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Imam and the Waqfis

Immediately after the demise of his father, Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.) was tried by an acute calamity which deepened the tragedy of losing his father. On one hand, he was suffering from the attempts of the rulers and their supporters at his life and, on the other hand, he was painfully and bitterly witnessing the horrible division which caused dissension among his father's followers. It was caused by the promotion of an invented idea which called for the Imamate to be terminated with Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (a.s.), claiming that he did not actually die but was still alive, that he was the Qa'im (Mahdi) of the Progeny of Muhammad (S), that his absence was similar to the absence of Musa ibn 'Imran (Moses son of Amram), and that, accordingly, the Imamate should not transfer to his son Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.).

Pioneers of Waqfism

The first to promote this idea were few men who were among the most distinguished followers of Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (a.s.) such as Ali ibn Abu Hamza al-Bataini, Ziyad ibn Marwan al-Qandi, and Uthman ibn Isa al-Ruwasi. These three persons are considered the first to invent this "sect," openly claimed to be its adherents, and invited others to promote it.

Objectives of the Waqfis

This new "sectarian" trend did not result from a pure belief and a mere conviction; rather, it was prompted by materialistic and worldly desires which affected the thinking of its inventors and caused them to deviate from the Right Path. Those individuals tried to find excuses for their falling into such "sect" by narrating narratives they had heard from Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) without being actually familiar with their implications, nor did they accurately comprehend their contexts either. This may be deliberate especially since Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (a.s.), while still alive, had explained to them their actual implications.

For example, *Al-Ghaiba* quotes al-Hasan ibn al-Hasan saying: "I said to Abul-Hasan Musa (a.s.): 'Can I ask you a question?' He answered, 'You must rather ask your own Imam.' I inquired, 'What do you

mean? I do not know of any Imam other than your own self.' He said: 'He is my son Ali to whom I gave my title (of Imam).' I said: 'Master! Please help me save myself from Hellfire! Abu Abdullah (a.s.) had said that you yourself are the Qaim, the caretaker of this issue.' He said: 'Was I not?' Then he added, 'O Hasan! No Imam preaches to a nation except when he is their Qaim; so, when he leaves them (dies), his successor will be the Qaim and the Hujja (Proof) till he too leaves. We (the Imams) are all Qaims; therefore, from now on, redirect all your dealings to my son Ali, for by God I swear twice that I did not do that but God did out of His love for him.'^{[1](#)}

This narrative reveals to us the reality behind the confusion in which those who deviated by Waqfism were swept. It also proves that the theory of Waqfism was not born after the demise of Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (a.s.) but was alive even during the time of Imam As-Sadiq (a.s.) according to the narration of events which could not be explained even by their narrators. In this narrative, the Imam tries to explain to these individuals their misunderstanding of those implications and their erroneous interpretation thereof in a way upon whose premise the Waqfis establish their claim.

Imam Denounces Waqfism

The Imam did his best to emphasize the error of that concept and its collision with reality by continuously stating that the Imamate after his demise would be the responsibility of his son Ali, and he even made a number of his followers and family testify to that. For example, Haider ibn Ayyub says: "We were in Medina at Qaba where we used to meet Muhammad ibn Zaid ibn Ali. He came to us one day much later than anticipated, so we asked him what caused him to be so late.

He said, 'Abu Ibrahim invited seventeen men of us, all descendants of Ali and Fatima, God's blessings be upon both of them, and he required us to bear witness to his will and testimony that his son Ali would be his successor and representative during the remainder of his own life and after his demise, and that the issue was in effect since then.' Then Muhammad ibn Zaid said, 'By God, O Haider! He has today tied the knot of Imamate for him, and the Shi'as will accept him as the Imam after his father's demise.'^{[2](#)}

Abdullah ibn al-Harith said: "Abu Ibrahim called us to his presence and we responded. He said, 'Do you know why I have gathered you all here?' We answered in the negative. He said, 'Bear witness that this Ali, my son, is my regent, executor of my will, and my successor after me; whoever entrusted me with something, let him take it back from him, and whoever insisted on seeking audience with me, let him obtain his written approval for that.'"^{[3](#)}

Abdul-Rahman ibn al-Hajjaj is quoted saying that Abul-Hasan Musa ibn Ja'far (a.s.) had nominated his son Ali for the Imamate and wrote a statement to this effect in the presence of sixty witnesses from among the most distinguished dignitaries of Medina.^{[4](#)}

In these clear texts, and in others, he is seen emphasizing his nomination of his son as the Imam and, at the same time, he is declaring that his death was imminent, thus in advance falsifying the claim of the Waqfis.

