

The Light of The Qur'ān

An Explanation to Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ and Sūrah al-Kāfirūn

الإخلاص الكافرون

A summary of over twenty classical
commentaries of the Qur'ān

Ṭabarī, Sama'ānī, Baghawī, Zamakhsharī, ibn 'Aṭiyyah, ibn al-Jawzī,
Qurṭubī, ibn al-Qayyim, ibn Taymiyyah, ibn Kathīr, Suyūṭī, Ālūsī,
Shawkānī, Sa'dī, Shanqīṭī and others

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ۝ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ ۝ لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ ۝
وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ ۝

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ ۝ لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ ۝ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ
عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ ۝ وَلَا أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَا عَبَدْتُمْ ۝ وَلَا أَنْتُمْ
عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ ۝ لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ ۝

The Prophet (ﷺ) passed by a person reciting *al-Kāfirūn* and remarked, “*He has been saved from shirk.*” He passed by another person reciting *al-Iklāṣ* and remarked, “*Paradise has become obligatory for him.*”

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Prepared and translated by
Abū Rumaysah



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DĀR AS-SUNNAH PUBLISHERS
P.O. Box 9818, Birmingham, B11 4WA, United Kingdom

T/F: + 44 (0) 121 243 1772
W: www.darassunnah.com
E: info@darassunnah.com
E: daar-us-sunnah@mail.com

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سورة: الإخلاص

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the Name of Allāh,
the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful

قل هو الله أحد ①

1) Say: He is Allāh, the One and only!

الله الصمد ②

2) Allāh, the Everlasting Sustainer of all.

لم يلد، ولم يولد ③

3) He fathered none, nor was He born.

وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ ﴿١﴾

4) And no one is comparable to Him.

INTRODUCTION

With the Name of Allāh, the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful

In the view of ibn Mas'ūd, ibn 'Abbās, al-Ḥasan, 'Aṭā', 'Ikrimah and Jābir, this Sūrah is Makkī. Another view of ibn 'Abbās, as well as the view of Qatādah and Ḍaḥḥāk is that it is Madanī.¹ In the Meccan and Syrian recitations, the number of verses are five and in the rest, four with the former ending the third verse at, "**He fathered none,**" the fourth verse being, "**Nor was He born.**" The chapter consists of eleven words and forty seven letters.²

Rāzī and Fayrozabādī list a total of twenty titles for this chapter such as *al-Taḥḥīd*, *al-Tajrīd*, *al-Tafrīd*, *al-Ikhlāṣ*, *al-Najāb*, *al-Wilāyah*, *al-Samad*, *al-Asās* and *Nūr al-Qur'ān*.

Aḥmad recorded, on the authority of Ubayy bin Ka'b, that the polytheists asked the Prophet (ﷺ), "Muḥammad, tell us the lineage of your Lord," whereupon Allāh revealed "**Say: He is Allāh, the One**

¹ Qurṭubī, Abū Ḥayyān

² Fairozabādī

*and only! Allāh, the Everlasting Sustainer of all; He fathered none, nor was He born. And no one is comparable to Him.*³

Bukhārī recorded, on the authority of ‘Amrah bint ‘Abdu’l-Raḥmān - a woman who used to stay in the apartment of ‘Ā’ishah, the wife of the Prophet (ﷺ), that ‘Ā’ishah said, “The Prophet sent a man as the commander of a war expedition who would lead his companions in prayer. He would complete his recitation by reciting, *‘Say: He is Allāh, the One and only.’* When they returned they mentioned this to the Prophet (ﷺ) who said, “Ask him why he did that.” They asked him and he replied, ‘It contains the description of the All-Merciful and I love to recite it.’ So the Prophet said, “Inform him that Allāh, Most High, loves him also.”⁴

Bukhārī recorded, on the authority of Abū Sa‘īd, that a man heard someone reciting *“Say: He is Allāh, the One and only,”* repeating it over and over again. When morning came, the man went to the Prophet (ﷺ) and mentioned this to him, speaking as though he thought the act insignificant. The Prophet said, “By Him in whose hand is my soul, it is equivalent to a third of the Qur’ān.”⁵

Mālik records that Abū Hurayrah said, ‘I went with the Prophet (ﷺ) and he heard a person reciting, *“Say: He is Allāh, the One and only,”* and said, “It is obligatory.” I asked him what was obligatory, he replied, “Paradise.”⁶

³ Aḥmad #21219 and Tirmidhī #3364.

It was ruled ṣaḥīḥ by Ḥākīm #3987 with Dhahabī agreeing, and ḥasan by Albānī.

⁴ Bukhārī #7375

⁵ Bukhārī #5013-6643-7374

⁶ Mālik, vol. 1, pg. 176, Tirmidhī #2899 who said it was ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ gharīb.

It was ruled ṣaḥīḥ by Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Tirmidhī*

al-Ḥasan said, 'This chapter is pure, it does mention anything to do with this world or the next.'⁷

Dāruquṭnī said, 'In terms of authentic narrations, this Sūrah has the most dealing with its excellence.'⁸

⁷ Tabarī

⁸ Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*

CHAPTER I: THE FOUNDATION

قل هو الله أحد

Say: He is Allāh, the One and only!

“Say” with certainty, unwavering belief and firm understanding that “*He is Allāh, the One and only,*” absolute oneness is something unique to Him. He is the One, the one true God. He is not subject to plurality and neither is there more than one god. As such the verse repudiates the doctrine of trinity, the doctrine of the dualists who believe in the gods of light and dark, the doctrine of those who believe in divination through stars and celestial zones, and polytheism in general.⁹ He is also singular in His perfection, He is singular in possessing the Most Beautiful Names and perfect Lofty Attributes, and He is singular in His pure deeds. There is nothing comparable to Him or like Him.¹⁰

In this verse, Allāh has announced His *Tawhīd* and ordered the

⁹ Sa’dī

¹⁰ Rāzī, Baqā’ī

addressee to proclaim it. Therefore, when the servant says, **“Say: He is Allāh, the One and only,”** he has singled out Allāh in the same way that He singled out Himself. He (ﷺ) was commanded to say the word, **“Say”** to actualise this reality, and to highlight that his only duty was to convey; he would communicate exactly what was related to him.¹¹

Ibn al-Qayyim said, while explaining the *Mu‘awwidhatayn*,

If it is then asked: Why is it that the order (in these chapters) is implemented by reciting the order and the ordered? It is known that when one commands, ‘Say: *Alḥamdulillāh*. Say: *Allāhu Akbar*. Say: *SubḥānAllāh*’ the person ordered responds by saying, ‘*Alḥamdulillāh*, *Allāhu Akbar* and *SubḥānAllāh*’ without repeating the word, ‘Say.’ However, in these chapters one recites them by saying,

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ الْفَلَقِ ﴿١﴾

“Say: I take refuge with the Lord of Daybreak.”¹²

قُلْ أَعُوذُ بِرَبِّ النَّاسِ ﴿١﴾

“Say: I take refuge with the Lord of Mankind.”¹³

I reply by saying: this is the exact same question that Ubayy ibn Ka‘b asked the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ). Bukhārī records that Zirr ibn Ḥubaysh said, ‘I asked

¹¹ Ibn al-Qayyim, *Badā’i‘ al-Fawā’id*, vol. 2, pg. 659

¹² *al-Falaq* (113):1

¹³ *al-Nās* (114): 1

Ubayy ibn Ka'b concerning the *Mu'awwidhatayn* and he said, "I asked the Messenger of Allāh concerning this and he replied, 'This is how it was said to me, so I recite (the word): *Say*' so we recite as the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) recited."

Bukhārī then records that Zirr ibn Ḥubaysh asked Ubayy ibn Ka'b, 'Abū Mundhir, your brother ibn Mas'ūd says such and such.' He replied, 'I asked the Messenger of Allāh and he replied, "This is how it was said to me, so I recite (the word): *Say*" so we recite as the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) recited.'¹⁴

The reason is that the duty of the Prophet (ﷺ) was to convey the Qur'ān as it was revealed from Allāh and he had no say whatsoever as to its content or recitation. Therefore when Allāh said, "*Say: I take refuge with the Lord of Daybreak,*" the dictates of conveying in a complete way demanded that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) say, "*Say: I take refuge with the Lord of Daybreak.*"

This is the meaning of his words, "*This is how it was said to me...*" i.e. I do not say this of my own accord rather I say what is said to me for I only convey the words of my Lord as He revealed them to me.

So abundant peace and blessing be upon him for he did indeed convey the message, completely fulfil his duty and trust and said as was said to him. This fact alone suffices us from the deviancy of the Jahmiyyah, the Mu'tazila and their brothers who say, 'This is an Arabic Qur'ān whose wording and phraseology was conceived by the Prophet.' The ḥadīth quoted here clearly repudiates their stance and explicitly states that the Prophet

¹⁴ Bukhārī #4976-4977.

(ﷺ) conveyed the Qur'ān exactly as it was revealed to him to the extent that when it was said to him, 'Say' he conveyed this word as well. The duty of the Messenger is only to convey.¹⁵

The purpose of the message is to call mankind to Allāh, in order to achieve this one must know what he is being called to and calling to, as such some form of definition is required. Commencing the *Sūrah* with "Say," points to the Messenger's duty of conveying this message, it provides the definition for him, clears him of those who accused him of falsehood or madness by indicating that he is merely passing on what has come to him, and alludes to the fact that the intellect by itself cannot come to know Allāh as is required.¹⁶

The primary addressee of "Say" is the Prophet, and then all who read it and can pass the message on, for this reason the object of the address has been left unmentioned in order to generalise it. As such, the address proves the universality of the message and that it is not just restricted to the Arabs or a particular people or a particular tribe.¹⁷

Generalising the recipients of the address also proves that the statement that is commanded to be said is clear and understandable to all.¹⁸

¹⁵ Ibn al-Qayyim, *Badā'i al-Fawā'id*, vol. 2, pp. 706-707. cf. Ibn Rajab

¹⁶ Baqā'ī

¹⁷ Baqā'ī

¹⁸ Baqā'ī

The personal pronoun, *huwa*, is also called a concealed noun since its significance is not shown by itself alone. Here it is acting as the *ḍamīr al-sha'n*,¹⁹ which is employed to stress the importance of the information following and direct the readers attention to it, since the personal pronoun itself is explained by what follows.

By commencing the sentence with this personal pronoun, the verse is effectively, in the first instance, abstracting the subject matter and thereby highlighting that the essence or nature of Allāh is unseen, *ghayb*, and that He is the necessary existent²⁰ since the personal pronoun is the most definite of definite nouns. Also highlighted is the fact that His existence is so well-known and widely accepted that each and every person can bring Him to mind.²¹

In a direct sense, since the verse was revealed in response to the question posed, it is as if it reads 'Say: (In answer to your question, the One you are asking about) is Allāh.'²²

¹⁹ Abū Su'ūd, Abū Ḥayyān, Qāsimī, ibn 'Uthaymīn

²⁰ Baqā'ī

²¹ Abū Su'ūd.

²² Ṭabarī, Sama'ānī, Shawkānī

الله
Allāh

This name has been explicitly mentioned here because it subsumes all the Attributes of perfection: all those pointing to His magnificence and beauty.²³

He is the Lord, the One who is worshipped, the One deserving of being singled out for worship due to the Perfect Godly Attributes that He is described with.²⁴

Ṭabarī said,

‘Allāh is derived from *al-ilāh*, the *hamzah* which is the *fa* of the noun has been removed and so the *lām*, which is the *‘ayn* of the noun, meets with the *lām* which is additional and has a *sukūn* on it, hence this *lām* mixes with the other and becomes one with a *shaddah*. As regards the meaning of Allāh, it has been reported to us on the authority of ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās who said, “He is the One who everything takes as deity (*ilāh*) and is worshipped by every object of creation.” He then quotes his isnād to Ḍaḥḥāk who said that ‘Abdullāh ibn ‘Abbās said, ‘Allāh is the One possessing divinity (*dhū’l-ilāhiyyah*) and deserving worship (*‘ubūdiyyah*) from all His creation.’ He then said, ‘If someone were to ask: what is the proof that *ulūhiyyah* is worship (*‘ibādah*), and that the word *al-ilāh*

²³ Baqā’i

²⁴ Ṭabarī, vol. 1, pp. 82-83; Sa’di

means *al-ma'būd* (one who is worshipped), and that it follows the form *fa'ila yaf'alu*.²⁵ He said, "The word *ta'allub* is undoubtedly on the form *tafa'ul* deriving from *aliba ya'labu* and the meaning of *aliba*, when spoken, is *'abada* (to worship). The verbal noun of this word has also been mentioned proving that the Arabs articulated it upon the form *fa'ila yaf'alu* without adding anything. Sufyān ibn Wakīf narrated to us; ...; that ibn 'Abbās recited,

"...and abandon you and your *ilāba*?"²⁵

and said, "i.e. and your worship," and he said, "He was one who was worshipped and did not worship." He also quoted another isnād to ibn 'Abbās where he said of this verse, 'Pharaoh was worshipped and did not worship,' and he quoted a similar narration from Mujāhid. Then he said, 'The opinion of ibn 'Abbās and Mujāhid clearly shows that the meaning of *aliba* is *'abada* and that the word *ilāba* is the verbal noun.' He then quoted a ḥadīth on the authority of Abū Sa'īd that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said, "The mother of 'Īsā gave him to a scribe that he may teach him. The teacher said, 'Write *bismillāb*.' 'Īsā said, 'Do you know what Allāh is? He is the God of the gods (*ilābu'l-āliha*).'"²⁶

Ibn al-Qayyim, may Allāh have mercy upon him, said,

"This Noble Name has ten characteristics in its physical

²⁵ *al-A'rāf* (7): 127, i.e. ibn 'Abbās and Mujāhid read it with the reading *ilāba* as opposed to the more standard *āliha*. The full verse reads, "The ruling circle of Pharaoh's people said, 'Are you going to leave Mūsā and his people to cause corruption in the earth and abandon you and your *āliha*?'"

²⁶ Ṭabarī, vol. 1, pp. 122-124 as quoted from Āli al-Shaykh, *Fatḥu'l-Majīd*, pp. 21-22

wording that are specific to it,' he mentioned them and then said, 'as regards its specific characteristics with regards to meaning, the most knowledgeable of creation (ﷺ) said, "I cannot enumerate praise of You, You are as You have praised Yourself." How is it possible to enumerate the specificities of a Name, the object of which has every single perfection without restriction, who deserves all commendation and praise, all lauding and veneration, who possesses all magnificence and perfection, and all nobility and beauty? All goodness, beneficence, generosity, grace and gifts belong to Him and come from Him. This Name is not mentioned over something paltry except that it becomes plentiful, nor at a time of fear except that it removes it, nor at a time of hardship except that it lifts it, nor at a time of distress and worry except that it alleviates it, nor at a time of constraint except that it liberates it. No weak creature depends upon it except that it grants him strength, nor one undergoing humiliation except it grants him honour, nor one who is poor except that it leads him to richness, nor one who is left alone except that it grants him comfort, nor one who is overcome except that it aids him and supports him, nor one in a state of dire need except that it lifts his need, nor one who is run astray except that it draws him back. It is the Name through which hardship is removed, through which blessings descend, through which supplications are answered, through which the foot does not slip, through which evil is repressed and good is promoted. It is the Name through which the heavens and earth stand, because of which the heavenly scriptures descended, the Messengers were sent, the legal laws legislated, the legal punishments established, and Jihād legislated. Through this Name is creation divided into the felicitous and the wretched, and through it does the Undeniable Reality come to pass and the Final Convulsion occur. Because of it are the

Scales erected, the Path laid out, and the Paradise and Hell made ready. Through it is the Lord of the worlds worshipped and praised, and to establish its rights were the Messengers sent. It is about it that the questions will be asked in the grave and on the Day of Resurrection. Because of it did the dispute arise and to it one goes for judgment. Love and hate is based on it. Felicitous is one who has come to know it and establish its right, wretched is one who is ignorant of it and leaves off its right. It is the core of the creation and the command and through it do both stand and become firm, and to it do they end. ...

رَبَّنَا مَا خَلَقْتَ هَذَا بَطْلًا سُبْحَانَكَ فَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿١٩١﴾

“Our Lord, You have not created this for nothing. Transcendent are You! Safeguard us from the punishment of the Fire.”^{27, 28}

²⁷ *Āli ‘Imrān* (3): 191

²⁸ cited in Āli al-Shaykh, *Fath al-Majīd*, pg. 15

أحد

The One and only (*Aḥad*)

The majority have stated that *Aḥad* has the same meaning as *Wāḥid*,²⁹ and this is proven by the recitation of ibn Mas'ūd, 'Say: He is Allāh, the Unique (*Wāḥid*).³⁰ He is the One and only (*Aḥad*), i.e. Unique (*Wāḥid*), singular and unparalleled in every aspect, and there is nothing like Him.³¹ He has no peer, no companion, no son and no partner;³² He is One with regards lordship, *rubūbiyyah*, and One with regards divinity, *ulūbiyyah*.³³ Allāh, Most High, says,

وَلِنَا أَعْمَلْنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُخْلِصُونَ ﴿١٦٣﴾

“Your God is One God; there is none worthy of worship save Him, the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful.”

[*al-Baqarah* (2): 163]

²⁹ Sama'ānī

³⁰ Baghawī. Ibn 'Aṭīyyah also quotes this from 'Umar and Rabi' ibn Khaytham.

³¹ Tha'ālabī, Ibn 'Aṭīyyah, Abū Ḥayyān

³² Qurtubī, ibn Kathīr

³³ Ibn Rajab, Qāsimī

أَتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ
وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ
مَرْيَمَ وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا
لَّا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ سُبْحَانَهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٣١﴾

“They have taken their rabbis and their monks and the Messiah son of Mary as lords beside Allāh, when they were bidden to worship only One God. There is none worthy of worship save Him. Be He Glorified from all that they ascribe as partner (to Him)!”

[*al-Tawbah* (9): 31]

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا مُنذِرٌ وَمِمَّنْ إِلَهٍ إِلَّا اللَّهُ الْوَاحِدُ الْقَهَّارُ ﴿٦٥﴾

“Say: I am only a warner, and there is none worthy of worship save Allāh, the Unique, the All-Conquering.”

[*Ṣād* (38): 65]

وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ ﴿٤﴾

“And no one is comparable to Him.”

[*al-Īkhlās* (112): 4]

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ ﴿١١﴾

“Nothing is like Him; He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.”

[*al-Shūrā* (42): 11]

Ibn ‘Atīyyah said, ‘The whole of the Qur’ān, all of Muḥammad’s

message, rather all the messages, came with this purpose: to affirm that Allāh is Unique, the One and only. Everything in creation actually points to this reality.' Allāh, Most High, says,

هَذَا بَلَاغٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَلِيُنذَرُوا
 بِهِ وَيَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ وَيَذْكُرُوا أَنَّهُ
 الْأَلْبَبُ ﴿٥٢﴾

“This is a clear message for mankind in order that they may be warned by it, and that they may know that He is only One God, and that men of understanding may take heed.”

[Ibrāhīm (14): 52]

الرَّكَنُ أَهْكَمَتْ أَيْنَهُ ثُمَّ فَضَّلَتْ مِنْ لَدُنْ حَكِيمٍ خَيْرٍ ﴿١﴾
 لَا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا اللَّهَ إِنَّنِي لَكُم مِّنْ نَّبِيِّنَ وَبَشِيرٍ ﴿٢﴾

“A Book whose verses are perfectly constructed and then demarcated, coming from One who is All-Wise, All-Aware. ‘Do not worship anyone but Allāh, I am a warner and a bringer of good tidings to you from Him.’”

[Hūd (11): 1-2]

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ
 وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ
 حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِ الضَّلَالَةُ فَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ
 كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾

“We sent a Messenger among every people saying:

‘Worship Allāh and avoid all that is worshipped besides Him.’ Among them were some whom Allāh guided but others received the misguidance they deserved. Travel about the earth and see the final fate of the deniers.”

