Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Endowments & Religious Affairs
Al Ifta Office

THE BASIC TENETS OF ISLAM

BY

THE GRAND MUFTI OF OMAN
HIS EMINENCE

SHEIKH AHMED BIN HAMED AL-KHALILY

SECOND EDITION
1431 / 2010

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بســم الله الرحمن الرحيم

INTRODUCTION

For a faith to inspire action, it has to be founded on deep feeling of certainty. Faith is incomplete when it is followed blindly or accepted unquestioningly. The person who calls himself a Muslim because of his family traditions, or accepts Islam under coercion or blind imitation is not a true Muslim in the sight of Allah. The true Muslim must build his faith on well-grounded convictions beyond any doubt and above uncertainty. If he is not quite sure about his faith, he is invited by Allah to search in the open book of nature, to use his reasoning powers, and to reflect on the teachings of the Noble Qur'an. He must search for the indisputable truth until he finds it, and he will certainly find it by the grace of Allah if he is serious enough. (see, for example, the Noble Qur'an 2:170; 43:22-24)

Every person who is duly qualified as a genuine and earnest thinker is enjoined by Islam to employ his faculties to the fullest extent in his quest for the truth. As for the person who is unqualified or is uncertain of himself, he should pursue his thinking only as far as his limits. It would be quite in order for such a person to rely entirely on the authentic sources of religion, which are sufficient in themselves, without applying to them any critical questioning of which he is incapable. The point is that no one can be a true Muslim unless his faith is based on strong belief and his mind is clear from doubts. In other words Islam is complete only when it

is grounded in unshakable convictions and freedom of choice; it cannot be forced upon anybody, for Allah would not accept this forced faith. Furthermore, freedom of choice is the cornerstone of responsibility. And because Islam forbids compulsion in religion and ensures freedom of belief, many non-Muslim groups have lived in Muslim countries peacefully enjoying full freedom of conscience.

When a person, of his/her own free will, chooses to become a Muslim, then it is important that he/she announces publicly his/her faith in Islam so that he/she may be granted the same rights as Muslims. In Oman, the channel followed for making this announcement official is the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs: either directly, or through the Islamic Information Centre at the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, or any Sharia Court in the country.

The following is a translation of a speech given by His Eminence Sheikh Ahmed bin Hamed Al-Khalily, the Grand Mufti of Oman, and intended for those who wish to embrace Islam. The speech was meant to explain briefly the basic tenets of Muslim faith, which every Muslim is required to know in more detail and have firm belief in, and to fulfill the practical implications and requirements thereof in accordance with the teachings of Islam.

Mohamed bin Salim Al-Busaidy

THE BASIC TENETS OF ISLAM

THE FIRST PILLAR: TESTIMONY THAT NONE HAS THE RIGHT TO BE WORSHIPPED BUT ALLAH, AND THAT MUHAMMAD IS THE MESSENGER OF ALLAH

FAITH IN GOD

All praise is due to Allah - the Lord of the universe, and may blessings and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah - our Master Muhammad, his family, his companions and his righteous followers till the Day of Judgment.

First of all, it has to be known that Islam is based upon indisputable faith in the existence of God (Allah) who created man and everything in being. The signs of the existence of God are manifest in this entire universe. Every atom in the universe bears testimony to His existence. The existence of man provides sufficient proof of the existence of God the Exalted.

It is a universally accepted fact that everything that is made requires a Maker. When one looks at a building, he realizes immediately that someone must have constructed it. Though the materials used in its construction existed before, no one would believe that

these materials joined together spontaneously to form the building. Likewise if one looks at a book, he knows that some writer must have written it.

That is the case in respect of the things that existed before in the form of raw materials. How about man who had no entity at all? A forty-year old man had no existence before these forty years. A man who is now fifty did not exist in any form before this period of fifty years. In the same way, before thirty years ago there was no being of a man who is now thirty years old. Would it be possible for a man to take himself out of non-existence into existence? Similarly this whole world came into being after a phase of non-existence. Certainly, it was impossible for it to create itself.

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

The Creator who created both man and the universe has definitely a large number of attributes and qualities. Among these are:

Unity: The unity of the system of the universe with its vast dimensions and delicate combinations, and its operation in the most orderly manner provides sufficient evidence of the unity of God the Creator. It would not have been possible for the universe to operate if it had emanated from more than one single authority.