Advocates of Waqfism Reveal Their Own Nature

There are many narratives narrated by some advocates and inventors of Waqfism which clearly prove to us their false claims. For example, Ziyad ibn Marwan al-Qandi narrates the following:

"Once I visited Abu Ibrahim and his son Ali was with him. He said to me, `O Ziyad! His (son's) statements are as good as mine, his speech is like my speech, and his instructions are as binding as mine.'" [5](#).

Ahmed ibn Muhammad al-Maithami, a Waqfi, says: "Muhammad ibn Isma'il ibn al-Fadl al-Hashimi told me the following: `I visited Abul-Hasan Musa ibn Ja'far (a.s.) and he was suffering from an acute illness. I asked him: `If the matter regarding which I pray God that it would not happen (Imam's death) comes to pass, who shall we follow?' He said: `My son Ali; his writing is as though I wrote it, and he is my regent and successor after me.'" [6](#).

Ghannam ibn al-Qasim is quoted saying: "Mansour ibn Yunus Barzaj told me that he had visited Abul-Hasan, that is, Musa ibn Ja'far (a.s.), and he said to him, `Have you come to know what new undertaking I have undertaken today?' He answered in the negative, so the Imam said, `I have appointed my son Ali as my regent and successor after me; so, enter his room and congratulate him and tell him that I ordered you to do so.' So he entered his room and congratulated him and informed him that his father had ordered him to do so, yet Mansour reneged after that, and he even confiscated the funds (of Muslims) entrusted to him." [7](#).

What is most significant in this narrative is the Imam's initiation of the dialogue with Mansour to tell him about his successor, then his ordering him to enter his son's room to congratulate him and to tell him that he was doing so because his father ordered him to. What the Imam wanted to accomplish by doing all of that was to make a practical point for the record against Mansour by making him recognize the Imamate of his son after him in a way which does not permit him at all to preach Waqfism except if he reneged as actually happened after that.

Imam Musa Ibn Ja'far (a.s.) Warns the Waqfis

There is another stance for the Imam which is not without an exciting moment involving one of the main advocates of Waqfism. His stance was like a clear warning to those who created the controversy of this "sect" and promoted it; al-Bataini states:

"I said to Abul-Hasan, `Your father had informed us of his successor, and we wish you could inform us of yours.' So he took my hand and shook it, then he recited the verse: `God will not mislead people after He had guided them, in order that He may make clear to them what to fear (and avoid)'. " [8](#).

The recitation of that verse came almost like a prophecy about the future of what that person and his friends would do and how they would fall into the slippery paths of misguidance; therefore, he shakes his

hand and recites a verse which predicted that those folks' deviation would take place after proof had been made manifest against them. The Imam, as a matter of fact, refers clearly to the Waqfi movement after him and even reads the epitaph of the faith of those who advocate Waqfism in a narrative narrated by Muhammad ibn Sanan who says:

"I visited Abul-Hasan one year before he was conveyed to Iraq, and his son was with him. He called upon me to be attentive, and I responded. Then he said, 'There will be a movement this year..., but do not let it bother you.' Then he lowered his head contemplating, picking the ground, then he raised his head and recited the verse, 'God leads the oppressors astray and does what He pleases.'⁹ I said, 'And what is that, may my life be sacrificed for yours?' He said, 'Anyone who denies the right of this son of mine and refuses to recognize his Imamate after me will be equal to one who denied the right of Ali ibn Abu Talib (a.s.) and did not recognize his Imamate after Muhammad (S).' So I understood that he was implying that his death was near, and that he was appointing his son as his successor."¹⁰

Materialistic Objectives of Waqfis

History tells us that those who invented the dissension of this "sect" were chief officers of Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (a.s.) and keepers of the funds collected for him from his Shi'a followers. When he died, Ali ibn Abu Hamza al-Bataini had with him as much as thirty thousand dinars; Ziyad ibn Marwan al-Qandi had seventy thousand dinars, and Uthman ibn Isa al-Ruwasi had thirty thousand dinars and six concubines.

They did not relish the idea of delivering these funds to his son and executor of his will after him; therefore, they invented the trick of denying the death of Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (a.s.), claiming that he was still alive, and that they would not hand those funds except to him upon his return. Ahmed ibn Hammad said: "One of the officers, Uthman ibn Isa, was staying in Egypt, and he had with him a great deal of wealth and six concubines.

So Abul-Hasan ar-Ridha' (a.s.) wrote him demanding the delivery of the concubines and the money, but he wrote him back saying that his father did not die. He (ar-Ridha') wrote again saying, "He died, and we have distributed his legacy; the news about his death is correct, and there are eye witnesses to that.' Yet he (Uthman) wrote back saying, 'If your father is not dead, then you have no right to claim what is his, and if he did die, as you say, then he never ordered me to give anything to you, and I have emancipated the concubines and married them.'"

