

The Extremists and Misinterpretation of the Holy Qur'an

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The above-mentioned writer says,

"A group of the extremists (ghulat) believe that the Holy Qur'an is misrepresented. Some chapters and verses on 'Ali's guardianship and succession have been left out. They do not believe in the Holy Qur'an compiled by 'Uthman and say that he changed and misrepresented it according to his wish. For example, they say the Confederates Chapter (Sura al-Ahzab) which contains 73 verses now had 286 verses before compiling. The Hijr Chapter (Sura al-Hijr) which has 99 verses now contained 190 verses before. All the missing verses are those concerning 'Ali's guardianship (wilayat).

An unidentified Holy Qur'an has been found in India that contains a Chapter of Light (Sura al-Nur) other than this Chapter of Light (Sura al-Nur). It has seven verses and they think it is the Chapter of guardianship of 'Ali b. Abi Talib and the Imams after him. The extremists say that the Prophet gave the perfect and reliable written text, which was written by 'Ali b. Abi Talib himself, to Fatima. It was three times greater in extent than the ordinary Holy Qur'an. This is the same copy, which inherits one Imam to the other one. Finally it reaches al-hujja (the Hidden Imam) and he will interpret it for the people of the end of the time."¹

Ghulat [extremist] are those who exaggerate or go beyond all bounds, particularly in reverence for certain individuals notably 'Ali b. Abi Talib and the 'Alids and consider them incarnation of the Deity. What heads of the sects are to be called ghulat [extremists] depends on the point of view of the writer, but as a rule, those who adopted such notions originally foreign to Islam as incarnation (hulul), metempsychosis (tanasukh) etc., are considered ghulat.²

We (Shi'ite) say that our belief concerning those who exceed the bonds of belief (ghulat), and those who believe in delegation (mufawwadha) is that they are deniers (kuffar) of Allah, Glory be to His name. They are wicked as the Jews, the Christians, the Fire-Worshippers, the Qadarites or the Kharijites (Haruriya), or the heretics (ahl al-bid'a) or those who hold views, which lead astray (al-ahwa al-madhilla).³

Imam 'Ali b. Musa al-Ridha, the eighth Imam, says that the Prophet said, "Do not exalt me to a higher rank than I deserve, since Allah, Glory be to His name, made me His servant before he made me His Messenger."

He narrates it through his father, Musa b. Ja'far al-Kazim, from his father, Ja'far b. Muhammad al-Sadiq, from his father, Muhammad b. 'Ali al-Baqir from his father, 'Ali b. al-Husayn, from his

father, Husayn b. 'Ali, from his father, 'Ali b. Abi Talib, from the Messenger of God (S.A.W.A.) narrated. He, Glory be to His name, says in His Book, ﴿It does not behoove any human that Allah should give him the Book, judgment and prophet-hood and then he should say to the people, 'Be my servant instead of Allah.' Rather [he would say], 'Be a godly people, because of your teaching the Book and because of your studying it.' And he would not command you to take the angels and the prophets for lords. Would he call you to unfaith after you have been Muslims.﴾ (Q: 3/79-80).

'Ali b. Abi Talib says, "Two groups have corrupted themselves concerning me: the extremist friends and the negligent enemies. I seek absolution to Allah in respect of exceeding and exalting our position higher than we are, an absolution similar to that of Jesus, the son of Mary, from the Christians, as Allah, Glory be to His name, says, ﴿And when Allah said, "O Jesus son of Mary! Were it you who said to the people, 'Take me and my mother for gods besides Allah'?" He said, "Immaculate are you! It does not behoove me to say what I have no right to say. Had I said it, You would certainly have known it. You know whatever is in my self, and I do not know what is in Your Self. Indeed, You are Knower of all that is Unseen. I did not say to them anything except what You had commanded me to say, 'Worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord.' Moreover, I was a witness to them so long as I was among them. But when You had taken me away, You Yourself were watchful over them, and witness to all things.﴾" (Q: 5/116-117).

Allah also says, ﴿The Messiah son of Mary, is but an apostle. Certainly, other apostles have passed before him, and his mother was a truthful one. Both of them would eat food.﴾ (Q: 5/75). That is they eat and they excrete like ordinary people. Thus, whoever claims deity for the prophets; or claims divinity or prophet-hood for Imams or Imamate for non-Imams, we disown them in this world and in the Hereafter.⁴

It is related from Zurara that he said, "I said to Imam Musa b. Ja'far al-Kazim that a man from among the descendents of 'Abd Allah b. Saba' is a believer in the doctrine of delegation (tafwidh), and Imam said, 'What is delegation (tafwidh)?' I said according to him (the man from among the descendents of 'Abd Allah b. Saba') Allah, the Mighty and Glorious, created Muhammad and 'Ali b. Abi Talib and then delegated the matter of (creation) to them, and these two created and gave sustenance, and caused life and death." The Imam said, "He, the enemy of Allah, has lied. When you return to him recite him the verse of the Thunder Chapter (Sura al-Ra'd) ﴿Have they set up for Allah partners who have created like His creation, so that the creations seemed confusable to them. Say Allah is the creator of all things, and He is the One, the All-paramount.﴾" (Q: 13/16).