[*al-Nahl* (16): 36]

Ibn al-Qayyim said,

The *Tawhīd* that the Messengers called to, and with which the Books were revealed, is of two types: *Tawhīd al-Ma‘rifah wa’l-Ithbāt* and *Tawhīd al-Talab wa’l-Qaṣd*. The first deals with affirming the being of the Lord, Most High, His Attributes, His Names, His actions, His speaking, His Books and His conversing with whoever He wills of His servants; it also deals with affirming His decree and destiny and His infinite wisdom. This category has been articulated in the Qur’ān with complete clarity as can be seen in the beginning of *Sūrah al-Ḥadīd*, *Sūrah Tā Hā*, the end of *al-Ḥasr*, the beginning of *Tanzīl Sajdah*, the beginning of *Āli ‘Imrān*, the whole of *Sūrah al-Ikhlās*, and others.

The second category is dealt with in His sayings,

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿١﴾ لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٢﴾

“Say: ‘Disbelievers! I do not worship what you worship....’”

[*al-Kāfirūn* (109): 1-2]

قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ
 أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا
 بَعْضًا أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُولُوا اشْهَدُوا بِأَنَّا
 مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

“Say, ‘People of the Book! Come to a proposition which is the same for us and you - that we should worship none but Allāh and not associate any partners with Him and not take one another as lords besides Allāh.’ If they turn away, say, ‘Bear witness that we are Muslims.’”

[*Āli ‘Imrān* (3): 64]

and can be found in *Tanzīl al-Kitāb* and its end, the beginning of *Sūrah al-Mu‘min*, its middle and its end, the beginning and end of *Sūrah al-A‘rāf*, the generality of *Sūrah al-An‘ām*, and the generality of the chapters of the Qur’ān.

Indeed every *Sūrah* in the Qur’ān deals with both types of *Tawhīd* and calls to them. This is because the Qur’ān either contains information about Allāh, His Names and Attributes, and His actions and words, this then is *Tawhīd* dealing with knowledge and information [about Allāh]; or it calls man to worship Him alone without any partner and to relinquish all that is worshipped besides Him, this then is *Tawhīd* dealing with intent and goal; or it contains command and prohibition and the injunction to obey Him, His prescriptions and proscriptions, this then is the rights of *Tawhīd* and those matters that complete it; or it deals with honouring the people of *Tawhīd* and informing about how they were dealt with in this life and the honour they will receive in the Hereafter,

this then is the recompense of *Tawhīd*; or it deals with information about the people of *shirk* and how they were dealt with in this life and what will be unleashed against them of punishment at the final destination, this then is the recompense of those who left the bounds of *Tawhīd*. Therefore, the whole Qur'ān deals with *Tawhīd*, its rights and its recompense, and it deals with *shirk*, its people and their recompense.³⁴

Ibn Taymiyyah said,

The *Tawhīd* that the Messengers came with affirmed divinity (*ilāhiyyah*) for Allāh alone such that a person bears witness that *lā ilāha illa Allāh*, none is to be worshipped save Him, his *tawakkul* is only placed in Him, his love and hate is only for His sake, and any deed he does is only for His sake. That *Tawhīd* also comprised affirming the Names and Attributes that He affirmed for Himself. Allāh, Most High, says,

وَاللَّهُمَّ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٦٣﴾

“Your God is One God. There is none worthy of worship besides Him, the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful.”

[*al-Baqarah* (2): 163]

وَقَالَ اللَّهُ لَا تَتَّخِذُوا إِلَهَيْنِ
إِثْنَيْنِ إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ فَارْهَبُونِ ﴿٥١﴾

“Allāh says, ‘Do not take two gods, He is only One God. So dread Me alone.’”

[*al-Nahl* (16): 51]

³⁴ Āli al-Shaykh, *Fatḥu'l-Majīd*, pp. 25-26

وَمَنْ يَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ لَا بُرْهَانَ لَهُ بِهِ
فَإِنَّمَا حِسَابُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

“Whoever calls on another god together with Allāh, has no grounds for doing so at all and his reckoning is with his Lord. Truly the disbelievers have no success.”

[*al-Mu'minūn* (23): 117]

وَسَلَّ مَنْ أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رُسُلِنَا
أَجَعَلْنَا مِنْ دُونِ الرَّحْمَنِ إِلَهًا يُعْبَدُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾

“Ask those We sent before you as Our Messengers: Have We ever designated any gods to be worshipped besides the All-Merciful?”

[*al-Zukhruf* (43): 45]

He informs us that every Prophet called man to the worship of Allāh alone without any partners,

قَدْ

كَانَتْ لَكُمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ إِذْ قَالُوا لِقَوْمِهِمْ
إِنَّا بَرَاءٌ وَأَوْمَانُكُمْ وَمِمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ كُفْرًا يَكْفُرُونَ وَإِنَّا
بَيْنَكُمْ أَلْعَدُوَّةُ وَالْبَغْضَاءُ أَبَدًا حَتَّى تُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَحَدُّهُ

“You have an excellent example in Ibrāhīm and those with him, when they said to their people, ‘We wash our hands of you and all that you worship apart from Allāh, and we reject you. Between us and you there will be enmity and hatred for ever unless and until you have faith in Allāh alone.’”

[*al-Mumtāḥanah* (60): 4]

and He says about the polytheists,

إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ
لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾ وَيَقُولُونَ
إِنَّا لَتَارِكُوا آلِهَتِنَا
لِشَاعِرٍ مَّجْنُونٍ ﴿٣٦﴾

“When they are told, ‘There is none worthy of worship save Allāh,’ they were arrogant. They said, ‘Are we to forsake our gods for a mad poet?’”

[*al-Sāffāt* (37): 35-36]

There are many verses like these in the Qur’ān. The meaning of *Tawhīd* is not restricted to *Tawhīd al-Rubūbiyyah*: the belief that Allāh alone is the creator of the worlds as thought by the people of theological rhetoric (*ablu’l-kalam*) and the *Sūfis*. These people thought that if they were affirm this aspect, along with its proof, they would have affirmed the pinnacle of *Tawhīd*, that if they were to witness this and were to obliterate themselves in it they would have done so in the pinnacle of *Tawhīd*.

In reality, if a man was to accept the Attributes of His Lord as was deserving and was to absolve Him of everything He should be absolved of, and affirmed that He alone is the creator of everything, he would not be a *muwahhīd* until he bore witness that none has the right to be worshipped save Allāh alone, accepting that He is the only God deserving of worship, and then affixed himself to the worship of Allāh alone without any partner. The *ilāh* is one who is taken as god and worshipped (*ma’lūh ma’būd*), who deserves worship, it does not mean one who is able to create from nothing. If someone were to explain *al-ilāh* to mean one who was capable of creating from nothing and believed that this meaning

was the single distinguishing meaning of the word, and thought that affirmation of this was the pinnacle of *Tawhīd*, as was the way of those who affirmed the Attributes and delved into *kalām* - and this is what they say of Abū'l-Ḥasan and his followers - then he does not know the reality of the *Tawhīd* with which Allāh sent His Messenger (ﷺ). This is because the polytheist Arabs affirmed that Allāh alone was the creator of everything, yet despite this belief they remained polytheists. Allāh, Most High, says,

وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٦١﴾

“Most of them do not have faith in Allāh without associating others with Him.”

[*Yūṣuf* (12): 106]

A group of the Salaf said, “If you ask them, ‘Who created the heavens and the earth,’ they would answer, ‘Allāh,’ yet despite this they would worship others besides Him.”³⁵ Allāh, Most High, says,

قُلْ لِمَنِ الْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ قُلْ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾ قُلْ مَنْ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٨٦﴾ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ قُلْ أَفَلَا نُنْفِقُ ﴿٨٧﴾ قُلْ مَنْ مَلِكُوتِ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ يُجِيرُ وَلَا يُجَارُ عَلَيْهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ قُلْ فَأَنَّى تُسْحَرُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾

³⁵ Ibn Kathīr relates this from ibn ‘Abbās, Mujāhid, ‘Aṭā’, ‘Ikrimah, Sha’bī, Qatādah, Daḥḥāk, and ‘Abdu’l-Raḥmān ibn Zayd ibn Aslam.

“Say, ‘To whom does the earth belong, and every-
one in it, if you have any knowledge?’ They will
say, ‘To Allāh.’ Say, ‘So will you not pay heed?’ Say,
‘Who is the Lord of the Seven Heavens and the
Lord of the Mighty Throne?’ They will say, ‘Allāh.’
Say, ‘So will you not have *taqwa*?’ Say, ‘In whose
hand is the dominion over everything, He who gives
protection and from whom no protection can be
given, if you have any knowledge?’ They will say,
‘Allāh’s.’ Say, ‘So how have you been bewitched?’”

[*al-Mu'minūn* (23): 84-89]

Not everyone who affirms that Allāh, Most High, is the
Lord of everything and its creator necessarily worships
Him and only Him, supplicating to Him and no one
else, placing his hope and fear in Him and no one else,
loving and hating for His sake only, obeying His Mes-
sengers and enjoining what He enjoins and prohibiting
what He prohibits. The generality of the polytheists be-
lieved that Allāh was the creator of everything but they
set up intercessors through whom they committed *shirk*,
and they set up partners with Him. Allāh, Most High,
says,

أَمْ أَخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ شُفَعَاءَ
قُلْ أَوْلَوْكَانُوا لَا يَمْلِكُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾
قُلْ لِلَّهِ الشَّفَعَةُ جَمِيعًا ۖ لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ ۖ ثُمَّ
إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾

“Or have they adopted intercessors besides Allāh?
Say, ‘Even though they do not control a thing and
have no awareness?’ Say, ‘Intercession is entirely
Allāh’s affair. The kingdom of the heavens and

earth is His.'..."

[*al-Zumar* (39): 43-44]

وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ
 مَا لَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ هَؤُلَاءِ شَفَعُونَا
 عِنْدَ اللَّهِ قُلْ أَتَسْتَعِينُونَ اللَّهُ بِمَا لَا يَعْلَمُ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَلَا
 فِي الْأَرْضِ سَبَّحْتَهُ، وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

“They worship, instead of Allāh, what can neither harm them nor help them, saying, ‘These are our intercessors with Allāh.’ Say, ‘Would you inform Allāh of something about which He does not know either in the heavens or on earth?’ May He be glorified and exalted above what they associate with Him!”

[*Yūnus* (10): 18]

وَلَقَدْ جِئْتُمُونَا فَرَادَى
 كَمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ أَوَّلَ مَرَّةٍ وَتَرَكْتُمْ مَا خَوَّلْنَاكُمْ وَرَاءَ ظُهُورِكُمْ
 وَمَا نَرَى مَعَكُمْ شُفَعَاءَكُمُ الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ أَنَّهُمْ فِيكُمْ شُرَكَاءَ
 لَقَدْ نَقَطَ بَيْنَكُمْ وَضَلَّ عَنْكُمْ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

“You have come to Us all alone just as We created you at first, leaving behind you everything We bestowed on you. We do not see your intercessors accompanying you, those you claimed were partners with Allāh.”

[*al-An'ām* (6): 94]

وَمِنَ

النَّاسِ مَنْ يَتَّخِذُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَنْدَادًا يُحِبُّونَهُمْ كَحُبِّ اللَّهِ

“Some people set up equals to Allāh, loving them as they should love Allāh.”

[*al-Baqarah* (2): 165]

This is why you will find amongst the followers of these people³⁶ those who prostrate to the sun, moon and stars and invoke them, fast for them, sacrifice to them, and try to draw close to them. They then claim that this is not *shirk* and that “*shirk* can only be committed when one believes that these objects regulate and control my affairs, but if I was to take them as a mere means (*sabab*) and intermediary (*wāsiṭah*), I would not be a *musbrik*.” However, it is known by necessity in the religion of Islām that this is *shirk*.³⁷

Aside from textual proofs directing a person to His oneness, Allāh also provides rational proofs:

قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ مَعَهُ آلِهَةٌ كَمَا يَقُولُونَ إِذًا لَأَبْتَغُوا إِلَىٰ ذِي الْعَرْشِ سَبِيلًا

سُبْحٰنَهُ وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يَقُولُونَ عُلُوًّا كَبِيرًا

“Say: If there had been other gods with Him, as they say, they would certainly have sought out a way to the Master of the Throne! Glory to Him! He is high above all that they say in greatness and sublimity!”

[*al-Isrā'* (17): 42-43]

³⁶ i.e. those who think that *Tawhīd* is restricted to this meaning.

³⁷ Āli al-Shaykh, *Fathu'l-Majīd*, pp. 26-29

لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلَ اللَّهِ لَفَسَدَتَا فَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ

عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

“If there had been any gods beside Allāh in heaven or earth, they would both be ruined. Glory be to Allāh, the Lord of the Throne, beyond what they describe!”

[*al-Anbiyā'* (21): 22]

مَا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ مِنْ وَلَدٍ

وَمَا كَانَ مَعَهُ مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِذَا أَذْهَبَ كُلَّ إِلَهٍ بِمَا خَلَقَ وَلَعَلَّ

بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

“Allāh has not chosen any son, nor is there any god along with Him; else would each god have assuredly championed that which He created, and some of them would assuredly have overcome others. Glory be to Allāh above all that they allege.”

[*al-Mu'minūn* (23): 91]

Others said that *al-Aḥad* and *al-Wāḥid* are not synonymous; rather each has its own specific meaning. Azharī said that only Allāh is ever described as being *Aḥad*, one does not say *raḥul aḥad* or *dirham aḥad*, rather one says *raḥul wāḥid* and *dirham wāḥid*. In affirmation one would say, *ra'aytu raḥulan wāḥidan* and in negation one would say, *mā ra'yatu aḥadan*.³⁸ Therefore, Khaṭṭābī said, “The difference between the two is that *al-Wāḥid* is One with respect to His essence and nothing resembles Him in it; *al-Aḥad* signifies that He is One with respect to His Attributes and qualities and none shares with Him in

³⁸ Rāzī, Shawkānī

them.' Ḥalīmī said, 'al-*Aḥad* is One whom nothing resembles and al-*Wāḥid* is One who has no partner or equal.'³⁹ Others said that al-*Aḥad* denotes that He is not limited or subdivided or apportioned whereas al-*Wāḥid* signifies that He has no partner or like.

Ibn Rajab said, 'The people of theological rhetoric, *ablu'l-kalām*, explained al-*Aḥad* to mean one who could not be subdivided or apportioned. If what they mean is that He is not composed of separate individual components or that He cannot be split up into constituent parts, this is correct. But if they mean that one (quality) cannot be discerned from another - and this is what they mean when they use the term *mujassim*, anthropomorphist - this is completely false.'

In the verse, the Name *Aḥad* follows Allāh because Allāh signifies His being the one deserving worship, one whom all creation needs yet needs no one, and such can only be One. Therefore divinity, *ilāhiyyah*, dictates Oneness but oneness does not necessarily dictate *ilāhiyyah*, hence the sequence of Names here.⁴⁰

The Name *Aḥad* cannot be unrestrictedly applied to any besides Allāh in an affirmatory context since He is the One who is perfect in all His Attributes and actions.⁴¹

³⁹ Qurtubī, *al-Asnā*, ibn Rajab.

⁴⁰ Baqā'ī

⁴¹ Ibn Kathīr, ibn Rajab, Shawkānī who quotes this from Azharī

CHAPTER II: SUCCOUR

الله الصمد

Allāh,
the Everlasting Sustainer of all.

Allāh is the One who is sought for the fulfilment of all needs. The inhabitants of the lower and upper world all stand in dire need of Him. They ask Him for their needs and they place their hope in Him to fulfil their desires. This is because all His Attributes are perfect: He is the All-Knowing whose knowledge is perfect, the Forbearing whose forbearance is perfect, the Most-Merciful whose mercy encompasses everything and so on.¹ The verse affirms His generosity and mercy because one is not recoured to unless he is someone who grants grace.² It also negates all defect from Him as this is implied by the word *al-Ṣamad*, just as it negates the fact that

¹ Sa'di

² Qurtubī, *al-Asmā*, vol. 1, pg. 184

there is anyone above Him who could overcome Him.³

Linguistically, the word *al-Ṣamad* has two essential meanings: intent and objective (*qaṣd*), and hardness and rigidity (*ṣalābah*). It is the first that is meant here for all of creation turn to Allāh and seek Him in supplication and entreaty.⁴ Ibn al-Anbārī stated that all linguists agreed that this was the correct meaning.⁵

Abū Ja'far al-Ṭabarī said,

In the language of the Arabs, *al-Ṣamad* is one who is sought or betaken to, to whom one recurses and One who has nothing above him... Since this is the case, the most befitting explanation of this word should be that which conforms to its well-known meaning in the language of those whose tongue the Qur'ān was revealed in.⁶

One says: '*ṣamada ilayhi*,' i.e. he betook himself, directed himself, aimed towards him, recursed to him. '*ṣamada ilayhi fī'l-ḥawā'ij*,' he betook himself to him or took recourse in him in exigencies. '*ṣamada al-amr*,' he betook himself to the thing, aimed at it, sought it. A *ṣamad* is also a lord or chief because one repairs, betakes himself, or has recourse to him in exigencies; or because he is one to whom obedience is rendered, without whom no affair is accomplished; or

³ Rāzī

⁴ Ibn al-Fāris, *Mu'jam Maqāyis al-Lughā*

⁵ Abū Ḥayyān

⁶ Ṭabarī.

cf. Qurtūbī who attributes this view to Khaṭṭābī, Tha'ālabī, Abū Ḥayyān, Ḥalabī and Ālūsī

one to whom lordship ultimately pertains.⁷

Therefore, in exegesis to this word, Suddī said, 'He is the One who is sought to fulfil all desires, whose succour is pleaded for in calamity.'⁸ Ibn 'Abbās said, 'The One to whom creation resorts in times of need and asks of to fulfil requests.'⁹ Abū Hurayrah said, 'He is One who stands in no need of anyone yet everyone is in dire need of Him.'¹⁰ Allāh, Most High, says,

يٰۤاَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اَنْتُمْ الْفُقَرَاءُ اِلَى اللّٰهِ وَاللّٰهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ
الْحَمِيدُ ﴿١٥﴾

“Mankind! You are the poor in need of Allāh whereas Allāh is the Rich Beyond Need, the Praiseworthy.”

[*Fāṭir* (35): 15]

وَمَا يَكُم مِّنْ
نِّعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللّٰهِ تَعْلَمُوْنَ اِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضَّرَفَالِيْهِ تَجْرَوْنَ ﴿٥٣﴾

“Any blessing you have is from Allāh. Then when harm touches you, it is to Him that you cry for help.”

[*al-Nahl* (16): 53]

⁷Lane's Lexicon, summarised

⁸Baghawī, Qurtubī

⁹Ibn Kathīr

The Salaf illustrated the meaning of *al-Ṣamad* in various ways, all of them revolving around its essential meaning:

1) He neither hungers nor thirsts and is not hollow

Ibn ‘Abbās said, ‘*al-Ṣamad*: the One who is not hollow.’¹¹ Mujāhid said, ‘*al-Ṣamad*: solid and not hollow.’¹² This same view was quoted by Ṭabarī from al-Ḥasan, Sa‘īd ibn al-Jubair and Ḍaḥḥāk.

Ṣha‘bī said, ‘*al-Ṣamad*: One who does not eat food and does not drink.’¹³ Sa‘īd ibn al-Musayyib said, “The One who has nothing to fill.”¹⁴

Allāh, Most High, says,

قُلْ أَعِيَذُ بِاللَّهِ أَنِّي أَخَذْتُ وَلِيًّا فَأَطِرُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ يُطْعِمُ
وَلَا يُطْعَمُ

“Say: ‘Am I to take anyone other than Allāh as my protector, the Bringer into Being of the heavens and the earth, He who feeds and is not fed?’”

