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Monotheism

Monotheism in the Islamic Ideology

The Quranic monotheism is not an indifferent and irresponsible concept. It is rather a committed and a constructive notion. It is a way of thinking which has an effective role in the construction and administration of the society. It defines the aim and the strategy of the society. Monotheism is indeed one of the cornerstones – the principal one – of Islamic ideology.

The dependence of the world and man on the Superior Power (God) demands the world to have been created for a purpose. It also demands responsibility: that is man by using his power of thinking and decision should choose the straight path in order to achieve an aim. He should actually know this aim and the direction which ends in it.

Considering God as the only Creator of the world necessitates that the power of legislation be exclusive to His Will, and all the animate who possess common sense be subject to follow His rules (Exclusive Divinity). Also, the infinite knowledge of God demands that the competency of making rules of men, which are unavoidably based on man's needs and interests, be solely confined to Him.

The uniform servitude of all the living things towards God necessitates that none of His creatures be granted the right to govern over others (negation of idolatry). It also necessitates that the leader of mankind be the one whom God himself has chosen to govern, either by appointing the infallible Imams or by defining the criteria for Islamic governors at the time of the infallible Imam's absence.

The following verses of the Qur'an will elucidate parts of the Islamic thought about monotheism.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَتَّخِذُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَنْدَادًا يُحِبُّونَهُمْ كَحُبِّ اللَّهِ ۖ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ ۗ وَلَوْ يَرَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا إِذْ يَرَوْنَ الْعَذَابَ أَنَّ الْقُوَّةَ لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعَذَابِ إِذْ تَبَرَّأَ الَّذِينَ اتُّبِعُوا مِنَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا وَرَأَوُا الْعَذَابَ وَتَقَطَّعَتْ بِهِمُ الْأَسْبَابُ وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوا لَوْ أَنَّ لَنَا كَرَّةً فَنَتَبَرَّأَ مِنْهُمْ كَمَا تَبَرَّءُوا مِنَّا ۗ كَذَٰلِكَ يُرِيهِمُ اللَّهُ أَعْمَالَهُمْ حَسَرَاتٍ عَلَيْهِمْ ۖ وَمَا هُمْ بِخَارِجِينَ مِنَ النَّارِ

Yet of mankind are some who take unto themselves (objects of worship which they set as) rivals to Allah, loving them with a love like (that which is the due) of Allah (only) – those who believe are stauncher in their love for Allah –
(On the day) when those who were followed disown those who followed (them), and they behold the doom, and all their aims collapse with them.
And those who were but followers will say: If a return were possible for us, we would disown them even as they have disowned us. Thus will Allah show them their own deeds as anguish for them, and they will not emerge from the Fire. (2: 165-167)

God Exclusive Obedience and Worship

So far we understood that monotheism is not only a philosophical concept but a belief on which man's social and individual life should be based.

Some of the general articles of the Monotheistic Resolution the Qur'an are as follows:

According to the principle of monotheism, human beings do not have the right to worship or obey any person or anything except God. On this basis all the sufferings and oppressions which have been imposed on mankind by false gods throughout the history have been devoid of any true justification. This general statement includes idols, gods, tyrants and finally the inclinations of the carnal soul. The following verses which are about false gods whether mankind or other things-clarify the general pattern of this aspect of monotheism.

وَيَوْمَ نَحْشُرُهُمْ جَمِيعًا ثُمَّ نَقُولُ لِلَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا مَكَانَكُمْ أَنْتُمْ وَشُرَكَاؤُكُمْ ۚ فَزَيَّلْنَا بَيْنَهُمْ ۖ وَقَالَ شُرَكَاؤُهُمْ مَا كُنْتُمْ إِيَّانَا
تَعْبُدُونَ فَكَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ شَهِيدًا بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ إِنْ كُنَّا عَنْ عِبَادَتِكُمْ لَغَافِلِينَ هُنَالِكَ تَبْلُو كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَا أَسْلَفَتْ ۚ وَرُدُّوا إِلَى اللَّهِ
مَوْلَاهُمُ الْحَقِّ ۖ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ قُلْ مَنْ يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَمَّنْ يَمْلِكُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَمَنْ
يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ الْحَيِّ وَمَنْ يُدَبِّرُ الْأَمْرَ ۚ فَسَيَقُولُونَ اللَّهُ ۚ فَقُلْ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ

