

Section 4: Islam, the Natural Religion

Surah Ar-Room – Verse 28

ضَرَبَ لَكُمْ مَثَلًا مِّنْ أَنفُسِكُمْ هَلْ لَكُمْ مِّنْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ مِّنْ شُرَكَاءَ فِي مَا
رَزَقْنَاكُمْ فَأَنْتُمْ فِيهِ سَوَاءٌ تَخَافُونَهُمْ كَخِيفَتِكُمْ أَنفُسَكُمْ كَذَلِكَ نُفَصِّلُ الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ
يَعْقِلُونَ

28. “He sets forth to you a parable relating to yourselves. Have you among those whom your right hands possess partners in what We have given you for sustenance, so that with respect to it you are alike, you fear them as you fear each other? Thus do We explain the signs in detail for a people who understand.”

Using parables is sometimes one of the ways of propagation and education.

You are not the real owner; yet you are not ready to have partner, then how do you take pieces of stone and wood as partners of the Creator and the real Owner. So the Qur'an also mentions a proof upon the negation of polytheism in the form of stating a parable.

It says:

“He sets forth to you a parable relating to yourselves...”

That parable is as follows:

“...Have you among those whom your right hands possess partners in what We have given you for sustenance, so that with respect to it you are alike...”

So that you fear that they, independently and without your permission, interfere in your properties as you

fear about free partners in your own properties or heritage.

The above verse continues saying:

“...you fear them as you fear each other?...”

When you consider such a thing wrong concerning your slaves, who are in your casual possession, how do you take the creatures that are in Allah’s true possession as His partners? Or you count some prophets as Jesus (as), or Divine angels, or some creatures as jinn, or idols made of stone and wood as the partners of Allah? What an ugly judgment and far from logic it is?

The casual owned objects, that may become free very soon and come in the same row with you (as Islam had designed it) they, as an owned one, never stand in the row of their owner and they have no right to interfere in his realm, then how the true owned ones whose whole entity belong to Allah, and it is impossible that this dependence be ceased, because whatever they have are from Him and without Him they are nothing, how have they chosen them as partners with Allah?

Some of the commentators have said that the verse refers to the words that polytheists of Quraysh mentioned at the time of Hajj rites when saying: /labbayk/, because in their Hajj rites they used to say:

*“O Allah! You have a partner that You are its owner as well as the owner of what it possesses.”*¹

It is obvious that, like other occasions of revelation, this occasion of revelation does not limit the meaning of the verse and, however, the verse is an answer to the whole polytheists and, taking their life which used to turn upon the pivot of slavery, it brings argumentation for them.

The application of the Qur’anic phrase: ***Ima razaqnakum/ (what We have given you for sustenance)*** points to this matter that you are neither the true owner of these slaves nor the true owner of your properties, because all of them belong to Allah, yet you are not ready to transfer your own casual properties to your own casual slaves and accept them as your partners, while there will not appear any difficulty and impossibility from the genetic point, because the statement is upon the axis of authenticities.

But the difference between Allah and His creatures is a genetic difference which is invariable, and their taking partner is impossible!

On the other side, worshipping a creature is either because of its greatness, or for the benefit or harm that man gets from it, but these artificial objects of worship have neither that nor this.

For emphasis on being more careful of the content of this question, at the end of the verse the Qur’an says:

“...Thus do We explain the signs in detail for a people who understand.”

Yes, by mentioning some clear parables from the inside of your life, the facts are reiterated in order that you contemplate and do not accept at least something for Allah, the Lord of the worlds, that you do not admit it for yourself.

Surah Ar-Room – Verse 29

بَلِ اتَّبَعَ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَهْوَاءَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ فَمَنْ يَهْدِي مَنْ أَضَلَّ اللَّهُ وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ
نَاصِرِينَ

29. “Nay! Those who are unjust follow their low desires without any knowledge, so who can guide him whom Allah leaves astray? And they shall have no helpers.”

The polytheists do not ponder wisely and they are unjust to themselves. They do not have any scientific argument for their own polytheism, and the origin of their deviation is their inner low desires. The verse says:

“Nay! Those who are unjust follow their low desires without any knowledge...”

These clear noble verses and such evident and manifest examples are for the possessors of mind, not for the unjust, sensual and unaware persons that the curtains of ignorance and unawareness have covered their whole hearts, and superstitions and the bigotries of the Age of Ignorance have severely darkened the atmosphere of their thought.

Because of their deeds, Allah has put these unjust people, who follow no logic, in the valley of misguidance, and who can guide those whom Allah (s.w.t.) has left astray?

The verse continues saying:

“...so who can guide him whom Allah leaves astray?...”

The application of the Qur’anic phrase *izalamul (are unjust)* instead of *’ašraku/ (are polytheists)* points to this fact that ‘polytheism’ is considered the greatest ‘injustice’. Their injustice is upon the Creator, because they have set His creature in the same low with Him; (and we know that injustice is when something is put somewhere other than its own place).

They are also unjust to Allah’s creatures, because they have certainly restrained them from the path of benevolence and happiness which is the path of Monotheism.

They are unjust even to themselves, because they have destroyed the capitals of their existence, and they are in the wrong way.

