



THE CASE AGAINST ATHEISM

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Religion, which invites belief in God, has always faced opposition from those who view the universe itself as humanity's creator. This is called atheism. Before the seventeenth century, religion and religious thought dominated politics on a global scale. For almost a thousand years after the advent of prophethood of Muhammad (peace be upon him), this dominance remained intact with the same authority. This duration has explicitly been described in the divine scriptures. It was a prophecy of God's messengers, thus it was fulfilled to the letter, and now this dominance has ended globally. In the resulting environment, a large number of prominent standard-bearers of atheism have emerged, and they are making their case against religion with strong conviction and certainty. The case they present is fundamentally based on four objections. We will explain here the manner in which the Quran has responded to them:

First Objection

The first objection is that the concept of God is the result of the intellectual evolution of mankind. Therefore, we can see that the God introduced by the Quran does not have any traces in the early history of humans. Wherever you look, the manifestations of polytheism are present in every direction, but monotheism is nowhere to be seen. Thus, the reality is that the concept of a single God gradually emerged in this history, and even then, it was presented by its proponents in various roles depending on the circumstances: as a king, as a proud husband, and as a sympathizer of the poor, taking the position of a religious leader. Moreover, monotheism has

carried along the rites of worship from polytheistic religions, and in every era has demanded ascribing those rituals to it specifically. Keeping that in view, how is it possible for any rational being to readily accept this God, created by humans, as their creator, master, and deity?

In response to this objection, it must be stated that this tale of evolution is nothing more than fiction. It finds no basis in the realm of facts. Regarding the history of human religious thought, the information obtained so far can take us back at most five thousand years. However, is this also the age of humans on earth? If we consider the research carried out so far, even the lowest estimate of human existence on earth predates these figures by thousands of years. Then how can one refute the Quranic assertion that initially all humans followed a single religion whose guidance had directly descended from their Lord Himself? Deviations in their religious thought occurred afterward, leading to disputes. Polytheism emerged from that era. Hence, the truth is that the journey of religious thought has been from monotheism to polytheism, not the other way around.

Allah Almighty says:

وَمَا كَانَ النَّاسُ إِلَّا أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَاخْتَلَفُوا وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لَقُضِيَ بَيْنَهُمْ فِي مَا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ۔

[They should not give reference of their forefathers with regard to this polytheism of theirs.] In reality, people were one community only; later they have differed with one another and had a matter not been decided by your Lord previously,² the issue in which they are differing would have been decided among them. (Surah Yunus 10:19)

The history of the last two thousand years also testifies to this truth. Scholars know that the beginning of this history was initiated with the call to monotheism by two distinguished prophets of God, Jesus and Muhammad, peace be upon them. However, subsequently, observe how the mix of philosophy and mysticism has caused deviations in their teachings, to the extent that the followers of Jesus, peace be upon him, have turned him into the son of God and his mother into the Mother of God, praying to them for intercession, and among the followers of Muhammad, peace be upon him, people have appeared who see the Unique (Ahad) behind the veil of Ahmad (Muhammad) and in a state of ecstasy exclaim:

وہی جو مستوی عرش تھا خدا ہو کر
اتر پڑا ہے مدینے میں مصطفیٰ ہو کر

*“He who was God, the Occupier of the throne,
Has descended in Medina in the guise of Mustafa (Muhammad).”*

Subsequently, it becomes unnecessary to seek further evidence to assert that worship rituals were essentially designated by God and for God alone, but when polytheism created its own objects of

worship, it adopted these rites with some modifications for its own deities as well. Therefore, when the prophets were sent, their first and foremost demand in their call to the people was this: O people, these rites of worship are exclusive for God and should remain so, because only He is your sustainer, the King of the universe, and the only deity; there is no deity besides Him.

