

Home > An Enlightening Commentary into the Light of the Holy Qur'an vol. 2 > Section 26: Rejection of the Signs and the Apostles from Allah > Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 216

Section 26: Rejection of the Signs and the Apostles from Allah

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 211

سَلِّ بْنِ إِسْرَائِيلَ كَمْ آتَيْنَاهُمْ مِنْ آيَةٍ بَيِّنَةٍ وَمَنْ يُبَدِّلْ نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُ
فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ

211. "Ask the Children of Israel how many dear signs We gave them; and whosoever changes Allah's blessing after it has come unto him, then, verily Allah is severe in retribution. "

This verse points to the manner of the Children of Israel that how they were entangled with the punishment of *Allah* when they changed the blessings of *Allah* and showed ingratitude after having those clear signs and divine favours.

"Ask the Children of Israel how many clear signs We gave them; and whosoever changes Allah's blessing after it has come unto him..."

The purpose of 'change of blessing' is that one misuses the blessings, favours, and material and spiritual sources of authority, potentialities and talents that the one naturally has in his possession on the path of destruction, deviation, transgression, and vicious actions.

Allah gave the Children of Israel both spiritual trainees and powerful leaders. He (s.w.t.) bestowed upon them all sorts of material and spiritual facilities and possibilities, but they changed those bounties. That behaviour they had, not only ruined their lives in this world, but also causes that there will be waiting a painful chastisement for them in the world to come.

"... then, verily Allah is severe in retribution."

The problem of 'change of blessing' and its painful resulting fate *is* not conclusive to the Israelites. At this very present Age, the industrial world is also entangled with this great adversity. The human race of today has so much abundant and different bounties and facilities that no period in the history has recorded the like of them for human kind.

Yet, as a result of being distant from the heavenly instructions of prophets and because of 'change of blessing', human beings of this Age have applied those bounties terribly alongside the way of their own destruction.

They have produced the most dangerous destructive weapons out of them (those bounties) to ruin the world. Or, they have gained profits by misusing their own material natural potentialities for the spread of transgression, oppression, exploitation, and have changed the world into an insecure and unpeaceful site in all respects.

The initial phrase of the verse: ***"Ask the Children of Israel"*** is in fact, for the reason that the blessing of *Allah* be confessed by them, and then, it be remarked why they were faced with that adversity: that they scattered wandering in the world.

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 212

زَيْنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا وَيَسْخَرُونَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا فَوْقَهُمْ يَوْمَ
الْقِيَامَةِ وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَنْ يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

212. "The life of this world has been made to seem fair to those who disbelieve, and they mock those who believe, but those who guard (against evil) shall be above them on the Day of Judgement and Allah provides with sustenance for whomever He wills without measure."

Occasion of Revelation

Ibn-Abbas, the famous commentator, says that this holy verse was revealed about the chief leaders of Quraysh, a minority of wealthy people in their disbelieving tribe, who were living in easy circumstances.

They used to mock a group of steadfast Muslim believers, who were poor from the point of finances. These disbelievers said: if the Prophet Muhammad (S) had really been appointed from the side of God and was a noble prophet, the rich and authoritative ones would have followed him. Then, this verse was revealed and answered their vain statements.

The occasion of revelation of the verse does not hinder us from taking the verse as a general and common rule, or consider it as the perfecter of the previous verse about the Jews. The verse says:

"The life of this world has been made to seem fair to those who disbelieve..."

Thus, they were so proud that they ridiculed those believers who were rather poor:

"...and they mock those who believe..."

Yet, in the meantime, the attention should also be paid to this condition that:

"...but those who guard (against evil) shall be above them on the Day of Judgement..."

The reason for that condition lies in the coming world where the spiritual ranks will be illustrated in their objective forms and believers will be positioned in such elevated high ranks that these miserable people, comparing them to as if the believers are in high sky of honour, feel themselves in the lowest and deepest earthly abode of disgrace. This is not surprising, of course, because the foregoing detailed condition is the fruit of their own deeds:

"...and Allah provides with sustenance for whomever He wills without measure."

These facts are, indeed, some glad tidings for the poor believers and also a severe warning to the rich who are proud and faithless unto the Truth.

