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Do the Shi'ite Muslims Say That the Revelation Came to Muhammad by Mistake, and That it Was Intended for Ali?

This is a vicious lie widely spread in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab countries in order to discredit the followers of the members of the House of the Prophet. This accusation was made during periods of oppression against the Shi'ites. The rulers of the periods of the Umayyads and Abbasids used to consider every follower of the Members of the House of the Prophet revolutionary and dangerous. They conspired against these Shi'ites and accused them of heresy and disbelief in order to encourage the Muslims to shed their blood and usurp their rights and wealth.

The centuries of oppression passed with all their injustices and terrors. It was expected that during the new period of freedom, the mistakes of the past would be corrected. It was hoped that the Muslim scholars would make a serious study in order to see if there is any justification for such terrible accusations.

It is very easy to know the truth.

There are hundreds of books written by Shi'ite scholars about their beliefs. Had the Sunni scholars read any of these books, they would have found that the Shi'ite beliefs are in full agreement with the Book of God and the well-known statements of the Prophet.

We are living in the era of speed and easy movement. It is easy for Muslim scholars to have conferences, discuss problems, and find solutions.

The simplest principle of justice is to follow the commandments of the Holy Qur'an:

"Oh you who believe, if a transgressor comes to you with news, try to verify it, lest you inflict damage on people unwittingly; then you may consequently regret your hasty action" (***49: 6***).

The Almighty commanded us to try to find out whether an accusation is true or false, and that we ought not to try people and convict them without questioning them.

We do not know of any court in the world in which the judge convicts a person before interviewing him, provided the accused is available and honors the summons.

In spite of the ease with which one can find the correct information nowadays, we find that those who accuse and spread hatred among Muslims do not take one single step in order to find the truth which may unite the Muslim world.

While writing these words, I recollect that the Egyptian government during the fifties sent the late Dr. Muhammad Bisar to Washington, D.C., as director of the Islamic Center there. I went to visit him and he received me kindly and informed me of the knowledge he had acquired concerning American Muslims. He initiated a dialogue between us, saying:

"Some of the Muslims in this country asked me about the various Islamic sects. I declared to them that all Muslim sects are good except the Shi'ite Ithna 'ashari."

I immediately realized that Dr. Bisar did not know the meaning of the Shi'ite Ithna 'ashari. Otherwise, he would not have been rude enough to say that to me while I am a Shi'ite Ithna 'ashari. Thus, we had the following dialogue:

Chirri: What is wrong with the Ithna 'ashari?

Bisar: They believe in things opposed to Islam.

Chirri: Give us an example of their wrong belief.

Bisar: They say the revelation came to Muhammad by mistake, and that Ali Ibn Abi Talib was supposed to receive the revelation.

Chirri: How did you learn that?

Bisar: I read it in the book of *Al-milal wa al-nihal* by al-Shahrastani.

Chirri: Have you asked any Shi'ite scholar about this subject?

Bisar: No, I have not.

Chirri: Then you have convicted millions of Muslims and considered them "kafir" without asking any of them about this serious accusation. Did the Almighty command you to do that? And did Egypt send you to propagate such a vicious message?

A year after our meeting in Washington, I met Dr. Bisar in Philadelphia at an Islamic conference. He

informed me that he re-examined the book of *Al-milal wa al-nihal* by al-Shahrastani and found that what was attributed to the Shi'ites, that the revelation came to Muhammad by mistake, was not the belief of the Ithna 'ashari Shi'ite school of thought. It was, rather, a sect which existed and disappeared hundreds of years ago. Hearing that from him, I accepted his apology. Yet, I was amazed that it took him a whole year to re-read the book and discover the truth.

I spent years studying hadith and Islamic history books which were written by Sunni and Ithna 'ashari scholars. I never found in any Shi'ite book a hadith or historical report indicating that Ali Ibn Abi Talib was higher than or equal to Muhammad. As a matter of fact, I found only the opposite. The Shi'ites consider Ali to be the best man after the Messenger because he was the most obedient to him.

One of the hadith which the Shi'ites pride themselves upon is a hadith attributed to the Messenger of God. The Prophet said to the tribe of Wulay'ah:

"Bani Wulay'ah, you must change your attitude, or I shall send to you a man who is from me to punish you severely."

Some of the people who were present asked the Prophet "Who is the man you are going to send to them?" The Prophet replied: "He is the man who was patching the sole of my shoes." They looked around and found Ali patching the sole of the Prophet's shoes.

