

Who Are The Ulu'l-Amr?

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Sub Title:

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This text explores the concept of "Ulu'l-Amr" in the Holy Qur'an, focusing on the principles of leadership, authority, and obedience in Islam.

It discusses the relationship between believers and their leaders, emphasizing the importance of adhering to divine guidance and resolving conflicts according to Islamic teachings.

It also addresses the roles of those in positions of authority and how their obedience impacts the Muslim community.

The commentary provides deeper insights into the nature of true faith and the significance of lawful governance within the Islamic framework.

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Who Are The Ulu'l-Amr?

From: Al-Mizan, An Exegesis Of The Qur'an, Vol. 8, Under Commentary of Surah An-Nisa', Verses 59 –70

Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i

Commentary Of The Verses 59-70 Of Surah An-Nisa'

O You Who Believe! Obey Allah And Obey The Messenger

“O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority from among you” (4:59).

After calling the people to worship Allah alone, and do good to various groups of believers, and condemning those who cast aspersions on this idea or prevent others from Allah's way, the talk again turns to the basic theme from a different angle, from which grow up other branches. It leads to reinforcing the foundation of Islamic society, as it exhorts and urges the believers to preserve their unity and to remove every type of dispute or discord by referring it to Allah and His Messenger.

Undoubtedly, the sentence ***“Obey Allah and obey the Messenger” (4:59)***, paves the way for the next order to refer all quarrels to Allah and His Messenger, although the sentence is in fact the basis of all Divine laws and Shari'ah. It is obvious from the order:

“Then if you quarrel about any thing, refer it to Allah and the Messenger ...” (4:59).

Which emanates from this origin; then the speech repeatedly turns to the same theme, as it goes on saying:

“Have you not observed those who think that they believe in what has been revealed to you” (4:60).

Then again says:

“And We did not send any messenger but that he should be obeyed by Allah's permission” (4:64).

Then says:

“But no! By your Lord! They do not believe until they make you a judge of that which has become a matter of disagreement among them” (4:65).

There should be no doubt whatsoever that when Allah tells us to obey Him, it means that we must obey Him in all the realities and laws which He has sent to us through His Messenger.

As for His Messenger, his orders emanate from either of his two lawful authorities:

First: His legislative authority based on divine revelation other than the Qur'an. By this authority, he teaches the people details of what is mentioned in general terms in the Qur'an, and explains all the related matters. Allah says:

“And We have revealed to you the Reminder that you may make clear to them what has been revealed to them” (16:44).

Second: What he, in his wisdom, decides in administrative and judicial matters by the authority given him by God. Allah says:

“... That you may judge between people by means of that which Allah has taught [lit. shown] you” (4: 105).

It is the opinion with which he used to judge between people according to the laid down judicial laws; and it is the decision he used to take in important affairs. Allah had told him to consult the people seeking their advice:

“And take counsel with them in the affair; but when you have decided, then place your trust in Allah” (3: 159).

Thus, the people would participate in consultation; but the decision would be of the Prophet alone.

The above discourse shows that the Messenger's obedience has a connotation distinct from Allah's obedience, although the Messenger's obedience is in reality the obedience of Allah Himself, because it is Allah who has obliged the people to obey the Messenger, as He has said:

“And We did not send any messenger but that he should be obeyed by Allah's permission” (4:64).

People have to obey the Messenger in what he explains by divine revelation and in what he decides and orders by his divine wisdom.

It is this variation of connotation which has necessitated repetition of the order of obedience: ***“obey Allah and obey the Messenger” (4:59).*** (And Allah knows better.) This repetition, however, is not for emphasis, as the exegetes have opined. Had the intention been of emphasis, it would have been more appropriate not to repeat; it would have been more to the point to say, obey Allah and the Messenger, as it would have implied that obedience of the Messenger is one with the obedience of Allah; after all, not every repetition shows emphasis.

However, the “*Ulu 'l-amr*” (أُولُو الْأَمْرِ = those vested with authority) – whoever they might be – do not have the privilege of revelation; they decide and act according to what is right in their opinion; and their opinion and order must be obeyed just like the Prophet's opinion and order. That is the reason why Allah has not mentioned them when He orders the believers to refer their disputes to Allah and the Messenger. He says:

“Then if you quarrel about any thing, refer it to Allah and the Messenger if you believe in Allah and the last day” (4:59).

The people thus ordered are the believers, because the Verse begins with the address, ***“O you who believe!”*** and the quarrel mentioned here must be an internal dispute among the believers. We cannot suppose that the believers would quarrel with those who are vested with authority when they are obligated to obey them. So, this quarrel must be among the believers themselves, and it cannot be in matters of orders issued by those vested with authority¹; rather it has to be about identification of Allah’s command in a particular affair, as may be inferred from the next Verses which condemn those who resort to the judgment of a *taghut*, preferring it to the judgment of Allah and His Messenger.

A believer must resort in such matters to the religious laws laid down in the Qur’an and the Sunnah; and both the Qur’an and the Sunnah are final proofs in all affairs, for him who has the ability to understand the law from them. When the *Ulu ’l-amr* say that this is what the Qur’an and the Sunnah say on this matter, all argument has to stop. When they talk, theirs is the final word, because the Verse makes their obedience compulsory without any restriction or condition; and finally, every affair returns to the Book of Allah and the Sunnah.

It shows that the people with authority – whoever they might be – have no authority to legislate a new law or to abrogate a rule established by the Qur’an or the Sunnah. Otherwise, it would serve no purpose to order people to refer their dispute to the Qur’an and the Sunnah, to Allah and the Messenger, as may be inferred from the Verse 36 of chapter 33:

“And it is not for a believing man or a believing woman to have any choice in their affair when Allah and His Messenger have decided a matter; and whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he surely strays off a manifest straying” (33:36).

Allah decides by giving a law; His Messenger decides by elaborating a divine law, giving an order or pronouncing a judgment. As for the persons vested with authority, they have the power, in executive matters, to decide according to their discretion, and in judicial and general matters, to bring to light the decisions of Allah and His Messenger.

In short, as the *Ulu ’l-amr* have no power of legislation, nor do they have any order other than that which Allah and His Messenger have given in the Qur’an and the Sunnah, Allah did not mention them again in connection with referral of disputes, when He said:

“Then if you quarrel about any thing, refer it to Allah and the Messenger” (4:59).

Thus, Allah’s obedience is in one category and that of the Messenger and those vested with authority, in another. That is why Allah has said:

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

Undoubtedly, the obedience, ordered by the words, ***“Obey Allah and obey the Messenger”***, is general, without any condition or restriction. It proves that the Messenger cannot issue any order or prohibition

contrary to Allah's actual order or prohibition. Otherwise, making his obedience compulsory would be a contradiction in terms on the part of Allah; far be it from His sublime presence. It necessarily follows that the Messenger (S) was ma'sum (infallible), sinless, free from error.

The same argument applies in case of the persons vested with authority. But the presence of al-'ismah (أَلْعِصْمَةُ = sinlessness) in the Messenger (S) is independently established by proofs from the reason and the Qur'an and the Sunnah, without depending on this Verse. Apparently, it is not the case with the people vested with authority. Someone therefore could imagine that it was not necessary for these people of authority to be ma'sum, sinless, and that the Verse could be explained even without believing in their 'ismah.

The argument could be put forward as follows: "This Verse ordains a law aimed at the well-being of the *Ummah*, which would protect the Muslim society from internal discord and disunity. It aims at nothing more than what is found in other nations and societies. They give one of their leaders the authority to manage their affairs; they pledge to obey him, and his orders are carried out. But they know that he may sometimes contravene the law or err in his judgment. So, when it is clearly known that he was going against the law, he is not obeyed; rather, his error is pointed out to him. But when there is only a possibility – without certainty – that he might be wrong, his orders are obeyed and implemented although in fact he might have decided erroneously. Yet that mistake is tolerated for the sake of maintaining the society's unity, which is more important and would compensate for such mistakes and errors.

"The case of *Ulu 'l-amr* (those vested with authority) mentioned in this Verse is not different from other worldly leaders in their authority. Allah has ordered the believers to obey them. If they give an order contrary to the Qur'an or the Sunnah, it would be invalid and would not be obeyed; the Messenger of Allah (S) has said: 'No creature is obeyed in disobedience of the Creator.'

This meaning has been narrated by the Shi'ahs and Sunnis both, and also the generality of the Verse proves it. If the *Ulu 'l-amr* commit a mistake, and it is definitely known to be a mistake, it would be changed to conform with the Qur'an and the Sunnah; but if there is no certainty of mistake, the order would be carried out as if there was no mistake. It would not do any harm to obey such an order and implement it even if in reality it was wrong, because the preservation of the *Ummah's* unity and continuance of its power and prestige would compensate for such contravention of the actual divine law. It would not be unlike the established dictum of the Principles of Jurisprudence that the decisions derived from apparent proofs of jurisprudence are binding on man even if they are not in accordance with the actual divine order, although the divine order would not be changed by that man-made decision; and the contrariness would be compensated by underlying good of society.

"In short, it is compulsory to obey the *Ulu 'l-amr*, even if they are not sinless, and could commit mistakes and even debauchery. They shall not be obeyed if they indulge in debauchery; they shall be returned to the Qur'an and the Sunnah when it is known that they had deviated from them, but in all other cases, their orders shall be obeyed and their decisions enforced. There is no harm in implementing an order

which does not visibly go against actual divine law (even if in reality it does) for the sake of preserving Islamic unity and for the well-being of the Muslim nation.”

Comment: If you ponder on what was written earlier, you will realize that this fallacy has no leg to stand on. It is possible to use this ‘argument’ for restricting the generality of the Verse in case of debauchery, by putting forward the above-quoted Prophet’s tradition, “No creature is obeyed in disobedience of the Creator”, or some Qur’anic Verses of the same import, e.g.,

“Surely Allah does not enjoin indecency” (7:28).

