

Fast 30: The Oneness of God — 4. Depth of its meaning

- Islam did not only eradicate the crude form of idolatry practised by the fellow Arabs of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, i.e., worship of actual idols of stone and other such objects. There were more subtle forms of worship of beings and things other than God prevailing in the world which Islam identified, and it argued and warned against them. People considering themselves to be worshippers of the One God were violating the concept of oneness of God under various guises.
- The Christian doctrine ascribed to Jesus a status beyond that of a mortal human being, calling him 'son of God'. The Quran repeatedly rejected this concept. It says:

“They say: Allah has taken a son (to Himself). Glory be to Him! He is the Self-sufficient. His is what is in the heavens and what is in the earth. You have no authority for this. Do you say against Allah what you do not know?” (10:68)

قَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحٰنَهُ هُوَ الْعَزِيْزُ لَهُ مَا
فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَا فِي الْاَرْضِ اِنْ عِنْدَكُمْ مِّنْ
سُلْطٰنٍ بِهٰذَا اَتَقُوْلُوْنَ عَلٰى اللّٰهِ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ



The expression “Glory be to Him” (*subhāna-hu*) is used to indicate that God is free of all defects and imperfections. Requiring sons, or any progeny at all, is a requirement of imperfect human beings, and other animal life, because they become weak with old age and then die. The father needs the son to assist him, and eventually the son takes the place of the father. In this verse it is said that God is Self-sufficient (*al-ghanī*), which means ‘above need of anything’. All creation in the heavens and the earth is equal in being His creation, and no one can be His son to the exclusion of all others.

- Critics assert that it has been wrongly assumed in the Quran that in Christianity Jesus is regarded as the physical ‘son of God’. They say that the term ‘son of God’ is meant only metaphorically, meaning a beloved one, and the author of the Quran is showing ignorance by not realising this sense of the term. However, awareness of this other sense of the term ‘son of God’ is clearly present in the Quran:

“And the Jews and the Christians say: We are the **sons of Allah and His beloved ones**. Say: Why does He then punish you for your sins? **Rather, you are mortals from among those whom He has created.**

وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ وَالنَّصٰرَى نَحْنُ اَبْنٰؤُ اللّٰهِ وَ
اَحِبَّاؤُهُ قُلْ فَلِمَ يُعَذِّبُكُمْ بِذُنُوْبِكُمْ
بَلْ اَنْتُمْ بَشَرٌ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقَ

He forgives whom He pleases and punishes whom He pleases.” (5:18)

يَغْفِرُ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيُعَذِّبُ مَن يَشَاءُ ط

It is stated here that no people can be “sons of God and His beloved ones” *to the exclusion of others*. All people are mortals created by God, and He forgives or punishes any of them according to the same principles. Likewise, no individual prophet or man sent by God can be a beloved of God *in a more special way* than the other prophets sent by God. Thus the Quran says about the messengers sent by God:

“And they say: The Beneficent has taken to Himself a son. Glory be to Him! No, **they are honoured servants**” (21:26).

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا سُبْحٰنَهُ ط بَلْ عِبَادٌ مُّكْرَمُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

All messengers of God are equally honoured servants, honoured by Him and by Muslims. All human beings are equal before God; no one group is more beloved than others because of its descent, race or religion.

- The Quran also mentions such violations of the oneness of God which are committed by Muslims as well. In Study 27 a verse has been quoted which begins as follows: “They take their doctors of law and their monks for lords besides Allah” (9:31). Those among Muslims who blindly follow the *ulama* or the *shaikhs* and *pirs*, and believe that obedience to them constitutes obedience to God because they have better knowledge of the faith, are, in effect, taking them as gods besides Allah. They relegate Allah to the background, as if Allah had handed over His authority to their religious leaders. They fail to question as to whether their rulings are in accordance with the Quran and the teachings of the Holy Prophet. They are demeaning themselves to a position lower than that which God gave them by bestowing upon them the power of thinking and reason.
- Another kind of violation of the oneness of God is mentioned as follows:

“Have you seen him who takes his low desire for his god?” (25:43, see also similar statement in 45:23).

أَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلٰهَهُ هَوَاهُ ط

Those who do not truly follow belief in one God, whether they are disbelievers in God, or are members of a non-Islamic religion, or are from among Muslims themselves, will often be found to take some low desire of theirs as the god that they worship. This shows itself in that they will do anything, violate any moral standard, commit any injustice against others, in order to satisfy their base desire. They do not

even hesitate to distort their religion in order to justify their misdeeds. When they want to satisfy some low desire of their own, they often do so under the pretext of following a religion.

- Thus the concept of the oneness of God as given by Islam excludes all kinds of behaviour that involves treating other things and beings as if they were god. Such behaviour reduces a human being to a very low state, as the Quran says:

“(You should be) upright for Allah, not setting up partners with Him.

And whoever sets up partners with Allah, **it is as if he had fallen from on high**, then the birds had snatched him away, or the wind had carried him off to a distant place.” (22:31).

حُنَفَاءَ لِلَّهِ غَيْرَ مُشْرِكِينَ بِهِ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ
بِاللَّهِ فَكَأَنَّمَا خَرَّ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَتَخَطَفَهُ الطَّيْرُ
أَوْ تَهْوَى بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي مَكَانٍ سَحِيقٍ ﴿٣١﴾

- What a person is meant to learn in Ramadan by fasting is how to restrain his low desires, so that he is not taking them to be “his god”. Therefore, let us in the end pray to Allah, the Most High, that we learn to keep fasts in their true sense and spirit, of refraining from all wrong-doing, and actively doing good to people, and remembering Allah and thanking Him — *ameen*.

And lastly, Eid Mubarak to all readers of these Quran Studies,

Wishing all of you a very happy and blessed Eid!