And the phrase stating that '**Allah provides with sustenance for whomever** (here, the believers) **He wills without measure**' may point to this idea that Divine rewards, from the view of quantity and quality, are never equivalent to our good deeds. They are bestowed according to His Grace and Generosity, and, also, we know that there is no limit to the Grace and Generosity of *Allah*.

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 213

كَانَ النَّاسُ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنْذِرِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِي مَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ فِيهِ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ أُوتُوهُ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَتْهُمْ الْبَيِّنَاتُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ فَهَدَى اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لِمَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الْحَقِّ بِإِذْنِهِ وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

213. "(All) Mankind was but a single nation, then Allah raised Prophets as bearers of good tidings and warners, and He sent down with them the Book with the Truth that it might judge between people on that wherein they differed. And none were at odds over it, except those very (people) whom it was given unto, after clear arguments had come to them, revolting among themselves. So Allah guided by His Will, those who believed regarding that which people had differed about the truth. And Allah guides whomever He wills to the Straight Path."

It is understood from this verse that human race had a simple and plain life at the beginning. Then, later, after the increase of population and the appearance of a variety of tastes among them, little by little, diversities and oppositions arose.

"(All) Mankind was but a single nation..."

As some Islamic traditions indicate, this period has been adapted to an Age before the time of Noah (as) when people, with little information, used to live a simple limited life.

But, sometime later there appeared some conflicts between individuals when they wanted to gain more and more interests especially by employing others for reaching the foregoing purposes via them. This caused that the classes of people and social levels came into existence.

"...then Allah raised Prophets as bearers of good tidings and warners..."

The necessity of a social life is the existence of a firm and just law in that society. This law should be able to solve the problems of people. *Allah* appointed the prophets for solving the problems and removing the opposition created thereby.

He (s.w.t.) sent some heavenly Books down to them, but some arrogant groups consciously stood against the invitation of the prophets and produced a new conflict, added to their former ones.

"...and He sent down with them the Book with the Truth..."

In this way, of course, *Allah* led some receptive people to His guidance with His grace and favour, and left those who, as a result of envy, jealousy, force, or oppression, resisted against the truth alone to themselves until they receive their retribution.

"...that it might judge between people on that wherein they differed..."

Explanations

1– The larger the number of contemporary people in one region is, the more variety of demands will arise; and, when the life is simpler and the number of people is smaller, the less the contradictions will be.

2– Wherever there lies a dispute, there needs a judge. Human made laws and civilizations are not able to solve the discords of mankind, because all human groups or individuals usually look for their own personal needs or demands.

The solution of the human problems should be made up via the path of Divine prophets and through the revealed laws which are free from any fault and falsification because they are sent down from the side of *Allah* (s.w.t.) and by an infallible figure, i.e. a godly prophet.

"...And none were at odds over it, except those very (people) whom it was given unto..."

3- The best way of solution to contradictions is Faith in the Resurrection. This doctrine utilizes the subject of glad tidings to prevent the appearance of contradictions, and uses the subject of warning as *its* remedy.

4- The worst kind of contradiction is the intentional one which comes forth with the aim of jealousy and oppression while there are clear evidences available.

"...after clear arguments had come to them, revolting among themselves...."

5- The path to the solution of contradiction, therefore, is belief in Truth and obeying the law of prophets:

"...So Allah guided by His Will, those who believed..."

6- The critical statement of the Qur'an is targeted to that pertinacious contradiction in which a person does not accept the judgement of prophets appointed by *Allah* based on the Divine Law, else the contradictions and disputes that finally surrender to justice are not objected.

This kind of diversity is similar to the two pans or scales of a balance which move up and down until one finally parallels with the other.

"...regarding that which people had differed about the truth...."

7- There sometimes appear disputes between the believers, too, but they will be led under the guardianship of *Allah*; while disbelievers will be wandering in darkness forever.

"...And Allah guides whomever He wills to the Straight Path. "

8- Rescue from contradiction is, surely, counted "the Straight Path."

