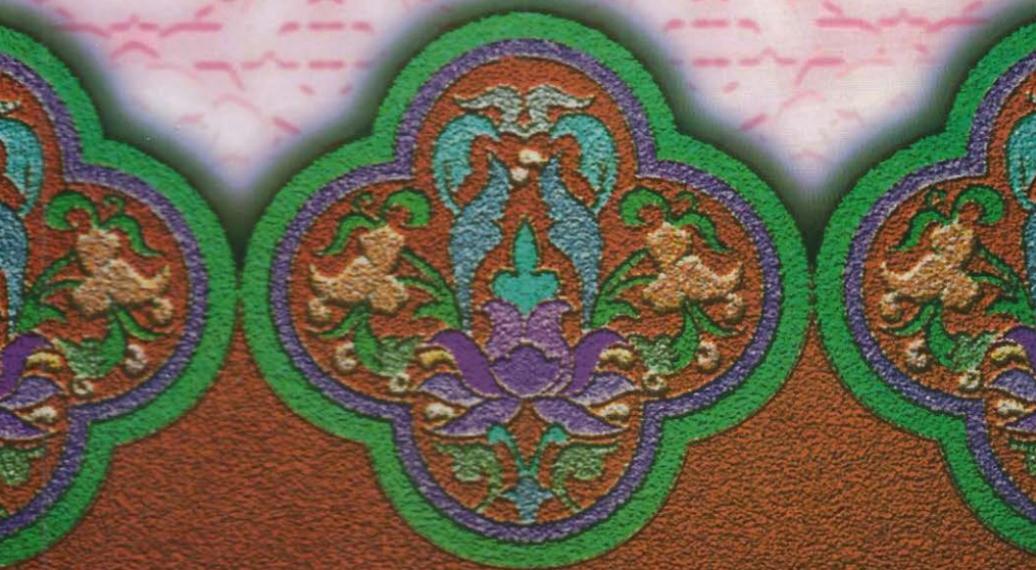


شرح مبادئ التوحيد

The Fundamentals of

# TAWHEED

(ISLAMIC MONOTHEISM)



Dr. Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips

شرح مباني التوحيد

The Fundamentals of

**TAWHIED**

( ISLAMIC MONOTHEISM )

By

Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips

Dedicated to the memory of  
Sultan Muhammad (1950-1990) a dedicated student  
of Tawheed and a dear friend.

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Call to Islaam  
East Ham, London, U.K.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	v
1. CHAPTER ON THE CATEGORIES OF TAWHEED	1
Tawheed ar-Ruboobeeyah (maintaining the unity of Lordship)	5
Tawheed al-Asmaa was-Sifaat (Maintaining the unity of Allaah's Names and Attributes)	10
Tawheed al-'Ebaadah (Maintaining the unity of worship)	15
2. CHAPTER ON THE CATEGORIES OF SHIRK	27
Shirk in Ruboobeeyah	28
(A) Shirk by Association	28
(B) Shirk by Negation	31
Shirk in al-Asmaa was-Sifaat	34
(A) Shirk by Humanization	34
(B) Shirk by Deification	34
Shirk in al-'Ebaadah	36
(A) Ash-Shirk al-Akbar (major Shirk)	36
(B) Ash-Shirk al-Asghar (minor Shirk)	40
3. CHAPTER ON ALLAAH'S COVENANT WITH AADAM	43
The Barzakh	43
Pre-creation	44
The Fitrah	48
Born Muslim	51
The Covenant	52
4. CHAPTER ON CHARMS AND OMENS	55
Charms	56
Ruling on Charms	60
Omens	63
Fa'l (Good Omen)	68
The Islamic Ruling on Omens	69
5. CHAPTER ON FORTUNETELLING	74
World of the Jinn	75
The Islamic Ruling on Fortunetelling	84
Visitation of Fortunetellers	84
Belief in Fortunetellers	85
6. CHAPTER ON ASTROLOGY	88
Arguments of Muslim Astrologists	92
The Islamic Ruling on Horoscopes	94

7.	<b>CHAPTER ON MAGIC</b>	97
	The Reality of Magic	98
	The Islamic Ruling on magic	111
8.	<b>CHAPTER ON TRANSCENDENCY</b>	114
	Significance	115
	Danger of the Immanence concept	118
	Clear Proofs	120
	Summary	131
9.	<b>CHAPTER ON SEEING ALLAAH</b>	136
	Allaah's Image	136
	Prophet Moosaa Asks To See Allaah	138
	Did Prophet Muhammad ( ﷺ ) See Allaah?	140
	Satan Pretends to be Allaah	141
	The meaning of Soorah an-Najm	142
	The wisdom behind not seeing Allaah	144
	Seeing Allaah in the Next Life	144
	Seeing Prophet Muhammad ( ﷺ )	147
10.	<b>CHAPTER ON SAINT WORSHIP</b>	150
	Allaah's Favor	150
	Taqwaa	153
	Walee: The "Saint"	157
	Fanaa: The union of Man with God	160
	The union of God with Man	164
	Roohullaah: The "Spirit" of Allaah	167
11.	<b>CHAPTER ON GRAVE WORSHIP</b>	176
	Prayers to the Dead	178
	The Evolutionary Model of Religion	183
	The Degeneration Model of Religion	184
	The Beginning of Shirk	187
	Excessive Praise of the Righteous	190
	Grave Restrictions	191
	"Taking Graves as Places of Worship"	197
	Masjids with Graves	199
	The Prophet's Grave	199
	Salaah in the Prophet's Masjid	201
	<b>Conclusion</b>	203
	Index of Hadeeths	205
	Bibliography	210

## FOREWORD

It is common knowledge that *Tawheed* is the basis of the religion of Islaam and that it is most precisely expressed in the formula: “*La elaaah il-lal-laah*” (There is no God but Allaah) which states that there is only one true God and that He alone deserves to be worshipped. This seemingly simple formula forms the dividing line between *Eemaan* (true belief in God) and *Kufr* (disbelief), according to the tenets of Islaam. Because of this principle of *Tawheed*, the Islamic belief in God is considered to be unitarian and Islaam is counted among the world’s monotheistic religions along with Judaism and Christianity. Yet, according to the Islamic unitarian concept (*Tawheed*), Christianity is classified as polytheism and Judaism is considered a subtle form of idolatry.

Thus, the principle of *Tawheed* is quite profound and needs further clarification even among Muslims. This point is vividly illustrated by the fact that some Muslims like Ibn ‘Arabee<sup>1</sup> understood *Tawheed* to mean that Allaah is all and all is Allaah; that there is only one existence which is Allaah. Yet, such beliefs are classified by mainstream Islaam as pantheism and, as

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<sup>1</sup> Muhammad ibn ‘Alee ibn ‘Arabee was born in Spain in the year 1165CE and died in Damascus in the year 1240CE. He claimed to possess inner light and knowledge of Allaah’s greatest name and referred to himself as the seal of the sainthood which he implied was a status higher than prophethood. In the centuries following his death, his followers elevated him to the status of saint, and gave him the title of *ash-Shaykh al-Akbar* (The Greatest Master), but the majority of Muslim legal scholars considered him a heretic. His principle works are *al-Futoohaat al-Makkeeyah* and *Fusooos al-Hikam* (H.A.R. Gibb and J.H. Kramers, *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1953), pp. 146-7).

such, *Kufr*. Other Muslims such as the *Mu'tazilah*<sup>1</sup> felt that *Tawheed* consisted of stripping Allaah of all His attributes and asserting that He is present everywhere and in everything. Yet, these ideas were also rejected by orthodox Islaam, and considered heretical. In fact, almost all of the various heretical sects which broke off from the main body of Islaam, from the Prophet's time till today, all began their divergence from the point of *Tawheed*. All of those who worked for the destruction of Islaam and the misguidance of its followers have attempted to neutralize the principle of *Tawheed*, because it represents the very essence of the divine message of Islaam brought by all the prophets. They have introduced concepts about Allaah totally alien to Islaam; concepts designed to take man away from the worship of Allaah alone. Once people accept these pagan philosophies about God, they become easily susceptible to a multitude of other deviant ideas all of which eventually lead those who accept them to the worship of created things under the guise of the true worship of God.

The Prophet ( ﷺ ) himself, vividly warned Muslims to beware of such deviations as had befallen the nations before them. He encouraged them to stick closely to the path which he had tread. One day as he sat with his companions, he drew a straight line in the dirt, He then drew a series of lines branching off from either side of it. When the companions asked him what it meant, he pointed to the branches and told them that they represented the various paths of misguidance in this life. He went on to say

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<sup>1</sup> A rationalist philosophical school founded in the Umayyad period (i.e. early 8th century CE) by Waasil ibn 'Ataa and 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd. It gained sway over the 'Abbaasid state for over a hundred years and continued to influence Islamic thought until the 12th century (*Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, pp. 421-6).

that at the head of each path sat a devil inviting people to it. After that, he pointed to the straight line in the middle and told them that it represented the path of Allaah. When the companions asked for further clarification, he told them that it was his path and he recited the following verse:

وَأَنْ هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السَّبِيلَ  
فَنَفَرَقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ<sup>٤</sup>

“This is my path leading straight, so follow it. And do not follow the other paths or else you will be separated from His (Allaah’s) path<sup>1</sup> ”.<sup>2</sup>

It is therefore of the utmost importance that *Tawheed* be clearly understood in the way it was taught by the Prophet (ﷺ) and understood by his companions; or else one could easily end up on one of the many deviant paths while claiming *Tawheed*, praying, paying *Zakaah*,<sup>3</sup> fasting and making Hajj. Allaah, Most Wise, has pointed to this phenomena when He said in the Qur’aan,

وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ

“Most of them claim to believe in Allaah but they really commit shirk.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-An’aam 6:153.

<sup>2</sup> Reported by Ibn Mas’ood and collected by an-Nasaa’ee, Ahmad and ad-Daarimee.

<sup>3</sup> Annual Compulsory Chairity.

<sup>4</sup> Soorah Yoosuf 12:106.

However, when an English reader compares the large number of books written in English on *Salaah*, *Zakaah*, *Sawm* (fasting) and Hajj or on Islamic economics and politics to the one or two pamphlets and booklets written on *Tawheed*, he or she could only conclude that *Tawheed* is of little significance in Islaam. This assumption is further strengthened when one reads even the most comprehensive books on Islaam, wherein, *Tawheed* is usually discussed in about a half a page while the rest of the book is devoted to an elaboration of the other pillars of Islaam. Yet, *Tawheed* is the very foundation of Islaam on which all the other pillars and principles depend. If one's *Tawheed* is not sound, the rest of one's Islaam becomes, in effect, a series of pagan rituals. Without a doubt, much more needs to be translated and written in the field of *Tawheed* to fill the void and correct mistaken beliefs rampant among Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

The present work represents a humble attempt to provide English speaking readers with a basic analysis of the major areas of the Islamic Science of *Tawheed*. Although this book is based on the approach used in classical Arabic texts on the science of *Tawheed* such as *al-'Aqeedah at-Tahaaweeyah*,<sup>1</sup> I have deliberately avoided the presentation of the theological issues found in classical works which have little or no relevance to modern English readers.

The majority of the material for this book was gathered from *Tawheed* lessons which I prepared and taught in grades seven through twelve at Manaret ar-Riyadh English Medium Islamic School; hence, the language is purposely uncomplicated. Many of these lessons as well as other lessons in *Fiqh* (Islamic law),

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Abil-'Ezz al-Hanafee, *Sharh al-'Aqeedah at-Tahaaweeyah*, (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islaamee, 8th ed., 1984).

*Hadeeth* (prophetic traditions) and *Tafseer* (exegesis) have been circulated in Muslim communities across the United States and in the West Indies. Based on a positive response and a great demand for more of such material, I decided to put this book together by revising the *Tawheed* lessons and by adding a few more pertinent topics. I pray that Allaah accept this effort and make it of real benefit to all who read it, for it is ultimately Allaah's acceptance alone that really counts, and success is only by His will.

Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips  
Ramadaan 1982  
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Due to a number of socio-economic factors, I was unable to publish this work until this year, 1989. However, in preparing the manuscript for publication, further modifications and improvements have been introduced, which - God willing - will increase the value of this work.

## 1. CHAPTER ON THE CATEGORIES OF TAWHEED

Literally *Tawheed* means “unification” (making something one) or “asserting oneness”, and it comes from the Arabic verb **وحد** (*wahhada*) which itself means to unite, unify or consolidate.<sup>1</sup> However, when the term *Tawheed* is used in reference to Allaah (i.e. *Tawheedullaah*<sup>2</sup>), it means the realizing and maintaining of Allaah’s unity in all of man’s actions which directly or indirectly relate to Him. It is the belief that Allaah is One, without partner in His dominion and His actions (*Ruboobeeyah*), One without similitude in His essence and attributes (*Asmaa wa Sifaat*), and One without rival in His divinity and in worship (*Ulooheeyah/ ‘Ebaadah*). These three aspects form the basis for the categories into which the science of *Tawheed* has been traditionally divided. The three overlap and are inseparable to such a degree that whoever omits any one aspect has failed to complete the requirements of *Tawheed*. The omission of any of the above mentioned aspects of *Tawheed* is referred to as “*Shirk*” (lit. sharing); the association of partners with Allaah, which, in Islamic terms, is in fact idolatry.

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<sup>1</sup> J.M. Cowan, *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, (Spoken Language Services Inc., New York, 3rd. ed., 1976), p. 1055.

<sup>2</sup> The word *Tawheed* does not actually occur in either the Qur’aan or in the statements (*Hadeeths*) of the Prophet (ﷺ). However, when the Prophet (ﷺ) sent Mu’aadh ibn Jabal as governor of Yemen in 9AH, he told him, “You will be going to Christians and Jews (*ahl al-Kitaab*), so the first thing you should invite them to is the assertion of the oneness of Allaah (*Yuwahhidoo Allaah*).” (Narrated by Ibn ‘Abbaas and collected by al-

The three categories of *Tawheed* are commonly referred to by the following titles:

1. *Tawheed ar-Ruboobeeyah* (lit. "Maintaining the Unity of Lordship")
2. *Tawheed al-Asmaa was-Sifaat* (lit. "Maintaining the Unity of Allaah's Names and Attributes")
3. *Tawheed al-'Ebaadah* (lit. "Maintaining the Unity of Allaah's Worship")<sup>1</sup>

The division of *Tawheed* into its components was not done by the Prophet (ﷺ) nor by his companions, as there was no necessity to analyse such a basic principle of faith in this fashion. However, the foundations of the components are all implied in the verses of the Qur'aan and in the explanatory statements of the Prophet (ﷺ) and his companions, as will become evident to the reader when each category is dealt with in more detail later in this chapter.

The necessity for this analytical approach to the principle of *Tawheed* arose after Islaam spread into Egypt, Byzantium, Persia and India and absorbed the cultures of these regions. It is only natural to expect that when the peoples of these lands entered the fold of Islaam, they would carry with them some of the remnants of their former beliefs. When some of these new converts began to express in writings and discussions, their var-

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= Bukhaaree (Muhammad Muhsin Khan, *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, (Arabic-English), (Riyadh: Maktabah ar-Riyaad al-Hadeethah, 1981), vol. 9, pp. 348-9, no. 469) and Muslim (Abdul Hamid Siddiq, *Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf Publishers, 1987), vol. 1, pp. 14-5, no. 27). In this *Hadeeth* the present tense of the verb from which the verbal noun *Tawheed* is derived was used by the Prophet (ﷺ).

<sup>1</sup> Ibn Abil-'Ezz al-Hanafee, *Sharh al-'Aqeedah at-Tahaaweeyah*, p. 78.

ious philosophical concepts of God, confusion arose in which the pure and simple unitarian belief of Islaam became threatened. There were also others who had outwardly accepted Islaam but secretly worked to destroy the religion from within, due to their inability to oppose it militarily. This group began to actively propagatate distorted ideas about Allaah among the masses in order to tear down the first pillar of *Eemaan* (faith) and with it Islaam itself.

According to Muslim historians, the first Muslim to express the position of man's free-will and the absence of destiny (*Qadar*) was an Iraqi convert from Christianity by the name of Sausan. Sausan later reverted to Christianity but not before infecting his student, Ma'bad ibn Khaalid al-Juhanee from Basrah. Ma'bad spread the teachings of his master until he was caught and executed by the Umayyad Caliph, 'Abdul-Malik ibn Marwaan (685-705), in the year 700 CE.<sup>1</sup> The younger *Sahaabah* (companions of the Prophet [ ﷺ ]) who were alive during this period, like 'Abdullaah ibn 'Umar (d. 694 CE) and 'Abdullaah ibn 'Abee Awfaa (d. 705CE), advised the people not to greet those who denied destiny nor make funeral prayers for those of them who died. That is, they considered them to be disbelievers.<sup>2</sup> However, Christian philosophical arguments for free-will continued to find new supporters. Ghailaan ibn Muslim from Damascus studied under Ma'bad and championed the cause of free-will until he was brought before Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-'Azeez (717-720CE). He recanted his beliefs publically, however, on the caliph's death, he resumed teaching free-will. The following

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Hajar, *Tahdheeb at-Tahdheeb*, (Hydrabad, 1325-7)vol. 10, p. 225.

<sup>2</sup> 'Abdul-Qaahir ibn Taahir al-Baghdaadee, *Al-Farq bain al-Firaq*, (Beirut: Daar al-Ma'rifah), pp. 19-20.

caliph, Hishaam ibn 'Abdul-Malik (724-743CE), had him arrested, tried and executed.<sup>3</sup> Another prominent figure in this controversy was al-Ja'd ibn Dirham, who not only supported the philosophy of free-will, but also attempted to re-interpret the Qur'anic verses containing descriptions of Allaah's qualities according to neo-platonic philosophy. Al-Ja'd was at one point a tutor for the Umayyad prince, Marwaan ibn Muhammad, who later became the fourteenth caliph (744-750CE). During his lectures in Damascus, he openly denied some of Allaah's attributes, like seeing, hearing etc., until the Umayyad governor expelled him.<sup>2</sup> He then fled to Kufah, where he continued to propound his ideas and gather followers until his heretical opinions became widely publicized and the Umayyad governor, Khaalid ibn Abdillaah, had him publically executed in 736 CE. However, his main disciple, Jahm ibn Safwaan, continued to defend his master's doctrines in philosophical circles in Tirmiz and Balakh, when his heresies became widespread, he was executed by the Umayyad governor, Nasr ibn Sayyaar, in 743CE.<sup>3</sup> The early caliphs and their governors were closer to Islamic principles and the consciousness of the masses was higher due to the presence of the Prophet's companions and their students. Hence, the demand for the elimination of open heretics received immediate response from the rulers. In contrast, the later Umayyad caliphs were more corrupt and as such cared little about such religious issues. The masses were also less Islamically conscious and thus were more susceptible to deviant

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<sup>1</sup> Muhammad ibn 'Abdul-Kareem ash-Shahrastanee, *Al-Milal wan-Nihal*, (Beirut: Daar al-Ma'rifah, 2nd ed., 1975), vol. 1, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Ar-Radd 'alaa al-Jahmeeyah*, (Riyadh: Daar al-Liwaa, 1st ed., 1977), pp. 41-43.

<sup>3</sup> Muhammad ibn 'Abdul-Kareem ash-Sharastanee, *Al-Milal wan-Nihal*, vol. 1, p. 46.

ideas. As greater numbers of people entered Islaam, and the learning of an increasing number of conquered nations was absorbed, the execution of apostates was no longer used to stem the rising tide of heresy. The task of opposing the tide of heresy fell on the shoulders of the Muslim scholars of this period who rose to meet the challenge intellectually. They systematically opposed the various alien philosophies and creeds by categorizing them and countering them with principles deduced from the Qur'aan and the Sunnah. It was out of this defense that the science of *Tawheed* emerged with its precisely defined categories and components. This process of specialization occurred simultaneously in all of the other areas of Islamic knowledge as it has done in the various secular sciences of today. Therefore, as the categories of *Tawheed* are studied separately and in more depth, it must not be forgotten that they are all a part of an organic whole which is itself the foundation of a greater whole, Islaam itself.

#### **Tawheed ar-Ruboobeeyah (Maintaining the Unity of Lordship)**

This category is based on the fundamental concept that Allaah alone caused all things to exist when there was nothing; He sustains and maintains creation without any need from it or for it; and He is the sole Lord of the universe and its inhabitants without any real challenge to His sovereignty. In Arabic the word used to describe this creator-sustainer quality is *Ruboobeeyah* which is derived from the root "*Rabb*" (Lord). According to this category, since God is the only real power in existence, it is He who gave all things the power to move and to change. Nothing happens in creation except what He allows to happen. In recognition of this reality, Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) used to often repeat the exclamatory phrase "*La hawla wa laa quwwata illaa billaah*" (There is no movement nor power except by Allaah's will).

The basis for the *Ruboobeeyah* concept can be found in many Qur'anic verses. For example, Allaah says:

اللَّهُ خَلِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ

“Allaah created all things and He is the agent on which all things depend.”<sup>1</sup>

وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ وَمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

“And Allaah created you all and whatever you do.”<sup>2</sup>

وَمَا رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَىٰ

“It was not you who threw, when you threw, but it was Allaah who threw.”<sup>3</sup>

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ

“And no calamity strikes except by Allaah’s permission.”<sup>4</sup>

The Prophet (ﷺ) further elaborated on this concept saying, “Be aware that if the whole of mankind gathered together in order to do something to help you, they would only be able to do some-

<sup>1</sup> Soorah az-Zumar 39:62.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah as-Saaffaat 37:96.

<sup>3</sup> Soorah al-Anfaal 8:17. This was in reference to a miraculous incident which took place when the Prophet (ﷺ) gathered some dust in his hand and threw it at the enemy (at the beginning of the Battle of Badr). Allaah caused the dust to reach the faces of the enemy in spite of their great distance.

<sup>4</sup> Soorah at-Taghaabun 64:11.

thing for you which Allaah had already written for you. Likewise, if the whole of mankind gathered together to harm you, they would only be able to do something to harm you which Allaah had already written to happen to you”<sup>1</sup>

Thus, what man conceives as good fortune and misfortune are merely events predestined by Allaah as part of the tests of this life. The incidents follow patterns set only by Allaah. Allaah has said in the Qur’aan,

يَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا بِتِمْثَالِكُمْ وَأَوْلَادِكُمْ عَدُوًّا  
لَكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوهُمْ

“O Believers! Surely there is in your wives and children an enemy for you, so beware of them.”<sup>2</sup>

That is, within the good things of this life there are severe tests of one’s faith in God. Likewise, in the terrible events of life there lies test as is mentioned in the verse,

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ  
وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالشَّرَاتِ وَبَشِيرِ الصَّابِرِينَ

“Surely We will test you with fear, hunger, loss of wealth and life and the fruits of your work, so give glad tidings to those who are patient.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Reported by Ibn ‘Abbaas and collected by at-Tirmidhee. See Ezzeddin Ibrahim and Denys Johnson - Davies, *An-Nawawi’s Forty Hadith*, (English Trans.), (Damascus, Syria: The Holy Koran Publishing House, 1976), p. 68, no. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah at-Taghaabun 64:14.

<sup>3</sup> Soorah al-Baqarah 2:155.

Sometimes the patterns are recognizable, as in the case of cause and effect relationships, and sometimes they are not, as in the case when apparently good results come from evil means or bad results from good means. God has explained that the wisdom behind these apparent irregularities is often beyond man's immediate comprehension due to his limited scope of knowledge.

وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ  
 وَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَّكُمْ  
 وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

**“Perhaps you may dislike something which is really good for you or like something bad for you, but Allaah knows (what is best for you), and you do not.”<sup>1</sup>**

Apparently evil events in human lives sometimes turn out to be for the best and apparently good things which people desire turn out to be harmful. Consequently, man's realm of influence in the course of events which make up his life is limited to the mental choice between options presented to him and not the actual results of his choice. In other words “man proposes and God disposes”. Apparent “good fortune” and “misfortune” are both from Allaah and can not be caused by good-luck charms such as rabbit's feet, four-leaf clovers, wishbones, lucky numbers, zodiacal signs, etc., or by omens of bad luck like Friday the thirteenth, breaking mirrors, black cats, etc. In fact, the belief in charms and omens is a manifestation of the grave sin of *Shirk*

<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-Baqarah, 2:216.

(association) in this form of *Tawheed*. ‘Uqbah, one of the companions of the Prophet (ﷺ), reported *that once a group of men approached Allaah’s messenger to give their allegiance to him, and he accepted the oath from nine of them but refused to accept it from one. When they asked him why he refused their companion’s oath, he replied, “Verily, he is wearing an amulet.”*<sup>1</sup> *The man who was wearing the amulet put his hand in his cloak, pulled the amulet off and broke it then made the oath. The Prophet (ﷺ) then said, “Whoever wears an amulet has committed Shirk.”*<sup>2</sup>

As for using the Qur’aan like a charm or amulet by wearing or carrying Qur’anic verses on chains or in pouches to ward off evil or to bring good fortune, there is little difference between such practices and those of the pagans. Neither the Prophet (ﷺ) nor his companions used the Qur’aan in this fashion, and the Prophet (ﷺ) said, *“Whoever innovates in Islaam something which does not belong to it will have it rejected.”*<sup>3</sup> It is true that the Qur’anic chapters, an-Naas and al-Falaq, were revealed specifically for exorcism (that is, for removing evil spells), but the Prophet (ﷺ) demonstrated the proper method by which they should be used. On an occasion when a spell had been cast on him, he told ‘Alee ibn Abee Taalib to recite the two chapters verse by verse and when he became ill he used to recite them on

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<sup>1</sup> A charm worn to bring good fortune or avert evil.

<sup>2</sup> Collected by Ahmad.

<sup>3</sup> Reported by ‘Aaeshah and collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, (Arabic - English) vol. 3, p. 535, no. 861), Muslim (*Sahih Muslim*, (English Trans.) vol. 3, p. 931, no. 4266 and no. 4267) and Abu Daawood (Ahmad Hasan, *Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf Publishers, 1st. ed., 1984), vol. 3, p. 1294).

himself.<sup>1</sup> He did not write them down and hang them around his neck, tie them on his arm or around his waist, nor did he tell others to do so.

**Tawheed al-Asmaa was-Sifaat (Maintaining the Unity of Allaah's Names and Attributes).**

This category of *Tawheed* has five main aspects:

1. For the unity of Allaah's names and attributes to be maintained in the first aspect, Allaah must be referred to according to how He and His Prophet (ﷺ) have described Him without explaining away His names and attributes by giving them meanings other than their obvious meanings. For example, Allaah in the Qur'aan says He gets angry with the disbelievers and the hypocrites. He says:

وَيُعَذِّبُ الْمُنَافِقِينَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتِ وَالْمُشْرِكِينَ وَالْمُشْرِكَاتِ  
الظَّالِمِينَ بِاللَّهِ ظَنُّ السَّوْءِ عَلَيْهِمْ دَائِرَةُ السَّوْءِ  
وَعُذِّبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَنَهُمْ وَأَعَدَّ لَهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ وَسَاءَتْ مَصِيرًا

“That He may punish the hypocrites, men and women, and the pagans men and women, who have an evil opinion of Allaah. A circle of evil is around them; Allaah is angry with them, curses them and has prepared for them an evil end.”<sup>2</sup>

Thus, anger is one of God's attributes. It is incorrect to say that His anger must mean His punishment since anger is a sign of

<sup>1</sup> Reported by 'Aa'eshah and collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, (Arabic-English), vol. 6, p. 495, no. 535) and Muslim (*Sahih Muslim*, (English Trans.), vol. 3, p. 1195, no. 5439 and 5440).

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-Fat-h 48:6.

weakness in man and, as such, not befitting of Allaah. What Allaah has stated should be accepted with the qualification that His anger is not like human anger, based on Allaah's statement, "*There is nothing like him*".<sup>1</sup> The process of so-called "rational" interpretation when taken to its logical conclusion results in the denial of God's very existence. For, Allaah describes Himself as living and man lives, therefore, according to the rationalist argument, God is neither living nor existing. The fact is that the similarity between God's attributes and those of mankind is only in name and not in degree. When attributes are used in reference to God, they are to be taken in the absolute sense, free from human deficiencies.

2. The second aspect of *Tawheed al-Asmaa was-Sifaat* involves referring to Allaah as He has referred to Himself without giving Him any new names or attributes. For example, Allaah may not be given the name al-Ghaadib (the Angry one), in spite of the fact that He has said that He gets angry, because neither Allaah nor His messenger has used this name. This may seem to be a very fine point, but it must be maintained in order to prevent the false description of God. That is, finite man is in no position to define the infinite Lord of creation.

3. In the third aspect of *Tawheed al-Asmaa was-Sifaat* Allaah is referred to without giving Him the attributes of His creation. For example, it is claimed in the Bible and Torah that Allaah spent the first six days creating the universe then slept on the seventh.<sup>2</sup> For this reason, Jews and Christians take either

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<sup>1</sup> Soorah ash-Shooraa 42:11.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 2:2, "And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done." (*Holy Bible*, Revised Standard Version (Nelson, 1951), p. 2).

Saturday or Sunday as a day of rest in which work is looked at as a sin. Such a claim assigns to God the attributes of His creation. It is man who tires after heavy work and needs sleep to recuperate.<sup>1</sup> Elsewhere in the Bible and Torah, God is portrayed as repenting for His bad thoughts in the same way that humans do when they realize their errors.<sup>2</sup> Similarly the claim that God is a spirit or has a spirit completely ruins this area of *Tawheed*. Allaah does not refer to Himself as a spirit anywhere in the Qur'aan nor does His Prophet (ﷺ) express anything of that nature in *Hadeeth*. In fact, Allaah refers to the spirit as part of His creation.<sup>3</sup>

The key principle which should be followed when dealing with Allaah's attributes is the Qur'anic formula,

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

**“There is nothing like Him and He is hearer and seer of all.”<sup>4</sup>**

The attributes of hearing and seeing are among human attributes, but when they are attributed to The Divine Being they are without comparison in their perfection. However, when

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<sup>1</sup> In contrast Allaah says explicitly in the Qur'aan, “No tiredness overcomes Him nor sleep...” (Soorah al-Baqarah 2:255).

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 32:14, “And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do to his people.” (*Holy Bible*, Revised Standard Version),

<sup>3</sup> Allaah clearly states that in the following verse: “They ask you (Muhammad) about the spirit. Tell (them) that the spirit (exists) by my Lord's command” (Soorah al-Israa 17:85).

<sup>4</sup> Soorah ash-Shooraa 42-11.

these attributes are associated with men they necessitate ear and eye apparatuses which can not be attributed to God. What man knows about the Creator is only what little He has revealed to him through His prophets. Therefore, man is obliged to stay within these narrow limits. When man gives free rein to his intellect in describing God, he is liable to fall into errors by assigning to Allaah the attributes of His creation.

In their love of pictorial representations, Christians have painted, carved and molded innumerable human likenesses and called them images of God. These have served to pave the way for the acceptance of Jesus' divinity among the masses. Once they accepted the conception of the Creator as being like a human being, accepting Jesus as God presented no real problem.

4. The third aspect of *Tawheed al-Asmaa was-Sifaat* requires that man not be given the attributes of Allaah. For example, in the New Testament Paul takes the figure of Melchizedek, king of Salem, from the Torah (Genesis 14:18-20) and gives both him and Jesus the divine attribute of having no beginning or end,<sup>4</sup>

**“1 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him,<sup>2</sup> and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace.<sup>3</sup> He is without father or mother or genealogy, and has neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the son of God he continues a priest forever.”<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 7:1-3, (*Holy Bible*, Revised Standard Version).

“<sup>5</sup> So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, ‘Thou art my son, today I have begotten thee’; <sup>6</sup> as he says also in another place, ‘Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek’.”<sup>1</sup>

Most *Shi'ite* sects (with the exception of the *Zaidites* of Yemen) have given their “*Imaams*” divine attributes of absolute infallibility,<sup>2</sup> knowledge of the past, the future and the unseen, the ability to change destiny<sup>3</sup> and control over the atoms of creation.<sup>4</sup> In so doing they set up rivals who share God’s unique attributes and who, in fact, become gods besides Allaah.

5. Maintaining the unity of Allaah’s names also means that Allaah’s names in the definite form cannot be given to His crea-

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews, 5:5-6, (*Holy Bible*, Revised Standard Version).

<sup>2</sup> Muhammad Rida al-Muzaffar states in his book *Faith of Shi'a Islam*, (U.S.A.: Muhammadi Trust of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 2nd ed. 1983): “We believe that, like the prophet, an **Imam must be infallible, that is to say incapable of making errors or doing wrong, either inwardly or outwardly, from his birth to his death, either intentionally or unintentionally**, because the Imams are the preservers of Islam and it is under their protection.” (p. 32). See also *Islam*, (Teheran: A Group of Muslim Brothers, 1973), p. 35, by Sayed Saeed Akhtar Rizvi.

<sup>3</sup> Al-Muzaffar further states: “We maintain that the powers of the Imams to receive inspiration has reached the highest degree of excellence, and we say that it is a Divinely - given power. By this means **the Imam is able to understand information about anything, anywhere, and at any time**, and he understands by means of this Divinely - given power at once, without recourse to methodological reasoning or guidance from a teacher.

<sup>4</sup> Al-Khomeini states: “Certainly the Imam has a dignified station, a lofty rank, a creational caliphate, and sovereignty and mastery over all atoms of creation.” (Aayatullah Musavi al-Khomeini, *al-Hukoomah al-Islaameeyah*, (Beirut: at-Talee’ah Press, Arabic ed., 1979), p. 52).

tion unless preceded by the prefix 'Abd meaning "slave of" or "servant of". Many of the Divine names in their indefinite form like *Ra'oof* and *Raheem* are allowable names for men because Allaah has used some of them in their indefinite forms to refer to the Prophet ( ﷺ ):

لَقَدْ جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ عَزِيزٌ عَلَيْهِ  
مَا عَنِتُّمْ حَرِيصٌ عَلَيْكُمْ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ  
رَءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ

"A messenger has come to you from among yourselves to whom anything which burdens you is grievous. He is full of concern for you and is full of pity (*Ra'oof*) and full of mercy (*Raheem*)".<sup>1</sup>

But *ar-Ra'oof* (the One Most Full of Pity) and *ar-Raheem* (the Most Merciful) can only be used to refer to men if they are preceded by 'Abd as in 'Abdur-Ra'oof or 'Abdur-Raheem, since in the definite form they represent a level of perfection which only belongs to God. Similarly, names like 'Abdur-Rasool (slave of the messenger), 'Abdun-Nabee (slave of the Prophet), 'Abdul-Husayn (slave of Husayn), etc., where people name themselves slaves to other than Allaah are also forbidden. Based on this principle, the Prophet ( ﷺ ) forbade Muslims from referring to those put under their charge as 'Abdee (my slave) or Amatee (my slave girl).<sup>2</sup>

### Tawheed al-'Ebaadah (Maintaining The Unity of Worship)

In spite of the wide implications of the first two categories of

<sup>1</sup> Soorah at-Tawbah 9:128.

<sup>2</sup> (*Sunan Abu Dawud*, (English Trans.), vol.3, pp. 1385-86, no. 4957).

*Tawheed*, firm belief in them alone is not sufficient to fulfill the Islamic requirements of *Tawheed*. *Tawheed ar-Ruboobeeyah* and *Tawheed al-Asmaa was-Sifaat* must be accompanied by their complement, *Tawheed al-'Ebaadah*, in order for *Tawheed* to be considered complete according to Islaam. This point is substantiated by the fact that Allaah Himself has related in clear terms that the *Mushrikoon* (idolators) of the Prophet's time confirmed many aspects of the first two forms of *Tawheed*. In the Qur'aan Allaah tells the Prophet (ﷺ) to say to the pagans:

قُلْ مَنْ يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَمَّنْ يَمْلِكُ السَّمْعَ  
وَالْأَبْصَرَ وَمَنْ يُخْرِجُ الْحَيَّ مِنَ الْمَيِّتِ وَيُخْرِجُ الْمَيِّتَ مِنَ  
الْحَيِّ وَمَنْ يَدْبُرُ الْأُمُورَ فَسَيَقُولُونَ اللَّهُ

“Say: ‘Who is it that gives you all sustenance from the sky and earth, governs sight and hearing, brings forth life from dead (matter) and death from the living, and plans the affairs of man?’ They will all say: ‘Allaah’.”<sup>1</sup>

وَلَئِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَهُمْ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ

“If you asked them who created them, they would surely say, ‘Allaah’.”<sup>2</sup>

وَلَئِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ نَزَّلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ  
مِنْ بَعْدِ مَوْتِهَا لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ

<sup>1</sup> Soorah Yoonus 10:31.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah az-Zukhruf, 43:87.

**“If you asked them who brings down water from the sky and with it brings the earth to life after its death? They will most certainly say, ‘Allaah’.”<sup>1</sup>**

The pagan Makkans all knew that Allaah was their creator, sustainer, their Lord and Master yet that knowledge did not make them Muslims according to God. In fact, Allaah said:

وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ

**“Most of them do not believe in Allaah except while joining partners to Him.”<sup>2</sup>**

Mujaahid’s<sup>3</sup> commentary on this verse was as follows: “Their belief in Allaah represented by their statement, ‘Allaah created us, provides for us and takes our lives’, did not stop them from worshipping other gods along with Allaah.”<sup>4</sup> From the previously mentioned verses, it is clear that the *Kuffaar* (disbelievers) knew of Allaah’s sovereignty, dominion and power. In fact, they used to faithfully devote various types of worship to Him like Hajj, charity, animal sacrifices, vows and even prayers in times of dire necessity and calamity. They even used to claim that they were following the religion of Abraham. Because of that claim, Allaah revealed the verse:

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<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-‘Ankaboot, 29:63.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah Yoosuf, 12:106.

<sup>3</sup> Mujaahid ibn Jubayr al-Makkee (642-722) was Ibn ‘Abbaas’ most outstanding student. The narrations of his *Tafseer* (commentary) of the Qur’aan has been compiled by ‘Abdur-Rahmaan at-Taahir and published in two volumes under the title, *Tafseer Mujaahid*, (Islamabad: Majma’ al-Buhooth).

<sup>4</sup> Collected by Ibn Jareer at-Tabaree.

مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَكِنْ كَانَ  
 حَنِيفًا مُسْلِمًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ

“Abraham was not a Jew nor was he a Christian, but (he) was a true Muslim and not among those who joined partners with Allaah.”<sup>1</sup>

Some pagan Makkans even believed in the Resurrection and the Judgement and others in predestination (*Qadar*). Ample evidence of their belief can be found in pre-Islamic poetry. For example, the poet Zuhayr was reported to have said:

“It is either delayed, placed in a book and saved for the Day of Judgement or hastened and avenged.”

‘Antarah was quoted as saying:

“O ‘Ebil to where will you run from death, if my Lord in the sky has destined it? ”<sup>2</sup>

In spite of the Makkans’ confessions of *Tawheed* and their knowledge of Allaah, Allaah classified them as disbelievers (*Kuffaar*) and pagans (*Mushrikoon*) simply because they worshipped other gods along with their worship of Allaah.

Consequently, the most important aspect of *Tawheed* is that of *Tawheed al-Ebaadah*, maintaining the unity of Allaah’s worship. All forms of worship must be directed only to Allaah because He alone deserves worship, and it is He alone who can

<sup>1</sup> Soorah Aal’Imraan, 3:67.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Sulaymaan ibn ‘Abdul-Wahhaab’s *Tayseer al-‘Azeed al-Hameed*, (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islaamee, 2nd., 1970), p. 34.

grant benefit to man as a result of His worship. Furthermore, there is no need for any form of intercessor or intermediary between man and God. Allaah emphasized the importance of directing worship to Him alone by pointing out that this was the main purpose of man's creation and the essence of the message brought by all the prophets. Allaah says:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

“I did not create the *Jinn* and Mankind except for My worship.”<sup>1</sup>

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ  
وَأَجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ<sup>ط</sup>

“Verily, We have sent to every nation a messenger (saying), ‘Worship Allaah and avoid false gods’.”<sup>2</sup>

Understanding the purpose of creation in a complete sense is beyond man's innate abilities. Man is a finite created being and can not reasonably hope to fully comprehend the actions of the infinite Creator. Hence, God made it a part of man's nature to worship Him, and He sent prophets and books of divine revelation to clarify the aspect of the purpose of creation which was within man's mental ability to grasp. That purpose is, as was previously mentioned: the worship of God (*'Ebaadah*) and the main message of the prophets was to worship God alone, *Tawheed al-'Ebaadah*. Consequently, the gravest sin is *Shirk*,

<sup>1</sup> Soorah adh-Dhaariyaat, 51:56.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah an-Nahl, 16:36:

the worship of others instead of Allaah or along with Allaah. In Soorah al-Faatihah, which every Muslim is required to recite in his or her prayers at least seventeen times daily, verse four reads, “**You alone do we worship and from You alone do we seek help**”. A clear statement that all forms of worship should only be directed to the One who can respond, Allaah. The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) confirmed the concept of unity of worship saying, “*If you ask in prayer ask only Allaah, and if you seek help, seek it only from Allaah.*”<sup>1</sup> The absence of any need for intercession is further emphasized by the many verses indicating His closeness to man. For example:

وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِ  
إِذَا دَعَانِ فَلْيَسْتَجِيبُوا لِي وَلْيُؤْمِنُوا بِي لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْشُدُونَ

“When My servants ask you (O Muhammad) about Me (tell them), ‘Verily I am close (to them), I listen to the prayer of every one who calls on Me. So let them respond to Me and believe in Me in order that they may be guided aright.’”<sup>2</sup>

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنسَانَ وَتَعْلَمُ مَا تُوَسَّوَسُ بِهِ نَفْسُهُ وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ  
مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ

<sup>1</sup> Reported by Ibn ‘Abbaas and collected by at-Tirmidhee. See *An-Nawawi’s Forty Hadith*, (English Trans.), p. 68.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-Baqarah, 2:186.

