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The Word "Wali"

Wila', walah, wilayah, wali, mawla. The real, original meaning of all of these words comes from the root-word "waliya" (waw-lam ya). This root-word is among those which appear with the greatest frequency in the Qur'an, being used in various forms: it appears in the Qur'an in 124 places in the noun form, and in 112 places in the verb form.

The original meaning of this root-word, according to the famous Qur'anic lexicon *Mufradatu 'l-Qu'ran*, is "the being situated of something besides something else, in the sense that there is no separation between them", that is to say that if two things are so contiguous one with the other that there is nothing between them, the root-word "waliya" is used.

As a result of this, the word has come to be used in the sense of nearness and affinity, usually to mean a special or spiritual affinity. And again, for the same reason, it has been used with the meaning of "intimacy", "friendship", "being in charge", "being in control", and with other meanings of the same variety. In all of these, there exists a kind of personal contact and contiguity.

For this root-word and its derivatives many meanings are mentioned. For example, 27 meanings are given for the word mawla. However, it is obvious that this word was not created with 27 meanings and that in other instances it is used with the sanction of this meaning. The subsequent different meanings, or, to put it more exactly, the numerous instances of usage, should be derived from their syntactical and situational contexts.

The derivatives of this root word have been used in application to both material, bodily things, and abstract and mental matters, but they were unquestionably used originally in a physical sense, and then, by appropriate comparison with what is visualized, or by abstraction of the perceived meaning from its material and tangible associations, they also came to be used with abstract meanings.

For man's attention to the things he perceives either from the point of view of a single individual during his own life time, or from the point of view of a human collectivity during the period of its historical life predates his meditation on intellectual ideas.

After sensory signification and meaning, man moves on little by little to an abstract signification and meaning, and he then naturally uses the same words which he employed with the objects of nature and thus recruits them into his service. In a similar way, scientists do not invent special words for their particular sciences, but rather they use words which have a current meaning in the ordinary language giving these words a particular meaning and signification which differ from the common meaning and signification.

The *Mufradatu l-Qur'an* says in connection with the word "walayah/wilayah", looking at it from the point of view of the instances of its application.

"Wilayah' has the meaning of 'assistance', but *walayah* has the meaning of 'being in charge' and 'the person in authority in a certain matter'; it is also said that the meaning of both is the same, and that it is this 'being in charge and having authority' ". Then it mentions instances of the use of these words.

Two Kinds Of " Wila' "

In the Holy Qur'an, the words wila', muwalat, and tawalli are used many times. In this great, heavenly book, certain matters are set out under these headings, and, on the whole, it can be seen from contemplation of this purified text that from the vantage point of Islam there are two kinds of wila': negative and positive.

That is to say that on the one hand Muslims are ordered not to accept one kind of wila' and to leave it alone, while, on the other hand, they are shown another kind of wila' which they are to cultivate diligently.

"Wila", affirmative and Islamic, is in turn of two kinds: general wila', and special wila'. This special wila' is also of several different kinds. These are: a wila' of love, a wila' of Imamate, a wila' of social leadership, and a wila' of universal disposal. Here briefly, we shall discuss each one of these.

1. Negative " Wila' "

The Qur'an strongly warns Muslims against accepting fellowship with, and protection from, non-Muslims: not that it takes a bad view of love for other human beings, or supports hatred by Muslims against non-Muslims in all circumstances, or is against kindness towards them. The Qur'an explicitly says:

لَا يَنْهَاكُمُ اللَّهُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِنْ دِيَارِكُمْ أَنْ تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ
الْمُقْسِطِينَ

“Allah does not forbid you respecting those who have not made war against you on account of (your) religion, and have not driven you forth from your homes, that you show them kindness and deal with them justly; surely Allah loves the doers of justice. (60:8)”

Islam does not say that acts of friendship and works of good must be done exclusively for Muslims, and that in no way should generosity be extended from you towards others. How could a religion whose Prophet is, according to the Qur'an, "*a mercy for the worlds*" (21: 107) be like that?

The matter is, however, that Muslims must not be inattentive towards their enemy, some of whom secretly harbor duplicity towards them. The pretension of friendship by the enemy towards Muslims should not deceive them, and it must not cause them to take the enemy for a friend and to trust him.

The Muslim must always be aware that he is a member of Islamic society, that he is a part of this whole; and his being part of this whole, a member of one body, necessitates, whether you like it or not, conditions and limits. The non-Muslim is a member of another body.