It is inconceivable that the Shi'ites can be proud of the fact that Ali was the patcher of the Prophet Muhammad's shoes and claim that the Imam is higher than or equal to the Prophet. Therefore, I do not find any justification for directing such an accusation at the Shi'ites who glorify the Prophet the most.

The Shi'ites say that the highest honor the Imam Ali acquired is that he was chosen by the Prophet to be his brother. When the Prophet commanded every two Muslims to become brothers, he held Ali's hand and said "This is my brother." Thus, the Messenger of God, the highest Messenger, the Imam of all righteous people, the one who had no equal among the servants of God, made Ali his brother. (*Al-Seerah al-Nabawiyyah,* by Ibn Hisham, part 1, page 505).

Are The Sunnites Clear of Exaggeration?

Certainly the Shi'ites are not extremist, and there is no hadith reported by the Shi'ites that may justify such an accusation. However, it would not be improper to ask the following question: Are the Sunnites and their scholars free of exaggeration and extremism concerning the position of some prominent companions of the Prophet?

It would not be out of place to say that the Sunnites are closer to extremism than the Shi'ites. We find in the books of the Sunni scholars and hadith recorders indications that they put 'Umar in a position higher than that of the Messenger of God. The following are some of the hadiths:

"Al-Hakim Al-Nisaburi (in his book *Al-Mustadrak,* part 3, page 84), reported that Ubayy Ibn Ka'b said the following:

"I heard the Messenger of God saying: The first one the Almighty will embrace on the Day of Judgement is 'Umar. The first one the Lord will shake hands with will be 'Umar, and the first one the Almighty takes by His hand and admits to paradise is 'Umar."

Al-Hafiz Muhammad Ibn Majah in his authentic *Sunan* reported that Ubayy Ibn Ka'b said:

"The Messenger of God said: The first one God will shake hands with (on the Day of Judgement) will be 'Umar. The first one God will greet is 'Umar, and he is the first one Allah takes by His hand and admits to paradise."

These hadiths clearly indicate that 'Umar will be above all the Prophets including the head of the Prophets, Muhammad. When 'Umar is to be the first embraced and his hand shaken by the Almighty, all the prophets will be after him.

This is a strange and astonishing hadith. It portrays the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth as a human who embraces people and shakes hands with them.

Al-Hakim also reported that Jabir Ibn Abdullah said that Abu Bakr said that he heard the Messenger say: "The sun never rose on a man better than 'Umar."

Al-Hakim said "This hadith is authentic." (*Al-Mustadrak,* part 3, page 90).

If the sun never rose on a man better than 'Umar, it means that 'Umar was not less than any of the Prophets of God including their highest, Muhammad Ibn Abdullah.

It is reported among the virtues of 'Umar that the Messenger of God said: "Whenever Gabriel delayed in his visits to me, I guessed that he was sent to 'Umar." (Ibn Abi Al-Hadid, Vol.6, part 12, page 178).

It is also reported that 'Umar is the lamp of the people of paradise. (Ibn Hajar, *Al Sawa'iq Al-Muhriqah,* page 97).

If the Prophet had been concerned whether Gabriel could have visited 'Umar, 'Umar would have been equal to the Prophet in position and would have been a competitor. Furthermore, how could 'Umar be the light of the people of paradise while the Prophets, including the Messenger of God, are among the people of paradise?

This means that the light of 'Umar is higher than the light of all the prophets. Furthermore, if 'Umar is the light of the people of paradise, and the width of paradise is the Heaven and the Earth, it means that 'Umar's light is the light of the universe. Should that be the case, all the prophets would be in need of his light, and that would mean that 'Umar is above the messengers of God.

In conclusion, I would like to say that I do not mean, through these hadiths, to accuse our Sunnite brothers of placing 'Umar above the Final Messenger of God and the rest of the prophets. This is certainly not my intention; but I wanted to say that what the Sunnites attributed to the Shi'ites, that Ali is above Muhammad, is an unjustifiable and vicious lie because there is nothing in the Shi'ite books that indicates this allegation.

The Shi'ites consider the spread of such a lie a flagrant aggression against the glory of Islam and the honor of the Shi'ites.

I wanted to bring to the attention of the readers that the Imamite Shi'ites are too righteous to accuse their Sunnite brothers of placing a man above the Prophet in spite of the fact that there are many hadiths, which are considered by the Sunni scholars to be authentic, indicating that 'Umar is higher than the great Messenger and the messengers who were before him.

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