As for the perception that the concept of God appears to be different in divine scriptures, it is entirely based on a misunderstanding. These scriptures are the finest examples of sublime literature. Hence, it can be shown on each occasion by segregating the verses of these scriptures from the historical accounts of their compilers, that people have demonstrated a lack of knowledge, contemplation, and refinement in attempting to understand and explain these scriptures, thus completely destroying their beauty with their interpretations. After that, it can only be said that: شعر مرا به مدرسه که برد۔ (How did my verse reach the Madrasah?)

Second Objection

The second objection pertains to the way religious adherents have perceived and consequently developed religious thought, which embodies a collection of contradictions. There is a lack of consensus on the concept of God, His attributes and actions, His ways of dealing with humans, His commands and guidance, His demands from humans, or His conjectures regarding humans and the universe; as if to say: all friends have brought a different news from the gathering of elegance, (لائے ہیں بزم ناز سے یار خبر الگ الگ)! After this, can any sane person be expected to consider this collection of contradictions worthy of attention or believe in it?

The response to this objection is that the capacity for understanding existential realities and deriving conclusions from them, which has been granted to humans, inevitably leads to these differences. The achievements humans have displayed in this world are the fruits of this capacity. There is no doubt that its misuse has led to problems, but upon reflection, it becomes evident that this very ability is the true honor of a human being. It is what makes a person human. The Creator made him this way and has also promised eternal life with this very capability. After this, how can one expect God to snatch this ability from humans just to create unity in the understanding of guidance. Absolutely not, He has clearly decreed that *آيَا كَرَاهَ فِي الدِّينِ (There is no compulsion in religion)*³; meaning no one is forced in matters of faith, nor will they ever be.

However, this does not mean that as a result, humans have been left to wander in the labyrinths of disagreements. The Quran has stated that the religion of God is only one, and it has always been known as 'Islam', but as soon as this state of confusion in understanding emerged, God began sending His prophets to every nation, and with them, He also sent down His scriptures. These scriptures were revealed as a scale (Meezan) and criterion (Furqan) to distinguish between truth and falsehood so that people could resolve their differences through them and thus establish justice in matters of truth. The Almighty says:

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّنَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَ
مُنذِرِينَ سَمِعُوا وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ
النَّاسِ فِي مَا اختلفوا فِيهِ -

[They present differences among people as a pretext for their hypocrisy. They should know that] mankind was just a single community. Then [differences arose between them. So,] God sent forth prophets as bearers of glad tidings and as warners, and with them He sent down His Book as the decisive truth so that it may settle between people the differences among them. (Surah Al-Baqarah 2:213)

The last scripture in this series is the Holy Quran. In the world of divine literature, it is now the only book about which it can be said with complete certainty that it is in our hands exactly as it was given, without any slightest alteration, in the same language, and the same order. Its continuous transmission (tawatur) itself is a miracle, because it is the only book in the world that even now, millions of Muslims can recite orally from memory—from the first chapter to the last. History informs us that this tradition of recitation has not been interrupted even for a single day over the past fourteen hundred years. This clearly indicates that its preservation has been arranged by the Creator of the world Himself. The aspects of the Quran to which the Quran itself draws attention at various places, as described in the words of Imam Amin Ahsan Islahi, are as follows:

"First, during the period of the Quran's revelation, Allah Almighty specifically ensured that the devils could not interfere with the process of revelation of the Quran. It is a permanent arrangement in this cosmic system that devils cannot hear the discussions of divine matters, but...especially during the period of the Quran's revelation this arrangement was made so that the devils could not insert anything before it (مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ)⁴

Second, the angel chosen by the Almighty to reveal the Qur'ān has been described in the Qur'ān (81:20-21) as 'the one endued with power, held in honor before the Lord of the Throne, obeyed in the Heavens, moreover trustworthy.' In other words, the angel is so mightily powerful that evil spirits cannot overcome him, he is the leader of all angels, and he cannot forget anything. Whatever is entrusted to him by the Almighty, he executes precisely. There is not a semblance of a chance that the slightest of change can take place in the revelation entrusted to him. He has a very high rank before the Almighty, which signifies that he surpasses all creation in terms of his abilities. It is obvious that this arrangement has also been made so that the possibility of any falsehood entering the Quran from its origin is eliminated.