[*al-An‘ām* (6): 14]

¹⁰Qurtubī

¹¹Ṭabarī, Bayhaqī, *al-Asmā’ wa’l-Ṣifāt* #100, ibn Abī ‘Āṣim, *al-Sunnah* #665

¹²Ṭabarī, ‘Abdu’l-Razzāq, ibn Abī Ḥātim, and ibn Abī ‘Āṣim #673-674-676

¹³Ṭabarī, ibn Abī Ḥātim, Bayhaqī #103, ibn Abī ‘Āṣim #682-683-684

¹⁴Ṭabarī, ibn Abī ‘Āṣim #677

وَمَا

خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ ﴿٥٦﴾ مَا أُرِيدُ مِنْهُمْ مِنْ رِزْقٍ
وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ يُطْعَمُونِ ﴿٥٧﴾ إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الرَّزَّاقُ ذُو الْقُوَّةِ الْمَتِينُ

“I only created jinn and man to worship Me. I do not require any provision from them and I do not require them to nourish Me. Truly Allāh, He is the Provider, the Possessor of Strength, the Sure.”

[*al-Dhāriyāt* (51): 56-58]

2) The One from whom nothing comes out.

‘Ikrimah said, ‘*al-Ṣamad*: the One from whom nothing comes out, He does not give birth and is not born.’¹⁵

3) The One who does not give birth and is not born

Abū’l-‘Āliyah said, ‘*al-Ṣamad*: the One who does not give birth and is not born. There is nothing that gives birth except that it is inherited from, and nothing that is born except that it will die. So He, Most High, informed them that He will not be inherited from, nor will He die.’¹⁶

Abū Sa’d al-Ṣaghānī said in commentary to the first two verses, ‘This is because nothing is born except that it will die, and nothing will die except that it will be inherited from, but Allāh will not die and will not be inherited from.’¹⁷

¹⁵Ṭabarī, ibn Abī Ḥātim, ibn Abī ‘Āṣim #667-668-670. Bayhaqī #102 from al-Ḥasan

¹⁶Ṭabarī

¹⁷Ṭabarī, ibn Abī Ḥātim, ibn Khuzaymah, *al-Tawḥīd*, pg. 30, Tirmidhī #3364

So in this case the next verse would serve as an explanation to this word.¹⁸ Ibn Kathīr was of the opinion that this was a good exegesis.

بَدِيعُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ اَنۢىۤ يَكُوۡنُ لَهُۥ وَلَدٌ
 وَلَمْ تَكُنْ لَهُۥ صٰحِبَةً وَّخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْۡءٍ وَّهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْۡءٍ عَلِيۡمٌ ﴿١٠١﴾
 ذٰلِكُمُ اللّٰهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ خَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْۡءٍ
 فَاعْبُدُوْهُ وَّهُوَ عَلٰى كُلِّ شَيْۡءٍ وَكِيْلٌ ﴿١٠٢﴾

“He is the Originator of the heavens and the earth. How could He have a son when He has no wife? He created all things and He has knowledge of all things. That is Allāh, your Lord. There is none worthy of worship but Him, the Creator of everything. So worship Him. He is responsible for everything.”

[*al-An‘ām* (6): 101-102]

4) The absolute Master or Chief

Shaqīq¹⁹ and Abū Wā‘il²⁰ said, ‘*al-Ṣamad*: the absolute master.’ This is also recorded from ibn Mas‘ūd.²¹

Ibn ‘Abbās said, ‘*al-Ṣamad*: the one with perfect mastery, the Ex-

¹⁸ Baghawī, Qurtubī, ibn Kathīr

¹⁹ Ṭabarī, ‘Abdu’l-Razzāq, ibn Abī Hātim, ibn Abī ‘Āṣim #666- 671-672, Bayhaqī #99

²⁰ Ṭabarī, ibn Abī ‘Āṣim #672

²¹ Ibn Kathīr.

alted whose greatness is perfect, the Forbearing whose forbearing is perfect, the Rich whose self-sufficiency is perfect, the Compeller whose compelling is perfect, the All-Knowing whose knowledge is perfect, the All-Wise whose wisdom is perfect. All aspects of excellence and mastery are perfected in Him, He is Allāh, this is His description and it applies only to Him.²²

Sa'īd ibn Jubayr said, 'The One who is perfect in all His Attributes and actions.'²³ Rabī' and Maqātil said that it meant One who is free from all defect and blemish.²⁴

5) The Everlasting who will never perish

al-Ḥasan and Qatādah said, '*al-Samad*: the One who continues forever after His creation perishes.'²⁵ Qatādah said, 'The ever-enduring.'²⁶ Allāh, Most High, says,

كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ ﴿٢٦﴾ وَبَقِيَ وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ ﴿٢٧﴾

"Everyone on it will pass away but the Face of your Lord will remain, Master of Majesty and Generosity."

[*al-Rahmān* (55): 26-27]

²² Ṭabarī, ibn Abī Ḥātim #19535, Abū'l-Shaykh #98, Bayhaqī #98

²³ Baghawī

²⁴ Baghawī

²⁵ Ṭabarī, ibn Abī Ḥātim, ibn Abī 'Āṣim #679, Abū'l-Shaykh #92-95-99-100, Bayhaqī #104

²⁶ Ṭabarī. Ibn Abī 'Āṣim #681 and 'Abdu'l-Razzāq also record it from al-Ḥasan

6) The governor of affairs and the Most High

Mujāhid, '*al-Ṣamad*: One who is in charge of everything.'²⁷ 'Alī and 'Ikrimah said, 'The One above whom is no-one.'²⁸ Allāh, Most High, says,

وَهُوَ الْفَاہِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِ ۖ وَهُوَ الْحَكِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ ﴿١٨﴾

“He is the Absolute Master, over His servants.”

[*al-An'ām* (6): 18]

Ṭabarānī, *Kitāb al-Sunnah*, after quoting most of the above opinions said,

All of these (views) are correct and they are all the qualities of our Lord, Mighty and Magnificent. He is the One who is resorted to in exigencies, He is the absolute master, He is not hollow, He does not eat and drink and He is the One who will remain after His creation perishes.²⁹

Ibn al-Qayyim summarised the meaning as follows:

al-Ṣamad is a master or chief whose mastery is perfect, and it is for this reason that the Arabs would apply this name to their nobles due to the plenitude of their praiseworthy qualities. The *Ṣamad* is one to whom hearts recourse and betake in hope and fear, this is because of his many good traits and praiseworthy qualities. It is for

²⁷ Ṭabarī, Abū'l-Shaykh, *al-Aḥzām* #96

²⁸ Baghawī

²⁹ Ibn Kathīr.

cf. Shanqīṭī to 6:14

this reason that the majority of the Salaf, amongst them, ibn 'Abbās, explained it to mean, 'The master with perfect mastery, the Exalted whose greatness is perfect, the Forbearing whose forbearing is perfect, the Rich whose self-sufficiency is perfect, the Compeller whose compelling is perfect, the All-Knowing whose knowledge is perfect, the All-Wise whose wisdom is perfect. All aspects of excellence and mastery are perfected in Him, He is Allāh, this is His description and it applies only to Him.' Those who said that it meant that He was not hollow did not contravene this exegesis for the word signifies a gathering, someone who gathers the attributes of perfection. No one is comparable to Him because He is perfect in His being *al-Ṣamad*.³⁰

The word *Ṣamad* is preceded by the definite article prefix (*al*), this is because the initial addressees accepted and knew of His Self-Sufficiency, however they did not accept, or know of, His absolute Oneness and it is to express this that *Aḥad* is left as an indefinite noun.³¹ It is also said that the word *Aḥad*, in any context outside of enumeration and negation, is only ever applied to Allāh, hence it's being left indefinite since it does not need the definite article to particularise it. *Ṣamad* is applied to others besides Allāh, and hence it is given the definite article prefix to highlight that He is the one and absolute *Ṣamad*.³²

The word Allāh is repeated again to emphasise the fact that anyone who does not have the quality of absolute oneness and the

³⁰ Ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Ṣawā'iq al-Mursalab*, pg. 1023

³¹ Baydāwī, Rāzī

³² Ibn Taymiyyah, *Daqā'iq al-Tafsīr*, Ibn Rajab, Baqā'ī, Ālūsī

quality of self-sufficiency is not deserving of divinity, *ulūbiyyah*.³³

The two sentences are not connected by a connecting particle because one is like a conclusion to the other, when looked at from one perspective, and an evidence for it, when looked at from another.³⁴ Absolute oneness necessitates total self-sufficiency and independence, therefore the second verse is a conclusion of the first. The One who is self-sufficient in and of Himself, in whom the whole creation stands in dire need, can only be one, everything besides that one is needy and its existence is dependent on another; as such the second verse is also evidence for the first.³⁵

³³ Baydāwī, Ālūsī, Shawkānī

³⁴ Baydāwī, Baqā'ī, Ālūsī

³⁵ Ālūsī

CHAPTER III: UNIQUENESS

لم يلد، ولم يولد ﴿٣﴾

He fathered none, nor
was He born.

Ibn ‘Abbās said, *‘He fathered none* He has not sired a son, *nor was He born:* He does not comes from something else.’¹ He also said, *‘He fathered none* as Maryam did, *nor was He born* as were ‘Īsā and ‘Uzayr.’² The claims of the polytheists, the beliefs implicit in the questions they asked the Prophet (ﷺ) are now tackled and explicitly negated.³ It is for this reason, the reason that the claims made are not new, that the verbs employed are in the past tense.⁴ The

¹Ibn Abī Ḥātim #19534

²Qurtubī

³Tha‘alabī

⁴Baydāwī, Rāzī, Abū Su‘ūd, Ālūsī, Shawkānī

verse negates all lineage from Him from each and every perspective. He is the first before whom was nothing and He is the last, after whom will be nothing.⁵ Anything that is born is generated (*ḥādith*), and anything that is generated cannot be divine and does not deserve to be worshipped.⁶ Hence, the verse further emphasises the absoluteness and perfection of his being *Aḥad* and *al-Ṣamad*.⁷

Ibn Taymiyyah said,

It is impossible that He give birth or be born. This is because it is impossible to give birth or be produced, or any other words bearing these meanings, without having two sources, or parents. Whatever is born, an object that exists in and of itself, must have a source substance from which it comes out. Whatever is an accident (*ʿarad*) i.e something that can only exist in something else must have a substance to exist in. The first is negated by His being *Aḥad* because this signifies that no one is comparable to Him and none is equal to Him. Therefore it is impossible that He have a companion and giving birth requires the communion of two. Allāh, Most High, says

بَدِيعُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لَهُ وَلَدٌ
وَلَمْ تَكُنْ لَهُ صَاحِبَةٌ وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠١﴾

“...How could He have a son when He has no wife?
He created all things and He has knowledge of all

⁵ Qāsimī

⁶ Qāsimī

⁷ Ibn al-Qayyim, *Badā'i' al-Fawā'id*, vol. 1, pg. 159

things.”

[*al-An'ām* (6): 101]

Here He, Glorious is He, negated His having a son by stating the impossibility of the implications thereof. Negating the consequence negates the cause. He also states that He created everything, i.e. everything is created by Him, nothing is born of Him.

The second is negated by His being *al-Ṣamad* because something is born when portions separate from two sources, such as the birth of a child coming from the sperm and egg of the mother and father. As such one portion is dependent on the other in order to actually produce something and all of this is impossible for Allāh, Most High. He is *Aḥad*: there is no one comparable to Him who could be a companion or equal, and He is *al-Ṣamad*: nothing splits away from Him. Therefore both of these Names negate His having a son and being born.⁸

Ālūsī said,

He fathered none, this is to be negated from Allāh, Most High, because giving birth dictates that some portion of Him separate from Him. The consequence of accepting this would be to accept that Allāh is composite which in turn negates His qualities of being *al-Ṣamad* and *al-Aḥad*. Additionally, the son is of the same genus as the father whereas nothing is like Allāh, Most High: He is the necessary existent and everything else is a possible existent. A son is usually sought for support and aid and to continue one's lineage, but Allāh is ever-existent and not in need of anything.⁹

⁸ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Daqā'iq al-Tafsīr*

⁹ cf. Baydāwī, *Nasafi*

The above words highlight some of the reasons why one would desire or require a child: to continue ones line and to preserve oneself through descendants, but Allāh has no need of this:

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا سُبْحٰنَهُ ۗ بَل لَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ
وَالْاَرْضِ كُلُّ لَهٗ قٰنِیُنٌ ﴿۱۱۶﴾

“They say, ‘Allāh has taken a son.’ Glory be to Him!
No, everything in the heavens and earth belongs to
Him. Everything is obedient to Him.”

[*al-Baqarah* (2): 116]

and He owns everything,

وَمَا يَنْبَغِي لِلرَّحْمٰنِ اَنْ يَّتَّخِذَ وِلْدًا ﴿۱۱۶﴾ اِنْ كُلُّ مَنْ فِي
السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ اِلَّا اَعْيٰى الرَّحْمٰنِ عَبْدًا ﴿۱۱۷﴾

“It is not fitting for the All-Merciful to have a son.
There is no one in the heavens and earth who will
not come to the All-Merciful as a slave.”

[*Maryam* (19): 92-93]

Another reason is to have the child inherit him but Allāh says,

كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ ﴿۱۱۷﴾ وَبَقِيَ وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ ذُو الْجَلٰلِ
وَ الْاِكْرَامِ ﴿۱۱۸﴾

“Everyone on it will pass away but the Face of
your Lord will remain, Master of Majesty and
Generosity.”

[*al-Rahmān* (55): 26-27]

وَلِلَّهِ مِيرَاثُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ ﴿١٨٠﴾

“Allāh is the inheritor of the heavens and the earth and Allāh is aware of what you do.”

[*Āli 'Imrān* (3): 180]

Abū'l-Āliyah said, '*al-Ṣamad*: the One who does not give birth and is not born. There is nothing that gives birth except that it is inherited from, and nothing that is born except that it will die. So He, Most High, informed them that He will not be inherited from, nor will He die.'¹⁰

Abū Sa'd al-Ṣaghānī said, 'This is because nothing is born except that it will die, and nothing will die except that it will be inherited from, but Allāh will not die and will not be inherited from.'¹¹

Allāh has praised Himself for all of this with His words:¹²

وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي لَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ شَرِيكٌ فِي الْمَلِكِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ وَلِيٌّ مِنَ الذُّلِّ وَكَبْرَهُ تَكْبِيرًا ﴿١٧٩﴾

“And say: ‘Praise be to Allāh who has no son and who has no partner in His kingdom and who needs no one to protect Him from abasement.’ And proclaim His greatness repeatedly!”

[*al-Isrā'* (17): 111]

¹⁰Ṭabarī

¹¹Ṭabarī, ibn Abī Ḥātim, ibn Khuzaymah, *al-Tawḥīd*, pg. 30, Tirmidhī #3364

¹²Sālim

Allāh highlights the sheer depravity of the claim that He has a son with His words:

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا ۗ لَقَدْ
 جِئْتُمْ شَيْئًا إِدًّا ۗ تَكَادُ السَّمَوَاتُ يَنْفَطِرْنَ مِنْهُ
 وَتَنْشَقُّ الْأَرْضُ وَتَخِرُّ الْجِبَالُ هَدًّا ۗ أَنْ دَعَوْا لِلرَّحْمَنِ وَلَدًا
 ۗ وَمَا يَنْبَغِي لِلرَّحْمَنِ أَنْ يَتَّخِذَ وَلَدًا ۗ إِنْ كُلُّ مَنْ فِي
 السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِلَّا آتِي الرَّحْمَنِ عَبْدًا ۗ لَقَدْ أَحْصَاهُمْ
 وَعَدَّهُمْ عَدًّا ۗ وَكُلُّهُمْ آتِيهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَرْدًا ۗ

“They say, ‘The All-Merciful has a son.’ They have devised a monstrous thing. The heavens are all but rent apart and the earth split open and the mountains brought crashing down, at their ascription of a son to the All-Merciful! It is not fitting for the All-Merciful to have a son. There is no one in the heavens and earth who will not come to the All-Merciful as a slave. He has counted them and numbered them precisely. Each of them will come to Him on the Day of Rising all alone.”

[Maryam (19): 88-95]

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا سُبْحٰنَهُ
 بَلْ عِبَادٌ مُّكْرَمُونَ ۗ لَا يَسْبِقُونَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ وَهُمْ
 بِأَمْرِهِ يَعْمَلُونَ ۗ

“They say, ‘The All-Merciful has a son.’ Glory be to Him! No, they are honoured slaves! They do not precede Him in speech and they act on His

command.”

[*al-Anbiyā'* (21): 26-27]

بَدِيعُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لَهُ وَلَدٌ
 وَلَمْ تَكُنْ لَهُ صَاحِبَةٌ ۖ وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿١٠١﴾
 ذَٰلِكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ خَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ
 فَاعْبُدُوهُ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ ﴿١٠٢﴾

“He is the Originator of the heavens and the earth. How could He have a son when He has no wife? He created all things and He has knowledge of all things. That is Allāh, your Lord. There is none worthy of worship but Him, the Creator of everything. So worship Him. He is responsible for everything.”

[*al-An'ām* (6): 101-102]

Bukhārī and Muslim record on the authority of Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “There is none who is more patient upon hearing blasphemy than Allāh, they claim He has a son whereas He provides for them and grants them good health.”¹³

Bukhārī records on the authority of Abū Hurayrah that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “Allāh, Mighty and Magnificent, says, ‘The Son of Adam denies me and he abuses me though he has no right to do either. He denies Me by saying, ‘He will not resurrect me as He created me,’ whereas the first creation is not any easier for Me than repeating it. He abuses Me by saying, ‘Allāh has taken a son,’ whereas I am the One, the Everlasting Sustainer who has fathered none and

¹³ Bukhārī #6099 and Muslim #2804

was not born, and no one is comparable to Him.”¹⁴

Not only was the claim made that He had a son, daughters and general kinship were also claimed and repudiated by Allāh,

وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ شُرَكَاءَ الْجِنَّ وَخَلَقَهُمْ
وَحَرَّفُوا الْبَيْنَ وَبَنَتِ بَغْيَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا
يَصِفُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

“Yet they make the jinn co-partners with Allāh when He created them! And they attribute sons and daughters to Him without any knowledge. Glory be to Him! He is far above what they describe!”

[*al-An‘ām* (6): 100]

وَجَعَلُوا بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ الْجَنَّةِ
نَسْبًا وَلَقَدْ عَلِمَتِ الْجَنَّةُ إِنَّهُمْ لَمُحْضَرُونَ ﴿١٥٨﴾ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا
يَصِفُونَ ﴿١٥٩﴾

“They claim there is a blood-tie between Him and the jinn but the jinn know very well that they will be arraigned. Glory be to Allāh above what they describe.”

[*al-Sāffāt* (37): 158-159]

A proof that He does not give birth is that He was not born, and this is what is mentioned next.¹⁵ Abū Su‘ūd said,

¹⁴ Bukhārī #4974-4975

¹⁵ Rāzī, Baqā‘ī

“Nor was He born,” nothing comes from Him because He is eternal *a parte post* and *a parte ante*, and is never absent. This has been explicitly negated here, even though the addressees accepted the import of this statement, to further affirm the previous negation and to emphasise it by alluding to the fact that both go hand-in-hand.¹⁶ Experience proves that everything that gives birth must, in turn, be born; whatever does not give birth is not born.¹⁷

It is also for this reason, the reason that **“nor was He born,”** is generally accepted, that negation of giving birth was mentioned first since this was the claim current amongst them, and therefore the claim that should have been immediately dealt with.¹⁸

The verse also shows that He is Rich Beyond Need and as such His grace and beneficence is granted, not because He needs creation or fears harm from them, but through pure mercy and generosity.¹⁹

¹⁶ cf. Shawkānī, Sālim

¹⁷ Refer also to ibn Rajab

¹⁸ Rāzī, ibn Rajab, Ālūsī, Sālim

¹⁹ Rāzī

CHAPTER VI: PURITY

وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهٗ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ ﴿١﴾

And no one is comparable to Him.

