There is but one God – Muhammad is the last of the prophets
There will be no prophet after me (Prophet Muhammad)

THE UNITY OF GOD

by Muhammad Ali, M.A., LL.B.

Published for free distribution by AAII(L) UK
For further information write to:
The Secretary,
Committee for propagation of Islam
Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat-I-Islam (Lahore) UK
56, Longley Road, Tooting, London, SW17-9LL

www.aaiil.org
HE IS ONE AND HAS NO EQUALS

All the basic principles of Islam are fully dealt with in the Holy Quran, and so is the doctrine of faith in God, whereof the corner-stone is belief in the Unity God of (tauhid). The best known expression of Divine Unity is that contained in la ilaha ill-Allah. It is made up of four words, la (no), ilah that which is worshipped), illa (except) and Allah (the proper name of the Divine Being). Thus these words, which are commonly rendered into English as meaning "there is no god but Allah," convey the significance that there is nothing which deserves to be worshipped except Allah. It is this confession which when combined with the confession of the prophethood of Muhammad—Muhammad un Rasulu-llah—, admits a man into the fold of Islam. The Unity of God according to the Holy Qur’an, implies that God is One in His person (dhāt). One in His attributes (sifāt) and One in His works (af’al). His Oneness in His person means that there is neither plurality of Gods, nor plurality of persons in the Godhead; His Oneness in attributes implies that no other being possesses one or more of the Divine attributes in perfection; His Oneness in works implies that none can do the works which God has done, or which God may do. The doctrine of Unity is beautifully summed up in one of the shortest and earliest chapters of the

1. Some have explained Oneness in attributes as meaning that He does not possess two powers, two knowledges, etc., and Oneness in works as meaning that no other being has influence over Him.
Holy Qur’an; “Say, He, Allah is one; Allah is He on Whom all depend; He begets not, nor is he begotten; and none is like Him” (ch. 112).

THE GRAVITY OF SHIRK.

The opposite of Unity or Tauhid is shirk. The word shirk implies partnership and sharik (pl. shuraka) means a partner. In the Holy Qur’an shirk, is used to signify the associating of gods with God, whether such association be with respect to the person of God or His attributes or His works, or with respect to the obedience which is due to Him alone. Shirk is said to be the gravest of all sins: “Shirk is a grievous iniquity” (31:13); “Allah does not forgive the association of other gods with Him and forgives what is besides that to whomsoever he pleases” (4:48). But the great gravity of this human weakness is not due to the jealousy of God—in fact jealousy is, according to the Holy Qur’an, quite unthinkable as an attribute of the Divine Being; it is due to the fact that it demoralizes man, while Divine Unity brings about his moral elevation. According to the Holy Qur’an, man is God’s vicegerent (khalifah) on earth (2. 30), and this shows that he is gifted with the power of controlling the rest of the earthly creation. We are told expressly that he has been made to rule the world. “Allah is He Who made subservient to you the sea that the ships may run therein by His command and that you may seek of His grace and that you may give thanks. And he has made subservient to you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, all from Himself; surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect” (45 12 13). Man is thus placed above the whole of creation nay, even above the very angels who make obeisance to him (2.34). If, then, man has been created to rule the universe and is gifted with the power to subdue everything and to turn it to his use, does he not degrade himself by taking other things for gods, by bowing before the very things which he has been
created to conquer and rule? This is an argument which the Holy Qur’an has itself advanced against shirk. Thus the words, “Shall I seek a lord other than Allah and He is the Lord of all things” (6:165), are followed in the next verse by, “And He has made you rulers of the earth.” And again: “What, shall I seek for you a god other than Allah while He has made you excel all created things?” (7:140). Shirk is, therefore, of all sins the most serious because it degrades man and renders him unfit for attaining the high position destined for him in the Divine scheme.

**VARIOUS FORMS OF SHIRK**

The various forms of shirk mentioned in the Holy Qur’an are an indication of the ennobling message underlying the teaching of Divine Unity. These are summed up in 3:63: “That we shall not worship any but Allah and that we shall not associate aught with Him and that some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah”. These are really three forms of shirk—a fourth kind is mentioned separately. The most palpable form of shirk is that in which anything besides God is worshipped, such as stones, idols, trees, animals, tombs, heavenly bodies, forces of nature, or human beings who are supposed to be demi-gods or gods or incarnations of God or sons or daughters of God.

