

Gallinaceous Acephaly

The Prohibition of Abdicating Islām's Spiritual Imperative to Rectify Society to the People of Misguidance

Ḥamzah wald Maqbūl

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قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اَرَأَيْتُمْ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ عَلٰى بَيِّنَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّيْ وَرَزَقْنِيْ مِنْهُ رِزْقًا حَسَنًا ۚ وَمَا اُرِيْدُ اَنْ اُخَالِفَكُمْ اِلٰى مَا اَنْهٰكُمْ عَنْهُ ۚ
اِنْ اُرِيْدُ اِلَّا الْاِصْلَاحَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُ ۚ وَمَا تَوْفِيقِيْ اِلَّا بِاللّٰهِ ۚ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَاِلَيْهِ اُنِيْبُ

[Shu'ayb عليه السلام] said: “O my people, do you not see that I am upon clarity from my Lord, Who has given me a beautiful provision? I do not wish to forbid for you a matter, then myself indulge in it. I wish [for you] naught but rectification, as much as I am able, and my enablement is not but from Allāh. Upon Him is my trust and to Him do I return [in all matters]. (Qurʿān, Hūd)

The Problem:

As an idea, I emphatically affirm that black lives matter. It is beyond debate and whoever sincerely disagrees, has disbelieved in Islām and has nullified their eligibility for salvation on the Day of Judgement, when the Only True King will weigh deeds; that day the only weight in the scale pans will be that which is in *ḥaqq*.

However, there is an official Black Lives Matter movement which has a [website](#) and [chapters](#) throughout the nation. I am not willing to be a part of it, nor will I give it my unqualified support. Even as I write this sentence, I feel a pain, because although I know that the sentence is correct and written unambiguously, the words “Black Lives Matter” mean so much to me emotionally that it hurts to write anything but support. I also understand that the vast majority of those who are legitimately and rightfully protesting racial injustice and police brutality in this country are not official members of this organization or any of its chapters, nor are they taking to demonstrations with the specific intention of supporting this particular group, as opposed to their general opposition to the wanton violence and murder unleashed disproportionately on black people by the police in this country.

That being said, it would be naïve to think that the specific BLM organization and its official platform will not inordinately benefit from the general and righteous rage of the protesters and the general populace. Riding the wave of that rage, they, as we speak, are acquiring, or rather, are misappropriating a false legitimacy, which a Muslim would be wise to be wary of.

As believers, we are commanded to be intelligent about how we engage with the world around us. The believer, when bitten, doesn't stick his hand in the same hole twice. There is no virtue, nor is there reward, in being made into a fool or being cheated, and it may even be sinful if and when it is done out of neglect or intellectual laziness, or being afraid of disagreeing with others.

In the case of the emotions stirred by the repeated and pornographic killing of black people in this country, on video, and without any cause, again and again, it is hard to say that you disagree with an organization literally called Black Lives Matter, when you agree with them so intensely on so much. The only time when one can be reasonably expected to do so, is when the matter is sacred. The *sharī'ah* of Islām is, by definition, sacred.

Most African Americans in this country were rightfully wary of voting Republican in the 2000 election. Then, the preponderant majority of the immigrant Muslim population, including my own father, threw their weight behind the GOP due to our shared social conservatism (at the University of Washington, I was told by a Stephen-Miller-level smug college Republican once that before 9/11, American Muslims were the most consistently Republican voting demographic in the United States after white males), clothing their political views a cloak of theologicky-ness, only to be crushed by the steamroller of the Bush-Ashcroft-Rumsfeld axis of evil *made possible by American Muslims*. They were well-intentioned, sincere and tragically naïve Muslims. The African American Muslim community knew better and very rightfully reserves the right to say "we told you so," in the face of immigrant Muslim naivety, because politics is about a lot more than just theological smugness in the face of *ad hoc* alignment on particular issues.

Muslims have been getting set up and taking the fall in activist-cum-political sagas around the world for more than the last century. From the early Muslim Brotherhood in pre-nationalist Nasserist Egypt, to Bolshevik leaning Muslims in various parts of Central Asia, whose love for the poor was leveraged by fanatical anti-religious zealots who later used their power to erase Islām from whole nations through genocide, pious Muslims have been

leveraged to the point of being self-financing cannon fodder for all manner of impious, bordering on obscene political causes and projects.

