

Clarification Of The Doubts

A Decisive Reply To The Doubts And Arguments Of The Associationists

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Know -- May Allah show you mercy -- that Tawhid (Monotheism) is the singling out of Allah for worship and service. It is the religion of the prophets sent by Allah to mankind. The first of the prophets was Nuh ﷺ whom Allah had sent to his people when they exaggerated their esteem for the saints, Wadd, Suwa', Yaghuth, Ya'uq and Nasr, and raised them into gods. The last is Muhammad ﷺ who destroyed the idols which stood for these deified persons.

It was to a religious people who worshipped regularly, performed the pilgrimage, gave in charity and remembered Allah constantly that He sent His Prophet Muhammad. Their mistake was one of assigning to some creatures an intermediary role between them and Allah in the hope of realizing closeness to Allah and His pleasure through their intercession. They compared them to the angels who keep Allah constant company, to Jesus and Mary, and many other saints. For this reason, Allah sent Muhammad ﷺ to revive for them the religion of their ancestor Ibrahim, and to teach them anew that such pietism and devotion as they showed for the saints belonged exclusively to Allah, never to any favorite angel, prophet or any creature. For it must be borne in mind that these associationists did witness that Allah is indeed alone the Creator, without partners in the act of creation, that He alone was the Provider, that He alone was the Giver of life and death, Ruler of the universe; and finally, that heaven and earth and all the creatures in them are under His command and at His disposal

The evidence that those who were fought by the Prophet of Allah ﷺ subscribed to the religious views we mentioned is in the Qur'an. Allah said:

"Ask them, O Muhammad, 'Who sends down for you your provision from the sky and Who grows it out from the earth? Who hears your prayer and sees your condition? Who brings the living out of dead, and the dead of the living? Who directs the course of the world?' They will answer, 'Allah.' Rejoin: 'Would you then not fulfill your duty to Him?' Qur'an 10:31

"Ask them, O Muhammad, 'Who is Master of the seven heavens, Lord of the glorious throne?' They answer, 'Allah.' Rejoin: 'Would you then not keep your duty to Him?' Ask them again, 'In Whose hand is dominion over all things? Who is it that assists people and is never assisted by anyone else? Who, as you claim, has knowledge?' They will answer: 'Allah' Rejoin: 'How then are you beguiled?' 'Qur'an 23:86-89

The associationists' acquiescence in all this was not sufficient to enter them into the ranks of tawhid to which the Prophet ﷺ had called them. If therefore you have convinced yourself of this fact, you would know that the tawhid which was turned down by these ancients is itself the tawhid which holds Allah as sole object of worship, what is called in modern parlance "the monotheistic creed." For they did pray to Allah day and night, but also prayed to the angels to intercede on their behalf, thinking that the angels carry weight with Allah for their righteousness and closeness to Him. They also prayed to the righteous humans, such as al Lat, or to a prophet such as Jesus.

You would then know, equally, that the Prophet ﷺ fought them precisely on account of this shirk or associationism, and invited them to exclude all but Allah from their worship and devotion, following the divine commandment:

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"Therefore, do not worship, pay homage or pray to anyone beside Allah."Qur'an 72:18

Allah said:

"To Him alone are worship and prayer legitimate. Those who address themselves in religious worship or prayer to other beings will never receive satisfaction."Qur'an 13:15

The Prophet had fought them to no purpose but to make worship, sacrifice, supplication and every religious devotion be directed to Allah alone.

You have therefore become convinced that their profession of the faith that only Allah is God did not entitle them to enter Islam; that their invocation of angels, prophets and saints for intercession with Allah and winning of His favor has, on the contrary, rightly rendered them outlaws in the eyes of Islam.

Such is the tawhid to which the prophets of Allah have called men, and which the associationists rejected. It alone is what is meant by the statement "There is no God but Allah," because only He may legitimately be approached in any religious devotion, not the king, prophet, saint, holy tree, holy grave or jinn.

