

(Infallibility of the Prophets (Part III

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This part addresses the questions and counter arguments on this subject in the current and the previous rounds of discussions, and the responses to them.

Side Comments

A person asked how we explain the following verse of Quran considering the subject of infallibility:

"If Allah were to punish mankind for their wrong-doing (Dhulm), He would not leave on the (earth) a living creature, but He respites them to an appointed time, and when their time comes they cannot put (it) off a second nor (yet) advance (it)." (Quran 16:61) My comment is as follows: There are different meaning for "Dhulm". Surely the prophets were not wrong-doers (Dhalim) as what we imply by "Dhulm". Let me start with a tradition from the Messenger of Allah, and then prove it by Quran.

The Messenger of Allah said: "The good deeds of the righteous people, are sins for those who are close (to Allah)."

This precious tradition means that the sin for the prophets and Imams has a different meaning than what we usually consider as sin. In their high level, they consider themselves sinful when they question themselves by saying: "I should have done more good deeds than of what I have done till now." This is while they did their best. Or "I did not worship Allah to the extent that He deserves by His Majesty." Or "I could be closer to God." These are the sort of sins to them which is much more different than what we think of as sin. Their sin is just a feeling of shyness toward the Glory of Allah.

According to his genuine nature, an advanced human being does not make any hesitation in following the path of Almighty God. In every step that he takes towards development, the greatness and grandeur of the power of the Almighty will become more obvious him, and he will look at his past from a higher level. For what he has done he will sometimes apologize, even if what he has done was his duties. That is because he now comprehends its inadequacy. He interprets his past worships as sin and does not see any value for his work when presented to the Great position of the Lord. With his elevated view, he perceives his submission to God's presence as sinful and even an action far from politeness.

The prophets and the divinely-appointed Imams have reached this point. Since they realize the Magnificence of their Lord and comprehend the position of the Life-Giver, they see themselves,

their activities, and their prostrations and praises so little that they interpret the worship of that much affluence and greatness as sin, and with supplication and invocation, they ask for pardon and they hope for forgiveness. When they face the divine commandments and consider the Holy Position of the Almighty, they submit themselves to the Master. They see their action in front of the Lord as nothing, and recognize it as not suitable for praise. They hope it would be accepted by the Generosity and Majesty of the Creator, otherwise it is a sin to submit such inadequate worship to the Holy Presence of the Lord.

Those people like the Prophet Muhammad and his Ahlul-Bayt (peace be upon them all) realized the Divine position with a much wider view. Continuously upon the two wings of knowledge and action, they progressed to a higher and superior position. They were, at every moment, finding out more about the Magnificence of the Life-Giver of the world, and more about their own needs;

consequently better understanding of their inadequate actions in comparison with that much Power and Greatness. To compensate for that, they confessed to their sins and asked the Lord for the permission to apologize with the excuse that they can NOT do to the extent of what Allah deserves, and with the hope that He would guide them to a higher and superior position until they could continue their development process in order to reach the sublime morality. Now the verse you mentioned should be understood in this context. No HUMAN could warship Allah to the extent of what Allah deserves to be worshipped. It is like one wants to pay an infinite debt by finite resources. Thus everybody is sinful and shameful in front of His Glory.

The closer to God, the more shameful of your insufficient worship in front of God you are. Let me also give you a proof from Quran that "Dhulm" for prophets has much different meaning. Allah, to whom belong Might and Majesty states in Quran:

"And when Abraham was tested by his Lord with certain commands and he fulfilled them. Then He said: Lo! I appoint you an Imam for mankind. (Abraham) said: And of my offspring (will there be Imam)? He said: My covenant does not reach the wrong-doers (among them)." (Quran 2:124).

In the above verse Allah states that the position of God-assigned leadership does not reach to a person who is "Dhalim" (wrong-doer). Now, there is no dispute that Prophet Muhammad(S.A.W.) was a divinely appointed leader and a descendant of Abraham (AS). Not only him, but also Moses, Jesus, David, Sulayman (Solomon) were also descendants of Abraham and all of them were assigned by Allah as Imam. This goes to prove that non of them were "Dhalim" (wrong-doer), otherwise the last sentence of Verse 2:124 will become untrue! The only way to accept that there is no contradiction between the verse 2:124 and the verse

you mentioned, is to accept what our Prophet said in the above mentioned tradition concerning that sin has a different meaning for those who are close to Allah. Their sins are the good deeds in our eyes! A Muslim convert (former Catholic) stated that there is a report of David's adultery in the Old Testament. The Prophets were human. Remember that Muhammad's past and future sins were forgiven. It is not that he didn't have any. The Prophet(S.A.W.) used to ask forgiveness for himself. Clearly, that would constitute the attitude of a sinner repenting after an act of sin.