And other similar Verses.

Likewise, comparable cases may be quoted for religious obligatoriness of obeying orders which are apparently binding, like obedience of the commanders of expeditions who were appointed by the Messenger of Allah (S), the governors he sent to various places like Mecca or Yemen, or who were left in charge of Medina when he himself went out. Another is the authoritative nature of mujtahid’s ruling for his followers, and so on.

But all this cannot restrict the generality of the Verses in any way. Correctness of a theory is one thing, and its being proved by apparent meaning of a Qur’anic Verse is quite another.

The Verse proves obligatoriness of these *Ulu ’l-amr*’s obedience, without putting any restriction or condition, without attaching any proviso. Nor is there any other Qur’anic Verse to limit its generality. In short, there is nothing to show that the order ***“and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority from among you” (4:59)***, implies, ‘obey those vested with authority from among you as long as they do not order you to commit a sin or until you are not sure that they are in wrong; but if they tell you to commit a sin, you are not obliged to obey them, and if you are sure of their mistake then correct them by directing their attention to the Qur’an and the Sunnah.’ Certainly, the Qur’an’s wording does not support this meaning.

Also, we should not forget that when ordering people to obey their parents, Allah has said:

“And We have enjoined on man goodness to his parents, and if they contend with you that you should associate (others) with Me, of which you have no knowledge, do not obey them ...” (29:8).

It should be noted that parents’ obedience is much less important (and is restricted to their off-spring); yet Allah has attached to it such a clear and unambiguous proviso. How is it that He did not attach any such condition in the Verse of obedience which deals with one of the fundamental religious principles, and on which depends the felicity of mankind?

Moreover, the Verse has joined the Messenger and “those vested with authority” in this order; and mentions both under one obedience: ***“Obey the Messenger and those vested with authority from among you” (4:59)***; and the Messenger cannot order sin nor can he issue a wrong judgment. If it were

possible for the *Ulu 'l-amr* to be wrong in an order or a judgment, it was highly essential to put suitable restriction on this order as far as the *Ulu 'l-amr* were concerned. Thus, the only way out is to interpret this Verse in its general sense without any condition or restriction. This in its turn proves that the *Ulu 'l-amr* were ma'sum, sinless in the same way as the Messenger (S) was – without any difference.

al-Amr (الأمر) in the phrase, *Ulu 'l-amr* the religious or temporal affairs of the believers who have been addressed in this Verse; as is supported by the Verse:

“And take counsel with them in the affair” (3: 159).

Or as is said in praise of the pious:

“And their system is to take counsel among themselves” (42:38).

Although it may possibly be taken to mean order, which is opposite of prohibition, but it will be a far-fetched interpretation.

This word is qualified with the phrase, from among you. Obviously, it is an adverbial phrase of place. That is, the *Ulu 'l-amr* will be raised from among you. It is similar to the words of Allah:

“He it is who raised among the Meccans a Messenger from among themselves (62:2).

Or the prayer of Ibrahim:

“Our Lord! and raise up in them a Messenger from among themselves (2: 129).

Or the divine words:

“If there come to you messengers from among you, relating to you My communications ...” (7:35).

This explanation leaves no room for the mistaken thought (expressed by someone) that ***“from among you”*** indicates that those vested with authority would be normal people like us, as they would be one of us, i.e., mere believers without having the distinction of divine 'ismah (protection from sins and errors).

Ulu 'l-amr, being a plural noun, shows that there must be a number of those vested with authority, and it is correct without any doubt. But obviously it is possible for them to come one after another, and the believers would be required to obey the one who manages their affairs at a given time. Thus, all of them taken together will be collectively entitled to the believers' obedience, as we say, 'Pray your compulsory prayers and obey your superiors and elders.'

Strangely enough, ar-Razi has objected to this idea, saying that “it would mean using a plural for singular and that is contrary to a word's apparant usage.” It seems he had forgotten that such usage is very common in literature, and the Qur'an itself is full of such Verses. For example:

“So do not yield to the rejecters (68:8).

“So do not follow the unbelievers (25:52).

“Surely, we obeyed our leaders and our great men (33:67).

“And do not obey the bidding of the extravagant ones (26: 151).

“Maintain the prayers (2:238).

“And make yourself gentle to the believers (15:88).

And various other Verses containing positive and negative statements, and having declarative as well as exclamatory sense.

It would be against the apparent meaning of a word if a plural was used for only a single individual; but it is not against apparent meaning if it is used for a group of individuals, in a way that it turns into a series of numerous orders. For example, we say, ‘Honour the scholars of your town’; meaning: Honour this scholar, and honour that scholar, and so on.

Another suggestion: Ulu ’l-amr, who are entitled to unconditional obedience, may be a group – and may thus be referred to with plural sense. It may be an association of many persons each individual counted as a possessor of authority, inasmuch as he has influence over people and his words are obeyed. For example, army commanders, scholars, rulers and community elders. The author of al-Manar has suggested that this refers to ahlu ’l-halli wa ’l-’aqd (أَهْلُ الْحَلِّ وَالْعَقْدِ = lit. those who tie and untie; i.e., people having influence and authority), who are trusted by the *Ummah*; including scholars, military commanders, leaders in fields of commerce, industry and agriculture, as well as trade-unionists, political leaders, and chief editors of influential newspapers. This is what we mean when we say that *Ulu ’l-amr* means people of influence and authority. It is a collective body of the leaders of the *Ummah*.

Comment: The problem is that the complete Verse cannot be explained in the light of this suggestion.

As you have seen, the Verse proves the sinlessness of the *Ulu ’l-amr*; and even those who support the above suggestion, have to admit that the Verse confirms their sinlessness.

The question arises: Who among this body of influential persons is sinless? Is each of its members sinless, so that the collective body could be called sinless? Because a group is but the sum total of the individuals. But it is evident that there never was in this *Ummah*, even for a single day, a group of influential people who had authority to jointly manage the Muslim’s affairs and whose every member was sinless and free from error. Obviously, it is impossible for Allah to order us to obey a group which had never existed in reality.

Or does it mean that sinlessness, a real attribute, exists in that collective body as an adjective exists in

its qualified noun? Although each individual member may commit sins, and in common with all other human beings can indulge in polytheism and disobedience, and although the opinion he forms may be erroneous or may lead to sin and straying, but when the said body collectively reaches at a decision it remains safe from mistakes and errors – because the collective body is sinless. But this too is impossible. How can a real attribute, that is, sinlessness, exist in an abstract idea, i.e., the collective body? A real attribute cannot stand in a mentally posited idea.

Or, does it mean that sinlessness of this body is attributable neither to its individual members nor to the collective body? That it only signifies that Allah protects this body in a way it does not order any sin, nor does it arrive at a mistaken decision. Its case is not different from a mutawatir² (الْمُتَوَاتِرُ) information which is protected from falsity, although none of its narrators or informants is sinless, nor is this, freedom from falsity attributed to the chain of narrators when looked at as a composite group.

All that it means is that a habit has been formed which prevents falsehood from seeping in that information. In other words, Allah protects a mutawatir information from infiltration of falsehood.

In the same way, opinion of *Ulu 'l-amr* is protected from mistakes and errors, although neither the collective body nor its individual members are free from sin and mistake. Nor do they have any special quality or attribute. It is nevertheless safe from falsehood and error, like a mutawatir tradition. This is what sinlessness of *Ulu 'l-amr* means. The Verse only shows that their opinion is never confused; it is always right and in conformity with the Qur'an and the Sunnah. It is a special divine providence for this *Ummah*; and it has been narrated from the Prophet (S) that he said: "My *Ummah* will not unite on error."

Comment: As for this tradition, it is totally irrelevant to this subject. Even if it is accepted as correct, it only says that the *Ummah* will not unite on error. It does not say that people of influence and authority from among the *Ummah* would not join hands on error. *Ummah* has its own meaning, and *ahlu 'l-halli wa 'l-'aqd* has another; there is no evidence that the former means the latter. Moreover, the tradition does not say that whatever they unitedly decided would be free from error; it rather says that they would not be united on error – and the two propositions are not the same.

The tradition accordingly would mean as follows: Never will the entire *Ummah* unite on error concerning any matter; there will always be among them those who would be on right guidance – either all or some of them, at least the sinless one. It will correspond with the Verses and traditions showing that Islam; the religion of truth, would never disappear from the earth, would continue upto the Day of Resurrection. Allah says:

"... Therefore, if these disbelieve in it, We have (already) entrusted with it a people who are not disbelievers in it (6:89)

"And He made it a word to continue in his posterity (43:28)

"Surely, We have revealed the Reminder and We will most surely be its guardian (15:9)

“Falsehood shall not come to it from before it nor from behind it; a revelation from the Wise, the Praised One (41:42).

There are many Verses having the same connotation.

Also, this is not a speciality of the *Ummah* of Muhammad (S), because the correct traditions prove otherwise. Look at the traditions narrated from the Prophet (S) through various chains of narrators which describe the division of the Jews into seventy-one sects, of the Christians into seventy-two and of the Muslims into seventy-three sects, all of which would go to hell – except one. We have quoted it in the “Traditions” under the Verse:

“And hold fast by the cord of Allah all together ...” (3: 103).

