Halaqa: Wednesday, September 18, 2013

Topic: The Single Creator; There is no creator but He

Differentiating between the one creator and the singleness of God

* What we see in society is that many people believe in the creator, but not really being aware what is meant by Creator
* What does it mean when we say that the Creator is one?

How do we believe in the oneness of God without falling into pantheism, a very common phenomenon?

*[What is pantheism (according to Wikipedia): Pantheism is the view that everything is part of an all-encompassing, immanent God. All forms of reality may then be considered either modes of that Being, or identical with it.]*

The subject on the oneness of God is easy in the general term but when we delve into details, that’s when the problem arises

* It might be easy to say that there is one creator BUT what is difficult is to ascertain His singularity in everything AND not attribute divinity to the parts of creation

When we pay attention to the details, we have to be careful and be ready to challenge our preconceived notions

* Be open to criticize, evaluate and re-evaluate our previous beliefs
* Don’t immediately try and defend it

The verses of the Quran are to be read in two ways:

**1- To establish the belief system introduced in the Qur’an.**

**While fulfilling this purpose, the creation, which is the act of the Creator to reveal Himself to conscious beings, is to be taken as witness to the truthfulness of the News of the Qur’an.**

* God says in the Quran: I created you
* I cannot take whatever the Quran says for granted. I have to investigate the point
* Do I need a creator? Who is my creator? How can I identify Him? How can I be sure of Him?
* How and why should I prefer what the Quran says (as brought us to by the Prophet Muhammad over 1400 years ago) as compared to what is preached by scientists (everything happens by chance)?
* I should not prefer one stand over the other arbitrarily BUT rather my preference should be based on sound conclusions that are the result of my OWN investigations

**Creation is to be given the priority and then the Qur’an’s news need to be confirmed under the witnessing of the creation.**

Creation must be the witness to the fulfillment of the Quran

* I cannot say that the scientist is wrong simply by quoting that the Quran says so and so
* Rather, I have to investigate creation and come to a conclusion on the source of creation

Scientist: Humans happened by chance and are an accidental occurrence

Traditional Muslim: Rejects the scientist. My sacred book said that my creator created me, so that must be the case.

Conscious believer: I cannot explain my creation as an accidental occurrence by presenting my investigations and evidences in creation.

Don’t fall into the ridiculous argument of just quoting religious sources without any real investigation within the observable world and coming with evidence which speak to all human beings..

If I reach the conclusion at the end of my investigations: An absolute single, individual being must have created me deliberately as a result of His choice and Will

* What am I supposed to do, if I am created?
* I turn to the Quran to employ the second purpose of the Quran (i.e. to find ways of acting in this life)

**2- To establish the juridical rules taught in the Qur’an:**

**The readers are expected to confirm them by using the evidence in the creation including their human qualities.**

**These verses are to be given the priority and then they need to be confirmed under the witnessing of the creation.**

When we look at the Quran to establish jurisprudential rulings, our type of reading will be extremely different if we are trying to establish a belief system from our readings

* *The Quran teaches both systems but depending on our intention, our way of reading the Quran will change*

Difference between the 2 stages:

1. Creation is given priority
2. Verses are given priority

Example: Don’t tell lies. Don’t gamble. Don’t eat pork

* Give priority to the verse and learn the context and the background of the verse in order to understand what “lying, “ “gambling,” “eating pork” means and the conditions, limits, exceptions related to them are
* And only then look for evidence to why gambling, lying and eating pork is prohibited for you in order to see the correlation between the belief system that the Qur’an presents and what gambling, lying, eating pork represent. That is, we need to see their roots in the belief system of the Qur’an. (In this analysis we have to take into consideration human qualities as well as the way the creation comes into existence, because these rules are for primarily for human beings.)

When it comes to matters of belief, it is pointless for me to know at what point in the history or in which context a belief matter was introduced BUT when it comes to juridical matters, we ought to study the verses and the background so that we can understand the verse in its context.

What does it mean not to ‘throw arrows’:

* In its historical context, it means attributing events to chance
* I have to see things in its historical context, otherwise I will not understand the verse
* Once I understand it, I conclude that my creator does not want me to attribute chance to anything NOR does He want me to depend on chance

In the Quran, we read about slavery:

I need to study the historical background of the verse: How the slavery was defined at that time and try to understand what the Qur’an is suggesting to me. When is study the historical background of slavery that time I understand that a person is claiming the ownership of another person and depriving of his free will for just being born into a slave family. After establishing this I have to go back to the creation:

* I have to see how God acts in the universe so that I will chose a way to act in harmony with the glorification of God
* And hence conclude that God creates every human being with equal rights and appoints them to act as the representative of the rest of the creation as conscious beings. If someone deprives of another’s free will to practice his representation without any legitimate reason, it goes against the way the Creator acts. Then, I conclude that slavery is against the wisdom in the creation and it must be contrary to the will of the Creator.

