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Wila' In A Positive Sense, With A Special Meaning

Wila' in its positive, special sense is the wila' of Ahlu 'l-bayt, the Household of the Prophet. There can be no room for debate over the fact that the noble Prophet has called and directed the Muslims to a kind of wila' in connection with his pure, sinless family; that is to say that even scholars from the Sunni sect make no controversy over this. The aayah of the pure relatives:

قُلْ لَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا إِلَّا الْمَوَدَّةَ فِي الْقُرْبَىٰ

Say: "I do not ask of you any reward for it but love of my near relatives" (42: 23)

Sets down the matter of wila' in its special meaning. And it is also present in the famous and uncontested hadith of Ghadiri, where it is said [1](#):

مَنْ كُنْتُ مَوْلَاهُ فَهَذَا عَلِيٌّ مَوْلَاهُ

"For whomsoever I am his mawla, `Ali is his mawla."

This itself is mention of a kind of wila' which will be explained later.

A noble ayah says:

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ

"Only Allah is your Vali and His Messenger and those who believe, those who keep up prayers and pay the poor-rate while they bow (5:55)"

The different schools are of one opinion, that this was revealed concerning `Ali (a.s.) at–Tabari cites many ahadith in this connection², and az–Zamakhshari, who was one of the greatest scholars of the Sunni school, said in a definitive manner

"This ayah was revealed concerning `Ali," and the reason for the plural being used (i.e., those), although that which was revealed was not more than one person, that it is exhorting people to behave like this; and it explains that believers should acquire character and qualities like this, and should be eager and fervent in this way in doing good and in generosity and in helping the poor, and that even in prayer they should not procrastinate." (i.e., although they may be in prayer when the matter of zakat arises, they should not delay, and should perform their obligation during the time of prayer.)³

Also Fakhru'd–Din ar–Razi, who, like az– Zamakhshari, is one of the great men of the Sunni school and of the whole community, said: "This ayah was revealed concerning `Ali, and scholars are all in agreement that the payment of zakat in the time of ruku`⁴ (the position of bowing down in prayer) did not take place except in the case of 'Ali.'"

Towards the end he makes some contention about the interpretation of the word wali, and later on we will discuss the meaning of this ayah.

`Ali ibn Hammad al–`Adwi al–Basri al–Bagh–dadi, known as Ibn Hammad, one of the Shi'ah poets of the fourth century of the hegira (10th/11th century A.D.) points to the present meaning in the following poem

قرن الاله ولاءه بولائه مما تزكى و هو حان يركع

سماه رب العرش نفس محمد يوم البهال و ذالك ما لا يدفع

"God brought the wila' of Ali and His wila', Because Ali, in the time of ruku, gave zakat.

The Lord of the Throne gave him the name of 'the soul of Muhammad',

On the day of cursing. And this is an indisputable fact." ^{5&6}

As we said before, a kind of wila' has been prescribed in Islam that is positive⁷ and has an ordinary meaning, and the noble ayah;

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ

"And the believers, the men and the women, are wali one to the other (9:71)."

Is a witness to this kind of wila'.

Now we wish to say that the noble ayah:

إِنَّمَا وَلِيُّكُمُ اللَّهُ

“Only Allah is your Wali. (5:55).”

states the matter in such a way that it does not carry universality. In no way is it possible that this ayah was designed as a statement of wila' with its ordinary, positive meaning, because the Qur'an here is not aiming to state a universal law; it does not seek to set down the desirability or the necessity of paying zakat at the time of ruku`, and lay it down as a duty, something recommended legally in the Islamic sense as a kind of law of the shad'ah.

Rather, it is a reference to an action that took place when someone did something in the external world, and now the Qur'an established that action to indicate the person, and in an indirect way affirms its decree which is this very wila' in its special meaning.

This way of saying something, when a particular event pertaining to a specific individual is expressed using a plural, is not uncommon in the Qur'an. For example:

يَقُولُونَ لَئِنْ رَجَعْنَا إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ لَيُخْرِجَنَّ الْأَعَزُّ مِنْهَا الْأَذَلَّ

“They say: If we return to Medina, the mighty will surely drive out the meaner therefrom (63:8)”

Here also, the Qur'an is referring to a story which actually took place, and it says *yaquluna* (they say) although the speaker was not more than one person – `Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul.

The giving of zakat during ruku` was not something commonplace among the Muslims, as a result of which we might say that the Qur'an praises them all and affirms wilayah in whatever sense we say it for everyone.

This very matter is a living witness that the reference of the ayah is individual and specific, in other words that there was someone who, while in ruku` and while in worship, was still not inattentive to the slaves of Allah and thus did something, and now the Qur'an tells us: "He, also, like Allah and His Prophet, is your wali." Therefore, a particular person is being discussed, and he, like Allah and the Messenger, is also the wali of the believers, and the believers must accept his wila'.

However, what is the purpose of this wila'? Is it only a specific love and devotion which people should have towards that respected person, or is it higher than that? It is this matter that we shall be discussing before long. For the time being, let it suffice to say that contrary to the fancy of some of the scholars of the Sunni school, the sense of this ayah is wila' with a special meaning, not wila' in its ordinary sense.

The Kinds of Wila in its Positive Sense, With a Special Meaning

So far, as has been noted, the matter of the wila' of `Ali (a.s.) and the rest of the household of the Prophet is in general, not open to doubt. Ultimately, the controversy lies in what is the intended meaning of wila' in this ayah, and in the rest of the aayah's and in the ahadith (traditions) of the Prophet which were gathered together with it. In order, so that the meaning should be clear, we consider it necessary to discuss the special uses of the words wila' and wilayah in the Qur'an and the sunnah which have reference to the Household (of the Prophet). These two words are normally used in four different ways:

A. The Wila' Of Love (Mahabbah) Or The Wila' Of Nearness (Qarabah)

The wila' of love, or the wila' of nearness, signifies that the Household are the near relatives of the noble Prophet, and that people are recommended to cultivate affection for them and to love them in a special way, over and above the necessity for wila' in its ordinary positive sense.

