

The Abbaside Ruler Tests the Scholars of his Time

The Abbaside caliph Abu Ja`far al-Mansour was one of the most shrewd men who knew how to control people's minds and buy their conscience. He tried his best to spread his influence and expand the area under his control by either enticing or terrorizing others (he followed the policy of "the carrot and the stick").

We have already come to know his cunning and conniving from the way he dealt with Malik after the latter had been whipped by the governor of Medina. This leads us to conclude that there was a very strong tie between Imam Malik and al-Mansour a long time before that incident took place.

Malik had, in fact, met al-Mansour fifteen years before the meeting to which we referred above. It took place when al-Mansour had just taken control of the reins of government. 1 Among what al-Mansour had said then to Malik was the following: "O Abu Abdullah! I have seen a vision." "May Allah grant success to the commander of the faithful to reach the right decision," Malik responded, adding, "and may He inspire him to utter guidance; so, what did the commander of the faithful see?"

Abu Ja`far al-Mansour said, "I saw that I should seat you in this house so you will be one of the custodians of the sacred House of Allah, and to oblige people to learn from you, and to get the residents of various countries send you their emissaries and messengers during the pilgrimage in order to guide them to what is right of their creed and to righteousness, *Insha-Allah*, for knowledge is with the people of Medina, and you are the most learned among them..."²

Ibn Qutaybah says that when Abu Ja`far al-Mansour took hold of the reins of caliphate, he met with Malik ibn Anas, Ibn Abu Thuayb, and Ibn Sam`an, all in one meeting, then he asked them, "What sort of a man am I in your view? Am I a fair imam or an imam of oppression?" Malik said to him, "O commander of the faithful! I plead to you in the Name of Allah, the Most Exalted, and I seek intercession to you through Muhammad and his kinship to you, to excuse me from having to discuss it."

Al-Mansour said, "The commander of the faithful has excused you." Ibn Sam`an answered him by

saying, "You, by Allah, are the best of men, O commander of the faithful! You perform the pilgrimage to the sacred House of Allah; you fight our foe, and you secure the safety of the highways; the weak feel secure through you against being devoured by the strong, and it is through you that the creed stands; so, you are surely the best of men and the most just of imams."

As for Abu Thuayb, he answered al-Mansour thus: "You, by Allah, in my view, are the very worst of all men; you took what belonged to Allah and His Messenger, and you confiscated the shares of those of kin, and of the orphans, and of the indigent; you annihilated the weak and exhausted the strong then took their wealth; so, what will be your excuse tomorrow when you stand before Allah?" Abu Ja`far al-Mansour said to him, "Woe unto you! What do I hear you saying?! Have you lost your mind?! Look and tell me: Who do you see in front of you?" He said, "Yes, I see swords, but it is only death, and it is something which cannot be avoided; the sooner it comes the better."

After this conversation, al-Mansour dismissed Ibn Abu Thuayb and Ibn Sam`an, keeping Malik. Having granted him security, he said to him, "O Abu Abdullah! Go back to your country well-guided and guiding others. But if you prefer to stay with us, we will not prefer anyone over you, nor will we regard anyone as your peer."

Al-Mansour then sent each one of them a money sack containing five thousand dinars with one of his policemen. He instructed the policeman thus: "Give each one of these men one of these sacks. If Malik ibn Anas takes it, leave him alone, and if he does not, there is no harm on him if he refuses it. But if Abu Thuayb take it, cut his head off and bring it to me, but if he gives it back to you, leave him alone and do not harm him. If Ibn Sam`an refuses to take his, kill him and bring his head to me, but if he takes it, let that secure his safety."

Malik says, "The policeman took the sacks to all three of us. Ibn Sam`an accepted it, so he was safe. Abu Thuayb refused to accept it, so he was safe. As for me, I was, by Allah, in need of it, so I took it."³

This incident demonstrates to us the fact that Malik knew very well how unjust and oppressive this caliph was. Yet, due to the friendly ties between him and al-Mansour, he begged him, invoking the name of Muhammad and his kinship to him, not to press him to express his opinion. Hence, what pleased the Abbaside rulers, and what concerned them most during that age and time, was people glorifying and praising their kinship to the Prophet; this is why the caliph understood what Malik was driving at, which he appreciated, and this is why he excused him from voicing his opinion.

As for the second *faqih*, namely Ibn Sam`an, he complimented him for merits which he did not have out of fear of being killed, for the swordsman was standing there waiting for the caliph's signal. As for the third, that is, Ibn Abu Thuayb, he was brave; he did not fear anyone's reproach, and he was a sincere believer, a man of the truth who offered advice for the sake of pleasing Allah and His Messenger, and for the benefit of the general public; therefore, he confronted him with the facts and uncovered his falsehood and adulteration. And when he threatened to kill him, he fearlessly welcomed death.

