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Is it “the Book of Allah and my Progeny” or “the Book of Allah and my Sunnah”?

I have thoroughly dealt with this subject in my book *Ma`al Sadiqeen* ([so let us be] with the truthful). I said briefly that both traditions do not contradict one another because the authentic Sunnah is preserved with the pure Progeny of Ahlul Bayt, peace be upon them, and that the residents of the house know best what their house contains. Ali ibn Abu Talib is the gateway to the Prophet's Sunnah, and he is more worthy of being regarded as Islam's narrator of *hadith* than Abu Hurayra, Ka`b al-Ahbar¹, or Wahab ibn Munabbih.

Despite all of that, we have to provide more explanations and clarifications even if doing so will be at the cost of being repetitious, for there is always a benefit in repetition, perhaps some of them did not read it there, so they will be exposed to it here with additional explanations and clarifications.

The kind readers may find in this research what convinces them that the hadith reading “... the Book of Allah and my *`Itrat* (Progeny)” is the original one, and the caliphs deliberately altered its wording to read “... the Book of Allah and my Sunnah” so that they might thus be able to exclude Ahlul Bayt from life's stage.

We have to note here that the tradition reading “... the Book of Allah and my Sunnah” is not held as authentic even by “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a” because they themselves have narrated in their *Sahih* books that the Prophet prohibited them from writing his Sunnah down! So, if such a prohibition is proved to be true, how is it possible to imagine the Prophet saying, “I have left among you my Sunnah” while such Sunnah is neither recorded nor known to anyone?!

Moreover, were the tradition worded “... the Book of Allah and my Sunnah” authentic, how was Umar ibn al-Khattab justified in responding to the Messenger of Allah by saying, “The Book of Allah suffices us”?! Had the Messenger of Allah left a written Sunnah, how did Abu Bakr and Umar justify their burning of it and their prohibiting people from learning it?!

Were the tradition reading "... the Book of Allah and my Sunnah" authentic, why did Abu Bakr deliver a sermon following the demise of the Prophet in which he said, "Do not narrate anything about the Messenger of Allah; whoever asks you, say: `Between us and you is the Book of Allah, so follow what it permits and abstain from what it prohibits.'"?2

Had the tradition reading "... the Book of Allah and my Sunnah" been authentic, why did Abu Bakr violate it when he fought those who refused to pay *zakat* while the Messenger of Allah had said, "Whoever articulates: *La ilaha illa-Allah*, his life and wealth are to be protected, and his judgment will be on Allah"?!

Had the tradition worded "... the Book of Allah and my Sunnah" been authentic, how did Abu Bakr and Umar, and those who agreed with them from the *sahaba*, justify their violation of the sanctity of Fatima al-Zahra and their attack on her house and threat to burn it down and everyone inside it? Did they not hear the Prophet say about her, "Fatima is part of me; whoever angers her angers me, and whoever harms her harms me"? Yes, by Allah, they did hear and understand it... Did they not hear the verse saying,

"Say: I do not ask you for any reward for it except kindness to my kin" (Holy Qur'an, 42:23)

which was revealed in honor of Fatima's husband and sons? Did they regard kindness to Ahlul Bayt to be terrorizing them, threatening to burn them alive, and crushing Fatima's stomach till she miscarried?!

Had the tradition worded "... the Book of Allah and my Sunnah" been authentic, how did Mu`awiyah and the *sahaba* who swore the oath of allegiance to him and followed him permit themselves to curse Ali and condemn him from the pulpits during the entire Umayyad reign? Did they not hear Allah's commandment that they should bless him just as they bless the Prophet ? Did they not hear the Prophet saying, "Whoever curses Ali curses me, and whoever curses me curses Allah"?3

Had the tradition reading "... the Book of Allah and my Sunnah" been authentic, why was such Sunnah unknown by most companions, so they were unfamiliar with it, hence they issued religious verdicts based on their own personal views, and so did the four Imams who resorted to analogy and *ijtihad*, to "consensus" and to closing the door of pretexts and those of public interests taken for granted, supporting their views by quoting certain companions, a number of rulers whom they liked, opting to choose the "lesser evil," etc.?!

Since the Messenger of Allah left "the Book of Allah and the Sunnah of His Prophet " in order to protect people against misguidance, there is no need for any of these things invented by "Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a" especially since every innovation is misguidance, and every misguidance is in the fire of Hell, according to the sacred *hadith*.

Rational people and the people of knowledge blame the Prophet for neglecting his Sunnah and not ordering others to record and safeguard it against distortion, variation, invention and innovation, then

saying to people, “I am leaving among you the Two Weighty Things, so long as you uphold them, you shall never stray after me: the Book of Allah and my Sunnah”!

But if these rational folks are told that he prohibited them from writing it down, it will be the greatest joke, for this is not the doing of the wise: How can he prohibit the Muslims from writing his Sunnah down then tell them that he is leaving his Sunnah among them?!

