

THE ISLAMIC CONCEPT OF GOD AND PROPHET

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The idea of God is the essential feature of all religions. It distinguishes between a religion and a philosophy or a cult. However, we find alongside this perpetual existence of the idea of God in all religions, even the primitive ones and many differences in its perception. These two phenomena, the existence of the idea of God in all religions among all nations and the great variations in contemplating this "God" lead us to two findings. The first one is that the idea of God is an instinctive and original one. It has an actual positivism, a factual existence and not a mere of a dream or wish. No such idea can persist in all ages and among all nations and withstand all attacks and suspicions unless it has a deal and solid foundation. The second one is that the mental image of God is oriented by the degree of the material and cultural progress that a society attains by its geographic and environmental conditions. Thus, Primitive "God" was primitive; because the people who adored Him were primitive as they could not understand otherwise. The gods of tough mountain-men were distinct. How great is the difference between the thunderous Odin of the Viking and the mild Isis of the Egyptians?

Although the first finding conforms to what religions claim in general, the second finding, *shows* a great challenge that might shake the very foundation of religions, If the mental image of God is dependent upon every nation's particular understanding and the degree of its social development, then His image would differ from community to community, undermining the entire framework of religious belief. Islam does not overlook the phenomenon of diversity in the mental image of God in the preceding religions. Indeed, the occurrence of such diversity was one of the reasons for the appearance of Islam and other revealed religions.

The conception of God in Islam has two aspects; the first one is related to the existence of God and its proof through Creation. The second one is that the existence of God symbolizes purposefulness, abstractness and absolutism. Without His existence, all these symbolisms will be meaningless, or at best have a relative purpose and import.

The Qur'an treats these two aspects in a comprehensive way in which one leads into the other. It proves the existence of Allah, (God) through one great evidence, namely "Creation". Although all religions prove the existence of God through Creation, Islam accords the subject in an original and distinguished treatment.

The Qur'an is an artistic expression of natural phenomena. It implies frequent calls for man to conceive, think and contemplate everything he observes, even the ant and the bee after which two Surahs have been named. Usually, the Qur'an directs attention towards the universe, the sun, the moon, the sequence of day and night and life and death, etc. in a very vivid and declaratory manner. The Qur'an mentions the camel because it represents a valuable asset such as the Bedouin possess a cow within the context of the Jew because it had an association with life in medieval Egypt.

Everything in the universe reflects the miracle of Creation. How have all these creatures come into life? Is it by a mere chance or by AL-Dahr (the age) nature at the old and modern sceptics claim? "And they say" "What is there but our life in this world we shall live and then we shall die, and nothing but time that destroys us" (Surah AL-Jatheia, 24) the matter is also expressed by Berge son in his book entitled Evolution of Creation "The Qur'an stands against these unrealistic claims. There must be a Creator since chance cannot guarantee the precise, harmonious and constant confirmation of the universe. Millions of years can not be able to create life even if they can after the shape or nature of life. Scientific discoveries affirm, everyday, the perfect and accurate organization of the universe and how it revolves according to every law regulating the small station and the huge galaxy. If the laws disrupted for any reason, catastrophes will occur invoking the entire systems of universe.

I would like to mention a trifle incident which occurred to me and probably to many others as well. One day the television showed a picture of a latest Japanese robot, showing how it walked, stopped, picked a flower and presented it to a lady. Immediately after that and in the same programme, some scenes from a circus were presented in which a female acrobat performed her risky role with great courage and precision. What a contrast between that clumsy, slow moving, ugly steel contraption and this beautiful, radiant, flesh and blood creature of God, though the robot is the latest product of modern technology. The Qur'an is very emphatic about the miracle of Creation, not only with regard to man but also with regard to a small fly. It challenges man to create a fly, which they cannot, nor can anybody else. I think that modern technology will not be able to create a helicopter as small as a fly.

In proving the existence of God by Creation, the Qur'an builds up the mental image of God in a unique fashion. Some religions personify God endowing Him with all human qualities and attributes. This concept is in the Greek and Egyptian mythology. Philosophers, on the other hand, tend to envisage God in an abstract philosophical supposition having no life or vitality. Christianity for historical reasons expounded a very compound

structure of trinity, the relationships within this trinity, and the nature of each hypothesis. This notion is not perceivable through one's natural dispositions or his own ??? but must be acquired from a professional priest, hence, the necessity of the Church and the priests exists. Even after learning such a theology, many thinkers expressed their doubts about the consistency of this theology. The personified God was the real reason that made many European thinkers repudiate Christianity. Islamic theology, on the other hand, does not follow the same approach. Although the attitude of Islam towards God encompasses all characteristics of life, power, will, perfection, etc. It stresses the fact that these characteristics are by no means similar to human qualities.

