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Discussion with one of The Wahhabi Ulama

My friend, the Tunisian teacher, told me that his Saudi friend would come the next day to debate with me for a scholarly discussion. He told me that he had invited a group of teachers to participate in the argument so that everyone might make use of it. He told me that he had served lunch for the invitees. He said to me, "Today is the weekend holiday and we have enough time. How much we are eager to such meetings! We want you to be victorious; so do not disappoint us, because this Saudi man often talks alone without giving us a chance to talk."

At the appointed time, the teachers came and with them was the Wahhabi scholar. We were nine – seven invitees, the host and me. After the meal, we began our argument whose subject was "*Tawassul* (supplicating to Allah by means of a prophet or a saint) and the intercession between a servant and his God"

I said that I believed in *tawassul* to Allah by means of His prophets, messengers and righteous saints. I said that man's supplication might be repelled because of his many sins and business with the pleasures of this life and then he might seek the intercession of the beloveds and saints of Allah.

The Wahhabi scholar said, "This is polytheism and Allah does not forgive the association of anyone to him."

I said, "What is your evidence that this is a kind of polytheism?"

He said, "Allah says -

'And that the mosques are Allah's, therefore call not upon any one with Allah.' (Qur'an, 72:18)

This is a clear verse that prohibits the supplication to anyone other than Allah. Whoever calls upon other than Allah makes a partner to Him that benefits and harms, whereas the benefiting and harming one is Allah alone."

One of the attendants approved his speech and wanted to support him, but the host stopped him, saying, "Take it easy! I have invited you not for dispute and competition, but I have invited you to listen

to these two scholars. As for this Tunisian man, I have known him since long ago, but I was surprised when I discovered recently that he is a Shia, following the Ahlul Bayt (as), and this is our Saudi friend that all of you know and know his beliefs. We have just to listen to them both and see their arguments and evidences, until they have finished their debate. After that, it is our time to participate in the discussion, and every one can give his opinion if he wants."

We thanked him for his kindness and polite way, and we kept on with our arguments.

I said, "I agree with you that Allah the Almighty is alone the Benefactor, the One who can harm, and not one of Muslims disagrees with you on this, but our disagreement is on *tawassul*. The one, who supplicates to Allah by means of the Messenger of Allah (S) for example, knows well that Muhammad (S) neither benefits nor harms, but his (Muhammad) supplication is accepted and responded to by Allah. If Muhammad (S) asks Allah, saying, 'O my Lord, have mercy on this servant, forgive that servant, or enrich this one', surely Allah will respond to him.

The true Prophetic traditions narrated in this context are too many. For example, one day one of the companions who was blind, came to the Prophet (S) and asked him to pray Allah for his sight to be restored to him. The Prophet (S) ordered him to perform *wudhu'* and offer a two-*rak'a* prayer for Allah, and then to say, 'O Allah, I beseech You by means of your beloved Muhammad that You restore my sight.' After doing so, his sight was recovered.1

One day, Tha'laba, who was a destitute companion, came to the Prophet (S) and asked him to pray to Allah for him to become wealthy, because he liked to be benevolent to help the poor and give charities. The Prophet (S) prayed Allah for him, and he became so wealthy that his livestock were uncountable, but then, he stopped coming to the mosque to offer prayer, and he did not give zakat...and this story is famous to most of people.2

One day, the Prophet described to his companions the bliss of Paradise, and what Allah had prepared to its inhabitants there. Ukasha asked the Prophet (S), 'O Messenger of Allah (S), pray Allah for me to make me one of them (the inhabitants of Paradise)'!

The Prophet (S) said, 'O Allah, make him one of them!' Another one got up and said to the Prophet (S), 'And to me, O Messenger of Allah (S)!' The Prophet (S) said, 'Ukasha has preceded you to that.'3

In these three traditions, there is clear evidence that the Messenger of Allah (S) made himself the means between Allah and His servants."

The Wahhabi interrupted me, saying, "I argue by the Holy Qur'an and he argues by weak traditions that neither fatten nor avail against hunger."

I said, "Allah says in the Holy Qur'an,

O you who believe! Be careful of (your duty to) Allah and seek means to Him. (Qur'an, 5:35)

He said, "The 'means' refers to a good deed."