By the way, this meaning is preliminary for the next sentence indicating that if Allah has let them be astray from the Path of Truth, it is for their injustice; as Surah 'Ibrahim, No. 14, verse 27 says:

“...and Allah leaves the unjust to stray...”

Thus, it is certain that those, whom Allah leaves to them and lets them alone, will not have any helper, as the verse announces:

“...And they shall have no helpers.”

So, in this way, the verse makes the evil end of this group clear. Why not? They have committed the greatest inequities when they have dismissed their wisdom and thought and have turned their backs to the light of knowledge by going to the darkness of low desires. It is natural that Allah negates His succour from them and leaves them in darkness so that there will remain no helper for them.

Surah Ar-Room – Verse 30

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَتَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ
ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

30. “So set your face to the religion being upright, the nature (framed) of Allah, in which He has created mankind. There is no altering of Allah’s creation. That is the right religion, but most people do not know.”

The Arabic word */Fitrat/* in lexicon means: creation and tearing the curtain of non-existence for the creation of a being. It seems that Allah has created man in a form that he inclines for the Truth and repudiates from wrong. It is just like the mother’s love to her child, which is not something taught but it is natural and instinctive.

Yes, walking along the path of religion is walking along the path of nature. The man’s natural affairs may decrease or increase, but they will never be abolished absolutely, and also the truth seeking wishes, which are hidden inside of man, will not change by the change of place and time.

Up to here, we have had some detailed discussions about Monotheism and theology by the way of observing the system of creation and using it for proving an origin of knowledge and power in the world of super nature through the noble verses of Monotheism in this Surah.

Next to them, in the first holy verse out of the verses under discussion, the words are about the natural Monotheism. In other words, it pursues the same subject from the way of inside and innate observation, and through necessary apprehension of conscience.

It says:

“So set your face to the religion being upright, the nature (framed) of Allah, in which He has created mankind. There is no altering of Allah’s creation...”

“...That is the right religion, but most people do not know.”

The Arabic word */wajh/* means ‘face’, and here the purpose of it is the innate face, and the face of the heart. Therefore, the objective meaning of it is not attention only by the face, but attention with the entire entity, because the face is the most important limb of the body and its symbol.

The Arabic term */’aqim/* is derived from */’iqamah/* here in the sense of ‘to straighten’ and ‘to establish’.

The Qur’anic word */hanif/* is derived from */hanaf/* with the sense of inclining from falsehood toward the truth and from crookedness toward straightness and it is, of course, contrary to the Arabic word */janaf/* with the sense of inclination from straightness to aberration.

Therefore, ‘the religion upright’ means a religion which has inclined from crookedness, deviations, superstitions and aberrations toward straightness.

This sentence on the whole means that we must constantly turn our attention toward the religion which is far from any crookedness, the religion of Islam, the pure religion of Allah (s.w.t.).

The above verse emphasizes that the pure religion which is free from any polytheism is the religion that Allah has created in the nature of all human beings and it is a permanent and unchangeable nature, though a great deal of people do not pay attention to this fact.

The abovementioned verse points to some facts:

1. Not only theology but religion, as a general rule, and in all dimensions, is also something natural; and it must be so, because monotheistic studies tell us that there should be an agreement between the system of genesis and divine religion. Whatever is found in religion has certainly a root in nature, and whatever is in creation and man’s ego is a complement for the religious laws.

In other words, ‘genesis’ and religion are two powerful arms that act harmoniously in all fields. It is impossible that you find an invitation in religion the root of which is not in man’s nature; and it is impossible that there can be something in the depth of man’s entity but religion opposes it.

No doubt religion defines some limits and conditions for the leadership of nature so that it does not fall in the way of deviation, but it never struggle against the principle of natural demand, and it will guide it by means of a lawful way, else there will appear a contradiction between religion and creation which is not consistent with the basis of Monotheism.

In a more clear statement, never Allah, the Wise, does some contradictory deeds in a way that His

creation command says: 'Do', and His religious command says: 'Do not do'!

2. Religion in the form of a pure fact, and free from any pollution, exists in inside of the man's soul, and deviations are some casual things. Therefore, the duty of Divine prophets is to wipe out these casual affairs and let the noble nature of man have possibility of development.

3. The Qur'anic phrase: ***lā tabdīlā li xalqillah/ (there is no altering of Allah's creation)*** and next to it the sentence: *alika dinul qayyim/* (that is the right religion) are two other emphases on the fact that religion is natural and the lack of possible change of this Divine nature, though, as the result of the lack of enough development, a lot of people are not able to comprehend this fact.

It is also necessary to pay attention to this point that the Arabic term ***fitrat/*** is originally derived from *fatr/* in the sense of splitting something from its length, and in those instances it is used in the sense of 'creation', as if, at the time of the creation of beings, the curtain of non-existence were cleft and they appear.

However, from the first day that man comes into the world of existence, this Divine light is flaming inside his soul.

The Islamic traditions, which have been narrated upon the commentary of this holy verse, verify what was said in the above, which will be referred to later in addition to other discussions on the subject of Monotheism as being natural.

A Few Traditions Upon the Nature of Theology

Not only in the verses of the Qur'an, but also in the Islamic traditions there are some considerable explanations about the 'knowledge of Allah' and 'Monotheism' as being natural. In some of them the 'monotheistic nature' is emphasized, and in some other concerning traditions, this meaning has often been discussed under the title of 'gnosis' or 'Islamic gnosis' or 'knowing mastership'.