*Illah (*reason for juridical rules is the Will of God)and *hikmah* (wisdom)

Stage 2 E.g. Fasting

- Study the context of the verse concerning juridical rule, define what fasting comprises of and the way the fasting is practiced etc from the historical context of the verse.

* The real reason for fasting; my creator wants me to fast
  + I have to understand why my creator wants me to fast (the subject moves into the belief category)
  + Go back to stage 1
    - The action must be based on the belief system that the Qur’an offers
    - To check the compatibility between the belief system and the ordinance of fasting through studying the creation and the purpose in it. Do this always by bearing in mind the purpose in the creation of human beings.
    - I fast because I need to acknowledge the authority over the things I heedlessly consume
    - I need to be reminded
    - I have to join in the exaltation of the Creator, which is performed by the whole body of creation
      * A tree uses water BUT never says that the water is mine
      * Similarly, I have to acknowledge this and join the harmony of the exaltation of the universe

Human beings have the choice whether to use their free will to join or not to join the exaltation of the universe and to declare that:

* The Creator is Absolute
* He is not of the nature of this universe

Stage 2 (juridical actions): Zakah (purifying yourself and your property)

-Give zakah in order to purify yourselves and your property

- Study the context of the verse and find out the outlining principles concerning HOW zakah is to be practiced.

Return to stage 1: E.g. Zakah, (Act of purifying)

* What does purify mean?
* In the creation nothing claims the real ownership of their properties.
* We need to disclaim the false ownership of the property we have and the harvest we reap

If you don’t have the assured base of belief, your actions will not be founded on the foundations of belief

* We have to support all the juridical rules from the belief system and create a harmonious relationship between them

Don’t lose yourself in the number of prayers and the timings of the prayers OR in the amount to be donated in charity

* We have to ask ourselves why we pray?
* What is the core of the prayer?
* What is the reason for charity?

What is commonly practiced in the Muslim community is that stage 1 is taken for granted and never questioned

* As a result, we have stopped paying attention to creation where the Stage 1 is practiced
* Don’t ignore and be heedless of creation all around us that glorify the Creator

We often perceive the mosque as sacred and the parks and gardens, for instance, as ‘secular’

* But in reality, if we are conscious, our time in the park can be religious BECAUSE all of creation speaks to you and glorifies their creator
* The mosque is sacred only as far as the people in it are glorifying God with consciousness AND not simply performing actions

**If you don’t see God in the park, it is impossible to see God in the masjid**.

* Only after seeing God in the park and joining in the symphony of glorification can you say *allahu akbar* with a higher degree of awareness.

We are all qualified within our own capacities to confirm our Creator’s existence by investigating creation around us

* We are all individually responsible for our belief
* Belief cannot be borrowed, imitated or inherited

Always prepare yourself with the how and why of your claims

* How and why do you believe in the Creator?
* How and why do you believe in nature?
* How and why do you believe that God is Absolute?
* How and why do you believe that women or men should dress a certain way?

While we are journeying in our submission to our creator, we have to study how the Quran directs us to this end.

While some sort of experience might be needed in studying juridical rules (language, background, historical context), when it comes to matters of belief, everyone has to come to their own conclusion.

Once you receive a judicial ruling from someone esteemed in the field, you have to perform the action based on your belief system.

* As much as you are aware of God as the Worshipped One and that I am the worshiper, that much your prayer has life
* Any matter related to belief is a person requirement (*fard-al-ain)*
* When it comes to matters of *fiqh* it is a *fard-ul-kifayah*

How can you determine which judicial ruling is the right one or is better?

Analogy: When you are ill, you visit a doctor. You trust that the doctor is the right one but he might turn out to be a fraudster.

* He writes you a prescription that you do not understand
* You get the medicine and eat it
* You have no idea what the doctor wrote but you still eat it

Similarly, you accept juridical rulings from a person who claims to have studied jurisprudence and then it is left to your responsibility to find out the “life” of that form of action by exploring that “life” using the evidence in creation. It is only the aspect of belief that gives life to your external form of juridical rulings.

It is our personal responsibility to investigate the foundations of belief in every juridical ruling. Jurists are not the specialists on explaining the belief foundation of the rules. They only tell what the external for of the rules. They study the subject only at the Stage 2 from historical and contextual perspective and give evidence from the sacred sources: I.e. the Qur’an and the Hadith. When they establish their ruling on a hadith narration, they complete their duty. It is every body’s individual responsibility to investigate the belief aspect of those rulings. That means we need to go back to Stage 1 to investigate the belief foundations of these rulings.

