

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND LOVE: AN OVERVIEW

ABDULCABBAR BORAN*¹

ABSTRACT

Love—expressed in the Qur'an as “mahabbah,” or deep heartfelt affection—is one of the most fundamental concepts of the religion. It spans a wide spectrum, including love for Allah, love for His Rasul, love among believers, and love for humanity as a whole. Religion is a phenomenon that can only be lived through love. The sign of love for Allah is wishing to reach Allah from the heart and waging jihad against one's own nafs (soul) to reach Allah the Almighty. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, “The small jihads are over, now we are turning to the great jihad; it is the jihad waged against the nafs (soul).” This struggle with the nafs is the struggle of love against hatred and enmity. In our study, we examine the different dimensions of love for Allah in the light of the Holy Qur'an and hadiths, and open a door to how to attain love.

Keywords: *Love, Happiness, Dhikr (Remembrance), Religion, Spirituality*

Methodology

In our study, the related concepts were examined in different contexts through the Holy Qur'an and Hadiths, and a qualitative analysis was conducted.

The Relationship Between Religion and Love

One of the names of Allah Almighty mentioned in the Holy Qur'an is Al-Wadud. Allah is the one who loves and is loved according to His name, and He created the universe and His creatures with love. He wants to see this love in all His creations. The holy books, prophets, and messengers. He sent to teach religion and faith to people is a manifestation of His great love for human beings. All Holy books and prophets are guides that show people the path to

¹ **Abdulcabbar Boran*** (Corresponding Author), is the Rector and a faculty member at the Department of Tafsir and Hadith, Faculty of Islamic Studies, Chesapeake University of Theology, 1954 Long Green Lane, Hampton, VA 23663, UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. Email: acboran@chvaedu.com

happiness. This is a sure sign that Allah wants the human beings He created with love to be happy. Love also plays a central role in living a religious life. Love is expressed in the Holy Qur'an by the words *hubb* and *maḥabbah*. It has been addressed in many different contexts. The most important of these contexts is the love of Allah and His Rasul. It is one of the most vital issues of a person's religious life. Indeed, when the leading *sahabah* (companion) Abu Bakr gave all his wealth in the way of Allah, when asked, "What did you leave for your children?" he said, "I left them the love of Allah and His Rasul," (At-Tirmidhī, Hadith 3675) which is one of the best examples of the matter. After the period of the *sahabah* (companions), the importance of love in Islam was emphasized and practiced as an example for humanity by the great masters of sufism such as Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī and Yunus Emre. In this study, the place of love in Islam will be evaluated in general through the Holy Qur'an and hadiths, and an attempt will be made to present different dimensions of the subject by relating it to the view of the great sufi figures.

The Various Dimensions of the Relationship Between Religion and Love

The concept of love, love for Allah and the Rasul (Messenger), love among believers, love for the worldly possessions (lust), love for relatives, has been dealt with in many different contexts in the Qur'ân and noble hadiths. Basically, the love for Allah and as a result, the love for the Rasul (Messenger), believers and all human beings and on the other hand, the love for worldly possessions (lust) which is the opposite direction are mentioned.

Al Imran-14: The lust (extreme desire) towards women and children, of hoarded treasures of gold and silver, of branded beautiful horses and cattle and well-tilled land, is made to seem beautiful to people. These are the enjoyments of the life of this world; and Allah is the best Refuge in His presence.

According to the Qur'an, the measure of whether a person loves Allah or the life of the world more is that the person wishes to reach Allah in heart. Those who wish to reach Allah are those who put Allah before the world. Those who do not wish to reach Allah are those who consider the life of the world more important than Allah and are satisfied with it. On this matter, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "Love of the world is the root of every kind of erroneous behavior. Love of something makes you blind and deaf" (Abu Dawud: Adab 125). It is expressed in the Holy Qur'an as follows:

Yunus-7: *Surely they do not wish to reach Us (they do not wish their spirits to reach Us before death). They are pleased with the life of the world and are satisfied with it, and those are the ones who are heedless of Our Verses.*