In short, there is no need to further discuss this tradition, because, even if its chain of narrators be free from defects, it has no relevance to the subject under discussion. We should look at the meaning of sinlessness as applied to the influential people of authority from this *Ummah*, if it is they who are referred to as ***“those vested with authority from among you” (4:59).***

What is the genesis of ‘ismah (sinlessness) of the influential people of authority among the Muslims? What makes their opinion free from error? This body of influential people which manages the public affairs is not something unique for the Muslim *Ummah*. There are found in every big and small nation, and even in the tribes and clans, a number of people who have prestige and influence in their society; and who exercise power and have authority over public affairs. Look into the histories of the ancient people as well as the present nations; you will find countless instances where the people of influence and power unanimously agreed on a course of action about some very important matter and their plan was carried out. Later events sometimes showed the decision was correct; at other times it proved wrong. There is, of course, greater chance of mistake in individual decision than in a collective one; yet there is no guarantee that a decision jointly arrived at after thorough debate and discussion will never be wrong. History and our own experience provide ample proof for it.

Now, if collective decisions of influential and powerful leaders of Muslim *Ummah* are always free from mistakes and errors, we will have to find for it a cause other than the normal ones; it will have to be something supra-natural and miraculous. If so, then it would be a manifest miracle reserved for this *Ummah*, which would strengthen their power, defend their land and protect them from all types of mischief that could endanger their unity. In short, such a cause would be a divinely given miracle parallel to the Glorious Qur’an, and it would live as long as the Qur’an lives; it would have the same relation to the practical life of the *Ummah* as the Qur’an has to its intellectual one. In that case, it was necessary for the Qur’an to describe its boundary and area; Allah would have mentioned it as one of His special graces for this *Ummah*, as He has done with reference to the Qur’an and Muhammad (S).

Also, He should have explained to this group its collective responsibilities as He has done in connection with His Prophet (S). Likewise, the Prophet should have given detailed instructions to his *Ummah*

concerning this extra-ordinary group, and more particularly to his companions; after all, they were the people who became *ahlu 'l-halli wa 'l-'aqd* after him and took the control of the *Ummah* in their hands. The Prophet should have explained about this band which is supposed to be vested with authority what was its reality? What was its boundary? How wide was the area of its jurisdiction? Would there be a single body to rule over the whole Muslim *Ummah* in all public affairs? Or would there be separate bodies of *Ulu 'l-amr* in different Muslim societies to rule over their lives, honour and properties?

Also, it was incumbent on the Muslims – and especially the companions – to pay more attention to it. They should have asked questions and gone into its details. They had asked about things which had no importance compared to this basic matter; they had asked about crescent, the things to be spent and war booty, as Allah has mentioned:

“They ask you about crescents” (2: 189).

“They ask you as to what they should spend” (2:215).

“They ask you about spoils of war” (8: 1).

So why did they never ask about it? Or was it that they had asked but it was manipulated by people and hidden from us? But this meaning was not against the desire of the majority of the *Ummah* (which follows the same system) so that we could think that they neglected and discarded it until it was completely forgotten!

Also, it should inevitably have been quoted during the disputes and strifes which had repeatedly erupted after the Prophet's death. What happened to this 'reality' that it was never quoted or referred to in their argumentations and polemics, while the narrators have transmitted all their arguments word by word? Why is it not found in any speech or letter? Why was it not known to the early exegetes among the companions and their disciples until it was 'discovered' by a handful of later writers like ar-Razi and some who came after him?

Even ar-Razi has objected to this view after mentioning it. He says that it is against the composite consensus; the phrase, *Ulu 'l-amr* has been explained in not more than four ways: The rightly-guided caliphs, commanders of expeditions, religious scholars and sinless Imams. This fifth explanation goes against the above composite consensus. Then he has replied that this new explanation is in fact based on the third meaning [i.e., religious scholars]. In this way he has destroyed all that he himself had built. It is now clear that things were not like that at all; nobody ever thought it was a noble and unique divine gift to the clique of influential and powerful leaders of the Muslims, which would constitute a great miracle of Islam.

Or do they want to say that this freedom from error did not emanate from any supra-natural cause? Rather, Islam had generally trained its followers so nicely, basing its teachings on such balanced principles, that it was bound to produce this result – that the people of power and influence among this

Ummah, be-cause of this training, make no mistake in their collectively arrived at decisions and do not err in the opinions they form.

First of all, this supposition is wrong because it goes against the common sense. Perception of a whole is the sum total of the perception of its components. When each of them is liable to be wrong, the whole group cannot be safe from error and mistake.

Secondly, if the opinion of the group of influential persons is always correct and free from error, and if this extra-ordinary feature is based upon such invincible cause, then it should never fail in producing the desired result. Then what else was the cause of all this falsehood, disturbance and mischief which has overfilled the Muslim world?

There were countless gatherings after the Prophet's death, in which influential and powerful leaders of the Muslims collectively decided whatever they thought correct, and followed what in their opinion was the right path; but all this led them to nowhere; they went on blundering into far-reaching errors; their attempts to bring happiness to the Muslims increased only the *Ummah's* misfortune and unhappiness. The society which was based on religion turned soon after the Prophet (S) into an imperialism – oppressive and destructive. Let scholars make in-depth study of the disturbances and mischiefs that raised their head, since the Messenger of Allah (S) departed from this world; and have a look at what followed. On every page of Islamic history they will find blood spilled, honours defiled, properties looted, religious laws ignored and divinely ordained punishments nullified. Let them look for its origin and discover its roots. Was there any effective cause other than the opinions formed and decisions taken by the powerful and influential leaders, which they had yoked the *Ummah* with?

So, this is the position of the most important pillar on which they want to build the structure of Islam! This is the effect of the 'opinion' of influential and powerful leaders who, they tell us, are referred to by the words, *Ulu 'l-amr* (those vested with authority), and who, according to them, are free from error in their opinion!

Those who believe that *Ulu 'l-amr* refers to the people of influence and power, have no escape from admitting that those people were not sinless, not free from mistakes and errors. That the *Ulu 'l-amr*, like all other people could be right in some cases and wrong in the others. But inasmuch as theirs was a distinguished group, experienced in public affairs, the ratio of their mistakes was much smaller. Allah has made their obedience compulsory. Although they could at times be wrong, but Allah has granted indulgence to such mistakes, keeping in view the overwhelming good emanating from their management of affairs. If they issue an order or give a ruling which contravenes the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and that order or ruling happens to be congruous with the good of the *Ummah* – even if it reinterprets a religious law contrary to what was hitherto done, or changes it to bring it into line with the demands of time or inclinations of the *Ummah* or conditions of the modern world – this new verdict will be followed, and religion will recognize it as good.

Why? Because religion aims only at society's happiness and advancement. This attitude is clearly seen in the way the Islamic governments behaved in the early days of Islam as well as later on. Whenever a law prevalent in the Prophet's days was changed or any system established by him discarded, the only reason given was that that law or system was in conflict with one or another right of the *Ummah*; and that the good of the nation demanded that a new law should be enforced and a new system established which would satisfy people's aspirations for blessings of life. A scholar has openly written³ that a caliph has full authority to act contrary to explicit religious laws if he thinks it to be in the best interest of the *Ummah*.

Accordingly, the Muslim nation would not be any different from other civilized societies inasmuch as they all have an elected body which decides the laws of the society keeping in view the demands of the situation at a given time.

This opinion, as you see, is held by those who think that religion is a social system presented in the garb of religion. It is governed by the same factors which govern other human societies leading them on the path of evolution step by step. Islam was a high ideal which was perfectly suitable for those who lived during and near the days of the Prophet.

Islam, according to them, is only a link in the chain of human civilization – and the time has left it behind. One should not study it except in the way the archaeologists look at the artifacts from the earth.

We have nothing to discuss about the Verse: ***“obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority from among you” (4:59)***, with the persons holding the above-mentioned view. That view is based on a theory which would adversely affect all fundamentals of religion and the whole system established by the Prophet's traditions, including the basic gnosis and belief, moral values and rules of jurisprudence.

If we look in this light at all that was done by the companions in the days of the Prophet and during his last illness; at the disputes and strifes they caused; at the changes they made in some laws and systems established by the Prophet (S); at the happenings in the days of Mu'awiyah and the caliphs who followed him, the Umayyads, then the 'Abbasids and then the later ones – and all things resemble one another – we shall arrive at a stunning conclusion.

A most astonishing view has been expressed about this Verse by a writer, who has opined, “The Verse, ***obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority from among you (4:59)***, does not imply any of the things said by the exegetes – divided as they are among themselves:

“First, because the obligatoriness of *Ulu 'l-amr*'s obedience – whoever they might be – does not prove that they have any distinction or superiority over others. We are also obliged by religion to obey unjust oppressive rulers when there is no alternative, for the sake of warding off their evil, and those unjust rulers can never be superior to us in the sight of Allah.

“Second, because the order given in the Verse is not unlike other religious commands which can be implemented only when its object is available. For example, it is obligatory to spend on poor, and forbidden to help oppressors; but it is not obligatory for us to create a poor or an oppressor in order that we could spend on him or resist from helping him, respectively.”

Comment: The fallacy of these two ‘reasons’ is transparent. Add to it his supposition that *Ulu ’l-amr* in the Verse means rulers and kings, unsoundness of which has already been shown.

As for his first reason, he seems oblivious to the fact that the Qur’an is full of Verses forbidding obedience of the unjust, the oppressors and the unbelievers. It was impossible for Allah to order us to obey them, after all that prohibition; and then to go a step further and join their obedience with His and the Messenger’s obedience. If that obedience were allowed for the sake of one’s safety, Allah would have used words like ‘permission’, etc., as He has done in one place: **“except when you guard yourself against them for fear of them” (3:28)**. Not that He should clearly make their obedience compulsory, which would lead to all types of horrible results.

