

Infallibility of the Prophets Part 2

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In this part, we discuss the logical support for the infallibility of the Prophets, and we then provide some traditions from Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih al-Tirmidhi with regard to the issue of infallibility.

Reason And Logic

Apart from the analysis of the character of a prophet historically or as a character from the Qur'an, such character can also be judged within the confines of reason and logic. As such, the obvious question is: Is it rational and/or realistic for a Prophet sent by the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe to be a sinner? Let's find out:

First, when Allah (SWT) sends forth a Prophet, He (SWT) distinguishes him from all the creatures by cleansing him from evil and sin, so that he may serve as an example. Indeed, Allah (SWT) asserts:

"You have indeed in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in Allah and the Final Day, and who remember Allah much. (Qur'an 33:21)"

As such, a man that has been chosen by the Creator of the Universe to represent Him (SWT) on the Earth, cannot be of an evil nature, nor can he be a sinner that commits ignoble acts. If the Prophet is sent to advice humanity to do good deeds, then he himself commits sins, do you believe that he will serve as an outstanding example to be followed? That would be like an Imam of Mosque who waves his right hand saying: "Don't drink beer!" while a holds a beer can in his left hand!!!

Second, if the Prophet (S) enjoins righteousness and forbids evil when he himself is a sinner who commits evil, he has gone against what Allah said in Qur'an that:

O you who believe! why do you say that which you do not act? It is most hateful in the sight of

Allah that you say that which you do not act. (Qur'an 61:2-3)

Based on the above verse of Qur'an, if prophet was a sinner, he should not have preached others in the first place!! As such, a sinful prophet faces a dilemma: If he does not preach, he has disobeyed the order of God who has ordered him to convey the message (Qur'an 5:67).

On the other hand, if he preaches, he again has disobeyed God where Allah states "O you who believe! why do you say that which you do not act? It is most hateful in the sight of Allah that you say that which you do not act.!!!"

Didn't Allah (SWT) reprimand the Jews by saying:

"Do you enjoin right conduct on the people, and forget (to practice it) yourselves, and yet you study the Scripture? Will you not understand? (Qur'an 2:44)"

Clearly, a Prophet cannot order a layman to perform prayer on a timely basis, when the Prophet himself forgets to pray, and when he remembers, he prays without ablution (Wudu) (as Sahih al-Bukhari, Arabic version, v1, p123; and v1, p37)!!! Purified be the Representatives of Allah (SWT) from such false accusations!

Third, a prophet that sins is a repulsive character. We, as humans, detest a person who comes to us and says don't do this and don't do that, yet he himself commits wicked acts. He automatically becomes repulsive to us, and we cannot stand to listen to him anymore.

Similarly, if Prophet Muhammad (S) was cruel to a blind man, which he was not, how can he ask us to have good manners? (Note again: The blind man's story is not related to the Prophet (S) as some Sunnis state; it was a chapter revealed to reprimand Uthman Ibn Affan, who was the one who frowned in the face of the blind man. Please see the earlier article which was exclusively in this regard).

Do you seriously believe that a Prophet of Allah (SWT) was a sinner and so offensive? Why do you follow him then? I, personally, will not believe in a man who claims to be sent by Allah (SWT), the Creator of the Universe, and then sins and behaves in a manner that is not even befitting of a beast!

Forth, was Allah (SWT) so incapable as to make His (SWT) prophets and messengers sinless? Why would Allah (SWT) even bother to send a sinning prophet to be an example to a community? If sin is something that even the prophets and messengers can not avoid, then what is the purpose of sending a religion to the mankind any way? Does God expect the ordinary people to follow his instructions when his own deputies can not?

Fifth, a prophet or messenger is an interpreter of Allah's commands. As such, if the prophet is the first to violate these commands, who among the Ummah will abide by these commands? Or if he is in a state that deprives him of his mental faculties causing him to err, then he will MISinterpret the commands of Allah (SWT). If that happens, then surely Allah (SWT) is playing a game with His creation!

For He (SWT) sends them a man to interpret the religion for them, yet this man is subject to magical spells, as the Israelites reports claim, and mental hallucinations that cause him to become unaware of his own behavior (See Sahih Bukhari, Arabic version, v7, p29)! What kind of interpreter is that? Exalted be Allah (SWT) from such allegations against His Prophet (S)!

sixth, for those among Sunnis who say that the Prophet (S) is sinless or infallible ONLY in the delivery of Allah's (SWT) message, and other than that, just like any other man, he (S) sins and makes mistakes in many things, such assertion is full of logical holes. For instance, Sunnis narrated that once the Prophet gave advice on agriculture, and people did it, but they suffered a big loss by following that advice!! Then Prophet told them that what he said was his personal advice and not revelation!!! (which is, by the way, in contradiction with the verse:

"Nor does he (prophet) speak out of his desire. What he says is nothing but revelation that is revealed. (Qur'an 53:3-4)"

How do we know which of the Prophet's sayings are from Allah (SWT), and which are his personal sayings? He (S) may say something which the companions take as Allah's command, but it may be that he (S) was only expressing his OWN opinion. If that happens, then all of Allah's laws will be in chaos and disarray!

