

The Ummah Unites Only Upon Tawhid

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The Muslims today are great in number and light in weight. They are spread across more than fifty states, each with its own flag, its own border and its own loyalty, and every few years a new summit, a new alliance or a new slogan promises to bring them together before it falls apart like the one before it. These attempts keep failing because they try to build unity on things that never united this ummah in the first place, such as shared interests, shared enemies, a shared language or a shared piece of land. The truth is: the ummah unites only upon tawhid, and the Khilafah returns only when the ummah returns to tawhid. Every other road has been walked for a full century since the fall of the last Khilafah, and the condition of the Muslims is the witness to where those roads lead.

Tawhid is the purpose for which the ummah exists, and a community cannot be gathered upon anything other than the purpose it was created for. Allah tells us that every messenger to every nation came with one and the same call.

> وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَّسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ
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> *"And We certainly sent to every nation a messenger, saying: Worship Allah and stay away from taghut."*[1]

Al Shawkani said:

> *"Allah, glorified is He, did not send His messengers nor reveal His books to them except for the purification of His tawhid and for singling Him out in worship."*[2]

When the Prophet ﷺ began to build this ummah outside of Madinah, he gave his envoy the same order of priorities. He said to Muadh ibn Jabal when he sent him to Yemen:

> *"You are going to a people from the People of the Book, so let the first thing you call them to be that they single out Allah. When they have come to know that, tell them that Allah has made five prayers obligatory upon them in their day and night."*[3]

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[1] Surah al Nahl 16:36
[2] Al Shawkani, al Fath al Rabbani min Fatawa al Imam al Shawkani, 1/173, as cited in al Mawsuah al Aqadiyyah, al Durar al Saniyyah: https://dorar.net/aqeeda/2832
[3] Sahih al Bukhari 7372

The prayer, the zakah and everything after them were built on top of that first foundation, which shows that a community of Muslims is formed by tawhid before it is formed by anything else.

The second proof is that Allah Himself placed the oneness of the ummah and the oneness of worship in a single ayah, so that the two can never be pulled apart.

> إِنَّ هَٰذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُونِ
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> *"Indeed this ummah of yours is one ummah, and I am your Lord, so worship Me."*[4]

The ummah is one because its Lord is one and its worship is directed to Him alone. The moment a part of the ummah takes another lord in obedience, another law in judgment or another bond in loyalty, the thing that made it one has been removed, and no conference can put back what was taken out at the root. The same link appears in the most famous ayah about unity.

> وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا
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> *"And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided."*[5]

Allah did not say *"hold together"* and stop there. He named the thing to hold on to, which is His rope, meaning His covenant, His Book and His deen. The early scholars of tafsir understood this as a command of tawhid. Abu al Aliyah said about *"hold firmly to the rope of Allah"* that it means: *"with sincerity to Allah alone,"* and about *"do not become divided"* he said: *"Do not become enemies to one another over it,"* meaning over sincerity, *"and be brothers upon it."*[6]

Ibn Kathir said about the same ayah:

> *"He commanded them with the jamaah and forbade them from division, and numerous ahadith have come with the prohibition of division and the command of unity and harmony."*[7]

The first hadith he then brings is the one in which the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

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[4] Surah al Anbiya 21:92
[5] Surah Al Imran 3:103
[6] Al Suyuti, al Durr al Manthur, tafsir of Surah Al Imran 103: https://quran-tafsir.net/seoty/sura3-aya103.html
[7] Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al Quran al Azim, Surah Al Imran 103: https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/katheer/sura3-aya103.html

> *"Allah is pleased with three things for you and dislikes three things for you. He is pleased for you that you worship Him and associate nothing with Him, and that you hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided."*[8]

The order in this hadith carries the whole argument of this article, since worshipping Allah without any partner comes first and holding together upon His rope comes directly after it.