As for the second reason, it is based on the same assumption as the first one. However, if it is supposed that their obedience was made obligatory because they had a special status in religion, then they would be sinless, as explained earlier. And it is impossible for Allah to oblige us to obey someone who did not exist or who was rarely found – and this too in a Verse which contained the most fundamental aspect of religious good, a factor without which the equilibrium of Islamic society could not be maintained. You have seen that the *Ummah* needs *Ulu ’l-amr* for the same reason it needs the Messenger for, that is, for guarding and managing the affairs of the *Ummah*. We had talked on it when discussing about the decisive and ambiguous Verses⁴.

Now we return to our original topic.

It is now clear that it would be meaningless to interpret the phrase: **“those vested with authority from among you” (4:59)**, as ‘the people having influence and power’ (whatever meaning we give to this latter phrase).

The only meaning now possible is: Those individuals from among the *Ummah* who are sinless, free from error and mistake in their words and deeds, whose obedience has been made obligatory. The only way to recognize them is through clear divine affirmation, either in His own words or through His Prophet. This explanation corresponds with what has been narrated from the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt that it is they.

As for the claim that *Ulu ’l-amr* refers to the rightly guided caliphs, commanders of expeditions or religious scholars whose opinions and words are followed, it is rebutted on two counts:

First: The Verse proves their sinlessness, and undoubtedly, none of these three groups was or is sinless – except what a group of Muslims believes about the right of ‘Ali (‘a)

Second: All these interpretations are just claims without any evidence.

Objections have been raised against the explanation that the phrase refers to the sinless Imams of Ahl al-Bayt ('a):

First Objection: In case this meaning were correct, it was necessary for Allah and the Messenger to clearly identify them [to the *Ummah*]; and if it were done, no two persons would have disputed about them after the Messenger of Allah (S).

Reply: It is clearly mentioned in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, like the Verses of Guardianship, Purity and others; and the traditions like that of the Ark:

"The parable of my Ahl al-Bayt is like the parable of Noah's Ark; whoever boarded it was saved, and whoever stayed away from it was drowned".

And that of the Two Precious Things:

"Surely I am leaving among you two precious [or weighty] things, the Book of Allah and my offspring who are my Ahl al-Bayt; as long as you would hold fast to both of them you would never go astray after me".

These have been quoted in the discourse on "Decisive and Ambiguous Verses" in the third [Ar.] volume⁵. There are also traditions about the *Ulu 'l-amr*, narrated through Shi'i and Sunni chains, some of which will be given under coming "Traditions".

Second Objection: Their obedience is conditional to their identification, because an order to obey them without recognizing them would be a command to do the impossible. As their obedience is conditional, this Verse cannot apply to them because it is unconditional.

Reply: This objection bounces back to the objector. Every obedience [even of the people of influence and power] is conditional to their recognition. The only difference is that we may recognize the people of influence and power by ourselves without referring it to Allah and His Messenger, while a sinless Imam can be identified only through an introducer. However, the condition of recognition is equally present in both cases; so, both should be contrary to the Verse.

The fact is that although identification is counted as a condition, it is not like other conditions. It only means that when one is obliged to do something, he has to recognize the object of obligation and its other concomitants; but the obligation does not depend on it. If recognition were like other basic conditions which affect the obligation itself, like 'ability' for hajj or existence of water for wudu', then nobody would be obliged to do anything at all.

Third Objection: We are unable, these days, to reach a sinless Imam and learn knowledge and religion from him. Therefore, he cannot be the *Ulu 'l-amr* whose obedience is obligatory for the *Ummah*,

because there is no way to have any contact with him.

Reply: This problem is created by the *Ummah* itself, not by Allah or the Messenger. The *Ummah* opted for wrong ways and was untrue to itself. Thus, the responsibility and obligation to obedience stays unchanged. Suppose a nation killed its prophet. Can they claim that now they were unable to obey him because he was no more? Moreover, the objection may be directed to the objector himself, because nowadays there is not a single *Ummah* in Islam in which the people of influence and power from among themselves could enforce what they would decide for it.

Fourth Objection: Allah says: “*Then if you quarrel about any thing, refer it to Allah and the Messenger*” (4:59). If *Ulu ’l-amr* means a sinless Imam, it was necessary to say, ‘refer it to the Imam’.

Reply: Its reply has already been given in the Commentary; and it shows that it actually means referring to the Imam.

Fifth Objection: The believers in a sinless Imam say that his obedience rescues the *Ummah* from darkness of strife and evil of disagreement. But evidently the Verse ordains a law related to quarrel – in spite of the existence of Imam and obedience of the *Ummah*. It points to disagreement among the *Ulu ’l-amr* themselves in reaching at a decision about some event or occurrence. But according to those who believe so, it is not possible to quarrel or dispute in presence of a sinless Imam, because in their views he is like the Messenger (S). Accordingly, this sentence would be without any purpose or benefit.

Reply: Its reply too is clear from the preceding Commentary. The quarrel mentioned in the Verse refers to the believers’ disagreement concerning rules of the Qur’an and the Sunnah, not concerning executive orders issued by the Imam in various events and happenings. It was mentioned earlier that no one has any right to legislate a law other than Allah and His Messenger. If the quarreling parties are capable of inferring its law from the Qur’an and the Sunnah, they have the right to do so, or they could ask the Imam about it, because he is free from error in his opinion. But if they are unable to infer it, then the only way is to ask the Imam. It is just like the days of the Messenger of Allah (S) when his contemporaries had the option of inferring the law from the Qur’an (if they could) or asking the Messenger of Allah (S) about it; but in case they could not infer it, the only remedy was to ask him (S).

As the Verse shows, the *Ulu ’l-amr* are just like the Messenger in obligatoriness of their obedience. As for the believers’ quarrel, the Verse describes the procedure to be adopted, and it makes no difference whether the Messenger be present (as the following Verses show) or absent (as the unrestrictedness of the Verse proves). The order to refer the matter to Allah and the Messenger is, therefore, confined to the dispute among the believers themselves, as is shown by the word if you quarrel; it should be noted that Allah has not said, if those vested with authority quarrel; nor has He said, if they quarrel. The matter will be referred, in the presence of the Messenger, by asking him the relevant law or inferring it from the Qur’an and the Sunnah (for those who have the ability to do so); and in his absence, the question is to be asked of the Imam, or its reply inferred as described above. Obviously, the sentence, “*Then if you*

quarrel about any thing...” (4:59), is not without purpose or benefit, as the objector had claimed.

All this proves that the word, *Ulu 'l-amr*, in this Verse refers to some men from among the *Ummah*, each of whom is similar to the Messenger in two aspects: He too is free from sin and mistake, and his obedience too is obligatory and compulsory. However, we do not say that the phrase, *Ulu 'l-amr*, does not have a wider connotation according to language, or that it may not be used in a more general way if one wants to. But meaning of a word is one thing, and applying it to appropriate objects is another. For example, meaning of messenger is general, and it is used in the same meaning in this Verse; yet the intended personality is of the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad (S).

Then If You Quarrel About Any Thing, Refer It To Allah And The Messenger

“Then if you quarrel about any thing, refer it to Allah and the Messenger” (4:59).

It branches out from the restriction understood from the context. The preceding sentence ***“obey Allah and obey the Messenger...”*** (4:59), makes obedience of Allah and the Messenger compulsory. This obedience is in the sphere of religion which ensures erasure of every possible dispute and guarantees fulfilment of every possible need. It leaves nothing uncared for, and no referral is required to any one other than Allah and His Messenger. The sentence, thus, implies: obey Allah and do not obey *taghut*. This is the implied restriction which we have mentioned above.

The speech is addressed to the believers. It shows that the ‘quarrel’ refers to their dispute among themselves, and not to any putative quarrel between them and the *Ulu 'l-amr*, nor to any supposed dispute among the *Ulu 'l-amr* themselves. It is because the former, i.e., quarrel among the believers and the *Ulu 'l-amr*, goes against the obligation of their obedience, and the latter, i.e., dispute among the *Ulu 'l-amr* themselves, does not conform with obligatoriness of their obedience [which shows that they are always right] because in dispute one party is surely wrong. Moreover, this idea is not in accord with the Verse, as it is addressed to the believers; Allah says: ***“then if you quarrel about any thing, refer it...”*** (4:59).

The word, ‘thing’, is general and could possibly include all decisions and orders given by Allah, His Messenger and *Ulu 'l-amr*; yet the next words, “refer it to Allah and the Messenger”, show that the Verse speaks about quarrel in something outside the direct responsibility of the *ulu 'l- amr*. They have full authority and control over executive matters which come within the area of their *wilayah* (أُولَايَةُ = guardianship; mastership), like their order to join an expedition, to fight or to make peace, and so on. The order to refer a matter to Allah and the Messenger does not cover such things, because people are obliged to obey the *Ulu 'l-amr* in these things.

This sentence, therefore, is confined to religious laws only; no one, other than Allah and the Messenger, has any authority to issue or abrogate a law. The Verse somewhat explicitly shows that no one has any right to manipulate any religious law explained by Allah and His Messenger, and *Ulu 'l-amr* and others

all are equal in this respect.

The proviso “...**if you believe in Allah and the last day...**” (4:59), puts utmost emphasis to this order, and indicates that its contravention emanates from defect in belief. The order has a direct connection with faith; its contravention would show that although the person concerned pretended to believe in Allah and His Messenger, disbelief was hidden in his heart; and this is hypocrisy, as the following Verses prove:

“This is better and very good in the end...” (4:59).

The indicative, ‘this’, points either to referring the matter in dispute or to obeying Allah, His Messenger and those vested with authority. “at-Ta’wil” (التَّأْوِيلُ) = translated here as “in the end”) refers to the underlying good on which the order is based and which is realized when the order is carried out. Its meaning has been explained in the third volume⁶, under the Verse:

“...seeking to give it (their own) interpretation, but none knows its interpretation except Allah...” (3:7).