This is in the Qur'an, and many ahadith have also been recorded through Shi'ah and Sunni schools about this subject, that love of the Household, and, among them, of `Ali (a.s.), is one of the basic precepts of Islam; and in this connection two problems immediately crop up.

Firstly, why, with special reference to the Household, has all this been recommended: that people should cultivate devotion to them? And is this love and devotion a means of approaching near to God? Suppose that everyone is acquainted with the Household of the Prophet, and that they truly have love and devotion towards them, what is the result and benefit of this? All Islamic precepts have a philosophical and metaphysical reason behind them.

If a certain precept turns up in the context of Islam, it absolutely must have its own philosophy and metaphysics. The answer to this problem is that the exhortation to love the Household and other expressions of the wila' of love of the Household do have a special metaphysics; it is not an extravagance or a foolishness, it is not (merely) a reward for the noble Prophet or for themselves.

The noble Qur'an makes it clear through the mouth of the Prophet that the benefit of the recompense that he is asking from us, in other words love of his near relatives, accrues to us ourselves.

The wila' of love, is an introduction and a way to other kinds of wila' which we want to explain. The bond of love is what really joins people to the Household so that they can benefit from their existence, from what they have left behind, from what they have said and what they have taught, and from their behavior and their manner.

In our book *Jadhibah wa daf i'ah-e A li (alayhi's-salam)*, we have discussed at length the virtues of love and devotion towards the pure ones, and the ones near to Allah (*al - Haqq*), which fashion man and are precious agents in training and stimulating his spirit and transforming his state of mind, and here we shall not repeat ourselves.

Secondly, is the wilā' of love a peculiarity of the Shi'ahs, or is it also believed in by other Islamic groups?

In answer, it must be said that the wilā' of love is not a peculiarity of Shi'ites. Other Muslim groups also give importance to it. Al-Imam ash-Shafi'i, who is one of the Imams of the Sunni schools, wrote in his famous poems:

يا راكبا قف بالمحصب من منى واهتف بقاعد جمعها والناهض

سحرا إذا فاض الحجيج إلى منى فيضا كملتطم الفرات الفائض

إن كان رفضا حب آل محمد فليشهد الثقلان أني رافضي

O rider, standing on the stony ground of Mind:

Cry at dawn to those stopped at Khif [8](#)

and those bestirring,

When the pilgrims are leaving for Mind,

Moving like the rolling of the waves of

the surging Euphrates:

If love of the Household of Muhammad is a heresy (rafid)

Then, jinn and men bear witness that

I am a heretic (Rafidite)! [9](#)

He also wrote:

يا آل بيت الرسول حبكم فرض من الله في القرآن انزله

يكفيكم من عظيم الفخر انكم من لم يصل عليكم لا صلاة له

O Household of the Messenger of Allah,

love for you

Is an obligation from Allah,

revealed in the Qur'an.

It suffices as the greatest honor bestowed

on you,

That his prayer is as nothing who does not

include in it praises to you.

Again, he wrote:

ولَمَّا رَأَيْتُ النَّاسَ قَدْ نَهَبَتْ بِهِمْ مَذَاهِبُهُمْ فِي أَبْحَرِ الْغَيِّ وَالْجَهْلِ

رَكِبْتُ عَلَى اسْمِ اللَّهِ فِي سَفْنِ النَّجَا وَهُمْ آلُ بَيْتِ الْمُصْطَفَى خَاتَمِ الرُّسُلِ

وَأَمْسَكْتُ حَبْلَ اللَّهِ وَهُوَ وَلَاؤُهُمْ كَمَا قَدْ أَمَرْنَا بِالتَّمَسُّكِ بِالْحَبْلِ

*When I saw people being taken
Through their madhahib [10](#) into seas
of erring and ignorance,
I set sail in the name of Allah in the ship
of deliverance
Which is the Household of Mustafa, the
Seal of the Prophets;
I grasped the rope of Allah which is their wila',
As we were commanded to grasp the rope [11](#)*

Az-Zamakhshari and Fakhru'd-Din ar-Razi, who in the matter of the succession to the caliphate, came down against the Shi'as, are themselves narrators of hadith on the subject of the wila' of love. Ar-Razi quotes from az-Zamakhshari that the Prophet said:

أَلَا وَمَنْ مَاتَ عَلَى حُبِّ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ مَاتَ شَهِيداً، أَلَا وَمَنْ مَاتَ عَلَى حُبِّ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ مَاتَ مَغْفُوراً لَهُ، أَلَا وَمَنْ مَاتَ عَلَى حُبِّ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ مَاتَ تَائِباً، أَلَا وَمَنْ مَاتَ عَلَى حُبِّ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ مَاتَ مُؤْمِناً مُسْتَكْمِلاً إِلَيْمَانِ...

"Whosoever died in love of the Household of Muhammad has died a martyr;

Whosoever died in love of the Household of Muhammad has died in forgiveness; whosoever died in love of the Household of Muhammad has died a believer and in the perfection of his faith." [12](#)

Amiru 'l-mu'minin (a. s.) has also said in Nahju 'l-balaghah, Sermon 232:

فَإِنَّهُ مَنْ مَاتَ مِنْكُمْ عَلَى فِرَاشِهِ وَهُوَ عَلَى مَعْرِفَةِ حَقِّ رَبِّهِ وَحَقِّ رَسُولِهِ وَأَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ ، مَاتَ شَهِيداً وَوَقَعَ أَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ ، وَاسْتَوْجِبَ ثَوَابَ مَا نَوَى مِنْ صَالِحِ عَمَلِهِ وَقَامَتِ النِّيَّةُ مَقَامَ إِصْلَاحِهِ لِسَيْفِهِ .

