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A Dialogue With a Scholar

I said to one of our scholars: “When Muawiah killed the innocent and disgraced the honourable, you judge him as being an interpreter of Islam who got it wrong, and therefore has one reward. When Yazid killed the descendants of the Messenger and authorized the sacking of al-Medinah al-Munawwarah by his army, you judge him as an interpreter of Islam who got it wrong, and therefore has one reward.

Some of you even said about him that ‘al-Husayn was killed by the sword of his grandfather.’ Why should I not then interpret Islam through this study, which is forcing me to doubt the intentions of the Companions and to blow the cover of some of them, which would not be equated with killings done by Muawiah and Yazid of the Prophet's family? If I am right I deserve two rewards, and if I am wrong, I would have only one reward.

However, my criticism of the Companions is not for the sake of insulting them or cursing them, but it is a means through which I hope to reach the truth. Who is the right group, and who is the wrong group. This is my duty and the duty of each Muslim, and Allah, praise be to Him, knows what is inside ourselves.
The scholar then answered me, ' O my son, Ijtihad (the interpretation of Islamic religion) has not been allowed for some time."

I asked, "Who disallowed it?"
He said, "The four Imams."
I said liberally, "Thanks be to Allah! Since neither Allah disallowed it, nor His Messenger or the rightly guided caliphs, whom we are ordered to follow, then there are no restrictions on me to interpret Islam, as they did.”

He said, "You may not interpret Islam unless you know seventeen disciplines, among them: Tafsir (commentary on the Holy Qur'an), Linguistics, Grammar, Sarf (Morphology), Rhetoric, Hadiths (Prophetic traditions), History and others."

I interjected by saying, "My Ijtihad is not to show the people the rules of the Qur'an and the Prophet's tradition, or to be a religious leader of a new creed. Nay! All that I want to know is who is right and who is wrong. For example, to know whether Imam ‘Ali was right or Muawiah, I do not need to master

seventeen disciplines. All I need to do is to study the life and works of each one of them to know the truth."

He said, "Why do you want to know all that?

This is a people that have passed away; they shall have what they earned and you shall have what you earn, and you shall not be called upon to answer for what they did." (***Holy Qur'an 2:134***)

I asked, "Do you read Tusaloon (the Arabic word for Questioned) with Dammah (the vowel point upon the letter ta) or with Tasaloon with Fathah (the vowel) point a)?"
He said, "Tusaloon, with Dammah."

I said, Thanks be to Allah, if it was with Fathah, then there would be no research. As it is written with Dammah, then it means that Allah – praise be to Him – will not make us accountable for what they have done, similarly, He, the Most High, said:

"Each soul is pledged to whatever it has earned." (***Holy Qur'an 74:38***)

Also He said:

"There is nothing for man except what he has strived for." (***Holy Qur'an 53:39***).

And the Holy Qur'an urged us to know about the earlier nations and to learn lessons from their histories. Also, Allah told us about the Pharaohs, Haman, Nimrod, Quaroon, and about the early prophets and their nations, not for the sake of pleasure, but to show us what is right and what is wrong. As for your question as to why I want to know all that? It is important for me to know all that.

Firstly, to know who is the friend of Allah so that I may befriend him, and to know who is the enemy of Allah, so that I may oppose him, and that is what the Qur'an asked me, or indeed, ordered me to do.

Secondly, it is important for me to know how I should worship Allah and draw near to Him by obeying His commands, in the way He – the Majesty – wants them to be, not as Malik or Abu Hanifah or any other interpreter of Islam wants them to be.

I found that Malik does not prefer the saying of "In the name of Allah the most Merciful and the most Compassionate" during the prayers, whereas Abu Hanifah considers it a "must". Others say that the prayers are not valid without them. Because prayers are a pillar of Islam, if accepted other deeds would be accepted; but if they were rejected, other deeds would be rejected.

Therefore, I do not want my prayers to be invalid. The Shiites say that during the ablution we must rub our feet with wet hands, whereas the Sunnis say that we must wash them. But when we read the Holy Qur'an we find "rub your hands and feet" which is clear about the rubbing. So how do you expect any sensible Muslim to accept this and reject the other without research and analysis?"

He said, "You can take what you like from each creed, because all of them are Islamic creeds, and all of them came from the Messenger of Allah."

