Saturday, October 25 2014  
  
**Community Life*- A brief overview***  
People who care about others want to share their understanding of religion with others. As a result of friendly or inimical interaction, people get involved in community life. The Prophet (pbuh) used to invite and welcome all sorts of people (including war captives or envoys) and he would entertain them with food and conversation in the masjid. To some, it may seem contradictory to letting the enemy know what is going on in the heart of the community. *What does all this signify?*

* Islam is an open religion; it does not belong to anyone.

If you have a meeting behind close door, it is not Islam. Our house and mosque must be open to everyone. **This can only happen if I have a strong conviction of my own religion**.

As individuals, we mostly tend to stick to our own community life. We appropriate our Creator’s religion to our own personal cultural environment. Not only this genre of attitude will ruin our personal development as humans, but it will also ruin the future of communities in the United States. It is a serious problem as we lack the confidence in our own conviction.

* We need “not to” have a community life; we need to have an open life.

Generally speaking, the third generations of Muslims in Europe have lost their identities. The next generations of Muslims in America are most likely geared towards that way as well. For example: when a child who grows up in a typical Muslim community/environment heads to college life, this young adult is shocked when faced with a crossroad. In this case, he/she either denies his/her own culture and join the mass mainstream culture because he/she cannot defend his/her own belief. For instance he/she cannot explain to someone else about the actual meaning behind fasting, performing certain rituals or simply what a Muslim is. This happens because **we have not gained any values** from our community/religious upbringing. It only helps preserve the ethnic culture of the community under the pretext of “religious activity.” If it was genuinely religious, *why is division taking place in any “Muslim” community establishment according to the ethnicity?*  
   
Due to this lack of confidence, any type of negativity developing into any being turns into reaction. This reaction becomes the source of hatred which usually leads to fighting. *Have you prepared how to challenge the outside culture?*  
Solution: We have to build the confidence within ourselves. We have to critically analyze how to tackle the next generation’s needs.   
-Conservatism is not the solution; we have to be open individuals. This does not necessarily mean that we have to be liberal. We have to understand which kind of belief system we have.   
-As an individual, I have to be confident in my belief and I should present Islam from my own perspective where the message is catered to human beings. **You have to have your own explanation/conviction of why you follow the Quran.** If you do not, then it means that you have not fully submitted to the Absolute One, which is the backbone of Islam.

* A Muslim is someone who fully submits to the truth with full conviction.

Somehow, we tend to reduce religion to recitation of the Qur’an with a beautiful voice and pronunciation. However, in the Quranic teaching, **belief (*iman*) comes first and then submission (*Islam*)**. In order to submit to your conviction, you follow the Quran.

* Belief must first be established at “every moment”. I ought to exercise my conviction at every moment as well. Belief is the result of this conviction.

For example: I know that stealing is wrong (my belief). How did I come to this conclusion? Well, through my observation of the universe and listening to my own conscious, I am convinced that stealing is wrong. I submit to the following: “I know that stealing is wrong and so I will not steal”.   
As a result, I may not become a thief. *That is Islam: you being Muslim to your belief*. **You do not embrace Islam; when you submit to your conviction that is Islam**.

* Islam is the act of submitting yourself. Your submission is Islam.

Somehow, we tend to institutionalize religion/belief system. We can only institutionalize an administrative system. For example: A church in Christianity/a mosque in Islam is not a belief system, it is an institution. If these institutions are established on ethnic differences, then, the practical aspect of religion is taught there and the belief aspect is mostly missing.

**Note:** We are not talking about our social/religious identity; we are talking about present day reality.

Question: *How do you transfer this knowledge to a child?*   
You cannot submit yourself to more than what you are convinced about. The more you are convinced, that is bound to reflect on your child. The baby needs to grow with you; you should not make the baby dependent on yourself. You have to develop your own way of upbringing within your own reality. You have to be strong to your values: “**I live according to my values and the baby grows with it**” and develop your own way within your reality.  
  
The problem is that we do not educate ourselves with the belief system. We think we inherit our belief system from our forefathers, and when we inherit a belief system, we tend to imitate it. This imitation limits us to treat the child only according to the culture we inherited. Everyone is responsible for educating himself/herself. We have to learn the fundamental of belief system within the context of humanity.

