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<u>Home</u> > <u>On The Khilafah Of 'Ali Over Abu Bakr</u> > 13) Hadith Al-Qital, Ibn Taymiyyah Charges Imam 'Ali With Mass Murder

13) Hadith Al-Qital, Ibn Taymiyyah Charges Imam 'Ali With Mass Murder

Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah (d. 728 H) states:

والمقصود هنا أن ما يعتذر به عن علي فيما أنكر عليه يعتذر بأقوى منه عن عثمان فإن عليا قاتل على الولاية وقتل بسبب ذلك خلق كثير عظيم ولم يحصل في ولايته لا قتال للكفار ولا فتح لبلادهم ولا كان المسلمون في زيادة خير

The intention here is that whatever is used to excuse 'Ali from the criticisms against him, such also exonerate 'Uthman at an even greater level. This is because 'Ali fought for power, and murdered an extremely large number of people to achieve that. And he did not achieve during his government — he did not fight the pagans, nor did he conquer their (pagans') land. Moreover, the Muslims did not experience any increase in goodness.1

He adds:

ونحن لا ننكر أن عثمان رضي الله عنه كان يحب بني أمية وكان يواليهم ويعطيهم أموالا كثيرة وما فعله من مسائل الاجتهاد التي تكلم فيها العلماء الذين ليس لهم غرض كما أننا لا ننكر أن عليا ولى أقاربه وقاتل وقتل خلقا كثيرا من المسلمين الذين يقيمون الصلاة ويؤتون الزكاة ويصومون

We do not deny that 'Uthman, may Allah be pleased with him, used to love Banu Umayyah, and used to befriend them and gave them lots of money. What he did was from matters of *ijtihad* (personal opinions) which the unbiased scholars criticize, just as **we do not deny that 'Ali** put his relatives in power, and fought, and **murdered a lot of Muslims who used to perform** *Salat*, **and used to give** *Zakat*, **and used to fast**.2

These are terribly disturbing accusations. Considering that our Sunni brothers always claim all the Sahabah were saints, one wonders where in their theology the above allegations fit in. If 'Ali, 'alaihi al-

salam, was indeed a power-hungry mass murderer – as the Shaykh has alleged – then how exactly was he a saint at all in their *madhhab*?

But, our Shaykh has not finished yet. In his view, the defensive battles of Amir al-Muminin against the insurgents – led by Mu'awiyah and 'Aishah – who rose in bloody armed rebellion against him, had nothing to do with Islam:

فإن جاز أن يطعن في الصديق والفاروق أنهما قاتلا لأخذ المال فالطعن في غيرهما أوجه فإذا وجب الذب عن عثمان وعلي فهو عن أبي بكر وعمر أوجب وعلي يقاتل ليطاع ويتصرف في النفوس والأموال فكيف يجعل هذا قتالا على الدين

If it is permissible to criticize (Abu Bakr) al-Siddiq and ('Umar) al-Faruq on the basis that they both fought in order to collect wealth, then criticism of others apart from them both is even more correct. If it is necessary to defend 'Uthman and 'Ali, then defence of Abu Bakr and 'Umar is even more necessary. 'Ali used to fight to make people obey him and to have control over souls and wealth. How can this be categorized as fighting for the religion?3

In fact, our Shaykh thinks that the evidence suggesting that 'Ali had become a pagan through his fighting and killings are strong and supported by *sahih ahadith*:

ثم يقال لهؤلاء الرافضة لو قالت لكم النواصب علي قد استحل دماء المسلمين وقاتلهم بغير أمر الله ورسوله على رياسته وقد قال النبي صلى الله عليه و سلم سباب المسلم فسوق وقتاله كفر وقال ولا ترجعوا بعدي كفارا يضرب بعضكم رقاب بعض فيكون علي كافرا لذلك لم تكن حجتكم أقوى من حجتهم لأن الأحاديث التي احتجوا بها صحيحة وأيضا فيقولون قتل النفوس فساد فمن قتل النفوس على طاعته كان مريدا للعلو في الأرض والفساد وهذا حال فرعون والله تعالى يقول تلك الدار الاخرة نجعلها للذين لا يريدون علوا في الأرض ولا فسادا والعاقبة للمتقين فمن أراد العلو في الأرض والفساد لم يكن من أهل السعادة في الاخرة وليس هذا كقتال الصديق للمرتدين ولمانعي الزكاة فإن الصديق إنما قاتلهم على طاعة الله ورسوله لا على كاعته فإن الزكاة فرض عليهم فقاتلهم على الإقرار بها وعلى أدائها بخلاف من قاتل ليطاع هو

Then it is said to the Rafidhah (i.e. Shi'is). If the Nawasib (i.e. haters of 'Ali) said to you (i.e. Shi'is): 'Ali made it permissible to shed the blood of Muslims and fought them, without the order of Allah and His Messenger, to enforce his rule, and the Prophet, peace be upon him, had said, "Cursing a Muslim is an evil deed, and fighting him is disbelief" and he (the Prophet) also said, "Do not become pagans after me by killing one another", and thereby 'Ali became a pagan, your (i.e. Shi'i) argument is NOT stronger than their (i.e. Nasibi) argument because the *ahadith* which they use as proof are *sahih*.

Moreover, they say that murder is mischief, and that whoever murders in order to enforce obedience to himself, he is someone who wants to be exalted in the earth. This mischief was the condition of Fir'awn, and Allah the Most High says, "That home of the Hereafter, We shall assign to those who do not seek to

be exalted in the earth, nor commit mischief, and the good end is for the pious." (28:83) Therefore, anyone who seeks to be exalted in the earth, and to do mischief, is not from the successful ones in the Hereafter.

This was not like the fight of Abu Bakr against the apostates and those who refused to pay *Zakat*. This was because al–Siddiq only fought them to enforce the obedience of Allah and His Messenger, and not to enforce his own obedience. *Zakat* was compulsory upon them, and fighting them was to the reason for its recognition (by the rebels) and payment, as opposed to the one who fought to enforce his own obedience.4

This is a simple summary of the claims of Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah against Amir al-Muminin 'Ali:

- 1. His wars were not for Islam. He was only fighting for power and control of people's wealth.
- 2. He murdered a very large number of righteous Muslims in pursuit of his power struggle.
- 3. Any Muslim who fights another Muslim is a pagan. Therefore, those who claim that 'Ali had become a pagan through his wars have a strong point, backed by *sahih ahadith*.

So, why does our Shaykh still consider 'Ali to have been a "righteous" Muslim? He makes a further claim:

'Ali b. Abi Talib, may Allah be pleased with him, regretted things he did, such as fighting and others.5

Without that, Shaykh Ibn Taymiyyah would have declared him a pagan war criminal like the Nawasib did. But, what is the truth of all these allegations, accusations and claims? Is any of them based upon reliable sources? Did 'Ali truly fight only for power? Did he really murder Muslims? Did he ever regret his defensive wars against the insurgents?

- 1. Abu al-'Abbas Ahmad b. 'Abd al-Halim b. Taymiyyah al-Harrani, Minhaj al-Sunnah al-Nabawiyyah (Muasassat Qurtubah; 1st edition, 1406 H) [annotator: Dr. Muhammad Rashad Salim], vol. 6, p. 191
- 2. Ibid, vol. 6, p. 356
- 3. Ibid, vol. 8, pp. 329-330
- 4. Ibid, vol. 4, pp. 499-500
- 5. Ibid, vol. 6, p. 209

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