

Fortieth Hadith: Exegesis of Surat Al-Tawhid and Some Verses of Surat Al-Hadid

بِالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلَى الشَّيْخِ الْأَقْدَمِ وَالرُّكْنِ الْأَعْظَمِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ الْكَلِينِي رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَحْيَى عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنِ الْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ سَعِيدٍ عَنِ النَّضْرِ بْنِ سُؤَيْدٍ عَنْ عَاصِمِ بْنِ حَمِيدٍ قَالَ: سُئِلَ عَلِيُّ بْنُ الْحُسَيْنِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ عَنِ التَّوْحِيدِ فَقَالَ: إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَلِمَ أَنَّهُ يَكُونُ فِي آخِرِ الزَّمَانِ أَقْوَامٌ مُتَعَمِّقُونَ، فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى: ﴿قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ﴾ وَالآيَاتِ مِنْ سُورَةِ الْحَدِيدِ إِلَى قَوْلِهِ: ﴿وَهُوَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ﴾ فَمَنْ رَامَ وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ فَقَدْ هَلَكَ

With my chain of authorities reaching up to the foremost shaykh and the greatest pillar, Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni (R) from Muhammad ibn Tahya, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad, from al-Husayn ibn Said, from al-Nadr ibn Suwayd, from 'Asim ibn Humayd who said: Ali ibn al-Husayn (A) was asked concerning tawhid. He replied, "Verily, God Almighty and Glorious, knew that in the ultimate era there would be people of profound thinking, and so God, the Exalted, sent down, Qul huwa Allahu ahad (Say: He is Allah, the One...) and the verses of Surat al-Hadid until His words, '...and He knows well that which is in the breasts.' Hence someone who seeks to go beyond that will perish."¹

Exposition

Hadrat Sadr al-Muta'allihin (Q) says, "Asim ibn Humayd was not a contemporary of Imam Sajjad and therefore the tradition is a *marfu'* one."² The repetition of the word *qala* (he said) is perhaps due to a fragmentation in the *hadith*, or, perhaps, it is an error of the copyists, or the subject (*fa'il*) was mentioned but was omitted due to a lapse of the pen. Or the fail has been omitted, the case being one where such omission is permissible. Or the first fail is the pronoun referring to al-Nadr ibn Suwayd, and this possibility is very remote.

As to *al-tawhid*, *tawhid* pertains to the form *tafil*, and that is either due to repetition signified by the verb, in the sense of extreme emphasis on unity and simplicity, or it is in the sense of qualification of the object (*maful*) on the basis of the verb, such as in *takfir* and *tafsiq*. One of the scholars has held that the

form *tafil* is not used in the sense of qualification of the object (*maful*) and that it is also wrong to impart such a sense to *takfir* and *tafsiq*, because they rather mean calling someone to *fisq* and *kufr*, and that [in the sense of qualifying the object] *ikfar* should be used instead of *takfir*. Hence, the *Qamus*, too, under the entry on *k.f.r.*, does not mention *takfir* in the sense of attribution of *kufr*.

This author says: Although I too have not seen in the *Qamus* that *takfir* means attribution of *kufr*, and even Jawhari, the most erudite of the lexicographers, has not mentioned this sense for *takfir* and, in consonance with the statement of the above-mentioned scholar, has considered *ikfar* to be the proper word for this sense, but the books on grammar have considered one of the meanings of the form *tafil* as qualification of the object (*maful*) with the quality implied in the verb, and they have cited *tafsiq* as an example. In any case, the meaning of *tawhid* is attribution of unity (*wahdaniyyah*).

As to the word *mut'ammiqun*, *'amq* and *'umq* (with *fathah* or *dammah* on the *'ayn*) means the bottom of a well and a pit. For the same reason mathematicians use the term *'umq* (height) in the sense of the third dimension of bodies which begins at its top surface and ends at the bottom surface, in the same way that they use length as the first dimension and breadth as the second. Also for the same reason a person possessing a piercing vision is called *muta'ammiq* and a perspicacious vision is called *'amiq* (deep) and a vision that does not have depth is called superficial (*sathi*). It is as if matters pertaining to knowledge have a depth and a bottom and the *muta'ammiq* person is one who goes to their depth (*'umq*) from where he draws out the truths, and someone with a superficial vision remains at the surface and fails to fathom the depth of any matter.

