

Section 7: Polytheism Prohibited

Surah An-Nahl – Verse 51

وَقَالَ اللَّهُ لَا تَتَّخِذُوا إِلَهَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ إِنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ فَإِيَّايَ فَارْهَبُونَ

51. “And Allah has said: ‘Do not take two gods. Verily, He is only One God; hence, fear Me (and Me alone).”

The objective in declaring here that you must not designate for yourselves two gods is not the fact that you must and you are allowed to designate three gods. On the other hand, firstly, the total and the least negation imply the utmost negation in it as well.

Secondly, the objective of this verse, perhaps is the ideas of those pagans who used to say: We have got One God Who is the Creator, and one who is administrator, and we must direct our worshipping towards the later one. 1

As for the query of the pagans who raised this issue in some previous verses that: if Allah so wanted, we would not become pagans, this verse states that Allah has dissuaded you from paganism, hence, how can He have intended you to become pagans? Therefore, Allah has ordained you not to designate two gods for yourselves.

The verse says:

“And Allah has said: ‘Do not take two gods. Verily, He is only One God...”

The unity in the system of creation and the unity governing its laws and procedures are themselves clues as to the unity of Allah. Such being the case, He declares: Fear My punishment only and fear opposition to My commandments and nothing else.

The verse continues saying:

“...hence, fear Me (and Me alone).”

The fact that the Qur’anic word /’iyyaya/, which proceeds, is the proof for its confinements and limitations, which implies only and solely fear opposition to Me and My punishment. Another example of this form is:

“You (alone) do we worship and of you (only) do we seek help.”²

The great commentator, the Late Tabarsi quotes a delicate sentence from some philosophers under this verse, saying:

“Allah has commanded you not to worship two gods, but you fabricated so many gods for yourself. Your unruly self is one idol, your whims and passions are regarded as other idols, and the world and your material objectives are your other idols. You even prostrate before other human beings; so how can you be a monotheist?!”

Surah An-Nahl – Verse 52

وَلَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَهُ الدِّينُ وَاصِباً أَفَغَيْرَ اللَّهِ تَتَّقُونَ

52. “Unto Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth, and to Him should obedience be (rendered) constantly. Then are you in awe of other than Allah?”

The Qur’anic term /din/ mentioned in this verse denotes ‘worshipping’ and ‘servitude’ which are the requirements of the embracing of Faith and of the school of Truth.

The Arabic word /wasib/ signifies ‘constantly’ and ‘intensively’, as verse 9 of Surah As-Saffat, No. 37 says:

“...and for them is a perpetual chastisement.”

In sharp contrast to those superstitious ideas by which they used to suppose god for every type of beings, Allah is only One for whatever is found in the Heavens and on the earth.

So, religious framework for laws and religious legislations are the sole rights of the One Who possesses the entire process of genesis and creation.

The verse says:

“Unto Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth, and to Him should obedience be (rendered) constantly...”

Towards the end of this verse, the Qur’an declares that despite the fact that all laws, religion, and obedience belongs to Allah, do you still fear other than Allah and abstain from other than Him?

The verse continues saying:

“... Then are you in awe of other than Allah?”

Can the idols do any harm against you or bestow on you any blessings the opposition of which scares you and you consider their worship as a requirement?

Surah An-Nahl – Verses 53 – 54

وَمَا بِكُمْ مِّنْ نِّعْمَةٍ فَمِنَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ إِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فَإِلَيْهِ تَجْأَرُونَ

ثُمَّ إِذَا كُشِفَ الضُّرُّ عَنْكُمْ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِّنْكُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ يُشْرِكُونَ

53. “And whatever of favour is (bestowed) on you, it is from Allah; then whenever any calamity afflicts upon you, unto Him you cry (for assistance).

54. “Then when He remove the affliction from you, behold! A group of you associate others with their Lord.”

The Arabic term /durr/ refers to that kind of anxiety which results from the absence of blessings, and the Qur’anic term /taj’arūn/ signifies ‘crying’ and ‘appealing’.

The content of this verse has also been repeated in some other verses of the Qur’an as is the case in verse 67 of Surah ‘Isra’ which proclaims:

“And when affliction touches you in the sea, away will go those on whom you call except Him; but as He delivers you to the land, you turn away (from Him), and man is very ungrateful.”

However, once He embarks you safely, you will turn away from Him and you start betraying His favours and blessings.

The verse says:

“And whatever of favour is (bestowed) on you, it is from Allah; then whenever any calamity

afflicts upon you, unto Him you cry (for assistance).

Certainly, hearing your call for help, Allah answers your call and solves your difficulties. Afterwards, as He removed your troubles and saved you from your losses, some of you designate associates and counterparts for Him and turn to the idols.

The verse says:

“Then when He remove the affliction from you, behold! A group of you associate others with their Lord.”

In fact, the Holy Qur’an alludes to this minute point that monotheism, as an inherent trait, is embedded in everybody’s nature, but in normal circumstances, it is obscured by one’s negligence, arrogance, ignorance, fanaticism and superstition.

