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| **Date** | Wednesday, January 13 2016 |
| **Topic** | Chapter Fatiha  |
| **Part** | 1 |

 ***Who is the reader of the Quran (and the universe)?***

* I am the reader.

*Who are you?*

* A human being.

*What does a human being mean?*

* A conscious being endowed with endless human qualities.
* Since I am created, I cannot claim that I have the power to create.
* I exist therefore my Creator exists.
* If I am heedless of my existence, then my claims about religion are baseless.

***How do I define myself?***

* I am a created being with intelligence.
* I am made with unlimited capacities.

***How do I define God?***

* Definition of God does not have to be a physical description.
* “Natural laws” and “nature” are empty claims.
* **My understanding (human qualities, capacities) requires me to conclude that this universe must have a Source of existence. Otherwise I cannot explain existence itself.**
* I can only believe in God as a result of my observation and interaction with the universe.
* I am not limited in my capacity to understand the Creator.
* By comparing my being to the One that creates me, the Absolute, if I claim that He is unlimited but I am limited. This comparison will be false because the Absolute is incomparable to anything.
* I may wrongly choose to limit myself in utilizing my capacities to comprehend the Creator, the One that endows me with these capacities.
* **There is no limit in comprehending the Absolute because the Absolute is incomprehensible.**

Theology= making sense of existence.

* Theo= recognition of coming into existence from the Creator. Attributing my existence to Him.
* Consciousness= Awareness of one’s existence.
* Which kind of qualities do I have?
* How come I am aware of my existence?

*How do I explain my existence?*

* To be aware of existence is only possible if I refer it to a Giver, an Originator.
* Baseless argument: Existence exists by itself.
* If someone is not aware of his existence, he cannot become a believer.
* I can know the existence Giver’s existence (ghayb) only through my awareness of my own existence. (i.e. believe in *ghaib*= Not part of the universe)
* The Source of existence of this universe is cannot be part of this universe.
* Belief in God is so easy, simple; it is not complex at all.
* Use your human qualities and conclude.
* Human beings are given consciousness of existence by the One that gives existence.
* I have to look at my capacities and see that it is given to me to use my freewill.
* I have knowledge, I think, I conclude (i.e. if it is so, therefore it must be so)

Each of us is a **Caliph (vicegerent)** in the universe representing the Creator.

***What is a vicegerent?***

* An agent that represents the Creator.
* Creator is not part of the universe but agents are in the universe to represent Him.
* I am an agent in the universe acting on behalf of the Creator.
* I have to think about myself and act on behalf of my Creator.
* I am conscious of my existence i.e. my human qualities.

Contrary to traditional understandings, being a vicegerent has nothing to do with taking on an administrative position (ameerulmumineen) or abusing power of authority. This concept is not to be confused with “ameerulmuslimeen”.

* *ameerlumumineen*= the one who leads and gives the last words in social matters only on behalf of people who believe in God.
* *ameerulmuslimeen*= the one who rules a territory on behalf of certain group of people who claim to belong to a certain religion which is called “Islam.”

Both terms have been confused to be taken as “social identity”. Being a representative of God does not mean to gain authority but to showcase the existence of an Absolute being. For instance in the light of verse 6 from chapter 9 of the Quran (see below), it is incumbent upon the believer to provide help and make someone feel secure in their existence. That is, provide them with a secure place and share with them your lived conclusions so they may take heed to the truth.



*”And if any of those who ascribe divinity to anything besides God seeks your protection, grant him protection, so that he might [be able to] hear the word of God [from you]; and thereupon convey him to a place where he can feel secure: this, because they [may be] people who do not know [the truth]”.*

**I cannot see nor imagine the Creator.**

* I am conscious of the existence of my human qualities; therefore I ought to use them for its real purpose. The purpose is to get to know the Source of these qualities. **This aspect to know my Creator has no limit.**
* Analogy: A person walks into the room and claims that he is some famous singer. How can I know? The singer has to perform to showcase his qualities. Only when the singer performs can I confirm that the one singing is the famous singer.
* Similarly, the Creator manifests Itself through creation.
* What I make of Its performance is at the core of my awareness of my existence.
* I can confirm the existence of the Creator through what I observe in the universe i.e. act of creation (action).
* Action is important because I am given the ability to experience any quality that exists within the universe through that act.
* I understand the qualities existing in this act (the universe) because I have the criteria to understand all the qualities in the universe.
* I am responsible to understand my existence within my human capacity; I am not expected to be more than what I am.
* I have to use my capacity to the fullest and not be LAZY!
* **My capacity is such that I can understand the qualities in creation which are nothing but the reflections of the qualities of its Creator.**
* I have the ability to understand the manifestation of the “Actor” of the universe.

*Can I read the Quran without being conscious of the universe?*

* We have to read the speech of the Creator and the universe parallel to each other. As long as I am aware of my qualities (i.e. I have the capacity to understand qualities manifested in the universe as well as the speech), parallel reading becomes a necessary requirement.
* In summary, I have to take my existence SERIOUSLY, that is the SPIRIT OF A HUMAN BEING!
* **If I do not base my argument on my observation, evidence and evaluation of the existence of the universe, my claim to any belief concerning *ghaib* is baseless.**

Now, let us start with a parallel reading of the universe with Chapter Fatiha.



In the name of the Creator, the Most Gracious, Merciful (1:1)

Fatiha= Opener to the reality revealed to me.

* The Creator of the universe opens the truth to me verbally along side with His performance in the universe so I can learn about myself, my relationship with the universe using my capacities. This is the only way that I can evaluate news from the universe.
* Allah= proper name.
* Allah, the Originator= proper name defined with one quality, which is His existence only. Like knowing a person with her name only (let’s say, Jennifer) but none of her qualities. This means you do not really know her except that such a person exists.
* To know the qualities= to feel them and experience them through act of creation. Like knowing that person’s qualities by experiencing her actions, then you start knowing “Jennifer” with her qualities. You start describing her not by her name only but, for example, the engineer, the artist, the wise, kind etc. Jennifer.
* When we apply this example to Allah, only after experiencing His manifestations of His acts in the universe can we know Allah as the Originator, Form Giver, Wise, Merciful, Compassionate etc. Allah. Now that means something to me.
* I understand what “*In the name of God*” means only as much as I observe the qualities that manifest in the act of creation (universe.) Each “*Name*” represents to me each quality I witness in the universe.
* Ism= singular.
* Asma= plural.
* *Al asma al husna*= the unlimited qualities of God that I have the capacity to witness in the creation so that I understand God with His qualities.
* In order to understand the Quran, I have to cleanse my thoughts and do parallel reading (as encouraged by the Creator as He demonstrates His qualities by creating the universe and Speaks to human beings verbally through Revealing His Words to the appointed Teachers, prophets), otherwise imitation and imagination takes place within oneself!