Al-Mansour had instructed his policeman to cut off Abu Thuayb's head if the latter accepted his gift, and to do likewise to Ibn Sam`an if the latter refused to accept it.

Since Abu Ja`far al-Mansour was shrewd, you find him raising the status of Malik, forcing the public to embrace his sect, thus dealing the death blow to the sects established by Ibn Abu Thuayb despite the fact that the latter was more knowledgeable and much better than Malik as Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal admitted.⁴ Likewise, Layth ibn Sa`d was a better jurist than Malik as Imam al-Shafi`i had admitted.⁵

Needless to say, during that time, Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq was the best, the most knowledgeable, and the greatest jurist of all of these men as they themselves admitted.⁶ Did anyone in the nation reach his degree of knowledge or deeds, his merits or prestige, especially since his grandfather was Ali ibn Abu Talib who was the best, the most knowledgeable, and the greatest jurist among all people after the Messenger of Allah ? But politics elevate the status of some people while lowering that of others, and wealth advances some people at others' expense.

What concerns us in this research is to prove through clear evidence and convincing arguments the fact that the four sects of "Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a" are sects which were invented by the politics of their time, and the politicians who had invented them forced people to follow them by either terrorizing or enticing them, and by propagating for them; people simply follow the creed of their rulers.

Anyone who wishes to see more proofs and research them further ought to read the book titled *Al-Imam al-Sadiq wal Madhahib al-Arba`a* (Imam al-Sadiq and the four sects) by Shaykh Asad Haydar, may Allah have mercy on his soul. He will then get to know how much prestige and influence Imam Malik had gained: even Imam al-Shafi`i used to plead to the governor of Medina to beg Malik to permit him [al-Shafi`i] to meet with him. The governor said, "I prefer to walk bare-footed the whole distance from Medina to Mecca rather than stand at Malik's door because I feel no humiliation worse than having to stand at his door."

Here is Ahmad Ameen, the Sunni Egyptian scholar, stating the following in his book *Zahara al-Islam*:

The governments played a major role in supporting the sects of Ahlul Sunnah. When governments are strong, and when they support a particular sect, people will soon follow it, and it remains strong so long as the government remains strong.⁷

We say that the sect of Imam Ja`far al-Sadiq, which is the sect of Ahlul Bayt, if we were to call it a "sect" following in the Muslims' custom ___ otherwise it is nothing but authentic Islam brought about by the Messenger of Allah ___ was not supported by any ruler nor recognized by any authority. On the contrary, rulers deliberately aimed at rendering it unsuccessful, trying by all means to put an end to it and turn people against it.

So if that "sect" nevertheless succeeded in penetrating the pitched darkness and maintained its supporters and followers across all those dark ages, it is only through the favor bestowed by Allah upon

the Muslims: Allah's light can never be put out by any mouths, nor can the swords put an end to it, nor can it be rendered ineffective by false propaganda and purposeful rumors, and so that people will have no argument against Allah or be able to claim that they were unmindful.

Those who emulated the Imams of Guidance from the Purified Progeny were only a few; they were only a handful following the demise of the Prophet. Across history and as time passed by, they multiplied because the good tree is firmly rooted, and its branches are in the skies, timely bearing its fruit by the permission of its Lord, and what belongs to Allah continues and is never diminished...

Quraysh had wished to put an end to Muhammad at the dawn of his mission, and when they, by Allah's favor and by the favor of Abu Talib and Ali who were always ready to offer their lives to be sacrificed for him, the culprits from Quraysh were unable to do so; therefore, they entertained themselves with the thought that the lineage of Muhammad would discontinue at the time of his death, and his issue will come to an end, so they grudgingly waited in anticipation.

But the Lord of the Worlds granted him al-Kawthar, and Muhammad became the grandfather of al-Hasan and al-Husayn, and he gave the glad tidings to the believers that they both were Imams whenever they stood up or sat down, and that all the Imams would be from the offspring of al-Husayn...

All this threatened Quraysh's interests and future. It was not to its liking at all. Quraysh, thus, broke out in rebellion immediately after the demise of Muhammad, trying to put an end to all his progeny. They surrounded Fatima's house with fire wood. Had Ali not sought peace with them, and had he not sacrificed his right to the caliphate and not stayed on peaceful terms with them, they would surely have finished him, and Islam would have become, starting from that very day, a thing of the past.

