

"Then I was Guided" in the court

Believing that "people are on the religion of their rulers" and taking the Messenger of Allah (S) as my exemplar that he had sent many letters to the kings of his time inviting them to Islam; an idea came to my mind.

In his somehow similar letters to the kings of his time, the Messenger of Allah (S) had said, *"Be Muslim and you shall be safe and Allah will reward you twice, but if you turn your back, the sin of the magi shall be on you."*

This is evidence that "people are on the religion of their kings" that if the kings believe, people believe, if they disbelieve, people disbelieve, and if they become polytheists, people become polytheists too.

The idea that preoccupied my mind was to send copies of my book '*Then I was Guided*' to the Arab kings and presidents accompanying them with friendly letters befitting their positions so that they might remember (Allah), for surely their reminding would benefit the believers! Since they are at the head of the countries of this nation, so they are the men of power and authority, and their responsibility for the fate of people and the fate of the Muslim nation is a very great responsibility. *"Every one of you is a shepherd (responsible) and every one of you is responsible for his herd (subjects)"* as the Prophet (S) said.

Believing that the successful ones in this life and the afterlife are the true believers who do good, enjoin each other with truth, and enjoin each other with patience, and that *"No one of you is a true believer until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself"*, and *"if Allah guides by you one man, it is better to you than the world and all that there is in it"*...for all that, I sent copies of '*Then I was Guided*' to King Hasan the Second of Morocco, President ash-Shathli bin Jadid of Algeria, President Zaynol Aabidin bin Ali of Tunisia, President Mu'ammar al-Qadhafi of Libya, King Husayn bin Talal of Jordan and his brother (heir apparent) Hasan bin Talal, and to King Fahad ibn Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia.

I sent each book with a special dedication and a letter of high reverence by registered mail. The copies of the book were received by all consignees. I knew that from the receipts I received from the post office that had the signatures of the secretaries of all the kings and presidents I sent the book to. I waited too

long for the replies, but I received none except one reply from Zaynol Aabidin bin Ali the president of the Republic of Tunisia, who expressed to me his sincere thanks.

Once in a press conference in India when I mentioned this story, I was asked, “Do you think that President Zaynol Aabidin has read your book?”

I replied, “The president is so busy that he has no time to read a book, but if he has read it, he is thanked for that, and if not, he is excused. The important thing is that he was the only one, from among the kings and presidents to whom I sent the book, who replied to my letter.”

While waiting for the replies and before receiving the reply of President Zaynol Aabidin, I traveled to Tunisia and there were two hundred copies of ‘*Then I was Guided*’ with me in my car. At the port, the custom officials hesitated to detain the copies of the book. They sent for their boss, who said when he saw the book, “Is this the Green Book?”

I said, “Its color is green, but it is not the Green Book of al-Qadhdhafi.”

He said to me, “Do you not know that letting books pass in this quantity is forbidden and it requires a permit of import?”

I said, “O brother, this is my book and I am its author. I have offered a copy as present to his Excellency the President.”

He took a copy of the book and compared the name of the author to the name in my passport. When he became certain, he said to me, “I too want you to give me a copy as gift.”

I said, “With great pleasure! What is your noble name?”

As I was writing a dedication to him, he was signing the permit.

I arrived in Tunis, the capital and gave some copies as present to some of my friends there. Then I traveled to my birthplace the city of Qafsah, where I met my relatives and old students. After two or three days, half of the copies were distributed.

I thought of my traditional opponents too, and gifted each one a copy of the book with a dedication by name and with some nice words of courtesy, out of my belief in the saying of Allah:

And not alike are the good and the evil. Repel (evil) with what is best, when lo! he between whom and you was enmity would be as if he were a warm friend. Qur'an, 41:34

I said to myself that they might be guided to the truth and leave fanaticism, or at least they might refrain from troubling me.

Then, I traveled to some neighboring towns and villages and distributed the rest of the copies. Nothing

remained with me in my car except three or four copies that I kept for what would be later on.

President Zaynol Aabidin returned the glory of the Zeytoonah University and it was reopened after it had been closed for thirty years. He sent government delegations to each district to appoint the director, whom the people of the district chose to manage the branch of the Zeytoonah University there. Unfortunately, the one who was chosen in Qafsah and his appointment was celebrated, was the most spiteful one to me and to the Shia.

This man seized that opportunity and gave the copy that I had sent to him to the commissioner of the district, accusing me with dangerous accusations. The commissioner of the district gave permission to the governor to arrest me, take back all the copies of the book that I had gifted and sent to people. Those who would be found to have the book were called in order to be questioned and a report was to be written on the case.

The agents of police and security forces began carrying out the orders and looking for me everywhere. At that time, I was a guest at one of my friends, who was a manager of a big department. My son-in-law came to me there in a hurry and told me about the matter. He suggested that I should go immediately to the borders and leave the country. I thanked him for his feelings towards me and said to him, "If I do that, I shall give them an excuse against myself. I will wait for them with all courage, for I have nothing to fear of, nor have I done anything that I may regret."

The agents of the security forces came and took me with them to the police station. There, questioning and argumentation began with the chief of the chief inspector with some of politeness and respect until the governor arrived. As soon as the governor saw me, he shouted at me, "Do you want to make a revolution in this peaceful country? Do you think that we are in Iran here?"

He turned to inspector and said to him, "This master has brought three thousand copies of a book full of blasphemy and brought one hundred millions of money to distribute them among people, inciting them to revolt and rebel."

