

Chapter 4: The Individual And Social Effects Of Monotheism

Knowing Allah is not only the basis of Islam, but of all divine religions. We must find out why this subject has been given so much importance that it was the theme of the first invitation by all prophets and all religious laws and commands have always been associated with and based on this theme so that no one can be considered a Muslim or religious, should he not believe in Allah.

Where does the importance of this conviction originate from, that so much emphasis has been laid on it? Is it simply a verbal statement or is it a belief in the heart as well? And if it is a belief, what relation does exist between this belief and the deed and morality of man? If the belief is the source of inspiration of man in life, we must, therefore, find out what this inspiration is. If knowing Allah created an overall change and improvement in man we must know this change and improvement. Otherwise, where does the importance and status of monotheism originate from? Hereunder we shall in brief, examine these questions:

Monotheism, when scrutinized from the Islamic standpoint, is a vast and profound subject which not only forms the epigraph of all convictions but it has also its roots in all social, moral and familial aspects of life and it provides a special sense and color for each of these religious deeds, habits and beliefs.

The Islamic monotheism enjoys such great importance that the Great Leader of Islam based the overall salvation upon it. He also began the universal invitation with a call to monotheism and repeatedly said: «Say there is no God but Allah to be saved. »

The Holy Quran when announcing the common aim of the Divine prophets and calling the followers of the Scriptures to the unity of word, recognizes monotheism as the basis of unity for all followers of the Divine religions.

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا

مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ ۚ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَا مُسْلِمُونَ

«Say: O followers of the Book. Come to an equitable proposition between us and you that we shall not serve any but Allah and (that) we shall not associate aught with Him, and (that) some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah: but if they turn back, then say: Bear witness that we are Muslims. » (3:64)

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنْ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ

«And certainly We raised in every nation an apostle proclaiming: Serve Allah and shun the Shaitan. » (16:36)

In the following brief study, we shall examine the individual and social effects of monotheism with reference to the judgment of the Quran.

Social Effects

Solidarity And Unity Of All Nations

The Islamic monotheism teaches us that the creator of all people and of the whole of all creatures, is Allah, the One. He has created all creatures, He breeds all, He wishes happiness and benefaction for them and His Grace and Blessing encompasses all. Thus, the origin of creation, and grace is a single point at which all efforts of people must be directed:

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

«... Surely we are Allah's and to Him we shall surely return.» (2: 156)

When the source of hope, movement and aim is a single point, all people must know themselves to be creatures of a single God. They must step only towards Him and there must be no dissension and separation among them.

وَاللَّهُمَّ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ ۚ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ

«And your God is one God! there is no god but He; He is the Beneficent, the Merciful. » (2: 163)

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ إِلَّا نُوحِي إِلَيْهِ أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدُونِ

And We did not send before you any messenger but We revealed to him that there is no god but Me, therefore serve Me. (21:25)

Equality and Justice

In accordance with the Islamic monotheism, Allah possesses absolute power. The domain of His knowledge encompasses everything and only He is entitled to govern the whole world. Everything subsists by Him and His command emanates from one end of the world to the other:

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ الْمُلْكُ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

«Blessed is He in Whose hand is the kingdom, and He has power over all things. » (67:1)

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ

«Allah! There is no God save Him, the Everliving, the Self- subsisting by Whom all subsist;» (2:255)

لِلَّهِ الْأَمْرُ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَمِنْ بَعْدُ

«... Allah's is the command before and after. » (30:4)

أَلَا لَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَهُوَ أَسْرَعُ الْحَاسِبِينَ...

«... now surely His is the judgment and He is swiftest in taking account.» (6:62)

He is the Supreme Owner of everything. He has supreme authority and He maintains all natural values, properties and richness. All gifts have been created for people and for the benefit of one and all.

Water, air, forest, mines, food, clothes, dwellings, jobs, right of marriage and having children etc. are for the benefit of all people and no one other than Allah is the absolute possessor of such things ... People are His creatures who must benefit from the Divine bounties ... certain rules for private ownership have been prescribed with regard to the rights of other people and the principle of equality and justice. All others are His servants who must benefit from the Divine donations ... and with regard to the rights of other people and the principle of equality and justice especial limitations and regulations are prescribed for private ownership and property.

