Al-Islam.org
Ahlul Bayt Digital Islamic Library Project
Published on *Al-Islam.org* (https://www.al-islam.org)

Summary of The Last Reason

From the previously mentioned discussions, we can conclude that the actual motive of the prohibition of recording the Hadith was not only to suppress the merits of the Ahl al-Bayt but also to give rise to a new jurisprudential atmosphere through which the ruler (or the caliph) can block all the jurisprudential shortage that he would find. This conclusion can be manifested more clearly through the consideration of the following presentations:

First Presentation

We have previously presumed that the first spark of the prohibition of recording the Hadith came into view on the tongue of `Umar ibn al-Khattab shortly before the demise of the Holy Prophet when the latter asked the attendants to bring him a pen and an inkpot so that he would dictate a document that would save the Muslims from straying off forever. Objecting to the Holy Prophet, `Umar said, “The man is hallucinating! Let the Book of Allah be sufficient for us!”

This process of the prohibition from recording rested upon offending the sacredness and the magnificent esteem of the Holy Prophet and upon defaming his divine immaculacy although this process was, in a certain moment, a private situation that `Umar had to take in order to orient the issue of the next leadership to the course that he wanted. As a result, `Umar opened wide the door permitting each one to do as exactly as he wanted.

He also imposed his own opinion on the Sahabah and the attendants in that situation. Even when women, from behind the curtains, shouted at the attendants to carry out the Holy Prophet’s order, `Umar answered them, “Shut up! You have had ill situations with him. When he is ill, you press your eyes for shedding tears; and when he restores to health, you hang to his neck!” Yet, the Holy Prophet said, “These (women) are better than you are!”[1]

This answer exposes that the Holy Prophet had not been satisfied with `Umar’s act; rather he wanted to reconfirm his statement that he had previously declared during the Farewell Hajj when he said that he would leave among his people the two weighty things (i.e. the Holy Qur'an and the Ahl al-Bayt) one of

which is more precious than the other.

As he anticipated that the Holy Prophet would reconfirm on the Holy Qur'an and the Ahl al-Bayt as the two weighty things that he would leave among his people to follow, `Umar ibn al-Khattab ascribed irrational talk to the Holy Prophet—while the Holy Prophet is too sacred to talk irrationally—in order to underestimate his words or even his written documents in case the Holy Prophet would have written something.

As `Umar belittled the words of the Holy Prophet and ascribed him to hallucination, then it would have been unimportant to present his written document as pretext.

From this cause, the Holy Prophet had to abstain from insisting on recording (or dictating) a document that he promised to save the Muslims from deviation! He therefore said, "Leave me and do not dispute with each other! It is unsuitable to dispute in the presence of a Prophet."[2] In brief, the prohibition of recording in this situation was made in order to prevent stating the decision of the next leadership in a written form.

The prohibiting from writing later on was the result of the contradiction between `Umar ibn al-Khattab's opinions and the Holy Prophet's traditions, instructions, and directives. Accordingly, the prohibiting from writing had two dimensions; one is political and the other is legislative.

What is I consider the most probable reason behind the prohibiting from writing and from recording the Hadith, in addition to all that which has been mentioned by the gentle scholars in the presentation of the seventh reason, was that `Umar ibn al-Khattab wanted to establish the conception of "an opinion that I have considered" (i.e. *Ra'y*) and to allow the multiplicity of opinions in order to meet the jurisprudential shortage that very frequently embarrassed him.

Because they knew that the source of the religious laws was exclusively Almighty Allah and the Holy Prophet, the people did not accept to take these laws except from people who enjoyed elite relationship with the Holy Prophet and had full knowledge with the secrets of the divine revelation and its interpretation.

Furthermore, the two caliphs who came to power after the Holy Prophet had to encounter issues the dealing with which necessitated the issuance of verdicts deduced from personal opinions and away from the sacred texts.

The caliphs therefore had to practice Ijtihad and then allow the others to practice it so that decisions that would be taken out of their practices of Ijtihad would be justifiable and that they would not stand alone in this invented process. `Umar then exerted all efforts to dedicate such right of Ijtihad to himself, but `Uthman ibn `Affan, as has been previously cited, said no.

Second Presentation

Abu-Bakr and `Umar did not claim full acquaintance with all the religious questions in which the Holy Prophet had judged; rather they issued religious decisions according to their personal views. In this regard, Abu-Bakr affirmed on various occasions that the verdicts he issued had not been based upon any reference of legislation; if it therefore was true, this would be originated from Almighty Allah's guidance, but if it was not, it would be Satan's, as well as his, fault.

