

The Qur'ān in the Perspective of Ahl al-Sunnah and the Shi'ah

The Holy Qur'ān is Allah's word revealed on His Messenger Muhammad (may Allah's benediction and peace be upon him and his Progeny), the book that falsehood cannot come at it from before it or from behind it. It is the superior reference for Muslims in all their rulings, rituals ('ibādāt) and doctrines ('aqīd). Whoever doubts or affronts it will verily be out of the pale of Islam, as the Muslims as a whole are in agreement on sanctifying and revering it, with adhering strictly, in their worship, to all the teachings stated in it.

But Muslims differ concerning its exegesis and interpretation, in a way that the Shi'ah refer in this respect to the Prophet (S) and expositions of the Imams of Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah refer too to the Prophet's traditions, but they depend on the Sahābah (Companions) — without any distinction — or anyone of the four imāms, the leaders of the known four Islamic schools of thought, in reporting and exposing and interpreting the traditions.

Naturally, this led to the emergence of dispute and disagreement in opinions concerning so many Islamic — particularly fiqhi — issues.

And when we can clearly find difference among the four Islamic schools of thought of Ahl al-Sunnah, it is not strange in any way to see the disagreement be more explicit between them and the school of Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them).

As I mentioned in the outset of the book, I would never refer but to a few examples for the sake of brevity, and anyone seeking more details must plunge into the depths of the ocean to extract as many as he can of the potential realities and hidden jewels.

Ahl al-Sunnah concur with the Shi'ah in believing that the Messenger of Allah (S) has verily exposed to the Muslims all the precepts of the Qur'ān, and interpreted its verses completely. But after the Prophet's demise the two sects differed regarding to whom they should refer, in order to have full knowledge of that exposition and interpretation. Thus Ahl al-Sunnah have determined to refer to the Sahābah — with no distinction — and after them to the four imāms and the 'ulamā' of the Islamic *Ummah*. Whereas the

Shi'ah held that. The Imams from among the Prophet's Household (Ahl al-Bayt) being competent alone for this status, beside just an elite of the selected Companions, since Ahl al-Bayt ('a) are the followers of the Remembrance, whom Allah — the Exalted — commanded us to refer to when He — the Almighty and the Glorious — said:

"...so ask the followers of the Reminder if you do not know..." (Sura an-Nahl, 16:43)[1](#)

They are too those whom Allah — the Exalted — has chosen and made them to inherit the knowledge of the books, when He — Subhānahu — said (in the Holy Qur'ān):

"Then We gave the Book for an inheritance to those whom We chose from among Our servants;..." (Sura Fatir, 35:32).

Based on this, the Messenger of Allah (Allah's peace and benediction be upon him and his Progeny) has counted them the equal of the Qur'ān, and the second thaql (precious asset) of which he (S) ordered the Muslims to get hold, when he said:

"I am leaving behind among you two precious things. The Book of Allah and my kindred ('Itrah), as long as you hold on to them you shall never go astray."[2](#)

In another narration reported by Muslim, he (S) said:

"... The Book of Allah and my Household (Ahl al-Bayt), I urge you to remember Allah regarding my Ahl al-Bayt (He repeated the last statement three times)"[3](#)

It is commonly known that Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) were the most knowledgeable, pious, godliest and best of people, in whose regard al-Farazdaq has said:

When enumerating men of piety they be their leaders,

Or said who are the best of people, is replied they be.

I cite here one example just to show the nature of association between Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them) and the Holy Qur'ān, in which Allah— the Exalted — said:

"But nay! I swear by the falling of stars; and most surely it is a very great oath if you only knew; most surely it is an honoured Qur'ān, in a book kept hidden, none shall touch it save the purified ones. " (Sura Al-Waqi'a, 56: 75 — 79).

These verses undoubtedly indicate that Ahl al-Bayt ('a) — headed by the Messenger of Allah (S) — are the only people entitled and able to realize the obscure meanings of the Qur'ān. When pondering upon the oath sworn by the Exalted and Glorious Lord, we will face this fact: When Allah — the Exalted — swears by the declining day, the pen, the fig and the olive, then the greatness of taking oath by the places of the stars shall be manifested due to the secrets and influence on the universe it implies, with Allah's permission.

Confirming the oath in the negative and affirmative forms is explicitly observed, as after the oath the Almighty affirms by saying:

"That (this) is a noble Qur'an. In a Book kept hidden." And what is hidden here means that which is internal and concealed, then Allah — the Mighty and Glorious — says: **"none shall touch it save the purified ones,"** and 'none' (لا) here is a particle of negation, and "touches it" means, realizes and comprehends it, not meaning contacting by hand, as there is difference between contacting by hand (لام) and touching (مس). Allah, the Exalted, said:

"Surely those who guard (against evil), when a visitation from the Shaitan afflicts them they become mindful, then lo! they see" (Sura al-A'raf, 7:201)

Allah — the Glorious — also said:

"Those who swallow down usury cannot arise except as one whom Shaitan has prostrated by (his) touch does rise.." (Sura al-Baqara, 2:275).

'Touch' in these verses is relevant to 'Aql (reason) and apprehension not to contacting by hand (لام). And how is it possible that Allah swears that the Qur'an should be touched only by who is purified, while several episodes in history books indicate that several tyrants have toyed with and torn it. Further we witnessed how the Israelis have trodden the Qur'an under their feet — we seek protection with Allah —, beside setting it to fire at the time of occupying Beirut during their ill-famed invasion, the event about which ugly and appalling pictures and films were transmitted by TV devices. So the meaning we conceive from Allah's saying is that the meanings of the Qur'an can never be realized but only by an elite from among Allah's servants, whom He has chosen and cleansed with a thorough cleansing. The word "the purified" in the verse (56:79), is passive participle, i.e. those who were purified; and Allah — the Mighty and the Glorious — said:

"...Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O People of the House! and to purify you a (thorough) purifying." (Sura al-Ahzab, 33:33)

The Almighty's saying: **"none shall touch it save the purified ones,"** indicates that the Qur'an's reality can never be realized but only by the Messenger of Allah (s) and his Ahl al-Bayt (peace be upon them), so the Messenger (S) said in their regard:

"The stars are safety for inhabitants of the earth against drowning, and my Ahl al-Bayt are safety for my Ummah against disagreement, whenever being opposed by any Arab tribe, disagreement will prevail amongst them, after which they will turn to be party of Iblis (Satan)."⁴

This idea that is held by the Shi'ah is derived from the Holy Qur'an and the Messenger's traditions, which are reported even in Ahl al-Sunnah's *Sihah* (collection of Ahadith) as we noticed.

¹. Tafsir al-Tabari, Vol. IXV, p. 109; Tafsir Ibn Kathir, Vol. II, p. 570.

². It is reported by al-Tirmidhi in his Sahih, Vol. II, p. 329, and also by al-Nasafi and al-Imam Ahmad.

³. Sahih Muslim, Vol. II, p. 362, "باب فادى آل علي بن أبي طالب".

⁴. This hadith is reported by al-Hakim in al-Mustadrak, Vol. III, p. 149, on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas, and said: this hadith is of authentic chain of narrators.

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