

Chapter 4

❖ Clarification of Doubts ❖

By reflecting on the previous discussions, many answers to doubts will become clear, but in a bid to elucidate better the earlier subjects, we will embark on describing some doubts and the corresponding answers to them.

Doubt 1: *Mandatory laws are against the demand of humanity.*

In the parlance of logic, freewill is the reason, assessor and controller of man and it constitutes the essence of humanity. Now, if we deny him of freewill and freedom and compel him, we have denied him of humanity and uniquely made him like an animal, in whose neck a bridle is placed and is drawn to this and that way.

So, showing respect to man and preserving his essence of humanity necessitates granting him the right to choose. As such, religion is not supposed to have mandatory decrees and urge him to obey the Prophet, the Imāms, and the deputies and representatives of the infallible Imāms. In this manner, his

humanity is disrespected and he is made like a domesticated animal that is drawn to this and that direction.

Reply

If we submit to the skepticism and say that since man is autonomous, mandatory law then should not be imposed on him. No government can have mandatory orders for human beings. They are autonomous to do whatever they like. Imposition is tantamount to denying freedom and denying freedom means denying humanity. Thus, no law is valid and we have accepted the law of the jungle and chaos. Basically, compulsoriness is the enduring feature of law and an account will become a law if it entails compulsoriness.

In any system and structure, once a person accepts the laws and directives, he has to observe them in all circumstances. It is not possible for a person to acknowledge the law, but once its execution is detrimental to him and he is subjected to the dictums of the law, he would not abide by it and take into account his own gains and losses. In this manner, the system will disintegrate and will never recover. So long as a law is regarded valid and official by the legislative authorities, everybody is supposed to obey. Even if a defect can be noticed in it, it is the duty of the concerned authorities to redress it. Under the pretext of the defect in the law, others are not supposed to refrain from obeying it.

Doubt 2: *The government's imposition of limitations is against the demand of freedom.*

No government has the right to set penalties and impose limitations on the people because in doing so, out of fear of the penalties, and on account of the pressure put on them, the people will not commit any violation. However, if there were no

penalties and limitations, they could have freely done whatever they like, whether it is good or bad.

Reply

The problem with the above argument is that it stands on the principle of absolute freedom. They have discussed some preliminary points of this principle and on the basis of which they imagine that in this world man must be totally free and no limit and pressure should be imposed upon him. No one is supposed to compel him to do a certain action and to hinder him doing a certain action. Without doubt, this principle is illogical and for any person with intellect and common sense, it is wrong and unacceptable.

No man has absolute, limitless and unrestricted freedom in that he can do whatever he likes, and no law would restrain him. (Here, what we mean by law is not the moral and rationally independent laws, which have no guarantor of their execution. Rather, it refers to the legal laws in their general sense, whose execution is guaranteed and backed up by the government.)

There must be laws and regulations, and the people must be urged to observe the laws and regulations. If a person violated them, he must be dealt with accordingly. If a person usurped the rights of people, he must be urged to grant them their rights. There must be traffic and driving rules, and the violators who sometimes are responsible for the death of many people, must be penalized and fined.

Apart from the fact that the existence of laws and regulations and their acceptance by all people everywhere throughout history bear witness to the fact that absolute freedom—that no one has the right to exert pressure on others, impose limit on them and to deny them some of their freedoms—is unacceptable and wrong. In practice, no one has ever been obliged to it. Acceptance of the principle of absolute freedom means denial of civility and acceptance of the savagery and law of the jungle.

If man is really a civil creature, he must have a social system. Individuals must respect the rights of others. There must be laws and regulations. Penal laws must be taken into consideration for the violators. The government must guarantee the execution of the laws. In reality, the notion of absolute freedom and this claim that no one is supposed to exert pressure on people to do or not to do a certain act, is a denial of the necessity of the existence of government and is undertaking that the government should cease to exist because the government, ruling system and executive power basically take form in the context of the existence of social laws and regulations and their duty is to guarantee and implement laws.

Certainly, such an idea and thinking is inconsistent with law abidance, civil society, civilization, and the need to observe the laws. The foundation of human civilization is the acceptance of responsibility and the acknowledgment of a power whose concern is to implement laws in the society, and certainly, along its performance of responsibility, the government will also exert pressure on the people.

The government's duty is that in case of necessity, by exerting pressure and forceful and powerful actions, it has to urge the lawbreakers to abide by the regulations and to penalize the violators. If mere reminders and admonitions will suffice, then it is enough for the government to act as a teacher and instructor, and not as a ruling authority.

The duty of the preachers, teachers and trainers is only to admonish and remind the people to observe social morality and human etiquettes. They have no executive leverage for following their admonitions and reminders, and it is essentially not their duty to urge the people to observe human dignities. But it is the government's duty to impose the law to the people even by force and threat and to deal with the violators accordingly. It has to fine the violator, and in case he tries to escape from the ambit of

law, he has to be pursued and apprehended, and for him it has to implement the laws and regulations.

Therefore, the existence of government and executive power is the basis that man does not possess absolute freedom. Absolute freedom is inadmissible and inharmonious with civilization, humanity and social life.

It makes no difference whether the government is the executor of civil laws, which have been codified based on the demands of people, or the government is the executor of the divine laws.

Doubt 3: *The need for obeying God and the Prophet is against the demand of the Qur’anic verses.*

If religion wanted to interfere in the political and social affairs of people, and obliged them to have a particular behavior or to obey someone, this is contradictory with the freedom of man. Man is a creature having freedom and freewill, who is supposed to do whatever he likes. No one is supposed to oblige and compel him to perform a certain act. And that religion has to set the duty for him and urge him to obey someone, and an absolute obedience it is. This is discordant with freedom.

The Holy Qur’an also negates dominating and controlling others, and does not regard even the Messenger of God (ﷺ) as having dominion (over others). We will cite below some verses that indicate this point:

﴿ فذَكَرْهُمْ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُذَكِّرٌ * لَسْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمُصَيِّرٍ ﴾

“Remind them, for thou art but a remembrancer.
Thou art not at all a warder over them.”¹

¹ *Sūrah al-Ghāshiyah* 88:21-22.

﴿... وَ مَا جَعَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظًا وَ مَا أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ بِوَكِيلٍ﴾

“We have not set thee as a keeper over them, nor art thou responsible for them.”¹

﴿مَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ...﴾

“The duty of the messenger is only to convey (the message).”²

﴿إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَ إِمَّا كَفُورًا﴾

“Lo! We have shown him the way, whether he be grateful or disbelieving.”³

﴿وَ قُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَ مَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفِرْ...﴾

“Say: (It is) the truth from the Lord of you (all). Then whosoever will, let him believe, and whosoever will, let him disbelieve.”⁴

¹ Sūrah al-An ‘ām 6:107.

² Sūrah al-Mā ‘idah 5:99.

³ Sūrah al-Insān (or, ad-Dahr) 76:3.

⁴ Sūrah al-Kahf 18:29.

Reply

In the face of verses that the skeptic cited to negate the dominance and authority of the Messenger of God and the lack of necessity of obeying him are verses that are contradictory with the first group of verses on account of the skeptic's wrong understanding of it. Let us cite some of these verses:

﴿وَمَا كَانَ لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلَا لِمُؤْمِنَةٍ إِذَا قَضَى اللَّهُ
وَرَسُولُهُ أَمْرًا أَنْ يَكُونَ لَهُمُ الْخَيْرَةُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِمْ...﴾

“And it becometh not a believing man or a believing woman, when Allah and His messenger have decided and affair (for them), that they should (after that) claim any say in their affair.”¹

The above verse categorically points out the need to obey and submit to God and His Messenger, giving a reminder that the believers have no right to refuse obeying and following the Messenger of God.

﴿إِنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا الَّذِينَ
يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ رَاكِعُونَ﴾

“Your friend can be only Allah; and His messenger and those who believe, who establish worship and pay the poor due, and bow down (in prayer).”²

¹ Sūrah al-Aḥzāb 33:36.

² Sūrah al-Mā'idah 5:55.

﴿النَّبِيُّ أَوْلَىٰ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْ أَنفُسِهِمْ...﴾

“The Prophet is closer to the believers than their selves.”¹

Which of the verses cited we should take as preeminent in the sense of having guardianship [*wilāyah*]? And which is to be taken to mean more deserving? In both cases the verses substantiate the fact that the Prophet’s right of decision-making for the people prevails over their right of decision-making for themselves.