That is why, even the Prophet's opinion has to conform with Allah's orders, for fear of misinterpretation by the people. In fact the Prophet had a perfect reason and his Ijtihad was in perfect compliance with the Allah's orders and satisfaction and that is why Qur'an orders us to obey WHATEVER he states without condition.

Also, how can we understand which acts of the Prophet are wrong, and which are right? What is the measure for us? Isn't a part of this measure the practice of the Prophet (S) himself? Since the practice of the Prophet (S) is considered to be one of the sources of deriving the rules of Islam, we can NOT evaluate the Prophet's actions by the rules which are derived from his actions! As such all the actions of the Prophet should have been protected.

Seventh, for the Prophet (S) to be chosen to deliver Allah's (SWT) message (one of which was the Qur'an) and be himself a sinner, will cast doubt on the authenticity of the Qur'an. When the Prophet (S) recites a verse from the Qur'an, how do we know that that verse is indeed from Allah (SWT), and not a side effect from the hallucinative episode that the Prophet (S) was allegedly experiencing as a result of the magical spell cast upon him?! That would mean that Allah's (SWT) Book will be distorted by the same man who was sent to deliver it!

Eighth, just imagine what impossible situation would have been created if any prophet begin to exhort his followers to commit a mistake or sin. The wretched followers would be condemned to the displeasure of Allah in any case.

If they obey the Prophet and commit that sin, then they have disobeyed the command given by Allah and thus are disgraced. If, on the other hand, they disobey the Prophet, they again have disobeyed the command of Allah about obeying the Prophet. So, it appears that a fallible prophet could bring nothing but disgrace and condemnation to his people.

Ninth, a punishable sin will cause sadness and depression to the soul of the believer. The believer who sincerely loves Allah (SWT) is angered and depressed by the sin he has committed. Feelings of sadness begin to roam the mind, and the believer will lose confidence many times.

Feelings of doubt are evoked in the sense that the believer feels that Allah (SWT) may not support him at a certain point in time as punishment for what he has rendered. This doubt is NOT in the sense that he feels Allah (SWT) is not merciful enough to forgive him; rather, it is the doubt about what will happen if Allah ever decides to retaliate for what he has done.

With the above in mind, a prophet should not be a sinner, because that would entail that he loses confidence at certain stages in his mission. If doubt strikes the soul of a prophet, you can be assured that his mission is in jeopardy.

Also, from a political and psychological standpoint, doubt automatically translates into disaster. On the other hand, it is a known historical fact that the Prophet (S) never displayed any doubt in his mission, and thus he could not have been guilty of sins. Having doubt could not have only undermined his mission, but it would also have undermined his credibility among the believers.

Tenth, a Prophet is a teacher by virtue of his prophethood. If a teacher errs when he is supposed to be sent directly by Allah (SWT) as a mercy to mankind, then he will need a more knowledgeable and a more virtuous teacher to guide him and to punish him in the case that he violates the limits of God; which means that the Prophet himself will need an unerring teacher sent by God, and so on, ad infinitum. Thus, it cannot be except that the Prophet MUST be the number one teacher and the highest in virtue among his own people, and that he be sinless and infallible to begin with.

As for the Imams (divinely appointed Caliphs), the same argument applies, but they are NOT prophets or messengers. They are, however, successors and vicegerents to the Seal of Prophethood. As such, if these Imams are to guide the Ummah of Muhammad (S), they also must have the same qualities that the above argument illuminates. Please see the next article which is exclusively about the infallibility of Imams.

[Reference To Infallibility In Sahih Al-Bukhari](#)

There is an interesting tradition in Sahih al-Bukhari which asserts that there are people who are Ma'soom (infallible/protected). The tradition clearly specifies that these people are the prophets and their successors (Caliphs). The tradition also illuminate the fact that He is Allah who gives the position of

Caliphate to the Caliph which implies that the infallible Caliph is the one who is assigned by Allah, not by people.

Moreover, the tradition asserts that there are good advisors/companions and bad advisors/companions for the prophets and their successors, but those who are protected by Allah will not be deceived by the evil advisors around them. Here is the tradition:

Sahih al-Bukhari Hadith: 9.306

Narrated Abu Sa'id al-Khudri:

The Prophet said, "Allah never sends a prophet or gives the Caliphate to a Caliph but that he (the Prophet or the Caliph) has two groups of advisors: A group advising him to do good and exhorts him to do it, and the other group advising him to do evil and exhorts him to do it. But the protected person (Ma'soom) is the one who is protected by Allah."

