

This document aims to define the religion of Islam for both Muslims and non-Muslims. Our research conducted in the United States and Europe has revealed that in the majority of mosques, academia, and media, the pillars of Islam are being incorrectly defined. Even in the US academia, educators unequivocally identify this fact. Research also shows that people across the world do not practice their religion based on education and research, but rather on their cultural heritage. This mixture creates a dangerous and misleading precedent for future generations. Therefore, this document intends to correct the existing myths and bring Abrahamic religions one step closer to a single religion of "Worshipping and Understanding Only One GOD" as intended from the beginning. Before delving into this paper, I ask you to carefully consider the following question: If there is ONLY ONE GOD, and HE sends 124,000 prophets or messengers to remind humanity to stay on the right path and worship Him alone, "How come we have so many religions?" The source is the same, and the message is the same, yet we have so many religions. Why is that?

# Defining Religion of Islam and It's Ideology



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# Defining Religion of Islam and It's Ideology

## Introduction

One of the most fundamental aspects of human nature is the need to discover its creator. This quest for meaning has brought people together throughout history. From Adam until now, 124,000 prophets or messengers have been sent to guide humanity in the right direction towards knowing the one eternal GOD. Of these, five prophets have had a tremendous impact on humanity's path: Noah (PBUH), Abraham (PBUH), Moses (PBUH), Jesus (PBUH), and Mohammad (PBUH).

My search for the creator led me to my religion, Islam. After many years of studying and exploring various religions, I found Islam to be complete and intriguing, especially the Quran, which has remained untouched for 1400 years. It is the most thought-provoking book, enticing readers to ponder its verses, which often reveal completely unexpected dimensions. Muslims believe that the Quran is the word of GOD, and it differs significantly from both the Hebrew Bible (Torah) and the Christian New Testament (the Bible). In the Quran, the theology is the main focus, assuming that the reader is already familiar with the stories in the Tora and the Bible.

Huston Smith observed that Muslims have difficulty understanding why Jews and Christians prize, have faith in, and esteem a book in which GOD talks only in the third person. In contrast, the Quran speaks directly to the reader, giving its claims immediate power. It is direct and to the point, with each Sura (or chapter) announcing the central point, which emphasizes GOD's (Allah's) supremacy.

I am focusing on Islam because it is the religion practiced by nearly 1.6 billion people worldwide, making it the second-largest religion after Christianity, according to a report by the Pew Research Center. Many Americans associate Islam with countries in the Middle East or North Africa, but nearly two-thirds of Muslims (62%) live in the Asia-Pacific region. However, our unofficial survey at 4ava.net found that a significantly low percentage of people in US and European mosques can correctly define Islam. One of the main problems is that many Muslim countries do not practice Islam based on the Quran, and wrong information about Islam and the Quran is taught in the US. This is a fascinating and sad phenomenon that raises questions about the quality of Islamic education.

I must confess that I am not the best person to write about the definition of Islam and its pillars. There are great scholars who can write with eloquence and depth that I could never dream of. However, a sense of duty and the lack of research in this area compel me to publish this paper. I have studied with

Mr. Ahmad Manafi in the 70s and Dr. Mohammad Ali Ansari now. Some parts of this paper are translations of Professor Ansari's teachings.

The purpose of this paper is to define Islam and its ideology using the Quran as the main reference and other Islamic scholars as secondary sources. I have included a few illustrations to aid in understanding. The paper aims to answer the following questions using the Quran:

- What is Islam?
- What are the pillars of Islam?

## Defining the Words “Islam” & the word “Religion” from Islam Point of View

First I should stress: Islam is a religion that Muslims believe originated from God and was sent to guide humanity on earth. It is a faith-based way of life, and the Quran is considered the word of God, providing guidance for believers. Monotheism is a central tenet of Islam, and Muslims worship only one God, the creator, who is known as Allah. This belief is shared by other Abrahamic faiths, such as Christianity and Judaism, who use the Arabic word Allah to refer to God. However, according to Islamic beliefs, Allah is God's proper name, while Christians and Jews know him as YHWH or Yahweh. Allah has no partners, and all decisions, power, and ruling belong to Him alone, as He is the creator of all things. In Quran Almighty GOD introduces himself as Allah (اللَّهُ):

إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي (20:14)

“Indeed it is Me, Allah – there is no God except I – therefore worship Me and keep the prayer established for My remembrance.”

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ (3:2)

Allah - there is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of existence.

هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ ۗ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ (57:3)

He is the first and He is the last, the transcendent and the immanent; and He has knowledge of everything, (All Knowing).

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ (112:1)

SAY: "HE IS Allah (God) the one the most unique,

اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ (112:2)

Allah, the Eternal, Absolute; (Allah is He on Whom all depend.)

لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ (112:3)

“He has no offspring, nor is He born from anything.”

وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ (112:4)

there is no one comparable (equivalent) to Him

Based on the above description of GOD in Quran, absolute submission is belong to Him and we should worship Him. He is the ruler, all wise, infinite in wisdom, mercy, forgiveness, compassion, powerful, able... and creator of all things.

## Defining “Religion” (in Arabic:Dīn) in Islam

To understand the Islamic perspective on religion, we must consider some fundamental principles. There are two types of principles in religion: Fluctuating and Fixed. Fluctuating principles refer to religious laws that are subject to change, while Fixed principles are commands that cannot be altered in religion. The Arabic word "Dīn" or religion has multiple meanings, including accounting for, auditing, retribution, punishment, reward, and compensation. However, the shared general meaning of religion or "Dīn" is a faith or way of life based on a set of doctrines and beliefs that guide one's actions. Essentially, religion is a compilation of rules and practices that provide guidance for human conduct. In religion of Islam, owner or master and complete authority of religion is the GOD.

مَالِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ

Owner of the Day of Recompense (Judgement)<sup>1</sup>

That is, no one has right to touch or change the divine religion. In fact, Man has no right to touch the religion due to in-perfection and ignorance (lack of knowledge).

The pious (the faithful) has three principles:

- Possess strong faith and backing of conviction,
- Knowledge of the commands
- and finally, show virtues or have excellent morals in everything that he/or she dose.

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<sup>1</sup> Quran 1:4

To attain true piety, it is essential to have knowledge of GOD and understand whom we are worshipping. Religion should not be based on personal preferences or opinions such as "in my opinion" or "I thought we should do this... or that." True religion is not subject to someone's taste or whims. Faithful, acquire their religion from their GOD not from their own liking.

وَلَا كُنْ أَتَاهُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ لَا مِنْ رَأْيِهِ<sup>2</sup>

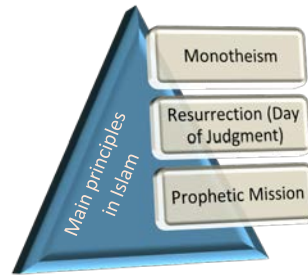
And it was from his Lord, not from his own opinion

أُولَئِكَ عَلَىٰ هُدًى مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ ۗ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٥﴾

Those are upon [right] guidance from their Lord, and it is those who are the successful.

## Principles of Islam

Islam hovers around three main principles. They are:



A Muslim by general definition is the one: who worship only the GOD alone, believes in the Day of Judgment, whole-heartedly, accepts all the prophets who came from GOD, and accept Mohammad (PBUH) as the final messenger (the Last prophet).

## Obligatory Exertions (exercises) of Islam

Obligatory exertions are the practices that divine religions have brought to purify both the soul and body. These practices are designed to help individuals remain steadfast on their path towards achieving the ultimate objective with ease. Although they are not mandatory, they are considered obligatory, as they serve as reminders of who we are and whom we worship. They are not pillars of religions, but rather a means to always bring God into our lives. Obligatory Exertions in Islam are:

- Prayer (Sa-lot, 5 time a day)
- Fasting (Roo-zeh, one month from dawn to dusk during month of Ramadan)
- Alms (Za-Kat, donation to charity)
- Annual Tax (Khoms, 1/5 of Saving's tax )
- Pilgrimage (Haj, Once in their lifetime perform pilgrimage to Mecca)
- Self-Control (Jihad, try to control excessive self-desires)
- Directing others to do what is lawful or good (Aamr-be ma'arouf)
- Prevent others from committing what is unlawful or wicked (Naah-ye az mon-kar)
- Friendship
- Immunity

<sup>2</sup> Osoul Kafi: Imam Ali (A) sermon on "Defining Islam"

## The Meaning of Islam

To provide an introduction, it is important to note that according to the Mohamedian doctrine, the only religion that is accepted is "Islam", which means "submission" to God. This concept encompasses all other religions as well and was the core message of all 124,000 prophets who came before Prophet Mohamed (PBUH). The verse 19 in chapter Al Emran says:

إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ ۗ...<sup>3</sup>

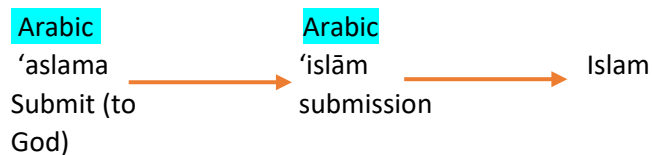
Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam (submission to the GOD)

The religion of submission, or Islam, is not limited to those who identify as Muslims. It is a universal concept that applies to anyone who submits to the will of God, regardless of their religious affiliation. The Quran refers to figures such as Abraham and Joseph as Muslims because of their submission to God.

So, what exactly is Islam? To answer this fundamental question, we need to look at the Arabic root of the word "Islam" and define it.

### What is the word "Islam" means in Arabic?

The origin of the word Islam in Arabic:



From Arabic "islām "submission", from "aslama" Submit (to GOD)"

The word *Islam* derives from the Arabic tri-consonantal root sīn, lām, mīm (S,L,M [س ل م]). Many different words created from this root word by inserting different vowels between the three root consonants.

Word	Arabic	Meaning
Is.lām	اسلام	Submission
Sā.lm	سيلم	Agreement, Harmony, Concord
Sâ.lm	سيلم	Peace
Sâ.lâ.m	سيلم	100% Submission, Fully Agree
Sâ.lām	سلام	Well-being /or Peace

The concept of Islam is rooted in the notion of peace and agreement with GOD. This means that adherents must observe the boundaries and rules set forth by GOD, the Creator. If they disobey or refuse to comply, they declare war on GOD and cannot be considered Muslim. GOD, as the all-knowing and all-wise Creator, has provided humanity with the best and most suitable way to worship Him. This is why He sent 124,000 prophets, with Muhammad (PBUH) being the last of them, to guide us.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Emran (3:19)

The relationship between GOD and humanity can be compared to that of a parent and child. Just as parents want the best for their children, GOD wants the best for all of humanity. The religion of Islam is not limited to Muslims alone; rather, it encompasses all religions that submit to the will of GOD.

To truly worship GOD, we must first know Him. This is the purpose of our existence: to gain knowledge and understanding of our Creator and worship Him as He deserves. Worship is not limited to prayer alone; it encompasses everything in our lives that teaches us about GOD. It is this desire to know our Creator that is imbedded in the fabric of our DNA, and it is why humanity has always been searching for the Creator. But their actions and deeds may not reflect that submission. On the other hand, Muslim by “action and deeds” are the ones whose words and deeds are in harmony with the submission to GOD. The true essence of being a Muslim lies in being a Muslim by action and deeds. It is not enough to just say the words without truly understanding and implementing them in our daily lives. In fact, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized the importance of actions over words when he said: “The most beloved of actions to Allah are the most consistent ones, even if they are small”. So, it is important to strive to be Muslim by our actions and deeds, not just by our words.