As to the expression, *fa man rama-rama* and *yarumu* are in the sense of seeking, and *maram* is that which is sought.

As to the expression *wara'a dhalika*, *wara'* is in the sense of 'behind' (*khlaf*), and at times, it is used in the sense of 'in front of' (*quddam*). Hence it has contrary meanings and its use in the first sense is appropriate to cases such as the present one.

[A Hint Concerning The Exegesis Of Surat Al-Tawhid](#)

It should be known that *tafsir* (exegesis) of this blessed *Sarah* and that of the beginning verses of *Surat al-Hadid* is beyond the capacity of the likes of us, and, in fact, outside the scope of the present discourse. To be just, how could it be permissible for the likes of me to embark upon the exegesis of something which God, the Exalted, has sent down for persons of profound thinking and for the veritable *'ulama*? And Hadrat Baqir al-'Ulum (A) (as mentioned in *al-Tafsir al-burhan*) after divulging some of the secrets relating to the letters of the blessed word *'al-samad*, said, "Had I found anyone who could bear the knowledge that God has bestowed upon me, I would have propagated *tawhid*, *islam*, *iman*, *din* and *sharayi* ' through *al-samad*." [3](#)

The great philosopher Sadr al-Muta'allihin says concerning the verses of *Surat al-Tawhid*, "You should

know that each of these six verses referred to in the *hadith* constitutes a great door to the knowledge of *tawhid* and Divinity, and comprises a well-established matter from among the principles of *samadiyyat* and *rububiyyat* (lordship).

And were time to provide opportunity and assistance to a divine gnostic or sage that has acquired his knowledge from the niche of Muhammadan prophethood (S) and who has derived his wisdom from the traditions of the Household of Infallibility and Purity (A) truly, it would befit him, and these verses, to fill a big volume, or several of them, with exegesis of each of them.”⁴

In any case, the likes of this authors are not champions of this field, but as it is not reasonable to abandon what is feasible for the infeasible, we shall briefly mention some hints out of what we have learned from our great teachers, from the books of the people of gnosis, and from the radiant niche of guidance of the Household of Infallibility, and all guidance comes from God.

A Hint Concerning Bismillah

It should be known that in accordance with the view of the people of gnosis, the *bismillah* (‘in Name of Allah’) in every *surah* pertains to that *surah* itself and not to “I seek help” or anything of the kind, because *ismullah* (Name of Allah) is the totality of the *mashiyyah* (Divine will) at the plane of manifestation (*maqdam al-zuhuri*), the station of the Most Sacred Effusion (*fayd al-aqdas*) at the plane of revelation (*tajalli*) of *ahadiyyah*, the station of inclusiveness of Divine Names (*jam’ al-ahadi ye asma’*) at the plane of *wahidiyyah*, and the entire cosmos (*kawn*) at the plane of inclusive unity (*ahadiyyat-a jam’*), which is the inclusive cosmic object (*kawn al-jami*) and the levels of existence in the vertical ascending and descending order and each of the objective entities (*huwiyyat al-‘ayniyyah*) at the horizontal plane.

The meaning of ‘Allah’ differs in accordance with each of these considerations, for it is the referent of those Names, and the meaning of *bismillah* varies in accordance with each *surah* of the Noble Qur’an with which the *bismillah* is associated in respect of text and which is manifestation of it in respect of meaning. Rather, the meaning of *bismillah* varies in accordance with every action that is begun with *bismillah* and it relates to that very action.

One who has gnosis of the manifestations of Divine Names observes that all works and actions and all objects and accidents are manifested and realized by virtue of the sacred Greatest Name (*ism al-azam*) and the station of absolute will (*mashiyyat al-mutlaqah*). Hence while performing that action and bringing it into existence he recalls this matter in his heart and extends it to the plane of the natural realm and *mulk* pertaining to himself and says, “*Bismillah!*”

That means, I eat or I drink, or I write and I do such and such a thing by the station of the absolute will of the Possessor of the station of All-encompassing beneficence (*rahmaniyyat*), which is the expanse of existence, and the station of All-mercifulness (*rahimiyyat*), which is the expanse of the station of

perfection of existence, or the Possessor of the station of All-encompassing beneficence, which is the station of revelation (*tajalli*) through exoteric manifestation (*tajalli bi zuhur*) and expansion of existence (*bast al-wujud*), and the station of All-mercifulness, which is the station of revelation through esoteric manifestation (*tajalli bi batiniyyat*) and contraction of existence (*qabd al-wujud*).

