Synopsis of the Friday Sermon delivered by Ameer Mustapha Elturk on Oct 17, 2014

“The Two Types of Dawah”

The following ayat, “And who is better in speech than one who calls (people) to Allah, acts righteously and says, ‘I am of those Muslims (who have surrendered to Allah)?’” (Fussilat, 41:33), and “Never let them turn you away from the revelations of Allah after they have been revealed to you; (instead) call (people) to your Lord, and be not of those who ascribe partners (unto Him)” (al-Qasas, 28:87), suggest that there are two types of dawah: Dawah to Allah (dawah ila-Allah) and dawah to the Lord, (dawah ila al-Rubb).

Another ayah of great importance also discusses the obligation of dawah to the Lord, “Call unto the path of your Lord with the Wisdom and the good preaching,” (al-Nahl, 16:125). As discussed before, the imperative, “Dawah with the Wisdom” mainly deals with articulating the Qur’anic concepts that deal with man and society to intellectuals and scholars bringing out the wisdom of the Allah (SWT), the Lord and Master of the universe.

Both types of dawah invite toward the main belief of Islam which is tawheed or monotheism. One deals with the “Oneness in Divinity, tawheed al-uluhiyyah,” while the other deals with the “Oneness in Authority, tawheed al-rububiyyah.” It is important to learn these subjects and know the difference between the two in order to present a holistic view of our Creator when making dawah.

Tawheed al-uluhiyyah (oneness in divinity) deals with the concept of Godship (al-Ilah), the Deity, the Holy being (al-Quddoos), the Divine and Supreme Being. Whereas; tawheed al-rububiyyah (oneness in authority) deals with the concept of Lordship, the authority or position of a Lord.

The essence of the call of all of God’s prophets and messengers including Muhammad (SAW) was tawheed al-uluhiyyah. Satan was successful in diverting people from worshipping Allah (SWT) alone and directed them toward the worship of idols among other objects of worship. Allah (SWT) sent to every nation and community a messenger calling on their people to worship none other than the one God (al-Ilah), i.e. Allah (SWT). “We have sent among every ummah (community, nation) a Messenger (proclaiming), ’Worship Allah (alone), and avoid (or keep away from) taghoot’” (al-Nahl, 16: 36).

Taghoot is referred to the worship of idols or the worship of anything besides Allah (SWT). The object of worship could be a stone, a creation of Allah such as the sun, the moon, trees; or an idea or concept such as communism, secularism or any idea that is repugnant to the teachings of Allah (SWT). In a nutshell, taghoot is false beliefs.

Muslims must declare disbelief (kufr) in Taghoot in whatever shape it may manifest itself followed by an affirmation of our faith in Allah (SWT). Only then will we have firmly grasped the strongest and most secure handhold that will never break (al-Baqarah, 2:256). Only then will we be under Allah’s protection and help.

Prophet Nuh, among other prophets such as Saleh, Hud and Shu’aiib, cried out to his people, “O my people, worship Allah. You have no other god besides Him” (al-‘Araf, 7:59). Every Messenger of Allah was sent with this specific message, “There is no god except Allah.” “We have never sent any Messenger before you without having revealed to him that there is no deity except Me (none has the right to be worshipped but Allah), so worship Me” (al-‘Anbiyah, 21:25). Therefore, tawheed al-uluhiyyah, is in essence to single out Allah who is
al-Ilah (the God) in worship. He is the only One to be worshipped in truth. “Know, therefore (O prophet), that there is no god but Allah (la ilaha illa Allah)” (Muhammad, 47:19).

The first part of the verbal testimony of faith in Islam (la ilaha illa Allah) negates all deities and affirms Allah’s oneness in divinity. The second part of the profession of faith is to affirm one’s belief in Allah’s final messenger, the seal of all prophets and messengers Muhammad (SAW) who, unlike his predecessors who were sent to their respective nations and tribes, was sent to the entire human race for all time to come. The full expression of faith is, “la ilaha illa Allah, Muhammad Rasul Allah, (there is) no god except Allah, Muhammad the Messenger of Allah.”

This statement is the foundation of the religion upon which the edifice of Islam is built. According to the prophet (SAW), “Islam is built on five, to testify that there is no god except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, to perform the prescribed prayers, give zakat, fast the month of Ramadan and perform pilgrimage in Makkah if one is able to.”

