

CERTITUDE

YAQĪN

This article comprises the following sections: i. Definitions and Usage; ii. Essential part of *Īmān*; iii. Acquired or Granted?; iv. Degrees; ix. Bibliography.

Definition and Usage

Certitude, *al-yaqīn* in the Qurʾān, is a defining “attribute of knowledge; its epistemic value is higher than comprehension and what can be understood through inductive reasoning and the like; thus, one says, *ʿilm al-yaqīn* and not *maʿrifatun yaqīn*; it is the fully-confirmed understanding [of a matter] along with the proofs for [that conviction]” (Rāghib). “It is knowledge without any doubt,” (Ṭabarī, *sub* Q 2:4) and “confirmation of knowledge (*itqān al-ʿilm*) through the removal of doubt” (Zamakhsarī; Bayḍāwī; Qurṭubī, *sub* Q 2:4).

The Qurʾān is a *Book wherein is no doubt, guidance for those who are conscious of their Creator (hudan lil-muttaqīn. Q 2:2), muttaqīn—the God conscious—are defined as having five qualities: (i) They believe in the Unfathomable (al-ghayb); (ii) are steadfast in prayer; (iii) spend out of what We have provided them; (iv) believe in what has been revealed to you [the Prophet] and what has been revealed before you; and (v) they have certitude about the Hereafter (Q 2:3-4).*

“This is the characterization of the believers by Allah Most High; their certitude concerning the Hereafter is the certitude about all that the polytheists denied and rejected: the revivification of the dead and Resurrection, Reward and Punishment, the Reckoning (*ḥisāb*) and the Balance (*mīzān*) and everything which Allah has prepared for His creatures on the Day of Reckoning (*yaʾum al-qiyāma*)” (Ṭabarī, *sub* 2:4).

“To be certain about a thing is to have its knowledge and *īmān* is its attestation (*taṣḍīq*), thus, when one has certitude, one believes and testifies because of the certainty of knowledge. Some of the disbelievers were in doubt about the Resurrection, as they said, [concerning Q 45:32, and when it was said: “Verily, the Promise of Allah is the truth, and there is no doubt about the coming of the Hour,” you said:] ‘we know not what is the Hour; we do not think it but as a conjecture, and we have no certitude about it.’ (Māturīdī, *sub* Q 45:32)

In addition to the linguists and the exegetes, precise definition of *yaqīn* has also remained a central concern of the Sufis because it is one of the stations of

the Path that leads to the Creator. These definitions are often presented in pithy aphorisms as the sayings of the masters, in a *bāb*, “Chapter on *Yaqīn*”. Among the early Sufi articulations are the definitions by al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/ca.857), al-Junayd al-Baghdādī (d. ca.296/908), al-Sulamī (325-412/936-1031), Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj al-Ṭūsī (d. 378/988), Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996), and al-Qushayrī (376-465/ca.986-ca.1073).

The Damascene ascetic and *waʿīz*, Abū ‘Abd Allāh Anṭākī (140-239/757-853) said, “Even the least amount of *yaqīn*, when it enters the heart, fills it with light and cleanses it from all kinds of doubt, thus transforming the heart to become filled with gratitude (*shukr*) and fear of Allah...” Abū ‘Abd Allāh b. Khafif [(ca.268–371/882–982), the ascetic from Shiraz whom Junayd called the ‘seal of Sufis (*khātam al-ṣūfīyya*)], said, ‘*yaqīn* is the certitude about all matters related to the Unseen, which have been transmitted by the Prophets” (Qushayrī, *Risāla*, p. 162).

Yaqīn is derived from the trilateral root *y-q-n* and is used 28 times in five derived forms:

- i. 12 times as the Form IV verb *yūqīnu*, “to firmly believe”;
- ii. twice as the Form X verb is *ʾtayqanat*, “to be convinced, to be certain”;
- iii. eight times as the nominal *yaqīn*, “certitude, certainty”; two of these (Q 27:22 and 56:95) are genitive adjectives (*ṣifa majrūra*);
- iv. five times as the Form IV active participle *mūqīnīn*, “those who are certain”; and
- v. once as the Form X active participle *musʾtayqīnīn*, “those who are fully convinced”.

Works on Qurʾānic polysemy and aspects of usage of key terms (*al-Wujū wa-l-naẓāʾir*) list ways in which *yaqīn* has been used in the Qurʾān. Al-Dāmaghānī (d. 478/1085) in his *al-Wujūh wal-naẓāʾir* lists (i) attestation, (ii) death, (iii) witnessing (*al-ʿayān*), (iv) knowledge, and (v) truth (*ṣidq*). Ibn al-Jawzī (508-597/1114-1200) in his *Nuzhat al-aʿyūn* has (i) attestation (*taṣḍīq*), (ii) truth, (iii) witnessing (*mushāhida*), (iv) death, and (v) sure knowledge (*al-ʿilm al-mutayaqqan*).

The Qurʾān uses three conjugated terms to denote three levels of certitude— *ʿilm al-yaqīn*, *ʿayn al-yaqīn*, and *ḥaqq al-yaqīn*, “the knowledge of certainty, the eye of certainty, and the reality (or truth) of certainty”, the first two terms appear in Q 102:5 and 102:7; the third and the highest level of certitude is graphically depicted as the experiential certainty of *deniers* of Truth, when they would enter Hell, to a *welcome of boiling*