**“It is We who created man and We know what his soul whispers to him, for We are nearer to him than his jugular vein.”<sup>1</sup>**

The confirmation of *Tawheed al-'Ebaadah* conversely necessitates the denial of all forms of intercession or association of partners with Allaah. If someone prays to the dead seeking their influence on the lives of the living or the souls of those who have passed away, they have associated a partner with Allaah, because worship is being shared between Allaah and His creation. The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said, in no uncertain terms, “Prayer (*du'aa*) is worship.”<sup>2</sup> And, Allaah, Most Great and Glorious, said:

أَفْتَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا  
يَضُرُّكُمْ

**“Do not worship besides Allaah that which can not help or harm you.”<sup>3</sup>**

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ نَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ عِبَادٌ أَمْثَلُكُمْ

**“Those on whom you call besides Allaah are only slaves like yourselves.”<sup>4</sup>**

If someone prays to the Prophet (ﷺ), to so-called saints,

<sup>1</sup> Soorah Qaaf, 50:16.

<sup>2</sup> *Sunan Abu Dawud*, vol. 1, p. 387, no. 1474.

<sup>3</sup> Soorah al-Anbiyaa, 21:66.

<sup>4</sup> Soorah al-A'raaf, 7:194.

*Jinns* or angels asking for help or asking them to request help from Allaah for them, they have also committed *Shirk*. The concept of “Ghaus-i-Azam” (*al-Ghawth al-A’dHam*), a title given by the ignorant to ‘Abdul-Qaadir al-Jeelaanee,<sup>1</sup> is also an expression of *Shirk* in this form of *Tawheed*. The title literally means “the greatest source of rescue; the one most able to save someone from danger” and such a description only belongs to Allaah. When misfortune occurs, some people call on ‘Abdul-Qaadir by this title seeking his aid and protection even though Allaah has already said:

وَأِنْ يَمَسَّكَ اللَّهُ بِضُرٍّ فَلَا كَاشِفَ لَهُ إِلَّا هُوَ

“If Allaah allows harm to befall you none can remove it except Him.”<sup>2</sup>

According to the Qur’aan, when the Makkans were questioned about directing their prayers to their idols, they answered,

مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى اللَّهِ زُلْفَىٰ

<sup>1</sup> ‘Abdul-Qaadir (1077-1166) was a principal of a school of Hanbalite Law and a Ribaat (monastery) in Baghdad. His Sermons (collected in *al-Fat-h ar-Rabbaane*, Cairo 1302) were strictly orthodox with some, mystic interpretations of the Qur’aan. Ibn ‘Arabee (born 1165) declared him the *Qutb* of his time and stated that he had a rank which placed him above all beings except God. ‘Alee ibn Yousuf ash-Shattanawfee (d. 1314 CE) wrote a book called *Bahjat al-Asraar* (Cairo, 1304) in which he attributed many miracles to ‘Abdul-Qaadir. The Qaadireeyah Sufi order is named after him and its spiritual exercises and regulations traced back to him. (*Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, pp. 5-7 and 202-205).

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-An’aam, 6:17.

**“We only worship them so that they may bring us closer to Allaah.”<sup>1</sup>**

The idols were only used as intermediaries yet Allaah called them pagans for their practice. Those among Muslims who insist on praying to other than Allaah would do well to reflect on this fact.

Christians, influenced by the teachings of Saul from Tarsus (later called Paul), deified Prophet Jesus and directed their prayer to him and his mother. The Catholics among Christians have saints for every occasion to whom they direct their prayers in the belief that these saints can directly influence the affairs of this world. The Catholics also use their priests as intercessors between themselves and Allaah in the mistaken belief that the priests are closer to Allaah due to their celibacy and piety, and thus more likely to be listened to by Allaah. Most *Shi'ite* sects have devoted certain days of the week and hours of the day for prayer to 'Alee, Faatimah, Hasan and Husayn<sup>2</sup> due to their distorted belief in intercession.

Worship ('*Ebaadah*) in the Islamic view, includes more than just fasting, paying *Zakaah*, Hajj and animal sacrifices. It includes emotions like love, trust, and fear, all of which have degrees which should only be directed to God. Allaah has addressed these emotions and warned against excesses in them as follows:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَتَّخِذُ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَندَادًا  
يُحِبُّونَهُمْ كَحُبِّ اللَّهِ وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَشَدُّ حُبًّا لِلَّهِ

<sup>1</sup> Soorah az-Zumar, 39:3.

<sup>2</sup> Faatimah was the Prophet Muhammad's youngest daughter who married the Prophet's cousin 'Alee ibn Abee Taalib, and Hasan and Husayn were their sons.

“There are among men those who take (for worship) others besides Allaah as equals to Him. They love them as they should only love Allaah. But those who believe have a much greater love of Allaah..”<sup>1</sup>

أَلَا تَقْتُلُونَ قَوْمًا نَّذَرُوا أَيْمَانَهُمْ وَهَمُّوا  
بِإِخْرَاجِ الرَّسُولِ وَهُمْ بَدَءُوكُمْ أُولَٰئِكَ مَرَّةً  
أَتَخَشَوْنَهُمْ فَأَلَّ اللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَخْشَوْهُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

“Will you not fight people who broke their oaths, plotted to expel the messenger and were the first to (attack) you? Do you fear them? Allaah has more right to be feared if you are truly believers.”<sup>2</sup>

وَعَلَى اللَّهِ فَتَوَكَّلُوا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

“Put your trust in Allaah if you are truly believers.”<sup>3</sup>

Since the term ‘Ebaadah means total obedience and Allaah is considered the ultimate Lawgiver, the implementation of secular legal systems not based on divine law (*Sharee’ah*) is an act of disbelief in the divine law and belief in the correctness of such systems, such a belief constitutes a form of worshipping other than Allaah (*Shirk*). Allaah said in the Qur’aan:

وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ

<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-Baqarah, 2:165.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah at-Tawbah 9:13.

<sup>3</sup> Soorah al-Maa’idah, 5:23.

**“Those who do not rule by what Allaah has revealed are disbelievers (Kaafiroon).”<sup>1</sup>**

On one occasion, the Prophet's companion, 'Adee ibn Haatim, who was a convert from Christianity, heard the Prophet (ﷺ) recite the Qur'anic verse, **“They have taken their rabbis and monks as lords besides Allaah,”**<sup>2</sup> so he said: 'Surely we did not worship them,' The Prophet (ﷺ) turned to him and said 'Did they not make forbidden (**Haraam**) what Allaah had made allowable (**Halaal**)<sup>3</sup>, and you all made it **Haraam**, and did they not make **Halaal** what Allaah made **Haraam**<sup>4</sup> and you all made it **Halaal**?' He replied, 'We certainly did.' The Prophet (ﷺ) then said, 'That was how you worshipped them'.<sup>5</sup>

Hence, a significant part of *Tawheed al-'Ebaadah* involves the implementation of *Sharee'ah*, especially in lands where Muslims form the majority of the population. Divine law has to be re-introduced in the many so-called Muslim countries where governments now rule according to imported capitalist or communist constitutions, and Islamic law is either totally extinct or relegated to a few areas of minor importance. Likewise, Muslim countries, where Islamic law is on the books but secular laws are in force, have also to be brought in line with the *Sharee'ah* as it

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<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-Maa'idah, 5:44.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah at-Tawbah, 9:31.

<sup>3</sup> Christian clergy made *Haraam* the marrying of more than one wife and the marrying of first cousins. Roman Catholicism forbade priests from marrying and forbade divorce in general.

<sup>4</sup> The Christian Church made *Halaal* the consumption of pork, blood and alcohol. Some of them also made allowable painting and statues depicting God as a man.

<sup>5</sup> Collected by at-Tirmidhee.

pertains to all aspects of life. The acceptance of non-Islamic rule in place of *Sharee'ah* in Muslim lands is *Shirk* and an act of *Kufr*. Those in a position to change it must do so, while those unable to do so must speak out against the rule of *Kufr* and call for the implementation of *Sharee'ah*. If even this becomes impossible, un-Islamic government must be sincerely hated and despised for the pleasure of God and the upholding of *Tawheed*.

## 2. CHAPTER ON THE CATEGORIES OF SHIRK

The study of *Tawheed* cannot be considered complete without a careful analysis of its opposite, *Shirk*. Some mention of *Shirk* has already been made in the previous chapter and examples of it have been given to illustrate how *Tawheed* may be obliterated. However, in this chapter *Shirk* will be looked at as a separate topic whose grave importance Allaah has attested to in the Qur'aan,

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَغْفِرُ أَنْ يُشْرَكَ بِهِ وَيَغْفِرُ مَا دُونَ ذَلِكَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ

“Surely Allaah will not forgive the association of partners (*Shirk*) with Him, but He forgives (sins) less than that of whomever He wishes.”

Because the sin of *Shirk* denies the very purpose of man's creation, it is to God the gravest of sins; the unforgiveable sin.

*Shirk* literally means partnership, sharing or associating,<sup>2</sup> but Islamically it refers to the act of assigning partners to Allaah in whatever form it may take. The following analysis of *Shirk* is according to the three broad categories developed in the study of *Tawheed*. Hence, we will first look at the main ways in which *Shirk* can occur in the area of *Ruboobeeyah* (Lordship), then *Asmaa wa-Sifaat* (Divine Names and Attributes) and finally in 'Ebaadah (Worship).

<sup>1</sup> Soorah an-Nisaa, 4:48.

<sup>2</sup> *The Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, p. 468.

## **Shirk in Ruboobeeyah**

This category of *Shirk* refers to either the belief that others share Allaah's Lordship over creation as His equal or near equal, or to the belief that there exists no Lord over creation at all. Most religious systems fall into the first aspect of *Shirk* in *Ruboobeeyah* while it is the philosophers and their man-made philosophies who tend to fill the second aspect.

### **(A) Shirk by Association:**

Beliefs which fall under this sub-category are ones in which a main God or Supreme Being over creation is recognized, however His dominion is shared by other lesser gods, spirits, mortals, heavenly bodies or earthly objects. Such belief systems are commonly referred to by theologians and philosophers as either monotheistic (having one God) or polytheistic (having more than one God). According to Islaam, all of these systems are polytheistic and many represent various degrees in the degeneration of divinely revealed religious systems all of which were originally based on *Tawheed*.

Within Hinduism the Supreme Being, *Brahman* is conceived as indwelling, all-pervading, unchangeable and eternal, the abstract impersonal Absolute, in which all things have their origin and end. While the god *Brahma* is the personified creator of the universe who forms a trinity with the preserver god, *Vishnu* and the destroyer god, *Shiva*.<sup>1</sup> Thus, *Shirk* in *Ruboobeeyah* is expressed in Hinduism by the delegation of God's creative, destructive and preservative powers to other gods.

Christian belief states that the one God reveals himself in the

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<sup>1</sup> W.L. Reese, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980), pp. 66-67 and 586-7. See also John Hinnells, *Dictionary of Religions* (England: Penguin Books, 1984) pp. 67-8.

three persons of Father, Son (Jesus Christ) and *Holy Spirit*. These three persons are nevertheless regarded as a unity, sharing one 'substance'<sup>1</sup> Prophet Jesus is elevated to divinity, sits on the right hand of God and judges the world. The *Holy Spirit*, who in the Hebrew Bible is the means by which God exercises his creative power, in Christian thought becomes a part of the God-head. Paul made the *Holy Spirit* the alter ego of Christ, the guide and help of Christians, first manifesting itself on the day of Pentecost.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, *Shirk* in *Ruboobeeyah* occurs in the Christian belief that Jesus and the *Holy Spirit* are God's partners in all of His dominion, in their belief that Jesus alone pronounces judgement on the world and in their belief that Christians are helped and guided by the *Holy Spirit*.

Zoroastrians (Parsis) conceive of God, *Ahura Mazda*, as being the creator of all that is good, and is alone worthy of absolute worship. Fire is one of the seven creations of *Ahura Mazda* and is considered his son or representative. But they also commit *Shirk* in *Ruboobeeyah* by conceiving of evil, violence and death as being the creation of another god called *Angra Mainyu* whom they represent by the symbol darkness.<sup>3</sup> Hence, God's sovereignty over all creation (i.e. His *Ruboobeeyah*) is shared with an evil spirit elevated to the level of an opposing god due to man's desire to not attribute evil to God.

In the Yoruba religion, followed by over 10 million people in West Africa (mainly Nigeria), there is one supreme God, *Olorius* (Lord of Heaven) or *Olodumare*. Nevertheless, modern Yoruba religion is characterized by a multitude of *Orisha*

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<sup>1</sup> *Dictionary of Religions*, p. 337.

<sup>2</sup> *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, p. 231.

<sup>3</sup> *Dictionary of Religions*, pp. 361-2.

worship, so that Yoruba religion appears as strict polytheism.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, Yorubas commit *Shirk* in *Ruboobeeyah* by turning over all of God's functions to minor gods and spirits.

The Zulus of South Africa believe in one God, *Unkulunkulu*, meaning the ancient, the first, the most revered one. The principal specific titles for God are; *Nkosi yaphezulu* (Lord-of-the-Sky) and *uMvelingqanqi* (the first to appear). Their Supreme Being is represented as a male, who, along with the earth female, bring forth the human world. Thunder and Lightening are in Zulu religion acts of God, whereas sickness and other troubles in life may be caused by the ancestors, the "*Idlozi*" or "*abaphansi*" (those under the earth). The ancestors also protect the living, ask for food, are pleased with ritual and sacrifice, punish neglect and take possession of fortune tellers (*inyanga*).<sup>2</sup> Thus, *Shirk* in *Ruboobeeyah* takes place in the Zulu religion not only in their concept of the creation of the human world but also their attribution of good and evil in human life to the work of ancestral spirits.

Among some Muslim people, *Shirk* in *Ruboobeeyah* is manifested in their belief that the souls of saints and other righteous humans can affect the affairs of this world, even after their deaths. Their souls, it is believed, can fulfill one's needs, remove calamities and aid whoever calls on them. Therefore, grave worshippers assign to human souls the divine ability to cause events in this life which in fact only Allaah can cause.

Common among many *Sufis* (Muslim mystics) is the belief in "*Rijaal al-Ghayb*"<sup>3</sup> chief of whom occupies the station called "*Qutub*" from

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<sup>1</sup> *Dictionary of Religions*, p. 358.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 363.

<sup>3</sup> Literally, "men of the unseen world". The world is supposed to endure due =

which the affairs of this world are governed.<sup>1</sup>

### (B) Shirk by Negation

This sub-category represents the various philosophies and ideologies which deny the existence of God either explicitly or implicitly. That is, in some cases God's non-existence is stated (Atheism), while in other cases His existence is claimed, but the way in which He is conceived actually denies His existence (Patheism)

There are a few ancient religious "systems" in which God does not exist, foremost among them is the system attributed to Gautama Buddha. Buddhism, a reformist movement in Hinduism opposed to the caste system, was founded in the 6th century BC during the same period as Jainism. During the 3rd century BC it became the state religion. Eventually it was assimilated by Hinduism, Buddha himself becoming one of the *Avatars* (incarnations of God). It disappeared from India but became dominant in China and other Eastern nations. *Hinayana* Buddhism (400-250 BC), the earlier and more strict of the two interpretations of Buddhism which arose after Gautama Buddha's death, makes it clear that there is no God; hence the burden of salvation belongs to the individual alone<sup>2</sup>. Thus, this ancient strain of Buddhism could be classified as an example of *Shirk* in *Ruboobeeyah* wherein God's existence is explicitly denied.

Similarly in the teachings of Jainism as systematized by Var-

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= to the intercessions of a hierarchy of "averting" Saints whose number are fixed, the place of one who dies being immediately filled. (*Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, p. 582).

<sup>1</sup> *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, pp. 55.

<sup>2</sup> *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, p.72.

dhamana, there is no God, but liberated souls achieve something of this status, having immortality and omniscience; and the religious community treats the liberated ones as though they were divine, building temples to them and venerating their images.<sup>1</sup>

Another ancient example is that of the Pharaoh of Prophet Moses' time. Allaah mentioned in the Qur'aan that he negated the existence of God and claimed to Moses and the people of Egypt that he, Pharaoh, was the only true lord of all creation. Allaah quoted him as saying to Moses, **"If you chose a god besides me, I will surely imprison you"**<sup>4</sup> and to the people, **"He proclaimed, 'I am your Lord, the Most High' "**<sup>3</sup>

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries a number of European philosophers asserted the non-existence of God in what became known as the "death of God philosophy". The German philosopher Philipp Mainlander (1841-1876) in his principal writing, *The Philosophy of Redemption*, 1876, states that the world begins with the death of God, since God is a principle of unity shattered in the plurality of the world and a principle of joy denied in the law of suffering which dominates the world.<sup>4</sup> In Prussia Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) supported the idea of the "death of God" proposing that God was nothing more than a projection of man's uneasy conscience and that man was the bridge to the Superman.<sup>5</sup> Jean Paul Sartre, a French

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<sup>1</sup> *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, pp. 262-3.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah ash-Shooraa, 26:29.

<sup>3</sup> Soorah an-Naazi'aat, 79:24.

<sup>4</sup> *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, p. 327.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 391.

philosopher of the twentieth century also echoed the “death of God” thought. He claimed that God could not exist because He was a contradiction in terms. The idea of God, according to him, is a projection which man must make being what he is.<sup>1</sup>

Darwin’s (d. 1882) proposal that man was merely a glorified ape was widely adopted in the theories of social scientists and philosophers of the nineteenth century as it provided a “scientific” basis for the non-existence of God. According to them religion evolved from animism to monotheism along with man’s supposed social evolution from an independent individual to a national state and his physical evolution from ape to man.

They attempt to escape the questions surrounding creation by claiming that there was none and by attributing Allaah’s attribute of being without beginning and end to matter which He has created. Present day holders of this belief are the followers of Karl Marx, communists and scientific socialists, who claim that the origin of everything in existence is matter in motion. They further claim that God is a figment of man’s imagination created by the ruling classes to justify their hereditary rule and divert the attention of the oppressed masses from the realities in which they live.

An example of this form of *Shirk* among some Muslims is that of many *Sufis* like Ibn ‘Arabee who claim that only Allaah exists (All is Allaah, and Allaah is all). They deny the separate existence of Allaah and thereby in fact deny His existence. This idea was also expressed in the 17th century by the Dutch Jewish philosopher, Baruch Spinoza, who claimed that God is the total of all parts of the universe including man.

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<sup>1</sup> *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, pp. 508-9.

## **Shirk in al-Asmaa was-Sifaat**

*Shirk* in this category includes both the common pagan practise of giving Allaah the attributes of His creation as well as the act of giving created beings Allaah's names and attributes.

### **(A) Shirk by Humanization**

In this aspect of *Shirk* in *al-Asmaa was-Sifaat*, Allaah is given the form and qualities of human beings and animals. Due to man's superiority over animals, the human form is more commonly used by idolaters to represent God in creation. Consequently, the image of the Creator is often painted, moulded or carved in the shape of human beings possessing the physical features of those who worship them. For example, Hindus and Buddhists worship countless idols in the likeness of Asian men and consider them manifestations of God in creation. Modern day Christian belief that Prophet Jesus was God incarnate; that the Creator became His creation, is another good example of this type of *Shirk*. There have been many so-called great Christian painters like Michaelangelo (d. 1565), who painted pictures of God as a naked old European man with long flowing white hair and beard on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican. These pictures have in turn, been held by the Christian world in the highest of esteem.

### **(B) Shirk by Deification**

This form of *Shirk* in *al-Asmaa was-Sifaat* relates to cases where created beings or things are given or claim Allaah's names or His attributes. For example, it was the practice of the ancient Arabs to worship idols whose names were derived from the names of Allaah. Their main three idols were: al-Laat taken from Allaah's name al-Elaah, al-'Uzza taken from al-'Azeez and al-Manaat taken from al-Mannaan. During the Prophet

Muhammad's era there was also a false prophet in a region of Arabia called Yamaamah, who took the name *Rahmaan* which only belongs to Allaah.

Among the *Shi'ite* sects is the *Nusayreeyah* of Syria, who believe that the Prophet Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, 'Alee ibn Abee Taalib, was a manifestation of Allaah and give him many of Allaah's qualities. Among them is also the *Ismai'is* also known as Agha Khanis who consider their leader, the Agha Khan, to be God incarnate. Also included in this category are the *Druze* of Lebanon who believe that the Faatimid Caliph al-Haakim bi Amrillaah, was the last manifestation of Allaah among mankind.

Claims of *Sufis* (Muslim mystics) like al-Hallaaj that they have become one with God and as such exist as manifestations of the Creator within His creation may also be included in this aspect of *Shirk* in *al-Asmaa was-sifaat*. Modern-day spiritualists and mediums like Shirley Maclaine, J.Z. Knight, etc., often claim divinity for themselves as well as mankind in general. Einstein's Theory of Relativity ( $E = mc^2$ , Energy is equal to mass times the square of the speed of light) taught in all schools is in fact an expression of *Shirk* in *al-Asmaa wa as-Sifaat*. The theory states that energy can neither be created nor destroyed; it merely transforms into matter and vice versa. However, both matter and energy are created entities and they both will be destroyed as Allaah clearly states:

اللَّهُ خَلِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَكِيلٌ

“Allaah is the creator of all things...”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Soorah az-Zumar, 39:62.

كُلُّ مَنْ عَلَيْهَا فَانٍ

“Everything in (the world) will perish...”<sup>1</sup>

The theory also implies that mass and energy are eternal having no beginning or end since they are supposed to be uncreated and transform into each other. However, this attribute belongs only to Allaah who alone is without beginning or end.

Darwin’s theory of evolution is also an attempt to explain the evolution of life and its forms from lifeless matter without the intervention of God. One of the leading Darwinists of this century, Sir Aldous Huxley expressed this thought as follows:

“Darwinism removed the whole idea of God as the creator of organisms from the sphere of national discussion.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Shirk in al-‘Ebaadah**

In this category of *Shirk*, acts of worship are directed to other than God and the reward for worship is sought from the creation instead of the Creator. As in the case of the previous categories, *Shirk in al-‘Ebaadah* has two main aspects.

#### **(A) Ash-Shirk al-Akbar (Major Shirk):**

This form of *Shirk* occurs when any act of worship is directed to other than Allaah. It represents the most obvious form of idolatry which the prophets were specifically sent by Allaah to call the masses of mankind away from. This concept is supported by Allaah’s statement in the Qur’aan:

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<sup>1</sup> Soorah ar-Rahmaan, 55:26.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Francis Hitching’s, *The Neck of the Giraffe*, (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1982), p. 254 from Tax and Callender, 1960, vol. III, p. 45.

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ  
وَأَجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ

“Surely we have sent to every nation a messenger saying, worship Allaah and avoid *Taaghoot* (false gods)”<sup>1</sup>

*Taaghoot* actually means anything which is worshipped along with Allaah or instead of Allaah. For example, love is a form of worship which, in its perfection, should only be directed to Allaah. In Islaam, the love of God is expressed by total obedience to Him. It is not the type of love which man naturally feels toward creation; towards parents, children, food, etc. To direct that type of love towards God is to lower Him to the level of His creation which is *Shirk* in *al-Asmaa was-Sifaat*. Love which is worship is the total surrender of one’s will to God. Consequently, Allaah told the Prophet ( ﷺ ) to tell the believers:

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحِبُّكُمْ اللَّهُ

“Say: If you love Allaah, follow me and Allaah will love you.”<sup>2</sup>

The Prophet ( ﷺ ) also told his companions, “None of you is a true believer until I become more beloved to him than his child, his father and the whole of mankind”.<sup>3</sup> Love of the Prophet ( ﷺ )

<sup>1</sup> Soorah an-Nahl, 16:36.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah Aal’Imraan, 3:31.

<sup>3</sup> Reported by Anas and collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Bukhari* (English-Arabic), vol. 1, p. 20, no. 13) and Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 1, p. 31, no. 71).

is not based on his humanity but on the divine origin of his message. Thus, like the love of Allaah, it is also expressed by total obedience to his commands.

Allaah said in the final revelation:

مَنْ يُطِيعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ

“Whoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allaah,”<sup>1</sup>

and

قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَالرَّسُولَ

“Say: Obey Allaah and obey the Prophet...”<sup>2</sup>

If man allows the love of anything or anyone to come between himself and Allaah, then he has worshipped that thing. In this way, money can become one’s god or even one’s desires could become a god. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “*The worshipper of the Dirham will always be miserable*”<sup>3</sup> and Allaah said in the Qur’aan

أَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ

“Have you not seen the one who takes his desires as his god?”<sup>4</sup>

Much emphasis has been placed on the evils of *Shirk* in ‘*Ebaadah*’ (worship) because it contradicts the very purpose of creation as expressed in Allaah’s statement:

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<sup>1</sup> Soorah an-Nisaa, 4:80.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah Aal’Imraan, 3:32.

<sup>3</sup> Reported by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Bukhari*, (English-Arabic), vol. 8, p. 296, no. 443).

<sup>4</sup> Soorah al-Furqaan, 25:43.

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

“I have not created Jinn or mankind except for my worship.”<sup>1</sup>

Major *Shirk* represents the greatest act of rebellion against the Lord of the Universe, and is thus the ultimate sin. It is a sin so great that it virtually cancels out all good a person may do and guarantees its perpetrator eternal damnation in Hell. Consequently, false religion is based primarily on this form of *Shirk*. All man-made systems in one way or another invite their followers to the worship of creation. Christians are called upon to pray to a man, a Prophet of God named Jesus, whom they claim to have been God incarnate. Catholics among Christians pray to Mary as the “mother of God”, to the angels like Michael who is honored on May 8 and September 29, Michaelmas Day, as St. Michael,<sup>2</sup> as well as to human saints, whether real or fictitious.

Muslims whose acts of worship fall into this category of *Shirk* are those who pray to Prophet Muhammad ( ﷺ ) or to mystics in the *Sufi* hierarchy of saints believing that they can answer their prayers, though Allaah has clearly said in the Qur’aan:

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَنْتُمْ عَذَابُ اللَّهِ أَوْ أَنْتُمْ السَّاعَةُ أَعْبَدُوا غَيْرَ اللَّهِ  
تَدْعُونَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ

“Say: Think to yourselves, if Allaah’s punishment came upon you or the Final Hour, would you then call on other than Allaah? (Reply) if you are truthful.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Soorah adh-Dhaariyaat, 51:56.

<sup>2</sup> William Halsey (ed.), *Colliers Encyclopedia*, (U.S.A: Crowell-Collier Educational Foundation, 1970, vol. 16, p. 110.

<sup>3</sup> Soorah al-An’aam, 6:40.

## **(B) Ash-Shirk al-Asghar (Minor Shirk):**

Mahmood ibn Lubayd reported, "Allaah's messenger ( ﷺ ) said: *"The thing I fear for you the most is **ash-Shirk al-Asghar** (minor shirk)."* The companions asked *"Oh! messenger of Allaah, what is minor Shirk?"* He replied *"**Ar-Riyaa** (showing off), for verily Allaah will say on the Day of Resurrection when people are receiving their rewards, "Go to those for whom you were showing off in the material world and see if you can find any reward from them."<sup>1</sup>*

Mahmood ibn Lubayd also said, *"The Prophet ( ﷺ ) came out and announced, 'O people, beware of secret **Shirk!**' The people asked, 'O messenger of Allaah, what is secret **Shirk?**' He replied, 'When a man gets up to pray and strives to beautify his prayer because people are looking at him; that is secret **Shirk.**'"*<sup>2</sup>

### **Ar-Riyaa**

*Riyaa* is the practise of performing any of the various forms of worship in order to be seen and praised by people. This sin destroys all the benefits that lie in righteous deeds and brings on the one who commits it a serious punishment. It is particularly dangerous, because it is natural for man to desire and enjoy the praise of his fellow men. Doing religious acts to impress people or in order to be praised by them is, therefore, an evil which deserves man's utmost caution. This danger is really significant to the believers whose goal is to make all of the acts of their lives religious acts dedicated to God. In fact, the likelihood that knowledgeable true believers would commit *ash-Shirk al-Akbar* is small, since its pitfalls are so obvious. But, for the true

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<sup>1</sup> Reported by Ahmad, at-Tabaraanee and al-Bayhaqee in *az-Zuhd*. See *Tayseer al-'Azeed al-Hameed*, p. 118.

<sup>2</sup> Collected by Ibn Khuzaymah.

believer like everyone else, the chance of committing *Riyaa* is great because it is so hidden. It only involves the simple act of changing one's intention. The motivating forces behind it are also very strong, since it comes from man's inner nature. Ibn 'Abbaas alluded to this reality when he said, "*Shirk is more hidden than a black ant creeping on a black stone in the middle of a moonless night.*"<sup>1</sup>

Thus, great care has to be taken to ensure that one's intentions begin pure and remain pure whenever righteous deeds are being done. In order to ensure this, the saying of Allaah's name is enjoined in Islaam before all acts of importance. A series of *Du'aas* (informal prayers) have also been prescribed by the Prophet (ﷺ) before and after all natural habits like eating, drinking, sleeping, sex, and even going to the toilet, in order to turn these everyday habits into acts of worship and develop in Muslims a keen awareness of Allaah. It is this awareness, called *Taqwaa*, which ultimately insures that intentions remain pure.

The Prophet (ﷺ) also provided protection against the inevitable acts of *Shirk* by teaching certain specific prayers which may be said anytime. Abu Moosaa said, "*One day Allaah's messenger delivered a sermon saying 'O people, fear Shirk for it is more hidden than the creeping of an ant.' Those whom Allaah wished asked, 'And how do we avoid it when it is more hidden than the creeping of an ant, O Messenger of Allaah?' He replied, 'Say:*

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا نَعُوذُ بِكَ أَنْ نُشْرِكَ شَيْئًا نَعْلَمُهُ وَنَسْتَغْفِرُكَ لِمَا لَا نَعْلَمُهُ

*Allaahumma Innaa na'oodhu bika an nushrika bika shay'an na'lamuh, wa nastaghfiruka limaa laa na'lamuh* (O Allaah, we

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<sup>1</sup> Reported by Ibn Abee Haatim and quoted in *Tayseer al-Azeez al-Hameed*, p. 587



### 3. CHAPTER ON ALLAAH'S COVENANT WITH AADAM

#### The Barzakh

In Islaam there is no support for the Hindu belief in reincarnation or the transmigration of souls wherein souls inhabit new bodies after bodily death.<sup>1</sup> Some of those who embrace this doctrine believe in a principle known as *Karma*<sup>2</sup>, that the deeds which a person accumulates in this life will determine the state in which he will be reborn. If he was bad, he is reborn in the womb of a woman from a lower level of society (caste) and he has to do good deeds so that he may be reborn on a higher level. If, on the other hand, he was good, he is reborn in the womb of a higher caste woman as a pious or holy man and continues to be reborn to successively higher caste women more pious and holy until he reaches perfection as a member of the Brahmin caste. When he becomes perfect, the cycle of rebirth ends with his soul dissolving and reuniting with the world soul, Brahma, in a process known as "Nirvana".

According to Islaam and all divinely revealed religions, when a person dies on earth he will not be reborn until the Day of

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<sup>1</sup> This belief has been adopted by some heretical *Isma'elite Shi'ite* sects like the *Druze* of Lebanon and the *Nusayrites* (Alawites) of Syria. (See *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islaam*, pp. 94-5, 454-4).

<sup>2</sup> *Karma* primarily means action, work or deed. In its secondary sense it signifies the 'effect' of an action, or the sum total of 'effects' of past actions. Thus, it is stated in the *Chandogya Upanishad (Veda)* that those whose past deeds have been good will after death be reborn from the womb of a Brahman woman, whereas those whose deeds have been evil will be reborn from the womb of an outcaste woman (See. *Dictionary of Religions*, p. 180).

Resurrection. After the destruction of the world, all of mankind will rise up from the dead to be judged by Allaah, the only God worthy of worship and the Greatest of Judges. From the time a man dies until he is resurrected, he remains in a suspended state known in Arabic as the “*Barzakh*”.<sup>1</sup> It should not seem strange to think that someone who died thousands of years ago, may be waiting for thousands of years before finally being brought back to life, because the Prophet (ﷺ) had said that everyone’s death is the beginning of his resurrection. Time only exists for those living on earth. Once a man dies, he leaves the time zone and a thousand years becomes a blinking of an eye. Allaah illustrated that reality in a story which He related in Soorah al-Baqarah about a man who doubted Allaah’s ability to resurrect a village; to bring it back to life after its death. So Allaah caused him to die for a hundred years and when he was resurrected, questioned him as to how long he had “slept”. He replied, “**A day or a part of a day.**”<sup>2</sup> Similarly people who awaken from long comas often think that little or no time has passed. Often one sleeps for hours yet on awakening he feels as though he had only just closed his eyes. So there is no point in trying to imagine waiting for centuries in the *Barzakh*, because time in that state has no relevance.

### Pre-Creation

Although Islaam rejects the notion of the soul’s continuous rebirth, it does, however, recognize that the soul of each child

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<sup>1</sup> Lit. a partition. Allaah said, “(They will remain in falsehood) until when death comes to one of them, he will say, ‘O my Lord send me back that I may do the good deeds I neglected.’ By no means! It is only words which he says. Behind them is a partition (*Barzakh*) until the day they are raised up.” (Soorah al-Mu’minoon 23:99-100).

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-Baqarah, 2:259.

came into existence prior to its birth on earth.

The Prophet (ﷺ) related that when Allaah created Aadam, He took a covenant from him in a place called Na'maan on the day of 'Arafah,<sup>1</sup> then He extracted from him all of his descendants who would be born until the end of the world, generation after generation, and spread them out in front of Him in order to take a covenant from them also. He spoke to them face to face saying: "Am I not your Lord?" and they all replied, "Yes, we testify to it." Allaah then explained why He had all of mankind bear witness that He was their creator and only true God worthy of worship. He said, "That was in case you (mankind) should say on the Day of Resurrection, "Surely we were unaware of all this. We had no idea that You, Allaah, were our God. No one told us that we were only supposed to worship You." Allaah went on to explain that it was also in case you should say: "It was our ancestors who made partners (with Allaah) and we are only their descendants; will You, then destroy us for what those liars did?"<sup>2</sup> <sup>3</sup> This was the Prophet's (ﷺ) explanation of the Qur'anic verse in which Allaah said:

وَإِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَأَشْهَدَهُمْ  
عَلَىٰ أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ شَهِدْنَا أَن تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ  
الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ ﴿١٧٢﴾ أَوْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أَشْرَكَ

<sup>1</sup> The 9th of the 12th lunar month known as Dhul-Hijjah.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-A'raaf, 7:172-173.

<sup>3</sup> This is from a *Saheeh* (authentic), narration of Ibn 'Abbaas collected by Ahmad, see al-Albaanee's *Silsilah al-Ahaadeeth as-Saheehah*, (Kuwait: ad-Daar as-Salafeeyah and Amman: al-Maktabah al-Islaameeyah, 2nd ed., 1983) vol. 4, p. 158, no. 1623.

ءَابَاؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ أَفَهِيَ كُنَّا بِمَا فَعَلِ  
 الْمُبْطِلُونَ

“When your Lord drew forth from the loins of the children of Aadam, their descendants and made them testify concerning themselves. (Saying): ‘Am I not your Lord’ They said, ‘Yes, we testify to it.’ (This) in case you say on the Day of Judgement, ‘We were unaware of this’. Or in case you say, ‘It was our ancestors who made partners (with Allaah) and we are only their descendants. Will you then destroy us for what those liars did? ”<sup>1</sup>

The verse and prophetic explanation confirm the fact that everyone is responsible for belief in God and on the Day of Judgement excuses will not be accepted. Every human being has the belief in God imprinted on his soul and Allaah shows every idolator during the course of his life, signs that his idol is not God. Hence, every sane human being is required to believe in God beyond His creation and not manifest in it.

The Prophet ( ﷺ ) then went on to say, “Allaah then placed between the two eyes of every human a flash of light showing their **Eemaan** and showed them all to Aadam. Aadam was awed by the sight of all these countless numbers of beings with flashes of light between their eyes so he asked Allaah, “O Lord, who are they?” Allaah told him that they were all of his descendants. Aadam then began looking closely at one whose flash of light amazed him, then he asked who he was and Allaah said, “That is

<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-A'raaf, 7:172-3.

*a man called Daawood from the last of the nations among your descendents.” Aadam then asked how old he was and when Allaah informed him that he was sixty, he said, “O Lord, increase his age by taking forty years from my age.” But when Aadam’s life span reached its end and the angel of death came, he said, “Is there not forty more years of my life still remaining?” The Angel replied, “Did you not give them to your descendent Daawood?” Aadam denied that he had done so and his descendants denied their promise to Allaah. Aadam later forgot his covenant to Allaah and so did his descendants and they all fell into error.”<sup>1</sup> Aadam ate from the forbidden tree due to his forgetting his promise to Allaah and Satan’s deceptive prodding, and most of mankind have ignored their responsibility to believe in God and worship Him alone, and have fallen into the worship of the creation.*

*Following that, the Prophet ( ﷺ ) said, “Allaah then pointed to some of the descendants which He had extracted from Aadam and his children and said, “I have created these people for Paradise and they will do the deeds of the people of Paradise.” He then pointed to the rest and said, “I have created these people for the Hellfire and they will do the deeds of the inhabitants of Hell.” When the Prophet ( ﷺ ) said that, one of his companions asked, “O Messenger of Allaah, what then is the point of doing good deeds?” The Prophet ( ﷺ ) replied, “Verily, if Allaah created one of His servants for Paradise, He helps him do the deeds of the people of Paradise until he dies doing one of their deeds, then He places him in Paradise because of it. But if He created a man for the Hellfire, He helps him do the deeds of its inhabitants until he*

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<sup>1</sup> From an authentic narration of Abu Hurayrah collected by at-Tirmidhee (Saheeh, see footnote 221, p. 241, of *al-'Aqeedah at-Tahaaweeyah*, 8th ed., 1984) edited by al-Albaanee).

dies doing one of their deeds, then He puts him in the Fire because of it.”<sup>1</sup> This statement of the Prophet ( ﷺ ) does not mean that people have no free will or choice between good and evil, for if that were so, the Judgement, reward and punishment would all be senseless. Allaah’s creation of a person for paradise is His creation of a person knowing full well before his creation that he will be among the people of paradise due to his choice of faith over disbelief and good over evil.

If someone sincerely believes in Allaah and tries to do good, Allaah will give him many opportunities to improve his belief and increase his good deeds. Allaah will never cause sincere belief to be wasted even if the believer falls off the path, He will help him get back on it. Allaah may punish him in this life when he goes off the right track to remind him of his errors and wake him up to make amends. In fact, Allaah will be so merciful as to take the life of the sincere believer while doing a good deed, thereby insuring that the believer will be among the fortunate dwellers of Paradise. If someone, on the other hand, disbelieves in Allaah and rejects righteousness, Allaah then makes evil deeds easy for him. Allaah gives him success when he does bad and that encourages him to do more evil until he dies in such a sinful state and is flung into the everlasting Fire because of his evil deeds.