Eternity:

God is eternal, i.e. infinitely pre-existent. The proof of His eternity is that if His existence had had a beginning, He would, like other beings whose existence has a beginning, have required a cause or originator to bring Him into being; and in that case such a cause or originator would be more entitled to divinity.

Everlastingness:

God is everlasting i.e. timelessly in existence. For it is impossible for a thing whose eternity has been established to cease to exist. If nothing causes God to come to existence, nothing causes Him to continue to exist. And if the continuance of His existence depends on nothing, then He must be self-sufficient, self-existent and everlasting.

Omnipotence (Absolute Power): The proof of God's being absolutely powerful is the creation of this universe and its consolidation. Had He been lacking or limited in power, it would not have been possible for Him to create this vast and precisely ordered universe.

Omniscience (Total and Infinite Knowledge): God is all-knowing; for had Almighty God been unknowing, He would not have been able to create this universe so skillfully and perfect it with such accuracy.

Life — God Almighty must be living; for had He been lifeless, He would possess neither knowledge nor power.

Hearing and Sight — God Almighty is all-hearing, all-seeing. The Maker of this universe must certainly have full power of hearing and seeing.

Speech — God Almighty is fully capable of speaking; as lack of such a power would render Him incapable of creation.

NOTHING IS ANALOGOUS TO GOD

There is nothing that bears any resemblance to Almighty God in respect of His entity, attributes and actions, nor does He resemble anything in any respect. The same term may be used to describe Allah as well as to describe His creatures; but its implications in each case are different. Allah, for instance, is described as powerful, and the same word may be used to describe creatures. But that does not by any means indicate that the capabilities of the creatures are similar to those of Allah. The powers of the creatures are proportional and extremely limited, whereas the powers of the Creator are absolute with no limitations. What man is able to do is very little compared to what he is unable to do. As against this, Almighty Allah can do each and everything, and nothing is beyond the scope of His power.

Similarly, the creatures may be described as knowledgeable, though they are by no means analogous to the Almighty Allah in knowledge. The knowledge of the creatures is relative and extremely restricted, while that of the Creator is absolute and unlimited.

Almighty God has neither partner nor son. He never begets, nor is He begotten. No one is equal to Him and nothing is like Him.

FAITH IN PROPHETS AND SCRIPTURES

After creating man, Allah did not left him on his own to govern his affairs according to the dictates of his reason and in pursuit of his desires, as human mind is not capable of providing him with satisfactory guidance. Man's thinking keeps on being influenced by numerous factors: psychological, social, economical, and so on. For that reason things that are liked in one society may be disliked in another. The criteria for liking and disliking are different even among the members of the same society. Providing adequate guidance is therefore beyond the scope of human mind.

In view of this, Almighty Allah has sent messengers to His creatures to invite them to the right way of living and warn them against evil. These messengers were among the human beings. They had all the general human qualities and characteristics. They had to eat and drink like any human being. They got delighted and grieved; they got angry and pleased.

They were only distinguished from the rest of human beings by the fact that they were the most intelligent and most righteous; they possessed the best character and highest standard of morality. This is because Allah had prepared them for carrying the torch of His light and transmitting His guidance to humanity.

None of them should be described as son of God. Nor should any of them be regarded as having the slightest element of divinity in him. None of them was an

associate of the Almighty in His creatures. All of them were slaves of the Omnipotent Lord, the Almighty. Among them, Muhammad (peace be upon him) stands out as the last messenger and the seal of the prophets. There will be no prophet after him.

Almighty God revealed scriptures to these messengers. Of those scriptures the Holy Qur'an stands out as the last and crowning touch of God's guidance to mankind, and was revealed to the Last Prophet, namely Muhammad (peace be upon him).

As Muslims, we must have faith in all of God's messengers and all the divine scriptures revealed to them. We are not allowed to distinguish between the messengers or the scriptures by believing in some and disbelieving in others. A general faith in all of the prophets and the scriptures is a must.

Besides, we are required to specifically identify Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the Holy Qur'an, as we are required to be devoted fully to the Holy Prophet and the Holy Qur'an. We must also have a specific faith in all the Prophets mentioned by name in the Qur'an.

THE QUR'AN CHALLENGES THE WHOLE WORLD

Almighty Allah empowered His messengers to perform miracles, i.e. acts that are beyond the power of man. As the mission of the previous prophets was temporary, their miracles were also temporary. By contrast, the mission of the Last Prophet, namely Muhammad (peace be upon him), is everlasting; and hence his miracle is also everlasting.

