

Our Misfortune Regarding Ijtihad Against the Texts

I gathered through my research that the misfortune which has befallen the Islamic nation has been due to the Companions' interpretation of Islam against the clear texts. Thus they violated the ordinances of Allah and obliterated the Tradition and the religious scholars and leaders who followed their example often contradicted the Prophetic Texts if they did not comply with what one of the Companions had done before them.

At times they even contradicted the Qur'anic Texts, and I am not exaggerating here, and I mentioned earlier in this book the case concerning the "al-Tayammum" verse. Despite the fact that there is a clear text in the Book of Allah as well as in the Messenger's tradition about Tayammum, they still took the liberty of interpreting it, and said that one should abandon the prayers if there was no water. Abdullah ibn Umar justified this interpretation in the way we have encountered elsewhere in this book.

One of the first Companions to open the door of Ijtihad (interpretation) was the second Caliph who used his discretion vis-a-vis the Qur'anic Texts after the death of the Messenger of Allah (saw) to stop the shares of those whose hearts inclined (to truth), although Allah had made its payment compulsory out of the Zakat, and said, "We do not need you."

As for his interpretation of the Prophetic texts, they are numerous, and on many occasions he contradicted the Prophet himself when he was alive. We have indicated in another chapter his opposition during the peace treaty of al-Hudaybiah, and how strongly he opposed the writing of the Messenger's last recommendation and said that the Book of Allah was sufficient.

There is another incident involving the Messenger of Allah and Umar which shows clearly the latter's mentality and how he allowed himself to argue and oppose the Messenger. The incident was about spreading the good news of Heavens. The Messenger of Allah sent Abu Hurayrah with the instruction that whenever he met a man who is absolutely convinced that "There is no other god but Allah" he was to give him the good news that he would end up in Heaven. Abu Hurayrah duly went out to spread the good news until he met Umar who prevented him from continuing his mission and beat him as he lay on

the ground.

Abu Hurayrah went back crying to the Messenger of Allah and told him about his encounter with Umar, so the Messenger asked Umar, "What made you do that?" Umar replied by asking the question, "Did you send him to spread the good news of Heaven to whoever convincingly believes that there is no other god but Allah?" The Messenger of Allah said, "Yes." Umar then said, "Do not do that, because I fear that all the people will rely on there is no other god but Allah."

We also have his son Abdullah ibn Umar who feared that people would rely on al-Tayammum, so he ordered them to abandon the prayers. I wish they had left the texts as they are and that they had not changed them with their futile interpretations which could only lead to the eradication of the Islamic laws, the violation of Allah's sanctity and the division of this nation into various creeds and warring factions.

Looking at the various stances that Umar took regarding the Messenger of Allah and his Tradition we could deduce that he never believed in the infallibility of the Messenger; and he thought of him as any other man subject to right or wrong. Thus comes the opinion adopted by the Sunni scholars and al-Jamaah that the Messenger of Allah was infallible as regards the transmitting the Holy Qur'an, but that apart from that he was like any other human being, sometimes wrong and sometimes right.

Some ignorant people claim that the Messenger of Allah (saw) accepted the temptations of the devil in his home. Once he was lying on his back surrounded by women playing their tambourines and the devil sat joyfully next to him until Umar came, then the devil ran away and the women hid their tambourines under their seats. The Prophet said to Umar, "As soon as the devil saw you, he left by a different way from the way you came in."

It is not therefore surprising that Umar has his own views on the religion and allowed himself to argue with the Messenger of Allah about political issues as well as religious ones, as we explained before regarding the good news about Heaven. From the idea of Ijtihad and using one's own opinion vies-a-vies the texts, a group of Companions, led by Umar ibn al-Khattab, started gathering force, and we saw on "The Day of Misfortune" how they supported Umar's point of view rather than the clear text.

We can then also deduce that it was the same group that did not accept the "al-Ghadir" text in which the Prophet (saw) made it clear that 'Ali would be his caliph (successor) over all the Muslims and they waited for the right opportunity to reject it when the Prophet died. The meeting at "al-Saqeefah" and the subsequent election of Abu Bakr was a result of that Ijtihad, and when they completed their control over the affairs, people started to forget about the Prophetic texts regarding the succession to the caliphate and started to interpret everything.