An authentic tradition, which the famous scholar Kulayni has narrated from Husham-ibn-Salim, indicates that he said:

"I asked Imam Sadiq (as) about the purpose of the Qur'anic phrase:

fitrat allah-illati fatar-an-nasa 'alayhal (the nature (framed) of Allah, in which He has created mankind),

and he (as) answered:

*'Its purpose is Monotheism'."*²

Also in the same book, Kafi, it has been narrated from one of the companions of Imam Sadiq (as) that

when he asked the Imam about the commentary of this verse, Imam said:

“It is Islam”.³

A similar tradition from Imam Baqir (as) indicates that in answer to Zurarah, one of his learned companions, who had asked about the commentary of this verse, Imam (as) said:

*“Allah set their nature on knowing Him.”*⁴

A well known tradition narrated from the Prophet of Islam (S) indicates that he said:

*“Every new born child is born with the nature of Islam, (a religion free from any polytheism) but the child will be brought up by his parents in a deviated way such as Jewish and Christianity.”*⁵

Upon the commentary of this verse, Imam Sadiq (as) also said:

*“The purpose of ‘nature’ is mastership (and accepting the leadership of the saints of Allah)”*⁶

In the first sermon of Nahj-ul-Balaqah Amir-ul-Mu'minin Ali (as), in a short but expressive sentence, says:

“...then Allah sent His Messengers and series of His prophets (one after another) towards them to get them fulfil the pledges of His creation, to recall to them His forgotten bounties, to exhort them by preaching, and to unveil them the hidden virtues of wisdom...”

According to the abovementioned narrations, not only ‘the knowledge of Allah’, but also the whole Islam, in an intensive form has been put in man’s nature, including Monotheism to the leadership of Divine leaders and true successors of the Prophet (S), and even ‘the articles of the Practice of the Faith’.

Therefore, according to the meaning mentioned in Nahj-ul-Balaqah, the prophets’ job is to get men fulfil their nature and to recall to them the forgotten bounties of Allah including the monotheistic fate and to unveil the treasures of wisdom which are covered and hidden inside the soul and thought of man.

It is interesting that the Qur’an, through numerous verses, mentions the afflictions, difficulties, and painful events that may happen in man’s life as a preliminary factor for arousing and developing the religious sense, among them is that it says:

“So when they ride in the ships they call upon Allah sincerely vowing worship (only) unto Him, and when He brings them safe to the land, they associate others (with Him)”.⁷

In this field, of course, we will explain more vastly when commenting on the next verse of this very Surah which is fairly similar to the verse of Surah Al- ‘Ankabut.

Surah Ar-Room – Verse 31

مُنِيبِينَ إِلَيْهِ وَاتَّقُوهُ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَلَا تَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

31. “Turn you to Him, and fear Him, and perform the prayer and be not of the idolaters,”

By supplication, turning to Him, being in awe of Him, and by establishing prayer we must make the natural and innate tendency to religion active.

In the previous verse, the Prophet (S) was addressed saying:

“So set your face...”,

while in this verse all people are commanded to turn to Allah, and it implicitly says that their attention to the pure and natural religion is in the case that they turn to Allah. It says:

“Turn you to Him...”

The Qur’anic word *munibin* is derived from *inabah* which originally means: ‘return to the monotheistic nature’, indicating that whenever there may appear a factor that may deviate and dissuade man, from the point of belief and action, and from the principle of Monotheism, he must return to Him.

It does not matter that this event repeats again and again so that, at last the foundations of nature become so strong, and the barriers become so weak and ineffective that he stands constantly in the front point of Monotheism and becomes a complete example of the verse which says:

“So set your face to the religion being upright...”⁸

It is noteworthy that the Qur’anic phrase *aqim wajhikal* (**set your face**) is in the singular form while the Arabic term *mubinin* (**turn you**) is mentioned in the plural form. This shows that, though the first command is singular and its addressee is the Prophet (S), the real addressees, in fact, are all believers and all Muslims.

Next to the command of ‘turn’, the Qur’an orders to piety, which is consistent of all Divine orders and prohibitions.

It says:

“...and fear Him...”

This Qur’anic sentence means that we must fear to oppose His command.

Then, among all His commands, the holy verse emphasizes on the subject of prayer and says:

“...and perform the prayer...”

Its reason is that prayer, with all its dimensions, is the most important program of struggling against polytheism and the most effective means for strengthening the foundations of Monotheism and Faith in Allah.

That is why, among all prohibitions, the verse emphasizes on ‘polytheism’, and says:

“...and be not of the idolaters,”

It says so because polytheism is one of the greatest sins and Allah may forgive any sin but He never forgives polytheism, as the Qur’an says:

“Verily Allah does not forgive that any thing should be associated with Him, and forgives what is besides that to whom He pleases...”⁹

It is clear that the four commands mentioned in this verse all are as emphasis on the subject of Monotheism and its practical issues, irrespective of repentance; returning to Him, piety, establishing prayer, and avoiding polytheism.

Surah Ar-Room – Verse 32

مِنَ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِيَعًا كُلُّ حِزْبٍ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُونَ

32. “Of those who split up their religion, and have become sects, every party rejoicing in what is with them.”