The ancients did not regard Allah in the fashion of tawhid, where He alone would be Creator, Provider, Forgiver and Ruler. They meant by the term 'God' what modern associationists understand by the term 'lord' or 'master.' That is why the Prophet ﷺ came to call them to the genuine meaning of tawhid, not to the literal meaning current among them which was already on the lips of the associationists and other ignorant people. All of these knew at once what the Prophet intended, namely, restriction of all attachment to Allah alone, of all dependence upon him exclusively, of denial of all other beings beside Him and avoidance of them. For when He commanded them:

"Say, No God is God but Allah," they answered, "Did He make all the gods into One? That is certainly something astounding!" Qur'an 38:5

When it is kept in mind that the unbelievers knew all this only too well, is it not very strange indeed for a person to claim he is a Muslim while not knowing as much of his religion as the unbelievers of Makkah knew; while he pays lip service to the letter of the confession of faith without believing anything of its meaning, without committing himself thereto. The precocious among such moderns believe that tawhid means merely the belief that Allah is the sole Creator, Provider and Ruler. Are not the plebeians among the unbelievers more knowledgeable, and hence worthier, than him?

If all this is perfectly clear to you, and you have come to know with certainty the nature of unbelief of which Allah said:

"Allah will not forgive man's association of aught with Him; but He will forgive anything lesser than this offence to whomsoever He chooses," Qur'an 4:47, 115

and you have known for sure the nature of the religion which Allah sent all the prophets to teach, the religion for which He accepts no substitute; you would realize the abyss of ignorance to which most people have sunk. This knowledge brings you two advantages.

First, the felicity of true guidance by Allah and the joy of receiving His blessing as the verse said:

"Say, it is with Allah's bounty and blessing [that I am rightly guided]. For such felicity it is legitimate to rejoice. For such felicity is worthier than all that they gather."Qur'an 10:58

The second advantage is that such knowledge generates in you the great fear of Allah. For knowing that one could lapse into unbelief by a loose word he may pronounce, even in ignorance -- you would be most careful not to let your tongue slip. Ignorance in this provides no excuse. You would

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equally take utmost care not to fall into damnation, and hence not permit yourself to say what compromises tawhid while thinking that it may be drawing yourself closer to Allah, as the associationists did. Remember what Allah has related to us about the people of Musa (Moses). Despite their knowledge and righteousness, they came to him pleading:

"Make to us a god even as they have gods." Qur'an 7:137

Know that in His wisdom, Allah has not sent a prophet but set up for him opponents. He said:

"And thus, We have caused every prophet to be opposed by enemies, human and jinn devils, who inspire one another through guile and spread falsehood." Qur'an 6:112

Hence, the enemies of tawhid possess many a science, many books and arguments, as Allah said of them;

"When apostles came to them with certain knowledge and evidence, they exulted in the knowledge they had gathered." Qur'an 40:83

If the path to Allah, as you must by now have come to know, is necessarily hampered by enemies endowed with eloquence, science and argument, it becomes your duty to provide yourself with such) earning about Allah's religion as you may use to ward off the temptations of these devils whose chieftain and general said to your Lord -- May He be glorified:

"I shall straddle myself across the straight path leading to You and lie in wait. I shall pounce on them from their front and back, their right and left." Qur'an 7: 15-16

But if you come to Allah's side, listen to His arguments and proofs, then you have no cause to fear.

"Satan's strategy is forever weak." Qur'an 4: 75

The common man who belongs to tawhid will overcome a thousand men of knowledge of the associationist camp, just as Allah has said;

"It is Our soldiers who will have victory." Qur'an 37:173

The soldiers of Allah will conquer with logic and sound argument, as they do with sword and spear. The fear is for that adherent of tawhid who follows the path devoid of defensive arms, while Allah has favored him with the benefit of His Book which He made

" A clarification for every point, guidance, mercy and happy tidings for the Muslims." Qur'an 16:89

No one comes with a false argument in this matter but the Qur'an contains its clear refutation. Allah said:

"They will not bring to you a parable but We shall bring you the truth and the better explanation of it." Qur'an 25: 33

Some exegetes held this verse to be generally valid, i.e., applicable to every false argument forever.