I said I am afraid that I may become one of those about whom Allah said:

"Have you then considered him who takes his low desire for his god and Allah has made him err having knowledge and has set a seal upon his ear and his heart and put a covering upon his eye. Who can then guide him after Allah? Will you not then be mindful?" (***Holy Qur'an 45:23***).

Sir, I do not think that all the four Islamic religious schools (Madhahib) are correct, as long as one of them allows something while the other forbids it; and it does not seem logical for one thing to be allowed and forbidden simultaneously. The Messenger of Allah (saw) did not question the rules of the Holy Qur'an because they are revelation:

"And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy." (***Holy Qur'an 4:82***).

Because of the vast differences between the four religious Islamic schools, they cannot be from Allah or from His Messenger, for the Messenger did not contradict the Holy Qur'an.

When the scholarly Shaykh found my argument logical and sound, he said, "I advise you, for the sake of Allah, that no matter how doubtful you may be, do not doubt the rightly guided caliphs, because they are the four pillars of Islam, if one of them collapses, the whole building will collapse."
I said, "God forbid Sir, but what about the Messenger of Allah if those people were the pillars of Islam?"

He said, "The Messenger of Allah is that building He is the whole of Islam."
I smiled when I heard his analysis, and said, "I ask Allah for forgiveness, yet again! Sir, you are saying, indirectly, that the Messenger of Allah (saw) would not be able to stand without the support of those four, whereas Allah, the Most High, says:

"He it is Who sent His messenger with guidance and a true religion that He may make it prevail over all the religions; and Allah is enough for a witness." (***Holy Qur'an 48:28***)

He sent Muhammad with the Message and did not involve any of the other four, or anybody else, and Allah said with regard to this:

"We have sent among you a messenger from among you who recites to you Our communications and purifies you and teaches you the Book and the wisdom and teaches you that which you did not know." (***Holy Qur'an 2:151***).

He said, "That is what we have learnt from our religious leaders and teachers, and we did not argue about what they taught us, as you the new generation do today. You doubt everything, even the religion itself. This is one sign of the nearness of the Hour, that is the Day of Judgment, and the Messenger of

Allah said: the Hour will come as a result of the evil in people."

I said, "Sir, why all this exaggeration? God forbid if I doubt the religion, I believe in Allah, Who is unique and has no partner. I believe in His angels, Books and Messengers. I believe in our master Muhammad as His servant and Messenger, and that he is the best of all the prophets and the last of the messengers, and that I am one of the Muslims. So how could you accuse me of all that?"

He said, "I accuse you of more than that, because you doubt our masters Abu Bakr and Umar, and the Holy Prophet said: If the faith of my nation and the belief of Abu Bakr were put on a balance, the faith of Abu Bakr would have weighed heavier. The Holy Prophet also said in honor of Umar: 'I was shown my nation and each one of them was wearing a shirt that came to the chest, and I was shown Umar and he was pulling his shirt.' They said: 'O Messenger of Allah! How do you interpret this? He said: 'The Religion.

And you come today, in the fourteenth century (Hijri) and doubt the righteousness of the Companions and especially Abu Bakr and Umar. Don't you know that the people of Iraq are the people of disunity, blasphemy and hypocrisy!'"

What could I say to this man who claimed knowledge and scholarship, and who became so arrogant that he changed a well structured dialogue into a disordered talk full of lies and propaganda? He said it in front of people who admired him, and I noticed that their faces lit up with excitement and evil.

I quickly went home and brought back two books, "al-Muwatta of Imam Malik" and "The Sahih of al-Bukhari". Then said, "Sir, what made me doubt Abu Bakr was the Messenger of Allah himself." I opened al-Muwatta and read: He said to the martyrs of Uhud, "Those, I bear witness against." Abu Bakr then said, "O Messenger of Allah, are we not their brothers? Did we not become Muslims as they did? Did we not fight as they did?"

The Messenger replied, "Yes, but I do not know what you are going to do after me."
On hearing that, Abu Bakr cried bitterly and said, "We are going to alter many things after your departure."[1]

After that I opened the "Sahih" of al-Bukhari and read: Once Umar ibn al-Khattab came to Hafsah and found with her Asma bint Umays. When he saw her, he asked, "Who is she?" Hafsah answered, "Asma bint Umays." Umar said, "Is she that Ethiopian?" Asma replied, "Yes." He said, "We emigrated (that is to say from Mecca to Medinah) before you, so we are more entitled to the Messenger of Allah than you."