"Whosoever from among you dies in his bed in knowledge of the truth of his own Lord and the truth of

His Messenger and his House– hold, has died a martyr and his reward is with Allah. He will deserve the reward for the intention of his righteous actions, and the intention will take place of the unsheathing of the sword."

Ibnu I-Farid, the famous Egyptian Sufi and poet (in Arabic literature, he is the equivalent of Hafiz in the Persian language), has said in his famous ghazal which begins with the couplet "Driver of the caravans, passing through the desert: With the measured pace of thy goodness, ascend the dunes of Tayy."

ذهب العمر ضياعا و انقضى

باطلا ان لم افز منك بشئ

عترة المبعوث حقا من قصي

*Life dwindles away wastefully and ends in
futility*

If I do not attain union with you.

*A part from this one thing I hold nothing, but
connection*

*To the wila' of the family (of the Prophet)
who was appointed from the descendents
of Qusayy.*

Here, perhaps, his meaning is wila' in a most sublime sense, but it is indisputable that he mentions wila' in the sense of love. `Abdu'r-Rahman Jami<sup>13</sup>, about whom al-Qadi Nurullah <sup>14</sup> said "two `Abdu'r-Rahmans have injured `Ali – `Abdu'r-Rahman ibn Muljam al-Muradi ¹⁵ and `Abdu'r-Rahman Jami", arranged in Persian the famous poem of al-Farazdaq <sup>16</sup> in praise of al-Imam Zaynu'l-`Abidin (a.s.).

It is said that someone reported from a dream that after the death of al-Farazdaq they had asked him in the dream: "What did Allah do with you?" He replied: "He forgave me on account of that poem I recited in praise of `Ali ibn al-Husayn."

Jami himself adds to this and says: "If God forgave all men for the sake of this poem, it would not be surprising!" Jami says of Hisham ibn `Abdu'l-Malik who imprisoned al-Farazdaq and tortured him

اگرش چشم راست بين بودی

راست کردار و راست دین بودی

دست بی داد و ظلم نگشادی

جای آن حبس خلعتش دادی

*If he had right-seeking eyes,
Had done goodness and had true din.
He would not have opened his hand to injustice and oppression
Instead of imprisonment he would have
given his robe of honor.*

Therefore the Shi'ah and the Sunni do not have different views about wila' meaning love, except for the Naasibi who hated the Household of the Prophet, were excluded from Islamic society, and were, like the unbelievers, condemned to vileness, and from the defilement of whose existence, praise be to Allah, the world has become cleaned in this age.

Only a few people are now occasionally seen, who write the odd book still endeavoring to increase the gaps between Muslims; and there are few among ourselves. And this is the best evidence that they have no authenticity, and that, like their associates from amongst us, they are the tools of the infernal colonialists.

Az-Zamakhshari and ar-Razi, in a foot- note to the previous hadith, narrate from the Prophet that he said:

أَلَا وَمَنْ مَاتَ عَلَى بُغْضِ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ مَاتَ كَافِرًا، أَلَا وَمَنْ مَاتَ عَلَى بُغْضِ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ لَمْ يَشْمُ رَائِحَةَ الْجَنَّةِ

“Whosoever dies in enmity to the family of Muhammad, dies an unbeliever. Whosoever dies in enmity of the family of Muhammad, will not smell the scent of Paradise.”

And al-Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (a.s.) said:

فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى لَمْ يَخْلُقْ خَلْقًا أُنْجَسَ مِنَ الْكَلْبِ وَإِنَّ النَّاصِبَ لَنَا أَهْلَ الْبَيْتِ لَأُنْجَسُ مِنْهُ

“Allah has not created anything more unclean than the dog; and those who oppose us, the Household, are more unclean than that.”

We must call this kind of wilā', if it is attributed to the Household of the Prophet (we call them those who are 'entrusted with wilā'), the wilā' of nearness; and if we attribute it to Muslims, from the point of view of an obligation that they have concerning affection for the Household, then we should say wilā' of love.

This is obviously not the place to go into how the root-word wilā' has come to be used in the sense of love . . . but two more aspects should be considered. One is whether the word wali has been used in the sense of friend or not? The other concerns which meaning is intended when the word wali is used in connection with the ayah of the Qur'an: **"Surely Allah is your wali . . ."** (5:55) which established the wilayah of Amiru 'l-mu'minin.

Some believe that in the Qur'an, everywhere this word is used (and it does at first seem as if this is the case), that it has the meaning of 'friend'. But with attention it is realized that it does not mean this. For example, the meaning of

اللَّهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ

"Allah is the guardian of those who believe. He brings them out of the darkness into the light;"
(2:257)

Is not that Allah is the friend of the believers; rather that Allah, through His own special providence, has the ranks of the believers in His hands. Similarly, the meaning of

أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

"Now surely the friends of Allah-- they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve (10:62)"

Is not that there is no fear for the friends of Allah. Here the word wali is in the form of "fa'il" (subject) with the meaning of "mafu'1" (object) [17](#). So the meaning thus becomes:

"Those whose guardian and the master of whose affairs is Allah are not subject to fear and apprehension" (10:62).

Similarly, the meaning of the ayah:

وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ

"And the believers, the men and the women, are awliya ' one to the other" (9:71)

is not that the believers are each other's friends; rather that the believers are under a mutual obligation to one another, and are occupied with each other's affairs, and considerate of each other's future. So

afterwards it says: "Bidding to good and forbidding evil."

