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Sunni Feedback on the Issues of Infallibility and Ahlul-Bayt

بِسْمِ اللَّـهِ الرَّحْمَـٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In this article, we reply on the comments of the Sunni brothers who studied the previous articles regarding to who Ahlul-Bayt are, and why they are infallible. More discussions on the issue of infallibility will be presented later in the next chapter.

A Sunni brother mentioned that the verse 33:33 expresses the decision of Allah to purify Ahlul-Bayt and make them spotless. How could this imply that they are flawless/sinless? This is adding an incorrect implication to the Arabic language!

To answer this question, we would like to ask: Isn't sin a kind of impurity? A person who commits sin is not a pure person.

If you think this is adding an incorrect meaning to the Arabic language, then I would ask you to quote one example where a scholar of Qur'an, Arabic grammar, and literature claims that committing sin is a sign of purity!!!

Also, based on your translation, you used the word "spotless". Then what will be the difference between "spotless"and "flawless"? Any spot is a flaw and is sin; and vice versa.

Moreover, which scholar of Arabic language can we find better than the Messenger of Allah? We quoted from the authentic Sunni collections 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."

The word "thus"in the highlighted part means that the Prophet himself is CONCLUDING that the verse means Ahlul-Bayt are sinless. Is the Prophet violating the Arabic language?

Another Sunni brother commented that the Verse 33:33 does not make Ahlul-Bayt infallible any more than verse 5:6 makes anyone who performs ablution infallible! Allah sates:

O you who believe! when you prepare for prayer wash your faces and your hands to the elbows; rub your heads and your feet to the ankles. If you are in a state of ceremonial impurity bathe your whole body. But if you are ill or on a journey or one of you had call of nature or you have touched women and you find no water then take for yourselves clean sand or earth and rub therewith your faces and hands. Allah does not wish to place you in a difficulty but to make you clean and to complete His favor to you that you may be grateful. (***Qur'an 5:6***)

To answer this brother, we would like to point out that purification/ cleansing has degrees and is of different types. If ones hand and face become dirty, and then if he washes them with soap and warm water they will become cleansed. The above verse (5:6) also tells us by ablution one can become cleansed. Now if somebody argues that the degree of cleansing with ablution is not any more than cleansing the hands and face with soap, then what will be your answer to him? You will tell him that ablution make different type of cleansing than of washing the body by soap.

The same goes for the difference between cleansing of every kind of impurity and the cleansing of ablution. Surely if a murderer makes ablution, he will not cleans his crime by that, because the impurity caused by murder can not go away by ablution even though Allah sent down the verse 5:6. Qur'an never said that by ablution you will get a Perfect purification.

There are different degrees of Purification. The only place that Allah said I intend to do a perfect purification is in verse 33:33 where He is addressing the Ahlul-Bayt. The word "perfect"comes from the emphasis of Allah by "Tat'hiran"which has been used only in verse 33:33. This emphatical word occur in any other place in Qur'an. Do you see the difference brother?

Do you agree that any small sin is a type of impurity? If yes, then a perfect purification will not leave any small sin for the Ahlul-Bayt. If Allah intends to keep off every kind of uncleanless from Ahlul-Bayt, no impurity, no matter how small, will reach them, because Allah is omnipotent. (The phrase "every kind of "is due to article of "al-"at the beginning of the world "al-Rijs").

A Sunni mentioned that saying 'we have respect for the pious wives among the wives of the Prophet' indicate that you consider some of them to be otherwise!

This is not something strange. After all, they were non-infallible humans who may have had some or many mistakes. That's exactly why they are not among Ahlul-Bayt. Even Qur'an confirms that some of the wives of the Prophet might have been wrong-doers:

But if you seek Allah and His Apostle and the Home of the Hereafter verily Allah has prepared for the well-doers amongst you a great reward. (***Qur'an 33:29***)

In the above verse, Allah states that He will only give the good reward to the well-doers among the wives of the Prophet. If all the Prophet's wives were well-dowers, then there was no need for Allah to say this. Allah would have said, "all of you will receive a great reward". Now look at the next two verses after the above verse:

O' Consorts of the Prophet! if any of you were guilty of evident misconduct conduct the Punishment would be doubled to her and that is easy for Allah. (***Qur'an 33:30***)

But any of you that is devout in the service of Allah and His Apostle and works righteousness to her shall We grant her reward twice, and We have prepared for her a generous Sustenance. (***Qur'an 33:31***)

Again Allah is threatening the wives of the Prophet that they will receive a double punishment if they have misconduct, while giving glad tidings that the good wives of the Prophet will receive twice reward. You see, God is selective toward the wives of the Prophet (S), but you are not!

