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Chapter 3: On Monotheism

Discourse 1: The Appearance of God and the Reasons behind His Concealment

The issue of recognizing God and the fact this world has a Creator is the most obvious thing as God the Exalted says,

"Is there a doubt about Allah, The Creator of the heavens and the earth? ..." The Holy Quran: Ibrahim 14:10.

The Master of the Martyrs Imam Al-Husayn (a.s.) said the following in one of his supplications, "O my Lord! Is there any appearance in things other than You which You may lack and by which they may make You reappear? Has there ever been any moment at which you disappeared so that there be a need to prove your existence? Has there ever been a moment at which you were far away so that there be a need to seek your effects to prove your existence?"1

Of course, the rank presented in this supplication is that of the Immaculate Divine Leaders (a.s.), since they are the ones who first see God whenever they look at anything. The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) said, "I never see anything unless I see God before it, with it and after it." This can also be seen in the Abu Hamzeh Supplication of Imam Sajjad (a.s.) as follows, "I got to recognize You by You. You presented yourself to me. I could not have recognized You without your assistance." 3

Thus the Holy Essence of God the Nourisher is the most evident of all things. So others must be recognized by means of God, while He is not recognized to be by means of others as we read

"He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Immanent: and He has full knowledge of all things." The Holy Quran: al-Hadid 57:3.

It has been narrated that once during the time of Imam Sadiq (a.s.), a group of atheists were sitting in the Al-Haram Mosque. Abdullah ibn Mogaffah and Ibn Abi al- Owjah were amongst them. Ibn Mogaffah

was sitting in a corner of the Al-Haram Mosque while Imam Sadiq (a.s.) was sitting in another corner of the mosque. A group of Muslims were circumambulating around God's House.

At that time, Ibn Moqaffah faced Ibn Abi al-Owjah, pointed to Imam Sadiq (a.s.) and said, "These people whom you see do not deserve to be called human. The only one who deserves to be a human and can be called a complete human is the one who is sitting in the other corner of the mosque." Ibn Abi al-Owjah said, "What are you saying! What is the difference between him and other people like us? He is also one of these same people." Ibn Moqaffah said, "It is not so. I have seen something in this great Sheikh which I have not seen in others!" Ibn Abi al-Owjah said, "What you have stated about him must be examined."

Ibn Muqaffah stated to him, "Lest you do this, I am afraid that it will take away the benefit of saying the rosary with your prayer beads."

Ibn Abi al-Owjah stated, "You do not have this opinion: Rather you are afraid that the opinion which you have about him and the rank which you know he deserves may become affected."

Ibn Mugaffah stated, "If you do not confirm that he is a perfect human, go and talk with him."

Ibn Abi al-Owjah stood up, went and sat down by Imam Sadiq (a.s.). Still he had not stated a word when the Imam (a.s.) stated to him, "If it is as you say, you and I will be like each other. However, if I am right, woe be to you since you will be tortured until eternity".

The Imam (a.s.) meant that if due to Owjah's opinion God does not exist, any deed which he has done in this world and any deed which the Imam (a.s.) has done in this world, will all be like each other. Then according to Owjah's viewpoint, all these deeds will be ruined and come to an end. However, if God exists and there is Resurrection as we believe, woe be upon Owjah's state!

At this time, Ibn Abi al-Owjah found an opportunity to change the subject and said, "I am not arguing with you."

The Imam (a.s.) said, "How can you say that you are not arguing with us? We say that this world has a Powerful Creator, and punishment and Resurrection exists, while you say that none of these things will happen. Thus we are not of the same opinion."

Ibn Abi al-Owjah said, "If your prayer is right and this world has a Creator, why does not God manifest and show Himself to the people? And why doesn't He talk with the people and tell them about these issues so that these arguments can come to an end?"

The Imam (a.s.) stated, "How has God who has created you been concealed from you? Which Powerful Hand created you when you did not exist? And who granted you all these parts of the body and blessings, so that you can see the different effects and various states in yourself? Sometimes you are ill and sometimes you are healthy.

This is how God the Exalted displays your health to you after your being ill. Sometimes you are strong and able, and sometimes you are weak and feeble. God the Exalted shows you your weakness and your powerfulness. He makes you understand anger after satisfaction and vice-versa; He shows you your fullness after being hungry.

And He makes you understand your thirst being quenched after being thirsty; and your debasement after being honored. And He shows you how you dislike something after liking it." The Imam (a.s.) continued to counts these changes of the mood and the heart in man one after another until Abi ibn al-Owjah stood up and went to Abdullah ibn Moqaffah. Ibn Muqaffah asked him, "O.K. What happened?" Ibn Abi al-Owjah said, "Woe be upon you! Imam Sadiq (a.s.) is not a human. He is a perfect human. He is an angel who has appeared in the face of a human. He (a.s.) spoke with me in such a way that it seemed I saw God with my own eyes, and I stood up and came to you."4

Thus we can conclude that God the Exalted is clearer than everything and the reason He is concealed from us is the extent of severity of His Manifestation. The other reason why God the Sublime has been concealed from man's Intellect is that He has no opposite since we usually can recognize things by their opposite.

For example, if darkness did not exist, no one would understand what light means. Man understands light when darkness exists, too. Thus we may recognize things by recognizing their opposite. However, God the Sublime does not have an opposite. Thus He has become concealed for the intellects.

Thus we may conclude that God is clearer than everything else. If the sun was always fixed in the midst of the sky, no one would pay any attention to the light which comes from it. However, when it changes by rising and setting and its darkness which is the opposite of light comes, we understand that the sun gives off this light. God the Sublime states,

"Say: Behold all that is in the heavens and on earth"; but neither Signs nor Warners profit those who believe not."The Holy Quran: Yunus 10:101.

The greatest joy of the scientists, scholars and wise men is looking at the world of Creation and pondering over the Majesty, Knowledge, Wisdom and Power of God the Nourisher. The Quran is the first to invite us to benefit from this joy, since it invites the people to think about the creatures and the world to see the manifestation of power of the Nourisher. In one place God states,

"Say: Behold all that is in the heavens and on earth"; but neither Signs nor Warners profit those who believe not." The Holy Quran: Yunus 10:101.

In another place God states,

"Do they not look at the sky above them? How We have made it and adorned it, and there are no flaws in it?" The Holy Quran: Qaf 50:6.

Elsewhere God states,

"On the earth are signs for those of assured Faith, As also in your own selves: Will ye not then see?" The Holy Quran: Az-Zariyat 51:20-21.

This is so that you may see all of the wonderful things which exist in your own being and the kinds of blessings which the Nourisher has granted you.

Moreover, in another verse God states,

"Then let man look at his food, (and how We provide it):" The Holy Quran: Abasa 80:24.

Although by looking at the food we eat we will enjoy it more, this verse does not mean that. Rather, the intention of this verse is that man must look at the food which he eats and think what factors have been used in preparing this food as we read in the following verses,

"For that We pour forth water in abundance, And We split the earth in fragments, And produce therein Corn, And Grapes and nutritious Plants, And Olives and Dates, And enclosed Gardens, dense with lofty trees, And Fruits and Fodder for use and convenience to you and your cattle." The Holy Quran: Abasa 80:25–32.

In these verses God the Blessed the Sublime draws the people's attention to thinking about the foods and the fruits which they eat, and see what factors have influenced the making of these foods.

As Sadi says in the Golestan, "Cloud and wind, moon and sun move in the sky

That thou mayest gain bread, and not eat it unconcerned.

For thee all are revolving and obedient.

It is against the requirements of justice if thou obeyest not."

Many factors influence the production of food and other aspects of human life. If the sun does not exist, no plants could grow on the Earth and humans and the animals would not survive. If this Earth was closer to the Sun than it is now, the creatures on the Earth would burn up due to the heat from the Sun. And if the Earth was farther away from the Sun than it is, the plants would not grow, and the humans and the animals would not survive. The Power and Wisdom of God the Blessed destined that this distance be what it is.

Thus, in addition to all of the factors at work, there must also be a farmer to plant the seeds, and plough the earth before that. Then he should water the earth and must take care that the crop is yielded. Harvesting, putting stalks into groups, heaping up the crop, taking what is yielded to the mill and producing wheat, then making the dough and bread are all factors which result in producing the bread. All of these factors have a share in eating this bread. Thus we see what actions of man and how many

tools are used to prepare it.