They challenged the Book of Allah, they violated the boundaries and changed the rules. There was the tragedy of Fatimah al-Zahra after the tragedy of her husband and his removal from the caliphate. There was also the tragedy in the payment of Zakat and the interpretation of that case despite the clear texts.

Then came the succession of Umar to the caliphate which was an inevitable result of Ijtihad, because Abu Bakr implemented his own interpretation of the situation and dropped the Shura (the consultative council) which always used to help him with the running of the caliphate's affairs. After that Umar came and made things even worse, he permitted things which were forbidden by Allah and His Messenger¹ and forbade what Allah and His Messenger had permitted.²

When Uthman came to power after Umar, he went a long way in al-Ijtihad, and did more than any on his predecessors had done, until his opinions started to affect political and religious life generally, thus leading to the revolution, and he paid with his life as a price for his Ijtihad.

When Imam 'Ali took charge of the Muslims' affairs he encountered great difficulties in trying to persuade people to go back to the honorable Prophetic Tradition and the Holy Qur'an, and tried his best to rid Islam from all the new innovations, but some people shouted loudly, "Behold! Umar's Tradition!"

I am convinced that those who fought and contradicted Imam 'Ali (as) did so because he forced them to go back to the correct texts. Thus he eradicated all the new innovations and interpretations that had been attached to the religion for the previous quarter of a century to which people had become accustomed, especially those who had their own whims and greed and who used the wealth of Allah and the people for their own ends, and deprived the ordinary folks of the basic rights of Islam.

We always find that self-opinionated individuals tend to favor Ijtihad because it allows them to reach their end by any means to hand, and the texts appear as barriers in their way and prevent them from achieving their goals.

It is worth noting here that Ijtihad may have its followers among the ordinary people, at any time and at any place simply because it is easy to implement and has no firm commitments.

Because the text demands commitments and lacks freedom, politicians tend to call it theocracy, which means the rule of Allah; but Ijtihad, with its freedom and its lack of commitment, is called democracy, meaning the rule of people. The men who met in al-Saqeefah after the death of the Prophet (saw) decided to abolish the theocratic government which was established by the Messenger of Allah on the basis of the Qur'anic texts, and changed it to a democratic government chosen by the people. However, these Companions were not aware of the word "democracy", for it is not an Arabic word, but they knew the "Shura" system.³

Those who do not at present accept the text regarding the succession to the caliphate are the proud supporters of "democracy", claiming that Islam was the first to adopt such a system, and they are the supporters of Ijtihad and reforms, and today they are considered to be the nearest possible thing to the western system, and that is why the western governments glorify them and call them the progressive and tolerant Muslims.

The Shiites, who support theocracy or the government of Allah, refuse Ijtihad vis-a-vis the text, and

differentiate between the rule of Allah and the Shura. They do not see any connection between the Shura and the Texts, but their main concern is about Ijtihad and the Shura in issues that do not have texts.

We see that Allah, praise be to Him, chose His Messenger Muhammad but He still said to him:

"And consult them about the matter." (Holy Qur'an 3: 159)

As for the choice of the leaders of the people, Allah said:

"And your Lord creates and chooses whom He pleases, to choose is not theirs." (Holy Qur'an 28:68)

When the Shiites advocate for the succession of 'Ali to the caliphate after the Messenger of Allah, they are actually committing themselves to the text, and when they discredit some of the Companions, they do it with regard to a few who replaced the text with Ijtihad and thus lost the rule of Allah and His Messenger and opened a wound in Islam that has not yet healed.

As a result we find the western governments and their thinkers despise the Shiites and call them religious fanatics and reactionaries because they want to go back to the Qur'an which rules that the thief should have his hands cut off, and the adulterer should be stoned, and urge people to go and fight in the name of Allah, but all that is haughtiness and barbarism, as far as they are concerned.