The second kind of shirk, which is less palpable, is the associating of other things with God, that is to say, to suppose that other things and beings possess the same attributes as the Divine Being. The belief that there are three persons in the Godhead, and that the Son and the Holy Ghost are eternal, Omnipotent and

1. The Arabic word for worship is ‘ibadah, which carries originally a wide significance, the showing of submission to the utmost extent, or obedience which is combined with the utmost humility, but in ordinary usage it means the adopting of a reverential attitude of the body towards a thing while the mind is engrossed with ideas of its greatness and mightiness, and the making of supplications to it. It is in this sense that the word ‘ibadah is used here
Omniscient like God Himself, as in the Christian creed, or that there is a Creator of Evil along with a Creator of Good, as in Zoroastrianism, or that matter and soul are co-eternal with God and self-existing like Himself, as in Hinduism, all fall under this head. The last kind of shirk is that in which some men take others for their lords. The meaning of this was explained by the Holy Prophet himself, in answer to a question put to him. When 9:31 was revealed—"They have taken their doctors of law and their monks for lords besides Allah"—‘Adiyy ibn Hatim, a convert from Christianity, said to the Holy Prophet that the Jews and the Christians did not worship the doctors of law and the monks. The Holy Prophet asked him if it was not true that they blindly obeyed them in what they enjoined and what they forbade, and ‘Adiyy answered in the affirmative, which shows that to follow the behests of great men blindly was also considered shirk. And the fourth kind of shirk is that which is referred to in 25:43 "Hast thou seen him who takes his low desires for his god?" Here blindly following one's own desires is also called shirk, the reason being that the Unity of God is not merely a dogma to be believed in but has a deep underlying significance as will be shown later on. A belief in the Unity of God means that true obedience is due to God alone, and whosoever obeys either any one else, or his own low desires, in preference to the Divine commandments, is really guilty of shirk.

IDOLATRY

Of the different forms of shirk, idolatry is denounced in the most scathing terms and, indeed, is cited more frequently than all the other forms of shirk. This is due to the fact that idolatry is the most heinous form of shirk and also was the most rampant throughout the world at the advent of Islam. Not only is idolatry condemned in its gross form, which takes it for granted that an idol can cause benefit or do harm, but the idea is also controverted that there is any meaning underlying
this gross form of worship: "And those who take guardians besides Him, (saying), We do not serve them save that they may bring us nearer to Allah, Allah will judge between them in that in which they differ" (39:3) A similar excuse is put forward today by some of the advanced idolaters. It is said that an idol is used simply to concentrate the worshipper's attention, which means that with an idol before a worshipper, whereon he may concentrate his attention, he will become more deeply engrossed in Divine contemplation and that is the very idea which is controverted in the verse quoted above—"that they may bring us nearer to Allah". But even in this case the worshipper must believe that the idol on which he centres his attention is a symbol of the Divine Being, which is a grossly false notion; and, moreover, it is the idol on which the worshipper's attention is centred, not the Divine Being. It is also wrong to suppose that a material symbol is necessary for concentration, for attention can be every whit as easily concentrated on a spiritual object, and it is only when the object of attention is spiritual that concentration helps the development of will-power. Along with idol-worship, the Holy Qur'an also prohibits dedication to idols (6:137).

**NATURE WORSHIP**

Another form of prevailing shirk denounced in the Holy Qur'an is the worship of the sun, the moon, the stars, in fact of everything which might appear to control the destinies of man. The worship

1. "And thus did We show Abraham the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and that he might be of those who are sure. So when night overshadowed him, he saw a star. Said he Is this my Lord? And when it set, he said I do not love the setting ones. Then when he saw the moon rising, he said. Is this my Lord? When it set, he said if my Lord had not guided me, I should be of the erring people. Then when he saw the sun rising, he said. Is this my Lord? Is this the greatest? And when it set, he said, O my people! I am clear of what you set up with Allah. I have turned my self. being upright, wholly to Him Who originated the heavens and the earth and I am not of the polytheists." (6:76-80)
of these great luminaries is expressly forbidden: "And among His signs are the night and the day and the sun and the moon; do not make obeisance to the sun nor to the moon, and make obeisance to Allah Who created them" (41:37). The argument is also clearly put forth in Abraham's controversy with his people that these things are themselves under the control of a Higher Power. The argument thus advanced against the worship of the sun and the moon not only applies to all heavenly bodies but also, and equally well to all the forces of nature, which are in fact again and again mentioned as being made subservient to man. The worship of Sirius is alluded to in 53: 49, where God is called the Lord of Sirius.

