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Section 6: The Two Witnesses of the Truth

Surah Ar-Ra'd – Verse 38

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلاً مِّن قَبْلِكَ وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ أَزْوَاجاً وَذُرِّيَّةً وَمَا كَانَ لِرَسُولٍ أَن يَأْتِيَ بِآيَةٍ إِلاَّ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ لِكُلِّ أَجَلٍ كِتَابٌ

38. "And indeed We sent Messengers before you, and appointed for them wives and children; and it was not for any Messenger to bring a sign (miracle), but by Allah's permission. For every term there is a book prescribed."

The appointment of the prophets is one of the Divine ways of treatment, and performing of miracles is not achieved on request or upon the wishes of people. On the contrary, it occurs with Allah's permission.

Incidentally, the prophets used to live like other people and they had wives and children. The verse says:

"And indeed We sent Messengers before you, and appointed for them wives and children..."

Imam Sadiq (as) said:

"We are the children of Hadrat Muhammad (S) and our mother has been Fatimah (as). And Allah has given none of the prophets anything which has not been provided for Hadrat Mohammad (S)."

Then, he recited the above mentioned verse.1

And in another quotation, he (as) remarks:

*"We are the descendents of the Messenger of Allah."*2

At the end of the verse, the Qur'an declares that there is a book for everything which Allah has ordained,

therein everything is recorded like one's life-span, death, and other affairs each of which is subject to the time when Allah has assigned according to His Own discretion.

The verse says:

"...and it was not for any Messenger to bring a sign (miracle), but by Allah's permission. For every term there is a book prescribed."

Surah Ar-Ra'd – Verse 39

يَمْحُواْ اللَّهُ مَا يَشَآءُ وَيُثْبِتُ وَعِندَهُ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ

39. "Allah effaces out whatever He pleases and He confirms (similarly), and with Him is the Mother (Basic Source) of the Book."

The Qur'anic sentence:

"Allah effaces out whatever He pleases and He confirms (similarly)"

presents a universal law which has been alluded to in the various Islamic texts. It states that the actualization of the various beings and events in the world follows two stages:

The stage of decisiveness within which no changes may occur, (and it has been referred to in the verse as 'the Mother of the Book'). The other stage or the second stage, within which changes may occur, is referred to, here, as the effacement and confirmation stage.

The verse says:

"Allah effaces out whatever He pleases and He confirms (similarly), and with Him is the Mother (Basic Source) of the Book."

At times, these two stages are referred to as 'the Preserved Table' and 'the Effacement and Confirmation Tablet.' It seems as though no alteration can find its way in one of the above Tables and it is completely preserved, while the other Table is prone to undergo changes, something may be written on it and then can be wiped out or something else be written instead of it.

Imam Baqir (as) has been quoted as saying:

*"There are some events which are certain to happen while there are others which are dependent on some conditions and circumstance with Allah, each of which He deems He precedes it and each of which He wills He effaces it and confirms the other, as He chooses."*3

Anyway, according to what is concluded from the verses of the Qur'an and quotations, all pre-ordained Divine acts are of two kinds.

Those matters which should be everlasting and thus their laws are also perennial like the verses which say:

"My word shall not be changed..."4

and where it says:

"every thing has its exact measurement before Allah.5

Or where it implies that Such pre-determined acts are kept recorded in the preserved table:

"In a guarded tablet..."6

and:

"It is a written Book,"

"Those who are drawn near (***to Allah***) ***shall witness it."***7

Those matters which are uncertain and their expediency depends on the people's behaviour, such as people's repentance from sin which is ensued by forgiveness as it is expedient, or donation to charity which is expedient for the repulsion of calamities, or oppression and cruelty which causes Divine punishment for the corruption which goes with it; that is, Allah is not confined in His administration of the universe as His infinite wisdom and His Omniscience and because of the change of conditions, He can introduce changes in His system of creation and laws.

