

## The Shia and the Friday Prayer

The important matter which the Sunni raise and criticize the Shia for on all occasions, is the matter of neglecting and not offering the Friday Prayer. Some of them are so excessive in their view that they consider the Shia as disbelievers for not offering the Friday Prayer, relying on a Prophet's tradition that says:

*"Whoever gives up the Friday (prayer) three times does turn his back to Islam."*

They also narrate another tradition that the Prophet (S) when once was asked about someone who gave up the Friday Prayer, he said:

*"He shall be in the Fire."*

Regarding the truth, we say that the Shia disagree among themselves on the legality of the Friday Prayer during the age of the Occultation of Imam al-Mahdi (a.s.). The Shia jurisprudents are of two opinions; some say it is obligatory at all times, and others say it is not obligatory unless all its conditions are available and one of its conditions is that it must be offered under the rule of a just ruler.

Before I turned a Shia, I truly say that I too much approved of Sheikh al-Khalisi who offered the Friday Prayer in the Mosque of Imam al-Kadhim (a.s.) in Baghdad. Sometimes I traveled from Najaf or Karbala to participate in the Friday Prayer there. At that time, I wondered at the courage of Sheikh Mahdi al-Khalisi<sup>1</sup> who did not care for the criticism of some *ulema* who did not think that the Friday Prayer was obligatory. He believed it was obligatory and he offered it in the best way. I noticed at that time (in 1968 AD) the masses of people who gathered in his mosque, showing him great reverence and respect.

I also wondered at those who criticized him for offering the Friday Prayer. I said to myself, "How do these people defame an *alim* (scholar) who, due to his *ijtihad*, offers the prayer that Allah the Almighty has ordered it to be offered when He has said:

***O you who believe! when the call is made for prayer on Friday, then hasten to the remembrance of Allah... Qur'an 62:9***

I repeated this saying before some of those people, defending Sheikh al-Khalisi and seeking for him different excuses and proofs. However, some of them revealed what was inside their hearts. They said to me that Sheikh al-Khalisi did not recite in the *azan* – “*the third witness*”. I asked what “the third witness” was, and they said that it was, “*I bear witness that Ali is the saint of Allah*”.

I spent that night asking myself if that is reason enough to criticize and defame that man. I researched much in the books, and I read the books of his (Sheikh Mahdi al-Khalisi) father, but I did not find anything except true knowledge, piety and concern for the unity of Muslims. This (concern about the unity of Muslims), some people considered to be flattery of the Sunni.

However and despite the fact that some people tried to make me dislike and keep myself away from him, whenever I visited al-Kadhimiyyah (in Baghdad where Imam al-Khadim a.s. is buried), I offered the Friday Prayer behind Sheikh al-Khalisi and listened to his sermons, from which I benefited much. Whenever I sat with him and listened to his talks, I liked him more. Still I remained reserved, justifying that the Shia knew him more than I did.

On the other hand, I remained confused between the two *ijtihads* (deductions) of which one said that the Friday Prayer was obligatory and the other said it was not.

I said that I could not understand that, except when I would reach the required degree of *ijtihad*. However, after the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the establishment of the Islamic Republic there, the Friday Prayer was offered since the first Friday after the victory. And since then, the Islamic Republic has spared no effort for the sake of the unity of Muslims. Then, I knew the value of Sheikh al-Khalisi and became certain of his loyalty and the truth in his mission. I remain until today with desire to see him, so that Allah may make me meet him from a near distance as a happy occasion and Allah is powerful over everything.

Anyhow, the Shia are until now on two thoughts; some offer the Friday Prayer, and the others do not, waiting for the reappearance of Imam al-Mahdi (may Allah hasten his reappearance).

I wish from the depth of my heart that the Friday Prayer is offered in every village and town of the Muslim countries, for it evokes great reward and has many benefits that only Allah the Glorified knows about.

In many lectures, I invited the Muslim colonies in the different countries which I visited, to offer the Friday Prayer, taking the Islamic Republic of Iran and its leader as their example and trying to bring their hearts close to each other and make Muslims – Sunni and Shia – love each other as a single united nation.

We pray to Allah, the Powerful to help us thank and worship Him well, as is His due and to reconcile our hearts with each other to be true brothers by His Grace, He is Hearing, Responding to the prayer.

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1. It is worth mentioning that once Sheikh Muhammad al-Khalisi, the father of Sheikh Mahdi al-Khalisi, went to the religious authority Sayyid al-Khoei in Najaf, talking with him about the matter of the Friday Prayer, relying on this Qur'anic verse, O you who believe! when the call is made for prayer on Friday, then hasten to the remembrance of Allah...Qu'ran 62:9 Sayyid al-Khoei pondered for a while and then said to him, "Who is the caller?" Sheikh Muhammad al-Khalisi could not answer and he went back to Baghdad, keeping on offering the Friday Prayer there.

It has been mentioned that Abu Hanifa too thought that it should not be offered except when available under a just ruler. Be it known that it is now offered in the Islamic Republic of Iran that calls for offering it in the other countries and in Syria.

Sayyid Fadhlullah calls for it in Lebanon. In fact, it is offered in Lebanon now.

In any case what kind of Friday Prayer is that which is offered under the authority of an oppressive ruler – when the Friday Sermon is dictated under his supervision, or when the imams of mosques are appointed according to his desire and mood from among those who praise and glorify the regime and its policies?!!

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