From here the answer to the second question becomes clear. In the ayah under discussion, the meaning is not that Allah and the Prophet and `Ali are your friends; rather that they are the holders of authority and the ones with the right to be the masters of your affairs.

So, although the idea that the word wali is used with the meaning of friend is correct, it is inconceivable that it should be restrictively used to mean that Allah, the Prophet and `Ali are nothing but your friends.

From this it becomes obvious that the explanation by some of the Sunni commentators is wrong when they say that the substance of this ayah is not something important, rather that it just means that `Ali is your friend, and that `Ali must be loved by you and be the object of your affections (because it is in the form `fa`il' with the meaning of `maf`ul') .

According to this proof, the ayah:

"And Allah is your wali." (5:55)

Which uses wali in the positive special sense, is not just wali in the sense of love. It is greater than this. So what kind of wila' is it? The explanation that will be given now will clarify this matter.

B. Wila' – Imamate

Wila' meaning Imamate and leadership; or, in other words, the position of authority in the din (to which matters are referred for decision), that is, a position which others should follow, should take as an example for their actions and behavior, from whom they should learn the precepts of the din; or yet again, supremacy (za`amah).

Such a position is necessarily one of immunity from sin (`ismah), and the speech and actions of such a person are a guarantee and a proof for others. It is this same position about which the noble Qur'an, when talking of the Prophet, says:

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُو اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

"Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in Allah and the latter day and remembers Allah much." (33:21)

قُلْ إِن كُنتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ

"Say: If you love Allah, then follow me, Allah will love you and forgive you your faults" (3:31)

In this ayah, the Messenger of Allah is introduced as an exemplar to whose behavior and morality people should conform their own behavior and morality, and whom they should take as their precedent. And this in itself is a proof of the Prophet's immunity from sin and error, because, if it were possible for sin and error to proceed from him, there would be no purpose in Allah, the Sublime, introducing him as a leader and a precedent.

This position then, after the Prophet, passed to the Household, and, according to a hadith which many Sunni scholars have narrated in books on the life of the Prophet, in histories, and in their own books on hadith from nearly thirty companions of the Prophet¹⁸, the Prophet chose his Household for the leadership and Imamate.

He said:

إِنِّي تَارِكٌ فِيكُمْ الثَّقَلَيْنِ: كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَ عِزَّتِي أَهْلَ بَيْتِي, وَ إِنَّهُمَا لَنْ يَفْتَرِقَا حَتَّى يَرِيدَا عَلَيَّ الْحَوْضَ, فَلَا تَقْدَمُوهُمَا

فَتَهْلِكُوا, وَلَا تَقْصُرُوا عَنْهُمَا فَتَهْلِكُوا, وَلَا تُعَلِّمُوهُمَ فَإِنَّهُمْ أَعْلَمُ مِنْكُمْ

“I leave among you two precious things: the Book of Allah and my Household. These two will not be separated until they encounter me at the pool of Kawthar (in Paradise). Do not run ahead of them, for you will be ruined; do not neglect them, for you will be ruined. And do not seek to instruct them, for they are wiser than you.”

Allah appoints, and Allah says about His Book:

لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ

“Falsehood shall not come to it from before it nor from behind it”. (41:42)

So, if the Household were associates of falseness and unrighteousness and ignorance, and thus ceased to be the complement and twin of the Book, and if they were not, like the Prophet, preserved and free from sin and error, they would not have become the leaders and exemplars in his place.

The subject matter of the hadith shows that those mentioned in it must be individuals preserved from sin, and, as Khwajah Nasiru'd-Din at-Tusi said, the others (i.e., the non-Shi'as) neither have anyone who is protected from sin, nor do they claim this protection for anybody, and so, apart from the pure Imams, the hadith has no applicability.

Ibn Hajar (al-Haytami) says:

"This saying of the Prophet – 'Do not run ahead of them, for you will be ruined; do not neglect them, for you will be ruined; and do not seek to instruct them, for they are wiser than you' – is a proof that whoever from the Household reaches the highest degree of knowledge, and merits the taking on of religious duties, is to be preferred before others." [19](#)

Al-Hafiz Abu Nu'aym narrates a hadith from Ibn `Abbas that the Prophet said:

"Whoever wishes that his life and death be like mine, and that he rest in eternal Paradise, should choose `Ali as wali after me, and take his wali as wali, and should follow the Imams after me for they are my descendants and were created from my clay. They are gifted with understanding and knowledge. Woe unto those who deny their virtues and who alienate them in kinship from me, for my intercession will never include them." [20](#)

Imamate and leadership in din, in such a sense that whatever the leader says and whatever he does is taken as a Divine guarantee and a proof, is a kind of wilayah, because it is an example of the right to govern, direct and control the affairs of man.

Anyway, every teacher and mentor, in so far as he is a teacher and mentor, is a wali, an authority and a master of the affairs of the learner and student. What does the teacher and the mentor have, that this right should not be given to someone sent by Allah?

The glorious ayah:

"Only Allah is your Wali and His Messenger, and those who believe, who keep up prayer and pay zakat while they bow in ruku'" (5:55)

Is a witness to this kind of wilayah. Of course, this does not mean that this ayah does not contain some other meaning of wilayah which we shall mention later on. It means that this ayah encompasses wila' in the sense of Imamate, leadership and mastery over the din. This word wali, was also used in some of the ahadith that have been quoted in the sense of wali – Imamate.

This kind of wila', then, if it is used in connection with the Imam, means the right to leadership and mastery in the din, but if it is used in connection with an ordinary individual, it means acceptance of and compliance with this right.