I shall report to you in the sequel some of the arguments of Allah's Book in answer to the allegations of associationists in our day and age. Their false arguments could be answered in two ways; one general, and the other specific. The former involves the great fact about the revelation which brings great advantage to whoever understands it. That is,

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"It is Allah Who revealed to you the Book, wherein are clear verses -- the substance of the Book -- and others allegorical. Those whose hearts are doubtful pursue that which is allegorical, seeking interpretation and dissension." Qur'an 3:7

The Prophet ﷺ said, "If you see any pursue the allegorical verses of the Qur'an, then know that such are those mentioned in the verse. Avoid them forthwith."

An example of this occurs when an associationist defends his position by quoting the Qur'an.

"Verily, the friends of Allah [the saints] have no cause to fear nor shall they grieve." Qur'an 10: 62

Others hold that intercession is legitimate and that prophets have enough favor with Allah to warrant their intercession with Him. Others quote words of the Prophet ﷺ which they interpret to prove their false allegations. This they do while the true meaning of the passages in question may not be known to you. Answer such people: "Allah mentioned in His Book that those with doubtful hearts will leave the clear revelation and pursue the allegorical." Present them with the arguments we have elaborated earlier. Tell them that they acknowledged Him as Creator. He defined their unbelief as consisting of their attachment to angels, prophets, saints, while they claim,

"These are only our intercessory with Allah." Qur'an 10:18

That is a clear judgment which no one can alter or interpret away. It may be that the meaning of the words of the Qur'an, or of the Prophet, are unknown to me. But I am certain that Allah's words are not self-contradictory; that the Prophet's words never run counter to those of Allah. That would be a goodly answer, and will be appreciated only by the blessed of Allah. As Allah said: -

"None is granted it [right guidance] except the steadfast; none will obtain it except those of great fortune." Qur'an 41: 35

As to the detailed answer, it will have to follow each particular objection the enemies of Allah marshal for misguiding men away from Allah. These objections and their answers follow.

They say, **"We do not associate anyone with Allah. We witness that He alone is Creator and Provider, that He is the Source of our good and evil, that He has no partners; that Muhammad ﷺ can by himself give us neither good nor evil, not to mention 'Abdul Qadir or others. But I am a sinner; and the righteous have a sake with Allah. I only ask of Him through them."** Answer as before; Those whom the Prophet had fought had equally acknowledged all these facts. They realized that their idols were by themselves devoid of power, but that they used their favor and intercession. Recite to him the verses Allah has revealed in this connection and explain them to him.

If he argues: **"These verses came to condemn idol-worshippers. How can you equate the saints with the idols?"** Answer him, as before, since he distinguishes between the two, knowing that the idol-worshippers acknowledged the creatorship of Allah: "The idol-worshippers too claimed to call on the saints, idols and the righteous of whom Allah said:

"Those unto whom they pray [i.e., the saints] themselves seek avenue to their Lord's mercy, compete in coming closer to Allah and fear His punishment," Qur'an 17:57

The unbelievers also pray to Jesus, and his mother Mary, but Allah said:

"Isa, son of Maryam, is only a Prophet, like so many others that came and passed before him. His mother was a saintly woman. Both of them ate food like all humans do, See how We make the revelations clear for them, and see how they turn away!" Qur'an 5:78

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Recite to him the verses:

"The day when We shall assemble them all and ask the angels, 'Are these the persons who used to worship you?' On that day they will answer: 'Praised be Allah! He is our Lord, not they. But before then, most of them would even worship the jinn" Qur'an 34:41

"And when Allah asked 'Isa, son of Maryam, 'O 'Isa! Did you ask the people to take you and your mother as gods beside Allah,' he answered: 'Praised be Allah! How can I claim what is not mine to claim?" Qur'an 5:119

Answer him therefore that Allah had declared unbelievers those who prayed to the idols as well as to the righteous, that the Prophet ﷺ has fought them.

He may object that in fighting them, the Prophet sought only the unbelievers among them. He may even say: "I witness that Allah is the source of our good and ill, the Ruler of the universe Whom alone I solicit; that the righteous predecessors are powerless; that I appeal to them merely to intercede with Allah on my behalf." The answer is that he and the unbelievers stand on a par. Recite to him the verses,

"As to those beings other than Allah whom we have taken as friends, we do not worship them except that they may draw us closer to Him;" Qur'an 39:3

"Those are only our intercessors with Allah." Qur'an 10:18

Know that these three false counter-arguments are the most conclusive. All of them have been anticipated by Allah in His Book. If you understand them well, the rest is easily refutable.

