

Usul al-Deen

Fundamental beliefs are called Usul al-deen, i.e. Roots of Religion. The Usul al-deen are five: Three are called Roots of Islam. They are:

- (1) Tawhid, Belief in oneness of God;
- (2) Nubuwwat, Belief in the Prophets;
- (3) Qiyamat, 'Belief in the Day of Judgement.

The remaining two Usul al-deen are called Usul al-Iman, Roots of Faith. They are:

- (1) 'Adl, Justice of God and
- (2) Imamat, the successorship of the Prophet.

A person believing in all five Usul al-deen is called Shi'a Ithna 'ashariyah. Such a Shi'a believes that:

1. Tawhid

There is only one God – Eternal, Self-sufficient; He has no beginning or end; He is Omnipotent, has power over everything and every affair; He is Omniscient, knows everything, nothing is ever a secret from Him. He has His own discretion in all affairs, does not do anything under compulsion. He is All-perceiving, All-Hearing, All-Seeing and Omnipresent, He sees and hears everything though He has neither eyes nor ears. He has no partner or colleague, nor has He any son, daughter or wife. He is neither made nor composed of any material substance. He has no body nor is He confined to a place. He is not afflicted by anything related to body: He is not governed by time, space, change or things like that. He is not visible, He has not been seen, and will never be seen either in this world or the hereafter. His attributes are not separate from His person.

2. Adl

Allah is just; He does not do injustice to anyone. He has ordered us to do justice to our fellow creatures – but He Himself treats us not only with justice but with grace. He created us for His worship, in order that we may attain spiritual perfection through it. That spiritual perfection enables us to reach near to Allah.

For this purpose, He has given us freedom of will and choice. When we choose, by our own free will the Straight Path (prescribed by Allah) we are assured in the next world of everlasting happiness and glory by Grace of Allah.

3. Nubuwwat

To show us the Straight Path, Allah has been sending His Representatives to the mankind. They are called nabii (Prophet) and rasul (messenger). (Plural: anbiya'; rusul or mursaleen).

There came 124,000 prophets and messengers, beginning with Adam (a.s.) and ending with Muhammad (s.a.w.a.). All the prophets were ma'sum (sinless, infallible; Plural; ma'sumeem). Muhammad, the Holy Prophet of Islam, is the Final Prophet; anybody claiming prophet hood after him is liar and imposter.

4. Imamah

To lead the people to the Straight Path, and to preserve the religion of Islam, Allah appointed twelve successors – one after another – of the Prophet of Islam. They are called Imams. Imam literally means leader.

Plural aimmah (Wl = Imams; leaders). First of them was Ali son of Abu Talib, and the last one is al-Mahdi (a.s.). All Imams are ma'sum.

The names of the twelve Imams are as follows:–

1. 'Ali, son of Abu Talib
2. Hasan, son of 'Ali
3. Husayn, son of 'Ali
4. 'Ali Zaynul 'Abideen, son of Husayn
5. Muhammad Baqir, son of 'Ali Zaynul 'Abideen'
6. Ja'far Sadiq, son of Muhammad Baqir

7. Musa Kazim, son of Ja'far Sadiq
8. 'Ali Rida, son of Musa Kazim
9. Muhammad Taqi, son of 'Ali Rida
10. 'Ali Naqi, son of Muhammad Taqi
11. Hasan Askari, son of 'Ali Naqi
12. Muhammad Mahdi, son of Hasan 'Askari

Imam Mahdi, the twelfth Imam, is alive, but is hidden from our eyes by order of Allah. He will re-appear, when Allah allows him, to establish the Kingdom of God on the earth. It will be near the end of the world, when he will establish justice and equity in the world after it had been devastated by Injustice and oppression.

5. Qiyamat

After that will come Qiyamat, the day of resurrection, the day of judgement. All people will die; then the whole mankind will be resurrected to face the reckoning of their faith and deed. People having correct belief and doing good deeds will be placed in the paradise; while people having wrong belief will go to the hell.

To know and believe in the above-mentioned usul al-deen is the first and foremost responsibility of a mukallaf. As explained just now, neglecting them throws one in ever-lasting punishment of the hell.

If one does not believe in the usul al-deen, then his acts of worship are not accepted by Allah; also he is not entitled to receive khumus, zakah, fitrah, radd al-mazalim and kaffara¹.

As described earlier, a minor child of a Muslim parent is treated as Muslim; but as soon as he/she becomes baligh, he/she must have the correct belief with firm faith. If at that time he/she was oblivious of these fundamental beliefs, or had doubt about them, it would create a real problem.

Mere verbal confession is not enough. One must have firm belief in heart.

Also, it is very much emphasized in Shi'a Ithna 'ashari faith that one should acquire the knowledge of usul al-deen with proofs and arguments. In this respect we totally differ from the Christians. The Christians say: First believe, then you'll understand. We say: First understand, and then believe.

Never the less, if one has not learned rational proofs and arguments of usul al-deen, yet firmly believes in them because, let us say, his parents have told him so, he is accepted as a Shi'a Ithna 'ashari. But such a faith is always in a precarious position. He believes in these things because he has confidence in

his father and mother. All right. Now suppose in later life he met someone in whose knowledge he had a greater confidence and that someone told him that there was no God or no twelfth Imam. Would not his belief in One God or the 12th Imam be shaken? Or even destroyed? Therefore, it is essential for the parents to teach their children necessary topics of usul al-deen with rational and logical proofs, so that nobody can mislead them in later days.

1. These are various religious monetary dues.

Source URL:

<https://www.al-islam.org/what-muslim-should-know-and-believe-sayyid-saeed-akhtar-rizvi/usul-al-d-een#comment-0>