Hence, from one viewpoint, the Godward wayfarer and the gnostic of God sees all actions and existents as manifestations of the absolute will and as annihilated in it. The aspect of unity predominates in this view and he considers *bismillah* in all the *surahs* of the Qur'an and in all actions and works to possess a single sense. And from another viewpoint which is turned towards the world of separation and differentiation he sees a different meaning in *bismillah* at the head of every *surah* and at the beginning of every action.

At this stage where we presently are, which is that of exegesis of the noble *surah* of *Tawhid*, we may take its *bismillah* as relating to the noble word '*qul*' (Say!), in which case the meaning of *bismillah* in the garb of singularity (*tajrid*) and under the predominance of *tawhid* will be the station of absolute will, and in the garb of multiplicity and at the station of attention to pluralities it will be its determinations (*ta'ayyunat*). And at the station of the togetherness of the two stations, which is the station of greatest *barzakh* (*maqam al-barzakhiiyyat al-kubra*), it will mean the will at the station of unity alongside plurality and the exoteric aspect (*zuhur*) alongside the esoteric one (*butun*), and rahmaniyyat and rahimiyyat in the second sense.

And as in the noble verse *Qul huwa 'llahu ahad*, in which *ahadiyyat al-ghaybiyyah* (the transcendent unity) and *uluhiyyat al-asma'iyah* (Divinity at the, plane of the Names) merge together, that which is meant is the Name Allah in accordance with the third station, that is, the station of *barzakhiiyyat*. Hence from the transcendent (*ghaybi*) station of *ahadiyyat* the address goes forth to the pious and immaculate, the *ahadi* and *ahmadi* heart of Muhammad that, "Say in accordance with this realm of the greatest *barzakh* through manifestation of the Name Allah, which is the station of absolute will and the possessor of the manifestation and determination of rahmaniyyat along with rahimiyyat, and expansion along with contraction."

The noble word *huwa* refers to the station of absolute Divine ipseity (*huwiyyat al-mutlaqah*) as such, without its being determined by Attributes and without revelation through Names, even the Names of Essence which are considered at the plane of *ahadiyyat*. And this reference is not possible except by the possessor of that heart and station, and had he not been assigned to divulge this relation to *Haqq* he would not have ever uttered this noble word. However, it was an irresistible Divine ordainment that the Seal of Prophecy (S) should disclose this reference.

And as he did not remain in the embrace of absoluteness and possessed the station of *barzakhiiyyat*, he said, "*Allahu ahad*." And Allah is the greatest all-inclusive Name and the absolute and ultimate Lord, and from the *barzakh* viewpoint of multiplicity of Names manifested at the plane of *wahidiyyah*, it is the same as the transcendent and *ghaybi* revelation (*tajalli*) at the station of *ahadiyyat*. Neither the aspect of

ahadiyyat is predominant over the aspect of *wahidiyyat* in the heart of such a wayfarer nor *wahidiyyat* over *ahadiyyat*.

The occurrence of Allah before *ahad*—despite that the Names of Essence have precedence in respect of conception—is perhaps a reference to the station of revelation to the wayfarer’s heart, for the revelations of Essence in the hearts of the *awliya*’ are first through revelation of—attributive Names (*asma*’ *sifatiyyah*) at the plane of *wahidiyyah* and later on through *ahadi* Names of Essence.

And the mention of Allah and singling it out from among the Names—despite that in accordance with the character of wayfaring and the order of revelation, the revelation first occurs, in accordance with the state of the wayfarer’s heart, through the manifestations of the Name Allah, which comprises the other Names, and only then, at the conclusion of wayfaring in the attributive Names, does occur the revelation through the Name Allah—that is for one of two reasons: either it indicates that revelation through any Name is revelation through the Name Allah, in accordance with the unity of manifestations and that which they manifest, especially at the plane of Divinity, or it indicates the destination of *wahidi* wayfaring, and unless it is realized the wayfarer does not set out on *ahadi* wayfaring.