C. Wila' – Za'amah

Wila', in the sense of za'amah, is the right to social and political leadership. Society needs a leader. That person who takes the reins of the government of a society and directs the social affairs of man, carries the destinies of the people, and is the ruler (waliyyu 'l-amr) of the Muslims. The Prophet, during his lifetime, was the waliyyu 'l-amr of the Muslims, and Allah granted him this position; and after him, according to a great deal of irrefutable evidence, it

أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ

“Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority from among you;”(4:59)

Similarly, the first ayah of surah al-Ma'idah and the hadith of Ghadir, together with the whole of the ayah:

"Certainly Allah is your Wali . . ." (5:55), and the whole of the ayah,

النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَىٰ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ

“The Prophet has a greater claim on the faithful than they have on themselves”(33:6)

concern the same kind of wilayah.

In so far as the Prophet did have such a rank, and in so far as this unique rank was a Divine one, that it to say, it was a Divine obligation with which Allah had favored the Prophet, and it was not conferred on him by the people, thus far there is no argument between the Shi'ahs and Sunnis; up to this point our Sunni brothers are with us.

The problem now arises as to what, after the Prophet, the commandment was concerning wilayah-za`amah. In order that there should be no social instability, and that chaos should not intervene, individual people must submit to someone who is worthy to be called the ruler, the waliyyu 'l-amr.

What is the commandment concerning such a position? Did Islam make a specific commandment about this matter, or did it choose to remain completely silent? And if it did make a specific commandment, what was it? Or did it leave the choice to the people to elect after the Prophet anyone they wanted to, and is obedience to him then an obligation to others (who did not elect him)? Or did the Prophet nominate a specific person before his death to take his place in this great and important position?

Here we shall go into the Prophet's social dealings among his ummah according to what can be inferred from the Qur'an. From the Qur'an, and from the sunnah as well and the life of the Prophet, it can be shown that in this matter the Prophet held together in his person three positions among the Muslims.

First, he was the Imam, the leader and the authority in the din; he held the wilayah of the Imamate, and his speech and actions were his guarantee and his proof.

وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا

“Whatever the Messenger gives you, accept it, and from whatever he forbids you, keep back”

(59:7)

Second, he held juridical wilayah; in other words, his judgment was binding in legal differences and internal disputes.

فَلاَ وَرَيْكَ لاَ يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّى يُحَكِّمُوكَ فِيمَا شَجَرَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لاَ يَجِدُوا فِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا

“But no! by your Lord! they do not believe (in reality) until they make you a judge of that which has become a matter of disagreement among them, and then do not find any straitness in their hearts as to what you have decided and submit with entire submission” (4:65)

Of course, it is true that in this case, it is also an example of the previous instance of the use of the term wilayah, but we have not yet seen this term actually used in the meaning of juridical wilayah...

Third, he had social and political wilayah. That is, apart from being the explainer and propagator of the commands, and apart from being the judge for the Muslims, he was the statesman and the ruler of the Muslim community, he was the waliyyu 'l-amr of the Muslims and the holder of authority in the Muslim community, as we have said before:

النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَىٰ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ

“The Prophet has a greater claim on the faithful than they have on themselves”. (33:6)

وَاطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِيَ الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ

“Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority from among you” (4:59)

are relevant here. Of course, the Prophet held a fourth rank also, which we shall mention later.

The Prophet formally governed the people, and he was the leader of the policies of the Islamic community. According to this ayah:

خُذْ مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ صَدَقَةً تُطَهِّرُهُمْ وَتُزَكِّيهِمْ بِهَا

“Take alms out of their property, you would cleanse them and purify them thereby” (9: 103)

He took taxes from the people; he administered the financial and economic affairs of the Islamic community.

This situation, from the three kinds of positions that the Prophet held, is a basis for the discussion of the caliphate. It is necessary to say here that the word 'Imamate', as well as having the meaning of leadership, is also used to mean a leader in reaching the ways of the din; that is to say, the word "Imam" is said and understood as `someone from whom one should obtain the ways of the din', and the Sunni Muslims generally apply the word `Imam' to Abu Hanifah, ash-Shafi'i, Malik and Ahmad ibn Hanbal. It is also much used in the sense of social and political leadership.

The Prophet said:

ثَلَاثٌ لَا يُغِلُّ عَلَيْهِنَّ قَلْبُ امْرِئٍ مُسْلِمٍ: إِخْلَاصُ الْعَمَلِ لِلَّهِ، وَالنُّصْحَةُ لِأَيِّمَةِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ، وَلُزُومُ جَمَاعَتِهِمْ

“In connection with three things, the heart of a Muslim will never permit treachery and doubt. Purity of intention before Allah, wishing good for a leader (Imam) of the Muslims in the way of leading the Muslims, (and) support for the community of Muslims.”

`Ali, peace be upon him, in one of his letters which are recorded in Nahju 'l-balaghah says:

إِنَّ أَعْظَمَ الْخِيَانَةِ خِيَانَةُ الْأُمَّةِ وَأَفْظَعَ الْغِشِّ غِشُّ الْأَيِّمَةِ

“The greatest treachery is treachery to the community, and the most abominable deceit is deceit with the leaders (Imams) of the community”

The result of this deceit is against the Muslims. If the captain of a ship steers the ship on a good course, and then someone comes who misleads the captain and involves the ship in some danger, he has not only been treacherous to the captain, and he has betrayed all those on board the ship. In this sentence, then, the word `Imam' is used in the sense of social leader.

In the history of Islam we read that the Muslims, even those who acknowledged the true Imams, addressed the caliphs of their time using the word Imam. The problem is that an Imam in this meaning is sometimes an Imam of justice and sometimes an Imam of oppression and the Muslims have (different) obligations when faced by each one of these.