There is nothing like Him in His Names, His Attributes and His Actions, Blessed and Exalted is He.¹ He does not have an equal, and He does not have an opposite:² “*Nothing is like Him, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.*”³

In Arabic, the words *kufu'*, *kafi'*, *kifā'a* all mean comparability, likeness or equality.⁴ This is one of its two basic meanings; the other is to incline or lean towards something.⁵ In light of this mean-

¹ Sa'dī

² Rāzī, Ibn 'Atīyyah, Tha'ālābī

³ *al-Shūrā* (42): 11

⁴ Ṭabarī

⁵ Ibn Fāris

ing the Salaf illustrated this by giving two general cases:

1) There is nothing like Him

Abū'l-‘Āliyah said, ‘There is nothing comparable to Him, nothing equal to Him, there is nothing like Him.’⁶ Ka‘b said, ‘Allāh, Most High, founded the seven heavens and the seven earths on this chapter. Not one of Allāh’s creation is like Him.’⁷ Ibn ‘Abbās said, ‘There is nothing like Him, so Glory be to the One, the Subduer.’⁸

2) That it comes from *kifā’ah* or suitability in marriage.⁹

Mujahid said that it meant wife or companion.¹⁰

The import of this verse is further clarified in other verses,

فَلَا تَضْرِبُوا لِلَّهِ الْأَمْثَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾

“Do not try and make metaphors for Allāh, Allāh knows and you do not know.”

[*al-Nahl* (16): 74]

فَلَا تَجْعَلُوا لِلَّهِ أُنْدَادًا وَأَنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

“Do not, then, knowingly make others equal to

⁶Ṭabarī,

⁷Ṭabarī, ibn Abī Hātim, Abu'l-Shaykh #895

⁸Ṭabarī

⁹Zamakhsharī

¹⁰Ṭabarī

Allāh.”

[*al-Baqarah* (2): 22]

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَجَعَلَ الظُّلُمَاتِ
وَالنُّورَ ۗ ثُمَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُرِيدُونَ بِعِبَادَتِ

“Praise belongs to Allāh who created the heavens and the earth and appointed darkness and light. Then those who disbelieve make others equal to their Lord!”

[*al-An‘ām* (6): 1]

and exemplifies one of the pillars of our faith in Allāh. Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Wāsiṭiyyah*,* said,

Part of faith in Allāh is to believe in what He has described Himself with in His Book and what His Messenger, Muḥammad (ﷺ), has described Him with without distorting,¹¹ denying,¹² questioning how,¹³ or liken-

* Available in English with the title, ‘*A textbook on orthodox Sunni creed, the Creed of al-Wāsiṭiyyah*.’ Published by Daar us-Sunnah Publishers, Birmingham, UK, 2009.

¹¹ ar: *tahrif*. In the context of ‘*aqīdah*, this is the term given to *ta’wīl*, or figurative interpretation which is ‘to turn a wording away from its more obvious meaning to one that is less obvious and weaker, such as in the case of those who stated that *istawā* means *istawlā*.’ This is because one is effectively, ‘Divesting the word of what it signifies of meaning.’ cf. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Dar’ Ta’ārūḍ*, vol. 5, pg. 385 and *Majmū’ Fatāwā*, vol. 3, pg. 165.

¹² ar: *ta’ṭīl*. In the context of ‘*aqīdah* this terms refers to the negation of Allāh’s Attributes. cf. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Dar’ Ta’ārūḍ*, vol. 8, pg. 247.

¹³ ar: *takyīf*, meaning to ‘ask after the manner and form of something’ and ‘to seek out the reality and nature of something.’ cf. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Bayān Talbis al-Jahmiyyah*, vol. 3, pg. 139 and *Dar’ Ta’ārūḍ*, vol. 7, pg. 328

ing;¹⁴ rather they believe that “*nothing is like Him and He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.*”¹⁵ As such they do not negate what He has described Himself with, they do not distort words from their proper places, and they do not desecrate His Names and Signs.¹⁶ They do not ask after the how and they do not liken His Attributes with the attributes of His creation.¹⁷ This is because He has no namesake; there is none who is comparable to Him, and none who is equal to Him.¹⁸

He, Glorious and Most High, is not to be compared to His creation for He best knows Himself and others; He is more truthful in speech and better in discourse than

¹⁴ ar: *tamthīl*, meaning to equate Allāh with something else in that which is obligatory or permissible or disallowed (to affirm for Him) because ‘Allāh, Most High, is to be absolved of being described with anything that is from the specific qualities of creation, or that there be anything comparable to any of His Attributes of perfection.’ cf. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Bayān Talbīs al-Jahmiyyah*, vol. 1, pg. 53 and *al-Safadiyyah*, pg. 101.

¹⁵ *al-Shūrā* (42):11

¹⁶ Desecration of Allāh’s Names occurs in a number of ways: 1) To name idols after the Names of Allāh such as al-Lāt, derived from *al-Ilāhiyyah*, or al-‘Uzzah, derived from al-‘Azīz. 2) Calling Allāh names that are unbecoming such as the Christians calling Him father 3) Describing Him with things that He is far removed from such as the saying of the Jews that He is poor 4) Divesting the Names of Allāh of their meanings and to deny their realities 5) Likening the Attributes of Allāh with those of His creation.

cf. Ibn al-Qayyim, *Badā’i al-Fawā’id*, vol. 1, pg. 153 and *Madārij al-Sālikīn*, vol. 1, pg. 39

¹⁷ Imām Aḥmad said, ‘Allāh is only described with what He described Himself with, or with what His Messenger (ﷺ) described Him with. One does not go beyond the Qur’ān and the ḥadīth.’ cf. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū’ Fatāwā*, vol. 5, pg. 382

¹⁸ cf. *Maryam* (19): 65, *al-Ikhlāṣ* (112): 4, *al-Baqarah* (2): 22

His creation. Moreover His Messengers are truthful and entrusted (to accurately convey the revelation) and therefore stand in contrast to those who speak about Him without knowledge. It is for this reason that He says,

سُبْحَانَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ ﴿١٨٢﴾
وَسَلِّمْ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٨١﴾ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٨٢﴾

“Glorified be your Lord, the Lord of Might, beyond anything they describe. And peace be upon the messengers. And praise be to Allāh, the Lord of the worlds!”

[*al-Saffāt* (37): 180-182]

Here, He glorified Himself above what the opponents of the Messengers described Him with, and He invoked peace and safety on the Messengers because what they said was safe from shortcoming and flaw.

He, Glorious is He, has combined negation¹⁹ and affirmation²⁰ in what He described and named Himself with. Consequently, *Ablu'l-Sunnah wa'l-Jamā'ah* have no recourse but to turn to what the Messengers brought for that is the Straight Path: the path of those whom Allāh favoured: the path of the Prophets, the sincerely truthful, the martyrs, and the righteous.²¹

¹⁹ Negation of any defect, or any attributes that give a meaning that suggests defect such as sleep, tiredness, inability etc. cf. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Minhāj al-Sunnah*, vol. 2, pg. 253

²⁰ Affirmation of Attributes of perfection, none of his creation is like Him in any of His Attributes. cf. Ibn Taymiyyah, *Minhāj al-Sunnah*, vol. 2, pg. 253

²¹ cf. *al-Nisā'* (4): 69

When negating the comparison, the negation made is that creation is not comparable to Him, not that He is not comparable to creation. This is because it does not befit His praise and glory that He be compared to something as relatively insignificant as His creation. If someone were to say, 'The king is not like an animal,' the simile, articulated like this, would not actually be regarded as something meritorious; if one were to say, however, 'There is no one comparable to the king,' this would be a statement of praise.²²

In normative speech one would expect the sentence to read, *lam yakun abadun kufuwan lahu*, but here the word *kufuwan* has been brought forward to highlight and stress the fact that nothing is comparable to Him. The personal pronoun has been placed before *kufuwan* to give emphasis to the essence of Allāh and to further highlight His dissimilarity to anything.²³

It is for this reason that ibn 'Abbās said, 'Contemplate everything but do not contemplate the essence of Allāh,' because the intellect cannot comprehend it.²⁴

These last three phrases are all connected with the particle, *waw*, unlike the rest of this chapter because they have all been stated with the same purpose in mind: to negate a comparison and likeness to Allāh, Most High, in all aspects: this is because things that are comparable are either a parent, a child or a peer, all have been

²² Ibn al-Qayyim, *Ighāthatu'l-Lahfān*, vol. 2, pg. 231. cf. Ibn Abī'l-'Izz, *Sharḥ 'Aqīdah al-Taḥāwīyyah*, pp. 387-388

²³ Zamakhsharī, Bayḍāwī, Rāzī, Tha'ālabī, Abū Su'ūd, Abū Ḥayyān, Ālūsī, Qāsimī, Shawkānī

²⁴ Tha'ālabī, ibn 'Aṭīyyah

negated here.²⁵

The meaning of *ahad* at the end of this chapter is not the same as that of *Ahad* in the beginning.²⁶

There are two authentic recitations of this verse, reading *kufuwan* and *kufan*; both are correct and valid dialects of the Arabic language.²⁷

²⁵ Baqā'ī, Ālūsī

²⁶ Sama'ānī

²⁷ Ṭabarī

CHAPTER V

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter, despite its brevity, negates each and every type of *shirk* and affirms all the foundations of *Tawhīd* and absolving of defect.¹

Nasafi's recapitulation of this *Sūrah* is as follows:

In response to their request to describe Allāh, He revealed a chapter that encapsulates His qualities. "**He is Allāh,**" alludes to the fact that He is the creator of all things and their originator; implicit in this is that He is Able, Omnipotent and All-Knowing since these qualities are necessary pre-requisites for an act of creation, the finesse of which left all creation in perfect harmony. Also implicit in this is that He is Ever-Living since someone who knows and is able must also be living. Affirmation of this then leads to accepting that He is Hearing, Seeing, one who has an intent, one who speaks and all other attributes of perfection since, were He not to be described with these, He would be described with the opposite which in turn are defective qualities. Defi-

¹ Qāsimī

ciency is the hallmark of something generated or something contingent and to ascribe it to the pre-existent is a logical impossibility. "**The One and only,**" He is One and all aspects of polytheism are negated. He alone brought all things into existence and He alone knows all hidden affairs. "**The Everlasting Sustainer of all,**" He is the Rich Beyond Need, needing no one at all whereas everything is in need of Him. "**He fathered none,**" negates the existence of a like, kinship or something of the same genus. "**Nor was He born,**" negates His being generated and affirms His pre-existence and His preceding everything. "**And no one is comparable to Him,**" negates that anything be similar to Him. Whoever thinks that this negation, composed in the past tense, excludes a negation in the present tense, whereas the claim of the disbelievers is current, in the present, is wandering aimlessly in misguidance. This is because if (the claimed gods) were not existent in the past, there would be no need to negate them in the present since something generated, something contingent, can never compare to something pre-existent. The words of the disbelievers revolve around polytheism, anthropomorphism and nullification and this chapter repudiates all of these.

Ibn al-Qayyim penned the following in summary to this chapter,

This chapter encapsulates *Tawhīd* of belief and cognisance. It establishes what is obligatory to affirm for the Lord, Most High: His Absolute Oneness which negates each and every aspect of polytheism, and His being the Everlasting Sustainer which subsumes all of His Attributes of perfection, qualities that are not subject to any type of defect. It negates His having a parent or a child which are both consequences of His being the Everlasting Sustainer and His Oneness. It negates a comparison to Him which in turn dictates that there is nothing like Him,

nothing similar to Him and nothing equivalent to Him. Therefore, this chapter affirms all perfection for Him and it absolves Him of all defect. It negates anything being close or comparable to His perfection and it negates His having any partner in any form or fashion. These are the pillars of *Tawhīd* of belief, the one who holds to this belief is clearly demarcated from the misguided and the polytheists in all their various hues and shades. This is why this chapter equates to a third of the Qur'ān for it is either constructive in its style or it is informative. Its being constructive subsumes command, prohibition and permissibility. Its being informative subsumes its informing about Allāh, His Names, His Attributes and His commands, and its informing about His creation. This chapter devotes itself entirely to Him and His Names and commands, as such it is like a third of the Qur'ān.²

Explaining the flow and structure of this *Sūrah*, Baqā'ī wrote,

First He established His pure and unblemished reality through stating the (personal pronoun), *huwa*, there can be no name to describe that reality save this pronoun. Therefore one realises that He, in Himself and for no reason save this, is the necessary existent. Following this is an exposition (of the pronoun) stating His divinity which is the most immediate consequence of that reality and is the most definite of all names: (Allāh). Since divinity dictates oneness, being an expression of total independence coupled with the complete dependence of everything else on Him, this was stated by mention of the ensuing Name, *al-Aḥad*. The meanings covered by the Names Allāh and *al-Aḥad* were then further rein-

² Ibn al-Qayyim, *Zādū'l-Ma'ād*, vol. 1, pg. 168

forced by stating that He is *al-Ṣamad* which again points to His being the necessary existent and His being the Master of all existence such that nothing resembles Him. Both these meanings are then further clarified by stating that He does not give birth and is not born and that nothing is comparable to Him. So the *Sūrah*, from its beginning to *al-Ṣamad* expounds on His reality, Glorious is He, its absolute oneness and uniqueness and the implications thereof in a well ordered, logical manner. From that point to the end, the *Sūrah* explains that there is nothing comparable to Him, He has no kin and there is nothing of the same genus as Him. He is not a species such that He is born of something or that something is born of Him. This then leads to a complete cognisance of His essence.

CHAPTER VI

Points of Benefit

a) The points of creed covered thus far are mentioned by Ṭahāwī in the beginning of his famous treatise on creed:

Allāh is one, without partner. Nothing is like Him. Nothing incapacitates Him. Nothing should be worshipped besides Him. He is pre-existent without beginning, eternal without end. He neither perishes nor ceases to exist. Nothing will be except what He wills. Imaginations cannot attain Him; comprehensions cannot perceive Him. Creatures do not bear any similarity to Him. Alive, He never dies; all-sustaining, He never sleeps. He is a creator without any need to create and a provider without any stores of provision.

b) Qurṭubī said,

This chapter combines two of Allāh's Names which subsume all types of perfection, and they are not found in

any other chapter: *al-Aḥad* and *al-Ṣamad*. They prove the absolute oneness of the Divine Essence which is described with every quality of perfection.¹

c) Qurṭubī said,

It is said that this *Sūrah* equates to a third of the Qur'ān because of the presence of these two Names which are not found in any other *Sūrah*, Allāh knows best. It is also said that the Qur'ān was revealed dealing with three general areas: rules and regulations, promise and threat, and Names and Attributes. This chapter deals with the Names and Attributes which is one of the three areas, as such it is said that it equates to a third of the Qur'ān. This explanation is proven by the ḥadīth of Abū'l-Dardā' in Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Allāh has apportioned the Qur'ān in three sections and made '**Say: He is Allāh, the One and only,**' one of those sections."^{2,3}

Discussing the issue of whether one part of the Qur'ān can be regarded to be better than another, ibn Taymiyyah said,

This is an important issue and people have differed about it greatly. Some opine that some of Allāh's words are better than others and this has been stated by the Prophetic texts such as the ḥadīth stating that a *Sūrah* comparable to *al-Fātiḥah* has not been revealed in

¹ Ibn Ḥajr, *Fath*, vol. 9, pg. 61

² Muslim #811

³ Qurṭubī, *al-Asnā*, vol. 1, pg. 185

the three Divine Scriptures.⁴ He informed us that *Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ* equates to a third of the Qur'ān⁵ and this must refer to something other than the number of letters it contains. He announced that *Ayatul-Kursī* is the greatest verse of the Qur'ān as is also established in the Ṣaḥīḥ. Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim records that the Prophet (ﷺ) asked Ubayy ibn Ka'b, "Abū'l Mundhir, do you know which verse in the Book that is with you is greatest?" He replied, 'Allāh and His Messenger know best.' He asked again, "Abū'l Mundhir, do you know which verse in the Book that is with you is greatest?" I replied, "*Allāh, there is none worthy of worship besides Him, the Ever-Living, the Self-Sustaining...?*"⁶ He then struck me on my chest and said, "Abū'l-Mundhir, may knowledge be made easy for you!"⁷ Ibn Abī Shaybah also records this ḥadīth with the same isnād as that of Muslim with the additional wording, "By the One in whose hand is my soul, this verse has a tongue and two lips..."⁸ It is also reported that it is the chief of the Qur'ān.⁹ He said about the *Mu'awwidhatayn* that the likes of them has never been

⁴ Aḥmad #8682-9345-9788-21094-21095.

It was declared ṣaḥīḥ by ibn Hibbān #775, ibn Khuzaymah #500-501, and Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi'* #5560

⁵ Bukhārī #5013

⁶ *al-Baqarab* (2): 255

⁷ Muslim #810

⁸ Aḥmad #21278 and 'Abdu'l-Razzāq #6001

⁹ Tirmidhī #2878 and Ḥākim #2059 said it was ṣaḥīḥ with Dhahabī agreeing. However, Tirmidhī pointed out its weakness and it was ruled ḍa'if by Albānī, *al-Da'ifab* #1348

seen.¹⁰

Allāh, Most High, says,

مَا نَنْسَخْ مِنْ آيَةٍ أَوْ نُنسِهَا نَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ مِمَّا أَوْمَرْنَا

“Whenever We abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten, We bring one better than it or equal to it.”

[*al-Baqarah* (2): 106]

hence informing us that He replaces it with something better or similar, this then proves that some verses are similar and others differ in excellence. Moreover, the Tawrāt and the Injil are both the speech of Allāh, yet all Muslims know that the Qur’ān is the best of the three Books. Allāh, Most High, says,

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَنَافِظُونَ ﴿٩﴾

“It is We Who have sent down the Reminder and We who will preserve it.”

[*al-Hijr* (15): 9]

وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ

بِالْحَقِّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا بَيْنَ يَدَيْهِ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَمُهَيِّمًا

“And We have sent down the Book to you with truth, confirming and conserving the previous Books.”

[*al-Mā'idah* (5): 48]

¹⁰ Muslim #814

قُلْ

لَئِنِ اجْتَمَعَتِ الْإِنْسُ وَالْجِنُّ عَلَىٰ أَنْ يَأْتُوا بِمِثْلِ هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ
لَا يَأْتُونَ بِمِثْلِهِ ۗ وَلَوْ كَانَ بَعْضُهُمْ لِبَعْضٍ ظَهِيرًا ﴿٨٨﴾

“Say, ‘If both men and jinn banded together to produce the like of this Qur’ān, they could never produce anything like it, even if they back each other up.’”

[*al-Isrā’* (17): 88]

Allāh, Most High, says,

اللَّهُ نَزَلَ أَحْسَنَ الْحَدِيثِ كِتَابًا مُتَشَابِهًا مَثَانِيَ نَقَشَتْ مِنْهُ
جُلُودُ الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُمْ ثُمَّ تَلِينُ جُلُودُهُمْ وَقُلُوبُهُمْ
إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ

“Allāh has sent down the Best Discourse, a Book consistent in its frequent repetitions. The skins of those who fear their Lord tremble at it and their skins and hearts yeild softly to the remembrance of Allāh.”

[*al-Zumar* (39): 23]

thereby informing us that it is the best discourse of all discourses, be they revealed by Allāh or not. Allāh says,

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ سَبْعًا مِّنَ الْمَثَانِي وَالْقُرْآنَ الْعَظِيمَ ﴿٨٧﴾

“We have give you the Seven Oft-repeated (verses) and the Magnificent Qur’ān.”

[*al-Hijr* (15): 87]

Regardless of what is referred to here, *al-Fātiḥah* or the whole Qur’ān, the verse proves that the Qur’ān has been particularised with this quality. Allāh has called the Qur’ān, Glorious, Noble and Great. He has challenged creation to produce something like it, or ten *sūrah*s like it, or even one *sūrah* like it,

فَلْيَأْتُوا بِحَدِيثٍ مِّثْلِهِ إِنْ كَانُوا صَادِقِينَ

“Let them bring a discourse like it if they are telling the truth.”

[*al-Tūr* (52): 34]

فَأْتُوا بِعَشْرِ سُورٍ مِّثْلِهِ

“Then produce ten invented *sūrah*s like this...”

[*Hūd* (11): 13]

فَأْتُوا بِسُورَةٍ مِّنْ مِّثْلِهِ

“...produce another *sūrah* like it.”

[*al-Baqarah* (2): 23]

He has specified that only it can be recited in the prayer, none can recite anything else alongside it, none can recite something else altogether and prayer cannot be performed without recitation of the Qur’ān. As such nothing can take its place and nothing can take the place of *al-Fātiḥah* in every aspect by agreement of the Muslims. This is regardless if one opines that it is a pillar that if one leaves off, the prayer must be repeated, or that it is obligatory such that if one leaves it, he is sinful but does not have to repeat the prayer, or that it is a Sunnah. No one has ever said that reciting something else in its place is equivalent to reciting it from every perspective.