It goes without saying that such changes are not signs of His ignorance or reconsideration or His regret, but they are based on His Wisdom and changes in conditions or the end of the cycle of that matter. The Glorious Qur'an has many examples for this meaning, among which are the following:

"...Call upon Me, I will answer you..."8

Man can obtain one's interests with supplication calling and prayer and changes his own destiny.

"...Allah may after that bring about reunion."9

The Divine law is not constantly the same everywhere. Probably, Allah introduces a new plan with the emergence of the necessary conditions.

"...every moment He is in a state (***of glory***)***."***10

That is, He tends to a particular task in completing His grace and blessings to people.

"…but when they turned aside, Allah made their hearts turn aside…"11

"And if the people of the towns had believed and kept from evil, We would have certainly opened up for them blessings…"12

Allah's wrath course will be diverted by His grace and blessings.

"Verily Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change their own condition…"13

Allah does not change the destiny of any nation unless they alter themselves.

"Except him who repents and believes and does good deed; so these are they of whom Allah changes the evil deeds to good ones…"14

"…but if you revert (to your sins) We shall (also) revert (to Our punishment)…"15

Question: If the knowledge of Allah is identical with His Essence and it is unchangeable, then whatever there has been in His knowledge must be executed, otherwise, it is identical with ignorance.

Answer: Allah's knowledge is based on the system of means and devices. That is, He knows that if such an instrument is used it will result in a specific conclusion, and if the other one is used such a thing will ensue; and thus His knowledge is not apart from the knowledge of causes and devices. 16

One of the criticisms, which is proposed by the Sunni people as against the Shiites, is that they claim: The Shi'ites regard /bida'/ (change in an earlier divine ruling, or heresy) for Allah, and they imagine that /bida'/ means change in the Divine knowledge and discovery of the offence for Allah.

While what the Shi'ites have in mind is not so and their objective is the appearance of something which we human beings imagined the reverse of it before.

The Arabic term /bida'/ in creation is like 'abrogation in law'. That is, as if we consider by the appearance of a regulation or a verdict that it is binding and continuous, while after sometime we notice that it has been changed.

Certainly, it does not follow that the law-maker has been regretting or he has been ignorant of it. Rather, the circumstances have led to these changes in the law, just like a prescription which the physician changes in accordance with the existing conditions of the sick.

However, as soon as the patient's mood changes, the physician issues a new prescription. Therefore, similar to the case of abrogation in the verses, which in fact is regarded as a kind of /bida'/, and is accepted by all of the Islamic sects, they must also accept /bida'/ in this very stated sense. Thus, /bida'/ signifies our ignorance and not of Allah's ignorance.

Some Examples of “bida’”

We thought that when Allah ordered Hadrat ‘Ibrahim (as) to decapitate his son, He wanted Ishmael (as) to be killed and his blood be shed on the earth. But, it was later revealed that the Divine Will had been to put the father to the test and not to kill the son.

Concerning the issue of Allah’s having a date with Hadrat Mūsa (as), we thought that the course of supplication and talking to Allah would take 30 nights:

“And made an appointment with Moses for thirty nights…”, 17

however, we found later that the course has been for forty nights from the beginning. At first 30 nights and later 10 nights were added.

We thought that the qiblah of the Muslims has been Bayt–ul–Muqaddas forever. However, the verses clarified for us the change of qiblah, telling us that our constant qiblah has been Ka‘bah.

When the signs of Allah’s wrath appeared, even Hadrat Yūnus (as) became confident that the Divine punishment was certain to come and that his infidel nation would perish. Thus, he went out from among the people, but the people accepted the faith and Allah’s wrath was removed:

“…except the people of Jonah (Yūnus)? When they believed, We removed from them the penalty…” 18

Anyway, the meaning of /bida’/ is not Allah’s ignorance and changing of His knowledge, for Allah knew from the beginning that the blood of Ishmael would not be shed; or the course of Moses’ supplication and talking to Allah would last for forty nights; the qiblah of the Muslims would be Ka‘bah; and the nation of Yūnus would deserve being saved.