The supreme authority of Allah, consequently, surpasses the will and authority of all people and under

no circumstances, the power of people must take the form of despotism. All authorities and powers must actually facilitate the fulfillment of the Divine Law and be in support of public interests and in giving help to people. Therefore, a class distinction which is the consequence of centralization of power by certain people or classes is condemned. All the disputes and controversies which may arise due to the centralization of capital, usurpation of public properties, will also be eradicated and the principle of economic and social justice will finally be established.

Intellectual and social freedom

According to Islamic monotheism, Allah is the source of inspiration. It invites people to think about the Divine signs and to pay careful attention to the signs of creation. Thus, people are offered complete freedom to know the realities of the world which are indeed the phenomena and laws of creation. They are never authorized to follow the desires of certain people, to give up knowing Allah and to give way to intellectual exploitation. It also condemns blind imitation of ancestors and religious authorities, and considers it as polytheism –Shirk:

اتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا

«They have taken their doctors of law and their monks for Lords besides Allah and (also) the Messiah son of Marium and they were enjoined that they should serve one God only. » (9:31)

If certain people, instead of accepting the realities of the world, the right and the truth, consent blindly to imitate and follow corrupt opinions and schools of thought, they will deviate from the right way of monotheism and submission to Allah and they will certainly go astray:

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ لَا تَغْلُوا فِي دِينِكُمْ غَيْرَ الْحَقِّ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا أَهْوَاءَ قَوْمٍ قَدْ ضَلُّوا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَأَضَلُّوا كَثِيرًا وَضَلُّوا عَنْ سَوَاءِ السَّبِيلِ

«Say: O followers of the Book! be not unduly immoderate in your religion, and do not follow the low desires of people who went astray before and led many astray and went astray from the right path. » (5:77)

Therefore, those people who believe in Allah do not give way to any kind of intellectual strangulation and never submit to intellectual stagnation and petrification. They always try, without being influenced by superstitions or deceived by pseudo religion-makers or getting involved with those people who impose their unjust views on others by force and violence, those who want to take advantage of public opinions for personal interests and in support of their own aim, to look at the vast horizon of creation, attempting to understand its mysteries and principles and arrive at a cosmology and worldview based on realism.

Negative effects of atheism (shirk)

Shirk in any form is the origin of a great deal of social perturbation to the extent that the Holy Quran introduces it as a great oppression:

إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ

«Lo! to ascribe partners (unto Him) is a tremendous wrong.» (31:13)

It introduces mushriks (atheists) as oppressors:

إِنَّهُ مَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَقَدْ حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ الْجَنَّةَ وَمَأْوَاهُ النَّارُ ۖ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِنْ أَنْصَارٍ

«Lo! Whosoever ascribes partners with Allah, for him Allah has forbidden Paradise, His abode is the Fire. For evil-doers there will be no helpers.» (5:72)

وَمَنْ يَقُلْ مِنْهُمْ إِنِّي إِلَهٌ مِنْ دُونِهِ فَذَلِكَ نَجْزِيهِ جَهَنَّمَ ۖ كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ

«And whoever of them should say: Surely I am a god besides Him, such a one do We recompense with hell; thus do We recompense the unjust.» (21:29)

Oppression is, indeed, deviation from reality and takes place when an unjust situation is imposed upon someone or something. Ascribing a partner to Allah is, therefore, the greatest possible injustice and deviation which may appear in the spirit and thought of man. It causes disorder and perturbation of principles of values and realities in the spirit of mushriks. This is some sort of unjust judgment and thinking which can only be interpreted as oppression.