A sign that a person is among those who wish to reach Allah, that is, those who love Allah, is that the person is pleased with dhikr (repetition of the name of Allah). While those people who do not wish to reach Allah hate the dhikr, the people who wish to reach Allah are the ones who enjoy dhikr and repeat the name of Allah. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) says that:

“The sign of loving Allah is engaging in dhikr, while the sign of not loving Allah is an aversion to it.” (al-Bayhaqī)

“Whoever harbors love for reaching Allah, Allah likewise loves to bring him unto Himself. And whoever finds reaching Allah distasteful, Allah likewise finds bringing him unto Himself distasteful.” (al-Bayhaqī)

Az-Zumar-45: *When the Oneness of Allah is mentioned, the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter (in reaching Allah before death) recoil with aversion; but when anything other than Him is mentioned, they rejoice.*

Al-Baqarah-152: *Therefore, praise Me so that I may remember you, and be thankful to Me, and do not deny Me.*

The act of dhikr — the repetition of the Divine Name “Allah” — enables the ruh (spirit) to reach Allah. As a person engages in dhikr, the afat (vices) of the nafs (soul) are gradually purified; and as these afat (vices) are removed, the ruh (spirit) ascends through the heavenly floors until it ultimately reaches Allah.

Fatir-18: *And no bearer of burdens (sinful) bears another’s burden (sin) and if one heavily laden calls another to (bear) his load, nothing of it will be lifted even though he be near of kin. You warn only those who are filled with awe towards their Lord in the Unseen (without seeing Him) and keep up the Prayer. And whoever cleanses himself (his nafs), does it only for his own nafs. And to Allah is the return (through the cleansing of the nafs, the ruh (spirit) returns to Allah and reaches Allah).*

The Prophet Muhammed (PBUH) said: *“You cannot enter heaven unless you believe, you cannot believe unless you love each other.”* (Bukhārī, Muslim) Here we see a first degree relationship between believing and love among the believers. At this point, when we look at the

previous Holy Books, we see that Allah has always mentioned love as the most important topic in all books. Jesus said, *"He who does not love his brother whom he sees but says that he loves Allah whom he does not see is a liar"*. (John 4:20) *"The most important thing is this: Hear, O Israel! Allah is the One Lord. You shall love the Lord with all your heart, and with all your nafs (soul), and with all your mind and all your strength. The second is this: You will love your neighbor as yourself. There is no greater commandment than these."* (Mark 12:29–31) These statements are very important in that they express that love is at the center of religion. Love for people is a manifestation of love for Allah and a measure of faith. Love for His Rasul comes first in love for people.

On this subject, in the Qur'an, Surah Al Imran (3:31) says: *"If you love Allah then take an allegiance to me, for Allah to love you and replace your sins with good. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving (Replacing your sins into good), Most Merciful (Acting in His Name Rahim, Sending Light Rahma)"*.

As indicated in the verse, Allah's love is a reciprocal reality that grows through pledging allegiance to the religious guide. Those who love Allah pledge allegiance to the Rasul. Allah loves those who pledge allegiance to the Rasul. In addition, pledging allegiance to a murshid (religious guide) is also obligatory for the ruh (spirit) to be delivered to Allah and for dhikr to be effective in the purification of the nafs (soul).

Al-Baqarah-151: *Thus We have sent among you a Messenger (a Prophet) from among you so that he may read (and explain) to you Our Verses and cleanse (and purify) you (your souls' hearts) and teaches you the Book and Wisdom and teaches you that which you did not know (beyond Wisdom).*

The love for His messengers, as they are Allah's representatives on earth, is a reflection of the love for Allah. When Abū Jahl came to the Prophet (PBUH) and said, *"Is there anyone uglier than you?"*, and when Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) later said, *"O Messenger of Allah, is there anyone more beautiful than you?"*, the Prophet replied, *"I am the mirror of truth; everyone sees himself in me."* (Rumi, Maṣnavī). This indicates that the messengers serve as mirrors of truth for humanity. In addition, the spiritual guides - the inheritors of our Prophet (PBUH) - likewise have a primary duty in establishing love between people and Allah.