Throughout this study I started to comprehend the reason why some of the religious leaders of the Sunni tradition and al-Jamaah closed the gate of Ijtihad as far back as the second Hijri century. Perhaps they predicted the repercussions of Ijtihad on the Islamic nation from misfortunes to bloody civil wars, and how it would change a nation, about which Allah said, "You are the best nation that has come out to the people" to a nation of warring factions where anarchy rules and eventually turns from Islam to the Jahiliya (pre-Islamic period).

Ijtihad continued with the Shiites, as long as the texts remained intact and nobody could change them, and what helped them in that was the Twelve Imams who inherited their grandfather's knowledge, and used to say that there was no problem that did not have Allah as its judge and that the Messenger of Allah (saw) had made it clear.

We also understand that when the Sunni traditionists and al-Jamaah followed the Companions who undertook Ijtihad and prevented the writing of the prophetic tradition found themselves compelled, due to the absence of the texts, to use personal interpretation, Qiyas (analogy), Istishab (association), as well as closing the field of Dhara'i (pretext) and many other measures.

We also understand that the Shiites gathered around Imam 'Ali, who was the gate to the city of knowledge, and he used to say to them, "Ask me about anything, for the Messenger of Allah taught me about one thousand (doors) of knowledge, each one of which opens one thousand more doors."⁴ But the

non-Shiites gathered around Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan who knew little about the Prophetic Tradition.

After the death of Imam 'Ali, the leader of the unjust faction became the commander of the believers, and he abused Islam through the implementation of his own personal opinions, which caused more damage to Islam than anybody else before him. But the Sunni traditionists and al-Jamaah say that he was "The writer of the Revelations", and that he was one of the outstanding scholars in the interpretation of Islam. How could they judge him like that when he was the one who poisoned al-Hasan ibn 'Ali, leader of Heaven's youth? Perhaps they say, "This was an aspect of his Ijtihad (interpretation), but he got it wrong!"

How could they judge his Ijtihad, when he was the one who took the nation's acclamation for himself by force, then gave it to his son Yazid after him, and changed the Shura system to a hereditary one?

How could they judge his Ijtihad and give him a reward, when he was the one who forced people to curse 'Ali and Ahl al-Bayt, the offspring of the Prophet, in every mosque, so that it became a followed tradition for sixty years?

And how could they call him "The writer of the Revelations" since the revelation came upon the Messenger of Allah (saw) for twenty-three years, and Muawiyah was a polytheist for the first eleven years of them, and later, when he was converted to Islam, did not live in Medina (for we could not find any historical reference to support that), whereas the Messenger of Allah (saw) did not live in Mecca after al-Fath (the conquer of Mecca by the Muslims)? So how could Muawiya manage to write the Revelation?

Behold! There is no power except in Allah, the Most High, the Great. And the question comes back, yet again: which group was right and which one was wrong? Either 'Ali and his followers were wrong or Muawiyah and his followers were wrong.

The Messenger of Allah (saw) explained everything. but some of those who claim to follow the tradition got it wrong, for it has become apparent to me through the research that the people who defend Muawiyah could only be the followers of Muawiyah and the Umayyads and not, as they claim, the followers of the Prophetic Tradition (Sunnah). If we observe their positions, we find that they hate the followers of 'Ali, and celebrate the Day of Ashura as being a festival and defend the Companions who hurt the Messenger of Allah during his lifetime and after his death, and always correct their mistakes and find justifications for their actions.

How could you love 'Ali and Ahl al-Bayt and at the same time you bless their enemies and their killers? How could you love Allah and His Messenger and at the same time defend those who changed the rules of Allah and His Messenger and interpret these rules in their own way?

How could you respect those who did not respect the Messenger of Allah and accused him of Hajjr and criticized his leadership?

How could you follow religious leaders that have been appointed by the Umayyads and the Abbasids for political reasons, and leave other religious leaders although the Messenger of Allah pointed out their number⁵ and their names?⁶

How could you follow somebody who did not know the Prophet very well and leave the gate to the city of knowledge, whose relation to the Messenger was the same as the position of Harun to Musa?