"And the day We shall muster them all, then We shall say to those who associate partners (with God): ·Get you to your place, you and your associates. Then We shall separate between them, and their associates will say, 'Not us you were serving. God is a sufficient witness between us and you; assuredly we were heedless of your service. There every soul shall prove its past deeds: and they shall be restored to God, their Lord, and the True and there shall go astray from them that they were forging Say: 'Who provides you out of the heaven and earth, or who possesses hearing and sight, and who brings forth the living from the dead and brings forth the dead from the living, and who directs the affair?' They will surely say, 'God' Then say: 'Will you not be God-fearing?'" (10:28-31)

قُلْ هَلْ مِنْ شُرَكَائِكُمْ مَنْ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْحَقِّ ۚ قُلِ اللَّهُ يَهْدِي لِلْحَقِّ ۗ أَفَمَنْ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْحَقِّ أَحَقُّ أَنْ يُتَّبَعَ أَمَّنْ لَا يَهِدِّي إِلَّا

أَنْ يُهْدَىٰ ۚ فَمَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ

"Say: 'Is there any of your associates who guides to the truth?' Say: 'God guides to the truth; and who is worthier to be followed–He Who guides to the truth, or he who guides not unless he is guided? What then ails you, how you judge?" (***10:35***)

It is clear that to guide and being guided is a quality which man deserves. Thus, the above verse is about those men who proclaim themselves as gods or consider themselves to be the partners of God and oblige other people to obey them as slaves. ! Islam negates the servitude to the pretended gods, being religious powers (monks) or political and economic powers (tyrants, nobles and rich men).

In a verse of the Qur'an Islam offers the following suggestion to the people of the Book:

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ ۚ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا مُسْلِمُونَ

"Say: 'People of the Scripture come now to a word common between us and you, that we worship none but God, and that we associate not aught with Him, and do not some of us take others as Lord s. apart from God.' And if they turn their backs, say: 'Bear witness that we are Muslims.'" (***3:64***)

However, the Qur'an considers people's obedience to the true believers as an obedience to God , and in a few verses it introduces the executive powers of the Islamic community (the Prophet and those who are in authority, i.e. Ulil amr[1].

The Spirit of Monotheism: Negation of Servitude to False Deities

Scrutinizing about some other verses of Qur'an will much more clarify the effect of monotheism and its monotheistic procedure on individual life and social organizations.

According to the Qur'an, the refusal to worship false gods does not necessarily imply that one is a monotheist. In order to be considered a monotheist, one has to negate the obedience to the opponents of God as well. This point is so much evident in the Qur'an that those who obey false gods are called idolaters. In this way worshipping God which is the meaning and the spirit of monotheism can be called the exclusive obedience and servitude to God.

Thus, the obedience to and the worshipping of false gods being in the form of an individual's commands, public rules, social organization or so forth is considered idolatry. This is why with the protesting tone monotheism is manifested in the verses of the Qur'an such as the following:

أَفَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ أَبْتَغِي حَكَمًا وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْكُمُ الْكِتَابَ مُفَصَّلًا ۚ وَالَّذِينَ آتَيْنَاهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّهُ مُنَزَّلٌ مِنْ رَبِّكَ
بِالْحَقِّ ۖ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُمْتَرِينَ وَتَمَّتْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ صِدْقًا وَعَدْلًا ۚ لَا مُبَدِّلَ لِكَلِمَاتِهِ ۚ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ وَإِنْ تُطِعْ
أَكْثَرَ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يُضِلُّوكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنْ يَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا الظَّنَّ وَإِنْ هُمْ إِلَّا يَخْرُصُونَ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ مَنْ يَضِلُّ
عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ ۖ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ فَكُلُوا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ بِآيَاتِهِ مُؤْمِنِينَ وَمَا لَكُمْ أَلَّا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا ذُكِرَ
اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَقَدْ فَصَّلَ لَكُمْ مَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمْ إِلَّا مَا اضْطُرِرْتُمْ إِلَيْهِ ۗ وَإِنَّ كَثِيرًا لَيُضِلُّونَ بِأَهْوَائِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ ۗ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ
هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُعْتَدِينَ وَذَرُوا ظَاهِرَ الْإِثْمِ وَبَاطِنَهُ ۚ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْسِبُونَ الْإِثْمَ سَيُجْزَوْنَ بِمَا كَانُوا يَقْتَرِفُونَ وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا مِمَّا لَمْ
يُذْكَرِ اسْمُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ وَإِنَّهُ لَفِسْقٌ ۗ وَإِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ لَيُوحُونَ إِلَىٰ أَوْلِيَائِهِمْ لِيُجَادِلُوكُمْ ۖ وَإِنْ أَطَعْتُمُوهُمْ إِنَّكُمْ لَمُشْرِكُونَ