The miracle of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was immaterial, in contrast to material miracles of the previous prophets. His miracle is contained in the very scripture revealed to him. The entire humanity with its enormous power has miserably failed to produce something similar to the Holy Qur'an.

The Qur'an itself challenged the whole world to bring the like of ten of its chapters. But no one could accept the challenge. The Holy Book then gave a concession asking humanity to produce a single chapter similar to that of the Qur'an but everyone failed to accept this challenge too.

The Holy Qur'an is inimitable both in respect of its contents and its linguistic beauty. Revealed in immaculately chaste Arabic, it remains the masterpiece of Arabic literature.

During the days of the Holy Prophet, Arabic literature had reached the peak of its glory. The Arab world of

that time produced innumerable orators and poets who were masters of the language. But in spite of their outstanding literary skills, they miserably failed to produce anything that could be comparable to even the smallest chapter of the Holy Qur'an.

The uniqueness of the Holy Qur'an is also manifest in its contents. The set of matchless laws for the mankind and the wealth of scientific information contained in the Qur'an make it an outstanding book of which imitation is beyond human power.

FAITH IN ANGELS

As Muslims, we must also believe in angels as being among the creatures of Almighty Allah. Angels are different from the rest of the creatures of Allah in that they do not require food or drink, do not go for the call of nature, and do not sleep, get tired or produce children. They are day and night engaged in glorification of the Almighty. They carry out His commands and are never disobedient to Him.

FAITH IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

We must also have a firm belief in the Day of Judgment. This means that we must believe in death and the hereafter i.e. life after death. We must have full faith in the fact that every creature has to die. Only Allah has always remained and will always remain alive. Death does not bring man to a final end. It is rather a phase for him to pass through.

After death there will be resurrection, whereby life will be restored to the bodies and everyone will be called to account for all his acts in this world. Rewards and punishments will then follow. The true believers, who have done noble acts in this world, will be rewarded with Paradise, while the unbelievers and perpetrators of evil acts will go to Hell. Life in both Hell and Paradise will last for ever.

FAITH IN FATE

We must also believe in fate, be it pleasant or unpleasant, as being from Allah the Exalted, the All-wise. After creating this universe, Allah Almighty has never forsaken it. He predestined all that happens in it and therefore nothing could happen contrary to His decree or against His will.*

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* With prior knowledge of everything, Almighty God has anticipated and predestined whatever happens in this world. His knowledge and power are in action at all times to keep order in His vast domain and maintain full command over His creation. He is All-wise and Loving and whatever He preordains must have a good motive and a meaningful purpose. Accordingly, we should accept wholeheartedly whatever He decrees for us of matters in which we have no option, although we may fail to understand the wisdom behind them, or even think of them negatively. Our knowledge is limited, and our thinking is based on individual or personal considerations, whereas His knowledge is limitless and He plans on a universal basis. Nevertheless, Almighty God has granted humankind a limited freewill with which they choose any course of action they wish. On account of this limited freewill, He tests us in every thing we do in the life of this world, and every person is morally held accountable for their actions.

DECLARATION OF FAITH
THE FIRST PILLAR OF ISLAM

In order to declare faith in all these tenets enumerated above, one has to pronounce the following two testimonies:

ASH-HADU AN LĀ ILĀHA ILLA-LLĀH.
WA-ASH-HADU ANNA MUHAMMADAN
RASOOLU-LLĀH

I bear witness that there is none to worship but Allah.
And
I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of Allah.

By reciting the above affirmation wholeheartedly, a person declares his faith in Islam and all its aforesaid fundamental doctrines, and thus becomes a Muslim with equal rights and duties to any other Muslim.

Pronouncement of the two testimonies constitutes the first of the five pillars of Islam, i.e. the five chief duties of a Muslim.

THE SECOND PILLAR: OBSERVING REGULAR PRAYERS

A Muslim must be regular in offering his prayers. Performance of the five daily prayers at their prescribed times is obligatory from the age of maturity. These prayers and a simple method of determining their times are as follows:

1- Fajr (Early-morning) Prayer; its time extends from the appearance of the true dawn till the beginning of sunrise.
2- Dhuhr (Noon or Early-afternoon) Prayer; its time begins immediately after midday when the sun starts to decline, extending to the beginning of the time of Asr prayer.
3- Asr (Late-afternoon) Prayer; its time begins when the shadow of every object is the same length as the object, and ends just at the beginning of sunset.
4- Maghrib (Sunset) Prayer, whose time extends from the completion of sunset till the disappearance of the twilight (red sunset glow) in the west.
5- Isha (Evening) Prayer, whose time extends from the moment when the twilight has just disappeared till midnight.