All exegetes of the Qur’an [*mufassirīn*] acknowledge this point, and on this basis, the people should prefer the decision of the Prophet over their own decision, having no right to oppose his decision and view. Of course, the verse only expresses the principle of guardianship of the Messenger of God (ﷺ). It does not express the limit of the guardianship—whether the limit of guardianship and the preeminence of the Prophet’s decision over that of others are social affairs, or apart from being social they are personal affairs as well.

Undoubtedly, it is not expected from the skeptics who have cited the first group of Qur’anic verses to negate the guardianship of the Messenger of God and his successors (‘a) to give answer to the apparent contradiction between the two groups of Qur’anic verses. So many of them are either unaware of the existence of the second group of verses or do not accept the substance of these verses. Yet, since we do not believe in the existence of contradiction and inconsistency among the verses of the Qur’an, we should try to remove the apparent contradiction of the verses. For this important endeavor we shall scrutinize the

¹ *Sūrah al-Aḥzāb* 33:6.

context of both groups of verses by taking into consideration the preceding and succeeding verses as well as the purport of the verses and their addressees so that we could comprehend the real contents of the verses as a whole.

The Reason behind the Difference between the Two Approaches in the Qur'an

Once we scrutinize the verses in both the first and second groups, we will realize that the purport and expression of the verses are different from one another. The first set of verses is pertaining to those who have not yet embraced Islam. As such, God wants to enlighten them on the truths of Islam, describing in detail the benefits to be accrued from submitting to Him. Since God knows that the Prophet, who is the embodiment of divine mercy and compassion, is worrying for the people lest they refused accepting Islam in the way of truth and submitting to God and as a result they would be thrown to the hellfire, He is consoling him—“Why are you putting in danger your life for the grief and sorrow you have for the people’s refusal to embrace the faith? We revealed Islam so that the people accept it out of their own decision and freewill. Otherwise, if We wanted so, We have the power to guide all the people”:

﴿وَلَوْ شَاءَ رَبُّكَ لَأَمَنَّ مِنَ فِي الْأَرْضِ كُلَّهُمْ﴾

﴿جَمِيعًا أَفَأَنْتَ تُكْرِهُ النَّاسَ حَتَّىٰ يَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ﴾

“And if thy Lord willed, all who are in the earth would have believed together. Wouldst thou (Muhammad) compel men until they are believers?”¹

¹ *Sūrah Yūnus* 10:99.

The aim of God in sending the messengers ('a) is to guide the people in recognizing the truth and the path of their felicity. Then, it is for them to accept the religion of truth out of their freewill. It is not that God would forcibly and compulsorily ask the people to embrace the faith. The faith that emanates from compulsion and imposition has no value and it is not harmonious with human training [*tarbiyyat-e insānī*]. Human training aims that out of cognition and awareness, man would understand and accept the truth, and not that he would be forced to submit to it. As such, God says:

﴿لَعَلَّكَ بَاخِعٌ نَفْسَكَ أَلَّا يَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ * إِنْ نَشَأْ نُنَزِّلْ

عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ آيَةً فَظَلَّتْ أَعْنَافُهُمْ لَهَا خَاضِعِينَ﴾

“It may be that thou tormentest thyself (O Muhammad) because they believe not. If We will, We can send down on them from the sky a portent so that their necks would remain bowed before it.”¹

Thus, the pillar of Islam and faith lies on this belief in the heart and such a belief stems from cognition and awareness, sound and solid proofs, and freewill, and it is not acquiescent to coercion. On this basis, God says to His Prophet: “You have performed your duty. Your duty is to convey the message and the divine signs to the people. Do not worry anymore about the polytheists not embracing the faith. You are not supposed to imagine that you have not done your mission. It is not part of your mission to compel the people to become Muslims because

¹ *Sūrah ash-Shu‘arā’* 26:3-4.

We have made you dominant over the unbelievers that you would compel them to become Muslims”.

In opposite of the first group of Qur’anic verses, the second group of verses is addressed to those who have accepted Islam out of their own cognition, awareness and freewill. They are reminded to perform the precepts of Islam, to obey the Prophet whom they believe is inspired by God and his decrees and orders as all coming from God, to submit to his submission, and that they do not have the right to choose and select with respect to his orders.

Prior to embracing the faith, man has the right to choose, but after embracing the faith, he must obey all the ordinances. Anyone who believes in only a part of the divine decrees has hardly earned the pleasure of God:

﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُفَرِّقُوا بَيْنَ اللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيَقُولُونَ نُؤْمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَنَكْفُرُ بِبَعْضٍ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَتَّخِذُوا

بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلًا * أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ حَقًّا... ﴾

“Lo! those who disbelieve in Allah and His messengers, and seek to make distinction between Allah and His messengers, and say: We believe in some and disbelieve in others, and seek to choose a way in between. Such are disbelievers in truth.”¹

Acceptance of some decrees and denial of the others, acceptance of some laws and rejection of the others in reality means lack of acceptance of the essence of religion because if the criterion of the acceptance of religion is the dictum of God,

¹ *Sūrah an-Nisā’* 4:150-151.

one must observe the core of the divine order, and the divine order is directed toward the acceptance of all decrees and laws, even if the criterion of accepting the religion is the interests and evils that God informed them of and has noted in His orders. Undoubtedly, God is cognizant of what is good and what is bad; so, why do they accept only some decrees?

Thus, one who has believed in God is he who also believes in His Prophet, obeys his decision, decree and directive, is pleased with God and the Prophet, and does not nurse ill-feeling against them:

﴿ فَلَا وَرَبِّكَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ حَتَّىٰ يُحْكُمُوكَ فِيمَا شَرَحَ بَيْنَهُمْ ثُمَّ لَا يَجِدُوا

فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَرَجًا مِّمَّا قَضَيْتَ وَيُسَلِّمُوا تَسْلِيمًا ﴾

“But nay, by thy Lord, they will not believe (in truth) until they make thee judge of what is in dispute between them and find within themselves no dislike of that which thou decidest, and submit with full submission.”¹

It shows that the true believer is pleased in his heart with respect to the order and decision of the Messenger of God (ﷺ), having no worry at all for the reason that he believes that he (the Prophet) is sent by God and his decree is the decree of God; he does not ill speak of him either:

﴿ إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ لِتَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ بِمَا أَرَاكَ اللَّهُ ﴾

¹ *Sūrah an-Nisā'* 4:65.

*“Lo! We reveal unto thee the Scripture with the truth,
that thou mayst judge between mankind by that which
Allah showeth thee.”¹*

A person who, after accepting Islam and believing in it, would say, “I am free in obeying the laws of Islam; if I want, I will do, and if I do not want I will not,” is similar to this one: In a country where a democratic and liberal system is governing, the people would voluntarily participate in the referendum, and through their votes they select their own representatives and officials of the social system. But once the legitimate government came to power, they would evade from doing it! Once that government obliged the people to pay their taxes, they would say, “We will not pay taxes; we were free in accepting the principle of government and in voting for it; now we are also autonomous in obeying its orders or to defy its orders.” Certainly, no rational person will ever accept such a behavior and conduct.

Yes, in the beginning no one is forced to accept Islam because basically, the pillar of Islam lies on faith and conviction of the heart. Through force, one cannot believe in Islam, God and the hereafter. But once he accepted Islam and he is asked to perform his prayers, if he would say that he will not pray; or when he is asked to pay *zakāt*² he would refuse to pay, no rational being will ever believe that he really accepted Islam. Is it possible for a person to have accepted a religion, yet he would not submit to its laws and act according to his own desire?

Whoever accepts Islam should obey its laws in the same manner that a government will not accept that a person would

¹ *Sūrah an-Nisā'* 4:105.

² *Zakāt*: the tax levied on various categories of wealth and spent on the purposes specified in Qur'an, 9:60. [Trans.]

vote for it, but in practice he would refuse accepting its laws and regulations. Commitment to pledges and responsibilities is the quintessence of social life. If there were no word of honor, commitment to pledge, promise and covenant, and performance of duty, social life would never take form.

Therefore, there is no point for a person to say that he does accept Islam and believe in the Prophet as the Messenger of God, but does not obey his orders and does not accept his (the Prophet's) guardianship and sovereignty over himself. Indisputably, there is a vivid contradiction in accepting Islam and the Messenger of God, on one hand, and lack of fellowship to the Prophet, on the other.

It is clear that if we honestly took a look at the verses of the Qur'an, scrutinizing the connotation, context and purport of the two groups of verses cited above, contradiction in the Qur'an would never be found. The doubt on the incompatibility of obedience and submission to others with the principle of man's freedom—which the Qur'an also has sanctioned—would be uprooted. But ailing hearts do not approach the Qur'an in sincerity, truthfulness and fairness. Even if they happened to consult the Qur'an, it is only to look for pretext for their flimsy and deviant idea. And as such, in studying the verses of the Qur'an, they engage in selectively picking up verses or part of verses without taking into account their purport and connotation.