If man really thinks about the wonders of Creation by studying about the earth, the sea, the sky and all other creatures and considers how the plants on the earth revive in the spring after everything perishes in the winter, and various fruits grow with different colors and tastes, then he will conclude that the Wise and Mighty God plans for and manages the wide world of Creation.

Discourse 2: Physical Signs of the Wise Creator

God the Blessed the Sublime states in His Book,

"And among His Signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the variations in your languages and your colors: verily in that are Signs for those who know." The Holy Quran: Al-Rum 30:22.

One of the greatest pleasures of scholars and scientists is to look at the effects of God's Power in this world and to see the strange things which exist in the heavens and the Earth. In the above noble verse God the Blessed the Sublime points out the creation of the heavens and the Earth as being one of His Signs.

He also points out the variation of colors and languages as another Sign of the Mightiness of God. One of the differences amongst languages are in the words which the people use in their conversation such as in Urdu, Farsi, or Arabic. Another difference amongst languages is in the case of sounds. All the people who live on the Earth do not have the same voice. This is so that no one's voice is mixed up with another person's voice. Anytime someone speaks to you, you say he is so and so.

And you will rarely mix him up with another one. Another sign pointed to is that of color. One of the other differences is the difference in skin colors; for example we have people who are black, white, yellow, red or of other colors. The other meaning is the differences between colors of the people of the same color. This means that all white skin colors, all yellow skin colors or black skin colors are not the same. There are different shades of color. And the difference in colors in man is due to the fact that no face, form and no man is like another. No one is mistaken for another.

This is in the same way that voices are not confused for one another. If it was other than this – that is if everyone did not have a special appearance – people would not recognize each other. Then a father might be mistaken for a son, two brothers could not be distinguished from each other, etc. and mankind could not survive. When man thinks about these matters, he would be amazed at the display of God's Power. That is why all over the earth voices, appearances and faces are not be similar to each other! Of course, there are some instances where two brothers or sisters look like each other, but they are not exactly the same. There are some differences even in twins.

Sometimes in some cases God does not act in the usual way, so that the people become aware of how

God has demonstrated His Power. In another noble verse He states the following about the differences in colors,

"Seest thou not that Allah sends down rain from the sky? With it We then bring out produce of various colors. And in the mountains are tracts white and red, of various shades of color, and black intense in hue. And so amongst men and crawling creatures and cattle, are they of various colors. Those truly fear Allah, among His Servants, who have knowledge: for Allah is Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving." The Holy Quran: Fatir 35:27-28.

Also God states in another verse,

"And the things on this earth which He has multiplied in varying colors (and qualities): verily in this is a sign for men who celebrate the praises of Allah (in gratitude)" The Holy Quran: Al-Nahl 16:13.

This implies that the variation of colors exists in everything. Moreover, everything glorifies God as we read in the following verse,

"The seven heavens and the earth, and all beings therein, declare His glory: there is not a thing but celebrates His praise; And yet ye understand not how they declare His glory! Verily He is Oft-Forbearing, Most Forgiving!" The Holy Quran: Isra 17:44.

When Moses (a.s.) and his brother Aaron (a.s.) were given the mission to invite Pharoah to worship God as the Quran states,

"(When this message was delivered), (Pharaoh) stated, 'Who, then, O Moses, is the Lord of you two?' He stated, 'Our Lord is He Who gave to each (created) thing its form and nature, and further, gave (it) guidance'." The Holy Quran: Ta-Ha 20:49-50.

Thus we see that God has granted every creature what has been necessary for its creation. For example, God has granted man whatever he needs and is suitable for him. He has created each of our organs with a proper size and functioning.

He has also given whatever has been necessary to the animals with this same quality. He has created those which must live in a dry land in a way that is suitable with dry land. He has created the sea animals in a way which is proper for the sea so that they live in water. He has created the birds birds in such a way that they can fly in the air. God says the following in this respect,

"Do they not look at the birds, held poised in the midst of (the air and) the sky? Nothing holds them up but (the power of) Allah. Verily in this are signs for those who believe." The Holy Quran: Al-Nahl 16:79.

Now the important point which must be mentioned is the goal of man's creation is for him to acquire knowledge and recognize and worship God as God the Blessed the Sublime states in the following

verse,

"Allah is He Who created seven Firmaments and of the earth a similar number. Through the midst of them (all) descends His Command: that ye may know that Allah has power over all things, and that Allah comprehends, all things in (His) Knowledge." The Holy Quran At- Talaq 65: 12.

God dominates over everything, is aware of their needs and has granted every creature what it needs. This means that God has provided fish for the birds in the sky and has provided little fish for the bigger fish as their sustenance.

Thus man has come to this world so as to acquire knowledge, recognize God and learn things from the world. This world with all its creatures and with its unimaginable extent and uncountable number of stars and galaxies. Even if man considers what he has come to learn about until now, he would get to recognize some of the Power of God and His Wisdom as the Holy Quran states,

"And if all the trees on earth were pens and the ocean (were ink), with seven oceans behind it to add to its (supply), yet would not the words of Allah be exhausted (in the writing): for Allah is Exalted in Power, full of Wisdom." The Holy Quran: Lugman 31:27.

Discourse 3: The Impossibility of Recognizing the True Essence of God

God the Blessed the Sublime stated,

"Glorify the name of thy Guardian – Lord Most High, Who hath created, and further, given order and proportion;" The Holy Quran: Al-A'ala 87:1-2.

God cannot be truly understood by the mind and the Intellect. The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) said, "God cannot be realized by the Intellect just as He cannot be seen by the eyes."5

It has been narrated on the authority of Imam Al-Baqir (a.s.), "Whatever you imagine God to be is only a created product of your mind and is not God."6

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) has said the following about God, "Praise is due to Allah – whom the height of intellectual courage cannot appreciate, and the deepest attempts at understanding cannot reach. 7 This concept has been expressed in various ways by Arab and Iranian poets as we read in Bustan of Sadi8,

"The people of the world are agreed to His divine origin;

Overpowered in respect to the substance of His essence.

The people discovered not what was beyond His majesty;

The vision discovered not the extent of His power.

The bird of Fancy flies not to the summit of His nature;

The power of the intellect arrives not at the skirt of His description.

In this whirlpool a thousand ships of reason foundered,

In such a way that not a plank was found on the marge.

Many nights I sat lost in this journey of thought of God,

When suddenly terror seized my sleeve, saying, "Get up!"

The knowledge of the King is the encircler of the wide plain of creation;

Thy conjecture becomes not the encircler of Him.

Genius reaches not to the substance of His nature;

Thought reaches not to the profundity of His qualities.

One can attain to the Arab poet, Suhban, in eloquence;

But one cannot reach to the substance of God without equal.

Because the immature ones have on this road urged the steed of thought,

At the words "la ahsa," they have wearied of the pace. "

When God sent Moses (a.s.) to invite Pharaoh to submit to God,

"Moses stated: 'O Pharaoh! I am an apostle from the Lord of the worlds,' The Holy Quran: Al-A'raf 7: 104.

Pharoah asked,

'And what is the Lord and Cherisher of the worlds?'" The Holy Quran: Ash-Shuara 26:23.

This is indeed asking about the nature and essence of God. Since the true Essence of God can never be expressed Moses (a.s.) replied by stating God's Attributes as we read,

"(Moses) stated: 'The Lord and Cherisher of the heavens and the earth, and all between, if ye want to be quite sure.'" The Holy Quran: Ash-Shuara 26:24.

God who owns this attribute has created the heavens and the Earth. His power is a reason for His Holy

Existence. Although His Power is exactly the same as His Essence. When Moses (a.s.) stated these words, Pharoah faced the people in his court as we read,

"(Pharaoh) stated to those around: 'Did ye not listen (to what he says)?'" The Holy Quran: Ash-Shuara 26:25.

Pharaoh wanted to stress that Moses (a.s.) was giving an answer that was different from the question asked. Moses (a.s.), however, went on and stated,

"Your Lord and the Lord of your fathers from the beginning!" The Holy Quran: Ash-Shuara 26:26.

Pharoah used this chance and stated,

"Truly your apostle who has been sent to you is a veritable madman!" The Holy Quran: Ash-Shuara 26:27.

However, Moses (a.s.) stated,

"Lord of the East and the West, and all between! if ye only had sense!" The Holy Quran: Ash-Shuara 26:28.

Pharaoh threatened Moses and stated,

"If thou dost put forward any god other than me, I will certainly put thee in prison!" The Holy Quran: Ash-Shuara 26:29.