However, the apparent picture of the commandments and events were such that man had a different thought. Thus, no change has occurred in the Divine knowledge and it is we whose view has undergone changes.

In this stated sense /bida’/ has got numerous educational implications, among which is that man is hopeful for changes of conditions till the last minutes of his life. The spirit of trust enlivens in him and he will not fall into the trap of outward aspects.

Thus man’s faith in the invisible world and Allah’s power may increase; and by way of repentance, donations and prayers, he seeks to change the course of accidents and the Divine wrath.

Imam Sadiq (as) has remarked:

“Allah has pledged faith in /bida’/ accompanied with Unity from all prophets.”

In another tradition, we are advised that whoever thinks that a new problem has been clarified for Allah which He did not know already, we should try to avoid him[19].

Explanations

Allah has open hands for changes in the system of creation and divine religion:

"Allah effaces out whatever He pleases..."

Allah has not left the creation process to itself.

"Allah effaces out whatever He pleases and He confirms* (*similarly*)*..."

The obliteration or reconfirmation of the laws, which govern the universe, are in His Own hands.

The effacement and the confirmation of the laws done by Allah are based on His Knowledge and Wisdom.

"...and with Him is the Mother* (*Basic source*) *of the Book."

The world of creation has a registry book in which all events are recorded.

Some Traditions

1- Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (as) has been quoted as having asked the Prophet (S) with regard to the above verse, and he (S) said:

"I illuminate your eyes with the interpretation of this verse and I also illuminate the eye of my Ummah after me by its interrelation: Charity given in its proper place, and kindness to one's parents and achieving any other good deeds, done in a correct manner, convert unhappiness into happiness, and prolong one's life, and prevent dangers." [20]

Allusion is made here to the fact that happiness or wretchedness is not an unavoidable matter. Even if man has done certain jobs which align him along the line of the wretched ones, he can still change his position and his destiny by turning to good things, especially helping and serving the people, since the room for these affairs is 'the Table of effacement and confirmation' and not 'the Mother of the Book'!

Imam Ali-Ibn-il-Hussayn, Zany-ul-' Abidin (as) has also been quoted as saying:

"If there were not one verse in the Qur'an, I would foretell for you all the events of the past and the future until the Day of Resurrection."

The one quoting the tradition says he asked which verse he (as) meant.

He answered:

"Allah said: 'Allah effaces out whatever He pleases and He confirms (similarly), and with Him is the Mother (Basic Source) of the Book'."

This tradition provides the reason that at least a part of the knowledge of the great leaders of the religion, regarding the different events, concerns 'the Table of effacement and confirmation', and 'the Preserved Table', with all its traits, is peculiar to Allah, and He instructs only those parts of it that He deems worthy to those special servants whom He considers as suitable.

2– Imam Baqir (as) has been quoted as saying:

"Some events are certain to happen and they do become realized. And there are some other events which are depended on conditions and are conditional before Allah; whichever He deems fit, He will give it the priority and whichever He pleases, He will efface out, and whichever He pleases, He will confirm." 21

Therefore, we have it in a tradition from Imam Sadiq (as) who said:

"Allah, Almighty and Glorious, sent no prophets except that He took these three pledges from him: Confession as to be subservient and subject to Allah; negation of all kinds of paganism; and the acceptance of this creed that Allah gives priority to whatever He pleases and delays whatever He pleases." 22

In fact, the first testament is concerned with obedience and submission to Allah, and the second one relates to the campaign against the paganism, and the third one relates to the subject of /bida'/, the result of which is that man's destiny is in his own hands and by changing the conditions, he can be covered by Allah's favor or by His punishment.

