

Religious Debates and Conflict Ethics

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Religious discussions in Turkey and the Muslim world and the ethics of disagreement.

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim.

Praise be to our Almighty Allah, who created us.

Peace and blessings to all prophets who enlightened the path of humanity, from Adam to our beloved Prophet Muhammad Mustafa.

As I begin my words, I greet you all respectfully.

First of all, may your kandil be blessed. May this climate of mercy and abundance; bring healing to the souls who are overwhelmed by the epidemic, give inspiration to the hearts, be a means to awaken to a new world by learning lessons and let him encompass all humanity, especially our country and the Islamic world. Have mercy on our martyrs.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Today, endless discussions of religion are taking place throughout the Islamic world without exception. I am not talking about the debates that make us better, find the wisdom we have lost, and bring us to the truth. I am talking discussions that are meaningless, useless, pointless and futile in many ways. In particular, I am talking about the debates created by the people of science and invitation and did not take Muslims anywhere, even dividing and breaking the ummah.

These discussions, which we can call the collapse and dissolution period of civilizations; overshadow the grace of religion. It blackens hearts thirsty for mercy. It is destroying hearts. There are minds hungry for the clear truths of religion, they are occupying those minds. Especially young generations, younger generations are being alienated from religion and even ripped off of it. These debates, these disputes on religion do not increase our faith, knowledge or wisdom. These do not make us more moral, more just, more merciful. It does not respond to any challenge faced by the ummah of Islam.

The course of these discussions have changed with digitalization. These discussions have surrounded the ummah and society. Religious knowledge has become widespread, this is

something good that has occurred with digitalization, but this information has lost its integrity and is fragmented. Moreover, digitalization spawned a chaos of knowledge, created an anarchy of interpretation, a fatwa chaos swept all around. These debates have made many doubt the truth of Islam, as well as its every truth. It has distanced many people from the plain and clear truths of religion.

Most of all, my dear brothers and sisters, these discussions erode the holiness and innocence of religion. It is increasingly eliminating the unifying nature of religion — it came to unite us. It makes it a means of segregation and marginalization. It turns religion into an issue of strife and bickering. It exhausts the religion and wears out the religious. In these ignorant and empty religious debates, it is always religion that suffers. The damage it has done to religion, society and the ummah is beyond what has been imagined. We must be aware of this.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In Turkey, which continues to be the hope of our ummah, the situation is the same as the Islamic world. These meaningless discussions on religion, which gradually surround us, cause us to narrow our horizons of civilization. Religion discussions in front of the public, on the screens and on social media constantly shift our social unity and solidarity on a fragile ground. As if other polarizations were not enough, they also create religious polarizations.

I would like to give an example from our recent history. In the 17th century, the world's empire, the Ottoman suffered great losses on three fronts for the first time. However, in Istanbul, two preachers bring society against each other through meaningless discussions of religion. One of the two preachers was Kadızâde Mehmed Efendi, who was sitting at the lectern of Hagia Sophia in the period, and the other was Abdülmecit Sivâsî Efendi, who was sitting at the Sultanahmet lectern. These two people attacked each other every Friday over a couple of issues. Over time, both of them formed their supporters. Finally, after a Friday prayer in 1651, unfortunately, the two sides start fighting and many people die. So much so that the historian Naîmâ says that everywhere from Sultanahmet Square to Beyazıt was filled with human bodies.

So, what were the issues that brought these two preachers against each other and made the two communities hurt each other so much? None of the topics of discussion were the main issues of Islam and Muslims, just as they are today. Kâtip Çelebi wrote a book called Mîzânü'l-Hakk, and it is only about these discussions. In this book, these two preachers both lined up and individually considered the issues that confound the two congregations. It was translated into Turkish, we have it. Well, what did these two preachers discuss?

- Is there punishment in the grave or not?
- Is it permissible to visit the grave or not?
- Intercession, is intercession right in the hereafter or not?
- Is it permissible to shake hands after prayer or not?
- Hz. Is the Prophet's parents heavenly or Hellish?
- Is it permissible to celebrate the Qandil and to read the Mawlid? Is it right or wrong?

