

Oneness of God

Oneness of the godhead is the fundamental principle of all heavenly religions and a specialty of the religion of Islam. Divine prophets called people to belief in oneness of God and monotheism and prohibited them from polytheism and duality. The Holy Prophet of Islam (S) began his mission with monotheism and in the first stage announced: Say ‘there is no god except Allah’ and be successful. Laws and beliefs of Islam are based on the oneness of the godhead.

The Holy Quran has accorded a special position to monotheism through numerous verses in such a way that it can be said to be a book of monotheism that opposes polytheism. The Holy Quran considers polytheism to be the only sin which is unforgivable under every circumstance. And He says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ

“Surely Allah does not forgive that anything should be associated with Him, and forgives what is besides that to whomsoever He pleases...” (4:48)

There are many kinds of monotheisms and we mention some of them in brief as follows:

Monotheism Of The Being

Monotheism of the being implies that all worldly phenomena are caused by a single being and except Him there is no other creator. The great being, who is called as ‘Allah’ is one and not more and He is unique. He has an independent existence without any need whereas all phenomena of the world are related to Him and are in need of Him.

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ

“Say: He, Allah, is One.” (112:1)

And He says:

قُلْ إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ وَإِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِّمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ

“Say: He is only one God, and surely I am clear of that which you set up (with Him).” (6: 19)

In books of philosophy and scholasticism oneness of the godhood is proved through various logical reasonings.

But we do not need to mention their details and explanations. If it is in the meaning of being that is necessary, pure and limitless, you will indeed realize that such a being should necessarily be unique and not multiple. In explanation of the matter it can be said that existing beings are not other than of two kinds: either they are limited or unlimited and absolute.

Limited beings are those whose existence is having a limit and they do not possess the being and perfections of others and they can be negated from it. For example: the existence of man is limited because he is a man and that is why other things like plants and lifeless things are placed with him and they can be negated from him. It can be said: Man is not plant and lifeless matter and they are also not human.

Since such beings do not possess existence in the position of their own being, they are needful and they have to take their existence from others. In such limited beings multiplicity, imagination and possibility of occurrence is present. As it is said (in plural form): Human beings, animals, plants and lifeless matters.

The second type is unlimited beings: Since such beings do not have limits and quantities; on the contrary they are absolute, pure and unlimited. Since they are unlimited and do not have any defect, they possess all the perfections and are needful from every aspect and free of need in their being. In this supposition, the existence of the greater and more free of need is not there that it should be needed.

In such a being actually, there is no imagination of multiplicity. In front of a being that is unlimited, how can we imagine another being who is unlimited and which should be its partner in creating and controlling the universe? Because if the second supposed being also possesses all the perfections of the being and is a part of its being, and if it lacks some of the perfections of the first being, he would be one and the same.

And if he lacks some perfection he would be limited and needful and such a being cannot be considered as a partner of God. This leads us to conclude that all phenomena of the world are limited and needful and are related to the Almighty Allah and we only have a single unique and pure being and He is one and has no partner.

Oneness in Attributes

Oneness in attributes means that the qualities of the Almighty Allah are His very being and not additional to His being. A few points can be mentioned to explain it:

1. Existing beings possess an existence and qualities; for example you see a white paper and say: This is a white paper. In this example, 'paper' is the being and 'white' is the quality. Paper can be white and it cannot be white. Whiteness is incidental to the paper and it does not have a separate existence. Whiteness is other than the paper and that is why it is possible for it not to be white.

Another example: Let us consider a knowing man. Here we have a knowing man and knowledge. Man is a being and knowledge is his attribute. Knowledge is not in the position of the being of man; on the contrary it is an incidental matter. If knowledge had been in the being of man, he would not have required acquiring it. Thus knowledge is neither the very being of man nor a part of his being.

2. Previously you read that the Almighty Allah possesses all the attributes of perfection. Since He is an unlimited being, it is necessary for Him to have all perfections. And if not, He would be deficient, limited, needful and an effect. You also learnt about the qualities of perfection like knowledge, power, life, hearing and sight.