Also, on the basis of this exposition, *huwa* (He) refers to the station which transcends all reference and lies beyond the aspirations of gnostics, and beyond all names and descriptions and above revelation and manifestation. *Ahad* refers to revelation through esoteric Hidden Names (*asma*’ *al-batiniyyah-ye ghaybiyyah*) and *Allah* refers to revelation through exoteric Names, and through these three all the primary conceptions of Lordship are obtained.

The other four Names, which are included in *samadiyyat*, are, in accordance with some traditions⁵ negative Names of *tanzih* (negation of similarity to creatures) which are conceived in subordination to the positive Names of Divine beauty (*asma*’ *al-thubutiyyah ye jamaliyyah*) as was pointed out earlier under one of the traditions.

That which has been said until this point applies in case *bismillah* is taken to relate to the noble word *qul*, and yet it may be related to each of the parts of this noble *surah*. In accordance with each of these possibilities the exegesis of the *surah* and its *bismillah* will be different, and as their discussion will cause prolixity we will abstain from it.

Our shaykh, the perfect gnostic Shahabadi, may my soul be his ransom, would say, “*Huwa* refers to six other Names and perfections which are mentioned in the blessed *surah* of *Tawhid* after this blessed word, because as the sacred Essence is the absolute *huwa*, which refers to sheer existence, it encompasses all the perfections of the Names (*kamalat asma*’*’iyyah*); hence It is *Allah*.

And since sheer existence with its simple reality possesses all Attributes and Names and this plurality of Names does not compromise the unity of the sacred Essence, It is *ahad*. And as sheer existence has no essence (*mahiyyah*) It is *samad*. And since sheer existence is without deficiency, and is not derived from any other, and as repetition is impossible for it, it is neither begetter (*walid*) nor begotten (*mawlud*) and has

no match (*kufu*).”

It should be known that in the sacred traditions there are mentioned many meanings and subtle points concerning *samad* whose discussion is beyond the scope of these pages and requires a separate treatise. Here we will mention only one point which is that if *samad* should refer to essence itself, in accordance with some considerations, the meaning of *Allah* in *Allah us-samad* will pertain to the station of *wahidiyyat* and the station of inclusive unity of Names (*ahadiyyat al-jami' asma'*). And should it refer to a relative attribute, as inferred from certain traditions, it would refer to the inclusive unity of Names at the plane of revelation through the sacred effusion and its meaning would be consonant with “*Allah is the Light of the heavens.*”

A Brief Hint Concerning the Exegesis of the Noble Verses of Surat Al-Hadid Until The Words ‘Alimun Bi Dhatis-Sudur

As to the first verse,⁶ it implies the *tasbih* of all existents, even plants and ‘inanimate’ objects (*jamadat*). Its limitation to intelligent beings [as suggested by some scholars] is due to the veiled intellects of the intelligent. And should this noble verse be capable of reinterpretation (*ta'wil*), other noble verses cannot be interpreted in this manner, such as the statement of God, the Exalted:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَسْجُدُ لَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ وَالنُّجُومُ وَالْجِبَالُ وَالشَّجَرُ وَالْدَّوَابُّ ﴿٦﴾
وَكَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ ﴿٧﴾

Hast thou not seen how to God bow all who are in the heavens and all who are in the earth, the sun and the moon, the stars and the mountains, the trees and the beasts, and many of mankind?
(22: 18)

Also, the interpretation of the *tasbih* as something innate (*fitri*) and inbuilt (*takwini*) is an inane one, not consonant with the traditions and Qur’anic verses besides being contrary to firm metaphysical proof and the gnostic approach. That which is strange is that the great philosopher and scholar Sadr al-Muta’allihin (Q) does not consider *tasbih* in these creatures to constitute speech. He considers the “speech” of some ‘inanimate’ objects such as the pebbles to be sounds created in them, in accordance with their states, by the holy spirit of the *wali*.

He has considered the statements of some gnostics who consider all existents as possessing linguistic life (*hayat nutqi*) as being contrary to metaphysical reasoning and as implying suspension of their nature (*ta'til*) and perpetuation of compulsion (*dawam al-qasr*),⁷ although such a position is contrary to his own principles. However, this position, which is borne out by explicit Qur’anic verses and is the essence of gnosis, does not lead to any inconsistency at all, and were it not for the fear of prolixity we would have elaborated on this matter along with its necessary preliminaries. However, here we shall confine

ourselves to a passing hint.