### **The Fitrah**

Since Allaah made all human beings swear to His Godhood when He created Aadam, this oath is printed on the human soul

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<sup>1</sup> From an authentic narration of ‘Umar Ibn al-Khattaab collected by Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawood*, (English Trans.) vol. 3, p. 1318, no. 4686) and at-Tirmidhee and Ahmad. (See footnote 220, p. 240 of al-Albaanee’s authentication of *al-Aqeedah at-Tahaaweeyah* (8th ed., 1984).

even before it enters the fetus in the fifth month of pregnancy. So when a child is born, it has with it a natural belief in Allaah. This natural belief is called in Arabic the "*Fitrah*".<sup>1</sup> If the child were left alone, it would grow up aware of Allaah in His unity, but all children are affected by the pressures of their environment whether directly or indirectly. The Prophet (ﷺ) reported that Allaah said, "*I created My servants in the right religion but the devils made them go astray.*"<sup>2</sup> The Prophet (ﷺ) also said, "*Each child is born in a state of "Fitrah", but his parents make him a Jew or a Christian. It is like the way an animal gives birth to a normal offspring. Have you noticed any (young animal) born mutilated before you mutilate them?*"<sup>3</sup> So, just as the child's body submits to the physical laws which Allaah has put in nature, its soul also submits naturally to the fact that Allaah is its Lord and Creator. But its parents try to make it follow their own way and the child is not strong enough in the early stages of its life to resist or oppose its parents. The religion which the child follows at this stage is one of custom and upbringing and Allaah does not hold it to account or punish it for this religion. When the child matures in youth and clear proofs of the falsehood of its religion are brought to it, the adult must now follow the religion of knowledge and reason.<sup>4</sup> At this point the devils try their best to encourage him to stay as he is or to go further astray. Evils are made pleasing to him and he must now live in the midst of a struggle between his *Fitrah* and his desires in order to find the right road. If he chooses his *Fitrah*, Allaah will help him

<sup>1</sup> *Al- Aqeedah at-Tahaaweeyah*, (8th ed., 1984) p. 245.

<sup>2</sup> *Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1488, no. 6853.

<sup>3</sup> Collected by Muslim, (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1398, no. 6423) and al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English), vol. 8, pp. 389-90, no. 597).

<sup>4</sup> *Al-'Aqeedah at-Tahaaweeyah*, (5th ed., 1972), p. 273.

overcome his desires even though it may take most of his life to escape, for many people enter Islaam in their old age although most tend to do so before that.

Because of all these powerful forces fighting against the *Fitrah* Allaah chose certain righteous men and revealed to them clearly the right path in life. These men whom we call prophets were sent to help our *Fitrah* defeat its enemies. All the truths and good practices present in societies around the world today came from their teachings, and if it were not for their teachings, there would be no peace or safety in the world at all. For example, the laws of most Western countries are based on the “Ten Commandments” of Prophet Moses, like “Thou shalt not steal” and “Thou shalt not kill” etc., even though they claim to be “secular” governments, free from the influence of religion.

Thus, it is man’s duty to follow the way of the prophets since it is the only way which is truly in harmony with his nature. He should also be very careful not to do things simply because his parents and their parents did it, especially if knowledge reaches him that these practices are wrong. If he does not follow the truth, he will be like those misguided people about whom Allaah says in The Qur’aan,

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمُ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا أَلْفَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ  
ءَابَاءَنَا أُولَئِكَ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ شَيْئًا وَلَا  
يَهْتَدُونَ

**“If they are told to follow what Allaah has revealed, they say: ‘No, we will continue to follow what we found our foreparents doing!’ Even though their**

foreparents did not comprehend anything nor were they rightly guided”<sup>1</sup>

Allaah forbids us from obeying our parents if what they want us to do is against the way of the prophets. He said, in the Qur’aan,

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حُسْنًا وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ لِتُشْرِكَ بِي  
مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا

“We advise man to be good to his parents, but if they try to make you do in My name what you know to be false, do not obey them”<sup>2</sup>.

### Born Muslim:

Those who are fortunate to be born in Muslim families must be aware that all such “Muslims” are not automatically guaranteed paradise, because the Prophet (ﷺ) warned that a large part of the Muslim nation would follow the Jews and Christians so closely that if they entered a lizard hole Muslims would climb in after them.<sup>3</sup> He also said that before the Last Day some Muslims would actually worship idols.<sup>4</sup> All of these people will have Muslim names and consider themselves Muslims, but it will be

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<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-Baqarah 2:170.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-Ankaboot 29:8.

<sup>3</sup> Narrated by Abu Sa’eed al-Khudree and collected by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English), vol. 9, pp. 314-5, no. 422 and *Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1403, no. 6448).

<sup>4</sup> Narrated by Abu Hurayrah and collected by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim. (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1506, no. 6944 & 6945 and *Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English), vol. 9, p. 178, no. 232).

of no benefit to them on the Day of Judgement. Today, there are Muslims all around the world praying to the dead, building tombs and masjids over graves and even performing rites of worship around them. There are even some who claim to be Muslim and worship 'Alee as Allaah.<sup>1</sup> Some have turned the Qur'aan into a good luck charm which they hang on chains around their necks, in their cars or on key chains etc. Therefore, those born into such a Muslim world who blindly follow whatever their parents did or believed, have to stop and think whether they are simply a Muslim by chance or a Muslim by choice? Is Islaam what their parents, tribe, country, or nation did or does, or is it what the Qur'aan teaches and what the Prophet ( ﷺ ) and his companions did?

### **The Covenant:**

The covenant which every man made to Allaah during pre-creation was that he would recognize Allaah as his Lord and not direct any form of worship to others besides Him. This is the essential meaning of the "*Shahaadah*" (declaration of faith) which everyone must make in order to become a full fledged Muslim; *laa ilaaha illallaah* (there is no god but Allaah) also known as "*Kalimah at-Tawheed*" the statement of Allah's Unity. Bearing witness to God's unity in this life is only a confirmation of the primordial declaration made in the spiritual state. But the question which remains is: How is the covenant to be fulfilled?

The covenant is fulfilled by sincerely believing in *Tawheed* and putting that belief into practice in daily life. *Tawheed* is put into practice by avoiding all the acts of *Shirk* (setting up partners with God) and by closely following the last messenger whom

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<sup>1</sup> The *Nusayris* of Syria and the *Druzes* of Palestine and Lebanon.

Allaah sent as a practical and living example of life based on the principle of *Tawheed*. Because man has declared that Allaah is his Lord, he must then consider righteous deeds to be only those defined by Allaah and His Prophet (ﷺ) as being righteous, and evil deeds likewise. In so doing, the principle of *Tawheed* is put into practice mentally. This method is important because a deed may seem good when it is in fact evil. For example, it has been said that when a poor man wants a king to do something for him, it is better for the poor man to get a prince or someone near to the king to speak on his behalf. Based on that it is further said that if one really wants Allaah to answer his prayers, he should pray to the Prophet or a saint to ask Allaah for him because he is dirty with the many sins he commits daily. This may seem logical, but both Allaah and His Prophet (ﷺ) have clearly told man to pray directly to Allaah without any intermediaries.<sup>1</sup> Likewise a deed may seem evil when it is in fact good. For example, someone might point out that cutting off someone's hand for stealing is barbaric or that lashing someone for drinking alcohol is inhumane, and one might feel that such punishments are too harsh and not good, yet, Allaah and His Prophet have prescribed these punishments and the good results of their application speak for themselves.

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<sup>1</sup> Allaah has said in the Qur'aan:

وَقَالَ رَبُّكُمْ ادْعُونِي أَسْتَجِبْ لَكُمْ

“And your Lord says: ‘Call on Me; I will answer your prayer’ ” (Soorah al-Ghaafir, 40:60).

and the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “If you ask in prayer, ask only Allaah; and if you seek help, seek it only from Allaah.” (Reported by Ibn ‘Abbaas and collected by at-Tirmidhee. See *An-Nawawi’s Forty Hadith*, (English Trans.), p. 68).

Therefore, the covenant with Allaah can only be fulfilled by a Muslim by choice, regardless of whether his parents were Muslims or not, and the application of the covenant is, in fact, the implementation of the principles of Islaam itself. Man's *Fitrah* is the basis of Islaam, so when he practices Islaam in its totality, his outer actions and deeds come into harmony with the very nature in which Allaah created man's inner being. When this takes place, man unites his inner being with his outer being which is a key aspect of *Tawheed*. The result of this aspect of *Tawheed* is the creation of the truly pious man in the mold of, Aadam, to whom Allaah made the angels bow and whom Allaah chose to rule the earth. Because, only man who lives *Tawheed* can judge and rule the earth with true justice.

#### 4. CHAPTER ON CHARMS AND OMENS

In the first chapter on *Tawheed*, *Tawheed ar-Ruboobeeyyah* (Unity of Lordship) was defined as the realization of Allaah as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe in all of man's relations with Him. The creation, maintenance and eventual destruction of the universe and its contents are by Allaah's command and both goodluck and badluck occur according to Allaah's will. However, man, during all ages, has asked the question, "Is there any way of knowing before hand whether goodtimes or badtimes are coming?" For, if there is a way of knowing ahead of time, misfortune could then be avoided and success could be ensured. From the most ancient of times, some individuals have falsely claimed access to this hidden knowledge and the ignorant masses of mankind have flocked around them, paying huge sums to gain pieces of this vital information. Some of the contrived methods for averting misfortune became common knowledge; and, thus, a profusion of good-luck charms like those mentioned in this chapter can be found in most societies. Some of the imagined secret ways of knowing one's fortune also became common knowledge, and thus various types of omens and their interpretation can be found in all civilizations. There is, however, a body of this knowledge which has remained a secret, handed down from generation to generation, in the various forms of the occult arts of fortune-telling and magic.

It is very important that a clear Islamic concept of these prac-

tices be developed because of their widespread occurrence in human societies. Perhaps, even more important, is the fact that, if they are not clearly understood, a Muslim could easily fall into the major sin of *Shirk* which is at the root of these practices. In the following four chapters, the Islamic position in relationship to these claims which contradict Allaah's unique attributes (*Sifaat*) and promote the worship ('*Ebaadah*) of creation will be looked at in greater detail. Each claim will be analysed, based on the Qur'aan and the Prophet's ( ﷺ ) *Sunnah* and an Islamic ruling will be placed on each of them as a guideline for those who honestly seek the reality of *Tawheed*.

### Charms

It was the practice among the Arabs in the time of Prophet Muhammad ( ﷺ ) to wear arm bracelets, bangles, beaded necklaces, shells, etc., as charms to avert evil and bring good fortune. Talismans and amulets can also be found in all regions of the earth in a variety of forms. As was mentioned in previous chapters, faith in charms, amulets and talismans contradicts true belief in Allaah's *Ruboobeeyah* (Lordship) by attributing to created objects the power to avert evil and bring good fortune. Islaam opposed all manifestations of such beliefs which appeared in Arabia during the time of the last Prophet ( ﷺ ) in order to establish a foundation on the basis of which similar beliefs and practises would also be condemned and prohibited whenever and wherever they later appeared. Such beliefs, in fact provide the ideological basis for idol worship in most pagan societies and the charms themselves represent a branch of idolatry. This relationship can easily be seen in the Catholic branch of Christianity wherein Prophet Jesus is deified, his mother Mary and Saints are worshipped; and pictures, statues, and medallions with their imagined likenesses are kept and worn for good fortune.

When people accepted Islaam during the Prophet's (ﷺ) time, they often carried with them faith in charms collectively known in Arabic as *Tamaa'im* (sing *Tameemah*). Consequently, there are many recorded statements of the Prophet (ﷺ) in which he strictly forbade such practises. The following are only a few examples:

*'Emraan ibn Husayn reported that when the Prophet (ﷺ) saw a brass bangle on a man's upper arm, he said to him, "Woe be on you! What is this?" The man replied that it was to protect him from a sickness called al-Waahinah<sup>1</sup> The Prophet (ﷺ) then said, "Cast it off, for verily it would only increase your weakness. And, if you died with it on, you would never succeed."*<sup>2</sup>

Thus, the wearing of copper, brass or iron bracelets, bangles, and rings by the sick or the healthy in the belief that they will avert or cure sicknesses is strictly forbidden. Such practises also fall under the prohibition against the treatment of sickness with *Haraam* (forbidden) cures about which the Prophet (ﷺ) had said "Treat each other's sicknesses, but do not treat sicknesses with forbidden things."<sup>3</sup>

*Abu Waaqid al-Laythee also reported that when Allaah's messenger (ﷺ) set out for Hunayn<sup>4</sup>, they passed by a tree called Dhaatu Anwaat<sup>5</sup>. The idolators used to hang their weapons on*

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<sup>1</sup> Lit. weakness. Possibly referring to Arthritis.

<sup>2</sup> Collected by Ahmed, Ibn Maajah and Ibn Hibbaan.

<sup>3</sup> Collected by Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud*, (English Trans.) vol.3, p.1087, no. 3865) and al-Bayhaqee.

<sup>4</sup> The site of the last major battle between the Prophet (ﷺ) and Arabian pagan tribes which took place in the 10th year after the Hijrah.

<sup>5</sup> Lit. "that which has things hanging on it."

its branches for good fortune. Some of the Sahaabah who were new in Islaam asked the Prophet (ﷺ) to designate a similar tree for them. The Prophet (ﷺ) replied, "Subhaanallah!<sup>1</sup> This is just like what Moses' people said to him; **"Make a god for us just like their gods!"**<sup>2</sup> By the One in whose hand rests my soul, all of you will follow the path of those before you."<sup>3</sup>

In this *Hadeeth*, the Prophet (ﷺ) not only rejects the concept of good luck charms but he also prophesies that the Muslims will imitate the practices of the Christians and the Jews. *Dhikr* beads in common use among Muslims imitate the rosary of the Catholics; *Mawlid* (celebration of the Prophet's birthday) imitates Christmas; and the belief among many Muslims in saints and their intercession is no different in principle from that found in Christianity. The prophesy has already come true!

The Prophet (ﷺ) further emphasised the seriousness of wearing amulets by evoking Allaah's curse on those who do so. *Uqbah ibn 'Aamir* reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) once said, "May Allaah cause failure and unrest to whoever wears a talisman or puts it on others".<sup>4</sup>

The Prophet's (ﷺ) companions strictly followed the Prophet's (ﷺ) commands with regard to charms and amulets. Consequently, there are many recorded incidents in which they openly opposed such practices in the society as well as among their families whenever they appeared. 'Urwah reported that when the *Sahaabee*, Hudhayfah, visited a sickman

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<sup>1</sup> May Allaah be glorified.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-A'raaf 7:138.

<sup>3</sup> Collected by at-Tirmidhee, an-Nasaa'ee and Ahmad.

<sup>4</sup> Collected by Ahmad and al-Haakim.

and saw a bracelet on the man's upper arm, he pulled it off and broke it. Hudhayfah then recited the verse "Most of them who believe in Allaah commit Shirk."<sup>1</sup> "2 On another occasion, he touched the upper arm of a sick man and discovered a *Khayt* (cord bracelet) around it. When he asked the man what it was, the man replied, "It is something containing a spell made especially for me". Hudhayfah tore it off the man's arm and said, "If you had died with it on, I would never have made the funeral prayer for you!"<sup>3</sup> 'Abdullaah ibn Mas'oud's wife, Zaynab reported that once when Ibn Masoud saw a cord necklace around her neck and he asked what it was, she replied, "It is a cord in which a spell has been placed to help me." He snatched it from her neck, broke it up and said "Surely the family of 'Abdullaah has no need for *Shirk!* I have heard Allaah's messenger say, 'Verily spells, talismans and charms are *Shirk.*' "Zaynab replied, "Why are you saying this? My eye used to twitch and when I went to so and so, the Jew, he put a spell on it and it stopped twitching!" Ibn Masoud replied, "Verily it was only a devil prodding it with his hand so when you had it bewitched he left it. It would have been sufficient for you to have said as the Prophet ( ﷺ ) used to say:

«إذهب البأس رب الناس وأشف أنت الشافي لا شفاء إلا شفاءك،  
شفاءاً لا يغادره سقماً» .

(*Idh-habil-ba's Rabban-naas washfi antash-shaafee  
Laa shifaa' illaa shifaa'uk shiffaa'an laa  
yughaadiruhu saqamaa*) Remove the suffering, O  
Lord of mankind and heal it perfectly as You are the  
true healer. There is no cure except Your cure; a

<sup>1</sup> Soorah Yoosuf 12:106.

<sup>2</sup> Collected by Ibn Abee Haatim.

<sup>3</sup> Collected by Ibn Wakee'.

cure which is not followed by sickness! ”<sup>2</sup>

### Ruling on Charms

As was previously mentioned, the prohibition on amulets, talismans and charms is not limited to the Arabian forms opposed by the Prophet ( ﷺ ). Wherever objects are used for the same purpose, this prohibition also applies. The use of a variety of charms is widespread in Western society today in spite of its technological advancements and its scientific achievements. Many talismans have become so interwoven in everyday life that few people stop to think about them, yet, when their origins are exposed, the *Shirk* which lies at their base becomes quite obvious. The following are only two examples of popular talismans in Western society:

**The Rabbit's foot:** The hind paws of rabbits or gold and silver replicas of the hind paws are worn on chains and bracelets as good luck charms by millions in the West. The origin of this belief is based on the rabbit's habit of thumping their hind legs on the ground. According to the ancients, rabbits talked with the underground spirits when they thumped the ground. Hence, the paws were saved as a means of conveying one's wishes to the spirits as well as an instrument for bringing good luck in general.

**Horseshoes:** Many houses in America have horseshoes nailed over their doors, miniature versions

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<sup>1</sup> The *du'aa* is also reported by both 'Aa'eshah and Anas and collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, (Arabic-English), vol. 7, pp. 427-8, no. 5, 638-9) and Muslim (*Sahih Muslim*, (English Trans.), vol. 3, p. 1195, no. 5434).

<sup>2</sup> Collected by Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud*, (English Trans.), vol.3 p. 1089, no. 3874), Ahmad, Ibn Maajah and Ibn Hibbaan.

are also worn on charm bracelets, key chains or necklaces, in the belief that they will bring good luck. The origin of this belief can be found in ancient Greek mythology. In ancient Greece, horses were considered sacred animals. If a horse's shoe was hung over the door of a house, it was thought to bring good fortune. The open end of the horseshoe had to point upward, though, so it would hold the good luck. If it pointed downward, they believed that the good luck would spill out.

The belief in charms gives created things the divine power to avert misfortune and thus, those who subscribe to such beliefs contend that Allaah's *Ruboobeeyah* (Lordship) is limited by His creation. In fact, they consider the charms to be more powerful than Allaah, because the charms are thought to be able to prevent misfortune which Allaah has destined. Therefore, the belief in charms is an obvious form of *Shirk*, as Ibn Mas'oud had said in the previously mentioned *Hadeeth*. This ruling is further strengthened by the following *Hadeeth*.

*'Uqbah ibn 'Aamir reported that when a group of ten men came to the Prophet ( ﷺ ), he only accepted the oath of allegiance from nine. They asked, "Oh Messenger of Allaah, why did you take the covenant from nine of us and refuse this man?" The Prophet ( ﷺ ) answered, "Verily he has a talisman on him." The man then put his hand in his cloak, pulled out the talisman and broke it. When the Prophet ( ﷺ ) finished taking the oath from him, he turned and said, "Whoever wears a talisman has committed Shirk!"*<sup>1</sup>

***Qur'anic Charms:*** The *Sahaabah* like, Ibn Mas'oud, Ibn 'Ab-

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<sup>1</sup> Collected by at-Tirmidhee and Ahmad.

baas and Hudhayfah, were all opposed to the wearing of Qur'anic charms. Some Scholars among the *Taabi'oon* (students of the Prophet's companions) allowed it, but most were against it. However, the texts of the *Hadeeths* on talismans, do not distinguish between charms containing Qur'aan and those which do not. And, we have no record of the Prophet (ﷺ) wearing Qur'anic verses or allowing them to be worn. The wearing of Qur'anic charms also contradicts the prophetic method of breaking spells and averting evil. The *Sunnah* is to recite certain Qur'anic chapters (113th and 114th) and verses (e.g. *Aayatul-Kursee*, 2:255)<sup>1</sup> when evil approaches. The only prescribed method of gaining good fortune from the Qur'aan is also by its recitation and application. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "*Whoever recites a letter from Allaah's book earns a good deed and each good deed is worth ten times its value. I am not saying that Alif Laam Meem is one letter but that Alif is a letter, Laam is a letter and Meem is a letter.*"<sup>2</sup> Wearing the Qur'aan in an amulet is like a sick man given a prescription by a doctor. Instead of reading it and getting the medicine, he rolls it into a ball, puts it in a pouch and hangs it around his neck, believing that it will make him well.

As long as one who wears a Qur'anic charm believes that it will avert evil and bring good fortune, he has given a part of creation the power to cancel what Allaah has already destined. Consequently, he will depend on it instead of Allaah. This is the essence of the *Shirk* involving charms, as is evident from the following narration:

*'Eesaa ibn Hamzah said, "Once I came to visit 'Abdullaah ibn 'Ukaym and found Hamzah with him, I asked 'Abdullaah,*

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<sup>1</sup> Narrated by Abu Hurayrah and collected by Al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, (Arabic-English), vol. 6, p. 491, no. 530).

<sup>2</sup> Collected by Ahmad and al-Haakim.

“Don’t you wear a **Tameemah** (charm)?” He replied, “May Allaah give us refuge from that! Don’t you know that Allaah’s messenger (ﷺ) said, ‘Whoever wears a necklace or bracelet, depends on it’.”<sup>1</sup>

The practise of producing miniature Qur’aans so small as to be unreadable with the naked eye for the purpose of wearing in lockets invites to *Shirk*. Similarly ornaments with *Aayatul-Kursee* written in minute, virtually illegible, lettering and worn as pendants also encourage *Shirk*. One who wears such ornaments merely for decoration does not commit *Shirk*, but most who wear it do so for protection from evil, and, as such, fall into an aspect of *Shirk* in the fundamental Islamic principle of *Tawheed*.

Muslims have to carefully avoid using the Qur’aan as a good-luck charm. By hanging it in their cars, on key chains, bracelets, necklaces the way non-Muslims use their various amulets and talismans, they open the door to *Shirk*. Thus, a conscious effort has to be made to purify one’s belief of all that would detract from a pure concept of *Tawheed*.

### **Omens**

Pre-Islamic Arabs used to consider the direction in which birds and animals moved to be a sign of impending good or bad fortune and would plan their lives around such signs. The practise of reading good and bad omens in bird and animal movements was referred to as *Tiyarah* from the verb *Taara* which means “to take flight.” For example, if an individual set out on a journey and a bird flew over him and turned to the left, he would see in it a sign of impending bad fortune, turn around and return

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<sup>1</sup> Reported by Ibn Mas’oud and collected by Ahmad, at-Tirmidhee, and al-Haakim.

home. Islaam invalidated these practices because they corrode the foundation of *Tawheed al-'Ebaadah* and *Tawheed al-Asmaa was-Sifaat*.

1. by directing the form of worship known as trust (*Tawakkul*) to other than Allaah, and.
2. by attributing to man the power to predict the coming of good or evil, and the ability to avoid Allaah's destiny.

The basis on which the prohibition of *Tiyarah* is established is the *Hadeeth* of the Prophet's grandson, al-Husain, in which he reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "*Whoever does Tiyarah or has it done for himself, has his future prophesied or has someone bewitched, is not one of us.*"<sup>1</sup> "Us" here refers to the nation of Islaam. Therefore, *Tiyarah* is considered among the acts which puts one who believes in it outside the fold of Islam. The Prophet (ﷺ) also negated the effects of *Tiyarah* in another *Hadeeth* reported by Mu'aawiyah ibn al-Hakam. *Mu'aawiyah told the Prophet (ﷺ), "There are some among us who follow bird omens." The Prophet (ﷺ) replied, "It is only something you made up by yourselves, so do not let it stop you."*<sup>2</sup> That is, do not let it stop you from doing what you want to do, since such omens are all fictitious concoctions of man's imagination which have no reality. Thus, Allaah's Prophet (ﷺ) explained clearly that Allaah, most Glorious, did not make the direction in which birds fly a sign of anything. No success or calamity which occurs is caused by their motion of flight or may be foretold by it, even if some events happen to coincide with pre-Islamic concepts about their motion.

The *Sahaabah* (companions of the Prophet [ﷺ]) strictly

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<sup>1</sup> Collected by at-Tirmidhee.

<sup>2</sup> *Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.,) vol.4 p.1209, no. 5532.

rejected all manifestations of the belief in bird omens whenever they found them expressed by their own companions and students. For example 'Ikrimah said, "Once when we were sitting with Ibn 'Abbaas, a bird flew over us and screeched. A man from among the group then exclaimed, "Good! Good!" Ibn 'Abbaas reprimanded him saying, 'There is neither good nor evil in it.'"<sup>1</sup> Similarly, the Taabi'oon (students of the *Sahaabah*) also rejected all forms of belief in omens expressed by their own students from among the third generation of Muslims. For example, once a crow screeched while Taawoos was on a journey with one of his friends and his companion said, "Good!" Taawoos replied, "What is the good in that? Do not accompany me any further."<sup>2</sup>

There is however a statement attributed to the Prophet (ﷺ) in *Saheeh al-Bukhaaree*<sup>3</sup> whose meaning is rather dubious; "*Bad omens are in three things: women, riding animals, and houses.*"<sup>4</sup> 'Aaeshah rejected this narration saying, "By the One who revealed the *Furqaan* (Qur'aan) to Abul-Qaasim<sup>5</sup>, whoever relates it has lied. Allaah's messenger (ﷺ) said that the people of ignorance used to say, 'Surely there are *Tiyarah* (bad omens) in women, houses and beasts of burden.' Then she recited the verse:

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ إِلَّا فِي

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in *Tayseer al-Azeez al-Hameed*, p. 428.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> The most authentic collection of *Hadeeths* (Prophetic traditions).

<sup>4</sup> *Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English), vol. 7, pp. 447-8, no. 666.

<sup>5</sup> Abdul Qaasim was the Prophet's (ﷺ) pet name. The oath here means "by Allaah."

## كِتَابٌ مِّن قَبْلِ أَنْ نَبْرَأَهَا

“No affliction strikes in the earth nor befalls you except according to what was written prior.”<sup>1 2</sup>

The *Hadeeth*, however, is sound, but it should be interpreted according to another of its narrations which is more specific; “*If there were to be bad omens, they would have been in horses, women and places of residence.*”<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the Prophet (ﷺ) was not confirming the existence of bad omens. He was only pointing out the areas in which it was most likely to occur, if it were to be real. The reason why these three were specified was due to the frequency of occurrence of misfortune associated with them due to the fact that in those days they were the three most important things in a man’s life. Consequently, the Prophet (ﷺ) prescribed certain prayers of refuge to be said when taking possession of them or entering them. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “*If any of you marries a woman or hires a servant he should take a hold of her forelock, mention the name of Allaah, Most Glorious, pray for blessing, then say:*

«اللهم إني أسألك خيرها وخير ما جبلتها عليه وأعوذ بك من شرها  
وشر ما جبلتها عليه.»

*Allaahumma innee as-aluka khayrahaa wa khayra  
maa jabaltahaa alayh wa a'oudhu bika min shar-  
rihaa wa sharri maa jabaltahaa alayh.*

<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-Hadeed 57:22.

<sup>2</sup> Collected by Ahmad, al-Haakim and Ibn Khuzaymah.

<sup>3</sup> *Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English) p.435, no. 649, *Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.4, p.1208, nos:5528 & 5529 and *Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), vol.3, p.1099, no. 3911.

Oh Allaah I ask You for the best of her and the best of what you have made a part of her nature. I also seek refuge in You from her evil and the evil You have made a part of her nature.

*If he buys a camel let him take hold of the upper-most part of its hump and say likewise.*"<sup>1</sup> It was also reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said that if any of us enters a house he should say:

«أعوذ بكلمات الله التامات من شر ما خلق».

*A'oodhu bi kalimaatillaah at-taammaati min sharri maa khalaq.*

I seek refuge in the perfect words of Allaah, from the evil which He has created."<sup>2</sup>

The following is also another tradition which appears to support omens. *Anas ibn Maalik quoted Yahyaa ibn Sa'eed as saying that a woman came to Allaah's messenger and said, "Oh Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) there is a house whose inhabitants were many and their wealth was abundant. Then their numbers dwindled and the wealth disappeared. Can we leave it?" The Prophet (ﷺ) replied, "Leave it for it is cursed by Allaah."*<sup>3</sup> The Prophet (ﷺ) informed them that leaving it was not a form of *Tiyarah* since the place had become a burden on them psychologically due to

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<sup>1</sup> Reported by 'Amr ibn Shu'aib and collected by Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), vol. 2, p. 579, no. 2155) and Ibn Maajah.

<sup>2</sup> Reported by Khawlah bint Hakeem and collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1421, no. 6521).

<sup>3</sup> Collected by Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), vol. 3, pp. 1099-100, no. 3913) and Maalik (Muhammad Rahimuddin, *Muwatta Imam Malik*. (English Trans.), (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf. 1980), p. 413, no. 1758).

misfortune and loneliness. This is a natural feeling which Allaah has placed in man. Whenever man experiences evil or misfortune in or from a thing, he tends to dislike it and wants to get as far away from it as possible, even though the thing did not actually cause the misfortune. It should also be noted that this request took place after misfortune had afflicted them and not before. It is correct to refer to a place or people as being cursed by Allaah due to the misfortune which befalls them. Cursed in the sense that they have been punished by Allaah for some evil which they have done. Likewise, man tends to love and want to be near whatever brings him good fortune and success. This feeling is not in itself *Tiyarah*, although, when it is misplaced it can lead to *Tiyarah* and *Shirk*. The transition takes place when an individual tries to avoid places and things in which others had misfortune or when he tries to seek out those in which others had good fortune. He begins to attribute the good and bad fortune to the places and things themselves and in time he may even perform certain acts of worship there.

### **Fa'l (Good Omen)**

Anas reported that the Prophet ( ﷺ ) said, “*There is no contagion<sup>1</sup> nor Tiyarah, but I like Fa'l.*” *The Companions then asked,*

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<sup>1</sup> In another narration reported by Abu Hurayrah and collected by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim in which the Prophet ( ﷺ ) denied the existence of contagion, a bedouin asked, “*Oh Messenger of Allaah what about the case of a healthy herd of camels in the desert, when a diseased camel is brought among them and they all get sick because of it?*” *The Prophet replied “So who infected the first one?” (Sahih Al-Bukhari (Arabic - English), vol.7 pp.411-12, no. 612) and Sahih Muslim (English Trans.), vol.4, p.1206, no. 5507, see also Sunan Abu Dawud (English Trans.), vol. 3, p. 1097, no. 3907). The Prophet ( ﷺ ) here denies contagion based on pre-Islamic beliefs in which its cause was attributed to spirits and gods besides Allaah.*

“What then is *Fa’l*?” He replied, “A good word.”<sup>1</sup> The recognition of bad omens in things indicates bad thoughts about Allaah and the presence of ideas containing *Shirk*. Although the belief in good omens tends to be more positive in its approach to Allaah, it still involves the *Shirk* of assigning divine powers to created things. This is why the *Sahaabah* were very surprised when the Prophet (ﷺ) expressed a liking for *Fa’l*, a good omen. The Prophet (ﷺ), however, defined for them the limited aspect of *Fa’l* which is Islamically acceptable. It is the use of optimistic terms. For example, nicknaming a sick person “*Saalim*” (well) or one who has lost something “*Waajid*” (finder). The use of these and similar terms revive hope and optimism in the unfortunate and produce feelings of well being. Believers are required to maintain optimism about Allaah at all times.<sup>2</sup>

### The Islamic Ruling on Omens

From the preceding *Hadeeths* it can clearly be seen that *Tiyarah* refers to the general belief in omens. The principle of deriving fortune forecasts from bird movements has been rejected in its totality by the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (ﷺ). The ancient Arabs took their omens from birds and other nations take theirs from elsewhere, but, the principle involved is the same. Often when the origins of these omens are identified, the *Shirk* in them becomes most obvious. The following are only a few of the countless omens presently observed in Western society:

**Knock on Wood:** When someone is thankful for

<sup>1</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English), vol.7, p.436, no. 651) and Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.4, p.1208, no. 5519). See also *Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), vol.3, p.1098, no. 3906.

<sup>2</sup> *Tayseer al-'Azeez al-Hameed*, pp. 434-5.

something and hopes that his luck will not change he says, "Knock on wood", and looks around for some wood to knock on. The origin of this belief goes back to the time when people in Europe thought that gods lived inside trees. To ask the tree-god a favor they would touch the tree. If the wish were granted they would touch the tree again to thank the god.

**Spilling Salt:** If salt is spilled, many believe that misfortune will shortly follow, so the spilled salt is thrown over the left shoulder to counteract it. The origin of this omen lies in the ability of salt to keep things fresh. This was believed by the ancients to be due to its magical powers. Thus, spilling salt became a warning of evil. Since evil spirits were thought to live on one's left side, throwing the spilled salt over the left shoulder was supposed to satisfy the evil spirits.

**Breaking a Mirror:** Many people believe that breaking a mirror accidentally is a sign of seven years of bad luck. Ancient people thought that their reflections in water were their souls. So if their reflections were shattered (e.g. if someone threw a pebble in the water), then their souls were also shattered. When mirrors were made this belief was transferred to them also.

**Black cats:** The crossing of a black cat in front of one's path signals the coming of bad luck to many. This belief originated in the Middle Ages when people believed that black cats were witches pets. Witches were supposed to make magic brews by

mixing the brains of black cats with parts of toads, snakes and insects. If a witch's black cat lived for seven years, without ending up in a brew, the cat was supposed to change into a witch.

**Number 13:** In America the no. 13 is considered unlucky and thus, in many of the apartment buildings the 13th floor is called the 14th. Friday the 13th is considered particularly unlucky and many people avoid travel or special engagements on this day. And if anything bad befalls them on that day, they immediately attribute it to the day itself. This phenomena is not restricted to the common people as some might mistakenly imagine. For example, the flight commander of the Apollo moonshot of 1970, which came near to disaster, explained on his return that he should have known that something was going to happen. When asked why, he replied that the flight took place on Friday the 13th, blast off was at 1300 hours (ie, one o'clock), and the flight number was Apollo 13.

The origin of this belief goes back to the evening of Jesus' last supper as told in the Bible. At the Last Supper, there were 13 people. One of the 13 was Judas, the man who supposedly betrayed Jesus. Friday the 13th is supposed to be particularly unlucky for at least two reasons. First, Friday is the day Jesus was supposed to have been crucified. And, according to medieval belief, Friday is the day when witches held their meetings.

Allaah's ability to cause good and bad fortune is being shared by His creation in these beliefs. Also fear of misfortune and hope

for good fortune which should only be directed to Allaah, is being directed to other than Allaah. Knowledge of the future and the unseen is also being claimed, and this quality belongs only to Allaah. Allaah clearly pointed this out in His attribute '*Aalim al-Ghayb*, 'Knower of the Unseen'. Allaah even has the Prophet (ﷺ) confess in Qur'aan that had he known the unseen future, he would have avoided all misfortune!

Therefore the belief in omens can clearly be classified as an act of *Shirk* in all of the major areas of *Tawheed*. This ruling is further substantiated by the *Hadeeth* reported by Ibn Mas'oud in which Allaah's Messenger (ﷺ) said, "*Tiyarah is Shirk! Tiyarah is Shirk! Tiyarah is Shirk!*"<sup>2</sup> 'Abdullaah ibn 'Amr ibn al-'Aas also reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "*Whoever is prevented from doing something by Tiyarah, has committed Shirk.*" *The companions asked, "What is its atonement?" He replied, "Say:*

«اللهم لا خير إلا خيرك ولا طير إلا طيرك ولا إله غيرك».

(*Allaahumma laa khayra illaa khayruk wa laa Tayra illaa Tayruk wa laa elaaha ghayruk*).

Oh Allaah, there is no good except Your good, nor birds except Yours, and there is no god beside You."<sup>3</sup>

From the preceding *Hadeeths*, it can clearly be seen that the *Tiyarah* was not in any way limited to birds. It includes all forms of beliefs in omens. These beliefs vary in form from place to

<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-A'raaf 7:188.

<sup>2</sup> Collected by Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), vol.1.3, pp. 1096-7, no. 3901), at-Tirmidhee and Ibn Maajah.

<sup>3</sup> Collected by Ahmad and at-Tabaraanee.

place and from time to time but they all have the same common denominator of *Shirk*.

Therefore, Muslims are obliged to carefully avoid all feelings which stem from these beliefs. If they find themselves unconsciously acting on the basis of these beliefs, they should seek refuge in Allaah and say the previously mentioned *Du'aa* (prayer). This area may seem quite insignificant for so much fuss to be made about it. Islaam, however, puts stress on this area because it represents the seed from which Major *Shirk* may grow. The worship of idols, men, stars, etc, did not come about at one instant in time. Such practices of idolatry developed over long periods of time. Man's belief in Allaah's unity, was gradually eroded as the seed of Major *Shirk* took root and grew. Thus, Islaam, by providing guidance in all aspects of human life, tries to root out the evil seeds before they can take root and destroy the very foundation of a Muslim's belief.

## **5. CHAPTER ON FORTUNETELLING**

As was stated in the previous chapter, there are among mankind, people who claim knowledge of the unseen and the future. They are known by various names, among them: fortuneteller, soothsayer, foreseer, augur, magician, prognosticator, oracle, astrologer, palmist, etc. Fortunetellers use various methods and mediums from which they claim to extract their information, among them: reading tea-leaves, drawing lines, writing numbers, palm-reading, casting horoscopes, crystal ball gazing, rattling bones, throwing sticks, etc. This chapter will deal with the various fortunetelling arts, with the exception of magic, which will be dealt with in the following chapter.

Practitioners of occult arts which claim to reveal the unseen and predict the future can be divided into two main categories:

1. Those who have no real knowledge or secrets but depend on telling their customers about general incidences which happen to most people. They often go through a series of meaningless rituals, then make calculatedly general guesses. Some of their guesses, due to their generality, usually come true. Most people tend to remember the few predictions that come true and quickly forget the many which do not. This tendency is a result of the fact that after some time all the predictions tend to become half-forgotten thoughts in the subconscious until something happens to trigger their recall. For example, it has become a common practice in North America to publish, at the beginning of each year the various

predictions of famous fortunetellers. When a survey was taken of the various predictions for the year 1980, it was found that the most accurate fortuneteller among them was only 24% accurate in her predictions!

2. The second group are those who have made contact with the *Jinn*. This group is of most importance because it usually involves the grave sin of *Shirk*, and those involved often tend to be highly accurate in their information and thus present a real *Fitnah* (temptation) for both Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

### World of The Jinn

Some people have attempted to deny the reality of the *Jinn* about whom the Qur'aan has devoted a whole chapter, Soorah al-Jinn (72). By relying on the literal meaning of the word *Jinn* which comes from the verb *Janna*, *Yajunnu*: "to cover, hide or conceal", they claim that the word *Jinn* really refers to "clever foreigners". Others have even stated that a *Jinn* is a human who does not have a true mind in his head but he has a fiery nature. But, the reality is that the *Jinn* represent another creation of Allaah which co-exists with man on the earth. Allaah created the *Jinn* before He created mankind, and He also used a different set of elements than those used for man. Allaah said:

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِنْ حَمِإٍ مَسْنُونٍ  
وَالْجَانَّ خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ مِنْ نَارِ السَّمُورِ

**"Verily we created man from dried clay, from black putrid mud. And we created the *Jinn* before that from a fiery wind."**<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-Hijr 15:26-27.

They were named *Jinn* because they are hidden from the eyes of mankind. Iblees (Satan) is from the world of the *Jinn*, even though he was among the angels when they were commanded by Allaah to prostrate to Aadam. When he refused to prostrate and was asked why, Allaah said:

قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ نَّارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ

**“He said, ‘I am better than him. You (Allaah) created me from fire and You created him from clay!’ ”<sup>1</sup>**

‘Aa’esha reported that the Prophet ( ﷺ ) said, “*The angels were created from light and the Jinn from smokeless fire,*”<sup>2</sup> Allaah also said,

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا  
إِبْلِيسَ كَانَ مِنَ الْجِنِّ

**“And when We told the angels to prostrate to Aadam, they all prostrated except Iblees. He was of the Jinn.”<sup>3</sup>**

Therefore it is incorrect to consider him a fallen angel or the like.

The *Jinn* may first be divided into three broad categories in relation to their modes of existence. The Prophet ( ﷺ ) said: “*There are three types of Jinn: One type which flies in the air all*

<sup>1</sup> Soorah Saad 38:76.

<sup>2</sup> Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.4, p. 1540, no. 7134).