In reply to the disparaging quote about David (AS) from the Bible, I won't even dignify that statement by the Bible writers with a comment! one should know better than to quote a mutilated book!

As for the Prophet(S.A.W.) asking for forgiveness from Allah (SWT), I have just answered this few lines before and proved it by Quran and Hadith that the sin of the Prophets and Imams are much different than what we consider sin (which is punishable), and as such they will not be held accountable for that. That is why Allah informed the Prophet(S.A.W.) that his past and his future "sins" are forgiven!

If Allah (SWT) had inspired "sinful" prophets and messengers to lead people to the Right Path, it would mean that Allah (SWT) approves of sinfulness! Why then does He prohibit it? What kind of game is Allah (SWT) playing? What kind of Creator is He Who approves of something while prohibiting it at the same time? Cease and desist from insulting Allah (SWT) by claiming that His prophets and messengers were sinners. Fear Allah (SWT) O People before the day comes when you will account for your deeds! Exalted be the Merciful from these ludicrous insinuations!

A reader mentioned that Moses (AS) killed a man with his fist. What sin could be greater than killing a human?

Well, The Prophet Muhammad(S.A.W.) and Imam Ali (AS) killed many unbelievers! They did this to comply with Allah's regulations. Also killing a person during self-defense or when protecting believers from the assault of a non-believer, is not a crime.

Moreover, in many instances the sin of the prophets mentioned in Quran is the act they have committed which is considered violation by the tyrants of their time and NOT by Allah. It means that the governor considered such prophet is GUILTY of a specific act. This does NOT mean that they are guilty before Allah. The case of Prophet Moses killing a non-believer in defense of one of his Shia (followers) falls into this category. In fact Quran testifies the above mentioned fact by saying:

Behold your Lord called Moses: "Go to unto the wrongdoing folk: 26:11

The people of Pharaoh, will they not fear Allah? 26:12

He said: "O my Lord! I do fear that they will charge me with falsehood" 26:13

"My breast will be straitened and my speech may not go (smoothly), so send Aaron (to help me). 26:14

"And (further) they hold a charge of sin against me; and I fear they may slay me." As we can see in the last verse, the sin of murder is what the people of Pharaoh considered to be sin and not Allah. They considered Moses guilty. As such, that was not a sin before Allah, but rather the charge of the government.

Prophet Moses did what he was supposed to do, that is helping the oppressed believer against the oppressor. Although he did not intend to kill the oppressor, it happened during that defense. It was a Satan's plan to make the situation more difficult for Moses (AS). By that unplanned murder, life was made harder for Moses (AS) since he had to stay away from Egypt, but this does not mean that he sinned. Sometimes defending the truth may cause trouble but not sin. Despite all such troubles, Allah finally granted Moses (AS) victory over the unbelievers. Again, Prophet Moses (AS) was not a wrong-dower (Dhalim) otherwise it contradicts Verse 2:124 where Allah said that the position of God-assigned leadership shall not reach to the wrong-doers.

Another brother argued that Allah (SWT) has forbidden us from purifying ANYBODY in verse: "... hold NOT yourselves PURIFIED [53:32]" As such, even prophets and messengers can not be considered purified.

My response was that the verse is taken out of context, and thus has clouded the meaning. Let us carefully study the WHOLE verse: Those who avoid great sins and shameful deeds, and only fell into small reprehensible faults, verily thy Lord is ample in forgiveness. He knows you well when He brings you out of the earth and when you are hidden in your mother's wombs therefore justify not yourselves. He knows best who (among you) guards against evil. (53:32) This verse is saying: THOSE WHO HAVE COMMITTED SMALL REPREHENSIBLE FAULTS should not justify themselves. They should be careful not to fall victim to their egoism and pretend that they are the best when ONLY Allah (SWT) knows what is really in their hearts. As such, this verse does NOT apply to the Prophet(S.A.W.) who did not have any fault, or Allah (SWT) would have directed the verse at him(S.A.W.) as He (SWT) does when talking to or about him(S.A.W.). Therefore, the verse DOES NOT even come close to supporting an argument that the Prophet(S.A.W.) was a sinner.