- Is smoking tobacco, drinking coffee, halal or haram?

These discussions would infiltrate the Palace and the sultan of that day IV. Murad's way of inspecting the issue of tobacco and coffee by going around coffeehouses by making amendments, stems from the influence of these discussions in the Palace.

What else did they discuss?

- Is Hadhrat Hızır alive or not?

- Sema devran - the Mevlevi sema - dhikr, music is permissible or not?

- Look at this one: Is it religiously objectionable to study sciences such as mathematics and philosophy?

Now three centuries have passed. I regret to state that though three centuries have passed, unfortunately the same discussions continue on from Tangier to Jakarta, from north to south, in Asia and the Middle East, not only in our country but throughout the whole Islamic world. On that day, the world's great empire, the Ottoman Empire, was bleeding on three fronts. While losing blood, these arguments were being made. The Western world was preparing for the information and industrial revolutions. How futile it is to discuss these things that day, believe me, at a time when the flames fell on Islamic capitals, Damascus, Baghdad, Sana, Yemen, and every part of the Islamic world burned in fire, many religious debates were also so ridiculous, so futile.

When we look at it today; Almost all areas of hot conflict are in the Islamic world. We all see this. Even so, the ummah said that the Quran's *النَّارِ مِنَ حُفْرَةٍ شَقَا عَلَىٰ وَكُنْتُمْ* / *ارِ* / So you were at the edge of that pit filled with fire. It is right that these meaningless religious debates continue, for Allah's sake, while the Ummah is at the edge of the fire-filled pits?

There is no minimum peace and security environment in the Islamic world. In other words, there is no salute in Islamic lands and no trust in places of faith. Even so, the fundamentals of religion are constantly discussed, the system of evidence, the hierarchy of evidence is constantly discussed by teachers, on the screens and on social media. And in an intolerant and confrontational language. Is this right, for Allah's sake?

Our Almighty Book, the Holy Qur'an, says, do not be one of those who divide their religion and split into groups. Despite his command, sometimes there are differences over the most detailed issues of religion. The other day there was debate in a place of Islam, about after the al-Fatiha prayer, will they say amin loudly or silently? A fight broke out between those who said "loud" and those who said "silent". A person's life was lost. What pain this is. In some places, discussions about "Are we going to raise a hand and say "et-Tehiyyâtu" or not? Are taking place. What ignorance is this?

In fact, there are many places where morality and justice are not ensured. Is it right to continue these debates, which constantly confront Islam and Muslims with existential crises?

The problems that have accumulated in the Islamic world await solutions. Even so, these debates that consume the energy of the ummah do not stop. In fact, it makes our problems even more unsolvable.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Of course, religious interpretations and views will differ today, as they have in the past. Do not misunderstand what I said. Disagreement is a natural thing, disagreement is Allah's verse, disagreement is mercy. For, the nature of religion, nature of prayer and nature of man differ. There will be differences so that society is not condemned to a static structure. There should be diversity so that people meet, think, produce and humanity may develop. Therefore, first of all, the new truths that different ideas will reveal are what make conflict graceful. The truth emerges from consent.

It should not be forgotten that in the Islamic civilization, discussion has a method, an ethic that turns conflict into grace. The problem is there. The problem is not in conflict; it is in the manner and moral of conflict. What is the moral of conflict? It lets us know that there is a truth that transcends the morality of conflict. It requires believing that there is a truth that encompasses everyone and to pursue that truth. With this method, absolute respect for this morality is a must for every believer. No party, no scholar, can be free of this. In fact, no believer can be contented.

