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(English Translation)

al-Nasihah al-Dhahabia li ibn Taymiyya
Letter from al-Dhahabi to his former sheikh, Ibn Taymiyya
(Sincere Advice to Ibn Taymiyya, Maktab al-Misria 18863)

In the Name of Allah Most Merciful and Compassionate.

Praise be to Allah for my lowliness. O Lord, have mercy on me, diminish my mistakes, and preserve my Iman for me. What sadness at my lack of sadness; what sorrow over the sunna and the departure of its people; what longing for believing brothers to share with me in weeping; what grief over the loss of people who were light-giving lamps of Sacred Knowledge, men of taqwa, and treasure-troves of every good; alas for not finding a dirhem that is halaal or a brother who is loving.

Great good tidings to him whose own faults divert him from those of others, and woe to whom the faults of others divert him from his own. How long will you see the speck in your brother's eye and forget the log in your own? How long will you praise yourself, your prattle, your style, while blaming religious scholars and searching out people's shameful points, knowing as you do that the Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) forbade it saying: "Mention not your dead save with good, for they have gone onto what they have sent ahead."

Of course, I realise that you will defend yourself by telling me the attacks are only for those who've never smelled the scent of Islam and don't know what Muhammad (Allah bless him and give him peace) brought and that is your jihad. Not so, by Allah those who you attack know what is even better than the amount that suffices if the servant acts on it to make him succeed. Moreover, they are ignorant of a great deal that does not concern them. And "the excellence of a person's Islam includes leaving what does not concern him." By Allah man! Give us respite from you, for you are an eloquent polemicist who neither rests nor sleeps. Beware of doubt-creating, problematic religious questions. Our Prophet (Allah bless him and give him peace) was offended by too many questions, found fault with them, and forbade excessive asking. He also said:

"The thing I fear most for my people is the eloquent hypocrite."

Too much talking, if free of mistakes, hardens the heart when it concerns the halaal and haraam. So how should it be when it concerns the words of the Yunusiyya, the philosophers, and expressions of kufr, which make hearts go blind? By Allah, we've become a laughing stock in existence. How long will you disinter the details of philosophical expressions of kufr for us to refute with our minds? You've swallowed, man, the poison of the philosophers and of their works more than once; and by too much using of a poison one's constitution gets addicted. It collects, by Allah, in the body.

O, what longing for a group among whom the Qur'an is recited with reflection, where awe is experienced through its meditation, where there is silence from its contemplation. O, what longing for an assembly where the pious are mentioned, for

mercy descends where the righteous people are remembered, not where the righteous are spoken of with contempt and curses. The sword of al-Hajjaj and the tongue of Ibn Hazm were brothers [ie no Muslims was safe from them], and now you have joined the family. By Allah, give us a break from talking about "the bid`a of Thursday", and "eating the grains", and rather make a serious effort to remember the bid`as we used to consider the source of all misguidance, which have now become the "genuine sunna" and the "basis of tawhid", and whoever doesn't know them is a Kafir, or a donkey, and whoever doesn't call him a Kafir is a bigger Kafir than Pharaoh. You consider the very Christians like us.

By Allah, there are misgivings in hearts. You are fortunate if your faith in the two shahadahs has remained unscathed. Oh the disappointment of him who follows you, for he is exposed to corruption in basic beliefs and to dissolution. Particularly if he is short of learning and religion, a self-indulgent idler who does well for you by fighting on your behalf with his hand and tongue, while he is actually your enemy in his being and heart. What are your followers but hidebound do-nothings of little intelligence, common liars with dull minds, silent outlanders strong in guile, or dryly righteous without understanding? If you don't believe it, just look at them and honestly assess them.

The donkey of your lusts, O Muslim, has stepped forward to applaud your self. How long will you dote on your ego and attack the finest people? How long will you credit it, and disdain the pious? How long will you exalt it, and despise the devotees? How long will you be its closest friend, and detest the abstinent? How long will you praise your own words in a manner you do not even use for the Sahihs of Bukhari and Muslim? Would that the hadiths of the two Sahihs were safe from you, as you continually attack them, by suggesting weakness, considering them fair game, or with figurative explanations and denial. Hasn't the time come to give up? Is it not it time to repent and atone? Aren't you at that tenth of a man's life when he reaches seventy years and the final departure has drawn near? Indeed, By Allah, I don't recall that you remember death much. You sneer at whoever remembers death. So I don't think you'll take to my words or hear my exhortation. You will, instead, probably show great energy and concern to demolish this piece of paper with weighty volumes, snipping off the ends of my sentences for me until you gain the upper hand and can close the argument with a triumphant "...at all. And he was silent."

If this is how you stand in my eyes, and I am someone sympathetic to you, fond and affectionate, how do you think you stand with your enemies? By Allah among your enemies, there are the righteous and intelligent men and virtuous ones, just as among your friends there are the wicked, liars, ignoramuses, layabouts, the vile, and cattle. I can accept that you should publicly disparage me, while secretly benefiting from what I have said. "May Allah have mercy on the man who shows me my faults" [words attributed to `Umar (Allah be pleased with him)]. For I have many faults and sins, and woe to me if I myself do not repent, and how enormous my disgrace from Him who knows the Hidden. The sole remedy for me is the forgiveness of Allah and His clemency, His giving success and His guidance.

Praise be to Allah, Lord of the worlds. Allah bless our lieglord Muhammad, the Last of the Prophets, his folk and companions one and all.