(أَشْهَدُ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ)

“There is no GOD but The GOD, and Mohammed (PBUH) is messenger of GOD”

For those who are not fully committed, they are referred to as nominal Muslims or Muslims in name only. They may claim to be Muslim, but they sometimes violate the boundaries set by God. However, what benefits do they gain by being that way? The only advantages they enjoy are the rights, privileges, and protections afforded to Muslims in this world, not in the hereafter.

On the other hand, Muslims who demonstrate their submission through their actions and deeds are different. Their submission is apparent in everything they do, every moment of their lives. If they remain steadfast in their submission to God, they will not only benefit in this life but also in the hereafter. Those who demonstrate their submission to God through their actions and are consistent in their behavior with others, whether with fellow human beings or God Himself, are the true winners. Quran says (2:208):

4 يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ كَافَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ ۚ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

“ye who believe! **Enter into Islam whole-heartedly**; and follow not the footsteps of the evil one; for he is to you an avowed enemy”.

The important words are **ادْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ كَافَّةً** “Enter into Islam whole-heartedly”, and do not let it go. Consider this: O believers, you have already acknowledged and believed in the existence of one GOD who desires for you to prosper in this life and to ultimately return to Him. So, why settle for a partial effort? Why not fully commit to the task at hand and strive for the ultimate success?

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<sup>4</sup> Al-Baghara (2:208)



بَلَىٰ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ وَجْهَهُ لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُحْسِنٌ فَلَهُ أَجْرُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾

“Yes, those who surrender with every fiber of their body to GOD while doing good deeds, their reward is with their GOD; and there shall not have any fear nor grief come upon them” (2:112) [This verse is for the people of the book.]

## Definition of Islam by Imam Ali ibn Abi Taleb (A)

Imam Ali (A) “was the cousin and the son-in-law of prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He ruled as the fourth caliph from 656 to 661, but he is regarded as the rightful immediate successor to Prophet Muhammad by the Shia Muslims and scholars.

Born to Abu Talib and Fatimah bint Asad, Ali is the only person to be born in the sacred sanctuary of the Kaaba (Arabic: كَعْبَة) in Mecca, the holiest place in Islam, according to many classical Islamic sources, especially Shia ones. Ali was the first male who accepted Islam, and according to some authors the first Muslim”<sup>6</sup>.

No one in Islamic world can dispute his great knowledge and understanding of Quran after the prophet himself. You can find his teachings in the book called the Peak of Eloquence (نحج البلاغه - Nahajul Balagha). Imam defines Islam<sup>7</sup> in six stages. You can find these stages in the “Peak of Eloquence” (or Nahajul Balagha) and in the book by Seghatol Islam Kolayni called “Principals of Kafi” (or Osoul Kafi). Furthermore, these stages are also known as degrees of faith for Muslims. To truly be a Muslim, one must strive to attain these classes, which may not be easy for everyone. I translated (with some commentary from Prof. Ansari’s) the Ali(A)’s definition from Principles of Kafi to convey the message and the meaning of the Islam.

Seghatol Islam Kolayni originally wrote this hadith in “Principles of Kafi” (known as Osoul Kafi), in the book of “Faith and Islam”. I am including the full Arabic writing below and then I am parsing them.

بَابُ نَسَبِيَةِ الْإِسْلَامِ عِدَّةٌ مِنْ أَصْحَابِنَا عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدَ بْنِ خَالِدٍ عَنْ بَعْضِ أَصْحَابِنَا رَفَعَهُ قَالَ قَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَ لَأَنْسَبَنَّ الْإِسْلَامَ نِسْبَةً لَا يَنْسَبُ بِهٖ أَحَدٌ قَبْلِي وَلَا يَنْسَبُ بِهٖ أَحَدٌ بَعْدِي إِلَّا بِمِثْلِ ذَلِكَ إِنَّ الْإِسْلَامَ هُوَ التَّسْلِيمُ وَالتَّسْلِيمُ هُوَ الْيَقِينُ وَالْيَقِينُ هُوَ التَّصَدِيقُ وَالتَّصَدِيقُ هُوَ الْإِقْرَارُ وَالْإِقْرَارُ هُوَ الْعَمَلُ وَالْعَمَلُ هُوَ الْأَدَاءُ إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ لَمْ يَأْخُذْ دِينَهُ عَنْ رَأْيِهِ وَلَكِنْ أَتَاهُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ فَأَخَذَهُ إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ يَرَى يَقِينُهُ فِي عَمَلِهِ وَالْكَافِرَ يَرَى إِتْكَارَهُ فِي عَمَلِهِ فَوَ الَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ مَا عَرَفُوا أَمْرَهُمْ فَاعْتَبَرُوا إِتْكَارَ الْكَافِرِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ بِأَعْمَالِهِمُ الْخَبِيْثَةَ اَصُولِ كَافِي ج

*Start of translation and commentary:*

قَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَ لَأَنْسَبَنَّ الْإِسْلَامَ نِسْبَةً لَا يَنْسَبُ بِهٖ أَحَدٌ قَبْلِي وَلَا يَنْسَبُ بِهٖ أَحَدٌ بَعْدِي إِلَّا بِمِثْلِ ذَلِكَ

