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The Second Discussion

The leadership belonging to the Prophetic Household and to Imam Ali, played out in the "natural phenomenon" so far alluded to consists of two types of authority.

The first is intellectual authority; the second, authority associated with governing and societal activity. Both were embodied in the person of the Prophet. In the light of what we have learned with respect to circumstances, the Prophet had had to determine the most fitting extension of his rule which could sustain each of these two authorities, in order that intellectual authority might fill any lacunae to be faced by the Muslim mind. A proper notion needs to be advanced – i.e. the Islamic viewpoint – on any intellectual or life issues evoked. It must explicate what appears ambiguous and obscure in the Holy Book.[1]

The Qur'an constitutes the primary source for intellectual authority in Islam. Finally, the purpose is for socio-political authority to resume its course and to lead the trek of Islam along a societal path.

These two types of authority are combined within the Household of the Prophet by force of those circumstances we considered earlier. Prophetic traditions have always confirmed this. The prime example of a tradition dealing with intellectual authority is the *hadith* of the "Two Weights" (*hadith al-thaqlayn*), where the Prophet proclaims:

I am about to be summoned [before my Lord], and must comply. I leave with ye two weighty things: God's Book, a rope from Heaven to Earth; and my progeny, the members of my Household. God the Gracious, the All-Knowing has informed me that they shall separate not to the day when they will be restored to me at the Basin. You behold how, you do by them after I am gone![2]

The chief example of a Prophetic stipulation concerning authority in the exercise of leadership over society is *hadith al-Ghadir.* It is presented by Tabarani, on the grounds of its universally-accepted soundness, through Zayd b. Arqam's words:

The Messenger of God gave his sermon at Ghadir Khum beneath some trees, declaring. "O People, I

am about to be summoned [before my Lord], and must comply. I shall be held to account and ye shall be held to account. But what will you say?" They replied, "We shall testify that you have delivered [the Message], striven and counseled. May God reward you for it!"

He then told them, "Would you not testify that there is no god but God [*Allah*], and that Muhammad is his Servant and Messenger that His Paradise is real and His Hell-Fire real; that death is real; that the resurrection after death is real; that the Hour shall without a doubt come; that God resurrects all those who lie in their graves?" They said: "Nay, we shall testify to all this!" To which he replied, "O God be Thee Witness! O People God is my Guardian and I guardian of the faithful. I am more so than their own selves. For whomsoever I am a guardian, he too [i.e. `Ali] is his guardian. Lord, guard over the one who guards over him, and be a foe to his foe."[3]

Thus, of a considerable number of like traditions, these two outstanding Prophetic *hadiths* provide for the embodiment of both kinds of authority in the Prophet's Household. The Islamic current upholding the devotional act based on the Prophet's full stipulations believed in these authorities, and comprised those Muslims who were the benevolent friends of the Household.

But whereas the socio-political authority belonging to every Imam implies the exercise of power while he lives, intellectual authority is a permanent, unconditional reality unconfined to the period of his lifetime. Therefore, it has a living, practical meaning for every period. So long as the Muslims needed a definitive understanding of Islam, an acquaintance with its provisions, legality, prohibitions, concepts and moral values, there will be need for an intellectual Divinely-defined authority epitomized, firstly, by the Book of God; secondly, by the Prophet's Tradition (*sunnat rasulihi*) and that of the immaculate descendents, if the Household, who never have and never would diverge from the Books as indeed the Prophet himself has stipulated.[4]

Fronts they very outset, the second tendency, which upholds independent legal judgement rather than the devotional act according to the text, had decided. with the death of the Prophet on transferring the authority for exercising political power to some leading personalities of the *Muhajirin,* thereby conforming with shifting and rather maleable considerations.

Immediately following the Prophet's death, the transfer of power to Abu Bakr was based on what came out of the limited discussions at the Saqifah session.[5] `Umar later ascended to the Caliphate after being appointed by Abu Bakr[6]; `Uthman followed suit through an undesignated appointment by `Umar.[7] Accommodation, a third of a century after the Prophet's passing, led to the infiltration to positions of power by the offspring of all those Meccans who had held out to the last (*al-Tulaqa*)[8] and who just yesterday had been fighting Islam.

All that relates to political authority in its exercise of power. Intellectual authority, on the other hand, was difficult to institute in the members of the Household. Independent legal judgement therewith led to dispossession of their political authority, since the latter's institution entailed the creation of objective

conditions for a transfer of power to them and a merging of the two kinds of authority.

However, it was equally difficult to acknowledge intellectual authority in a power-wielding Caliph, the requirements of intellectual authority being different from those of the exercise of power. The feeling that a person is qualified to exercise power did not automatically imply that his installation as intellectual leader - the highest authority after the Qur'an and Prophetic Tradition in matters of theoretical understanding - was thought feasible. This kind of leadership required a high degree of refinement and theoretical comprehension, and clearly none of the Companions was more adequately endowed with it than the rest, if the members of the Household are excluded.9

The result was that the balance of intellectual authority continued to swing for some time. The Caliphs, in many instances, dealt with Imam `Ali on the basis of his intellectual authority, or something approaching that. So much so that the Second Caliph repeated many times that "If not for 'Ali, `Umar would surely have perished.

God forbid that there be a problem and no Abu Hasan to [solve] it..."10 Nevertheless, after the Prophet's passing, the Muslims in time became accustomed to see Imam `Ali and the Household as ordinary subjects, whose intellectual authority was not indispensable, but transferable to some reasonable substitute. That substitute was rot to be the Caliph himself, but the Prophet's Companions.