Add to the above the fact that the Glorious Book of Allah, when we add to it the Prophet's Sunnah which the Muslims wrote during many centuries, contains what abrogates and what is abrogated, and it has the specific and the general, and the fixed and what is similar to something else, for it is the sister of the Holy Qur'an.

But all the text of the Holy Qur'an is correct because Allah, Glory to Him, took upon Himself to protect it, and because it is recorded. As for the Sunnah, it contains more inaccuracies than accuracies. The Prophet's Sunnah is, first and foremost, in need of someone who is divinely protected against sinning to point out to its accuracies and to reveal all the changes made to it. Anyone who is not divinely protected against sinning can never do anything of this sort even if he were the scholar of scholars.

Both the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah, moreover, need a very highly knowledgeable scholar who is deeply immersed in their injunctions and familiar with their secrets in order to show people, after the death of the Prophet, all the issues in which they differed and the ones with which they are familiar.

Have you not seen how Allah, the Most Praised One, pointed to the fact that the Holy Qur'an needs someone to explain it, saying,

“We have revealed the Reminder (Qur'an) so that you may clarify to men what has been revealed to them and so that perhaps they may reflect” (Holy Qur'an, 16:44)?

Had the Prophet not been present among the people to explain the revelation to them, the Holy Qur'an would not have been revealed to them. They surely would not have come to know Allah's commandments even if the Holy Qur'an had been revealed in their language. This is simple common sense about which nobody contends, one which everyone knows.

Despite the revelation of the Holy Qur'an and its imposition of prayers, *zakat*, fast, and pilgrimage, the Muslims need the explanations of the Prophet especially since he was the one who showed them how to perform the prayers, how much *zakat* should be paid, what the injunctions related to the fast are, what rites the pilgrimage includes..., etc. Had it not been for him, people would never have come to know any of that.

If the Holy Qur'an, which contains no contradictions, and which no falsehood can approach from before it or from behind, needs someone to explain it, the Sunnah is in a greater need than the Holy Qur'an for someone to explain it due to the abundance of its contradictions which resulted from all the insinuations

and lies that crept into it.

Such a need is quite natural, even a rational necessity, that each Messenger should look after the Message with which he is sent, so he appoints someone to succeed him in doing so. Such an appointment of a successor and care-taker is done only through divine revelation so that the Message may not die when he dies; it is for this reason that each and every prophet had a successor.

It is to meet such a pressing need that the Messenger of Allah appointed his vizier and successor over his nation to be Ali ibn Abu Talib whom he raised since his childhood to be adorned with the conduct of prophethood. He taught him as he grew up the knowledge of the early generations and the last, acquainting him and only him with secrets which nobody else knows, guiding the nation to him time and over again, advising them in his regard repeatedly.

He, for example, told them once, "This is my Brother, Successor, and Caliph over you," and once, "I am the best of the prophets, while Ali is the best of the successors of the prophets and the best man whom I leave behind (after my demise)." He also said, "Ali is with the truth and the truth is with him," and "Ali is with the Qur'an and the [knowledge of the] Qur'an is with him," and "I fought for the sake of the revelation of the Qur'an while Ali will fight for [safeguarding] its interpretation, and he is the one who will explain to my nation whatever they differ about after me," and "Nobody pays my dues except Ali, and he is the *wali* of every believer after me," and "Ali to me is like Aaron was to Moses," and "Ali is of me and I am of him, and he is the gate of my knowledge."⁴

It has been scholarly and historically proven, as supported by the writings of biographers, that Ali was, indeed, the only authority upon whom the *sahaba*, be they the learned or the ignorant, depended. Suffices for that the admission of Ahlul Sunnah that Abdullah ibn Abbas, whom they call "the nation's scholar," is Ali's student who graduated from his school, and suffices for a proof the fact that all branches of knowledge with which Muslims are familiar were attributed to him, peace be upon him.⁵

Let us suppose that the tradition of "... the Book of Allah and my Sunnah" contradicted the one whose wording has "... the Book of Allah and my *'Itrat*," the second should be preferred over the first so that a rational Muslim may refer to the pure Imams of Ahlul Bayt for explanations of the concepts embedded in the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah.

But if one accepts only the tradition containing the wording "... the Book of Allah and my Sunnah," he will be puzzled about both the Qur'an and the Sunnah and not find the reliable authority who can explain for him the injunctions which he could not understand, or the ones in which scholars differ a great deal, and about which the Imams of those sects said many different or contradictory statements.

There is no doubt that if one were to take what this scholar or that says, or were he to follow the views of this sect or that, he will be following and accepting without a proof the accuracy or the lack thereof of this jurist or that. To accept this sect and reject that is blind fanaticism, a baseless imitation. Allah, the most Exalted, has said the following in this regard,

“And most of them follow only conjecture; surely conjecture will not avail anything against the truth; surely Allah is cognizant of what they do” (Holy Qur'an, 10:36).