The relationship of a member of the body of Islam with members of non-Islamic bodies must be of such a kind that, at the very least, it does not compromise his membership of the Islamic body; in other words, it must not damage the unity and independence of that body. Thus, like it or not, the relation of a Muslim with a non-Muslim cannot be equal with, or, even sometimes, closer than the relation of a Muslim with a Muslim.

The friendly and sincere relationship of Muslims with one another must be within the limit that membership of one body and participation in one whole requires. *Wila'* of the negative sort in Islam expresses the fact that a Muslim should always realize in an encounter with a non-Muslim that he is encountering a member of an alien body, and the meaning of saying that there must not be *wila'* with non-Muslims, is that the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims must be within the limit of the relationship between Muslims themselves, which means that a Muslim should not accept membership of a non-Muslim body; or, put in other words, his membership of the Islamic body should not be ignored.

Thus, there is no inconsistency in a Muslim being benevolent and kind towards a non-Muslim and at the same time not accepting his *wila'* (allegiance with him), that is to say that the Muslim must not count him a member of the body of which he himself is a member, and should behave towards him as an outsider.

In the same way, there is no inconsistency between *wila'* in the negative sense and the fundamental of humanitarianism and compassion for mankind. The essential condition of humanitarianism is that man should be concerned with the fate, well-being and true happiness of all men.

It is for this very reason that every Muslim is concerned that all human beings should become Muslims and be led to the right path. However, as long as this blessing is not obtained, those others who have been blessed must not be sacrificed for those who have not been blessed, and permit boundaries to collapse and every kind of action and reaction to take place.

Imagine that a certain group of men are afflicted with a certain illness. Humanitarianism requires that we come to their rescue, and as long as rescue is not forthcoming to them, it requires that we be benevolent towards them.

However, humanitarianism does not demand that we impose no restrictions between these people whose illness, it so happens, is contagious, and individuals who are healthy or have been cured. Thus, it is that Islam, on the one hand, counts generosity and kindness towards non-Muslims as permissible, but, on the other hand, does not permit that a Muslim should accept the protection (wila') of a non-Muslim.

Islam is the religion of humanitarianism; Islam even loves the one who associates others with Allah (mushrik), not from the point of view that he is a mushrik, but from the point of view that he is a created being, one of God's creatures, and Islam is concerned for the reason that he has fallen into the way of ruin and confusion, and the way of liberation and bliss has been made narrow. For if it did not love him, Islam would be indifferent to his shirk and misery.

In Islam there is love and hatred, but a love and hatred which is reasonable and logical, not sentimental, for no good reason, and without any standard of comparison. A friendship or enmity which arises solely from the feelings has no logic; it is sentimental, blind and deaf, and it dominates the human heart, it tugs in any direction it wishes. But rational love and hatred arise from a kind of understanding, and in fact result from affection for the fate of other people, and this is an instance of genuine affection.

Here is an example: A father and a mother have two sorts of affection towards their child; one is reasonable and logical, the other sentimental. Reasonable affection sometimes causes the parents in all seriousness to subject their own child to suffering, and they consider all the reasons for causing him pain.

Let us say they put their child in the hands of a surgeon. The parents, in such a case, fall to weeping, they feel greatly afflicted and tears pour from their eyes; but they want the doctor to start the operation as soon as possible. They ask him to remove the troublesome part. The weeping is the result of sentimental emotions, but their demand is the result of reasonable emotion.

If those parents had taken heed of their present grief, and if their sentimental emotions had taken precedence over their rational emotions and they had not allowed one of their child's limbs to be cut, they would in fact have been consenting to his death.

But with the logic of the intellect and the verdict of the affections about the fate of their child, they put aside their feelings and submit the child to pain and torment.

Every rational man may occasionally, in order to cure his own pain, put himself in the hands of a surgeon who may, for example, remove his finger. In his heart, he does not want to suffer the pain of having his finger cut off, and, of course, he will be extraordinarily unhappy to lose it.

However, he will endure this pain in a rational way, and, following the verdict of his mind, will submit to the loss of the part; clearly it is logic and his intellect which leads him forward and brings the request to his tongue, otherwise his feelings would have caused him to reverse his verdict.

In the case of a corrupt, unreformed society in which unbelief and ignorance rule, Islam, on the one hand, gives the command to jihad so that the corruption may be uprooted;

وَقَاتِلُوهُمْ حَتَّى لَا تَكُونَ فِتْنَةً

“Kill them, so that calamity is no longer” (2: 193).

On the other hand, it orders vigilance and avoidance, so that people do not reveal what is in their hearts to them (the unbelievers), so that the community and mankind remains healthy; and this is not in the least incompatible with humanitarianism.