<sup>3</sup> Soorah al-Kahf 18:50.

the time, another type which exists as snakes and dogs, and an earthbound type which resides in one place or wanders about.”<sup>1</sup>

The *Jinn* may be further divided into two categories in relationship to their faith: Muslims (believers) and *Kaafirs* (disbelievers). Allaah refers to the believing *Jinn* in Soorah al-Jinn as follows:

قُلْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ أَنَّهُ اسْتَمَعَ نَفَرٌ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ فَقَالُوا إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا قُرْءَانَ أَنَا  
عَجَبًا ۖ يَهْدِي إِلَى الرُّشْدِ فَآمَنَّا بِهِ وَلَمْ نُشْرِكْ بِرَبِّنَا أَحَدًا ۚ  
وَأَنَّهُ تَعَالَى جَدُّ رَبِّنَا مَا اتَّخَذَ صَاحِبَةً وَلَا وَلَدًا ۚ وَأَنَّهُ كَانَ  
يَقُولُ سَفِينًا عَلَى اللَّهِ شَطَطًا

“Say: It has been revealed to me that a group of *Jinn* listened and said, ‘Verily we have heard a marvellous Qur’aan. It guides unto righteousness so we have believed in it. And, we will never make partners with our Lord. He, may our Lord’s glory be exalted, has not taken a wife nor a son. What the foolish ones among us used to say about Allaah is a horrible lie.”<sup>2</sup>

وَأَنَا مِنَّا الْمُسْلِمُونَ وَمِنَّا الْقَاسِطُونَ فَمَنْ أَسْلَمَ فَأُولَئِكَ  
تَحَرَّوْا رَشَدًا وَأَمَّا الْقَاسِطُونَ فَكَانُوا لِجَهَنَّمَ حَطَبًا

“And there are among us Muslims and others who are unjust. Whoever accepts Islaam has sought out

<sup>1</sup> Collected by at-Tabaree and al-Haakim.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-Jinn 72:1-4.

**the right path. As for those who are unjust, they will be fuel for the Hell fire.”<sup>1</sup>**

The disbelievers among the *Jinn* are referred to by various names in both Arabic and English: *Ifreet, Shaytaan, Qareen*, demons, devils, spirits, ghosts, etc. They try to misguide man in various ways. Whoever listens to them and becomes a worker for them is referred to as human *Shaytaan* (devil). Allaah said:

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَيْطَانِ الْإِنْسِ وَالْجِنِّ

**“Likewise, we have made for every Prophet an enemy, *Shaytaans* from among mankind and the *Jinn*.”<sup>2</sup>**

Every human has an individual *Jinn* accompanying him referred to as a *Qareen* (i.e. companion). This is a part of man’s test in this life. The *Jinn* encourage his lower desires and constantly try to divert him from righteousness. The Prophet (ﷺ) referred to this relationship as follows, “Everyone of you has been assigned a companion from the *Jinn*.” The *Sahaabah* asked, “Even you, O Messenger of Allaah?” And the Prophet replied, “Even me, except that Allaah has helped me against him and he has submitted. Now he only tells me to do good.”<sup>3</sup>

Prophet Sulaymaan (Solomon) was given miraculous control over the *Jinn*, as a sign of his prophethood. Allaah said:

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<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-Jinn 72:14-15.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-An’aam 6:112.

<sup>3</sup> Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.4, p. 1472, no. 6757).

وَحَشْرَ لِسُلَيْمَانَ جُنُودَهُ مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنْسِ وَالطَّيْرِ فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ

“And, we gathered for Sulaymaan his army from the *Jinn*, mankind and the birds.”<sup>1</sup> and they were all kept in order and ranks.

But this power was not given to anyone else. No one else is allowed to control the *Jinn* and no one can. The Prophet said, “Verily an ‘Ifreet<sup>2</sup> from among the *Jinn* spat on me last night trying to break my *Salaah*. However Allaah let me overpower him and I wanted to tie him to one of the columns in the masjid so that you all could see him in the morning. Then, I remembered my brother Sulaymaan’s prayer: ‘Oh my Lord, forgive me and bestow on me a kingdom not allowed to anyone after me.’”<sup>3</sup> <sup>4</sup>

Man cannot gain control over the *Jinn* as this was a special miracle given only to Prophet Sulaymaan. In fact, contact with the *Jinn* in circumstances other than possession, or accident is most often made by the performance of sacrilegious acts despised and forbidden in the religion.<sup>5</sup> The evil *Jinn* summoned in this fashion may aid their partners in sin and disbelief in God. Their goal is to draw as many others as they can into the gravest of sins, the worship of others besides or along with God.

<sup>1</sup> Soorah an-Naml 27:17.

<sup>2</sup> A strong or powerful evil *Jinn* (E. W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, (Cambridge, England: Islamic Texts Society, 1984), vol. 2, p. 2089).

<sup>3</sup> Soorah Saad 38:35.

<sup>4</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English), vol.1, p. 268 no. 75) and Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.1, p. 273, no. 1104).

<sup>5</sup> Abu Ameenah Bilal Philips, *Ibn Taymeeyah's Essay on the Jinn*, (Riyadh: Tawheed Publications, 1989), p. 21.

Once contact and contract with the *Jinn* are made by fortunetellers, the *Jinn* may inform them of certain events in the future. The Prophet (ﷺ) described how the *Jinn* gather information about the future. He related that the *Jinn* were able to travel to the lower reaches of the heavens and listen in on some of the information about the future which the angels pass among themselves. They would then return to the earth and feed the information to their human contacts.<sup>1</sup> This used to happen a lot prior to the prophethood of Muhammad (ﷺ) and fortunetellers were very accurate in their information. They were able to gain positions in the royal courts and enjoyed much popularity and were even worshipped in some regions of the world.

After the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) began his mission the situation changed. Allaah had the angels guard the lower reaches of the heavens carefully, and most of the *Jinn* were chased away with meteors and shooting stars. Allaah described this phenomena in the following Qur'anic statement made by one of the *Jinn*,

وَأَنَّا لَمَسْنَا السَّمَاءَ فَوَجَدْنَاهَا مُلِئَتْ حَرَسًا شَدِيدًا وَشُهَبًا  
وَأَنَّا كُنَّا نَقْعُدُ مِنْهَا مَقْعِدًا لِّلسَّمْعِ فَمَن يَسْمَعُ الْآنَ يَجِدِلْهُ  
شَهَا بَارِصِدًا

**“We (the *Jinn*) had sought out the heavens but found it filled with strong guardians and meteors. We used to sit on high places in order to listen, but whoever**

<sup>1</sup> Collected by al-Bukhâaree and Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.4, p. 1210, no. 5538).

listens now finds a flame waiting for him.”<sup>1</sup>

Allaah also said,

وَحَفِظْنَاهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْطَانٍ رَجِيمٍ ﴿١٧﴾ إِلَّا مَنْ أَسْرَقَ السَّمْعَ  
فَاتَّبَعَهُ وَشِهَابٌ مُبِينٌ

“And We have guarded it (the heavens) from every cursed devil, except the one who is able to snatch a hearing and, he is pursued by a brightly burning flame.”<sup>2</sup>

Ibn ‘Abbaas said, “When the Prophet ( ﷺ ) and a group of his companions set out for the Ukaadh market, the devils were blocked from hearing information in the heavens. Meteors were let loose on them, so they returned to their people. When their people asked what happened, they told them. Some suggested that something must have happened, so they spread out over the earth seeking the cause. Some of them came across the Prophet and his companions while they were in *Salaah* and they heard the Qur’aan. They said to themselves that this must have been what blocked them from listening. When they returned to their people they told them, ‘Verily we have heard a marvellous Qur’aan. It guides unto righteousness so we believed in it. And we will never make partners with our Lord.’<sup>3,4</sup> Thus, the *Jinn*

<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-Jinn 72:-8-9.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-Hijr 15:17-18.

<sup>3</sup> Soorah al-Jinn 72:1-2.

<sup>4</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English), vol.6, pp. 415-6, no. 443) Muslim, (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.1, pp. 243-44, no. 908), at-Tirmidhee and Ahmad.

could no longer gather information about the future as easily as they could before the Prophet's (ﷺ) mission. Because of that, they now mix their information with many lies. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: *"They (the Jinn) would pass the information back down until it reaches the lips of a magician or fortuneteller. Sometimes a meteor would overtake them before they could pass it on. If they passed it on before being struck, they would add to it a hundred lies."*<sup>1</sup> 'Aa'eshah reported that when she asked Allaah's messenger (ﷺ) about fortunetellers, he replied that they were nothing. She then mentioned that the fortunetellers sometimes told them things which were true. The Prophet (ﷺ) said: *"That is a bit of truth which the Jinn steals and cackles in the ear of his friend; but he mixes along with it a hundred lies."*<sup>2</sup>

Once while 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab was sitting, a handsome man<sup>3</sup> passed by him. 'Umar said: "If I'm not wrong, this person is still following his religion of pre-Islamic times or perhaps he was one of their fortunetellers." He ordered that the man be brought to him and asked him about what he suspected. The man replied, "I have never seen a day like this where a Muslim is faced with such accusations." 'Umar said, "Verily I am determined that you should inform me." The man then said, "I was their fortuneteller in the time of ignorance." On hearing that 'Umar asked, "Tell me about the strangest thing which your

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<sup>1</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English), vol.8, p. 150, no. 232) and at-Tirmidhee.

<sup>2</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English), vol. 7, p. 439, no. 657) and Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.4, p. 1209, no. 5535).

<sup>3</sup> His name was Sawaad ibn Qaarib.

female *Jinn* told you.” The man then said, “One day, while I was in the market, she came to me all worried and said, ‘Have you not seen the *Jinns* in their despair after their disgrace? And their following of she-camels and their riders.’<sup>1</sup>” ‘Umar interjected, “It is true.”<sup>2</sup>

The *Jinns* are also able to inform their human contact of the relative future. For example, when someone comes to a fortune-teller, the fortune-teller’s *Jinn* gets information from the man’s *Qareen*<sup>3</sup> of what plans he had made prior to his coming. So the fortune-teller is able to tell him that he will do this or that, or go here or there. By this method, the real fortune-teller is also able to learn about a stranger’s past in vivid detail. He is able to tell a total stranger of his parents’ names, where he was born, the acts of his childhood, etc. The ability to vividly describe the past is one of the marks of a true fortune-teller who has made contact with the *Jinn*. Because the *Jinn* are able to traverse huge distances instantaneously, they are also able to gather huge stores of information about hidden things, lost articles and unobserved events. Proof of this ability can be found in the Qur’aan, in the story about Prophet Sulaymaan and Bilqees, the Queen of Sheba. When Queen Bilqees came to see him, he asked the *Jinn* to bring her throne from her land. “An *‘Ifreet* from among the *Jinns* said, **‘I will bring it for you before you can get up from your place. Verily, I am strong and trustworthy for the assignment.’**<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> After the *Jinn* were prevented from eavesdropping on the angels, they had to follow the Arabs to find out why they were prevented.

<sup>2</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English), vol.5, pp. 131-2, no. 206).

<sup>3</sup> The *Jinn* assigned to every human being.

<sup>4</sup> Soorah an-Naml 27:39-40.

## The Islamic Ruling on Fortunetelling

Because of the sacrilege and heresy involved in fortunetelling, Islaam has taken a very strong stance towards it. Islaam opposes any form of association with those who practice fortunetelling, except to advise them to give up their forbidden practices.

### Visitation of Fortunetellers

The Prophet ( ﷺ ) laid down principles which clearly forbade any form of visitation of fortunetellers. Safiyyah reported from Hafsaah (wife of the Prophet) that the Prophet ( ﷺ ) said, "*The Salaah of whoever approaches a fortuneteller and asks him about anything will not be accepted for 40 days and nights.*"<sup>1</sup> The punishment in this *Hadeeth* is for simply approaching a fortuneteller and asking him questions out of curiosity. This prohibition is further supported by Mu'aawiyah Ibn al-Hakam as-Salamee's *Hadeeth* in which he said, "*O Messenger of Allaah, verily there are some people among us who visit oracles.*" The Prophet ( ﷺ ) replied, "*Do not go to them.*"<sup>2</sup> Such a severe punishment has been assigned for only visitation because it is the first step to belief in fortunetelling. If one went there doubtful about its reality, and some of the fortuneteller's predictions come true, one will surely become a true devotee of the fortuneteller and an ardent believer in fortunetelling. The individual who approaches a fortuneteller is still obliged to make his compulsory *Salaah* throughout the 40 day period, even though he gets no reward from his prayers. If he abandons the *Salaah* all together, he has committed another major sin. This is similar to the Islamic ruling in the case of *Salaah* on or in stolen property,

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<sup>1</sup> Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.4, p. 1211, no. 5540).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol.4, p. 1209, no. 5532.

according to the majority of Jurists. They hold that whenever obligatory *Salaah* is performed, it produces two results under normal circumstances:

1. It removes the obligation of that prayer from the individual.
2. It earns him a reward.

If *Salaah* is performed on or in stolen property it removes the obligation of *Salaah*, but it is devoid of reward.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the Prophet ( ﷺ ) forbade praying the same obligatory prayers twice.

### **Belief In Fortunetellers**

The Islamic ruling with regard to anyone who visits a fortuneteller believing that he knows the unseen and the future is that of *Kufr* (disbelief). Abu Hurayrah and al-Hasan both reported from the Prophet ( ﷺ ) that he said, “*Whosoever approaches a fortuneteller and believes what he says, has disbelieved in what was revealed to Muhammad.*”<sup>2</sup> Such a belief assigns to creation some of Allaah’s attributes with regard to the knowledge of the unseen and the future. Consequently, it destroys *Tawheed al-Asmaa was-Sifaat*, and represents a form of *Shirk* in this aspect of *Tawheed*.

The ruling of *Kufr* includes, by analogy (*Qiyaas*), those who read the books and writings of fortunetellers, listen to them on the radio or watch them on the T.V., as, these are the most common means used by 20th century fortunetellers to spread their predictions.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted from an-Nawawee in *Tayseer al-'Azeez al-Hameed*, p. 407.

<sup>2</sup> Collected by Ahmad. Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), vol. 3, p. 1095, no. 3895) and al-Bayhaqee.

Allaah clearly states in al-Qur'aan that no one knows the unseen besides Him. Not even the Prophet Muhammad ( ﷺ ). Allaah said:

وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ

“With Him are the keys to the unseen and none knows it except Him alone.”<sup>1</sup>

Then he told the Prophet Muhammad ( ﷺ ),

قُلْ لَا أَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِي نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ وَلَوْ كُنْتُ  
أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ لَأَسْتَكْثَرْتُ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ وَمَا مَسَّنِيَ السُّوءُ

“Say! I have no power to bring good to myself nor avert harm but it is only as Allaah wills. If it were that I knew the unseen, I would have multiplied the good and no evil would have touched me.”<sup>2</sup>

And he also said:

قُلْ لَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الْغَيْبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

“Say! None in the heavens nor the earth knows the unseen except Allaah”<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, all the various methods used around the world by oracles, fortune-tellers, and the likes, are forbidden to Muslims.

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<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-An'aam 6:59.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-A'raaf 7:188.

<sup>3</sup> Soorah an-Nahl 27:65.

Palm-reading, I-Ching, fortune cookies, tea leaves as well as Zodiacal signs and Bio-rhythm computer programs, all claim to inform those who believe in them about their future. However, Allaah has stated in no uncertain terms that He alone knows the future:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ عِلْمُ السَّاعَةِ وَيُنزِلُ الْغَيْثَ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا فِي  
الْأَرْحَامِ وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ مَّاذَا تَكْسِبُ غَدًا  
وَمَا تَدْرِي نَفْسٌ بِأَيِّ أَرْضٍ تَمُوتُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ

**“Verily the knowledge of the Hour is with Allaah alone. It is He who sends down the rain and knows the contents of the wombs. No one knows what he will earn tomorrow nor in which land he will die, but Allaah is all-knowing and aware.”<sup>1</sup>**

Therefore, Muslims must take utmost care in dealing with books, magazines, newspapers as well as individuals who, in one way or another, claim knowledge of the future or the unseen. For example, when a Muslim weather-man predicts rain, snow, or other climatic conditions for tomorrow he should add the phrase, “*In Shaa Allaah* (If Allaah so wishes)”. Likewise, when the Muslim doctor informs her patient that she will deliver a child in 9 months or on such and such a day, she should take care to add the phrase “*In Shaa Allaah*”, as such statements are only estimations based on statistical information.

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<sup>1</sup> Soorah Luqmaan 31:34.

## 6. CHAPTER ON ASTROLOGY

Muslim scholars of the past referred to the field of star and planetary calculations collectively as *Tanjeem*, and they divided it into three main categories for the purpose of analysis and classification according to Islamic law.

1. The first category represents the belief that earthly beings are influenced by heavenly bodies and future events may be forecasted by the observation of the movement of these bodies.<sup>1</sup> This belief, which came to be known as astrology, originated, as far as can be determined, in Mesopotamia in the 3rd millennium B.C., and attained full development within the orbit of Greek civilisation. An older Mesopotamian form also reached India and China by the 6th century B.C., although only the prediction of the future by stars was adopted in China. In Mesopotamia, astrology was a royal institution in which omens concerning the welfare of the king and his country were drawn from signs in the sky. The underlying belief in Mesopotamia was that the heavenly bodies were powerful gods. When these astral-gods were introduced to Greece, in the 4th century B.C., it became a source for Greek planetary lore. In Greece, astrology as a "science" for determining the future became accessible to those outside the royal court who could afford it.<sup>2</sup>

For over two thousand years, astrology exacted a dominant influence on religion, philosophy, and the science of pagan,

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<sup>1</sup> *Tayseer al-'Azeez al-Hameed*, p. 441.

<sup>2</sup> William D. Halsey (ed.), *Collier's Encyclopedia*, (USA: Crowell - Collier Educational Corporation, 1970), vol. 3, p. 103.

then Christian Europe. Both Dante and St. Thomas Aquinas of 13th century Europe accepted astrological causation in their respective philosophies. This belief was also held by the Sabians to whom the Prophet Ibraaheem (Abraham) was sent. The Sabians deified the sun, moon, and the stars and prostrated to them. They also built special places of worship in which statues and pictures representing the heavenly bodies were placed. It was their belief that the spirits of the heavenly bodies descended into the idols, communicated with them and fulfilled the needs of the people.<sup>1</sup> This form of astrology is considered *Kufr* (disbelief) because it destroys *Tawheed al-Asmaa was-Sifaat* (the unity of Allaah's names and attributes). Such beliefs give the planets, stars and the galaxies some of God's unique qualities, most prominent among them: *Qadar* (destiny). Those who practise astrology are also in *Kufr* because they claim knowledge of the future which is only known to Allaah. By attributing to themselves some of Allaah's divine qualities of knowledge, they falsely offer those who believe in them an opportunity to avoid harm which Allaah has destined for them and to gain good which Allaah has not destined for them. Astrology is also classified as *Haraam* (forbidden) based on the *Hadeeth* of Ibn 'Abbaas in which the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Whoever acquires knowledge of any branch of astrology, has acquired knowledge of a branch of magic. The more he increases in that knowledge, the more he increases in sin",<sup>2</sup>

2. The second category represents those who claim that Allaah has willed that the movement and configurations of heavenly

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<sup>1</sup> *Tayseer al-'Azeez al-Hameed*, p. 441.

<sup>2</sup> Collected by Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), vol.3, p. 1095, no. 3896) and Ibn Maajah.

bodies indicate the occurrence of earthly events.<sup>1</sup> This was the stated belief of Muslim astrologists who learned and practised the Babylonian science of astrology. Astrology was introduced into the royal court by the later Umayyad caliphs, as well as the early 'Abbaasids. Each caliph used to have by his side a court astrologer, who would advise him on his day to day affairs and warn him of impending dangers. Because astrology in its original form was known by the masses of Muslims to be *Kufr*, a compromise was made by those Muslims who wished to practise it, in order to make it appear acceptable Islamically. Consequently, astrological predictions were attributed to Allaah's will. However, this form is also *Haraam* (forbidden) and its practitioner should also be considered a *Kaafir* (disbeliever), as there is no real difference in essence between this belief and that of the pagans. Allaah's powers are given to the heavenly bodies, and those who claim to interpret their formations claim knowledge of the future which only belongs to Allaah. However, some latter day scholars have become lax in the application of divine law and have allowed this form of astrology due to the fact that it has become a widely accepted belief among many Muslims.

3. The third and final category is the use of star formations by sailors or desert travellers in order to determine directions or by farmers to determine the arrival of the seasons in order that they may know when to plant crops, etc.<sup>2</sup> These and similar practical uses represent the only aspect of astrology which is *Halaal* to Muslims according to the Qur'aan and the *Sunnah*.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tayseer al-Azeez al-Hameed*, p. 442.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 447-8.

The basis for this exception is the following Qur'anic verse:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ النُّجُومَ لِتَهْتَدُوا بِهَا فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ

**“He is the One who made the stars as guidance for you in the darkness of the land and the sea.”<sup>1</sup>**

Al-Bukhaaree related the following statement from Qataadah:<sup>2</sup>

“Verily Allaah made the stars for directional guidance and for stoning the devils. So, whoever seeks anything beyond that from the stars has wildly speculated. He has missed his lot, lost his share of the good life, and has taken upon himself what he has no knowledge of. Verily those who do so are a people ignorant of Allaah’s commands. They have invented divination by the stars, claiming that whoever marries by such and such a star, this or that will happen, and whoever travels by such and such a star will find this or that. By my life, under every star is born a red, black, tall, short, ugly, and handsome animal. But neither the stars, animals nor birds know anything of the unseen. Allaah would have taught it to Aadam, if He were to teach it to anyone. He created him with His own hands, made the angels bow to him, and taught him the names of all things.”

The limitations set by Qataadah on the use of stars was based on verse 98 of Soorah al-An‘aam mentioned previously. It was also based on the following verse:

وَلَقَدْ زَيَّنَّا السَّمَاءَ الدُّنْيَا بِمَصَابِيحَ وَجَعَلْنَاهَا رُجُومًا لِلشَّيَاطِينِ

**“Verily We have beautified the earthly skies with lamps and used them for the stoning of the devils.”<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-An‘aam 6:98.

<sup>2</sup> A leading scholar among those who studied under the Prophet’s companions.

<sup>3</sup> Soorah al-Mulk 67:5.

The Prophet (ﷺ) explained that the *Jinn* would sometimes journey up to the lower skies and eavesdrop on the angels as they discussed among themselves various events which were to happen in the world. The *Jinn* would later return to the earth and inform those involved in predicting the future. He also explained that Allaah uses the falling stars (meteorites) as a means of driving away the *Jinn* and preventing most of them from eavesdropping except on rare occasions. Consequently, the Prophet (ﷺ) said that the predictions of the fortunetellers are a mixture of a few truths among hundreds of lies! Muslims are therefore obliged to refrain from using the stars for purposes other than those clearly defined by Allaah, or ones which are related to them.

### Arguments of Muslim Astrologists

Muslims involved in astrology have tried to utilize some verses of the Qur'aan to support and justify their practices. For example, in recent times, Soorah al-Burooj has been translated into English as the chapter of "the Zodiacal Signs",<sup>2</sup> and its first verse as a divine oath "By the Zodiacal Signs". This is of course an incorrect and misleading translation of the word "*Burooj*". The word really means "star configurations" and not the "zodiacal signs". The Zodiacal signs are only animal representations transposed by the ancient Babylonians and Greeks on existing stellar configurations. Therefore, this verse can in no way be used to support the heathen practice of star worship. The

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<sup>1</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English), vol.7, p. 439, no. 657) and Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.4, p. 1209, no 5535).

<sup>2</sup> A. Yusuf Ali. *The Holy Qur'an* (Trans.). (Beirut: Daar al-Qur'aan al-Kareem), p. 1714.

pictorial representations have no relationship to the configurations of the stars. Not only that, but the movement of the stars through space will cause the existing star configurations to change radically as time goes on.

In earlier times, the following verses from Soorah an-Nahl were used to justify astrology in the courts of the caliphs:

وَعَلَّمَنَّا<sup>ع</sup> وَإِلَّا تَجْمِ هُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ

**“And signs and with the stars they are rightly guided.”<sup>1</sup>**

“Muslim” astrologers claimed that this verse meant that the stars are signs revealing the unseen and by this knowledge people may be guided in their future.<sup>2</sup> However Ibn ‘Abbaas, whom the Prophet (ﷺ) called *Turjumaan al-Qur’aan* (the translator of the Qur’aan’s meanings), said The “signs” mentioned in this verse meant roadsigns or landmarks in the daylight hours. They were not in reference to the stars at all. And he went on to say that **“with the stars they are rightly guided”** meant, that they are guided by them at night during their travels on the sea and land.”<sup>3</sup> In other words, the meaning of this verse is the same as that of verse 98 of Soorah al-An’aam.

In any case, the use of these or other verses of the Qur’aan to support the study and application of astrological pseudo-sciences, is totally invalid. It contradicts numerous other Qur’anic verses which maintain that Allaah alone knows the future, and it also contradicts many *Hadeeths* which clearly oppose the learn-

<sup>1</sup> Soorah an-Nahl 16:16.

<sup>2</sup> *Tayseer al-‘Azeez al-Hameed*, p. 444.

<sup>3</sup> Collected by Ibn Jareer at-Tabaree in his Tafseer, *Jaami’ al-Bayaan ‘an Ta’weel al-Qur’aan*, (Egypt: al-Halabee Publishing (o., 3rd., 1968), vol. 14, p. 91.

ing and belief in astrology and related pseudo-sciences.

For example, the Prophet's companion Ibn Abbaas reported that he said, "*Whoever learns a branch of stellar sciences, has learned a branch of magic*"<sup>1</sup> Abu Mahjam also reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "*What I fear the most for my nation after my time is: the injustice of their leaders, the belief in the stars and the denial of divine destiny*".<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, there really is no basis in Islaam for the belief in or practice of astrology. Whoever tries to bend the words of the religious texts to suit their own twisted desires is in fact doing as the Jews did. They took verses of the Torah out of context, and changed the meanings of the words knowingly.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Islamic Ruling on Horoscopes**

Not only is the practice of astrology *Haraam* as mentioned earlier, but also visiting an astrologist and listening to his predictions, buying books on astrology or reading one's horoscope are also forbidden! Since astrology is mainly used for predicting the future, those who practise it are considered fortunetellers. Consequently, one who seeks his horoscope comes under the ruling contained in the Prophet's statement: "*The Salaah of whoever approaches a fortuneteller and asks him about anything will not be accepted for forty days and nights*".<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Collected by Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), vol.3, p. 1095, no. 3896) and Ibn Maajah.

<sup>2</sup> Collected by Ibn Asaakir and authenticated by as-Suyootee (Quoted in *Tayseer al-'Azeed al-Hameed*, p. 445).

<sup>3</sup> See Soorahs an-Nisaa 4:47 and al-Maa'idah 5:13 and 41.

<sup>4</sup> Reported by Hafsaah and collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.4, p. 1211, no. 5540).

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the punishment in this *Hadeeth* is simply for approaching and asking the astrologist, even if one is in doubt about the truth of his statements. If one is in doubt about the truth or falsehood of astrological information, he is in doubt about whether or not others know the unseen and the future besides Allaah. This is a form of *Shirk* because Allaah has clearly stated:

وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِيحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ

“With Him are the keys to the unseen and none knows it except Him”.<sup>1</sup>

قُلْ لَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الْغَيْبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ

“Say: None in the heavens or earth knows the unseen except Allaah.”<sup>2</sup>

If, however, one believes in the predictions of their horoscope, whether spoken by an astrologist or written in books of astrology, he falls directly into *Kufr* (disbelief) as stated by the Prophet (ﷺ) “Whoever approaches an oracle or fortuneteller and believes in what he says, has disbelieved in what was revealed to Muhammad.”<sup>3</sup>

Like the previous *Hadeeth*, this *Hadeeth* literally refers to the fortuneteller but it is just as applicable to the astrologist. Both claim knowledge of the future. The astrologist’s claim is just as opposed to *Tawheed* as the ordinary fortuneteller. He claims that people’s personalities are determined by the stars, and their

<sup>1</sup> Soorah Al-An’aam 6:59.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah an-Naml 27:65.

<sup>3</sup> Reported by Abu Hurayrah and collected by Ahmad and Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), vol.3, p. 1095, no. 3895).

future actions and the events of their lives are written in the stars. The ordinary fortuneteller claims that the formation of tea leaves at the bottom of a cup, or lines in a palm tell him the same thing. In both cases individuals claim the ability to read in the physical formation of created objects knowledge of the unseen.

Belief in astrology and the casting of horoscopes are in clear opposition to the letter and spirit of Islaam. It is really the empty soul, which has not tasted real *Eemaan* (belief) that seeks out these paths. Essentially these paths, represent a vain attempt to escape *Qadar* (fate). The ignorant believe that if they know what is in store for them tomorrow, they can prepare from today. In that way they may avoid the bad and ensure the good. Yet, Allaah's messenger was told by Allaah to say.

لَوْ كُنْتُ أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبَ لَأَسْتَكْرَثُ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ وَمَا مَسَّنِيَ  
السُّوءُ إِنِّ أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ وَبَشِيرٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

“If I knew the unseen, I would surely have only sought the good. But, I am only a warner and a bearer of glad tidings for believers”.<sup>1</sup>

True Muslims are therefore obliged to stay far away from these areas. Thus, rings, chains, etc., which have the signs of the Zodiac on them should not be worn, even if one does not believe in them. They are part and parcel of a fabricated system which propagates *Kufr* and should be done away with entirely. No believing Muslim should ask another what his sign is, or attempt to guess his sign. Nor should he or she read horoscope columns in newspapers or listen to them read. And, any Muslim who allows astrological predictions to determine his actions, should seek Allaah's forgiveness and renew his Islaam.

<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-A'raaf 7:188.

## 7. CHAPTER ON MAGIC

Magic may be defined as the seeming control or foresight of natural forces by ritual invocation of supernatural agencies, as well as the belief that men can coerce nature by the use of certain rites, formulas, and actions.<sup>1</sup> The study of natural phenomena, traditionally called "white" or "natural magic", in Western society developed into what is now known as modern natural science. Distinguished from this was "black magic" or sorcery, the attempt to use or invoke supernatural powers for personal or sinister purposes. The terms witchcraft, divination and necromancy are among the terminologies most commonly used in reference to magic and its practitioners. Witchcraft was defined as sorcery practiced by a woman possessed by a demon. Divination referred to the attempt to gain supernatural insight into the future while necromancy or communication with the dead, was one of the methods of divination.

In Arabic, however, the term "*Sih*r" (magic) makes no distinction between the branches of magic. Thus, it includes sorcery, witchcraft, divination and necromancy. *Sih*r is defined in Arabic as whatever is caused by hidden or subtle forces.<sup>2</sup> For example, the Prophet (ﷺ) was reported in a *Hadeeth* to have said,

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<sup>1</sup> *Reader's Digest Great Encyclopedic Dictionary*, (New York: Fund & Wagnalls Publishing Co., 10th ed., 1975) p. 813.

<sup>2</sup> *Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol.1, pp. 1316-7.

“Verily some forms of speech are magic.”<sup>1</sup> An eloquent charismatic speaker can make right seem wrong and vice versa. Thus, the Prophet (ﷺ) referred to some aspects of it as being magical. The pre-dawn meal taken before fasting is called *Sahoor*<sup>2</sup> (from the root *Sihir*) because its time is in the darkness at the end of the night.<sup>3</sup>

### The Reality of Magic

It has become popular in modern times to deny that magic has any reality to it at all. Popular stories about the effects of magic are explained away as the result of psychological disorders like hysteria, etc., and it is pointed out that magic only affects those who believe in it.<sup>4</sup> Magical feats are all described as hoaxes based on a series of illusions and tricks.

In spite of the fact that Islaam rejects the effects of charms and amulets with regards to the prevention of misfortune and the attraction of good fortune, it does recognize that some aspects of magic are real. It is true that much of the magic around today is a product of trickery involving gadgets cleverly designed to deceive audiences. But, just as in the case of fortunetelling, there exist around the world some people who practice real magic resulting from their contact with the *Shayaateen* (the evil *Jinns*). Before looking at the *Jinn* and their abilities, let us look at the evidence from the Qur’aan and the *Sunnah* used to sup-

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<sup>1</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English), vol.7, p. 445, no. 662), Muslim, Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), vol.3, p. 1393, no. 4989) and at-Tirmidhee.

<sup>2</sup> Or *Suhoor*. See *Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 1, p. 1317.

<sup>3</sup> *Taysser al-Azeez al-Hameed*, p. 382.

<sup>4</sup> The *Ash’arite* scholar, Fakhrud-Deen ar-Raazee (d. 1210CE) proposed this idea in his commentary on verse 102 of Soorah al-Baqarah and the noted historian, Ibn Khaldoon, further developed it.

port the position that Islaam recognizes a reality to some manifestations of magic. Such an approach to the subject is essential, as the ultimate criterion for truth and falsehood in Islaam lies in these two sources of divine revelation to man.

Allaah, in the Qur'aan, explains the fundamental Islamic view of magic in the following verses:

وَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِّنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ مُصَدِّقٌ لِّمَا مَعَهُمْ  
بَدَّ فَرِيقٌ مِّنَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَرَاءَ  
ظُهُورِهِمْ كَأَنَّهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

“And when a messenger from Allaah (Muhammad) came to them confirming what they had with them (i.e. the prophecies about Muhammad in the Torah), a group from among those who were given the scripture (i.e. Rabbis) cast Allaah’s Book behind their backs pretending they had no knowledge of it or him”.<sup>1</sup>

After pointing out the hypocrisy of the Jews with regards to the prophets sent to them, Allaah goes on to take apart a lie which they had invented about Prophet Sulaymaan.

وَاتَّبِعُوا مَا تَنَلُوا الشَّيَاطِينُ عَلَىٰ مُلْكِ سُلَيْمَانَ وَمَا كَفَرَ  
سُلَيْمَانُ وَلَكِنَّ الشَّيَاطِينَ كَفَرُوا يُعَلِّمُونَ النَّاسَ  
السِّحْرَ وَمَا أُنزِلَ عَلَى الْمَلَكَيْنِ بِبَابِلَ هَارُوتَ وَمُرُوتَ<sup>٤</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-Baqarah 2:101.

وَمَا يَعْلَمَانِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ حَتَّى يَقُولَا إِنَّمَا نَحْنُ فِتْنَةٌ فَلَا تَكْفُرْ  
 فَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ مِنْهُمَا مَا يُفَرِّقُونَ بِهِ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَزَوْجِهِ  
 وَمَا هُمْ بِضَارِّينَ بِهِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ  
 مَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمُوا لَمَنِ اشْتَرَاهُ  
 مَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلْقٍ وَلَبِئْسَ مَا شَرَوْا بِهِ  
 أَنْفُسَهُمْ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ

"They follow what the *Shayaateen* (devils) related concerning Solomon's kingdom, but it was not Solomon who disbelieved, it was the devils who disbelieved by teaching the people magic and that which was revealed to the angels Haaroot and Maaroot in Babylon. Although the two would not teach anyone anything until after they warned them saying, 'Verily we are only a test and trial, so do not commit disbelief'. But the people went ahead and learned from the two of them what could cause the separation of a man from his wife. However, they could not harm anyone with it except by Allaah's permission. They (in fact) learned what would only harm their own souls and not benefit them. Verily they knew that whoever purchases it would have no share in the Hereafter. Evil indeed was the price for which they sold their own souls if they only knew."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-Baqarah 2:102.

The Jews used to justify their practice of magic within an esoteric mystical system called the *Cabala* by claiming that they had learned it from Prophet Sulaymaan himself. Allaah explains that after tossing the divine scriptures behind their backs and rejecting the last Prophet, the Jews chose to follow magical formulas taught to them by devils. These devils already committed disbelief just by teaching it. They also taught an art of sorcery called astrology. It had been taught in ancient times by two angels by the names Haaroot and Maaroot who were sent as a test to the people of Babylon. The angels used to warn the people not to commit disbelief by learning sorcery before they would teach them any of its principles, but the people did not pay heed to their warnings. They learned from astrology how to cause enmity between people and destroy marriages to such a degree that they thought they could harm whomsoever they pleased. However, Allaah is really the One who decides whom it will affect and whom it will not. This knowledge which they learned was of no real benefit to them, thus, they only harmed themselves by learning it. Because acts of disbelief are essential to the practice of real magic, they harmed themselves by guaranteeing for themselves a place in Hell.

The Jews who learned these arts knew well that they were cursed because it was forbidden in their own scriptures. The following verses can still be found in the Torah:

“When you come into the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who burns his son or his daughter as an offering, anyone who practices divination, a soothsayer, or an auger, or a sorcerer, or a charmer, or a medium, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For whoever does these things is an abomination to the Lord; and because of these abomina-

ble practices the Lord your God is driving them out before you.”<sup>1</sup>

But they paid no heed to these scriptures, pretending they were not there. It was also written in the Torah that whosoever partook of the magical arts would forever abide in the fire, cut off totally from any of the rewards of Paradise. But, the Jews removed these verses altogether from the Torah and practiced the magical arts.

Allaah closes the verses on a note of pity in order to confirm the graveness of their situation. If only the Jews knew how severe the penalty of the next life is, they would realize how terrible it was for them to sell the future of their souls for a few cheap tricks in this short life.

These verses clearly indicate that magic is *Haraam* (forbidden) in the phrase: **“Whoever purchases it would have no share of Paradise in the Hereafter”**.<sup>2</sup> Eternal residence in the fire could only be a punishment for an extremely *Haraam* action. The verse also proves that the magician as well as one who learns or teaches magic are *Kaafirs* (disbelievers). The phrase, **“Whoever purchases it”** (i.e. acquires it) is general in its implications. It includes whoever acquires wealth from teaching it, whoever pays to learn it, or simply whoever has knowledge of it. Allaah also referred to magic as being *Kufr* (disbelief) in the phrase: **“Verily we are a test and a trial so do not commit disbelief”,** and **“It was not Solomon who committed disbelief, it was the devils who disbelieved by teaching the people magic.”**<sup>3</sup>

The previously mentioned verse proves without a doubt that

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<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 18:9-12.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-Baqarah 2:102.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

some magic has reality to it. There is also a *Hadeeth* in *Saheeh al-Bukhaaree* and other books of *Hadeeth* which mentions that the Prophet (ﷺ) himself suffered from the effects of magic. *Zayd ibn Arqam* reported that a Jew by the name of *Labeeb ibn A'sam*, cast a magical spell on the Prophet (ﷺ) and when he began to suffer from it, *Jibreel* came to him and revealed the **Mu'awwadhataan** (Soorahs *al-Falaq* and *an-Naas*) then said to him, "Surely it was a Jew who cast this spell on you and the magical charm is in a certain well." The Prophet sent 'Alee ibn Abee Taalib to go and fetch the charm. When he returned with it, the Prophet (ﷺ) told him to untie the knots in it, one by one, and recite a verse from the Soorahs with each. When he did so, the Prophet (ﷺ) got up as if he had been released from being tied up.<sup>1</sup>

Every nation on Earth has records of people who have practiced some form of magic. Although some of it may have been false, it is highly unlikely that the whole of mankind could have agreed to make up similar stories about magical and supernatural events. Anyone who seriously contemplates the widespread presence of recorded instances of supernatural phenomena, will conclude that there must be some common thread of reality to them. "Haunted" houses, seances, ouija boards, voodoo, demonic - possession, speaking in tongues, levitation, etc., all represent puzzles to those unfamiliar with the world of the *Jinn*. All of these occurrences have their own manifestations in various parts of the world. Even the Muslim world is plagued with it, especially, among the shaikhs (masters) of various extremist *Sufi*

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<sup>1</sup> Collected by 'Abd ibn Humayd and al-Bayhaqee and much of it can also be found in *al-Bukhaaree* (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English), vol.7, pp. 443-4, no. 660) and *Muslim* (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.3, pp. 1192-3, no. 5428).

(mystical) orders. Many of them appear to levitate, travel huge distances in split instants of time, produce food or money from no where, etc. Their ignorant followers believe these feats of magic to be divine miracles and thus, willingly give their wealth and lives in service to their shaikhs. But behind all of these phenomena lie the hidden and sinister world of the *Jinn*.

