

How Must The Aqeedah Be Established?

Islam was revealed to be a mercy to all of mankind, and its message was indeed addressed to all of mankind, Muslim and non-Muslim. Consequently, when we discuss the establishment of the Islamic Aqeedah it has to be done in light of this fact. Using an Ayat of the Qur'an may work on a Muslim but this has absolutely no authority with a non-Muslim. Before addressing the topic, a definition of the word Aqeedah is due. The meaning of Aqeedah is: what the heart is knotted on or tied to, after the mind has become convinced. This Aqeedah has to be decisive and based on evidences.

Also, the meaning of the word Iman: is a decisive belief reached through evidences.

From these two definitions it becomes clear that the mind is an important feature in arriving at the Aqeedah. As a matter of fact it is the only way sanctioned by Islam, toward reaching or arriving at the Aqeedah. Before discussing this further, let us look at ways in which people in general arrive at belief or Aqeedah, in order to discuss their merits:

Imitation

Imitation in belief is a common practice among people. Usually children assume the beliefs of their parents without any questioning of the belief itself. This is an invalid method since the belief is taken regardless of its correctness. So we find many people worshipping cows, rocks, or men only because their parents did so.

Emotion

Arriving at belief through the emotions alone is also invalid. As a matter of fact mankind started worshipping idols because they were led by their emotions. The emotions at all times should be led by the mind and only chaos results if the emotions are left unchecked.

Reaction

Reactionary belief is also invalid. We find for example some African-Americans adopting either Egyptology, ancestor worship, Judaism or Islam as a reaction to the 'white man' enslavement, rejecting Christianity, which is portrayed as a religion where even the saviour has blonde hair and blue eyes. So when they carried their belief, they went far, saying that God is black, white man is devil, which is completely absurd.

Consequently, the correct way at arriving at the Aqeedah or at belief is through the mind and emotions (fitrah). The Qur'an addressed this aspect in many Ayat, for example;

“And of his is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of your languages and colours. Lo! herein indeed are signs for men of knowledge.” (30:22) “Will they not regard the camels, how they are created! And the heaven how it is raised! And the hills, how they are set up! And the earth how it is spread!” (88:17-20)

"So let men consider from what he is created. He is created from a gushing fluid. that is issued from between the loins and ribs. "(86:5-7)

“Lo in the creation of the heavens and

earth, and the alternation of the night and day, these indeed are signs for men of understanding. Those who contemplate on Allah while standing, sitting or laying on their sides, thinking deeply into the creation of the heavens and earth.”(3:190-193)

And we can quote hundreds of Ayat which call mankind to think, consider, contemplate and ponder over the creation in order to arrive at the proper belief. After the mind is convinced to the point where there remains no doubt with something that is in compliance with fitrah, the heart automatically knots and clings to this decisive, unshakeable belief or Aqeedah.

When we say that the mind is the tool used to arrive at belief, we do not mean that the process one uses has to be as rigorous as a scientist, analysing the makeup of the atom or the cell, to arrive at

the Aqeedah. Rather, we mean that from simple exercises in rational thinking, one can undoubtedly reach this conclusion. Let us look at some occurrences in history, where this was applied.

Prophet Ibrahim (AS) had a debate with a ruler regarding the creator of the heavens and earth. Ibrahim (AS) said that his Lord gave life and caused death. The ruler, in response, told his ministers to bring two men in front of him. He gave an order to kill one and allowed the other to live, and then declared, "I also give life and cause death." Our father Ibrahim then addressed him with the following challenge, "My Lord causes the sun to rise from the east, can you make it rise from the west?" The ruler was of course left speechless and embarrassed. (This was mentioned in Al-Baqarah:259)

Ummar bin Al Khattab, the second Khalifah of Islam (RA), was seen crying and then laughing. He was asked why he did do so, to which he replied, "We used to make our gods out of dates, and when we became hungry we used to eat them,' that is why I am laughing."

Abu Hanifah a foremost scholar in the history of Islam had a debate with an atheist regarding the Creator. On the day of the debate Abu Hanifah sent his students to the place of the debate to wait with the atheist for his arrival. Abu Hanifah arrived purposefully late and was asked by the now irate atheist as to his tardiness. Abu Hanifah told him that on his way to the debate, he reached a river, and there were no boats nor people present. He waited for a while, only to see a tree fall and immediately carve itself into a boat. The boat then came to the river bank and summoned him to get in. He did so and the boat took him to the other side of the river. The extremely irritated atheist replied that this was absolutely unbelievable. Abu Hanifah then retorted that if this was unbelievable, how then can one say that the sun, moon, and universe was created in this same fashion. The debate was over.

Consequently, the tool used to reach belief or the Aqeedah must be the mind and the evidences used to ascertain this belief must be decisive. This method is called the rational method. This is the only method that should be used to arrive at belief.

RATIONAL METHOD

Some people believe that the rational method is very rigid and philosophic, and others believe it to be blasphemy to even suggest using this method to arrive at belief. As we mentioned before, the Qur'an pushes us to ponder upon the earth, camel, sea, stars, the development of the foetus in the womb, and many other situations, to reach a certain conclusion.