I ask you, what a terrible contradiction to violate all the beauties and principles of the moral protectorate envisaged by religion, when we say, "Dear Brothers", that we should defend our own thoughts about religion. What a bad way to violate the right of a servant, to violate the morality of brotherhood, to violate the law of brotherhood when we say that we should defend a claim that we know to be the truth. Can we defend the Quran by violating the morality of the Quran, for Allah's sake? Can we protect sunnah by destroying and ignoring the sunnah order? We have a tradition since the Companions. We have a tradition that begins with prayer in discussions to the opinion holder he criticizes. Can we get somewhere by leaving this decent style of my Companions? Can religion be defended by ignoring our ancient scientific heritage by ceffe'l-pen? Could all the originals of the procedure be sacrificed in order to prove the most important issue, the details?

To abandon the minimum morality to an ordinary believer; KavI-i leyyin (soft words), kavI-i tayyibe (good words), KavI-i sedid (sound words), KavI-i hasen (good words), while it is not good to leave all these things, is it suitable for a person of science and a person of invitation to do so? We had done a lesson called "Verbal Ethics" before on this subject. Emr-i bi'l-ma'rûf, the duty of the believer is - okay - to command good. However, emr-i bi'l-ma'rûf is done only with a well-known word, that is, with good words. Can Nehy-i ani'l-münker, meaning to prevent from evil, be realized with a word of münker? Can things that are haram for every believer in daily life,

such as backbiting, gossip, insults, slander be considered permissible to win two followers in religious debates, for Allah's sake? Can the truth be confused with superstition and mischief to humanity? Does not expressing a thought with claim and suspicion lead to endless discussions or not? Do these arguments not produce hatred, anger, justice, and sedition? Hasn't it been doing so for fourteen centuries, for Allah's sake?

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Our Lord clearly warned us in his Great Book that such discussions should not turn into niza'a (dry quarrel), joke (divisions), strife and confusion. There are many verses on this subject: **مَنْ مَرَّ بِشَيْءٍ مِنْ دِينِهِمْ فَلْيَعْلَمْ وَكَانُوا عَلَيْهِمْ فَارِقُونَ الْبَيْنَ** / Do not dismiss your religions. Do not be one of those people who see everyone's own opinions as the truth. **وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا** / Do not quarrel with each other, do not fight, do not fall into each other. **فَتَفْشَلُوا** / you will get weak. **وَيَذْهَبَ رِيحُكُمْ** / your wind will disappear, your strength will be gone.

The Messenger of Allah gave a name to such meaningless religious debates in our hadith books and corpus. (المراء) He calls it "mirâ". Mirâ is to transform religion into a tool of hostility. Mirâ 'means trying to find his fault in order to humiliate a person. And to start a fight over that. One hadith narrated by Ibn-u Mâjah is as follows: **لا تعلموا العلم لتباهوا به العلماء** / Do not learn in order to be superior to scholars - this bai is mentioned as the will of Lokman Hakim to his children in hadith books. **أو السفهاء به اولتماروا** / Or do not learn science to quarrel with fools and low people. **أو الناس وجوه لتصرفوا** / Or do not learn science so that people will turn their faces to you, that is, to gain their favor. **النار النار ذلك فعل فمن** / Whoever does so, there is fire, fire. There is another rumor in the same manner. There, too: **لا الايمان حقيقة عبد يستكمل لا** / The subject cannot reach the truth of faith. - Until when? - Unless these meaningless, useless, futile religious debates that we call **محقا كان وان المراء يدع حتى** / If right, mirâ '.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I would like to make a call by expressing a few more points regarding the morality of conflict determined by our ancient tradition within the framework of this method, and I would like to conclude with this call.

First of all, I would like to express that Islam it is not a religion to be represented by individuals, communities, sects, politics, religious affairs and theology. Why am I saying this? In these discussions, I see this: Each party sees itself as a representative of Islam. Nobody can represent Islam. The eternal truths of religion cannot be based on mortal personalities. Islam is represented. Do you know what it is represented by? Islam can only be represented with good morals. It can only be represented by the example of the Messenger of Allah. Not with dry discussions. In any case, under any name and title, a person or persons cannot be absolute. This is one of the mistakes we have fallen into in these discussions. No one, but no one, except prophets, can be attributed faith and innocence. Leaving aside our ancient tradition of 1400

years, religion cannot be thought of as just one person, a group, or a party. Islam cannot be reduced to only an author and his works.