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 214

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِكُمْ مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ مَسَّتْهُمُ الْبَأْسَاءُ
وَالضَّرَّاءُ وَزُلْزِلُوا حَتَّى يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ مَتَى نَصْرُ اللَّهِ أَلَا إِنَّ
نَصْرَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ

214. "Or did you suppose you would enter Paradise untouched by the suffering which was endured by those before you? They were afflicted by distress and adversity and were so shaken that the Messenger and those who believed with him said, 'When will Allah's help (come)?' Surely

Allah's help is (always) nigh! "

Occasion of Revelation

Some of the commentators say that this verse was revealed on the occasion of the battle of Ahzab, or the Confederate, when the Muslims got impatient and terribly terrified in the battle. So, they, being surrounded by the enemy, began asking about the help of *Allah*, the Almighty.

Therefore, the revelation of this verse invited them to patience and perseverance and made them hopeful of triumph through the help of *Allah*.

It is also reported that when Muslims were defeated in the battle of 'Uhud, Abdillah-ibn-'Ubayy, reproaching them, inquired that until when those Muslims were going to give themselves in death and he added that if Muhammad (S) was really the Messenger of *Allah*, then He (s.w.t.) would not let his companions be captured or killed. At that moment the above verse was revealed.

Intense Adversities as a Divine Practice

The above verse indicates that some of the believers thought that the main factor of arriving in Heaven was only the expression of Faith to *Allah* and, thereafter, no trouble or pain they might tolerate. Hence, *Allah* would arrange their affairs, they imagined, and destroy their enemies without any effort and endeavor that they themselves might suffer.

Against this kind of wrong thinking, the Qur'an points to the true and usual method of *Allah*. It says that the believers must be ready to devote themselves and to face with troubles and difficulties along the path of Faith and its influence.

These difficulties are, in fact, some trials which make the real Faith from the unreal one manifest. The Qur'an also explains that these trials and difficulties exist as a general law, and that is why they had afflicted the former nations and all previous sects, too

"Or did you suppose you would enter Paradise untouched by the suffering which was endured by those before you?... "

The Israelites, for example entangled with many sufferings in order to be rescued from the oppressive grips of the Pharaoh. When they were amazed and did not know what to do, the grace and favour of *Allah* came and helped them to win their enemy.

This situation was not exclusive to the Children of Israel alone, but, as the above verse points out in the phrase: ***"by those before you"***, all earlier nations had a common status from this point of view, too. It seems that this is a Divine practice which is the secret of training and spiritual development in human kind—

"...They were afflicted by distress and adversity..."

All dynasties should be involved in the current of adversities and calamities so that they be prepared for some more important and graver adventures, and also, by this way, the efficient and experienced ones be recognized and with repelling the unworthy persons, the society be filtered.

"...and were so shaken that the Messenger and those who believed with him said..."

Another point that we must be aware of in commenting on this verse is that, at the end, it proclaims that afflictions and adversities had so intensely encompassed the former nations that even the believing people and prophets, all together, said:

"... 'When will Allah's help (come)?'..."

It is evident that the purpose, here, is not a protest against the Providence, but this manner of statement is itself a kind of invocation and a plea for help. So, the Qur'an says:

"...Surely Allah's help is (always) nigh! "

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 215

يَسْأَلُونَكَ مَاذَا يُنْفِقُونَ قُلْ مَا أَنْفَقْتُ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَلِلَّوَالِدَيْنِ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ وَالْيَتَامَى
وَالْمَسَاكِينِ وَابْنِ السَّبِيلِ وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ بِهِ عَلِيمٌ

215. "They ask you (O' Muhammad) what they should spend; say: 'Whatever you spend that is good, (from your material and spiritual wealth to avail) for parents, relatives, the orphans, the needy, and the traveller; and whatever you do that is good, verily Allah is All-Knowing of it'."

Occasion of Revelation

'Arnr-ubn-i-Jamuh was an old man who was rich, too. Once he asked the Prophet Muhammad (S) what he would spend as charity and to whom he could give the charity. Concerning this matter, the above verse was revealed.

There are many verses in the Qur'an which speak about charity in the way of *Allah*. The Lord of the world has variously encouraged Muslims to spend in charity and help the indigent, but the status of the verse under discussion is different. At the time of revelation, some people wanted to know what kind of property they should spend from. So, it says:

"They ask you (O' Muhammad) what they should spend;..."

The verse, in answer to this question, besides explaining what should be spent, points to another problem, too. It adds the situations and persons that charity might be spent on. And, as it was mentioned in the above, the occasion of revelation also shows that both problems (the material which should be spent, and the persons whom charity should be given to) had been questioned about.