I said, "The verses, concerning good deeds, are many and clear. Allah says:

And convey good news to those who believe and do good deeds, (Qur'an, 2:25)

But, in this verse He says – 'Seek means to Him' - and in another verse, He says,

'Those whom they call upon, themselves seek the means to their Lord.' (Qur'an, 17:57)

These two verses indicate that the seeking of a means in supplicating to Allah has to be with piety and good deeds. Do you not see that Allah says:

'O you who believe, be careful of (your duty to) Allah' -

in that He mentions faith and piety before the seeking of a means?"

He said, "Most of scholars interpret "means" as good deed."

I said, "Keep us away from interpretation and the sayings of scholars! What then if I prove 'intercession' by the Qur'an itself?"

He said, "This is impossible, except if it is in another Qur'an that we do not know!"

I said, "I know what you mean, may Allah forgive you! But I will prove that from the Qur'an that all of us know. Allah says,

They said: O our father, ask forgiveness of our faults for us, surely we were sinners. He said: I will ask for you forgiveness from my Lord; surely, He is the Forgiving, the Merciful (Qur'an, 12:97–98)

Why did our lord Jacob, the prophet of Allah, not say to his children: you yourselves ask Allah for forgiveness and do not make me intercessor between your Creator and you? He did accept that intercession and said: I shall ask my Lord to forgive you. Thus, he made himself a means to Allah for his children."

The Wahhabi felt it difficult to repel these verses that could not be doubted or misinterpreted. He said, "What do we do with Jacob who was from the children of Israel and whose religion was abrogated by the religion of Islam?"

I said, "I will give you evidence from Islam, from the religion of Muhammad the Prophet of Islam (S)."

He said, "We are listening."

I said,

'In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful... and had they, when they were unjust to themselves, come to you and asked forgiveness of Allah and the Messenger had (also) asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah Oft-returning (to mercy), Merciful', (Qur'an, 4:64)

Why did Allah order them to come to the Prophet (S) to ask for Allah's forgiveness near him, and then the Prophet (S) would ask Allah to forgive them? This is clear evidence that the Prophet (S) was their means to Allah and that Allah would not forgive them except by him (the Prophet)."

The attendants said, "This is clear evidence that cannot be refuted."

The Wahhabi, feeling defeated said, "Yes, this was right when the Prophet was alive, but the man had died fourteen centuries ago."

I said with astonishment, "How do you say about the Messenger of Allah (S) 'the man had died'? The Messenger of Allah (S) is alive and not dead."

He laughed mockingly at my saying, and said, "The Holy Qur'an said to him,

'Surely you shall die and they (too) shall surely die,.' (Qur'an, 39:30)

I said, "And the Qur'an itself says,

'Reckon not those who are killed in Allah's way as dead; nay, they are alive (and) are provided sustenance from their Lord,' (Qur'an, 3: 169)

And,

'Do not speak of those who are slain in Allah's way as dead; nay, (they are) alive, but you do not perceive.' (Qur'an, 2:154)

He said, "These verses talk about martyrs who were killed in the way of Allah, and they have nothing to do with Muhammad."

I said, "Glory be to Allah, and there is no power save in Allah! You demote the Prophet Muhammad (S) who is the most beloved to Allah, lower than the rank of a martyr! As if you want to say: Ahmad ibn Hanbal had died a martyr and he is alive near his God, but the Messenger of Allah (S) is dead like any other dead one."

He said, "This is what the Holy Qur'an says."

I said, "Praise be to Allah Who has uncovered to us your nature and made us know your reality by your own tongues. You have tried your best to wipe out the signs of the Prophet (S) to a degree that you tried to remove his tomb, as you had removed the house in which he was born."

At this moment, the host intervened, saying to me, "Let us not go out of the circle of the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. We have agreed on this."

I apologized and then said, "What is important is that our friend has acknowledged 'intercession' during the Prophet's life and denied it after his death."

The attendants all said it was so, and they asked him again, "Did you agree that 'intercession' was permissible during the Prophet's life?"

He replied, "It was permissible during his life, but it is not permissible now after his death."

I said, "Praise be to Allah! For the first time, the Wahhabis acknowledge 'tawassul', and this is a great victory. Please, allow me to add that tawassul was permissible even after the Prophet's death."

The Wahhabi said, "By Allah, it is not permissible. It is from polytheism."

I said, "Take it easy! Do not be hasty and swear that you may regret it after that."

He said, "Give evidence from the Qur'an!"

I said, "This is not possible, because the Revelation stopped by the death of the Prophet (S). We have to rely on the books of Hadith."

He said, "We do not accept any tradition, except that it is true. What the Shia narrate is of no value to us."

I said, "Do you trust in the Sahih al-Bukhari which is the most reliable book to you after the Book of Allah?"