"My sahabah (companions) are like the stars of the sky. Whichever one you follow will reach the hidayah (guidance)." (Ibn Hazm, Al-Ahkam, 4:82)

“There are such beloved servants of Allah that they make Allah beloved to people, and they make people beloved to Allah.” ((al-Suyuti, al-Jami‘ al-Saghir, 1:251; Kanz al-Ummal, 15:1186; Fawz al-Qadir, 3:371; al-Bayhaqi, al-Sunan al-Kubra))

“The awliya (saints) of Allah are those who, when seen, remind one of the dhikr of Allah.” (Haythami)

“I leave you two trusts: the Qur’ân and my Ahl al-Bayt.” (al-Nasâ’î: Kitâb 48, bâb 52)

“Allah Almighty sends to this ummah, in every century, a man who renews and revives the affairs of the religion. Among you there will be a group who invites people to the Truth; they are the ‘People of Truth’ (Ahl al-Ḥaqq). These individuals renew and revive the matters of the religion. These friends of Allah make Allah beloved to His servants.” (Bukhārī / Muslim / Sunan Abī Dāwūd)

The noble hadiths reveal that the owners of the post of irshad (religious guide) are also mirrors of the truth between people and Allah and are a means for people to attain the hidayah (guidance). In every era, the one whom Allah loves most is the Imam of that time — the mujaddid (renewer) of the age and the inheritor of the Messenger of Allah.”

When the matter of love is viewed from the perspective of the believers, it is Allah who enables the love they have for one another. Allah has placed love in the hearts of believers. In the beginning, the sahabah were servants of the taghut (human and jinn satans) and they had blood feuds and were enemies to each other. However, when they wished to reach Allah and pledged allegiance to the Messenger of Allah, Allah placed love in their hearts. At this point, it becomes evident once again that wishing to reach Allah is the fundamental factor that frees a person from the trap of Satan's hatred and enmity.

Az-Zumar-17: And they avoided slavery to At-Tâghût (saved themselves from human- and jinn satans), because they turned to Allah (they wished to reach Allah while alive). For them, there are glad tidings. Therefore, give good tidings to My servants!

Al Imran-103: And hold fast, all together, to the rope of Allah and do not divide into groups, and remember the blessing of Allah upon you. You had become enemies (one to another), then He brought your hearts united, so that, by His (Allah’s) blessing, you became brothers; And you were on the brink of a pit of Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus Allah makes His Verses clear to you, that you may attain Hidayah (guidance).

Al-Anfal-63: And He has united their hearts (with love). If you had spent all that is in the earth, you could not have united their hearts. And but Allah has united them. Certainly, He is Majestic, All-Wise.

The sahabah (companions) underwent a spiritual training of the Messenger of Allah, cleansed all the afat (vices) from their nafs (souls), and attained the hidayah. At this point, they all became symbols of love. They reached a level where they could feel love even for those who were hostile to them.

Al-Hujurat-7: And know that among you is the Messenger of Allah. If he were to obey you in many of the affairs, you would surely be in trouble. But Allah has caused give you to love the Faith and has adorned it in your hearts. Shown , and made disbelief, ungodliness and rebellion to you as negative hateful. Such are those, they who are Religious Guide (that is, they will become Holy Teacher)

Al Imran-119: You (believers) are like this; you love them while they do not love you, and you believe in the Book as a whole; and when they meet you they say: “We believe”. And when they are alone, they bite the tips of their fingers with rage. Say: “Die in your rage!” Surely Allah knows what is in their hearts.

Allah’s faithful servants feel love for everyone, especially Allah and His Rasul, and live for people. In this regard, when Shaybānī al-Rāī, the murshid (spiritual guide) of Imām al-Shāfi‘ī was asked about the calculation of zakat, he said, “*I consider myself as my own zakat*”, (Özak, M. (n.d.)) which indicates the love of a salih (righteous servant) towards people. Certainly, the indicator of love for something is the effort given to it. At this point, when we look at the relationship between love and infaq (charitable giving), the inward indicator of one’s love for Allah is the amount of daily dhikr performed. The Qur’an presents three measures of dhikr: occasional dhikr, abundant dhikr, and continuous dhikr.