They also used to ask the other Sahabah about the rulings that had been decided by the Holy Prophet while they had not known; and they did accept the words of these Sahabah in this respect.
They also confessed of their lack of knowledge before everybody including the lady who proved false `Umar's decision in the famous issue of women's dowries and thus he confessed of her having been more knowledgeable than he was in the jurisprudential questions.[3]

As a matter of fact, the religious rulings that Abu-Bakr and `Umar ignored were not few and were not restricted to one or two questions so that one would exert efforts in finding for them a justifiable interpretation. Meanwhile, the other Sahabah—such as Mu`adh ibn Jabal, Hudhayfah ibn al-Yaman, `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud, and `Ali ibn Abi-Talib—knew the actual religious laws about such questions.

It is now obvious that when `Umar ibn al-Khattab summoned the Sahabah and said to them, "We (i.e. the ruling authorities) are more knowledgeable about these rulings than you are; therefore, I listen to you but sometimes reject your words," and when `Urwah ibn al-Zubayr said to `Abdullah ibn `Abbas, "They (i.e. Abu-Bakr and `Umar) were more know knowledgeable about the traditions of Allah's Messenger than you are and they are also more attentive to them than you are,"—such situations and their likes were declared for the sake of strengthening the scholarly position of Abu-Bakr and `Umar in the ruling government and for obliging the others to accept the decisions of these two even if such decisions would be issued out of their personal views since they were more knowledgeable than anybody else about what is good for the Muslims.

As has been previously cited, when the people brought before `Umar the records that comprised the Holy Prophet's traditions, they had only intended that he would pick up the most accurate of them; they had not wanted him to decide about the fate of these papers and declare his own opinion to be the most accurate.

The concept of most knowledgeability was presented after the affairs of the Islamic State had been settled for `Umar and after the prohibition of reporting and recording the Hadith had advanced in great strides. These two matters made possible for `Umar to claim enjoying the amount of knowledge that he liked after he had threatened and terrified the Sahabah. In the beginning, `Umar permitted the Sahabah to practice Ijtihad and pretended that he had submitted to their opinions as regards the religious laws; and this was the first step in the march of justifying his decisions that he issued later on.

Because the opinions of some of the Sahabah who were less knowledgeable than `Umar, such as Abu-Hurayrah and Samarah ibn Jundub, were decided as true, the opinions of `Umar should be absolutely justifiable since he was not less than these names in knowledge and standing; rather he should be preceded to them.

Moreover, `Umar was the first and last winner in the jurisprudential sessions that were held under his supervision. The unlimited, extensive participation in the practice of Ijtihad, as a preliminary step, achieved another benefit for the ruling authority. This benefit could be seen clearly in the states of the Sahabah's commitments of mistakes as regards the religious laws and their finding faults with each other.

Such states would institute the most powerful justifications and the most logic explanations of `Umar's jurisprudential errors. None would be able to argue that `Umar had made a mistake since the all had participated in that error when they acceded to the issuance of religious laws according to personal views and deductions.

What is more is that we should not forge that the enactment of the prohibition of the recordation and reporting of the Hadith that resulted in the blankness of the Sahabah's books of Hadith had brought about a big space in the religious legislation that could not be met except by the practice of Ijtihad and the resting upon personal opinions. Hence, the one and only purpose behind `Umar's decision of the prohibition of recording the Hadith was the invention of Ijtihad.

Third Presentation

Earlier in this book, we have scanned narrations revealing that some of the Sahabah used to test and provoke `Umar ibn al-Khattab for purpose of attracting his attention towards his faults, not disparaging him.

They used to ask him about the religious ruling of a certain question on many occasions so that he would take notice of the contradiction in his answers. Such narrations also reveal that the disagreement between the Sahabah was restricted to the jurisprudential questions.

As a matter of fact, `Umar was annoyed by such behaviors; he therefore said to the man who asked him about a question that he had already heard its answer from the Holy Prophet, "May perdition overtake both your hands! You have asked me a question that you had put before the Holy Prophet so that I would contradict him."[4]

The experience of finding fault with the caliph can be seen in its clearest version during the reign of `Umar ibn al-Khattab rather than the other rulers. This matter supports the fact that he had opened the door of the adoption of personal opinions so wide that he could not close it.

Generally speaking, one who is actually expert in religious laws must not be alarmed by questions that

are put before him; rather he must enjoy putting questions before him so that he will answer. In this respect, Imam `Ali ibn Abi-Talib used to say, “Ask me before you miss me.”