Moreover Allah mentioned in Verse 33:33 of Quran that the Ahlul-Bayt of Prophet(S.A.W.) are

PERFECTLY pure and flawless, then we can conclude that Allah is the one who is confirming that the Prophet is pure and thus it is in conformity with the above quoted verse which states only Allah knows who is the best and most purified. No need to mention that the Prophet(S.A.W.) is the first member of the Ahlul-Bayt, and if the Ahlul-Bayt are perfectly pure, so is the Prophet(S.A.W.).

A reader mentioned that: We identify with the Prophets and Messengers through their sin. That is, we look at the sin of the Prophets and the Messengers, and we identify our OWN sins with theirs!

The above assertion is off base. We do NOT identify with the Prophets through their SIN; we rather identify with them through their SUFFERING. There is a big difference between the two: Suffering necessitates patience in times of tribulation and adversity to survive through the ordeal one is undergoing. All the prophets and messengers (May Allah bless them) suffered greatly by virtue of their title as representatives of the of Supreme Being, Allah (SWT). We identify with that, and remain steadfast during our times of despair. As such, a prophet did NOT sin, but rather suffered.

The Mercy from Allah (SWT) is NOT, as you state, that the prophets and messengers sin, but rather that they were sent to communicate and deliver the message of Allah (SWT) to us. And in so doing, they were not kings or high priests who would not be able to identify with the oppressed masses. Indeed, look at Moses (AS), the great Messenger from Allah (SWT), whose ENTIRE life was a miracle. The suffering that Moses (AS) endured evoked a sense of peace in the minds of his (AS) followers that served to strengthen them in times of great hardship under Pharaoh's oppression.

Similarly, the Messenger of Allah (SWT), Muhammad(S.A.W.), suffered when he was struck in his head, causing a severe injury to his jaw. He also suffered from hunger, rejection, a boycott from disbelievers, sarcasm, temptation, wars, mutiny, distrust from some of his followers, the hypocrites, betrayal, and then he, after his demise, also suffered by virtue of the massacring of his family. It is an authentic tradition that the Prophet(S.A.W.) during his lifetime said: "No Prophet has EVER suffered as I have suffered.

" The indication here was to how his own flesh and blood, his family-- which were dearer to him than his own soul, would be treated after his demise; not to mention the hardship he was exposed to during his lifetime. It is that kind of suffering that allows us to identify with the Prophets, NOT their sins!

Again, the argument clearly fails when we analyze it from the perspective of the "example or model" par excellence sent to humanity: If Allah (SWT) says: "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. (Quran 33:21)," (Emphasis Mine) He (SWT) means that our lives should be modeled around that "EXCELLENT EXEMPLAR." That's where the word "Sunnah --- the Prophet's(S.A.W.) custom or tradition" comes from. Now, if that model was corrupt (May Allah forgive us), then how can we model ourselves around it; we, then, will

NEVER be able to cleanse ourselves!

Another brother stated To be human is to be a sinner; that is, sin is an innate part of us as human beings. I find highly disturbing the tendency among Muslims, Shia and Sunni likewise,

to regard the Prophet Muhammad (saws) almost as a species of infallible demigod.

I would like to first ask this brother if knows Muslims believe that angels are infallible, i.e., they do not make any mistakes. (Otherwise, some major flaws, among many, would be that the validity of Quran transmitted by Gabriel which will go seriously under question; and that the angels who record our deeds may write things incorrectly; and also the angel of death may take

the life of a wrong person instead of another!!!

. Allah stated in Quran: "...the angels do not violate the Commands of Allah, and do (precisely)

what they are ordered. (66:6)"

If you also agree that angels are infallible, and if your above statement is true, then you consider angels are either god or demigod (? (may Allah protect us). Therefore, your above statement is wrong. I just gave you an example of infallible species who are nothing but the

creatures of God. They are neither God nor semi-god, nor demi-god, yet infallible.