Anyway, do not regard Allah’s blessings as the consequences of your own struggle, education and your own administrative ability or as a result of your luck or chances. By contrast, regard whatever of blessings given to you, even the most insignificant ones in your eyes, as what Allah has given you.

The blissful Prophet (S) remarks:

“He who regards the blessings of Allah as only food and clothing, has failed both in performing his duties, and he has approached Allah’s punishment.” 3

Surah An-Nahl – Verse 55

لِيَكْفُرُوا بِمَا ءَاتَيْنَاهُمْ فَتَمَتَّعُوا فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ

55. “So that they may show ingratitude for whatever (of blessings and removing hardships) We have given them; then enjoy yourselves for soon will you know.”

A glance at previous verses up to this moment depicts the manner of the Divine invitation and the Divine provision for education!

He is the sole and only Allah:

“...verily He is only One God...” 4

“Unto Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth...” 5

He possesses everything:

“Unto Him belongs whatever is.”

It is He Who provides all with instruction:

“To Him should obedience be...”.⁶

He is benevolent, providing all with blessings:

“And whatever of favour is (bestowed) on you, it is from Allah...” ⁷

He answers all calls:

“...then whenever any calamity afflicts upon you, unto Him you cry for assistance.”⁸

Do you yet seek other people's assistance?

The end-result of paganism leads to blasphemy, and disregarding of His blessings brings the Divine chastisement.

Therefore, there, after naming the above logical reasoning and making the facts transparent, He implies with a threatening tone: Let them spare the blessings which We have given them, and let them enjoy worldly materials temporarily; they will soon find out the conclusive results of their performance.

Surah An-Nahl – Verse 56

وَيَجْعَلُونَ لِمَا لَا يَعْلَمُونَ نَصِيبًا مِّمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ تَاللَّهِ لَتُسْأَلُنَّ عَمَّا كُنتُمْ تَفْتَرُونَ

56. “And they assign a share out of that which We have provided them with, for what they do not know. By Allah, you will certainly be questioned for that which you used to forge.”

Following the former well-justified discussions concerning the rejection of paganism and worshipping of the idols, the Qur'an points to the three parts of the innovations and evil habits of the pagans, implying that they appropriate a certain portion of what Allah has allocated to them for the idols which provide no advantages or losses for them.

The verse says:

“And they assign a share out of that which We have provided them with, for what they do not know...”

This share consisted of a number of camels and other four-footed animals and part of it comprised of agricultural products which have been alluded to in the Surah Al-An'am, verse 136. they were regarded

by the pagans as the proper share of the idols and which were dispensed within their path.

Then, later, the Qur'an, swearing to Allah, announces that in the Court of Justice of the Resurrection Day, they all will be interrogated about in connection with these lies, slanders, and accusations or perjuries.

The verse says:

“...By Allah, you will certainly be questioned for that which you used to forge.”

Therefore, their vicious and evil acts contains both the losses which they incur in this world, for parts of their capitals are perished in this way, and the punishment which they will meet in the Hereafter.

Surah An-Nahl – Verse 57

وَيَجْعَلُونَ لِلَّهِ الْبَنَاتِ سُبْحَانَهُ وَلَهُمْ مَا يَشْتَهُونَ

57. “And they ascribe daughters to Allah, glory be to Him; and for themselves (they ascribe sons) what they desire.”

The second evil innovation of the pagans which they entertained in their imagination was the assigning of daughters to Allah. He is clear of everything and of having children, and Allah is pure of all material things.

However, they ascribe for themselves whatever they desire.

The verse says:

“And they ascribe daughters to Allah, glory be to Him; and for themselves (they ascribe sons) what they desire.”

That is, they were never ready to ascribe those daughters whom they ascribed to God for themselves, too. In principle, having daughters was regarded as a kind of scandal, and a shame in their culture.

Surah An-Nahl – Verse 58

وَإِذَا بُشِّرَ أَحَدُهُم بِالْأُنْثَىٰ ظَلَّ وَجْهُهُ مُسْوَدًّا وَهُوَ كَظِيمٌ

58. “And when one of them is given the news of having a daughter his face becomes black while

he is wroth inwardly.”

This verse refers to the third hideous evil habit of the pagans for the sake of complementing the above discussion. It implies that when one of them is informed of the good tidings of having been provided a daughter by Allah, he will be so infuriated with anger that his face changes altogether and becomes blackened while being full of wrath.

The noble verse says:

“And when one of them is given the news of having a daughter his face becomes black while he is wroth inwardly.”

Surah An-Nahl – Verse 59

يَتَوَارَى مِنَ الْقَوْمِ مِنْ سُوءِ مَا بُشِّرَ بِهِ أَيُمْسِكُهُ عَلَى هُونٍ أَمْ يَدُسُّهُ فِي التُّرَابِ أَلَا سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ

59. “He hides him from the people for the evil of the news which has been given to him, (asking himself): shall he keep her with disgrace or bury her (alive) in the dust? Beware! (How) evil is what they judge!”

It is true that the birth of a child is considered as a good tiding, but superstitions regard such good tidings as disgrace and humiliation. This noble verse declares that all does not end to this and he, in order to save himself from such scandal which, to his incorrect belief, has overtaken him, he escapes from his people, going into hiding for this evil announcement made to him.

