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Fourth Reason: Justifications Of Abu-Zahw And `Abd Al-Ghaniy

Mr. Abu-Zahw says,

“There was another thing that urged the Holy Prophet to prohibit them from recording the Hadith; it was the maintenance of their talents of memorization! Had they recorded the Hadith, they would have depended upon the records completely and neglected their capacities of memorization. With the elapse of time, such great capacities would certainly vanish.”¹

Shaykh `Abd al-Ghaniy says,

“The Holy Prophet prohibited the recordation of the Hadith for fear that they (the Sahabah) would entirely depend upon the records and neglect the memorization, which was their nature and innate disposition and, as a result, their talents would be exposed to weakness.

Therefore, the Holy Prophet’s prohibition was dedicated to those whose memories were too strong to be affected by oblivion.”²

Before the above-mentioned text, Shaykh `Abd al-Ghaniy has said,

“Memorization and recording alternate in the protection of the Shari`ah, yet in most cases one faints when the other grows stronger. On this account, we can understand the causes that incited the Sahabah to urge their disciples to depend upon their memories and neglect their pens; they understood that writing would certainly weaken the talent of memorization, which was in their natures, and as a general rule, human soul always tends to whatever nourishes the nature and avoids whatever opposes or weakens it.”³

Dr. al-Khatib says,

“They refused that the students of Hadith would devote themselves to their records, making them the

stores of their knowledge. They also did not want to violate the Sahabah in the question of the compliance with memorization and the complete dependence upon the memory, since to depend upon the records results in the weakening of the memory and the negligence of the memorization.”⁴

Commenting on the words of Shaykh `Abd al-Ghaniy, Sayyid al-Jalaliy says.

“Except its oratory purpose, the wording is empty of any scientific or conclusive matter. Moreover, it is far away from subjectivity since the main topic of the study is the prohibition of the recording, while the wording is only agreeable to personal desires!

How can an epidemic that affects the memory or the probability of oblivion necessitate the negligence of a major source of the Islamic law, namely the Holy Sunnah, which accordingly was left without verification, documentation, or even recording?”⁵

In any event, two more points must be added to the critique of this justification:

First: It might have been acceptable if the prohibition of recording the Hadith had been issued by the Holy Prophet. In fact, the false Hadiths of the prohibition were fabricated under certain political circumstances and preceding convictions of definite individuals who insisted on narrowing the reporting and recordation of the Hadith in a restricted zone. Hence, the decision of the prohibition was neither legal nor issued by the Holy Prophet, as will be detailed later on.

Second: Supposing this justification is acceptable, it does not reveal the illegality of recording the Hadith, since to dislike depending upon the records does not indicate its illegality; rather it means to desire not to do it.

Had the process of recording been illegal, some of the Sahabah would not have recorded anything of the Hadith. It has been narrated on the authority of `Ayyad, the judge, that some of the Sahabah used to record the Hadith and that they would erase after memorizing.⁶

Furthermore, this justification is contradictory to great extent! It is unimaginable to think that a teacher who persistently urges his pupils to learn and safeguard the items of knowledge that they would study—such a teacher will at last instruct his pupils not to record or note down the items of knowledge that they learnt! Indisputably, to record and write down the knowledge is better for preserving it than memorizing it.

An Arabic proverb says, ‘Whatever is recorded will be established, and whatever is memorized will flee.’ What is then the reason beyond the emphasis on the memorization of the Hadith, and what is the reason beyond the claim that the prohibition of recording the Hadith will protect the memory? What is the use of a memorizer’s recollection after his death? Although the angels have been more capable of memorization than man has, Almighty Allah has ordered them to record. Listen to the following holy verse:

“But verily over you (are appointed angels) to protect you; kind and honorable, writing down (your deeds).” (Holy Qur’an: 82: 10–1)

It may be true that the talent of memory becomes stronger through training just like the sense of hearing for the blind, which is usually stronger than it for the endowed with eyesight, because the earlier use it as a substitute for the sight. The same thing can be said about the illiterate merchant whose memory is usually stronger than that of the literate for the same reason.

Albeit the previous fact is undeniable, it cannot be applied to the Sahabah whom Almighty Allah has chosen for protecting and conveying the religious laws to the next generations. If the reason beyond the prohibition of the recording was to keep the Sahabah’s brilliant memories as strong as they were, we have to find appropriate interpretation for the following narration:

Al-Khatib al-Baghdadiy, al-Bayhaqiy, in *Dala’il al-Nubuwwah*, and al-Qurtubiy have narrated on the authority of authenticated series of narrators that `Abdullah ibn `Umar said,

“Umar ibn al-Khattab required twelve years to memorize the Surah of al-Baqarah.⁷ When he did, he slaughtered a sheep on that occasion.”⁸

Accordingly, we have to condemn Shaykh `Abd al-Ghaniy and Mr. Abu-Zahw as well as the other scholars who have adopted the same opinion, otherwise we have to belie Ibn al-Jawziy, al-Dhahbiy, and al-Qurtubiy as well as the other narrators of the previous report.

As a result, there must have been a reason other than the preservation of the talents of memorization. Such a reason will be exposed in the coming chapters of this book.

In the preface to *Taqyid al-`Ilm*, Mr. Yusuf al-`Ishsh says,

“The memories of most of people are too weak to load a whole material of a science and safeguard it from waste. Naturally the capacity of memorization is different among people; as it be strong for some people, it will surely be weak for others and, consequently, it will not always help them and keep its material forever.”⁹

Biographers have listed the names of the Sahabah who used to confuse the narrations by interfering.

The question is thus not as accurate as conceived by some scholars.