Angels are programmed and work like faultless bug-free computers. They can not go against the orders of Allah. However, the prophets are NOT angels. They are all human, but purified human beings. That purification by Allah (SWT) as alluded to in the previously mentioned verses does NOT make them divine, but it does elevate them above the level of ordinary human

beings in terms of denouncing sin.

The advantage of human over angel is that human is able to willingly obey God. In other words, the prophet has choice to either go right or wrong, but he chooses to go right always, and such, he is infallible while he has choice. A human can make mistakes, but he does not have to. If we make mistakes, it is not because we have to, but it is because of our foolishness, ignorance and lack of knowledge, or else because of the lack of control of our carnal desires. Those who say human has to make mistakes to be human, are generalizing their own weak soul to all

others. They follow their lusts, and are envious to see if one never does that.

Based on Quran, the level of human CAN BE much higher than angels. (and of course, could go even lower than animals, on the other side Quran states that all angels prostrated Prophet

Adam (AS). This is enough to prove that the rank of the prophets is higher than that of angels. In fact, the best human beings (in terms of Taqwa) are the best of all the creatures, and the most honored before Allah. Remember also the story of Mi'raaj where there were places in the heavens that only Prophet Muhammad(S.A.W.) could get into, but the Angel Gabriel could not fly to. The Gabriel said to the Prophet that he (Gabriel) will burn if he wants to go further with the Prophet(S.A.W.).

One side remark, here, is that, Satan is not an angel. He was from Jinn (unseen creatures). Witness to that is Quran where it quotes the statement of Satan saying: "You have created me from fire." The unseen (Jinn) creatures are made of fire, and as such, they are not the angels. The Jinns, like human beings, have choice to go right or wrong, and will be accountable for their acts in the day of judgment.

A brother mentioned that there is a religious part of the prophet's life and a non-religious part. The danger of believing that every thing the prophet did was by order of God, causes that Muslims should imitate the prophet(S.A.W.) to the finest details otherwise they won't be obeying God!!! Even to what the prophet liked to drink and eat,...

My response to him was that ALL the acts of the Prophet were acts of worship. Even his eating, sleeping, etc., were worship, and as such, there was no non-religious part in his life! All he did were in full accordance with Allah's wishes and commandments. But religion is not limited to what is obligatory and what is forbidden. Most of the Prophet's actions fall in the category of what is "Mustahabb" (i.e., recommended) or what is "Mubaah" (i.e., OK either way). Moreover, no one said we are required to imitate all the actions of the Prophet. If one eats what the Prophet preferred to eat, it will be all right and no one can blame him unless he claims that one should eat only what the Prophet ate. Obeying the Prophet(S.A.W.) means that if the Prophet ordered to do something or forbade to do something, then one is religiously REQUIRED to follow it, no matter if the order does not seem to be religious (which is a false imagination). In fact, ALL the orders and prohibitions of the Prophet were a part of religion. This is actually what the religion is about. Even his Ijtihad was in full accordance with the wish of Allah for Allah granted him the most perfect reason. Whatever came to the heart of Prophet(S.A.W.) is the order of God, and such it is a part of religion. Forget about that fabricated Hadith on agriculture.

As for eating food: Everything is Halaal, unless the Prophet prohibited it explicitly or implicitly. For instance, pork has been prohibited explicitly. Also any today's new product which was not at the time of the Prophet but has some ingredients which are extracts from those Haraam products, becomes Haraam implicitly.

Therefore, if the Prophet(S.A.W.) did not eat a special food, but he did not prohibit it either, we still can eat it, because we follow his general order that whatever has not been made Haraam, is Halaal. Also if he preferred a special food, but he did not mention that it is obligatory to eat it, it does not become obligatory to eat. Thus, the preference of the prophet for a special food is not considered to be the order of Prophet as you tried to imply. In religion, there are many things that are neither obligatory nor prohibited, and we have choice to do it or not. What the Prophet ate might be considered as recommended food, and not obligatory unless otherwise specified.

Regarding the verse: "Nor does he (Muhammad) speak out of his desire. It is no less than revelation that is revealed (Quran 53:3-4)," a brother said: The above verse is only limited to Quran. The pagan Arabs were calling the Prophet insane, and discrediting the Quranic revelations as the handiwork of the prophet. The meaning of the above verses is that the Quranic verses which the prophet is speaking about are not out of his desire, but are indeed Revelation. If everything the prophet said or did is revelation, then what is the difference between Quran and authentic Hadith?

