

Fast 29: The Oneness of God — 3. What it gives us

- Belief in One God is the basis of human progress, whether it is material progress, intellectual progress or moral and spiritual progress, and makes a person rise to the highest that he is capable of rising to.
- Taking other things to be god instead of the One God, or in addition to the One God, limits and restricts a person's outlook and prevents him from fully developing the powers that have been placed in his nature as a human being. The same applies to those people who, in theory, believe that there is only One God but in their practical actions they in effect regard other things as gods.
- The pre-Islamic Arabs, while believing in one God, also worshipped idols of stone. They were trapped in ignorance, superstition, evil social customs, and oppression of and injustice towards the weak. They considered their idols as justifying their own selfish and evil behaviour. The Quran mentions such practices of theirs and says:

“And thus their associate-gods have made it seem good to many idolaters the killing of their children, that they may cause them to perish and obscure for them their religion.”
(6:137)

وَكَذَلِكَ زَيَّنَ لِكَثِيرٍ مِّنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ قَتْلَ
أَوْلَادِهِمْ شُرَكَاءَهُمْ لِيُرُدُّوهُمْ وَيَلْبِسُوا عَلَيْهِمْ
دِينَهُمْ^ط

The “killing of children” refers both to the practice of killing female new-born children, and to human sacrifices of sons to idols. The Quran goes on in this context to say:

“They are losers indeed who kill their children foolishly **without knowledge**, and forbid what Allah has provided for them, forging a lie against Allah. They indeed go astray, and are not guided.” (6:140)

قَدْ خَسِرَ الَّذِينَ قَتَلُوا أَوْلَادَهُمْ سَفَهًا بِغَيْرِ
عِلْمٍ وَحَرَّمُوا مَا رَزَقَهُمُ اللَّهُ افْتِرَاءً عَلَى اللَّهِ
قَدْ ضَلُّوا وَمَا كَانُوا مُهْتَدِينَ ﴿١٤٠﴾

They were making up, or forging, justifications for their customs, saying that these were done for the sake of their idols. The mention of “forbid what Allah has provided” refers to their superstitions, mentioned in these verses (6:136–144), as to who could or could not eat certain cattle and crops. The Quran says that all this was done without any basis in knowledge. They are challenged as follows: “Inform me with **knowledge**, if you are truthful” (6:143). Elsewhere, the Quran says in similar vein:

“Or, have they taken gods besides Him? Say: **Bring your proof.**” (21:24)

أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَهَةً قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ^ع

“Is there a god with Allah? Say: **Bring your proof**, if you are truthful.” (27:64)

ءَالِهَةٌ مَعَ اللَّهِ قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾

- The Quran challenged them to provide *knowledge* and *evidence* that their beliefs and vile practices were justified. Are they supported by some phenomenon in nature, or by reason and sense, or by some authoritative writing? No, these were based on conjecture and their own low desires and superstitions.
- In demanding knowledge and evidence and arguments from them, the Quran shows that true beliefs must be supported by these criteria. This is why the early Muslims developed a civilization which laid stress on knowledge, learning, investigation, logic and reason in all fields of life.
- Earlier civilizations, such as the Babylonians, Greeks and Romans, considered that there are different gods controlling different aspects of nature or life. For example, there was a god of harvest, god of water, god of weather, god of war, god of wealth, god of the sun, and god of one’s tribe or nation. Islam taught that it is the same God Who controls everything:

“And your God is one God; there is no God but He! He is the Beneficent, the Merciful. In the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of night and day, and the ships that run in the sea with that which benefits mankind, and the water that Allah sends down from the sky, then gives life with it to the earth after its death and spreads in it all (kinds of) animals, and the changing of the winds and the clouds made subservient between heaven and earth, there are surely signs for a people who understand. Yet there are some

وَالْهُكْمُ لِلَّهِ وَاحِدٌ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٦٣﴾ إِنَّ فِي خَلْقِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالاخْتِلَافِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ وَالْفُلْكِ الَّتِي تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِمَا يَنْفَعُ النَّاسَ وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَّاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا وَبَثَّ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ دَابَّةٍ وَتَصْرِيفِ الرِّيْحِ وَالسَّحَابِ الْمُسَخَّرِ بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٦٤﴾ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ

people who take for themselves objects of worship besides Allah, whom they love as they should love Allah. And those who believe are stronger in (their) love for Allah.” (2:163–165)

مَنْ يَتَّخِذْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَنْدَادًا يُحِبُّونَهُمْ كَحُبِّ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ

“Do you not see that to Allah makes submission whoever is in the heavens and whoever is in the earth, and the sun and the moon and the stars, and the mountains and the trees, and the animals and many of the people?” (22:18)

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَسْجُدُ لَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ وَالنُّجُومُ وَالْجِبَالُ وَالشَّجَرُ وَالذَّوَابُّ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ

All the various phenomena mentioned in the first quotation above point to one God, and not to different gods, controlling different things. The second quotation tells us that these various objects, such as the sun and the moon, etc., submit to God, i.e., run according to laws ordained for them. The mention of “many of the people” points to the fact that human beings have a choice as to whether or not to submit to the laws of their moral and spiritual progress revealed by God, so not all of them submit to them.

- The concepts taught by the Quran, mentioned in the last point, led to Muslims making a scientific study of the world. Their studies then provided Western sciences with the basis upon which to build modern science. The Quran teaches that man, instead of worshipping the sun, moon or stars, should worship God Who created them — and that means studying how He makes them work and using them for our benefit because that is what they have been created for.