She became very angry, then she said, "No, by Allah, you were with the Messenger of Allah, who fed your hungry people and advised the ignorant among you; whereas we were in a foreign land, in Abyssinia, for the sake of Allah and His Messenger, and whenever I ate or drank anything, I remembered the Messenger of Allah (saw) and we were hurt, and we were frightened. By Allah I will mention this to the Prophet without lying, adding anything or deviating from the subject."

When the Prophet came, she said, "O Prophet of Allah, Umar said such and such." He asked, "What did you say to him?" She answered, "Such and such." He said, "I am not more entitled to him than to you." He and his companions had one emigration, but you, people of the ship, had two emigrations." She said, "I found Abu Musa and the people of the ship coming to me in groups and asking me about the Hadith, very much delighted with what the Prophet (saw) had said to them."[2]

After having read the Hadiths, the looks on the faces of the scholarly Shaykh and that of the audience changed. They looked at each other and waited for the scholar, who was too shocked at what he had heard, to reply. All he did was to raise his eye brows, as a sign of astonishment and then said, "O my God grant me more knowledge."

I said, "If the Messenger of Allah (saw) was the first to doubt Abu Bakr, and did not bear witness against him, because the Messenger did not know what would happen after him; and if the Messenger of Allah did not approve of the preference of Umar over Asma bint Umays, but indeed preferred her to him; then it is within my right to doubt and not to have a preference for anybody until I know the truth. Evidently, these Hadiths contradict and nullify all the known Hadiths in favor of Abu Bakr and Umar, because they are more realistic than these which mention their alleged virtues."

The audience said, "How could that be?" I said, "The Messenger of Allah (saw) did not bear witness against Abu Bakr and said: 'I do not know what they will do after me!' This sounds very reasonable. History has proved that, and the Holy Qur'an and history bear witness that they did change after him.

Because of that Abu Bakr cried for he changed and angered Fatimah al-Zahra, daughter of the Messenger as we explained before, and he changed until he repented and wished that he was not a human being.

As for the Hadith: If the faith of my nation and the faith of Abu Bakr were put on balance, the faith of Abu Bakr would weigh heavier", it is invalid and implausible. It is not possible for the faith of a man, who spent forty years of his life believing in polytheism and worshipping idols, to be greater than the faith of the entire nation of Muhammad, which has many God-fearing and pious people and martyrs and Imams, who spent all their lives fighting for the sake of Allah.

How could Abu Bakr fit into this Hadith? If it was true, he would not, in later life have finished that he was not a human being. Further, if his faith was greater than the faith of the entire nation of Muhammad, Fatimah, the daughter of the Messenger of Allah and the leading lady, would not have been angry at him or asked Allah to punish him in each prayer she prayed."

The scholar did not say anything, but some of the men said, "By Allah! This Hadith made us doubtful." Then the scholar said to me, "Is that what you wanted? You have made these people doubt their religion." It sufficed me that a man from the audience replied by saying, "No, he is right, we have not read a whole book in our life, we followed you blindly and without any argument, and now it appears to us that what al-Hajj has been saying is right, and it is our duty to read and research!" Other people

agreed with him, and that was a victory for truth and justice. It was not victory by force, but by logical deduction and proof. Allah says:

"Say, bring your proof, if you are telling the truth." (***Holy Qur'an 27:64***)

That is what encouraged me to undertake the study and opened the door for me, so I entered it in the name of Allah by Allah and tracing the footsteps of the followers of the Messenger of Allah. I hope that Allah, praise be to Him, the Most High, grants me success and enlightenment, for He promised to enlighten anyone who searches for the truth, and He does not break His promises.

The study went on for three years, because I often re-read the books, right from the first page to the last.

I read "al-Muraja'at" by Imam Sharaf al-Din several times, since it opened new horizons for me and enlightened me and pleased me for the love and the fellowship of Ahl al-Bayt.

I read "al-Ghadeer" by Shaykh al-Amini three times because of the clear cut facts it contained. I also read Fadak in History" by al- Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr and al-Saqifah" by Shaykh Muhammad Rida al-Muzaffar, which explained so many vague issues.