Quraysh became calm again when they felt that their grip over the reins of government was secure against anyone threatening their interests, especially if such a threat came from Muhammad's offspring. As soon as the caliphate was rendered to Ali, however, Quraysh once more lit the fires of war to crush him.

They did not calm down except after having put an end to him and brought caliphate back to the very worst among their clans, turning it a Kaiser-style monarchy wherein fathers would appoint their sons to succeed them. And when al-Husayn refused to swear the oath of allegiance to Yazid, Quraysh broke out thundering in revolt to deal the death blow to the Prophet's family and to anyone called an offspring of Muhammad ibn Abdullah, hence the massacre at Karbala...

In that massacre, they killed the offspring of the Prophet, including children and infants, and they wanted to uproot the tree of Prophethood in all its branches, but Allah, Glory and Exaltation are His, fulfilled His promise to Muhammad by saving Ali ibn al-Husayn [Imam Zain al-Abidin] and brought out of his loins the rest of the Imams. Thus, the east of the earth and the west is now full of his offspring, and such is al-Kawthar...

There is hardly any country, town, or place on earth without the presence of the offspring of the Messenger of Allah who enjoy people's respect and love. Nowadays, after the failure of all attempts, the population of the Shi`as who follow the Ja`fari *fiqh* alone outnumber 250 million world-wide.

They all emulate the Twelve Imams who descended from the Prophet's family, seeking nearness to Allah through loving and being loyal to them, hopeful of the intercession of their grandfather on the Day of Judgment. You cannot find such figure among the followers of any one particular sect if taken individually despite the rulers' power and finance.

And they plan, and Allah, too, plans, and surely Allah is the best of planners. (Holy Qur'an, 8:30)

Did Pharaoh not order every male born to the Israelites to be killed when the soothsayers told him that one of their newborns would threaten his kingdom with extinction? But "the best of planners" saved Moses from Pharaoh's mischief and looked after him till he grew up even in the lap of Pharaoh himself, thus bringing his kingdom to an end, annihilating his party, and the Command of Allah is always carried out.

Did not Mu`awiyah (the Pharaoh of his time) not curse Ali, killing him, his offspring, and supporters? Did he not prohibit anyone from mentioning any of his merits? Did he not try, through all his schemes, to put out the light of Allah and bring things to the way they used to be during the time of *jahiliyya*?

But "the best of planners" raised the name of Ali despite the nose of Mu`awiyah and his party, so Ali's grave became a shrine visited by numerous pilgrims, Sunnis and Shi`as; nay! Even Christians and Jews praise and laud Ali ! Ali's became the second most frequently visited grave after that of the Messenger of Allah. Millions of Muslims circle it tearfully, seeking nearness to Allah. Above it is a gilt dome and lofty gilt minarets that steal everyone's sight.

As for Mu`awiyah, the emperor who ruled the land and filled it with corruption, nobody mentions him well. Do you see any shrine erected for him or any monument? Do you see any grave site for him visited by anyone other than a dark and neglected cemetery? Surely falsehood has a round, while the truth remains firmly seated; so, be admonished, O people of reason.

All Praise is due to Allah for having guided us. All praise is due to Allah Who clarified for us the fact that the Shi`as are the true followers of the Sunnah of His Messenger; they surely are the followers of the Prophet's Sunnah because they follow the example of Ahlul Bayt, the people of the house of Prophethood, and surely the people of the house know best what their house contains. They are, after all, the ones whom Allah chosen. He made them the inheritors of the knowledge of His Book.

He has also clarified for us the fact that "Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a" followed the innovations of their rulers among their predecessors and the latter's posterity; moreover they truly cannot prove their claims at all.

1. On p. 150, Vol. 2, of his book *Tarikh al-Khulafa*, Ibn Qutaybah indicates that their first meeting took place in 148 A.H./765 A.D. and the second one took place during the season of the pilgrimage in 163 A.H./780 A.D. We say that Malik used to meet the caliph quite often, and that the reason why Ibn Qutaybah mentioned these meetings specifically is due to the fact that Malik had himself narrated their tales, and because such narrations contained very important issues. It is not rational to say that the caliph used to meet with his state's supreme judge only once every fifteen years.

2. *Ibid.*, Vol. 2, p. 142.

3. Ibn Qutaybah, *Tarikh al-Khulafa*, Vol. 2, p. 144.

4. *Tadhkirat al-Huffaz*, Vol. 1, p. 176.

5. Such admission is recorded on p. 524 of al-Shafi'i's book *Al-Manaqib*.

6. You have already come across Malik's statement that, "No eyes had ever seen, nor ears have ever heard, nor anyone saw anyone a better jurist than Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq.

7. *Zahara al-Islam*, Vol. 4, p. 96.

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