To mention this in the heat of the current moment of social and political fervor isn't going to be well received by many. However, vision consists not of being caught up in the moment, but being able to see that which is in the distance; that which others aren't seeing.

The fact of the matter is that the official BLM movement and platform is much more than the idea conveyed by the three words which make up its name. It is a module of a complete religion, replete with an [officially stated creed](#); much like the dogmatic creedal formulæ of medieval Europe which resulted in intractable wars over the minutiae of Catholic-Protestant theopolitical wrangling, you would have missed the mark by a wide margin if you believed that those behind this movement don't hold what is written in the "What We Believe" section of their website with as much zeal and fervor. Not only do they believe in its tenets being a new line that demarcates the dividing line between righteousness and evil, the vast majority of them believe in enforcing its dictates using state violence, and a great many also would tolerate and at times welcome vigilantism for its progress.

Remember, the Sunnī tradition is unique in its transparency. Every other tradition, secular or theocratic, which has successfully run state and empire, has relied on a modicum of *taqiyyah* or dissimulation in order to advance its cause. In Machiavellian secular polities, due to their having abandoned the idea of mandate based on virtue in the conventional sense, this isn't a surprise. Indeed, even *sunnī* polities have tried it; however, the righteous faction of 'Ulamā' have been a bulwark against its entrenchment.

This is not so for other movements. Just like the Bolsheviks were happy to receive the help of so many Muslims from Tsarist lands, letting them naively assume that Soviet Socialism would be tolerant of any form of revelation-based Islām, only to empty out *masājid* and criminalize Islām shortly after achieving their goals, if you think that the BLM platform is joking when they explicitly state that they want to "... disrupt the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure..." or "foster a queer-affirming network... with the intention of freeing ourselves from the tight grip of heteronormative thinking..." you are in delusion. Such beliefs are not only religiously held by the group, additionally, it is safe to assume that this wording is an

anemic description of their beliefs, toned down in order to be palatable to the current sensibilities held by the public, *and that which their chests conceal is greater* (Āl ‘Imrān).

The point of this tract is not to raise a paranoid alarm. Even before these protests, which have reached the point of being able to radically upend many basic institutions in our society (to be sure, many of them need to be upended), our courts have been litigating the line between freedom of religion and an attempt to force the regularization and acceptance of sexual deviance on those who would not accept it. The problem is real and is already causing us harm. I’m not talking about losing sleep because someone in my neighborhood is gay. I’m talking about a day when my children could be taken from me because I teach them that a valid *nikāḥ* is only valid between a man and a woman.

It is not an attempt to dislodge a real and justified need for speech, action, organization or even protest against racial injustice, through paranoid homophobia or red-scare fearmongering. There are many racists or dangerous ignoramuses who will bring up these issues in order to stop or dull the momentum of a change in our society which is long overdue. I affirm the righteous cause of those marching and protesting and invoke Allāh’s blessings on those who take to the streets and organize any and all righteous action in order to pursue this overdue change.

Some may rightly ask, “Why launch such a scathing critique of BLM at this crucial moment, when all your criticism can be leveled at modern western liberalism?” This is a valid and legitimate question. The answer is that I have been teaching ‘*Aqīdah*’ for more than the last decade to all who will listen, partly in order for them to properly understand my ongoing scathing critique of modern western liberalism, which is the Kool-Aid unquestioningly drunk by a large faction of the Anglophonic *ummah*, which has caused a number of intellectual maladies hitherto unknown to it to arise. As for the question of “why now?” the answer is precisely because it is a hot topic. It is interesting how many of the same people who will express outrage about the timing often end up being the one who will bang on about the importance of context and disingenuously lament the irrelevance of the ‘*Ulamā*’ whenever they get a chance.

The point isn’t even that it is unlawful in the sacred *sharī‘ah* for Muslims to collaborate with the official BLM Movement on particular issues in which we have agreement. We should ally

ourselves on an ad hoc basis with all who will stand for justice on a particular issue in a beneficial way.

The point is that we aren't part of that movement. We aren't Bernie Bros, or Biden 2020, because we aren't Democrats, much less Republicans, as a matter of conviction.