Another point must be aroused in this regard; to accept the justifications of Shaykh `Abd al-Ghaniy and Mr. Abu-Zahw who have claimed that the Arabs enjoyed brilliant memories, we must believe that the Holy Sunnah has been dedicated to the Arabs exclusively. History has told that there were many non-Arab Sahabah who also intended to record the Holy Sunnah. Thus, how should the justifiers come back with this fact?

If it had been obligatory to memorize a thing, that thing would certainly have been the Holy Qur'an. And if the brilliant memory and the good memorization required the memorized material not be recorded, why would the memorization of the Holy Qur'an not stop against recording it, taking into consideration that many of the Sahabah did memorize the Holy Qur'an.

What is more is that the memory, which was claimed that the decision of the prohibition from reporting and recording the Hadith would maintain it, could not meet the Muslims' need for the Holy Prophet's traditions; therefore, Abu-Bakr ibn Abi-Quhafah, the first caliph, stated that the Sahabah reported from the Messenger of Allah narrations about the reporting of which they had disagreed. Undoubtedly, lack of memory was one of the active reasons beyond such disagreement.

Having realized the new generation's urgent need for the religious data and the first generation's duty to answer, Abu-Bakr used the expression, 'and if anyone asks you...' in the decision of the prohibition of recording the Hadith.

In the same speech, Abu-Bakr said, 'You are reporting about the Messenger of Allah inconsistent narrations.' From this statement we understand that the reason beyond the inconsistency in the secondary questions was the different reports of the Sahabah,¹⁰ meaning that either some of them did forge lies against the Holy Prophet who, having predicted this question, said,

'After my departure, forging lies against me will increase';¹¹

or others were exposed to oblivion, inattention, or mistake and as a result, inconsistency in the narration occurred; or the narratives were too contradictory for the well-versed in the religious laws to educe a conclusion.

Imam `Ali ibn Abi-Talib has had a nice explanation regarding the inconsistency in the reports from the Holy Prophet. Later on in this book, this explanation will be cited.

As a conclusion, in order to learn with certainty about a Hadith, one must take precautions in the adoption of a narration; but if the authenticity of a Hadith is doubted, verification must be made so as to discriminate between the forged and the sound.¹²

But, under any circumstances, it is unacceptable to issue orders of erasing and setting fire to the recorded Hadiths because of a mere, refutable probability. Such being the case, the orders would certainly cause waste and abuse, not precaution and accuracy.

In this connection, it is important to cite that there are many issues confirming the invalidity of the memorizer's wording, such as the narrations telling the Sahabah's reporting and accepting narrations and the narrations telling the anticipation of Sa'd ibn Abi-Waqqas and `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud, as well as others, from reporting the Hadith... etc.¹³

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1. Muhammad Muhammad Abu-Zahw: al-Hadith wa'l-Muhaddithun 123.
 2. `Abd al-Ghaniy Abd al-Khaliq: Hijjiyyat al-Sunnah 428. See also al-Suyuti: Tadrib al-Rawi 150.
 3. `Abd al-Ghaniy `Abd al-Khaliq: Hijjiyyat al-Sunnah 405.
 4. Muhammad `Ajjaj al-Khatib: al-Sunnah qabl al-Tadwin 333. This opinion has been beforehand said by the following scholars: Al-Sam`aniy in 'Adab al-Imla' wa'l-Istimla" 146, al-Qadi `Ayyad in 'al-Ilma'' 149, Ibn al-Athir in 'Jami' al-Usul' 1:40, Ibn al-Salah in 'al-Muqaddimah' 301 and 'Ulum al-Hadith' 192 and others.
 5. Sayyid Muhammad Rida al-Jalaliy: Tadwin al-Sunnah al-Sharifah 370.
 6. `Isim ibn Damarah (as recorded in al-Ramhurmuziy: al-Muhaddith al-Fasil), Khalid al-Hadhdha' (as recorded in al-Khatib al-Baghdadiy: Taqyid al-`Ilm) and Ubaydah (as recorded in Ibn `Abd al-Barr al-Qurtubiy: Jami' Bayan al-`Ilm wa Fadlih) were among the Sahabah who recorded the Hadith.
 7. Chapter 2 (The Cow) of the Holy Qur'an.
 8. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid: Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah 12:66, Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti: al-Durr al-Manthur 1:21, Ibn al-Jawziy: Sirat `Umar 165, al-Qurtubiy: al-Tafsir 1:40 and al-Dhahbiy: Tarikh al-Islam 267.
 9. Al-Khatib al-Baghdadiy: Taqyid al-`Ilm 8: Preface by Mr. Yusuf al-`Ishsh.
 10. For more details and a clearer explanation of the idea, refer to the author's book 'Tarikh al-Hadith al-Nubawiy; al-Mu'aththirat fi `Ahd Abi-Bakr (History of the Hadith; Motives in the Reign of Abu-Bakr)' 111-124.
 11. Al-Muhaqqiq al-Hilliy: al-Mu`tabar 1:29. In Sahih al-Bukhariy 1:52 H. 16, it is narrated on the authority of `Ali ibn Abi-Talib that the Holy Prophet's said, "Do not forge lies against me; for anyone who forges lies against me shall be led to Hellfire."
 12. According to the previously cited narration of Rafi` ibn Khudayj, the Holy Prophet ordered to discriminate between the forged and the sound.
 13. Mahmud Abu-Rayyah: Adwa'un `Ala'l-Sunnah al-Muhammadiyah 55-58. These narrations can be read in Sunan Ibn Majah 1:11 H. 25, Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal 4:370 H. 19323, 19324...

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