According to the injunction of the Qur'an, they ignore the clear revelations [*muḥkamāt*] of the Qur'an and engage in following the allegorical ones [*mutashābihāt*]:

﴿... فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ﴾

﴿وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ...﴾

“But those in whose hearts is doubt pursue, forsooth, that which is allegorical seeking (to cause) dissension by seeking to explain it. None knoweth its explanation save Allah and those who are of sound instruction.”¹

Beyond following the allegorical ones, some people dissect and mutilate the verses and select a statement while taking out the proceeding and succeeding portions. Then, they imagine that the verses of the Qur’an are contradicting one another!

As it has been discussed, without taking into account the purport and discourse of the Qur’anic verses, they conformed their doubt on the inconsistency of the guardianship and dominance of the Prophet and the divine authorities with the principle of man’s freedom to some verses. We have stated earlier that the verses whose purport is the lack of dominance of the Messenger of God over the people are addressed to the unbelievers prior to the acceptance of Islam as the Messenger of God does not have dominance over them and cannot invite them to Islam by force. In reality, based on the verses, freedom of action and freewill in accepting the divine orders is prior to the jurisdiction of Islam. Otherwise, after the jurisdiction of Islam, every Muslim must accept the guardianship and dominance of the Prophet and the divine authorities; he is duty-bound to observe the Islamic values. Although the Islamic government does not interfere in the personal and private life of individuals

¹ *Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān 3:7. The whole verse is as follows: “He it is Who hath revealed unto thee (Muhammad) the Scripture wherein are clear revelations [muḥkamāt]. They are the substance of the Book and others (which are) allegorical [mutashābihāt]. But those in whose hearts is doubt pursue, forsooth, that which is allegorical seeking (to cause) dissension by seeking to explain it. None knoweth its explanation save Allah and those who are of sound instruction who say: ‘We believe therein; the whole is from our Lord; but only men of understanding really heed’.”*

and in issues that take place in secret, in relation to the social life and in interacting with one another everybody is obliged and duty-bound to observe the divine limit. He should sternly resist against transgression upon the sanctuary of divine values, insult to the religious sanctities, and engagement in debauchery and indecencies. This in fact is a showcase of the guardianship of the Islamic authorities over the individuals constituting the society who persuade them so as to be equipped with the amenities of faith and Islam—Islam which they have voluntarily chosen.

Doubt 4: *The imposition of limitations in actions is against the demand of the natural law.*

There is a set of natural and inborn rights, which are above the law and no lawmaker has the right to set limit on.

Among these rights, for example, the freedom to choose one's residence can be cited. This means that man is free to live in any city and place he likes and no one can prevent him in doing so—as to why he has bought a house in a certain place and has chosen residence.

Another example is the freedom to choose one's occupation, which means that everyone is free to choose whatever occupation he likes and no law can condemn him as to why he has chosen a certain occupation. Similar is the case of freedom in choosing a spouse, meaning that man is free to choose as his spouse and marry anyone whom he likes, and no law can prevent him from choosing the spouse whom he likes.

Reply

Let us pose this question to anyone who raises this doubt: Which does he mean, these rights are indeed absolutely and unconditionally fixed for individuals, or there are existing laws related to them? If he says that there are existing laws related to them, then he has blemished his own claim because in principle

the spirit and nature of enactment of law is nothing but setting red line and imposing limitations. But if he chooses the first line of argument and says that there are no existing law, condition and requisite in relation to them, the problem is that in practice such a thing is impossible. For instance, one of the rights that is said to be above the law is the right to be free. Yet, is there a single country in which there is absolute, unconditional and unrestrained freedom and the individuals are free to do whatever they like? In essence, the social system cannot tolerate such a thing.

If there were no law in the society and law did not fix the limit and boundary for the action of human beings, everything would disintegrate and the social system would cease to exist. If all these freedoms are above the law as it is claimed, then we have the following: right for residence, right for occupation, right for spouse, right to freedom of expression, etc. Is there anyone in the world who, under the pretext of freedom of expression, has the right to vilify and pour scorn on others?! Is there anyone in the world who, under the excuse of freedom to choose residence, has the right to usurp the house and land of people and to dwell therein?! Is there anyone in the world who, under the ploy of freedom to choose a spouse, has the right to marry his own mother or sister?!

Therefore, those who claim that there are rights that are above the law are themselves not bound by this basis and do not allow the lawmaker to determine limits and boundaries as well as conditions and requisites regarding them. This is a contradiction they are facing, and its solution is for them to abandon this claim because taking out the limits and boundaries in the social conduct, as what we have said, is impossible and leads to chaos and the disintegration of the system.

Doubt 5: Religion cannot impose limit on freedom.

Freedom is above religion and religion cannot create limitations for the freedom of human beings and through its laws it cannot deprive the people of benefiting from freedom.

Reply

In reply to the previous skepticism, it was clear that the essence of law is the setting of limitation. As it comprises of social and political laws, religion also regulates and restricts the social and political actions of man, ordering that those actions must be done within their particular framework. If religion means other than this, what is the purpose behind its existence? If religion is meant for this that every person can behave in whatever way he likes, then what is the status of religion? What is the station of religion?

The existence of religion and law has no other sense except setting limit on the freedoms of man. Thus, that which is said that freedom is above religion is nonsense. Yes, it is possible that there are those who, in the name of religion, wanted to put restriction on the legitimate freedom of people, and wanted to prohibit that which has been made lawful by God through superstitions and ethnic customs. For example, unfortunately there are still some ethnics and tribes in this and that corner of our country that prohibit some of those made lawful by God. In the same manner, in the culture of our present society some of those made lawful by God are considered abominable. Had it not been the case, many of the sexual corruptions in the society could be prevented. The Commander of the Faithful ('a) said:

لَوْلَا سَبَقَ مِنْ ابْنِ الْخَطَّابِ فِي الْمُنْعَةِ مَا زِنَى إِلَّا شَقِيٌّ

“Had (‘Umar) ibn al-Khaṭṭāb not prohibited fixed-time marriage [*mut‘ah*],¹ no one would ever commit adultery and fornication [*zinā*] except a wretched person.”²

Regrettably, in our culture this thing made lawful by God, which is a key solution for many problems, is still considered abominable. Yes, if there are those who under the name of religion wanted to declare lawful those that are made unlawful by God, this act is abominable. Apart from being abominable, it is also unlawful [*ḥarām*] and it is a kind of religious innovation [*bid‘ah*]. The same is true for its opposite. Forbidding the lawful is also an innovation:

انَّ الله يُحِبُّ أَنْ يُؤَخَّذَ بِرُخْصِهِ كَمَا يُحِبُّ أَنْ يُؤَخَّذَ بِعِزِّهِ

“Verily, God loves the people to benefit from the permissible [*mubāḥāt*] and lawful [*ḥalāl-hā*] things just as He loves them to perform the compulsories [*wājibāt*] and shun the unlawful [*muḥarramāt*] things.”³

¹ For information on the issue of *mut‘ah*, see, among others, Sayyid Muḥammad Husayn Ṭabāṭabā‘ī, *Al-Mīzān: An Exegesis of the Qur‘an*, trans. Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi (Tehran: World Organization for Islamic Services, 1992), vol. 8, under the commentary on Qur‘an 4:24, pp. 104-111; Sayyid ‘Abdul-Ḥusayn Sharafuddīn Mūsawī, *Questions on Jurisprudence*, trans. Liyakatali Takim (Ontario: Hydery Canada Ltd., 1996), chap. 4, <http://www.al-islam.org/masail/4.htm>; Sachiko Murata, “Temporary Marriage in Islamic Law,” *Al-Serat* 13, no. 1, http://www.al-islam.org/al-serat/al-serat_muta/title.htm. [Trans.]

² *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah Ibn Abī‘l-Ḥadīd*, vol. 12, p. 253.

³ *Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 69, p. 360.

Thus, under the name of religion, or under the name of tribalism or local, ethnic and clannish prejudices nobody has the right to declare unlawful some of those made lawful by God. In the same manner, setting limits on freedoms is unlawful and an innovation. No one is amenable with these. But if what is meant by “freedoms” is the illegitimate freedoms, naturally no one is expecting also that religion would not oppose illegitimate freedoms!