* If I educate myself as a human being, I can transfer that message to other fellow human beings.

I must go through the training of my own belief system. For example: I am convinced about the effectiveness of the pencil for the cost of one dollar. In practice, I go and pay one dollar to get the pencil. This act means that I have submitted to my conviction. Similarly, I am convinced that smoking is bad, so I will not smoke.   
- Quran encourages people to submit to their convictions.

* Religion really happens when you submit to your conviction.

**The Words: page 235 (*last paragraph*)**   
*“The imagination sees that appointed angels have entered these trees like bodies, from whose branches hang many flutes. It is as though an Eternal Monarch has clothed the angels in the trees for a splendid parade accompanied with the sounds of a thousand flutes. Thus the trees show themselves to be not lifeless, unconscious bodies, but highly conscious and meaningful.”*  
  
The author says that the angels are blowing the flutes. In practical terms, we think that the leaves are making the noise.

*Analogy A:* The book has pages, scripts and when I read, it carries the meaning from the author. Similarly, the tree has branches, leaves and the noise they make carries meaning from their Maker.   
 - In and of itself, the tree/book has no meaning.   
 - The tree is the result of an act of creation.   
 - When air blows, the tree rustles and it draws our attention.  
 - In reality, the noise from the leaves brings us news such as: “*Here I am. This is not an accident. Try to read me. In my existence, you will definitely find meaning…*”  
 -This communication is taking place through angels. The angelic side of the creation is becoming apparent to us. ***Now, the tree has meaning, which is transferred to us by a vehicle, and it is called “Angels.”***   
 - Our realization of the meaning in the creation is the representation of angels in the process of existence as we human beings observe it.

* In the act of creation, angels represent the meaning of the objects/events created.

However, we are trained with secular understanding of communicating with the object/events themselves. For example: If we “carefully” observe the classroom we are sitting in, we see that everything is deliberately in its place (the windows, the door, the thermostat system, the tables/chairs and carpet…) We all know that these are designed by an architect. But when we plug our electronic device into the outlet, do we even think about the following:  
a/ who is the architect of this classroom/building?  
b/ how did the architect positioned the outlet so perfectly for my convenience?

*Analogy B:* I believe in God. The universe is created by God, I am definitely sure that it has a Creator. The universe cannot happen by itself, I am definitely convinced about it. This analogy is similar to saying that a building has an architect; the building cannot be made by itself.   
 -When we use an elevator, we get from one floor to another in a couple of seconds.   
 *-****Do we ever thank the architect for making our life easy?***   
 -The idea of architect never even comes to us. Similarly, our belief in God may also be practiced that way.   
 -Just like the architect needs to be acknowledged and thanked, our Creator needs to be acknowledged and thanked as well.   
 -If we do not have any concept of angels in our mind, we cannot communicate with God. We would be communicating with objects themselves, not with their conscious Creator through the meaning they carry to us.

* When you receive a message from creation, it has arrived to us via a vehicle, though it has no physical existence. But we are sure of its existence; we experience the meaning of the message. The Qur’an calls these vehicles as **“*Angels*”** that message is received via angels. Your response to the message is represented by these non-physical beings back to God. That is how our understanding of existence becomes complete together with the meaning they carry.

In the example above, the existence of the outlet is solely reduced to being a physical thing. Secular Sciences only measures the physical aspect of a matter/action/creation and never talks about its meaning. There is a meaning to the existence of the outlet that the architect meant to convey to you. The architect says: “*I know you will come here needing electricity and I will provide it for you*”. Your response should be: “Thank you. I am pleased with you”. The meaning is transferred to you and you respond to the architect.

This communication is taking place through the meanings of the creation/action i.e. Angels.

* In Creation, the communication between me and my Lord is realized via*Angels*. That’s how the Quran describes angels as “messengers” (*Rasool***.**) **(See, for example, 6:61)**

The belief process in Angels may take place as follow:

**Step 1/** *My ultimate conclusion-* ***The Creator must exist: I believe in God***.  
  
-From the way I interact with the universe, I am convinced that this universe must have an origin which is Conscious and Absolute in its nature/qualities. Otherwise, I cannot explain the nature of this universe. -Whatever qualities I see in the universe, points to an Absolute source of this quality.   
-I cannot explain the existence of my feelings, my human qualities around the universe without referring it to an Absolute source/an Absolute cause of existence with Absolute qualities.   
-As far as I am concerned, I can confirm that this universe has an absolute conscious Creator.  
-I conclude the Absolute existence of a Creator, which is why I believe in God.  
  