I read "al-Nass wal Ijtihad", the Text and the Interpretation, and became more convinced. Then I read "Abu Hurayra" by Sharaf al-Din and Shaykh al-Mudira" by Shaykh Mahmud Abu Rayyah al-Misri, and learnt that the Companions who changed after the departure of the Messenger of Allah were two types. The first changed the rule because of its power and authority. The second changed the rules by attributing false Hadiths to the Messenger of Allah.

I read “Imam al-Sadiq the four Madhhabs" by Asad Haydar and learnt about the differences between gifted knowledge and acquired knowledge. I also learnt about the differences between Allahs wisdom which He grants to whom He pleases, and the intrusion on knowledge and the belief of personal interpretation (of Islam) which kept the nation away from the spirit of Islam.

I read more books by al-Sayyid Ja'far Murtada al-Amili, and al-Sayyid Murtada al-Askari, and Al Sayyid Al-Khusi,and al-Sayyid al-Tabatabai, and Shaykh Muhammad Amin Zain al-Din, and al-Fayroozabadi, and Ibn Abi al-Hadid al-Mu'tazili in his commentary on "Nahj al-Balagha", and Taha Husayn's "al-Fitna al-Kubra".

From the history books I read the following Annals written by al-Tabari, Ibn al-Athir, al-Masudi and al-Ya'qubi. And I read more, until I became convinced that the Shi’a Imamiyya were right.

Thus, with the help of Allah, I boarded Ahl al-Bayt's ship and sought their fellowship, because I found, thanks be to Allah, the alternative to the Companions, who, to the best of my knowledge, regressed and only a few of them were saved.

I exchanged them for the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt, the Prophet's Family, whom Allah cleansed and purified and made it our duty to seek their fellowship.

The Shiites are not, as some of our religious scholars claim, the Persians and the Magus whose power and glory were destroyed by Umar in al-Qadisiyyah war and that is why they hate them!

My answer to these who are ignorant is that following the creed of the Prophet's Family is not restricted to the Persians, for there are Shiites in Iraq, Hijaz, Syria, Lebanon, and all of them are Arabs. In addition to that, there are Shi'tes in Pakistan, India, Africa, America, and all of those are neither Arabs nor Persians.

If we confine ourselves to the Shiites of Iran, the issue becomes clearers because I found that the Persians believe in the leadership of the twelve Imams, all of whom were Arabs from Quraysh from Bani Hashim, the family of the Prophet (saw). If the Persians were prejudiced and hated the Arabs, as some people claim, they would have been taken Salman al-Farisi as their Imam, for he was a great Companion and respected by both Shiites and Sunnis.

On the other hand I found that most of the leading Sunni Imams were Persians, such as Abu Hanifa, al-Nisa'i, al-Tirmidhi, al-Bukhari, Muslim, Ibn Maja, al-Ghazali, Ibn Sina, al-Farabi and many others. If the Shiites were all Persians who rejected Umar ibn al-Khattab because he destroyed their power, then how can we explain the rejection of the Arabs who were not Persians?

Therefore, this is an illogical claim. These people refused Umar because of his role in excluding the Commander of the Believers, ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, from the caliphate after the departure of the Messenger of Allah, and because of the tragic civil wars and decline of this nation. It is high time that the truth was unveiled to every free-thinking scholar so that he may refute the allegation without any prior animosity.

It is true that the Shiites, whether they were Arabs or Persians or any other nationality, followed closely the Qur'anic Texts and the tradition of the Messenger of Allah and his Family, and refused to accept the alternative despite the oppressive policies of the Umayyads and later the Abbasids for seven centuries.

During that period, they pursued the Shiites everywhere; they killed them, they made them homeless, they denied them their rightful grants, they removed their cultural and intellectual heritage and they spread all sorts of rumors about them in order to keep people away from them. The legacy of these policies is still felt up to the present day.

However, the Shiites stood their ground, remained patient and took the blame for their commitment to Allah and they are paying the price of their defiance to this very day. I challenge any of our religious scholars to enter a debate with their religious scholars without coming out of it overwhelmed by their enlightened way.

Yes, I found the alternative, and thanks be to Allah Who guided me to this because I would not he there

without His Guidance. Thanks and praise be to Allah Who led me to the saved group, for which I was eagerly searching.