It was indicted earlier also that the reality of existence is identical with consciousness, knowledge, will, power, life and other aspects of life, so much so that if any thing were not to possess knowledge and life, it would not have existence. And anyone who apprehends, with a gnostic understanding, the meaning of the fundamentality of existence and its being univocal, will, on the basis of gnosis or knowledge, affirm the life that pervades all existents along with all the other aspects of life such as consciousness, will, speech, etc. Were one to possess the station of vision of reality, acquired through spiritual austerities, one would directly witness the chorus of the *tasbih* and *taqdis* of all existents.

Now the stupor caused by nature has dimmed our sight, dulled our hearing, and all other senses, not allowing us to be aware of the realities of existence and objective entities, in the same way that there are curtains of darkness and light that separate us from God, and curtains that conceal other existents from us, and even our own souls, concealing their life, consciousness and other aspects from our sight.

But the most impenetrable of all curtains is the curtain of denial arising from confined thoughts, which keep man from attaining to anything. The best thing for the likes of us, who are kept from vision by surrounding veils, is to submit to and to affirm the signs and traditions of God's *awliya'* and to refrain from interpretations based on subjective opinion and from efforts to reconcile them with Judgments of feeble intellects.

If supposedly it were possible to interpret the verses pertaining to the *tasbih* of existents as something inbuilt or innate, what are we to do with the noble verse:

﴿قَالَتْ نَمْلَةٌ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّمْلُ ادْخُلُوا مَسَاكِنَكُمْ لَا يَحْطِمَنَّكُمْ سُلَيْمَانُ وَجُنُودُهُ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ﴾

An Ant said, "O ants, enter your dwellings, lest Solomon and his troops should trample upon you without knowing? (27: 18)

And what are we to do with the traditions that have been narrated on various topics from the Household of Purity and Infallibility, which are by no means amenable to such interpretations?

Accordingly, the pervasion of all things with life and *tasbih* based on consciousness and knowledge must be regarded as one of the necessary principles of higher philosophy and as one of definite principles of the teachers of religion and gnosis. However, the character of the *tasbih* of every existent and the particular *dhikr* pertaining to it, and that man is the possessor of all-inclusive *tasbih* and that other existents have *dhikr* consonant with their own mode of existence—an overall view of that is based on a scientific and gnostic criterion relating to the science of the Names, and its details pertain to the sciences deriving from direct witness of reality that are exclusive to the perfect *awliya'*.

As mentioned in the previous section, the *bismillah* of every *surah* relates to that very *surah* and here too

it relates to *sabbaha lillah*. From it one may infer the creed of the orthodox sect concerning the problem of *jabr* and *tafwid*, for it refers, in a subtle manner, as is ultimately revealed by the mystical experience of the gnostics, to each of the two relations, that is, the relation to *ismullah* (Name of Allah), which is the station of the Divine will pertaining to Act (*mashiyyah fi'liyyah*), along with the relation to things existent in the heavens and the earth.

The Divine will has been given precedence [to the reference to creation] in order to underline the sustaining role of God and to give precedence to the Godward aspect over the aspect relating to the creation. And were it not for the fear of prolixity we would have described the reality of the *tasbih* and its implication of *tahmid*, and that every *tasbih* and *tahmid* by everyone refers to God, and we would have also explained the meaning of *tasbih* and *tahmid* for *ismullah* and by *ismullah*, the reason for the special mention of the two blessed Names *al-'aziz* (Almighty) and *al-Hakim* (All-wise) and their relation to 'Allah,' the difference between the 'Allah' mentioned in the *bismillah* and the 'Allah' mentioned in the noble verse *sabbaha lillah*, and given the explanation of 'heavens' and 'earth' and that which is in the heavens and the earth, in accordance with different viewpoints of the gnostics and the philosophers, as well as discussed the *huwa* in this blessed verse and the difference between it and the *huwa* in the noble verse *Qul huwa 'lahu ahad* in accordance with the sweet approach of *'irfan*. However, in these pages we have to confine ourselves to, a passing hint.

