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> The goal of prophets ('a) is monotheism

Chapter 10: What is Tawhid (Monotheism)?

It is now proper for us to briefly discuss monotheism so that we may understand what the term monotheist, which is contrasted with polytheist, means and who is called a monotheist.

In "Nahj al-Bal ghah", Im m 'Al ('a) said, "Monotheism denotes not conjecturing about Him and justice means not accusing Him." 1

It can be deduced from this statement that monotheism is the opposite of polytheism, which denotes conjecturing about Allah. This *had* th alludes to the root of idolatry and polytheism, which derive from conjecture and fantasy. A polytheist imagines that Allah has partners. This is confirmed by a *had* th transmitted from Im al–S diq (a) that, Every person who imagines that Allah is like any one of His creatures is a polytheist, because neither is Allah like a thing [from among His creatures] nor is a thing [from among His creatures] like Him. Allah is other than whatever is imagined [in the mind]."2

It is said that an ant imagines that Allah, just like itself, has two feelers (antennae). That is to say, it imagines Allah according to its mental perception. We too [as] human beings do not have the right to liken Allah to creatures as conceived by our minds. Allah is contrary to whatever we may imagine and what He is other than what we conjure up. With respect to Allah, we only have to say that He is Preeternal, Everlasting, All-mighty and nothing is like Him. In this regard, it is befitting to recount what Shaykh Mufed has transmitted from Shaykh Sadeq:

"Know that our Shi'ite conviction is that Allah is One, who is not like any creature. He is Pre-eternal and Everlasting. He hears, sees, and knows. He is Wise and Alive, and He rules over everything. He is an Invincible Power. He is Immaculate and Impeccable. He is Needless. He cannot be described, and He has no body or substance. He has no length, breadth and surface. He is neither heavy nor light. He is neither stationary nor mobile. He has neither time nor place.

"He is not affected by qualities of creatures and none is like Him. He is a thing that is not like other things. He is absolutely needless. He neither has an off-spring nor is He someone's offspring. He neither has an equal nor a partner. Eyes and minds cannot conceive Him, but He conceives eyes and

minds. Sleep and slumber do not overcome Him, and He knows every delicate thing. He is the Creator of every thing. There is no god besides Him. The whole creation and all affairs are under His reign. And whoever believes that Allah has a likeness is a polytheist.

"Whoever ascribes to the Imamate She ah other than what has been said is a liar. And any had the which contains issues other than what has been recounted has to be rejected as a forged and false tradition. And any had the which is contrary to the Holy Qur'an is a false tradition, even if it is found in She ah books."

It can be deduced from Shaykh Mufsd's statement and the assertions of other people that Allah has no likeness and has all the attributes of perfection [sifst-i kamst].

Nothing more than this can be said with respect to Allah.

Some philosophers have said that the existence of possible or contingent beings with respect to the existence of Allah belongs to the category of analogical gradation; that is to say, our existence is a weaker level and the existence of Allah is a higher [or stronger] level. For instance, the light of a candle and the light of the sun are both lights, but they have different levels. Existence, just like light, has levels.

In my opinion, it is better for us to refrain from such kinds of discourses with respect to the Essence of Allah and make no judgments. At least, we have to be cautious [when we make assertions concerning the Divine Essence of Allah]. What has been explained are reflections about Allah's effects; one can reflect as much as he can regarding the effects of Allah, but it is prohibited to meditate about His Divine Essence.

The goal of creation is monotheism and refutation of polytheism

Concerning the goal of creation, Allah states:

"I did not create the jinn and the humans except that they should worship Me."4

Devotional service to Allah means submission to His Divine will and acknowledging His oneness in all aspects, whether in beliefs or acts of worship, and forsaking every kind of polytheism and idolatry.

It has been recounted in some *had* ths that the above quoted verse means that the goal of creation is acquisition of knowledge and knowing the One God. It is to be concluded that the jinn and humans have been created to attain monotheism, to know Allah, the One, and to submit to Him.

Monotheism conforms to man's primordial nature

Contrary to polytheism, which is an inclination to defection and opposed to man's primordial nature, monotheism is precisely in conformity with man's innate disposition. The reason why monotheism is

man's innate disposition has already been explained under the discussion about the monotheism of idolaters when confronted by crises. Qur'anic verses denote that idolaters used to invoke Allah when the sea became stormy and they were afraid of drowning, and that they used to forsake their idols during those moments.