If the associationist objects: "I do not worship aught but Allah. My recourse to the righteous and my soliciting of them is not worship," then answerer, "You admit that Allah has commanded you to worship Him alone, that this is your duty to Him. What then is this exclusive worship of Allah which is your duty to Him?" For apparently this man knows neither the nature of worship nor its various forms. Explain it to him.

Tell him that Allah said: **"Pray to Allah humbly and in secret." Qur'an 7:54** If he concedes that that is an imposition of worship, for prayer is the heart of worship, then give him the rest of the argument. If it is granted that calling upon somebody in day or night, out of fear or in solicitation, is worship, and you have called upon a prophet or other to fulfill your need, wouldn't that be an instance of worship? Likewise, if you acted in accordance with a commandment of Allah, **"Pray unto Allah and sacrifice unto Him," Qur'an 108:2** wouldn't your action be worship? This cannot be denied, Reason then with him that if he were to sacrifice to a prophet, a jinn or any other creature, that would be a worship addressed to other than Allah, and hence, shirk. This conclusion is unavoidable. Tell him, in addition, that the unbelievers whom the revelation of the Qur'an addressed worshipped the angels, the righteous, al Lat and other beings. They worshipped their gods by praying, sacrificing and recouring to them, while at the same time these gods acknowledged themselves as creatures of Allah standing under His dominion. The associationists recognized Allah as sole Ruler, but they recoured to other beings for intercession on account of their favor with Allah. Another objection is that genuine tawhid denies the intercession of the Prophet ﷺ. The answer to it is that, on the contrary, we do not deny it at all. The Prophet ﷺ is indeed the appointed intercessionary. But intercession is all to Allah, as He Himself has revealed:

"Say, O Muhammad, all intercession belongs to Allah." Qur'an 39:4

It can not be entered into by anyone without His permission, just as He said,

"No one may intercede with Him without His permission," Qur'an 2:255

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Surely the Prophet would not intercede on behalf of anyone without permission. Allah Himself said:

"They will not intercede but for those with whom Allah is pleased." Qur'an 21:

We do know that He will not be pleased except with tawhid, since it was He Who revealed: "Whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him." Qur'an 3:85 If, therefore, intercession all belongs to Allah, that it cannot take place except by His leave, and that He will not permit it except on behalf of the adherents of tawhid, it follows that intercession belongs to Him and must be solicited directly from Him. Our prayer therefore should be: "O Allah, do not deprive us of Muhammad's intercession. O Allah, permit him to intercede on our behalf," etc.

In case it is objected that the Prophet ﷺ has been granted the power to intercede, and that it may therefore be asked of him to do what he had already been given the privilege to do, the answer is that, whereas Allah did grant him that privilege, He commanded you not to ask it of him. Allah said:

"Do not call unto anyone beside Him." Qur'an 72: 18

' Intercession has equally been granted to other beings beside the Prophet ﷺ namely, to the angels, the leaders and saints. Would you then say the same of them, that Allah has granted them the power to intercede and that you may ask them therefor? If you do, you have relapsed back to your original situation described by Allah in His Book. If you do not, then your claim that you may ask the Prophet for his intercession because he was given that privilege is false.

If it is objected that one does not at all associate anything with Allah, and that recourse to the righteous is not associationism, then give the following answer: "You realize that Allah has forbidden shirk more strongly than He forbade adultery, that He will not forgive this offence. He cannot plead ignorance of the nature of that which Allah has so emphatically forbidden. Allah could not forbid us that which He did not clarify."

There is another objection. That is the claim that shirk is itself idol- worship, whereas none of us nowadays worship idols. This is answered by pointing to the meaning of idol-worship. Everyone knows that the associationists of pre-Islam did not believe that the wooden and stone idols created, provided, ruled or responded to their worshipper. Such is belied by the Qur'an itself:

"Ask them, O Muhammad, who sends down for you your provision from the sky and who grows it out from the earth?" Qur'an 10:31

If, moreover, the objector holds that shirk is to visit the wooden or stone idol, shrine or other holy object, to sacrifice and call unto it in the hope that it will bring him closer to Allah and protect him from evil with its grace, then tell him that that is precisely what the associationists of today do. He would then admit that associationism is idol-worship. But so is recourse to the righteous, any calling upon them. This is proven by Allah's treating as unbelief any devotion addressed to the angels, to Jesus and the righteous ancestors.

