

*Qhutbah, Insha Allah, Friday, April 10, 2009*

*Alhamdu lillah, wa ash hadu ala ila ha ill lallah*

*Bismillah hir Rahman nir Rahim*

Those of us who believe in the divine origin of revealed religion view with great anxiety and consternation the vanishing ethics of morality and inadequate influence of faith, particularly in the West where the majority has turned agnostic because of all enveloping materialism.

The dictionary meaning of Agnosticism - A religious orientation of doubt; a denial of ultimate knowledge of the existence of God, agnosticism holds that you can neither prove nor disprove God's existence. It stands for a complete lack of conviction in things beyond the observable experience and is, thus an explicit denial of God or an Unseen Power. There is little evidence for the assumption that unbelief or disbelief in God is taking place in the "Islamic" world. However, "*misbelief*" is totally prevalent. And, one will easily concede that as with the passage of time, the religious movement in Islam is towards marching backwards in the name of "orthodoxy" which is nothing but a narrow and sectarian interpretation of religion. Orthodoxy is also another word for fundamentalism that is a much-abused worldly term applied by the West to movements seeking Islamic revival.

Many people have come to realise that agnosticism is gaining ground in the same proportion as fanaticism. The world is standing precariously on the threshold of a cataclysmic disaster. Many believe that the end is at hand, call it the Apocalypse or whatever.

The Arabic word for a gnostic is "*Arif*" literally "*one who recognises*" – that is one who has perceived from spiritual experience the existence of God and the meanings of His various Names and Attributes mentioned in the Quran in various contexts. He reflects on God, particularly His attributes of Kindness, Benevolence and Mercy, which are impossible to totally comprehend with the limited nature of human reason. [17:85] *They ask you about the revelation. Say, "The revelation comes from my Lord. The knowledge given to you is minute."* Gnosticism could be used in a wider sense to mean specifically the mystical and spiritual knowledge that all creation has emanated from the "Quintessence" of God.

It is an bewildering paradox why such a wide spread rejection of even the true "Christian" belief of One God is happening in the face of the fact that modern scientists, physicists and cosmologists are declaring their failure to clarify what was never

attempted to be explained – why does gravity pull, planets revolve, galaxies glide in their orbits, the ingress and egress of tides, the blowing winds or what makes the hearts of all living things throb?

At this stage, some of them have confessed that in the search for a material explanation – they are looking at the Hand of God. Some of them have answered queries of the earnest seekers of knowledge to turn to theologians (philosophical study of being and knowing) or metaphysicians (the physical study of being and knowing) regarding the “why” of the movement of heavenly bodies in the unexplorable, inexplicable vastness of space. Theologians try to understand and interpret religion and determine what is right and wrong, what is true and false – by exercise of the faculties of reason and deduction. Physics tries, in vain, to answer all that one sees in the physical world and metaphysics speculates about all that is unseen and beyond empirical knowledge. But most will not turn to God alone due to their big fat egos.

*Science knows more and more about less and less and philosophy less and less about more and more.*

There is also a concept of “Muslim mysticism” (Sufism), which is confused with hermitism (monasticism) and ascetism. These are all based on the deceptive, though perhaps sincere belief that the more a person suffers from voluntary self-denial and endures self-inflicted pain, the greater the reward with the Lord. The Sufis of Islam who are generally known as Auliyaullah (lovers of God) spend most of their time advocating the worship of dead so-called saints and fulfilling bizarre rituals with whirling dervishes.

The Sufis seek knowledge in truth, the spiritual plane of religion through instruction and meditation and treading the path of spiritual purification. Their conviction and belief are derived from concentration on the beneficence, bounteousness and generosity of the Almighty. Their spiritual outlook produces a liberal and lenient outlook and they treat God’s words as soothing and consoling rather than frightening and scary. They want to win the heart instead of satisfying the mind.

The True Believers [8:2] The true believers are those whose hearts tremble when GOD is mentioned, and when His revelations are recited to them, their faith is strengthened, and they trust in their Lord. [13:28] They are the ones whose hearts rejoice in remembering GOD. Absolutely, by remembering GOD, the hearts rejoice. Though they do preach tolerance and liberalism, we Submitters have to practice our religion according to the precepts of the Quran and nothing else with no innovations whatsoever. After the Prophet, rejuvenated Islam flashed across the awareness of the Arabian Peninsula in the 7<sup>th</sup> Century C.E. It had the merit of unifying humankind in a manner Christianity had been unable to achieve for centuries. As against the Roman Empire,

which took nearly a thousand years to grow to its full geographic extent, Islam sprang up and grew to its fullness within a short period of eighty years.

It came in the sweep of history to change the course of human life, and to give a new meaning and purpose as well as direction to human progression. At a time human civilization stood tottering, and its spiritual life had become rotten to the core, Islam rescued it as a unifying source. Islam viewed reality as fundamentally spiritual and the origin of life as purely spiritual. Islam rejected the essentially materialistic criteria to unify humankind. It had renounced blood relationship as a basis of unity thus extending its invisible boundaries beyond race, colour and geography. See the success it had in Africa. It filled an ideological vacuum admirably. In Africa, the Negro population regarded Christianity as the religion of the white race. Politics alone does not create nations. Its all inclusiveness and cross cultural absorption succeeded more in Islamising the Negro population of Africa than all the effort of David Livingstone (a Scottish missionary and explorer who discovered the Zambezi River and Victoria Falls (1813-1873)) with all the financial and political support of an all powerful imperial power. Africa today, despite a century long interlude of British, French and German imperial rule has 62 % Muslims as against 14 % Christians including 3% Europeans.