In reply to the first subject, i.e. the matter that should be dispensed with by the way of charity in the way of *Allah*, applying the term 'khayr' (good), there has been given a complete, expressive and inclusive answer to the question. The answer simply is whatsoever good that may benefit the others. Thus, it concludes all beneficial capital, irrespective of material or spiritual.

"...say: Whatever you spend that is good, (from your material and spiritual wealth to avail)..."

In reply to the second subject, i.e. the person and the order in which charity should proceed, a logical series is given. The claim of the parents and of the nearest relatives is made the first concern of the charitable. Then, it refers to the orphans and the indigents before paying to the needy travelers.

"...for parents, relatives, the orphans, the needy, and the traveller..."

It is self-evident that making provision for relatives, besides the ordinary effects that any charity has, contains a profound result in firmness of their relationship.

"...and whatever you do that is good, verily Allah is All-Knowing of it'."

The dispensers of charity should not persist on the matter so that others understand their benevolence, and their good actions should be done for obtaining more sincerity. It seems that the secret of that fact lies in this sense that the One Who gives reward knows everything including whatever deed we do. So, the Exalted One in Whose possession is the recompense of all deeds, with Him are the accounts of all human beings, too.

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 216

كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْقِتَالُ وَهُوَ كُرْهُ لَكُمْ وَعَسَى أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ وَعَسَى أَنْ تُحِبُّوا شَيْئًا وَهُوَ شَرٌّ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

216. "Fighting (in the cause of Allah) is prescribed for you, although you dislike it. Yet it may happen that you dislike a thing while it is good for you; and it may happen that you love a thing while it is evil for you; surely Allah knows, and you know not."

The previous verse was about charity while this verse is about donating soul and blood, both of which run in the field of devotion, both together in one rank.

This verse states that, it is necessary for you to fight against the enemy. This command has surely been legislated and is incumbent upon Muslims, while human kind naturally is inconvenient with suffering toils: and pains.

"Fighting (in the cause of Allah) is prescribed for you, although you dislike it..."

The next part of the verse points to the fact that fighting and struggling with the enemy is basically hard and disagreeable, because it causes the death of some people, together with pain and loss of limbs and properties in an environment of terror and insecurity for some others.

Yet, there are always some devoted persons who never withhold of any self –sacrifice in the way of their own sacred aims.

But, the majority of ordinary people are those who, as was reasoned in the above, tend not to take part in the holy struggle and self –sacrificing practically.

The Lord of the world, with a sharp tone, condemns this kind of thinking of theirs, but He opens a new doorway to them. The Qur'an, addressing Muslims, says that you are not aware of the expedencies of affairs. How do you know?

There may be something good behind what you suppose is inconvenient, and there may be something evil at the back of what you like. It is only *Allah* Who knows the whole secret of affairs. Yet, it is certain that those who are studious and clever (not the inattentive people) can find a way to the solution of a part of the secrets of some qualifications.

"...Yet it may happen that you dislike a thing while it is good for you; and it may happen that you love a thing while it is evil for you"

This verse points to a fundamental principle in the Divine laws of creation and legislation. It develops the spirit of regulation and resignation in man unto these laws. It is so that human members, concerning the Divine laws, should not take their own distinction and concept as a criterion of judgment, because surely their knowledge is limited in all aspects and, comparing with their unknown quantities, it is naught, or as if it were a drop of water in the face of a sea.

"...surely Allah knows, and you know not."

Therefore, they must never frown at such laws which originate from the knowledge of Allah, the knowledge that is infinite from any points of view. But, they ought to know that all of these laws are totally alongside the benefit of the human race whether they are the laws of legislation such as: Holy War, alms tax, and the like of them, or the laws of creation and the incidents that occasionally occur in life and are never avoidable.

They are like death and grievous inflictions unto our friends and relatives which come forth unexpectedly

and unavoidably; or like the future secrets which are concealed from Man, and the similar subjects.

However, Holy War is one of the important applications of Islam. There are many verses of the Qur'an as well as Islamic traditions from Prophet Muhammad (S) and Ahlul-Bayt (as) found upon the importance and virtue of Holy War.