It is always necessary to take into account that we can always be wrong in discussions, that our brother can be right. Imam Shafi says this: When I get into an argument with someone I say, "Allah, make my brother just in this argument, make him successful." Any scientist and invitation person, institution, community cannot say "This is the only truth." It cannot see or present it as the only truth. It cannot shape its views on the faults and mistakes of others. There will be differences. It cannot demand that religion be understood and practiced only through its own interpretation, its own thought, in a way to eliminate these differences. There is no such thing in our tradition. Different opinions and interpretations cannot be denied the right to life. Especially, no one should be the patron of the religion with the slogan "religion is getting away from us". One cannot declare their own opinion as "demoted religion", all other thoughts as "fabricated religion". Especially, what a disaster it is for a person to present his own fight as the "fight of Islam", for a group to portray it as such, to put personal discussions before scientific discussions. What a great big mistake it is to accept our understanding of religion as the absolute right and to regard others as "those who should be guided". What a burden it is to insist that someone else is wrong instead of saying they think differently. Moreover, what a great evil it is to claim that he did all these things in the name of Ehl'I Sunnah. This is also a bad thing for Ehl'I Sunnah.

In these discussions, the biggest evil done is a Muslim declaring that his Muslim brother is an unbeliever. Takfir is a hate crime condemned by Islam. Nobody, but nobody, by considering himself the sole owner of the religion, has the authority, the right, to expel someone out of the Islamic circle because of his thought or interpretation. Likewise, no one has the right to question his brother's intentions and target "dissenting" views. Because takfir is also to target someone. However, what did Ehl'i Sunnah say? What was the principle of Ehl'i Sunnah? "Ahl al-qiblah cannot be said." I would like to remind you once again of Abu Hanifa's principle: "Those who believe in من آمن من / بتأويل لا يكفر بتزويل آمن من / Tenzil are not disbelieved due to their interpretation." This principle is in front of us. It is essential to preserve this universal mission of Ehl'i Sunnah. We should not forget that the religious debates fed by takfirist's discourses are the triggers of internal conflicts and fights in all the fragile regions of the Islamic world.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Finally, every word is a trust. Today, the most important issue we Muslims should pay attention to is to abide by the morality of conflict, to act in a certain way in understanding and interpreting religion. For, care that does not turn conflict into conspiracy and corruption is an indispensable duty for every Muslim. The only guide that will protect us all from this disaster is the light of the Quran and Sunnah.

We all have to act as soon as possible to get out of this vortex that we have fallen into. Now, please, we must quickly remove religion from being a tool of struggle, a place of debate and conflict. We are losing generations.

I'm requesting this from you. I ask all my brothers who see themselves as a person of invitation, a person of science; Please let us not discuss the issues that are not possible to apply. Let's not turn these into a fight in front of younger generations, in digital environments. Let's not make single truths on matters open to interpretation. Please do not get into arguments that will harm instead of benefit. Let's avoid any language and style that would not comply with the holiness of religion and the dignity of science. Let us not dismiss anyone, any of our brothers, accuse them of heresy, let us not discriminate. We should definitely avoid unfounded and baseless accusations and statements, brothers. Let's not share our views for the sake of a simple rating on social media. Let's not attempt to present unfounded, irregular views as religious truths.

I want to make a call on this issue: As a first step, I invite the owners to delete the contents (if any) that contain all kinds of discourses in the written-visual-social media contrary to the moral of the conflict. Come, let's each of our brothers do this please. Let us build a new, restorative, unifying language of invitation and a new style of invitation from scientific academic circles, official institutions and non-governmental organizations that carry out religious services. I urge you. I would also like to express that I am ready to serve and host this personally.

I end my words with a prayer of the Messenger of Allah: *لا الهة الا الله* / Lord, do not make our misfortune our religion. Do not make our religion our evil. Do not leave us confronted with calamities regarding our religion.

I greet you all respectfully.

Be entrusted to Allah.