Now the question arises that of what type the qualities of Almighty Allah are? Are they like qualities of other people which are incidental and additional to their beings? Can the divine being of Almighty Allah be ever bereft of knowledge, hearing and seeing and are these qualities incidental to His being, as in the case of human beings? Or that the qualities of Almighty Allah are of some other kind? If you ponder on the above discussion, you would easily get the reply to this query?

In order to explain this we should say: The Almighty Allah is a being in such a way that His existence is unlimited, absolute, and pure and has no end. Positive attributes of such a being cannot be denied. And if not, He would be limited, deficient and needful. Therefore knowledge, power and life and other positive attributes are the very being of Almighty Allah, and not incidental and additional to His being. That is why He is always in possession of the qualities and He does not need to acquire them.

The Almighty Allah is an unlimited being, and is knowledge, power and life itself. Since His being is Necessary Being (Wajibul Wujud), His knowledge, life and power would also be necessary and free of need of cause and unlimited; although He is only a single being and not more; but He is such an unlimited being that different meanings can be separated from Him.

With regard to Almighty Allah it is not that we should have a described being and the attributes be separate from Him; on the contrary, His divine being and positive attributes are in fact each other and He is one unlimited and absolute being.

In Nahjul Balagha, Ali Ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) has mentioned this critical matter and said:

“Perfection of sincerity 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 who recognizes His like regards Him two; and who regards Him two recognizes parts for Him; and who recognizes parts for Him mistook Him; and who mistook Him pointed at Him; and who pointed at Him admitted limitations for Him; and who admitted limitations for Him numbered Him.”¹

Oneness in Creation

Creation is in the meaning of origination. Oneness in creation implies that Almighty Allah, since He is one in His being and does not have any partner, in creation also He is one and there is no creator other than Him. Previously we mentioned that beings are of two types: one is such that its being is its very existence and has no need of anyone or anything else. Secondly there are beings, which in the position of existence do not have independent existence and they need other beings to bring them into existence; and that is unique being of the Lord of the worlds.

That is why all phenomena of the world need Almighty Allah for their existence and they have no other who has given them existence, as the possible phenomenon since originally are needful of the holy being of Almighty Allah and in survival, continuity of being, and in their actions and effects are also related to and needful of this needless being. If they are not independent existence they also do not have independence in action and effects.

It is God who has brought them into existence and not made their beings null and void. That is why whatever is there, is from Almighty Allah and it does not have any creator and originator other than Him. This is the meaning of oneness in creation.

There is no power and strength except that of Allah, the High and the Mighty. Although phenomena of the world have effects; for example the Sun possesses light and heat, it helps in the growth of plants and plants in turn prepare food for animals and human beings. And hundreds and thousands of other effect like we see in Nature in this world; such effects cannot be denied, but they are not creators and originators. On the contrary in effect of natural actions or reaction the effects that are bestowed to them become obvious.

The creator of the universe is one who has given existence to natural beings and has bestowed effects and specialties to them. Scientists have made amazing new inventions through experiments and research, but with a little attention it can be concluded that they have not brought them into existence; on the contrary their most important achievement is the exposition of secrets hidden in material natures, which the creator of the world has placed in their beings. We do not negate the causality and effects and effectuality of the material world. On the contrary we also do not negate the independence of their effects. From these statements we can conclude that since the Almighty Allah is one in His being, He is also one in His creation and that He has no partners.

We can conclude from the Holy Quran that the polytheists of the Arabian Peninsula also confessed to oneness in creation.