**Step 2/** *My inevitable conclusion-* ***The Universe is meaningful: I am facing Angels.***   
  
-When I look at the universe, every physical substance/object has so many meanings. The Universe itself is a book.   
-We interact with the meaning of the physical object itself. Can we attribute these meanings to physical objects itself?  
-From my perspective: As I communicate with the universe, the message I receive from the physical object cannot be attributed to the object itself.  
-The physical fact itself has no meaning (example: quality of paper used in a book or number of pages in a book, types of leaves on a tree…)   
-I can communicate with the physical facts of an object only through its meaning. When I receive meaning through these physical objects, I conclude that I am facing Angels.

* By using the Quranic term, “angel”, I can conclude: “I have a Creator and this meaning is transferred through an “angel”.

-We ought to put an emphasis on the meaning of the object/event. I have to extract meaning out of an object/event and analyze it within my human qualities.   
  
The word for angel is malak (pl. ***malaika***.) The physical object itself is ***mulk*** and communicating with the meaning I receive from this object is ***malakut***. For example: If I eat a cherry, the fruit (*mulk*) itself is addressing to our animal side. The human side questions/investigates and finds the meaning (*malakut*) behind eating the cherry.   
  
***Rasool=Messenger=anything that carries/represents a message in the creation=Angel.***   
  
In the scripture, the message you receive from an event/object is described as a “*Rasool.”* If the meaning is transferred to a person (verbally or via physical action), this person is a *Rasool* in the form of a human being. He is transferring and representing the message of the Creator. Quran is a message we receive from the messenger, the Prophet. The Prophet receives it through an Angel, called in the Qur’an as Gabriel (**See 2:97; 2:98; 66:4**)  
 *How do I make the distinction between the tree itself and the message?*When we see the tree, we enjoy the tree itself. The appearance (aesthetics) and the music we hear from its rustling is also pleasant and graceful. The message is: “I conclude that the maker of this tree must be Gracious and Merciful”. Since I have received this message from the *malakut*/meaning side of the tree, the messenger is the Angel.   
 - We must have this awareness of Angels.  
  
**Step 3/** *My firm conclusion-* ***The Creator communicates with the Universe: God speaks to me***-I am a human being, I understand from the speech. The one who made me with the ability to understand the speech must speak.   
-I want to hear this speech/meaning as an expression, in the form of words (scriptures)  
-He enabled me with the power to speak. He must be the One who gives the power to speak to all speaking creatures.

* My Creator must speak to me in a language that I understand and communicate with Him.

*Do you think that the owner of this universe will enable me with the power to understand the speech and will not speak to me?*   
- God, the Owner of the Universe speaks, He must speak to me and all living beings in this Universe.  
  
**Quran/Bible/Torah= *kalamulaah*= speech of God**.  
  
-In and of itself, any physical book/scripture (*mushaf*) has no meaning. For example: The Quran is a meaning transferred to me from my Creator via Angels/*Rasools*.   
-When you say I believe in the books, it must come from your own conviction that the Creator speaks: “I, as a human being understand Him”. You have to accept that this reality exists.  
-All followers of monotheistic religions must understand that books are inspired by God: “The owner of the universe must speak”.   
  
The fundamental concept is: The Creator is ***mutakallim****/*TheCreator **speaks** (He creates, He originates and He puts everything in perfect order/measure). This same Creator speaks in various ways.  
For example: Creator speaks by creating other human beings, Creator speaks by creating you with the ability to speak, by making the stars as they are , the mountains as they are…  
-We should develop our understanding of God as the Creator and the Speaker concurrently. (The Merciful, the Just, the Creator…)  
  
*How should I understand something like “Angel Gabriel’s wing covered the whole horizon?”*  
-The message/meaning you get encompasses your whole vision of your horizon. You cannot read the eternal speech of the Absolute One literally.  
- You have to understand the whole message at the level of the Eternal Absolute universal message.   
- You can only enlarge your understanding as much as you have developed your abilities.