Finally, the Shi'ite scholars, basing their argument on the above, are of the opinion that when /bida'/ is attributed to Allah, it may be rendered as /'ibd a'/, that is, the appearance of something which was not apparent formerly and what would not be predicted.

As for attributing this matter to the Shi'ites, that they believe that Allah sometimes regrets His Own acts or becomes aware about what He did not know already, is of the greatest crimes and is of the most unforgiving accusations.

Therefore, some of the Imams have been quoted as saying:

"He who believes that something will be revealed and exposed to Allah today which He was not aware of yesterday, then such a person must be abhorred and detested." 23

Surah Ar-Ra‘d – Verse 40

وإِن مَّا نُرِيَنَّكَ بَعْضَ الَّذِي نَعِدُهُمْ أَوْ نَتَوَفَّيَنَّكَ فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلاغُ وَعَلَيْنَا الْحِسَابُ

40. "And We will either let you see part of what We promise them or cause you to die, for your duty is only to make (the Message) reach them, while (calling them) to account is on Us."

One must conclude of all that what is being observed of Allah's favour on the Muslims and the Divine punishment over the pagans is only some partial actualization of the Divine promises.

Even the death of such individuals as the dear Prophet of Islam (S) cannot hinder the actualization of the Divine promises which will be realized at the time when predicted.

Therefore, in this verse, concerning the divine penalties which the Prophet (S) was promising and they were expecting them and even they criticized as to why his promises were not fulfilled, He says to him:

And if parts of what We have promised them would be shown to you in your life-time as of your victory and of their defeat as well as 'the liberation of your followers and the capture of their followers' or We would make you pass away before such promises are materialized, under all such circumstances your duty and mission has been to convey your prophetic mission's message and the settlement of accounts with them is on Us.

The verse says:

"And We will either let you see part of what We promise them or cause you to die, for your duty is only to make (the Message) reach them, while (calling them) to account is on Us."

In the meantime, one concludes from this verse that Islam will dominate all other religions, and within the Prophet's lifetime and after his death, the roots of paganism will be eradicated.

And this meaning is reconfirmed by verse 33 of the Surah At-Taubah which says:

"He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of Truth, that He may prevail it over all religions, though the polytheists may detest it."

Imam Baqir (as) said:

*"This process goes on at the time of Hadrat-i-Mahdi (a.j.) when no one will remain on the earth unless he confesses to the prophetic mission of Mohammad (S)."*24

Surah Ar-Ra‘d – Verse 41

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا نَأْتِي الأَرْضَ نَنقُصُهَا مِنْ أَطْرَافِهَا وَاللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ لاَ مُعَقِّبَ لِحُكْمِهِ وَهُوَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ

41. "Do they not see that We come unto the earth and reduce it from its sides? And* (*were*) *Allah commands, there is no reverser for His command, and He is swift in reckoning."

We read in various Islamic quotations that the objective of reducing the sides of the earth means the loss of lives of the great scholars. 25

One must take lessons from the history and the ultimate end of the life of the predecessors, and thus not to be skeptic about the promises and the testaments of Allah.

The termination of governments and personalities depend on the Divine Will, and the theocracy and the commands of Allah are not vulnerable.

The verse says:

"Do they not see that We come unto the earth and reduce it from its sides? And* (*were*) *Allah commands, there is no reverser for His command..."

Incidentally, it is clear that the meaning of 'the earth' in here is the inhabitants of the earth. That is: '*Do they not notice the reality that the tribes, civilizations, and governments are constantly falling and are being annihilated?*'

And this provides a warning to all people, including the good and the evil, even in cases of the scholars and the learned men of human communities in which once a member of them dies, the entire world may sometimes suffer from shortcomings, which case is self-explanatory and shaking.

Then the holy verse implies that the administration and the issuing of decrees are His Own monopolies and no one else is in a position to reject those commands or obstruct His decrees, and He is fast in setting accounts.

The verse says:

"...and He is swift in reckoning."