I said to him with challenge, "Firstly, my book is not a book of blasphemy nor does it call for revolt. If it was so, I would not present a copy of it to his Excellency President Zaynol Aabidin, nor would I come to Tunisia at all. Secondly, if I have brought three thousand copies, I would have to come with a big truck to carry them. The car, which I have come with, is now detained with you. You can fill it yourselves to see how many copies it may contain. Thirdly, you say that I have distributed one hundred millions of money among people. I daresay and insist on you to bring even one man, saying that I have given him even one fil. After all, I did not come to the country stealthily or by force. I came in a lawful way and was searched like the rest of people. If I had one hundred millions, they would not let pass without a permit. Surely, you are more aware of these affairs than I am."

Finding my speech reasonable, he asked me, "How many copies of the book have you brought?"

“Twenty copies”, I replied.

He said, “Give me two hundred names of the persons whom you have given copies of your book.”

I said, “This is not possible, not because I refuse to give you the names, but I really do not know them. For example, from among them there are some of my students, whom I have not seen for ten years or more; I know them by the face and do not remember their names.”

After consultation, they decided to set me free that night, but to come back to them the next morning. Early in the morning, I came to them at the appointment. They made me ride in a car accompanied by two men from their agents. We went to the neighboring villages in order to take back the copies of the book from the houses that I knew. On the way, I discovered that my two companions were mustabsir¹ (Shia).

One of them said to me, “Professor, have you forgotten me? Do you not remember me? I was one of your students in the seventies in the Preparatory School of Teachers. Last night I did not sleep, for I took your book from the (police) station and read it all. I swear by Allah that I am like you (Shia).” The second said, “I, too, read your book two days ago when one of my friends brought it to me. It opened my heart to many things that I doubted before and could not find convincing answers to them except in your book. Now, I am a Shia.”

We all laughed for that chance and did not feel the distance. In three days and from many villages, we collected copies of the book as possible as we could. According to the orders, the Security Force agents delivered a summons to everyone who was found to have a copy of the book.

I met the commissioner and after a short talk, he said to me, “They frightened me of you and said that you are an extreme Shia and are financed by al-Khomeini. They said that you say it is permissible to marry one’s sister.”

I laughed saying to myself, “Now, I know my friend!” I told him that the matter was the matter of suckling and it was mentioned in the same book. He smiled and took out a copy of the book from his drawer, saying to me, “What you said is true, but I blame you, because you have not offered me a copy of the book. If you did since the day of your coming to Qafsah, nothing would happen. However now, the case is out of our hands. It is in the court that shall decide on the matter. After that, you come to us to give you back your passport to travel with peace.”

I understood from this man’s speech that they, after having become certain about my innocence of all rumors and having known through the detained documents that the president had received my book from Paris, moved the case to the court to only see if the contents of the book was dangerous to the regime or religion.

I went to the court after having known from the Shia agents that all the persons, who were questioned,

did not say about me except good. The questions that they were asked are as the following:

- What is your relation with at–Teejani?

The answer was either “my teacher” or “my friend”.

- Did he give you money?

The answer was “No, I have never seen even one *fil* from him.”

- Did he ask you for money?

The answer was “No at all! He never did ask me for anything”.

In the court, I requested to meet the vice–president. After his permission, I went in to him. I saw a copy of my book on his table with a piece of paper inside it. I said, “Sir, I am the author of the book. I have come to Tunisia for one week, but now I am detained since a month without any guilt. I am very worried about my wife and daughters who are alone in Paris.”

He interrupted me, saying, “The book must be read first and then the judgment announced. I have read about one third of it and inshallah I shall finish it tonight. Tomorrow, the judgment will be given on it.”

I said, “Sir, I do not ask from you anything, but to act quickly.”

He said, “Come to us tomorrow afternoon!”

The next day, I went there and was surprised by the vice–president who received me at the door and embraced me very warmly, saying, “I believe in everything in this book, O Doctor!”

My eyes were filled with tears and I did not believe what my ears heard. He said to me, “Please, come in! We will write down the judgment for you. If you had spent millions to make public your book, it would not have been made public, as it has become now. Some of my friends called me from Tunis asking me for your book, which has been called “Salman Rushdi al–Qafsi (of Qafsah)”

I sat down, praising Allah and thanking Him too much for His favors and assistance to me in the same court in the matter of suckling, and then in the matter of the book where they had intended evil against it, but it changed into good.

Mr. Vice–president wrote down the judgment and gave it to the clerk to type it with a typewriter. He ordered his clerk to release the detained copies of the book, and then said to me, “I would ask Your Honor for ten copies of the book to offer them to my friends. If you like, we can give the rest of copies back to their owners from whom they were taken.”

I said, “I myself will do that after receiving the judgment.”

Some officials came to me asking for the book. I gave the Vice-president what he wanted and distributed more than ten copies in the court.

Mr. Vice-president gave me the judgment after having signed it himself. He ordered his clerk to carry the rest of copies to my car. Then, he gave me my passport and took leave of me.

I left, being so delighted and happy. I gave back the copies of the book to their owners, putting in every book a copy of the judgment. Thus, the book was circulated even in coffee-houses with no fear or embarrassment.

Since forbidden fruit is sweet, this temporary detainment made the book so famous and caused an intellectual revolution to some people. Because of this, many people turned to be Shia.

And Allah turned back the unbelievers in their rage; they did not obtain any advantage and Allah sufficed the believers in fighting; and Allah is Strong, Mighty. Qur'an, 33:25

When I went back to Paris, I found among the letters that had come to me the letter of Mr. Zaynol Aabidin bin Ali, the president of the Tunisian Republic.

Really, I cannot hide my interest and pride in the charismata that I have seen and am still seeing by the virtue of the Ahlul Bayt (peace be on them).

The last of our prayer is that praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, and blessings and peace be on the noblest of prophets and messengers, our master and guardian Muhammad and on his pure, immaculate progeny.

Muhammad at-Teejani as-Sammawi the Tunisian

1. Mustabsir is a term used to refer to a Sunni who willingly turns Shia.

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