DEISM AND THE TRINITY

Deism is mentioned in particular: "And Allah has said, Take not two gods, He is only One God" (16:51) The jinn are also referred to as being set up on a level with God: "And they make the jinn associates with Allah, while He created them (6:101)." Trinity is also denounced as a form of shirk: "Believe therefore in Allah and His messengers, and say not, Three : desist, it is better for you; Allah is only one One God!" (4:171) It is sometimes alleged that the

1. The doctrine and practice of Mariolatry, as it is called by the Protestant controversialists, is too well-known in the catechism of the Roman Church the following doctrines are to be found: "That she is truly the mother of God..........; That she is the mother of Pity and very specially our advocate: that her images are of the utmost utility." It is also stated that her intercessions are directly appealed to in the Litany. And further, that there were women in Thrace, Scythia and Arabia who were in the habit of worshipping the Virgin as a goddess, the offer of a cake being one of the features of their worship. From the time of the council of Ephesus, to exhibit figures of the Virgin and Child became the approved expression of orthodoxy..........Of the growth of the Marian cultus alike in the East and the West, after the decision at Ephesus, it would be impossible to trace the history.......... Justinian in one of his laws bespeaks her advocacy for the empire...............Nurses looks to her for directions on the field of battle. The emperor Heraclius bears her image on his banner. John of Damascus speaks of her as the sovereign lady to whom the whole creation has been made subject by her son. Peter Damian recognizes her as the most exalted of all creatures, and apostrophizes her as deified and endowed with all power in heaven and in earth!" (En. Br., 11th ed. XVII, p. 813).
Quranic conception of the Trinity is a mistaken one because it speaks of Jesus and Mary as having been taken for two gods: “O Jesus, son of Mary! Didst thou say to men, Take me and my mother for two gods, besides Allah?” (5 : 116). The reference here is to Mariolatry. That Mary was worshipped is a fact, and the Qur'an's reference to it is significant, but it should be noted that neither the Holy Qur'an, nor the Holy Prophet has anywhere said that Mary was the third person of the Trinity. Where the Holy Qur'an denounces the Trinity, it speaks of the doctrine of sonship but does not speak of the worship of Mary at all; and where it speaks of the worship of Mary, it does not refer to the Trinity.

DOCTRINE OF SONSHIP

Another form of shirk, refuted in the Holy Qur'an, is the doctrine that God has sons or daughters. The pagan Arabs ascribed daughters to God while the Christian hold that God has a son. Though the doctrine of ascribing daughters to God is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an several times, as in 16 ; 57 ; 17 ; 40 ; 37 ; 149, yet it is against the Christian doctrine that the Holy Book speaks with gravest emphasis: “And they say: The Beneficent God has taken (to Himself) a son. Certainly you have made an abominable assertions the heavens may almost be rent thereat, and the earth cleave asunder, and the mountains fall down in pieces, that they ascribe a son to the Beneficent God” (19 ; 8-91). The doctrine is denounced repeatedly; for instance in : 116 ; 6 : 102-104 ; 10 : 68 ; 17 : 111 ; 18 : 45; 19 : 35, 91, 9 ; 23 : 91 ; 37 : 151, 152 ; 112 : 3. Of these ch. 112 is undoubtedly one of the earliest revelations, while the 17th, 18th and 19th chapters also belong to the early Makkah period. This shows that from the very first the Holy Qur'an set before itself the correction of this great error. It will be observed that a mention of the doctrine of sonship is often followed by the word subhana-hu which word is used to indicate the purity of God from all defects. The
reason of this is that the doctrine of sonship is due to the supposition that God cannot forgive sins unless He receives some satisfaction therefor, and this satisfaction is supposed to have been afforded by the crucifixion of the Son of God, who alone is said to be sinless. The doctrine of sonship is thus practically a denial of the quality of forgiveness in God, and this amounts to attributing a defect to Him. It is for this reason also that we are told in 19:92 which is preceded by a most forcible denunciation of the doctrine of sonship, that “it is not worthy of the Beneficent (God Rahman) that He should take to Himself a son.” The word Rahman signifies originally the Lord of immeasurable mercy Who requires no satisfaction or compensation for a display of the quality of mercy which is inherent in Him, and the attribute of being Rahman negatives the doctrine of sonship.