According to the version of his letter as recorded in *Al-Ghayba*, he wrote, "Your father did not die; rather, he is still alive and in charge, and anyone who says that he died is on the wrong track."¹¹

Both Ali ibn Abu Hamza al-Bataini and Ziyad al-Qandi tried to resist the Imam's attempt to pursue them and reject his demand that they should deliver the funds by denying that they had had any money that belonged to his father with them, but Yunus ibn Abdul-Rahman, whom they both tried to allure with money to join their call for Waqfism, revealed to us their crime of theft and confiscation of his Imam's

funds; he said:

"Abu Ibrahim died and each of his chief executive officers had a great deal of money with him, and this is the reason why they claimed Waqfism, that is, their own desire to keep the money for themselves. Ziyad al-Qandi had seventy thousand dinars and Ali ibn Abu Hamza al-Bataini had thirty thousand dinars. Having seen all of that and come to realize the truth behind it and to know what I knew of the dilemma of Abul-Hasan ar-Ridha' (a.s.), I encouraged people to support him, so both men asked me to meet them and asked me: 'Why are you doing that? If you want wealth, we can make you wealthy,' and they offered ten thousand dinars for me if I accepted, and they told me to change my mind, but I refused and I said to them, 'We all have been narrating one particular *hadith* from the Truthful Imams that, 'When innovations in religion are promoted, let the learned person promote his knowledge disproving them, and if he does not, the light of Iman will be taken away from him;' so, I would not abandon the Jihad in the Way of God at any rate.' For this reason, they opposed me and concealed enmity towards me."[12](#).

Imam Reveals the Real Motives of the Waqfis

In one of his letters to al-Bazanti, the Imam (a.s.) reveals the truth behind these individuals' call for Waqfism; he says:

"As regarding Ibn al-Sarraj, the reason why he called upon people to disobey us and not to be loyal to us is that he confiscated funds which my father al-Hasan had entrusted to him before he died, and he argued about it with me and refused to give it back even when all others did so and delivered to me all items entrusted to them. But when my father al-Hasan passed away, he took the opportunity of the disobedience of Ali ibn Abu Hamza and his friends to me and claimed he felt sick. By my life, he was not sick at all, but he wanted an excuse for confiscating the money and running away with it.

As regarding Ibn Abu Hamza, he is a man who adopted an interpretation of one *hadith* which he himself invented, and he did not do a good job at his interpretation for he did not have enough knowledge to digest his own invention, but he passed it on to people anyway and he fell into the trap which he did not know he had set for himself; so, he hated to prove himself a liar while trying to disprove what he himself had claimed through *ahadith* which he interpreted without knowledge thereof, and he realized that if he did not make sure to represent my forefathers as truthful, he would not be certain whether what he had heard about al-Sufiani and others was true or not.

He, therefore, told people that what my forefathers had said did not disprove any of his claims, but his knowledge was short of comprehending the implications of the *ahadith* my forefathers had narrated and the truth related to them; so, he caused dissension or at least put some doubt in people's minds about what he was narrating, and in the end he fell into a pitfall he thought he was trying to avoid..."[13](#).

The fact that the Imam (a.s.) did not mention the money incentive as being the major factor which caused al-Bataini and his friends to profess Waqfism does not prove its absence, for the Imam (a.s.) was dealing with refuting these individuals' claims and proving their arguments wrong. As regarding Ibn

al-Sarraj, since the man did not claim an excuse of his own, his own confiscation of the funds during the life-time of the Imam's father was the subject of the Imam's criticism.

A Leading Waqfi Confesses

What leads us to believe that the Waqfis did not establish their claim of Waqfism on a concrete reality, and that Waqfism was invented merely to satisfy the desire for a materialistic gain, is the story of the confession of one of the leaders of Waqfis at the time of his death. He admitted the horror of his sin of confiscating the money and not delivering it to Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.).

Al-Toosi's work *Al-Ghayba* quotes al-Husayn ibn Fadal saying, "I used to see an old man from Baghdad at the house of my uncle Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn Fadal, and he used to tease him quite often. He said to him one day, 'There is nobody worse than you, Shi'a folks (or you Rafidis, according to another version of the story).' My uncle said to him, 'Why so, may God curse you?!' He said: 'I am married to the daughter of Ahmed ibn Abu Bishr al-Sarraj who, before breathing his last, told me that he had with him ten thousand dinars which actually belonged to (Imam) Musa ibn Ja'far (a.s.), and that he did not deliver it to his son after him and testified that the man had not died yet.