Moses (a.s.) challenged his power and stated,

"Even if I showed you something clear (and) convincing?" The Holy Quran: Ash-Shuara 26:30.

Pharaoh stated.

"Show it then, if thou tellest the truth!" The Holy Quran: Ash-Shuara 26:31.

Then Moses (a.s.) showed some of his miracle and

"So (Moses) threw his rod, and behold, it was a serpent, plain (for all to see)! And he drew out his hand, and behold, it was white to all beholders!"

The Holy Quran: Ash-Shuara 26:32-33.

This goes on until the end of the verses which state the events which occurred between the magicians and Moses (a.s.), and the struggles of Moses (a.s.) against Pharaoh.

The above events were referred to in order to show that the true Essence of God cannot be recognized, and even Moses (a.s.) introduced God the Blessed by means of His Attributes.

Thus the question that comes up is how to recognize God. The answer to this question is that God can be recognized by thinking about what He has created. That is why after God the Blessed the Sublime stated,

"Glorify the name of thy Guardian - Lord Most High," The Holy Quran: Al-A'ala 87:1.

God says,

"Who hath created, and further, given order and proportion;" The Holy Quran: Al-A'ala 87:2.

Therefore, we can get to recognize God by the signs which exist in the heavens and the Earth.

We read the following in the Jowshan Kabir supplications, "O the One whose Majesty lies in the heavens! O the One whose signs lie in the Earth. O the One for which everything is a reason! O the One whose Wonders lie in the seas! O the One whose Treasures lie in the mountains!"9

Thus recognizing the Holy Essence of God is attained by means of thinking about what is created as we read in the Holy Quran,

"On the earth are signs for those of assured faith, as also in your own selves: Will ye not then see?" The Holy Quran: Az-Zariyat 51:20-21.

Once we ponder over ourselves, we shall realize that we did not exist before and a certain Power has brought us into this existence. We realize that we have a body with eyes to see, ears to hear, a nose to smell, a tongue to taste, and skin to touch. We possess all these parts which give us the ability to understand the outward nature of things. God the Blessed the Sublime says,

"It is He Who brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers when ye knew nothing; and He gave you hearing and sight and intelligence and affections: that ye may give thanks (to Allah)."

The Holy Quran: Al-Nahl 16:78.

Of course, the ability to see and hear are related to what can be seen and heard. The eye and the ear only transfer what they realize to our brain. There are also other inner abilities in man such as the ability to memorize which enable man to store whatever he sees, smells, feels, tastes or hears in his lifetime in his brain.

This is one of the greatest God-given blessings. We could not live if we lacked any of these abilities. For example, people could not live if they could not remember things and forgot whatever they experienced. The Intellect is the best inner power with which man can distinguish between right and wrong, or good and bad.

Thus we may recognize God by means of thinking about the animate and the inanimate things. This world is like a school to which God the Blessed has sent us to so as to acquire knowledge and

recognition in it.

One of the most important means of acquiring knowledge and recognition is the ability to see and the other one is the ability to hear. The ability to see is one of the most important Divine Blessings by which we can see things.

Whenever we look at any of the creatures, we see the manifestations of God's Power. For example, the air which we breathe is exactly composed in such a way that we can live. Were it any different from the way it is, we could not survive.

Or if we consider the four seasons, we see that the plants in the Earth die in the winter, but the rain will revive everything again in the spring. Then we get plants which emerge from the black soil and the earth becomes green again. Vegetables grow and fruits grow on the trees which will yield various kinds of fruits with different colors, smells and various tastes as a result of God's Mercy.

Now we must see what our duty is once we recognize God. The duty of one who has recognized God is to worship God the Blessed as we read in the following verse of the Holy Quran,

"I have only created Genies and men, that they may serve Me." The Holy Quran: Az-Zariyat 51:56.

This world is like a book by looking at which and thinking about God's Majesty man can attain more knowledge about God. Once man attains knowledge about God the Glorified he will worship God. Acts of worship can be divided into two groups.

One group are the usual acts of worship like saying one's prayers, fasting, going on pilgrimage to Hajj, giving the alms-tax, giving the one-fifth levy, etc. And the other kind of deeds are those which technically are not called worshipping but can be done in a way similar to acts of worship.

This means that man can engage in acts of business, work, trade, industry, agriculture etc., in addition to fasting, saying one's prayers, going on the Hajj pilgrimage and waging a Holy war against the unbelievers which are acts of worship. Once done according to Islamic Laws and for the sake of God, they are a form of worshipping God.

It has been narrated that God's Prophet (S) stated, "A business man (who earns money according to the religious laws) is beloved by and a friend of God." It has been stated in a narration, "If one makes an effort and does business so as to fulfill his own needs and the needs of his family and help his religious brothers, his face will shine like a full moon when he meets God." 10 Based on this, man should first learn the Islamic matters and precepts when he intends to do trade.

There is a narration on the authority of the Commander of the Faithful (a.s.) who stated, "First the jurisprudence, the Divine lawful and unlawful and the lawful and unlawful trades must be learned and then man must engage in trade."

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It has been written in another narration, "Do business so that you do not become in need of people, since the Honorable God the Exalted likes honest businessmen." 12 That is why the most important duty of ones who want to do business is to be righteous. There is also another narration on the authority of God's Prophet (S) who stated, "A person who has the following characteristics has perfect chivalry and justice: one who does not oppress the people in his dealings with them; one who does not lie when he talks to the people; and one who does not act opposite to what he promises. It is incumbent to act like a brother with him; support his justness; respect his manliness; and not gossip about him." 13

To rap it all up, man can live in such a way that all the things which he does such as business transactions or other deeds are a form of worship of God. For example, one can intend to gain power from eating in order to serve God, and thus set his act of eating food as a form of worship of God (Of course, the food must be allowed food and should be obtained in a legitimate way). Or he may intend to get enough strength to serve God. In this way he can live in such a way that all his life is a form of servitude and worship.

Discourse 4: The Order of the Universe is a Sign of the One and Only God

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) wrote the following addressed to his son Al-Hassan (a.s.) upon his return from the Battle of Siffin, "O My dear son! Beware that if there were any partners for your Lord, they would have surely dispatched Messengers and Prophets to inform you about their deeds and attributes. But, the Lord of this world is the One God as He has described himself to be..." 14

One may first think that this is a very simple saying. However, a more careful consideration of it shows that it is very strong reasoning which disapproves of the existence of any partners for God.

Thus taking a closer look at this world and everything in it shows a strong interrelationship which makes us understand that the totality of these things is like a big machine whose parts are related to each other. This indicates that everything has been created by a single Wise Creator. For example, we need air and cannot survive if it does not exist. As Sadi said, "Each breath inhaled sustains life, exhaled imparts rejuvenation. Two blessings in each breath, each due a separate salutation."

The plants and the animals also need air. Also we are strongly in need of water and it quenches our thirst. Also foods and fruit are related to our taste. Also their colours are related to our vision. In fact, all the creatures are related to our vision.

Not only are we in need of water, but all the other creatures of the Earth are in need of it. Everything on the planet Earth needs water. All of their parts are related to each other. In addition, everything on the Earth is also dependant on the things in the sky. For example, if the sun does not shine, it is not only we who cannot survive, but also all the animals and the plants.

Also these planets are dependent upon other planets. Our solar galaxy is related to other galaxies. All the galaxies and whatever we have learned about so far all are related to each other. This means that everything in the universe is a part of a system. The universe is like a big machine with various parts all of which are interrelated. The amazing order which governs the universe and its parts is a sign of the existence of God as the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "But the Lord of this world is the One God ..."

Whatever you see and whatever has been stated by the Prophets (a.s.) are all from one God. Whatever signs we see are all related to the One. Therefore, the Universe itself bears witness for us that its God and Creator is only one.

Moreover, when we look at the creatures, we realize that the Creator has granted each one whatever it needs to live. A mosquito is well– equipped with the means to live. So is an elephant. Neither one has any deficiencies.

The same holds true for all other animals, birds or fish. Thus we realize that the creator of all animals is the same. He is the same God who has also created man. That is why the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "The world itself testifies that there are no partners for God. No one has come to inform us about the existence of another god. There are also no signs of deeds or attributes of another god. Moreover, everything which exists in the Universe is so interrelated that it points to the fact that there is a single Creator."