Imam Ali (A) started by saying: “In today’s lecture, I want to tell you about specialty and genealogy of Islam. In another way, I am going to define Islam in such way that no one ever defined it like this before me and no one will be able to define Islam after me, except in this way”. That is, no one can add anything more to say on this subject. “I want to reveal the facts about Islam and submission, to you. If we say Islam is the religion of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), it is because of these facts”. The following,

<sup>5</sup> Al-Baghara (2:112)

<sup>6</sup> Wikipedia.org <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ali>

<sup>7</sup> Principals of Kafi (Osoul Kafi) Page 645 of 1159

is description of Amir Al Momenin (Chief/or commander of all faithful/or believers) the first knowledgeable man of Islam after the Prophet, define Islam by:

إِنَّ الْإِسْلَامَ هُوَ التَّسْلِيمُ

“There is no Islam without submission<sup>8</sup>. Islam means complete submission to the will of God. Once one accepts the divine knowledge, theology, and superior being, questioning God no longer makes sense. God has already provided the best choices for us, so not submitting to His will is meaningless. If there was a superior design for life, God would have recommended it to us. As the all-knowing, He knows what is best for us and has prescribed the perfect way of life for humanity. Therefore, there is no more dispute here. إِنَّ الْإِسْلَامَ هُوَ التَّسْلِيمُ

There are no desires, demands and orders of Almighty exist except the very best choices for his worshipers. There is no meaning, or no implication for not submitting anymore. If there is a better plan (or religion) for Man to live by, other than the one is given by God, He would have suggested that to us or He would have introduced to us for our religion. Therefore, He would not give us these rules and religion. There is no more dispute here.

” إِنَّ الْإِسْلَامَ هُوَ التَّسْلِيمُ

This is not as simple as we thought. وَالتَّسْلِيمُ هُوَ الْيَقِينُ But this submission/or surrender that I am talking about, does not materialize unless with belief/or conviction<sup>9</sup>. Humanity cannot embark on the path of submission without conviction and surrendering to the will of God. This kind of submission, which was the tradition of Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael, Jacob, and the Prophet of Islam (PBUH), requires unwavering belief and conviction. وَالتَّسْلِيمُ هُوَ الْيَقِينُ

What is conviction/or belief? وَ الْيَقِينُ هُوَ التَّصَدِيقُ Furthermore, the conviction or belief that I am referring to is accompanied by the necessity of acknowledgement. It requires one to capture the truth with every fiber of their being, confront it with honesty, and acknowledge it as the ultimate reality. This acknowledgement is not a mere product of imagination, but rather a sincere confirmation of the truth. وَ الْيَقِينُ هُوَ التَّصَدِيقُ

What is acknowledgement? We do not want to be stuck in here!

وَ التَّصَدِيقُ هُوَ الْإِقْرَارُ “But, this acknowledgment that I am telling you about must accompany with confession/admission<sup>10</sup>.” To truly submit to the Almighty and surrender to His will, the acknowledgement of the truth is not enough. One must also confess and admit their acknowledgement with every fiber of their being. This means expressing, declaring, and insisting on their surrender to the Almighty. It is through this admission that one can fully internalize and actualize their submission to the Divine.

<sup>8</sup> Quran: (There are many verses I only list few of them here) 1:5; 2:13; 2:128; 2:208; 3:67; 3:83; 3:84; 12:132, ...

<sup>9</sup> Quranic Reference: 15:99

<sup>10</sup> Quran: 3:52; 3:64; 3:81; 5:44; 5:111;

Now, if we make this declaration or confession and voice it out, would that be sufficient, Enshallah (Godwilling)?

No, my intent of confession is not this but, **وَالْإِقْرَارَ هُوَ الْعَمَلُ** My intention for confession is your deed or your daily actions. Not by saying that " I submit, I confess and I acknowledge", ... No.

**وَالْإِقْرَارَ هُوَ الْعَمَلُ** There is no confession without your action (or your deed)<sup>11</sup>. This confession must be reflected in your daily actions and behavior. Your surrender to the will of Almighty should be evident in every aspect of your life. Simply confessing is not enough, but rather, it is the first step towards a continuous process of transformation.

So, what is the required action or deed? Does merely confessing mean that you have fulfilled your obligation? No, it means much more than that. It means leading a life that adheres to the principles of Islam, living by the values and ethics that it teaches, and striving to be the best version of yourself. It means seeking knowledge, performing good deeds, and being mindful of your actions towards others. In short, it means living a life that embodies the teachings of Islam, and using your actions to strengthen your confession of faith .No. the act of saying in your daily routine, is not my intention. **وَالْعَمَلُ هُوَ الْأَدَاءُ**

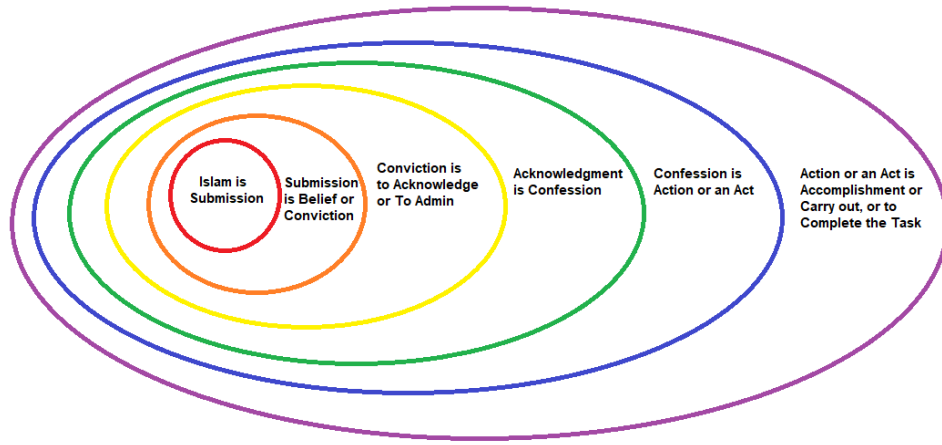
*(This word by Imam Ali (PBUH) is very meaningful and I am not going into it. I am merely translating it. It is very deep in meaning. You may want to ponder and pause on this sentence ).* Imam saying: "this