The third proof is that Allah describes division as a fruit of shirk and of leaving parts of the deen. Allah says:

> وَلَا تَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ فَرَّقُوا دِينَهُمْ وَكَانُوا شِيَعًا ۖ كُلُّ حِزْبٍ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُونَ

> *"And do not be among the mushrikin, among those who split up their deen and became sects, every party rejoicing in what it has."*[9]

About the Christians who broke their covenant, He says:

> فَنَسُوا حَظًّا مِّمَّا ذُكِّرُوا بِهِ فَأَغْرَيْنَا بَيْنَهُمُ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ

> *"They forgot a portion of what they were reminded of, so We stirred up enmity and hatred among them until the Day of Resurrection."*[10]

Ibn Taymiyyah built a complete principle on these ayat. He said:

> *"The cause of unity and harmony is gathering the whole deen and acting upon all of it, which is the worship of Allah alone without partner, as He commanded, inwardly and outwardly. The cause of division is abandoning a portion of what the servant was commanded with, and transgression among them. The result of unity is the mercy of Allah, His pleasure, His blessings, happiness in this world and the next and brightened faces. The result of division is the punishment of Allah, His curse, darkened faces and the Messenger ﷺ being free of them."*[11]

He also said:

> *"Whenever people abandon part of what Allah commanded them, enmity and hatred fall among them. When a people divides they become corrupt and perish,*

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[8] Sahih Muslim 1715
[9] Surah al Rum 30:31 to 32
[10] Surah al Maidah 5:14
[11] Ibn Taymiyyah, Majmu al Fatawa, volume 1, Qaidah fi al Jamaah wa al Furqah wa Sabab Dhalik wa Natijatih: https://ar.wikisource.org/wiki/مجموع_الفتاوى/المجلد_الأول/قاعدة_في_الجماعة_والفرقة_وسبب_ذلك_و_نتيجته and the same passage at https://kalemtayeb.com/quran/item/67106

> *and when they unite they are set right and take authority, for the jamaah is mercy and division is punishment."*[12]

History confirms what he says. The Arabs before Islam shared one language, one land and one lineage, yet they still spent generations killing each other over camels and wells. Nothing joined them until ***La Ilaha Illa Allah*** entered their hearts, and Allah reminded His Prophet ﷺ that this joining was His work and could never have been bought.

> وَأَلَّفَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ ۚ لَوْ أَنفَقْتَ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا مَّا أَلَّفْتَ بَيْنَ قُلُوبِهِمْ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ أَلَّفَ بَيْنَهُمْ

> *"And He joined their hearts. If you had spent everything on earth you could never have joined their hearts, yet Allah joined them."*[13]

If all the wealth of the earth could not unite Aws and Khazraj, then oil money, trade agreements and military pacts will never unite Turk, Arab, Kurd, Malay and African. Hearts belong to Allah, and He joins them for those who gather upon Him.

This brings us to the Khilafah. The ayah that the whole ummah quotes when it speaks about the return of its authority is a conditional promise, and the condition sits inside the ayah itself.

> وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ كَمَا اسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي ارْتَضَىٰ لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُم مِّن بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا ۚ يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي شَيْئًا ۚ وَمَن كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَٰلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

> *"Allah has promised those among you who believe and do righteous deeds that He will surely give them succession in the land as He gave succession to those before them, and that He will surely establish for them their deen which He has chosen for them, and that He will surely replace their fear with security. They worship Me and associate nothing with Me. And whoever disbelieves after that, those are the defiantly disobedient."*[14]

Succession, establishment and security are the three things every Muslim longs for today, and Allah attached all three to iman, righteous action and a worship that is free of every kind of shirk. Ibn Kathir said: *"This is a promise from Allah to His Messenger ﷺ that He will make his ummah the successors of the earth, meaning the leaders of the people and the rulers over them, and through them the lands will be set right."* He then explained why the promise was fulfilled in one age and weakened in another:

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[12] Ibn Taymiyyah, Majmu al Fatawa, as quoted in Mawsuat al Firaq, al Durar al Saniyyah: https://dorar.net/frq/111
[13] Surah al Anfal 8:63
[14] Surah al Nur 24:55

> *"When the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, were the people most upright upon the commands of Allah after the Prophet ﷺ and the most obedient to Allah, their victory was in proportion to that. They made the word of Allah dominant in the east and the west, and He supported them greatly, and they ruled over all the people and the lands. And when the people after them fell short in some of the commands, their dominance decreased in proportion."*[15]

In the same place Ibn Kathir transmits from Abu al Aliyah how the first generation reached that promise: *"The Prophet ﷺ and his Companions were in Makkah for about ten years, calling to Allah alone and to His worship alone without partner, in secret and in fear."*[16] Ten years of tawhid came before a single state institution was built, and the state that followed lasted because of what it stood on.

