



DEFENDING THE QURAN IN THE STUDY OF TAWJEEH AL-QIRA'AT

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ABSTRACT

The study of Tawjeeh Al-Qira'at (the interpretation of the different readings or recitation of the Quran) is an authenticated branch of knowledge in which there have been a great deal of works and popular scholars who have contributed to this science by interpreting the various issues pertinent to Quranic Qira'at. However, many people are not aware of the significance of this field of study. The purpose of this paper is to explore some modes of recitation and interpret them based on the Quran and the Arabic language in order to show the significance of this branch of knowledge to the Quran. The research adopted an analytical approach by tracing some verses of the Quran and provide an explanation for their different modes of recitation. The research indicates that the study of Tawjeeh Al-Qira'at is one of the top Quranic sciences that can be used

to defend the Quran. As a broad field of study, it is recommended that those who find interest in it should be well-informed of the other relevant branches of knowledge.

Keywords: Tawjeeh, Qira'at, Defending, The Holly Quran.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Holly Quran is the word of Allah revealed to prophet Mohammed through the Angel Gabriel. The people involved in the study of the Quran either via teaching or learning are considered in Islam as the most successful in this life and the hereafter. Moreover, the Almighty Allah grants incisive understanding for the people who are engaged in the study of the meanings and purposes of the Quran. As the Holly Quran is Allah's word, He gave an oath that he will protect it from fabrication and extrapolation until the day of judgment. Despite the fact the Quran has been exposed to various distortion campaigns, they all remained allegations which were refuted by scholars of Islam. These allegations were not logical but they were misrepresentations elicited from interpretation of Quranic exegetists and Hadith scholars. Tawjeeh Al-Qira'at (the interpretation of the different readings or recitation of the Quran) is one of the science which is concerned with refuting the allegations against the Quran.

2. RESEARCH ON TAWJEEH AL-QIRA'AT FOR DEFENDING THE QURAN

No sooner than Islam had spread beyond the Arab peninsula than many distortion campaigns started against it. The Quran, as the major source of Islam, has received the largest share of defamation and distortion attempts which aimed at arousing suspicions and doubts about its magnanimous values [1]. Enemies of Islam had some hostile attitude towards the Quran since they believe it serves as the guidance and constitution for Muslim societies [2]. Thus, throughout the ages, scholars of Islam had to defend the Quran using logical argument and similar language used by enemies of Islam. Among the aspects that were subject to distortion is the Quranic Qiraat and thus the discipline of Tawjeeh Al-Qira'at emerged to refute these claims. This discipline derives its significance from the fact that it constitutes a rebuttal of the atheistic aggression aiming at undermining the constants of Islam which can be exploited by enthusiasts.

Many atheists attempted to distort the Quran by arousing some doubts in the different Qira'at i.e. the different readings of the Quran. For example, they cite the verse where Allah says "If it had been from [any] other than Allah, they would have found within it much contradiction" (Al-Quran 3:83) and Allah says: "Falsehood cannot approach it from before it or from behind it; [it is] a revelation from a [Lord who is] Wise and Praiseworthy." (41:42). They postulate that Sahabah (companions of Prophet Mohammed) differed in reading one single verse. As an example, they cite the verse in Surah Yusuf "w qal althi nja minhuma waddakr b'ed ummah" (And he of the two who was released, and (now) at length remembered) (12:45). The verse was recited by Abdullah ibn Abbas as "ummah". The verse "waja?t sakratul mauti bilhak" (50:19) (And the intoxication of death will bring the truth; that is what you were trying to avoid) was read by Aisha (the Prophet's wife) as "waj?t sakratul alhaqi bilmaut". As another example, the verse 'saihatan wahidah' was read by Ibm Mas'ud as 'zakiatan wahidah.' Scholars of Islam has refuted these claims by clarifying the reasons for these differences [4].

