**IMAN**

**THE BASIC BELIEFS**

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IMAN: its nature and Character

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The Qur'an deals in many passages with man's relationship to Allah and the concept of life which naturally follows from that relationship. Its message is epitomized in the following verse:

Verily Allah hath bought of the Believers their lives and their properties for the price that theirs shall be the Paradise: so they fight in the way of Allah and slay and are slain. It (i.e. the pro- mise of Paradise) is a covenant which is binding on Him in the Torah and the Injil and the Qur'an. And who is more faithful unto his covenant than Allah? Rejoice then in your bargain that ye have made, for that is the supreme triumph. (al-Taw bah 9: 111)

In the above verse the nature of the relationship which comes into existence between man and God because of Iman (the belief, trust and faith in Allah) is called a 'bargain'. This means that Iman in Allah is not a mere metaphysical concept; it is in the nature of a contract by which man barters his life and his possessions in exchange for the promise of Paradise in the Hereafter. God, as it were, purchases a Believer's life and property and promises, in return, the reward of Paradise in the life after death. This concept of a bargain and a covenant has important implications, and needs to be clearly understood.

Everything in this world belongs to Allah. As such, man's life and wealth, which are part of this world, also belong to Him, because He has created them and has entrusted them to every man for his use. Looked at from this angle, the question of 'selling' or 'buying' may not seem to arise at all; God does not need to buy what is already His and man cannot sell what is not really his.

But there is one thing which has been conferred on man, and which now belongs fully to him, and that is free will, which gives him freedom to choose between following or not following the path of Allah. This freedom of will and choice does not automatically make man the real owner of all the power and resources over which he has command, nor does it give him the right to use them just as he likes. Yet, because of this free will, he may, if he likes, consider himself free of all obligations to the Lord and independent of any higher authority. It is here that the question of bargain arises.

This bargain thus does not mean that God is purchasing something which belongs to man. Its real nature is this: all creation belongs to God but He has bestowed certain things on man to be used by him on trust. God wants man to willingly, and voluntarily acknowledge this. A person who voluntarily renounces his freedom to reject God's supremacy and instead acknowledges His sovereignty, and, in so doing, 'sells' his 'autonomy' (which, too, is a gift from God) to God, will get in return God's promise of eternal bliss in Paradise. A person who makes such a bargain is a Mu'min (Believer) and Iman (faith) is the Islamic name for this contract; a person who chooses not to enter into this contract, or who, after making such a contract, does not keep to it, is a Kafir. The avoidance or abrogation of the contract is technically known as Kufr. Such is the nature of the contract. Now let us briefly study its various aspects and stipulations.

1. God has set us to account for ourselves in two areas:

(a) He has left, man free, but nonetheless wishes to see whether he will remain honest and loyal to Him, or whether he will rebel against his own Creator, whether he will behave nobly or start 'playing such fantastic tricks as make the angels weep.

(b) He wants to see whether man is prepared to have enough trust in God to offer his life and wealth in return for a promise about the next world.

2.. It is a principle of Islamic law that Iman consists in adherence to a certain set of doctrines nd anyone who accepts those doctrines becomes a Mu'min. No one has the right to call such a man a disbeliever or drive him from the fold of Ummah, unless there is clear proof that faith has been abandoned. This is the legal position. But in the eyes of the Lord, Iman is only valid when it entails complete surrender of one's will and freedom of choice to the will of Allah. It is a state of thought and action, coming from the heart, wherein man submits himself fully to Allah, renouncing all claim to his own supremacy.

A man may recite the Kalimah, accept the contract and even offer Prayers and perform other acts of worship, but if in his heart he regards himself as the owner and the master of his physical and mental powers and of his moral and material resources, then, however much the people may look upon him as a Mu'min, in the eyes of God he will be a disbeliever. He will not really have entered into the bargain which the Qur'an says is the essence of Iman. If a man does not use his powers and resources in the way God has prescribed for him, using them either he has not pledged his life and property to Allah, or has nullified that pledge by his conduct.

3. This aspect of Iman makes the Islamic way of life the very opposite of that of the non-Muslim. A Muslim, who has real faith in Allah, makes his entire life one of obedience and surrender to His will. He never behaves arrogantly or selfishly or as if he were master of his own destiny, save in moments of forgetfulness. And as soon as he becomes conscious of such a lapse, he will submit himself to his Lord and ask forgiveness for his error.

Similarly, a group of people or a society which consists of true Muslims can never break away from the Law of their Lord. Its political order, its social organizations, its culture, its economic policy, its generations, legal system and its international strategy must all be in tune with the code of guidance revealed by Allah. Any unwitting contraventions must be corrected as soon as they are realized.

It is disbelievers who feel free from God's guidance and behave as if they were their own master. Anyone who behaves like this, even though he may bear a name similar to that of a Muslim, is trading the path of the disbelievers.

4. The will of God, which it is obligatory for man to follow, is the one which God Himself has revealed for man's guidance. It cannot be determined by man himself. God has Himself explained it clearly and there is no ambiguity about it. Therefore, if a society sticks honestly to its contract with Allah, it must shape its life in accordance with the Book of God and the Sunnah of the Prophet, blessings and peace be on him.

It is clear from the foregoing discussion why the payment of the 'price' has been postponed till the life after death. Paradise is not the reward for the mere profession of the bargain, it is the reward for the faithful execution of it. Unless the behavior of the 'vendor' complies with the terms of the contract he will not entitled to the reward. The final act of the 'sale' can only be concluded after the last moment of the vendor's earthly life.

There is another significant point which emerges from the study of the verse quoted above when it is read in its context in the Qur'an. In the verses preceding it, reference is made to the people who pro- fessed Iman and promised a life of obedience, but who, when the hour of trial came, proved unequal to the task. Some neglected the call of the hour and betrayed the cause. Others refused to sacrifice their lives and riches in the cause of Allah. The Qur'an, after criticizing their insincerity, intakes it clear that Iman is a contract, a form of pledge between man and God. It does not consist in a mere profession of belief in Allah: It is an acknowledgement of the fact that Allah alone is our Lord, Sovereign and Ruler and that everything that man has, including his own life, belongs to Him and must be used in accordance with His directives. If a Muslim adopts a different course, he is insincere in his profession of faith. Only those who have really sold their lives and all that they possess to God and who follow His dictates in all spheres of activity can be called true Believers.

IMAN: its true meaning

-SAYYID MOUDOODI

Brothers in Islam! You become Muslims by reciting a few words called the Kalimah: