

Concord and Discord

Originally, we, Shi'ite and Sunnite Muslims, are both from the tribe of Islam and we have many things in common. Our beliefs originate from the Holy Qur'an and the Apostle of God's traditions and customs narrated by his purified household and his trusted Companions, however, we have some divergence of views about interpreting a few verses of the Holy Qur'an and understanding the meaning of some traditions and customs of the Prophet (S.A.W.A.). In spite of this divergence, we should not dispute and lose our power; rather we could listen to each other's word and follow what is the best of it.

The author of the above-mentioned book, *Khilafat va intikhab* (Caliphate and Election), rejects some of Shi'ite views, which we will quote, and then we will answer his objections. He writes:

“The ink and parchment (*qirtas*) tradition which is related in Bukhari's *Sahih* is baseless. Although this ludicrous story is found in many collections of traditions, it seems unreliable and untrue. Some religious sects and nations, which rose up secretly in later times; fabricated it and some naïve and thoughtless Muslims included it in their books. In many occasions the Messenger of God said, “The Book of God and my practice are enough for your guidance and bliss.” Why did he [the Prophet] want to write something contradictory to his previous sayings? **”Heaven be praised, a monstrous calumny!”** The Messenger of God is immune and immaculate from inconsistency.”¹

We say, Many Sunnite and Shi'ite scholars have narrated this tradition in their canonical and historical books: including San'ani in *al-Musannaf*, Bukhari in *Sahih*, Ibn Sa'd in *Tabaqat al-kubra*, al-Mufid in *Kitab al-irshad* and so forth. It is so well attested by different *isnads* that it does not seem possible to reject it; however, our brother devoted seven pages refuting it. He says, “Some of the naïve and thoughtless Muslims included this fabricated tradition in their books.”²

Moreover, he considers that the Prophet (S.A.W.A.) wished to write a will contrary to his previous sayings and customs, God says, **﴿Nor does he speak out of [his own] desire: It is just a revelation that is revealed [to him].﴾** (Q: 53/3–4). In the last hours of his life, the Messenger of God (S.A.W.A.) wanted to write a document for his people, after which they would never go astray. It is the natural right of every one to make a testament. If he wanted to repeat his former sayings, it was based on God's

order, ﴿**And admonish, for admonition indeed benefits the faithful.**﴾ (Q: 51/55). ﴿**So admonish, for admonition is indeed beneficial.**﴾ (Q: 87/9).

Concerning the Guardian Verse (*aya wilayat*), he writes, "according to Shi'ite belief, while 'Ali was bowing down in his prayer, a beggar came to the mosque and asked for help. 'Ali gave him his ring for charity; and this verse came down concerning him. They believe that the term 'guardian' (*wali*) in this verse refers to 'leadership' which is exclusive to God, the Messenger of God and the faithful, and the concept of 'while bowing down' is 'Ali, since he gave alms while he was bowing down. Our exegetists and traditionists have not preserved it. From our (the Sunnite) point of view it is not the case.³

It concerns all the Immigrants and the Helpers, since the pronoun is in the plural form (*alladhina*), figuratively speaking, although we can sometimes use it for singular nouns, there is no reason here to ignore its real meaning. The phrase 'while bowing down' does not have a real and practical meaning, since alms giving during saying one's prayers renders it invalid; its real meaning is ﴿those who are humble﴾.⁴

We say many Sunnite and Shi'ite exegetes and traditionists including, Muqatil b. Sulayman, Baladhuri, Jassas, Tha'alibi,⁵ Suyuti,⁶ as well as all Shi'ite ones have narrated this verse as concerned with 'Ali. Had he consulted the exegetical and traditional literature he would not have said, "Our exegetes and traditionists have not preserved it." The plural pronouns are used for singular nouns on other occasions in the Holy Qur'an.

During the Battle of Dhat al-Riqa', a man of Banu Muharib called Ghaurath (or 'Amr b. Jihash of Banu Nadhir) went to the Messenger of God (S.A.W.A.) as he was sitting with his sword in his lap, and asked to be allowed to look at it. The Prophet (S.A.W.A.) gave it to Ghaurath (or 'Amr) and he began to brandish it intending to strike him, but God frustrated him. He said, "Aren't you afraid, Muhammad?" "No, why should I be?" "Aren't you afraid of me when I have a sword in my hand?" "No, God will protect me from you. Then he returned the Apostle's sword to him. God sent down, ﴿**O you have faith! Remember Allah's blessing upon you. When a people (qawmun) set out to extend their hands against you, but He withheld their hands from you.**﴾ (Q: 5/11).⁷

In this verse, God uses 'a people' (*qawmun*) for a singular noun, Ghaurath or 'Amr b. Jihash. In another verse, ﴿**Indeed Abraham was a nation (ummatan) obedient to Allah.**﴾ (Q: 16/120). He uses 'a nation' (*umma*) for a singular noun, Abraham. He also, uses a plural pronoun for a singular noun in *aya mubahala* (Q: 3/61), when He speaks of 'our' women; Fatima was the only woman present at *mubahala*.

He writes, "Giving alms during saying one's prayer renders it void and null."

God is Gracious! He knows the Islamic laws and gives decrees what is right and what is wrong but God and His Apostle do not know it!

He says, "leadership (*wilayat*) is not derived from guardian (*wali*), concerning this verse, ﴿**O you who**

have faith! Do not take those who take your religion in derision and play, from among those who were given the Book before you, and the infidels, as friends (awliya). ﴿Q: 5/57).” It means friend, companion, spouse and boss. Here it is impossible that 'guardian' would mean 'leader'; for no believer thinks of making the Jews or Christians 'caliph', but it is probable to make them friends.⁸

Regarding the meaning of the word *wali*, a term may have different meanings in different occasions. For avoiding such a mistake, God has used the exclusive word '**only**' in this verse (Q: 5/55). He says, your guardian is **only** Allah, His Apostle and ...” If it meant companion, friend, spouse and boss, the use of the word '**only**' would be unnecessary. We may have many friends and companions other than Allah and His Apostle.

In the next verse (Q: 5/57), *awliya* means friends, but they are two different verses with different concepts, however, if we accepted it as 'leader' or 'emir' we would not go beyond the expectations. God orders, **﴿O you who have faith, obey Allah and obey the Apostle, and those who vested with authority among you, and if you dispute concerning anything, refer it to Allah and the Apostle, if you have faith in Allah and the Last Day.﴾** (Q: 4/59).

﴿And obey Allah and His Apostle, and do not dispute, or, you will lose heart and your power will be gone.﴾ (Q: 8/46). Unfortunately, we ignored God's ordinance and began to fight each other. Due to weakness of Muslims, the Europeans could defeat them in Andalusia and uproot Islam in the Iberian Peninsula in Europe. The Jews occupied Palestine and now they govern the Farther Mosque (*Masjid al-Aqsa*) the first Muslim Qibla. They imprison, torture and kill our Muslim brethren and we remain silent. The American Christians have occupied Afghanistan and Iraq, and they rule over the Muslim people in those countries.

He adds, “All the nouns in this verse Q: 5/57 are in the plural form, while 'Ali b. Abi Talib is only one man; it is unreasonable to say a group of people are our enemy and 'Ali alone is our supporter.”⁹

Verses Q: 5/55 & 57 are two different ones with two different meanings. Even so, as we said before, we can use plural pronouns for singular nouns.

He continues, “Well, giving alms 'while bowing down' is a story, but how could one say their prayers 'while bowing down'?”¹⁰

We think it is a misprint, perhaps he means how one give alms while bowing down.

Again, he says, “Supposing that he gave *zakat*, but he was not a wealthy man and he did not have the definite kinds of properties which *zakat* is levied on. He did not keep more than one meal at home, much less for gold and silver which *zakat* is levied on.”¹¹

'Ali b. Abi Talib was a Muslim and the bravest warrior in Islam. His share in spoils of war and public treasury was not less than the one of other Muslims. Moreover, he possessed the fertile estate of Fadak up to the caliphate of Abu Bakr.¹² He possessed plant grooves, which he dedicated to his offspring.¹³ He had also dug several springs from under the ground and brought under cultivation many

barren and uncultivated lands. Thereafter he gave up rights over them and dedicated them as trust for the Muslims. When he left the perishing world, he owned nothing. He could earn his living well, but he preferred others to himself. He gave food, for the love of Allah to the needy, the orphan and the prisoner.

The term *zakat* does not mean necessarily a tax, which is levied on definite kinds of property, and it is distributed to eight categories of persons. The giving away of the worldly possessions was regarded as a particularly pious act (see Q 13: 22). The term *zakat* also means virtue in general as well as, with an almost means of perceptible translation of meaning (see Q: 86/14) and pious gift (see Q: 7/75). The same word, that denotes righteousness and virtue, can therefore also use for benevolence and charitable gifts. 14 Moreover, Qurtubi says, “This verse indicates that, we can use *zakat* for recommended charity, since 'Ali gave his ring while bowing down.” 15

He says, “It is obligatory to give alms to Muslims not to unbelievers. How could the beggar know that he should take the ring? 'Ali could not speak in his prayers.” 16

This verse says nothing about the beggar's creed. Whence does the writer judge that he was an unbeliever? Although 'Ali did not speak to him, the beggar knew (perhaps by sign) that he gifted him the ring and he took it.