What shall I seek other than God for judge? For it is He Who sent down to you the Book well-explained; and those whom We have given the Book know it is sent down from thy Lord with the truth; so be not thou of the waverers. Perfect is the Word of thy Lord in truthfulness and justice; none can change His words; He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing. If thou obeys the most of those on earth they will lead thee astray from the path of God; they follow only surmise, merely conjecturing. Thy Lord knows very well who goes astray from His path; He knows best who erred from His way and He knows best t" rightly-guided. Eat of that over which God's Name has been mentioned, if you believe in His signs. How it is with you that you do not eat of that over which God's Name has been mentioned, seeing that He has explained for you that He has forbidden unto you unless you are constrained to it'.' But surely many lead astray by their caprices. Without any knowledge; thy Lord knows best the transgressors. Forsake the outward sin, and the inward; surely the earners of sin shall be recompensed for what they have earned. And eat not of that over which God's Name has not been mentioned; it is ungodliness. The Satan inspire their friends to dispute with you; if you obey them you are idolaters… (***6:114-121***)

وَأُزْلِفَتِ الْجَنَّةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ وَبُرِّزَتِ الْجَحِيمُ لِلْغَاوِينَ وَقِيلَ لَهُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ هَلْ يَنْصُرُونَكُمْ أَوْ
يَنْتَصِرُونَ فَكُبْكِبُوا فِيهَا هُمْ وَالْغَاوُونَ وَجُنُودُ إِبْلِيسَ أَجْمَعُونَ قَالُوا وَهُمْ فِيهَا يَخْتَصِمُونَ تَاللَّهِ إِنْ كُنَّا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ
إِذْ نُسَوِّيكُمْ بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ وَمَا أَضَلَّنَا إِلَّا الْمُجْرِمُونَ فَمَا لَنَا مِنْ شَافِعِينَ وَلَا صَدِيقٍ حَمِيمٍ فَلَوْ أَنَّ لَنَا كَرَّةً فَنَكُونَ مِنَ
الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِنَّ فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةً ۖ وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

And Paradise shall be brought forward for the God-fearing and Hell advanced for the erring. And it will be said unto them where were you serving apart from God:' do they help you or help themselves?" Then they shall be pitched into it. They and the perverse and the hosts of Iblis altogether. They shall say as they dispute there one with another. 'By God we were certainly in manifest error when we made you equal with the Lord of all being. It was naught but the sinners that led us astray; so now we have no intercessors, nor a loyal friend. O that we might return again, and be among the believers! ·· Surely in that is a sign. Yet most of them are not believers…" (***26:90- 103***)

Monotheism and the Negation of Social Classes

Social discrimination has always been the great cruelty of the human history. In order to justify this cruelty, sometimes it is said:
Different gods have created different classes of the society and therefore, each class has its own peculiar advantages and right." Sometimes it is said, “The One God has granted particular rights to a special group of people when creating them." On the whole at different stages of the history of man’s life this justification has had different forms and on this basis, the luxury of the highly distinguished class and deprivation of the oppressed class have been considered a natural necessity.