Al Sadi drew the same rule for every age. He said:

> *"The matter remains so until the Hour. Whenever they uphold iman and righteous deeds, what Allah promised them must come about. The disbelievers and the hypocrites are only given power over them, and given the upper hand at times, because of the shortcoming of the Muslims in iman and righteous deeds."*[17]

The Sunnah gives the same message from the other direction. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

> *"When you deal in inah, hold on to the tails of cattle, become content with farming and abandon jihad, Allah will place a humiliation over you which He will not remove until you return to your deen."*[18]

The cure named in this hadith is a return to the deen, and the head of the deen is tawhid. Allah stated the general law behind all of this in one sentence.

> إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُغَيِّرُ مَا بِقَوْمٍ حَتَّىٰ يُغَيِّرُوا مَا بِأَنفُسِهِمْ
>
> *"Indeed Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change what is within themselves."*[19]

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[15] Ibn Kathir, Tafsir al Quran al Azim, Surah al Nur 55: https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/katheer/sura24-aya55.htm
[16] Ibid
[17] Al Sadi, Taysir al Karim al Rahman, Surah al Nur 55: https://quran.ksu.edu.sa/tafseer/saadi/sura24-aya55.html
[18] Sunan Abi Dawud 3462
[19] Surah al Rad 13:11

The Prophet ﷺ also gave the glad tidings that the Khilafah will come back, and he described the kind of Khilafah it will be. Hudhayfah narrated that the Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

> "*Prophethood will be among you for as long as Allah wills, then He will lift it when He wills to lift it. Then there will be a Khilafah upon the method of prophethood for as long as Allah wills, then He will lift it when He wills. Then there will be a biting kingship for as long as Allah wills, then He will lift it when He wills. Then there will be a tyrannical kingship for as long as Allah wills, then He will lift it when He wills. Then there will be a Khilafah upon the method of prophethood.*" Then he was silent.[20]

The coming Khilafah is tied to the method of prophethood, and the method of prophethood began with tawhid, was carried by tawhid and ruled by tawhid.

Imam Malik summed up the whole matter in a sentence that the scholars have repeated for twelve centuries. He said:

> "The last of this ummah will only be set right by what set right its first."[21]

Ibn Taymiyyah commented on it by saying: "*How excellent is what Malik said*," and he explained that

> "*whenever the hold of the nations on the covenants of their prophets weakens and their iman decreases, they replace it with the innovations, the shirk and the other things they have introduced.*"[22]

Our duty begins with ourselves and our homes. We learn tawhid properly, in all of its parts, and we teach it to our families before we teach them anything else, following the order the Prophet ﷺ gave to Muadh. We place our loyalty with the believers because of their iman, and we take out of our hearts the pride in nation, tribe, party and group that splits one ummah into many. We return every dispute to the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Messenger ﷺ and accept the result even when it goes against our own side. We keep our hearts wide in the matters where the scholars of Ahl al Sunnah have always differed, so that a difference in fiqh never becomes a reason for enmity. We feel the pain of every oppressed Muslim as our own and help with what we are able to give, in wealth, in word and in dua. And we work, each from his own place, for the day when the word of Allah is once again the highest reference in the lands of the Muslims,

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[20] Musnad Ahmad 18406

[21] Imam Malik, transmitted in al Shifa of al Qadi Iyad 2/87 to 88, with the comment of Ibn Taymiyyah from Iqtida al Sirat al Mustaqim p. 367, as documented in Bakr al Badani, "Kalimah Yasirah wa Qaidah Azimah (2)", Alukah: https://www.alukah.net/sharia/1001/95711/

[22] Ibid

knowing that Allah has promised succession to those who worship Him and associate nothing with Him, and that Allah never breaks His promise.

Wa'Allāhu Aʿlam

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