The Prophet said, in an authentic hadith reported by both schools:

أَفْضَلُ الْجِهَادِ كَلِمَةٌ عَدْلٍ عِنْدَ سُلْطَانٍ جَائِرٍ

“The most excellent jihad is (to utter) a word of justice in front of an oppressor.”

And, similarly, the Prophet said

آفَةُ الدِّينِ ثَلَاثَةٌ: إِمَامٌ جَائِرٌ، وَ مُجْتَهِدٌ جَاهِلٌ، وَعَالِمٌ فَاجِرٌ

“The blight of the din is three things. Oppressive leader (Imam), ignorant worshipper of Allah, and a sinful `alim (scholar).”

More important than this, in the Qur'an itself leaders are mentioned who invite people to the Fire of Gehenna, and they are also designated by the word of Imam.

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النَّارِ

“And we made them Imams who call to the fire. (28:41)

Of course, there is no doubt that usually the word `Imam' or `Imams' is applied to just and pious leaders, and in Shi'ite parlance, the word is applied to those who lead to Allah who are immune from sin and these are only twelve.

D. Wila'-Tasarruf

Wila'-tasarruf (free universal determination), or spiritual wila', is the highest of the stages of wilayah. The other kinds of wilayah are either connected to the degree of nearness to the Prophet, to the abundance of the loftiness of the degree of purity, or to the stature of an individual of the Household, or else they are connected to their social or cognitive knowledge. That which has been designated by the word wilayah in the two last sections did not stretch beyond the limits of legislation and administration, although the origin and foundation of the philosophy behind this administration is social and cognitive authority.

However, wila'-tasarruf, or spiritual wila' is a kind of extraordinary creative ability and mastery. First we must see what the meaning and semantics of wilayah-tasarruf are, and what the ideas of those who believe in it are.

The concept of creative wilayah, from one angle, is connected with hidden faculties in this creature who appeared on the face of the earth with the name of man, and with accomplishments which this amazing creature is potentially capable of, and which he can bring up to the level of action.

From another angle, it is connected with the relationship of this creature to Allah. The purpose of creative wilayah is that man, as a result of travelling on the way of submission, achieves the station of Divine nearness, any the result of his arrival at the station of nearness, naturally to the higher stages of it, that is, human spirituality, which is itself truth and reality, becomes the leader of the caravan of spirituality, the commander of the hearts, the testifier of actions and the Proof of the Age (Hujjatu 'z-zaman).

The earth is never void of a wali, who is the bearer of this spirituality; or, using a different expression, of

the Perfect Man (al-Insanu l-kamil). Wilayah in this meaning is different from prophet hood, different from the caliphate, different from guardianship (wilayah), and different from the Imamate when it has the meaning of an authority in the commandments of the din. Its difference from prophet hood, the caliphate and guardianship is an absolute one, but from Imamate it has a conceptual and mentally creative difference.

The meaning of its difference from prophet hood, the caliphate and guardianship being absolute is not that everyone who became a prophet, a caliph or guardian was not a wali, rather, it means that prophet hood, and also the caliphate and guardianship are realities different from wilayah. Notwithstanding this, the great proph- ets, and especially their Seal, were possessors of universal Divine wilayah.

And the meaning of its difference from Imamate being mentally created is that there is only one station. Considering it from one direction it is called Imamate, and from another direction it is called wilayah. But the meaning of Imamate is a wide one.

Imamate means leadership, but an authority in the commandments of the din is a leader; a political and social leader is also a leader; and a teacher of the inner self, a spiritual guide, is also a leader for the innermost heart.

From the Shi`ite point of view, from which the question of wilayah is under consideration, it can be viewed from three aspects; and in each of the three aspects the word Imamate has been used.

Firstly, from the political point of view, who was the person who most merited and was fittest to assume the place of the Prophet in social and political leadership of the Muslims? And who had to be the leader (z a`im) of the Muslims after the Prophet? There is also the fact that the Prophet, on behalf of Allah, appointed `Ali to that social position. This point of view, in the present instance, has a historical and dogmatic aspect, and is not being looked at from the point of view of pure knowledge.

Secondly, as far as the commandments of the din are concerned, on whom does the authority for reference fall? And in which way has this person acquired his knowledge? And is this person incapable of erring as far as the commandments are concerned, or not? This aspect has a dogmatic side to it as well as being a question of knowledge.

Thirdly, from the point of view of the spirit and the inner self, the Shi`ite view is that at all times there is no Perfect Man who has the power of penetrating what is hidden, and he is a witness for the spirits, the souls and the hearts, and he has a kind of creative control over the world and over man. He is always in existence, and for this reason he is called hujjah – proof, guarantee.

As was said, the ayah: ***"The Prophet has a greater claim on the believers than they have on themselves"* (33:6)** is not very far from this subject, and it also bears witness to this meaning of wilayah.

The meaning of wilayah-tasarruf or creative wilayah is not what some ignoramuses have supposed,

namely, that one man from humanity obtained the position of guardianship and protector ship with regard to the world in such a way that he becomes the turner of the earth and the heavens, the creator, the sustainer, the life giver, and the bringer of death on behalf of Allah.

Although Allah arranged the world according to the regularity of cause and effect, and although creatures which the Qur'an calls angels were, by Allah's permission, **"those who regulate the affair"** (79:5) and **"the partitioners"**(51:4), this consideration is in no way contradictory with Allah's not taking a partner in His supreme authority and creative power: and, similarly, it does not contradict the fact that no being can ever be deemed a wali in the sense of a companion or an assistant to Allah or even a tool or instrument of Allah.

وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ شَرِيكٌ فِي الْمُلْكِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ وَلِيٌّ مِنَ الذَّلِّ وَكَبِّرْهُ تَكْبِيرًا

"Who has not a partner in the kingdom, and Who has not a helper to save Him from disgrace; and proclaim His greatness magnifying (Him)" (17: 111)

The relationship of the created to the Creator is not anything other than, absolute dependence and nothingness. The Qur'an, in the same way as it makes Allah known to the highest limit of self-sufficiency, and in the same way as it says, for examples;

اللَّهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْأَنْفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا

"Allah takes the souls at the time of their death." (39:42)

Also proclaims:

قُلْ يَتَوَفَّاكُم مَلَكُ الْمَوْتِ الَّذِي وُكِّلَ بِكُمْ

"Say: The angel of death who is given charge of you shall cause you to die."(32: 11)

الَّذِينَ تَتَوَفَّاهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ ظَالِمِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ

"Those whom the angels cause to die while they are unjust to themselves." (16:28)

The Qur'an, at the same time as it says:

إِنَّ رَبِّي عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَفِيظٌ

“Surely my Lord is the Preserver of all things” (11:57)

وَيُرْسِلُ عَلَيْكُمْ حَفَظَةً حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَكُمُ الْمَوْتُ تَوَفَّتْهُ رُسُلُنَا

“He sends keepers over you; until when death comes to one of you, Our messengers cause him to die.” (6:61)

In this ayah, He distinguishes the prophets both as guardians and also as takers of souls.

So, from the point of view of tawhid (Divine Unity), there is nothing preventing the existence of means, or the ascribing of the carrying out of commands to other than Allah, but by the permission of Allah and by the will of Allah, in such a way that those who carry out and execute are themselves the very command and will of the Lord.

At the same time, good Islamic thinking first of all requires that we do not associate the creation, and giving and taking of life, and instances of these, to other than Allah; because the Qur'an forces us to pierce through the ways and the means and to gain access to the original source, to turn our attention to Him Who accomplishes the labor of the whole world, to see that the means are His creation, the execution of His command, and the manifestation of His wisdom.

Secondly, the order of the universe is, from the point of view of means, a special order which Allah created, and man will never, as the result of his own evolution; take the place of any of the means of Divine bounty. Rather, he himself will take the bounty through these very means; that is to say, an angel will inspire him, and an angel will become an agent of his preservation, and an agent of the taking away of his soul. And yet at the same time it is possible that the station of nearness and freedom of existence of that man be sometimes higher and greater than that of the angel who is an agent for him.

Another matter is that we cannot exactly determine the limits of the wilayah-tasarruf, or creative wilayah of a perfect or comparatively perfect man. That is to say that all the indications of the Qur'an and the knowledge that we have verified, in short, the arrival of man at a level at which his will has a determining control over the universe; but to what extent? Is there no limit, or is there a restriction to the extent? This is a matter which is outside our present undertaking.

The third matter which it is necessary to mention is that wilayah-tasarruf is a question of a degree of obedience which has become entirely cleared of material thoughts. This power is not a power which we call a desire of the heart, or a function of the mind, or someone's willful desire. Basically, a man who is still condemned to the thoughts and desires of his fancy is deprived of such wonders.

In a man who is pure to this extent, his will is never excited by the beginning and preliminaries that excite our will; his will is excited by inward stimulation and beckoning's from the unseen. But how and what is the nature of this stimulation and beckoning we do not know, and so such a man "sometimes sits

in the highest heaven" and "sometimes does not see as far as his instep. [21](#)

However, according to what was revealed in the ayah of the Qur'an:

قُلْ لَا أَمْلِكُ لِنَفْسِي نَفْعًا وَلَا ضَرًّا

“Say: I do not control any benefit or harm for my own soul.”(7: 188)

It is clear that this means that the original power for all profit and hurt is Allah, and that my ability to profit and hurt myself is also from Allah, not from myself. Anyway, how could it be possible for other men to be, within limits, the masters of their profit and hurt, and for the Prophet to be even less so than other men.

It was necessary to raise these three points in the introduction to the discussion of creative wilayah. Since there has been less discussion on this subject, and, moreover, since there are a number of assertions which stimulate interest and which we shall put forward on this topic, we shall extend the discussion about this matter a little further.

We confess that the acceptance of wilayah in this meaning is a little difficult; believing in it is not without its problems, especially since, for our level of understanding, so many explanations for such problems are not satisfying. From time to time people expose the difficulties of the problem and the way in which it is rejected in this manner, at present, with all the urgent and pressing problems that there are for Muslims, what is the necessity of introducing such difficulties as to whether the Prophet and the Imams have wilayah-tasarruf or not?"

Some others bring forth their objections and difficulty in another manner which has a religious coloring, and they say that this is an exaggeration, and it is believed to be a super-human, semi-divine degree for a man to have: it associates the work of Allah with what is other than Allah, so it is shirk (associating with Allah) and is in opposition to the first Islamic fundamental which is tawhid.

The fact of the matter is that we cannot either accept or refute a matter just by ourselves; whether a concept entails shirk or conforms to tawhid is not a matter for our desire or free-will, so that anything we want to stick the word tawhid onto we can. There are many precise criteria in the Qur'an and from the proofs of reason. Islamic teachings on matters concerned with shirk and tawhid emanate from the summit and the highest-degree of self-mastery, beyond the conceptualization of the ordinary individual.

The question of whether one matter is more urgent and more pressing than another is also a fundamental matter, but it is not the only criterion of necessity that one matter in one epoch is discussed more, and so more people have the impression of its necessity. It is a mistake if we always imagine that the impressions of necessity are the same as the necessities themselves.