Third, the very person who was entrusted with the Qur'ān was firstly the best of creation in every aspect, and secondly, the responsibility for remembering the Quran and its preservation and arrangement was not placed solely on him, but Allah Himself took up this responsibility. Hence, in Surah Al-Qiyamah, it is said:

لَا تُحَرِّكْ بِهِ لِسَانَكَ لِتَعْجَلَ بِهِ - إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا جَمْعَهُ وَقُرْآنَهُ - فَإِذَا
قُرْآنُهُ فَاتَّبِعْ قُرْآنَهُ - ثُمَّ إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا بَيَانَهُ -

To acquire this Qur'ān [O Prophet!] Do not move your tongue hastily over it. Indeed, upon Us is its collection and recital. So when We have recited it, follow this recital [of Ours]. Then upon Us is to explain it [wherever need be] (Surah Al-Qiyamah 75:16-19)

Narratives confirm that the portion of the Quran that had been revealed was kept memorized by the Prophet, peace be upon him, and his close companions and every Ramadan the Prophet would review it with Angel Gabriel to ensure there was no chance of error or forgetfulness, and this review was done in the order that Allah Almighty had preferred to arrange the Quran. It is also known from narratives that the Prophet, peace be upon him, conducted this review twice during the last Ramadan of his blessed life. Then the entire Quran was transferred to written form in that same order and with the same recitation, and later the Rightly Guided Caliphs sent its copies to other cities of the state. No previous scriptures received such attention and care in its arrangement. For instance, it is not even known when and by whose hands the different scrolls of the Torah were compiled.

The fourth point is that the Quran is a miracle with respect to its eloquence in words and its profundity in meanings, making it such that the speech of others cannot be integrated with it. Even the speech of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, despite his being the bringer of the Quran and the most eloquent among the Arabs and non-Arabs, cannot compete with it. Thus, there is no chance that the speech of another could be mixed with it. The attempts of those who have dared to produce a response to the Quran are recorded in the books of literature and history. Just place their examples in comparison with the Quran, and you will see the difference between substance and fluff as clear as day. In this way, the path for interpolation into the Quran from behind (وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ)⁵ has been effectively blocked.

Fifth, along with the protection of the Quran, Allah Almighty has also promised the preservation of its language until the Day of Judgment. In the case of other heavenly scriptures, countless distortions entered through translations, due to the disappearance of their original languages, and now it is impossible to trace them. However, the original language of the Quran is preserved and will remain so until the Day of Judgment. Therefore, there is no chance for the intrusion of falsehood into it through translations and interpretations. If there is any attempt to insert falsehood into it, scholars can examine it against the original and cleanly separate out the falsehood.” (Tadabbur-e-Quran 7/112)

Third Objection

The third objection is that religion invites belief in a God whose behavior is extremely cruel. He makes children cry and kills them through illnesses and suffering, makes humans slaughter millions of animals daily and pits them against each other, does not stop a murderer or oppressor but instead provides them with opportunities to commit their injustices, creates countless creatures just so that humans can domesticate them and rule over them, utilizing every aspect of them for their own use, and even encourages humans to fight and kill each other, promising rewards for it. Moreover, this world created by Him is not perfect in every regard. It has earthquakes, lightning, famines, and pains. Not only this, deficiencies can also be pointed out in some places. How can one believe that such an entity is the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, the All Knowing, and the All Wise, with an unlimited mind and boundless power?