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) continued on and stated, "However, the Lord of this world is the One God as He has described himself to be as we read in many verses in the Holy Quran,

"And your Allah is One Allah. There is no god but He, Most Gracious, Most Merciful." The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2: 163.

What is so amazing is the strong reasoning which follows,

"Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the night and the day; in the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of mankind; in the rain which Allah sends down from the skies, and the life which He gives therewith to an earth that is dead; in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters through the earth; in the change of the winds, and the clouds which they trail like their slaves between the sky and the earth; (Here) indeed are Signs for a people that are wise." The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:164.

This is the only verse in the Holy Quran where everything in the creation is mentioned followed by reasoning that these are signs of God. The fact that they are brought together in one verse here refers to their interrelationship and the fact that all together they are signs of God.

You may only worship God after you recognize Him. One must have knowledge of God the Sublime

since it is due to knowledge which man can distinguish between the forbidden and the allowed, and serve God.

Thus we must strive hard to acquire knowledge and act accordingly. There is a narration on the authority of God's Prophet (S) in which we read, "Indeed God the Sublime has established four things in four other things. He has established the continuation of faith in being humble to God."15

Man must think about the Creation and be humble to God for his faith to remain intact. Once man recognizes God's Majesty, he will see everything else to be small as the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "The realization of the Majesty of God would make everything seem to be small in your sight." 16

Discourse 5: God's Attributes

Introduction

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "Praise is due to Allah whose worth cannot be described by speakers, whose bounties cannot be counted by calculators and whose claim (to obedience) cannot be satisfied by those who attempt to do so, whom the height of intellectual courage cannot appreciate, and the deepest understanding cannot reach." 17

It has also been narrated on the authority of the Noble Prophet Muhammad (S) to say, "O My God! I cannot praise and eulogize You as I should. You are just as You praised and eulogized Yourself." 18

Some of the religious scholars have stated the difference between glorifying God and thanking Him as follows, "Thanking is the verbal glorification of someone for some good that has been done voluntarily, whether it be a deed or a bestowed blessing. Praising is the verbal act of glorification of someone for a good deed whether it is done voluntarily or not." 19

Therefore, thanking God is for a blessing, but praising God could be in return for blessings or other things. For example, we may praise or glorify a person, flowers or even sweet basils, but we cannot thank sweet basils since their good scent is not spread by a voluntary action on their part. Thus we may praise or thank the Divine Leaders (a.s.) or the good people, but we may only praise the flowers.

The Divine Blessings are Uncountable

The blessings granted to us by God are uncountable. If all the computers in the world try to calculate them, they cannot do so. God the Blessed the Sublime states,

"If ye would count up the favors of Allah, never would ye be able to number them: for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." The Holy Quran: Al-Nahl 16:18. Therefore, how can man who cannot even count God's blessings thank Him for them.

The following is a part of the supplications of Imam Sajjad (a.s.) called 'The Supplications of the Grateful Ones.' After expressing the blessings of God in this supplication, the Imam (a.s.) says, "O God! Your blessings are so innumerous that I cannot verbally count them. Your blessings are so extensive that I can neither count them nor even understand them. Then how could I thank You for them. I can never fully appreciate them, since even thanking You for them is itself another blessing which You have granted to me. Thus I should still thank You for that."20

Thus, man cannot even fully count the blessings of God the Blessed the Sublime and is not able to fully appreciate the blessings of the Benevolent the Mighty God. Not even all the worshipping done by all the worshippers in the world can compensate for the blessing of servitude to God.

God cannot be Worshipped as He Deserves to be

The Prophet (S) says, "We have not recognized You as we should and we have not worshipped You as You deserve to be worshipped."21 It is impossible for mankind to understand the Creator's Truth. Moreover, since nothing is like God, His truth cannot be truly understood by man as we read in the Holy Quran,

"... There is nothing whatever like unto Him..." The Holy Quran: Shuraa 42:11.

God's true Essence can also not be recognized by our eyes in this world or in the Hereafter just as God's Truth cannot be recognized by us. It is even impossible for the Prophets (a.s.) and God's Trustees to see Him with their physical eyes.

Moses (a.s.) went to the place to meet God along with seventy of the Israelites as we read in the following verse,

"And Moses chose seventy of his people for Our place of meeting...." The Holy Quran Al-A'araf 7:155.

And God spoke to Moses (a.s.), stating,

"And remember ye stated: 'O Moses! We shall never believe in thee until we see Allah manifestly" but ye were dazed with thunder and lightning even as ye looked on."" The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:55.

Most commentators are of the opinion that Moses (a.s.) asked the following from God due to the request of the Israelites,

"...'O my Lord! show (Thyself) to me, that I may look upon thee.' Allah stated: 'By no means canst thou see Me (direct); But look upon the mount; if it abide in its place, then shalt thou see Me.'

When his Lord manifested His Glory on the Mount, He made it as dust. And Moses fell down in a swoon. When he recovered his senses he stated: 'Glory be to Thee! to Thee I turn in repentance, and I am the first to believe.'" The Holy Quran: AI-A'arf 7:143.

If it were asked why Moses (a.s.) stated, '...I am the first to believe' while many believers existed before him, the answer would be that he meant he was the first one to believe that no one can see God with the physical eyes. This is the opinion of most of the commentators. However, the late Allameh Tabatabaee has a different view regarding the following words of Moses, "O my Lord! show (Thyself) to me, that I may look upon thee." He states, "What Moses (a.s.) meant was not looking physically. He (a.s.) meant to see God using his insight similar to what happens after death when the veils to the unseen world are removed and man can see the metaphysical things. This is similar to the case when Abraham prayed to God and stated,

"My Lord! Show me how Thou givest life to the dead." The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:260.

A call was heard,

"... He stated: 'Dost thou not then believe?' He stated: 'Yea! but to satisfy my own undertaking.'..."

The Holy Quran: Al-Bagara 2:260.

The request of Moses (a.s.) was similar to that of Abraham and he (a.s.) just wanted to attain this metaphysical experience before death."22

If the request of Moses (a.s.) is taken to be with his insight and not seeing with the eyes, then we can realize the high rank of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) who stated, "My certitude would not increase even if the veils to the unseen are pushed aside."23

This means that Ali (a.s.) had the same certitude that we would gain after we die and the veils to the unseen are pushed aside. This shows how much he (a.s.) ranked higher than Moses (a.s.). The issue of seeing is a very important issue and a lot has been stated about it. For example, a man named Za'lab Yamani went to see Ali (a.s.) and asked him, "O Commander of the Faithful! Have you seen your Lord?"

The Imam (a.s.) replied, "I am not one to worship God without having seen Him." The man asked, "Then how did you see God?!" The Imam (a.s.) replied, "Eyes do not see Him face to face, but hearts perceive Him through the realities of belief. He is near to things but not (physically) contiguous.

He is far from them but not (physically) separate. He is a speaker, but not with reflection. He intends, but not with preparation. He moulds, but not with (the assistance of) limbs. He is subtle but cannot be attributed with being concealed. He is great but cannot be attributed with haughtiness. He sees but cannot be attributed with the sense (of sight). He is Merciful but cannot be attributed with weakness of heart. Faces feel low before His Greatness and hearts tremble out of fear of Him."24

The term 'looking towards' used in the following verse of the Holy Quran:

"Some faces, that Day, will beam (in brightness and beauty); Looking towards their Lord;" The Holy Quran: Al-Qiam a 75:22.23

is also not referring to physically seeing with the eyes. Rather, it refers to insight or observation by the heart or soul, since the veils to the unseen are pushed aside after death. We can conclude this from several narrations on the authority of the Immaculate Divine Leaders as mentioned by the late Sayyid Morteza in his book Al– Muhkam val–Mutashabih. This means that we will believe in the existence of God the Sublime on the Resurrection Day after the veils to the unseen are drawn aside, just as we believe something which we see in this world.

God is close to everything but is not observable. God is away from everything, but not apart from them. God speaks but not by narrating as the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "...He is near to things but not (physically) contiguous. He is far from them but not (physically) separate..."25

God is speaking, but not with his tongue and thinking power as the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "...He is a speaker, but not with reflection. He intends, but not with preparation. He moulds, but not with (the assistance of) limbs. He is subtle but cannot be attributed with being concealed. He is Great but cannot be attributed with haughtiness. He sees but cannot be attributed with the sense (of sight). He is Merciful but cannot be attributed with weakness of heart. Faces feel humble before His Greatness and hearts tremble out of fear of Him."26

God is speaking as He spoke to Moses (a.s.), and spoke to the Prophet Muhammad (S) on the night of his Ascension, but not by means of language and thought. Even the revelation of the Holy Quran to the Prophet Muhammad (S) is a form of speaking. But God's speaking is not due to thinking. God orders and the Quran is embedded in the heart of the Prophet Muhammad (S) as we read in the following verse of the Holy Quran,

"Verily, when He intends a thing, His Command is, "be", and it is!" The Holy Quran: Ya-Sin 36:82.