action(or deed) by you must accompany by "A-da" (**أَدَاءً**). Sometimes we are doing something and then we say: (for example) thank GOD I performed my prayer tonight. Thank GOD Ramadan finished and I was able to be steadfast to my fasting. Thank GOD I went to Hajj and my left shoulder did not deviate from Kaba. Occasionally we think that we accomplished something. This is acting (or doing) it, but it is not A-da (**أَدَاءً**). **أَدَاءً** refers to the purpose or intention behind an action, to accomplish one's objectives and bring it to completion. It is not merely about performing a duty, but rather fulfilling the ultimate goal of the action. It is like carrying a load and not setting it down halfway, but bringing it all the way home. This type of action requires utmost belief, conviction, obligation, and commitment to achieve its objectives.

Let's take a moment to reflect on this. Islam is all about submission, which stems from belief or conviction. This belief or conviction is acknowledged through confession and put into action to achieve one's objectives. This beautiful chain of words draws a clear picture of what Islam truly means, as described by the holy Imam.

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<sup>11</sup>Quran: 35:10



After definition of Islam in the following sentences, Imam is talking to believers and faithful. He is giving them guidance as how to practice their religion.

إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ لَمْ يَأْخُذْ دِينَهُ عَنْ رَأْيِهِ وَ لَكِنْ أَتَاهُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ فَأَخَذَهُ إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ يَرَى يَقِينُهُ فِي عَمَلِهِ وَ الْكَافِرَ يَرَى إِنْكَارَهُ فِي عَمَلِهِ فَوَ الَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ مَا عَرَفُوا أَمْرَهُمْ فَاعْتَبِرُوا إِنْكَارَ الْكَافِرِينَ وَ الْمُنَافِقِينَ بِأَعْمَالِهِمُ الْخَبِيثَةَ

*Translation:*

“Indeed, believer (or faithful) does not receive his religion from his own Style (or his/her verdict), rather, receives it from GOD. Indeed believers’ conviction or belief is evident in their actions or deeds. The unbeliever denials or rejections shows in their actions. Swear to the one whom holding my life in His hand that, they do not recognize their commandment of their religion. Therefore, you should recognize the unbelievers and hypocrites denials or rejections from their wicked acts (or deeds or actions).”

إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ لَمْ يَأْخُذْ دِينَهُ عَنْ رَأْيِهِ وَ لَكِنْ أَتَاهُ مِنْ رَبِّهِ فَأَخَذَهُ إِنَّ

In the final part of his sermon, Imam Ali (S) emphasizes a crucial concept that is often overlooked in society today. Sadly, this issue is becoming more prevalent not only in Islam but in all religions. He stresses that true believers do not derive their religion from their own opinions or personal preferences. Rather, they accept and follow the teachings of GOD as outlined in their religion. This is the essence of submission, accepting and surrendering to the will of GOD.

The distinction between divine and non-divine religions lies in the fact that the latter are created by human intellects. These “isms” are designed by a group of people with different ideologies and backgrounds, who try to summarize their knowledge and understanding into a concept that suits a specific group of people. However, their knowledge and understanding of the universe is limited and finite.

On the other hand, divine religions come from the creator of all things. They are not fabricated by human beings, but rather are designed by GOD. The principles and obligatory practices in divine

religions have a divine root and are based on the knowledge and wisdom of the creator. By accepting and following these teachings, one can attain true submission to GOD.

المؤمن يرى يقينه في عمله

The piety or faith of an individual cannot be solely found in their words or thoughts, but rather, it must be demonstrated through their deeds and actions. It is only when people observe their behavior, their demeanor, and their treatment of others that they can truly understand the depth of their conviction. In other words, the faithful do not need to proclaim their faith through words; their actions speak louder than words. It is through their actions that their piety becomes apparent to others.

والكافر يرى إنكاره في عمله

The lack of faith or disbelief in an individual becomes apparent through their actions and behavior. Their denial of faith can be observed in their conduct towards others and their attitude towards life.

فوالذي نفسي بيده

Imam pledges here: to the One who holds my life in His hand (The GOD)

مَا عَرَفُوا أَمْرَهُمْ فَاعْتَبِرُوا بِإِنكَارِ الْكَافِرِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقِينَ بِأَعْمَالِهِمُ الْخَبِيثَةَ

Know these affairs or matters. Know the business of the people and the unbelievers. Then see the credibility of it, with knowledge and wisdom and make a distinction. See the denial of unbelievers, the hypocrites, not from their speeches or gestures but by their actions and their business. It is the same way for pious and believers as for the unbelievers.

In this sentence, the renowned champion of piety, Imam Ali (A), outlines a beautiful Islamic plan that is rooted in faith and aimed at promoting societal understanding. His wisdom and scholarship are evident in this concise yet powerful statement, which serves as a testament to his greatness.

## The Pillars of Islam

As you know, the mighty GOD in Quran mentioned Islam is “The religion of truth”. That means the religion that is firm, stable, and permanent.

12 هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ ۗ وَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا ﴿٢٨﴾

“It is He who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to manifest it over all religion. And sufficient is Allah as Witness.”

13 هُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ رَسُولَهُ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَدِينِ الْحَقِّ لِيُظْهِرَهُ عَلَى الدِّينِ كُلِّهِ وَلَوْ كَرِهَ الْمُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

<sup>12</sup> Quran – 48:28

<sup>13</sup> Quran – 9:33



It is He who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to manifest it over all religion, although they who associate others with Allah dislike it.