Paradoxically, there was a shift in the way Muhammad (SAW) addressed people compared to the prophets who preceded him. His call toward the worship of al-Ilah, the One God, Allah (SWT) remained part and parcel of his mission; however, he addressed people by saying, “O mankind! Worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, so that you may be saved (from utter doom in the hereafter)” (al-Baqarah, 2:21).

The shift from “Worship Allah, the al-Ilah” to “Worship the Lord, al-Rubb” makes one wonder. One may ask, why is there a sudden stress on the Lordship of Allah (SWT) in addition to the divinity of Allah? That is not to say that previous prophets and messengers of Allah didn’t preach the concept of Lordship. Indeed they did. Going back in history, Nuh, Musa, and Ibrahim among others did preach the concept of lordship (rububiyyah.)

One example is the profound dialogue that took place between Musa (AS) and the Pharaoh of Egypt. Musa and Harun (AS) were instructed to inform the Pharaoh, “Surely, we are the messengers of the Lord of the Worlds” (al-Shu’ara’, 26:16). “Pharaoh said, ‘And what is the Lord of the worlds?’” “Musa said, ‘The Lord of the heavens and the earth and what is between them, if you would be sure’” (al-Shu’ara’, 26:23-24). Musa (AS) insisted, “Your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers” (al-Shu’ara’, 26:26).

Pharaohs’ authority seemed to have been threatened by the claim of Musa (AS). Consequently, he proclaimed throughout Egypt, “Am I not the lord of this land? And do not the rivers in this country flow under me? Do you not all see this (and believe in what) I say!” (al-Zukhruf, 43:51). Pharaoh could not resist but declare lordship for himself, “So he gathered (his people) and proclaimed... I am the supreme lord of you all” (al-Nazi’at, 79:23-24). So the Pharaoh openly denied Allah’s kingship, authority and sovereignty.

Similarly, the pagan Arabs at the time of the prophet (SAW), worshipped multiple gods that they partnered with the Grand Ilah, Allah (SWT). They denied the kingship, authority and sovereignty of Allah (SWT), i.e. His Lordship. They did however; believe in His Lordship but in a very limited sense. They acknowledged Him as the Lord, sustainer of the heavens and earth. They were quick to acknowledge Him as the Creator of everything.

“And if you were to ask them, ‘Who created the heavens and the earth, and subjected the sun and the moon (to His law)?’ They would say, ‘Allah.’ How then are they deluded (from the truth)?’” (al-’Ankabut, 29:61). Similarly, “Say, ‘Who is Lord of the seven heavens, and Lord of the mighty Throne?’ They will reply, ‘(All this power belongs) to God,’ say, ‘Will you not, then, take heed?’” (al-Mu’minoon, 23:86-87).

It appears, however, that the pagan Arabs had an issue with Allah (SWT) being the Lord and sovereign in the land. In other words, they resisted Him being in full control and having full authority over their public and social affairs. That is why when they were asked about such matters, they hesitated in their response and Allah (SWT) was swift to inform them that all authority in the heavens and also on earth belongs to Him. “Say, ‘Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth?’ Say, ‘(It is) Allah,’ Say, ‘Have you taken besides Him allies who do not possess for themselves any benefit or harm?’” (al-Ra’d, 13:16).

Hence, Muhammad (SAW) introduced a unique religion centered on Allah (SWT) alone. One of Muhammad’s aims was to reintroduce Allah as being the Lord of the Worlds (Rabbul-’Alameen), who is beyond being solely a creator, but also the Only Lord whose authority cannot be challenged. He is the Ruler who must be obeyed in all matters. “Sovereignty belongs to Allah alone. He commands that you worship (and obey) none except Him. That is the true faith, but most people do not realize it” (Yusuf, 12:40).
Allah (SWT) insisted on Himself being the sole Supreme Being to be worshipped alone and the sole Sovereign to be obeyed. Allah (SWT) will never accept partners neither in His divinity nor in His authority. In all humility, regarding His Divinity, the Prophet (SAW) was instructed to, “Say, ‘I am only a human being like you to whom it has been revealed, ‘Your god is One God.’ So let whoever hopes to meet his Lord act righteously and not associate anyone in the worship of his Lord’” (al-Kahf, 18:110). Similarly, regarding His Authority, Allah (SWT) adamantly proclaims, “And no one is allowed to share His rule” (al-Kahf, 18:26).