Polytheism is not only worshipping the sun, the moon, and idols; every one who is the cause of separation in the religion of Allah is polytheist.

Under the shade of repentance, piety, and prayer a person can obtain the power of being distanced from polytheism. The verse under discussion has stated one of the signs and sequels of polytheism in a short and expressive sentence. It implies: you should not be among the polytheists, those who scattered their religion and divided into groups.

It says:

“Of those who split up their religion, and have become sects...”

And it is wonderful that, with all the ethical differences that they had, every group of them was happy with their own sect.

The verse says:

“...every party rejoicing in what is with them.”

Yes, one of the symptoms of polytheism is separation in belief, because having different objects of worship is the cause of having different methods which is the origin of separations and deviations, in particular that polytheism is always with carnal desire and bigotry, and pride, individualism, and selfishness are its sequels.

Therefore, union and Unity is impossible save under the shade of theology, wisdom, humility, and donation.

Thus, wherever we see discord, deviation, and separation we must know that a kind of polytheism domains there. This subject can be stated as a clear conclusion that the fruit of polytheism is separation of rows, opposition, and powers being spoiled and its end is weakness, vileness, and inability.

The reason why every group of deviated persons and polytheists are rejoicing in the way they have chosen, and imagine it as True, is clear, because carnal desire decorates the wishes in the man's view, and the fruit of this decoration is an increasing affection and rejoice for the way he has chosen, though that way is wrong and aberration. Sensuality never lets man see the feature of truth in its real form and find a correct judgment free from love and wrath.

In Surah Fatir, No. 35, verse 8, the Holy Qur'an says:

“Is he whose evil deed is made fair seeming to him so much so that he considers it good?...”,

and is he like the one who is on the Path of Truth and sees the facts as they are?

Surah Ar-Room – Verse 33

وَإِذَا مَسَّ النَّاسَ ضُرٌّ دَعَوْا رَبَّهُمْ مُنِيبِينَ إِلَيْهِ ثُمَّ إِذَا آذَاهُمْ مِنْهُ رَحْمَةٌ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ
مِنْهُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ يُشْرِكُونَ

33. “And when harm afflicts men, they call upon their Lord, turning to Him, then, when He makes them taste of mercy from Him, behold, some of them associate partners with their Lord,”

The losses we bear are from our own side, but the mercy and favours are from the side of Allah.

There are some people who call on Allah only at the time of afflictions and difficulties, but a believer ought to call upon Allah at all times.

The verse under discussion, in fact, is reasoning and an emphasis on the discussion mentioned in the previous verse indicating that monotheism is natural and that this divine light will develop with the existence of afflictions and difficulties.

It says:

“And when harm afflicts men, they call upon their Lord, turning to Him...”

But they are so incapacious, short sighted, and captive of the bigotry and blind imitation of their ancestors’, polytheistic ideas that as soon as the terrible events remove and they feel the breeze of peacefulness and Allah makes them taste of mercy from His side, a group of them become polytheist.

The verse says:

“...then, when He makes them taste of mercy from Him, behold, some of them associate partners with their Lord,”

The use of ‘harm afflicts men’ points to a little distress as the phrase ‘when He makes them taste of mercy from Him’ indicates to receiving a little bounty, because the application of ‘taste’ in these instances is used for showing the scanty of something, specially with mentioning the Arabic words ***Idurri*** (***harm***) and ***Irahmah*** (***mercy***) in an indefinite form.

That is, there are some persons who with a little stress go toward Allah (s.w.t.) and the curtain of over their nature of Monotheism will be removed, but by a little bounty they will change the way and become neglectful of Him and may forget everything.

For the first case, of course, it speaks in a general form and says that all people are such that they remember Allah (s.w.t.) when confronting afflictions, because the monotheistic nature is general and for all.

But for the second case, i.e. mercy, the verse mentions only those who pave the path of polytheism, since some of the servants of Allah usually remember Him both when they confront difficulties and when they face with Divine bounties, and the variations of life never cause them to be neglectful of the Truth.

With regard to the concept of the Arabic word ***I’inabah*** which is derived from /noub/ in the sense of: ‘returning again to something, the application of the Qur’anic phrase: ***Imunibina ilayhi*** (***turning to Him***) is a tender hint to this meaning that the basis and foundation in man’s nature is certainly monotheism and theology, but polytheism is something casual, because when his hope is ceased from it, he, desirably or undesirably, returns to Faith and Monotheism.

It is interesting that in the abovementioned verse, ‘mercy’ is counted from the side of Allah, but harm has not been attributed to Him, for a great deal of our difficulties and afflictions are the consequences of our own deeds and sins, while all bounties are from Allah whether directly or indirectly.

The Qur’anic word */rabbahum/*, which has been mentioned twice in this verse, is an emphasis on this fact that man feels the Divine Lordship and administration on his own self, if wrong training does not drive him toward polytheism.

This point is also necessary to be mentioned here that the pronoun mentioned in the word */minhu/* relates to Allah and it is an emphasis on this fact that all bounties are from the side of Allah, the Exalted.

Many of the commentators, such as the authors of Al-Mizan, Tibyan, and Abul-Futuh Razi, have chosen this meaning, though some other commentators, such as Fakhr-i-Razi, have considered this pronoun for */durr/* (harm) and have rendered the verse as this: ‘When Allah gives them mercy after harm and stress, some of them associate partners with their Lord’.