The crux of the matter is, of course, his denial of associationism. You must ask him to define it. If he defines it as idol-worship, press him for further clarification. He must present an explanation of what he means by 'I worship naught but Allah,' and you should press him for it until he defines worship in Qur'anic terms. Again, he cannot plead ignorance, for he does make a claim. If he defines the relevant terms differently, then inform him of their definitions as they came in the clear verses revealed by Allah. Tell him that what the modern associationists do is identically the same as that done by their ancestors. What is objected to in our restriction of worship and devotion to Allah is the same as was opposed to the Prophet, namely,

"Did he make all gods into One? That is certainly something astounding!" Qur'an 38:5

In fact, what the modern associationists call the monotheistic creed is the same associationism which the Qur'an has come to refute, and which the Prophet has fought. The aberration of antiquity

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is even a lighter offence than that of modern times. First, the ancients did not call upon the angels, the saints and the idols except in prosperity. Whenever they were in distress, they sincerely worshipped Allah alone. Allah said of them,

"In adversity on the high seas, all those to whom you pray will fail you, not Allah. When He brings you safely to shore, you turn away. Man is ever thankless." Qur'an 17:67

"Say: Would you, if punishment from Allah were to befall you, or the last hour were to seize you, call to any being other than Allah for help? No! But unto Him alone will you call if you are truthful. He will expose what you have prayed to and you will forget the partners you ascribed to Him." Qur'an 6:41

"And when adversity strikes man, he turns to his Lord in prayer and repentance." Qur'an 39:8

"Say, you may enjoy your unbelief for a short while. But you are doomed to the Fire." Ibid

"And if the waves of the sea cover them like awnings, then do they call on Allah, dedicating all their devotion to Him." Qur'an 31:32

Whoever understands this problem clearly will realize the difference which separates the modern associationists from their older predecessors. The former, who were fought by the Prophet ﷺ called unto Allah and other beings in prosperity only; but in time of distress they called upon Allah alone, declared He had no partners, and forsook their previous lords.

The second point is that whereas the ancients have called unto other beings beside Allah -- namely prophets, saints, angels, and other beings close to Him, trees and rocks which conform to His divine pattern and never disobey for, the associationists of our times do so to some of the most corrupt people. Their so-called "patrons" are precisely those about whom they report all kinds of sins, adultery, theft, neglect of salat and other crimes. To believe in that which is incapable of disobedience, like wood and stone, is better than to do so in beings whose corruption and immorality are for everyone to witness. We may hence conclude that those associationists whom the Prophet ﷺ fought in his days were more rational and their crime lighter than that of the modern ones.

The moderns have another defence, no less fallacious than what we have already seen, but far more beguiling and misleading. They hold that the unbelieving contemporaries of the Prophet against whom the Qur'an launched its arguments did not witness that there is no God but Allah, unlike themselves who do. The ancients belied the Prophet and charged him with witchcraft, denied the resurrection of the body and the Qur'anic revelation. Hence, they were radically different from the modern associationists who witness that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah; who accept the Qur'an as true, believe in the resurrection, hold the salat and observe the fast. How then, runs their argument, can the two be comparable to each other?

The answer is that the 'ulama' [Muslim men of knowledge] universally agree that to believe the Prophet of Allah ﷺ in part of his revelation, and to belie him in the other part, is to commit unbelief, to stand outside the pale of Islam. Such is the case of the person who accepts tawhid but denies the obligation to hold salat, or accepts both these and denies the zakat, or the fasting, or the pilgrimage. It was for the benefit of those who accepted everything that was revealed to the Prophet before, but refused to be led by him to the pilgrimage that the verse was revealed:

"And to Allah is due from mankind the observance of pilgrimage to the House by everyone capable of it. Whoever disbelieves must know that Allah stands in no need of men." Qur'an 3:97

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The 'ulama' are agreed that whoever accepts all this but denies the resurrection of the body has committed unbelief and rendered himself liable to capital punishment and his property to confiscation. Allah said:

"Those who disbelieve in Allah and His prophets, who discriminate between them, who believe in some and disbelieve in others, seeking a way in between, are the real unbelievers. To them We have prepared a humiliating punishment." Qur'an 4:149

Since Allah Himself has so clearly condemned the person who believes in part of the revelation and disbelieves in the other part, their defence falls to the ground. Such was the defence of those who wrote to us from al Ahsa'.