Have You Not Observed Those Who Think That They Believe In What Has Been Revealed To You?

“Have you not observed those who think that they believe in what has been revealed to you?” (4:60).

“Az-Za‘m” (الزَّعْمُ) means to think, to claim, no matter it conforms with reality or not. It is different from “al-‘ilm” (الْعِلْمُ) = to know) which is used for a knowledge that conforms with fact. As az-za‘m is generally used for thoughts and claims not conforming with facts, people often think that this non-conformity is part of its connotation; but it is not so.

“At-Taghut” (الطَّاغُوتُ) is a masdar in the meaning of “at -tughyan” (الطُّغْيَانُ) = to exceed proper bounds) on the paradigm of “ar-rahbut” (الرَّهْبُوتُ), “al-jabarut” (الْجَبَرُوتُ) and “al-malakut” (الْمَلَكُوتُ); but generally, it is used for active participle in exaggerated sense. The Arabs say: Tagha ‘l-ma’ (طَغَى الْمَاءُ) = Water overflowed the banks). Its use for man began as an extended metaphor; then it became common until it is now taken as its real meaning; it indicates his exceeding the proper limits laid down by reason or Shari‘ah. At -Taghut therefore means oppressor and tyrant, who rebels against, and discards the demands of divine worship showing hauteur against Allah. That is why scholars say that at -taghut refers to every one who is worshipped – other than Allah.

The words: **“what has been revealed to you and what was revealed before you” (4:60)** mean, what Allah has revealed to His messengers. This expression was preferred to the phrase, ‘they believe in you and in those before you’, because the talk is about obligation of referring disputed matters to the Book of Allah and its laws. It also indicates that the ‘command’ in the clause: **“they were commanded to deny**

him” (4:60) refers to the order contained in divine books and revelations sent to the prophets, Muhammad and the preceding ones, may Allah bless him, his progeny and them all.

The opening words **“Have you not observed” (4:60)** clarify a possible query: Why has the order been given to obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority [and to refer the disputes to them]? The reply: Have you not seen how they indulge in disobedience by resorting to the judgment of *taghut*? The question reflects pity; it is a matter of pity that they were doing so, while they claimed to believe in the Books revealed to you and the other prophets; these books were sent down to judge between the people in matters they disputed about. Allah has clearly said in the Verse:

“Mankind was but one nation; so Allah sent the prophets as bearers of good news and warners, and He sent down with them the book with truth, that it might judge between the people in that in which they differed ...” (2:213).

Yet they resort to the judgment of *taghut* in their disputes, i.e., to the judgment of those who have exceeded the limit, rebelled against divine religion and crossed the boundary of truth. They do so in spite of their being clearly ordered in these books to deny *taghut*. Was it not enough reason for forbidding them to resort to *taghut* for judgment, that it was tantamount to discarding the books of Allah and abrogating His laws?

The sentence at the end, and the Satan desires to lead them astray into a far-reaching error, shows that they did so coming under the Satan’s influence and his misguidance, as he wanted to lead them into a far-reaching error.

And When It Is Said To Them: Come To What Allah Has Revealed

“And when it is said to them: Come to what Allah has revealed and to the Messenger...” (4:61).

“Ta‘alaw” (تَعَالَوْا = come) is imperative of at-ta‘ali (التَّعَالَى = to rise); “sadda” (صَدَّ = turned away).

“Come to what Allah has revealed and to the Messenger” (4:61), means, come to the law of Allah and to him who decides according to it ***“... turning away from you with (utter) aversion” (4:61)***. The speech is addressed to the Messenger alone, although they were called not to him alone, but to him and the book together. The Verse comments on those who claimed to believe in what was revealed by Allah; they were not unbelievers that they could openly reject the Book of Allah. Such people were in fact hypocrites, showing that they believed in what Allah had revealed, but turning away openly from His Messenger.

It clearly proves that any attempt to differentiate between Allah and His Messenger by accepting the order of Allah and hesitating about the order of the Messenger is unmitigated hypocrisy.

But How Will It Be When Misfortune Befalls Them On Account Of What Their Hands Have Sent Before?

“But how will it be when misfortune befalls them on account of what their hands have sent before?” (4:62).

It is a warning that this turning away from the order of Allah and His Messenger, and resorting to the judgment of someone else, i.e., *taghut*, is sure to bring misfortune in its wake, and its only cause will be this turning away from the order of Allah and His Messenger, and that resort to the *taghut*'s judgment.

The words:

“Then will they come to you swearing by Allah: We did not desire (anything) but good and concord” (4:62).

Give prior information of their excuse that it was not with any bad intention that they had resorted to the *taghut*'s judgment.

The meaning thus will be as follows – and Allah knows better:

If they persisted in that behaviour, then how would they feel when its evil consequences overwhelmed them, and then they would rush to you swearing by the name of Allah that their only desire, in resorting to the judgment of other than the divine book and the Messenger, was to bring good and accord in society and removing the disagreement between the parties.

These Are They Of Whom Allah Knows What Is In Their Hearts

“These are they of whom Allah knows what is in their hearts...” (4:63).

It is a rejection of their excuse. Allah did not describe what was in their heart, nor did He say that their motive was bad, because the words, turn aside from them and admonish them, were enough to expose it. If their intention was not bad, it would have been true and good; and Allah would not order His Messenger to turn aside from a person who spoke truth and described fact.

The words: ***“and speak to them effectual words concerning themselves” (4:63)*** mean: Say to them such words as would reach their hearts and they would come to realize the evil of their activities; they should understand that it was hypocrisy which on coming in open was bound to bring Allah's wrath and punishment to them.

And We Did Not Send Any Messenger But That He Should Be Obeyed

“And We did not send any Messenger but that he should be obeyed ...” (4:64).

It is an all-encompassing refutation of these hypocrites' evil-doings described above: resorting to

taghut's judgment, turning aside from the Messenger, swearing and offering excuse of having intention of good and concord. All this is, in one way or another, disobedience of the Messenger of Allah, whether accompanied by any excuse or not. Allah has made his obedience compulsory without any restriction or condition; He has sent him only to be obeyed by Allah's permission.

No one should imagine that it was only Allah's obedience that was required, while the Messenger was merely one of the human beings, who was obeyed only for people's good; and if such a result could be achieved without his obedience, then there was no harm in going ahead independently, leaving the Messenger aside; otherwise, it would mean associating him with Allah, and worshipping him. This attitude was reflected, every now and then, in their talk with the Messenger of Allah (S), when he took a decision about some important matter, and someone would ask him: Is it by Allah's order or by yours?

Therefore, Allah has made it clear that the obligation to obey the Prophet (S) is all-encompassing and unconditional; it is nothing but Allah's obedience because it is by His permission. The Verse in effect says what is declared in the Verse 80 of this same chapter:

“Whoever obeys the Messenger, he indeed obeys Allah” (4:80).

Then Allah says that if they had returned to Allah and His Messenger, repenting for the sin of disobeying the Messenger and turning aside from him, it would have been better than their swearing in the name of Allah and offering lame and useless excuses which could not please the Messenger of Allah (S), as Allah would inform him of the reality behind that facade. This is the import of the second half of the Verse:

“And had they, when they were unjust to themselves, come to you and asked forgiveness of Allah and the Messenger had (also) asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah Oft-returning (to mercy), Merciful” (4:64).

But No! By Your Lord! They Do Not Believe Until They Make You A Judge

“But no! By your Lord! They do not believe until they make you a judge of that which has become a matter of disagreement ...” (4:65).

“Ash- Shajr” and “ash-shajur” (الشَّجَرُ، الشَّجُورُ = to mingle, to jumble). From it are derived “at-tashajur” and “al-mushajarah” (التَّشَاجُرُ، الْمُشَاجَرَةُ = to quarrel, to dispute), as if the claim and counter-claims are mixed up and jumbled together; the same is the root of ash-shajar (الشَّجَرُ = tree) because its branches look jumbled and mixed together; “al-haraj” (الْحَرْجُ = straitness, tightness).

At first glance it appears that it is a rebuttal of the hypocrites' thinking that they believed in the Prophet (S) even while resorting to the Satan's judgment. It seems to mean: This claim is not correct; they will not be counted as believers until they come to you for judgment and then do not find any straitness in their hearts when you gave your judgment. But the generality of the clause:

“...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 total submission” (4:65).

And that of the next Verse:

“And if We had prescribed for them: Lay down your lives or go forth from your homes, they would not have done it except a few of them...” (4:66).

Supports the view that this admonition is not restricted to the hypocrites; it covers others too inasmuch as they apparently think that mere acceptance of what Allah has revealed including gnosis and commands constitutes true belief in Allah, His Messenger and all that the Messenger has brought. But it is not so. True belief means total submission from the depth of one's heart as well as in appearance. How is it possible for true believers not to submit to the Prophet's order in appearance (turning aside from him and going against him) or in their inner self by feeling straitness in their hearts when that judgment goes against their wishes. Allah has said to His Messenger:

“... That you may judge between people by means of that which Allah has taught you” (4: 105).

Now, if any one feels annoyed with the Prophet's judgment, he is in fact annoyed with Allah's judgment, because it is Allah who has made his obedience compulsory and given him authority to enforce his decisions.

If they surrendered to the Messenger's order and judgment without finding any straitness in their hearts on that account, they would have in fact surrendered to Allah's order and judgment, whether it be a legislative one or creative. It is one of the stages of faith, on reaching which a believer attains to many superior virtues (the most prominent being submission to Allah's order), and becomes free from many bad traits like finding straitness in heart and objecting to divine order by tongue or heart. The 'submission' required in the Verse is general and comprehensive.

It is now clear that, although the wording of the Verse:

“But no! By your Lord! They do not believe 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 total submission” (4:65).

