**The understanding of the necessarily existent One is for me. I cannot perceive Him and so I cannot describe Him.**

The scriptures are from God and not self-imposing statements by God. The author of the scripture is describing through His actions how I can reach Him. The author is not describing His personality. It is not a self declaration and cannot be taken as an autobiography. The scripture is guiding me to get to know the author. It guides me on how I should use myself and the creation to come to a conclusion about the author. The author of the universe is constantly demonstrating His work. I can use my human abilities to experience them and conclude the existence of the necessarily existent One, who is absolute i.e. not of the nature of this universe.

When I read the scripture, I get the guidance according to my capacity. **The meaning of the message is reconstructed within me according to my understanding.** This understanding is personal and bound to be subjective. No one, neither materialists nor clergymen can claim absolute objectivity. Any objective statement on the Creator is against the nature of humans’ createdness and God’s Absoluteness.

Belief can only occur after I read the scripture and confirm it in the world, in my life here. The meaning has to be confirmed through me. With this approach I confirm the message I receive. The result is me being secured and confident (*Amana*). If the confirmation doesn’t go through me then it is a blind confirmation because I am just accepting what is claimed in a source external to me, without confirming it myself.

Hermeneutic circle: I go to the scripture and I see it in the world. My being is a factor, i.e. the message is confirmed through me.

**How do we confirm certain verses that deal with rituals and seem to be jurisprudential in nature?**

These verses are to be confirmed within our overall understanding of the pillars of belief: how we perceive God, the angels, the messengers, the books and the hereafter. These verses must be established under the pillars of belief.

Usually such verses are being studied separately just like a discipline, as the field of law. The law however is established according to the set constitution. When we do not know or agree to the constitution, the laws do not make sense. For example when verses such as those on inheritance do not make sense to me at present then I cannot confirm it presently. My responsibility is to continue to develop my world view based on the fundamentals of belief. These verses on rules will only make sense as much as I have developed my understanding of the fundamentals. I should thus study the fundamentals at a deeper level which enhances further my world view. Only then will those rituals start making sense to me.

What mostly happens when we analyze these verses is:

1. We may take the understanding of such verses from their historical context. This is contrary to the definition of the scripture which is universal.
2. We take it from a certain cultural context where one culture’s understanding on the matter will vary slightly from another.

We need to get out of this cultural understanding as it leads to imitation. The message is universal and must be seen in my current conditions. The universal human values must first be established and only then can the rules and rituals make sense.

This does not mean that everyone will have the same values. There may be some commonalties but everyone establishes their own understanding and world view.

For example a cup comes in different shapes. Water is the same but it takes the shape of the cup it is poured into. The rules and rituals, the practical side is represented by the cup and comes in several shapes according to the conditions and circumstances of people. The water is the world view one establishes through the guidance of the speech of God.

This aspect of reconciling rules and rituals according to our present day condition and established world view may be regarded by some as modernizing religion. **Every age is modern.** The prophets were modern according to their times because they called people to heed to the message according to the conditions, context and situation of their times. Traditionalists attempt to defend the rules according to historical conditions but when they are challenged with the conditions of the current society they have a hard time conforming to it.

Historically we hear that after the death of the prophet (pbuh), there was a conflict between two main groups of people. It had to do with the understanding of religious matters. A group declared that the Quran will decide the conflict amongst us. The other party argued that the book (*mushaf*) does not speak but a person makes it speak.

* It is what one makes of the meaning and not what one claims to be that is belief.

I take the Quran, read the verse and reconstruct the meaning according to my understanding. It is inevitable that the reality is that everyone who reads it has to interpret it according to their understanding. There are always such conflicts in understanding and as long as we strive to solve them, we uncover new understandings and these conflicts can be productive. However if one is adamant and claims to hold to the absolute truth then it is counterproductive because one cannot progress in belief with that claim.

**When I read a verse and claim that I agree with this verse, it is my understanding and I should not claim to hold the absolute truth.**

A lazy approach that is prevalent in society is that someone just agrees to the scripture since he/she is a believer. Let us suppose that a medical student is assigned a medical book. The student looks at the book and the number of pages that he has to go through. He is shying away to read it and practice the teachings in the lab. With this approach he tells his professor that he agrees to whatever is in the book and should be granted a passing grade. What would the professor say to such a claim?

Our attitude might be similar when it comes to the scripture. I can claim to believe in it and be done with my duty. We need to be cognizant of this lazy approach which falls into blind following and is like cheating. I have to study, confirm and establish a firm base of belief.