On the other hand, one who lacks the knowledge of the Holy Prophet will panic about any question that is put before him and will also beat Subay` ibn `Usul accusing him of infidelity because he put many questions![5]

Fourth Presentation

Owing to the expansion of the area of the Islamic State; the multiplicity of the new questions; the necessity of finding solutions for these questions in the light of the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah; `Umar’s failure to comprehend all the traditions of the Holy Prophet as regards such questions; the possibility of the occurrence of contradiction between `Umar’s reports and the Sahabah’s—owing to all of these reasons, it became fundamental for `Umar to strengthen his previous conceptions of Opinionism (*Ra’y*), which he had presented during the lifetime of the Holy Prophet, and legality of Ijtihad. Also, it became necessary to block the reporting and recordation of the Hadith since these two matters would educate the publics and attract the attentions towards the caliph’s errors.

In the last of his reign, `Umar allowed the Sahabah to practice Ijtihad and declare their own opinions in the religious issues so as to justify his deeds. As well, he ordered them to reduce reporting the Hadith because he did not like hearing the questions whose answers were not known by him. As a consequence, the prohibition of reporting and recording the Hadith relieved from its private frame to prove that the purpose behind it were further than what has been said about it and to prove that it was not related to the issue of the true and false leaderships of the Islamic State.

Fifth Presentation

It is well-known that `Umar dispersed the Hadiths about the virtues and merits of Imam `Ali in particular and the Ahl al-Bayt in general and that he justified his act of taking them away from the political leadership of the Muslim community that the people of Quraysh had not liked for the Hashimites to hold both “positions” of prophethood and leadership.

Having held the position of the leadership (i.e. caliphate), it became harmless for `Umar to spread the Hadiths revealing the merits of `Ali ibn Abi-Talib; rather it was offensive to spread the Hadiths of jurisprudential questions since such narrations comprised materials that would show clearly the contradictions between `Umar’s decisions that were based upon his personal views from one side and the divine revelation and the Holy Prophet’s traditions on the other side.

The result of such contradiction would be that all his decisions would be proven false and thus the Muslims would not stand motionless; rather they would revolt against him. Had the government of `Umar failed, the source of such failure would have been this very point.

It is true that after he had come to power, `Umar did not like hearing the details and expositions of the virtues and merits of Imam `Ali and the Ahl al-Bayt since the circulation of such Hadiths would contribute in the shaking of his standing as a caliph and in the undermining of his leading position as well as in strengthening the situation of the opposite party and in revealing his legality and worthiness of holding the position of the leadership of the Islamic State.

The same words are applicable to the situation that `Umar adopted in the case of the Disastrous Thursday (i.e. preventing the Holy Prophet from dictating his final will in a written form). Nevertheless, in addition to the problems that `Umar had to encounter as regards finding suitable answers for the jurisprudential questions that were put before him, the fear from spreading the Hadiths of the merits and virtues of Imam `Ali and the Ahl al-Bayt was one of the leading motives that urged him to decide the prohibition from reporting and recording the Hadith. As a result, he prohibited the reporting and recordation of the Hadith generally so as to save his position and himself from the political, jurisprudential inconveniences.

To take Imam `Ali away from the jurisprudential and political leaderships was one of the essential goals of the state of the caliphs. This sense was publicly declared in `Abdullah ibn `Abbas's famous word,

"Verily, had you not selected for your leadership those whom Almighty Allah has rejected, and rejected those whom Almighty Allah has selected for you, and confessed to the divinely commissioned leadership and successorship of the Household of your Prophet, you would surely have been nourished from above you and from beneath your feet, no shortage would have occurred to the shares of inheritance none of which would have ever failed, and no two individuals have ever disagreed about any of the laws of Almighty Allah."[6]

This is because the jurisprudential enlightenment was not less important than the political education. If people had recognized the actual capability of Imam `Ali in the knowledge of the religious laws and the actual incapability of the other party (represented by the ruling authorities), this would undoubtedly have had misgivings about the caliph's jurisprudential knowledge causing one of the two wings of caliphate to fail.

The prohibition from recording the Hadith in general and the decision of reducing reporting it in particular and the opening wide the door of Ijtihad by means of personal opinions, analogies... etc.,—all these matters bear out that there must have been another more important motive, other than the motives mentioned by the scholars as have been presented in the seventh reason, that necessitated the issuance of the decision of prohibiting the recordation of the Hadith.

Sixth Presentation

The majority of the reports that narrated the objections of the Sahabah to `Umar's decision was dedicated to the jurisprudential, not administrative or governmental, aspects. In plain words, the

Sahabah objected to `Umar as regards the jurisprudential questions, not the worthiness and merits of other individuals.