As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the *Jinn* are essentially invisible except for those in the snake and dog form.<sup>1</sup> However, some of them are able to take any form they wish including human form. For example, Abu Hurayrah said, *"Allaah's messenger made me responsible to protect the Zakaah (charity) of Ramadaan. While I was doing so, someone came and began to dig around in the food so I caught a hold of him. I said, 'By Allaah I am going to take you to Allaah's messenger!' The man implored, 'Verily I am poor and I have dependents. I am in great need'. So I let him go. The next morning, the Prophet (ﷺ) said, 'Oh Abu Hurayrah, what did your captive do last night?' I said, 'He complained of being in great need and of having a family so I let him go.' The Prophet (ﷺ) replied, 'Surely he lied to you and he will return.' Since I knew that he was going to return, I laid in wait for him. When he returned and began to dig in the food, I grabbed him and said, 'I'm definitely going to take you to Allaah's messenger.' He pleaded, 'Let me go! Verily I'm poor and I do have a family. I won't return.' So I had mercy on him and let him go. The next morning Allaah's messenger said, 'Oh Abu Hurayrah, what did your captive do last night?' I said that he complained of being in great need and of having a family, so I let him go. The Prophet (ﷺ) replied, 'Surely he lied to you and he will return.' So I waited for him and grabbed him when he began to scatter the food around. I said, 'By Allaah, I will take you to*

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<sup>1</sup> See chapter five on Fortunetellers, pp. 76-7, for evidence of this fact.

*Allaah's messenger. This is the third time, and you promised you would not return. Yet you came back anyway!' He said, 'Let me give you some words by which Allaah will benefit you.' I said, 'What are they?' He replied, 'Whenever you go to bed recite Aayatul-Kursee<sup>1</sup> from beginning to end. If you do so, a guardian from Allaah will always be with you and Satan will not come near you until the morning.' Then I let him go. The next morning Allaah's messenger said, 'What did your captive do last night?' I said that he claimed that he would teach me some words by which Allaah would benefit me so I let him go. When the Prophet (ﷺ) asked what they were, I told him that they were saying Aayatul-Kursee before going to bed. I also told him that he said that a guardian from Allaah would remain with me and Satan would not come near me until I awoke in the morning. The prophet (ﷺ) said, 'Surely he has told the truth although he is a compulsive liar. Oh, Abu Hurayrah! Do you know who you have been speaking to these past three nights?' I replied, 'No'. And he said, 'That was a devil.' ”<sup>2</sup>*

They are also able to travel over vast distances instantaneously and enter human bodies prepared for their entry. Allaah has seen fit to give them these extraordinary abilities, as He has given other creatures abilities beyond those of man. Yet, He has chosen man to be above all of creation.

If these basic facts about the *Jinn's* abilities are kept in mind, all of the supernatural and magical incidents which are not hoaxes can be easily explained. For example, in the cases of “haunted” houses, where lights go on and off, pictures fall from the walls, objects fly through the air, floors creak, etc., the *Jinns* are acting

<sup>1</sup> Verse number 255 of Soorah al-Baqarah (2).

<sup>2</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, (Arabic - English), vol.9, pp. 491-2, no. 530).

on material objects while remaining in their invisible form. This is also true in the case of seances where the spirits of dead people seemingly communicate with the living. People who know the voices of their dead relatives, hear them speak to them of incidents from their lives. This feat is accomplished by the medium summoning the *Jinn* which was assigned to the dead person. It is this *Jinn* which imitates the dead person's voice and relates incidents from the person's past. Similarly in the case of the ouija board which appears to answer questions. The invisible prodding of the *Jinn* can easily cause amazing results if the proper atmosphere is set. In the case of those who appear to be able to levitate or raise objects without touching them, they are simply lifted up into the air by the invisible hand of the *Jinn*. Those able to travel vast distances and be in two places at almost the same time are transported by their invisible companions or the *Jinn* may even become visible in their form. Likewise, those who are able to produce food or money from the air are aided by the invisible and fast moving *Jinn*.<sup>1</sup> Even the most amazing cases of apparent reincarnation like that of a seven year old girl in India by the name of Shanti Devi who related instances from her previous life in vivid and accurate detail. She described her former home in the town of Muttra which was in a province far away from where she lived. When people went there to check, the local people confirmed that such a house had once stood where she described. They also confirmed some of the details of her former life.<sup>2</sup> Obviously this information was put into her subconscious mind by the *Jinn*. The Prophet (ﷺ) confirmed this phenomena when he said, "*Verily the dreams which a man sees in his sleep are of three types: A dream from ar-Rahmaan*

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<sup>1</sup> See *Ibn Taymeeyah's Essay on the Jinn*, pp. 47-59, for numerous accounts of such incidences.

<sup>2</sup> Colin Wilson, *The Occult*, (New York: Random House, 1971), pp. 514-515.

(Allaah), a sad dream from Satan and subconscious dreams.”<sup>1</sup> There is no doubt that the *Jinn* can enter the human body as it enters the mind. Cases of possession are too numerous to count. It may be temporary as in the case of many Christian and pagan sects where people work themselves into a physical and spiritual frenzy, fall into a state of unconsciousness and begin to speak in foreign tongues. In that weakened state the *Jinn* may easily enter their bodies and cackle on their lips. This phenomena has also been recorded by some *Sufi*<sup>2</sup> orders during their *Dhikr*<sup>3</sup> sessions. Or, it may be a long term phenomenon wherein major personality changes take place. The possessed often act irrationally, exhibit superhuman strength or the *Jinn* may actually talk through them on a regular basis.

Exorcism<sup>4</sup> became a widespread practice in Europe during the middle ages. The Christian practice of exorcism is based on numerous accounts of Jesus exorcising possessed people related in the Gospels. In one account Jesus and his companions came to Gerasenes and met a man possessed. When Jesus commanded the demons to leave him, they left him and entered a herd of swine which was feeding on a nearby hillside. The herd then rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.<sup>5</sup> It has also become the topic of a number of films produced in the late seventies and eighties (e.g. “The Exorcist”, “Rosemary’s Baby”, etc.). The general attitude of the

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<sup>1</sup> Reported by Abu Hurayrah and collected by Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud*, (English Trans.), vol. 3, p. 1395, no. 5001).

<sup>2</sup> Mysticism which developed among Muslim peoples.

<sup>3</sup> God’s names are repeated continuously and often musically while swaying the body or even dancing.

<sup>4</sup> The expulsion of evil spirits or demons from possessed people or places.

<sup>5</sup> See Matthew 8:28-34, Mark 5:1-20 and Luke 8:26-39.

materialist West is the rejection of everything supernatural. Thus, to Westerners, exorcism has no rational basis and is looked at as a result of superstition. This attitude is a reaction to the wide scale witch hunts and burnings which took place in Europe during the Dark and Middle ages. However, in Islaam the practice of exorcism is recognized as a valid means of treating genuine cases of possession and other ailments resulting from it, if the method conforms to the Qur'aan and the *Sunnah*.

There are essentially three methods of removing the *Jinn* from a possessed person.

First, the *Jinn* may be removed by summoning another *Jinn*. This method is forbidden in Islaam because calling the *Jinn* often involves acts of sacrilege. The tenets of Islaam are likely to be desecrated for the *Jinn* to be beckoned. This is the case where a magician or witch breaks a spell cast by another.

Second, the *Jinn* may be removed by confirming *Shirk* in its presence. When the *Jinn* is pleased by the *Kufr* of the exorcist he may also leave. In doing so, he assures the exorcist that his method and beliefs are correct. This is the case of Christian priests who exorcise the *Jinn* by calling on Jesus and by using the cross, as well as that of pagan high priests who exorcise in the name of their false deities.

Third, the *Jinn* may also be expelled by using Qur'anic recitation and prayers seeking refuge in Allaah. These divine words and formulas help to change the atmosphere around the possessed. The *Jinn* may then be driven out of the body by commands and possibly even accompanied by blows. However, these practises by themselves are useless unless the one doing them has firm *Eemaan* (faith) and a good contact with Allaah based on righteous deeds.

Although some Muslims today under Western secular influence openly deny possession and others even go so far as to deny the existence of the *Jinn*, both the Qur'aan and the *Sunnah* say otherwise. There are a number of authentic traditions in which the Prophet (ﷺ) is recorded as having exorcised people. There are, as well, traditions of his companions doing the same with his approval. The following are three narrations describing three different methods.

Ya'laa ibn Marrah said, "Once I went travelling with the Prophet (ﷺ) and we came across a woman sitting with her child in the road. She said, 'Oh messenger of Allaah, this boy has been afflicted and has caused us many trials. I don't know how many times per day he is seized by spells!' The Prophet (ﷺ) said, 'Give him to me'. So she raised him up to him and the Prophet (ﷺ) put the boy in front of him in the middle of his saddle. Then he opened the boy's mouth, blew<sup>1</sup> in it thrice and said, 'Bismillaah (in the name of Allaah)! I am a slave of Allaah, so get away, oh enemy of Allaah!' Then he returned the boy to the woman, and said, 'Meet us here on our return and tell us what happened.' Then we went and on our return we found her at the place. She had with her three sheep so the Prophet (ﷺ) asked, 'How is your boy?' She replied, 'By the One who has sent you with the truth, we haven't noticed anything wrong with him since then, so I've brought you these sheep.' The Prophet (ﷺ) said to me, 'Dismount and take one. Then return the rest to her.'<sup>2</sup>

Umm Abaan bint al-Waazi' reported that when her grandfather

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<sup>1</sup> The Arabic word used here is **نفث** (*Nafatha*) which means to put the tip of the tongue between the lips and blow. It is thus a cross between blowing (*Nafakha*) and spitting lightly (*Tafala*).

<sup>2</sup> Collected by Ahmad.

Zaari' went with a delegation from their tribe to see the Messenger of Allaah, he brought along with him a son of his who was insane. When he reached Allaah's messenger he said, "I have a son with me who is insane, so I have brought him for you to pray for him." The Prophet (ﷺ) told him to bring him. So he took off his son's travelling clothes and put on some good clothes, then carried him to the Prophet (ﷺ). The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Bring him close to me and turn his back to me." The Prophet (ﷺ) then grabbed the boy's clothes and began to hit him severely on his back. While he was hitting him he said, "Get out, enemy of Allaah! Enemy of Allaah get out!" The boy then began to look around as if he were all right. The Prophet (ﷺ) sat him down in front of him and called for some water. He then wiped it on the boy's face and made a prayer for him. After the Prophet's (ﷺ) prayer, there were none in the delegation who was better than the boy."<sup>1</sup>

Khaarijah ibn as-Salt reported that his uncle said, "Once, when we left Allaah's messenger's company, we came across a bedouin tribe. Some of them said, 'We have been told that you have come with some good things from that man (i. e. Prophet Muhammad). Do you have any medicine or incantation for a man possessed?' We answered yes, so they brought a madman bound in a spell. I recited the **Faatihah** over him every morning and evening for three days. Every time I completed the recitation, I would gather my saliva and spit. Finally he got up as if he broke free from being tied in bonds. The Bedouins then brought me a gift as payment, so I said to them, 'I can't accept it until I ask Allaah's messenger.' When I asked the Prophet, he said, 'Take it. For, by my life, whoever eats by way of false incantations will bear the burden of his

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<sup>1</sup> Collected by Ahmad and Abu Daawood at-Tayaalasee from Matar ibn 'Abd ar-Rahmaan (*Usud al-Ghaabah*, vol. 2, p. 145). Ibn Hajar rated Umm Abaan as an acceptable narrator.

sin. But you have earned that wage with an incantation of truth.’”<sup>1</sup>

### The Islamic Ruling on Magic

Since both the practice and learning of magic is classified in Islaam as *Kufr* (disbelief), the *Sharee'ah* (law) has set aside a very stiff sentence for anyone caught practising it. The penalty for anyone caught practising it, who does not repent and give it up, is death. This law is based on the following *Hadeeth* reported by Jundub ibn Ka'b: The Prophet (ﷺ) said, “*The prescribed punishment for the magician is that he be executed by the sword.*”<sup>2</sup>

This law was applied vigorously by the Righteous caliphs who led the Muslim nation after the Prophet's (ﷺ) death. Bajaalah ibn 'Abdah reported that Caliph 'Umar ibn al-Khattab sent a letter to the Muslim forces waging a campaign against Rome and Persia which commanded them to inform all the Zoroastrians married to their mothers, daughters and sisters to dissolve such marriages. They were also told to eat the food of Zoroastrians in order to include them in the category of “*Ahl-ul-Kitaab*”.<sup>3</sup> Finally, *they were ordered to kill every fortuneteller*

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<sup>1</sup> Collected by Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), vol.3, p. 1092, no. 3887).

<sup>2</sup> Collected by at-Tirmidhee. This *Hadeeth*, though *Da'eef* (weak) in its chain of narration has been upgraded to the level of *Hasan*, (relatively authentic) due to supporting evidence. Three of the leading four legists (Ahmad, Abu Haneefah and Maalik) ruled according to it. While the fourth, ash-Shaafi'ee ruled that the magician should only be killed if his magic feats reached the level of *Kufr* (see *Tayseer al-'Azeez al-Hameed*, pp. 390-1).

<sup>3</sup> Those who follow a revealed scripture like the Jews and Christians. This portion of the narration was collected by al-Bukhaaree, at Tirmidhee and an-Nasaa'ee.

and magician who they found. Bajaalah said that on the basis of the order he personally executed three magicians.<sup>1</sup>

Muhammad ibn 'Abdur-Rahmaan reported that Hafsa, wife of the Prophet (ﷺ) and daughter of 'Umar, had a servant girl of hers killed because she worked some magic on her.<sup>2</sup>

This punishment is also recorded in the Torah to this day, clearly showing the Jews and Christians that magic is forbidden:

“A man or a woman who is a medium or a wizard shall be put to death; they shall be stoned with stones, their blood shall be put upon them.”<sup>3</sup>

After the time of the Righteous Caliphs, the laws became lax. The Umayyad kings not only allowed magicians and fortunetellers to practise their forbidden arts but they also introduced them into the royal court. Since the state stopped applying the law, some of the *Sahaabah* (companions of the Prophet) took it upon themselves to enforce it. Abu 'Uthmaan an-Nahdee reported that Caliph al-Waleed ibn 'Abdil-Malik (Rule 705-715 C.E.) had a man in his court who used to perform feats of magic. Once he severed a man's head and separated it completely from his body. When the shock of his deed electrified the audience, he proceeded to further amaze them by rejoining the head. And the man then appeared as if his head had never been cut off. The people in the audience gasped, “*Subhaanallah* (Glory be to Allaah)! He is able to give life to the dead!” The *Sahaabee*, Jundub al-Azdee, noticed the commotion in al-Waleed's court so he came and watched the magician's perfor-

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<sup>1</sup> Collected by Ahmad, Abu Daawood and al-Bayhaqee.

<sup>2</sup> Collected by Maalik (*Muwatta, Imam Malik*, (English Trans.) pp. 344-5, no. 1511).

<sup>3</sup> Leviticus 20:27.

mance. On the following day, he returned with his sword strapped across his back. When the magician stepped up to begin his show, Jundub burst through the crowd with his sword drawn and chopped off the head of the magician. He then turned to the startled audience and said, "If he is really able to bring life to the dead, let him bring himself back to life". Al-Waleed had him arrested and thrown in jail.<sup>1</sup>

The severity of the ruling on magicians is primarily to protect the weaker elements of society from falling into *Shirk* in *Tawheed al-Asmaa was-Sifaat* by attributing to magicians divine qualities belonging only to Allaah. In addition to the sacrilege committed by those who practise witchcraft in earnest, magicians often claim for themselves supernatural powers and divine attributes, in order attract a following and earn undue fame.

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<sup>1</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree in his book on History.

## 8. CHAPTER ON TRANSCENDENCY

Allaah, Most Great and Glorious, has described Himself in His revealed books and through His prophets in order that man may have a better understanding of just who He is. Since the human mind is limited in its knowledge and scope, it is impossible for it to understand something which has no limits. Therefore, Allaah mercifully took it upon Himself to reveal to man some of His attributes, in order that mankind may not confuse the attributes of created things with those of Allaah. When Allaah's attributes are confused with those of creation, man ends up deifying creation. It is this deification of creation which is the essence and basis of idolatry in all of its forms. In all pagan religions and cults created beings or objects are falsely endowed by man with divine attributes and consequently they become objects of worship instead of Allaah or along with Allaah.

Among Allaah's countless attributes is one which is of paramount importance with regard to the worship of God as opposed to the worship of His creation. It is an attribute which became confused with the appearance among Muslims of the Greek-influenced *Mu'tazilite* school of philosophical thought and remains misunderstood among many Muslims until today.<sup>1</sup> This critical attribute is that of "*al-'Uloo*", which in English

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<sup>1</sup> Naasiruddeen al-Albaanee, *Mukhtasar al-'Uloo*, (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islaamee, 1st ed., 1981), p. 23.

means highness or transcendence. When it is used to describe Allaah, this attribute refers to the fact that Allaah is above and beyond His creation. He is neither enclosed by the creation nor is any part of the creation above Him in any way. He is not a part of the created world nor is it a part of Him. In fact, His Being is totally distinct and separate from His creation. He is the Creator and the universe and its contents are all a part of His creation. However, His attributes function without restriction in His creation. He sees, hears and knows all, and He is the prime cause of all that happens within the worlds of creation. Nothing happens without His will. Consequently, it may be said that the Islamic concept of Allaah in relationship to His creation is essentially dualistic, but in relationship to Allaah alone or creation alone it is strictly unitarian. It is dualistic in the sense that Allaah is Allaah, and creation is creation. Two separate entities, the Creator and the created, the Infinite and the finite. Neither is one the other nor are they both one. At the same time the Islamic concept is uncompromisingly unitarian in the sense that Allaah is absolutely one, without parents, offspring or partner. He is unique in His divinity and nothing is similar to Him. He is the sole source of power in the universe and everything depends on Him. Likewise, it is firmly unitarian vis-a-vis creation, because all of the universe and its contents were created by Allaah alone. All created beings and entities are the product of the same Creator, and, as such, are constructed from the same elemental substances, the building blocks of "nature".

### **Significance:**

The attribute of transcendence has special significance to man with regard to his worship of God. Prior to the arrival of Islaam in its final form, man had strayed far away from the implications of this noble attribute. Christians claimed that Allaah had come

to the earth and became flesh and blood in the form of man, Prophet 'Eesaa (Jesus), whom they claim was crucified and died. The Jews before them also claimed that Allaah came down to earth in the form of a man and lost in a wrestling match with Prophet Yaqoob (Jacob).<sup>1</sup> The Persians regarded their kings as gods endowed with all of Allaah's attributes, and, consequently, they worshipped them directly. The Hindus believed that *Brahman*, the Supreme Being, was in every place and in everything so they worshipped countless idols, human beings and even animals as personifications of *Brahman*.<sup>2</sup> In fact, this belief has taken Hindus to an incredible state wherein they actually make pilgrimage to their Holy city of Banaras to worship the god Shiva personified as an erect male penis endearingly called called "*lingam*."<sup>3</sup>

The Hindu idea that *Brahman* is everywhere later became a part of the Christian belief system and eventually found its way among the Muslims many generations after the Prophet (ﷺ). When the philosophical books of India, Persia and Greece were translated during the Golden Age of the 'Abbaasid Empire, the

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 33:24-30.

<sup>2</sup> John R. Hinnells, *Dictionary of Religions*, (England: Penguin Books, 1984), pp. 67-8.

<sup>3</sup> *Collier's Encyclopedia*, vol. 12, p. 130. See Santha Rama Rau's article "Banaras: India's City of Light", *National Geographic*, February 1986, p. 235, "A dual natured deity, Siva destroys but also creates. Lingams, usually shaped from stone, are phallic symbols representing the god's regenerative powers. Huge Lingams are a common feature of temples. The Lingam typically appears on a circular base, called a Yoni (female organ), that represents Shakti, the god's female half and a source of divine energy. In the broadest sense, the Lingam symbolizes the entirety of the Hindu universe... In a common Hindu ceremony, a priest bedecks a Lingam with flowers, anoints it with clarified butter, and washes it with milk and water!"

concept of Allaah being everywhere and in every thing was introduced into philosophical circles and became a foundational principle in the creed of *Sufi* (mystical) orders. Eventually it gained sway with a philosophical school known as the *Mu'tazilah* (the Rationalists) followers of which occupied key posts in the administration of the 'Abbaasid Caliph, Ma'moon (rule: 813 to 832 CE). With the blessing of the Caliph, they vigorously propagated this belief along with the other distortions contained in their school of philosophy. Inquisition courts were set up throughout the empire and many scholars were killed, jailed and tortured for their opposition to the philosophy of the *Mu'tazilites*.

It was not until Imaam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (778-855 CE) stood his ground and defended the beliefs of early Muslim scholars and the *Sahaabah*, (companions of the Prophet), that the tide was eventually turned. During the reign of Caliph al-Mutawakkil (rule 847-861), the *Mu'tazilite* philosophers were removed from sensitive administrative posts in the government and their philosophy was officially condemned. Although most of their ideas died out in time, that of Allaah being everywhere (i.e. immanent) has remained to this day among followers of the *Ash'arite* school<sup>1</sup>. This school was founded by scholars who

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<sup>1</sup> This school of scholastic theology takes its name from Abul-Hasan 'Alee al-Ash'aree (873-935 CE) a theologian born in Basrah who until his fortieth year was a zealous pupil of the *Mu'tazilite* theologian al-Jubbaa'ee. After a study of *Hadeeth* elucidated for him the contradiction between *Mu'tazilite* views and the spirit of Islaam, he began to champion the orthodox views. He is considered the founder of orthodox scholasticism (*Kalaam*) and his most famous works are *al-Ibaanah 'an Usool ad-Diyaanah* (translated by W.C. Klein (New Haven, 1940) and *Maqaalaat al-Islaameeyeen*, (Cairo: Maktabah an-Nahdah al-Misreeyah, 2nd ed., 1969). Towards the end of his life al-Ash'aree abandoned scholasticism altogether and relied solely on *Hadeeth*. However, other theologians especially of the *Shaafi'ite* school of

left the *Mu'tazilite* philosophy and attempted to to refute the excesses of *Mu'tazilite* thought from a philosophical basis.

### **Danger of the Immanence Concept**

On the basis of the false attribute of divine immanence (i.e. the "God is everywhere" belief) some claimed that God was more in humans than in animals, vegetation, minerals, etc. From that theory it was only a matter of time before some claimed that God was more in them than in the rest of humans, either by *Hulool* (indwelling of Allaah in man) or by *Ittihaad* (complete unification of the human soul with Allaah's "soul"). Among Muslim people of the ninth century, a deranged mystic and so-called saint, al-Hallaaj (858-992CE), openly declared that he and Allaah were one.<sup>1</sup> The *Nusayrites*, a breakaway *Shi'ite* sect of the tenth century, claimed that the Prophet's son-in-law, 'Alee ibn Abee Taalib, was a manifestation of Allaah<sup>2</sup> and another breakaway *Shi'ite* sect of the eleventh century called the *Druze*, claimed that the Fatimid *Shi'ite* caliph, al-Haakim bi Amrillaah (996-1021 CE) was the last incarnation of God among men.<sup>3</sup> Ibn 'Arabee (1165-1240 CE), another so-called *Sufi* saint of the twelfth century, exhorted his followers in his

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= law adopted his earlier views and the *Ash'arite* school took on a life of its own. Al-Baaqillaanee (d. 1013 CE) reduced al-Ash'aree's refutation to a system, established the intellectual basis and arranged the arguments. Among the leading *Ash'arite* scholars following him were Imaam al-Haramayn (al-Juwaynee [d. 1086]), al-Ghazzaalee (d. 1112) and ar-Raazee (d. 1210). (*Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, pp. 46-7 and pp. 210-215).

<sup>1</sup> A. J. Arberry, *Muslim Saints and Mystics*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976) pp. 266-271.

<sup>2</sup> *Shorter Encyclopedia of Islaam*, pp. 454-455.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 94-5.

poetry to pray to themselves and not to anything outside of themselves because he believed that God was inside man.<sup>1</sup> This same theory was the essence of Elijah Muhammad's (d. 1975) claim in America that black people were "Allaahs" and that his mentor, Fard Muhammad, was the supreme Allaah himself.<sup>2</sup> Reverend Jim Jones, who killed himself and 900 of his followers in Guyana in 1979, is one of the most recent example of man claiming to be God and people accepting it. In fact, Jim Jones learned his philosophy and psychological techniques for manipulating the innocent from another American who called himself Father Divine. Father Divine, whose real name was George Baker, appeared during the early depression years of the 1920's and opened restaurants for the poor. After capturing their stomachs, he projected on them the claim that he was god incarnate. In time he married and named his Canadian wife, Mother Divine. By the mid-thirties his followers numbered in the millions and were to be found all across the U.S.A. and even in Europe.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, these claims of divinity were not limited to any particular place or religious group. They simply took root wherever the soil was fertile. If minds were already prepared by the belief in God's immanence in His creation to accept the man-god con-

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn 'Arabee described Allaah as follows, "Glory be to He, who made all things appear while being their essence." (See, Ibn 'Arabee, *al-Futoohaat al-Makkeeyah*, vol.2, p. 604, quoted in *Haadhihee Heya as-Soofeeyah* by 'Abdur-Rahmaan al-Wakeel, (Makkah: Daar al-Kutub al-'Ilmeeyah, 3rd ed., 1979), p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> Elijah Muhammad, *Our Saviour Has Arrived* (Chicago: Muhammad's Temple of Islam no. 2, 1974), pp. 26, 56, 57, 39-46.

<sup>3</sup> E.U., Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 32.

cept, then those who claimed divinity could easily find followers.

It may be concluded that the belief that “Allaah is everywhere” is extremely dangerous primarily because it encourages, defends and rationalizes the greatest sin in Allaah’s sight, the worship of His creation. It is also an aspect of *Shirk* in *Tawheed al-Asmaa was-Sifaat* as it claims for God an attribute which does not belong to Him. Neither in the Qur’aan nor on the tongue of the Prophet ( ﷺ ) can such a description of Allaah be found. In fact, both the Qur’aan and the *Sunnah* confirm the opposite.

### **Clear Proofs:**

Since the greatest sin in God’s sight is the worship of others besides Him or along with Him, and everything besides Him is His creation, the principles of Islaam are all either directly or indirectly opposed to the worship of creation. The fundamental tenets of the Faith make a very clear distinction between the Creator and what He has created.

There are a number of proofs based on the essential elements of the Islamic creed which have been used by orthodox Muslim scholars to establish the fact that Allaah is totally separate from, and above His creation. The following are seven such proofs:

#### **1. A Natural Proof:**

Man, from the Islamic viewpoint, is born with certain natural tendencies and is not merely a product of his environment. This fact is based on the Qur’anic passage in which Allaah explained that when He created Aadam, He extracted from him all of his descendents and made them bear witness to His unity<sup>1</sup>. This concept is further emphasised by the Prophet’s

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<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-A’raaf 7:172.

( 驚 ) statement that every new born child is born with an inclination to worship Allaah, but its parents make it a Jew, a Magian or a Christian<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, man's natural reaction to the implications of the "god is everywhere belief" may be used, to some degree, as a measure of its accuracy. If Allaah exists everywhere and is present in everything, it would imply that His essence could be found in filth and filthy places. When confronted with this implication, most people are naturally repulsed by the thought. They find themselves instinctually unable to accept any statement which points to the fact that Allaah, the Creator of the Universe, is present in man's excrements or in any other items or places not befitting His majesty. Therefore, it may be concluded that since man's natural instincts, placed in him by Allaah, reject the claim that Allaah is everywhere, it is highly unlikely that such a claim would be correct. Those unwilling to give up the "God is everywhere belief", however, might argue that man's repulsion towards this concept is a result of upbringing and conditioning, and not really a result of natural instincts. But, the vast majority of young children automatically reject this concept without any hesitation or contemplation, even though most of them were previously indoctrinated with the idea that Allaah is everywhere.

## **2. The Prayer Proof:**

According to the rules and regulations governing prayer in Islaam, places of worship must be completely free from statues or pictorial representation of God or His creation and the various positions of worship used in formal prayer (bow-

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<sup>1</sup> Reported by Abu Hurayrah and collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English), vol.8, pp. 369-90, no. 597) and Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.4, p. 1399, no. 6429).

ing, prostrating, etc.) are prohibited from being directed to anyone or anything besides God. If God were present everywhere; in every thing and in every individual, it would be perfectly acceptable for people to direct worship towards each other or even to direct worship towards themselves as the infamous *Sufi* "saint", Ibn 'Arabee, suggested in some of his writings. It would also not be possible to logically convince an idol worshipper or one who worships trees or animals that his method of worship is wrong and that he should only worship the unseen God, Allaah, who is alone without partners. The idolater would merely answer that he is not worshipping the object itself but the part of God which is inside of these objects or God who incarnated Himself in human or animal forms. Yet Islaam classifies anyone who does such an act as a *Kaafir* (disbeliever) regardless of the rationale. The fact is that such an individual is prostrating before God's creation. Islaam came to take man away from the worship of man and other created beings, and lead them to the worship of the Creator alone. Therefore, the commandments in Islaam concerning worship clearly indicate that Allaah is not to be found in created things; He is totally separate from them. This position is further strengthened by a **total ban** in Islaam on any pictorial representation of God or any other living being from the animal world.

### 3. The Mi'raaj Proof:

Two years prior to his migration to Madeenah, the Prophet (ﷺ) made a miraculous night journey (*Israa*) from Makkah to Jerusalem where he (ﷺ) took the *Mi'raaj*<sup>1</sup> up

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<sup>1</sup> The noun of instrument *Mi'raaj* (Lit. stairs or ladder) is actually the vehicle which took the Prophet (ﷺ) up through the heavens. However, the ascension itself is commonly referred to by this name. (See Lane's, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 2, pp. 1966-7).

through the seven skies to the pinnacle of creation. This miraculous journey was bestowed on him in order that he be in the direct presence of Allaah. It was there, above the seventh heaven, that *Salaah* (formal prayer) was made compulsory five times per day, Allaah spoke directly to the Prophet (ﷺ), and Allaah revealed to him the last verses of Soorah al-Baqarah (Second Chapter of the Qur'aan).<sup>1</sup> If Allaah were everywhere there would have been no need for the Prophet (ﷺ) to go anywhere. He could have been in the direct presence of Allaah on the earth in his own house. Therefore, the incident of the miraculous ascension of the Prophet (ﷺ) up through the heavens contains within it a subtle implication that Allaah is above His Creation and not a part of it.

#### 4. Qur'anic Proof:

The number of verses in the Qur'aan which state that Allaah is above His creation are too numerous to count. They are found in almost every chapter of the Qur'aan, either directly or indirectly. Among the indirect references are those which refer to things rising up to God or descending from Him. For example, in Soorah al-Ikhlāas, Allaah calls Himself "*As-Samad*"<sup>2</sup> which means: that to which things rise. Such references are sometimes literal, as in the case of the angels about whom Allaah said,

تَنْزِيلُ الْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالرُّوحِ إِلَيْهِ فِي يَوْمٍ كَانَ مِقْدَارُهُ  
خَمْسِينَ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ

<sup>1</sup> See *Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English), vol.9, pp. 449-50, no. 608 and *Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.1, pp. 103-4, no. 313 for the Prophet's (ﷺ) account of the incident.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-Ikhlāas 112:2.

**“The angels and the Spirit (Gabriel) ascend up to Him in a day whose length is like fifty thousand years.<sup>1</sup>**

and sometimes spiritual, as in the case of prayer and *Dhikr* about which Allaah said,

إِلَيْهِ يَصْعَدُ الْكَلِمُ الطَّيِّبُ

**“Every good saying goes up to Him”.<sup>2</sup>**

Even in the following verse

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يَهْمَنُ ابْنُ بَنِي صَرَاحَةَ عَلِيٍّ أَبْلَغُ الْأَسْبَابِ  
وَإِنِّي لِأَظُنُّهُ كَذِبًا

**“Pharaoh said, ‘Oh Haamaan, build a lofty place for me that I may attain the ways. The ways of (reaching) the heavens for me to behold the God of Moses, for I certainly believe he is a liar..’.”<sup>3</sup>**

An example of descent from God can be found in the following verse:

قُلْ نَزَّلَهُ رُوحُ الْقُدُسِ مِنْ رَبِّكَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيُثَبِّتَ  
الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ

**“Say, the Holy Spirit has brought it (the revelation) down from your Lord in truth, in order to strengthen those who believe, and as a guide and**

<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-Ma'aarij 70:4.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah Faatir 35:10.

<sup>3</sup> Soorah Ghaafir 40:36-7.

glad tidings to Muslims.”<sup>1</sup>

Direct references can be found in both the divine names of God as well as in His explicit statements. For example, Allaah calls Himself by the names “Al-‘Alee” and “Al-A‘laa” both of which mean the highest, above which there is nothing. For example, “Al-‘Alee Al-‘AdHeem”<sup>2</sup>, “Rabbikal-A‘laa”<sup>3</sup> He also explicitly, referred to Himself as being above His servants saying,

وَهُوَ الْقَاهِرُ فَوْقَ عِبَادِهِ

“He is *al-Qaahir* (the irresistible) above His worshippers”<sup>4</sup>

and He also described His worshippers as,

يَخَافُونَ رَبَّهُمْ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ

“Those, who fear their Lord who is above them”<sup>5</sup>.

Therefore, the Qur’aan itself clearly points out for those who contemplate its meanings, that Allaah is high above His creation and not within it or surrounded by it in any way.<sup>6</sup>

## 5. Hadeethic Proof:

There is also ample evidence in the statements of the Prophet ( ﷺ ) which clearly establish that Allaah is not on the earth

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<sup>1</sup> Soorah an-Nahl 16:102.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-Baqarah 2:225.

<sup>3</sup> Soorah al-A‘laa 87:1.

<sup>4</sup> Soorah Al-An‘aam 6:18 and 61.

<sup>5</sup> Soorah an-Nahl 16:50.

<sup>6</sup> *al-‘Aqeedah at Tahaaweeyah*, pp. 285-6.

or within His Creation. Like the Qur'anic verses, some *Hadeeths* contain indirect references while others are direct. Among the indirect or implied references are those which refer to the angels ascending up to Allaah as in the *Hadeeth* of Abu Hurayrah in which he narrated that Allaah's messenger said, "*(A group of) angels stay with you at night and (another group of) angels by daytime, and both groups gather at the time of 'Asr (evening) and Fajr (dawn) prayers. Then those angels who have stayed with you overnight, ascend (to Heaven) and Allaah asks them (about you) - though He knows all about you...*"<sup>1</sup>

Included among the indirect references are those which refer to Allaah being above His throne which is itself above all creation. An example of this type can be found in Abu Hurayrah's report that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "*When Allaah completed creation, He wrote in a Book (which He kept) with Him above His throne, 'Verily My mercy will precede my anger.'*"<sup>2</sup>

An example of a direct reference is the narration about the Prophet's wife Zaynab bint Jahsh who used to boast to the other wives of the Prophet (ﷺ) that their families gave them away in marriage to the Prophet, (ﷺ) while Allaah from above the seven heavens gave her away in marriage<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English) vol.9, pp. 386-7, no. 525), Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.1, pp. 306-7, no. 1320) and an-Nasaa'ee.

<sup>2</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English), vol.9, pp. 382-3, no. 518) and Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.4, p. 1437, no. 6628).

<sup>3</sup> Narrated by Anas and collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English), vol.9, p. 382, no. 517).

Another may be found in the *Du'aa* (prayer) by which the Prophet (ﷺ) taught the sick to pray for themselves,

«ربنا الله الذي في السماء تقدس اسمك»

“*Rabbanaa Allaah alladhee fis-Samaa’e Taqaddasasmuka...* (Our Lord Allaah who is above the heavens, may Your name be Holy...)”<sup>1</sup>

The following *Hadeeth* is perhaps the most explicit of the direct references:

Mu’aawiyah ibn al-Hakam said, “*I had a servant girl who used to tend to my sheep in the area of Mount Uhud, near a place called al-Jawwaareeyah. One day I came to see them only to find that a wolf had made off with a sheep from her flock. Since I, like the rest of Aadam’s descendants, am prone to do regrettable acts, I gave her a terrible slap in her face. When I came to Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) with the story, he considered it a grave thing for me to have done. I said, ‘Oh Messenger of Allaah (ﷺ) couldn’t I free her?’*”<sup>2</sup> He replied, ‘*Bring her to me*’, so I brought her. He (ﷺ) then asked her, ‘*Where is Allaah?*’ and she replied, ‘*Above the sky*’. Then He asked her, ‘*Who am I?*’ and she replied, ‘*You are Allaah’s Messenger.*’ So he said, ‘*Free her, for verily she is a true believer.*’ ”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Collected by Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), vol.3, p. 109, no. 3883).

<sup>2</sup> Al-Bukhaaree, Muslim and Abu Daawood collected a *Hadeeth* transmitted by Abu Hurayrah in which he reported that Allaah’s Messenger (ﷺ) said, “*When you hit (others), avoid the face.*” (See *Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 4, p. 1378, nos. 6321-6 and *Sunan Abu Dawud*, (English Trans.), vol. 3, p. 1256, no. 4478). He was reported to have said, “*The expiation for slapping a slave or beating him is to set him free*” (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 3, pp. 882-3, no. 4078).

<sup>3</sup> Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.1, pp. 271-2, no. 1094).

When testing the faith of others, the logical question to ask would be “Do you believe in Allaah?” The Prophet ( ﷺ ) did not ask that question, because most people at that time believed in Allaah, as the Qur’aan frequently mentions,

وَلَيْنَ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَسَخَّرَ الشَّمْسَ  
وَالْقَمَرَ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ

“And if you ask them who created the heavens and the earth and controls the sun and the moon, they will certainly say, ‘Allaah’.”<sup>1</sup>

Because the pagan Makkans of that time believed that Allaah was somehow present in their idols and thereby a part of creation, the Prophet ( ﷺ ) wanted to determine if her belief was confused and paganistic like other Makkans or clearly unitarian and according to the divine teachings. Hence, he asked a question which would determine whether she knew that Allaah was not a part of His creation or whether she believed that God could be worshipped in creation. Her answer that Allaah is above the heavens has to be considered by true Muslims as the only valid answer to the question “Where is Allaah?” because the Prophet ( ﷺ ) ruled that she was a true believer on the basis of it. If Allaah is everywhere as some Muslims today still contend, the Prophet ( ﷺ ) would have had to correct her answer, “Above the sky”, since whatever was said in his presence which he did not reject is considered, according to Islamic Law, approved *Sunnah (Taqrereeyah)* and thus valid. However, the Prophet ( ﷺ ) not only accepted her statement, but he also used it as a basis for judging her to be a true believer.

<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-Ankaboot 29:61.

## 6. The Logical Proof:

Logically speaking, it is obvious that in a case where two things exist, one of those things must either be a part of the other and dependent on it like its attributes, or it must exist by itself, distinct from the other. Thus, when God created the world, either He created it inside Himself or He created it outside of Himself. The first possibility is unacceptable because it would mean that Allaah, the infinite Supreme Being, has within Himself finite attributes of deficiency and weakness. Therefore, He must have created the world outside of Himself as an entity distinct from Himself yet depending on Him. Having created the world outside of Himself, He either created it above Himself or below Himself. Since human experience nowhere confirms prayer downwards, and being below creation contradicts God's majesty and supremacy, God must therefore be above His creation and distinct from it.

As to the contradictory descriptive statements that God is neither connected to the world nor separate from it, or that He is neither in the world nor outside of it<sup>1</sup>, such words are not only illogical but they, in fact, deny God's actual existence.<sup>2</sup> Such claims relegate God to the surrealistic realm of human thought where opposites can co-exist and the impossible exist (like three gods in one).

## 7. The Consensus of Early Scholars:

The statements of the early scholars of Islaam confirming God's transcendence are too numerous to mention in this

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<sup>1</sup> See *Haashiyah al-Beejooree 'alaa al-Jawharah*, p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> *al-'Aqeedah at-Tahaaweeyah*, pp. 290-1. See also Ahmad ibn Hanbal's *ar-Radd 'Alaa al-Jahmeeyah*.

concise work. The 15th century *Hadeeth* scholar, adh-Dhahabee, wrote a book entitled *al-'Uloo lil-'Alee al-'AdHeem* in which he gathered the statements of over 200 major scholars of the past confirming Allaah's transcendency.<sup>1</sup>

A good example of such statements can be found in Mutee' al-Balakhee's report that he asked Abu Haneefah his opinion of a person who says he does not know whether his Lord is in the heavens or on earth. Abu Haneefah replied, 'He has disbelieved, because Allaah has said, **'The Most Merciful is above the throne (Soorah Taahaa 20:5)'**, and His throne is above His seven heavens." He (al-Balakhee) then said, "What if he said that He is above the throne but he does not know whether the throne is in the heavens or on earth?" He (Abu Haneefah) replied, "He has disbelieved because he has denied that He (Allaah) is above the heavens and whoever denies that He is above the heavens has disbelieved."<sup>2</sup> Though many who follow the *Hanafee* school of law today claim that Allaah is everywhere, the early followers did not hold that position. The incident in which Abu Haneefah's main student, Abu Yousuf, told Bishr al-Mareesee<sup>3</sup> to repent when he denied that Allaah is above the throne, was recorded in a number of books written during and about that era.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Mukhtasar al-'Uloo*, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Narrated by Abu Ismaa'eel al-Ansaaree in his book *al-Faarooq* and quoted in *al-'Aqeedah at-Tahaaweeyah*, p. 288.