Let me bring you one example so that the dear reader may get to know the authenticity of this tradition, and so that the truth may become distinct from falsehood:

If we take the Holy Qur'an and read the verse in it which refers to the *wudu* (ablution), we will read what Allah, the most Exalted, has said to be the following:

“... and rub (therewith) your heads and feet to the ankles” (Holy Qur'an, 5:6);

we will immediately understand that it implies that rubbing the feet is done in the same way the heads are rubbed. Yet if we look at what Muslims are actually doing, we will see them differing from one another: all “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah” *wash* them, whereas all Shi`as *rub* them! Thus we will be puzzled and become skeptical: which party is right?

If we refer to the scholars among “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah,” and to the scientists of exegesis, we will find them differing from one another with regard to such ruling, each according to the traditions upon which he depends.

They say that there are two ways to read the original Arabic word, the object of rubbing or washing: one way suggests it should be pronounced *arjulakum*, and the other suggests its pronunciation should be *arjulikum*.

Then they argue saying that both methods are accurate, that whoever reads it *arjulakum* should wash his feet, and whoever reads it *arjulikum* should wipe them! A third scholar, one who is deeply acquainted with the Arabic language from Sunni scholars⁶ says, “Both methods of reading this word obligate rubbing,” adding that the Holy Qur'an indicates rubbing whereas the Sunnah has been to wash them!

As you can see, dear reader, the scholars of “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah” did not remove our confusion because of all the contradictions in their statements. Rather, they even increased our doubts when they said that the Sunnah has contradicted the Holy Qur'an, while the Prophet is cleared from being accused of doing anything contrary to the commandments stated in the Holy Qur'an; he could never have washed his feet when performing his ablution.

Had the Prophet washed his feet during his ablution, no highly respected *sahabi* would have ever contradicted him, knowing that the *sahaba* were men of knowledge and scholarship, and they were close to him and saw what he did. Among such *sahaba* was Ali ibn Abu Talib, Ibn Abbas, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, Huthayfah of Yemen, and Anas ibn Malik.

All the *sahaba* who read that word as *arjulikum*, who constitute most *qaris*, in addition to all Shi`as who emulate the Imams from the pure Progeny of the Prophet, have instituted that the feet must be rubbed, not washed, during the ablution.

So what is the solution?!

Have you not seen, dear reader, that any Muslim remains confused regarding his skepticism if he cannot refer to someone upon whom he can rely? He, otherwise, will not find what is right and how to distinguish what is the correct commandment of Allah and what is falsely attributed to Him.

I have deliberately brought you, dear reader, this example from the Holy Qur'an so that you may get to know the extent of differences of views and the contradictions in which Muslim scholars from "Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`ah" are wandering about regarding something which the Prophet used to do so many times each and every single day, and for twenty-three years...

This is something with which all people, the commoners and the elite, among the companions of the Prophet, should have been familiar. Yet we find the scholars of Ahlul Sunnah differing among themselves: some read one word [of the Holy Qur'an] this way, while others read it differently, deriving contradictory religious rulings, each party according to the way it reads it.

And such scholars have in their exegesis of the Book of Allah and the organization of its injunctions, according to the way they read it, numerous differences which are not foreign to the researchers. If their differences with regard to interpreting the Book of Allah are so obvious, more obvious are their differences with regard to the Prophet's Sunnah..., so what then is the solution?

If you say that we have to refer to someone who can be relied upon to explain and clarify the accurate injunctions derived from the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah, we will then demand that you name such a wise speaker, for the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah do not [by themselves] protect anyone from straying; they both are silent; they do not speak, and they permit many interpretations, as we have stated above with regard to the verse relevant to the ablution. We have already agreed, dear reader, that we must follow the scholars who are knowledgeable of the facts relevant to the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah, and the disagreement between us remains in getting to know who such scholars are.

If you say that they are the nation's scholars headed by the respected *sahaba*, we have already come to know about their differences regarding the verse relevant to the ablution, and about many other issues, and we have also come to know that they fought one another and called one another *kafir*; therefore, we cannot depend on all of them; rather, only the righteous among them should be relied upon, and the problem still lingers.

And if you say that we should refer to the Imams of the four [Sunni] sects, you have also come to know that they have differed among themselves in most issues, so much so that some of them regarded the articulation of the Basmaleh as abominable, whereas others have decided that without it, the prayers are void. You have also come to know how these sects came about, that they were manufactured by the oppressive rulers, and that they are far from the time of the Message and did not know the *sahaba*, let alone the Prophet, in person.