Earlier in this book, it has been cited that `Abdullah ibn `Abbas said, “I see coming that you shall certainly be perishing! While I say to you that it was the Messenger of Allah who deemed it lawful, you answer me that Abu-Bakr and `Umar prohibited it!”[7] and `Abdullah ibn `Umar said, “I will never neglect the instructions of the Holy Prophet for a word of any other person!”[8] and “The Holy Prophet did it; and certainly he is better than `Umar ibn al-Khattab.”

These texts and their likes confirm that the disagreement between `Umar and the Sahabah was dedicated to the exposition of the religious laws and to the principles that `Umar had decided for the Muslim jurisprudence, such as the Ijtihad and *Qiyas*... etc.

The overall scheme of the caliphs included the prohibition from reporting the merits of the Ahl al-Bayt, the evidences on the divinely commissioned leadership of them, and the Holy Prophet’s instructions and traditions about the religious laws.

In general, the scheme recommended the prohibition of spreading any item that would contribute in documenting the authenticity of the Ahl al-Bayt School. To prove it, let us cite the following narrations:

It has been narrated that `Abd al-Rahman ibn Yazid said: In the year 82 (AH), Sulayman ibn `Abd al-Malik, having been still the crown prince, passed by al-Madinah during his journey to performing the ritual Hajj. The people greeted him while he was pushing his way in the city. He then visited the places where the Holy Prophet had offered prayers as well as the site where he was injured during the Battle of Uhud.

Accompanied by Aban ibn `Uthman, `Amr ibn `Uthman, and Abu-Bakr ibn `Abdullah, the crown prince visited the sites of Masjid Quba’, Masjid al-Fadikh, Mashrabat Ummi-Ibrahim, and Uhud Mount. As he asked about each site that he visited, the fellows explained to him what had happened therein. He then ordered Aban ibn `Uthman to write down a book about the life account of the Holy Prophet as well as the events of his campaigns.

Aban said, “I have already written down such a book whose materials have been authenticated by trustworthy individuals.”

Sulayman thus ordered that book to be copied ten times. When the book was copied on parchments, the copies were presented before the crown prince. As he noticed that the Ansar were praiseworthily mentioned in the book, especially as regards the two historical homages of al-`Aqabah and the Battle of Badr, he commented, “I cannot imagine that these people (i.e. the Ansar) did really enjoy such merits. There is only one option in this regard; either my family had denied the merits of these people or they were not as exactly as what is mentioned in this book.”

Aban ibn `Uthman answered, “Your Excellency: the deeds that they had committed against the oppressed martyr should not stop us from saying the truth. They (i.e. the Ansar) were as exactly as what is mentioned in this book.”

Sulayman said, “I must not order of copying such a book before I seek the permission of *Amir al-Mu’minin* (i.e. the caliph; `Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan). Probably, he will refuse such a thing.”

He therefore ordered the copies to be torn out and commented, “When I return, I will ask *Amir al-Mu’minin*, and if he agrees, nothing will be easier than re-copying the book.”

When he was back to the capital, he presented the question before his father, the caliph, who commented, “What will you excuse when you bring us a book that is empty from any item of honor for us? Do you intend to introduce to the people of Syria matters that we do not want for them to know?”

Accordingly, Sulayman answered, “For this very reason have I ordered the copies of the book to be torn out. I would never copy the book before I seek your opinion.”