Please check the traditions narrated in Sahih al-Bukhari on the misconduct Aisha and Hafsa, some of which I provided in Parts IV through VIII of the article of "Who are Ahlul-Bayt?"and then let me know what you think of them? This is exactly what I mean by non-pious. If the Allah threatened Aisha and Hafsa by divorce, because they backed each other against the Prophet (S), then how can we render them as pure?

The verse of Qur'an tells us that Ahlul-Bayt are perfectly pure. According to the traditions in Sahih al-Bukhari, Hafsa is swearing by Allah that she argues with the Prophet (S) and keeps the Prophet angry for the whole day. Umar is advising her not to imitate Aisha who is proud of her beauty! Are these attitudes signs of perfect purity mentioned for Ahlul-Bayt? Perhaps you might want to also look at the history, and see who rode the Camel and allowed shedding the blood of ten thousand Muslims.

I also would like to remind you there have been some prophets in the past that some of their wives were not pious. Among them are the wife of Prophet Noah, the wife of Prophet Lot, and so on. Allah informed those prophets that those wives who don't follow your instructions are not related to them and they will perish along with the rest of people. Non of those prophets took it as insult.

I also would like to say that it happened to me that I heard from a Sunni Muslim claiming that Shi'a believe that Aisha committed adultery! (May Allah protect us). This is a false accusation. Shi'a do NOT attribute such a thing to any of the wives of the Prophet (S). The problem of the Shi'a with Aisha is mainly around the line of politics and her hostility toward Ahlul-Bayt.

A naive contributor mentioned that:

It is reported on the authority of ‘Akrama that Ibn Abbas said this verse (33:33) is addressed to the wives of the Prophet.

There is no denial to the fact that the above report exists in some Sunni books. Such reports also indicate that Akrama even had the audacity to yell in the public places that the verse was revealed only for the wives of the Prophet (S).

But the issue doesn’t stop here, and it is important to look at the very personalities of those individuals involved. Surprisingly, al-Dhahabi wrote in his work:

The very first reason to reject the tradition(s) of Akrama is based on the fact that **he was Kharijite**. Secondly his being a Kharijite, he even justified the killings of the fellow Muslim(s).

Sunni reference: al-Kashaf, by al-Dhahabi, v2, p272

Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani quoting from Ahmad Ibn Hanbal and others, wrote:

In the season of Hajj Akrama came to Africa, and said: It would be very dear to me if I were at Hajj at this moment, I would have had swords in both my hands, and I would massacre the Muslims. After these statements by Akrama, the people of Africa avoided him.

Ahmad Ibn Hanbal says: Akrama narrates contradictory Hadiths.

Yahya Ibn Sa’id Ansari says: Akrama is a compulsive liar.

Sunni reference: Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, v8, p268

In fact, Akrama was a slave of the son of Ibn Abbas. Abdullah Ibn Harith reported:

I once went to ‘Ali Ibn Abdullah Ibn Abbas, and I was surprised to see that Akrama was tied to the rest room. I said to ‘Ali: Is this how you treat your slaves, and he replied: Akrama associates many lies to my father (Ibn Abbas).

Sunni reference: Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, v8, p268

At this point, it would be nice to quote another report which is also falsely attributed to Ibn Abbas:

Abul Qasim Abdurrahman Ibn Muhammad Siraj says: it is related through Muhammad Ibn Yaqub, through Hasan Ibn ‘Ali Ibn Affan through Abu Yahya al-Hamanithrough Saleh Ibn Musa al-Qurshi through Khaseef through Sa’id Ibn Jubair through Ibn Abbas that the verse 33:33 was revealed for the wives of the Prophet.

Sunni reference: Asbab al-Nuzool, by al-Wahidi, p239

The scrutiny of the above tradition by the Sunni scholars yields the following facts about three individuals

in the chain of authorities of the above report:

Imam al-Nisa'i says: Abu Yahya al-Hamani (one of the narrators in the chain) is not a reliable reporter.

Sunni references:

● al-Kashaf, by al-Dhahabi, v2, p152

● Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, v1, p469

Ahmad Ibn Hanbal says: Sa'id Ibn Jubair (one of the narrators in the chain)is not an authority and this Hadith is not a reliable Hadith. Abu Hatem Salah says: He has a weak memory and tends to mix up Hadiths.

al-Dhahabi writes: Khaseef Ibn Abdurrahman (one of the narrators in the chain) is the slave of the Umayad, but he has a weak memory and Ahmad has declared him as weak.