<sup>3</sup> Bishr (d.833 CE) from Baghdad was a *Mu'tazilite* scholar of Jurisprudence and philosophy. (See *al-A'laam*, (Beirut: Daar al-'Ilm lil-Malaayeen, 7th ed., 1984) vol.2, p. 55 by Khairuddeen az-Ziriklee).

<sup>4</sup> Narrated by 'Abdur-Rahmaan ibn Abee Haatim and others. See *al-'Aqeedah at-Tahaaweeyah*, p. 288.

## Summary:

Therefore, it can be safely said that according to Islaam and its key principle of *Tawheed*,

1. Allaah is completely separate from His creation.
2. Creation neither surrounds Him nor is above Him in any way.
3. He, Allaah is above all things.

This is the classical conception of Allaah according to the sources of Islaam. It is very simple and firm, and leaves no room for the type of misconceptions which often lead to the worship of creation.

This view, however, does not deny that Allaah's attributes operate throughout His creation. Nothing escapes His sight, His knowledge and His power. But just as it is considered a major advance in technology to be able to sit in the comfort of our homes and watch events taking place half-way around the world, Allaah sees, hears and knows all that happens in the universe without having to be inside of it. Ibn 'Abbaas was reported to have said, "In Allaah's hand, the seven heavens, seven earths, their contents as well as what is between them, is like a mustard seed in one of your hands"<sup>1</sup> And, just as remote-control T.V. is considered a great technological improvement over manual control, Allaah's power operates unhindered within the smallest elements of creation without Him having to be there. In fact, the concept that Allaah is within His creation is really a form of *Shirk* in *Tawheed al-Asmaa was-Sifaat* wherein Allaah is given some of man's weaknesses. It is man who has to be present in the world for him to see, hear, know and affect what takes place in it.

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<sup>1</sup> *al-'Aqeedah at-Tahaaweeyah*, p. 281.

Allaah's knowledge and power, on the other hand, has no bounds. Man's very thoughts are totally exposed to Allaah, and even the emotional workings of his heart are subject to Allaah's control. This is the light in which the few verses which allude to Allaah's closeness should be understood. For example, Allaah said,

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ وَنَعْلَمُ مَا تُوَسْوِسُ بِهِ نَفْسُهُ وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ  
مِنْ جَبَلِ الْوَرِيدِ

**“Verily, We created man and know what his soul whispers, for We are closer to him than his jugular vein”.**<sup>1</sup>

He also said,

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اسْتَجِيبُوا لِلَّهِ وَلِلرَّسُولِ إِذَا دَعَاكُمْ لِمَا  
يُحْيِيكُمْ وَعَلِمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَحُولُ بَيْنَ الْمَرْءِ وَقَلْبِهِ  
وَأَنَّهُ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ

**“O believers, respond to Allaah and His messenger when they call you to that which will give you life. And know well that Allaah comes between a man and his heart. And to Him you will be gathered.”**<sup>2</sup>

These verses should not be taken to mean that Allaah is inside man at a point closer than his jugular vein or that He is inside

<sup>1</sup> Soorah Qaaf 50:16.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-Anfaal 8:24.

man's heart changing its states. They simply mean that nothing escapes Allaah's knowledge, even the innermost thoughts of man, and nothing is beyond His power to control and change, even the emotions of the heart. As Allaah said,

أَوَلَا يَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسِرُّونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ

“Don't they realize that Allaah knows what they hide and what they expose?”<sup>1</sup>

وَأذْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ كُنْتُمْ أَعْدَاءً فَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِكُمْ فَأَصْبَحْتُمْ بِنِعْمَتِهِ إِخْوَانًا

“(Remember) when you were enemies and He put love between your hearts and by His blessings you became brothers”<sup>2</sup>

and the Prophet (ﷺ) often used to pray saying,

«يا مقلب القلوب ثبت قلبي على دينك».

“Yaa muqallib al-Quloob (O, Changer of hearts) Thabbit Qalbee 'alaa Deenik (steady my heart in Your Religion)”.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, verses like

مَا يَكْفُرُونَ مِنْ جُنُودٍ أَلْهَوْا رَبَّهُمْ وَلَا حَمْسَةً  
إِلَّا هُوَ سَادِسُهُمْ وَلَا آدَنِي مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْثَرُ إِلَّا هُوَ مَعَهُمْ  
أَيَّنَ مَا كَانُوا

<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-Baqarah 2:77.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah Aal'Imraan 3:103.

<sup>3</sup> Collected by at-Tirmidhee and authenticated by Muhammad Naasirud-Deen al-Albaanee is *Saheeh Sunan at-Tirmidhee* (Riyadh: Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States, 1st. ed., 1988), vol. 3, p. 171, no. 2792.

**“There is not a secret consultation between three, but He is their fourth, nor between five but He is the sixth, nor between fewer nor more but He is in their midst wheresoever they may be...”<sup>1</sup>**

should be understood according to their context. By reading the preceding segment of the same verse,

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ

**“Can you not see that Allaah knows all that is in the heavens and on earth?”**

and the concluding segment of the verse,

ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُم بِمَا عَمِلُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

**“In the end He will tell them the truth of their conduct, on the Day of Judgement for Allaah has full knowledge of all things.”**

It becomes clear that Allaah is here referring to His knowledge and not the fact that His Supreme Being is present among men, for He is above and beyond His creation.<sup>2</sup>

As for the following statement which has been attributed to the Prophet (ﷺ), “The heavens and earth cannot contain Allaah, but the heart of the true believer contains Him,” it is inauthentic. But, even if it were taken at face value, there is no way that a logical person could deduce from it that Allaah is in man. If a believer’s heart literally contains Allaah, and the believer is con-

<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-Mujaadalah 58:7.

<sup>2</sup> Ahmad ibn al-Husain al-Bayhaqee, *Kitaab al-Asmaa was-Sifaat*, (Beirut: Daar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmeeyah, 1st ed., 1984), pp. 541-2.

tained within the heavens and earth, then Allaah is contained by the heavens and earth. Because, if A is inside of B, and B is inside of C, then A must also be inside of C.

Therefore, according to the classical Islamic outlook based on the Qur'aan and the Prophet's *Sunnah*, Allaah is above the universe and its contents in a way which befits His majesty and He is not in anyway contained within His creation nor is it within Him, but His infinite knowledge, mercy and power operate on every particle within it without any hindrance whatsoever.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 'Umar al-Ashqar, *al-'Aqeedah fee Allaah*, (Kuwait: Maktabah al-Falaah, 2nd ed., 1979), p. 171.

## 9.CHAPTER ON SEEING ALLAAH

### Allaah's Image

As was stated previously, man's mind is limited and Allaah is limitless, therefore man cannot hope to understand anything about Allaah's attributes except what Allaah chooses to reveal to him. If man tries to picture Allaah in his mind he will only go astray, because Allaah is different from anything man can conceive. Any image of God which man constructs in his mind will be from some part of creation, or a composite of created things which he has observed. Thus, if he pictures Allaah in his mind, he ends up giving Allaah the attributes of creation. It is, however, possible for man to intellectually and emotionally understand some of Allaah's attributes. Hence, Allaah has revealed some of them to man. For example, *al-Qadir*: the All-Powerful, means that there is nothing which Allaah is unable to do. Similarly, *ar-Rahmaan*: the most-Merciful, means there is nothing in creation which has not been blessed by Allaah's mercy, whether they deserve it or not. Such understandings do not require any pictorial representations in the mind. Thus, it is only along these lines that the human mind may correctly conceive of Allaah. A confused understanding of the boundaries within which Allaah may be conceived by man was one of the factors which led the early Christians of Greece and Rome astray from the true teachings of Prophet Jesus. Europeans who embraced Christianity put in their churches and shrines pictures and statues of God in the form of an old European patriarch with a long flowing white beard. Early Christians of Palestine

came from a Jewish background which strictly, prohibited any pictorial representations of the Creator. Europeans, however, went astray in this respect due to a long historical tradition of representing their gods in human form and because of their dependence on the distorted scriptures of the Jews for religious guidance. In Genesis, the first book of the Torah, the Jews had written the following concerning man's creation.

“Then God said, “Let us make a man in our image, after our likeness. so God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; (1:26,27)”

From these verses and others like them, early European Christians concluded that the scriptures taught that God looks like a man in the same way that they portrayed their mythological gods looking like men. Consequently, they expended much wealth, time and energy portraying God in human form in statues and paintings.

The practise of representing God in human form is, and has been, quite widespread. When man lost touch with divine revelation which taught that God was not similar to His creation, he began to direct his worship to creation. In doing so, he often chose to represent God in human form, as man was obviously the greatest living being on earth. Thus, for example, from the time of the Chou dynasty (1027 BC - 402 CE) the official or state religion of China focused upon the abstract diety “T'ien” (Heaven) who was given human form as “Yu Huang”, Jade Emperor, Lord on High, ruler of the heavenly court.<sup>1</sup>

In the Qur'aan Allaah makes it very clear that nothing we can think of is like him. Allaah states,

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<sup>1</sup> *Dictionary of Religion*, p. 85.

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

“There is nothing like Him (Allaah) but He sees and hears all”<sup>1</sup>

and

وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ

“There is none comparable to Him”<sup>2</sup>

### Prophet Moosaa Asks To See Allaah

After making it clear that He is not like His creation, Allaah goes on to inform us that our eyes cannot grasp Him. He said,

لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْأَبْصَارُ وَهُوَ يُدْرِكُ الْأَبْصَارَ

“Eyes cannot catch Him but He catches all eyes”<sup>3</sup>.

This divine statement points out that man is incapable of viewing the Divine Being.

In order to further emphasize this fact, Allaah related in the Qur’aan a pertinent incident from the life of Prophet Moosaa (Moses);

وَلَمَّا جَاءَ مُوسَى لِمِيقَاتِنَا وَكَلَّمَهُ رَبُّهُ قَالَ رَبِّ أَرِنِي

<sup>1</sup> Soorah ash-Shooraa 42:11.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-Ikhlaas 112:4.

<sup>3</sup> Soorah al-An’aam 6:103.

أَنْظُرْ إِلَيْكَ قَالَ لَنْ تَرِنِي وَلَكِنْ أَنْظُرْ إِلَى الْجَبَلِ فَإِنِ  
 اسْتَقَرَّ مَكَانَهُ فَسَوْفَ تَرِنِي فَلَمَّا تَجَلَّى رَبُّهُ لِلْجَبَلِ  
 جَعَلَهُ دَكًّا وَخَرَّ مُوسَى صَعِقًا فَلَمَّا أَفَاقَ قَالَ  
 سُبْحَانَكَ بُنْتُ إِلَيْكَ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“And when Moses came to our appointed meeting place and his Lord spoke to him, he said: ‘My Lord! Show me Yourself so that I may gaze upon You.’ He replied: ‘You will never see Me, but look at the mountain. If it remains in its place you will be able to see Me.’ When his Lord revealed His glory to the mountain, it was crushed into dust, and Moses fell down unconscious. When he regained his consciousness he said: ‘Glory be unto You! I turn to You repentant and I am the first of the true believers.’”<sup>1</sup>

Prophet Moosaa thought that he might be allowed to see God since Allaah had preferred him over the rest of mankind of that time by choosing him to receive His message.<sup>2</sup> But, Allaah made it very clear to him that it was not possible for him or anyone else. No man could bear the intensity of even seeing Allaah’s glory much less Allaah’s boundless being.<sup>3</sup> When the mountain disintegrated, Prophet Moosaa realized his error and begged Allaah’s forgiveness for requesting something which was not permitted.

<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-A’raaf 7:143.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-A’raaf 7:144.

<sup>3</sup> al-‘Aqeedah at-Tahaaweeyah, p. 191.

## Did Prophet Muhammad ( ﷺ ) See Allaah?

Some Muslims have felt that an exception was made in the case of the last of the Prophets, Muhammad ( ﷺ ), whom Allaah caused to travel up through the heavens and go even beyond the point where angels were allowed to go. But when his wife, 'Aa'eshah, was asked by one of the *Taabe'oon*<sup>1</sup> named Masrouq, if Prophet Muhammed ( ﷺ ) had seen his Lord, she replied, "My hair is standing on end because of what you have asked! Whoever tells you that Muhammad saw his Lord has lied!"<sup>2</sup> And when Abu Dharr asked the Prophet ( ﷺ ) if he saw his Lord, the Prophet ( ﷺ ) replied, "*There was only light, how could I see Him.*"<sup>3</sup> The Prophet ( ﷺ ) on another occasion explained the significance of the light and that it was not Allaah himself, saying, "*Verily Allaah does not sleep nor is it befitting for Him to sleep. He is the One who lowers the scales and raises them. The deeds of the night go up to Him before the deeds of the day and those of the day before those of the night, and His veil is light.*"<sup>4</sup>

Thus, it can be said with certainty that the Prophet Muhammad ( ﷺ ), like the prophets before him, did not see Allaah, Most Great and Gracious, in this life. Based on this fact, the claim of those who are supposed to have seen Allaah in this life is proven false. If the prophets, whom God has preferred over all of man-

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<sup>1</sup> Students of the Prophet's companions.

<sup>2</sup> Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.1, pp. 111-112, nos. 337 & 339).

<sup>3</sup> Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.1, p. 113, no. 341).

<sup>4</sup> Reported by Abu Moosaa al-Ash'aree and collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.1, p. 113, no. 343).

kind, were unable to see Him, how could any man, no matter how righteous and pious he may be, see Him? The claim that one has seen God is, in fact, a statement of heresy and disbelief, because it implies that the one who makes such a claim is greater than the prophets.

### **Satan Pretends to be Allaah**

There is no doubt that many of the mystics (*Sufis*) who claim to have seen Allaah saw something. They often describe spectacular visions of light and possibly even unearthly beings. However, the fact that many mystics often discard basic practices of Islaam after such visions shows clearly that what they are involved with is satanic and not divine. Those who declare that they have seen God often claim that they no longer need to pray and fast regularly as common people do, because they have risen spiritually above the plane of the masses. Sheikh 'Abdul-Qaadir al-Jeelaanee (1077-1166 CE), after whom the Qaadiree *Sufi* order is named, gave an account of an incident which he once experienced. This incident contains an explanation for both the visions of those who claim to have seen Allaah, as well as the reason why they often discard basic Islamic practices after such visions. "One day," he said, "I was deeply involved in worship when all of a sudden I saw before me a grand throne with a brilliantly shining light surrounding it. A thunderous voice then struck my ears: 'Oh 'Abdul-Qaadir, I am your Lord! For you I have made lawful that which I have forbidden for others'." 'Abdul-Qaadir asked, "Are you Allaah besides whom there is no god?" When there was no answer, he said; "Get away, Oh enemy of Allaah." And with that, the light vanished and darkness blanketed him. The voice then said, " 'Abdul-Qaadir, you have succeeded in defeating my strategy because of your under-

standing of the religion and your knowledge. I have managed to misguide over seventy saintly worshippers by such incidents.” Afterwards, the people asked ‘Abdul-Qaadir how he realized that it was Satan. He replied, “I recognized that it was Satan by his claim that Allaah had made lawful for me what He had forbidden to others, because I knew that the divine law revealed to the Prophet ( ﷺ ) could not be cancelled or changed. I also realized who it was when Satan announced that he was my Lord, but was unable to confirm that he was Allaah who is without any partner.”<sup>1</sup>

Similarly some people in the past have reported that they have seen the Ka’bah and circled it in visions. Others have reported that a great throne was stretched out before them with a glorious being seated on it and a large number of men were ascending and descending around it. They considered the men to be angels and the glorious being to be Allaah, the exalted and glorious, but in fact, it was Satan and his followers.<sup>2</sup>

Consequently, it may be assumed that the basis to claims to seeing Allaah, either in dreams or in broad daylight, can be traced back to Satanic psychological and emotional states. In these states, Satan takes on glorious light forms and claims to those who are experiencing the visions that he is their Lord. Due to their ignorance of pure *Tawheed* they accept such claims and thereby go astray.

### **The Meaning of Soorah an-Najm**

Some people<sup>3</sup> use the following verses in Soorah an-Najm to

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<sup>1</sup> Ibn Taymeeyah, *at-Tawassul wal-Waseelah*, (Riyadh: Daar al-Iftaa, 1984) p.28

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Among them is an Nawawee in his commentary on *Saheeh Muslim*, vol. 3, =

support the claim that Prophet Muhammad ( ﷺ ) saw Allaah.

وَهُوَ بِالْأُفُقِ الْأَعْلَى ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَنَّى فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَى  
فَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ مَا أَوْحَىٰ مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَىٰ أَفَتَمُرُونَهُ  
عَلَىٰ مَا يَرَىٰ وَلَقَدْ رَآهُ نَزْلَةً أُخْرَىٰ عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَىٰ

“When he was on the uppermost horizon. Then he came close and descended. Until he was two bow’s lengths away or closer. And He revealed to His slave that which He revealed. The heart did not lie about what it saw. Will you argue with him about what he saw? And verily he saw him yet another time. By the lote-tree of the uppermost boundary.”<sup>1</sup>

They assert that these verses are in reference to the Prophet Muhammed ( ﷺ ) seeing Allaah. However, when Masrouq asked the Prophet’s wife ‘Aa’eshah, about these verses she replied, “I was the first person from this *Ummah* (Muslim nation) to ask the messenger of Allaah about that and he replied: ‘*Verily it was Jibreel, May Allaah’s peace be on him. I never saw him in the form in which he was created except these two times; I saw him descending from the heavens and the greatness of his size filled all that was between the sky and the earth.*” ‘Aa’eshah then said, “Haven’t you heard that Allaah, Most High, said, ‘**Eyes can not catch Him but He catches all eyes. He**

= p.12.. [See *Sharh Kitaab at-Tawheed min Saheeh al-Bukhaaree*, (Madeenah: Maktabah ad-Daar, 1985), pp. 115-6 by ‘Abdullaah Aal Ghunaimaan].

<sup>1</sup> Soorah an-Najm 53:7-14.

is the Subtle, the Aware?’<sup>1</sup> And haven’t you heard that Allaah said, “Allaah will not speak to any man except by inspiration, or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger (Angel)?”<sup>2</sup> <sup>3</sup> Accordingly, the verses from Soorah an-Najm, when considered in the light of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) own explanation, do not in any way support the mistaken belief that Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) saw Allaah.<sup>4</sup>

### The Wisdom Behind Not Seeing Allaah

If God could be seen in this life, the tests of this life would be pointless. What makes this life a real test is the fact that we are obliged to believe in Allaah without actually seeing Him. If Allaah were visible, everyone would believe in Him and all that the prophets (ﷺ) taught. In fact, man would end up like angels, in total obedience to Allaah. Because Allaah made man to be higher than the angels, whose belief in Allaah was without choice, man’s choice of belief over disbelief had to be in a situation where Allaah’s existence could be questioned. Thus, Allaah has kept himself hidden from mankind and will continue to do so until the last day.

### Seeing Allaah In The Next Life<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-An’aam 6:103.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah ash-Shooraa 42:51.

<sup>3</sup> Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.1, pp. 111-112, no. 337).

<sup>4</sup> The narration attributed to Ibn ‘Abbaas and collected by Ibn Khuzaymah in *Kitaab at-Tawheed* that the Prophet (ﷺ) saw Allaah with his eyes is *Da’eef* (inauthentic) - see *al-Aqeedah at-Tahaaweeyah*, p.197, ftn. 169.

<sup>5</sup> The main Muslim sects of the past which deny that Allaah will be seen in the next life are the *Jahmites*, *Mu’tazilites* and their followers among the *Khaarijites*. In present times only the twelver *Shi’ites* continue to deny that man will see Allaah in the next life. (See *al-Aqeedah at-Tahaaweeyah*, p. 189).

There are a number of instances in the Qur'aan where Allaah has stated plainly that humans will see Him in the next life. In describing some of the events on the Day of Resurrection Allaah says,

وَجُوهٌ يَوْمَئِذٍ نَّاصِرَةٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهَا نَاظِرَةٌ

**“On that day some faces will be bright. Looking at their Lord”<sup>1</sup>**

The Prophet (ﷺ) has been even more explanatory about this great event. When asked by some of his companions, “Will we see our Lord on the Day of Resurrection?” He replied, “Are you harmed by looking at the moon when it is full?” They replied, “No”. He then said, “Verily you will see him likewise.”<sup>2</sup> On another occasion he said, “Verily each one of you will see Allaah on the day when you must meet Him, and there will not be between Him and you a veil nor a translator.”<sup>3</sup> Ibn ‘Umar also reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) once said, “The day of Resurrection is the first day that any eye will look at Allaah, Most Great and Glorious.”<sup>4</sup> Seeing Allaah is a special added blessing for the people of paradise. This additional favour is itself greater than all the other pleasures which Allaah has in store for the

<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-Qiyaamah 75:22-23.

<sup>2</sup> Reported by Abu Hurayrah and collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English), vol. 9, pp. 390-1, no. 532) and Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.1, p. 115, no. 349).

<sup>3</sup> Reported by ‘Adee ibn Abee Haatim and collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English), vol.9, p. 403, no. 535).

<sup>4</sup> An authentic narration collected by ad-Daaraqutnee and ad-Daarimee in his book *ar-Radd ‘alaa al-Jahmeeyah* (Refutation of the Jahmites), (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islaamee, n.d.) p. 57.

righteous inheritors of the gardens of paradise. Allaah refers to this additional pleasure saying,

لَهُمْ مَا يَشَاءُونَ فِيهَا وَلَدَيْنَا مَزِيدٌ

**“For them is whatever they wish and there is with Us something additional,”<sup>1</sup>**

Two of the Prophet’s ( ﷺ ) most notable companions, ‘Alee ibn Abee Taalib and Anas, were reported to have explained that the additional thing which Allaah referred to here is, looking at Him.<sup>2</sup> The companion Suhaib reported that Allaah’s messenger recited (the verse)

لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا الْحُسْنَىٰ وَزِيَادَةٌ

**“For those who do right is a good reward and (something) additional”<sup>3</sup>**

and said, *“When the people deserving paradise have entered it and those deserving hell have entered it, a crier will call out, ‘Oh people of paradise, Allaah has a promise for you which He wishes to fulfil.’ They will ask, ‘What is it? Has He not made our scale (of good deeds) heavy, made our faces shining, put us in paradise and extracted (some of) us from hell?’ The veil will then be removed and they will gaze at Him. Nothing which He has bestowed on them will be more dear to them than gazing at Him. And that is the something additional.”<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Soorah Qaaf 50:35.

<sup>2</sup> Collected by at-Tabaree (see *al-'Aqeedah at-Tahaaweeyah*, p. 190).

<sup>3</sup> Soorah Yunus 10:26.

<sup>4</sup> Collected by at-Tirmidhee, Ibn Maajah and Ahmad.

As for the previously mentioned verse, “**Eyes cannot catch Him, but He catches all eyes**”, it negates seeing Allaah at all in this life, but in the next life, it only negates the possibility of seeing Allaah in His totality. The righteous will only be able to see a part of Allaah since their sight will still be the sight of finite created beings while Allaah is and always will be the infinite uncreated Lord who can not be encompassed by sight, knowledge or power.<sup>1</sup> As for the disbelievers, they will not see Allaah in the next life which will be a great deprivation and disappointment to them. Allaah said,

كَلَّا إِنَّهُمْ عَنْ رَبِّهِمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ لَمَّحْجُورُونَ

“**But on that Day they will be veiled from their Lord.**”<sup>2</sup>

### Seeing Prophet Muhammad ( ﷺ )

This is the other area of visions which has, to some degree, been a source of confusion and trials among Muslims. People claim to have seen the Prophet ( ﷺ ) and to have received special guidance from him. Some claim that their visions were in dreams while others claim to have actually seen him in a waking state. Those who make such claims are usually revered by the masses. They often introduce various religious innovations and attribute them to the Prophet ( ﷺ ). The basis of these claims rests on the *Hadeeth* reported by Abu Hurayrah, Abu Qataadah and Jaabir ibn ‘Abdullaah in which the Prophet ( ﷺ ) stated, “*He who saw me in a dream in fact saw me, for Satan can not assume*

<sup>1</sup> *al-Aqeedah at-Tahaaweeyah*, p. 188, 193, 198. See also Soorah Taahaa 20:110 where Allaah says, “**They (man) can not encompass Him with (their) knowledge**”.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-Mutaffifeen 83:15.

my form”<sup>1</sup> There is no doubt that this *Hadeeth* is *Saheeh* (authentic) and reliable, and thus can not be denied or distrusted; but there are, however, some points which should be noted concerning its meaning.

- a. The *Hadeeth* confirms the fact that Satan can come in dreams in various forms and invite man to misguidance.
- b. The *Hadeeth* states that Satan cannot take the actual form or appearance of the Prophet (ﷺ).
- c. The *Hadeeth* also confirms the fact that the Prophet’s form may be seen in dreams.

Since the Prophet (ﷺ) made this statement about dreams to his companions, who were familiar with his appearance, it means that if one who knows **exactly what the Prophet (ﷺ) looks like** sees someone fitting that description in a dream, he could be sure that Allaah had blessed him with a vision of the Prophet (ﷺ). That is because Allaah has denied Satan the ability of taking the actual form of the Prophet (ﷺ). However, this also means that Satan can appear in dreams to those unfamiliar with the Prophet’s appearance, and claim that he is Allaah’s messenger. He may then prescribe religious innovations for the dreamer or inform him that he is *al-Mahdi* (the awaited reformer) or even Prophet ‘Eesaa (Jesus), who is to return in the last days. The number of individuals who have started religious innovations or made such claims, based on dreams, are countless. People are particularly inclined to accept such claims because of their misunderstanding of the implications of the

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<sup>1</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English), vol.9, p. 104, no. 123). and Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.4, p. 1225, no. 5635 and p. 1226, no. 5639).

above mentioned *Hadeeth*. Since the *Sharee'ah* (Islamic Law) is complete, the claim that the Prophet (ﷺ) has come in dreams with new additions must be false. Such a claim implies one of two things: (1) Either that the Prophet (ﷺ) did not fulfil his mission in his life time, or (2) that Allaah was not aware of the future of the *Ummah*, and thus did not prescribe the necessary injunctions during the Prophet's (ﷺ) life time. Both of these implications contradict basic principles of Islaam.

As for seeing the Prophet (ﷺ) in the waking state, such a claim goes beyond the boundaries of the *Hadeeth* into the impossible. Any such visions which actually occur would no doubt be satanic apparitions, regardless of the outcome. During the Prophet's miraculous night journey to Jerusalem and into the heavens, Allaah did miraculously show him a number of the former prophets and Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) communicated with them. Those who claim to see Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) in the waking state, in fact, attempt to elevate themselves to his level. Any such innovations in the religion of Islaam, whether based on visions of the Prophet (ﷺ) or otherwise, are totally unacceptable based on the many statements of the Prophet (ﷺ) prohibiting them. For example, 'Aa'eshah reported that Allaah's messenger said, "*Whoever innovates in this affair of ours (i.e. Islaam) something not belonging to it, will have it rejected.*"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English), vol. 3, p. 535, no. 861), Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.3, p. 931, no. 4266) and Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), vol.3, p. 1294, no. 4589).

## 10.CHAPTER ON SAINT WORSHIP

### Allaah's Favor:

It is a part of man's nature to elevate some human beings over others. He likes to hold them in high esteem and prefers to follow them rather than make decisions on his own. This is a direct result of the fact that Allaah has favored some people over others, in various ways. Man has been placed over woman socially:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ  
عَلَى بَعْضٍ

“Men are guardians of women by that which Allaah favored some of them over others”<sup>1</sup> ,

وَالرِّجَالُ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ

“And men are one level over women.”<sup>2</sup>

And some men have been placed over other men economically:

وَاللَّهُ فَضَّلَ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ فِي الرِّزْقِ

“Allaah has favored some of you over others with sustenance.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Soorah an-Nisaa 4:34.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-Baqarah 2:228.

<sup>3</sup> Soorah an-Nahl 16:81.

The tribe of Israel was favored over the rest of mankind by divine guidance:

يٰۤاِسْرٰٓءِيْلَ اذْكُرْ اَنْعَمْتَ اِلَيْهِ اَنْعَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ وَاِنِّي فَضَّلْتُكُمْ  
عَلَى الْعٰلَمِيْنَ

**“Remember, Oh Israel, the blessing which I bestowed on you by favoring you over all mankind.”<sup>1</sup>**

The prophets were favored over all mankind by revelation and Allaah favored some of the prophets over others:

تِلْكَ الرُّسُلُ فَضَّلْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ

**“Those are the prophets of whom We favored some over others.”<sup>2</sup>**

Yet Allaah has told us not to desire the things by which He has favored some of mankind over others

وَلَا تَتَمَنَّوْا مَا فَضَّلَ اللّٰهُ بِهِۦٓ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ

**“Do not wish for that with which We have favored some of you over others.”<sup>3</sup>**

because these favors are tests which carry with them great responsibilities. They are not a result of man’s strivings, and, as such, should not be a source of pride. Allaah will not give us a reward for having them, although we will be held to account for

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<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-Baqarah 2:47.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-Baqarah 2:253.

<sup>3</sup> Soorah an-Nisaa 4:32.

how we used them. Thus, Allaah's Messenger advised us, "Look at those below you and not those above you. It is better for you, so that you do not deny Allaah's blessings on you."<sup>1</sup>

Everyone has been placed above others in some way or another, and everyone has certain responsibilities for which he will be held accountable. The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Everyone of you is a shepherd, and everyone is responsible for his flock."<sup>2</sup> These responsibilities are the basic components of the tests of this life. If we are thankful to Allaah for His favors and apply them justly, we succeed; otherwise, we fail. But, perhaps the greatest test of responsibility is that of Allaah's favoring man over all creation. This favor was confirmed by Allaah's command to the angels to prostrate to Aadam and the responsibility is twofold:

- a. It carries a personal responsibility of accepting Islaam: total submission to Allaah.
- b. It also carries a group commitment of establishing Allaah's law throughout the earth.

Thus, believers are far superior to disbelievers in Allaah's sight because of their acceptance of their responsibilities. Allaah said:

كُنْتُمْ خَيْرَ أُمَّةٍ أُخْرِجَتْ لِلنَّاسِ تَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ  
وَتَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَتُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ

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<sup>1</sup> Collected by both al-Bukhaaree and Muslim. See *Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English), vol.8, p. 328, no. 497, and *Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.4, p. 1530, no. 7070.

<sup>2</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim. See *Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English) vol.3, p. 438, no. 730 and *Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.) vol.3, p. 1017, no. 4496.

**“You (believers) are the best of nations brought forth for the benefit of mankind (because) you command the good, prohibit evil and believe in Allaah.”<sup>1</sup>**

### **Taqwaa:**

Among the community of believers, some are superior to others; and this superiority is a direct result of their own strivings. It is a superiority linked to *Eemaan*, the strength and depth of faith. A living faith drives the one who possesses it to shield himself from whatever displeases Allaah. This shield in Arabic is called “*Taqwaa*.” It has been variously translated as “fear of God”, “piety”, as well as “God-consciousness”; and it carries all these meanings and more. Allaah clearly expressed the superiority of *Taqwaa* as follows:

إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَنْفُسُكُمْ

**“Verily the most noble among you is the one with the most *Taqwaa*.”<sup>2</sup>**

Allaah is here saying that the only factor which makes a believing man or woman truly superior to another is the level of *Taqwaa*. It is this piety or fear of God which elevates man from the level of “thinking animal” to that of governor (*Khaleefah*) of the planets. The importance of the fear of Allaah in a Muslim’s life cannot be overstressed. Allaah mentioned *Taqwaa* and its derivatives 26 times in the Qur’aan, everywhere emphasizing that *Taqwaa* is the driving force behind living faith. Without it, faith is only a meaningless jumble of memorized words and phrases, and ‘righteous’ deeds only shells of pretence and hypocrisy. Consequently, piety is preferred over all other con-

<sup>1</sup> Soorah Aal Imraan 3:110.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-Hujuraat 49:13.

siderations in all of life's transactions. The Messenger of Allaah ( ﷺ ) said: "A woman is married for four (reasons): her wealth, her nobility, her beauty, and her piety. Choose the pious one and be successful."<sup>1</sup> No matter how beautiful, rich or well bred a woman might be, if she is not pious, she is inferior to a pious, ugly, poor woman from a dishonorable family. The converse is also true, as the Prophet ( ﷺ ) said, "If a man whose practise of the religion satisfies you, asks you for your daughter in marriage, you should marry them; otherwise there will be corruption in the land."<sup>2</sup>

The Prophet ( ﷺ ) once reprimanded Abu Dharr for derisively calling Bilal, 'son of a black woman', then he went on to say, "Look! Surely you are not better than a brown man nor a black man except by fearing Allaah more than them."<sup>3</sup> This understanding was hammered home time and time again by Allaah's messenger ( ﷺ ). Even in the Farewell Pilgrimage, done shortly before he died, he lectured the people on the insignificance of racial differences and the all importance of *Taqwaa*.

The most pious individuals are only known to Allaah, because the seat of *Taqwaa* is the heart. Man can only judge people by each other's outward deeds which may or may not be misleading. Allaah made that abundantly clear in the following verse:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يُعْجِبُكَ قَوْلُهُ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا  
وَيُشْهَدُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ مَا فِي قَلْبِهِ ۗ وَهُوَ أَلَدُّ الْخِصَامِ

<sup>1</sup> Reported by Abu Hurayrah and collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, (Arabic-English), vol. 7, pp. 18-9, no. 27) and Muslim (*Sahih Muslim*, (English Trans.), vol. 2, p. 749, no. 3457).

<sup>2</sup> Reported by Abu Hurayrah and collected by at-Tirmidhee.

<sup>3</sup> Reported by 'Abdullaah ibn 'Amr and collected by Ahmed.

**“There is among people in this life, he whose speech will dazzle you. And he will call on Allaah as a witness to what is in his heart; yet, he will be among the most vicious of enemies.”<sup>1</sup>**

Therefore, it is not permissible for humans to designate certain people as being particularly saintly and pious to a degree beyond the reach of ordinary humans. The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) specified among his companions (*Sahaabah*) some whom he gave glad tidings of paradise in this life.<sup>2</sup> However, such pronouncements were based on revelation and not his own ability to judge the hearts. For example, when the Prophet (ﷺ) said concerning those who make a pledge of allegiance known as *Bay'ah ar-Ridwaan*, “No one who made the pledge beneath the tree will enter the hellfire,”<sup>3</sup> he was confirming the Qur’anic verse revealed to that effect:

لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ يُبَايِعُونَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ

**“Allaah is pleased with the believers when they pledged allegiance to you beneath the tree...”<sup>4</sup>**

Similarly, he judged some whom everyone thought were

<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-Baqarah 2:204.

<sup>2</sup> Among them are ten well known, Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthmaan, ‘Alee, Talhah, az-Zubayr, Sa’d ibn Abee Waqqaas, Sa’eed ibn Zayd, ‘Abdur-Rahmaan ibn ‘Awf, Abu ‘Ubaydah ibn al-Jaarraah (see *al-'Aqeedah at-Tahaaweeyah*, pp.485-7).

<sup>3</sup> Reported by Jaabir and collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.3, p. 1034, no. 4576).

<sup>4</sup> Soorah al-Fat-h 48:18.

destined to paradise to be among those destined for the hellfire. All such judgements were based on revelation. Ibn 'Abbaas said that he was told by 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab that *on the day of (the battle) of Khaybar, some of the Prophet's companions came and said, "So and so is a martyr and so and so is a martyr," but when they came to a man about whom they said, "So and so is a martyr," Allaah's messenger declared, "By no means! I have seen him in hell in a cloak which he took (from the spoils) dishonestly." Allaah's messenger then said, "Go, Ibn al-Khattaab, and announce among the people three times that only the believers will enter paradise."*<sup>1</sup>

In Christian tradition down through the ages, some individuals were highly praised for their supposed spiritual achievements. Miracles were attributed to them and the rank of "saint" was bestowed on them. In pre-Christian Hindu and Buddhist tradition, teachers who were supposed to have climbed the ladder of spiritual excellence and who had performed supernatural feats were also given titles like *Guru, Avatar*, etc., indicating spiritual superiority. These designations have led the masses to either seek intercession through them or to worship them as gods. Consequently, these religious traditions have lists of saints to whom the masses fervently pray. Islaam, on the other hand, opposes even the excessive praise of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) who said, *"Do not praise me excessively as the Christians did to 'Eesaa ibn Maryam, verily I am only a slave, so call me instead the slave of Allaah and His messenger."*<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Collected by Muslim. See *Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.) vol.1, p. 65, no. 209.

<sup>2</sup> Reported by 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab and collected by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim (See *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, (Arabic-English), vol. 4, p. 435, no. 654).

### **Walee: The “Saint”**

The term saint has been used to translate the Arabic word *Walee* (pl. *Awliyaa*) which Allaah used to designate those who are close to Him. But, a more appropriate translation is “close friend” because *Walee* literally means an “ally.” Allaah even uses it to refer to Himself in the verse:

اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ

“Allaah is the *Walee* of those who believe and takes them from the darkness into light.”<sup>1</sup>

He also uses it to refer to Satan as in the verse:

وَمَن يَتَّخِذِ الشَّيْطَانَ وَلِيًّا مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ خَسِرَ خُسْرًا مُّبِينًا

“Whoever takes Satan as a *Walee* instead of Allaah, has clearly lost all.”<sup>2</sup>

This term also means “close relative” as in the following verse:

فَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا لَوَلِيَّهِ سُلْطٰنًا فَلَا يَسْرِفُ فِي الْقَتْلِ

“We have given power to the *Walee* of whoever is wrongly killed, but do not be excessive in the execution (of the murderer).”<sup>3</sup>

It is also used in Qur’aan to indicate closeness between men, for example,

<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-Baqarah 2:257, 3:68, 42:9 and 45:19.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah an-Nisaa 4:119, 7:27, 30, and 4:75.

<sup>3</sup> Soorah al-Israa 17:33.

لَا يَتَّخِذِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“The believers should not take the disbelievers as *Awliyaa* instead of other believers.”<sup>1</sup>

But the usage which concerns us most is “*Awliyaa-ullaah*” close friends of Allaah. In the Qur’aan Allaah has designated among mankind certain types of individuals whom He considers especially close to Himself. Allaah’s description of His *Walees* can be found in Soorah al-Anfaal where Allaah states:

إِن أَوْلِيَائِهِمْ إِلَّا الْمُتَّقُونَ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

“Verily His (Allaah’s) *Awliyaa* are only those with *Taqwaa*, but most people do not realize that.”<sup>2</sup>

And Soorah Younus:

الْآيَاتِ أَوْلِيَائِهِمُ اللَّهُ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ

“Behold! Certainly no fear nor grief shall overcome the *Awliyaa* of Allaah, those who believe and have *Taqwaa*.”<sup>3</sup>

Allaah explains for us that the criterion for “*Walaayah*” (divine friendship) is *Eemaan* (faith) and *Taqwaa* (piety) and these qualities are shared by all true believers.<sup>4</sup> Among the ignorant masses,

<sup>1</sup> Soorah Aal’Imraan 3:28, 4:139, 144 and 5:51.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-Anfaal 8:34.

<sup>3</sup> Soorah Younus 10:62-63.