If the principle of absolute power and guardianship of Allah is impaired in a society and its people accept a certain individual or class of people as their own sovereign authority and despot and the latter rules despotically over its subjects, that society can indeed be considered atheistic, because people have appointed an individual or group of people as their Lord and their supreme guardian. This is in contrast with the principles of Islamic monotheism and the centralization of power in Allah, the Omnipotent. The consequence of such a deviation is that the power-seekers of the world will begin exercising their power, suppressing public opinions and violating the properties and rights of other people. This «power-seeking» and «power-exercising» mania is the source of a great deal of atrocious acts, bloodshed, plundering and immense oppression in a society in which the people themselves created man-made gods for themselves.

If a group of people monopolize all natural resources like lands etc. without the least regard to the rights

of others and the Divine Laws, they will surely oppose the principle of absolute ownership of Allah and of the participation of all people in natural donations. In this case, contrasts and collision of interests among people and among societies arise, the rights of all people and nations will be violated by the influential and powerful group, the foundation of destructive exploitation, aggression and war will be established and severe oppression in favour of economic inequality will appear.

Ambition and the Struggle for Power

مَا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ مِنْ وَلَدٍ وَمَا كَانَ مَعَهُ مِنْ إِلَهٍ ۚ إِذَا لَذَهَبَ كُلُّ إِلَهٍ بِمَا خَلَقَ وَلَعَلَّا بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ ۚ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ

«Allah has not chosen any son, nor is there any god along with Him; or else would each god' have must surely championed that which he created, and some of them would surely have overcome others. Glorified be Allah above all that they allege. » (23:91)

The effect of shirk is dissension and separation. There is a perpetual conflict between the followers of imaginary idols who are naturally divided into different groups. To defend their false gods each group will fight against other groups and will, in order to defeat the other, resort to all kinds of crimes and aggressions.

Principally, submission to the whims and fancies of leaders having conflicting opinions and intentions will result in conflict and a struggle for power. Under monotheism and a single worldview based on realism, these differences will gradually disappear. Should any difference of opinions continue to persist, no group does condemn and fight each other... Conversely, they attempt peacefully and in collaboration with each other to discover and understand the realities of the universe.

Rebellion and Insurrection

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ

«And verily We have raised in every nation a messenger, (proclaiming): Serve Allah and shun false gods. » (16:36)

كَلَّا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِكَفْرٍ ۖ كَذَّابٍ ۖ كَلَّا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنَّاظٍ ۚ إِنَّ رَبَّهُ لَسَاءَ لِمَا يَسْتَفْتِنِي

«Nay, but verily man is rebellious; That he thinks himself independent. » (96:6-7)

Worship of Allah signifies a feeling of constant need towards Him, to solicit His Grace, Favor and Providence, to attempt to obey and follow His Laws and to try to obtain the satisfaction of the Creator

through offering aid and service to people and leading a pious life.

Lack of worship and the feeling of need towards Allah would make man rebel and he would, if given the chance tyrannize the people. His vanity and egoism and his greed for even more interests and his obsession to impose his designs upon the people, leads him to violate the rights and interests of the public.

Sensuality and Perversion

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ وَخَتَمَ عَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ عَلَىٰ بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةً فَمَنْ يَهْدِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ
اللَّهُ ۗ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

«Have you seen him who makes his desires his god, and Allah sends him astray purposely, and seals his hearing and his heart, covers his sight? Then, who will lead him after Allah (has condemned him)? Will you not then heed? » (45:23)

When egoism replaces worship of Allah, cupidity, personal interests and sensual desires become the idol of man. He then attempts to attain them even at the expense of trampling over the rights of others. Man's longing for riches causes him to neglect everything to the extent that he thinks only of his personal interests and thereby deviates from reality and justice; his ears fail to hear the cries of the oppressed and refuse to heed the advice of benevolent people; and his eyes are unable to see but his own interests and he loses all insight and understanding and his sense of reality. Such a man will, surely, go astray and divert from the right path.