"The One and Only God, the Eternal, Absolute. He bequeath not, nor is He bequeath, and there is none like unto Him" (112-14).

"There is nothing whatever like unto Him" (42-11).

"No vision can grasp Him, but His grasp is overall vision" (6:103)

"He is the last and the last, the Evident and the human and He has full know ledge of all things" (57:3).

Islam purified the idea of God from any nation of incarnation of Polytheism, which was the essence of all previous religions. It perceives God as the One and the Only Creator of material and mental existence. This creation presents a proof of the existence of God, and in the meantime, the existence of God becomes the only explanation of this universe material and mental existence without a Creator. Thus, the idea of God becomes the source of all values and the only rational explanation of the existence of this organized universe.

Stripping the image of God from all forms of theological entanglements (incarnation, polytheism, etc), and relying on the creation as a proof of His existence conforms to Islam's clarity and simplicity as His chosen religion that explains the absence of a church or a clergy. Nature is the church of a Muslim. Their hearts and consciences (inner feelings) are their own guardian. This meaning is crystallized in the Noble Prophet's advice to one of his companions, "Consult your heart even if people give you their advices".

It is apparent that we cannot visualized or grasp the shapes and nature of God's image, although we are sure of the existence of its owner, confident that He is the Almighty Creator since these creatures and universe cannot be created by a chance or by a mere evolution and cannot function so precisely without an absolute regime ,wisdom and intelligence that surpass all our imaginations, our inability to comprehend the nature God may generate some suspicions and doubts, but this inability is not only a logical conclusion. Our capacities are admitted, and there are many things that we are unable to

understand. How then can we understand the Omnipotent Creator of them all?

The recognition of God can not be a matter of mathematical calculations or experiments, because if they were so, the conception of God would lose its characteristics and contemplation and heart that one believes in God, otherwise he will not appreciate the Absolute Almighty God. The unique importance and the far-reaching effects of the conception of God specifically lie in the fact that we believe in God although we do not see Him by eyes, not touch Him by hands. According this fact, the idea of human conscience emerges. It is the power that directs man to act not only to gain benefits or avoid pains but also to endure losses and hardship.

Where does this power come from? Pure reason cannot guide us beyond utility. The existence of a divine element, conscience in the human soul is not an accessible matter to a mathematical proof. The Prophet (God's blessing and peace be upon him) mentioned that "Honesty is deposited in the core of human heart" and as God said. "My skies and My Earth are not wide enough to contain me, but human heart is". Some thinkers are of the view that human conscience cloned the idea of God, but the opposite is true. God implants conscience in human souls through religion. This is what the celebrated Egyptologist James Rasted indicated in his book relating to the religion of Ancient Egypt. The book entitled "The Dawn of the conscience".

The Concept of the Prophet hood

As mutational earliest, man can think on the existence of a Creator God by his own intuition but he cannot visualize His nature of shape. Hence there were variations in envisaging God among different nations throughout history. And in order to avoid this contusion, God sent His Messengers and Prophets to convey the right concept about His Being to mankind.

The essential function of a Prophet is to carry and disseminate the message of God. Since the Prophet does not know it by himself, and since a direct access from prophet to God is impossible, this message is transmitted through a particular medium, viz. through the Arch-angel Gabriel.

When the failure of a man to comprehend the true image of God and how he wavers between the incarnations of pagans and the abstractions of philosophers and to what extent he is influenced by his environmental conditions, if all these are considered, then we can understand the necessity of the emergence of Prophet hood. Without their guidance, mankind would go astray, to become the victim of sorcerers, soothsayers and occultists. The temple of Delphi is a historic case in point. Many leaders like Alexander the Great, and some Roman Emperors, and even philosophers like Socrates fell

on such false influence. Horrible claims and dreadful acts were committed under this influence, Even Plato "The Driven Plato" was unable to teach beyond his theory of ideas, which presented a lifeless God.