In his response to the variation of these readings, Ibn Qutaibah stated that atheists have attempted to distort the Quran by tracing *Mutashabihat* verses (i.e. verses which may have a

variety of possible meanings) seeking affliction and searching meaning with little understanding and so they fabricated the meanings of these verses. They claim that some *Mutashbihat* verses are contradictory and ungrammatical. Despite the fact that they have little knowledge of Arabic and the Quran, they attempted to challenge the validity of these verses in order to misguide people. If what they have advocated should be considered, it would have been raised by the people of utmost eloquence during the Prophet's time. The almighty Allah has challenged them to produce a surah like any surah of the Quran. Ibn Qutaibah expounded that he wanted to defend the book of Allah by presenting a rebuttal of these claims from Quranic Tafseer (interpretation). Ibn Qutaibah stated that he authored a book in which he compiled all the problematic issues in *Mutashbihat* verses and refuted the atheists' doubts providing explanations which he elicited from the Quranic exegeses as well as consulting experts on Arabic dialects without deviation [5].

3. EXPLANATION OF SOME EXAMPLES FROM QIRA'AT

Based on what has been stated above, it is clear that the major motivation of research on the Quran is to refute false claims against it and provide an interpretation of the meanings of the different Qira'at. Among the Islamic scholars who responded to these claims is Ibn Qutaibah, may Allah have mercy on him. He wrote:

As regards the atheists' argument that there exists variations of Qira'at, the Prophet Mohammed peace be upon him said: "The Quran was revealed in seven major Arabic dialects; each one is self-contained, and so read however you want.". This Hadith is narrated by Ahmed in his book who narrated it by Abdulrahman ibn Abi Bakrah that Prophet Mohammed peace and blessings be upon him said the angels Gabriel and Mikael came to me; Gabriel said "read the Quran in one Arabic dialect; Mikael asked Gabriel to add more and Gabriel said "read it in seven Arabic dialects; except that if a verse about mercy is concluded by torture or a verse about torture is concluded by mercy" [6]. Imam Al-Albani said that this hadith is *Hasan* and it is accepted by scholars of Hadith [7].

Atheists might argue that these variation in readings are acceptable with regards to different forms which have the same meaning, and may question why different forms have different meanings. In this case, the differences in meaning are of two types: diversity and antonymy. While the latter does not exist in the Quran except in verses implying command and prohibition, the former is available. An example of variation in terms of diversity is exemplified in surah Saba, "رَبَّنَا بَعْدَ بَيْنِ أَسْفَارِنَا" (34:19) which means dua'a (i.e. a supplication, Oh Allah make the stages between our journeys long) and can also be read as "رَبَّنَا بَعْدَ بَيْنِ أَسْفَارِنَا" which means that the Almighty Allah has made the stage between our journeys long. Despite the variation between these two meanings they are both right because the people of Saba asked the Almighty Allah to separate them on earth saying Oh Allah, make the stages between our journeys long. After Allah has accepted their dua, they said Allah has made the stages between our journeys long and accepted our dua [8].

There are also many Mutawatir Qira'at in this verse. Ibn Katheer Al-Makki and Abu Amr Al-Basri, for instance, read the verse "ربنا باعد" as "رَبَّنَا بَعْدَ" i.e. without the vowel 'أ' (a) and tightened harf (letter) 'ع'. As another example, Ibn Y'akub Al-Hadrami read the same verse by sustaining the letter 'أ', pronounced the 'ب' /b/ sound with *Raf'a* or *dhammah* and the 'د' /d/ sound as /da/ with *nasb* i.e. in the past form of the verb (رَبَّنَا بَعْدَ). As for the rest of reciters (ibn Nafi', Ibn Dhakwan, Asim, Hamzah, Kisa'i), they read the sound 'ب' with *nasb* (رَبَّنَا) while sustaining the letter 'أ' (بَاعِدُ) /ba?id/ i.e they pronounced the 'ع' with *Jarr and the sound /d/ with sukun as an imperative verb*: (رَبَّنَا بَعْدُ).

It is clear that like their predecessors, current enemies of Islam has challenged the authenticity of the Quran by questioning validity of diversity in different Quranic Qiraat. Based

on these claims, scholars of Islam have refuted these allegations with irrefutable proof. This indicates the significance of scholarly works on Tawjeeh Al-Qira'at.

4. CONCLUSION

This paper explored the role of Tawjeeh Al-Qira'at in defending the Quran. The research indicates that Tawjeeh Al-Qira'at is the top most branch of knowledge that defends the Quran. It is such a comprehensive branch of knowledge that includes various sub-disciplines such as Quran's rhetoric, style, meanings, secrets and others. Thus, scholars interested in Tawjeeh Al-Qira'at should be well-informed of these fields of knowledge to provide sufficient contribution to this broad discipline.

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