Apparently makes it restricted to the Prophet's judgment only (because it refers to their resorting to the judgment of someone else even when they were obliged to refer every dispute to the Prophet (S), yet its import is general and covers orders of Allah and His Messenger both, and in matters of legislation as well as creation, as described above.

Not only that. It encompasses all judgments he delivered, all systems he established and all actions he performed, because the order is general; and it is not possible for the one who truly believes in Allah to

reject, be annoyed or feel disturbed on account of a judgment, order or system that in any way emanates from Allah or His Messenger. Otherwise, it would be, to a certain degree, associating others with Allah. Allah says:

“And most of them do not believe in Allah without associating others (with Him)” (12: 106).

And If We Had Prescribed For Them ... Except A Few Of Them

“And if We had prescribed for them: Lay down your lives or go forth from your homes, they would not have done it except a few of them; and if they had done what they were admonished, it would have certainly been better for them and best in strengthening (them)” (4:66).

It was described under the Verse:

“...But Allah has cursed them on account of their unbelief, so they shall not believe but a few (4:46)

That this style indicates that the statement is applicable to the collective body of people, i.e., to the society as a whole, and that the exception only serves to remove any possible misunderstanding that it covers each and every member without sparing a single person. The exception, therefore, is rather separated than attached, or it falls between the attached and the separated exceptions inasmuch as it has two sides.

Therefore, the sentence ***“they would not have done it except a few of them” (4:66)*** describes the condition of the collective body that as a society they do not obey the orders which seem unpalatable to them and which affect the things to which their hearts are firmly attached like their lives and homes; and the exception of the few has been added to remove a possible misunderstanding.

The meaning: If We had prescribed for them and ordered them to kill themselves or go forth leaving their homes and places of residence which they were emotionally attached to, they would not have done it, would have disobeyed Us. Nevertheless, as the above statement could have given an impression that there was not among them even a single true believer who would submit to the command of Allah, this misunderstanding was removed by excepting a few of them; although the preceding statement in fact had not included them in the first place, because it had commented on the society per se, and had not looked at individual members except as components of that society.

It shows that the Verse speaks about the killing of the whole by whole group, and their collective dispersion from their villages and towns. It does not refer to individuals – that every one should kill himself or go out from his personal home. It is the same style as used in the Verse:

“...Therefore, turn to your Creator (penitently), and kill your people [lit.: yourselves] ...” (2:54).

Because this Verse too is addressed to the group, not to individuals.

And If They Had Done What They Were Admonished

“...And if they had done what they were admonished...” (4:66).

The word ‘prescribed’ used at the beginning, has been changed here to ‘admonished’. It is an indication that these directives given as commands and orders are in fact pointers leading to what contains their good and bliss. They are in their essence admonitions and sympathetic guidance ordained for their good.

It Would Have Certainly Been Better For Them And Most Efficacious In Strengthening

“It would have certainly been better for them and most efficacious in strengthening (them)” (4:66).

That is, in all matters that concerns them in this world and the next. It is because the good of the next world is inseparable from this world’s good; rather the former follows the latter. “Most efficacious in strengthening”, i.e., strengthening their hearts and souls with true faith, as the speech revolves around faith. Allah has said:

“Allah strengthens those who believe with the sure word in this world’s life and in the hereafter” (14:27).

And Then We Would Certainly Have Given Them From Ourselves A Great Reward

“And then We would certainly have given them from Ourselves a great reward” (4:67).

That is, when they got strengthened with firm faith. The vagueness of “a great reward” has the same implication as the unrestrictedness of “better for them”.

And We Would Certainly Have Guided Them In The Straight Path

“And We would certainly have guided them in the straight path” (4:68).

The meaning of the straight path was explained in the first volume under the Verse:

“Guide us to the straight path” (1:6).

And Whoever Obeys Allah And The Messenger, These Are With Those Upon Whom Allah Has Bestowed

“And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger, these are with those upon whom Allah has bestowed favours from among the prophets and the truthful and the witnesses and the good

ones; and excellent are these as companion” (4:69).

Obedience of Allah and the Messenger has been joined in this good news although the preceding Verses had spoken specifically about the Messenger’s obedience and submission to his command and judgment; it is because of some intervening Verses referring to Allah, e.g.,

“And if We had prescribed for them ...” (4:66).

The obligation therefore is of obeying Allah and obeying His Messenger; as was clearly laid down in the beginning of this topic:

“Obey Allah and obey the Messenger ...” (4:59).

The words:

“... These are with those upon whom Allah has bestowed favours” (4:69).

Show that the obedient ones would join the company of the prophets and the other favoured ones, not that they would become one of them. Those bestowed with favours are the people of “the straight path”; and this phrase has not been attributed in the Qur’an to any one other than Allah, with exception of this group, as the Qur’an says:

“Guide us to the straight path” (1:6)

“The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours” (1:7).

In short, the obedient ones will enjoy the company of the prophets, truthful ones, etc., without becoming themselves prophet, etc. Also, the end clause, “and excellent are these as companion”, points to this direction. It was explained earlier that the favour specifically refers to mastership and guardianship.

Coming to these four groups, the prophets are recipients of revelation who are given news of the unseen. We know nothing more about them except what is seen of their achievements in society. Also, it has earlier been described that “ash-shuhada” (الشُّهَدَاءُ), when used in the Qur’an, means witnesses of people’s actions, not martyrs in the battle-field; and that the good ones are those who deserve favours from Allah.

As for the truthful ones, the word “as-siddiq” (الصِّدِّيقُ) is the exaggerative form of as-sidq (الصِّدْقُ = truth). Truth occurs in speech as well as in acts. Truth in action means its conformity with the words, because it shows firm belief. When one is true in one’s words, it gives a true picture of his inner belief without any contradiction; a word is true when it conforms with reality. As the speech itself is an action, the one who is truthful in action would not say except what he knows to be true and real. His words therefore are doubly true – the narration and the matter narrated both are true.

The truthful one, who never lies, is the one who does not do except what he knows to be right, without

following his desires, and does not say except what he knows to be truth, and does not think except that which is true; he sees the reality of the things, says truth and does right.

In this way the ranks are fixed: The prophets (and they are the leaders and chiefs); then the truthful ones (and they are witnesses of realities and people's deeds); then the witnesses (who are witnesses of deeds); and lastly the good ones (who are qualified to receive divine favours).

The last word, "rafiqa" (رَفِيقًا = companion) is accusative of specification; and means: as companion, in the manner of a companion. That is why it has been used in singular form. Some others have said that it is a circumstantial clause and means: each of these is excellent as companion. In that case, the style is similar to that found in the Verse:

"... then We bring you forth as baby ..." (22:5).

This Is Grace From Allah And Sufficient Is Allah As The Knower

"This is grace from Allah, and sufficient is Allah as the Knower" (4:70).

The sentence begins with the indicative pronoun, dhalika (ذَلِكَ = lit.: that), and that pronoun is made for distant objects; then the predicate al-fadl (الْفَضْلُ = grace) is strengthened with the definite article al (الْ). All these literary devices signify the magnificence of the grace, as though it is the grace in its totality. The Verse ends with the mention of divine knowledge, because the preceding speech describes the ranks of faith and belief, which cannot be identified except by the divine knowledge.

It should be noted here that these noble Verses have changed several times the style from first or second person to the third and vice versa without affecting the flow of speech or weakening their interlinked arrangement. The series begins addressing the believers in second person [***O you who believe! (4:59)***], then talks of them in third person [***And if We had prescribed for them (4:66)***].

Likewise, Allah has mentioned Himself in the first Verse in third person [***Obey Allah..(4:59)***], then turns to first person plural [***And We did not send... (4:64)***], then at once to the third person in the same Verse [***by permission of Allah... (4:64)***]; then again to the first-person plural [***And if We had prescribed ... (4:66)***], and finally to third person [***And whoever obeys Allah ..(4:69)***].

Likewise, the Messenger of Allah has been described in the first Verse in third person [***...And obey the Messenger(4:59)***], then addressed in the second person [***...Come to you... (4:62)***], and then turns to third person (***and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them***), then it turns again to second person [***By your Lord! (4:65)***], it then turns third time to the third person [***And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger) (4:69)***], and finally uses the demonstrative pronoun, ula'ika (أُولَئِكَ = these) with second person pronoun ka (كَ = you). Altogether there are ten changes here, and the reasons are not difficult to understand for anyone who ponders on the context.

Traditions

Ibn Babawayh has narrated through his chain from Jabir ibn ‘Abdillah al-Ansari that he said: “When Allah, the Mighty, the Great, sent to His Prophet, Muhammad (S), the Verse: **“O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority from among you” (4:59)**, I said, ‘O Messenger of Allah! We know Allah and His Messenger; but who are those vested with authority whose obedience Allah has conjoined to your obedience?’