Allah, the Almighty, sent the Prophet of Islam with guidance and the religion of truth at the pinnacle of his life. When we say, "Islam is the true religion," it means that Islam is a religion that is steadfast, enduring, and unchanging in its principles and beliefs. The word (الْحَقُّ) Al-Hagh) means firm and permanent. Islam is a religion that is firm in place because, it is not altered nor changed and never going to change. Not because of weakness, on the contrary, moves always toward glory and power forever. The All-mighty GOD made this religion permanent due to the concepts of its building blocks. In short, we can say the pillars of Islam made of four fundamental cardinals that contributes to its stability and permanency. These four principles make the pillars and Islamic educations.

## 1. Human Nature

The first concept that we must examine as a fundamental and pillar of the Islam is the human nature. Islam is based on human nature; in Quran all mighty GOD says:

فَأْوِمُّواْ وَجْهَكُمْ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا ۖ فِطْرَتِ اللّٰهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا ۚ لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللّٰهِ ۗ ذٰلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ  
ۚ وَلٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٣٠﴾<sup>14</sup>

“AND SO, set thy face steadfastly towards the [one ever-true] faith, turning away from all that is false, in accordance with the natural disposition which God has instilled into man: [for,] not to allow any change to corrupt what God has thus created this is the [purpose of the one] ever-true faith; but most people know it not. (30)”

When God created humans, He embedded information and knowledge within the very fabric of our being, known as "human nature". Our soul is given inspiration and revelations from God, and we have access to knowledge and information within us that we must find a way to unlock. This knowledge and information is the divine programming of humanity, and the gathering of this programming is what defines human nature. As a result, we see that prophets did not always come to teach us something new, and divine revelations are not always about imparting new knowledge, but rather serving as reminders of what we already know within ourselves. One of the names of Quran is reminder (Arabic name: Zekr).

ۙ اِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَاِنَّا لَهٗ لِحٰفِظُوْنَ ﴿٩﴾<sup>15</sup>

“Lo! We, even We, reveal the Reminder, and lo! We verily are its Guardian.”

The Quran serves as a powerful reminder, calling us to return to our innate human nature. It prompts us to reconnect with the divine programming embedded within us by our Creator. The teachings of the Quran are not always new information, but rather they serve as a reminder of what we already know deep down inside. Through the Quran, we can access the knowledge and information that lies within us and use it to navigate our lives in a way that is pleasing to our Creator. GOD calls the Prophet of Islam, Mohammed (PBUH) with a reminder in Quran:

<sup>14</sup> Quran: 30:30

<sup>15</sup> Al Hijir- 15:9

فَذَكِّرْ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُذَكِّرٌ ﴿٢١﴾

“So remind, [O Muhammad]; you are only a reminder. (21)”

Many of the sayings of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) were not meant to teach something new, as humans already possessed that knowledge, but rather to remind them of what they already knew but had neglected or ignored. The Prophet was guiding and coaching us to reconnect with our humble human nature, which is essential for leading a righteous and fulfilling life. If in Quran says:

هَلْ جَزَاءُ الْإِحْسَانِ إِلَّا الْإِحْسَانُ ﴿٦٠﴾

“Is the reward for good [anything] but good?”

The above verse "Is the reward for good [anything] but good?" is a universal concept that can be understood by people of all languages and cultures. It teaches us to reward goodness with goodness, which is a fundamental aspect of human nature. Islam is based on the principles of human nature, and these principles are reflected in the teachings of the religion. One of the most significant verses of the Quran, known as Ayat Al-Kursi, is considered the pinnacle of the Quran by the Prophet (PBUH). It reminds us of the divine nature of the reward for goodness and encourages us to embody these values in our actions towards others. Part of it says:

لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ...

The interpretation of this verse by some scholars is that "there is no compulsion in religion". This means that in Islam, no one can be forced to convert to Islam against their will. Islam is presented as an invitation, and it is up to the individual to accept or decline it. In its essence, there is no coercion in accepting the religion of Islam. However, in some exceptional cases, certain measures may need to be taken to ensure the continuity and preservation of the religion. This verse can also be understood as emphasizing the importance of freedom of religion and the absence of any compulsion in matters of faith.. Another meaning of this (لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ) is different from what we discussed. Another interpretation of the verse could be that in matters of religion, there are no unpleasanties or undesirables. This can be compared to food - the food that one enjoys and finds desirable is pleasing, and the food that is not appealing to one's taste buds is considered unappetizing. Similarly, in matters of religion, everything is designed to be pleasing and desirable to the human nature. There are no aspects of the religion that are unpleasing or repulsive, rather everything is meant to be attractive and alluring to those who seek the truth. (لَا إِكْرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ)... Islam is a religion that is in agreement with human nature, and there is nothing abominable in it that contradicts this fact. When Islam is presented in its true form, without embellishment, exaggeration, or diminishment, it naturally resonates with the human soul and inspires interest. The beauty of divine religion lies in its conformity to human nature, which is why people are drawn to it.

However, human nature can sometimes be transformed, and this can create difficulty in understanding and accepting certain aspects of Islam. For example, in Rumi's Mathnavi, there is a story about a man

<sup>16</sup> Al Ghashiya– 88:21

<sup>17</sup> Al Rahman -55:60

who passed out in a perfume bazar because he was not used to pleasant smells. In this case, his nature was transformed, and he needed something that he was familiar with to revive him.

Similarly, if someone has difficulty establishing a healthy relationship with Islam, it may be due to a problem with either their own nature or a partial delivery of the religion. It is possible that some elements have been added or shortchanged, creating confusion and misunderstandings.