Here, it is proper for us to quote this verse:

"So set your face on the religion as a people of pure faith, the origination of Allah according to which He originated mankind (there is no altering Allah's creation; that is the upright religion, but most people do not know)."5

'The origination of Allah' [in the above quoted verse] denotes monotheism. It means that Allah created man's soul with a natural inclination to worship Allah. It has been recounted in a had th transmitted from the Noble Prophet (s) that every person was born with an innate disposition to monotheism and the worship of Allah, but it is their parents who deviate them to Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism. 6

The goal of prophets ('a) is monotheism

Prophets ('a) were delegated to exterminate polytheism and revive monotheism. Prophets ('a) came to deliver man from idolatry and make him a monotheist. There are many verses in the Holy Qur'an which indicate this, some of which we will quote hereunder:

"Then, after them We brought forth another generation, and We sent them an apostle from among themselves, saying, 'Worship Allah! You have no other god besides Him. Will they not then be wary [of Him]?' Said the elite of his people, who were faithless and who denied the encounter of the Hereafter and whom We had given affluence in the life of the world: 'This is just a human being like you: he eats what you eat, and drinks what you drink. If you obey a human being like yourselves, you will indeed be losers'."7

"They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouths, but Allah is intent on perfecting His light though the faithless should be averse."8

"We did not send any apostle before you but We revealed to him that 'There is no god except Me; so worship Me'."9

It can be inferred from the above quoted verses that the aim of delegating prophets (a) is to preach monotheism to mankind and put an end to any kind of polytheism and idolatry.

In the entire course of history, prophets (a) fought against polytheism and polytheists. The Noble Prophet (a) too was charged with fighting idolatry and going to war against polytheists.

"Fight them until faithlessness 10 is no more, and religion becomes [exclusively] for Allah. Then, if

they relinquish, there shall be no reprisal except against the wrongdoers."11

'Al-fitnah' basically means a trial, and it is employed in one of the following three instances: 1) tribulation, 2) retribution, and 3) obstructing the way of Allah and religion.

In the above quoted verse, it means polytheism.

The above quoted verse means that continue fighting until monotheism is established and accepted [by all]. There should be no war after monotheism has been established and accepted.

It has thus been written in "*Tafs al-M al-M* , "This verse exclusively pertains to polytheists, and does not include the People of the Book (i.e. Jews and Christians). Religion [*al-d n*] denotes establishing monotheism and refuting polytheism, and this is accepted by the People of the Book, even if their beliefs are in reality [a kind of] polytheism. Islam is content with their paying the *jizyah* 12 and there is no need to go to war with them so that they may pronounce the phrase 'There is no god except Allah' [/ *il-ha ill-h*]."

In "Tafs Ir al-Durr al-Manth Ir", it has been said that 'fitnah' means polytheism and religion [al-d In] means the pronouncement 'There is no god except Allah'. And the Noble Prophet (s) stated, "Allah has ordered me to fight until monotheism is established, after which war is unnecessary." 13

In "Majma' al–Bay n", a tradition has been transmitted from Im nal–S diq ('a) that he said, "'Fitnah' means polytheism and 'al–d n' denotes obeying Allah and submitting to His orders."

It can be deduced from the purport of the above quoted verse as well as the traditions that polytheism is by no means acceptable to Allah.

- 1. Nahj al-Bal ghah, sermon [khutbah] no. 462.
- 2. Tawhed Sadeq, p. 80, hadeth 36.
- 3. Shaykh Muftd, I'tiqtdt, p. 21.
- 4. Strat al-Dhtriytt 51:56.
- 5. Sirat al-Rim 30:30.
- 6. Tafser 'Illeyyen, p. 407, as quoted from "Majma' al-Bayen".
- 7. Srat al-Mu'minrn 23:31-34.
- 8. Strat al-Tawbah (or Bart'ah) 9:32.
- 9. Srat al-Anbiy 21:25.
- 10. Or 'polytheism'.
- 11. Srat al-Bagarah 2:193.
- 12. Head tax imposed on all non-Muslims living under the protection of an Islamic government.
- 13. Tafs T Al-M Tz Tn, vol. 2, p. 62, 72.

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