Who was the first to use the term Ahl al-Sunnah (Sunni Traditions) and al-Jamaah? I have searched through the history books and found that they agreed to call the year in which Muawiyah seized power "the year of al-Jamaah".

It was called thus because the nation became divided into two factions after the death of Uthman: The Shi'a of 'Ali and the followers of Muawiyah. When Imam 'Ali was martyred and Muawiyah seized power after his pact with Imam Hasan which enabled him to become commander of the believers the years was then called "al-Jamaah". Therefore the name Ahl al-Sunnah (Sunnah Traditionists), and al-Jamaah indicates the Sunnah (tradition) of Muawiyah, and the agreement on his leadership, and does not mean the followers of the Sunnah (tradition) of the Messenger of Allah.

The Imams and other members of Ahl al-Bayt, who are the descendants of the Messenger of Allah, know more than anybody else about the Sunnah (tradition) of their grandfather and what it entails, for as the proverb goes. The people of Mecca know its paths better than anyone else. But we opposed the Twelve Imams whom the Messenger of Allah mentioned in his sayings and followed their enemies.

Despite our acknowledgement of the tradition in which the Messenger of Allah mentioned twelve caliphs, all of them from Quraysh, we always stop at the four caliphs. Perhaps it was Muawiyah who called us Ahl al-Sunnah and al-Jamaah, meaning the agreement on his Sunnah (tradition) in which he made it compulsory to curse 'Ali and Ahl al-Bayt.

This continued for sixty years until Umar ibn Abdul Aziz – may Allah be pleased with him – stopped it. Some historians inform us that the Umayyads themselves plotted to kill Umar ibn Abdul Aziz, and he was one of them, because he killed the Sunnah, which was the cursing of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib.

O my people! Let us go – guided by Allah, the Most High – and search for the truth and rid ourselves from that blind prejudice, because we are the victims of the Abbasids and the victims of the dark history and the intellectual barrenness which we have been subjected to for a long time.

Undoubtedly we are the victims of the cunning and the shrewdness of people like Muawiyah, Amr ibn al-As, al-Mughirah ibn Sh'bah and others. Research into our Islamic history in order to reach the absolute truth and Allah will reward you twice. Let us hope that we can unite this nation which was stricken by the death of its Prophet and then became divided into seventy-three factions.

Let us unite this nation under the banner of "There is no other god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah" and to follow Ahl al-Bayt, whom the Messenger of Allah commanded us to follow

and said, "Do not be in front of them, for you will perish, and do not keep away from them, for you will perish, and do not teach them, for they know more than you do?"⁷

If we do that, Allah will lift His anger from us, and He will change our fear to peace and tranquility. and will enable us to rule on this earth, and will make His friend Imam al-Mahdi – may peace be upon him, appear to us, since the Messenger of Allah promised us with his re-appearance to fill the earth with peace and justice after it had been filled with injustice and oppression...thus Allah will complete, through him, the enlightenment of the whole world.

- ^{1.} As in the case of the divorce by three times Muslim, Sahih, Chapter on the divorce by three times Sunan, Abi Dawood, vol 1 p 344
- ^{2.} As in the case of his prohibition of Muta al Hajj and Muta al Nisa Sahih, Muslim, Chapter on Hajj Sahih, Bukhari, Section on al Hajj Chapter on al-Tamattu
- ^{3.} In fact such thing doesn't happen even in this type of election, because those who are elected are not entitled to represent any nation, in any form.
- ^{4.} Tarikh Dimashq, Ibn Asakir, vol 2 p 484, Maqt al Husayn, al Khawarizmi, vol 1 p 38, al Ghadir, al Amini, vol 3 p 120
- ^{5.} Sahih, Bukhari, vol 4 p 164, Sahih, Muslim, p 119
- ^{6.} Yanibul Muwaddah, al Qunduzi al Hanafi
- ^{7.} al Durr al Manthur, Suyuti, vol 2 p 60, Usd al Ghabah, vol 3 p 137, al Sawaiq al Muhriqah, Ibn Hajar, p 148, 226, Kanz al Ummal, vol 1 p 168, Majma az Zawaid, vol 9 p 163

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