He has particularised the Qur'ān such that none but the pure can touch the *mushaf* as is established from the Companions such as Sa'd, Salmān and ibn 'Umar, and the majority of the Salaf and the Khalaf: the four Imāms and others. This was the Sunnah implemented by the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) and stated in his letter sent to 'Amr ibn Ḥazm; there is no doubt that he did actually write it. It is also proven by the Book of Allāh. Likewise the ritually impure (*junnub*) cannot recite the Qur'ān in the view of the majority of scholars: the four Imāms and others, and this is proven by the Sunnah.

Particularising one of two discourses with specific rules and regulations dictates that it, in and of itself, is of extra merit; to say otherwise would go against the way of the Lord, Most High, in His legal law, it would even go against the customs current amongst His creation. It also goes against rational proofs in addition to going against legal proofs.

Allāh, Most High, says,

وَاتَّبِعُوا أَحْسَنَ مَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ

“Follow the best that has been sent down to you from your Lord.”

[*al-Zumar* (39): 55]

فَبَشِّرْ عِبَادَ ﴿١٧﴾ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَمِعُونَ الْقَوْلَ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ أَحْسَنَهُ

“So give good news to My servants. Those who listen well to what is said and follow the best of it.”

[*al-Zumar* (39): 17-18]

فَخُذْهَا بِقُوَّةٍ وَأْمُرْ قَوْمَكَ يَأْخُذُوا بِأَحْسَنِهَا

“Seize hold of it vigorously and command your people to adopt the best in it.”

[*al-A'raf* (7): 145]

This then proves that, amongst what Allāh has revealed, is that which is good and that which is better. This is regardless if the better is abrogating, which must be taken to and the abrogated left, since a verse is not abrogated except that it is replaced with something better or its like, or the better falls into another category.

The view that some parts of the speech of Allāh are better than the other parts is the opinion narrated from the Salaf, it is the view of the legal jurists from the four schools of law and others. Their statements concerning this are numerous and recorded in many books.¹¹

d) The absolute oneness of Allāh leads us to worship Him and Him alone. He alone deserves to be worshipped and all other worship is futile,

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ
رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٦٣﴾ لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ، وَبِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

“Say, ‘My prayer and my rites, my living and my dying are for Allāh alone, the Lord of the worlds. I am commanded to be like that and I am the first of the Muslims.’”

[*al-An'ām* (6): 162-163]

e) There are many aḥādīth proving the excellence of stating the

¹¹ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū' Fatāwā & Tafsīr al-Kabīr*

tablīl such as the ḥadīth recorded by Bukhārī on the authority of Abū Hurayrah that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “Whoever says, ‘None has the right to be worshipped save Allāh alone without any partner, to Him belongs sovereignty, to Him belongs praise, and He is powerful over everything,’ one hundred times in a day will have the reward of freeing ten slaves, one hundred good deeds will be credited to him, one hundred evil deeds will be wiped out for him and he will have a protection from Shayṭān for that day until evening. None can do anything better than what he did save a person who said it more frequently.”¹²

f) One should take refuge with Allāh alone, Qurṭubī said,

It is obligatory upon every legally responsible person to know that the qualities of absolute oneness and everlasting sustaining belong to Allāh alone. Therefore none should be sought save Him and none should be resorted to in cases of exigency save Him.¹³

g) Witnessing His Oneness is the arena of the Prophets. Ibn al-Qayyim said,

This is the sphere of *Tawḥīd* and His command. The servant witnesses the oneness of the Lord, the Creator, he witnesses His will being implemented, and he witnesses the creation dependent on Him... his witnessing the *Tawḥīd* of the Lord and His being One with respect to creation, implementing His will, and the workings of His decree opens the door of seeking refuge and resorting to Him, and he realises his dire need of Him. It

¹² Bukhārī #3293-6403 and Muslim #2691

¹³ Qurṭubī, *al-Asnā*, vol. 1, pg. 186

will guide him to the threshold of servitude and throw him at His door as one who is needy, incapable, indigent, one who does not possess the ability to bring harm or benefit, life or death, or resurrection for himself. Witnessing His command and prohibition, His reward and punishment leads him to praise Him, to do His utmost to obey Him and to censure himself for his faults and shortcomings. Hence his life will revolve around witnessing the greatness, wisdom, perfect power, pre-eternal knowledge, and unfathomable providence (of Allāh), and his witnessing his own shortcomings and faults. He will then diligently correct his soul's defects and deeds. Such a servant is one who has been granted accord, who is aided, and has divine providence showered on him. This is the sphere of the Prophets. Ādam said,

قَالَ رَبِّنا ظَلَمنا انْفُسنا وَاِنْ لَمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمنا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ
الْخَسِرِيْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾

“Our Lord! We have wronged ourselves. If You forgive us not and have not mercy on us, surely we are of the lost!”

[*al-A'raf* (7): 23]

The first Messenger, Nūh said,

قَالَ رَبِّ اِنِّيْ اَعُوْذُ بِكَ اَنْ اَسْأَلَكَ مَا لَيْسَ لِيْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَاِلاَّ
تَغْفِرْ لِيْ وَتَرْحَمْنِيْ اَكُنْ مِنَ الْخَسِرِيْنَ ﴿٤٧﴾

“My Lord, in You do I seek refuge that I should ask of You that whereof I have no knowledge. Unless You forgive me and have mercy on me I shall be

among the lost.”

[*Hūd* (11): 47]

The Imām of the *Hunafā'* and the Shaykh of the Prophets, Ibrāhīm, said,

الَّذِي خَلَقَنِي فَهُوَ يَهْدِينِ ﴿٧٨﴾ وَالَّذِي هُوَ يُطْعِمُنِي وَيَسْقِينِ
 ﴿٧٩﴾ وَإِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِ ﴿٨٠﴾ وَالَّذِي يُمِيتُنِي ثُمَّ
 يُحْيِينِ ﴿٨١﴾ وَالَّذِي أَطْمَعُ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ لِي خَطِيئَتِي يَوْمَ الدِّينِ

“Who created me, and He does guide me, who feeds me and waters me, when I am sick, He heals me, who causes me to die, then gives me life (again), and who, I ardently hope, will forgive me my sin on the Day of Judgment.”

[*al-Shu'arā'* (26): 78-82]

and he supplicated,

رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا الْبَلَدَ آمِنًا وَاجْنُبْنِي وَبَنِيَّ
 أَنْ نَعْبُدَ الْأَصْنَامَ ﴿٢٥﴾

“My Lord! Make safe this territory, and preserve me and my sons from serving idols.”

[*Ibrāhīm* (14): 35]

Hence he knew that it is Allāh who comes between a servant and his committing *shirk* and worshipping idols, he knew that there was no Lord besides Him and therefore directed this request to Him.¹⁴

¹⁴ Ibn al-Qayyim, *Tariq al-Hijratayn*, vol. 1, pg. 262

h) It is possible that man possess some aspects of being *samad*, Ghazālī said,

The one whom God has appointed to be a model for His servants in fulfilling their worldly and religious duties, and who secures the needs of His creatures by his word and action - to that one God bestows a share in this attribute. But the absolutely eternal is the one to whom one turns in every need, and He is God - may He be praised and exalted.¹⁵

i) Man should try to imitate this attribute as much as is humanly possible. Qurṭubī said,

Moreover it is upon man to inculcate in himself the qualities of leadership and nobility such that people betake themselves to him and his door is sought. Hishām ibn 'Urwah narrated that his father said, 'I met Sa'd ibn 'Ubadah and a caller would proclaim, "Whoever wants fat and meat, let him come to Sa'd." Then I met his son, Qays, and a similar call would be proclaimed for him.'¹⁶

j) Tirmidhī records on the authority of 'Abdullāh ibn Buraydah al-Aslamī from his father that the Prophet (ﷺ) heard a person supplication,

«اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ بِأَنِّي أَشْهَدُ أَنَّكَ أَنْتَ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ الْأَحَدُ
الصَّمَدُ الَّذِي لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ» .

¹⁵ Ghazālī, *The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God*

¹⁶ Qurṭubī, *al-Asnā*, vol. 1, pg. 186.

The narration is referenced to Dāruqtñī, *al-Askhiyā'* by ibn Ḥajr, *al-Iṣābah*, vol. 2, pg. 30

'O Allāh, I ask You by virtue of the fact that I testify that none has the right to be worshipped save You, the One and only, the Everlasting Sustainer of all who has fathered none and was not born, and no one is comparable to Him.'

He said, "By the One in whose hand is my soul, he has asked Allāh by His greatest name which if used in supplication, He will respond, and if asked by it, He will grant."¹⁷

k) Ibn Taymiyyah said,

Some of the people of innovated theological rhetoric adduced that the Lord, Most High, was a physical body from His saying, "**Allāh, the Everlasting Sustainer.**" Amongst these were those who held views similar to Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam, Muḥammad ibn Karrām and others. They said that He was *ṣamad* which means that He is not hollow and that this description only applies to solid bodies such as mountains and rocks. This is why it is said in exegesis to this word that He is the One from whom nothing comes out, nothing goes in, and He does not eat or drink. Such negations can only apply to a body. They further said that the essential meaning of *ṣamad* is to gather (*ijtimāʿ*) such as water collecting (*taṣmīd*) in one place, and this meaning can only apply to a body which is composite. Those who negated this said *al-Ṣamad* was one who could not be dispersed or subdivided whereas every body in creation can be subdivided. They further said that *al-Aḥad* was one who could not be subdivided or apportioned whereas every body in creation could. They stated, 'If you say that He is a body which is composite, i.e. made up of individual essences, or from

¹⁷ Abū Dāwūd #1493-1494 and Tirmidhī #3475 with a ṣaḥīḥ isnād.

an essence and a form then something which is made of parts is in need of those parts whereas He, Glorious is He, is *al-Samad* and this means that He is Rich Beyond Need. Therefore something composite cannot be *samad*.¹⁸

l) Ibn Taymiyyah said,

Just as it is necessary to absolve the Lord of all defect and fault, so too is it necessary to absolve Him of being similar to any object of creation in any of those Attributes that are affirmed to be His. Both these categories make up the absolving that is obligatory. This *Sūrah* proves both types. His saying, “**no one is comparable to Him,**” negates likeness and partnership. His saying, “**the Everlasting Sustainer,**” subsumes all Attributes of perfection. Therefore the genus of defects has been negated from Allāh, Most High. Everything which is particular to objects of creation constitutes those defects that one must absolve the Lord of, but not so what the Lord has been described with. The servant is described with qualities as befit him such as knowledge, ability, mercy etc. and these are not defective qualities, rather their meanings are also established for Allāh, but they are established for Him in a way that no created object can compare to let alone be like. Indeed, the food and drink and clothes that Allāh has prepared in Paradise do not compare to anything in this world, even if the names of the two be the same and even though both are created. More so is it that the Creator be incomparable to His creation than one creation being incomparable to another. Allāh has named Himself as being Forbearing, Kind, Most Merciful, All-Hearing, All-Seeing, Almighty, King, Supreme and He has also applied these names to

¹⁸ Qāsīmī

some of His creatures. We know full well that the creatures who have been given these names cannot ever compare to the Creator in any of (the qualities) indicated therein.¹⁹

m) Rāzī said,

This *Sūrah*, with respect to Allāh, is like *Sūrah al-Kawthar* with respect to the Messenger. They abused the Messenger by saying that he was cut off, without heir, having no son and they abused Allāh by saying that He had a son. A man without a son is seen to be deficient and the existence of a son of Allāh is a defect with respect to Allāh, Most High. It is for this reason that He commenced this chapter with, “*Say,*” i.e. you, Muḥammad, should stand up in defence of Me by saying this; however in the other chapter, I would say, “*Truly We have given you Great Abundance,*” (without commencing with, ‘Say’) so that I may stand in defence of you.

n) Ibn al-Qayyim said,

I heard Shaykhu’l-Islām ibn Taymiyyah saying, “The Sunnah prayers before Fajr act as the commencement of deeds (for the day) and the Witr prayer acts as the cessation of deeds. It is for this reason that the Prophet (ﷺ) would recite the Two Chapters of *Ikhlās*,²⁰ in them since they gather together *Tawḥīd* in knowledge and deed, *Tawḥīd* in knowledge and intent, and *Tawḥīd* in belief and motivation.”²¹

¹⁹ Qāsimī. cf. Ibn Rajab

²⁰ i.e. *Sūrah al-Kāfirūn* and *Sūrah al-Ikhlās*

²¹ Ibn al-Qayyim, *Zādu’l-Ma’ād*, vol. 1, pg. 168

سورة: الكافرون
Sūrah al-Kāfirūn (109) : 1-6

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the Name of Allāh,
the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿١﴾

1) Say: "O disbelievers!

لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٢﴾

2) I do not worship what you worship

وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ ﴿٣﴾

3) and you are not servants of who I worship.

وَلَا أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَّا عَبَدْتُمْ ﴿٤﴾

4) I am not a servant of what you worshipped

وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَّا عَبَدُ ﴿٥﴾

5) and you are not servants of who I worship

لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ ﴿٦﴾

6) You have your religion and I have mine

CHAPTER VII

Introduction

Ibn Mas'ūd, al-Ḥasan and the majority said that this chapter was revealed in Mecca.¹ Qatādah said that it was revealed in Madīnah, and this is one of two views related from ibn 'Abbās.²

There is a unanimous agreement that the chapter comprises six verses and that the number of words is twenty eight. It is called *al-Kāfirūn*, Disbelievers, because of its opening words, *al-Dīn*, Religion, because of its closing words, and *al-Muqashqishah* (as stated by Zurārah ibn Awfā).³ Abū 'Ubaydah said, "There are two *Sūrah*s called *al-Muqashqishah*: *al-Kāfirūn* and *al-Ikhlāṣ*. They both sweep away (*qashqash*) sins just as tar sweeps away scabies."⁴ Aṣma'ī reasoned that they were given this title because they serve to absolve a per-

¹ Ibn al-Jawzī

² Qurtubī

³ Ibn Abī Ḥātim #19520

⁴ Fairozabādī

son from hypocrisy.⁵ It is also called *al-Munābidhab*, the Disavowal, and *al-Ikhlās*, Purity.⁶

Islām was spreading in Mecca bringing sweeping change with it, and it was a measure of the concern that the pagans had that soon after the conversion of the powerful and influential Ḥamzah, a conversion that shocked them and forced them to rethink their strategy, they approached the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) offering him vast riches, honour and prestige, and kingship if he would only give up his call. The Prophet (ﷺ) refused. Later, another conversion shook them to their roots, that of 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb. Where they were previously practising their religion in private for fear of persecution, this conversion emboldened the Muslims and now they began to openly practise their faith; this in turn forced an extreme reaction from the Meccans. A treaty was drawn up and the Muslims were exiled and excommunicated for a little over two years. The ban failed miserably and was finally annulled. Soon after, the pagans once again approached the Prophet (ﷺ), this time the proposal was one of conciliation and compromise: they would follow Islām for one year and he would follow their religion for one year. It was on this occasion that this chapter was revealed: the so-called compromise was totally unacceptable and was rejected.

Ibn 'Abbās said, "The Quraysh promised the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) such wealth as would make him the most affluent person in Mecca and they would let him marry any woman he wanted. They said, "This is a gift for you; however, you must refrain from abusing our gods and criticising them. If you do not accept, we have another proposal for you which will effectuate peace and compromise." He asked, "What is it?" They said, "Worship our gods, al-Lāt and al-

⁵ Ibn 'Ādil

⁶ Rāzī

‘Uzzah, for one year and we will worship your God for one year.’” He said, “Wait until my Lord reveals an answer.” The revelation then came from the Preserved Tablet:

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿١﴾ لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٢﴾
 وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عِبِيدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ ﴿٣﴾ وَلَا أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَا عَبَدْتُمْ ﴿٤﴾
 وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عِبِيدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ ﴿٥﴾ لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ ﴿٦﴾

Say: “O disbelievers! I do not worship what you worship, and you are not servants of who I worship. I am not a servant of what you worshipped, and you are not servants of who I worship. You have your religion and I have mine.”

[*al-Kāfirūn* (109): 1-6]

قُلْ أَفَعَيَّرَ اللَّهُ تَأْمُرُونَِّيَ أَعْبُدُ أَيُّهَا
 الْجَاهِلُونَ ﴿١٤﴾ وَلَقَدْ أَوْحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ وَإِلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكَ لَئِن
 أَشْرَكْتَ لَيَحْبَطَنَّ عَمَلُكَ وَلَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿١٥﴾ بَلِ اللَّهُ
 فَاَعْبُدْ وَكُن مِّنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿١٦﴾

“Say: ‘Do you order me to worship something other than Allāh, you ignorant people?’ It has been revealed to you and those before you: ‘If you associate others with Allāh, your actions will come to nothing and you will be among the losers.’ No! Worship Allāh and be among the thankful.”

[*al-Zumar* (39): 64-66]⁷

Sa‘īd ibn Mīnā said, ‘Walīd ibn al-Mughīrah, ‘Āṣ ibn Wā‘il, Aswad

⁷ Tabarī, Ṭabarānī, *al-Ṣaḡhīr*, and Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr* referenced it to ibn Abī Ḥātim (#19518).

ibn al-Muṭṭalib and Umayyah ibn Khalaf met the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) and said, “Muḥammad, come, let us worship what you worship and you worship what we worship. We can all share in this together: if what you have brought is better than what we have, we would have shared it with you and taken our due portion of it. If what we have is better than what you have brought, you would have shared it with us and taken your due portion of it.” At this, Allāh revealed, “*Say: ‘O disbelievers!...*” to the end of the *Sūrah*.⁸

Ibn ‘Abbās said, “The Quraysh said, “If only you would accept our gods, we would worship your God,” so Allāh revealed this chapter.”⁹

Tirmidhī records on the authority of Anas that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said that this *Sūrah* was the equivalent of a quarter of the Qur’ān.¹⁰ This is also recorded from ibn ‘Abbās¹¹ and ibn ‘Umar.¹²

Abū Dāwūd and Tirmidhī record on the authority of Nawfal that the Prophet (ﷺ) told him, “Before you go to sleep, recite, “*Say: O*

⁸ Ṭabarī, and Suyūṭī referenced it to ibn Abī Ḥātim (#19519) and ibn al-Anbārī, *al-Maṣābiḥ*.

Baghawī additionally mentions al-Ḥārith ibn Qays al-Sahmī and al-Aswad ibn ‘Abd Yaghūth amongst those who met him (ﷺ), and Tha‘ālabī adds: Ubayy ibn Khalaf, Abū Jahl and the children of al-Ḥajjāj.

⁹ Suyūṭī referenced it to ‘Abd ibn Ḥumayd, ibn al-Mundhir and ibn Mardawayh.

¹⁰ Tirmidhī #2893 who said it was gharīb and Albānī ruled this portion of it ḥasan.

¹¹ Tirmidhī #2894 who said it was gharīb and Albānī ruled this portion of it ṣaḥīḥ.

¹² Ḥākim #2078 who said it was ṣaḥīḥ but Dhahabī pointed out that it had severe weakness.

disbelievers!...” because it is absolution from *shirk*.¹³

Aḥmad records that the Prophet (ﷺ) passed by a person reciting *al-Kāfirūn* and remarked, “He has been saved from *shirk*.” He passed by another person reciting *al-Ikblās* and remarked, “Paradise has become obligatory for him.”¹⁴

It is also authentically reported that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) would recite this *Sūrah* and *Sūrah al-Ikblās* in the two *rak‘abs* after having performed *ṭawāf*,¹⁵ the two Sunnahs before Fajr, the two Sunnahs after Maghrib,¹⁶ and in the witr prayer.¹⁷

Ghunaym ibn Qays said, ‘We were ordered to disavow Shayṭān in the two *rak‘abs* before Fajr by reciting *al-Kāfirūn* and *al-Ikblās*.’¹⁸

Ibn ‘Abbās said, ‘There is no *Sūrah* in the Qur’ān that enrages Iblīs more than this one because it encapsulates *Tawḥīd* and absolution

¹³ Abū Dāwūd #5055, Tirmidhī #3403. Ḥākim #2077 said it was ṣaḥīḥ with Dhahabī agreeing as did Albānī.