<sup>4</sup> *Al-‘Aqeedah at-Tahaaweeyah*, p.358.

the main criterion for *Walaayah* (“Sainthood”) is the performance of miracles which are commonly called *Karaamaat* to distinguish them from the miracles *Mu’jizaat* of the prophets. To most who hold this belief, the faith and practise of the “miracle” worker are of no consequence. Hence, some who have been designated “saints” held heretical beliefs and practises, while others were known to have abandoned the religious rituals, and, yet others were even involved in licentious and vulgar behaviour. However, nowhere has Allaah made the working of miracles a stipulation for being His *Walee*. Therefore, as earlier stated, all believers who have *Eemaan* and *Taqwaa* are *Walees* of Allaah and He is their *Walee*, as Allaah Himself said,

**“Allaah is the *Walee* of those who believe.”<sup>1</sup>**

Consequently, Muslims are not allowed to designate certain believers as being *Awliyaa* of Allaah and not others. In spite of this clear Islamic position, a hierarchy of so-called Muslim saints has become a prominent feature in *Sufi* circles and among the masses who blindly follow them. In ascending order of merit they are: the *Akhyaar* (chosen) who number 300; the *Abdaal* (substitutes) numbering 40; the 7 *Abraar* (pious); the 4 *Awtaad* (pegs); the 3 *Nuqabaa* (watchmen), the *Qutb* (pole) who is considered the greatest saint of his time, and at the top of the list is the *Ghawth* (Succor), the greatest of Saints, who is believed, in some circles, to be capable of taking on his shoulders a portion of the sins of the believers. According to the belief of “mystics”, the saints of the top three classes are present invisibly in Makkah at the hours of prayer. When the *Ghawth* dies, the *Qutb* replaces him and there is a moving up all through the series, the

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<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-Baqarah 2:257.

purest soul of each class rising to the next degree.<sup>1</sup> This body of mythology has been borrowed from Christianity, just as *Dhikr* beads were adopted from the Christian rosary, and *Mawlid* from the Christian celebration of Christmas.

### **Fanaa: The Union of Man With God**

A close look at various lists of the most prominent so-called saints, reveals names like that of al-Hallaaj who was publicly executed as an apostate for daring to openly claim divinity in his infamous pronouncement “*Anal-Haqq*” ‘I am the Reality’ when Allaah already said:

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنَّهُ يُحْيِي الْمَوْتَى

“That is so, because Allaah is the Reality and it is He who gives life to the dead.”<sup>2</sup>

What led this deranged individual to make such a pronouncement was his belief in a principle very similar to the ultimate state of being in Buddhism known as “*Nirvana*.”<sup>3</sup> In this state, according to a branch of Buddhist thought, the ego disappears and the human soul and consciousness are extinguished.<sup>4</sup>

This concept also forms the core of a philosophy known as “mys-

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<sup>1</sup> *Encyclopedia of Islaam*, p.629. See also ‘Alee ibn ‘Uthmaan al-Hujweeree, *Kashf al-Mahjoob*, trans. by Nicholson, (London: Luzac, rep. 1976), p.214.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-Hajj 22:6 and 62, 24:25 and 31:30.

<sup>3</sup> Sanskrit term meaning “blown out” referring to the extinction of all worldly desires, or salvation. Though the term originated in Vedantic (*Bhagavad-Gita* and the Vedas) it is most often associated with Buddhism. In *Hinayana* Buddhism the term is equated with extinction while in *Mahayana* Buddhism it is a state of bliss (W.L. Resse, *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980), p.393).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p.72.

ticism". Mysticism<sup>1</sup> is defined as an experience of union with God and the belief that man's main goal lies in seeking that union. The origins of mysticism can be found in the writings of ancient Greek philosophers like *Plato's Symposium* in which mention is made of various ladders of ascent, composed of steep and hard steps, whereby a union of the soul with God is finally attained.<sup>2</sup> A parallel concept can also be found in Hinduism's identification of *Atman* (human soul) with *Brahman* (the impersonal Absolute), the realization of which is the ultimate goal or release from existence and rebirth.<sup>3</sup> Greek mystic thought blossomed in the Gnostic Christian movements which, like that of Valentinus (c. 140 CE), reached their peak in the second century CE. These trends were combined in the third century with Platonism by the Egypto-Roman philosopher, Plotinus (205-270 CE), to form a religious philosophy known as *neoplatonism*. Christian anchorites or hermits of the 3rd century CE, who began the monastic tradition in Christendom by withdrawing into the Egyptian desert, adopted the mystic goal of union with God as it was propounded in neoplatonic thought at that time, within a framework of meditative and ascetic practises of self-denial. Although it was "St." Pachomius (290-346 CE) who established the first set of rules for Christian monasticism and founded nine monasteries in the Egyptian desert; "St." Benedict of Nursia (480-547 CE), in developing the Benedictine Rule for the monastery at Monte Cassino in Italy, came to be regarded as the real founder of Western monastic order.<sup>4</sup> The mystic tradition

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<sup>1</sup> From the Greek "*Mystes*" meaning "one initiated into the mysteries." The term is derived from the Greek mystery religions whose initiates bore the name "*mystes*" (*Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, p. 374).

<sup>2</sup> *Colliers Encyclopedia*, vol. 17, p.114.

<sup>3</sup> *Dictionary of Religions*, p.68.

<sup>4</sup> *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, pp.365-6 and 374.

kept alive in monastic Christianity began to find expression among Muslims from about 8th century CE, a century after the borders of the Islamic state had expanded to include Egypt and Syria and its major centers of monasticism.<sup>1</sup> A group of Muslims who were not satisfied with what the *Sharee'ah* (Islamic Law) had to offer, developed a parallel system which they named the *Tareeqah* (the way). Just as the ultimate goal of the Hindu was unity with the world soul and of the Christian mystic union with God; the ultimate goal of this movement became *Fanaa*, the dissolution of the ego, and *Wusool*, the meeting and unification of the human soul with Allaah in this life. A series of preliminary stages and states which had to be attained were defined. They were called *Maqaamaat* (stations) and *Haalaat* (states). A system of spiritual exercises was also designed for the initiate in order to bring about this "meeting." These exercises of *Dhikr*<sup>2</sup> often involved head and body movements and sometimes even dance, as in the case of whirling dervishes. All of these practises were attributed to the Prophet (ﷺ) through chains of narration in order to validate them, but there does not

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<sup>1</sup> "The authors of treatises on Muslim mysticism have often compared the "annihilation" of *Sufism* with Buddhist *Nirvana*; but according to others this comparison is entirely inadequate as the Buddhist idea of annihilation is independent of the idea of God and includes the idea of transmigration of souls, to which *Nirvana* puts an end. In Muslim mysticism on the other hand, there is no question of the passing of soul upon death into another body and the notion of a personal and all-present God is throughout predominant. The origin of the Muslim conception of *Fanaa* has rather to be sought in Christianity from which it seems to be borrowed. This conception simply means the annihilation of the individual human will before the will of God, an idea which forms the center of all Christian mysticism." (*Shorter Encyclopedia of Islam*, p. 98).

<sup>2</sup> *Dhikr*, which normally means the remembrance of God, in mystic circles, is used to refer to the continuous repetition of God's names and attributes.

exist any authentic support for them in any of the classical books of *Hadeeth*. A multiplicity of systems evolved, and orders, similar to those among Christian monks, appeared named after their founders, like the *Qaadiri*, *Chishti*, *Nakhshabandi*, and *Teejaani* orders. Along with that, volumes of legends and fairy tales were spun around the founders and the outstanding personalities of these orders. And, just as Christian and Hindu monks chose special isolated structures (i.e. monasteries) in which to house their communities, the *Sufi* orders developed similar housing schemes called *Zaawiyahs* (lit. corners).

In time, a body of heretic creeds developed out of the mystic "union-with-God" belief. For example, most orders claimed that Allaah could be seen when the state of *Wusool* (arrival) was achieved. Yet when 'Aa'eshah asked the Prophet (ﷺ) if he saw Allaah during *Mi'raaj* (ascension) he replied that he had not.<sup>1</sup> Prophet Moosaa (ﷺ) was also shown that neither he nor any man could withstand seeing Allaah in this life by Allaah revealing some of His being to a mountain which crumbled to dust during the revelation.<sup>2</sup> Some *Sufi* adepts claimed that when the state of *Wusool* was attained, the mundane obligations of *Sharee'ah* like five times daily *Salaah*, were no longer obligatory. Most of them prescribed that prayers to Allaah could be sent through the Prophet (ﷺ) or through the so-called saints; many also began the practice of making *Tawaaf*,<sup>3</sup> animal sacrifices and other acts of worship around the shrines and tombs of the saints. *Tawaaf* can be observed today around the grave of Zaynab and Sayyid al-Badawi in Egypt, around the tomb of

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<sup>1</sup> Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.1, pp. 111-112 - nos. 337,339 and p. 113, no. 341.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-'Aaraaf 7:143.

<sup>3</sup> Walking around an object of religious devotion.

Muhammad Ahmad (The *Mahdi*) in Sudan, and around the Darghas of countless saints and holy men in India and Pakistan.

The *Sharee'ah* came to be looked at as the outer path designed for the ignorant masses, while the *Tareeqah* was the inner path of an elite enlightened few. Opinionated *Tafseer* (Qur'anic commentary) appeared in which the meanings of the Qur'anic verses were bent and twisted to support the heretical ideas of the mystic movement. Greek philosophical thought was also blended with fabricated *Hadeeths* to produce a body of inauthentic literature which challenged the early Islamic classics and eventually displaced them among the masses. Music was introduced in most circles and drugs like marijuana could be found in others as a means of heightening the pseudo-spiritual experience which they all sought. Such was the legacy of the latter generation of *Sufis* which had been built on the false premise that union of the human soul with Allaah was attainable. The early generation of pious individuals, like 'Abdul-Qaadir al-Jeelaani, and others to whom some orders were attributed, clearly understood the importance of distinguishing between the Creator and the created. The two could never become one, as One was Divine and Eternal, while the other was human and finite.

### **The Union of God With Man**

Nothing escapes Allaah's knowledge, therefore, the wise are those who act accordingly. They feel His presence at all times. They carefully perform all their obligatory (*Fard*) duties, then they piously try to make up for any of the inevitable deficiencies by doing a host of voluntary acts. These voluntary acts help to protect the obligatory duties. For example, during times of weakness or spiritual lows, one may become lax in fulfilling one's religious duties. However, those who had voluntary practises would likely neglect some of their voluntary practises,

while keeping their obligatory duties intact. If they did not have a protective shield of voluntary acts and they fell into a period of spiritual laziness, some of their obligatory duties are likely to be discarded or neglected. The more someone strengthens his obligatory practices by performing voluntary acts, the more his life conforms to the *Sharee'ah*, the will of Almighty Allaah. Allaah conveyed this principle through the Prophet ( ﷺ ) in a *Hadeeth* saying: “The most beloved thing with which My slave may come close to me is that which I have made obligatory (*Fard*) on him. My servant will continue to come closer to me by voluntary acts (of worship) until I love him. If I love him, I will be his hearing by which he hears, his sight by which he sees, his hand by which he grasps, and his foot by which he walks. If he asks Me anything I would give it and if he seeks refuge in Me I would protect him.”<sup>1</sup>

This *Walee* of Allaah would only hear, see, grasp and walk to what is *Halaal* (lawful), while conspicuously avoiding all the *Haraam* (prohibited) as well as that which leads towards it. This is the only true goal worthy of dedicating one’s life. Its attainment is the perfection of man’s dual role as servant of God and governor of the world. But, it cannot be reached except by the route prescribed in the *Hadeeth*. First the compulsory duties have to be completely established, then the prescribed voluntary acts of worship have to be performed consistently and according to the *Sunnah*. Allaah emphasized this fact by telling His Prophet to inform the believers:

قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحِبُّكُمْ اللَّهُ

“Say, if you love Allaah, follow me (Muhammad)

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<sup>1</sup> Reported by Abu Hurayrah and collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English), vol.8, pp. 336-7, no. 509.

**and Allaah will love you.”<sup>1</sup>**

Therefore Allaah’s love can only be attained by strictly following the directives (*Sunnah*) of His Apostle (ﷺ) and by carefully avoiding all innovations in religious matters. This formula is contained in the following *Hadeeth* in which the Prophet (ﷺ) was reported by Abu Najeeh to have said, “*Keep to my Sunnah and that of the rightly guided caliphs. Bite on to it with your molars. And beware of innovations, for verily they are all heresy (Bid‘ah) and heresy is misguidance which leads to the hell fire.*”<sup>2</sup>

One who strictly follows this principle will only listen to what Allaah wishes for him to listen to. For Allaah said describing the righteous:

**“And when the ignorant (mockingly) address them, they merely say: ‘Peace’ ”<sup>3</sup>**

Elsewhere in the Qur’aan He also said,

وَقَدْ نَزَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الْكِتَابِ أَنْ إِذَا سَمِعْتُمْ آيَاتَ اللَّهِ  
يُكْفَرُ بِهَا وَيُسْتَهْزَأُ بِهَا فَلَا تَقْعُدُوا مَعَهُمْ حَتَّى يَخُوضُوا  
فِي حَدِيثٍ غَيْرِهِ وَإِن كُنْتُمْ إِذًا مِثْلَهُمْ

**“He has already revealed to you in the Book, that when you hear the signs of Allaah denied and**

<sup>1</sup> Soorah Aal‘Imraan 3:31.

<sup>2</sup> Collected by Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud*, (English Trans.) vol. 3, p. 1294, no. 4590 and at-Tirmidhee.

<sup>3</sup> Soorah al-Furqaan 25:63.

**ridiculed, you should not sit with them unless they change the subject. If you did you would be like them..”<sup>1</sup>**

By him listening only to what Allaah wishes for him to hear, Allaah has metaphorically become his hearing. In a similar way, Allaah becomes his sight, hands and feet.

This is the correct interpretation of the previously mentioned *Hadeeth* in which Allaah states that He will become man’s hearing, sight, hands and feet. Unfortunately, this *Hadeeth* has been misinterpreted by mystics as support for the concept of union with Allaah - May Allaah forbid.

#### **Roohullaah : The “Spirit” of Allaah**

Support for the mystic belief in the re-unification of the human soul with Allaah has also been falsely deduced from some of the verses of the Qur’aan itself. The following verses in which Allaah said:

ثُمَّ سَوَّاهُ وَنَفَخَ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوْحِهِ

**“Then He (Allaah) fashioned him (Aadam) and blew in him from His spirit.”<sup>2</sup>**

and

فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتَهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوْحِي

**“When I fashioned him and blew into him of My Spirit...”<sup>3</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Soorah an-Nisaa 4:140.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah as-Sajdah 32:9, and 38:72.

<sup>3</sup> Soorah al-Hijr 15:29 and Soorah Saad 38:72.

have been used as evidence for the belief that every human being contains within his body a part of God. The portion of Allaah's "spirit" which Allaah breathed into Aadam has supposedly been inherited by all of his descendents. Reference has also been made to Prophet 'Eesaa about whose mother Allaah said,

وَالَّتِي أَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ رُوحِنَا  
وَجَعَلْنَاهَا وَابْنَهَا آيَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ

**"She was chaste, so We blew into her from Our Spirit..."<sup>1</sup>**

Thus, it is believed among mystics that this divine eternal spirit within man yearns to reunite with its origin from whence it came. However, this is not the case. Possessive pronouns (my, your, his, her, our) in Arabic, as in English, have two general meanings depending on the context in which they are used. They may describe an attribute or a possession which is or is not a part of its owner. For example, in Allaah's command to Prophet Moosaa (Moses)

وَأَضْمُ يَدَكَ إِلَى جَنَاحِكَ تَخْرُجَ بَيْضَاءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سَوَاءٍ

**"Put your hand inside your shirt and it will come out shining unharmed..."<sup>2</sup>**

both the "hand" and "shirt" belonged to Prophet Moosaa but his hand was an attribute which was a part of him, while his shirt was a possession which was not a part of him. The same is the

<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-Anbiyaa 21:91 and Soorah at-Tahreem 66:12.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah Taahaa 20:22.

case relative to God with regards to His attributes and His creation.<sup>1</sup> For example, in the case of divine mercy wherein He says:

وَاللَّهُ يَخْتَصُّ بِرَحْمَتِهِ مَن يَشَاءُ

**“Allaah gives His mercy specifically to whomsoever He wishes...”<sup>2</sup>**

Allaah’s mercy is one of his attributes and not a part of His creation. On the other hand, Allaah sometimes refers to created things as “His” to emphasize the fact that He created them, Yet others are referred to as His to indicate the special position of honor with which He views them. For example, with respect to the She-Camel sent as a test to Prophet Saalih’s people, the Thamood, Allaah quoted Prophet Saalih as saying,

هَذِهِ نَاقَةُ اللَّهِ لَكُمْ آيَةٌ فَذَرُوهَا تَأْكُلْ فِي أَرْضِ اللَّهِ

**“This is Allaah’s camel sent to you as a sign. So allow it to graze in Allaah’s earth.”<sup>3</sup>**

The camel was miraculously sent as a sign to the Thamood who did not have any right to deny it from grazing, because the whole earth belongs to Allaah. Similarly is the case of the Ka’bah about which Allaah made a covenant with Prophets Ibraaheem (Abraham) and Ismaa’eel (Ishmael):

<sup>1</sup> *Tayseer al-‘Azeez al-Hameed*, pp. 84-5.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-Baqarah 2:105.

<sup>3</sup> Soorah al-A’raaf 7:73.

أَنْ طَهَّرَ آيَاتِي لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْعَاكِفِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ

“That they may purify My house for those who circle it, cling to it, bow down prostrate (near it)”<sup>1</sup>

and paradise in the case of the righteous who on the Day of Judgement will be told by Allaah “Enter My paradise.”<sup>2</sup>

As for the spirit (*RooH*), it is one of Allaah’s creations. Allaah states in the Qur’aan

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الرُّوحِ قُلِ الرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّي وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ  
مِنَ الْعِلْمِ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا

“They ask you concerning the spirit, tell them the Spirit is from my Lord’s command; and you have not been given except a very small amount of knowledge.”<sup>3</sup>

Elsewhere in the Qur’aan He said:

إِذَا قَضَىٰ أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

“If Allaah has decided a thing, He only has to command: Be, and it is.”<sup>4</sup>

And He also said:

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<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-Baqarah 2:125.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-Fajr 89:30.

<sup>3</sup> Soorah al-Israa 17:85.

<sup>4</sup> Soorah Aal ‘Imraan 3:47.

خَلَقَهُ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ

**“He (Allaah) created him (Aadam) from clay then said: Be, and he was.”<sup>1</sup>**

The command is “be” for all of creation. Therefore, the spirit is created by Allaah’s command. Islaam does not consider God to be an incorporeal Spirit, as do some religions like Christianity. He has neither corporeal body nor is He a formless spirit. He has a form befitting His majesty, the like of which no man has ever seen or conceived, and which will only be seen (to the degree of man’s finite limitations) by the people of paradise.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, when Allaah refers to the blowing of a spirit from Himself into prophets Aadam and ‘Eesaa, special honor is given to their created spirits due to the prominence of Prophet Aadam’s position in relation to the rest of mankind and to clarify the confusion concerning Maryam’s virgin birth of Prophet ‘Eesaa. Even Allaah’s attribution of the act of blowing to Himself is, in fact, a clarification of His will and supreme power, for it is the angels who actually insert and extract the souls into man. This fact is evident from the following *Hadeeth* of Ibn Mas‘oud who reported that Allaah’s Messenger said, “*Verily your creation is combined in your mother’s womb for forty days in the form of an oily fluid, then as a leach-like clot for a similar period and as a clump of flesh for another similar period. Then an angel is sent to him to blow the spirit into him...*”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Soorah Aal ‘Imraan 3:59.

<sup>2</sup> See the **Chapter on Seeing Allaah**, p. 136 of this work for further detail on this point.

<sup>3</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, (Arabic - English), vol. 4, pp. 290-1 no. 430) and Muslim. (*Sahih Muslim*, (English Trans.) vol. 4, p. 1391, no. 6390).

Thus, Allaah has the spirit blown into every human by one of His angels. By saying that ‘He blew’, Allaah in fact reminds us that He is the primary cause of all that takes place in creation, as He said:

وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ وَمَا تَعْمَلُونَ

“Allaah created you and whatever you do.”<sup>1</sup>

Just prior to the battle of Badr the Prophet ( ﷺ ) threw a handful of dust at the enemy ranks assembled hundreds of yards away, but Allaah caused some of the dust particles to miraculously reach all of the eyes of the enemy. Allaah referred to the Prophet’s action as follows:

وَمَا رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَىٰ

“It was not you that threw when you threw but it was Allaah who threw.”<sup>2</sup>

Thus, by attributing the Spirit to Himself, Allaah simply gave it a special place of honour among the spirits which He has created. Not that He, Allaah, has a spirit and blew off a piece of it into both Prophet Aadam and Prophet ‘Eesaa. To further emphasize that point Allaah also refers to the Angel sent to inform Maryam as “His spirit”:

فَأَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهَا رُوحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا

“So we sent to her Our Spirit who took the appearance of a well formed man.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Soorah as-Saaffaat 37:96.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-Anfaal 8:17.

<sup>3</sup> Soorah Maryam 19:17.

The Qur'aan is a totality. Its verses explain themselves and the sayings and practices of the Prophet (ﷺ) further clarify its meanings. When verses are taken out of context, the meanings, of the Qur'aan can easily be distorted. For example, verse four of Soorah al-Maa'oon reads:

فَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ

“Woe be on those who make prayer (Salaah).”

This verse by itself is in total contradiction to the rest of Qur'aan and Islaam. *Salaah* has been made obligatory throughout the Qur'aan, For example, Allaah said:

إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي

“Verily I am Allaah, there is no god besides me, so worship me and establish prayer (Salaah) in order to remember Me.”<sup>1</sup>

Yet this verse curses those who make *Salaah*! However, the verses which follow it clarify the intended meaning as:

الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ  
وَيَمْنَعُونَ الْمَاعُونَ

“Those who are negligent in their *Salaah*, who do it to be seen. Yet they refuse even the simplest of kindness.”<sup>2</sup>

Thus, Allaah's curse is on the *Salaah* of the hypocrites who pretend belief and not on all who make *Salaah*.

<sup>1</sup> Soorah Taahaa 20:14.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah al-Maa'oon 107: 5-7.

A more meaningful translation of the verse “Then He fashioned him (Adam) and blew into him from His spirit,” would be “Then He fashioned him and **caused one of His (noble) spirits to enter him.**” Consequently, there is no basis in the divine scriptures for the mystic belief in the uncreated soul of man, yearning to re-unite with its origin, God. In Islaam, there is no distinction between the Arabic terms *Rooh* (spirit - pl. *Arwaah*) and *Nafs* (soul - pl. *Anfus*) with respect to man except that when it is connected to the body it is usually referred to as a *Nafs*.<sup>1</sup> In the Qur’aan God states:

اللَّهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْأَنْفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا وَالَّتِي لَمْ تَمُتْ فِي مَنَامِهَا

“It is Allaah who takes the souls (*Anfus*) at death and those which do not die (He takes) during their sleep...”<sup>2</sup>

The Prophet (ﷺ) was reported by Umm Salamah to have said, “Verily, when the spirit (*Rooh*) is taken the eyes follow it”<sup>3</sup>

The successful souls will be made to enter paradise as Allaah said to the righteous souls

يَأْتِيَنَّهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ أَرْجَعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَّرْضِيَةً  
فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي وَادْخُلِي جَنَّاتِي

<sup>1</sup> *al-'Aqeedah at-Tahaaweeyah*, p. 394.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah az-Zumar 39:42.

<sup>3</sup> Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.2, p. 437, no.2005).

**“O soul (*Nafs*) at peace, come back to your Lord pleased with yourself and pleasing to Him. Enter among My devotees. Enter My paradise.”<sup>1</sup>**

Thus, in the end, the righteous human soul will not become extinguished in God nor unite with His supreme being, but will remain a finite spirit reunited with a finite body enjoying the pleasures of paradise for as long as Allaah wishes.

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<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-Fajr 89:27-30.

## 11.CHAPTER ON GRAVE WORSHIP

Throughout much of human history honoring the dead through elaborate burial rites, ornate tombs and decorated graves, along with festivals of commemoration and adoration have led to great confusion and misguidance in religion. As a result, much of mankind has become involved in some form of grave worship. In fact, the religion of most Chinese, who represent approximately a third to a quarter of mankind, is ancestor worship. Most of their religious rites are connected with graves and the worship of representations of their ancestors.<sup>1</sup> The graves of holy or saintly men among Hindus, Buddhists and Christians, have become shrines where rites of worship like prayer, sacrifice and pilgrimage are performed on a large scale. With the passage of time, Muslim rulers and the masses strayed away from the fundamental principles of the Islamic creed and began

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<sup>1</sup> The veneration of ancestors (*Pai Tsu*) is one of the most ancient, persistent, and influential themes in Chinese religion and traditional Chinese society. according to their beliefs, the *Hun* (spiritual soul) and the *P'o* (gross soul) of the dead are dependent for their survival and happiness upon the offerings of spirit money, incense, food and drink made by their descendents. In return, the *Hun* soul, as a spirit (*Shen*), can achieve considerable benefits for the family by means of its supernatural contacts. In the case of ordinary beings this relationship is only considered to last for three to five generations. The souls are then succeeded by more recent ones. ("Ancestor cult (chinese)", *Dictionary of Religions*, p.38).

to imitate the pagan practises of the non-Islamic nations around them. Huge edifices were built over the graves of the *Sahaabah* (Companions of the Prophet [ ﷺ ]) like 'Alee, the major jurists like Imaam Abu Haneefah and Imaam ash-Shaafi 'ee, and those designated as *Sufi* "saints" like Junayd and 'Abdul-Qaadir Al-Jeelaanee. In more recent times this practise of building shrines included even the graves of leaders of social movements like Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, and Muhammad Ahmed, the so-called Mahdi of the Sudan. Today many ignorant Muslims travel vast distances in order to perform religious rites of *Tawaaf* around these tombs. Some even make prayer inside and outside of them, and others 'piously' bring sacrificial animals to these cursed sites in order to perform the rites of *Dhabh* (ritual sacrifice) there. Most of those who perform rites of worship at graves hold the false belief that the righteous among these dead people are so close to Allaah that all acts of worship done in their vicinity will more likely be accepted by Allaah than if they were done elsewhere. That is, since these dead individuals were blessed, all that is near them must also be blessed. Their tombs and even the land on which they are built must be permeated with the overflow of their surplus blessing. Because of this belief, grave-worshippers often wipe the walls of graves, then wipe it on themselves in order to collect extra blessings. Often they collect the earth in the vicinity of the graves in the vain belief that the earth has special healing powers due to the effect of the blessings manifest in those buried there. Many among certain branches of the *Shi'ites* collect clay from Karbala, where Imaam Hussain was martyred, and bake them to make small tablets on which they prostrate during their *Salaah*.

## Prayers to the Dead

Those involved in grave worship direct prayers to the dead in two ways:-

1. Some use the dead as intercessors. They pray to them in the way that Catholics use their priests in the confession of their sins. Catholics confess their sins to their priests and the priests ask God's forgiveness for them. Thus, the priests act as middlemen between the people and God.

The pre-Islamic Arabs also used their idols in a similar way. With regard to the purpose of their idols, Allaah quoted the pagan Arabs as saying,

مَا نَعْبُدُهُمْ إِلَّا لِيُقَرِّبُونَا إِلَى اللَّهِ زُلْفَىٰ

**“We only worship them so that they may bring us closer to Allaah.”<sup>1</sup>**

Some grave-worshippers among Muslims pray to the dead asking them to convey their requests to Allaah for the fulfillment of their needs. This practise of theirs is based on their belief that righteous dead people are not only closer to Allaah than they are, but also that they are capable of hearing any man's request and fulfilling it, even after their death! Thus, the dead become idol intermediaries capable of doing favors for the living.

2. Others pray directly to the dead begging them forgiveness for their sins. In so doing, they give dead humans Allaah's attribute of being (*at-Tawwaab*), the One to whom repentance is due; as well as that of being (*al-Gafoor*), the only One capable of forgiving sins. There is a strong similarity between their prac-

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<sup>1</sup> Soorah az-Zumar 39:3.

tice and that of the Catholics among Christians who call on special saints for the fulfillment of their daily needs. For example, if something is lost, Saint Anthony of Thebes is prayed to in order to help find it<sup>1</sup>. St. Jude Thaddaeus is the patron saint of the impossible and is prayed to for intercession in incurable illnesses, unlikely marriages or the like<sup>2</sup>. If some one is setting out on a journey, Saint Christopher, the patron saint of travelers used to be prayed to for protection up until 1969 when he was officially struck off the list of saints by papal decree, after it was confirmed that he was fictitious.<sup>3</sup> Included in this category are Christians in general with regard to Prophet Jesus whom they consider to be God incarnate. Most Christians pray to Jesus instead of God. There are many ignorant Muslims throughout the world who direct their prayers to the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) in this fashion. Both of these methods are totally rejected by the teachings of Islaam which hold that one who dies enters the dimension called the *Bārzakh* wherein his deeds come to an end. He is unable to do anything for the living, though the results of his deeds may affect the living and continue to earn reward or punishment for himself. Abu Hurayrah reported Allaah's messenger as saying, "*when a man dies, his (good) deeds come to an end, except three types: charity of continuing benefit, knowledge beneficial to people and a righteous offspring who prays for him.*"<sup>4</sup> The Prophet (ﷺ) also took

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<sup>1</sup> *The World Book Encyclopedia*, (Chicago: World Book, Inc., 1987), vol.1, p.509.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, vol.11, p.146

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, vol.3, p.417.

<sup>4</sup> Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 3, p. 867, no. 4005).

great pains to explain that he could not benefit anyone in this life, regardless of their closeness to him. Allaah commanded him in the Qur'aan to say to his followers:

قُلْ لَا أَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِي نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا إِلَّا مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ وَلَوْ كُنْتُ  
 أَعْلَمُ الْغَيْبِ لَا سَتَكُنْتُ مِنَ الْخَيْرِ وَمَا مَسَّنِيَ السُّوءُ إِنْ  
 أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ وَبَشِيرٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

**“I have no power to bring good or avert harm even from myself, it is only as Allaah wills. If I had knowledge of the unseen, I would surely have accumulated only good and no evil would have befallen me. But I am only a warner and a bringer of glad tidings for those who believe.”<sup>1</sup>**

One of his companions, Abu Hurayrah, reported that when the verse **“Warn your nearest kin.”<sup>2</sup>** was revealed to the Prophet, he said *“O people of Quraysh, secure deliverance from Allaah (by doing good deeds). I can not avail you at all against Allaah; O sons of ‘Abdul-Muttalib, I can not avail you at all against Allaah; O (my uncle) ‘Abbaas ibn ‘Abdul-Muttalib, O (my aunt) Safeyyah, I can not avail you at all against Allaah; O Faatimah, daughter of Muhammad, ask me whatever you like, but I have nothing which can avail you against Allaah.”<sup>3</sup>*

On another occasion, one of the Prophet’s companions con-

<sup>1</sup> Soorah al-‘Araaf 7:188.

<sup>2</sup> Soorah ash-Shu‘araa 26:214.

<sup>3</sup> Collected by Muslim and al-Bukhaaree See *Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.1, p.136, no. 402, and *Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English), vol.4, pp.478-9, nos. 727 & 728.

cluded his statement to the Prophet ( ﷺ ) with the phrase, “It is what Allaah wills and you will.” The Prophet ( ﷺ ) immediately corrected him saying, “*Are you making me an equal to Allaah? Say: ‘It is what Allaah alone wills.’*”<sup>1</sup> In spite of this clear opposition to praying to the Prophet ( ﷺ ), many Muslims not only do that, but they also pray to a hierarchy of saints. This heretical practise is based on the claim of mystics (*Sufis*) that the cosmic order is preserved by a fixed number of saints called *Rijaal al-Ghayb* (The men of the unseen world). When a holy man among them dies, his place is immediately filled by a substitute. At the peak of the hierarchy is the *Qutb* (pole or mystic axis of the world), or the *Ghawth* (Succour). ‘Abdul-Qaadir al-Jeelaanee (d.1166 CE) is popularly referred to as “*al-Ghawth al-A’dHam (Ghaus-e-Azam)*: the greatest source of help”, and in times of calamity many turn to him for help crying out “*Yaa ‘Abdal-Qaadir Aghithnee* (O ‘Abdul-Qaadir, save me).” Such unmistakable pronouncements of *Shirk* are common even though practising Muslims repeat at least seventeen times per day in their prayers the phrase “*Eeyaaka Na ‘budu wa Eeyaaka Nasta ‘een - You alone do we worship and from You alone we seek help.*”

Both of these methods of prayer involve the grave sin of *Shirk*, which Islaam vigilantly opposes, yet both methods have managed to creep into the religious practices of the masses of Muslims today in one form or another. In so doing they inadvertently confirm, the veracity of Allaah’s Ominous statement in the Qur’aan

وَمَا يُؤْمِنُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ بِاللَّهِ إِلَّا وَهُمْ مُشْرِكُونَ

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<sup>1</sup> Collected by Ahmad.

**“Most of them (claim) belief in Allaah, while committing Shirk.”<sup>1</sup>**

as well as the Prophet’s warning reported by Abu Sa’eed al-Khudree *“You will follow the practises of your predecessors, inch by inch and yard by yard; so much so that if they were to enter a lizard’s hole, you would also follow them.”* When he was asked if he meant the Jews and the Christians, he replied *“If not them, who else?”<sup>2</sup>*

Thawbaan also reported that he said, *“The Last Hour will not come until some groups of my nation worship idols”<sup>3</sup>* and Abu Hurayrah reported that he said, *“The Last Hour will not come until women from the Daws tribe wiggle their buttocks (as they circumambulate) around the temple of the idol<sup>4</sup> al-Khalasha.”<sup>5</sup>*

It is, therefore, essential that Muslims have a clear understanding of religion, its origin and its historical development, from an Islamic perspective. After so doing, such practices may then be comprehended in their proper context and the Islamic ruling on them will become quite obvious.

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<sup>1</sup> Soorah Yousuf 12:106.

<sup>2</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English), vol.9, pp.314-5, no. 422) and Muslim. (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.4, p.1403, no. 6448).

<sup>3</sup> Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.) vol.3, pp. 1180-1, no. 4239), Ibn Maajah and at-Tirmidhee.

<sup>4</sup> Ibn Atheer, *An-Nihaayah fee Ghareeb al-Hadeeth wa al-Athar*, (Beirut: al-Maktabah al-Islaameeyah, 1963), vol.1, p.64.

<sup>5</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree and Muslim. See *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, (Arabic-English), vol.9, p.178, no. 232 and *Sahih Muslim*, (English Trans.), vol.4, p.1506, no. 6944.

## The Evolutionary Model of Religion

Under the influence of Darwin's Theory of Evolution, most social scientists and anthropologists have concluded that religion began with early man's pantheistic deification of the forces of nature.<sup>1</sup> According to them, early man was amazed by the more cataclysmic and devastating forces of nature, like lightning, thunder, volcanoes, earthquakes, etc., which they supposedly conceived of as supernatural beings. Consequently, they sought ways and means of appeasing them, much in the same way that they sought the aid of their leaders or more powerful tribes. In this way, early rites of worship, like prayer and sacrifice, were supposed to have developed. The North American Indians, who believe in spirits of the river, forests etc., are used as examples of this early stage in the evolution of religion known as animism.<sup>2</sup> At this stage, they claim, every individual had a personal set of gods. As families developed, family gods replaced personal gods. The polytheistic situation among the Hindus of India, where every family has its own personal god, is cited as an example of this stage. Economic necessity and the struggle for survival eventually caused family links to expand, and thus tribes evolved. Tribal gods, in turn, gradually replaced the old family gods and with each successive generation, tribes became larger and larger and the number of idols got fewer and fewer. Eventually ditheism emerged in which all of the supernatural powers were confined to two main gods, a god of good and a god of evil. According to evolutionists, an example of this stage can be seen in the religion of the Zoroastrians of Persia.

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<sup>1</sup> David Hume (1711-76) followed Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) in propounding this theory in the *Natural History of Religion* (1757) (*Dictionary of Religions*, p.258).

<sup>2</sup> *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, pp.16, 193.

Prior to the appearance of the Persian “reformer”, Zarathustra (Greek: Zoroaster), Persians were thought to have believed in nature spirits, clan gods and family gods. According to the evidence gathered and interpreted by anthropologists, during Zoroaster’s time tribal gods were reduced to two; *Ahura Mazda* who, according to them, created all good in the world, and *Angra Manyu* who created all evil.<sup>1</sup> When tribes gave way to nations, tribal gods in turn gave way to the national God and monotheism was supposedly born. The God of Israel, as portrayed in the Old Testament is a national entity, fighting on their behalf against their foes. The Israelites in turn are referred to as His chosen children. The Egyptian ruler, Akhenaten of the fourteenth century B.C., also known as Amenhotep IV, is also cited as proof of the evolutionist concept of religion. At a time when the prevailing belief in Egypt was polytheism, he introduced the monotheistic worship of one God called *Ra*, which he symbolized by the disc of the sun.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, according to social scientists and anthropologists, religion has no divine origin. It is merely a by-product of the evolution of early man’s superstitions based on his lack of scientific knowledge. They believe that science will eventually be able to unlock all of the secrets of nature, at which time, it is assumed, religion will disappear.

### **The Degeneration Model of Religion**

The Islamic concept of religion and its development is exactly the opposite of the previous view. It is one of a process of degeneration and regeneration and not one of evolution. Man began as a monotheist, but in time strayed into various forms of

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<sup>1</sup> *Dictionary of Religions*, pp.28 & 42.

<sup>2</sup> *Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, p.143.

polytheism. Sometimes it was ditheism, sometimes it was tritheism and sometimes it was pantheism. Prophets were sent by God to all the nations and tribes of the earth to guide them back to the straight path of monotheism. But, with the passage of time, they went astray and the teachings of the prophets were either changed or lost. The proof of this reality lies in the fact that all the so called primitive tribes which have been found have the belief in a Supreme Being. No matter what their stage of religious development may have been according to the evolutionary theory, most believe in a Supreme God over all the other gods or spirits. From *Itzamna*, the creator-god of the Central-American Mayans<sup>1</sup> to *Ngewo*, creator of the universe and spirits of the Sierra Leone Mende<sup>2</sup>, and from Hinduism's *Brahman*, the impersonal Absolute<sup>3</sup> to *Marduk*, the ancient city deity of Babylon and Supreme God of the pantheon<sup>4</sup>, the Supreme Being can be clearly seen. Even in the ditheism of the Zoroastrians, *Ahura Mazda*, the God of good is greater than *Angra Manyu*. And the day of judgement, according to their beliefs, is the day when *Ahura Mazda* defeats *Angra Manyu*! So *Angra Manyu* is really their supreme God.<sup>5</sup> According to the evolutionary model, this should not be the case, as the belief in One Supreme God supposedly grew out of limited polytheism and thus could not co-exist with animism. However, the concept of a single Supreme Being remains in most of the religions as evidence that the masses strayed away from the monotheistic

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<sup>1</sup> *Dictionary of Religions*, p.93.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.210.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p.68.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.204.

<sup>5</sup> *Dictionary of Religions*, p.28.

teachings of the prophets by giving some of God's attributes to other aspects of creation, which came to be regarded as lesser gods in some cases and as intercessors in others.

Another proof of the correctness of the degeneration model can be found in the historical transition of monotheistic Judaism into polytheistic Christianity. Monotheism taught by Prophet Jesus first degenerated into ditheism according to those who held that Jesus was not God the father, but a created divine son. This was also the case among Greeks who identified Jesus as the *Logos*, found in the philosophies of Anaxagoras through to Aristotle.<sup>1</sup> Later it further degenerated into tritheism among the Romans who officially sanctioned the trinitarian concept.<sup>2</sup> Finally, it degenerated into full-fledged polytheism in the Roman Catholic Church, wherein Mary and a series of so-called saints were given the powers of intercession and protection. Similarly, if we look at the pure and final message of Islaam, as brought by the last Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), and compare it with the present day beliefs among many Muslims, we find that a degeneration of beliefs and practices has also occurred. The pure monotheism of early Islaam has degenerated over the ages. Among the various sects which have arisen, Allaah's attributes have been given to the Prophet (ﷺ), his descendants, as well as to pious and impious individuals designated as saints among later generations.

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<sup>1</sup> According to these philosophers, *Nous* was the immaterial motivating principle of the universe while *Logos* was its material manifestation - (*Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, p.314).

<sup>2</sup> The finally acceptable trinitarian formula, as worked out by the Cappadocians and approved by the Roman council of Constantinople in 381, held that God is one Being, existing externally in three persons, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (*Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion*, p. 586).

The Darwinian concept of organic evolution proposes that all life forms around today evolved from single celled amoeba-like organisms. These simple life forms later developed into increasingly complex forms due to their struggle for survival. If this theory were to be directly applied to the development of religions, it would, in fact, support the degeneration model, which proposes that religion began in its simplest form, monotheism, but in time it changed into increasingly complex forms of idolatry as its simplicity was lost. Ditheism, tritheism, polytheism and pantheism emerged in varying localities, depending on the prevailing socio-economic conditions.