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) added, "...He moulds, but not with (the assistance of) limbs. He is subtle but cannot be attributed with being concealed. He is Great but cannot be attributed with haughtiness. He sees but cannot be attributed with the sense (of sight). He is Merciful but cannot be attributed with weakness of heart. Faces feel humble before His Greatness and hearts tremble out of fear of Him."27

God dominates over all that can be seen. God is All-hearing which does not mean the God hears with the ears as we do. His Hearing is not by means of some physical means. On the contrary, His Knowledge encompasses everything. Therefore, God's being All-Seeing and All-Hearing are just His Essence similar to His Knowledge. However, God creates what is stated to have been spoken by Him. God is Merciful but His Mercy is not due to His Heart as it is in our case. God has Mercy and bestows it on everyone. Faces are humble in front of Him. And the hearts are trembling and scared because of being fearful of Him.

Discourse 6: The Recognition of God using Signs

Introduction

The first step which man must take in his religion is recognition of God as the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated in the first sermon in Nahjul Balaqah as follows, "The foremost thing in religion is the acknowledgement of Him; the perfection of acknowledging Him is to testify to Him; the perfection of testifying to Him is to believe in His Oneness; the perfection of believing in His Oneness is to consider Him to be Pure. And the perfection of His Purity is to deny Him attributes; because every attribute is a proof that it is different from that to which it is attributed and everything to which something is attributed is different from the attribute.

Thus whoever attaches attributes to Allah recognizes His like, and whoever recognizes His like regards Him as being two; and whoever regards Him as being two recognizes parts for Him; and whoever recognizes parts for Him mistook Him; and whoever mistook Him pointed to Him; and whoever pointed to Him admitted limitations for Him; and whoever admitted limitations for Him numbered Him."28

Sincerity for God

The following two meanings have been presented for sincerity:

- 1– The popular meaning, which is doing one's tasks with sincerity for God. This means that when man becomes a monotheist, he worships God. When man engages in worshipping God, he must do it sincerely for the Holy Essence of the Lord.
- 2– The other meaning of sincerity is what Ibn Abil Hadeed has mentioned in his commentary on the Nahjul Balaqah. He says, "Sincerity (Ikhlas) means considering God the Blessed to be pure (and not made up of various compounds). Perfect monotheism depends on this concept of God's Purity. This means that God the Blessed the Sublime is pure while everything else is composed of various compounds."29

God's Attributes

The perfection of sincerity is not to ascribe attributes to God the Sublime. This holds true no matter which one of the above two meanings of sincerity we adopt. This implies that we should not ascribe to God the attributes which are in the creatures. For example, when we say that so and so is knowledgeable and wise it means that there was a time in the past when he did not have any knowledge or power, and then he acquired knowledge and became powerful. This means that his knowledge is different from himself and his power is also different from himself.

However, in the case of the Blessed God the attributes and His Holy Essence are indivisible. He existed before the creation of anything and shall exist after the termination of everything. His Knowledge, Power

and all other attributes cannot be separated from Him.

Therefore, whoever considers God's attributes to be like our attributes and claims that God has attributes which are divisible from His Holy Essence has indeed considered God to be like something else. Whoever does so has divided up God into two. Such a person has not indeed recognized God. Thus, God does not have the common attributes which are separable from us. On the contrary, the attributes of God's Holy Essence are just the same as His Essence. Then the question comes up as to how God can be recognized by us.

The answer to this question is as follows. The best way to recognize God is by means of the physical signs which exist in the heavens and the Earth – the amazing signs which can be seen by everyone. We can see this in Bihar ul–Anwar, "There is a sign in everything indicating the Oneness of God." From amongst these signs which indicate the power of God we can refer to rain as we read in the following verse of the Holy Quran,

"Seest thou not that Allah sends down rain from the sky? With it We then bring out produce of various colours..." The Holy Quran: Fatir 35:27.

This refers to the various brands of fruits with their various types. For example, we can see that the same land, water, sunlight and air produce fruits which are extremely varied in smell, taste and colour. These blessings point out to us the power of God the Sublime and we can see God with our insight. God is so clearly out there that we fail to see Him.

We can also refer to the following verse of the Holy Quran in which the wonders in the mountains are pointed out to us,

"... And in the mountains are tracts white and red, of various shades of colour, and black intense in hue." The Holy Quran: Fatir 35:27.

We can also note that the following verse points out the wonders of the people and animals,

"And so amongst men and crawling creatures and cattle, are they of various colours. Those truly fear Allah, among His Servants, who have knowledge: for Allah is Exalted in Might, Oft-Forgiving." The Holy Quran: Fatir 35:28.

We see that there are so many various creatures that we can hardly find two similar ones. This is an aspect of God's power, but we fail to realize it since we take it for granted. Many people keep asking themselves about the whereabouts of God while they can easily see God if they only try to use their heart and insight. This is similar to the following words of wisdom, "Once many fish gathered together and stated, 'We sometimes hear about water and it is stated that our lives depend on water, but we have never seen water. Let's go to the wise fish who knows about water and ask him to show us water. They all swam to the wise fish and asked him to show them water. The wise fish told them, 'Show me

something other than water then I shall show you water. "31

The Quran states,

"...Those truly fear Allah, among His Servants, who have knowledge..." The Holy Quran: Fatir 35:28.

Here we read that those who have knowledge truly fear God. They ponder over the amazing order in the universe and see God's Majesty. The Quran says,

"...and contemplate the (wonders of) creation in the heavens and the earth, (with the thought):
'Our Lord! not for naught Hast Thou created (all) this!'" The Holy Quran: Al-Imran 3:191.

They are the ones who believe in the Hereafter and say,

"... Give us salvation from the penalty of the Fire." The Holy Quran: Al-Imran 3:191.

They also say,

"Our Lord! we have heard the call of one calling (Us) to Faith, 'Believe ye in the Lord,' and we have believed. Our Lord! Forgive us our sins, blot out from us our iniquities, and take to Thyself our souls in the company of the righteous." The Holy Quran: Al-Imran 3: 193.

Discourse 7: The Main Duty of Man is to Recognize and Worship God

Introduction

God the Blessed the Sublime states,

"O ye people! Adore your Guardian-Lord, who created you and those who came before you, that ye may have the chance to learn righteousness; Who has made the earth your couch, and the heavens your canopy; and sent down rain from the heavens; and brought forth therewith fruits for your sustenance; then set not up rivals unto Allah when ye know (the truth)."

The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:21-22.

The first duty of man is knowing and recognizing God the Blessed the Sublime. His next duty is worshipping and serving God. All the Prophets (a.s.) have been appointed to Prophethood so as to invite the people to God and monotheism and to direct them to worship God. The Blessed and the Sublime God states,

"We sent Noah to his people. He stated: 'O my people! worship Allah...'" The Holy Quran: Al-A'raf 7:59.

There are other verses in the Quran which state that the Prophets (a.s.) invite the people to God and to worshipping Him since this is exactly the aim of the creation of this world as we read,

"I have only created Genies and men, that they may serve Me." The Holy Quran: Az-Zariyat 51:56.

Also God states the following addressing the Prophet (S),

"Not an apostle did We send before thee without this inspiration sent by Us to him: that there is no god but I; therefore worship and serve Me." The Holy Quran: Al-Anbiya 21:25.

The Relationship between Servitude, Piety and Certitude

In another verse God the Blessed the Sublime states the following addressing all the people of all ranks,

"O ye people! Adore your Guardian - Lord, who created you and those who came before you, that ye may have the chance to learn righteousness;" The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:21.

Servitude and worship means that man should act according to God's orders in all tasks including personal and social acts. All deeds must be done for the sake of God.

This means that one must gain a mood and power due to worshipping God that results in paying full attention to God; acting according to God's orders; avoiding what is forbidden by God; and acquiring what is usually referred to as piety. The highest rank of piety is certitude which is the main goal of recognition of God and worshipping Him.