**You can accept juridical rulings BUT you cannot accept matters related to belief blindly**.

**“What! they associate with Him that which does not create any thing while they themselves are being created!”**

**A’raf (7): 191**

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How can I confirm this and what does this verse teach me?

* Investigate the matter in order to confirm it
* The Quran calls us to investigate the matter

Definition of created: To bring into existence something that previously did not exist

Example: Everything is in constant motion. Motion is indicative of a re-occurring existence

* Yesterday was created
* Today is independently being created
* Can yesterday be the cause of today? Investigate it
* Can anything in my being be the cause of the next stage in my being?

Growth of tree is a “normal” action as the growth of babies

* When we say things are “normal,” we take it for granted and fail to see creation behind it
* Rather, see how everything is changing in every moment
* Can one moment be the cause of existence of the next? No.
* Everything has a precedent and this precedent has to be Absolute, otherwise the whole system collapses because every moment a new system is being brought into existence. The things may seem to be similar in two different moments but they are not exactly the same at every moment. Every moment is a new act of creation. If two things are similar that never means that one is the cause of existence of the other. That is just a sign of “ORDER IN THE CREATION”

Don’t say that genes creates our existence

* Genes themselves need to be created; they themselves are subject to a certain order to exist. They do not have an independent existence.
* Everything that you attribute as having the power of creation, is in itself needs to be created
* Genes do not exist out of their own free will NOR do they have control over their own existence

When a baby grows in a mother’s womb, the mother has no control over the growth of the child. Neither does the cell of the baby have the qualities to originate the future of the baby. They all are given existence every moment anew.

The Quran is reminding us that if something (that we attribute creation to) is created in itself, how can it really have the power of creation?

Can you really be the creator of ideas? No.

* You are using the qualities that have been given to you to choose and the ideas are created by the Creator of the whole universe
* We only have the free will to USE only, not to CREATE

**“And those they invoke other than God create nothing while they themselves are being created.”**

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If you invoke anyone other than the creator of the universe to give you something, you are wrong – the Quran is telling us

* We cannot take the source of existence of any thing in the universe other than the Creator of the whole universe
* It is not the clouds that send us water (that would be wrong ,baseless claim, and thus shirk)
  + - Question if the clouds can really be the source of existence of water?
    - Similarly, a mother does not create a child. Rather, the mother was made to be a mother of a child.
    - The clouds have been created to carry rainwater.

Everything in the universe is created. I am not making my hands, nose, mind, eyes, ears, etc.

* I am just using it
* I only have the free will of choosing how to use it

Are things created repeatedly or given existence anew at every moment?

* Can things just happen ‘normally’ OR ‘naturally’?
* No. Every moment is a new creation
* The creation is taking place within an order
  + We are so used to calling this order normal
  + But we have to be aware that every moment is re-occurring again and again
  + We may mistake the order as the source of existence and the creator of all the effects we see
  + But can the order really create?
  + Does atmosphere create rain? OR does the creator create the atmosphere as well as the rain at the same time within an order?

Can the molecules of the soil, give existence to a tree?

Does the world move like a ticking clock?

OR is everything happening anew?

* You are created within the order of the universe
* At every moment, the order of the universe is different though similar
* It is continuously renewed
* Every new existence needs a new will to create BECAUSE the universe is sustained into existence every moment anew

People sometimes use the order in the creation as the source of existence.

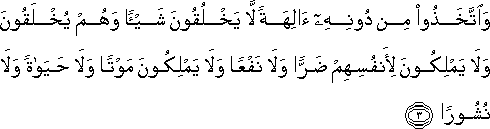
* We should not take the order as the source of existence.
* **Order is the way the One brings things into existence**

The verse warns us that we should not attribute creation to anything that in itself is BEING created.

* **Time is the reoccurrence of the act of creation.**

**“And yet, some choose to worship, instead of Him, imaginary deities that cannot create anything while they themselves are being created, and have it not within their power to avert harm from, or bring benefit to, themselves, and have no power over death, nor over life, nor over resurrection!**

**Furqan (25): 3**



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When I don’t want a tumor to exist, just by me saying ‘go away’ to it does not make it disappear.

* We cannot chase the harm away from us

Our brain needs life. It cannot make any order in my existence

- It needs to be made in order

Tree cannot give life to fruit

* The tree needs life
* If I cut it, it cannot give fruit

Nothing has any quality to reproduce itself.

* I have no idea how to use my speech
* I am just WANTING to speak

We have to pay attention to the quality of the things that we attribute existence of other things to

* Can it really be the cause of its effect? OR is it existing within an order
* The order is given existence by the creator NOT by anything that is created.