Doubt 6: *Servitude is against the demand of the natural disposition [fiṭrah] of man.*

As it is known to you, in the past human societies the system of slavery was prevalent. Through trick and force, they used to transport some people from far distance regions and force them to work as slaves in their own countries.

These people who were deprived of the rights of citizenship used to work in the farms and factories of their masters.

In the system of slavery racial discrimination and exploitation of the weak classes were exemplified in the worse manner. Such a system is inconsistent with the human spirit and nature. And all people strongly detest being slaves and servants of other people.

Slavery or being a servant in general is blameworthy, and thus, man should not be a slave by even God.

Reply

That this statement is contradictory with our religious teachings is very clear. The Holy Qur’an mentions the human beings as “servants of God”:

﴿... وَاللَّهُ رَؤُفٌ بِالْعِبَادِ﴾

“And Allah hath compassion on (His) bondmen.”¹

﴿وَمَا اللَّهُ يُرِيدُ ظُلْمًا لِلْعِبَادِ﴾

“And Allah willeth no injustice for (His) slaves.”²

God, the Exalted, calls the most beloved and noble of human beings, namely, the Eminent Prophet of Islam, Hadrat Muḥammad (s) as ‘servant’ [‘abd]:

﴿سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ

الْأَقْصَى الَّذِي بَارَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ﴾

“Glorified be He Who carried His servant by night from the Inviolable Place of Worship to the Far Distant Place of Worship the neighbourhood whereof We have blessed, that We might show him of Our tokens! Lo! He, only He, is the Nearer, the Seer.”³

Equally, those who acquired sublime stations of humanity and reached the status of the “soul in peace” [*nafs al-muṭma’innah*] are called ‘servants’ [‘ibād] and are included in the rank of the special servants of God:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّفْسُ الْمُطْمَئِنَّةُ * ارْجِعِي إِلَىٰ رَبِّكِ رَاضِيَةً مَرْضِيَّةً *﴾

¹ *Sūrah al-Baqarah* 2:207.

² *Sūrah al-Ghāfir* (or *al-Mu’min*) 40:31.

³ *Sūrah al-Isrā’* 17:1.

فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي * وَادْخُلِي جَنَّتِي ﴿٤٠﴾

“But ah! thou soul at peace!
Return unto thy Lord, content in His good pleasure!
Enter thou among My bondmen!
Enter thou My Garden!”¹

Therefore, in the culture of the Holy Qur’an, to be a ‘servant of God’ is not only not blamable and contemptuous but rather a badge of honor and nobility. After excessive acts of worship, His Holiness the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) used to humbly bow down in prostration and utter:

إلهي كفي بي عزاً أن أكون لك عبداً وكفي بي فخراً أن تكون لي رباً

“O God! It is an enough honor that I am you servant and it is an enough poverty that Thou art my Lord.”²

As such, in the culture of the *Ahl al-Bayt*³ (‘a) to be a servant does not indicate the abjectness and meanness of man. From the viewpoint of the Qur’an and the Sunnah [Prophetic tradition],

¹ *Sūrah al-Fajr* 89:27-30.

² *Biḥār al-Anwar*, vol. 77, p. 400.

³ *Ahl al-Bayt*: according to authentic *ḥadīths* recorded in both the Sunni and Shī‘ah sources, the term *Ahl al-Bayt*, and interchangeably *Iṭrah* and *Āl*, is a blessed Qur’anic appellation that belongs exclusively to the Prophet, ‘Alī, Fāṭimah, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn (‘a). The members of this Family of five, with the Prophet Muhammad (ṣ) at its head, were the ones alive at the time the Qur’anic verses regarding their virtue were being revealed to the Prophet (ṣ). However, nine other Imams from the descendants of Imām al-Ḥusayn (‘a) are also in this chosen Family, the final one being Imām al-Mahdī (‘a). For further information, visit: <http://www.al-islam.org/faq>. [Trans.]

servitude to God is the highest honor for man. Yet, in order to remove the doubt, we shall deal with the issue in detail. You know that belief in monotheism [*tawhīd*] means belief in the One True God Who is the Cherisher and Sustainer [*rabb*] of all the worlds.

﴿ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾

“Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds.”¹

﴿ فَاتَّهُمْ عِبَادُكَ ﴾

“Lo! They are Thy slaves.”²

It is the foundation of all divine religions, and all the heavenly scriptures have emphatically enjoined it. The need for the human beings to obey God, apart from the narrative proofs and devotional testimonies expressed in the Qur’an and the Prophetic tradition, has also philosophical evidence. Its philosophical evidence is based on the “ought to be” deduction from the “being”.

The explanation of these “beings” is of two kinds: (1) “beings” that can be deduced as “ought-to-be’s” and (2) “beings” that cannot be deduced as “ought-to-be’s”. Expressing the difference between the two requires a precise scientific and technical study, which is beyond our concern. What can be stated well here is that when in a logical analogy a passage of “beings”

¹ *Sūrah al-Fātiḥah* 1:2.

² *Sūrah al-Mā'idah* 5:118.

is the absolute cause of a phenomenon in the passage of “ought-to-be’s”, in reality this kind of drawing a conclusion is the deduction of “effect from cause”. But if the one located at the side of “beings” is not “absolute cause”, the effect cannot be deduced from the cause because in case of the existence of the absolute cause, the effect finds its necessity of existence. In this manner, it can be said that the effect has the deductive necessity [*wujūb-e bi'l-qiyās*] with respect to the absolute cause.

Now, that we say that man is the servant and slave of God (passage from the group of “beings”) is the absolute cause for the reason that man must obey God (passage from the group of “ought-to-be’s”). God, the Exalted, has created our material and physical existence and has breathed us of His spirit. In addition, He has endowed us with innumerable blessings such as air, water, food, bodily members, power to think, and everything that is related to the life of man. The ownership of God to these material and immaterial blessings cannot be negated.

Therefore, God is the Owner and Grantor of all our existence and blessings, which we use for our own subsistence, growth and perfection. Now that our Master is God and that we are His servants and slaves, on the basis of the dictate of reason that “the owner can occupy his possession in whatever manner he likes,” He has the right to “appropriate” us in any manner, and we should be subservient and obedient to Him, for quintessentially we are nothing. In the system of slavery the slave has the ability to oppose. He can escape from the clutches of his master. He can be sold to another master or be turned over to another.

Such things can be materialized in the “delegated ownership” [*mālīkiyyat-e i'tibārī*]. This is in contrast with the “real ownership” [*mālīkiyyat-e haqīqī*] in which assuming such affairs in regard to it is impossible and unattainable. God cannot take away the ownership of His servants from Himself or delegate them to others. Of course, this “incapability” is not on account of impotence and inability. Instead, basically, such an

act cannot intrinsically pertain to power. Just as God cannot annihilate Himself or commit suicide, one cannot imagine Him also to be not the “Owner” of His servants and the human beings to be not His “servants” for only a moment.¹

In other words, the label “Creator” [*khāliq*] for God and “creature” [*makhḷūq*] for the human beings and other beings are eternal and perpetual appellations.

To assume that He dismissed man from being an intrinsic “servant” is a contradiction, for its meaning will be this: that man both exists and is His servant, and does not exist and not His servant.

The existence [*mawjūdiyyah*] of every being [*mawjūd*] is like that of ‘creatureship’ [*makhḷūkiyyah*], servanthood [*mamlūkiyyah*] and servitude [*‘ubūdiyyah*], and our servitude in relation to God can never be cut off in the same manner that the light cannot be assumed to have no brightness, or the fire be regarded as having no heat.

“Real Ownership” [*mālikiyyat-e i‘tibārī*] and “Delegated Ownership” [*mālikiyyat-e i‘tibārī*]

What we said about the impossibility of negating the “master and servant” [*mālik wa mamlūk*] relationship between God and man is related to the “real and intrinsic ownership or mastership” [*mālikiyyat-e ḥaqīqī wa takwīnī*]. As what we have indicated, ownership or mastership is classified into two: (1) “real and intrinsic ownership or mastership” [*mālikiyyat-e ḥaqīqī*] and (2) “delegated ownership” [*mālikiyyat-e i‘tibārī*].

The concept of “ownership or mastership” [*mālikiyyah*] among the human beings is a “delegated affair” [*amr-e i‘tibārī*].

¹ For concise information about this issue on the essential attributes of God, see Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, *God of Islam* (Tehran: World Organization for Islamic Services, 1998), <http://www.wofis.com/publications/020/020.pdf>. [Trans.]

For example, by giving an amount of money, I will become the owner of a garment. That is to say that a contract between me and the garment's owner will be forged in the basis of which by giving a certain amount of money on my part, the garment will belong to me and I will become its owner while the other person will own the money. I can do whatever I like to the garment. For instance, I would sell it and give it to somebody. Such an affair is the demand of my "ownership".