(The Prophet) said: ‘They are my caliphs, O Jabir! and the Imams of the Muslims after me. The first of them is ‘Ali son of Abu Talib, then al-Hasan, then al-Husayn, then ‘Ali son of al-Husayn, then Muhammad son of ‘Ali who is mentioned as al-Baqir in the Torah; you will surely meet him, O Jabir! when you see him convey my salam (greetings) to him. Then as-Sadiq Ja‘far son of Muhammad; then Musa son of Ja‘far; then ‘Ali son of Musa; then Muhammad son of ‘Ali; then ‘Ali son of Muhammad; then al-Hasan son of ‘Ali; then Muhammad (whose name and patronym will be the same as mine) son of al-Hasan son of ‘Ali, the Proof of Allah on His earth and Baqiyyatullah (بَقِيَّةُ اللَّهِ = the one kept safe by Allah) among His servants; he is the one by whose hands Allah, Sublime is His remembrance, will conquer the whole world from the east to the west; he it is who will remain hidden from his followers and friends for such a long period that no one will remain firm on the belief of his imamah except he whose heart has been tested by Allah for faith.’ “

Jabir says: “I said: ‘O Messenger of Allah! Will his followers get any benefit from him during his occultation?’ (The Prophet, S.) said: ‘Certainly, by Him Who has sent me with prophethood! they will be guided by his light and benefit from his wilayah (الْوِلَايَةُ = love, mastership) during his occultation as people benefit from the sun when it is hidden in cloud. O Jabir! this is part of the hidden secrets of Allah and the treasured knowledge of Allah. So, keep it hidden except from the people who deserve to know”⁷

The author says: an-Nu‘mani has narrated through his chain from Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilali from ‘Ali (‘a) a tradition of the same meaning as above. Also ‘Ali ibn Ibrahim has narrated it through his chain from Sulaym from ‘Ali (‘a). There are other traditions narrated through Shi‘i and Sunni chains, describing the imamah of the above Imams together with their names; which may be seen in Yanabi‘u ‘l-mawaddah, and al-Bahrari’s Ghayatu ‘l-maram and other books.

Jabir al-Ju‘fi has said: “I asked Abu Ja‘far (‘a) about the Verse: **“obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority from among you” (4:59)**. He said: ‘The Imams.”⁸

The author says: al-‘Ayyashi has narrated in his Tafsir another similar tradition through ‘Umar ibn Sa‘id from Abu ‘l-Hasan (‘a), in which the following reply is given: “ ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib and the Imams after him.”

Ibn Shahrashub narrates: “al-Hasan ibn Salih asked as-Sadiq (‘a) about it and the Imam replied: ‘The Imams from the Ahl al-Bayt of the Messenger of Allah (S).’ “

The author says: A similar tradition has been narrated by as-Saduq through Abu Basir from al-Baqir (‘a) in which it is said: “The Imams from the children of ‘Ali and Fatimah until the Hour (of resurrection) comes.”

Abu Masruq has narrated a tradition from Abu ‘Abdillah (‘a); he says: “I told him: ‘We have discussion with theologians and we argue against them with the words of Allah, the Mighty, the Great: **“Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority from among you” (4:59)**, but they say: “It was revealed about the believers.” And we argue against them with the words of Allah, the Mighty, the Great, Say: I do not ask of you any recompense for it except the love for near relatives; and they say: “It was revealed about the near relatives of the believers.” Thus I did not leave anything like this which came to my mind but I mentioned it (to him).’

Thereupon he said to me: ‘In that case, call them to al-mubalahah (الْمُبَاهَلَةُ = imprecation).’ I said: ‘And how should I do it?’ He said: ‘Keep yourself good and happy for three days; keep fast; take bath; and go forth you and he to the mountains; then entwine your right hand’s fingers in his fingers; then show justice to him and begin with yourself and say: “O Allah, the Lord of the seven heavens and the Lord of the seven earths, the Knower of the unseen and the seen, the Beneficent, the Merciful! If Abu Masruq has rejected truth and claimed wrong, then send on him reckoning from the heaven and a painful chastisement.” Then turn the same imprecation on him and say: “And if he (i.e., your adversary) has rejected truth and claimed wrong, then send on him reckoning from the heaven and a painful chastisement’.”

“Then (the Imam, a.s.) said to me: ‘Thus it will not be long that you will see it (chastisement) in him.’ But, by Allah, I did not find anyone who would answer to this call.[9](#)”

‘Abdullah ibn ‘Ajlan has narrated from Abu Ja‘far (‘a) that he said about this Verse of obedience: “It is about ‘Ali and the Imams; Allah has put them in places of prophets except that they do not make anything lawful or unlawful.[10](#)”

The author says: The exception in this tradition confirms what was written in the Commentary that according to this Verse legislating a law was reserved for Allah and His Messenger.

Burayd ibn Mu‘awiyah has narrated that Abu Ja‘far (‘a) recited: **“Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority from among you” (4:59)**; then if you fear a dispute about anything, refer it back to Allah and the Messenger and those vested with authority from among you.” Then he said: “How can it be that He orders their obedience and then allows disputing with them? He (Allah) has said it to the rebellious ones who were told, obey Allah and obey the Messenger.[11](#)”

The author says: All that this tradition shows is that the Imam (‘a) was explaining the Verse and elaborating on it; as we have described in the Commentary. It does not mean that the Imam (‘a) was giving a separate version of the Verse, as might be misunderstood by the word, ‘recited’. A proof of what we have said may be found in the fact that different wordings have been used in other traditions [giving

the same meaning, and even in the same tradition recorded in another book]. For example.

Hariz has narrated from Abu ‘Abdillah (‘a) that he said: “It was revealed, then if you quarrel about any thing, refer it to Allah and to the Messenger and to those vested with authority from you.” (at-Tafsir, al-Qummi). Also al-‘Ayyashi has narrated from Burayd ibn Mu‘awiyah from Abu Ja‘far (‘a) (and it is the same tradition which has been quoted above from al-Kafi), and this narration says, inter alia: “Then (Allah) said to the people, ‘O you who believe!’, and He has gathered [in this address] all the believers upto the Day of Resurrection” ***“Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority from among you” (4:59)***. He has meant us particularly. Then if you fear a dispute about anything, refer it back to Allah and the Messenger and those vested with authority from among you. It was revealed in this way. And how would He order them to obey those vested with authority and then allow them to quarrel with them? It was said to those who were ordered [to obey and] who were told: ***“Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority from among you” (4:59)***. [12](#)

Abu Basir has narrated from Abu Ja‘far (‘a) that he said: “It (i.e., the Verse of obedience) was revealed about ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib (‘a).” “I said to him: ‘People say to us, “What was to prevent Him from naming ‘Ali and his Ahl al-Bayt in His Book?”’ Abu Ja‘far (‘a) said: ‘Tell them, “Verily Allah revealed (the order of) prayer to His Messenger; but He did not name three (rak‘ah) or four, until it was the Messenger of Allah who explained it; and He revealed (the order of) hajj and did not reveal, ‘circumambulate seven times’, until the Messenger of Allah (S) explained it. [Likewise] Allah revealed: ***“Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority from among you” (4:59)***; and it was revealed about ‘Ali and al-Hasan and al-Husayn (peace be on them); and he (the Messenger of Allah, S.) said about ‘Ali: ‘Whoever’s master am I, ‘Ali is his master.’

Also, the Messenger of Allah (S) said: ‘I admonish you concerning the Book of Allah and my Ahl al-Bayt; verily I have asked Allah not to let them be separated from each other until He brings them to the hawd (الْحَوْضُ = reservoir [of al-Kawthar]), and He has granted it to me.’ And he said: ‘Do not teach them because they are more knowledgeable than you; verily they shall never take you away from the gate of guidance and shall never let you enter the gate of misguidance.’

If the Messenger of Allah had remained silent and not identified the people (of his Ahl al-Bayt), surely the progeny of ‘Abbas, and the progeny of ‘Aqil and someone else’s progeny would have claimed (to be among them); but Allah revealed in His Book: ***“Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O people of the House! and to purify you a (thorough) purification (33:33)***; and ‘Ali and al-Hasan and al-Husayn and Fatimah (peace be on them) were the interpretation of this Verse; so the Messenger of Allah (S) took the hands of ‘Ali and Fatimah and al-Hasan and al-Husayn (blessings from Allah be upon them) and entered them under the mantle in the house of Umm Salamah and said: ‘O Allah! every prophet had had his precious things and his people; and these are my precious things and my people’ Umm Salamah said: ‘Am I not from your people?’ He said: ‘Verily you are (preceeding) to good but these are my precious things and people of my (house)’” [13](#).

The author says: al-Kulayni has narrated in al-Kafi, through his chain of narrators from Abu Basir from the same Imam ('a) a similar tradition with minor differences in wordings.

Ibn Shahrashub has quoted from at-Tafsir of Mujahid that this Verse [of obedience] was revealed about the Leader of the faithful ['Ali, a.s.] when the Messenger of Allah (S) left him in Medina as his deputy. ('Ali) said: "O Messenger of Allah! Are you leaving me to look after the women and the children?" He [the Messenger of Allah] said: "O Leader of the faithful! Are you not pleased that you should have the same position with me as Harun had with Musa, when (Musa) said to him: 'Take my place among my people, and act well'? Then Allah said: 'and those vested with authority from among you'." (The Imam then) said: "'Ali ibn Abi Talib, Allah appointed him as the master of the *Ummah*'s affairs after Muhammad and when the Messenger of Allah (S) made him take his place at Medina. Thus, Allah ordered the servants to obey him ('Ali) and not to go against him. [14](#)"

Mujahid has also narrated from Ibanah al-Falaki that it was revealed when Abu Buraydah complained against 'Ali ('a) [15](#)

A tradition has been quoted in 'Abaqatu 'l-anwar from Yanabi'u 'l-mawaddah of ash-Shaykh Sulayman ibn Ibrahim al-Balkhi who quotes from al-Manaqib, from Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilali from 'Ali ('a) which, inter alia, says: ['Ali, 'a] said, "The least by which a servant goes astray is that he does not know the Proof of Allah, the Blessed, the Sublime, and His witness over His servants, whose obedience Allah has ordered and whose love and obedience made obligatory." Sulaym says, "I said, 'O Leader of the faithful! describe them to me.' He said, '(They are) those whom Allah has joined with Himself and His Messenger, and said: ***"Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those vested with authority from among you"* (4:59).**' I said to him, 'May Allah make me your ransom! explain (it) to me.' He said, 'Those (about whom) the Messenger of Allah (S) had said in several places and his last sermon on the day when Allah, the Mighty, the Great, took him to Himself: "Surely I am leaving among you two things, you shall never go astray after me if you hold fast to them: the Book of Allah, the Mighty, the Great, and my progeny who are my Ahl al-Bayt; because [Allah,] the Kind, the Knower, has promised me that they shall never be separated (from each other) until they come to me at the Reservoir – like these two (saying this, the Prophet joined his index fingers together) and I do not say 'like these two' (saying which he joined his index and middle fingers together); so hold fast to them both and don't go ahead of them, otherwise you would go astray'"

The author says: Traditions narrated from the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt, giving similar meanings as above are very numerous. What we have presented here gives examples of all types of meanings described in traditions. Anyone wanting more details should consult collections of ahadith.