To what extent the Qur'an emphasizes a matter in the presentation of a problem and in its teaching is in itself a criterion which must at all times be something to be made use of. The problem of creative wilayah is one of the problems associated with man and human powers. The Qur'an lends great importance to man, human powers and the extraordinary aspects of his nature, and, in discussions which we shall, insha'Allah, set forth in our book "Man in the Qur'an"²², we shall deal with this subject.

Here, it is sufficient that we give a summary indication of this problem and make clear the foundations of this idea, with attention to the meaning and understanding of the Qur'an; so that the ordinary person should not imagine that this is, so to speak, an "occult" subject.

With this kind of problem, which may sometimes seem irrelevant to our understanding, we get nearer to the truth if we find fault within ourselves rather than if we reject the matter.

There is no doubt that the subject of wilayah in its fourth meaning belongs to gnosis ('irfan), but it has not been proved that since something belongs to gnosis, it must be declared null and void. This matter belongs to gnosis, which, from the point of view of Shi'ism, is also an Islamic matter. Shi'ism is a school of Islam, and 'irfan is a way; at this point this school and this way (irrespective of the superstitions with which the latter is cluttered) coincide with one another.

And if, necessarily, it is agreed that it be said that one of these two was derived from the other, by the verdict of indisputable historical circumstances it is definitely 'irfan which produced an adaptation of Shi'ism and not the other way round. In any case, we shall explain the foundations and bases of this consideration in an abridged form.

The most important problem which must be dealt with in this area is the problem of nearness and approach to Allah. We know that in Islam, perhaps in every revealed religion, the spirit of the precepts which must be carried out is a determination to 'approach near', and the extreme result which can be attained through action is proximity to the essence of Oneness. So we shall begin the discussion itself with the meaning and understanding of 'nearness'.

¹. This is the event which took place on 18th Dhu 'l- hijjah when the Prophet during the return from his last hajj-pilgrimage gathered all the pilgrims together at a place called Ghadir Khumm and announced 'Ali (a.s.) as his successor. It is on record in many histories, both Sunni and Shi'ah, that the people completely accepted him. (tr.)

². Taf sir, at-Tabari, vol. vi, pp. 288 -289.

³. al-Kashshaf , vol.i, p.505. (Egyptian edition, 1373)

⁴. at-Taf siru 'l-kabir, vol.xii, p.30. (Egyptian print- ing, 1357)

⁵. This refers to the day when Muhammad (s.a.w.a.) was to have met a group of Christians to engage in a kind of contest to verify which of them held the truth. The Qur'an (3:61) mentions this event in which the Prophet was accompanied by al- Imam al-Hasan and al-Imam al-Husayn, Fatimah, and 'Ali (a.s.), and refers to the latter as the soul of Muhammad. (tr.)

⁶. Rayhanatu 'l-adab ,vol.v, p.311.

⁷. See Polarization Around the Character of Ali ibn Abi Talib, published by WOFIS, Tehran, 1981. The matter of this book is a discussion of those things in 'Ali (as.) which attracted seekers after truth and those thing which repelled the lover of falsity. (tr.)

⁸. Masjidu 'l-Khif below Mina, where the stoning of the three pillars marking Satan and temptation takes place. In

Masjidu'l-Khif the Prophet prayed and pilgrims may also go there to pray and to gather to go to Mina.

[9.](#) Rafd means heresy, and the first Shi'ite groups were known as Rafidites, may be because of their not accepting the first three Caliphs. (tr.)

[10.](#) The different sects and schools that developed in Islam. (tr.)

[11.](#) See the Qur'an (4: 103) "and hold fast to the rope of Allah".

[12.](#) at-Taf siru 'l-kabir, ar-Razi, vol.xxvii, p. 166.

[13.](#) Nuru 'd-Din `Abdu 'r-Rahman Jami, born in Khurasan in 817 A. H. (1492 A. D.). He was one of the great figures in Iranian literature and Sufism, and was also a renowned scholar. (tr.)

[14.](#) as-Sayyid Nurullah ibn ash-Sharif al-Mar'ashi ash-Shushtari, author of the famous Shi'ah biographical work Majalisu 'l-Mu'minin (Assemblies of the Believers). He was flogged to death in 1019 A. H. (1610 – 11 A. D.) in India by order of the Emperor Jahangir at the instigation of the Sunnis, and was therefore named the "Third Martyr" (Shahid-e Thilith). (tr.)

[15.](#) The person who struck `Ali ibn Abi Talib (a.s.) with the poisoned sword that killed him. This event took place in the Mosque of Kufah at the morning prayer on 19th Ramadan, 40 A. H. (661 A. D.) .(tr.)

[16.](#) Abu Firas, Hammim ibn Ghalib (d. 110/728), a famous Arabic poet in the time of the fourth Imam when Hishim ibn `Abdu 'l-Malik was caliph.

[17.](#) These terms are from the terminology of Arabic word formation. The meaning here is that the form of the word would indicate that they are the wali's of Allah, but the real meaning is that they are people whose wali is Allah, this latter meaning usually being denoted by another verbal root form – "maf 'ul". (tr.)

[18.](#) This has been dealt with in the Risalah which Qawamu 'd-Din Jasbi Qummi, one of the learned scholars of the Qum madrasahs, compiled on the instructions of Ayatullah Burujardi, and which contains the isnad of these ahadith.

[19.](#) as-Sawa'iqu 'l-muhriqah, p. 135.

[20.](#) Hilyatu 'l-awliya', vol.i, p.86.

[21.](#) A quotation from the Iranian poet Sa'adi.

[22.](#) Posthumously published as Insan dar Qur'an (Man in the Qur'an) as part four of Jahanbini-e Islam (The World-View of Islam) (Qum, 1399/1979). (tr.)

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