He said astonishedly, "Does al-Bukhari say that *tawassul* is permissible?!"

I said, "Yes, he says that, but unfortunately, you do not read what there is in your Sahihs, and despite that, you resist out of fanaticism to your opinions.

Al-Bukhari has mentioned in his Sahih that Umar ibn al-Khattab asked Allah for rain by means of al-Abbas ibn Abdul Muttalib when there was famine. He often said, 'O Allah, we beseeched You by means of our prophet, and You sent down to us rains, and now we beseech You by means of the uncle of our prophet. So send down rain to us!' Al-Bukahri says, 'And they had rains'.4"

Then I said to him, "It is Umar ibn al-Khattab, who is to you the greatest of companions, and you have no doubt in his loyalty, strong faith, and good beliefs. You say that if there would be a prophet after Muhammad, he would be Umar ibn al-Khattab. Now, you are between two things with no third; either you acknowledge that *tawassul* is from the essence of Islam and that the saying of Umar 'O Allah, we beseeched You by means of our Prophet, and You sent rains down to us, and now we beseech You by

means of the uncle of our Prophet. So send rain down to us!'- is an acknowledgment of *tawassul* during the Prophet's life and after his death, or you say that Umar ibn al-Khattab was a polytheist because he made al-Abbas as his means to Allah. It is well known that al-Abbas was neither a prophet, nor an imam and not even from the Ahlul Bayt (as) from whom Allah has kept away uncleanness and purified with thorough purification.

Besides, al-Bukhari, who is the master of traditionists to you, has mentioned this tradition acknowledging its reliability and adding, 'and they had rains', which means that Allah responded to them. Thus, al-Bukhari and the narrators from the Prophet's companions, who narrated this tradition, are all polytheists in your view!!!"

He said, "If it is proved that this tradition is true, it shall be an argument against you."

I said, "How is it an argument against me?"

He said, "Because our master Umar did not supplicate to Allah by means of the Prophet because he was dead and he supplicated by means of al-Abbas because he was alive."

I said, "The doings and sayings of Umar are not evidence and have no value to me. I just mentioned this narration to prove the subject of our discussion, which is the denial of *tawassul* by you and all your *ulama* and that you consider it as polytheism.

I am astonished why Umar did not supplicate to Allah, during the absence of rains, by means of Ali ibn Abi Talib (as), who was to Muhammad (S) as was Aaron to Moses. No one of Muslims ever said that al-Abbas was better than Ali (as). However, this is another subject that does not concern us in this debate. I just say that you now acknowledge *tawassul* by means of living people and this is a great victory to me. I thank Allah Who has made our argument prevailing, and your argument vain. Since it is so, now I will use *tawassul* in your presence."

I got up from my seat, turned toward the *qibla*, and said, "O Allah, we call upon You and supplicate to You by means of Your righteous servant Imam Khomeini."

Suddenly, the Wahhabi leapt and shouted with denial, "I seek Allah's protection!" He left hastily.5

The attendants looked at each other, saying, "How strange he is! How often he criticized and refuted us! We thought that he was full of knowledge, but it has become clear that he is emptier than the heart of Moses' mother!"

One of them said, "We are Allah's and to Him we shall return! O Allah, I turn to You in repentance." He turned to us and said, "How much I was influenced by his sayings. Until today, I believed as he believed – that *tawassul* is a kind of polytheism. If I was not with you today, I would remain misled. Thanks to Allah, and to you."

And say: The truth has come and the falsehood has vanished; surely falsehood is a vanishing (thing). (Qur'an, 17:81)

- 1. Tarikh al Kabir, vol.6, p. 209, hadith no 2192
- 2. Al-Isabah fi Tamyiz al-Sahabah vol. 1, p. 198
- 3. Musnad Ahmad vol. 1, p. 454
- 4. Sahih al-Bukhari, vol. 4 p. 209, Chap. The virtues of Ja'far ibn Abi Talib.
- <u>5.</u> The Lebanese al–Bilad Magazine mentioned in a report on Bosnia, "We have met with a teacher of Arabic Language and Holy Qur'an in one of the mosques of the city, and he expressed his worry about the actions of some Muslim countries. The teacher Janiti said that a Tunisian volunteer, whose name was Ahmed, asked him to give a lecture on Wahhabisim, and when he refused to do that, he threatened to kill him and said that whoever did not embrace Wahhabism would be in Fire." Refer to al–Bilad Magazine, vol. 191, p.35.

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