He believes that “by accepting this story, it would mean that giving *zakat* is obligatory or at least recommended while bowing down, because God has praised it, however as we know there is not such an obligation in our law.” 17

Only religious jurists (*mujtahids*) can give decrees about religious acts. We cannot judge from the outward of the Holy Qur'an. For example, in the story of Joseph in the Holy Qur'an, we recite, ﴿**When Joseph said to his father, 'Father, I saw eleven planets, the sun, and the moon: I saw them prostrating themselves before me.**﴾ (Q: 12/4).

Waiting in agony and grief for a long time, Jacob's sons told their father that Joseph is yet alive and he is the governor over all the land of Egypt. Jacob said my son is yet alive. I will go and see him before I die. Jacob and all his seed came to Egypt. Joseph saw them, ﴿**And he seated his parents high upon the throne, and they fell down prostrate before him. He said, 'Father, this is the fulfillment of my dream long ago, which, my Lord has made come true.**﴾ (Q: 12/100).

Should we prostrate before our sons or our parents when we see them? No, we are nor allowed to do so, because, prostration is only for Allah. Then he says, “The phrase 'and gives *zakat* while bowing down' is grammatically in simple present tense and it means that the believers should give *zakat* as far as they are alive, but this event happened only once. Moreover, all the traditionists, including Ibn Hajar and others, believe that it is a weak tradition.” 18

The clause 'that maintains the prayer, and gives *zakat* while bowing down', is an adjective for the noun 'the faithful'. 19 Moreover, there are other verses in the Holy Qur'an in simple present tense, referring to

one special occasion, e.g. ﴿**And among the people is he, who sells his soul seeking the pleasure of Allah, and Allah is most kind to [His] servants.**﴾ (Q: 2/207). God sent down this verse concerning 'Ali,²⁰ whom the Prophet (S.A.W.A.) put to sleep in his bed on the night of his departure to Mecca.

Another verse is ﴿**They fulfill their vows and fear a day whose ill would be widespread. They give food, for the love of Him, to the needy, the orphan, and the prisoner. [Saying] 'We feed you only for the sake of Allah. We do not want any reward from you or any thanks.'**﴾ (Q: 76/7–9). All these verses are in the simple present tense and all of them concern 'Ali. We explained the traditionists and the exegetes' views previously.²¹ Ibn Hajar is one traditionist not all of them.

He believes that “accepting this story is belittling 'Ali and the importance of the prayer. It is narrated that they pulled an arrow out of 'Ali's leg while he was saying his prayers and he did not notice it, because he was praying to his God. How could he see a beggar come to the mosque and give him his ring while bowing down?”²²

This event shows 'Ali's maximal love for Allah. While he maintains prayers to Allah, he sees and feels nothing except Him, but when he hears Allah's Name, he can do nothing but gladdening the heart of whom who prays to Allah.

He says, “The exclusive word 'only' is used when someone is in doubt about something, while this verse came down when the Prophet was still alive and there was no disagreement among Muslims. A caliph is a deputy to the Prophet, then, there was no need for a caliph. Here, “your guardian is only...” means “your friend is only...”²³

One should appoint their successor while they are alive, not after their death.

Now Let us come back to the point of issue: that is the succession to the Messenger of God (S.A.W.A.). We learned God's attitude toward the last prophets and their successors in general and His attitude toward Muhammad (S.A.W.A.) and his offspring in particular. We also remember the Prophet's emphasis on the Holy Qur'an and on the offspring of his family (*ahl al-bayt*). He also said, “People, I am a way mark for you.

When you come to me at the heavenly waters (*hawdh*), then indeed I will ask you about two important things (*thaqalayn*) which I have left behind. Take care how you follow me with regard to them, for God has informed me that they will never scatter until they meet me. Indeed, I have left among you the Book of God and the offspring of my family (*ahl al-bayt*). Do not try to outdo them, for then you will be destroyed.”²⁴

Let us see what his people did after him. Let us see what his people did after him. Let us see what his people did after him. Let us see what his people did after him. Let us see what his people did after him.