Sunni references:

● Tahdhib al-Tahdhib, by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani, v3, pp 143-44

● al-Kashaf, by al-Dhahabi, v1, p280

A contributor claimed that there exists a tradition narrated by both Shi'a and Sunni which reads: "al-Salmanu minna Ahlal-Bayt"and translates to: "Salman (al-Farsi) is one of us, Ahlul-Bayt". This contradicts the Shi'ite doctrine that Ahlul-Bayt are some selected individuals from the progeny of the Prophet (S).

My comment is: Yes, there is a tradition with the above mentioned Arabic words. However the correct translation is as follows:

The Messenger (S) of Allah said: "Salman is from us Ahlul-Bayt."

which means he is our agent and is attached to us Ahlul-Bayt. In fact, Salman was an agent and a trustee for Ahlul-Bayt to the end of his life-time. His affinity to Ahlul-Bayt was to the extent that he was attached to them. An analogy would be a friend who would visit a family a lot, such that one would consider him attached to the family, although the blood relation is the only thing missing. Salman (ra) was one of the best companions of the Messenger of Allah. It is narrated that:

The Messenger of God said: "Certainly Allah commanded me to love four persons and informed me that He loves them."The companions asked the Prophet: "O' Messenger of God, who are those four persons?"The Prophet (S) replied: "'Ali is from them (repeating that three times), Abu Dharr, Salman al-Farsi, and Miqdad."

Sunni References:

- Sunan Ibn Majah, v1, p52, Tradition #149
- al-Mustadrak, by al-Hakim, v3, p130
- Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, v5, p356
- Fadha'il al-Sahaba, by Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, v2, p648, Tradition #1103
- Hilyatul Awliyaa, by Abu Nu'aym, v1, p172

Notice that the Prophet (S) said, "Salman is from us Ahlul-Bayt". This does NOT necessarily mean that "Salman is one of us Ahlul-Bayt". The Arabic word "min"has different meanings. In the above tradition (about Salman) as well as many other traditions "min"does not mean "one of". For instance, al-Bukhari recorded that:

The Prophet (S) said to 'Ali: "You are from me, and I am from you"

أنت مني و أنا منك

Sunni reference: Sahih al-Bukhari, Arabic-English version, v5, Tradition #553.

There is no mention of Ahlul-Bayt here. So if we suppose that the only meaning of "min"is "one of", then the saying of the Prophet will become:

"'Ali is one of me and I am one of 'Ali"

What a beautiful translation! How many persons is the Prophet, so that one of the Prophet is 'Ali? Funnier phrase in this translation is the latter part, that is, the Prophet is one of 'Ali!

Now, similarly it is narrated that:

The Messenger of Allah said: "Husayn is from me and I am from al-Husayn."

حسينٌ مني و أنا من حُسين

Sunni references:

(1) Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, v4, p172

(2) Fadha'il al-Sahaba, by Ahmad Hanbal, v2, p772, Tradition #1361

(3) al-Mustadrak, by al-Hakim, v3, p177

(4) Amali, by Abu Nu'aym al-Isbahani, p64

(5) al-Kuna wal Asmaa, by al-Dulabi, v1, p88

(6) al-Tabarani, v3, p21

(7) Adab by al-Bukhari, also al-Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah, as quoted in:

(8) al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, by Ibn Hajar Haythami, Ch. 11, section 3, p291

(9) Mishkat al-Masabih, by Khatib al-Tabrizi, English Version, Tradition #6160

Again, if we suppose that the only meaning of "min"is "one of", then the saying of the Prophet will become:

"Husayn is one of me and I am one of al-Husayn."

So this does not make sense either (specially the second phrase which is "The Prophet is one of al-Husayn").

One meaning for the saying of the Prophet (S) who said: "Husayn is from me and I am from al-Husayn,"is that al-Husayn is attached to him and he is attached to al-Husayn. In other words, the path of the Prophet Muhammad and the path of al-Husayn are non-separable. And their instructions are the same and will not contradict each other.

Another contributor commented that if based on Sunni references we quoted, Ahlul-Bayt are the Prophet, Fatimah, 'Ali, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, then how can you include the nine descendants of al-Husayn?

As we have already pointed out, only five members of Ahlul-Bayt were alive at the time of the Prophet (S). They were Prophet Muhammad, Lady Fatimah, Imam 'Ali, Imam al-Hasan, and Imam al-Husayn. They were mentioned as Ahlul-Bayt by the Prophet (S) and the most important Sunni collections testify to this fact.