The nature of man is a thief; appropriating and seizing things are human characteristics, and how many times has unawareness of the thoughts and deliberations of others been inscribed on men's tombstones. The Qur'an exhorts us

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَتَّخِذُوا عَدُوِّي وَعَدُوَّكُمْ أَوْلِيَاءَ تُلْقُونَ إِلَيْهِم بِالْمَوَدَّةِ وَقَدْ كَفَرُوا بِمَا جَاءَكُمْ مِنَ الْحَقِّ

“O you who believe! do not take My enemy and your enemy for friends: would you offer them love while they deny what has come to you of the truth (60: 1)”

إِنْ يَنْقُضُوكُمْ يُكُونُوا لَكُمْ أَعْدَاءً وَيَبْسُطُوا إِلَيْكُمْ أَيْدِيَهُمْ وَأَلْسِنَتَهُم بِالسُّوءِ وَوَدُّوا لَوْ تَكْفُرُونَ

“If they find you, they will be your enemies, and will stretch forth towards you their hands and their tongues with evil, and they ardently desire that you may disbelieve” (60:2)

Here the Qur'an considers the secret of vigilance towards, and avoidance of, the outsider; it is that the latter wishes others to enter into his faith and religion. What a great danger there is, then, for his companion in his show of friendship and his camaraderie.

It is here that the Qur'an affirms the original source of the danger. When these people befriend, it is not merely friendship and acquaintance, for they expend great effort to reach their goal and try hard in all ways.

All that we have discussed affirms that the relationship between a Muslim and a non-Muslim must be a prudent one, that a Muslim must not remain inattentive to danger, that he must not forget that he is a member of a society of tawhid, and that the non-Muslim is a member of another body and another social group.

But none of these things necessitates that the Muslim should completely cut off relations with the non-

Muslim, that he should not foster any social, economic or even sometimes political relations. Of course, all this is conditional on their totally coinciding with the interest of the Islamic society.

2. Wila', In A Positive Sense, With A General Meaning.

Islam wishes Muslims to live as a single, independent form, to always have order, inter- communication and sociality, every individual aware of himself as being a member of one body which is Islamic society itself, so that this Islamic society becomes strong and powerful, in the way that the Qur'an wants the society of Muslims to be superior to other societies.

وَلَا تَهِنُوا وَلَا تَحْزِنُوا وَأَنْتُمْ الْأَعْلَوْنَ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

“And be not infirm, and be not grieving, and you shall have the upper hand if you are believers.”
(3: 139)

Faith is the supreme support, but what does faith do? Faith is the support, the force and the pillar of the character, the maintainer of the independence and the motor of the movement of Islamic society.

Elsewhere the Qur'an says:

وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا فَتَفْشَلُوا وَتَذْهَبَ رِيحُكُمْ ۚ وَاصْبِرُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

“And obey Allah and His Messenger and do not quarrel for then you will be weak in hearts and your power will depart, and be patient; surely Allah is with the patient” (8:46)

Quarrelling and disputation destroy the being and character of Islamic society. Faith is the foundation of the friendship, love and fraternity wila' of the believers.

The Qur'an says:

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ

“And the believers, the men and the women, are friends (wali) one to the other; they bid to good and forbid evil” (9:71).

Believers are close to each other, and the cause of their being close to each other is that they are the protectors, friends and helpers of each other; they are concerned for each other's future; in fact, they cultivate concern in their own future in which they form one unity, and therefore they "bid to good " and dissuade each other from evil and wickedness.

These two activities – bidding to good and forbidding evil – result from the friendship of faith, and so together these two are situated immediately after the explanation of the wila' of faith.

A feeling for the future of individuals springs from affection for them in themselves. A father who has affection for his children naturally feels concern for their future. But perhaps he has no feelings towards other people's children in themselves. Therefore, he will have no affection towards them in themselves until he has also a concern for their future, and their doing good awakens in him a positive feeling, and their doing bad a negative feeling.

Bidding to good is a consequence of this positive feeling, and forbidding evil is a consequence of the negative feeling, and, until love and friendship exist, these feelings do not bring joy to a man's heart.

If a man is without affection for individuals, he is indifferent when faced with their actions and behavior, but when he is concerned, his loves and friendships will not leave him in peace. Thus, in the noble aayah (verse) bidding to good and forbidding evil are connected in a particular way to the question of wila'.

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ

“And the believers, the men and the women, are friends (wali) one to the other; they bid to good and forbid evil” (9:71).

Afterwards, under the subject of the fruits of bidding to good and forbidding evil, two subjects are mentioned:

وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ

“They perform prayer, and pay zakat (9:71).”