Al-Muzzammil-8: And, repeat the Name of your Lord and detach yourself (from worldly distractions) and turn entirely to Him.

Al-Ahzab-41: O you who believe (who are Amenû, who wish their spirits to reach Allah)! Repeat the name of Allah with a lot (more than half of the day) of dhikr.

An-Nisa-103: And when you have completed the prayer, repeat the name of Allah standing, sitting, or lying (down) on your sides (with a continuous repetition), but when you are in safety, then perform the ritual prayer, as it should be performed; surely the prayer is enjoined on the believers at fixed hours as an obligation.

The outward reflection of this love in a person's external relations is their infaq (charitable giving) in the path of Allah. In addition to material forms of giving—such as zakah, birr, and ṣadaqah—there are also other forms of infaq, including mercy, knowledge, and virtuous behavior.

Al-Imran-92: By no means shall you attain Al-Birr (ebrar, who gives the highest alms) until you spend out (for Allah) of what you love; and whatever you spend (from what Allah provides you, what you spend for Allah), Allah surely knows it.

Al-Isra-53: And say to My servants (that) they shall speak the best (of the word)! Surely Satan sows dissensions (makes mischief) among them. Surely Satan is an open enemy to human.

Another relationship between spending in the way of Allah and love in our relationships with Allah Almighty is the reaching of the ruh (spirit), which is entrusted to human beings, to Allah while we are alive. In the Holy Qur'an, the reaching of the ruh (spirit) to Allah while alive has been made obligatory with verbs such as "likae, vasele (ruh's arrival), ircii" (Al-'Ankabūt 5; Ar-Ra'd 21–22; Al-Fajr 27)

Al-Mu'minun-60: And they give (return) what they have to give (spirit) and their hearts tremble because they are the returned (returned their spirit) ones to their Lord.

Al-Hajj-35: Those are the ones whose hearts tremble (those whose hearts and bodies are shaken by a "current" coming from Allah) when they praise Allah. They are the patient ones over what afflicts them and the ones who keep up the prayer. And they spend out of what We have provided them.

The verses clearly mention infaq and the relation with returning to Allah. Here, the trembling of the hearts is also pointed out. When the believers perform dhikr, their hearts tremble, and this shows that the infaq mentioned in the verse is a form of giving that occurs when the lights of Allah are conveyed to the heart of the nafs (soul) through dhikr. As a result of this infaq, the person reaches his ruh (spirit) to Allah and becomes one of the awliyah (saints) of Allah. This point represents a turning point in a person's inner world where love prevails over hatred. In other words, it marks the stage at which the afat (vices) of the nafs (soul) have come under control and are largely replaced by the divine lights of Allah. The point where a person completely cleanses the afat (vices) in his nafs (soul) and removes the hatred of his heart 100% and replaces it with 100% love is the point where he reaches continuous dhikr. Those who attain continuous dhikr become possessors of an endless love that enables them to respond to evil with goodness.

Fussilat-33: *And who is better in speech than he who calls to Allah and do righteous deed (the soul's purification) and says: "I am surely of those who is submitted (to Allah)"?*

Fussilat-34: *And the good and the evil are not equal. Repel (evil) with what is best. Then the one whom you had enmity in between becomes as if he were a intimate friend.*

Fussilat-35: *And none are to attain that (to be able to repel evil with what is best) but those who are patient, and the owners of Greatest Pleasure.*

Although the believers are generally described in the Qur'an through love, the state of hostility is only mentioned as an exceptional attitude against those who fight against the Messenger of Allah and try to create mischief on earth. Indeed, the reason for this hostility is that these people have behavioural traits that will harm society. It has been stated as a characteristic of the believers that the true believers should not feel affection for such people - even if they are relatives of the believers.