Thus, one way for man to attain piety and certitude and strengthen his faith is to act according to the Divine Decrees so as to acquire piety. This is a result of acting upon the obligatory and recommendable deeds, and avoiding the unlawful and the abominable acts. Then he may attain perfect faith and certitude which are man's primary goals. Worshipping and servitude strengthen faith and faith reinforces worshipping and servitude.

Ways to Strengthen Faith

The way to strengthen one's faith is to reinforce good ethics and praiseworthy attributes in oneself. When one attains praiseworthy attributes such as righteousness; honesty; humbleness; kindness; reliance upon God; surrendering to God; contentment and good ethics – and he purifies his soul as much as he should – then he shall see the true light of knowledge in his heart and attain certitude. We read in the following tradition, "Knowledge is a light with which God shall illuminate whosoever's heart that He wills."32

Thus, it has been narrated on the authority of Muhammad – the Seal of the Prophets (a.s.) – who stated, "True knowledge which is the main aim of worshipping is certitude in the Origin and Resurrection. It is neither in the heavens for you to say that you shall fly in the sky and bring it down, nor is it in the depth

of the Earth for you to say that you shall dig it out. Rather, it is within you. The way to attain true knowledge is purification of your soul, acquiring good attributes and praiseworthy ethics resulting in certitude shining upon your hearts."33

The Cradle of Earth is a Proof of the Existence of the Wise Creator

God has drawn a similitude for the Earth to be like a carpet spread out for us to live on as we read,

"He Who has, made for you the earth like a carpet spread out..." The Holy Quran: Ta-Ha 20:53.

In another verse we read,

"He Who has, made for you the earth like a carpet spread out; has enabled you to go about therein by roads (and channels); and has sent down water from the sky. With it have We produced diverse pairs of plants each separate from the others. Eat (for yourselves) and pasture your cattle: verily, in this are Signs for men endued with understanding." The Holy Quran: Ta-Ha 20:53-54.

What we may understand from the Arabic word Mahd used in the above verse when referring to the earth (which has again been translated to be 'like a carpet spread out' by Yusuf Ali in the previous verse where the Arabic word Firash meaning carpet was used) – is that here the earth is made similar to a cradle. This is in reference to the issue of the Earth's movement at the time when all the scientists considered the Earth to be a still planet and believed that the Sun rotated around the Earth.

Of course, the Quran does not explicitly refer to the movement of the Earth since the people at that time would not believe this. However, now we believe this when we read it. We realize that God has stated this issue since it was not discovered until three centuries ago.

Another reference to the Earth as being similar to a cradle is in some of the interpretations of the Egyptian scholars where we read, "A child does not stay in the cradle forever, but only for a while so that he grows up and then comes out to live on the Earth. God the Blessed the Sublime has similarized this world to a cradle which means that the eternal place of living for us is not this world. We must go from this world to the Hereafter which is of infinite extent. The life in this world is only a preliminary phase of life, just like the baby's life in the cradle."34

Of course, there are many such references in the Holy Quran. For example we read,

"He Who has, made for you the earth like a carpet spread out; has enabled you to go about therein by roads (and channels); and has sent down water from the sky. With it have We produced diverse pairs of plants each separate from the others. Eat (for yourselves) and pasture your cattle: verily, in this are Signs for men endued with understanding." The Holy Quran: Ta-Ha 20:53-54.

Or we read,

"From the (earth) did We create you, and into it shall We return you, and from it shall We bring you out once again." The Holy Quran: Ta-Ha 20:55.

Or in another verse we read, "...and the sky as a canopy,..."35 This means that God has raised the sky for us like a ceiling and sitting on the Earth is just like calmly sitting in a very large house with the sky as a ceiling.

Meanwhile the Earth and all the other planets are in orbit although we do not see them. Each one of them moves according to a special rule, and any deviation from this order would result in a catastrophe. This order guides us to God the Wise. Thus we must worship God who has manifested all of these signs.

In a portion of the above-mentioned verse, we read,

"He Who has sent down water from the sky. With it have We produced diverse pairs of plants each separate from the others. Eat (for yourselves) and pasture your cattle: verily, in this are Signs for men endued with understanding." The Holy Quran: Ta-Ha 20:53-54.

Thus we should only worship God since He has Majesty, Power, Knowledge and Wisdom, and He has granted us all of these Blessings. We should only serve Him as we read in the opening verses of this discourse,

"...then set not up rivals unto Allah when ye know (the truth)." The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:21-22.

You know that all of this amazing order, power, heavenly and earthly signs, etc. are for the purpose of paying attention to God – the Creator of the world. However, mankind has gone after deviation and destruction from the very beginning and has ascribed partners for God. Some people worshipped the sun; some worshipped the moon; some worshipped the stars; and some people worshipped idols. Men worshipped various forms of idols which they set up as partners for God. The Prophets (a.s.) came so as to invite mankind to monotheism, and to rescue man from deviation and destruction.

Discourse 8: Belief in Monotheism is Inherent in Man by Nature

Introduction

It has been narrated on the authority of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.), "The Glorified God chose Prophets from amongst the offspring of Adam (a.s.) and made a covenant with them regarding what they are entrusted with; the revelations; and spreading God's Message. This was at a time when most of the people had completely forgotten God. They had forgotten the covenant which God had made with their nature and did not recognize God's Right. The Prophets (a.s.) were appointed to Prophethood

when the people had associated partners with God, and Satan had plotted and made them deviate from the path of monotheism and the recognition of God. Satan had led them to idol-worshipping, atheism and polytheism. It was at such times when God appointed Prophets with whom He had made a covenant regarding the spreading of His Message so that they may remind the people about the covenants made with their very nature. They came to remind the people of the blessings which they had forgotten about. They came to deliver the Divine Message and give men clear proofs, so that the treasures of their intellects would be aroused and the signs of God's Holy Essence would be clearly pointed out to them."36

One can cite the Earth on which we live, the sky above our head, the time given to us to live, and the necessities of life as an example. The Prophets were sent to remind the people of all of these Divine Blessings so that they would obey God. This is exactly the aim of sending the Prophets.

Recognizing the Blessed God is by Nature

If one asks what this statement means, "Does religion exist in our nature?" – he must be answered, "It means that God has given us Intellect and wisdom by which man recognizes God and reasons about the issues of monotheism and the Holy Essence of God."

Of course, the issue of recognizing God, remembering God, and praising God exists in the nature of all of the creatures. This means that all of the creatures recognize God by their nature and acknowledge the Holy Essence of God. All of them are humble before God and traverse in the path on which God has placed them. This is certified by the following verse of the Holy Quran,

"Seest thou not that to Allah bow down in worship all things that are in the heavens and on earth, the sun, the moon, the stars; the hills, the trees, the animals; and a great number among mankind? But a great number are (also) such as are fit for Punishment..." The Holy Quran: Al-Hajj 22:18.

Again God states in another verse about the fact that all the created things recognize God by their very natures as we read,

"...there is not a thing but celebrates His praise; And yet ye understand not how they declare His glory!..." The Holy Quran: Al-Isra 17:44.

Some have interpreted this to mean that the things obey God in their own world, while this interpretation does not seem to be correct. The above verse clearly states that everything celebrates God's praises implying that they all glorify God just as we do. That is why the late Sheikh Bahaoddin Ameli made the following comments about the fact that the pebbles which God's Prophet (S) held in his hand glorified God aloud by saying Subhanallah valhamdullilsh va laillaha illalah, "The fact that the pebbles stated God's glorifications is not a miracle itself since everything utters God's Glorifications. What is a miracle of God's Prophet (S) is to enable those who were present to hear the pebbles declaring God's

Glorifications.

Also God states in another verse.

"Whatever is in the heavens and on earth, let it declare the Praises and Glory of Allah..." The Holy Quran: Hadid 57:1.

and in another verse we read,

"Whatever is in the heavens and on earth, doth declare the Praises and Glory of Allah..." The Holy Quran: Al-Jome'a 62:1.

It has been stated in all these verses that whatever exists within the sky and the Earth recognizes God and surrenders to Him. They all follow the path which God has prescribed for them. All of the celestial bodies move in the orbits which God has ordered them to traverse. All of the animals go along the path which God has prescribed for them.