Concerning the delegators (al-mufawwidha), the extremists (ghulat) and their like Imam said,

“O God! Do not include us among them who curse them.”⁵

Concerning the extent of the Holy Qur'an, our belief is that the Holy Qur'an, which Allah revealed to His Prophet Muhammad, is the same as the one between the two boards (daffatayn), but it is the same extent in the hands of people.⁶

The Shi'ite belief concerning the perverting or misinterpretation of the Holy Qur'an -that is omitting part or parts of it- is that it has never occurred. The Holy Qur'an, which now is in the hands of Muslims, is just the same as revealed to Prophet (S.A.W.A). Most of the Shi'ite scholars has stipulated it including: Ibn Babawayh in his I'tiqadat al-Imamiyya, Tabrisi in Majma' al-bayan, Shaykh Ja'far Kashif al-Ghita' in his Kashf al-ghita, 'Allama al-Shahshahani in his al-'Urwa al-wuthqa , and al-Mawla Muhsin[Faydh] al-Qasani in his two books (al-Wafi and 'Ilm al-yaqin).⁷

Some Scholars have attributed the notion of not perverting the Holy Qur'an to great Shi'ite 'Ulama' and experts like al-Shaykh al-Mufid, al-Shaykh al-Biha'i and Qadhi Nur Allah Shushtari and others. Generally, we say no Shi'ite expert, who has written a book on Imamate, has stipulated perverting the Holy Qur'an.⁸

However, our Sunnite brethren have a different view. 'Umar says, “Part of what He sent down was the passage of stoning; we read it, and we were taught it, and we needed it. The Messenger of God (S.A.W.S.) stoned (adulterers) and we stoned them after him. I fear that in time to come men will say that they find no mention of stoning in God's book and thereby go astray by neglecting an ordinance, which God has sent down. Then we read in what we read from God's book, 'Do not desire to have ancestors other than your own for it is infidelity to do so.’⁹

However, we see neither 'the stoning passage', nor 'the ancestors' verse in the Holy Qur'an. Ibn Abi Maryam narrated from Ibn Abi Luhay'a from Ibn Abi al-Aswad, from 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr from 'A'isha who said, “Sura al-Ahzab (confederates) was read 200 verses during the Prophet's time, but when 'Uthman was collecting the Book, he could not find more than we are reading now.” Isma'il b. Ja'far also narrated from al-Mubarak b. Fudhala, from 'Asim b. Abi al-Nujud, from Ziz b. Hubaysh who said that 'Ubayy b. Ka'b had asked him, “How many verses are there in Sura al- Ahzab?” He answered 72 or 73 verses. 'Ubayy said it was the same extent as Sura al-Baqara, in which the 'stoning passage' was read.¹⁰

The baseless calumnies, which the Sunnite ascribes to the Shi'ite, are countless. Among those who have judged the Shi'ite creeds without studying and knowledge, are Fakhr al-Din al-Razi. Commenting the verse ﴿Allah effaces and confirms whatever He wishes﴾ (Q: 13/39), he says

the Rafidhis (the Shi'ite) say that al-bada' (emergence of new circumstances which cause a change in an earlier ruling) for God is permitted and bada' means that God ordains something, but something else happens, that is against His knowledge."¹¹ O! Allah You are Immaculate. This is nothing, but a fabrication.¹² Alusi, commenting the verse ﴿eat and drink until the white streak becomes manifest to you from the dark streak at the crack of dawn.﴾ (Q: 2/187) says,

“The Shi'ite permit themselves to begin their [Ramadhan] fast from the sunset.”¹³ I wonder whence Alusi has gotten this fascinating information and knowledge, and for this argument to what document, he has attested. He lived in Baghdad, the Shi'ite settlement from the old times up to now, and the Holy Shrines are near Baghdad, there are few people who cannot find the Shi'ite there; he could get true information from them. Truly, it is surprising that a learned man like Alusi cast baseless accusation on the Shi'ite. By God, this accusation and the likes are but division between Muslims, which only their enemies exploit it and govern them.¹⁴

Notes

1. Salimi, 58-60.
2. See Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam, H.A.R. Gibb and J.H. Krammers (eds.), 3rd impression, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1991, 110.
3. Ibn Babawayh al-Qummi, known as al-Shaykh al-Saduq (d. 381/991), I'tiqadat al-Imamiyya (A Shi'ite creed), trans. Asaf A.A. Fyzee., revised edition, Tehran, 1404/1982, 87-88.
4. Ibn Babawayh al-Qummi, known as al-Shaykh al-Saduq (d. 381/991), 'Uyun akhbar al-Ridha, ed. Sayyid Mahdi al-Husayni al-Lajwardi, Qumm, 1378, 200-201.
5. Ibn Babawayh al-Qummi, I'tiqadat, 90-92.
6. Ibid, 77.
7. al-Sayyid Abu al-Qasim al-Musawi al-Khu'i, al-Bayan fi tafsir al-Qur'an, Qumm, 5th edition, 1394/1974, 218-219.
8. Ibid, 219.
9. See above, 61.
10. al-Suyuti, Jalal al-Din Abd al-Rahman (d. 911/1105), al-Itqan fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an, ed., Muhammad Abu al-Fadhl Ibrahim, 2nd edition, Cairo, 1387/1967, 1: 234.
11. al-Razi, 19: 66.
12. al-Khu'i, 548.
13. al-Alusi, 2: 67.
14. Ibid, 559-560.