

(٦٢) إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالنَّصَارَى وَالصَّابِئِينَ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ  
الْآخِرِ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

***Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews, and the Christians, and the Sabaeans, whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good, they shall have their reward from their Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve (62).***

## Commentary

The verse first mentions the believers, and then says, “whoever believes in Allah . . .” The context shows that the latter phrase refers to the real belief, the true *iman*, and that the word, “those who believe”, (mentioned at first) refers to those who call themselves believers.

The verse says that Allah gives no importance to names, like the believers, the Jews, the Christians or the Sabaeans. One cannot get a reward from Allah, nor can he be saved from punishment, merely by giving oneself good titles, as they, for example, claim that:

***no one will enter the Garden except he who was a Jew or a Christian (2:111).***

The only criterion, the only standard, of honour and happiness is the real belief in Allah and the Day of Resurrection, accompanied by good deeds. It should be noted that Allah did not say, ‘whoever of them believes’; otherwise it would have accorded some recognition to these titles, and would have implied that there was, after all, some benefit in acquiring these names.

This theme has been repeatedly expounded in the Qur'an. The honour and felicity depend entirely on true and sincere servitude; no name, no adjective, can do any good unless it is backed by correct belief and good deeds.

This rule is applicable to all human beings, right from the prophets to the lowest rank. Look how Allah praises His prophets with all beautiful and excellent attributes, and then says:

***and if they had set up others (with Him) certainly what they did would have become ineffectual for them (6:88).***

Also, He describes the high status and great prestige of the Holy Prophet and his companions, and then ends it with these words:

***Allah has promised those among them who believe and do good, forgiveness and a great reward (48:29).***

Ponder on the significance of the phrase “among them”.

Then we find that Allah had given a man some of His signs but he went astray:

***and if We had pleased, We would certainly have exalted him thereby, but he clung to the earth and followed his low desire . . . (7:176).***

There are many verses clearly showing that the honour and respect with Allah depends on reality, not on appearance.

## **Tradition**

Salman al-Farisi said: “I asked the Prophet (s.a.w.a.) about the people of that religion which I followed (prior to Islam), and I described their (way of) prayer and worship. Then it was revealed: ***Surely those who believe, and those who are Jews. . .***”<sup>1</sup>

The author says: Various other Tradition with different chains of narrators, say that this verse was revealed about the people of Salman.

Ibn Faddal said: “I asked ar-Rida (a.s.) why “*an-Nasara*” (النصارى = the Christians) were given that name. He said: “Because they were from a village called an-Nasirah (الناصرة = Nazareth) in Syria.<sup>2</sup> Maryam and `Isa settled there after they returned from Egypt.”<sup>3</sup>

The author says: We shall comment on this tradition when writing on the stories of `Isa (a.s.) in Chapter 3 (The House of `Imran), God willing.

The same tradition says that “*al-Yahūd*” (اليهود = the Jews) got this name because they are descended from Yahūda, son of Ya'qūb.<sup>4</sup>

The Imam said: “The Sabaeans are a people, neither Zoroastrian nor Jews, neither Christians nor Muslims; they worship the stars and planets.<sup>5</sup>

The author says: It is idol-worship of a special type; they worshipped only the idols of the stars, while others worshipped whatever idol caught their fancy.

## A Historical Discussion

Abū Rayhan al-Bīrūnī writes in his book *al-ʿatharū l-baqiyah*:

“The earliest known among them (i.e., the claimants of prophethood) was Yūdhasaf.<sup>6</sup> He appeared in India at the end of the first year of the reign of Tahmurth; and he brought the Persian script. He called to the Sabaeen religion, and a great many people followed him.

The Bishdadian kings and some of the Kayanis who resided in Balkh held the sun, the moon, the stars and the planets together with other elements in high esteem and believed that these luminaries were very sacred.

It continued until Zoroaster appeared at the end of the thirtieth year of Peshtasav's reign. The remnants of those Sabaeans are now in Harran, from which they have got their new name, Harraniyyah.

Also it is said that this nomenclature refers to Haran, son of Tarukh (Terah) and brother of Ibrāhīm (a.s.), as he allegedly was one of their religious leaders and its staunchest follower.

“Ibn Sāncalā, the Christian, has written a book against Sabaeans. In that book he has attributed many ridiculous things to this Haran. For example, he describes the Sabaeans' belief about Ibrāhīm (a.s.) in these words:

“Ibrāhīm (a.s.) was removed from their community because a white spot had appeared on his foreskin, and the Sabaeans believed that a person having a white spot was unclean, and avoided mixing with such person. To remove that defect, Ibrāhīm cut his foreskin, i.e. circumcised himself. Then he entered one of the temples; and lo! an idol called out to him:

“O Ibrāhīm! You went away from us with one defect and came back with two; get out and do not ever come back to us.” Ibrāhīm was enraged; he smashed the idols; and went out. After some time, he felt remorse for what he had done, and decided to sacrifice his son on the altar of Jupiter, as it was their custom to kill their children to please the deities. When Jupiter was convinced of the sincerity of his repentance, it sent a lamb to him to slaughter in place of his son.”