They all submit to Him and move in the pre-determined way. Thus, all the creatures are humble before God the Blessed. They all know God, praise Him and declare God's Glorifications. The only exception to this rule is man. God the Blessed the Sublime has granted him the Intellect, and has established some religious duties for him with the freedom to choose whether to walk on God's path or divert to the deviated path.

Discourse 9: The Recognition of God The Glorified as the First Rank of Man's Perfection

The Attributes of the ones who have recognized God (and God's Trustees)

The Prophet Muhammad (S) stated, "Whoever recognizes God and His Majesty would prevent his tongue from speaking; his stomach from taking in any food; and would purify himself by fasting and standing up (to pray)." He (S) was asked, "O may our parents by your ransom! Who are God's Friends (the Trustees)?" The Prophet (S) replied, "Indeed God's Friends (the Trustees) remain silent. Their silence is itself a form of God's Remembrance. They look and their act of looking is itself a form of learning. They talk and their speech is filled with wisdom.37 They walk and their walking amongst the people is a blessing. Were it not for the restrictions of time and place to live which God has established for them, their souls would have left their bodies due to the fear of chastisement and eagerness for the rewards."38

The root of all sciences is the science of the recognition of God. The first step for man to take in the way of his religion is to try to recognize God. As God's Prophet (S) stated, "The highmost wisdom is the recognition of God."39

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) has stated, "The first thing for man to understand and learn from the religion is the recognition of God. The perfection of such recognition is acknowledgement of God. The perfection of acknowledgement of God is the belief in monotheism. The perfection of belief in monotheism is sincerity of one's acts for God."40

Therefore, the first step for man to take is to attain knowledge about God the Blessed since all other forms of knowledge are rooted in this. Even the roots of Prophethood, Divine Leadership and Resurrection are rooted in the recognition of God. That is why the Noble Prophet (S) has stated, "Whoever recognizes God and His Majesty would prevent his tongue from speaking; his stomach from taking in any food; and would purify himself by fasting and standing up (to pray)." 41

The Holy Quran has encouraged us to look at the things which have been created so as to realize God's Power. In one place God says,

"Do they not look at the camels, how they are made? And at the sky, how it is raised high? And at the mountains, how they are fixed firm? And at the Earth, how it is spread out?" The Holy Quran: Al-Qashia 88:17-20.

What a wonderful creation? The long neck, the legs and the rest of the camel's organs all match each other. Although the camel has a big body, it is very patient. It walks so gently and would even tread behind a small child if he takes ahold of its leash. It tolerates thirst and hunger such that it can survive without water and food for ten days! Thus it is also called patient. If a Bedouin Arab looked at the camel on which he rides, or looked at the Earth, the mountains or the sky he would realize God's Majesty. The same holds true if a scholar looks at a camel and its various states.

The Heavenly and the Earthly Signs for Proving the Existence of the Wise Creator

And in another place God says,

"On the earth are signs for those of assured Faith, As also in your own selves: Will ye not then see?" The Holy Quran: Az-Zariyat 51:20-21.

Yet in another place God says,

"Do they not look at the sky above them? How We have made it and adorned it, and there are no flaws in it? And the earth – We have spread it out, and set thereon mountains standing firm, and produced therein every kind of beautiful growth (in pairs) – to be observed and commemorated by every devotee turning (to Allah)" The Holy Quran: Qaf 50:6–8.

And in another place God says,

"He Who created the seven heavens one above another: no want of proportion wilt thou see in the Creation of 'Allah' Most Gracious. So turn thy vision again: seest thou any flaw? Again turn thy vision a second time: (thy) vision will come back to thee dull and discomfited, in a state worn out." The Holy Quran: Mulk 67:3-4.

In another place God says,

"With power and skill did We construct the Firmament: for it is We Who create the vastness of space. And We have spread out the (spacious) earth: How excellently We do spread out! And of everything We have created pairs: that ye may receive instruction." The Holy Quran: Az–Zariyat 51:47–49.

The point that everything is created in pairs is one of the facts which the Quran has informed us about while it has been proven in recent centuries. The amazing discipline which governs everything is another reason to prove monotheism. The fact that the vegetables grow on the Earth and become green, the plants grow and produce various fruits with different colours and tastes is another indication of God's power.

Then the Prophet (S) stated the following about God's Friends (the Trustees), "Indeed God's Friends (the Trustees) remain silent. Their silence is itself a form of God's remembrance. They look and their act of looking is itself a form of learning. They talk and their talking is filled with wisdom. 42 They walk and their walking amongst the people is a blessing..."43

God's Friends (the Trustees) understand the vanity of this world by just looking at the people who have come before and are now gone with their homes in ruin. They are never attached to this world. The Holy Quran says,

"Do they not travel through the earth and see what was the end of those before them? They were even superior to them in strength, and in the traces (they have left) in the land..." The Holy Quran: Al-Mumin 40:21.

The Prophet (S) stated the following about the Trustees, "...They talk and their talking is filled with wisdom. 44 They walk and their walking amongst the people is a form of blessing... 45 The Prophet (S) added the following about the Trustees, "...Were it not for the restrictions of time and place to live which God has established for them, their souls would have left their bodies due to the fear of chastisement and eagerness for the rewards. 46

They have fear of God on the one hand, and are hopeful of God's Mercy on the other hand. A believer should be both hopeful and afraid of God. He should always be between the two states of having hope and fear. In another narration we read, "If they split the heart of a believer, two rays of light will be seen within it. One of these is fear and the other one is hope."47

Discourse 10: Good Recognition of, Obedience to and Having a Good Opinion of God

God's Prophet (S) stated, "The Intellect consists of three parts. Whoever has these three has attained intelligence. Whoever does not is not intelligent. They are as follows: having good recognition of God, being completely obedient to God, and having a good opinion about God."48

Good Recognition of God The Glorified

Having good recognition of God is one of the three parts of the Intellect. This means that man should know God correctly. He should know the God who is the mixture of the whole attributes of perfection, beauty and glory: The God who is innocent from being a body and who is not like any of the things or creatures which He has created. This is certified by the following verse of the Noble Quran in which we read,

"... there is nothing whatever like unto Him..." The Holy Quran: Shuraa 42:11.

It is not proper to compare God to other things and say things such as, "He is like the sun, the moon and the stars".

Everything which we see is composed of some parts. Man consists of millions of parts and in the same way water, air, plants, animals and everything else are all composed of various parts. However, God the Blessed is neither composed of material parts nor composed of spiritual parts. Moreover, God cannot be seen as we read in the Holy Quran,

"No vision can grasp Him, but His Grasp is over all vision: He is above all comprehension..." The Holy Quran: An'am 6:103.

Nothing ever happens to God. The world as you see it is subject to changes and accidents. Man is also subject to changes and accidents. One time he is a child. Later he becomes a young adult and later he grows old. Moreover, the plants, animals and all the created things are changing. The trees are green at one time and their leaves fall off at another time. Everything in this world is changeable, but God the Blessed the Sublime is neither changeable nor subject to any accidents.

God does not appear in anything. What the Christians stated when they claimed that God appeared in the shape of Jesus (a.s.) was a lie. Neither in Essence nor in Attributes or Deeds God does not have any partners. Man should never ascribe a partner for God in worshipping. God's Attributes are just His Holy Essence. God is not like other created things whose attributes are added to their essence. For example, man does not have knowledge at a time and then he becomes learned at a later time. Thus the attribute of having knowledge in man is different from his essence. At one time man does not have any power but becomes powerful at a later time. Thus the attribute of being strong and powerful is

different from his essence. However, this is not the case for God. God's Attributes are just His Essence. This means that God is exactly the same as His Knowledge and Power. His Knowledge and Power are exactly the same as His Holy Essence.

God the Blessed the Sublime is not needy. On the contrary, all things and creatures are in need of God. God is rich in Essence as we read in the Holy Quran,

"O ye men! It is ye that have need of Allah, but Allah is the One Free of all wants, worthy of all praise." The Holy Quran: Fatir 35: 15.

God is the Creator of all things and creatures. There are no partners in the act of creation for God's Holy Essence. God the Blessed the Sublime has created everything which is visible or invisible. Whatever any of the creatures has is from God the Blessed. For example, one may be healthy, ill, rich or poor as God wills. God is knowledgeable about everything and is able to do anything. He is the One who has been from the beginning and will be until eternity.

God does the tasks by His Will. However, God's Will is not like man's will as we read in the Holy Quran,

"Verily, when He intends a thing, His Command is, 'be', and it is!" The Holy Quran: Ya-Sin 36:82.