Prayer is an example of the relationship of the created with the Creator. And zakat is an example of the benefit of relations between Muslims themselves, who support each other as a result of being compassionate and merciful within Islam. And afterwards, it branches out from this

أُولَئِكَ سَيَرْحَمُهُمُ اللَّهُ ۚ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ۚ

“These, Allah will show mercy to them. (9:71).

And these it is who shall be successful (9:88)”

It is then that various Divine mercies and joys come down on this society, and thus they become the

people who deserve to be called free.

Later we shall give some explanations of this ayah, showing that it, and some other aayah (verses) which mention wila' in its ordinary affirmative sense, are not only witnesses to love and friendship, but that they affirm a kind of obligation and responsibility for Muslims, as far as the virtue of the relationship of Muslims with each other is concerned.

The Prophet (May Allah bless and grant him and his family peace) said in a famous and established hadith:

مَثَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي تَوَادُّهِمْ وَتَرَاحُمِهِمْ وَتَعَاطُفِهِمْ كَمَثَلِ الْجَسَدِ إِذَا اشْتَكَى بَعْضُ تَدَاعَى لَهُ سَائِرُ الْجَسَدِ بِالسَّهَرِ وَالْحُمَّى

“Believers, in loving one another and being merciful towards each other, are like the body that, when a part of it complains, the other parts rally to it by fever and sleeplessness.”

The noble Qur'an says, regarding the Prophet and those who follow him and have received Islamic education

﴿ مُحَمَّدٌ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ۚ وَالَّذِينَ مَعَهُ أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ ۖ ﴾

“Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and those with him are firm of heart against the unbelievers, compassionate among themselves; (48:29)”

In this aayah, allusion is made to wila' in the negative sense and wila' in the positive sense. Just as we said earlier that the aayah of the Qur'an draws our attention towards the fact that the enemies of Islam, in every age, try to substitute negative wila' for positive wila', and vice versa; or in other words, they direct all their efforts to the end that relations between Muslims and non-Muslims should be cordial, and that relations between Muslims themselves, for various reasons, through all the disputes of the sects, should be hostile.

In our own time, a great number of actions have been carried out by outsiders, enormous budgets deployed, and regretfully they have introduced elements who have no other work than to transform wila' in the negative Islamic sense into a wila' in an affirmative sense, and affirmative Islamic wila' into a negative wila'. This is the greatest blow which these wicked people have dealt against the Prophet.

Today, if we should weep over one disaster from among those assailing Islam, and if we should shed tears over one tragedy from among those befalling Islam, it is this disaster and this tragedy. Amiru'l-mu'minin, `Ali (a.s.) said:

فَيَا عَجَباً وَاللَّهِ يُمِيتُ الْقُلُوبَ وَيَجْلِبُ إِلَيْهَا مِنَ الْجَمَاعِ هَؤُلَاءِ الْقَوْمِ عَلَى بَاطِلِهِمْ، وَتَفَرَّقُكُمْ عَنْ حَقِّكُمْ

“How strange it is! By Allah, it mortifies the heart and draws forth grief that these people agreed about their falsehood and you disagree about your truth.” (Nahju 'l-balaghah)

O Allah, protect and guard Islam and the Muslims from the evil of these evil-doers through the truth of Muhammad and his Pure Household!

اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا نَشْكُو إِلَيْكَ فَقَدْ نَبَّيْنَا صَلَوَاتِكَ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ، وَغَيْبَةَ وَلِيِّنَا، وَكَثْرَةَ عَدُوِّنَا وَقِلَّةَ عَدَدِنَا وَشِدَّةَ الْفِتَنِ بِنَا وَتَظَاهُرَ
الزَّمَانِ عَلَيْنَا فَصَلِّ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ وَأَعِنَّا عَلَى ذَلِكَ بِفَتْحٍ مِنْكَ تُعَجِّلُهُ وَبِضُرٍّ تَكْشِفُهُ وَنَصْرٍ تُعِزُّهُ وَسُلْطَانٍ حَقٍّ تُظْهِرُهُ
. وَرَحْمَةً مِنْكَ تَجَلِّئُنَاهَا وَعَافِيَةً مِنْكَ تُلْبِسُنَاهَا بِرَحْمَتِكَ يَا أَرْحَمَ الرَّاحِمِينَ

“O Allah, we complain to You over the loss of our Prophet – Your blessings on him and his family and on the absence of our wali, the abundance of our enemy and the paucity of our number, over the strain of afflictions on us and time’s turning against us. So, bless Muhammad and his family, and help us in this by a victory which You will hasten, and a help which You will strengthen, and an authority of truth which You will manifest, and a compassion You will envelop us in, and a well-being You will clothe us in.”

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