The Quran says:

وَلَيْنِ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ لِيَقُولَنَّ اللَّهُ فَأَنَّى يُؤْفَكُونَ

“And if you ask them, Who created the heavens and the earth and made the sun and the moon subservient, they will certainly say, Allah. Whence are they then turned away?” (29:61)

And He says:

وَلَيْنِ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ نَزَّلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوْتِهَا لِيَقُولَنَّ اللَّهُ

“And if you ask them Who is it that sends down water from the clouds, then gives life to the earth with it after its death, they will certainly say, Allah.” (29:63)

And He says:

أَفَى اللَّهِ شَكٌّ فَاطِرِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ

“Is there doubt about Allah, the Maker of the heavens and the earth?” (14: 10)

And He says:

قُلِ اللَّهُ خَلِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ الْوَحِيدُ الْقَهْرُ

“Say: Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the Supreme.” (13: 16)

And He says:

هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخَالِقُ الْبَارِي الْمُصَوِّرُ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى

“He is Allah the Creator, the Maker, the Fashioner; His are the most excellent names...” (59:24)

It can be concluded from such verses that the polytheists of the Arabian Peninsula and the ones addressed in the Quran knew that creation was from Almighty Allah and they were not polytheists in this matter. But it cannot be concluded from these verses that the polytheists of all areas of the world also

have same belief and that they accept oneness of god in creation; as in the case of Zoroastrians; who believe that all good is created by Yazdan and all evil is created by Ahriman. However we would refute this belief in the discussion of monotheism through logical reasonings.

Oneness in Lordship and Will

We mentioned previously that since Almighty Allah is a unique and single being; He also is one in creation and has no partner in it. Now we shall prove that He is also one in Lordship and control of universe. First we should define lordship and will and after that we should set out to reason out from them.

Lord in dictionary means one having something in His control so that He may reform its condition. Will is also in the same meaning: for example a piece of land is given in charge of a person in order that he may perform all necessary acts with regard to it. The gardener is identified as the lord and manager of the agricultural plot. The gardener is not the creator of the plot; on the contrary he is the lord and caretaker. Or for example if a person is given the power of creation and administrative matters are left at his discretion, he would also be called as the lord and controller. Or a man who is entrusted with the matter concerning quadrupeds; he is also considered as their lord and administrator.

Now the question arises that who is in control of the universe? Is it under the control of God, who has created it without any partner? Or He has handed over the charge of all or some of the phenomena to someone or something else? And this same matter is the topic of our discussion. From Quran and history it can be concluded that although the polytheists of the Arabian Peninsula accepted the oneness of god in creation, they did not ascribe to belief in the oneness of god in controlling and administering the world; on the contrary they considered other persons and things to be His associates in this regard.

Polytheists of the Arabian Peninsula, like polytheists of all countries of the world, believed that the Lord creator of the world (greater being) has entrusted the management of the world to invisible powers like angels, jinn, god of men, god of animals, god of seas and deserts, god of plants, god of human reproduction, holy spirits, evil spirits; so that they may control the world of nature independently and because of this belief, whenever they were confronted by dangers, calamities and to solve difficulties and fulfillment of needs they take refuge in a power related to the unseen; and to attract his attention perform offerings and rituals.

And as they were only 'imaginary' unseen powers, they shaped their images in wood, stone and metal and named them as idols and during worship focused their attention on them and humbled themselves before them while in fact their aim was to focus attention on unseen powers and different deities.

But the Holy Quran considers polytheism in lordship and will an invalid belief and also regards lordship as a special attribute of Almighty Allah. There are numerous verses in the Holy Quran which mention this point:

اللَّهُ الَّذِي رَفَعَ السَّمَوَاتِ بِغَيْرِ عَمَدٍ تَرَوْنَهَا ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ يَجْرِي لِأَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى
يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ يُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ بَلِقَاءِ رَبِّكُمْ تُوقِنُونَ

“Allah is He Who raised the heavens without any pillars that you see, and He is firm in power and He made the sun and the moon subservient (to you); each one pursues its course to an appointed time; He regulates the affair, making clear the signs that you may be certain of meeting your Lord.” (13:2)

And it says:

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ مَا مِنْ شَفِيعٍ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ
إِذْنِهِ ذَلِكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُوهُ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

“Surely your Lord is Allah, Who created the heavens and the earth in six periods, and He is firm in power, regulating the affair, there is no intercessor except after His permission; this is Allah, your Lord, therefore serve Him; will you not then mind?” (10:3)

Occupying the seat of authority and command (Arsh) is a simile for complete authority on the entire world to administer and ruling which is this same destiny and lordship. That is why lordship and divine will are also qualities only of Almighty Allah and the holy being of Allah from this aspect is also unique; and effect of causes and other cause will be there with His existential permission.