As to the second noble verse,⁸ it refers to the ownership of God, the Glorious, in relation to the kingdoms of the heavens and the earth. Subordinate to this ownership (*malikiyyat*), all-inclusive sovereignty, power and control take place the giving of life and causing of death, manifestation and return, expansion and contraction. In this view, all regulations and plans are annihilated in the regulation and planning of God, which is ultimate tawhid on the plane of Act (*tawhid al-fi'li*), and therefore the giving of life and making to die—which are either one of the major manifestation of malakuti dispositions or refer to the totality of expansion and contraction—have been related to the ownership of the sacred Essence itself.

Although the giving of life is one of the aspects of rahmaniyyat and making to die one of the aspects of ownership, both of them have been related to Divine ownership, and this may be on the basis of a major gnostic principle according to which every Name includes all the Names in their ahadi and ghaybi aspect, and this point cannot be elaborated here. The beginning and the following parts of the verse may be a reference to unity in plurality and plurality in unity at the station of revelation (*tajalli*) through the sacred effusion (*fayd al-muqaddas*), as is clear for those who are familiar with these principles.

The pronoun in *lahu* (to him belong), apparently, may refer to *Allah* and it may as well refer to 'aziz and *Hakim*, and the meaning of the noble verse will be different in each case, as reflection will show to those who are familiar with these principles.

Issues such as the explanation of the character of Divine ownership, the reason for the imperfect tense of the verbs *yuhit* (gives life) and *yumitu* (causes to die), which indicates continuity and repetition, the

referent of the pronoun *huwa*, and the different meanings that follow as a result of the different referents, explanation of whether *muhyi*, *mumit* and *qadir* are Names of Essence or those of Attributes or Acts– these issues have to be consigned to their proper occasion and place, like the explanation of the character of giving life and causing death, the reality of the trumpet of Israfil and the two soundings pertaining to bringing to life and causing death, the functions of Hadrat Israil and Hadrat Azra'il and their stations and the character of their causing life and death, each of which has quite elaborate gnostic descriptions and metaphysical proofs.

As to the third noble verse– it is as follows:

﴿هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ﴾

He is the First and the Last, and the Outward and the Inward, and He is the Knower of all things.

(57:3)

One who has knowledge of the true teachings the people of *ma'rifah* and conviction and is a wayfarer of the way of the people of the heart and wayfaring knows that the ultimate goal of the wayfaring of wayfarers and the ultimate aspiration of the gnostics is understanding of this clear noble verse. By the Life of the Beloved! there is no better statement of the reality of *tawhid* of the Essence and the Names than this verse, and it would be fitting for all the gnostics to fall to the ground and to bow down before this consummate gnosis of Muhammad (S) this inclusive comprehension of Ahmad, and this firm Divine sign.

By the reality of gnosis and love! when the gnostic lost in Divine splendor and the lover lost in the beauty of die Beloved hears this noble verse, he is overcome by such a celestial ecstasy and a Divine delight that is inexpressible in any language and unbearable by any creature.

فَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ، مَا أَعْظَمَ شَأْنَهُ وَأَجَلَّ سُلْطَانَهُ وَأَكْرَمَ قَدْرَهُ وَأَمْنَعَ عِزَّهُ وَأَعَزَّ جَنَابَهُ.

So glory be to God, how lofty is His station, how splendid is His sovereignty, how great is His worth, how inaccessible His majesty and how lofty His threshold!

Those who find fault with the statements of the august '*urafa* and the knowers of God and the *awliya*' of the All-Beneficent would do well to see if any Divine gnostic and wayfarer has said anything more than that which is contained in this noble verse or if anyone has introduced any new ware into the marketplace of Divine teachings. Here is this noble Divine verse and there are the books of the *urafa* brimming with '*irfan* to see and judge.

Although the blessed Surat *al-Hadid* and especially its first noble verses contain teachings which are beyond the reach of aspirers, but it is the belief of this author that there is a special quality in this noble

verse that is absent in other verses. The priority (*awwaliyyat*) and posteriority (*akhiriyyat*) of al-Haqq and His *zahiriyyat* and *batiniyyat* are things which are beyond speech and writing. So let us pass on and leave them for the hearts of the lovers and the *awliya*'.

As for the fourth noble verse,⁹ it refers to the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days and the *istiwa* (lit. sitting) on the Throne ('arsh). The intellects are bewildered in the exegesis of this noble verse and everyone has interpreted it in accordance with his approach in the sciences and gnosis. The literalists among scholars state that that which is meant by creation in six days is that the period of creation if measured would equal six [ordinary] days.

