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THE OBLIGATION OF OBEYING THE RULERS  
IN THAT WHICH IS LAWFUL

Imaam Aboo Zakariyyah Yahyaa Ibn Sharaf an-Nawawee  
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Stated Imaam Muslim (d.261H) - *rahimahullaah*,

**Chapter: The Obligation of Obeying the Rulers in Other than Disobedience (to Allaah) and the Unlawfulness of Obeying Them in Disobedience (to Allaah):**

Ahmad Ibn 'Abdur-Rahmaan Ibn Wahb Ibn Muslim informed us, the uncle of 'Abdullaah Ibn Wahb informed us, 'Amr Ibnul-Haarith informed us, Bukayr informed me from Busr Ibn Sa'eed, from Junaadah Ibn Abee Umayyah who said, 'We entered upon 'Ubaadah Ibnus-Saamit whilst he was ill. So we said, 'Inform us - may Allaah rectify your condition - of a *hadeeth* that Allaah will benefit with which you heard from the Messenger of Allaah (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*).' So he said, 'The Messenger of Allaah (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) called us and took the oath of allegiance from us. So that which he took from us as an oath was to listen and to obey in whatever we were pleased with, or disliked, and whatever we found difficult and whatever we found easy, and when someone is shown preference over us, and to not dispute with the people of authority.' He said, 'Except if you see clear disbelief (*kufraan bawaahan*) concerning which you have a proof from Allaah."<sup>1</sup>

Stated Imaam Aboo Zakariyyah an-Nawawee (d.676H) - *rahimahullaah* - in explanation of this *hadeeth*, "His (*sallallaahu 'alayhi wa sallam*) statement, "Except if you see clear disbelief (*kufraan bawaahan*) concerning which you have a proof from Allaah." This is how it occurs in the majority of narrations and in the majority of manuscripts. 'Bawaahan' with a *waw*. And in some of them there occurs, 'baraahan', and the *baa'* is open in both of them. And the meaning of both of them is: clear and apparent disbelief (*kufraan dhaahir*). And the intended meaning of *kufraan* here is disobedience. And the meaning of, 'concerning which you have a proof from Allaah,' is that which you know from the Religion of Allaah the Exalted. And the meaning of the *hadeeth* is: Do not oppose the rulers in their leadership, and do not contradict them unless you see disbelief which is confirmed through your knowledge of the basic fundamental principles of Islaam. So if you see that, then oppose them in it, and speak the truth wherever you are. And as for revolting against them and

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<sup>1</sup> Related by al-Bukhaaree (13/192), Muslim (3/1470), an-Nisaa'ee in *as-Sunanul-Kubraa* (5/220) and *as-Sunanus-Sughraa* (7/138), al-Bayhaqee in *as-Sunanul-Kubraa* (8/145), Maalik in *al-Muwatta'* (2/445) and al-Baghawee in *Sharhus-Sunnah* (10/46) by way of 'Ubaadah with it.

fighting them, then this is unlawful (*haraam*) by *ijmaa'* (consensus) of the Muslims, even if they are disobedient oppressors. And there are apparent *ahaadeeth* with the meaning of what I have mentioned. And *Ahlu-Sunnah* have consensus that the ruler is not to be removed due to *fisq* (disobedience). As for the angle that is mentioned is some of the books of *fiqh* by our companions that he is to be removed, and this was mentioned by the *Mu'tazilah* as well, then this is an error from the one who states and it is an opposition to the *ijmaa'*. The Scholars have stated that the reason for not removing him and the unlawfulness of revolting against him is the *fitan* (trials, tribulations) and corruption that will occur due to that. So the corruption that will occur due to removing him is greater than that which will occur due to him remaining. Stated al-Qaadee 'Iyaad: The Scholars have consensus upon the fact that the leadership cannot be granted to a disbeliever. And they have consensus upon the fact that if disbelief befalls him, then he is to be removed. Likewise is the case if he abandons establishment of the Prayer and calling to it. He said: Likewise is the case with the majority of them with regards to innovation. He said: And some of the *Basriyyeen* said: He is to be granted the leadership and it is to continue with him because he is excused. Stated al-Qaadee: So if he is overtaken by *kufir* (disbelief) and changes the *Sharee'ah*, or invents an innovation, he exits the judgement of leadership and obedience to him is nullified. And it is obligatory upon the Muslims to carry that out and to remove him and to replace him with a just leader if they have the ability to do that. So since that cannot occur, except through a group, it is obligatory upon them to carry that out by removing the disbeliever. And it is not obligatory with regards to an innovator, except if they think that they have the ability for that. So once the incapability has been confirmed, then it is not obligatory to do that and the Muslim can migrate from that section of the earth to other than it and flee with his Religion. He said: And the *faasiq* (disobedient sinner) is not to be placed in charge initially, so if *fisq* takes over the *khaleefah*, then some of them have stated: It is obligatory to remove him as long as there does not occur any *fitnah* or war. And the majority of *Ahlu-Sunnah* from amongst the *fuqahaa'*, the *muhadditheen* and the people of *kalaam* have stated: He is not to be removed due to disobedience, transgression and denial of rights. He must not be removed and it is not permissible to revolt against him due to that. Rather, it is obligatory to admonish him and instil fear in him due to the *ahaadeeth* that have been mentioned with regards to that. Stated al-Qaadee: And Aboo Bakr Ibn Mujaahid claimed an *ijmaa'* upon that, and some have tried to refute him in that by using the uprising of al-Hasan, Ibnuz-Zubayr and the people of al-Madeenah against Banee Umayyah, and the uprising of a large group from amongst the *taabi'een* and the first generation against al-Hajjaaj along with Ibnul-Ash'ath. So the speaker may use this as an excuse saying: We do not oppose the command of its people with regards to the just leaders, but the proof is that the majority revolting against al-Hajjaaj was not merely due to disobedience, but it was also due to him changing the *Sharee'ah* and manifesting disbelief. Stated al-Qaadee: Indeed, this was the result of a difference of opinion at first, then there evolved an *ijmaa'* upon the prohibition of revolting against them. And Allaah knows best.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Taken from *Sharh Saheeh Muslim* (12/224-229) of Imaam an-Nawawee.