

Letter 88

Pretexts Refuted

Rabi'ul-Awwal 11, 1330

Any fair minded person ought to yield to the truth and utter what is right. There are other views regarding the rejection of these arguments which I desired to put forth to you, so that the final judgment will be left entirely to you.

Their first pretext states that he, peace be upon him and his progeny, having ordered them to bring the ink-pot, did not really intend to write something but rather desired to test them, that's all. We say, in addition to what you yourself have stated, that this incident took place shortly before his demise, as the tradition itself suggests; there was simply no time for testing, but there was time for a last minute warning and justifying, time for a will containing a very significant matter, a piece of complete advice for the nation. Anyone who is dying is certainly far from testing or jesting; he would be concerned about his affairs and those of his own kin, especially if he is a Prophet.

If he, as long as he lived, did not have enough time to test them, how could he have found time to do so when he was about to die? His statement, peace be upon him and his progeny, telling them to get away from him when they fussed and argued in his presence, is surely indicative of his disappointment with them. Had those who opposed him been right, he would have appreciated their opposition and expressed his pleasure therewith.

Anyone who studies this tradition, especially their saying that the Messenger of Allah was delirious, will be positively sure that they were aware of his intention to do something they hated; so, they surprised him with such a statement, and they persisted fussing, arguing, and disputing, as is quite obvious. Ibn 'Abbas's tears, and his labelling the incident a catastrophe disprove this argument.

Those who seek excuses by arguing that 'Umar was divinely inspired in assessing the public interest of Muslims, that he was inspired by Allah, are talking nonsense, and their argument is dismissed in such a discussion since it suggests that he, not the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him and his progeny,

was on the right track in this incident, and that his so-called "inspiration" was more accurate than the revelation which he (S), the truthful and trustworthy that he was, uttered.

They say that it was intended to relieve the Prophet, peace be upon him and his progeny, from the burden of writing while feeling sick. You, may Allah support the truth through your person, know that writing such matters would only bring the Prophet peace of mind, tranquility, and the pleasure of his eyes. He would feel happy for ensuring a security for his nation, peace be upon him and his progeny, against misguidance.

The commands to be obeyed, the divine will, and the physical presence were all his. He, being more precious than my parents, wished to have access to a sheet of paper and an ink-pot; he issued an order and nobody was supposed to oppose his wish;

"Neither a believing man nor a believing woman has any right, when Allah and His Messenger decree a matter, to follow their own views, and whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger is surely in manifest misguidance (Qur'an, 33:36)."

Yet their insubordination in such an extremely significant matter, and their fussing, arguing, and disputing in his presence, were to him more painful than writing what he wished to write in order to protect his nation against misguidance. How can anyone who feels pity for him because of the pain of writing something oppose him and surprise him by saying that he was speaking in delirium?

They say that 'Umar thought that not to bring the sheet and the ink-pot was wiser. This is a most odd statement. How can it be wiser while the Prophet himself had ordered that they should be brought forth? Did 'Umar think that the Messenger of Allah would order something which would be better left out?

Yet even more strange is their argument that 'Umar feared that the Prophet might write things which would be impossible to implement and whose abandoning would require chastisement. How can it thus be feared in spite of the Prophet's statement "... you shall never stray"? Do people who thus argue think that 'Umar assesses the consequences more correctly than the Prophet himself, and that he is more cautious about and compassionate to his nation than the Prophet (S)? Certainly not.

They also say that it is possible that 'Umar feared the hypocrites might cast doubts about the authenticity of such writing, since it would be written during the Prophet's sickness, and that it would be a cause for dissension.

You, may Allah support the truth through your person, know that such an insinuation is impossible since the Prophet, peace be upon him and his progeny, has stated: "... you shall never stray," thus clearly stating that such writing would bring them security against straying; so, how can it be a reason for dissension just because the hypocrites might cast doubts about its authenticity?

Had he ['Umar] feared such hypocrites and their casting doubts about the authenticity of what the

Prophet wished to write, why did he then plant the seed of such doubts himself when he opposed and objected and even said that the Prophet was delirious?