Proximity to Allah, the root of development

Islam introduces to its followers a God who is the source of power and perfection; all signs and powers in the world persist by Him. His Knowledge, Will and Power surpass everything; no partner helps Him in governing the world; age, weakness, need, defect, destruction and death do not overtake Him; and He is the Supreme Power, the Supreme Knowledge, the Supreme Richness and the Supreme Perfection. Such is the God whom Muslims must believe in and all Muslims must aim at approaching. This is the most important mystery of development and of pure civilization of man, because:

Principally, conceiving an infinite Power, a limitless Knowledge, a supreme Will and a perfect richness widens human mental horizons and insight and enables him to attain the highest magnanimous spirit of humanity ... this great spirit, when accompanied by effort and activity, will open the doors of prosperity and perfection to man. The first responsibility of any Muslim is, therefore, to know this domain of infinite Power, Knowledge and Grace.

Man's second responsibility is to move towards this source of perfection and approach Him as much as

possible. The degree of decency of any Muslim can be evaluated with regard to his proximity to Allah. We may approach Allah through approaching science, power, justice, mercy ... the more we discover the mysteries of Nature and know the reality of the world, the more we approach the absolute knowledge and the source of knowledge, i.e. Allah. The more we can dominate the prevailing forces in Nature in order to increase the power and honor of the monotheistic community, the closer we get to the Divine Power., The harder we try to develop justice and to revive the social rights of the public, the nearer we are to the absolute justice of the Creator and finally, the more favor and service we offer to the people, the nearer we come to Allah, the Merciful.

Therefore, the results of the Divine orders regarding movement towards Allah appear in a great constant effort to perform good deeds and to attain perfection. Conversely, an ignorant, weak, needful, corrupt, narrow-minded and capricious society is far away from Allah. People of such a community can never consider themselves as favorite servants of Allah because Allah is free from ignorance, weakness, need and inability.

Moral and practical effects of belief in Allah

Fulfillment of duties

God, as introduced by Islam, is Omniscient, Omnipotent and Clear-sighted. He has prescribed certain duties for His creatures who have to fulfil them. He keeps close watch on the deeds of people, evaluates them, recompensates people according to their behavior and never breaks His promise. Thus, people who believe in Allah have contact with a source of great capability and perspicacity and they have a sense of responsibility before Him. They, therefore, try to fulfil their responsibilities. So, belief in Allah creates a guarantee within the spirit of the pious man and encourages him to follow good deeds and avoid evil.

Magnanimous Spirit

Those who believe in Allah deal with a God who is the source of Grace and Perfection. They therefore have contact with a great and perfect Origin, and they try to approach this Source of Grace, to fulfil their responsibilities towards Him and to obtain His Satisfaction. Thus, their aim advances from the stage of narrow and confined horizons towards the limit of vast and open horizons.

Philanthropy

لِإِنْ كَانَ آبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ وَأَمْوَالٌ اقْتَرَفْتُمُوهَا وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسَاكِينُ
تَرْضَوْنَهَا أَحَبَّ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَجِهَادٍ فِي سَبِيلِهِ فَتَرَبَّصُوا حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ
الْفَاسِقِينَ

«Say: If your fathers and your sons, and your brethren and your wives, and your tribe, and the wealth you have acquired, and merchandise for which you fear that there will be no sale, and dwellings you desire are dearer to you than Allah and His messenger and striving in His way: then wait till Allah brings His command to pass. Allah guides not the wrong-doers. » (9:24)

Such an excellent education condemns all agents of self-conceit and self-interest. Egoism, racial and tribal fanaticism, property, riches, wife and child cannot be considered as the only motivation for efforts and activities, and consequently, self-glorification, self-interest, vanity and voluptuousness will disappear.

The believer does not aim at satisfying only his own wants, but strives for the convenience of others and renders services to the society as well. He, sometimes prefers the interests of others to his own because He knows that Allah is watching over the deeds of people and recompensates them accordingly.

Forgiveness and self-sacrifice

The believer admits that he belongs to Allah and he believes in an eternal future and not only in this temporal life. He works for his eternal happiness. With his magnanimous spirit, he sacrifices his own convenience, property, even his life in the way of Allah, to render service to the public and he knows that if he loses these limited and temporal capitals, he will acquire the satisfaction of Allah instead and obtain perpetual blessing.

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