It is narrated in a tradition from the Prophet (S) who said: *"Good deeds comparing with Holy War in the way of Allah are not but a corpse in an unfathomable sea."*¹

It is also narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (as) who said: *"Holy War (in Islam) is the best (of all) things next to the obligatory duties (such as: prayers, fasting, Hajj and alms tax)."*²

Again, the Messenger of Allah (S) is narrated who has said: *"Heaven has a door which is called the Door of Strivers."*³

Holy War has not been allocated only to Islam. Other Divine religions before Islam had also had it, as the current Torah has narrated the injunctions of Moses (as) about fighting with several tribes other than the Israelites. Some definite references among them are: DEUTERONOMY, Chapters 7, 13, and Chapter 20; EXODUS, Chapter 32; and NUMBERS, Chapter 31.

The prophet Jesus (as) also has been commissioned to Holy War as it is recognized from MATTHEW, Chapter 10, No.34 and LUKE, Chapter 19, No.27 and Chapter 22, No.36.

Some stories of a few other former prophets who fought against disbelievers are referred to in the Qur'an, too. A few examples are:

Surah Ale-Imran No 3 verse 47: Surah Al-Baqarah, No. 2. Verse 246: 11 Surah Al-Maidah No. 5 Verse 27. 4

A Referential texts from the Book of the *Old Testament*, referred to in the above, are as follows:

The fifth book of Moses called DEUTERONOMY; Chapter 7, p. 219 No.2 to 5 say:

2. And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them:

3. Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.

4. For they will turn away thy son from following me that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.

5. But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire.

And, Deuteronomy, Chapter 13, pp. 227 & 228, No.9 and 15 say: 9 But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people.

10. And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

11. And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you.

12. If thou shalt hear say in one of thy cities, which the LORD thy God hath given thee to dwell there, saying,

13. Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known;

14. Then shalt thou enquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, if it be truth, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought among you;

15. Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein, and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword.

Again, Deuteronomy, Chapter 20, p.234, No. 1–4 say:

1. WHEN thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the LORD thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

2. And it shall be, when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak unto the people,

3. And shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them;

4. For the LORD your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.

Also, in the second book of Moses, called: EXODUS; Chapter 32, pp. 106, 107, No.27–29, it says:

27. And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour.

28. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.

29. For Moses had said, consecrate yourselves to day to the LORD, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day.

However, in the fourth book of Moses called: NUMBERS, Chapter 31, p.201, No. 1–12 says thus:

1. AND the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying,
2. Avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites: afterward shalt thou be gathered unto thy people.
3. And Moses spoke unto the people, saying, Arm some of yourselves unto the war, and let them go against the Midianites, and avenge the LORD of Midian.
4. Of every tribe a thousand, throughout all the tribes of Israel, shall ye send to the war.
5. So there were delivered out of the thousands of Israel, a thousand of every tribe, twelve thousand armed for war.
6. And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand of every tribe, them and Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war, with the holy instruments, and the trumpets to blow in his hand.
7. And they warred against the Midianites, as the LORD commanded Moses; and they slew all the males.
8. And they slew the kings of Midian, beside the rest of them that were slain; namely, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian: Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword.
9. And the children of Israel took all the women of Midian captives, and their little ones, and took the spoil of all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods.
10. And they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles, with fire.
11. And they took all the spoil, and all the prey, both of men and of beasts.
12. And they brought the captives, and the prey, and the spoil, unto Moses, and Eleazar the priest, and unto the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the camp at the plains of Moab, which are by Jordan near Jericho.

B. The referential texts from the Book of *New Testament* are as follows:

a. The Gospel according to St. Matthew, Chapter 10, P.902, and No.34: such is recorded:

34. Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.

b. The Gospel according to St. Luke, Chapter 19, p.1076, No.27 reports:

27. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me.

c. And, St. Luke, Chapter 22, p. 1080, No.36 explains thus:

36. Then said he unto them, But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he

that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one.

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1. Jami'us-Sa'adat & Bihar-al-Anwar, vol. 100, p.89 --
 2. Al-Kafi, vol. 5, p. 3
 3. Al- Tahthib, vol. 6, p. 123
 4. Atyab-ul-Bayan, , vol. 2, p. 414

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