However the nine descendants of Imam al-Husayn were not alive at that time so that the Prophet could not cover them by his mantle! But the Prophet did, in fact, mention their names and their numbers. Let us review some traditions from Sihah Sittah:

The Prophet (S) said: "al-Mahdi is one of us Ahlul-Bayt."

Sunni reference: Sunan Ibn Majah, v2, Tradition #4085

also:

The Prophet (S) said: "The Mahdi will be of my family, of the descendants of Fatimah (the Prophet's daughter).

Sunni references:

● Sunan Abi Dawud, English version, Ch. 36, Tradition #4271 (narrated by Umm Salama, the wife of the Prophet)

● Sunan Ibn Majah, v2, Tradition #4086

● al-Nisa'i and al-Bayhaqi, and others as quoted in:

● al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah, by Ibn Hajar al-Haythami, Ch. 11, section 1, p249

By the above traditions, the Prophet extended Ahlul-Bayt up to Imam al-Mahdi (as). So Ahlul-Bayt are not just those five, and Imam al-Mahdi is the last member of Ahlul-Bayt, but he was not born at the time of the Prophet so that he could take him into the Cloak as well! Also the messenger of Allah said:

"There shall be twelve Imams/Caliphs/Amirs for my nation"

Sunni references:

● Sahih al-Bukhari, Arabic-English, v9, Tradition #329;

● Sahih Muslim, English version, Chapter DCCLIV, v3, pp 1009-1010, Traditions #4476 --> #4483;

● Sunan Abi Dawud, v2, p421 (three traditions);

● Sahih al-Tirmidhi, v4, p501;

● Musnad Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, v5, p106;

● Others such as al-Tiyalasi, Ibn al-Athir, etc.

These 12 Imams will cover till the day of resurrection as Sahih Muslim testifies. The last of them is surely Imam al-Mahdi (as) who will appear in the last days and who is also from Ahlul-Bayt as the above tradition specified. There are other traditions in the Sunni collections in which the Prophet (S) has even mentioned the name of all these twelve individuals one by one. (see Yanabi' al-Mawaddah, by al-Qundoozi al-Hanafi).

Referring to the tradition narrated by Aisha where the Messenger of Allah named the members of his house, a Sunni brother commented that Aisha is by no means a trusted source of Hadith for the Shi'a. Then why do the Shi'a take her narration in this instance?

The first part is true. The Shi'a believe that all the narrators in the chain of a document should have been

just. If Aisha used to argue with the Prophet, and keep him angry for the whole day, or led the battle of Camel (the first civil war) then we consider these as BIG injustice. If any narrator has done any injustice in the history their narrations are void for us unless the same tradition has been narrated via another chain of authorities who are all trustworthy. Thus some of the traditions of six Sunni collections fall in this category, i.e., accepted for us.

Although Aisha is not a trustworthy narrator in the opinion of the Shi'ites, any part of his narrations that has also been transmitted by a trustworthy narrators such as Umm Salama (who also, by the way, reported the tradition of Cloak), will be accepted. All those traditions which we quoted from Sunni sources in support of the Shi'ite views, fall in this category, and we believe in them.

Moreover, the reason that we brought the Tradition of Aisha is that this is a tradition which is reported in Sahih Muslim and the Sunnis can not dispute its authenticity.

After reading my article on the necessity of following Ahlul-Bayt, a Sunni brother asked me what exactly following Ahlul-Bayt means, and if there is anything which is taught by the Imams and not explained by the Prophet himself?

As we have pointed out, following Ahlul-Bayt means to inquire about the Sunnah of the Prophet (S) only through them. In fact, Ahlul-Bayt are THE MEANS of identifying the true Sunnah of the Prophet from the innovations.

No doubt that the Prophet (S) explained all the fundamentals of the religion. However, people around him did not benefit from his knowledge equally. We have only one companion whom the Prophet called him the Gate of the City of Knowledge. Others got their knowledge based on their capacity. The major duty of the Imams of Ahlul-Bayt was to PRESERVE the Islamic teaching in its true spirit and reject the innovations and mutilation of the religion.

