

Understanding Truth and Falsehood

From: *Provisions of the Journey Vol.1*, by Ayatollah Muhammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi

O Abu Dharr! Truth is heavy and bitter while falsehood is light and sweet. All too often, an hour's impropriety results in extended sorrow and grief.

Right and Falsehood and the Instances of Their Application

One of the general themes which is discussed in Islamic culture and has wide applications is the concept of 'Truth and Falsehood [*haqq wa batil*]'. In the Gracious Qur'an, truth and falsehood have been employed in regard to objects of worship; in the case that Allah, the Exalted, is asserted as the right object of worship and the rest of the objects of worship are known as false:

ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنَّ مَا يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ هُوَ الْبَاطِلُ...

That is because Allah is the Truth, and that which they call upon besides Him; that is the falsehood (22:62)

Sometimes, right and falsehood are treated in the field of beliefs, opinions and notions and at times they are discussed in the scope of actions and deeds. One of the issues which the Gracious Qur'an teaches us is that the world is intertwined with right and falsehood. It can be asserted that the formation of this cosmos is combined of two elements; right and falsehood.

Allah is the foundation of right and falsehood which is a parasitical matter that manifests itself under the auspices of right. On the basis of the teachings of the Qur'an, this mixture of right and falsehood is not eternal, a day will come when right will be completely separated from falsehood and will remain stable and falsehood will be exterminated:

بَلْ نَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَى الْبَاطِلِ فَيَدْمَغُهُ فَإِذَا هُوَ زَاهِقٌ...

Nay! We cast the truth against the falsehood, so that it breaks its head, and lo! It vanishes... (21:18)

The Visible Appearance of Right and Falsehood

The theme of the Noble Prophet's (S) words in this section is that right is heavy and bitter and falsehood is light and sweet. To explain this sentence, it ought to be said that a believer who is pre-occupied with the prosperity of the hereafter must take the exigencies of his faith into consideration, reflect about his spiritual and psychological perfection and get rid of all the hurdles of the way and attain his aim.

It is natural for a believer who is at the beginning of the journey to expect everything to be light, easy, pleasant and sweet. He has not made himself ready to bear hardships and bitterness; it is for this reason that he is likely to stumble along the way and trespass the bounds of right and/or if as

before he carries on along that way, he is sad and worried about all the hardships and problems along the path of good and right.

The question is always asked of man regarding why right is heavy and bitter and man is confronted by strenuous hardships but on the contrary falsehood is easy and sweet. Perhaps, this query may arise that, God forbid, is Allah stingy and does not let His friends derive benefit from the pleasures and sweetness of the world and places on their shoulders heavy and hard duties? What prevented Him from making right sweet so that all the people might become followers of the truth and not be misguided? When we compare the life of a believing person with that of an infidel, we observe that a believer has to endure a lot of problems. As a result of this comparison, he asks this question, “Why does Allah who, according to uncountable *hadiths*, loves the believers and has heaped a lot of praise on them, confront them with these encumbrances and hardships?”

Man, His Free Will and Temptations

Man’s life in the world is founded on choosing the correct path and traversing the stages of perfection of his own volition. Man’s most outstanding quality is that he is free and at liberty as regards his movements and spiritual wayfaring. Allah created existents like angels which only have an inclination towards right and even if their actions are volitional, their disposition is still only directed towards right and adoration of Allah and they have no tendency towards falsehood. Worship of Allah is sweet and pleasurable for them.

Therefore, the order of nature is not devoid of existents which only have a tendency towards right and are exclusively preoccupied with servitude of Allah. For this reason, the will of Allah is dependent upon His creating an existent whose position is higher and loftier than that of the angels; that is why He made a human being who in spite of having an inclination to falsehood and the carnal soul, will trudge the path of his perfection of his own volition. Man ought to forsake the pleasure of sin in order to attain eternal prosperity.

If this existent tramples the appetitive soul underfoot and seeks the path of bliss, he will, without the least doubt, ascend higher than the angels for the reason that in spite of being faced with two conflicting dispositions, he of his own choice and volition abstains from his pleasures and procures the spirit of worship and adoration of Allah.

What has been gathered is that man in the world has two paths in front of him: one is the way of right and the other is the course of falsehood. Of course, it ought to be borne in mind that it is not true that once man selects any one of those two courses, he is compelled to keep trudging that path.

The other point which ought to be taken into consideration is that the world is a place of tests and trials and naturally it denotes a time when man is confronted by bitterness and hardships and comes out of the test triumphant by bearing with patience those hardships. If spiritual ascendancy and perfection were sweet at first sight for man and falsehood and decadence were bitter, tests would be devoid of purport because trials call for man to forsake his desires and

wishes and perform deeds for Allah and in the case that right were to appear sweet at first sight, man would discline himself from the bitter falsehood and incline towards the sweet right for his own sake and for the good pleasure of Allah. In the same way, if all falsehood were sweet and the course of right were devoid of any sweetness and pleasure, a person who abstained from falsehood and selected the correct path would be deprived of all pleasures; therefore, it is not true at all that there is absolutely no gratification along the course of right.

Allah's divine decree is not the same for all people, because the capacity of all individuals is not of the same manner and not all human beings have the capability to endure every kind of affliction and hardship; it is for this reason that Allah has a special divine decree for every human being; He decrees tribulations and problems for some people in their youth and for others in their old age. He afflicts one man with illness and another with poverty. He tries one man by means of his spouse and the other through his friend. It is not true that a believer will be guaranteed safety from any hardships and adversities because in this case he would not attain perfection.

For the reason that the world is a place of trials, a believer ought to strengthen his faith by means of enduring hard times and prove his loyalty to divine laws and his contentment with the divine will of Allah. With all certainty, this is a very hard undertaking, but he ought to patiently go through all these tribulations because he professes to be believer. But the infidel has no such affirmation; on the contrary he has no familiarity with Allah and the truth. He wishes to be at ease in this transient world and whatever happens later is not a matter of his concern. If he performs good works in this world at all, Allah grants him his reward right in this world:

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزِينَتَهَا نُوفِّ إِلَيْهِمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فِيهَا وَهُمْ فِيهَا لَا يُبْخَسُونَ * أُولَئِكَ لَيْسَ لَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ إِلَّا النَّارُ وَحَبِطَ مَا صَنَعُوا فِيهَا وَبَاطِلٌ مَا كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ

Whoever desires this world's life and its finery, We will pay them in full their deeds therein, and they shall not be made to suffer loss in respect of them. These are they for whom there is nothing in the hereafter, and what they wrought in it shall go for nothing, and vain is what they do.

(11:15-16)

There ought to be hard and tiresome duties so that man may by exercising piety and contentment with the will of Allah and patience in the face of tribulations traverse the course of perfection. If all duties were easy and simple, all the people of the world would become Muslims and the prominence and distinction of any person would not become clear.