When a person has a delegated or contractual ownership, he can expropriate in various ways that one he owns. Of course, man has also intrinsic ownership [*mālikiyyat-e takwīnī*], which in comparison to the intrinsic ownership of God in relation to all the worlds is so weak; for example, man's ownership of his own will, or man's ownership with respect to the "intellectual being" [*mawjūd-e dhihnī*] he has envisaged in his mind. Man can wish for and imagine a thing anytime he likes and not wish for and imagine it at another time.

In these two examples, albeit man has intrinsic ownership, it is yet different from the "intrinsic and real ownership of God" because the existence of man and his will and imagination are all creatures of God. In spite of it, man has the diverse capabilities to expropriate them. Thus, through the primary way, God, Who is the "Real Owner" [*mālik-e ḥaqīqī*] and the "Cherisher and Sustainer of all the worlds" [*rabb'ul-'ālamīn*], can expropriate His creatures in any fashion.

Some of the concepts used in the social life and particular cases sometimes experience expansion-oriented shift and are also used beyond the social life. Now, if the previous value-laden one is used in a new circumstance, a fallacy has been committed.

Concerning our discussion, the slavery of man by another man, which existed in the past social system, is laden with a negative value, but the slavery of man in relation to God is, apart from being negatively value-laden, is laden with the highest positive value, for it is under the auspices of servitude to God

that man can attain his ultimate perfection and be included among those who are thus addressed by God:

﴿فَادْخُلِي فِي عِبَادِي﴾

“Enter thou among My bondmen!”¹

God, the Exalted, addresses as “servant” [‘abd] His most beloved servant, namely, Ḥaḍrat Muḥammad (ṣ):

﴿سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ

الْأَقْصَى الَّذِي بَارَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ﴾

“Glorified be He Who carried His servant by night from the Inviolable Place of Worship to the Far Distant Place of Worship the neighbourhood whereof We have blessed, that We might show him of Our tokens! Lo! He, only He, is the Nearer, the Seer.”²

One cannot accept God as the Supreme Being while not regarding himself bound by servitude to Him. According to this outlook on servitude, man is the servant of God and obedience to Him is obligatory on man.

¹ Sūrah al-Fajr 89:29.

² Sūrah al-Isrā’ 17:1.

The Requisite of Divine Godhood as Cosmic and Religious Lordship

The requisite of acknowledging the existence of God is acknowledgment of one's servitude to Him and the requisite of acknowledging one's servitude to God is total obedience to His decrees. In other words, the requisite of divine Godhood is cosmic Lordship [*rubūbiyyat-e takwīnī*] and religious Lordship [*rubūbiyyat-e tashrī'ī*].

Some believe that God created the universe, but has abandoned it and has no hand in its management; the management of the universe and its internal evolution is done mechanically! These people do not believe in the cosmic Lordship of God in relation to the universe. They do not know the scope of monotheism [*tawhīd*], for monotheism in its true sense, which all the heavenly religions and divine prophets have enjoined, is a monotheism consisting of three pillars: (1) Divine Godhood [*Ulūhiyyat-e Ilāhī*], (2) cosmic Lordship, and (3) religious Lordship. In conclusion, the monotheism of anyone, who believes in the godhood of God but denies the cosmic or religious Lordship of God, is problematic.

According to the Holy Qur'an, God is not only the Creator of the universe, but also the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds [*rabb'ul-'ālamīn*], and the universe is evolving and revolving continuously by His will:

﴿ يَسْأَلُهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ هُوَ فِي شَأْنٍ ﴾

*“All that are in the heavens and the earth entreat Him.
Every day He exerciseth (universal) power.”*¹

¹ *Sūrah ar-Raḥmān* 55:29.

“Once He demurs, the moulds would collapse.”

The requisite of accepting the cosmic Lordship is the belief in the religious Lordship; that is, belief in the fact that whatever God has enjoined must be obeyed.

If we believed in the first level of monotheism [*tawhīd*], that is, the Godhood of the One God, we have become nearer to His truth and felicity. Then, if we accepted that God has also cosmic Lordship and that the management of the universe is solely under His will, we become a little bit nearer to the truth and the reward for our deeds becomes more. In the end, if we also believed in “monotheism in worship and obedience” we have become further nearer to His felicity.

One who believes in these three [levels of] monotheism is so different with a person who does not believe in God at all or a polytheist. The former believes in all the levels of monotheism while the latter does not believe at all in the existence of God, let alone having accepted “monotheism in Lordship” or “monotheism in obedience”. The former is in the highest stage of bliss and human perfection while the latter is in the lowest ebb of wretchedness.

Perhaps, the initial notion of all of us is that the one who denies God and does not accept any of the levels of monotheism is the farthest than anybody else to the divine mercy and will be doomed to perdition and chastisement while the one who believed in at least one of the levels of monotheism—for example, monotheism in the creative power—is to the same extent near to felicity and perfection.

By referring to the Holy Qur’an, the incorrectness of this notion will become clear. According to the Holy Qur’an, only the one who believes in all the levels of monotheism (that is, monotheism in the creative power, monotheism in the cosmic

Lordship, and monotheism in the religious Lordship) will attain eternal bliss and salvation. The totality of these beliefs has been incorporated in the expression, “There is no god but Allah” [*Lā ilāha illallāh*]. Even the belief in two of the levels of monotheism (monotheism in the creative power and monotheism in the cosmic Lordship) will not cause the salvation and felicity of anyone. In other words, the state of such a person will be no better than the one denying God. The best evidence for this matter is the account of Iblīs’s (Satan) disobedience, which the Qur’an recounts.

We do not know of a being that is more unfortunate and wretched than Iblīs in the world. But, was Iblīs a denier of the existence of God? From his conversation with God it is clear that he has believed in the “creative power of God”, because in his reason for not prostrating before Ḥaḍrat Ādam (‘a) he said: “Thou hast created me from fire and created him (Ādam) from clay.”

﴿ قَالَ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَلَّا تَسْجُدَ إِذْ أَمَرْتُكَ ؟ ﴾

﴿ قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّمَّنْ خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ نَارٍ وَ خَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ ﴾

“He said: What hindered thee that thou didst not fall prostrate when I bade thee? (Iblis) said: I am better than him. Thou createdst me of fire while him Thou didst create of mud.”¹

Therefore, Satan acknowledges the creative power of God. Was Iblīs a denier of the cosmic Lordship of God? In his conversation with God, he addressed the Divine Sacred Essence

¹ *Sūrah al-A‘rāf* 7:12.

as “Lord” [*rabb*]. As such, Iblīs believed in God as the One managing the universe:

﴿ قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَا أَغْوَيْتَنِي لَأُزَيِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَ لَأُغْوِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴾

*“He said: My Lord, because Thou has sent me astray, I verily shall adorn the path of error for them in the earth, and shall mislead them every one.”*¹

Was Iblīs a denier of the Day of Judgment? The answer is negative. He requested respite from God till the Day of Resurrection:

﴿ قَالَ رَبِّ فَأَنْظِرْنِي إِلَى يَوْمٍ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴾

*“He said: My Lord! Reprieve me till the day when they are raised.”*²

Was Iblīs refusing to worship God? By referring to the words of His Holiness the Commander of the Faithful (‘a) in the *Nahj al-Balāghah*³ the answer to this question will become clear. Concerning the devotion of Iblīs, he says:

¹ *Sūrah al-Ḥijr* 15:39.

² *Sūrah al-Ḥijr* 15:36.

³ *Nahj al-Balāghah* (Peak of Eloquence) is a collection of speeches, sayings and letters of the Commander of the Faithful, Imām ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib (‘a) compiled by Sharīf ar-Rāḍī Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn (d. 406 AH/1016). Contents of the book concern the three essential topics of God, man and the universe, and include comments on scientific, literary, social, ethical, and political issues. Except the words of the Glorious Qur’an and of the Holy Prophet (ṣ), no words of man can equate it in eloquence. So far, more than 101

وَكَانَ قَدْ عَدَّ اللَّهُ سِتَّةَ آلَافِ سَنَةٍ لَا يَدْرِي أَمِنْ
سَنَى الدُّنْيَا أَمْ مِنْ سَنَى الآخِرَةِ عَنْ كَثِيرِ سَاعَةٍ وَاحِدَةٍ

“He nullified his great acts and extensive efforts on account of the vanity of one moment, although Satan had worshipped Allah for six thousand years—whether by the reckoning of this world or of the next world is not known.”¹

Now, the fundamental question is this: What was the cause of Iblīs’s misfortune? The answer is that he had problem with respect to the religious Lordship and he did not accept the “monotheism in the religious Lordship;” that is, the belief that only God has the right to enjoin and forbid (a thing) and all the orders of God must be obeyed unconditionally.