The caliph thus acceded to this good opinion.9

1. Al-Muttaqiy al-Hindiy: Kanz al-`Ummal 5:644 H. 14133; Ibn Sa`d: al-Tabaqat al-Kubra 2:244.
2. Sahih al-Bukhariy 1:54 H. 114; Ibn Hazm: al-Ihkam fi Usul al-Ahkam 7:425; Ibn `Abd al-Barr: al-Isti`ab 1:169; Ibn Hajar al-`Asqalaniy: Fath al-Bari fi Sharh Sahih al-Bukhariy 1:209.
3. Al-Bayhaqiy: al-Sunan al-Kubra 7:233 H. 14114; Sa`id ibn Mansur: Kitab al-Sunan 195 H. 598.
4. Musannaf Ibn Abi-Shaybah 3:174 H. 13181; al-Ahad wa’l-Mathani 3:228 H. 1589; Sharh Ma`ani al-Athar 2:232; al-Tabaraniy: al-Mu`jam al-Kabir 3:262 H. 3353.
5. Al-Ghamidiy: Haqiqat al-Bid`ah wa-Ahkamuha 1:114 (as quoted from Ibn Hajar al-`Asqalaniy: al-Isabah fi Tamyiz al-Sahabah 165); Sunan al-Darimiy H. 146; Ibn Waddah: al-Bida` 69; Durr al-Ta`arud 7:172. In his book of ‘al-Masa'il’ 1:478 H. 81, Ahmad ibn Hanbal says, “Abu-`Uthman al-Nahdiy said that a man—from the tribe of Yarbu` or the tribe of Tamim—asked `Umar ibn al-Khattab about the interpretation of the words ‘wa’l-Dhariyat’ wa’l-Nazi`at’, ‘wa’l-Mursalat’, mentioned in the holy Qur'an in the holy verses, “I swear by the wind that scatters far and wide, 51/1” “I swear by the emissary winds, sent one after another (for men's benefit), 77/1” “I swear by the angels who violently pull out the souls of the wicked. 79/1”
Instead of answering the man, `Umar ibn al-Khattab ordered him to remove his head cover. As the man did, `Umar noticed that there was hair on his head. He thus said, “If I found you hairless, I would certainly behead you!”
`Umar then ordered us (or wrote a missive to the people of al-Basrah, ordering them) not to sit with that man forever. As a result, whenever we saw that man, whose name was Subay` ibn `Usul, we left him and separated even if we were one hundred persons.
On the other side, al-Hakim al-Nisapuriy, in al-Mustadrak `Ala’l-Sahihayn 2:506 H. 3736, has narrated on the authority of Abu’l-Tufayl that Imam `Ali ibn Abi-Talib Amir al-Mu'minin, once, stood on the minbar and said, “O people: Ask me before you miss me. Seize this opportunity and ask me, for you shall never find anyone like me to ask.”
On hearing this, Ibn al-Kawwa’ stood up and asked, “O Amir al-Mu'minin! What is the interpretation of (the holy verse) ‘Wa’l-Dhariyati Dharwa; I swear by the wind that scatters far and wide. 51/1’?”
The Imam answered, “This is the wind.”
Ibn al-Kawwa’ went on, “What is the interpretation of (the holy verse) ‘Fa’l-Hamilati Waqra; Then those clouds bearing the load of minute things in space. 51/2’”
The Imam answered, “This is the clouds.”

Ibn al-Kawwa' continued, "What is the interpretation of (the holy verse) 'Fa'l-Jariyati Yusra: Then those ships that glide easily. 51/3'?"
The Imam answered, "This is the ships.
Ibn al-Kawwa' continued, "What is the interpretation of (the holy verse) 'Fa'l-Muqassimati Amra: Then those angels who distribute blessings by Our command. 51/4'?"
The Imam answered, "This is the angels."
Ibn al-Kawwa' then asked, "Who are those about whom Almighty Allah, in the Holy Qur'an, has said, 'Have you not seen those who have changed Allah's favor for ungratefulness and made their people to alight into the abode of perdition (Into Hell)? They shall enter into it and an evil place it is to settle in. 14/28-29'?"
The Imam answered, "These are the hypocrites from the tribe of Quraysh."
Commenting on this narration, al-Hakim al-Nisapuriy says that its series of narrators is authentic; yet, al-Bukhariy and Muslim have not recorded it." See this narrative and its ways of narration in the following reference books of Hadith: `Umdat al-Qari 10:19; Taghliq al-Ta`liq 318-319; al-Muttaqiy al-Hindiy: Kanz al-`Ummal 13:159-162; al-Ahadith al-Mukhtarah 2:126 H. 494, 176 H. 556, 298 H. 678; Musnad al-Shashiy 2:96 H. 620; Ibn `Asakir: Tarikh Madinat Dimashq 27:99; al-Mi`yar wa'l-Muwazanah 298; Nudhum Durar al-Simtayn 126; Nahj al-Sa`adah 2:631; al-Ihtijaj 1:386; Jawahir al-Matalib 1:300.
6. Al-Bayhaqiy: al-Sunan al-Kubra 6:253 H. 12237.
7. Al-Bidayah wa'l-Nihayah 5:141; Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal 2:95 H. 5700 (In this reference book, it is written that `Abdullah ibn `Umar answered those who asked him why he had violated his father who prohibited the Mut`at al-Hajj, "Whose instruction must be followed; the Messenger of Allah or `Umar?"); al-Bayhaqiy: al-Sunan al-Kubra 5:21 H. 8658.
8. Sahih al-Bukhariy 2:567 H. 1488; Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal 1:135 H. 1139.
9. Al-Zubayr ibn Bakkar: al-Muwaffaqiyyat 332-333. In this reference book, the author has written a commentary to this report.

Source URL:
https://www.al-islam.org/prohibition-recording-hadith-causes-and-effects-sayyid-ali-al-shahristani/summary-last-reason#comment-0