As mentioned in other verses also:

بَلْ رَبُّكُمْ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الَّذِي فَطَرَهُنَّ

“Nay! your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, Who brought them into existence...” (21:56)

And He says:

قُلْ أَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ أَبْغَىٰ رَبًّا وَهُوَ رَبُّ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ

“Say: What! shall I seek a Lord other than Allah? And He is the Lord of all things...” (6:164)

And He says:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

“All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.” (1:2)

Therefore as the Almighty Allah is single in His being and creation and previously you have learnt about the argumentations of the same, in lordship and administering of the world also He is alone, without any partners. He controls the world and does not leave matters related to the whole world to anyone or anything else. Philosophical reasoning means the same that was mentioned in the oneness in creation.

There we mentioned that the possible phenomena of the world in His being and actions are needful of a being as His existence is free of need of others and such a being is not except the being of the Almighty Allah. It was also mentioned there that the worldly phenomena (visible and invisible) since they are dependent on a higher being for their existence, in their actions and effects also they are in need of that self-sufficient being and are fully dependent on it. We don't have a permanent and needless being among the worldly phenomena that lordship and control of the world can be entrusted to it.

And if we see causality and effectiveness in the phenomena of the world, we should consider them to be His direct actions and imagine that the control of the world is entrusted to it. On the contrary as mentioned in Quran, mediums and causes act through the permission of Allah. Although angels are mediums of divine favors and possess effects, but their influence is not independent. In the same way, material causes have effect in the being of causality and not that they are independent; on the contrary they themselves and their effects are needful and dependent on Almighty Allah.

Oneness in Worship

Oneness in worship means monotheism and restricting worship only to the holy being of Almighty Allah. Oneness in worship was the most important call of the prophets. Quran says:

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ

“And certainly We raised in every nation an apostle saying: Serve Allah and shun the Shaitan.” (16:36)

And He says:

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

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

Worship means servitude and obeisance and a special humility in front of the deity with the condition that the worship act should arise from belief in divinity, lordship, will and creatibility of the deity. Since

divinity, lordship, will and creatibility are reserved only for the holy being of Almighty Allah worship and servitude should also be reserved for Him and no other being is eligible for this position and this is the meaning of oneness in worship.

As opposed to oneness in worship, we have polytheism in worship. It can be concluded from the Holy Quran that some people worship beings other than Allah, like: angels, unseen powers, sun and moon and some stars; they pay homage to them and make offerings and sacrifices to them. Their worship arises from belief that those deities have lordship and control of the universe and they can guarantee the fulfillment of their needs effectively and directly. They perform worships, offerings and sacrifices to be noticed by them. And if they paid homage before the idols of stone, woods and metals, it was because they considered them to be an expression of those hidden beings and through invalid conjectures considered their worship to be a medium of divine proximity, while they cannot do anything. Quran has ridiculed the polytheists for this worship and says: Worship Allah as He is the doer of the world. The Holy Quran says:

قُلْ أَتَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَمْلِكُ لَكُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا

“Say: Do you serve besides Allah that which does not control for you any harm, or any profit?”
(5:76)

And says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ لَكُمْ رِزْقًا

“You only worship idols besides Allah and you create a lie; surely they whom you serve besides Allah do not control for you any sustenance...” (29: 17)

And says:

وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَأَعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ

“And surely Allah is my Lord and your Lord, therefore serve Him; this is the right path.” (19:36)

And said:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“O men! serve your Lord Who created you and those before you so that you may guard (against

evil).” (2:21)