The deputies/successors of the Prophet don't bring any new massage, and they just serve as leaders (Imams), Guardians for their true followers. They explain/elaborate Shari'ah (Divine law) for people. They clear up confusing things and events that may happen in each era. Also they are the only individuals who can be trusted for the correct interpretation of the Qur'anic verses as pointed in Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet (S). Adhering to Qur'an is not enough to guarantee our survival, because Qur'an only specifies very general rules, and has lots of ambiguous (Mutashabihat) verses which only Ahlul-Bayt know its true meaning:

He is Who has revealed unto thee (Muhammad) the Scripture wherein are clear revelations, which are the Essence of the Book, and others (verses which are) ambiguous. But those who have sickness in their hearts follow the part of which that is ambiguous, seeking discord and searching for its hidden meanings, but no one knows its hidden meanings except Allah and those who are firmly grounded in knowledge who say: We believe therein; the whole is from our Lord; but only men of understanding really heed. (***Qur'an 3:7***)

The term "Those who are firmly grounded in knowledge"refers to Ahlul-Bayt. In fact Ahlul-Bayt are "Qur'an, the Speaker."In another verse, Allah states:

"Ask the people of Reminder (the possessors of the Message, i.e., Qur'an) if you do not know."(Qur'an 21:7)

Again this is referring to Ahlul-Bayt. Ahlul-Bayt know the internal meaning/commentary of Qur'an which was revealed to Prophet along with Qur'an but were not a part of Qur'an. These pieces of information are hidden but to the purified ones:

None touches (the depth of meaning of Qur'an) save the purified ones. (56:79)

Please refer to the article titled: "Qur'an and Ahlul-Bayt"in which we quoted authentic traditions from the Sunni sources where the Messenger of Allah declared that Qur'an and Ahlul-Bayt are non-separable.

Regarding the necessity of following Ahlul-Bayt, a Wahhabi mentioned:

No thanks I am not a Christian, I only obey God and he is my savior. not Christ, not Ahlul-Bayt.

This reminds me of what Imam 'Ali said to al-Khawarij when they said what is highlighted above! Imam 'Ali commented: "kalimatu haqqin yuridu biha al-batil"(a word of truth, but falsehood was meant by it). I should even say that there is no truth in what you said. Do you believe in Qur'an, or you say you only follow God and not Qur'an?! If you are a true believer in Qur'an, then read the following verse please:

"O' you who believe! Obey Allah, and Obey Apostle and those from among you who are given authority (by Allah)."(Qur'an 4:59)

Allah tells you to obey His Messenger and His Ulul-Amr (Imam), but you say you ONLY obey Allah! Khawarij said exactly the same thing! Don't you reflect? You insist to ONLY obey Allah while Allah orders you to obey others also.

If you come down and say (for heck of it) you also obey the Prophet, then according to the most authentic traditions the Prophet order you to OBEY Ahlul-Bayt. But you mentioned you do not obey them. What kind of rhetoric is this? You said you are not Christian. Do you think if you obey the Prophet and his Ahlul-Bayt, you will become Christian? Exalted be Allah (SWT) from such ignorant and stupid allegations against His commandments by people who lack all knowledge!

You are mixing apples and oranges, my friend. Christians believe that Jesus went on cross to save them. So if they commit any sins, they are already forgiven by the Christ. And in this way they do what they wish to do.

However, to your surprise, the Shi'a think exactly the other way around. They say:

"The Prophet ordered you to OBEY him and his Ahlul-Bayt. The most important books of the major

Islamic schools testify to this fact. If you do not OBEY them you will be doomed to Hell."

Do you see the difference? Christians say you do not really have to obey to be saved. It is enough if you believe in Jesus. However Prophet Muhammad (S) said that you should obey Ahlul-Bayt to be saved from Hell. A person who calls himself a Shi'a, but does not really obey the instructions of Ahlul-Bayt, is not any better than a Christian.

As I mentioned, true love requires the person to obey the one who loves. If one claims the love of Ahlul-Bayt, but he does not obey their instructions, then he is only fooling his own soul. Ibn Abbas (ra) narrated that the Messenger of Allah said:

"Whoever wishes to live and die like me, and to abide in the Garden of Eden after death, should acknowledge 'Ali as WALI after me, and take his WALI (i.e., Imams after him) as WALI, and should follow the Imams after me for they are my Ahlul-Bayt and were created from my clay and are gifted with the same knowledge and understanding as myself. Woe unto those who deny their virtues and those who disregard their relationship and affinity with me, for my intercession shall never reach them."

Sunni references:

(1) Hilyatul Awliyaa, by Abu Nu'aym, v1, pp 84,86

(2) al-Mustadrak, by al-Hakim, v3, p128

(3) al-Jami' al-Kabir, by al-Tabarani

(4) al-Isabah, by Ibn Hajar al-Asqalani

(5) Kanz al-Ummal, v6, p155

(6) al-Manaqib, by al-Kharazmi, p34

(7) Yanabi' al-Mawaddah, by al-Qundoozi al-Hanafi, p149

(8) History of Ibn Asakir, v2, p95

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