

Letter 94

[His Order \(S\) to Kill the Renegade](#)

Rabi' al-Awwal 25, 1330

Suffices you in response to your request what is recorded by a group of the nation's scholars and the imams of narrators, such as imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal who writes on page 15, Vol. 3, of his *musnad*, quoting Abu Sa'd al-Khudri saying that Abu Bakr once came to the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him and his progeny and said: "O Messenger of Allah! I was passing through a valley when I saw a man, solemn and properly attired, saying his prayers."

The Prophet, peace be upon him and his progeny, said to him: "Go and kill him." So Abu Bakr went there, and when he saw the man like that, he hated to kill him; therefore, he returned to the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him and his progeny, without carrying out his order.

The Prophet, peace be upon him and his progeny, said to 'Umar: "Go and kill him," and 'Umar went there and saw him in the same way Abu Bakr had described, and he, too, came back without killing the man and said: "O Messenger of Allah! I have seen him saying his prayers very solemnly; so, I hated to kill him."

The Prophet (S) then said to 'Ali: "Ali, you go and kill him," whereupon 'Ali went to the place and returned only to say: "O Messenger of Allah! I could not find the man." The Prophet, peace be upon him and his progeny, then said: "This man and his friends read the Qur'an only pronouncing its words [just to impress people]; they depart from the faith as swiftly as the arrow departs from the bow, and they do not go back till the arrow goes back to the bow anew. Kill them, for they are the worst among the living."

In his *Musnad*, Abu Ya'li, as stated in the biography of Thul-Thadya by Ibn Hajar in his *Isaba*, quotes Anas ibn Malik saying: "We used to admire the piety and *ijtihad* of a man who was contemporary to the Messenger of Allah (S), and we mentioned him by name to the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him and his progeny, but he did not know him. We described him to the Prophet (S), but he still did not recognize him."

While we were talking about him, he came into sight and we said that it was he. He (S) said: 'Are you talking to me about a man on whose face Satan has placed his mark?' The man approached till he stood before them without greeting them. The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him and his progeny, asked him: 'I ask you in the Name of Allah if you have told yourself when you approached that there is nobody among us better than or superior to you?' The man answered: 'Indeed, I have,' and he came in to say his prayers.

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him and his progeny, asked who would be willing to kill the man, and Abu Bakr said he would. When Abu Bakr entered, he found the man engaged in saying his prayers; so, he wondered how he could kill a man who was saying his prayers. When the Messenger of Allah (S) asked him what he did, he answered: 'I hated to kill him while he was saying his prayers, and you yourself had ordered us not to kill those who pray.'

The Prophet (S) asked for a volunteer, and this time 'Umar responded. 'Umar entered and found the man prostrating and said to himself that Abu Bakr was better than him; therefore, he went out. When the Prophet (S) asked him if he did what he had promised to do, he told him that he had found the man placing his forehead on the ground prostrating to God.

The Prophet (S) once more asked: 'Who can kill this man?' 'Ali answered in the affirmative, and when he entered looking for him, he found out that he had already left; so, he went back to the Messenger of Allah (S) and told him that the man had already left. It was then that the Prophet (S) said: 'Had this man been killed, no couple among my nation would have disputed with one another.'"

This incident has been recorded by al-Hafiz Muhammad ibn Müsa al-Shirazi in his book wherein he combines the *tafasir* of Y'aqüb ibn Hayyan, 'Ali ibn Harb, al-Sadi, Mujahid, Qatadah, Waki', and Ibn Jurayh. Its authenticity is considered common knowledge by trustworthy traditionists such as Imam Shihabud-Din Ahmad, who is better known as Ibn 'Abd Rabbih al-Andalusi, who quotes it at the conclusion of his chapter on those who follow their own inclinations in the first volume of his book *Al-'Iqd al-Farid*.

At the conclusion of this incident as he narrates it, he says that the Prophet (S) has said: "This is the first horn [of the devil] coming out in my nation. Had you killed him, no two men would have disputed with each other. The children of Isra'il split into seventy-two groups, and this nation shall split into seventy-three groups all of which, except one, will go to Hell."¹

Another almost similar narration of this incident is recorded by authors of books of traditions² who cite 'Ali (as) saying: "Some people from Quraysh came once to the Prophet (S) and said: 'O Muhammad! We are your neighbours and allies, and some of our slaves had come to you without a genuine desire to learn your religion or jurisprudence; they simply escaped from our possession; so, return them to us.'

He asked Abu Bakr his opinion, and Abu Bakr said: 'They are right in saying that they are your neighbours;' whereupon the Prophet's face changed colour [i.e. became red with anger], and he asked

'Umar what he thought. 'Umar repeated Abu Bakr's words, and again his face changed colour and said: 'O people of Quraysh! By Allah! Allah will send you a man the faith of whose heart is tested by Allah, and he will fight you in order to safeguard the faith.'

Abu Bakr inquired if he meant him, and his answer was negative. Then 'Umar inquired if it was he about whom the Prophet (S) was talking, and his answer was: 'No, it is the man who is mending the sandal;' the Prophet (S) had given me his sandal to mend," Wassalam.

Sincerely,

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1. The words "firqa" and "Shi'ah" are, if you count the times each one of them is repeated, synonymous, for the total number of each one of them is 385, making the majority of that group hopeful.

2. Such as Imam Ahmad near the conclusion of page 155, Vol. 1, of his Musnad, Sa'id ibn Mansur in his Sunan, and Ibn Jarir in Tahthib al-Athar, all testifying to its authenticity. It is quoted from all of them by al-Muttaqi al-Hindi on page 396, Vol. 6, of his book Kanz al-'Ummal.

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