## 2. Intellect

The second foundation and pillar of Islam is Intellect. GOD has given human beings intellect as a valuable and essential component of their existence. Intellect is how we can overcome our ugliness, crookedness, meanness, and weaknesses. The divine religion of Islam is based on the use of intellect, and GOD encourages and directs us to use it repeatedly in the Quran.

Any actions or practices that conflict with intellect are prohibited in all religions, and Islam places even more emphasis on this principle. For example, the use of drugs and intoxication is viewed as wicked and satanic in Islam because they impair the intellect and prevent it from functioning effectively. Even the use of prescription drugs without medical guidance is viewed with skepticism, as long-term use can have negative effects on the intellect. In Islam, GOD wants humans to have mature and fruitful intellect. Therefore, in Quran GOD (Allah) invite us to:

...أَفَلَا تَتَفَكَّرُونَ<sup>18</sup>

*“Don’t you think and reflect?”*

...أَفَلَا يَتَدَبَّرُونَ<sup>19</sup>

*“Don’t you ponder?”*

God (Allah) calls upon us to use our intellect, to engage in thoughtful reflection and deep contemplation. In the Quran, God encourages us to compete in the realm of knowledge and to pay close attention to the wonders of creation on earth, as a testament to the maturity of our intellect. Imam Husain, the third Shia Imam, once questioned what God has left to give to those already endowed with intellect, and what God has given to those without it. The human intellect is a precious and powerful jewel, bestowed upon us by God

هُدًى وَذِكْرَىٰ لِأُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ<sup>20</sup>

*“A guidance and reminder for men of wisdom.”*

The word الْأَلْبَابِ comes from word لب (lo-b) that is pure intellect. In other words, the intellect is not a prisoner of human emotions or excesses. When humans fall prey to excess, they become embroiled in an internal battle that clouds their judgment, preventing them from exercising pure intellect. It is pure

<sup>18</sup> Quran – Al Anaam (6:50)

<sup>19</sup> Quran - Mohammad (47:24)

<sup>20</sup> Quran – Qafer (40:54)



intellect that God desires for us. The religion of Islam and its teachings are based on Islamic law, which prioritizes the use of intellect.

### 3. Knowledge/ Wisdom (or Science)

The third pillar of Islam is built on knowledge, wisdom, or science. Islam is a religion that emphasizes scientific inquiry and epistemology in its teachings. The first time GOD spoke to the prophet of Islam is the first five verses of the Sura Al-Alaq:

اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ ﴿١﴾ خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ عَلَقٍ ﴿٢﴾ اقْرَأْ وَرَبُّكَ الْأَكْرَمُ ﴿٣﴾ الَّذِي عَلَّمَ بِالْقَلَمِ ﴿٤﴾ عَلَّمَ الْإِنْسَانَ مَا لَمْ يَعْلَمْ ﴿٥﴾

READ IN THE name of your Lord who created, (1) Created man from an embryo; (2) Read, for your Lord is most beneficent, (3) Who taught by the pen, (4) Taught man what he did not know. (5)

What can we glean from this passage? We observe the importance of education, both as a student and as a teacher, in the Islamic tradition. The Quranic revelations themselves emphasize the value of knowledge, as exemplified using the pen, reading, and writing. At the time of these revelations in Mecca, only a small number of people were literate, further underscoring the significance of education in Islamic thought. Here, the phrase "Read in the name of your Lord" (اقْرَأْ بِاسْمِ رَبِّكَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ) is used. The following verses emphasize the importance of reading, writing, knowledge, education, and learning. These concepts are repeatedly recommended throughout the Quran. GOD in Quran says:

فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ...

*"Learn what is: there is no GOD (Allah) but the GOD..."*

O Muslim, do not merely utter the words "There is no GOD but The GOD." Instead, strive to comprehend its true meaning through acquiring knowledge. Only then will you truly understand and affirm that "There is no GOD but The GOD." The glorious GOD position (or ranks) the scholars in Quran in such high place:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوا فِي الْمَجَالِسِ فَافْسَحُوا يَفْسَحِ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۗ وَإِذَا قِيلَ  
انشُرُوا فَانشُرُوا يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ ۗ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ  
خَبِيرٌ ﴿١١﴾

*"O' believers! When you are told, Make room in assemblies; then make space; Allah will make way for you (hereafter). And, when you are told, "Arise", then rise. Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who have knowledge, to high ranks. Allah is informed of what you do. (11)"*

<sup>21</sup> Quran: Mohammad-(47:19)

<sup>22</sup> Quran: Mojadeleh-(58:11)

God elevates those who make the effort to acquire knowledge and endure the hardships of the learning process. GOD in Sura Al-Esra verse 36 recommend us:

﴿ ٣٦ ﴾ وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا

*“And ( O’ Human) never follow the things that you have no knowledge of it and you don’t trust, Your eyes, ears, and mind (or heart) are responsible. (36)”*

Quran urges us to seek knowledge and to follow scientific standards when forming opinions and making decisions. Therefore, if we lack knowledge about something, we should refrain from blindly following or endorsing it. Instead, we should strive to deepen our understanding of the subject matter. Islam is built on a strong foundation of knowledge, insight, wisdom, and recognition of these great truths. Let us ponder on saying by “Ahlul Bayt”<sup>23</sup> :

The Prophet of Islam (PBUH) repeatedly emphasized the importance of knowledge and wisdom, without placing any limitations on its scope, time, or place. He encouraged his followers to "seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave". In Islamic culture, the concept of being a "graduate" does not exist, as one is expected to continue learning throughout their life until their last breath.