We are Muslims, not in the cultural or group identity sense, but in as much as our longing is to submit and conform to the beauty and majesty of the Divine. It is what drives us and what we yearn for. It is our joy and our aspiration. It is why black lives matter to us, and it why we cannot be part of Black Lives Matter, in this world or the next.

Our heads are not to be counted in their demographics. They are not the voice that speaks for us. Our votes are not their votes and our cause is not their cause. Their speakers, candidates, platform, and strategy is not shared by us in any principled way. Whatever we agree on, we work together with them, like anyone else. Whatever we disagree on, we say *to you is your religion and to me is mine*. Sadly, in North American, and largely immigrant dominated Muslim respectability politics, our pathological need to be accepted by parties, other faith groups, government, public institutions, the media, and really anyone other than Allāh and His messenger ﷺ have led to a headless chicken strategy; headless in that we have no guiding principles or leaders who stick to them, and chicken in the sense that we are afraid to take a stand on anything we believe in for fear of what others will say.

If we were sincere in this desire, we would have our own well-defined agenda. We would have our own leaders, who understood that agenda and were committed to it, rather than treating things like *fiqh*, *ʿaqīdah*, and *ihsān* like impractical burdens of a bygone age, rather than concerns of acute importance in this world and the next. We would organize, speak, take action, and even protest, based on that agenda. If we weren't doing any of that yet, we would at least talk about starting.

To reiterate, I emphatically affirm with religious conviction that black lives matter, and any who deny it have denied a dictate of Islām; however wholesale support of an anti-Dīn organization that is openly antagonistic to foundational and fundamental precepts of Islām is totally unacceptable to any who believe in Allāh and long to meet Him in happiness on the Day of Judgment.

The Solution:

Far from being an abstract chastisement without any practical solution, I would suggest that this struggle to live one's submission to Allāh in adverse circumstances is the very story of the *ummah*. It is our sacred history. We must embrace that struggle.

It is the *Anṣar* giving up their own *Madīnah*, may Allāh increase her in honor and resplendence, and putting their hands in the hands of the *Siddīq* of this *Ummah* ﷺ, and against those of the Arab and 'Ajam. It is Ḥasan ﷺ signing truce with Mu'āwiyah ﷺ, despite the pure legitimacy of his claim to the mantle of the caliphate of his noble grandfather ﷺ. It is the rank and file of the *Ummah* and the scholars, trying to make sense of the alternating moral successes and catastrophes of the house of 'Abd al-Malik bin Marwān, the bloody treacheries of the early 'Abbāsids, their later prime ministers, mercenary armies, Seljuq warlords, assassins and periods of political, economic and social chaos which elided into the desolation of Crusaders and Mongols of the Muslim homeland. It is also the efforts of Zangids, Ayyūbid, Mamlūks and Murābits to push back against them. It is the tree of the alliance of Osmān Ghāzī and his shaykh Edebalī which branched across continents, races, and religious groups, rallying them to the cause of Islām, and giving rise to the renewal of the prophetic caliphate.

A state built on the Divine mandate of guardianship of the creation of Allāh, the Most Merciful, built on the principles of responsibility, mercy and stewardship. It is a beautiful vision, and one which was lived in earnest at times and places by the grace of the Lord. Sadly, it is currently out of the immediate grasp of most Muslims in the world at the moment, as it has been in times past. That doesn't mean that the project ever stopped.

When and where the state ceased to be an effective custodian of this vision, and the populace and scholars were no longer able to rectify its misguidance, it became the story of *Ṭarīqahs*, or Ṣūfī Brotherhoods, which gathered in cold winters, burning deserts, dark nights, distant *ribāṭs* and in every place of population or desolation in order to establish the rule of Islām in the hearts, then work together to repel the darkness of disbelief, oppression and injustice from society. This module of that sacred project is still in tact in many places and it is still a viable medium to continue the struggle.

Shāh 'Abd al-Qādir Gaylānī, Khwāja Mu'īn al-Dīn Chishtī and others founded alternate modalities for performing the sacred functions that were abandoned at times by the state and thus launched multi-generational projects which included missionary works which brought

entire nations into Islām (think of Central Africa or the Southeast Asian archipelago), repulsed cruel and heartless invaders who knew no faith but mischief, brought down profligate and unjust rulers, and taught the *alif*, *bā*, and *tā*, both figuratively and metaphorically to the *Ummah*.