The principle of the Companions' collective authority was gradually postulated thus, in place of the authority of the Household. The substitute became palatable once the properly appointed authority was passed over, because the Companions' generation was said to have kept close company with the Prophet, thrived while he lived, embraced his experience, heeded his words and practice.11

For all practical purposes, the members of the Household lost their God-given distinction to form part of the intellectual authority merely as Companions. But the Companions themselves were apt to experience sharp differences and conflicts, which sometimes reached the point of hostilities, with each party drawing the other's blood, impugning his honour, hurling accusations of deviation and betrayal.12

These differences and accusations, occurring as they did inside the intellectual leadership and doctrinal authority itself, engendered all manner of intellectual and doctrinal conflict13 within the body of the Islamic community. The latter reflected the conflictual dimensions of the intellectual leadership established by independent judgement.

1. Please refer to what we have tried to establish in the Appendix concerning this question: that is, the scope of Imam `Ali's power; his comprehension of God's Book; his grasp of the "particular" and the "general" (of its various applications); of the abrogating and abrogated verses, its provisions and laws, the text's explicit and implicit senses. See, for example, Suyuti's al-Ittiqan IV:234.

2. Al-Hakim al-Nisaburi, al-Mustadrak `ala al-Sah'ih III:119, where the author says, "It was corrected according to conditions set by al-Shaykhayn [i.e. al-Bukhari and Muslim] and presented by al-Muslim accordingly (cf. IV:1874. See Sahih al-Tirmidhi's I:130 ; al-Nassa'i, al-Sunan al-kubra V:622; Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal's Musnad IV:217, III:14-7 - Imam. See also Sunan al-Darimi II:432 (Ch. "Fazia'il al Qur'an"? (Dar Ihya al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah).

3. On the margins, Imam Baqir al-Sadr points out the following:

Hadith al-Ghadir is widely reported in books on traditions by both Shiites and Sunnis. The experts reckon the number of Companions who reported this hadith to be over a hundred. Those belonging to the following generation [al-tabi'in] who relate it number over eighty; those in the second century Hijri who committed the Qur'an and the traditions to memory nearly sixty individuals.

Cf al-`Allamah al-Amini, Kitab al-Ghadir. In this book, the `Allamah al-Amini offers a number of hadiths reported by Zayd b. Arqam in their different version. It appears that Imam al-Sadr collected these accounts in exactly the same form. (Cf. "al-Ghadir" I:31-6; also, in the Appendix, see how the hadith in question was presented, including in Sunan Ibn Majah I:11 (of the Introduction)). See Musnad Imam Ahmad b. Hanbal IV:281, 368 (Dar Sadir).

4. The famous hadith al-thaqlayn, about which we have already given explanation.
5. Cf Tarikh al-Tabari, "Nusus al-Saqifah" II:234.
6. Ibid; see the description of `Umar's investiture.
7. See the description of the six consultative members involved in `Uthman's investiture, see Ta'rikh al-Tabari II:580. Cf Imam Ali's "Shaqshaqiyyah Address," Sermon No. 3, Nahj al-balaghah, edited by Dr. Subhi al-Salih, p. 48. Also, Ibn Abi al Hadid's commentary on it I:151 ff (ed. Abu al-Fadl Ibrahim; and `Abd al-Fattah `Abd al-Maqsud), al-Saqifah wal khilafah, p. 264.
8. Al-tulaqa is a term used to describe those who embraced Islam only at the moment when Mecca was gained over, including Abu Sufyan and his son Muawiyah (Tarikh al-Tabari II:161), this with the knowledge that they were both among those referred to as "al-muallafat qullubuhum" (cf. Tarikh al-Tabari II:175).
9. Their need for Imam `Ali's authority, according to many textual sources showing their open admission to this effect (cf. Suyuti's Tarikh al-khulafa, p. 171); whereas Imam 'Ali never had to seek the authority of any one of them in matters of law or its provisions.
10. Al-Tabaqat al-kubra II:339.
11. Imam Baqir al-Sadr's appraisal of the first generation of Companions reveals the extent of objectivity maintained in his treatment of both the Muslims' history and the role of those who began teaming around Islam. Secondly, substituting the Companions for the Household was hardly accepted by many prominent Companions, such as Salman, `Ammar, Abu Dharr, al-Miqdad and others - they all remained loyal to the Household. Thirdly, although the ways of the Companions or their utterances prevailed, there was not complete acceptance that their views were defensible. It suffices to say that the way of the two Elders (i.e. Caliphs) was proposed to Imam `Ali the day of consultation, but was not accepted. See the knowledgeable and quite satisfactory discussion in al-`Allamah Muhammad Taqi al-Hakim, al-Usul al-`ammah lil fiqh al-muqaran, pp. 133-42.
12. Note the accusation by `Umar b. Khattab, the second Caliph, against Khalid b. al-Walid of having killed a Muslim and then turned on his wife (Ta'rikh al-Tabar'i II:274 [Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-`Ilmiyyah).
13. Cf Dr. Muhammad Salaam Madkur, Manahij al-ijtihad concerning the emergence of theological (kalamiyyah) and legal (fiqhiyyah) factions and schools in Islam, along with the disputes that erupted among them. See also Shahrastani, al-Milal wal-nihal I:15ff.

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