Halaqa: Wednesday, March 19, 2014

Topic: How does the Quran present God? (Part 2)

**“Blind Faith” (Is it really faith or is it an oxymoron?)**

It is an oxymoron because otherwise we would be rejecting our human qualities and accepting claims with no logical reason

None of our daily actions are performed blindly. Why should faith then be something blind?

* Faith has to be the result of our own choice and decision

Once we have acknowledged that faith needs to be an act of choice, we have to ask:

On what basis should I make my choice?

* Based on my intellect
* It is the single thing that differentiates me from the rest of creation and which makes me unique as a human being

A common scholarly expression: **The Necessarily Existent One *(Al-Wajib al-Wujud)***

* **The One whose existence is necessary**
* **Without this, I cannot explain the existence of anything**

Analogy: The orange tastes delicious

* Who created the orange?
* Who created my sense of taste?
* Who created my ability to ask and investigate?
  + The fact that it exists needs an explanation

Before asking all the above questions, I should ask: Who is the Source of **existence** of it all?

Power of attraction and repulsion between atoms

* Its existence needs an explanation
* Don’t get lost in the material existence of objects
  + We tend to ask: How does an apple exist?
    - The answer we commonly hear: As a result of natural laws
* But, we have to expand our thoughts to ask questions about the existence of everything, paying special attention to the non-material attributes such as laws we often take for granted.
  + - How can you explain the **existence** of movement/gravity?

Search for the source of existence in everything

* Your search will not present an answer within the limitations of this world
* You will inadvertently be led to the necessarily existent One

Since we cannot explain the existence of things by themselves, we can logically conclude that there must be a single source beyond all things.

We can only refer to this Source as the One whose existence is necessary for me. I cannot fathom this Source in any other way than saying “The Necessarily Existent One.” The One Who must exist because the Source is beyond my perception.

* I cannot give any form or shape to God or even to the concept of God because it is beyond my scope of imagination
* Since we cannot imagine a shape or even a concept of God, how can we believe in Him?

This necessarily existent One must necessarily be all-powerful. He must have Absolute knowledge

* It is not a mere figment of my imagination BUT a conclusion of my experience
* The qualities of this universe, must come from a Source whose qualities are Absolute otherwise, I find no way to explain the existence I observe

Some people think that they don’t believe in God

* In reality, they are rejecting the idea of institutionalized religion presented to them
* They don’t know what they are disbelieving in
  + Similarly, many people who claim that they believe in God, don’t really know what they are believing in

The first step requires asking the right questions because we cannot speak about God until belief is established

* To establish belief, we have to dismiss the false claims we are introduced to

**The Qu’ran established TAWHEED (Absoluteness of God)**

**The Qu’ran rejects SHIRK (Attributing deity to anything other than God, the Creator of the entire universe.)**

The Quran rejects mere belief in God but asserts the belief in ONE/ABSOLUTE God.

* How sure can we be that our belief in the oneness of God has no share with anything else?
* Nothing in this world can give existence to any other thing
  + Even if the whole world comes together, we will not be able to give existence to a minute atom because that would require creation from nothing. Hence, we testify that nothing, except Him, can bring into existence that which did not exist.

Deity: Being the source of existence of something else

We say: I am not the Source of existence of myself

I am not the Source of existence of my children

I am moving my hand

* + Really?
  + Can you give existence to movement?
  + We only have the choice of free will to want to move
  + We cannot be the source of anything
  + We are just here to acknowledge this reality

If we say, I am moving my hand, then we are indirectly saying that:

The birds are moving their own wings

The plants are moving their own elements

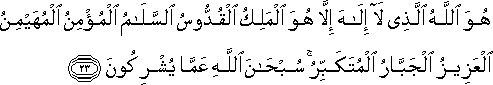
The single atom has the power of movement and consciousness

This train of thought reaches a dead end BECAUSE we logically know that an atom does not have any quality of a deity.

Tawheed: When we say that God is Absolute, it means that we cannot define God

* It is ineffable
* I cannot liken God to anything within the conception of the created human mind

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**Sahih International:**He is Allah, other than whom there is no deity, the Sovereign, the Pure, the Perfection, the Bestower of Faith, the Overseer, the Exalted in Might, the Compeller, the Superior. Exalted is God above whatever they associate with Him.