True Islam in ritual, ideology and prayers, dispensed any significant role for the Church or the clergy and made minimum demands on the people yet provided maximum benefits of brotherhood, solidarity and a non racial bias. It gave new concepts and precepts to humankind, the most stimulating being its glorious unification in the most remote and distant parts of the globe in a manner that no faith achieved without a powerful Church or an Imperial power. Its universal appeal lies in its remarkable capacity to first absorb and ultimately purify and integrate the norms of cultural response. Its sway over an Empire larger than either the Greek or the Roman empires at their zenith could not have been possible had they not adapted or otherwise assimilated foreign traits and customs and unified diverse ethnic groups. Everything was to be within the spiritual domain of Islam without compromising its fundamentals, Masha Allah.

Another redeeming feature of Islam, which greatly helped its spreading, is its social ethics, which is a harmonious blend of capitalism and socialism. It has the further merit of reconciling the apparently irreconcilable elements of race, class and tradition. Whenever cooperation is needed the mediation of true Islam would be indispensable. Further, no religion except Islam is so openly human centered. Tolerant and diverse in its makeup, egalitarian in its approach, cosmopolitan in faith, without dogmatic boundaries the Quran upholds the genuine teaching of all past religions and great Prophets and Messengers. It is at the same time – a Statute Book, a political manual, a directory of manners and ethics, as well as a culture to develop, incorporate and progress. It teaches us to pray in humility, to pay our Zakat, to feed the hungry, clothe the needy, protect the weak in word and deed, feed our family through honest earnings,

be sincere with one another, to struggle in the way of God etc. No other Scripture can claim to combine all this in one single book.

The Quran describes in various verses the beauty and functions of natural phenomena and invites human beings of true faith to reflect and ponder on the laws of nature - [13: 2-4] *GOD is the One who raised the heavens without pillars that you can see, then assumed all authority. He committed the sun and the moon, each running (in its orbit) for a predetermined period. He controls all things, and explains the revelations, that you may attain certainty about meeting your Lord. He is the One who constructed the earth and placed on it mountains and rivers. And from the different kinds of fruits, He made them into pairs - males and females. The night overtakes the day. These are solid proofs for people who think. On earth, there are adjacent lots that produce orchards of grapes, crops, palm trees - dioecious and non-dioecious. Although they are irrigated with the same water, we prefer some of them over others in eating. These are solid proofs for people who understand.*

The monotheistic concept of the unity of God, *Tawheed* is the rationalisation of human belief. Prior to the Quran the people falsely believed in superstition and materialist supernaturalism (a belief in forces beyond ordinary human understanding). Their worship of God was not pure; it was mixed with many false notions and paranormal beliefs. People resorted to many agents of divination in order to acquire worldly gains – wealth, success, power and status and though these material means they sought to conquer their fears.

They believed that certain spirits resided in and “inspired” some persons like the diviners who were supposed to have insight into the future or the unseen through supernatural means. There were clairvoyants, mystics, ascetics, sorcerers, magicians and poets who foretold future events and were believed by common people to have control over nature through spirits. There were idols and deities of stone, wood and clay instituted by various tribes sanctified with mystical ideals. Such false beliefs had distorted and disrupted morality and had reduced human beings to fearful cowards and hopeless materialists to consider these false agents to be a God and / or a Deity. These erroneous beliefs led to wrong actions and tended to impair the rational and moral faculties of human beings. These people, therefore, in general lacked true faith and did not use their senses of reasoning and understanding. They could not comprehend the higher human values and moral principles like truth, goodness, courage, equality, loyalty, freedom and justice. [72:6] *Human beings used to seek power through jinn beings, but they only afflicted them with a lot of adversity.*

For this reason, they misunderstood and did not recognise the Prophet Muhammad when he brought the Message of the One True God. They considered him merely an agent of inspired divination. [7:184] *Why do they not reflect upon their friend (the messenger)? He is not crazy. He is simply a profound warner. [21:5] They even said,*

*"Hallucinations," "He made it up," and, "He is a poet. Let him show us a miracle like those of the previous messengers." The Messenger [52:29] You shall remind the people. With your Lord's blessing's upon you, you are neither a soothsayer, nor crazy. (kaahins, majnun).*

Alas, but totally within God's plan and purview, the rot of Hadith and Sunna started after 110 years of the Prophet's passing away.

*Victory for the Righteous [3:137] Precedents have been set for you in the past; roam the earth and note the consequences for the unbelievers. [3:138] This is a proclamation for the people, and a guidance and enlightenment for the righteous. [3:139] You shall not waver, nor shall you grieve, for you are the ultimate victors, if you are believers.*

*[23:1-11] Successful indeed are the believers; who are reverent during their Contact Prayers (Salat). And they avoid vain talk. And they give their obligatory charity (Zakat). And they maintain their chastity. Only with their spouses, or those who are rightfully theirs, do they have sexual relations; they are not to be blamed. Those who transgress these limits are the transgressors. When it comes to deposits entrusted to them, as well as any agreements they make, they are trustworthy. And they observe their Contact Prayers (Salat) regularly. Such are the inheritors. They will inherit Paradise, wherein they abide forever.*

*Glory be to God, Most High.*