But it is clear that the first commentary is more consistent with the appearance of the verse.

Surah Ar-Room – Verses 34–35

لِيَكْفُرُوا بِمَا آتَيْنَاهُمْ فَتَمَتَّعُوا فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ

أَمْ أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانًا فَهُوَ يَتَكَلَّمُ بِمَا كَانُوا بِهِ يُشْرِكُونَ

34. “That they may be ungrateful for what We have given them. ‘Take your enjoyment, certainly you will soon know’.”

35. “Or have We sent down any authority upon them, such as it speaks of what they associate with Him?”

Polytheism is a step towards paganism and being unthankful, and returning to polytheism is a kind of being unthankful of divine bounties.

As a threat to these incapacious polytheistic persons who neglect Allah when they reach bounties, this verse says:

“That they may be ungrateful for what We have given them. ‘Take your enjoyment, certainly you will soon know’.”

Here, though the polytheists are addressed, it is probable that the verse has a vast concept and it encompasses all those who forget Allah (s.w.t.) at the time of affluence of bounties and are only busy enjoying them and neglect the endower of the bounties.

It is evident that the application of the imperative form of the Arabic verb here is for threatening.

In order to condemn this polytheistic group, next verse in the form of an objurgatory question says:

“Or have We sent down any authority upon them, such as it speaks of what they associate with Him?”

The word /am/ here is used for the aim of question and this is an objurgatory question with negative sense. That is, following this path and this custom must be either for the sake of the call of ‘nature’, or it is the judgment of intellect the command of Allah.

But their conscience and nature is made manifest at the time of afflictions and difficulties and it cries for a call of monotheism. The intellect also says we must go to the One Who is ‘the giver of bounties’.

There remains the command of Allah that in this verse it has been negated and the Qur’an says: He has not sent down such a command upon them. Thus, they are not relying on any acceptable principle for their own belief.

The Arabic word **/sultan/** is in the sense of something which creates dominion and victory, and here it means a firm and convenient reasoning.

The application of the Arabic term **/yatakallam/ (it speaks)** is a kind of figurative meaning which is used when a proof is clear. Here it implies that this is an expressive proof that speaks with man.

Some commentators have said that the word /sultan/ here probably means an angel with authority. In this case, the word ‘speak’ has its real meaning. It means: “We have not sent down upon them an angel that speaks of what they associate with Him”.

Surah Ar-Room – Verse 36

وَإِذَا أَذَقْنَا النَّاسَ رَحْمَةً فَرِحُوا بِهَا وَإِنْ تُصِيبُهُمْ سَيِّئَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ إِذَا هُمْ
يَقْنَطُونَ

36. “And when We make people taste of mercy they rejoice in it, and if an evil befalls them for what their own hands have forwarded, behold, they despair.”

In this holy verse, which is another illustration of the kind of thought and spirituality of these in capacious ignorant persons, the Qur'an says:

“And when We make people taste of mercy they rejoice in it, and if an evil befalls them for what their own hands have forwarded, behold, they despair.”

But the true believers are those who are not proud and neglectful at the time of affluence nor are they hopeless at the time of affliction. They believe that the bounties are from the side of Allah (s.w.t.) and they thank Him; they also consider the afflictions as an examination and divine test, or as the fruit of their own deeds, then they are almost always patient and they turn to Him.

In the meantime that the faithless persons are wandering in the midst of pride and hopelessness, the faithful persons are often spending time in the midst of ‘gratitude’ and ‘patience with perseverance’.

By the way, it is understood from this verse that at least a part of afflictions that afflict man is the consequence of his own deeds and sins. By this means, Allah intends to warn them and He causes them to become purified and brings them towards Him.

This point is also necessary to be remembered that the Qur'anic sentence *ifarihu biha!* (***they rejoice in it***) here does not mean only ‘to be happy with the bounty’, but the purpose is a rejoice together with pride and a kind of unawareness, the same mood that the incapacious poor persons feel when they sometimes find affluence, else rejoice together with thanks and remembrance of Allah not only is not bad, but also it has been enjoined, as the Qur'an says:

“Say: ‘In the grace of Allah and in His mercy...”

The application of the Qur'anic phrase *bima qaddamat 'aydihim!* (***for what their own hands have forwarded***) which refers only to sins, is for the reason that most of the deeds of man are fulfilled by the help of his hands, though there are some sins which are also committed by the heart, the eyes, and the tongues, but the abundance of the deeds of hands are the cause of this usage.

There appears a question here that whether this verse does not contradict with the verse No. 33 of this Surah, since this verse refers to their despair at the time of afflictions while in that verse the words are about their attention to Allah at the time of coming afflictions and stresses. In other words, that verse speaks about hopefulness, but this verse speaks about despair.

With regard to one point, the answer to this question is made clear. In the former verse the words were about ‘harm’, i.e., the harmful events such as torments, earthquakes, and other afflictions that in that position all people, irrespective of monotheist and polytheist ones, remember Allah, and this is one of the signs of monotheistic nature.