¹⁴ Aḥmad #16605-16617-23194 and Arna‘ūt said it was ṣaḥīḥ.

¹⁵ Muslim #1218 from Jābir

¹⁶ Aḥmad #4763-4909-5215-5691-5699-5742 from ibn ‘Umar. Arna‘ūt said it was ṣaḥīḥ meeting the criteria of Bukhārī and Muslim.

¹⁷ Abū Dāwūd #1423 and ibn Mājah #1171 from Ubayy ibn Ka‘b. Abū Dāwūd #1424 and Tirmidhī #463 from ‘Āishah and both were ruled ṣaḥīḥ by ibn Ḥibbān #2436-2447 and Albānī. Tirmidhī #462 and ibn Mājah #1172 from ibn ‘Abbās and ruled ṣaḥīḥ by Albānī and Arna‘ūt, *Ṭakbrīj Musnad Aḥmad* #2720. Aḥmad #15354-15361-15362 and Nasa‘ī on the authority of ibn Abzā and Arna‘ūt said it was ṣaḥīḥ meeting the criteria of Bukhārī and Muslim.

¹⁸ Ibn Abī Shaybah, vol. 2, pg. 242

from *shirk*.¹⁹

‘Amr ibn Mālik would say, “Recite *al-Kāfirūn* frequently and disavow yourself from them.”²⁰

The basic message of this chapter is that of disavowal: it enjoins a person to absolve himself of the polytheists and their deeds, to announce this openly and it commands sincerity in deeds,²¹ which is why the Prophet (ﷺ) said that it was absolution from *shirk*. Therefore, this chapter deals with *Tawhīd* in deed while *Sūrah al-Ikhlās* deals with *Tawhīd* in belief and it is for this reason that the Prophet (ﷺ) would recite these two chapters in prayer.²²

¹⁹ Mardāwī

²⁰ Ibn al-Durays #241

²¹ Ibn Kathīr

²² Ibn al-Qayyim, *Badā'i' al-Tafsīr*, vol. 5, pg. 352

CHAPTER VIII

Repetition

It has been argued that there is repetition in the verses, *“I do not worship what you worship, and you are not servants of who I worship. I am not a servant of what you worshipped, and you are not servants of who I worship.”* Verse 5 is a word-for-word repetition of verse 3, and verse 4 can be understood to be a recast of verse 2.

The proponents of this view said that in both cases, the repetition is to emphasise and reinforce what is being said. Farrā' said, “The Qur’ān was revealed in the Arabic language and the Arabs were in the habit of repeating phrases to emphasise them or to ensure that they were fully understood.”¹

Examples of this are abundant in Arabic poetry and they are also found in the Qur’ān, for example:

فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا ۖ إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا ۗ

“For truly with hardship comes ease; truly with hard-

¹ Farrā', Ālūsī, Shawkānī

ship comes ease.”

[*al-Sharḥ* (94): 5-6]

كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٢﴾ ثُمَّ كَلَّا سَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤﴾

“No indeed, you will soon know! Again no indeed, you will soon know!”

[*al-Takāthur* (102): 3-4]

or like the repetitions of,

وَبَلِّغْهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿١٥﴾

“On that Day, woe to the deniers!”

[*al-Mursalāt* (77): 15]

فَبِأَيِّ آيَاتِ رَبِّكُمَا تُكَذِّبَانِ ﴿١٣﴾

“So which of your Lord’s blessings do you both then deny?”

[*al-Rahmān* (55): 13]

in their respective chapters.

The point that is being emphasised here is that there is no chance whatsoever that the Prophet (ﷺ) would, or even could, accept the proposal forwarded by the disbelievers. They should give up all hope that he would ever acquiesce to such a preposterous suggestion.²

The majority, however, were of the view that this was not a case of mere repetition and that something different was meant in each pair of verses.³ Ibn Taymiyyah, while accepting that emphasising

² Qurṭubī, Abū Ḥayyān, ibn ‘Ādil, Ālūsī, Shawkānī

something by repeating it was a known tool in Arabic, said,

However, nothing of this type exists in the Qur'ān. Even though it is revealed in the Arabic language, the Qur'ān is unique and does not resemble the words of man, be that man a Prophet or someone else; no creature can produce a *Sūrah* like it, or even part of a *Sūrah*. There is no case in the Qur'ān where you get one verse repeated word-for-word straight after the verse it is repeating. *Sūrah al-Rahmān* has the verse repeated every other verse, not in succession. This latter style is better and more sublime than the first and they have exemplified it with the statements of someone who gave a person charity repeatedly with that person refusing to acknowledge his charity: 'Did I not find you poor and enrich you, do you reject that? Were you not naked and I clothed you, do you reject that? Were you not neglected and I saw to you, do you reject that?' Neither do the stories in the Qur'ān repeat themselves despite what some may think. There is no repetition in *Sūrah al-Kāfirīn* except in the verse, "**and you are not servants of who I worship,**" but again, here the verses are separated by another verse in between.⁴

What this difference in meaning is, however, is the subject of some dispute.

1) Some argue that the first pair of verses refers to the future and the second pair to the past.⁵ Zamakhsharī said,

³ Ālūsī

⁴ Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, vol. 7, pp. 53-54

⁵ Zamakhsharī, Baydāwī

“I do not worship what you worship,” the negation, *lā*, only ever precedes a verb when a future meaning is intended. The negation, *mā*, only ever precedes a present tense verb when the actual present tense meaning is intended.⁶ Therefore the meaning is, “I will never, at any time in the future, accept your proposal to worship your gods and at the same time you will not do what I ask you to do: worship my God.” The meaning of, **“I am not a servant of what you worshipped,”** is: “At any given time in the past, I have never worshipped what you worshipped. I never worshipped idols in the period of *Jābiliyyah*, how then can you expect me to do so after Islām has come?!” **“And you are not servants of who I worship,”** means that you have not worshipped, at any time, the one I worship.

2) While disagreeing with some of the grammatical reasons given by Zamakhsharī, and arguing that the second pair of verses refers to the present tense because the active participle, *ism fā'il*, has been used, Abū Ḥayyān says,

The opinion I prefer is that the first verse negates the possibility of his worshipping idols in the future because a negation with *lā* predominantly negates something in the future. The verse following, **“and you are not servants of who I worship,”** is also a negation dealing with the future because it has been stated by way of contrast, *muqābalab*. **“I am not a servant of what you worshipped,”** negates the action in the present tense, and following this is the verse, **“and you are not servants of who I worship,”** which also negates the present tense because, again, it has been stated by way of contrast. Therefore the meaning is that he (ﷺ) does not worship what they worship, and he will not worship what they worship;

⁶This is true in most cases as stated by Abū Ḥayyān and others.

the same applies to them as well.

3) Others stated the opposite, i.e. the first pair refers to the present and the second pair refers to the future,⁷ because the present tense verb can refer to the present or the future and the active participle can also refer to the present or the future, but more commonly the present. Both of these opinions are strong.

Shawkānī, however, raised objections to both of these opinions thus:

All of these opinions are far-fetched and affected. The explanation that, "***I do not worship what you worship,***" refers to the future, even if linguistically warranted, does not hold for "***and you are not servants of who I worship,***" since this is a nominal sentence and hence carries the meaning of permanence and its existing for all times. Constructing the sentence as a negation does not remove this aspect of the meaning. If understanding this verse to refer to the future was correct, it would also hold true for, "***I am not a servant of what you worshipped,***" and "***and you are not servants of who I worship.***" Therefore, their argument cannot hold for the last two verses, i.e. that it refers to the present tense. The same weakness of argument is true for those who held the opposite opinion that the first two verses deal with the present tense, and the next two with the future. This is because the second, third and fourth verses are all nominal sentences beginning with personal pronouns acting as the subject, *mubtada'*, all of them having active participles as their predicates, *kehabr*, and all of them negated with *lā*. So, with all of these common features,

⁷ Bukhārī, Akhfash as cited by Ḥalabī, Farrā', Nuḥās, Ṭabarī, Sama'ānī, Ibn al-Jawzī, Baghawī, ibn 'Atīyah, Nasafi

how can this opinion be justified?

The response to these objections can be seen in the quotes of Zamakhsharī and Abū Ḥayyān, or simply put, “it is permissible to use styles when contrasting that would not normally be allowed when mentioning something alone.”⁸

4) Ibn Kathīr said,

There is another opinion which was supported by Abū'l-'Abbās ibn Taymiyyah in one of his books. He said that the meaning of, “*I do not worship what you worship,*” negates the actual deed since it is syntactically in the form a verbal sentence. “*I am not a servant of what you worshipped,*” is syntactically in the form of a nominal sentence and therefore negates his ever accepting the suggestion since a negation that is constructed in this way is more emphatic. Therefore, it is as if he has negated the act as well as the possibility of accepting the act. The verses negate the occurrence as well as the legal possibility of its ever occurring. This is also a fine opinion.⁹

5) Ālūsī, after quoting the above, mentioned a similar meaning, “It is also possible that the verbal sentence be taken to mean a negation in a specific period of time and the nominal sentence be taken to mean an absolute negation of the possibility. Therefore, it is as if it is being said, “I can never accept this proposal and neither can it apply to you.””

6) Some, such as ibn Qutaybah, said that the repetition was to

⁸ Abū Ḥayyān

⁹ This is also the view of ibn al-Qayyim who says that it is the best opinion.

reflect the proposal of alternate years.¹⁰ Therefore, it was unacceptable for the Prophet (ﷺ) to worship anything besides Allāh for one year, and it was unacceptable for them to worship something besides Allāh in the next year. The reason was that this simply cannot be regarded to be worship of Allāh because *Tawhīd*, or Monotheism, demands that worship be sincerely and solely directed to Him.

7) Others said that they repeatedly made their request, so Allāh repeated the answer.¹¹

8) Others said that it was the habit of the polytheists to worship idols, then, when they tired of them, or found other rocks or objects more pleasing, they would discard the old idols and adopt the new idols as gods. So the first pair of verses refers to the idols they were currently worshipping and second pair refers to the idols they had worshipped and then discarded.¹²

¹⁰ mentioned by Baghawī, Qurṭubī, ibn 'Ādil, Khāzin. cf. ibn Qutaybah, *Ta'wīl Mushkīl al-Qur'ān*, pg. 151

¹¹ mentioned by Sama'ānī, Qurṭubī

¹² Qurṭubī citing Akhfash and Mubarrad

CHAPTER IX: DISBELIEF

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿١﴾

1) Say: "O disbelievers!

The address is phrased generally and therefore is directed to all disbelievers, even though, in the first instance, the addressees were a specific group of people.¹

This is the only place in the Qur'ān where Allāh addresses the disbelievers so directly in this way, every other address comes in forms such as, "**O you who disbelieve...**" in *Sūrah al-Taḥrīm*² for example. The point being emphasised by using the noun, *al-Kāfirūn* as opposed to the verb is that whoever has this characteristic as a permanent quality is truly deserving of being disavowed by Allāh and the believers, and himself being free of them.³

The significance of the word, "**Say,**" has already been explained

¹ Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, vol. 7, pg. 56, Ibn Kathīr

² *al-Taḥrīm* (66): 7

³ Ibn al-Qayyim, *ibn 'Āshūr*

in the commentary to *Sūrah al-Ikhlās*: the Messenger is tasked with conveying precisely what is revealed to him from Allāh.⁴ Additionally, the contents of this address are stringent and severe and people could find such words coming from someone they regard to be a peer hard to accept. Therefore, it is as if the Messenger (ﷺ) is saying, ‘These are not my words, I am merely conveying what is revealed to me!’⁵ Moreover, his addressing the disbelievers like this even though they came to him with a proposal of compromise, unafraid of how they would respond, indicates that he is protected by Allāh.⁶

The word *kāfir*, disbeliever, comes from the word *kufr* which linguistically means *satr*, or covering. In the technical, Islāmic sense it refers to a non-Muslim. Ibn Taymiyyah said, ‘Disbelief is the absence of faith in Allāh and His Messenger by agreement of the Muslims. This holds true regardless if the person actually believes something that is incompatible with true faith and voices it or does not believe in anything and does not voice it.’⁷

The scholars have categorised *kufr* into various classes:

- i) *Kufr al-Inkār*, the disbelief of rejection, referring to a person who has no knowledge of Allāh and does not acknowledge Him.
- ii) *Kufr al-Juhūd*, the disbelief of denial, referring to a person who has knowledge of the truth but denies it, like Pharaoh and the Jews.

⁴ Sama‘āni, Rāzī, Abū Ḥayyān, Khāzin, Sālim

⁵ Rāzī, Khāzin

⁶ Abū Ḥayyān, Baqa‘ī

⁷ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū‘ al-Fatāwā*, vol. 20, pg. 86

- iii) *Kufr al-'Inād*, the disbelief of obduracy, referring to a person who has knowledge of the truth, accepts it, but does not follow it out of hatred or arrogance like Iblis.
- iv) *Kufr al-'I'rād*, the disbelief of turning away, referring to a person who deliberately turns away from the truth, not paying it any attention, neither accepting nor denying.
- v) *Kufr al-Shakk*, the disbelief of doubt, referring to a person who doubts whether it is the truth or not.
- vi) *Kufr al-Nifāq*, the disbelief of hypocrisy, referring to a person who pretends to be a Muslim outwardly while, inwardly, remaining a disbeliever.
- vii) *Kufr al-Ridda*, the disbelief of apostasy, referring to a person who accepted Islām and then left it either through belief, deed or statement.

Allāh, Most High, says about the disbelievers:

﴿٥٥﴾ إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

“Surely the vilest of animals in Allāh’s sight are those who disbelieve and will not believe.”

[*al-Anfāl* (8): 55]

﴿٦﴾ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أُولَئِكَ هُمْ شَرُّ الْبَرِيَّةِ

“Surely those who disbelieve from the followers of the Book and the polytheists shall be in the fire of Hell, abiding therein; they are the worst of men.”

[*al-Bayyinah* (98): 6]

إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الضَّمُّ الَّذِينَ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ

“Surely the vilest of animals, in Allāh’s sight, are the deaf and dumb who do not understand.”

[*al-Anfāl* (8): 22]

وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالإِنسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ
لَّا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَّا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ آذَانٌ لَّا يَسْمَعُونَ
بِهَا أُولَئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلَّ هُم أَضَلُّ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ ﴿١٧٩﴾

“Certainly We have created many jinn and men for Hell; they have hearts with which they do not understand, they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear; they are like cattle, no, even further astray; these are the heedless ones.”

[*al-A‘rāf* (7): 179]

وَمَثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي يَنْعِقُ
بِمَا لَا يَسْمَعُ إِلَّا دُعَاءً وَنِدَاءً ضُمُّ بَكُمْ عَمَىٰ فَهْمٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُونَ

“The parable of those who disbelieve is as the parable of one who calls out to that which hears no more than a call and a cry; deaf, dumb, blind: they do not understand.”

[*al-Baqarah* (2): 171]

CHAPTER X: ABSOLUTION

لا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٢﴾

2) I do not worship what you worship

The Prophet (ﷺ) has never worshipped any false deity that the disbelievers have worshipped, be they polytheists or the People of the Book or any other. He has not done so in the past, he is not doing so in the present, and he is protected from doing so in the future. He has never associated partners with Allāh, instead his worship was sincerely and solely for Him, and the Lord he worshipped is the Lord as revealed in divine scripture, not some idle flight of fancy or superstition.

Ibn Taymiyyah said,

This address is directed to all disbelievers. He (ﷺ) has never worshipped Angels or any other false deity. This verse does not disavow the *shirk* of the polytheist Arabs alone, to think so would be a serious error, it disavows every polytheist. It is not possible that the Lord be described with the qualities of idols such as the absence of knowledge; therefore, contrast is not made in things like this.

The point here is to mention the attributes of the deity of the Messenger and the believers, and to apprise them of Him so that they can disavow the disbeliever's deities and the disbelievers can disavow theirs.

When the Jews say, 'We worship Allāh,' they are lying, be it knowingly or unknowingly. When the Christians say, 'We worship Allāh alone, we are not polytheists,' they are lying. If they wanted to worship Him, they would have worshipped Him in the way He ordered: the Legal Law, not some abrogated or distorted law.

He proceeded to explain that the Christians associate partners with Allāh and as such cannot be regarded to be worshippers of Allāh, and that moreover, they attribute qualities to Him that are far from fitting. The Jews do the same, a small party of them believed that 'Uzayr was Allāh's son and the generality of them again assigned qualities to Him that were far from fitting, 'some of them think He is poor, some think He is miserly, some think He is incapable and grows tired, and some think that He cannot reveal a new law.' Therefore the object they worship is a distorted, corrupt view of Allāh, 'idle flights of fancy that Shayṭān has adorned for them.' It can be said that they believe in the same deity as the Muslims in a very broad sense, but not in a host of very important specifics, as such they cannot be said to *worship* Allāh, rather in reality they end up worshipping Shayṭān, 'the Messenger and the believers do not worship *what* the Jews worship, but they do worship *who* they worship. This then proves the significance of using the word, *mā* (what) and not *man* (who) in the verse,' because *mā* refers to inanimate objects or the qualities of animate objects. Later on, he said, 'The Prophet (ﷺ) and the believers do not worship what the Jews worship. The latter do describe Him with qualities that are befitting, but they also describe Him with qualities that He must be absolved of. Their hearts do not contain the worship of Allāh alone because that

can only exist for someone who worships Him in the way He ordered.'

He further argues that ibn Zayd¹ and some others were mistaken when they argued that the meaning of this verse does not include the Jews because, 'the Jews did not associate partners with Allāh, they worshipped Him alone, but they did disbelieve in some of the Messengers and killed others, and they disbelieved in the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) and what he brought.' He said, 'While it is correct to say that the Jews did not associate partners in the way that the Arabs and the Christians did, it is not correct to say that they worshipped Allāh, rather they refused to worship Him and worshipped Shayṭān instead. Whoever says that the Jews worship Allāh has made a grave mistake because anyone who worships Allāh will be graced with Paradise and is one of Allāh's righteous servants.' Allāh, Most High, says,

أَلَمْ أَعْهَدْ إِلَيْكُمْ يَا بَنِي آدَمَ أَنْ لَا
تَعْبُدُوا الشَّيْطَانَ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٦٠﴾ وَأَنْ أَعْبُدُونِي
هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ ﴿٦١﴾

“Did I not make a contract with you, tribe of Ādam, not to worship Shayṭān who truly is an outright enemy to you, but to worship Me? That is a straight path.”

[*Yā Sīn* (36): 60-61]

Concerning the Jews, Allāh, Most High, says,

¹ Recorded by Ṭabarī and others.

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا نَصِيبًا
مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْجِبْتِ وَالطَّاغُوتِ وَيَقُولُونَ
لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا هَتُّوْا لَهُمْ آهْدَىٰ مِنَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا سَبِيلًا ﴿٥١﴾

“Do you not see those who were given a portion of the Book having faith in idols and false gods and saying to those who disbelieve, ‘These people are better guided on their path than the believers?’”

[*al-Nisā*’ (4): 51]

وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ
مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ نَبَذَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ
كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَرَأَىٰ ظُهُورِهِمْ كَأَنَّهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٠١﴾
وَاتَّبَعُوا مَا تَتْلُوا الشَّيْطَانُ عَلَىٰ مَلِكِ سُلَيْمَانَ وَمَا كَفَرَ
سُلَيْمَانُ وَلَا كَانِ الشَّيْطَانُ كَافِرًا

“When a Messenger comes to them from Allāh confirming what is with them, a group of those who have been given the Book disdainfully toss the Book of Allāh behind their backs, just as if they did not know. They follow what the devils recited in the reign of Sulaymān. Sulaymān did not disbelieve, but the devils did...”