We have at hand only one single solution which is: to refer to the Imams of the pure *ʿItrat*, the Progeny of the Prophet, of Ahlul Bayt from whom Allah removed all abomination and whom He purified with a perfect purification, the doers of good, the scholars whom nobody could surpass in their knowledge or asceticism, in safeguarding the creed and piety. They, and only they, are the ones protected by Allah against lying or erring as the Holy Qur'an testifies⁷ and according to the testimony of the great Prophet.⁸

Allah has permitted them to inherit the knowledge of His Book after having chosen them for this task, and the Messenger of Allah taught them all what people need, recommending them to the nation, saying, "The similitude of my Ahlul Bayt among you is like the ark of Noah: whoever boards it is saved, and whoever lags behind it is drowned." Ibn Hajar, one of the scholars of "Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama'ah," has said the following while explaining this tradition and admitting its authenticity:

The reason why he compared them to the ark is that whoever loves and venerates them as means to thank the One Who bestows His blessings upon them, following the guidance of their scholars, will be saved from the darkness of transgression, whereas whoever lags behind them will be drowned in the sea of ingratitude to Allah's blessings and will perish in the paths of oppression.⁹

Add to the above the fact that you cannot find even one scholar in the past or present Islamic nation, since the time of the *sahaba* and till today, who claimed that he was more knowledgeable or better than the Imams of the Prophet's pure Progeny, nor can you find anyone at all in this nation who claimed that he taught any of the Imams from Ahlul Bayt or guided them in anything at all. If you, dear reader, wish to review more proofs and explanations thereto, you ought to read *Al-Muraja'at* and *Al-Ghadeer*.¹⁰

Yet what I have offered you ought to be sufficient if you are fair, especially since the tradition that starts with "I have left among you the Two Weighty Things..., etc." is the truth which reason and feeling endorse and which is supported by both the Sunnah and the Holy Qur'an.

Thus does it become clear to us once again, through clear proofs which cannot be refuted, that Imamite Shi'as are the followers of the true Prophetic Sunnah, whereas "Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama'ah" have obeyed their rulers and dignitaries who misled them and left them groping in the dark.

All Praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds, for having guided those whom He has chosen from His servants.

1. His full name is Abu Ishaq Ka'b ibn Mati` (d. 32 A.H./652 A.D.). He was a Jew from Yemen who pretended to have embraced Islam then went to Medina during the reign of Umar ibn al-Khattab. Then he went to Syria to be one of Mu'awiyah's advisers. He die in Hims. He is believed to have succeeded in injecting a great deal of Judaicas into the Islamic beliefs. ___ Tr.

2. Al-Dhahabi Tadhkirat al-Huffaz., Vol. 1, p. 3.

3. Al-Hakim, Mustadrak , Vol. 3, p. 121, quotes this tradition and says, "It is authentic according to the methods of verification followed by both Shaykhs [Bukhari and Muslim] who did not (!) record it." It is also recorded on p. 73 of al-Suyuti's book Tarikh al-Khulafa, on p. 24 of al-Nisai's Khasais, and on p. 82 of al-Khawarizmi's book Al-Manaqib.

4. All these traditions are regarded by “Ahlul Sunnah wal Jama`a” as authentic, and they are recorded by many of their scholars who admit their authenticity. We have discussed them in our previous books. Anyone who wants to review their references ought to read Al-Muraja`at which is verified by Husayn al-Radi.
5. Refer for more information to the Introduction to Sharh Nahjul-Balagha by the Mu`tazilite scholar Ibn Abul-Hadid.
6. Al-Fakhr al-Razi states these views on p. 161, Vol. 11, of his book Al-Tafsir al-Kabir, the grand exegesis.
7. One such testimony is in verse 33 of Surat al-Ahzab (Chapter 33) which reads, “Surely Allah wills to remove from you, O Ahlul Bayt, all abomination, and to purify you with a perfect purification.”
8. Among such testimonies is his statement, peace and blessings be upon him and his progeny, “Uphold the Book of Allah and my `Itrat (Progeny); so long as you uphold them both (simultaneously), you shall never stray after me.” Just as the Book of Allah is protected by Allah from any error, so is the case with the pure Progeny . Anyone who is not infallible cannot be relied upon to guide others. One who himself is liable to err is in need of guidance.
9. This is stated on p. 151 of Al-Sawa`iq al-Muhriqa by the Shafi`i scholar Ibn Hajar.
10. To the best of my knowledge, no English translation of the 11-Volume encyclopedia titled Al-Ghadeer fil Kitab wal Sunnah wal Adab by Abd al-Husayn Ahmad al-Amini al-Najafi is available yet. Its fourth edition was published in 1397 A.H./1977 A.D. by Dar al-Kitab al-Arabi of Beirut, Lebanon. This book needs a book all by itself to describe its literary value, the knowledge it contains, and the data with which it is filled. ___ Tr.

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