Indeed, we are blessed to be the recipients of Allah’s final Scripture to humankind—the Qur’an. It is only through the Qur’an that we learn about Satan’s devious ploys and his never ending bitter enmity towards all children of Adam. Believers pay heed to every word of the Qur’an and take its message very seriously. The Qur’an declares, “O you who believe, surrender yourselves wholly (Kaffah) unto God, and do not follow in Satan’s footsteps, for he is your sworn enemy” (al-Baqarah, 2:208).

Imam al-Tabari, one of the earliest exegetes of the Qur’an, explained this ayah through the example of the companion Abdullah ibn Salam (RA) and others who previous to their becoming Muslims were profound scholars among the Jews. Since Saturday (Sabbath) was the sacred day of rest in Judaism, they thought of bringing about some sort of synthesis between the two faiths, through which they could continue to honor Sabbath as it was necessary under the Law of Musa (AS) while Islam did not require dishonoring it. Thus they thought that they would stay in touch with the Law of Musa (AS) and still not go against the Shariah of Muhammad (SAW). Allah (SWT) corrects their thought in this ayah which aims to establish that Islam is an obligation in its totality. It is total and perfect only when what is extraneous to Islam is not considered or made an integral part of it. Believers have been asked to ‘enter Islam completely’, not making allowances for a faith other than Islam—a divisive approach, which makes one an easy target for Satan. Ibn Abbas (RA) says that this ayah applies to the ahl al-Kitab (People of the Book), while others say that it applies to the munafiqun—those who profess ‘to believe’ with their tongues but whose hearts are void of faith.

It is unfortunate but true that in our own times, there is no dearth of so-called Muslims who profess Islam but are still in total darkness. When asked to revere Allah (SWT) by obeying His commands, they begin to rationalize by attributing their faith to the ‘firm belief in their hearts’, to their charitable deeds, and to their good ethical standards. After all Allah (SWT), they argue, is in no need of their prayers. This type of specious reasoning is nothing else than the voice of Satan within them. Then there are those Muslims who do observe the modes of worship by way of rituals but are actually deprived of the essence of ‘ibadah (worship and obedience). Satan and his agents keep them away from constant and conscious remembrance of Allah (SWT) through various means of frivolous and time-wasting activities, not to speak of indulging in gossiping, backbiting, and slandering as a pastime. Still there are those who are conscious of their religious duties but become victims of Satan’s whisperings by creating innovations in Islam and attributing such innovations to be integral to faith. Satan also turns towards those supposedly devout individuals who not only fulfill the obligatory requirements of worship but go beyond by performing other supererogatory modes of worship (nawafil). However, despite their meticulous observation of religious duties, they are found to be morally lax when it comes to ordinary day to day dealings with others. They have no qualms about lying and cheating—attributes that befit the hypocrites, when such unethical practices suit their interests.

Hence we see that Satan employs his numerous tactics to entrap one and all without exception; and he has in fact succeeded in his machinations. No wonder, the Qur’an says, “Satan was proved right in his opinion of them, for
they all followed him—except for a group of believers” (Saba, 34:20). Who are these true believers that the Qur’an is alluding to? They are those who pay heed to the commandments of Allah (SWT) and enter Islam in total submission—completely and wholeheartedly. They are the believers par excellence. Their oral profession of faith becomes a conviction in their hearts and gets manifested through their actions.

Indeed, for most of humanity including majority of Muslims, Islam is understood to be a religion like any other religious tradition. The fact of the matter is that Islam is not a religion. The word religion as it is used today has a special connotation. While religion may affect a religious person’s attitude, moral character, and behavior as a public servant, the collective affairs of the people seem to be void of divine guidance in the contemporary secular world. Islam demands that Allah (SWT), the Creator of the heavens and the earth and all that exists between them and beyond them, be at the center of all human affairs—the individual as well as the collective; the regional, the national, as well as the international. Indeed, Islam is not merely a religion, but a complete and comprehensive way of life.

Thus, the dichotomy between ‘Church’ and ‘State’ or ‘God’ and ‘Caesar’ prevalent in the western civilization and thought has no place in Islam. Indeed, in Islam, God is at the center of all activities, be they private, public, moral, ethical, social, economical, political, or whatever. In fact, it is the only complete system or way of life that Allah (SWT) is pleased with. Allah (SWT) says, “Today I have perfected your deen for you and completed My blessing upon you and I am pleased with Islam as a deen for you” (al-Ma’idah, 5:3). Another ayah says, “Indeed, the deen in the sight of Allah is Islam” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:19).