As regarding their interpretation of verses cited in support of 'Umar's statement: "The Book of Allah suffices us," such as the verse:

"We have left nothing unexplained in the Book (Qur'an, 6:38),"

and

"Today have I completed for you your religion (Qur'an, 5:4),"

it is erroneous, for neither verse suggests a security against misguidance, nor do both verses guarantee guidance for people; so, how can relying on these verses justify abandoning the implementation of the texts whose writing the Prophet wished to record? Had the presence of the dear Qur'an been to bring security against misguidance, then neither misguidance nor dissension, the removal of which is as hopeless as can be, would have ever taken place. [1](#)

In their final argument, they say that 'Umar did not understand the tradition to imply that such writing would be a cause for protecting each and every member of his nation from misguidance; and that rather he understood that it would, after its writing, safeguard them against erring in their consensus.

They claim that 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, knew that the error in their consensus would never occur, albeit if such writing had taken place or not, and that for this reason he opposed its writing thus.

Besides what you have said, we may add that 'Umar did not lack such a degree of understanding, and he was not blind to the implication of the tradition which became obvious to all people. Urban residents as well as bedouins understood the intention of the Prophet (S) that it would be a complete prescription for the protection of every individual against misguidance... only had it been written.

This is the meaning which anyone can comprehend of this tradition. 'Umar knew for sure that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him and his progeny, was not worried about his nation making an error in its consensus views, since he, may Allah be pleased with him, had heard him, peace be upon him and his progeny, saying: "The consensus of my nation shall never be in misguidance nor in error," and his statement: "One group from my nation shall always stand opposing what is just," and he was aware of the verse saying:

"Allah has promised those who believe among you and do good deeds that He will let them inherit the earth just as He let those before them be the successors, and He will firmly set the roots of the faith which He has approved, and He will exchange their fear with security; they shall worship Me, without associating anything with Me (Qur'an, 24:55),"

In addition to many such texts in both the Book and the Sunnah. They all are clear in implying that NOT the entire nation shall err in its consensus views; so, it is not feasible, in spite of all this, that 'Umar or anyone else would conceive that when the Prophet, peace be upon him and his progeny, asked for a blank sheet of paper and an ink-pot, was worried about his nation erring in its consensus views.

What 'Umar is liable to have understood of this hadith is what anyone else would, not what is contrary to the authentic Sunnah, nor to the perfect verses of the Qur'an. But the disappointment of the Prophet, peace be upon him and his progeny, was obvious when he told them to get away from him, and it proved that what they had shunned was indeed a sacred obligation.

Had 'Umar's objection been due to his misunderstanding of this hadith, as they claim, then the Prophet would have helped him remove his misunderstanding, and he would have clarified his objective to him.

Nay, even if the Prophet was convinced that he would be able to convince them to carry out his order, he would not have ordered them out. Again, Ibn 'Abbas's tears and genuine agony provide the greatest rebuttal to such claims.

Justice refuses to find an excuse for those who had permitted such a calamity to take place. Had it been, as you described, a simple slip like another one before it, and a rare occurrence, the matter would have been a lot more tolerable, but it was the catastrophe of the century that split the nation's spine; so, we are Allah's, and to Him is our return.

Sincerely,

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1. You, may Allah support the truth through your person, know that the Prophet (S) did not say: "I would like to write down the tenets," so that it may be said to him: "Suffices us the Book of Allah, the Exalted One." Even if we suppose that he wished to write down those tenets, it could very possibly be that his own writing thereof would be a cause for security against misguidance; therefore, there is no reason to avoid his text and be satisfied with the Qur'an alone. If the text he wished to write was only to safeguard them against misguidance, it would not be appropriate to leave it, shun it, and rely on the fact that Allah's Book includes everything. You know very well how the Muslim nation has no option besides referring to the sacred Sunnah in spite of the fact that it holds the Book of Allah, the Exalted, as indispensable, and although it is inclusive and is divinely protected, for deriving injunctions from it is not within the reach of every ordinary person. Had the Book of Allah been completely sparing us from referring to its own explanations as put forth by the Prophet (S), then Allah Aighty would not have commanded him to explain it to people when He said: "We have revealed unto you the Book so that you may explain to people what has been revealed for them."

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