Surah Ar-Ra‘d – Verse 42

وَقَدْ مَكَرَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ فَلِلَّهِ الْمَكْرُ جَمِيعاً يَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْسِبُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ وَسَيَعْلَمُ الْكُفَّارُ لِمَنْ عُقْبَي الدَّارِ

42. "And indeed those before them devised, but the devising altogether is Allah's; He knows what every soul earns, and the unbelievers soon will know for whom is the Ultimate abode."

The Qur'an closes ranks with whatever is other than Allah in order to enable all to concentrate on Him and on Him alone, despairing from others.

For instance, it says:

"...Verily the glory is wholly Allah's..."26

Once you appeal to others for the sake of acquiring prestige and good reputation, beware that all prestige and honour is for Him alone.

Elsewhere, the Holy Qur'an says:

"...that the Power is wholly Allah's..." 27

All powers are His.

And in this verse, it says:

"but the devising altogether is Allah's",

in order that man would not tend to others for obtaining prestige, power, and politics.

One of the best examples of Allah's devising is His offering of a respite to the deviants in such a manner that they feel that they are on the right track. However, Allah has repeatedly said in the Qur'an that the pagans must not think that their respite signifies Allah's love unto them. On the contrary, He respites them to fill their pot to the fullest.

Anyway, the pagans who were before them, played tricks on the believers, mixing their paganism with tricks and they did all this to refute the prophets.

As Allah obliterated all their tricks, He will do the same with this lot as well.

The verse says:

"And indeed those before them devised, but the devising altogether is Allah's..."

Therefore, Allah returns their tricks to themselves and He will provide clear evidences for His servants. No one's traits are hidden from Allah whether they are good or bad, as he is knowledgeable unto all that there is to be known.

The verse continues saying:

"...He knows what every soul earns..."

That is, Allah is aware of all tricks which are played on the Prophet (S), and he obliterates them all, revealing His religion.

Here, Allah threatens them by saying that they will soon learn as whose will be the Paradise. And this happens when the believers will enter the Paradise and the pagans will be sent into Hell. That is, the pagans will realize whether the ultimate happy ending is yours or theirs, which case reveals when Allah makes His religion manifest.

The verse continues saying:

"...and the unbelievers soon will know for whom is the Ultimate abode."

Surah Ar-Ra'd – Verse 43

وَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَسْتَ مُرْسَلاً قُلْ كَفَي بِاللَّهِ شَهِيداً بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ وَمَنْ عِندَهُ عِلْمُ الْكِتَابِ

43. "And those who disbelieve say: 'You are not a messenger'. Say: Allah is sufficient as a witness between me and you and he with whom is the knowledge of the Book."

We read in the first verse of this Surah that whatever is revealed to the Prophet (S) is identical with the Truth, though most people disbelieve it. We also read in this last verse of the Surah that the pagans refute the prophetic mission of the Prophet (S).

This indicates to the climax of the obstinacy and hostility of the seduced people as against the Divine Messenger and his words of truth. Therefore, it implies in this noble verse that they use a new pretext everyday, and they demand a new miracle, and eventually they claim that he is not a prophet.

The verse says:

"And those who disbelieve say: 'You are not a messenger'..."

Addressing them he should answer them: It was sufficient for them that two persons bear witness between them and him, one of whom was 'Allah' and the other one consists of those who have a full command of the knowledge of the Book, of the Qur'an.

Both parties are aware that I am His messenger: Allah as well as those who are knowledgeable about this Book, that is the Qur'an.

The verse says:

"...Say: 'Allah is sufficient as a witness between me and you and he with whom is the knowledge of the Book'."

And this further stresses once again the miraculous nature of the Qur'an in its different aspects.

As for the sentence;

"...and he with whom is the knowledge of the Book",

we have got the news which are in proximity of sequential order that the objective in mind is Amir-ul-Mu'mineen, and in some, that the objective in mind is the Immaculate Imams.