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1. Salimi, 63 – 69.
 2. He believes that 'Abd al-Razzaq b. Hammam San'ani, Ibn Sa'd, Bukhari, and many other scholars who preserved this tradition were naïve and thoughtless Muslims. We wonder whether he belittles these famous traditionists from his own point of view or from the Sunnite's viewpoints; despite the divergence of views, we respect and honor all the scholars, who endeavored and preserved the traditions of the Messenger of God for Muslims.
 3. Salimi, 29.
 4. Ibid, 29 f.
 5. Tha'alibi, (d. 875/1470), *al-Jawahir al-hisan fi tafir al-Qur'an*, ed. Ali Muhammad Mu'awwadh & Ahmad 'Abd al-Mawjud, Beirut, 1418/1997, 2: 396.
 6. For this verse concerning 'Ali, see e.g. Muqatil b. Sulayman, 1: 486; Baladhuri, *Ansab*, 2: 381; Tabari, *Tafsir Tabari*: 4: 628–9.; Jassas, 2: 557; Suyuti *al-Durr al-manthur*, 3: 99.
 7. Ibn Hisham, 3: 216.
 8. Salimi, 30.
 9. Ibid, 30 f.
 10. Ibid, 31.
 11. Ibid, 32.
 12. 'Ali says, "All that we had in our possession under this sky was Fadak, but a group of people felt greedy for it and other party withheld themselves from it. Allah is, after all, the best arbiter." See *Nahj al-balagha*, 2, 73.
 13. "This is what the slave of Allah, 'Ali b. Abi Talib, has laid down about his property, in pursuance of seeking Allah's pleasure so that He may by virtue of it give me entry into Paradise and accord me peace. It will be administrated by al-Hasan b. 'Ali. He would take a suitable portion of it for his livelihood and spent it on charity. If something happens to al-Hasan and al-Husayn survives, he will administer it accordingly. In the charitable estate of all the progeny of Fatima have the same rights as the progeny of 'Ali. I have laid down administration on the sons of Fatima in order to seek pleasure of Allah and the nearness to His Apostle in due regard for his honor and consideration of his kinship. It is obligatory on him who administrates it that he retains the estate as it is and spends the usufruct as he has been ordered and instructed. He should not sell the seedlings in the plantations of these villages till the land changes its face by turning them into plants." (See *Nahj al-balagha*, 2: 22–23).
 14. A. Zysow, "Zakat", in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition.
 15. Qurtubi (d. 671/1273), *al-Jami' li-ahkam al-Qur'an*, Dar al-kutub al-'Arabi, Cairo, 1387, 3: 2315.
 16. Salimi, 32.
 17. Ibid, 32 f.
 18. Ibid, 33.
 19. Abu al-Baqa' 'Abd Allah al-'Ukbari (d. 616/1219), *Imla' ma min manna bihi al-Rahman*, ed. Ibrahim 'Utwa 'Iwadh, Egypt 1969, 1: 219.
 20. Al-Haskani, 1: 123; al-Razi, *Fakhar al-Din* (d. 606/1210), *al-Tafsir al-kabir*, ed. M. 'A. M. Mustafa, Cairo, n.d., 5: 223 f.
 21. See above, 46, note 1.
 22. Salimi, 33.
 23. Ibid, 34.
 24. All Hadith collections have preserved hadith thaqalayn (two important things) as 'the Book of God and my offspring' (ahl al-bayt), e.g. Ibn Hanbal (d. 241/855), *Musnad*, Dar Sadir, Beirut, n.d., 3: 14, 17; 4: 367; 5: 182; Darimi (d. 255/869), *Sunan*, ed. Dr. Mustafa al-Dhahabi, Dar al-hadith, Cairo, 1420/2000, 2: 432; Muslim b. Hajjaj (d. 261/875), 7: 122 f; Tirmidhi, *al-Jami' al-sahih* (Sunan) ed. M. H. Nassar, Beirut, 1421/2000, 5: 662, No. 3786; Tabarani (d. 360/971), *al-Mu'jam al-kabir*, ed. Hamadi 'Abd al-Majid al-Slafi, Dar Ihya' al-turath al-'Arabi, Beirut, & Maktab Ibn Taymiyya, Cairo, 1420/1999, 3: 65 f; al-Hakim al-Naysaburi, 3: 110. Only Malik b. Anas (d. 179/796) in his *Muwatta'* (ed. Muhammad Fu'ad 'Abd al-Baqi, Cairo, 1951) mentions 'the Book of God and the customs of His Apostle'.

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