[*al-Baqarah* (2): 101-102]

The chapter does not start by saying, “Say: ‘O Polytheists!’” it says, “Say: ‘O disbelievers!’” and as such subsumes every disbeliever: those who commit *shirk*, those who negate what Allāh must be described with, and those who are too arrogant to worship Him. Negation is worse than *shirk* and every person who negates must

also have committed *shirk*.²

Linguistically, the word worship, *'ibādah* is derived from *'abada* which means to be subservient and to subjugate. In the technical, Islāmic sense, the word *'ibādah* is a comprehensive term referring to everything, inward and outward, that Allāh loves and is pleased with.³ Its pillars are love, hope, fear, submission and humility.

Worship can only be considered true worship when the way of performing it is taken from the Messenger (ﷺ), seeking thereby the face of Allāh only. These two conditions have to be present for the action to be considered worship and hence acceptable to Allāh⁴ and are proven by the ḥadīth recorded by Bukhārī and Muslim on the authority of 'Umar ibn al-Khattāb that the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said, "Actions are by intentions and every person shall have what he intended. So whoever's migration was to Allāh and His Messenger, his migration was to Allāh and His Messenger; and whoever's migration was for some worldly gain, or to marry a woman, his migration was for that which he migrated to,"⁵ and by the ḥadīth recorded by Muslim on the authority of 'Ā'ishah that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Whoever does an action that we have not commanded, it must be rejected."⁶ This aspect of the meaning of worship is also shown in these verses when understanding the *mā* as signifying the verbal noun, *mā al-masdarīyyah*. This is explained later.

² Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, vol. 7, pp. 73-76

³ Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-'Ubdīyyah*, pg. 1

⁴ Ibn al-Qayyim, *Tafsīr*, pg. 73

⁵ Bukhārī #1-54-2529-3898-5070-6689-6953, Muslim #1907

⁶ Muslim #1718

CHAPTER XI: PAGANISM

وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ ﴿٣﴾

3) and you are not servants of who I worship.

Just like the previous verse, this verse is also directed at all disbelievers. Among the disbelievers are those who do not worship Allāh at all and those who worship others alongside Allāh. Both types do not worship Allāh, the latter because to associate partners with Allāh cannot ever be considered worship of Him. As such, their proposal to worship Allāh every other year can, in reality, never come about because, at the end of the day, they would still be polytheists. It is to drive this point home that a nominal sentence structure has been employed in this verse since a nominal phrase adds the sense of something being permanent and entrenched.¹

Ibn Taymiyyah said,

This is an address directed to all of the disbelievers, even

¹ Baqā'i, ibn 'Āshūr

those who became Muslims afterwards because they had not accepted Islām at the time of this address. The address is applicable to them for as long as they were disbelievers. It also applies to the hypocrites since they are disbelievers in reality. For as long as a disbeliever remains a disbeliever, he is not worshipping Allāh, he is worshipping Shayṭān, regardless if he clearly shows this or does not such as the Jews. The Jews do not worship Allāh, they worship Shayṭān, because Allāh can only be worshipped in the way He has legislated and ordered. They may well think they are worshipping Him but their deeds, distorted as they are and prohibited by Him, are despised and hated by Him. He has proscribed them and therefore they cannot be considered worship.

Every person who disbelieves in Muḥammad does not worship what Muḥammad worships for as long as he remains a disbeliever. The present tense verb implies an act that is ongoing and unceasing, so for as long as the person is a disbeliever, he will not worship the God of Muḥammad (ﷺ), not in the present or the future.²

In both verses the word *mā*, what, has been used, i.e. in “*what you worship*” and “*who I worship.*” *Mā* is used to refer to inanimate objects, and the linguists differ about whether it can be used for animate objects.

With regards to the polytheists, they worshipped animate and inanimate objects. The *mā* was used to refer to their gods, giving prevalence to the inanimate objects they worship in order to belittle their worship.³

² Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, vol. 7, pg. 67-68

³ Baqā'ī

The question, however, arises about the sense in which *mā* is used where it relates to Allāh in the third and fifth verses. Those who have the opinion that it can be used to refer to animate objects understand it in its normative sense, translated here as “*who*.”⁴ They state that *mā* has been mentioned in verse 3 as opposed to *who*, *man*, as one may expect so the contrast holds with the flow of verse 2.⁵

Those who said that it was not permissible to use *mā* for animate objects said that the *mā* here was used to signify the verbal noun, *maṣdariyyab*.⁶ Therefore, the meaning would be, ‘*and you will not be worshippers as I worship*,’ and the reference would be to the act and method of worship as opposed to the object of worship. Sālīm argues that this is a strong argument, not necessarily because of this linguistic argument, but because in the last verse, “*You have your religion and I have mine*,” Allāh refers them to their worship and not to their object of worship.

Others said that *mā* is used to signify an adjectival qualifier, *ṣifab* of the act i.e. ‘*I do not worship what you worship of falsehood and you are not servants of what I worship of the truth*.’⁷ Ibn Taymiyyah said, ‘*Mā* is used to describe inanimate objects and the characteristics of animate objects.’⁸

Abū Muslim said the last pair only were used to signify the ver-

⁴ Ḥalabī

⁵ Sama‘ānī, Baghawī, Mardāwī, ibn al-Jawzī, Qurṭubī, Abū Ḥayyān, Nasafī, Ālūsī

⁶ Zamakhsharī, Bayḍāwī, Qurṭubī, Abū Ḥayyān, Ḥalabī

⁷ Zamakhsharī, Bayḍāwī, Nasafī, ibn al-Qayyim, Ālūsī

⁸ Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, vol. 7, pg. 73

bal nouns and first two were used to signify the relative pronoun, *manṣūlah*,⁹ this would seem to be the opinion preferred by ibn Kathīr who explains the verses thus,

“I do not worship what you worship,” of idols and partner-gods ***“and you are not servants of who I worship,”*** Allāh alone with no partners, so *mā* here has the meaning of *man*. ***“I am not a servant of what you worshipped,”*** i.e. I do not worship in the manner you worship: I will not traverse your path and I will not imitate it. I only worship Allāh in the way He loves and is pleased with. This is why the following verse says, ***“and you are not servants of who I worship,”*** i.e. you will not follow Allāh’s commandments and law in worshipping Him, instead you have invented something for yourselves. *“They are following nothing but conjecture and what their own selves desire. And that when guidance has reached them from their Lord!”*¹⁰

In this verse, ***“You are not servants,”*** is a nominal sentence and ***“who I worship,”*** is a verbal sentence. Ibn Taymiyyah explained,

He did not say, ‘You do not worship who I worship,’ using a verb, rather he used a nominal sentence to highlight that their vile, disbelieving souls are free of worshipping the God of Muḥammad (ﷺ), they cannot do so for as long as they remain disbelievers. This is because true worship is to worship Him alone in the way commanded by Muḥammad, whoever disbelieves in him (ﷺ) cannot fulfil this condition.¹¹

⁹ Halabī, Ālūsī

¹⁰ *al-Najm* (53): 23

¹¹ Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, vol. 7, pg. 69

CHAPTER XII: PURITY OF FAITH

وَلَا أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَا عَبَدْتُمْ ④
وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ ⑤

4) I am not a servant of what you worshipped 5) and you are not servants of who I worship

When contrasting verse 2 with verse 4 we see that “*I do not worship*,” is a verbal sentence and “*I am not a servant*,” is a nominal sentence, “*who I worship*,” is in the present tense and “*what you worshipped*” is in the past tense. The scholars have discussed these differences, ibn Taymiyyah said,

“*I do not worship*,” in this present time and in the future, “*what you worship*,” in this present time and in the future, since both are present tense verbs and can apply to the present and future but not the past. In the other verse he said, “*I am not a servant of what you worshipped*,” he did not say, ‘I do not worship,’ using a

verb and he did not say, 'what you worship,' using the present tense, instead the past tense was used. Therefore, the wording for his action and their action is different from the first sentence. The negation in this second sentence is more general, "*what you worshipped,*" deals with the past because the polytheists would worship many different gods, and at any one time they could have worshipped a god different to what they had worshipped previously. His saying, "*I am not a servant of what you worshipped,*" is a disavowal of everything they worshipped at any point in the past, and the first sentence is a disavowal of what they worship in the present and will worship in the future. Hence, both of these sentences taken together reflect a disavowal of what they worship in the past, present and future.¹ This comprehensive meaning is not found in each sentence when taken by itself. "*I am not a servant,*" employs the active participle and therefore applies to the present and the future. The verse is structured as a nominal sentence and is therefore more emphatic since it precludes the very possibility of the act occurring, whereas a negation using a verbal sentence would imply that it has not occurred even though it could have occurred. Therefore, this structure negates the possibility of the act ever occurring in the object because it just cannot reconcile it. Hence, the first sentence negates the occurrence of the act in the present and the future, and the second sentence negates the very possibility of it happening, and hence is more emphatic and potent than the first. Therefore, the words, "*I am not a servant,*" mean that 'My self will not accept and cannot accede to worshipping what you worship, even if you had just worshipped it in the past. I cannot worship, at any time, any of the gods you have worshipped.' The Prophet (ﷺ) has absolved himself of what the polytheists worshipped in the

¹ cf. Baqā'ī

present and will worship in the future, and has precluded the possibility of ever worshipping their gods. He has explained that this will not happen and it is far from fitting that it happen and as such negated the legal possibility and actual occurrence of the deed.

Such words, such a negation, are only ever said for something that is truly despicable such as the case of a person who is called to commit an indecent act or act of oppression. As such the negation, when structured like this, includes hatred and aversion to the deed. This sense is not present in a straightforward verbal negation such as 'I will not do it,' since a person could refrain from doing a deed because of some external factor and not because he hates it. When a person said, "***I am not a worshipper of what you worshipped,***" this carries the meaning of hating the god and hating their worship of that god.²

Concerning the different tenses in "***who I worship,***" and "***what you worshipped,***" Zamakhsharī answered, "They worshipped idols in the past, before his being commissioned, yet at that time he did not worship Allāh,³ therefore the present tense was used when referring to his action because using the past tense could be construed as being false for the period of time before his prophethood. Abū Ḥayyān rebuts this view by stating that it has left due propriety with the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ).⁴ The truth is that the Prophet (ﷺ) did worship Allāh, even during the time before he was commissioned, however he did not worship Him through those specific acts that could only be known through revelation. Therefore, one could say that the absence of the past tense in the statement could be to

² Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, vol. 7, pp. 64-68

³ Zamakhsharī

⁴ Abū Ḥayyān

highlight this fact, not that he never knew about *Tawhīd*.

Another reason for using the present tense is that it is a rhetorical device to bring the Prophet's (ﷺ) worship vividly into the mind of the listener and to help him fully grasp the concept, a style used in other places of the Qur'ān such as,

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَتُصْبِحُ الْأَرْضُ
مُخْضِرَةً

“Do you not see that Allāh sends down water from the sky and then in the morning the earth is covered in green?”

[*al-Hajj* (22): 63]

where the present tense verb, *tusbiḥu*, is used rather than the past, *aṣḥabat*, for this reason.⁵

A third reason for using the present tense was to highlight that who the Prophet (ﷺ) worshipped today was the same as who he worshipped yesterday,⁶ he was not given to worshipping on whim and fancy like the polytheists.

Ibn Taymiyyah gave another view: every believer is required to recite these verses, some believers converted to Islām and previously worshipped idols. Were the verse to read, ‘I worshipped,’ it could be taken to refer to false gods. This possibility is removed when using the present tense.⁷

⁵ Ibn al-Munayyir to Zamakhsharī. cf. Abū Ḥayyān, Abū Su‘ūd, ibn ‘Ādil

⁶ Qurtubī

⁷ Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, vol. 7, pg. 69

Ibn Kathīr concluded the commentary to these verses by saying,

He (ﷺ) absolved himself of all that they were upon. The worshipper must have an object of worship and a method of worship. The Messenger and his followers worship Allāh in the way that He has legislated and this is why the statement of Islām is, 'There is none worthy of worship save Allāh and Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh,' meaning that there is no object of worship save Allāh and no way to Him except through what the Messenger (ﷺ) brought. The polytheists, on the other hand, worship others besides Allāh for which He has granted no permission. This is why the Messenger (ﷺ) said to them, **"You have your religion and I have mine."** In the same way, Allāh, Most High says,

وَإِنْ كَذَّبُوكَ فَقُلْ لِي عَمَلِي وَلَكُمْ
عَمَلُكُمْ أَنتُمْ بَرِيئُونَ مِمَّا أَعْمَلُ وَأَنَا بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

"If they deny you, say, 'I have my actions and you have your actions. You are not responsible for what I do and I am not responsible for what you do.'"

[Yūnus (10): 41]

وَلَنَا أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُخْلِصُونَ ﴿١٣٩﴾

"We have our deeds and you have your deeds. We act for Him alone."

[al-Baqarah (2): 139]

CHAPTER XIII: DISAVOWAL

لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ ﴿٦﴾

6) You have your religion and I have mine

The word *dīn* in this verse has been explained to mean religion, accounting, recompense, supplication and worship.¹ Therefore, the meaning is: “**You have your religion**” of *shirk*² which you will never abandon; this is what you will die upon³ and then reap the recompense of your deeds,⁴ “**and I have mine,**” Islām and *Tawḥīd*⁵ which I will never abandon; I will never leave it for something else⁶ and I

¹ Bayḍāwī

² Baghawī, Zamakhsharī, Abū Ḥayyān, Nasafī

³ Ṭabarī, Bayḍāwī

⁴ Samaʿānī

⁵ Baghawī, Mardāwī, Zamakhsharī, Abū Ḥayyān, Nasafī

⁶ Ṭabarī, Bayḍāwī

will reap the recompense of my own deeds.⁷ Allāh, Most High, says,

وَلَنَا أَعْمَلْنَا وَلكُمْ أَعْمَلْتُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُخْلِصُونَ ﴿١٣٩﴾

“We have our deeds and you have your deeds. We act for Him alone.”

[*al-Baqarah* (2): 139]

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا اللَّغْوَ
أَعْرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَقَالُوا لَنَا أَعْمَلْنَا وَلكُمْ أَعْمَلْتُمْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ
لَا نَبْنِغِي الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾

“When they hear worthless talk they turn away from it and say, ‘We have our actions and you have your actions. Peace be upon you. We do not desire the company of the ignorant.’”

[*al-Qasas* (28): 55]

وَإِنْ كَذَّبُوكَ فَقُلْ لِي عَمَلِي وَلكُمْ
عَمَلِكُمْ أَنْتُمْ بَرِيئُونَ مِمَّا أَعْمَلُ وَأَنَا بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

“I have my deeds and you have your deeds. You are not responsible for what I do and I am not responsible for what you do.”

[*Yunus* (10): 41]

Just as you are content with your religion, I too am content with mine.⁸ Just as you supplicate to others alongside Allāh, I will only ever supplicate to Him alone,

⁷ Sama‘ānī, Mardāwī

⁸ Qurṭubī, Shawkānī

فَادْعُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ

“So call upon Allāh, making your religion sincerely His.”

[*Ghāfir* (40): 14]

لَهُ دَعْوَةُ الْحَقِّ وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ لَا يَسْتَجِيبُونَ لَهُمْ بِشَيْءٍ إِلَّا
 كَبَسِطَ كَفْتَهُ إِلَى الْمَاءِ لِيَبْلُغَ فَاهُ وَمَا هُوَ بِيَبْلُغُهُ وَمَا يَدْعَاؤُهُ إِلَّا كَفَرِينَ
 إِلَّا فِي ضَلَالٍ (١٤)

“The only true supplication is made to Him alone. Those they call upon apart from Him do not respond to them at all. It is like someone stretching out his cupped hands towards water to convey it to his mouth: it will never get there. The call of the disbelievers is all in vain.”

[*al-Ra'd* (13): 14]

Abū Su'ūd said,

i.e. ‘Your religion: polytheism, is yours and yours alone, I will never acquiesce to your wishes and accept it. Therefore, do not place your vain fancies in something impossible. My religion, *Tawhīd*, is mine and mine alone and you will not accept it because you have attached an impossible condition (to your offer) which is my worshipping your gods or my accepting them, and because your promise is *shirk* in itself.’ Now, since their offer was built on the premise that both parties share in both methods of worship, the restriction that is derived by the syntactic placing of the subject before the noun (*dīn*) is an absolute declaration of individuality and disavowal.

After the previous verses showing that the Messenger of Allāh

﴿١٦﴾ is free of their false religion, “*You have your religion,*” is mentioned first to drive home the point that their choice of faith is worthless and will not benefit them at all, and because they were the ones who approached him with this proposal.⁹ As such, this verse reinforces the message of the earlier verses,¹⁰ and exemplifies the epitome of washing one’s hands of disbelief.¹¹ It was to stress this that the following verses were revealed along with this chapter:

قُلْ أَفَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ تَأْمُرُونِي أَعْبُدُ أَيُّهَا
 الْجَاهِلُونَ ﴿١٦﴾ وَلَقَدْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ وَإِلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكَ لَئِنْ
 أَشْرَكْتَ لَيَحْبَطَنَّ عَمَلُكَ وَلَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ ﴿١٧﴾ بَلِ اللَّهَ
 فَاعْبُدْ وَكُنْ مِنَ الشَّاكِرِينَ ﴿١٨﴾

“Say: ‘Do you order me to worship something other than Allāh, you ignorant people?’ It has been revealed to you and those before you: ‘If you associate others with Allāh, your actions will come to nothing and you will be among the losers.’ No! Worship Allāh and be among the thankful.”

[*al-Zumar* (39): 64-66]

In a similar sense, Ibrāhīm said,

إِنَّا بَرَاءُؤُا مِنْكُمْ وَمِمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ كَفَرْنَا بِكُمْ

“We wash our hands of you and all that you worship apart from Allāh and we reject you.”

[*al-Mumtahinah* (60): 4]

⁹ Ibn al-Qayyim

¹⁰ Ālūsī

¹¹ Abū Ḥayyān

Allāh has explained that a benefit of distancing oneself in this manner is that He will provide him righteous descendents,

فَلَمَّا أَعْتَرَهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ
 مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ كُلًّا جَعَلْنَا نَبِيًّا
 وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُمْ مِنْ رَحْمَتِنَا وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ عَلِيًّا

“When he had separated himself from them and what they worshipped besides Allāh, We gave him Ishāq and Ya‘qūb, making each of them a Prophet. We endowed them with Our mercy and made them highly honoured.”

[*Maryam* (19): 49-50]

The verse in question does not mean that it is allowed for the disbelievers to persist in their disbelief¹² and neither does the verse imply an acceptance of their religion, rather it is said in the same sense as,

وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ
 شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ نَارًا أَحَاطَ بِهِمْ سُرَادِقُهَا
 وَإِنْ يَسْتَعِثُوا يَعْثُوا بِمَاءٍ كَالْمُهْلِ يَشْوِي الْوُجُوهَ بِئْسَ
 الشَّرَابُ وَسَاءَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا

“Say, ‘It is the truth from your Lord; so let whoever wishes have faith and whoever wishes disbelieve.’ We have prepared for the wrongdoers a Fire whose billowing walls of smoke will hem them in.”

[*al-Kahf* (18): 29]

¹² Baydāwī, Ālūsī

i.e. in the sense of a threat and warning. The first verse further emphasises this.¹³

Because the primary point was to stress that he (ﷺ) would never follow their religion, the beginning verses of the chapter commence by announcing this and then, in this final verse, it continues where the first verse left and addresses the disbelievers directly, concluding the ‘negotiations’ as it were.¹⁴

¹³ Rāzī, Qurṭubī, Khāzin, Sālim, ibn ‘Ādil

¹⁴ Abū Ḥayyān, Ḥalabī

CHAPTER XIV

Who is being Addressed?

The *Sūrah*, in its generality seems to indicate that the disbelievers, as a whole, will never believe and worship Allāh alone. An understanding such as this would be clearly flawed since many disbelievers have accepted Islām.¹ Many exegetes, when they came to discuss this point, were of the view that the discourse is directed to those specific disbelievers who Allāh knew would never believe.² This, then, would fall under the same category of verses as,

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْهِمْ ءَأَنْذَرْتَهُمْ أَمْ لَمْ تُنذِرْهُمْ
لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٦﴾

As for those who disbelieve, it makes no difference to them whether you warn them or do not warn them, they will not have faith.

