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WHAT ARE THE FUNDAMENTAL ARTICLES OF FAITH REQUIRED TO BE CONSIDERED A MUSLIM?

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Muslim scholars would agree that there are some fundamental articles of faith one must subscribe to be considered a Muslim¹. These fundamental articles of faith were discussed by the Centre for Intra-Muslims Studies (CIMS) on the 1st of April 2017 with a Sunni perspective presented by Maulana Abdul Hadi al-Umari & a Shia perspective by Shaykh Arif Abdulhussain.

Maulana Abdul Hadi outlined a set of fundamental beliefs rooted in the Quran and Sunna. Quoting narrations from the Prophet about what Islam is, he corroborated them with Qur'anic verses to build his case.

At the core of Maulana Abdul Hadi's presentation regarding the fundamental articles was the belief in one God (*tawhīd*) and prophethood of Muhammad (SAW) (*nubuwwa*). This is rooted in a lengthy narration in which the Prophet is asked what *islām* and *īmān* are, to which he replies *islām* is a) belief in one God b) belief in the prophethood of Muhammad c) establishing prayers d) paying the zakat e) fasting in Ramadhan and f) carrying out the Hajj whilst *īmān* is a) belief in Allah, b) his angels c) his messengers d) books e) day of judgement & f) predestination². Building on this as his framework and considering Islam and Iman as being synonymous³, he cited several verses⁴ to establish belief in all the above as being fundamental in being considered a Muslim.

Shaykh Arif's [presentation](#) saw him divide the fundamental beliefs into two parts; the primary (*usūl auwaliyya*) beliefs, subscribing to which one can be considered a Muslim, and secondary beliefs (*usūl thānawiyya*), belief in which would consider one a Shia. The primary being belief in oneness of God (*tawhīd*), Prophethood (*nubuwwa*) and the day of judgement (*qiyāma*) whilst the secondary

¹ Whilst seemingly intuitive, this discussion has the implication of preventing attributing disbelief (*kufir*) to anyone with a difference of opinion.

² [Sahih al-Bukhari 4777](#) (Book 65, Hadith 299)

³ One could critique the distinction between Iman and Islam as being at two different levels – one is superficial and one inner – rooted in the verse Hujurat 14: The Bedouins said we have Iman; say rather you have Islam.

⁴ "Each [of them] has faith in Allah, His angels, His scriptures and His apostles..." see Quran 2:285, 11:84.



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being belief in justice of God (*'adl*) and in the Imams (*imāma*). He also delineated the differences amongst the Imami scholars regarding these divisions.

Whilst rooting the discussion primarily on Qur'anic verses, Shaykh Arif pointed out that the basis for the fundamental beliefs is both rational and textual. Outlining the Shia scholars' views on the fundamental beliefs – he mentioned that some such as Ayatullah Khomeini, Shahid Sadr and others believe based on Qur'anic verses that mere belief in *tawhid* and *nubuwwa* suffices in categorising one as a Muslim⁵. Other Shia scholars such as Sayyid Khui add the necessity of belief in the last day for one to be considered a Muslim⁶. Similar diversity can also be seen amongst the Shia scholars in categorising one as a Shia; with some saying belief in Imama is enough, whilst some saying there is a need to believe in the justice of God also. The implications of these categorisations are that the denial of *Imāma*, or the denying of necessities of faith (*ḍarūriyāt*)⁷ does not take one out the fold of Islam provided the denial is not rooted in denying one of the primary tenets of belief such as *nubuwwa*⁸.

It was concluded that regarding the fundamentals of faith, despite minor differences, there was an overwhelming overlap between the Shia and Sunni regarding the fundamentals of faith.

⁵ See Quran 3:64, 60:12, 3:179. 24:47

⁶ Based on Quran 2:228, 2:232 2:8

⁷ Here in reference to the actions such as prayer, fasting, hajj etc.

⁸ If one denies the necessities of faith because he denies the belief in prophets or a particular prophet, that would be tantamount to coming out of the folds of Islam due to denying a fundamental principle.