And said:

يَقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرُهُ

“Certainly We sent Nuh to his people, so he said: O my people! serve Allah, you have no god other than Him...” (7:59)

And said:

وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ هَؤُلَاءِ شَفَعُونَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ

“And they serve beside Allah what can neither harm them nor profit them, and they say: These are our intercessors with Allah.” (10: 18)

And said:

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا إِلَهًا وَحِدًا

“...they were enjoined that they should serve one God only.” (9:31)

And said:

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ اللَّهَ وَلَا أُشْرِكَ بِهِ

“Say: I am only commanded that I should serve Allah and not associate anything with Him...” (13:36)

As you must have noted, the Holy Quran negates the lordship, divinity and creation of false deities and their worship; and declares it to be a wrongful and useless act and considers worship to be reserved only for the Almighty Allah as lordship and control of the universe is reserved for Him alone. In the previous lessons we have learnt through philosophical reasonings and there is no need to repeat it again.

As mentioned in the history of worship (religion), every humility, even the goal of humility cannot be taken to be an implication of worship, on the contrary humility in worship is that it should have come from belief in divinity, creation and lordship of the deity. And that is why the prostration of angels before His Eminence, Adam; since Almighty Allah had ordered it, it was not polytheism. Quran says:

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ قَالَ أَأَسْجُدُ لِمَنْ خَلَقْتَ طِينًا

“And when We said to the angels: Make obeisance to Adam; they made obeisance, but Iblis (did it not). He said: Shall I make obeisance to him whom Thou hast created of dust?” (17:61)

It is known that prostration before His Eminence, Adam (a.s.) was not worship and polytheism, otherwise Almighty Allah would never have ordered it. And in the same way, the prostration of Prophet Yusuf and his brothers in front of their parents was not worship and polytheism as mentioned in Quran that Prophet Yusuf (a.s.) seated his parents on the throne and fell down in prostration to them along with his brothers.

وَرَفَعَ أَبَوَيْهِ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ وَ خَرُّوا لَهُ سُجَّدًا

“And he raised his parents upon the throne and they fell down in prostration before him.” (12:100)

It is learnt that the prostration of angels for Adam (a.s.) and the prostration of Prophet Yusuf (a.s.) and his brothers for Prophet Yaqub (a.s.) was not worship and polytheism. Because angels, Prophet Yusuf (a.s.) and his brothers did not prostrate before Adam (a.s.) and Yaqub (a.s.) due to belief in their divinity, creation and lordship. On the contrary it was on account of respect and honor.

Kissing the Black Stone and touching it and circling the Kaaba in the holy religion of Islam is considered as worship act and it is ordered to perform it. In spite of the fact that the goal of humility is Kaaba, it is not considered as polytheism. Therefore the Ziyarat of the holy tomb of the Holy Prophet of Islam and kissing of the sarcophagus and supplication near it also will not be considered as implied polytheism. And in the same way, visiting the tombs of the Holy Imams (a.s.) and kissing their graves and seeking the mediation of those purified souls with Almighty Allah and praying and seeking their intercession are also not considered polytheism.

Because all visitors know that the Holy Prophet (S) and Holy Imams (a.s.) were servants of Almighty Allah and needful of Him. Their honor and respect is not due to belief in their divinity, creation and lordship. Respect of those holy tombs is only due to the fact that they are related to the holy souls of the Holy Prophet (S) and his chosen descendants and in traditions Almighty Allah has ordered paying respect to them, to keep their memory alive and express our loyalty to those chosen ones.

Mediation through these holy souls, which is proved beyond doubt in Islamic law, is in fact obedience of the laws of Shariah and a medium of gaining proximity to Almighty Allah. You take advantage of natural causes in the matters of life and it is not polytheism, seeking mediation of holy souls of divine saints can also be from unnatural causes. But in any case neither natural cause have independence in their effects, nor unnatural cause; and they cannot be considered as polytheism.

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