THE THIRD PILLAR: ALMSGIVING (ZAKĀT)

Zakat is the giving away of a portion of the wealth one may possess in excess of what is needed for sustenance to purify or legitimize what one retains. *Zakat* may be paid directly to the poor and the needy as alms or to the state. The state would use the collected *Zakat* for the upkeep of the poor, for those who own less than that prescribed for the paying of *Zakat* and who have no earning capacity, for the destitute, Muslims in debt through pressing circumstances, wayfarers (travelers in need), those serving the cause of Islam and struggling in the way of Allah, for slaves to buy themselves out of bondage and for other benevolent works. Those who collect *Zakat* on behalf of the state are also allowed payment from it for their work.

The amount charged on *Zakat*-payable* capital holdings remaining in one's possession for a complete period of one lunar year is 2.5% of their value. *Zakat* is also payable on gold, silver, liquid assets and merchandise. Besides, there are regulations governing the payment of *Zakat* on livestock and grains.

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* Worth 85 grams and over of gold.

THE FOURTH PILLAR: FASTING DURING THE MONTH OF RAMADHAN

Ramadhan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Islam has prescribed fasting during this month as a spiritual discipline.

Allah says in the Qur'an: "O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you, that ye may learn self restraint, (fasting) for a fixed number of days; but if any of you is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed number should be made up from days later. For those who can do it with hardship, is a ransom, the feeding of one that is poor. But he that will give more, of his own freewill, it is better for him. And it is better for you that ye fast, if ye only knew." AL-BAQARAH 2:183-184.

Ramadhan, putting an end to indulgence or imposing a clear limit to it day by day for a month, offers an unmistakable spiritual lesson. It constitutes a purification process and a kind of sacrifice that, like the pruning of trees, leads to renewal and fresh strength. On the moral plane, it brings a direct understanding of the suffering of the hungry and the needy.

The Qur'an was revealed in one of the last nights of Ramadhan, the Lailat-al-Qadr, which is the holiest night in the Islamic calendar. During Ramadhan supplementary prayers called *'Tarawih'* are performed after the Isha prayer. The month is an occasion for

intensive reading of the Holy Qur'an and uplift through good deeds.

THE FITH PILLAR: PILGRIMAGE

Pilgrimage (Hajj) is an elaborate series of rites performed at the Grand Mosque of Mecca and in the immediate environs of the city. The Hajj is obligatory upon those who can make their way to Mecca. The requirement is not unlimited. Rather it is incumbent once in lifetime, on those whose health and means permit it and who in doing so, do not compromise their responsibility towards their families.

The yearly flood of pilgrims from remotest places of Islam has been a remarkable means of spiritual renewal for distant communities, which are thus brought closer to the spiritual center of Islam.

ISLAMIC CODE OF CONDUCT

A Muslim must refrain from all the acts declared unlawful by Allah. Complete abstinence is a must from pork, alcohol and adultery or fornication as well as involving oneself in acts that might lead to adultery.

Telling lies, backbiting, sowing discord among people, using obscene language, abusing and mistreating others. These habits must be given up, as Islam is strongly opposed to them. Jealousy, intrigue, arrogance,

self-praise and ill will, these run counter to the spirit of Islam.

A Muslim must also keep himself away from all fraudulent acts, theft, usury and betrayal. All good acts must be done with the intention of seeking the pleasure of Allah if they are to be accepted and rewarded by Allah.

NO INTERMEDIARY

Another significant point in Islam is that there are no intermediaries or mediators between Almighty God and a sinful person. No one has the right to act as a middleman between God and His creatures, as no such institution exists in Islam - a religion that believes in an unadulterated monotheism. If a man commits a sin, he must seek pardon from Allah directly, without anyone mediating between the two.

EQUALITY

Islam does not attach any importance to territorial or racial differences. All humans are equal in the eyes of Allah. The Holy Prophet has explicitly said that no white is superior to a dark one, as all of us are from Adam, who was made from clay. "The noblest of you in the sight of Allah ", the Prophet declared, "is the one who is the most pious".

تم بحمد الله