The great Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī, whose unmovable dedication to the spiritual and rational supremacy of the way of the *sunnah* spoiled the plan of Akbar to dislodge Islām from the Indian Subcontinent. He was quite the possibly the most powerful ruler that the Indian Subcontinent ever saw; even though his leadership of resistance took him to prison for much of his life, at the end of it all, Akbar will eventually give up, and his son and successor Jahnāngīr will become his disciple. His heroic stand will earn him the title of *Mujaddid Alf-ī-Sānī*, or the Millennial Renewer of Islām in its two great post-Mongol imperial realms, the Mughal and Ottoman Empires. This is not a solitary example of their efforts restoring the state to a semblance of its original intended function: we see other examples like the reigns of ʿĀlamgīr, Fātiḥ, Qānūnī, and the like, Allāh give them all an exalted station amongst His *Awliyā*.

Some will protest that the institution of the *Ṭarīqah*, sadly, is all too fallible. I will not negate that point. Many will join to make friends, influence people, get married, or one of any number of myriad bogus reasons other than the only correct one: to rectify one's self until they can worship Allāh as if they see Him, or if they can't, then to at least know that He sees them, starting with one's own self, and thereafter extending that mission to society, according to the prophetic model.

I'm not talking about dogmatic quietists who masquerade about with a false dichotomy of political movement Islām and apolitical spiritual *taṣawwuf*; any modality of Islām which doesn't embrace a holistic and *sunnah*-based approach to existing in the world is at best shortchanging the disciple and, more often, a convenient way for cult leaders to run their shops without bumping heads with tyrants. Just because true *taṣawwuf*, or for that matter, Islām, prioritizes personal salvation over the rectification of society, doesn't mean that it isn't concerned with the latter, or that it even allows one to not have concern with the latter; *none perfects their belief until they love for their brother that which they love for themselves*.

I'm also not talking about those people, nor *sharī'ah*-optional goofy soofees, sexual abusers, cult manipulators or the like. One would hope that common sense would protect people from

such predators. The existence of those who lack common sense isn't a reason for people to stop trying to operationalize their Islām, except for to those who lack common sense.

Imām Qushayrī writes in his *Risālah*, one of the earliest and most authoritative works on the spiritual path of the people of the Sunnah:

ولا ينبغي للمريد أن يعتقد في المشايخ العصمة بل الواجب أن يذرهم وأحوالهم فيحسن بهم الظن ويراعي مع الله تعالى حده فيما يتوجه عليه من الأمر والعلم كافيهِ في التفرقة بين ما هو محمود وما هو معلول

“It does not befit the aspirant [to the spiritual path] to believe in the infallibility of [their] preceptors; rather it is obligatory to not obsess over them or their states, keeping a good opinion, while upholding [one’s own] responsibility to guard the limits of Allāh, Most High, in all matters in which one turns to Him in His commandments. Knowledge is a sufficient criterion to know the difference between what is praiseworthy and what is ill.”

Tarīqah is an attempt to operationalize the project of Islām. If someone can achieve its sacred objectives through the state or some other more effective mechanism, I’m happy to endorse it, support it, and even join it. Many have formed political parties and social welfare movements for this purpose. Some of them are admirable in their outcomes, but I have not seen any which have met with much success in any holistic manner I can detect; I may be wrong in this point, as I often am. If one weren’t able to present a superior alternative to complement their strenuous objections, then for many, such an objection is nothing more than witless opposition to anything more than a Friday Islām, which streamlines conveniently with ubiquitous neo-Catholic faith shared by capitalist and communist alike: modernism.

Those who criticize in order to rectify are from the most sincere and righteous exponents of Islām. Those who speak ill in order to show how smart they are, only do the work of Iblīs, namely to misguide while themselves being misguided.

What I know for sure is that getting together with serious, guided, learned and committed Muslims who have a well-thought out agenda in order to fight injustice as a module of operationalizing one’s Islām is a better option than being a tool in an atheistic subversion of any allegiance to revelation. It is also better than liking a snide post about how everyone else is wrong but me...