The problem of Iblīs was not in the affairs such as monotheism in the creative power (of God), monotheism in the cosmic Lordship, worshipping God, and belief in the Day of Judgment. He believed in all these affairs, but the denial of the “religious Lordship of God” subjected him to eternal damnation.

Keeping in view of the subject just discussed, it becomes clear that man has “obligation” [*taklīf*] in relation to God. The foundation of Islam also rests on the “duty-centeredness of man”. If the duty is taken away, nothing from Islam will be left. For instance, prayers and fasting are among the obligatory acts in Islam. If the duty is not present, it necessarily follows that these

exegeses have been written on the *Nahj al-Balāghah*, indicating the importance of this treatise to scholars and learned men of research and investigation. For more information, visit: <http://www.al-islam.org/nahjul>. [Trans.]

¹ *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 191, known as *al-Khuṭbah al-Khāṣi‘ah* (Sermon of Disparagement).

two affairs are not mandatory! Also, acts of tyranny and oppression are unlawful [*harām*]. If the base of duty is taken out, oppressing others will become permissible!

Doubt 7: *The era of duty-centeredness has ended and the modern man is in pursuit of his rights.*

Some say: In view of the development and progress that have transpired in the various periods in the life of man as well as the new beliefs, outlooks, and intellectual and facility structures that have emerged for the modern human civilization, today religion must be in pursuit of expressing the rights of human beings, and not presenting duties and mandatory orders.

Since they were facing the system of slavery and the rule of force and despotism, the human beings of the past used to shoulder responsibilities and duties determined for them. Yet, now the age of slavery has ended, and the era of his sovereignty and divine vicegerency [*khilafatullāh*] has arrived. Today's human being is not in pursuit of duty, but rather in pursuit of getting and exercising his rights.

Indeed, modernism and the new civilization have created a high wall between us and the human beings of the past who were subjects, slaves, servants, and beasts of burden for others. Therefore, the modern man has closed the book account of duty- and responsibility-centeredness—which belonged to the period of barbarism and intransigence—and is endeavoring to claim his rights.

Nowadays, talking about duty and performance of responsibility is retrogression and returning to the pre-modern era, and in this age, which is that of talking about human rights and by the blessings of democracy man has been delivered from slavery and exploitation, the time has come for the ancient religions, which emerged conducive for the age of slavery and concerned with duty and responsibility, to leave the scene, and

we should formulate the new religion that talks about the rights of human beings.

Reply

That it can be said absolutely that today's man is only in pursuit of right, and not duty, is a misleading and idle talk, for the philosophers of law also say: No right is ever established for a person unless a duty is realized reciprocally for others. For example, if the right to have clean and unpolluted air for the citizens is established, the other citizens are duty-bound not to pollute the air. So, if all have the right to pollute the air, the right to have clean air will become meaningless.

By the same token, if a person has the right to expropriate his properties, the others must be obliged not to expropriate his properties; otherwise, the right to make use of properties will not be actually realized.

In the same manner, every right proved for a person necessitates a duty that he has with respect to others. If a person has the right to benefit from public utilities, he is reciprocally duty-bound to render public services, accept (public) responsibilities and duties, and not be a burden for others.

Therefore, right and duty require each other, and the statement that human beings are only in search of right and do not accept duty is rejected.

Considering the fact that all divine and non-divine scholars and philosophers of law in general do not negate responsibility and duty and in fact they acknowledge the existence of duty and commitment, we will find out that the "duty" referred to in the statements of the skeptics is the "divine duty". The spirit of their statements refers back to this point: God is not supposed to set a duty for us, or else, according to them also, it is escape from the social duties vis-à-vis rights that the individuals have, for these duties are accepted by all the wise men. What I have said is substantiated by the fact that they have unambiguously said that

the mastership [*mawlawiyyah*] and servanthood [*'ubūdiyyah*] relationship, the issuance of order on part of the master, and the need of obeying him are all appropriate for the culture of slavery.

The Background of Those Who Rebelled against God

It is not only the modern man who does not bow his head in submission to God, religion and divine duties. In fact, many human beings throughout history, on account of the satanic insinuations, did not submit to the divine duties and threaded the path of rebellion and lawbreaking.

This statement that mankind is in pursuit of rights and not duties is not a new one. In fact, in the beginning Qābil (Cain), the rebellious son of Ādam (Adam) ('a) obviously did not submit to the divine duty and rules, and under the aegis of lawbreaking and egotism, he murdered his brother Hābil (Abel):

﴿ وَآتَىٰ عَلَيْهِم نَبَأَ ابْنَىٰ آدَمَ بِالْحَقِّ ۚ إِذْ قَرَّبَا قُرْبَانًا فَتُقْبِلَ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمَا وَ

لَمْ يُتَقَبَلْ مِنَ الْآخَرَ ۚ قَالَ لَأَفْتُنَّكَ ۚ قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ ۚ

“But recite unto them with truth the tale of the two sons of Adam, how they offered each a sacrifice, and it was accepted from the one of them and it was not accepted from the other. (The one) said: I will surely kill thee. (The other) answered: Allah accepteth only from those who ward off (evil).”¹

The historical accounts of the divine prophets narrated in the Qur'an are indicative of the fact that most people considered their own prophet as a liar. Apart from not responding

¹ *Sūrah al-Mā'idah* 5:27.

submissively to his prophetic call, they used to calumniate their own prophet, mock and deride him, and even murder him and drive him out of their own town. If a prophet would express a thoroughly important message for them and for example, as the Qur'an describes, discourage them from practicing shortchanging:

﴿ وَ لَا تَبْخَسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ... ﴾

“And wrong not mankind in their goods.”¹

They would say to him:

﴿ قَالُوا يَا شُعَيْبُ أَصَلَوَاتُكَ تَأْمُرُكَ أَنْ نَتْرَكَ مَا يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا أَوْ

﴿ أَنْ نَفْعَلَ فِي أَمْوَالِنَا مَا نَشَاءُ إِنَّكَ لَأَنْتَ الْحَلِيمُ الرَّشِيدُ ﴾

“They said: O Shu‘ayb (Jethro)! Doth thy way of prayer command thee that we should forsake that which our fathers (used to) worship, or that we (should leave off) doing what we will with our own property. Lo! thou art the mild, the guide to right behavior.”²

Here, it can possibly be said that what have happened throughout the history of the opposition and confrontation with the prophets and saints of God have been the result of idol-worship, polytheism and fellowship to the Satan, while our point is that mankind should remove from their neck the chain of slavery to any object of worship and reverence and also not

¹ *Sūrah al-A‘rāf* 7:85.

² *Sūrah Hūd* 11:87.

follow idols and the Satan. Yet, this argument from the true viewpoint and perspective of divine revelation is erroneous and idle, for from the viewpoint of divine revelation man is at the threshold of two paths of servitude: (1) servitude to God and (2) servitude to the *tāghūt*,¹ and it is impossible for him to be neither of the two types of servitude.

If even one would chant a slogan that he is not the servant of anybody or anything, in reality he is the servant of the *tāghūt* and his carnal desire. On this basis, the Qur'an thus states:

﴿ اللهُ وَلِيُّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا يُخْرِجُهُم مِّنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ وَ الَّذِينَ

كَفَرُوا أَوْلِيَاؤُهُمُ الطَّاغُوتُ يُخْرِجُونَهُم مِّنَ النُّورِ إِلَى الظُّلُمَاتِ ﴿

*“Allah is the Protecting Friend of those who believe. He bringeth them out of darkness into light. As for those who disbelieve, their patrons are false deities. They bring them out of light into darkness. Such are rightful owners of the Fire. They will abide therein.”*²

Elsewhere in the Qur'an, God says:

﴿ أَلَمْ أَعْهَدْ إِلَيْكُمْ يَا بَنِي آدَمَ أَنْ لَا تَعْبُدُوا الشَّيْطَانَ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ

¹ The term *tāghūt* applies to any idol, object, or individual that prevents men from doing what is good, and leads them astray. The term has been used eight times in the Qur'an. Prior to Islam, *tāghūt* had been the name of the one of the idols of the Quraysh tribe. This name is used also to mean the Satan. Moreover, the term is used to indicate one who rebels against lofty values, or who surpasses all bounds in his despotism and tyranny and claims the prerogatives of divinity for himself whether explicitly or implicitly. [Trans.]