Many if not most Muslims understand Islam restricted to its five pillars. These include: the declaration that there is no god but God and that Muhammad (SAW) is the Messenger of God, ritual prayers (salah), obligatory charity (zakah), fasting in the month of Ramadan (siyam), and annual pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj), once in a life time if one is physically and financially capable of doing so. It can easily be understood that pillars in themselves do not constitute the entire structure of a building. The five pillars have been made as part of ‘ibadah, which includes these modes of worship, as well as obedience of Allah (SWT). It is through these pillars of faith that Muslims are inclined to and propelled to live by the divine guidance incorporated in the Shariah (Islamic Law) as outlined in the Qur’an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW).

When it comes to Islam, there is no latitude to pick and choose according to one’s whims and desires. The earlier Muslim ummah of Bani Israel was sternly warned for doing this: “Do you believe in some of the Scripture and reject some? The punishment for those of you who do this will be nothing but disgrace in this life, and on the Day of Resurrection they will be condemned to the harshest torment: God is not unaware of what you do” (al-Baqarah, 2:85). This ayah explains in unequivocal terms that ‘partial obedience’ is ‘no obedience’ at all with Allah (SWT). Those who willingly reconcile with the evil satanic system that is built on corruption, deception, oppression, and injustice; those who reject religion or marginalize it from the socio-politico-economic arenas and consider religion to be restricted to people’s private lives are destined to be doomed in the hereafter even if they claim to be Muslims. They have been deceived by Satan.

The Qur’an clearly states, “The Jews and the Christians will never be pleased with you unless you follow their ways. Say, ‘God’s guidance is the only true guidance. If you were to follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, you would find no one to protect you from God or help you’” (al-Baqarah, 2:120). Allah (SWT) is the Creator, the Sustainer, the Cherisher, and the Sovereign. It is only in obeying His commands that we can fulfill our purpose of life by doing His will on earth.

The central prayer in Christianity is the Lord’s Prayer, “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.” Does it not mean that as God rules in heaven, so shall He rule on earth? The prayer ends with a profound request—not to lead us into temptation but to deliver us from evil (Satan). This is only possible when we pay heed to what Allah (SWT) says. Abdullah ibn Mas’ud (RA) would always remind his companions to
lend their ears whenever Allah (SWT) addresses by saying, “O you who believe” or “O people” because He is addressing them.

Mufti Shafi Usmani giving explanation of the main ayah under discussion says in his exegesis entitled *Ma’arif al-Qur’an* that the word *kaffah* in the ayah means totally and universally. In the structural scheme of the sentence, this word appears as an adverb referring either to the condition of the believers while entering Islam, which must be complete or to the perfect and complete state of Islam in which the believers must enter. No Muslim shall be deserving of calling himself a Muslim unless he accepts all Islamic injunctions truly and sincerely.

In response to the blessed oft repeated seven ayat of Surat al-Fatihah, Allah (SWT) gave us the Qur’an and the Prophet’s model to be followed through his Sunnah. “This Quran guides to that which is most upright, and it gives glad tidings to the believers who do good work that they will have a great reward” (al-Isra’, 17:9). It is to Allah (SWT) alone that we should submit in total obedience. There is a stern warning in the Qur’an that no other way other than Islam is acceptable to Allah (SWT). Whoever chooses a system other than Islam will be among the losers. “If anyone desires anything other than Islam as a deen, it will not be accepted from him, and in the Next World he will be among the losers” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:85).

Life is a constant battle between us and Satan. To emerge victorious, we have to remain wary of the oft repeated warnings: “Satan is your enemy; so treat him as an enemy” (Fatir, 35:6). “He always commands you to do what is evil and indecent, and to say things about God that you do not really know” (al-Baqarah, 2:169).

We have to follow Islam completely and not in bits and parts. We have to be mindful of Allah (SWT) as much as we can. “Be mindful of God as much as you can; hear and obey” (al-Taghabun, 64:16). Finally, we have the profound ayah reminding us, “O you, who believe, have taqwa of Allah with the taqwa due to Him and do not die except as Muslims (total submission to God)” (Aal ‘Imran, 3:102).

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