The principle of monotheism not only considers all the animate as creatures of One God but also obliterates the roots of social discrimination from the minds of human beings. A part of the monotheistic instructions which can be seen in the verses of the Qur'an is as follows:

قُلْ لِمَنِ الْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ ۚ قُلْ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ قُلْ مَنْ رَبُّ السَّمَاوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ ۚ قُلْ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ قُلْ مَنْ بِيَدِهِ مَلَكُوتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ يُجِيرُ وَلَا يُجَارُ عَلَيْهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ ۚ قُلْ فَأَنَّىٰ تُسْحَرُونَ بَلْ أَتَيْنَاهُمْ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ مَا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ مِنْ وَلَدٍ وَمَا كَانَ مَعَهُ مِنْ إِلَٰهٍ ۚ إِذًا لَذَهَبَ كُلُّ إِلَٰهٍ بِمَا خَلَقَ وَلَعَلَا بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ ۚ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ

"Say: 'Whose is the earth, and whose is in it, if you have knowledge? They will say, 'God's· Say: ·Will you not then remember?' Say: ·Who is the Lord of the seven heavens and the Lord of the mighty Throne? They will say, 'God'. Say: ·will you not then be God-fearing? Say: In Whose hand is the dominion over all things and He protects, while against Him there is no protection. If you have knowledge? They will say. God, Say: ·How then arc you bewitched? Nay, but We brought them the truth, and they are truly liars. God has not taken to Hi1mself any son, nor is there any god with Him: for then each god would have taken off that he created and some of them would have risen up over other; glory be to God. Beyond that they described, who has knowledge of the unseen and the visible; high exalted be He, above that they associated!" (***23:84-91***).

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ فِرَاشًا وَالسَّمَاءَ بِنَاءً وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَكُمْ ۖ فَلَا تَجْعَلُوا لِلَّهِ أَنْدَادًا وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

"O mankind , worship your Lord Who created you, and those that were before you; haply so you will be God-fearing; who assigned to you the earth for a couch, and heaven for an edifice, and sent down out of heaven water, · wherewith He brought fourth fruits for your provision; so set not up compeers to God wittingly." (***2:21-22***)

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ

عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

"O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and appointed you nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most God- fearing of you. God is All-knowing. All-aware." (***49: 13***)

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَىٰ كَثِيرٍ مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا

"We have honored the Children of Adam and carried them on land and sea and provided them with good things, and preferred them greatly over many of those We created." (***17:70***)

The Psychological Effects of Monotheism

Although the principal responsibility of monotheism is to establish a monotheistic society, that is a society where there is no class discrimination and the Divine rules and the command of Allah are dominant. The psychological effects of this belief in the spirit of the believers is tremendous and worth considering. On the whole it can be said that the monotheistic belief has two constructive dimensions: the construction of the society and the construction of the individual.

The follower of monotheism, under the influence of this belief enjoys important characteristic including, infinite hope, untiring effort, and protection against fright and lusts broad-mindedness rightly- chosen direction and so forth.

The Quran in some of its verses when speaking about faith and the life and efforts of the true believers clearly point out some of these characteristic . Example verses are as follow"

الَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِلَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَصَابَهُمُ الْقَرْحُ ۚ لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا مِنْهُمْ وَاتَّقَوْا أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ الَّذِينَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ إِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ جَمَعُوا لَكُمْ فَاخْشَوْهُمْ فَزَادَهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَقَالُوا حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ فَانْقَلَبُوا بِنِعْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَفَضْلٍ لَمْ يَمْسَسْهُمْ سُوءٌ وَاتَّبَعُوا رِضْوَانَ اللَّهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ ذُو فَضْلٍ عَظِيمٍ إِنَّمَا ذَٰلِكُمُ الشَّيْطَانُ يُخَوِّفُ أَوْلِيَاءَهُ فَلَا تَخَافُوهُمْ وَخَافُونِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

"And those who answered God and the Messenger after the harm had smitten them-to all those of them who did good and feared God, shall be a mighty wage; those to whom the people said.'The people have gathered against you, therefore fear them'; but it increased them in faith, and they said, 'God is sufficient for us; an excellent Guardian is He. So they returned with blessing and bounty from God, untouched by any harm: they followed the good pleasure of God; and God is of abounding bounty. That is Satan frightening his friends. Therefore do not fear them; but fear Me. if you are believers." (***3: I 72-175***)

1. Ulil-'amr: Generally it means "those of you who are in authority". But the question is that "Who is authority?" Some say that it refers to the Prophet(S) and his Household. It is also said that it refers to the juris consults. However ulil-'amr are those people who are as immaculate as the Prophet(S). In the Surah of 'Women', verse 59,the Qur'an says:

"O ye who believe obey Allah, and obey the Prophet and ulil-'amr'.' Here ulil-'amr enjoys the same position as the Prophet. One is to obey the Prophet as he is to obey ulil-'amr.

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