² *Sūrah al-Baqarah* 2:257.

مُبِينٌ وَأَنْ أَعْبُدُونِي هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ ﴿٦١﴾

“Did I not charge you, O ye sons of Adam, that ye worship not the devil Lo! He is your open foe! But that ye worship Me? That was the right path.”¹

The purport of the verse is that after setting aside the worship of Satan, there is no need to obey and worship anyone else. Instead, the worship of God should be taken up just as in the declaration of monotheism, the phrase “There is no god...” [Lā ilāha...] is followed by “...but Allah” [...illallāh].

Therefore, those who wakened up from the slumber of negligence through the manifestation of revelation have discerned that they should worship the Deity Who is their Creator and Real Master and on Whom depends the life and death, youth and old age, health and sickness. For them, servitude to Him is the ultimate honor. Those that He made obligatory have stemmed from the spring of the everlasting wisdom and mercy, and the performance of which will be the source of human felicity and perfection.

We found out that the habit of refusing to accept God and aloofness from the performance of duties and responsibilities are the result of crooked training of man, brutish and bestial temperament, and fellowship to Satan, which have always existed in history and are not the monopoly of the modern man. In reality, it is this modern man who has desisted from utilizing the facilities of civility, sunk in ignorance and savagery, and is the reactionary. In contrary, those who received training in the school [maktab] of the prophets (‘a) have desisted from bestial temperament and savagery, and have embraced civility through

¹ Sūrah Yā-Sīn 36:60-61.

the rule of law, acceptance of duties and responsibilities in their true sense, because civilization and civility are the opposite of savagery, and the basic requisite and condition of which is the acceptance of law.

So, how could some people afford to say that the modern civilization demands that man should not accept any responsibility?! Is this savagery or civilization? Basically, civilization is centered on the acceptance of limitations, law and the assumption of responsibility; otherwise, it will have no difference with savagery. As such, anyone who refrains from accepting law, duty and assumption of responsibility, are prone to return to savagery and barbarity. Certainly, anyone who has this idea and disposition could never be noble and vicegerent of God [*khalīfatullāh*] to pose as the model for us. (It is necessary to note that the slogan of civility and law-orientation that has gained currency today in our society means the attainment of the apogee of civility and pinnacle of law-orientation. It is not that a new event has happened, our society has been in savagery for the past 19 years¹ after the Revolution, and now it has adopted civility. It is not so. Basically, our Revolution took shape on the basis of the ancient Islamic civility and civilization. Among its principal mottos and aims is the observance of the divine law in all aspects.)

Adherence to God and Freedom

Again, in relation to the fact that the essence of the prophets' mission to the obedience to and worship of God and non-adherence to the *ṭāghūt*, God says:

﴿وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا الطَّاغُوتَ...﴾

¹ That is at the time of delivering this series of lectures. [Trans.]

*“And verily We have raised in every nation a messenger,
(proclaiming): Serve Allah and shun false gods.”¹*

Given this explanation, it cannot be accepted that the edifice of Islam is founded on disobedience to others including God. Essentially, any religion that does not call on us to obey God is a false one and the spirit of the mission of the prophets is absolute obedience to God, from Whom the entire world of being emanates, and Who is the Alpha and the Omega as well as the Real Master and Owner:

﴿ إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ ﴾

*“Lo! We are Allah's and Lo! Unto Him we are
returning.”²*

Now, once we recognized God as the Real Master and Owner of the entire world of being, how can it be accepted that He has no right to issue order and decree to us? Is ownership nothing but the fact that the owner can expropriate what he owned in whatever manner he likes? It is unacceptable that we claim to have accepted Islam but made ourselves free from the requisite of servitude to God, for this absolute freedom is not only condemnable from the religious viewpoint but the intellect cannot accept it as well.

Islam and religion are the harbingers of freedom, but it is the freedom and deliverance from the worship of and obedience to other than God and *tāghūts*, and not deliverance from obedience

¹ *Sūrah an-Naḥl* 16:36.

² *Sūrah al-Baqarah* 2:156.

to God. Albeit man has been created free and autonomous, he is religiously and legally duty-bound to obey God. That is to say that out of his freewill he has to obey God. Essentially, in the realm of creation the seal of servitude and servanthood has been put on every phenomenon. Intrinsically, no being has existed without the sign of servitude to God, and the existence of every being exactly means servitude to Him:

﴿ تَسْبِّحُ لَهُ السَّمَاوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ

إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ... ﴾

“The seven heavens and the earth and all that is therein praise Him, and there is not a thing but hymneth his praise; but ye understand not their praise.”¹

In relation to the servitude and worship of the creatures, God also says:

﴿ أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالطَّيْرُ

صَافَاتٍ كُلُّ قَدْ عَلِمَ صَلَاتَهُ وَتَسْبِيحَهُ... ﴾

“Hast thou not seen that Allah, He it is Whom all who are in the heavens and the earth praise; and the birds in their flight? Of each He knoweth verily the worship and the praise.”²

¹ *Sūrah al-Isrā’* 17:44.

² *Sūrah an-Nūr* 24:41.

Yet, on account of his possession of wisdom and intellect, man has been created free and autonomous. Although God, the Exalted, has showed him the path of guidance and the way of deviation, he is free to choose which path to tread. As what God Almighty has said:

﴿إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا﴾

*“Lo! We have shown him the way,
whether he be grateful or disbelieving.”¹*

Nevertheless, he has to take into account the purpose and goal behind his creation. He has to know that he ought to engage in serving and obeying God and that the religious law of God does not permit him to tread the path of obedience to the Satan and servitude to other than God. Instead, he has to shoulder the servitude and divine responsibility, for God has created him for such a purpose:

﴿وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ﴾

*“I created the jinn and humankind only that they might
worship Me.”²*

Now, in view of the fact that worshipping God is harmonious with the system of creation and universe, shouldering the divine responsibility and performance of one’s responsibility and duty to Him is actually a gesture of gratitude

¹ *Sūrah al-Insān* (or, *ad-Dahr*) 76:3.

² *Sūrah adh-Dhāriyāt* 51:56.

and thankfulness to the Merciful Creator Who endowed us with life and through His grace and favor He granted us with health and innumerable blessings. As God has said through the tongue of Ḥaḍrat Ibrāhīm (Prophet Abraham) (‘a):

﴿الَّذِي خَلَقَنِي فَهُوَ يَهْدِينِ * وَالَّذِي هُوَ يُطْعِمُنِي وَيَسْقِينِ﴾

﴿وَإِذَا مَرَضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِ * وَالَّذِي يُمِيتُنِي ثُمَّ يُحْيِينِ﴾

“(He is the Lord of the worlds) Who created me, and He doth guide me, and Who feedeth me and watereth me. And when I sicken, then He healeth me, and Who causeth me to die, the giveth me life (again).”¹

How could we refuse to adhere to Him? Is it not far from justice and fairness that we say that the modern man is not subservient to duty and obedience and is in pursuit of his rights? Does Islam accept this logic? Without doubt, such a thinking is devoid of rationality and far from humanity, let alone having Islamic basis.

Doubt 8: *The demand of the Divine Vicegerency [khalīfatullāh] means absolute freedom of man.*

Sometimes, it can be said that man, according to the description of the Qur’an, is the vicegerent of Allah [khalīfatullāh] and it means that he is the representative of God on earth and functions like God. Just as God has created the world, man has to “create” the phenomena, too. Just as God is

¹ Sūrah ash-Shu‘arā’ 26:78-81.

managing the universe as He wills, man is in control of the earth and has to act as he likes.

Reply

The reply to the above doubt is this: The meaning of vicegerency of God must be understood correctly and it must be noted that the title, “vicegerent of Allah” [*khalīfatullāh*] given to Ḥaḍrat Ādam (Prophet Adam) (‘a) in the Qur’an¹ is not pertaining to all the sons of Ādam because the Qur’an labels some of his sons as “devils” [*shayāṭīn*], stating:

﴿ وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَيَاطِينَ الْإِنْسِ وَالْجِنِّ ﴾

*“Thus have We appointed unto every Prophet an adversary devils of humankind and jinn.”*²

Undoubtedly, human devils are neither “vicegerents of Allah” nor included among whom the angels were required to bow down in prostration before them when God said:

﴿ وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي خَالِقٌ بَشَرًا مِّنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِّنْ حَمَإٍ مَّسْنُونٍ
* فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ سَاجِدِينَ ﴾

“And (remember) when thy Lord said unto the angels: Lo! I am creating a mortal out of potter's clay of black

¹ In this regard, God says: “And when thy Lord said unto the angels: Lo! I am about to place a viceroy in the earth, they said: wilt Thou place therein one who will do harm therein and will shed blood, while we, we hymn Thy praise and sanctify Thee? He said: Surely I know that which ye know not.” (Sūrah al-Baqarah 2:30)

² Sūrah al-An‘ām 6:112.