Then he pleaded us saying, 'For the sake of God, save my skin from the Fire and deliver it to ar-Ridha'! Please do so for the sake of God!' By God, we did not deliver a bit of it to him, and we left the man being burnt in Hellfire!"¹⁴.

Waqfism Spreads and Gains Momentum

These individuals fooled a select group from among the followers of the Imam (a.s.) and convinced them to believe, through casting doubts and suspicions, in Waqfism, so they finally fell to it and embraced the innovation. Among them were Abdul-Rahman ibn al-Hajjaj, Rifa'a ibn Musa, Yunus ibn Ya'qoob, Jameel ibn Darraj, Hammad ibn Isa, Ahmed ibn Muhammad ibn Abu Naseer, al-Hasan ibn Ali al-Washsha, and other dignitaries who used to be companions of the Prophet's Progeny.

But they came back to their senses, recognized the Imamate of ar-Ridha' (a.s.), and abandoned Waqfism. Others whose adherence to Waqfism was bought with a lot of money did not listen to any argument and preferred to uphold their beliefs and died wronging their own souls such as Hamza ibn Bazee' who was described by Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.) as the "wretch."

Ibrahim ibn Yahya ibn Abul-Ballad is quoted saying: "Ar-Ridha' once inquired, 'What did this wretch Hamza ibn Bazee' do?' I said that he became an old man. He said, 'He claims that my father is still alive! Today, they all doubt their own claim, but tomorrow they will die atheists.' Safwan said that he told himself he understood what the Imam (a.s.) meant by saying that they were doubtful, but he did not understand his reference to atheism.

After a short while, Safwan continues, one of their men was reported to have said at the time of his death that he disbelieved in the God of his Imam (meaning Imam Musa ibn Ja'far, A.S.). Safwan said, 'This is the interpretation of the (Imam's) *hadith*.'" ¹⁵ Imam ar-Ridha' (a.s.), indeed, suffered a great deal while fighting them and refuting their false beliefs, unveiling their real intentions and disclosing their reality before the public so that no weaklings would be duped by them.

Confusion of Some Waqfis

What is interesting is that after the demise of Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (a.s.), some of those folks called for the Imamate of his son Ahmed; so, when the latter accompanied Abul-Saraya during Ibn Tabataba's uprising against the Abbaside regime, they disapproved of his action and reverted to believe in Waqfism rather than submitting to the belief in the Imamate of his son ar-Ridha' (a.s.) as the successor of his father. Muhammad ibn Ahmed ibn Aseed said:

"After the demise of Abul-Hasan, Ibrahim and Isma'il sons of Abul-Asmal suggested to go and visit his son Ahmed, which they did, spending quite some time with him. When Abul-Saraya went out (to fight the Abbasides), Ahmed ibn Abul-Hasan joined him; so, we approached Ibrahim and Isma'il and said to them, 'This man has just joined Abul-Saraya; so, what is your view in the matter?' He said that both men found his behavior unacceptable, and they discontinued supporting him and said, 'Abul-Hasan is alive! We remain following the belief of Waqfism,' and I think that this man (meaning Isma'il) died doubtful." ¹⁶

This dissension continued for a long time during which the disputes and disagreements between them and the ones on the Right Path were at their peak till God caused the false beliefs to disintegrate and become extinct due to the fact that they were not based on firm durable foundations.

¹. Al Ghayba by Shaikh al-Toosi, p. 29.

². 'Uyoon Akhbar ar-Ridha', Vol. 1, p. 28.

³. Ibid., p. 27.

⁴. Ibid., p. 28.

⁵. Al Kafi, Vol. 1, p. 381; also al-Mufid's Irthaa, p. 286.

⁶. Uyoon Akhbar ar-Ridha', Vol. 1, p. 20.

⁷. Al-Kashi's Rijal, p. 398.

⁸. Al-'Ayyashi's Tafsir, Vol. 2, p. 115 of Surat al Tawba, verse 115.

⁹. Ibrahim:27.

¹⁰. 'Uyoon Akhbar ar-Ridha', Vol. 1, p. 32.

¹¹. 'Uyoon Akhbar ar-Ridha', Vol. 1, p. 113 and also Shaikh al-Toosi's Al Ghayba, p. 47.

¹². 'Uyoon Akhbar ar-Ridha', Vol. 1, p. 112.

¹³. Qurb al-Irshad, p. 206.

¹⁴. Shaikh al-Toosi's Al Ghayba, p. 48.

¹⁵. Shaikh al-Toosi's Al Ghayba, p. 50.

¹⁶. Al-Kashi's Rijal, p. 400.

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