### The Beginning of Shirk

Prophet Muhammad ( ﷺ ) described in vivid detail exactly how polytheism first found its way among mankind after eons of monotheism, which began with Prophet Aadam. The Prophet's companions related the picture to us in their explanation (*Tafseer*) of verse 23 of Soorah Nooh, wherein Allaah describes the reaction of Prophet Nooh's (Noah) people when he invited them to the worship of only one God.

وَقَالُوا لَا نَدْرِكُكَ وَلَا نَدْرِكُكَ وَدَاوَالَ سُوَاعًا وَلَا يَغُوثَ  
وَيَعُوقَ وَنَسْرًا

**They said to each other: “Do not leave your gods! Do not give up Wadd and Suwaa‘, nor Yaghooth, Ya‘ooq and Nasr!”**

Ibn ‘Abbaas said the following in his commentary on this Qur’anic verse: “These were idols of Noah’s nation which in time ended up among the Arabs. *Wadd* became the tribal god of

the Kalb tribe in the region of Dawmatul-Jandal, *Suwaa'* was adopted by the Hudhayl tribe, *Yaghooth* by the tribe of Ghutayf at Jurf near Saba, *Ya'ooq* by the Hamdaan tribe and *Nasr* became the god of the Dhul-Kalaa<sup>1</sup> clan of the Himyar tribe. These idols were named after some righteous men among Nooh's people. When these righteous men died, Satan inspired the people to make statues of them named after them. These statues were placed in their favorite meeting places as reminders of righteousness and no one of that generation worshipped them. However, when that generation died off, and the purpose of the statues were forgotten, (satan came to their descendants and told them that their predecessors used to worship the statues, because it was due to them that it rained. The descendants were fooled and began to worship them as idols.)<sup>2</sup> The following generations (continued to) worship them."<sup>3</sup>

The *Tafseer* of the verse given by these two illustrious companions of the Prophet (ﷺ), paints a clear picture of the process by which idolatry and polytheism found its way into the pure monotheistic system of beliefs held by our ancestors. It confirms the degeneration model, identifies the historical origin of ancestor worship, and it also explains why Islaam is so firmly opposed to the depiction of human and animal forms in statues or paintings. The prohibition of images can also be found among the ten commandments given to Prophet Moses and recorded in the Old Testament:

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<sup>1</sup> A Himyarite king of Yemen (Muhammad ibn MandHoor, *Lisaan al-'Arab*, (Beirut: Daar Saadir, n.d.), vol.8, p.313).

<sup>2</sup> From the narration of Muhaamad ibn Qays collected by at-Tabaree.

<sup>3</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, (Arabic-English), vol.6, pp.414-5, no. 442).

“You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in the heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth.”<sup>1</sup>

Early Christianity maintained this attitude until an infusion of Greco-Roman thought thoroughly distorted Prophet Jesus’ teachings. This change produced a rash of statue making in which martyrs, saints, apostles, Mary, Jesus and even God Himself were depicted.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, the last Prophet ( ﷺ ) warned those who made pictures and statues, as well as those who kept them hanging on display, that Allaah would give them a grave punishment in the next life. The Prophet’s wife, ‘Aa’eshah bint Abee Bakr, said, *“Once the Prophet came to see me and I had my closet covered with a woolen curtain which had pictures of winged horses on it. When he saw the curtain, the colour of his face changed and he said, ‘Oh ‘Aa’eshah, those receiving the most severe punishment on the Day of Resurrection are those who compete with Allaah’s act of creation. They will be punished and asked to bring to life what they have created.’ The Prophet went on to say, ‘Certainly, angels do not enter houses in which pictures and statues are present.’ ” ‘Aa’eshah then said, “So we cut it (the curtain) up into pieces and made out of it one or two pillows.”*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Exodus 20:4.

<sup>2</sup> The second council of Nicea (787 CE) officially approved the veneration of icons (symbolic sacred images) as a sign of faith in the incarnation. According to them, the divine *Logos* (word) became fully human as Jesus Christ and as such could be portrayed (*Dictionary of Religions*, p.159).

<sup>3</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, (Arabic-English), vol.7, p. 542 no. 838 and pp. 545-6, no. 844) and Muslim (*Sahih Muslim*, (English Trans.), vol.3, p. 1158, no. 5254).

## Excessive Praise of the Righteous

The previously mentioned story about the appearance of *Shirk* during the time of Prophet Noah's people also indicates that excessive love and praise of the righteous provided a foundation on which idolatry could be established.<sup>1</sup> The worship of images of Buddha and Jesus, in Buddhism and Christianity, represent clear examples of contemporary idolatry based on excessive love and praise of the righteous. Due to the dangers inherent in excessive praise, the Prophet (ﷺ) ordered his companions and Muslims in general not to praise him beyond his real worth. 'Umar ibn al-Khattaab reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Do not praise me excessively as the Christians did to the son of Mary. Verily I am merely a slave, so (refer to me) instead as 'Abdullaah wa Rasooluh (the slave of Allaah and His messenger)."<sup>2</sup>

Since it was the practice of Christians and Jews of that time to build places of worship over what was believed to be the graves of the prophets and saints, the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) cursed this practice. He also cursed anyone in the future who did likewise, in order to make it perfectly clear that Islaam was totally opposed to such idolatrous practices and to warn people about the great danger of excessively praising the righteous.

On one occasion the Prophet's wife, Umm Salamah<sup>3</sup>, told him about a church with pictures (on its walls) which she had seen in

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<sup>1</sup> *Tayseer al-'Azeez al-Hameed*, p.311.

<sup>2</sup> Collected by both al-Bukhaaree and Muslim. See *Sahih Al-Bukhari*, (Arabic-English), vol. 4, p. 435, no. 654 .

<sup>3</sup> Umm Salamah's name was Hind bint Abee Umayyah and she was from the tribe of Quraysh. She and her husband, Abu Salamah, sought refuge in Ethiopia from the persecution of the Quraysh pagans and later they migrated to Madeenah after the Prophet (ﷺ) did so. When her husband died in the 4th year after the migration, the Prophet (ﷺ) married her. Umm =

Ethiopia. He said, “If a righteous man dies among those people, they build over his grave a place of worship and paint in it those types of pictures. They are the most evil of creation in Allaah’s sight.”<sup>1</sup>

It is worth noting that Umm Salamah’s mention of the church to the Prophet (ﷺ) was while he was on his death bed, and his description of its builders as being “the most evil of creation” indicates that their practices are strictly forbidden to Muslims, without any exception. The reason for them being so severely cursed by the Prophet (ﷺ) is due to the fact that this practice of theirs combined two major sources of idolatry: 1. Edification of graves and 2. Making images.<sup>2</sup> Both of these acts invariably lead to *Shirk* as is obvious from the story of the idols from the time of Prophet Noah.

### Grave Restrictions

The fact that grave-worship was among the last things which the Prophet (ﷺ) warned against before leaving the world indicates that this practise would become a serious test for his Ummah. In the formative years of Islaam, the Prophet (ﷺ) had even forbidden his followers from visiting graves and it was not until *Tawheed* (belief in God’s unity) was firmly established among them that the ban was lifted. The Prophet (ﷺ) was reported to have said, “I used to forbid you from visiting graves,

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= Salamah was among the most scholarly women of her time and she continued to teach Islamic law after the Prophet’s time until her death in 684 CE (62 AH) (Ibn al-Jawzee, *Sifah as-Safwah* (Cairo: Daar al-Wa’ee, 1st ed., 1970), vol.2, pp. 40-2).

<sup>1</sup> Narrated by ‘Aa’eshah and collected by both al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English), vol.1, p.251, no. 419 and vol.2, p.238, no. 426). and Muslim (*Sahih Muslim*, (English Trans.), vol.1, p.268, no. 1076).

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Taymeeyah quoted in *Tayseer al-'Azeer al-Hameed*, p.321.

but now you should visit them, for surely they are reminders of the next life.”<sup>1</sup>

However, in spite of this allowance, the Prophet (ﷺ) placed certain restrictions on the visiting of graves in order to avoid its deterioration into grave worship in later generations.

- a. As a means of setting up a barrier in the way of grave worship, formal prayer was totally forbidden in graveyards regardless of the intention. Abu Sa‘eed al-Khudree reported from the Prophet (ﷺ) that He said: “All the earth is a masjid (place of worship) except graveyards and toilets.”<sup>2</sup> Ibn ‘Umar also reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “Pray in your houses, do not make them graveyards”.<sup>3</sup> Voluntary prayer is recommended in the home as an example for the family. If no prayer takes place there, it then resembles a graveyard in which no prayer is allowed. Although praying to Allaah in a graveyard is not in itself *Shirk*, the ignorant, under Satan’s influence, may assume that prayers in graveyards are **to** the dead and not **for** them. Consequently, this avenue to idolatry was decisively blocked. On one occasion the second Caliph, ‘Umar ibn al-Khattaab, noticed another of the Prophet’s companions, Anas ibn Maalik, praying near a grave and called out to him, “The grave! The grave!”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Narrated by Buraidah ibn al-Husaib and collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim*, (English Trans.), vol.2, pp.463-4 no. 2131), Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud*, (English Trans.) vol.2, p.919, no. 3229), an-Nasaa‘ee, Ahmad and al-Bayhaqee.

<sup>2</sup> Collected by at-Tirmidhee, Abu Daawood, (*Sunan Abu Dawud*, (English Trans.), vol. 1, p. 125, no. 492), and Ibn Maajah.

<sup>3</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, (Arabic - English) vol. 2, p. 156, no. 280), and Muslim (*Sahih Muslim*, vol.1, p.376, no. 1704.)

<sup>4</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English), vol.1, =

- b. A second barrier was placed by the Prophet's ( ﷺ ) prohibition of purposely praying in the direction of graves because such an act may be later understood by the ignorant as prayer directed to the dead themselves. Abu Marthad al-Ghanawee reported that the Prophet said, "*Do not pray towards graves nor sit on them.*"<sup>1</sup>
- c. The recitation of Qur'aan in graveyards is not allowed as neither the Prophet ( ﷺ ) nor his companions were known to do so. Particularly since the Prophet's wife, 'Aa'eshah asked him what to say when visiting graveyards and he told her to give *Salaams* (greetings of peace) and a prayer but did

= p.251, no. 48). These *Hadeeths* also confirm that the Prophet's prohibition of prayer in graveyards was not due to the area being considered ritually impure (*Najis*). The graves of the prophets are pure, because, according to the Prophet ( ﷺ ), Allaah has not allowed the earth to eat their bodies. Hence, the Prophet's curse on the Jews and Christians for taking the graves of their prophets as places of worship was due to the *Shirk* involved and not the impurity of the area. (*Tayseer al-'Azeer al-Hameed*, p.328).

<sup>1</sup> Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.) vol. 2, p. 460, no. 2122), Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud*, (English Trans.), vol.2, p.917, no. 3223), an-Naasaa'ee and Ibn Maajah. This includes even *Du'aa* (informal prayer) in their direction, because the Prophet ( ﷺ ) had said that *Du'aa* is worship (Collected by al-Bukhaaree in *al-Adab al-Mufrad*), Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud*, (English Trans.), vol. 1, p. 387, no. 1474), at-Tirmidhee and Ibn Maajah. *Du'aa* should be made in the same direction as *Salaah* (Formal prayer, towards the *Qiblah* (Makkah)).

**Note:**

It should also be noted that in Islam the funeral service is **not** held in the graveyard, but in a prayer area set aside for large congregational prayers or in a masjid. Furthermore, because the body is placed at the front of the congregation, directly in front of the *Imaam* (prayer leader), the funeral prayer (*Salaatul-Janaazah*) does not have any bowing (*Rukoo'*) or prostration (*Sujood*), so as not to give anyone the impression that the prayer is **to** the dead and not merely **for** the dead as the wordings of the prayer clearly indicate.

not tell her to recite *al-Faatihah* or any other chapter from the Qur'aan.<sup>1</sup> Abu Hurayrah also reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) had said, "Do not make your houses graveyards, for verily Satan flees from the house in which Soorah al-Baqarah is read."<sup>2</sup> This narration and others like it imply that the Qur'aan is not to be read in graveyards. Qur'anic recitation is encouraged in the house and making it like a graveyard, in which no recitation should take place, is forbidden.<sup>3</sup>

- d. The Prophet (ﷺ) forbade the white-washing of graves, the building of structures over them,<sup>4</sup> writing on them,<sup>5</sup> or rais-

<sup>1</sup> Naasir ad-Deen al-Albaanee, *Ahkaam al-Janaa'iz*, (Beirut: al-Maktab al-Islaamee, 1st ed., 1969), p. 191. The text of the Du'aa is as follows:

السلام على اهل الديار من المؤمنين والمسلمين ويرحم الله  
المستقدمين منا والمستأخرين وإنا ان شاء الله بكم لاحقون

"As-Salaamu 'alaa Ahlid-Diyaari minal-Mu'mineen wal-Muslimeen Yarhamullaahu al-Mustaqdimeena minnaa wal-Musta'khireen wa Innaa in Shaa Allaahu bikum Laahiqoon. Peace be upon the Believers and Muslims among the inhabitants of these dwellings. May Allaah have mercy on those who have gone ahead of us, and those following us. And we shall-Allaah willing - be joining you." (*Sahih Muslim*, (English trans.), vol. 2, pp. 461-2, no. 2127)

<sup>2</sup> Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim*, (English Trans.) vol. 1, p. 377, no. 1707). at-Tirmidhee and Ahmad.

<sup>3</sup> As for the recitation of Soorah Yaseen, there is no narration concerning graveyards and the narration about its recitation over the dying is inauthentic (*Da'eef*). See *Ahkaam al-Janaa'iz* p.11 and p.192 ftn.2.

<sup>4</sup> Reported by Jaabir and collected by Muslim, (*Sahih Muslim*, (English Trans.), vol. 2, p. 459, no. 2116) and Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud*, (English Trans.), vol.2, pp.216-7, nos. 3219 & 3220).

<sup>5</sup> Reported by Jaabir and collected by Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), vol.2, p.216, no. 3219) and an-Nasaa'ee.

ing them above ground level.<sup>1</sup> He also taught that any such structures should be torn down and the graves made level with the ground. 'Alee ibn Abee Taalib reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) ordered him to demolish all idols he came across and to level all graves, which were more than a palm's width high, with the surrounding earth.<sup>2</sup>

- e. The building of masjids over graves was expressly forbidden by the Prophet (ﷺ). The Prophet's wife 'Aa'eshah, reported that when death was descending upon Allaah's Messenger, he drew his striped cloak over his face saying: "*May Allaah's curse be on the Jews and Christians for taking*

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<sup>1</sup> Reported by Jaabir and collected by Muslim, (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.) vol.2, pp.459-60, no. 2116) and Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), vol.2, p.216 no.3219) and an-Nasaa'ee.

<sup>2</sup> Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim*, (English Trans.), vol.2, p.459, no. 2115), Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud*, (English Trans.) vol.2, pp.914-15, no. 3212), an-Nasaa'ee and at-Tirmidhee. The text of the *Hadeeth* is reported by Abu al-Hayyaaaj al-Asadee wherein he said that 'Alee ibn Abee Taalib said to him, "*Shall I send you as the messenger of Allaah sent me? To deface every statue or picture in houses and level all elevated graves*".

#### Note

These *Hadeeths* have been forgotten in many Muslim lands where graveyards have become filled with a variety of structures built over graves in imitation of other nations. In some lands like Egypt, graveyards resemble towns with well defined streets. Tombs to house the dead resemble houses, so much so that in some places poor families have broken into them and set up permanent residence in them. Based on this *Hadeeth* and others like it, not only should such tombs be demolished, but also mausoleums like the Taj Mahal in India, the one erected over the grave of the founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, in Karachi, Pakistan, the tomb of the claimed Mahdi in Sudan, that of Sayyid al-Badawee in Egypt, etc. Such a step would also cancel the role of the *Sadanah* (custodians) of the shrines who live off the generous donations of visitors who believe that generosity to the custodians can facilitate prayers to saints and guarantee results.

*the graves of their prophets as places of worship.*<sup>1</sup>

- f. In order to prevent grave worship, the Prophet (ﷺ) also forbade annual or seasonal gatherings even around his own grave. Abu Hurayrah reported that he said, “*Do not make my grave an ‘Eed (place of celebration), nor make your houses graveyards, and ask (Allaah’s) blessings for me wherever you may be, because it will reach me.*”<sup>2</sup>
- g. Setting out on journeys to visit graves was also forbidden by the Prophet (ﷺ). This practise forms the basis of idolatrous pilgrimages in other religions. Abu Hurayrah and Abu Sa’eed al-Khudree both reported that Allaah’s messenger said, “*Do not travel except to three masjids, Masjid Haraam (the Ka’bah in Makkah), the masjid of the Messenger, and al-Aqsa Masjid.*”<sup>3</sup> While returning from a trip Abu Basrah al-Ghifaree met Abu Hurayrah and the latter asked him where he was coming from. Abu Basrah replied that he was coming back from at-Toor where he had made prayer. Abu

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<sup>1</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, (Arabic-English), vol.1, p.255, no.427), Muslim, (*Sahih Muslim*, (English Trans.), vol.1, p.269 no. 1082), Abu Daawood, (*Sunan Abu Dawud*, (English Trans.), vol.2, p.917, no. 3221), and ad-Daarimee.

<sup>2</sup> Collected by Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud*, (English Trans.), vol.2 p.542-3 no. 2037) and Ahmad. If annual gatherings around the Prophet’s (ﷺ) grave are forbidden, then the huge gatherings and celebrations held on different occasions, like birthdays, at the shrines built over the graves of so-called saints, are completely outside the teachings of Islaam. Not only should the shrines be demolished, as indicated by the Prophet’s command narrated by the fourth Righteous Caliph, ‘Alee, but these religious festivals should also be stopped.

<sup>3</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, (Arabic-English), vol.2, p.157 no. 281), Muslim (*Sahih Muslim*, (English Trans.), vol.2, p.699, no.3218), Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud*, (English Trans.), vol.2, p.540, no.2028), at-Tirmidhee, an-Nasaa’ee and Ibn Maajah.

Hurayrah said, "If only I had caught you before you left, for I heard Allaah's messenger say, 'Do not travel to other than three masjids..'." <sup>1</sup>

### **"Taking Graves as Places of Worship":**

Ibn Mas'oud reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "The most evil of mankind are those who will be alive when the Last Day arrives and those who take graves as places of worship."<sup>2</sup> Jundub ibn 'Abdillaah reported that five days before the Prophet's death he heard him say, "Those before you took the graves of their prophets as places of worship. Do not take graves as places of worship for verily I forbid you to do so."<sup>3</sup> After understanding clearly from the previous *Hadeeths* that taking graves as places of worship is forbidden by the Prophet (ﷺ), it is necessary to define exactly what is meant by the phrase "Taking graves as places of worship." There are three possible meanings which can be deduced from the phrase in Arabic:

1. *Making Prayer or Sujood (prostration) on or Towards a Grave.* Praying on the grave is forbidden explicitly in Ibn 'Abbaas' *Hadeeth* in which the Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Do not pray towards graves nor on them"<sup>4</sup> as well as the *Hadeeth* narrated by Abu Marthad mentioned earlier.
2. *Building a Masjid over a Grave or Putting a Grave in a Masjid.* Building masjids over graves is forbidden by Umm

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<sup>1</sup> Collected by Ahmad and at-Tayaalasee and rated *Saheeh* (authentic) by al-Albaanee. See *Ahkaam al-Janaa'iz*, p.226.

<sup>2</sup> Collected by Ahmad.

<sup>3</sup> Collected by Muslim, (*Sahih Muslim*, (English Trans.), vol.1, p.269, no.1083).

<sup>4</sup> Collected by at-Tabaraanee.

Salamah's *Hadeeth* in which the Prophet (ﷺ) explained that those who build places of worship over graves are the most evil of creation in Allaah's sight. Placing a grave in a masjid was also forbidden according to 'Aa'eshah's interpretation of the Prophet's final statement, "*May Allaah curse a people who take their Prophets' (ﷺ) graves as masjids.*"<sup>1</sup> When the suggestion was made to bury the Prophet (ﷺ) in his masjid, she opposed it based on the Prophet's (ﷺ) last words.

3. *Praying in a Masjid Containing a Grave.* Praying in a masjid built over a grave is forbidden, because it is a natural consequence of the prohibition placed on building masjids over graves. The prohibition of a path necessarily prohibits what is at the end of the path. For example, the Prophet (ﷺ) forbade wind and stringed musical instruments (*Ma'aazif*). Abu Maalik al-Ash'aree reported that he heard the Prophet (ﷺ) say, "*There will be among my followers those who make allowable (Halaal) fornication and adultery, the wearing silk (for men), taking intoxicants, and musical instruments (Ma'aazif).*"<sup>2</sup> Both the playing of these instruments and listening to music are automatically prohibited as they are the purposes for which musical instruments are made. Similarly, neither the prohibition on building masjids over graves nor the order to build them elsewhere is aimed at the act of construction, for building is in itself permissible. It is, in fact, aimed at the performance of *Salaah* in them, which is the

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<sup>1</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English), vol.1, p.255, no.427 and vol.2, p.232 no.414), Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.1, p.269 no.1082), Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), vol.2, p.917 no.3221), and Ahmad.

<sup>2</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari*, (Arabic-English), vol. 7, p. 345, no. 494 [B]).

purpose for which they are built. Thus, the prohibition of building masjids on graves automatically implies the prohibition on *Salaah* in such masjids.

### **Masjids with Graves**

Such masjids are of two types with regard to their origin:

- a. A masjid built over a grave, and
- b. A masjid in which a grave has been put, sometime after its construction.

Naturally, there is no difference in relationship to *Salaah* in them. In both cases, *Salaah* in them is despised if no regard is paid to the grave, and *Haraam* if *Salaah* to the grave is intended. However, the method of correcting such masjids varies according to their origin:

1. A masjid built over a grave should be demolished and the grave levelled if it has a structure over it. Because such a masjid was originally a grave, it should be returned to its original state.
2. A masjid in which a grave has been placed should be left intact, but the grave should be removed. In this case the masjid was originally a masjid and not a grave, thus, it should be returned to its original state.

### **The Prophet's Grave**

The presence of the Prophet's grave in his masjid in Madeenah can neither be used to justify the placing of bodies in other masjids nor the building of masjids over graves. The Prophet (ﷺ) did not order that he be buried in his masjid, nor did his companions put his grave into the masjid. The companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) wisely avoided burying the Prophet (ﷺ) in the local graveyard for fear that later generations would become overly attached to his grave. 'Umar, the freed slave of Ghafrah,

related that when the *Sahaabah* (companions of the Prophet (ﷺ)) gathered to decide on the Prophet's (ﷺ) burial, one said: "Let us bury him in the place where he used to pray." Abu Bakr replied, "May Allaah protect us from making him an idol to be worshipped." Others said, "Let us bury him in al-Baqee' (a graveyard in Madeenah) where his brothers among the *Muhaajireen* (migrants from Makkah) are buried." Abu Bakr replied: "Verily burying the Prophet in al-Baqee' is detestable because some people may try to seek refuge in him which is a right belonging only to Allaah. So, if we take him out (to the graveyard), we will ruin Allaah's right, even if we carefully guard the Messenger's grave." They then asked, "What is your opinion O Abu Bakr?" He replied, "I heard Allaah's Messenger say: *'Allaah has not taken the life of any of his prophets except that were buried where they died'*." Some of them said, "By Allaah, what you have said is pleasing and convincing." Then they made a line around the Prophet's bed (in 'Aa'eshah's house) and dug the grave where his bed was. 'Alee, al-'Abbaas, al-Fadl and the Prophet's family took his body and prepared it for burial.<sup>1</sup>

'Aa'eshah's house was separated from the masjid by a wall and it had a door through which the Prophet (ﷺ) used to enter the masjid to lead *Salaah*. The companions sealed off this doorway in order to complete the separation of the Prophet's grave from his masjid. Consequently, the only way that his grave could be visited at that time was from outside the masjid.

Expansions of the masjid took place in the time of the second Caliph 'Umar, and the third Caliph 'Uthmaan. But both of them cautiously avoided the inclusion of either 'Aa'eshah's house or that of any of the other wives of the Prophet (ﷺ). Expansion in the direction of the houses of the wives of the Prophet (ﷺ)

<sup>1</sup> Collected by Ibn Zanjooyah and quoted by al-Albaanee in *Tahdheer as-Saajid*, (Beirut: al-maktab al-Islaamee, 2nd. ed., 1972), pp. 13-4.

would have automatically included the Prophet's grave in the masjid. However, after the death of all the *Sahaabah* who were in Medinah,<sup>1</sup> Caliph al-Waleed ibn 'Abdil-Malik (reign 705-715 CE) was the first to extend the masjid in an easterly direction. He included 'Aa'eshah's houses inside the masjid, but demolished the houses of the other wives of the Prophet ( ﷺ ). The expansion was reported to have been carried out by al-Waleed's governor 'Umar ibn 'Abdul-Azeez.

When 'Aa'eshah's house was included inside the masjid, a high circular wall was built around it so that it would not be visible at all from inside the masjid. Two additional walls were later built at an angle from the two northern corners of the house in such a way that they met each other forming a triangle. This was done to prevent anyone from facing the grave directly.<sup>2</sup>

Many years later, the familiar green dome was added to the roof of the masjid and was placed directly above the Prophet's ( ﷺ ) grave.<sup>3</sup> The grave was later surrounded by a brass cage with doors and windows, and the walls of the grave itself were draped in green cloth. In spite of the barriers which have been placed around the Prophet's grave, the error still remains to be corrected. Walls should once again be placed to separate it from the masjid so that no one could pray in its direction nor visit it inside the masjid.

### **Salaah in the Prophet's Masjid**

The prohibition of *Salaah* in masjids with graves in them is

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<sup>1</sup> The last *Sahaabee* to die in Madeenah was Jaabir ibn 'Abdillaah. He died there in 699 CE during the reign of Caliph 'Abdul-Malik (reign 685-705CE)

<sup>2</sup> Narrated by al-Qurtubee and quoted in *Tayseer al-'Azeez al-Hameed*, p.324.

<sup>3</sup> Sultan Kalawoon as-Salaah built the first dome over the chamber in 1282 CE and it was first painted green by order of Sultan Abdul-Hameed in 1837 (see Ali Hafiz, *Chapters from the History of Madina*, (Jeddah: Al Madina Printing and Publication Co., 1st ed., 1987), pp. 78-9).

applicable to all masjids except that of the Prophet ( ﷺ ). This is due to the many special virtues attributed to prayer in it, not found in any other masjid containing a grave<sup>1</sup> . The Prophet ( ﷺ ) himself pointed out this special feature saying, “Do not journey except to three masjids: al-Masjid al-Haraam, al-Masjid al-Aqsa, and this Masjid of mine.”<sup>2</sup> He also said: “A single salaah in this masjid of mine, is better than 1,000 Salaahs elsewhere, except al-Masjid al-Haraam.”<sup>3</sup> He even assigned special significance to a part of his masjid saying: “The area between my house and my pulpit is a garden from the gardens of paradise.”<sup>4</sup> If *Salaah* in the Prophet’s masjid was considered *Makrooh* (disliked), the virtues of his masjid would be negated and it would be made equal with all other masjids. Just as *Salaah* in general has been forbidden at certain times, yet allowed, if it has a defined purpose (e.g. *Janaazah*) other than optional prayer, *Salaah* in the Prophet’s masjid is likewise desirable due to its exceptional nature.<sup>5</sup> And, Allaah forbid, if a grave were to be put in either al-Masjid al-Haraam or al-Masjid al-Aqsa, *Salaah* would still be desirable in them due to their special virtues and place of honor in the sight of God.

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<sup>1</sup> There is no truth to the story that Prophet Ismaa’eel and his mother or any of the other prophets are buried in the open portion of the Ka’bah Commonly called “Hujr Ismaa’eel”.

<sup>2</sup> Reported by Abu Hurayrah and collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English), vol.2, p.157, no.281), Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.2, p.699, no. 3218) and Abu Daawood (*Sunan Abu Dawud* (English Trans.), vol.2, p.699, no. 3218).

<sup>3</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic - English), vol.2, p.157, no. 282).and Muslim. (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol.2, p.697, no. 3209)

<sup>4</sup> Collected by al-Bukhaaree (*Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Arabic-English), vol. 3, pp. 61-2, no. 112) and Muslim (*Sahih Muslim* (English Trans.), vol. 2, p. 696, no. 3204).

<sup>5</sup> *Tahdheer as-Saajid*, pp. 196-200.

## CONCLUSION

True faith of a standard acceptable to Allaah has to be based on *Tawheed* free from *Shirk* as outlined in detail in the preceding chapters. Anything less than that represents an aspect of idolatry and or disbelief, regardless of how firmly those who join partners with God profess their faith in Him or how skillfully they rationalize their unsanctioned practises. Allaah's unity must be maintained spiritually, intellectually and practically in all facets of human life within which the pleasure of God is sought. Monotheism, as brought by the prophets of God, was not merely a theory to be philosophically appreciated or emotionally championed, but a pragmatic blueprint for human existence in submission to the will of Almighty God, Allaah. The significance of this fact lies in the purpose of man's creation. Allaah said;

**"I only created the Jinn and man for my worship."<sup>1</sup>**

However, the creation of man is itself a manifestation of Allaah's perfect attributes. He is the Creator (*al-Khaaliq*), and thus man was brought into existence from non-existence. He is the Most Merciful (*ar-Rahmaan*), and thus the pleasures of this world were granted to him. He is the Most Wise (*al-Hakeem*), and thus He prohibited the substances and acts which are harmful to man while allowing those which are not. He is the Most Forgiving (*al-Ghafoor*), and thus He pardons those who turn to Him in sincere repentance. Abu Ayyoub and Abu Hurayrah both reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said: "*If you did not commit sins, Allaah would have swept you out of existence and replaced you by another people who would commit sins, ask*

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1. Soorah adh-Dhaariyaat 51 : 56.

*Allaah's forgiveness and He would pardon them.*"<sup>1</sup> Similarly all of the other divine attributes are manifest in man's creation, by God's will. On the other hand, man's worship of God is for his own benefit, as Allaah is in no need of man's worship. In the worship of God man realizes both his material and spiritual potential for all aspects of goodness and thereby earns for himself the everlasting abode of bliss at the end of this brief earthly journey. Consequently, the Godly way of life, Islaam, provides a means of turning each and every human act, no matter how insignificant or mundane it may seem, into acts of worship. As long as the following two basic conditions are fulfilled:

1. the act must be consciously done for the pleasure of God alone
  2. it must also be done according to the *Sunnah* of the messenger of Allaah'
- man's whole life can enter completely into the service of Allaah as He prescribed:

قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ

**"Say: Truly, my prayer, my sacrifice, my life and my death are all for Allaah, Lord of all the worlds"**<sup>2</sup>

However, such a state can only be attained through the knowledge of *Tawheed* and its careful conscious implementation according to the methodology taught by the final Prophet of God, Muhammad ibn 'Abdillaah ( ﷺ ).

Thus, it is the duty of every sincere believer in God to put aside his or her cultural experiences and emotional ties to family, tribe or nation, and acquire a working knowledge of *Tawheed*, the foundation of faith. For, it is only in the application of that knowledge that man may achieve salvation.

<sup>1</sup> Collected by Muslim (*Sahih Muslim*, (English Trans.), vol. 4, pp. 1436-7, no. 6620-22).

2. Soorah al-An'aam 6 : 162.

## INDEX OF HADEETHS

“(A group of) angels stay with you at night...”	126
“A Jew by the name of Labeeb ibn A'sam cast a spell on the Prophet...”	103
“A single <i>Salaah</i> in this masjid of mine is better...”	202
“A woman is married for four (reasons): her wealth...”	154
“All the earth is a masjid except graveyards and toilets...”	192
“Allaah’s Messenger made me responsible to protect the <i>Zakaah</i> of Ramadaan....”	104-5
“Allaah then pointed to some of the descendants which He had extracted from Aadam...”	47
“Are you making me an equal to Allaah?...”	181
“Bad omens are in three things; women, riding animals and houses...”	65
“Be aware that if the whole of mankind gathered together in order to do something to help you...”	6-7
“Certainly, angels do not enter houses in which pictures and statues are present...”	189
“Did they make forbidden what Allaah made allowable...”	25
“Do not journey except to three masjids...”	197 & 202
“Do not make my grave an ‘ <i>Eed</i> nor make your houses graveyards...”	196
“Do not make your houses graveyards...”	194
“Do not praise me excessively as the Christians did to ‘Eesaa ibn Maryam...”	156-190
“Do not pray towards graves nor sit on them.”	193 & 197
“Do you have any medicine or incantation for a man possessed...?”	110-11
“Each child is born in a state of <i>Fitrah</i> ...”	49
“Everyone of you is a shepherd, and everyone is...”	152

“Everyone of you has been assigned a companion from the Jinn...”	78
“He who saw me in a dream in fact saw me...”	147-8
“I created my servants in the right religion but the devils made them go astray...”	49
“I had a servant girl who used to tend my sheep in the area of Mount Uhud...”	127
“I have a son with me who is insane...”	110
“I have created these people for Paradise...”	47-48
“I used to forbid you from visiting graves...”	191-2
“ <i>Idh-habil-ba’s Rabban-naas washfi antash-Shaafee...</i> ”	59-60
“If a man whose practise of the religion satisfies you...”	154
“If a righteous man dies among those people, they build over his grave...”	191
“If any of you marries a woman or hires a servant...”	66-67
“If any of us enters a house he should say: <i>A’oodhu bi kalimaatillaah...</i> ”	67
“If I’m not wrong, this person is still following his religion of pre-Islamic times...”	82-3
“If there were to be bad omens, they would have been in...”	66
“If you ask in prayer, ask only Allaah...”	20, 53
“If you did not commit sins, Allaah would have...”	203
“Keep to my <i>Sunnah</i> and that of the rightly guided Caliphs...”	166
“Look at those below you and not those above you...”	152
“Look! Surely you are not better than a brown man...”	154
“May Allaah cause failure and unrest to whoever wears a talisman.”	58
“May Allaah curse a people who take their prophets’ graves as masjids...”	198
“May Allaah’s curse be on the Jews and Christians...”	195
“No one who made the pledge beneath the tree will enter the hellfire...”	155
“None of you is a true believer until I become more beloved...”	37

“O Messenger of Allaah, verily there are some people among us who visit oracles...”	84
“O people, beware of secret <i>Shirk</i> ...”	40
“O people of Quraysh, secure deliverance from Allaah, I can not avail you at all against Allaah...”	180
“Oh Messenger of Allaah, this boy has been afflicted...”	109
“Once a group of men approached Allaah’s messenger to give their allegiance to him...”	9, 61
“One day Allaah’s Messenger delivered a sermon saying, ‘O people, fear <i>Shirk</i> ...’	41
“One day as he sat with his companions, he drew a straight line in the dirt...”	v
“Pray in your houses, do not make them graveyards...”	192
“Prayer ( <i>Du’aa</i> ) is worship”	21
“ <i>Shirk</i> is more hidden than a black ant creeping on a black stone...”	41
“So and so is a martyr, and so and so is a martyr...”	156
“So who infected the first one?”	68
“That is a bit of truth which the <i>Jinn</i> steals and cackles in the ear...”	82
“The angels were created from light...”	82
“The area between my house and my pulpit is a garden...”	202
“The Day of Resurrection is the first day that any eye will look at Allaah.”	145
“The Last Hour will not come until some groups of my nation worship idols...”	182
“The Last Hour will not come until women from the Daus tribe...”	182
“The most beloved thing with which My slave may come close to me...”	165
“The most evil of mankind are those who will be alive when the Last Day arrives...”	197
“The prescribed punishment for the magician is that he be executed by the sword.”	111
“The Prophet ( ) forbade Muslims from calling anyone ‘ <i>Abdee</i> (my slave)...’	15

“The Prophet ( ) taught the sick to pray for themselves: <i>Rabbanallaah alladhee fis-Samaa’e...</i> ”	127
“The <i>Salaah</i> of whoever approaches a fortune-teller and asks him...”	84, 94
“The thing I fear for you the most is <i>ash-Shirk al-Asghar</i> ...”	40
“The worshipper of the Dirham will always be miserable”	38
“There are some who follow bird omens...”	64
“There are three types of <i>Jinn</i> : One type which flies...”	76-77
“There is no contagion nor <i>Tiyarah</i> , but I like <i>Fa’l</i> ”	68-69
“There was only light, how could I see Him?”	140
“There will be among my followers those who make allowable fornication and adultery...”	198
“They (the <i>Jinn</i> ) would pass information back down until it reaches the ears of a magician...”	82
“This is my path leading straight, so follow it...”	vi
“Those before you took the graves of their prophets as places of worship...”	197
“Treat each other’s sickness, but do not treat sickness with forbidden things”	57
“Verily Allaah does not sleep nor is it befitting...”	140
“Verily an <i>Ifreet</i> from among the <i>Jinn</i> spat on me last night...”	79
“Verily it was Jibreel, may Allaah’s peace be on him...”	143
“Verily some forms of speech are magic”	98
“Verily the dreams a man sees in his sleep are of three types...”	106-7
“Verily when the spirit is taken the eyes follow it.”	174
“Verily your creation is combined in your mother’s womb for forty days...”	171
“What I fear the most for my nation after my time is...”	94
“When a man dies, his good deeds come to an end...”	179
“When Allaah completed creation, He wrote in a Book...”	126
“When Allaah created Aadam He took a covenant from him...”	45

“When Allaah’s messenger ( ) set out for Hunayn, they passed by a tree called <i>Dhaatu Anwaat...</i> ”	57-58
“When the people deserving paradise have entered it...”	146
“When the Prophet ( ) and a group of his companions set out for the UkaadH market...”	81
“When the Prophet ( ) saw a brass bangle on a man’s upper arm...”	57
“ ‘Where is Allaah?’ and she replied, ‘Above the sky’”.	127
“Whoever acquires knowledge of any branch of astrology...”	89, 94
“Whoever approaches a fortuneteller and believes what he says...”	85, 95
“Whoever does Tiyyarah or has it done for himself...”	64
“Whoever innovates in Islaam something...”	9, 149
“Whoever is prevented from doing something by <i>Tiyyarah...</i> ”	72
“Whoever recites a letter from Allaah’s Book earns a good deed...”	62
“Whoever wears a necklace or bracelet depends on it.”	62-63
“Whoever wears an amulet has committed <i>Shirk.</i> ”	9, 61
“Will we see our Lord on the Day of Resurrection?”	145
“ <i>Yaa Muqallibal-Quloob</i> (O, changer of hearts)...”	133
“You will be going to Christians and Jews, so the first thing you should invite them to...”	1
“You will follow the practises of your predecessors inch by inch...”	182

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## THE BOOK

This book presents a detailed explanation of the classical Islamic concept of God's unity as it relates to faith and acts of religious devotion. It also discusses the major areas within which the Islamic Unitarian belief (*Tauheed*) is either nullified or compromised by idolatrous concepts collectively called *Shirk*. The uniqueness of this work lies not only in its thorough treatment of the subject in a fluid and uncomplicated English style but also in its modern presentation of classical theological issues.

"I found the book *The Fundamentals of Tauheed* extremely enlightening, and, in my view, it would undoubtedly lead the Muslim and non-Muslim reader to a very clear concept of the foundation of the Islamic faith. Furthermore, the extensive explanatory references to various aspects of *Shirk* goes a long way in clarifying many of the obnoxious idolatrous beliefs and practises which have become prevalent in most world religions, as well as many parts of the Muslim world".

Ghalib Yonkers, Religious Editor, *Saudi Gazette*, 1991.

ABU AMEENAH BILAL PHILIPS, was born in Jamaica, but grew up in Canada where he accepted Islam in 1972. He completed a diploma in Arabic and a B.A. from the College of Islamic Disciplines (*Usool ad-Deen*) at the Islamic University of Madeenah in 1979. At the University of Riyadh, College of Education, he completed a M.A. in Islamic Theology in 1985 and in the department of Islamic Studies at the University of Wales, U.K., he also completed a Ph.D. in Islamic Theology in 1994. He taught Islamic Education and Arabic in private schools in Riyadh for over ten years and for the past three years he has been lecturing M.Ed. students in the Islamic Studies department of Shariff Kabunsuan Islamic University in Cotabato City, Mindanao, Philippines. Since 1994 he has founded and directed The Islamic Information Centre in Dubai, U. A. E. and the Department of Foreign Languages at Dar al-Fatah Islamic Press in Sharjah, U. A. E.

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