*mud altered. So, when I have made him and have
breathed into him of My spirit, do ye fall down,
prostrating yourselves unto him.”¹*

The vicegerent of Allah [*khalīfatullāh*] has great qualifications and characteristics, among which are: (1) knowledge of the names: “*And He taught Adam all the names*”,² (2) the vicegerent of God should have the competence to implement justice on earth. So, the wicked man who commits carnage on earth, feels no inhibition in perpetrating any sort of crime, and does not observe justice cannot be the viceroy of God. Is God iniquitous in that his envoy is also iniquitous? The vicegerent of Allah is he who manifests divine attributes in both his private and social life, and not just any two-footed beings.

Therefore, those who are endeavoring to misguide the people and topple down the Islamic government, apart from being not the noblest creatures, are exactly the same devils [*shayāṭīn*] from among mankind whom God regards as more abject than the animals and concerning whom He says:

﴿ إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الصَّمُّ الْبُكْمُ الَّذِينَ لَا يُعْقِلُونَ ﴾

*“Lo! The worst of beasts in Allah's sight are the deaf,
the dumb, who have no sense.”³*

The statement that the nobility of man lies on freedom and any thing that sets limit on freedom is condemnable and rejected is a deceptive slogan that has been brought up in the Western

¹ *Sūrah al-Hijr* 15:28-29.

² *Sūrah al-Baqarah* 2:31.

³ *Sūrah al-Anfāl* 8:22.

world, and in other countries also some have also accepted it without taking into account its ramifications, and they regularly stand on this proposition.

What is meant by saying that man must be absolutely free and should have no limitation whatsoever? Does it mean that there should be no mandatory law? No rational person will ever accept it because it implies that everyone is free to do whatever he likes. Everyone is free to commit murder, to encroach upon the chastity of people, and create disorder in the society! Without doubt, the first harm and defect of such thinking will be inflicted upon its proponents. Is it possible at all to live in a society wherein such a freedom has taken root? As such, there is certainly no unlimited freedom and man is not free to do whatever he likes at any time.

After it became clear that freedom is limited and conditional, this question comes to the fore: Who is the one that determines the scope and limitation of freedom? And where are the bounds and limits of freedom? If every person is supposed to determine the extent, limit and boundary of freedom for himself, the result will be this: everyone will do whatever he likes, and it will experience the problem related to the absolute freedom. So, having no good option, to refer to a law must be considered in describing and determining the scope, limit and boundary of freedom.

In this case, if a person accepts that God exists Who knows better what is good and bad for man than what he himself knows, that no benefit from the life of human beings will reach Him, and that He only wishes for the good of His Servants, is there anybody for him who is more deserving to determine the limit of freedom? Thus, there is no contradiction in the intellectual and belief system of Muslims because they believe in God Who knows best what is good and bad for human beings and what will cause them felicity, and He, too, has announced the limit and boundary of freedom.

If we did not believe in God, however, or assuming to have belief in monotheism we did not recognize God as the Authority in determining the limit and boundary of freedom, we would be inflicted with thousands of mischief, for never would all the people arrive at a unanimous view and opinion.

Now, even if there were a majority and it embarked on determining the limits of freedom, how could the minority that does not accept the limits of freedom determined by the majority get its rights? Thus, though freedom is a beautiful and attractive term, it is not absolute and unlimited, and no one can have an absolute freedom.

Doubt 9: *Creating ambiguity in defining the legitimate freedom.*

In reply to the above statement, it can possibly be said that we do not say to have absolute freedom. Our point is that there should be legitimate freedoms.

Reply

We ask this question: What do you mean by “legitimate”? Do you mean it a thing that the religious law accepts? In language, there are two meanings for the word “legitimate”. The first meaning is that which the religion has permitted. If what you mean is this one, then it is the same with what we are talking about, for we are saying that freedoms must be within a framework that has been allowed by the religion.

The other meaning of “legitimate” is that which is legal. According to this meaning also, in the Islamic Republic of Iran, as what the Constitution stipulates, the law must be concordant with Islam. Our Constitution monolithically shows that all rulings and laws must be consistent with Islam, and essentially,

the philosophy behind the existence of the jurist-members of the Guardianship Council,¹ as per the Constitution, is to study the bills that the Islamic Consultative Assembly (the Iranian Parliament or Majlis) has approved so as to determine whether they are consistent with Islam or not. Assuming that all the people and deputies in the Majlis (with the exception of the deputies of religious minorities whose rights are also reserved) are all Muslims, religious and committed. Nonetheless, sometimes it is also possible that they would be complacent and approve a thing that is inconsistent with Islam.

According to the Constitution, the bills of the Majlis should be examined in the Guardianship Council whether they are consistent with Islam or otherwise. The jurist-members of the Guardianship Council confirm the Islamic nature of the Majlis bills while the lawyers of the Guardianship Council confirm their compatibility with the Constitution.

If our Constitution does not regard it necessary (to check) the Islamic nature of the laws, what then is the philosophy behind the existence of the Guardianship Council? What for are all these emphases on the sovereignty of Islam and the absolute Guardianship of the Jurist that have been laid down in the articles of the Constitution? Then, one should not be surprised if there are those who introduced themselves as legal experts would say: “Since the Constitution states that freedom should be respected, no religion and no law has the right to set limits on

¹ To guard the laws of Islam and the Constitution against contradictions of the approvals of the Majlis, a council named Guardianship Council is set up in the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is composed of six just and learned jurists and six lawyers in various branches of the law (*Art. 91 of the Constitution*). They will be appointed for a period of six years (*Art. 92*). The Islamic Consultative Assembly has no legal validity without the Guardianship Council (*Art. 93*). All bills approved by the Majlis shall be forwarded to the said Council for confirmation and to check them for compatibility with the Islamic tenets and the constitutional law (*Art. 94*). [Trans.]

those freedoms”! Which one that the Constitution states: to have legitimate, or illegitimate freedoms? Do you yourselves say legitimate freedoms? What do you mean by “legitimate freedoms”? If the word “legitimate” [*mashrū*] is taken from “religion or religious law” [*shar*], i.e. freedoms that the religion [*shar*] confirms, and by “legitimate” [*mashrū*] it means “legal”, then according to the Constitution, the freedoms that the religion and the law would confirm are the “legitimate” freedoms.

Doubt 10: *Observance of the religious precepts is against the demand of the sovereignty of man over his own destiny.*

There are those who say that based upon the Constitution, the human beings must be the sovereign over their own destiny. But then if they were compelled to observe religion only, they would no longer be the sovereign over their destiny.

Reply

Has our Constitution highlighted this point only? Has it not been stipulated in the same Constitution that sovereignty emanates from God, the Exalted? Does the same Constitution not state that the laws to be implemented in the country must be Islamic laws? Do these subjects not extant in the Constitution, and has it stipulated only this principle that the people must be the master over their own destiny?

Perhaps, it can be said that these two principles of the Constitution are contradictory, and it needs interpretation and solution. Yet, if we try to examine closely, we will understand the meaning of these two principles. When in the first principle it states that sovereignty emanates from God and then it states that the people are the master over their own destiny, it means that under the auspices of the sovereignty of God, the people are the master over their own destiny. Thus, those who are excluded from the Islamic society and people of this country have no right

to impose their idea, predilection, religion, and law on us. That is, America has no right to impose its law on us. It is these people who would approve their own desired law and the people have voted for the Constitution.¹

Some would perhaps say: “We do not accept the meaning of constitution the way you are defining it”. In reply, it must be said: If there were any ambiguity existing in the Constitution, its interpreter is the Guardianship Council. If you do not accept this Constitution, you can see that it does not give you the authority to interpret it and it has determined itself the solution for contradictions and removal of doubts. If you believe in this Constitution, then you have to ask for its interpretation from the Guardianship Council. It is the Guardianship Council that is the guardian of Islam and the Constitution, and it has been consisted of Muslim jurists whose duty is the preservation and vouchsafing of the Islamic laws.



¹ In the referendum on the Islamic Republic shortly after the victory of the Islamic Revolution on February 11, 1979, the Iranian people unanimously declared their final and firm decision to bring about a new political order, an Islamic Republic, by a 98.2% majority vote. [Trans.]