

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: SŪRAT *Al-Ikhlās*, 112.

This early Makkan Sūra sums up in a few terse words the Unity of the Godhead—often professed, but frequently mixed up in the popular mind with debasing superstitions.

Al-Ikhlās, or Purity (of Faith).

*In the name of Allah, Most Gracious,
Most Merciful.*

1. Say: He is Allah,⁶²⁹⁶
The One;⁶²⁹⁷
2. Allah, the Eternal, Absolute;⁶²⁹⁸
3. He begetteth not,
Nor is He begotten;⁶²⁹⁹
4. And there is none
Like unto Him.⁶³⁰⁰



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

قُلْ هُوَ اللَّهُ أَحَدٌ ١

اللَّهُ الصَّمَدُ ٢

لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا شَيْءٌ ٣

وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُوًا أَحَدٌ ٤

6296. The nature of Allah is here indicated to us in a few words, such as we can understand. The qualities of Allah are described in numerous places elsewhere, *e.g.*, in lix. 22-24, lxii. 1, and ii. 255. Here we are specially taught to avoid the pitfalls into which men and nations have fallen at various times in trying to understand Allah. The first thing we have to note is that His nature is so sublime, so far beyond our limited conceptions, that the best way in which we can realise Him is to feel that He is a Personality, "He", and not a mere abstract conception of philosophy. He is near us; He cares for us; we owe our existence to Him. Secondly, He is the One and Only God, the Only One to Whom worship is due; all other things or beings that we can think of are His creatures and in no way comparable to Him. Thirdly, He is Eternal, without beginning or end, Absolute, not limited by time or place or circumstance, the Reality. Fourthly, we must not think of Him as having a son or a father, for that would be to import animal qualities into our conception of Him. Fifthly, He is not like any other person or thing that we know or can imagine: His qualities and nature are unique.

6297. This is to negative the idea of Polytheism, a system in which people believe in gods many and lords many. Such a system is opposed to our truest and profoundest conceptions of life. For Unity in Design, Unity in the fundamental facts of existence, proclaim the Unity of the Maker.

6298. *Samad* is difficult to translate by one word. I have used two, "Eternal" and "Absolute". The latter implies: (1) that absolute existence can only be predicated of Him; all other existence is temporal or conditional; (2) that He is dependent on no person or things, but all persons or things are dependent on Him, thus negating the idea of gods and goddesses who ate and drank, wrangled and plotted, depended on the gifts of worshippers, etc.

6299. This is to negative the Christian idea of the godhead, "the Father", "the only-begotten Son" etc.

6300. This sums up the whole argument and warns us specially against Anthropomorphism, the tendency to conceive of Allah after our own pattern, an insidious tendency that creeps in at all times and among all peoples.