God has perceptions. He sees and hears, but not with eyes and ears like mankind. On the contrary, these perceptions are not by means of things like an eye or an ear. When it is stated that God the Blessed the Sublime is All–Hearing and All–Seeing, it refers to a prerequisite to God's Knowledge. This means that He is All–Encompassing everything with His Knowledge. He has Knowledge of all sounds and sights in the Universe. His All–Hearing and All–Seeing are just the same as His Knowledge which are just the same as His Essence.

God speaks but not with a physical means like the tongue. The speaking of God the Blessed the Sublime is that He Creates speech. Examples are God's talking with Moses (a.s.) and God's talking with the Prophet Muhammad (S) during his Ascension 49 which are instances of the Creation of speech by God. Another example is the Quran which has been created by God; God creates speech. It is not the case that God talks like man does.

God honestly promises and acts on all the promises which He has made as we read in the Holy Quran,

"... for Allah never fails in His promise." The Holy Quran: Al-Imran 3:9.

Thus, one part of the Intellect is having good recognition of God.

Being Completely Obedient to God

The second part of Intellect is complete obedience to God. An intelligent person is one who obeys God completely and observes all the necessary conditions. For example, he should say his prayers which are

said in remembrance of God and carry out all the rituals like bowing down and prostrating just as described in Islamic decrees.

He should say his prayers with sincerity and just for the sake of God. His prayer should be such that all his attention is directed towards God the Holy and he does not see other than Him while saying his prayers. He should pay attention to his prayer, know what he says, with Whom he speaks and what the intention is behind bowing down and prostrating.

He should pay attention to God's Holy Essence, His Majesty and the fact that He is the Lord of all the creatures in both worlds. 50 The same thing holds for his other acts and obligatory deeds. If he fasts, all his parts and organs should be fasting. If he gives charity to the poor, he should give them good things. If he enjoins others to do good deeds and admonishes them against doing wicked deeds, he should observe proper etiquette and abide by the conditions of such deeds.

Having a Good Opinion of God

The third part of the Intellect is having a good opinion of God. Having a bad opinion of God is one of the worst attributes. An example of having a bad opinion about God is to believe that God will never forgive us. This is not correct. One must be hopeful of God and must have a good opinion of God the Sublime. One should be hopeful that God would have Mercy upon him and would forgive him. One should do the acts of worshipping God which are a sign of having a good opinion of God. However, being hopeful should be accompanied by some fear of God.

In a narration on the authority of Loqman, he told his son, "Be afraid of God the Blessed the Sublime such that you fear God even if you have done all the obedience of all the people. Be hopeful of God's Mercy such that you have hopes even if you have committed all the sins of all the people." 51 Therefore, fear and hope must be equal to each other.

In another narration we read, "If they split the heart of a believer, two rays of light will be seen within it. One of these is fear and the other one is hope."52

The following is from amongst the sayings of the Master of the Martyrs al-Husayn (a.s.), "No one is safe from God's torture on the Resurrection Day unless he is afraid of God53 in this world."54

It has been stated in another narration that God says, "I am close to my worshipper who has a good opinion of Me."55

Therefore, one must have a good opinion of God and be hopeful of God's Mercy. However, he should also have fear of God. The following is from amongst the sayings of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) where he (a.s.) stated, "I advise you to try to attain five attributes. They are worth attaining even if you have to hit a camel's side with your feet to make it move fast. 56 None of you should be hopeful of anyone except God. You should not fear anything but your sins. Do not be one of those who do not

perform their duties, but hope to have salvation in the Hereafter. And if one of you does not know something, he should not be shy to ask. I advise you to be patient.57

The relationship of patience to belief is similar to the relationship of the head to the body. In the same way that a headless body is of no benefit, one who has belief but is not patient is of no benefit."58

- 1– None of you should be hopeful of anyone except God. You should not fear anything but your sins. Moreover, one should not place hopes in anyone else and should only have hopes in God.
- 2- You should not fear anything but your sins. The issue of fearing God returns to fearing one's own sins. One should fear that God may punish him for the sins which he has committed.

The above two points are about the issues of fear and hope which have been mentioned. When man is hopeful of God, he will plan to do his duties. Being just hopeful of God without saying one's prayers, fasting and performing other acts of worshipping is of no benefit. It is like being one who neither has any land nor has cultivated the land that he has, and is hopeful that the Blessed and the Sublime God will help him get a high yield that year. This is not being hopeful. Rather, it is being too proud. Real hopefulness is accompanied by performing one's duties.

The Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) stated, "Do not be one of those who do not perform their duties but hope to have salvation in the Hereafter."59

On the other hand, fear must be such that one performs the acts of worshipping as well as his duties in spite of being afraid of his sins and the low amount of his deeds. Therefore, hope and fear must both be accompanied by action.

- 3- "If one is asked something which you cannot answer, you should not be afraid to say, 'I do not know."
- 4- "And if one of you does not know something, he should not be shy to ask."

And if they ask him something which he does not know, he must simply say, "I do not know." Man is not supposed to know everything. If asked something which he does not know, he should not be ashamed to say, "I will study, and answer you when I find the answer."

5– I advise you to be patient. 60 The relationship of patience to belief is similar to the relationship of the head to the body. In the same way that a headless body is of no benefit, one who believes but is not patient is of no benefit."

- 1. Bihar ul-Anwar, 98/226.
- 2. Kalamate Maknunehye Faiz
- 3. Mafatih ul-Jinan
- 4. Kafi, 1/74.
- 5. Bihar ul-Anwar, 69/292.
- 6. Bihar ul-Anwar, 69/263.

- 7. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 1.
- 8. http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/sadi-bustan.html [1]
- 9. Mafatih ul-Jinan, The Jowshan Kabir supplications.
- 10. Bihar ul-Anwar, 103/8.
- 11. Bihar ul-Anwar, 103/117.
- 12. Al-Khisal, Narration No. 27-7.
- 13. Al-Khisal, Narration No. 4-28.
- 14. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 31.
- 15. Ithna Asharia
- 16. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 129.
- 17. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 1.
- 18. Misbah ul-Shria, Chapter 5 on Remembrance.
- 19. Side-note on Moula Abdullah 3.
- 20. Mafatih ul-Jinan
- 21. Awali al-Lali
- 22. Tafsir al-Mizan
- 23. Bihar ul-Anwar
- 24. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 178.
- 25. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 178.
- 26. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 178.
- 27. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 178.
- 28. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 1.
- 29. Sharhe Nahjul Balaghah, 1/73.
- 30. Bihar ul-Anwar, 81/184.
- 31. Kalamate Maknone, 6.
- 32. Misbah ul-Shria 16.
- 33. Kashf ul-Qita an Vojuhe Marasim al-Ehteda 30.
- 34. Al-Jawahir 20/164.
- 35. [It is Allah Who has made for you the earth as a resting place, and the sky as a canopy, and has given you shape and made your shapes beautiful, and has provided for you Sustenance, of things pure and good; such is Allah your Lord. So Glory to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds!] The Holy Quran: Mu–min 40:64.
- 36. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 1.
- <u>37.</u> Since what they say is either from the Holy Quran, glorifications of God, supplications, enjoining to do good, admonishing against evil or guiding the people.
- 38. Kafi, 2/237.
- 39. Bihar ul-Anwar, 3/269.
- 40. Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 1.
- 41. Kafi, 2/237.
- <u>42.</u> Since what they say is either from the Holy Quran, glorifications of God, supplications, enjoining to do good, admonishing against evil or guiding the people.
- 43. Kafi, 2/237.
- <u>44.</u> Since what they say is either from the Holy Quran, glorifications of God, supplications, enjoining to do good, admonishing against evil or guiding the people.
- 45. Udat ul-Da'ee 34.
- 46. Kafi, 2/237.
- 47. Udat ul-Da'ee 34.
- 48. Jame'a al-Akhbar 186.
- 49. Mi'raj

- 50. This world and the Hereafter
- 51. Kafi, 2/67.
- 52. Udat ul-Da'ee, 34.
- 53. As a result of which he is prevented from committing sins.
- 54. Bihar ul-Anwar, 44/192.
- 55. Bihar ul-Anwar, 70/385.
- 56. Meaning even if you have to work hard to get them.
- 57. In all bad events, affairs and hardships.
- 58. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 82.
- 59. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 150.
- 60. In all bad events, affairs and hardships.

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[1] http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/sadi-bustan.html