It is also possible to argue the case from another angle. We have seen that where there is belief in everything the Prophet had brought from Allah but disbelief in the salat, the consequence is kufr (unbelief), deserving of capital punishment. Likewise, when one accepts everything in the revelation as true except the resurrection of the body, or the fasting of Ramadan. The juristic schools do not disagree on this matter, and we have seen that the Qur'an itself gives the same judgment. It is known that tawhid is the most important task the Prophet ﷺ brought to us, more important than salar, zakal, fasting or pilgrimage. Certainly, to compromise tawhid is to commit unbelief, even if such compromising is accompanied by the strictest observance of all other duties imposed by the Prophet. Otherwise, unbelief would have been predicated of him who rejects the lesser but not of him who rejects the greater part, which is absurd.

The companions of the Prophet ﷺ fought Banu Hanifah despite the fact that that tribe adopted Islam immediately from the Prophet, witnessed that there is no God but Allah, that Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah, recited the adhan (call to salat) and held the salat. If it is objected that they also held Musaylimah to be a prophet, we argue: If raising a man to the position of prophet is committing unbelief and deserving capital punishment, raising Shamsan, Yusuf, a companion of the Prophet, or a prophet, to the position of the Almighty of Heaven and Earth must be so a fortiori. Can they be so ignorant?

"So Allah seals the hearts of the ignorant." Qur'an 30:59

Those whom 'Ali ibn Abu Talib had destroyed by fire were all pretenders of Islam. They were 'Ali's own companions and have been taught by no less than the companions of the Prophet. But they exaggerated their faith in 'Ali just as others had done with Yusuf, Shamsan and others. How then did the Prophet's companions unanimously agree to destroy them? Did they do so in vain? Or is belief in Ta~ and his like a lesser crime than belief in 'Ali ibn Abu Talib?

The same is true of Banu 'Ubayd al Qaddah (Fatimid) which ruled the Maghrib and Egypt during the 'Abbasi period. All of them witnessed that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah. They called themselves Muslims, observed the congregational prayer and held the Friday salat. When they diverted from the Shari'ah in matters much less important than these, the 'ulama' unanimously resolved to declare them heretics and to fight them. The 'ulama' called the provinces the heretics ruled "Land of War," fought them successfully, and rescued those provinces and peoples from their dominion,

If it is objected that these ancients were not guilty of unbelief on that account alone, but because they have combined associationism with belying the Prophet and the Qur'an, denying the resurrection of the body or another part of the faith, why then did the 'ulama' assign a chapter in the shari'ah for heresy, the act of unbelief by the Muslim? The 'ulama' took pains to mention in this part of the shari'ah many varieties of heresies, all of which deserved its subject capital punishment and confiscation of his property. They even ascribed it to much lesser acts of disbelief, such as a word spoken verbally but not meant, a word spoken in jest.

Those of whom Allah said:

"They swear by Allah that they did not say the word of unbelief; but they did say it

after their entry into Islam," Qur'an 9: 75

were declared heretics by Allah despite the fact that they were contemporaries of the Prophet, praying with him, observing the zakat, the pilgrimage, tawhid, and fighting on his side. Likewise was the case of those of whom the Qur'an said:

"And if you ask them to justify their claim, O Muhammad, they will say; 'We did but talk in jest.' Then say, 'Was it at Allah, His signs and His Prophet that you scoffed? Make no excuse. You have disbelieved after your confession of faith.'" Qur'an 9:66-67

Allah has called them disbelievers after their confession of faith in front of the Prophet ﷺ during the campaign of Tabuk, Their crime was a word of ridicule they claimed they said as a piece of jest. Consider if these were to object, like our contemporaries: Do you declare heretic Muslims who witness that there is no God but Allah, who hold the salat and fast? Consider also the answer Allah has given them!