But in the verse under discussion the words are about the sequels of man's sins and the despair emerged from them, because some people are so that if they did a good action they would become

proud and would consider themselves secure from the Divine punishment, and when they commit an evil action and its sequel comes to them, a despair from the mercy of Allah encompasses their whole entity.

Both that pride and this despair from the mercy of Allah are blameworthy.

Therefore, either of these two verses mentions a matter which is separate from the other.

Surah Ar-Room – Verse 37

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

37. “Do they not see that Allah enlarges the provision for whomever He pleases and straitens? Verily there are signs in this for a people who believe.”

Being attentive that the sustenance is with Allah, it hinders man of being despair. Every body must struggle for earning his livelihood, but he must know that determining the proportions of livelihood is in Allah’s authority so, the Qur’an in this verse says:

“Do they not see that Allah enlarges the provision for whomever He pleases and straitens?...”

Neither the manifestation of bounties must cause man’s pride, negligence, and disobedience, nor should its absence bring despair for him, because affluence and straitening of sustenance is in the power of Allah, and sometimes He assigns the former and sometimes the latter.

It is true that the world is the world of means and those who strive more usually obtain a better portion of provisions, and those who are lazy and do not work hard have a smaller share, but in the meantime this is not a general and permanent principle.

It happens that sometimes some very earnest, studious and eligible persons do their best but they gain nothing and, on the contrary, there are some maladroit ones to whom the doors of provision are open from every side.

These exceptions may be for the sake that Allah shows that, with all effects that He has created in the world of means, they should not be lost in the world of means, and they should not forget that behind this system there is another strong hand that turns it.

Sometimes He takes it so straitened that the more he strives the less he gets, because all doors are shut to him, and sometime He takes it so easy that before reaching to a door that door may be opened in front of him.

This fact with the examples of which we have, more or less, been familiar in our own life, besides that it

struggles against the pride for affluence and despair emerged from poverty, it is an evidence upon the fact that, beyond our will and our wish, there is another powerful hand in affairs.

Therefore, at the end of the verse, the Qur'an says:

"... Verily there are signs in this for a people who believe."

Some of the Islamic commentators have stated that once a knowledgeable man was asked:

"What is the proof that there is only one creator for the world?"

Then he answered:

"For three proofs: that the clever persons are (usually) backward, the artists and learned men are often poor, and the physicians are (sometimes) sick."

Yes, the existence of these exceptions is a sign for the fact that the affairs are entirely in the hand of another one.

A famous tradition narrated from Hadrat Ali (as) indicates that he said:

*"I came to know Allah, the Glorified, through the breaking of determinations, change of intentions, and losing of courage."*¹⁰

Surah Ar-Room – Verse 38

فَاتِ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ لِّلَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ
وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

38. "So give what is due to kindred, the needy, and the wayfarer, that is best for those who seek the pleasure of Allah, and those are they that are prosperous."

The real owner of properties is Allah, and then it is He Who defines how the properties must be used. In spending out and helping others, relatives are prior to every other one, either.

Therefore, this verse says:

"So give what is due to kindred, the needy, and the wayfarer..."

At the time of affluence, you should not think that whatever provision you have, you are the owner of it, but others have a share in it, too, among them are your relatives and the needy who are paralytic because of the intensity of poverty, and also those reputable persons who are far from home and as the

result of an event have remained in the way and are in need of help.

The application of the Arabic word *lhaqqah/ (due to)* in the holy verse points to this fact that they have a share in man's properties and if one pays something to them he has paid their own right to them and he has no reproach over them.

Some of the commentators have considered the addressee in this verse is only the Prophet of Islam (S) and they have rendered the Qur'anic phrase *ilqurba/ (kindred)* into his relatives.

A famous narration from Abu-Sa'id-Khidri, as well as others, indicates that when the abovementioned verse was sent down the Prophet of Islam (S) bestowed Fadak on Fatimah (as) and delivered it to her.¹¹

This very meaning has been narrated from Imam Baqir (as) and Imam Sadiq (as). The content of this tradition has been mentioned in a very detailed narration from Hadrat Imam Sadiq (as) containing the dialogue of the Lady of Islam, Fatimah Zahra (as) with Abu-Bakr.¹²

But some of other commentators have taken the addressee in this verse as general and believe that it includes the Prophet (S) and other people. According to this commentary all people are obliged not to neglect the right of their relatives.

These two commentaries, of course, do not contradict each other and they can come along with together, in this way that the verse has a vast concept and the Prophet (S) and his relatives, specially his daughter, Fatimah Zahra (as), are its perfect denotation expansion.

This makes it clear that neither of the above interpretations contradicts with this noble Surah as a Meccan Surah, because the concept of the verse is a conclusive concept so that it must be fulfilled in both Mecca and Medina, and, according to this holy verse bestowing Fadak on Fatimah (as) is completely acceptable.

The only thing which remains rather ambiguous here is the sentence:

“When the abovementioned verse was sent down...”

mentioned in the narration of Abu-Sa'id Khidri the appearance of which indicates that the bestowal of Fadak was after the revelation of the verse.

But if we take the Arabic term *lamma/* here in the sense of cause, not in the sense of a particular time, this problem will also be solved, and the concept of the narration will be that the Prophet (S) for the sake of this Divine commandment bestowed Fadak on Fatimah (as). In addition to that, some of the verses of the Qur'an have been sent down twice.