فالمعصوم من عصم الله تعالى

Do I need to make any comment?!

[Is Any One Like Him?](#)

The Holy Qur'an states that the Prophet (S) is HUMAN being like us Human beings. The likeness between us and him is in the sense that both of us are human and both are accountable for our deeds. However there is no similarity between us and him in terms of virtue, knowledge, closeness to Allah. Allah gave him abilities and authorities which were not given to us ordinary beings. In the following traditions in Sahih al-Bukhari, the Prophet clearly stated that he is not like any of us, meaning that although he is human, we can not compare our weak and sinful soul with his:

Sahih al-Bukhari Hadith: 3.182

Narrated Anas:

The Prophet said, "Do not practice al-Wisal (fasting continuously without breaking one's fast in the evening or eating before the following dawn)." The people said to the Prophet, "But you practice al-Wisal?" The Prophet replied, "I am not like any of you, for I am given food and drink (by Allah) during the night." (Qala: Lastu Ka ahadin minkum).

Sahih al-Bukhari Hadith: 3.183

Narrated Abdullah Ibn Umar:

Allah's Apostle forbade al-Wisal. The people said (to him), "but you practice it?" He said, "**I am not like you**, for I am given food and drink by Allah." (Qala: Inni lastu mithlikum).

Sahih al-Bukhari Hadith: 3.184

Narrated Abu Sa'id:

That he had heard the Prophet saying, "Do not fast continuously (practice al-Wisal), and if you intend to lengthen your fast, then carry it on only till the Suhur (before the following dawn)." The people said to him, "But you practice (Al-Wisal), O Allah's Apostle!" He replied, "I am not similar to you, for during my sleep I have One Who makes me eat and drink." (Qala: Inni lastu ka Hay'atikum).

Sahih al-Bukhari Hadith: 3.185

Narrated Aisha:

Allah's Apostle forbade al-Wisal out of mercy to them. They said to him, "But you practice al-Wisal?" He said, "I am not similar to you, for my Lord gives me food and drink." (Qala: Inni lastu ka Hay'atikum)

Sahih al-Bukhari Hadith: 3.187

Narrated Abu Huraira:

The Prophet said twice, "(O you people) Be cautious! Do not practice al-Wisal." The people said to him, "But you practice al-Wisal?" The Prophet replied, "My Lord gives me food and drink during my sleep. Do that much of deeds which is within your ability."

Sahih al-Bukhari Hadith: 3.188

Narrated Abu Said al-Khudri:

Allah's Apostle said, "Do not fast continuously day and night (practice al-Wisal) and if anyone of you intends to fast continuously day and night, he should continue till the Suhur time." They said, "But you practice al-Wisal, O Allah's Apostle!" The Prophet said,

"I am not similar to you; during my sleep I have One Who makes me eat and drink.

It appears from these authentic Sunni evidences, among others, that the Prophet is like us ONLY in the sense that he is human being (i.e., like us, he has choice to do right or wrong and has a human flesh). Other than that, there is no similarity between his Supreme soul/virtues and ours.

Reference To Infallibility In Sahih Al-Tirmidhi

In fact, the Prophet (S) himself testified that he and his Ahlul-Bayt are sinless. Interesting to see that

Messenger of Allah used the purification verse of Qur'an to prove his point. Ibn Abbas Narrated that:

The Messenger of Allah recited "Verily Allah intends to keep off from you every kind of uncleanness O' People of the House (Ahlul-Bayt), and purify you a perfect purification". (Qur'an, the last sentence of Verse 33:33) and then the Messenger of Allah said: "Thus Me and my Ahlul-Bayt are clear from sins."

فَأَنَا وَ أَهْل بَيْتِي مَطْهُرُونَ مِنَ الذَّنُوبِ

Sunni reference:

- Sahih al-Tirmidhi, as quoted in:
- al-Durr al-Manthoor, by Jalaluddin al-Suyuti, v5, pp 605-606, 198 under the commentary of Verse 33:33 of Qur'an
- Dala'il al-Nabawiyah, by al-Bayhaqi
- Others such as al-Tabarani, Ibn Mardawayh, Abu Nu'aym, etc.

Please note the word "thus" in the highlighted part of the above tradition. It means the Prophet himself is concluding that the verse means Ahlul-Bayt (including himself) are sinless.

Source URL: <https://www.al-islam.org/shiite-encyclopedia/infallibility-prophets-part-2#comment-0>