Another evidence is what Allah reported to us of Banu Isra'il. Despite their piety and righteousness at that time, they asked Musa (Moses),

"Let us have a god, even as they have gods!" Qur'an 7:137

just as some companions of the Prophet asked him, "Let us too have a tree like Dhat Anwat." The Prophet ﷺ swore that the two requests were of the same nature.

Faced with these annals of Islamic history, the modern associationists argue that neither Banu Isra'il nor the Prophet's companions in question had actually achieved their requests, another god in one case, another Dhat Anwat in the second. Hence they did not actually commit unbelief. It is certainly true that neither of them got what they wanted; that had they obtained what they sought, their unbelief would have been confirmed in the deed. These anecdotes teach us that the Muslim, even if he were steeped in knowledge, might well fall into shirk inadvertently. They have the merit of reminding us not to take tawhid simplistically. Self-conceit in such matters constitutes great ignorance and greater temptation. Should the Muslim pronounce words compromising to tawhid, he should be so told; and he should repent and withdraw his words, just as the Prophet's companions did.

Just so, however, he has deserved some chastening as the Prophet did to his companions.

The associationists of today present yet another argument. The Prophet, they argue, condemned Usamah's killing of the man who professed "There is no God but Allah," and told Usamah, "I have been commanded by Allah to fight men until they witness that there is no God but Allah." Other hadiths to this effect are also mentioned by these ignorant people, to the end of proving that whoever so witnesses does not commit unbelief no matter what else he does. We must inform them that the Prophet ﷺ fought the Jews and made bondsmen out of them despite the fact that they witnessed that there is no God but Allah; that the Prophet's companions fought Banu Hanifah while they too subscribed to this as well as to the fact that Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah, called themselves Muslims and observed the salat. The same is true of those whom 'Ali ibn Abu Talib consigned to the flames. And yet, these people argue, all the more inconsequently, that whoever denies the resurrection commits unbelief and deserves capital punishment, even if he held that there is no God but Allah. They hold the same to be true of the person who denies any of the pillars of Islam. But how could the change apply to these lesser cases and not to the deniers of tawhid itself, the head and crux of all religion? How ignorant are the enemies of Allah of the meanings of the hadiths they quote!

As to the tradition of Usamah itself, how he killed a person who pretended to enter Islam in order to save his neck at the very last moment, the moral it teaches is that we must stop execution if the person shows entry into Islam, in order to ascertain whether his entry is genuine or fake. In this regard, Allah said:

"O men who believe! Whenever you set out in the path of Allah, investigate the evidence and make absolutely sure before you act." Qur'an 4:93

Execution must therefore be stopped, not absolutely, but for a purpose; namely, to carry out the investigation and make sure. If the evidence is against the accused, one may -- indeed should -- proceed with the execution. Otherwise, the divine command to investigate and make sure becomes itself meaningless.

The fact that the Prophet asked Usamah: "Did you kill him after he said 'There is no God but Allah?' I am commanded to fight men until they witness that there is no God but Allah," constitutes evidence against their claim when we remember that it was the Prophet himself who said of the Khawarij (schismatics): "Kill them wherever you find them. If I ever seize them, I will kill them like the people of 'Ad." Everyone knows that the Khawarij were the most pious of all, the most devoted. The Prophet's companions acknowledged the Khawarij's superiority to themselves in such matters, even though the Khawarij were their students in Islam. But none of these deserving qualifications helped them when they followed a course other than the shari'ah.

The same is true of the Prophet's fighting of the Jews, of his companions' fighting of Rahu Hamfah, of his intention to fight Banu al Mustaliq when he received report that they had withheld the zakat. It was on that occasion that the verse

"O Men who believe, if an immoral man presents you with a report, investigate the evidence and make absolutely sure before you act." Qur'an 49:6

All this proves the meaning we assigned to these hadiths.