I have no doubt that the commitment to ‘Ali and Ahl al–Bayt is the commitment to the unbroken link – the link to Allah. There are many sayings by the Messenger of Allah agreed by all Muslims, which bear witness to that. The sensible mind is, perhaps, the best proof for anybody who is prepared to listen. ‘Ali was the most knowledgeable companion and certainly the bravest, as the entire nation testified. This is a sufficient condition to support the lawful claim of ‘Ali, alone and no one else, to the succession of the caliphate.

Allah the Most High said:

'And their prophet said to them, "Surely Allah has raised Talut to be a king over you." They said, "How can he hold kingship over us while we have a greater right to kingship than him, and he has not been granted an abundance of wealth?" He said, "Surely Allah has chosen him in preference to you, and He has increased him abundantly in knowledge and physique, and Allah grants His kingdom to whom He pleases, and Allah is Ample giving, knowing." (***Holy Qur'an 2:247***)

And the Messenger of Allah said. "‘Ali is from me, and I am from ‘Ali, and he is the master of every believer after me."[3]

Al–Zamakhshari said in some of his poetry:
Doubt and differences have increased. Every one claims that he is the right way. But I have committed myself to: there is no other god but Allah, and my love to Ahmed (Muhammad) and ‘Ali. A dog won the love of the companions of the cave, how could I be ever distressed with the love of the Prophet's Family.

Yes I found the alternative, praise be to Allah. and I became a follower of – after the Messenger of Allah – The Commander of the Believers, master of all guardians, leader of the chosen elite, the victorious lion of Allah Imam ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib; and the two masters of Heaven's youth, and the Prophet's two followers, Imam Abu Muhammad al–Hasan al–Zaki, and Imam Abu Abdullah al–Husayn; and the daughter of al–Mustafa (Muhammad), mother of the Imams, the essence of the Message, she, for whom Allah feels angry if she is angered, the most honorable lady Fatimah al–Zahra.

I have changed Imam Malik for the leader of all Imams, and teacher of the nation, Imam Ja'far al–Sadiq.

I have committed myself to the nine infallible men from the posterity of al–Husayn, Imams of all Muslims and the good friends of Allah. I have changed the Companions who turned back on their heels, like Muawiah, Amr ibn al–As, al–Mughira ibn Shu'ba, Abu Hurayra, Ikrima, Ka'b al–Ahbar and others, for the grateful Companions who never broke the promise they gave to the Prophet, like Ammar ibn Yasir, Salman al–Farisi, Abu Dharr al–Ghifari, al–Miqdad ibn al–Aswad. Khuzayma ibn Thabit – Dhu al–Shahadetain – and others, and praise be to Allah for this enlightenment.

I have changed the religious leaders of my people, who discouraged us from thinking and whose majority followed the rules and the sultans, throughout time. I changed them for the devoted religious leaders of the Shi'a who never closed the opportunity for studying and interpreting Islam, and who neither rose to oppose nor submitted to the oppressive rulers.

Yes, I changed dogmatic beliefs, full of contradictions for new enlightened and liberal ones based on logical deductions and reasoning.

As they say now a days "I have washed my brain" of the dirt that had accumulated over thirty years; lies of the Umayyads. I purified it with the ideology of the infallibles, those whom Allah cleansed and purified. I have done that for the remainder of my life.

O Allah...please let us live our lives following their footsteps, and let our nation follow their tradition, and gather us with them, for Your Prophet (saw) said: Man is placed together with those whom he loves.

Thus I have returned to my origin. For my father and uncles used to talk to us about our family tree. and often told us that we were from al-Sada (plural of Sayyid: a descendant of the Prophet) who escaped from Iraq under Abbasid pressure and found refuge in North Africa until they settled in Tunisia where their marks remain up to the present day.

There are many people like us in North Africa who are descendants from the purified posterity, and are called "Sada", but they went astray through the oppression of the Umayyads and the Abbasids, and now they have nothing of the truth except the people's respect for them. Priase be to Allah for his guidance...and praise be to Allah for my enlightenment and for opening my eyes to see the truth.

1. Muwatta, Malik, vol 1 p 307 ; Maghazi, al Qawidi, p 310
2. Sahih, Bukhari, vol 3 p 307
3. Sahih, al Tirmidhi, vol 5 p 296; Khasai's, al Nisai, p 87; Mustadrak, al Hakim, vol 3 p 110

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