The answer given by the Quran to this objection is that the world where God’s attributes of perfection, majesty, and beauty will predominantly manifest is currently hidden from our view,

and human beings were essentially created for that world. The colossal universe and its billions of galaxies that appear barren in front of Him are merely the materials for the construction of that world, scattered throughout the vast expanse of space. The Quran states that the day is not far when this world will be transformed into a different earth and sky, and all creatures will stand exposed before Allah, the One and the Overpowering⁶. Thereafter, a new world will come into existence, with its expanse as large as the entire universe. This will be a world of God's dominion and His mercy and favor. The world in which we open our eyes of conscience is merely a prelude to that world. It is not set up for administering divine justice, nor to display the entirety of His splendor. Its sole purpose is to test us, and both jinn and humankind are in a state of trial. It is said:

الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْغَفُورُ-

[He] Who created death and life to test you as to which of you does better deeds. And He is also Mighty and Forgiving. (Surah Al-Mulk 67:2)

As a result, existence in this world is inextricably intertwined with dualities: life with death, joy with sorrow, pleasure with pain, tranquility with anxiety, relief with affliction. Blessings, too, are often accompanied by tribulations, as if these pairs were designed as inseparable twins. This world is a place of regrets of the past and fears of the future. The knowledge and wisdom gifted to humanity are for the purpose of understanding this reality. The Quran declares that this realization is the true wisdom, and whoever grasps it, attains a great treasure of good⁷. It is through this understanding that a person recognizes the limits of human knowledge, and instead of blaming God, attempts to comprehend His plan with humility and confession of their incapacity, always remaining in prayer: "My Lord! Increase me in knowledge" (وَرَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا)⁸. The greatest deprivation of the disciplines of science and philosophy is the lack of this wisdom. It is the lack of this wisdom that gives rise to objections against God and consigns humanity to perpetual darkness, beyond which there is no light.

Fourth Objection

The fourth objection is that in the era of human infancy, there might have been a need for religion, but now that human beings are mature and intelligent, they have discovered the key to solving every problem through their knowledge and science, based on experience, observation, deduction, and induction. They have also come to understand the universe around them to a great extent, and for the organization of society and the needs of politics and economy, they have created highly sophisticated social structures and institutions. By observing these, one can estimate how superior and elevated human knowledge is compared to those religious laws which human beings have been carrying around their necks in the name of religion for centuries. After this, who would be willing to accept these religious laws at any level?

In response to this objection, it is stated that only those who are unfamiliar with religion can make such a comparison. The reason for this assertion is because religion was never intended for any of these purposes. It was not revealed to teach humans the laws of science, nor was it meant

to fulfill their medical needs, nor to teach them how to organize society and address the needs of politics and economy by creating social structures and institutions. Whatever humans have accomplished in this world was meant to be done by humans themselves. Their Creator endowed them with extraordinary powers and abilities for this purpose. The objective of religion is the purification of a person's knowledge and actions, and of their individual and collective life. The contents of religion, described as Sharia include teachings and guidance regarding worship, physical cleanliness, purification of food and drink, and instructions for the refinement of moral conduct. All these things are essentially not required for this world, but for the hereafter. It is God's decree that His paradise is only for those who will attain purification in the above matters. Apart from these, religion has no interest in anything else. Therefore, God's law must be understood in light of this objective and goal. Its necessity will also be determined from this angle, and its status and rank among the sciences and arts of the world will also be determined accordingly.

هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِّنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ
وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِن كَانُوا مِن قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ-

It is He who brought forth among the unlettered a Messenger from among them, who recites to them His revelations and purifies them and for this instructs them in the Law and in Wisdom. In reality, these people were in manifest error before this. (Surah Al-Jumu'ah 62:2)

REFERENCES:

- [1]. The Bible, Revelations 20:7-9
- [2]. That is, the decisions on difference of opinion will be made on the Day of Judgment.
- [3]. Al-Baqarah 2:256
- [4]. Surah As Sajdah 41:42
- [5]. Surah As Sajdah 41:42
- [6]. Surah Ibrahim 14:48
- [7]. Surah Al-Baqarah 2:269
- [8]. Surah Taha 20:114