[*al-Baqarah* (2): 6]

¹ Qurṭubī, Shawkānī

² Sama‘ānī, Baghawī, Bayḍāwī, ibn al-Jawzī, Zamakhsharī, Qurṭubī, Abū Ḥayyān, Tha‘alabī, Abū Su‘ūd, ibn ‘Ādil

and about whom Allāh says,

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِمْ كَلِمَتُ رَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

Those against whom the words of your Lord are
justly carried out will never have faith.

[Yūnus (10): 96]

Others, however, advanced different answers. Ibn Taymiyyah, after mentioning the above opinion said,

This is a mistake. Allāh's words, "**Say: O disbelievers**" are directed to all disbelievers. He (ﷺ) would recite this verse in Madīnah, after the death of the disbelievers who approached him; he would enjoin its recitation and state that it was absolution from *shirk*. If the address was indeed to those disbelievers who approached him, or to those who Allāh knew would die as disbelievers, what would be the point of directing an address such as this to a people who do not know that they are meant? Those specific disbelievers did not know they would die as disbelievers and neither do the rest....

The Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) ordered individual Muslims to recite this chapter and told them that it was absolution from *shirk*. If the address was directed to those who died upon *shirk*, the chapter would be absolution from the religion of these people only, it would not be absolution from *shirk* as a whole. The meaning of his (ﷺ) words is that the chapter is absolution from every form of *shirk*, that related to belief and deed. His words, "**You have your religion and I have mine,**" is also an address directed to all disbelievers. Even if that disbeliever was to accept Islām afterwards, before he did so, the Muslims are free of him, even if he repented afterwards. It is in this sense that Allāh says to His Prophet,

فَإِنْ عَصَوْكَ فَقُلْ إِنِّي بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾

“If they disobey you, say, ‘I am free of what you do.’”

[*al-Shu'arā* (26): 216]

He is free of the sins of his Companions even if they were to repent afterwards. In a similar sense, He says,

وَإِنْ كَذَّبُوكَ فَقُلْ لِي عَمَلِي وَلكُمْ عَمَلِكُمْ أَنتُمْ بَرِيءُونَ مِمَّا أَعْمَلُ وَأَنَا بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

“If they deny you, say, ‘I have my actions and you have your actions. You are not responsible for what I do and I am not responsible for what you do.’”

[*Yūnus* (10): 41]

...The address is directed to all the polytheists, those who have passed away and those who will come till the Day of Rising. Allāh has ordered him to wash his hands of everything that is worshipped besides Him, this is the religion of Ibrāhīm, the *Khalīl* with which he (ﷺ) was sent. Allāh, Most High, says,

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ إِنَّنِي بَرَاءٌ مِمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾ إِلَّا الَّذِي فَطَرَنِي فَإِنَّهُ سَيَهْدِينِ ﴿٣٨﴾ وَجَعَلَهَا كَلِمَةً بَاقِيَةً فِي عَقْبِهِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

“When Ibrāhīm said to his father and his people, ‘I am free of everything you worship, except for Him who brought me into being, who will certainly guide me,’ he made it an on-going word among his descendants so that perhaps they might turn back.”

[*al-Zukhruf* (43): 26-28]

Ibrāhīm also said,

يَقَوْمِ إِنِّي بُرِيءٌ مِمَّا تُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾
إِنِّي وَجْهَتُ وَجْهِي لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ
حَنِيفًا وَمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٧٩﴾

“My people, I am free of what you associate with Allāh! I have turned my face to Him who brought the heavens and earth into being as a pure natural believer. I am not one of the polytheists.”

[*al-An‘ām* (6): 78-79]

Allāh says,

قَدْ
كَانَتْ لَكُمْ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ فِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ إِذْ قَالُوا لِقَوْمِهِمْ
إِنَّا بَرَاءٌ وَإِوَاءُكُمْ وَمِمَّا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ كُفْرًا كَرِيمًا وَبَدَّابَيْنَنَا
وَبَيْنَكُمْ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ أَبَدًا حَتَّى تُؤْمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَحْدَهُ إِلَّا
قَوْلَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ لِأَبِيهِ لَا تُغْفِرَنَّ لَكَ وَمَا أَمْلِكُ لَكَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مِن شَيْءٍ
رَبَّنَا عَلَيْكَ تَوَكَّلْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ أَنبْنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٤﴾

“You have an excellent example in Ibrāhīm and those with him when they said to their people, ‘We wash our hands of you and all that you worship apart from Allāh, and we reject you. Between us and you there will be enmity and hatred forever unless and until you have faith in Allāh alone.’ Except for Ibrāhīm’s words to his father, ‘I will ask forgiveness for you but I have no power to help you in any way against Allāh.’ ‘Our Lord, we have put our trust in You and have repented to You. You are

our final destination.”

[*al-Mumtahana* (60): 4]

He says to His Prophet (ﷺ),

وَإِنْ كَذَّبُوكَ فَقُلْ لِي عَمَلِي وَلَكُمْ
عَمَلُكُمْ أَنْتُمْ بَرِيءُونَ مِمَّا أَعْمَلُ وَأَنَا بَرِيءٌ مِمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

“If they deny you, say, ‘I have my actions and you have your actions. You are not responsible for what I do and I am not responsible for what you do.’”

[*Yūnus* (10): 41]

Here Allāh has ordered him to wash his hands of the deeds of everyone who denies him, and this includes the polytheists and the people of the Book.³

Sālim, developing further on the different syntactical structures of these verses, said,

The *Sūrah* presents two contrasting view points: that of the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) and that of the disbelievers, with both refusing to worship what the other worships. However, when looking at the wordings used to describe both stances, they are not the same. With respect to the Messenger (ﷺ), the first sentence reads, “***I do not worship what you worship,***” using present tense verbs in both halves of the sentence which indicates the present state, i.e. ‘I do not worship, in this present time, what you worship, in this present time.’ Then He said, “***and you are not servants of who I worship,***” using a nominal sentence to describe their stance, and a verbal sentence to describe his, i.e. ‘You cannot be said to have

³ Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, vol. 7, pp. 56-61 summarised

the quality of worshipping who I worship, in this present time.' Then He said, "***I am not a servant of what you worship, and you are not servants of who I worship,***" [using a nominal sentence to describe his (ع) stance] i.e. he cannot be said to have the quality of worshipping what they worship, and they do not worship who he is worshipping.

Therefore, in the two sentences, his (ع) stance has been described with a verbal sentence and a nominal sentence: one to negate the act itself (in the present state), and the other to negate the possibility of its occurring in the future. Their stance, however, has been described in both cases with a nominal sentence which lends to the meaning of an established, entrenched quality, existing in both the past and the present. The verbal sentence, which indicates repetition and occurrence, was not used to describe them. As such, the sentences dealing with them do not refer to the future, and hence any possible confusion in understanding is removed. Allāh knows best.

CHAPTER XV

Abrogation

Some said that the last verse was abrogated by the Verse of the Sword,¹ however this is not correct because the chapter is a narrative, *khabr* and abrogation does not occur in narratives.² Moreover, washing one's hands of evil deeds and paganism is and always will be legislated.³ Some said that if one understands the verse to mean leaving each other alone and accepting the others faith, then there is a strong case for abrogation.⁴ Ibn al-Qayyim said,

Many people erred in thinking that this verse was abrogated by the Verse of the Sword because they understood that the verse implied an acceptance of their religion, and some thought that it meant an acceptance of

¹ Baghawī, Bayḍāwī, ibn al-Jawzī, Abū Ḥayyān, Tha'ālabī, Fairozabādī, the opinion is mentioned by Sama'ānī, ibn 'Aṭīyyah and Qurṭubī

² Qurṭubī, Shawkānī. cf. Nuḥās, *al-Nāsikh wa'l-Mansūkh*, vol. 3, pp. 154-155

³ Shanqīṭī to 10:41

⁴ Bayḍāwī, Ālūsī

the People of the Book specifically. Both opinions are wrong. There is no abrogation or even specification in this chapter. It is impossible that it be subject to abrogation because it talks exclusively about *Tawhid* which was the message of the Messengers, and *Tawhid* is not subject to abrogation. The reason why they erred is because they thought that the verse implied acceptance of their religion and then thought that acceptance was rendered null and void by the Verse of the Sword. There is no way that the verse can be understood in this light, from the very beginning the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) objected to their religious practise strenuously, he rebuked them and pointed out the flaws in their religion, and he threatened them with the coming punishment. They actually asked him to stop criticising their gods and religion in return for which they would leave him and his call alone, but he refused. How then can it be said that this verse implies acceptance of their religion? The actual meaning of the verse is complete disavowal and that each group is free of the other's religion as already explained.

CHAPTER XVI

Conclusion

Disavowal of the disbelievers faith and practise is an essential component of Islāmic faith and vital in preserving the Muslim identity and religion. It is a consequence of the love the believer holds for Allāh, His Messenger and the believers and his sincerity to them. It is for this reason that the Messenger of Allāh would take the pledge of allegiance from the believers that they be sincere to the Muslims and disavow the disbelievers.¹ Ibn al-Qayyim said,

The reality of the statement of faith is composed of knowing what the Messenger (ﷺ) came with, believing it, and acknowledging it on the tongue. It also comprises submitting to it out of love and humility, and acting by it outwardly and inwardly. It includes implementing it and calling to it as much as possible. It is perfected by loving and hating for the sake of Allāh, giving and withholding for His sake, and making Allāh the sole object of worship. The path to actualising this is through

¹ Aḥmad #19153-19162-19163-19165-19182-19219-19233-19238 and Arna'ūt said it was ṣaḥīḥ.

following the Messenger alone, inwardly and outwardly, and focusing the heart entirely on Allāh and His Messenger so that it turns to no one else.²

Ibn Taymiyyah said, ‘The hearts only find true delight and pleasure in loving Allāh and drawing close to Him by doing what He loves, and this is only possible if the person turns away from every other beloved object. This is the reality of *Lā ilāha ill’Allāh* and it is the religion of Ibrāhīm, the *Khalīl* and, indeed, all the Prophets and Messengers, peace and blessings be on them all.’³

Allāh, Most High, says,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا الْيَهُودَ وَالنَّصَرَىٰ أَوْلِيَاءَ بَعْضُهُمْ
أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنْكُمْ فَإِنَّهُ مِنْهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ
الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥١﴾

“You who have faith! Do not take the Jews and Christians as your friends; they are the friends of one another. Any of you who takes them as friends is one of them. Allāh does not guide wrongdoing people.”

[*al-Mā'idah* (5): 51]

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا آبَاءَكُمْ
وَإِخْوَانَكُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ إِنِ اسْتَحَبُّوا الْكُفْرَ عَلَى الْإِيمَانِ
وَمَنْ يَتَوَلَّهُمْ مِنْكُمْ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾ قُلْ إِنْ
كَانَ آبَاؤُكُمْ وَأَبْنَاؤُكُمْ وَإِخْوَانُكُمْ وَأَزْوَاجُكُمْ وَعَشِيرَتُكُمْ

² Ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Fawā'id*, pg. 143

³ Ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū' Fatāwā*, vol. 28, 32

وَأَمْوَالٌ اقْتَرَفْتُمُوهَا وَتِجَارَةٌ تَخْشَوْنَ كَسَادَهَا وَمَسْكِنٌ
 تَرْضَوْنَهَا أَحَبَّ إِلَيْكُمْ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَجِهَادٍ
 فِي سَبِيلِهِ فَتَرَبَّصُوا حَتَّى يَأْتِيَ اللَّهُ بِأَمْرٍ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي
 الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

“You who have faith, do not befriend your fathers and brothers if they prefer disbelief to faith. Those among you who do befriend them are wrongdoers. Say: ‘If your fathers or your sons or your brothers or your wives or your tribe, or any wealth you have acquired, or any business you fear may slump, or any house which pleases you, are dearer to you than Allāh and His Messenger and doing jihād in His Way, then wait until Allāh brings about His command. Allāh does not guide people who are deviators.”

[*al-Tawbah* (9): 23-24]

لَا يَجِدُ قَوْمًا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ يُوَادُّونَ مَنْ
 حَادَّ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَوْ كَانُوا آبَاءَهُمْ أَوْ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ
 أَوْ إِخْوَانَهُمْ أَوْ عَشِيرَتَهُمْ أُولَئِكَ كَتَبَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ
 الْإِيمَانَ وَأَيَّدَهُمْ بِرُوحٍ مِّنْهُ وَيُدْخِلُهُمْ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي
 مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمْ وَرَضُوا
 عَنْهُ أُولَئِكَ حِزْبُ اللَّهِ أَلَا إِنَّ حِزْبَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

“You will not find people who have faith in Allāh and the Last Day having love for anyone who opposes Allāh and His Messenger, though they be their fathers, their sons, their brothers or their clan. Allāh has inscribed faith upon such people’s hearts and

will reinforce them with a Spirit from Him and admit them into Gardens with rivers flowing under them, remaining in them timelessly, for ever. Allāh is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him. Such people are the party of Allāh. Truly it is the party of Allāh who are successful.”

[*al-Mujādilah* (58): 22]

Ṭabari’s recapitulation of this *Sūrah* is as follows,

The polytheists proffered a compromise: they would worship Allāh for a year and, in return, the Prophet of Allāh would worship their gods for a year. In answer, Allāh, Exalted is His mention, apprised His Prophet, Muḥammad (ﷺ), of the response befitting this request: Muḥammad “*Say,*” to these polytheists “*O disbelievers*” in Allāh “*I do not worship*” in this present time “*what you worship,*” of gods and idols “*and you are not servants of who I worship,*” at this time. “*I am not a servant*” in the times to come “*of what you worshipped,*” in days gone by “*and you are not*” ever going to be “*servants*” in the days to come “*of who I worship,*” at this time and in the future. “*You have your religion and I have mine.*” The response was phrased like this because the immediate address was directed to a specific group of polytheists who were never going to believe, established so in His pre-eternal knowledge.⁴ As such, He ordered His Prophet (ﷺ) to lay waste to their hopes and reject their offer, and to proclaim that such a state of affairs would never happen. He also made the Prophet (ﷺ) give up hope of their ever believing and hence ensuring their success. This is what actually happened, they did not succeed, nor were they victorious: some were killed at the Battle of Badr and others died before that as dis-

⁴ It has already been explained that the stronger opinion is that the address is actually general to all disbelievers.

believers.

Abū Ḥayyān commented thus,

“*Say,*” proving that it was Allāh who commanded him to articulate what follows. “*O disbelievers,*” they came to him with their hands outstretched, offering reconciliation, yet he addressed them like this thus proving that he was protected by Allāh and that he was not concerned about what they would do to him. The disbelievers referred to were a specific group, those who had proffered the compromise: Walīd ibn al-Mughīrah, ‘Āṣī ibn Wā’il, Aswad ibn al-Muṭṭalib, Umayyah and Ubayy the sons of Khalaf, Abū Jahl, the two sons of Ḥajjāj and others who, in actual fact, never accepted Islām. “*I do not worship what you worship,*” the opinion I prefer is that this first verse negates the possibility of his worshipping idols in the future because a negation with *lā* predominantly negates something in the future. The verse following, “*and you are not servants of who I worship,*” is also a negation dealing with the future because it has been stated by way of contrast, *muqābalah*. “*I am not a servant of what you worshipped,*” negates the action in the present tense, and following this is the verse, “*and you are not servants of who I worship,*” which also negates the present tense because, again, it has been stated by way of contrast. Therefore the meaning is that he (ﷺ) does not worship what they worship, and he will not worship what they worship; the same applies to them as well. He said, “*I do not worship what you worship,*” using *mā* to refer to idols, He contrasted this with, “*who I worship,*” using *mā* to refer to Allāh, Most High, because it is permissible to use styles when contrasting that would not normally be allowed when mentioning something alone. This, if one follows the view that *mā* cannot be used for objects that are animate. Those who said it

was allowed, the view attributed to Sibawayh, did not need to give such a reasoning. It is also said that the *mā* signifies the verbal noun in "**who I worship,**" and others said that it signifies the verbal noun in every occurrence. Zamakhsharī said that it was used to refer to the adjectival qualifier, i.e. 'I do not worship falsehood and you will not worship truth.' "**You have your religion and I have mine,**" you have your *shirk* and I have my *Tawhid*. This verse exemplifies the epitome of disavowal and because the most important point was to stress that he (ﷺ) would never follow their religion, the chapter begins by describing this and then, in the final verse, it continues where the first verse left off and addresses the disbelievers directly, concluding the 'negotiations' as it were. This verse is abrogated by the Verse of the Sword.⁵

Sa'dī explained the chapter as follows:

"Say" openly and clearly **"O disbelievers! I do not worship what you worship,"** I clear myself of what you worship, outwardly and inwardly **"and you are not servants of who I worship,"** because you do not worship Allāh sincerely, alone. Your worship of Him, mixed as it is with the worship of others besides Him, cannot truly be called worship. **"I am not a servant of what you worship; and you are not servants of who I worship,"** this sentence has been repeated. The first instance shows that what is said is a statement of fact, the act will not happen. The second instance shows that the state of affairs has now been set in stone. It is for this reason that Allāh proceeds to differentiate the two groups by saying, **"You have your religion and I have mine,"** just as Allāh says,

⁵ It has already been explained that the correct opinion is that the verse is not abrogated.

“Say, ‘Each man acts according to his nature, but your Lord knows best who is best guided on the Path.’”⁶ “If they deny you, say, ‘I have my actions and you have your actions. You are not responsible for what I do and I am not responsible for what you do.’”⁷

⁶ *al-Isrā'* (17): 84

⁷ *Yūnus* (10): 41

CHAPTER XVII

Points of benefit

1. There is no compromise on the truth. The disbelievers offered a so-called 'middle path,' built upon the presumption that both sides could be right or wrong and therefore, they should accommodate both. The response was swift, clear and severe.¹
2. This chapter follows *Sūrah al-Kawthar* to indicate that even though the believers may be few in number, they have great good. They should not despair and they must never falter in the face of falsehood. They must never sell their faith.²
3. The next *Sūrah* is *al-Naṣr*, dealing with victory and the *Sūrah* after is *al-Lahab*, dealing with the defeat of the enemy. This indicates that the path to success lies in adhering firmly to the religion and not compromising³ on things that cannot be com-

¹ Sālim

² Sālim

³ Sālim

promised.

4. Nuḥās said that these verses contain a proof of Prophecy as those who were immediately addressed, never accepted Islām.⁴ It also contain another prophecy in that it shows that Allāh had protected the Prophet (ﷺ) from ever worshipping anything besides Him.⁵
5. Ibn Taymiyyah said, 'The chapter is a complete disavowal of them but it also encourages the disbelievers to seek and learn the truth,' because they knew the Messenger (ﷺ) as someone who was totally honest, trustworthy and upright; he was a man of forbearance, fortitude and sublime character who was sincere to his people and wished the best for them. Therefore, the intelligent would take this into account and ponder why such a person would disavow himself of their religion and religious practise.⁶
6. "***You have you religion and I have mine,***" is commonly and habitually said by Muslims to each other when they want to wash their hands of minor issues or in cases of dispute. This is not allowed.⁷
7. Imām Shāfi'ī and others adduced the last verse of this *Sūrah* as a proof that all disbelievers are in reality one religion and, therefore, a Jew could inherit from a Christian and vice-versa if a relevant relationship existed between the two. He reasoned

⁴ Nuḥās, *Ma'āni al-Qur'ān*

⁵ Ibn al-Qayyim

⁶ Ibn Taymiyyah, *al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, vol. 7, pg. 72

⁷ Rāzī, ibn 'Ādil

that all religions besides Islām were false and, from this perspective, they could be regarded as one entity. Moreover, the address in the first verse is directed to all disbelievers, and in this verse the distinction is only made for two parties: your religion and my religion.

Imām Aḥmad and others were of the view that a Christian could not inherit from a Jew and vice-versa due to the ḥadīth in which the Messenger of Allāh (ﷺ) said, “The adherents of two different religions cannot inherit from each other.”⁸

⁸ Ibn Kathīr

The ḥadīth is recorded by Abū Dāwūd #2911 and ibn Mājah #2731 and declared ḥasan by Albānī, *al-Irwāʾ* #1675

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