The verse says:

“He hides him from the people for the evil of the news which has been given to him...”

He goes on immersed in this thought constantly as to whether he should take upon himself the scandal of this disgrace by keeping the daughter or bury her alive under the earth.

The verse says:

“...(asking himself): shall he! keep her with disgrace or bury her (alive) in the dust?...”

Condemning this tyrannical and inhumane verdict in an evermore–explicit manner, the Holy Qur’an declares as to what a bad and an evil judgment they pass on such matters.

The verse continues saying:

“...Beware! (How) evil is what they judge!”

Certainly, they do pass a bad judgment on the matter, for they used to bury alive girls while they had the right to stay alive just in the same way as the boys had, and perhaps a girl might have been better than a boy.

Ibn-i-Abb as has quoted as saying that if Allah wanted to consider the wishes of those people in the process of creation, no girls would be born, because no one desired to have a daughter; and if all children were born as sons, the human generation would be exterminated.

The Role of Islam in the Revival of the Position of Women

The humiliation and the damaging of the personality of women were not confined to the Ignorant Arabs of that time, women had an insignificant position among some other nations, too, any perhaps even among the most civilized nations of that time and, usually, a woman was regarded as a commodity and not as a human being.

However, the Arabs of the Age of Ignorance did their utmost in denouncing and in humiliating women in some more heinous and terrible forms.

Nevertheless, since the dawn of Islam, this superstition was fought out hard in all its dimensions. The Prophet of Islam himself (S) showed such a high esteem for his daughter, Fatimah Zahra (as), the Islamic Lady (as), that the people wondered.

He used to kiss her hands despite his high position, and he would visit her immediately upon the return from his trips, and the first person to visit was his daughter, Fatimah.

In a tradition from the Prophet (S) we read that he says:

“What a nice child a person’s daughter is! She is affectionate and of great help; she is one’s companion and she is clean while cleaning at the same time!”

In fact, such respect shown towards the personality of women has served as a cause for their liberation in the society and has put an end to the era of servitude and slavery of women.

However, it is most unfortunate that in some Islamic societies, there are still those forms of ‘ignorant’ thought prevalent, and there are still a good number of families who rejoice in having sons born to them and are disturbed by having daughters.

Even in the case of the Western Societies which imagine that they have high regards for the personality of women, we notice in practice that women are so greatly humiliated and are treated as puppets or as a means for extinguishing the fire of passion of men and / or as an instrument for the dissemination of information with regard to a certain merchandise.

Surah An-Nahl – Verse 60

لِّلَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ مَثَلُ السَّوِّءِ وَلِلَّهِ الْمَثَلُ الْأَعْلَىٰ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ

60. “For those who do not believe in the hereafter, is an evil attribute, and Allah’s is the sublime attributes, and He is the Mighty, the Wise.”

Those who do not believe in the Hereafter and consider Allah as having children possess an evil and nasty attribute, which consist of shameful and being sorrowful. But, there are outstanding qualities for Allah such as domination and might.

Some commentators suggest that this means that they are having defective traits, like: ignorance, blasphemy, being misled, contingency, weakness, powerlessness, needing sons and murdering of daughters; and there are certain qualifications of Lordship for Allah (s.w.t.) such as: having no need for companionship, spouse, children, and having the attributes of Lordship, authenticity and monotheistic nature.

Question: In this holy verse, He declares:

“...Allah’s is the sublime attributes,”

Elsewhere He says:

“...do not coin any similitude for Allah”.⁹

How are contradictions among them made possible?

Answer: The aim in declaring /‘am al/ is using ‘similes’. That is, do not exemplify Allah for something else; and the purpose of /maal-ul-’A’la/ is the qualification of /’A’la/ ‘the highest’ or the ‘most elevated’ and which signifies being essential in essence and not accidental; being Eternal, All-powerful, Omniscient, Alive, Unique etc.

Some commentators claim that the objective of /maal-ul-’A’la/ is examples which are used correctly; and the objective of the latter phrase is ‘those examples which are incorrectly employed.’

The verse says:

“For those who do not believe in the hereafter, is an evil attribute, and Allah’s is the sublime attributes...”

And, the last sentence of the verse means that Omnipotent Allah is He out of Whose domain, nothing

exists, and He is the Wise One Who places everything in its proper place according to His Wisdom.

The verse says:

“...and He is the Mighty, the Wise.”

One can infer from this verse that one must not attribute low traits to Allah, for He has criticized of the pagans who attributed to Him what they did not like for themselves. Once man abhors being attributed an evil thing, how is it that he seeks to attribute that hideous thing or the like of it to Allah?

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1. Tafsir-i-Al-Mizan
 2. Surah Al-Fatihah, No. 1, verse 5
 3. Tafsir-i-Nūr-uth-Thaqalayn, Vol. 3
 4. The current Surah, verse 51
 5. The current Surah, verse 52
 6. Ibid
 7. The current Surah, verse 53
 8. Ibid
 9. The current Surah, verse 74

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