Abu-Rayhan Birouni <sup>24</sup> an Iranian Mathematician and astronomer (973 CE), was dying. His scholar neighbor came to visit Abu Rayhan who was laying down in his deathbed. Abu Rayhan asked his scholar neighbor about one of the obligatory in Islam. The scholar neighbor replied, “Abu Rayhan, what does it matter? You are not able to do this!” Abu-Rayhan said, “In Islam, if I know it and die is better or die and not knowing it?” His scholar friend said, “of-course, if you know it and die”! Abu Rayhan asked him to explain and answer him. For Abu Rayhan, knowing and dying was better than dying without knowledge. The scholar neighbor left, but as he reached the front door, he heard the cries of Abu Rayhan's family. Abu Rayhan had passed away. This story illustrates the importance of knowledge and wisdom in Islam.

One of the pillars of Islam is to seek knowledge without borders or limits. Muslims are encouraged to travel to the farthest corners of the universe to gain knowledge, even from those who practice polytheism.

Islam is a religion based on knowledge and wisdom, exemplified by the detailed description of embryology<sup>25</sup> in the Quran, which was impossible to know 1400 years ago. This is Islamic thoughts.

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<sup>23</sup> Wikipedia: “Ahlul Bayt, is a phrase meaning, literally, "People of the House" or "Family of the House". Within the Islamic tradition, the term refers to the family of the Islamic prophet Muhammad.”

<sup>24</sup> Abu Rayhan-Biruni (born Sept. 4, 973 CE, Khwārezm, Khorāsān -died c.1052, Ghazna [now Ghazni, Afg.), Muslim astronomer, mathematician, ethnographic, anthropologist, historian, and geographer. He managed to become the most original polymath the Islamic world had ever known. Some of his work: 500 years before Galileo proved Earth is round and revolve around Sun. He accurately measured the circumference, and area of the earth; and many mathematical principles that for centuries baffled the mathematicians. Even to this day.

<sup>25</sup> Quran: Al-Hajj-(22:5), Al-Momenoun-(23:14), Qafer-(40:67), Al-Qiyama-(75:38), Al-Alaq-(96:2)

## 4. Moderation or equity

The fourth Pillar of Islam is moderation or equity. Islam is a religion that built on complete balance and equilibrium.

... لَا شَرْقِيَّةَ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةَ..<sup>26</sup>

... “Not Eastern and Not Western” ...

One of the most glorious verses in the Quran is verse 35 of Chapter Noor (or Light), which is found in every mosque around the world, and in the middle of it, it states: “Not Eastern and Not western”. This verse is not referring to the cultural East and West that we are accustomed to. In this context, East means Christianity and West means Judaism. After Prophet Jesus (PBUH) [Isa Masih in Quran], Christianity had a special mysticism with a focus on acquiring a monastic or single life. This idealistic inclination within the clergy formed the road-guard of Christianity. On the other hand, Judaism has no mysticism, and its spirituality of thoughts and ideals is less deep than that of Christianity. There is a sunrise and a sunset in spirituality, and one is called Eastern and the other Western. In essence, one represents excessiveness, and the other represents waste.

Islam rejects both excessiveness and waste (or dissipation). For example, consider the command of capital punishment. In Judaism, there is no mulct (or blood money), and the Talmud commands that the killer must be put to death. This is because Judaism moved toward worldliness and the monetary situation they found themselves in. In Christianity, this became waste, and they offered the option of mulct (or blood money) or forgiveness instead of capital punishment. Now, many Christian countries do not have capital punishment. When the divine religion of Islam came, it rejected both of these extremes and brought balance. Islam recognizes three types of murder: premeditated (or intentional), doubtful, or a mistake, and each type carries its own sentence. At times, compassion and mercy are necessary, and other times, the death sentence is necessary. Sometimes mulct (or blood money) must be used, and other times, forgiveness is preferred.

Inheritance is another example of the moderation of Islam. In Islam, we are not obligated to renounce this world for the afterlife. Islam recognizes the balance between worldly possessions and the afterlife.

وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ ۖ وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا ۗ وَأَحْسِنَ كَمَا أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ  
إِلَيْكَ ۗ وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفُسَادَ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾

*“So seek the abode of the Hereafter through what God has given you, and do not forget your part in this world. Do good to others as God has done good to you, and do not try to spread corruption in the land. Surely God does not like corrupters.” (77)*

<sup>26</sup> Quran: Noor-(24:35)

<sup>27</sup> Quran: al-Qasas-(28:77)

We must live. We want this world. Those who do not have good life in this world they will not have good afterlife. According to Imam Ali (A), this world “دُنْيَا مَمَرِكُمْ وَالْآخِرَت مَقَرُّكُمْ” [which means; “This world is your means (or passage) and afterlife is your resident (or place)”] is a means for us to reach the afterlife, and we should take provisions from it to ensure a good outcome in the next life. However, we should not become too attached to this world and should strive for balance between our worldly and spiritual lives.

Islam emphasizes moderation, balance, and justice. It encourages us to use this world for our basic needs within the confines of religious recommendations, so as not to cause our own torment. Islam is not just about being kind or violent, but about achieving a balance between these qualities.

In Islam, both GOD and the creations are seen and observed. We are encouraged to worship GOD and serve others through prayers, charity, and generosity. This balance between devotion to GOD and generosity to others completes our existence and makes us better humans.

Moderation is one of the four pillars of Islam, along with the declaration of faith, prayer, and charity. With these pillars, Islam will remain a legitimate and relevant religion for all of humanity. Again, the pillars are:

- Human Nature/ or in fabric of our being.
- Intellect
- Knowledge and wisdom
- Moderation and Balance

Essentially, these four factors form the basis of Islamic education. Without any of these factors, an Islamic teaching cannot be produced.