In summary, the pagan Arabs regarded Allah (SWT) as the Lord only to the extent of believing in Him as the Creator and the Supreme Sovereign and Regulator of the affairs of the universe. However, they did not believe that His Sovereignty also extended to such matters as morality, social affairs, culture, economics, politics, and other worldly affairs. They did not acknowledge Him as the only rightful and ultimate source of law in such matters; it was the word and dictates of the elders, tribe leaders and chieftains that the peasants and common people obeyed as law.

To shed more light on the subject of Lordship and to gain further insight on the profound shift of, “worship Allah” versus “worship your Lord,” a strategy that is befitting the world we live in today, consider the time and place then compared to the time and place of today. As the youngest of the three Abrahamic faiths; Jews and Christians who came centuries before the advent of Muhammad (SAW), have already made history in the last and final scripture, the Qur’an, “They took their rabbis and their monks as lords, as well as Christ, the son of Mary. But they were commanded to worship (and obey) only one God: there is no god but Him; glory be to Him, He is far above whatever they set up as His partners!” (al-Tawbah, 9:31).

Adi Ibn Hatim (RAA) was a Christian before embracing Islam at the time of the Prophet (SAW). Upon meeting the Prophet (SAW), Adi heard him recite the ayah, “They took their rabbis and their monks as lords...” Adi commented, “They did not worship them.” The Prophet (SAW) then asked Adi, “Do they (rabbis and priests) not make unlawful what Allah made lawful and make lawful what Allah made unlawful?” Adi conceded, “Yes.” The Prophet replied, “This is how they worshipped them.”

Emphasis on the Lord (Rubb), Sovereign and Law Giver, is as important as making dawah to the Supreme Being, al-Ilah, Allah (SWT), the Creator and regulator of the affairs of the universe. It is prudent to expound on both aspects of Allah’s uniqueness and oneness when making dawah especially in a world where God has been confined to a space in the heavens, worshiped by some people as God while His sovereignty is trampled on by people who declare themselves as Lords, be it the House of Lords (ironically) in England or the White House in the United States of America where elected officials play the role of Allah, the Lord, enacting laws that are repugnant to the Divine laws and injunctions. The world will never find peace unless the Divine Just social order based on His Divine Wisdom and knowledge is established.

It is ironic to talk about the resurgence of Islam at a time of heightened islamophobia. Today, Islam is a household name. Which of the two types of dawah “dawah ila Allah” or “dawah ila la-Rubb” are we going to preach? Which Allah will we introduce, Allah, the Creator and Provider or Allah, the King (al-Malik), the King of kings and also the Sovereign and the Law-giver? If we conceal the second attribute of Allah for diplomacy then we will be guilty of breaching the trust of conveying the truth and the whole truth in which we have been entrusted with. This betrayal of trust is tantamount to hypocrisy and utter doom in the hereafter.

Under such climate of bigotry and hatred toward Islam and Muslims one is discouraged to talk about Islam. However, consider the Muslims at the time of the Prophet (SAW) and more specifically in the early days of the Prophet’s mission. Islam and Muslims were condemned and criticized just as we and our faith are bashed today. Yet, in spite of such circumstances, oppression and persecution, Islam prevailed. Islam prevailed because of the unwavering faith the companions of the Prophet (SAW) had. They remained truthful to their beliefs while they continued their efforts of propagating what they believed in.

In this day and age when Islam is under attack and Muslims everywhere are victim to the hegemony of the west; Muslims, particularly in the West and specifically in the United States of America, must remain resilient, strengthen our faith through the Qur’an and continue to preach the very same message the Prophet and noble companions preached, the complete message of Islam, the universal message of all Prophets of God, La ilaha illalah without any fear or intimidation of blame coming from any critic. Therefore, “Never let them turn you away from the revelations of Allah after they have been revealed to you; (instead) call (people) to your Lord, and be not of those who ascribe partners (unto Him)” (al-Qasas, 28:87).