As for ancient exegetes, they are divided about the meaning of the phrase, *Ulu 'l-amr*. Some say, it means the rightly guided caliphs; others say, commanders of expeditions; a third group says, the scholars. ad-Dahhak has reportedly said that it refers to the companions of the Prophet (S); but it boils down to the third interpretation, because reportedly he has said: "They are companions of the

Messenger of Allah (S) as they were the callers (to Islam) and narrators of traditions.’ Obviously, this reasoning is based on their knowledge, and this interpretation would ultimately mean the scholars.

It should be noted that many things and various stories have been reported concerning the reason of revelation of this Verse; but if one ponders on them, one would be in no doubt that all of them are mere attempts by the narrators to apply the Verse on one or the other view or situation. We therefore have not quoted any of them as it was of no value. You may look into ad-Durru 'l-manthur and at-Tafsir of at-Tabari and other books like them for verification of this observation.

Al-Barqi has narrated through his chain from Abu 'l-Jarud that Abu Ja'far ('a) said about the Verse, ***“But no! By your Lord! they do not believe until they ... submit with total submission” ...*** (4:65).

Submission is pleasure and satisfaction with His decree. [16](#)”

'Abdullah al-Kahili has said that Abu 'Abdillah ('a) said: “If a people worshipped Allah alone who has no partner, and established prayer, and gave zakat, and performed hajj of the House, and fasted in the month of Ramadan, and then said about a thing done by Allah or by His Messenger (S), ‘Why did he do this?’ Or, ‘If he had done it in another way [it would have been better]’ or felt [annoyance] in their hearts, they would become polytheists because of it.” Then he recited this Verse, ***“But no! By your Lord! they do not believe 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 total submission”*** (4:65). Then Abu 'Abdillah ('a) said: “It is incumbent upon you to submit. [17](#)”

'Abdullah ibn Yahya al-Kahili has narrated that he heard Abu 'Abdillah ('a) saying: “By Allah, if a people worshipped Allah alone who has no partner, and established prayer, and gave zakat, and performed hajj of the House, and fasted in the month of Ramadan, and then said about a thing done of the Messenger of Allah (S), ‘Why did he do this or that? or felt [annoyance] in their hearts, they would become polytheists because of it.” Then he recited,

“But no! By your Lord! They do not believe 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- Muhammad and the progeny of Muhammad - have decided and submit with total submission” (4:65) [18](#).

The author says: There are other traditions similar to these two. The meaning given by the Imam ('a) extends the theme of the Verse on two counts: First, that the Verse covers all decisions and decrees, be they legislative or creative; Second, it makes no difference whether the decision or decree was issued by Allah or by His Messenger.

It should be mentioned here that there are other traditions which apply the Verse: ***“But no! By your Lord! they ... submit with total submission”*** (4:65), to the wilayah of 'Ali ('a) or the wilayah of the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt ('a); they provide examples of applying a Verse to one or the other of its prominent

models. Certainly, the Verse is applicable to Allah, His Messenger and the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt, and it continues in them.

Ash-Shaykh has narrated through his chain from ‘Ali (‘a) that he said: “A man from the Helpers (ansar) came to the Prophet (S) and said: ‘O Messenger of Allah! I cannot bear separation from you; so much so that if I enter my home and remember you, I leave my property and come (here) for looking at you, in your love. Then I remembered that when the Day of Resurrection would come, you would be made to enter the Garden and raised to the highest level of ‘illiyyin (عِلِّيِّينَ = highest place). Then how could I see you? O Messenger of Allah!’ Then the Verse was revealed:

“And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger, these are with those upon whom Allah has bestowed favours from among the prophets, and the truthful, and the witnesses, and the good ones; and excellent are these as companion!” (4:69).

Thereupon the Prophet (S) sent for the man and recited it to him and gave him the good news.[19](#)”

The author says: This theme is also narrated through Sunni chains in ad-Durru ‘l-manthur quoting from at -Tabarani, Ibn Marduwayh, Abu Nu‘aym (in Hilyatu ‘l-awliya’) and ad-Diya’ al-Maqdisi (in Sifatu ‘l-jannah, saying that this tradition was ‘good’), all narrating from ‘A’ishah; also quoting from at -Tabarani and Ibn Marduwayh both through ash-Sha‘bi from Ibn ‘Abbas; and through Sa‘id ibn Mansur and Ibnu ‘l-Mundhir from ash-Sha‘bi; and through Ibn Jarir from Sa‘id ibn Jubayr.

Ibn Shahrashub has narrated from Anas ibn Malik from someone he had named from Abu Salih from Ibn ‘Abbas that he said about this Verse: ***“And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger, these are with those upon whom Allah has bestowed favours from among the prophets [i.e., Muhammad (S)] and the truthful [i.e., ‘Ali, and he was the first to verify] – and the witnesses [i.e., ‘Ali, Ja‘far, Hamzah, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, peace be on them] (4:69)”***[20](#)

The author says: There are other traditions giving the same meaning.

Al-Baqir (‘a) said: “Help us with piety, because whoever met Allah with piety, would get happiness near Allah, as Allah, the Mighty, the Great, says: ***“And whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger ...” (4:69).*** After reciting the Verse, he said: “So from us is the Prophet, and from us is the truthful, and from us are the witnesses and the good ones.[21](#)”

As-Sadiq (‘a) has said: “The believers are of two kinds: (**One is**) a believer who fulfils the conditions Allah had imposed on him; he will be ***“with the prophets, and the truthful, and the witnesses, and the good ones; and excellent are these as companions!” (4:69)***, and he is among those who will intercede and will not need intercession (by others); and he is among those who are not inflicted with terror of this world, nor of the hereafter. (**Another is**) a believer who has made mistakes. He is like a green stalk, which inclines to whichever direction wind pushes it and then returns to its position. He is among those who are inflicted with terrors of this world and that of the hereafter, and he would be

interceded for; and he is on good.[22](#)”

The author says: as-Sihah says: “al-Khamah (الْخَامَة) is a green soft plant.” The Imam (‘a) in this hadith points to what was described in the Commentary of the Verse: **“The path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favours” (1:7)**, that ‘favour’ means al-wilayah (الْوِلَايَة) = love, mastership, friendship). This explanation thus corresponds with the Verses:

“Now surely the friends of Allah, they shall have no fear nor shall they grieve” (10:62).

“Those who believed and were pious” (10:63).

Terror of mishaps cannot reach the friends of Allah who rely on none other than Allah.

[1.](#) Islam’s history belies the assumption that the believers would not quarrel with those vested with authority. What was the reason of all the disputes, wars, bloodshed, oppressions and tortures which have stained the pages of Islamic history, right from the departure of the Prophet to this day, if not the Muslims’ rebellion against those vested with authority?

Of course, this premises could be justified if we said that the call, O you who believe! was addressed not to the whole Muslim Ummah (as is usually the case with this phrase), but to the true believers only who might have attained a higher level of faith. But in that case, the area of the ulu ’l-amr’s jurisdiction and authority would be reduced to such an extent as to render this order devoid of any importance. Also, if common Muslims were excluded from this address, they would have committed no sin by disobeying the Imams. (tr.)

[2.](#) Al-Mutawatir: A tradition narrated in every stage by so many narrators as to make their collusion for a lie impossible. (tr.).

[3.](#) Ahmad al-Amin in Fajru ’l-Islam. (Author’s note).

[4.](#) Vide al-Mizan (Eng. transl.), vol. 5, pp.46 – 129 (tr.). Under “A Detailed Discourse About The Decisive And Ambiguous Verses And The Interpretation” <https://al-islam.org/al-mizan-volume-5-sayyid-muhammad-husayn-tabatabai/...> [9]

[5.](#) Vide al-Mizan Eng. transl., vol. 5, pp.46 – 129, under “A Detailed Discourse About The Decisive And Ambiguous Verses And The Interpretation” <https://al-islam.org/al-mizan-volume-5-sayyid-muhammad-husayn-tabatabai/...> [9]

[6.](#) Vide al-Mizan, (Eng. transl.), vol.5, pp.65 – 73 (tr.).

[7.](#) Tafsir al-Burhan.

[8.](#) At-Tafsir al-‘Ayyashi.

[9.](#) Al-Kafi.

[10.](#) At-Tafsir al-‘Ayyashi.

[11.](#) Al--Kafi.

[12.](#) At-Tafsir al-‘Ayyashi.

[13.](#) At-Tafsir al-‘Ayyashi.

[14.](#) Tafsir al-Burhan.

[15.](#) Tafsir al-Burhan.

[16.](#) Al-Mahasin.

[17.](#) Al--Kafi.

[18.](#) At-Tafsir, al-‘Ayyashi.

[19.](#) Al-Amali, ash-Shaykh.

[20.](#) Tafsir al-Burhan. This tradition obviously interprets the word ash-shuhada’ (الشُّهَدَاءُ) as martyrs, not witnesses. (tr.)

[21.](#) Al-Kafi.

[1] [1]

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