For more information on the authentic and shari‘ah-grounded Ṭarīqah with which I have experience in the United States, please reach out to Shaykh Amīn Kholwadia of Dār al-Qāsim (darulqasim.org) or Shaykh Tamīm Ahmadī (nurpublications.org); special mention should be made of Imām Zaid Shākir (newislamicdirections.com), who is from the vanguard of the ‘Ulamā’ of Islām in this land. One can reach out to any of them or anyone else whose speech, actions, inward and outward states remind you of the Messenger of Allāhﷺ, wherever they may be. The author of this article did not write it at the request of any of the above-mentioned Shaykhs and does not represent them. In their humility, they do not actively solicit disciples, but it seems that the age will do that for them.

For more information on what the description of the qualities of a true Shaykh of Ṭarīqah are, see the relevant appendices of *Reliance of the Traveller* (Nūḥ Ḥā Mīm Keller) produced below:

SUFI SHEIKHS

w9.6 (Ahmad Zarruq:) The conditions of a sheikh to whom a disciple may entrust himself are five:

- (a) sound religious knowledge;
- (b) true experience of the Divine;
- (c) exalted purpose and will;
- (d) a praiseworthy nature;
- (e) and penetrating insight.

Someone with all five of the following is not fit to be a sheikh:

- (1) ignorance of the religion;
- (2) disparaging the honor of the Muslims;
- (3) involvement in what does not concern him;
- (4) following caprice in everything;
- (5) and showing bad character without a second thought.

If there is no sheikh who is a true guide (murshid, def: w9.7), or there is one, but he lacks one of the five conditions, then the disciple should rely on those of his qualities that are perfected in him, and deal with him as a brother (A: meaning the sheikh and disciple advise one another) regarding the rest (*Kitab qawanin hukm al-ishraq ila kaffa al-Sufiyya fi jami’ al-afaq* (y121), 119).

THE PURPOSE OF TAKING A SHEIKH AND A PATH

w9.7 (Muhammad Hashimi:) As for when the path is merely “for the blessing of it” and the sheikh lacks some of the conditions of a true guide, or when the disciple is seeking several different aims from it at once, or the disciple’s intention is contrary to the spiritual will of the sheikh, or the time required is unduly prolonged, or he is separated from his sheikh by the latter’s death or the exigencies of the times and has not yet completed his journey to Allah on the path or attained his goal from it-then it is obligatory for him to go and associate with someone who can complete his journey for him and convey him to what he seeks from the path, as it is not permissible for him to remain bound to the first sheikh his whole life if it is only to die in ignorance of his Lord, claiming that this is the purpose of the path. By no means is this the purpose. The purpose of the path is to reach the goal, and a path that does not reach it is a means without an end. The path was made for travel on it with the intention of reaching one’s goal, not for remaining and residing in even if this leads to dying in ignorance of one’s Lord. The meaning of a true disciple is one who forthrightly submits himself to a living sheikh who is a guide (murshid) during the days of his journey to Allah Most High so that the sheikh may put him through the stages of the journey until he can say to him, “Here you are, and here is your Lord” (al-Hall al-sadid Ii ma astashkalahu al-murid (y46), 7).

w9.8 (n:) Muhammad Hashimi’s above words about submitting oneself to a living sheikh refer to matters within the range of the permissible or recommended, not what contradicts the Sacred Law or beliefs of Islam (def: vl-v2), for no true sheikh would ever countenance such a contravention (dis: s4.7), let alone have a disciple do so, a fact that furnishes the subject of the remaining articles of this section.

w9.9 (‘Izz ibn ‘Abd al-Salam:) The Sacred Law is the scale upon which men are weighed and profit is distinguished from loss. He who weighs heavily on the scales of the Sacred Law is of the friends (awliya’) of Allah, among whom there is disparity of degree. And he who comes up short in the scales of the Sacred Law is of the people of ruin, among whom there is also disparity of degree. If one sees someone who can fly through the air, walk on water, or inform one of the unseen, but who contravenes the Sacred Law by committing an unlawful act without an extenuating circumstance that legally excuses it, or who neglects an obligatory act without lawful reason, one may know that such a person is a devil Allah has placed there as a temptation to the ignorant. Nor is it farfetched that such a person should be one of the means by which Allah chooses to lead men astray, for the Antichrist will bring the dead to life and make the living die, all as a temptation and affliction to those who would be misled (al-Imam al ‘Izz ibn ‘Abd ai-Salam wa atharuhu fi al-fiqh al-Islami (y38), 1.137).