Through these precedents and examples, we recognize that revelation is the only medium through which the true image of God can be tormented. We cannot explain this process in national terms. It is a part of what Islam calls "The Unseen World". However, we must accept prophets, the most representation example of human perfection, when they affirm it and the revelation exposes things we cannot otherwise perceive and which do not contradict the rules of reasoning.

The Qur'an defines the function of the Prophet which is to convey the message of Allah to mankind through revelation. He has no authority to say anything on his own revelation. He is essentially a transmitter, although he can explain what the believers may not understand; emphasize matters in detail and the broad lines of the revealed message.

Islam stresses the human character of the Prophet. He is not a divine person, but a man like other men, selected and guided by God. The Qur'an blames the Christians for deifying their prophets and saints and giving them the authority of mediation between man and God. Therefore, any kind of mediation is not permissible. In Islam Prophets are merely messengers of God, they cannot forgive anyone if he commits a crime and exempt him/her from the punishment he/she deserves. They also cannot intercede with God to anybody's behalf, for Islam does not accept the idea of intercession as such.

The Prophet, in Islam, is the supreme guide. He teaches, explains, calls for God, answers, and tries, as hard as possible, to make his mission be accepted. He must be the perfect teacher with an unlimited capacity to endure all abuses and persecution at the thoughts and hands of his opponents. He also does not claim anything for himself. He has not a privilege. His wife, children and his relatives have no advantage over other Muslims. Moreover, we find the Qur'an warns the Prophet's wives of a double punishment in case they commit a sin.

History proves that Prophets are the greatest leaders of humanity. They played their role more perfectly than any other well-known leaders. The three great Prophets, Moses, Christ and Muhammad surpassed all leaders in their leadership. A very important fact that distinguishes a prophet from other leaders is that the Prophet cannot use immoral methods. In Prophets, greatness is associated with good manners, mercy and justice.

IMPLICATIONS

Now, what are the effects of the conception of God and the Prophet? A Muslim imbued with this conception will have profound belief that he has not been created at random or without a purpose. He believes that God had entrusted with a sacred mission, and the Almighty, Just, and Compassionate God had sent Prophets to show by their example and manners the right path to salvation. By following the guidance provided by the Prophets, he will receive his reward from God on the Day of Judgment.

The Muslim experiences peace of soul and harmony with the whole universe, all its components, the sun, the moon, the planets, the Heavens, the earth, the day and the night, etc... If St. Francis of Assisi spoke by virtue of his extraordinary purity of character and clairvoyance to birds, the fire and the sun addressing them as sisters, the Qur'an teaches the old man Muslim that all creatures are like human beings. It states that there is not an animal (that lives) on earth nor a being that flies on its wings, but. Communities like you. (6:38).

The seven heavens and the earth, and all being therein declare His glory, there is not a thing but celebrates His praise (27:44)

This sense of brotherhood with all beings and elements of the universe based on objective principles make the true Muslim very careful in treating these elements. For example he must not waste water in washing "even if he was on the shore of a flowing river" he must not kill a dove, and must not use a pigeon or other living birds in sport as targets to shoot at. When a Muslim is slaughtering an animal, he must lessen its pain as much as possible.

The certain belief in an eternal life after death, beyond all that could be attained in this life, creates a feeling of expectation, and eliminates the sense of frustration caused not only by achievement and success. As long as material objectives and desires could be achieved one after another sometimes a feeling of boredom crops up minimizing one's motivation, zeal, and interest in life. But when there is a belief in the existence of another life after death, life becomes a continuum of accomplishments and vitality that lasts for ever. Therefore, a true Muslim never commits suicide, whereas in some advanced Western societies the rate of suicide is very high, even though the most of the material needs of the people are fulfilled. For a Muslim, this act is a kind of denying of the existence of the Almighty Compassionate God. Although a Muslim refuses to commit suicide, he is never afraid of death and meets it with tranquility, because he is confident of the Mercy of God.

These are some, but not all, of the results of the Islamic conception of God. In the Islamic conception of the Prophet Hood, a Muslim finds the guidance for the practical aspects of life. If a political leader, worker, employer father, husband, etc, would find precedents, commands and guiding

examples, this will lead him / her to live a decent and a happy life. It is a pity that although in the present day, Muslims revere their Prophet, their ignorance prevent them from grasping the core of his teaching. Confining their interest only to the aspects of worship in the noble life of Prophet Muhammad, focusing less on the political, social, and economic aspects.