Al-Mujadila-22: *You cannot find a people who believe in Allah and the Latter Day (reaching Allah before death) loving those who oppose Allah and His Messenger, even though they are their fathers, their sons, their siblings or their tribesman...*

Believers have always been described as loving and generous towards people, except in this exceptional situation. Historical records also describe the numerous sacrifices that the companions made for each other during the time of our Prophet (PBUH). Allah Almighty has shown them as an example to all humanity in the Holy Quran for their superior sacrifice.

1. The Nafs (Soul) and Its Afat (Vices) That Paralyze Love

The nafs (soul) is the being that is the focus of evil, the source of injustice in human beings. (An-Nisa 4:79). While love is a virtue of the ruh (spirit), hatred, its opposite, is a afat (vice) of the nafs (soul). Also, each of the other afat (vices) of the nafs (soul), such as stinginess, greed, lust, pride, ignorance, etc., appears as a factor that paralyzes love. Spending in the way of Allah is a manifestation of love, while stinginess is a afat (vice) that prevents it. Greed is a worldliness that disturbs people from Allah. Examples like this can be multiplied. Since the afat (vices) of the nafs (soul) are a barrier between the human being and Allah, they need to be cleansed and purified. For this reason, the nafs (soul) was created in such a way that it can be transformed, as cleansing, into a positive essence like the ruh (spirit).

At-Tin-4: I swear We have created the human (soul) in a calendar of perfection (so that it can turn to be the best in a period of time by doing the soul's cleansing and purification).

At-Tin-5: Then We have returned (brought back) it to Esfel-i Safilin (the lowest level of hell, to the darkness of the soul).

The cleansing of the afat (vices) in the nafs (soul) is possible through performing dhikr (repetition the name of Allah). As a person performs dhikr, the spiritual heart of the nafs (soul) will be filled with the lights of Allah and the afat (vices) will be replaced by fadl (the light of virtue). Thus, one day the person will be freed from all afat (vices) and become a perfected human being, a righteous servant.

Al-A'la-14: Whosoever cleansed (half of) his soul is in Salvation.

Al-A'la-15: And he (that is, the one who cleansed the soul) began to praise the Name of His Lord and performed prayers.

An-Nur-21: O you who believe (who are âmenû, who wish their ruh (spirits) to reach Allah before death), do not follow the footsteps of Satan! And whosoever follows the footsteps of Satan, then surely, he commands (every) abomination and evil (the denial and all that Allah has forbidden). And if it had not been for the Generosity and Mercy of Allah unto you (if these lights had not be placed into the hearts of your souls), none of you could have ever cleansed his soul, but Allah cleanses the souls of whom He wills and Allah is All-Hearing, All- Knowing.

Conclusion

When we look at the relationship between religion and love, we see that love is at the center of religion. All relationships with Allah are based on love and are strengthened in parallel with the increase in love. Love towards Allah is reflected in the way a person behaves in the outside world and is manifested as love for people. The factor that prevents this love is the presence of the afat (vices) within the nafs (soul) and, based on these afat (vices), a person's attachment to the life of this world. The path to freeing oneself from these negative elements is to wish to reach Allah, to find a murshid (spiritual guide), and to undergo the purification and refinement of the nafs (soul). In the Qur'an, the companions—who were initially enemies to one another—are presented as an example of how, by wishing to reach Allah and then pledging allegiance to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), they purified their nafs (souls) and, through His spiritual training, became the foremost possessors of the highest degree of love. The hadiths and verses also show that the inheritors of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) performed the same duty in later periods. The root of problems in family life, social life and between countries today is lack

of love. The great sufi masters of the Islamic world, such as Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, Yunus Emre, and Shaykh Bahauddin Naqshband taught people love with the understanding of “*We love the created for the sake of the Creator.*” Even today their names are remembered with love all over the world. This shows how important the spiritual training of Islam is and how much it has been neglected, considering the loveless environment of today. The results of our research show that people's path to both living happy life in this world and attaining the bliss of Paradise is through love for Allah Almighty and the way to gain this love is by wishing to reach Allah Almighty from the heart and pledging allegiance to a murshid (religious guide) appointed by Allah and cleansing the nafs (soul). We hope that this study will provide a basis for researchers who want to study different aspects of the subject.

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