However, these quotations do not confirm a monopoly and as we have repeatedly said allusions to cases are made to perfect example or examples, and we claim that if the objective in mind is the glorious Qur'an, no one else is knowledgeable as to the apparent and the hidden and as to the interpretations of the Qur'an, having monopoly in such cases except the household of the prophet.

As He declares:

"...none knows its (hidden) interpretation except Allah and those firmly rooted in knowledge..."28

Ab Sa'id Khidary says:

"I asked the Prophet (S) about: the Qur'anic phrase:

'said he with whom was knowledge from the Book',

(*which is found in the story of Solomon*).

He answered:

'He was the inheritor of my brother Solomon and replaced him.'

I inquired:

'Whom is it (the above verse) talking about and to whom allusions are being made?'

He answered:

'He is my brother Ali Ibn Abi Talib (*as*)*'."* 29

The author of Atyab-ul-Bayan claims that we may say the objective in mind of 'the knowledge of the Book' is the greatest Name of Allah, of which 'Asif-Ibn-Barkhya the inheritor of Hadrat Sulayman, only knew a faction and not more. And Amir-ul-Mu'mineen Ali (as), as well as other Immaculate Imams (as), knew all in its entirety except what was kept by Allah for Himself.

Some Islamic traditions denote that the relationship of the Qur'anic phrase /min-al-kit ab/ to /'ilm-ul-kit ab/ is just like a drop with respect to a green sea. Certainly, when one of the companions of Hadrat Sulayman, who had some partial knowledge of the Book, could at a glance revoke the throne of the queen of Saba before him, how mighty one might be if he possesses all the knowledge of that Book!

According to the quotations, as we said, the objective in mind about whom he has the knowledge of the entire Book is Hadrat Ali (as) and Ahl-ul-Bayt (as).

For further information about these quotations refer to Tafsir N□r-uth-Thaqalayn, Tafsir Burhan, Tafsir Safi, and Tafsir Kanz-ud-Daqa'iq.

O' Allah! Open the gates of your blessings to us and provide us with the knowledge of the Book, and engage our souls with the light of the Qur'an and provide our thoughts with such potentialities that we do not refer to other than You and not to regard anything as supreme once faced with Your Will.

Amin.

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1. Bihar, vol. 24, p. 265
2. Tafsir-ul-Burhan, and 'Ayyashi
3. Tafsir Burhan, vol. 2
4. Surah Qaf, No. 50, verse 29
5. The current Surah, verse 8
6. Surah Al-Bur□j, No. 85, verse 22
7. Surah Al-Mutaffifin, No. 83, verses 20 and 21
8. Surah Ghafir, No. 40, verse 60
9. Surah At-Tal aq, No. 65, verse 1
10. Surah Ar-Rahman, No. 55, verse 29
11. Surah As-Saff, No. 61, verse 5
12. Surah Al-'A'raf, No. 7, verse 96
13. Surah Ar-Ra'd, No. 13, verse 11
14. Surah Al-Furqan, No. 25, verse 70
15. Surah Al-'Isra, No. 17, verse 8
16. Shahid Mutahhari
17. Surah Al-'A'raf, No. 7, verse 143
18. Surah Y□nus, No. 10, verse 98

19. Safinat-ul-Bih ar, vol. 1, p. 61
20. Al-Mizan, vol. 11, p. 419
21. Al-Mizan, vol. 11, p. 419
22. 'Usūl-i-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 114 and Safinat-ul-Bihar, vol. 1, p. 61
23. Safinat-ul-Bihar, vol.1, p. 61
24. Tafsir-i-Majma'-ul-Bayan and Burhan
25. Tafsir Nūr-uth-Thaqalayn
26. Surah Yūnus, No. 10, verse 65
27. Surah Al-Baqarah, No. 2, verse 165
28. Surah Al-i-'Imran, No. 3, verse 7
29. Al-Mizan

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