The verse is introducing the qualities of God to us BUT we have to understand that all the qualities are in their Absolute state.

What does Absolute mean?

* It means that any of the qualities observed in this universe belongs to the One who creates it from nothing
* It is not of the nature of this universe

We need to come into existence.

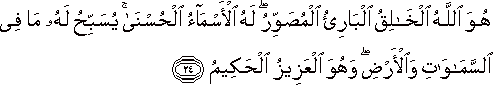
My source of existence cannot be the one which needs to come into existence. His existence must be essential, not dependent on anything else. He must be Absolute. There is no limit to His qualities; for example, His Will must have no limit. The universe is a witness to this.

Universe is coming into existence as a result of Will (with no means at all)

I am not the Source of existence of the power within me

* I am dependent
* BUT I need to explain how power exists
* Its existence can only be explained by referring it to the Absolute; the One who Creates everything

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**“He is God, the Creator, the maker who shapes all forms and appearances! His (alone) are the attributes of perfection. All that is in the heavens and on earth extols His limitless glory: for He alone is almighty, truly wise!”**

Human beings search for the source of existence. They conclude that there must be a source of existence of these things here in this world. They start wondering what IT is. Then, God comes to their aid and describes Himself as HE and names it as God, the One who brings them into existence and shapes their forms and appearances.

The One who is behind everything

God describes Himself as the Creator, the Originator, the One gives things shapes etc.

In the Quran, God says: I am the Creator

As the reader of the Quran we are expected to investigate who can be the Creator. If we reach the conclusion that the Creator can only be the One who is the Originator of the universe, then s/he can conclude that: The Creator of this universe is HE who is called God. Only then can s/he confirm the Qur’anic message. That is called “belief”

* I look at the universe and see that everything needs to be given existence
* I ask, who created everything?
* I search for the Creator, the Source of existence of this world
  + I see that nothing can give existence as the result of its own will
* From reading the Quran, I conclude that the Creator is God (as He described Himself)

Don’t start by saying that **God is All-Powerful**

* Rather, you ought to arrive at the fact that God is All-Powerful based on your experiences and search from a Source of Existence that the Source of existence of this universe must be All-Powerful. Only then can I say that this All-Powerful One is God. And thus confirm the message of the Qur’an.
* Rather than saying that God is All-Powerful and thus imitating the Qur’an, we need to reach at the conclusion that an All-Powerful One is needed to explain the existence. And this **All-Powerful One is God**

*Be careful of how we think about and say things.*

*I should say: The creator of X, Y and Z is God. (Let me reach God through creation because creation is what I can interact with and know)*

*God says: God is the creator of X, Y and Z (In the Quran, God is speaking and telling us about Himself, so He can assert that He is the Creator)*

Mine is a conclusion. Not an unfounded claim or a repetition of what I read in the Qur’an.

- I have to investigate and experience creation because only then can I be satisfied with the explanation

In prayer, when I recite the Quranic verses, what am I doing?

* I am presenting my conclusion (God’s words) back to God. That is only valid during my rituals not during my searches and reflections

**“His (alone) are the attributes of perfection”**

Everything you see and the qualities therein, must belong to someone

* This someone is Him, the Creator

With blind faith, we cannot conclusively defend claims so it is not really belief

* Don’t get brainwashed by terms that hold no meaning
  + Things just exist/natural laws
  + Investigate existence

The first attribute of God that is accepted by the scholars of Islam is Al-Wujood (The Existent One)

* How can I explain the existence of this world?
* By referring it to the necessarily Existent One

“**He alone is almighty, truly wise**”:

I have to be comfortable in my conclusion that the One who creates this universe is Almighty; beyond anyone’s and my imagination

**“Whatever is in the heavens and the earth extols His limitless glory”**

* Every single thing can only exist as a result of His Will
* The only One who can hold this quality is God

No one can say: *illAllah la ilaha*

* You have to first go through the process of negating before you can confirm
* We have to first question the universe
  + When you realize that there is no Creator within this universe, you will comfortably be able to conclude that there can only be One Absolute Creator

Quran is teaching us that we cannot imitate belief

* We have to go through the process of rejection and confirmation
* You have to experience the struggle of *lailaha* to taste the serenity and comfort of *illAllah*
* Nothing in this world can be a deity (*la ilaha*). But because the thing itself exists necessitates a Creator and this Creator must be God, (*illAllah)*