When we study the rain for example, we find that rain follows a definite rule or law, that can be called evaporation and condensation. This is a well mechanised process, where every step is systematic and cannot be changed. When the rain exists as a liquid (water), its chemical makeup is H₂O or two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen. During the evaporation process where the form of the rain water changes to a vapour or a gas, its chemical makeup remains the same. Oxygen and hydrogen exists abundantly in the atmosphere, but this does not effect the evaporation process at all. There are some scientists who claim that things in the universe happen randomly, and haphazardly, without any system. If this were so, then there would be at least one or more times when one of these hydrogen or oxygen atoms would collide with the vapour form of water to change or alter the evaporation process. As far as we know the evaporation and condensation process occurs over and over again, according to the same process, without interference. It is rather irrational to call such a process, a random or haphazard process. This is because it is well known that any two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom, does not make water. There has to be a specific system or process that causes these elements to combine to make water. We inevitably have to deduce that this and many other processes and systems present in the universe, are all -being controlled by a power and force with the ability and might to run and control them all at once. When we look at the human being, we find that the human being sleeps and dies, but these universal systems run perpetually, so it cannot be said that a human is in control of the systems of

the universe. Nor can it be said of an animal, albeit, it cannot be said of anything within the universe. We then reach a conclusion that this force or power or might that runs the universe in this systematic way is the Lord, Master, Creator, Originator, Organiser of the universe, Allah the Glorified, the Exalted.

We just employed the rational method to reach this Ultimate Conclusion. We applied our senses to a subject matter (rain), transferred it to the brain and then linked this subject matter to previous information that we had about rain (evaporation, condensation, chemical makeup etc.), and finally connected this information to other related information (systems could not be created or controlled by anything within creation), to reach our Ultimate Conclusion (Allah alone controls the universe). So we see that this is not a philosophical process, since philosophy incorporates hypothetical guesses, illusionary thinking and logic. Yes logic! Logic is an invalid way of thinking vis a vis, reaching the Ultimate Conclusion.

LOGIC

What is meant by Logic here is the ancient Greek way of thinking which influenced many Muslims such as Mu'atazilah'. It is an invalid type of thinking regarding the Ultimate Conclusion because it usually results in deceiving or misleading, and contradictory conclusions. The process of logic is to state an introductory premise, then to build steps or points toward reaching a conclusion. The danger in this type of thinking is that if the premise is incorrect, or if any of the intermediate steps are incorrect, the conclusion may be correct, and there are times when the premise or step is correct and the result is incorrect. Hence, the conclusions may be deceiving or misleading. An example of logical process is to say, a blackboard is made of wood, wood burns, therefore all blackboards burn. Also, logic is controlled by formulas and techniques and does not care about the information, as long as the techniques are correct, even if the information is incorrect. So in logical debates, the winner is the one who can out-manoeuvre the other with regard to the logical techniques and sequences, regardless of whether or not the information is correct. However, we can see instances where logic can lead to contradictory results. Consider the following two examples:

So we find that using logic can lead to two contradictory results. Regarding the Ultimate Conclusion, the Christians for example, used logic to arrive at a very erroneous and dangerous conclusion. They claimed that God created man in his own image therefore God's image is that of a man. Then after a while they commissioned an artist to paint the likeness of God, and His representation was that of a blonde haired, blue eyed, white man. (We seek refuge in Allah from ever making this type of error!!) Another feature of logic, is that there are no limits to the types of conclusions that can be reached with logic. As the previous examples have shown, those whom use logic have anthropomorphised (represented in human characteristics) Allah (swt). Even the Muslims who have employed logic have fallen prey to this error. We find even to this day, some Muslims debating on the form or shape, texture or quality of Allah's "hands", "face", "sitting", or "ascending". These Muslims do not recognise that thinking about any topic depends on the ability to sense the topic, as well as the previous information about the topic. Since we can only sense what is within the limits of this universe, and since Allah has told us that He has only given us a small amount of information, then the human mind is limited to the amount and degree of things that it can think about.

This does not mean that since Allah is outside of this universe, then we cannot think about Allah. As we have shown before, we are able to arrive at the Ultimate Conclusion based on the effects of the aspect of Allah as The Creator, The Organiser, The Originator, and The Controller of the Universe. We did not initiate a discussion about the essence of The Creator. Any discussion about the essence of The Creator, is an exercise in futility.

Consequently, only the rational method can lead to the Ultimate Conclusion, in way that leaves one with decisive certainty and that is in accordance with man's nature. And consequently filling the heart with tranquillity.

“Lo in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of night and day, and the ships which run upon the sea with that which is of use to men, and the water which Allah sendeth down from the sky, thereby reviving the earth after its death, and dispersing all kinds of beasts therein, and (in) the ordinance of the winds, and the clouds obedient between heaven and earth: are signs of Allah sovereignty for people who have sense.” (2:64)

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