The great philosopher Sadr al-Muta'allihin (Q) has considered them as implying the Divine days, each of which equals a thousand years, thus making the six days correspond to the period from the descent of Adam until the rise of the Muhammadan sun, which is six thousand years. He considers the beginning of the daybreak of Friday (*yawm al jumu'ah*) and the day of gathering (*yawm al jam*), as the seventh day and the beginning of the day of Resurrection and the beginning of the *istawa* of the All-Beneficent on the Throne. He has mentioned it briefly in *Sharh Usul al-Kafi* and elaborately in his exegesis.¹⁰ Some gnostics have interpreted the six days as stages in the journey of the light of the sun of existence in the mirror of descent and ascent.

According to the creed of gnosis, the descending levels of existence until the lowest point—which is the plane of concealment of the sun of existence by curtains of finitude and differentiation (*ta'ayyunat*)—constitute the reality of the night of ordainment (*laylat al-qadr*) and the beginning of the day of resurrection is from the first stage of return of mulk to malakut and removal of the curtains of *ta'ayyunat* to the ultimate levels of manifestation and return, which is the complete appearance of the greatest resurrection (*qiyamat al-kubra*).

The six days in which the creation of the heavens and the earth was completed, culminating in the Throne of God, the Throne of the all-Beneficent, which is the ultimate end of Divine *istawa*, power, and dominance, are the sixfold ascending planes in the greater cosmos ('*alam al-kabir*); and the Throne of God, which is the manifestation of the perfect dominance and ownership, is the plane of will and the all-beneficent sacred effusion (*fayd al-muqaddas al-rahmani*), which is its complete manifestation after elimination of the *ta'ayyunat* and completion of the creation of the heavens and the earths.

And until the existence of the heavens and the earth endures, their creation is not finished from the viewpoint of the people of gnosis, in accordance with the words "Everyday He is engaged in some work" (55:29) and as implied by the absence of repetition in revelation (*tajalli*). In the Greater Man (*insan al-kabir*) and the greater cosmos the sixfold planes and their seventh subtlety (*latifah*) is the Throne of the All-Beneficent, which is the plane of the real heart, and were it not for the fear of prolixity, we would have explained thoroughly the greater plausibility of this interpretation in comparison to other interpretations, although the knowledge of the Divine scripture is with God, the Exalted, and those who are its special addressees. We speak on the basis of probabilities and plausibilities following the

infeasibility of the literal sense.

At this place there is another probability which is not contrary to this mystical description, and that is in accordance with present-day astronomy which has replaced Ptolemaic astronomy. Apart from our solar system there are other innumerable planetary systems in accordance with the details given by books on contemporary astronomy. That which is meant by heavens and earth may be the present solar system along with its planets and their orbits and the description of its duration as six days may be in accordance with another planetary system. This probability is closer to the literal sense than others, while it does not contradict the gnostic interpretation, because it is in accordance with one of the esoteric meanings of the Qur'an.

The following part of the noble verse, in His words, "He knows what penetrates into the earth, (and what comes forth from it, what comes down from heaven, and what goes up unto it.)" refers to God's knowledge of the particular details of the planes of existence through the hierarchies of the Hidden and the manifest (ghayb wa shuhud), the ascent and the descent. And in His words, "He is with you (wherever you are; and God sees the things you do), there is a reference to the sustaining contiguity of God (ma'iyat al-qayyumiyyah ye haqq) and the character of God's knowledge of particulars through existential encompassment and universal sustainment. None except the elect from among the awliya' of God can perceive the reality of this Divine sustainment.

As to the fifth noble verse, [11](#) it refers to the ownership of God and the return of the entire realm of existence to God and indicates that this is related to the Name *malik* (Owner, Master), as mentioned in the phrase of the blessed *Surat al-Hamd*: the Master of the Day of Judgment (*maliki yawmi'd-din*), and the exegesis and elaboration of each of these matters should be left to another occasion and place.

As to the sixth verse, [12](#) it refers to the alternation of day and night and that each of them waxes as the other wanes and vice versa. In this alternation there are many benefits whose mention is beyond the scope of our discussion and there is another gnostic interpretation for the noble verse which we shall refrain from mentioning.