Another claim is that the Prophet said that on the Day of Judgment, the people will ask Adam to intercede on their behalf, then Nuh, Ibrahim, Musa, and 'Isa. All of them will refuse until the people come to Muhammad. This tradition, the claim holds, proves that asking intercession from beings other than Allah does not constitute unbelief. This claim is far from right. To ask any person to intercede on behalf of anyone in that wherein he is capable of interceding is not in question here. Allah has said of Musa,

"He asked that his fellow countrymen intercede for him against his enemy," Qur'an 28:15

just as man may ask some of his friends in case of need regarding things which fall within their power. What is denied here and condemned is not this kind of intercession, but that which is asked for at the graves of the saints, or outside, in matters which fall only under the jurisdiction of Allah. To ask the prophets on the Day of Judgment to ask Allah -- and that is all that the hadith claims -- is perfectly legitimate. There is nothing wrong in asking for this in order to bring the people who earned Paradise to their just reward and in getting the final judgment executed. There is nothing wrong in any man's visiting another and asking him to pray to Allah on the former's behalf. The Prophet's companions asked likewise during his lifetime; but none of them ever entertained the idea of asking for this at his grave. Our predecessors condemned such requests when they were made by anyone at the Prophet's grave. The requests made to the ordinary dead man must then be condemnable a fortiori.

Another argument is claimed by the modern associationists, namely, that when Ibrahim was cast into the fire, Angel Jibril appeared to him and asked him if he needed anything. Ibrahim answered: "I have no need of you." From this they conclude that if intercession amounted to unbelief, Jibril would not have offered it to Ibrahim.

The answer is simple. Jibril offered to intercede for Ibrahim in that of which he was capable. Allah has described Jibril as possessed "of tremendous strength." Had he been permitted by Allah to pull him from the fire, to take away the fire to the ends of the earth, or to raise Ibrahim to heaven, he would have certainly been capable of doing so. The case is like that of the poor man who is visited

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by the rich. The latter offers to help him with money and all that money can buy, but the poor man rejects the offer, preferring to suffer in patience until Allah provides for him. This has nothing to do with intercession as a form of worship and unbelief.

Let us conclude with another important problem about which much has been said before. There is no disagreement that tawhid must take place in the heart, in the mouth, and in the arm. If it is deficient in any of these areas, there is no Islam. Whoever knows the principles of tawhid and does not act on them is an unbeliever, on a par with Pharaoh and Iblis (Satan) or their likes. Such people claim that tawhid is true, that they understand and hold it as such, but that they are incapable of pursuing it in deed. Others hold that their people will not permit them to differ from established practice, or they give other excuses. They forget that even the great men of unbelief have known the truth and have not left it without implementation except for some excuse. Allah has said of them,

"They exchanged My signs for a mean price." Qur'an 53: 5

"They know the truth as well as they know their own offspring." Qur'an 9:10

On the other hand, if implementation was made without understanding, without sincere commitment, that would be hypocrisy, a more evil crime than unbelief. Allah said of it:

"Those who are guilty of insincerity and pretence take their seats in the bottom of hell" Qur'an 2:146

The question of insincere pretence is a long one. To study it in the careers of men yields the conviction that truth is never forsaken but for a cause, such as advantage, personal glory and fame. Allah said to the insincere:

"Make no excuse! You have committed unbelief after your confession of faith." Qur'an 9:67

Some companions of the Prophet were declared unbelievers because of a word they said in jest. The former kind is the more grave. In another verse, Allah said:

"Whoever disbelieves in Allah after his confession of faith and does so, not because of coercion where his heart continues firmly as before, but deliberately, has merited Allah's anger and dire punishment. Such people have preferred the advantage of this world to that of the next." Qur'an 16: 106

Only the coerced are excused. All the others are condemned, whether they commit their unbelief out of fear, distress, loyalty to others, love of money, or out of jest.

The verse is clear in its exception of the person under coercion. It is obvious that man may be coerced either to say or to do, but not to believe. That is why the verse qualified the one who yields under coercion but whose heart remains firm in faith. The second point to note is the verse's explanation: **"For they have preferred the advantage of this world to that of the next."** Thus, Allah established that unbelief and its consequent punishment are not caused by belief, ignorance, hatred for religion and love for unbelief, but rather, to obtain advantage in this world. They are brought about by preference of such advantage over the religion, over Allah Himself -- May He be praised and glorified.

Wa salla Allahu 'ala Muhammad wa 'ala alihi wa sahbihi wa sallam.