As for the matter that why among all the needy persons and possessors of right only these three groups have been mentioned the reason may be for the importance of them, because the right of relatives is

more significant than any other right, and among the deprived and the poor, the needy and the wayfarers are in need more than all.

Or it is for the sake of the point that Fakhr-i-Razi has said here. He says:

“The eight groups to whom alms must be given is in the case of that alms is obligatory, while the three groups who are mentioned in the verse must also be helped even at the time when giving alms is not obligatory, because some of the relatives are those to whom giving alimony is obligatory for a person but the needy is the deprived person that if he is not helped his life may be in danger.

Also a wayfarer may be in some circumstances that with the lack of succour he dies. The order of mentioning these three groups in the holy verse is also appropriate to the order of their importance.

However, for the encouragement of the benevolent, and also for stating the condition of the acceptance of expending, at the end of the verse the Qur’an says:

“...that is best for those who seek the pleasure of Allah...”

“...and those are they that are prosperous.”

They will be prosperous both in this world and the next, since expending brings some wonderful bounties with it in this life and the next both, because it is one of the heaviest deeds in the Divine scale.

*With regard to the fact that the Qur’anic phrase **lwajh-ullah** does not mean the bodily face of Allah, because He has not any bodily face, and it means the pure Essence of the Lord, this verse shows that the act of expending and paying the right of relatives, as well as that of the possessors of rights, is not enough.*

It is important that this action must be accompanied with sincerity, pure intention, and free from any kind of hypocrisy, gaudiness, approach, scorn, and expectation of compensation.

*This point is also necessary to be mentioned that, opposite to the statement of some commentators who have stipulated that expending for the sake of reaching Paradise is not the extension of **lwajh-ullah**, all the deeds that one does and have a kind of communication with Allah whether they have been done for the pleasure of Allah, or reaching to His compensation, or being delivered from His punishment all are the extensions of **lwajh-ullah** though the high and complete stage of it is that the one does not consider in his view anything save servitude and obedience to Him.*

Surah Ar-Room – Verse 39

وَمَا آتَيْتُمْ مِنْ رَبًّا لِيَرْبُوهَا فِي أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ فَلَا يَرْبُوهَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَمَا آتَيْتُمْ مِنْ زَكَاةٍ
تُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُضْعِفُونَ

39. “And that which you give in present so that it may increase in the property of men it will not increase with Allah, and whatever you give in charity (Zakat) seeking the pleasure of Allah, it is these (persons) that shall get manifold.”

The privilege of Islam is in this fact that, besides wiping out poverty from the deprived, it considers the spiritual growth of those who pay expending, too.

This verse refers to two kinds of expending: one of which is for the cause of Allah, and the other is for the purpose of reaching the worldly wealth.

It says:

“And that which you give in present so that it may increase in the property of men it will not increase with Allah...”

“...and whatever you give in charity (Zakat) seeking the pleasure of Allah, it is these (persons) that shall get manifold.”

The concept of the second sentence, viz., giving Zakat and paying expending in the path of Allah which causes abundant compensation and an immense reward, is clear, but as for the first sentence, regarding to the fact that /riba/ originally means ‘increase’, the commentators have cited different interpretation.

The first commentary, which is the most clear one and is the most consistent with the concept of the verse and adapts to the narrations of Ahlul Bayt (as), is that its purpose is the gifts and presents that some persons sent to others specially to the possessors of wealth and properties hoping to receive some more and better reward from them.

It is obvious that in giving such presents neither the need nor the eligibility of their receivers are considered, but all attention is focused on this that the present should be sent to a place where a better sum can be hunted, and it is natural that such presents that have not any sincerity in them are worthless from the point of ethics and spiritual aspects.

Therefore, the purpose of /riba/, in this verse, is ‘present’ or ‘gift’ and the objective of the Qur’anic sentence: *Iliyar bu fi ’amwalin-nas!*, mentioned in this verse, is taking some more reward from people.

No doubt taking such a reward is not unlawful, since there is no condition or agreement between them, but it lacks the spiritual and ethical value. Therefore, some narrations from Imam Sadiq (as), recorded in authentic sources of tradition, it has been rendered into ‘lawful /riba/’ (interest) in spite of ‘unlawful /riba/’ in which there is condition and agreement contract.

In the book entitled Tahthib-ul-’Ahkam there is a tradition which has been narrated from Imam Sadiq (as) who, on the commentary of this verse, said:

“Its purpose is a present which you give to another person and you seek a reward from him more than

that and this is a lawful interest.”

In another tradition Imam Sadiq (as) says:

“Interest is of two kinds: one is lawful and the other is unlawful.

*The lawful interest is that one lends his (Muslim) brother (something) as a loan hoping that when he returns it he adds something to what he has taken from him without any condition between them, and if the borrower gives the lender something more than that which he has taken without any condition between them, this excess is lawful for him, but there will be no reward for him with Allah concerning his loan, and this is what the Qur’an says in sentence ***lfalayarbu ‘indallah/ (it will not increase with Allah).****

But the unlawful excess is the case that one loans someone with the condition that he returns it with something added to it. This is the unlawful interest.”¹³

Another commentary which has been mentioned on the above verse says that the purpose in this verse is unlawful interest.