Conclusion

That which is stated in the closing part of the noble tradition, that "whoever seeks to go beyond that will perish," it indicates that the teachings which have been mentioned in these noble verses and the blessed *Surat al-Tawhid* constitute the limits of human knowledge and the ultimate frontier of gnosis, and should someone imagine that there is anything beyond that he is in error. And as these verses impart the highest teachings to mankind, their negligence also leads to destruction and perdition and ignorance of the station of the Lord.

Of course, this noble tradition is meant to encourage and inspire profound thought on these noble verses. But every science is for its people and every field has its own champions. One should not

imagine that one can understand the verses of tawhid—whether those of the blessed Surat *al-Tawhid* or the present noble verses or other verses of the Qur’an and similarly the noble traditions, sermons, supplications and prayers of the Imams (A) all of which are replete with higher teachings—with the aid of one’s ideas and on the basis of common-place literal meanings.

That is an immature notion and a satanic insinuation and a trap set by that highwayman of the road of humanity to stop man from attaining to the higher teachings and to bar him from the doors of wisdom and *ma’rifah* and to cast him into the valley of error and confusion. God is witness—and His witness is sufficient¹³—that I do not intend to promote the market of formal philosophy or formal *‘irfan*; rather, my purpose is that my brethren in faith, especially the learned amongst them, should pay some attention to the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) and those of the Qur’an and not neglect them, for the main purpose of the missions of the apostles and the revelation of the scriptures has been the noble goal of gnosis of God, in the shadow of which all felicities of the world and the Hereafter are realized.

But alas! So long as man is in this world and besieged by all kinds of veils he cannot identify the path of his own felicity. No matter how much the prophets, the saints and the scholars may exhort him, he does not awake from the slumber of neglect and does not remove the stoppers of neglect from his ears. He awakes from the sleep of neglect when he has lost the very means of acquiring felicity and when there remains nothing for him except regret and shame.

1. Al-Kulayni, Usul al-Kafi, i, 93, “kitab al-tawhid” “bab al-niyah” hadith 3.

2. Sharh Usul al-Kafi, p. 246, “kitab al-tawhid” “bab al-niyah” hadith 3.

3. See al-Burhan fi tafsir al-Qur’an, vol. 4, p. 526. The Arabic text of the tradition is as follows:

...ثُمَّ قَالَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ: لَوْ وَجَدْتُ لِعِلْمِي الَّذِي آتَانِي اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ حَمَلَةً لَنَشَرْتُ التَّوْحِيدَ وَالْإِسْلَامَ وَالْإِيمَانَ وَالِدِينَ وَالشَّرَائِعَ مِنَ الصَّمَدِ

4. Sharh Usul al-Kafi, p. 248.

5. Al-Shaykh al-Saduq, Kitab al-tawhid, p. 91, bab 4, hadith 3; al-Burhan fi tafsir al-Qur’an, vol. 4, p. 525, from Imam Baqir (A):

﴿فَقَالَ: ﴿اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ﴾. ﴿ثُمَّ فَسَّرَهُ فَقَالَ: ﴿لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ﴾

6. The Verse is:

﴿سَبِّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ﴾

Any that which is in the heavens and the earth does the tasbih of God, and He is the All-mighty, the All-wise.(57: 1)

7. Sharh Usul al-Kafi, p. 248, “kitab al-tawhid” “bab al-niyah” hadith 3.

8. The Verse is:

﴿لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ﴾

To Him belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth; He gives life and makes to die and He is powerful over all things.

9. The Verse is:

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا وَهُوَ﴾
﴿مَعَكُمْ أَيَّنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ﴾

He it is who created the heavens and the earth in six days then sat on the throne. He knows that which penetrates into the earth and that which emerges from it, and that which descends from the heaven and that which ascends into it, and He is

with you wherever you may be, and God sees what you do. (57:4)

[10.](#) Sharh Usul al-Kafi, p. 249–250; Sadr al-Muta'allihin, Tafsir al-Qur'an, vol. 6, pp. 160–164, exegesis of Surat al-Hadid.

[11.](#) The Verse is:

﴿لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ﴾

To Him belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and to God return all affairs. (57:5)

[12.](#) The Verse is:

﴿يُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُؤَلِّجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَهُوَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ﴾

He makes the night enter the day and He makes the day enter the night and He knows that which is in the breasts. (57:6)

[13.](#) A reference to 4:79.

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