SIGNIFICANCE UNDERLYING THE DOCTRINE OF UNITY.

The various kinds of shirk mentioned in the Holy Qur’an show that in the doctrine of Unity it gives to the world an ennobling message of advancement all round, physical as well as moral and spiritual. Man is freed not only from slavery to animate and inanimate objects, but also from subervience to the great and wondrous forces of nature which, he is told, he can subdue to himself. It goes further and delivers man from that greatest of slaverities, slavery to man. It does not allow to any mortal the dignity of Godhead, or of being more than a mortal; for the greatest of mortals is commanded to say: I am only a mortal like you; it is revealed to me that your God is One God”

1. “Allah sets forth a parable of a slave, the property of another, who has no power over anything and one whom We have granted from Ourselves a goodly sustenance, so he spends from it secretly and openly. Are the two alike?........And Allah sets forth a parable of two men: one of them is dumb, not able to do anything and he is a burden to his master wherever he sends him, he brings no good. Can he be held equal with him who enjoins what is just?” (16: 75. 76). “He has made subservient to you the sun and the moon pursuing their courses, and He has made subservient to you the night and the day” (14:33): “And the stars are made subservient by his commands ......... And He it is Who has made the sea subservient .........and thou seest the ships cleaving through it” (16: 12-14; ) “Do you not see that Allah has made subservient to you what is in the heaven and what is in the earth?” (31:20); and so on.
(18:110) Thus all the bonds which fettered the mind of man were broken, and he was set on the road to progress. A slave mind, as the Holy Qur'an plainly says, is incapable of doing anything good and great, and hence the first condition for the advancement of man was that his mind should be set free from the trammels of all kinds of slavery, which was accomplished in the message of Divine Unity.

UNITY OF HUMAN RACE UNDERLIES UNITY OF GOD.

The doctrine of the Unity of God, besides casting off the bonds of slavery which had enthralled the human mind, and thus opening the way for his advancement, carries another significance equally great, if not greater, to wit, the idea of the unity of the human race. He is the Rabb of all the nations, Rabb al-alamîn. Rabb in Arabic signifies the Foster of a thing in such a manner as to make it attain one condition after another until it reaches its goal of completion (R). The words Rabb al-alamîn thus signify that all the nations of the world are, as it were, the children of one father, and that He takes equal care of all, bringing all to their goal of completion by degree. Hence God is spoken of in the Holy Qur'an as granting not only His physical but also His spiritual sustenance. His revelation to all the nations of the world: “Every nation had a messenger” (10:47) “There is not a people but a Warner has gone among them” (35:24). We further find that the Holy Qur'an upholds the idea that God, being the God of all nations, deals with all of them alike. He hearkens to the prayers of all, whatever their religion or nationality. He is equally merciful to all and forgives the sins of all. He rewards the good deeds of the Muslim and the non-Muslim alike; and not only does He deals with all nations alike but we are further told that He created them all alike, in the Divine nature: “The nature made by Allah in which He has made all men” (30:30). And this unity of the human race, which is thus a natural corollary of the doctrine of the Unity of God, is further stressed in the plain words that “all men are single nation” (2:213), and that “people are naught but a single nation” (10:19)
The Ahmadiyya Anjuman Ishaat-I-Islam (Lahore) UK is the only Muslim organisation in the UK which distributes FREE Islamic literature for the propagation of Islam to the non-Muslim and for the edification of Muslim.

GIVE US YOUR SUPPORT