” ‘Abdu ‘1-Masūh ibn Ishaq al-Kindī wrote a book in reply of a book by ‘Abdullah ibn Ismā‘īl al-Hashimī. In that book ‘Abdu ‘1-Masūh writes about the Sabaeans:

”It is generally believed that they indulge in human sacrifice, although nowadays they cannot do so openly. But so far as our own information goes, they are monotheists who believe that God is free from every defect and evil, they describe God in negative, not positive, terms; for example, they say:

Allah cannot be defined or seen, He is not unjust or oppressive. According to them, the beautiful divine names may be used for God, but only in an allegorical sense, because no divine attribute can truly

describe the reality.

They believe that the management of all affairs is done and controlled by the sky and the heavenly bodies; the sky and those bodies are living things having the characteristics of speech, hearing and sight.

They revere the light and the luminaries. One of their legacies is the dome above the niche in the Umayyid mosque of Damascus; it was their prayer house, and at that time even the Greeks and the Romans followed the same religion. Then it came under Jewish control and they turned it into a synagogue. Later, the Christians took it over and converted it into a church.

Then came the Muslims, and they changed it into a mosque. The Sabaeans had their numerous places of worships, and their idols were named after various names of the sun, and shaped with fixed patterns, as has been described by Abu Ma'shar al-Balkhi in his book, *The Houses of Worship*.

For example, there was the temple of Ba'lbak which housed the idol of the sun; of Qiran, which was related to the moon and built in the moon's shape, like a shawl worn over head and shoulders. And there is a village nearby, Salams<sup>ق</sup>n by name; it is a corruption of its original name, صنم سين (Sanam S<sup>ق</sup>n = the idol of the moon).

Likewise, another village is called Tara<sup>ق</sup>z, that is, the gate of Venus. They do also claim that the Ka'bah and its idols belonged to them, and that the Meccan idol-worshippers were of the Sabaeen religion. According to them the idols, Lat and `Uzza, represented Saturn and Venus.

They have many prophets in their hierarchy, most of them being the Greek philosophers, for example, Hermes of Egypt, Agadhimun, Walles, Pythagoras and Babaswar (maternal grandfather of Plato) and many others like them.

Some of them do not eat fish – lest it be spume; nor poultry, because it is always hot. Also, they do not use garlic, because it creates headache and burns the blood and semen (which is the source of continuity of the human race); and they avoid beans, because it dulls the intelligence and also because it had first sprouted in a human skull.

They observe three compulsory prayers: at sunrise (eight rak `at); at noon (five rak `at) ; and at the third hour of the night.

”They prostrate three times in each rak `ah. Also, they observe two optional prayers – at the second and ninth hours of the day.

” `They pray with *taharah* and wudu `; they take bath after *janabah*; but they do not circumcise their children because they have not been told to do so. Most of their laws concerning marital and penal codes are like the *shar`ah* of Islam; while the rules about touching a dead body are similar to Torah's.

They offer sacrifices to the stars, their idols and the temples; the sacrificial animals are killed by the priests and witch-doctors, who read in it the future of the man who offers the sacrifice and answer to his questions.

” 'Hermes is sometimes called Idris, who is mentioned in Torah as Akhnukh. Some of them say that Yudhasaf was Hermes.

” 'Some others have said that the present-day Varraniyyah are not the real Sabaeans; rather these are mentioned in the books as heathens and idolators. The Sabaeans were those Israelites who stayed behind at Babylon when their majority returned to Jerusalem in the reigns of Cyrus and Artaxerxes.

They were favourably disposed to Zoroastrian beliefs, as well as to the religion of Nebuchadnezzar. What resulted from this exercise was a mixture of Judaism and Zoroastrianism – like the Samaritans of Syria.

Most of them are found in Wasit and the rural areas of Iraq around Ja'far and Jamidah; they trace their genealogy to Enosh, son of Seth. They criticize and oppose the Harraniyyah and their religion. With exception of a few things, there is no similarity between the two religions: The Sabaeans face towards the North Pole in their prayers, while the Harraniyyah face towards the South Pole.

” 'Some people of the book have said that Methuselah had a son (other than Lamech), named Sab<sup>ع</sup>, whom the Sabaeans have descended from. The people, before the *shar<sup>ع</sup>ah* spread and before Yudhasaf appeared on the scene, followed Samanian beliefs; they lived in the eastern part of the world and worshipped idols.

Their remnants are found in India, China and Taghazghaz, and the people of Khurasan call them Shamnan. Their relics, places of worship and idols are seen in eastern Khurasan adjoining India. They believe in eternity of the universe and transmigration of soul. According to them, the sky is falling down in an endless vacuum, and that is why it is moving round and round.'

“According to some writers, a group of them rejects the theory of eternity of the universe and says that it came into being one million year ago.”

The author says: All the above description has been taken from the book of al-Biruni. The opinion, attributed to some writers, that Sabaeans' religion was a mixture of Judaism and Zoroastrianism flavoured with some elements of Harraniyyah's beliefs, seems better suited in this context; after all, the verse obviously enumerates the groups which followed a divinely inspired religion.

1. ad-Durru 'l-manth<sup>ع</sup>r

2. In those days, all the land now divided into Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine, was called Syria or Greater Syria.

3. Ma`ani '1-akhbar

4. Ma`ani '1-akhbar

5. at-Tafsir, al-Qummi

6. It is now almost certain that Yudhasaf is a corruption of Budhastav, the title of Gautama Buddha, the founder of Bhuddhism.

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