According to this commentary, in fact, the Qur’an intends to compare usury with pure expending and to say that although usury is apparently an increase in wealth, but it is not an increase with Allah.

The real increase is found in expending in the path of Allah. Upon this foundation, they consider the verse as a preliminary on the prohibition of usury that, at first, before the migration of the prophet (S), it was stated as an ethical advice, and later, after the migration, its prohibition was gradually announced in three Suras of the Qur’an: Al-Baqarah, ‘Al-i-‘Imran, and An-Nisa’.

There is not, of course, any contradiction between these two meanings. The verse can be rendered into a vaster scope of meaning which contains both the lawful interest and unlawful interest, and both of them may be matched with the expending in the path of Allah, but the concept of the verse is more consistent with the first commentary.

The apparent of the holy verse shows that here an action is fulfilled that has not any reward, but it is lawful, since it says:

“...it will not increase with Allah...”,

and this meaning fits with ‘the lawful interest’ which has neither any reward nor any sin, i.e. it is not a thing that causes the wrath and punishment of Allah (s.w.t.), and we said before that the Islamic narrations approve it, too.

It is also necessary to be mentioned that the Arabic term ***lmud’ifun/*** does not here mean ‘increaser’, but it means the possessor of the increased reward.

This matter must not be neglected that the words /du‘f/ and /muda‘af/ in the Arabic philology do not mean ‘increase’ but they mean ‘two fold’ and ‘several folds’ and, in this verse, the word means ‘twofold’ at least; as the Qur’an in other occurrence says:

“Whoever brings a good (deed), he shall have ten times its like...”¹⁴

Concerning the reward of ‘loan’, it increases into eighteen times, as in a tradition Imam Sadiq (as) said:

*“It has been written on the door of Paradise that the reward of loan is eighteen times and (that of) alms is ten times.”*¹⁵

Concerning the loan without interest in the path of Allah, it can be increased into seven hundred times, as Surah Al-Baqarah, No. 2, verse 261 announces.

Surah Ar-Room – Verse 40

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ رَزَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ هَلْ مِنْ شُرَكَائِكُمْ مَنْ يَفْعَلُ مِنْ
ذَلِكَ مِنْ شَيْءٍ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَىٰ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ

40. “Allah is He Who created you, then gave you sustenance, then He shall make you die, then He shall bring you to life; is there any of your associate-gods who does aught of that? Glory be to Him and Exalted High is He far above what they associate (with Him).”

Our life and death, our past, present and future, as well as our sustenance are in the authority of Allah. In this verse, the Qur’an returns again to the subject of Origin and Resurrection which form the basic matter of many verses of this Surah, and Qualifies Allah with four attributes so that it can be both a hint to monotheism and struggle against polytheism, and a proof upon Resurrection.

It says:

“Allah is He Who created you, then gave you sustenance, then He shall make you die, then He shall bring you to life; is there any of your associate-gods who does aught of that?...”

“...Glory be to Him and Exalted High is He far above what they associate (with Him).”

It is certain that none of the polytheists believed that the creation was done by idols, or that their sustenance was given by idols, or the end of their lives was under the control of the idols, because they used to consider these artificial objects of worship as a medium and some intercessors between them and Allah (s.w.t.), not the creators of the heaven and the earth and sustainers.

Therefore the answer to these questions is negative and this question is a positive interrogation with a

negative sense.

Another matter which will be asked here is that they mostly did not believe in the life after death, how does the Qur'an emphasize on it here by means of the last attribute of Allah?

This application may be for the sake that the question of the life after death, as we have said in the discussion of Resurrection, has an innate aspect, and here the Holy Qur'an does not emphasize on their beliefs, but it emphasizes on their innate disposition.

Besides, sometimes it happens that when a capable speaker encounter a person who denies a matter, he mentions it among some other facts which that person accepts and he decisively emphasizes on it so that it affects on him. Now the life after death is an unbreakable relation, and regarding this logical relation both of them have been mentioned in one sentence.

However, the Qur'an implies that when all of these affairs (such as creation, sustenance and death) are in His Power, worshipping must be done only for Him, too, and the sentence:

"...Glory be to Him and Exalted High is He far above what they associate (with Him)"

restates this fact that they have made the rank of Allah extraordinarily low when they have put Allah in the row of idols and artificial objects of worship.

1. The Commentary of Majma'ul-Bayan, and Nur-uth-Thaqalayn, under the verse

2. 'Usul-i-Kafi, Vol. 2, P. 10

3. 'Usul-i-Kafi, Vol. 2, P. 10

4. Ibid

5. The commentary of Jawami'ul-Jami', by Tabarsi, under the verse

6. Nur-uth-Thaqalayn, the commentary, Vol. 4, P. 184

7. Surah Al-'Ankabut, No. 29, verse 65

8. The current Surah, verse 36

9. Surah An-Nisa', No. 4, verse 48

10. Nahj-ul-Balaqah, saying 250

11. Majma'ul-Bayan, under the verse

12. Tafsir-i-Ali-ibn-i-'Ibrahim, according to the narration of Tafsir-i-Nur-uth-Thaqalayn.

13. Nur-uth-Thaqalayn, Vol. 4, P. 191

14. Surah Al-'An'am, No. 6, verse 160

15. Nur-uth-Thaqalayn, Vol. 4, P. 190

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