My answer to this brother was that: Neither the above verses, nor the verses surrounding them specify limitation of any kind. There is no mention of "Quran" in the above verses nor the verses before and after, and therefor, your claim is unsupported, at least from the Quran. The Verse 53:3 exactly talks about "the speech" of the Prophet and not necessarily Quran, and thus, the rule mentioned in the next verse covers ALL his speeches.

The pagan Arabs did not criticize the Prophet for the Quran alone. They also criticized him for his claim of prophethood as well as his teachings and ideas.

As for the difference between Quran and Hadith: Both Quran and genuine Hadith are from Allah. The Prophet did not say anything of his own desire. However, there is a difference between Quran and Hadith:

- Quran is well-proven, but is NOT well-understood (see note below)
- Hadith is NOT well-proven, but is well-understood.

What I meant by "Quran is well-proven", is that we have no doubt about its authenticity, genuineness, and that has not been fabricated. What I meant by "Quran is NOT well-understood", is that most of its verses are ambiguous and only "Those who are Firmly Grounded in Knowledge" (i.e., the Prophet and his Ahlul-Bayt) have touched the depth of its meaning.

Also Quran only specifies the general rules. For all these and many other reasons, Quran can not be considered as the sources of Guidance ALONE. It needs an interpreter, and this is

where the Hadith plays its role. By genuine Hadith we can get close to the understanding of Quran. Allah said in Quran: He it is Who has sent down to thee the Book, in it are some clear verses; they are the Essence of the Book; and others which are ambiguous. But those in whose hearts is perversity follow the part there of 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 (Quran 3:7)

What I meant by "Hadith is NOT well-proven", is that, since we have not personally met the Prophet (or his successors), we are not sure if such and such Hadith are genuine. The important point which has the answer to your question is: If we were at the time of the Prophet and would have heard the Hadith from the mouth of the Prophet(S.A.W.), then that Hadith would have been AS BINDING AS Quran for us, and we can not prefer Quran over that Hadith, rather I would say, that Hadith which was heard in person is preferred to our defective understanding of Quran because most verses of Quran are ambiguous, but the Hadith we heard from the Prophet is clear. Also, there are many cases where the Hadith explains the exceptions of the general Quranic rules, and as such, it may SEEM to be contradictory with the Quran.

However, since we have not personally heard the Hadith from the Prophet (or his true successors), we need to examine its documentation (i.e., the chain of narrators who passed the Hadith) and the number of similar narrations in that regard to determine the overall strength of what has been attributed to the Prophet(S.A.W.). Some of the requirements of the authenticity of Hadith are as follows:

- It should not be in clear contradiction with well-established concepts in Quran;
- It should not be in clear contradiction with other well-established traditions;
- All the transmitters of the Hadith in the chain of transmitters should be righteous and just, etc.

Most Sunnis, however, do not consider the justice of the narrators as a criterion. They narrate from whoever saw the Prophet(S.A.W.) and claimed to be Muslim. The bother, then, asked: If the speech of prophet are the literal word of God, then why are they not included in the Quran itself? Not all the traditions are literal words of God. Only some traditions are the literal words of God such as Hadith al-Qudsi. They are not a part of Quran though. Some other traditions are the commands of Allah transmitted by Gabriel, and thus, they are indirect words of Allah. They include the divine commentaries of the verses of Quran which were revealed along with Quran, but not as a part of Quran. The rest of genuine

traditions are the information and commandments that Allah induced into the heart of the Prophet directly, and as such, they are the indirect words of God. This includes his Ijtihad and whatever passed through his mind.

Therefore, the some traditions are direct literal word of God, and some are indirect words of God, and as such, all of them are either revelation or inspiration, and are all from Allah. The Prophet did not say ANYTHING of his own. The reason that they are not a part of Quran, is because they were not supposed to be! A better answer is: Quran is an encapsulated database which provides general information for all ages. The Hadith is more specific and furnishes more details and also provides commentary to the Quranic injunctions without which Quran .can not be understood correctly

Conclusion

In conclusion, I repeat the question: If Allah (SWT) had inspired "sinful" Prophets and Messengers to lead people to the Right Path, it would mean that Allah (SWT) approves of sinfulness! Why then does He (SWT) prohibit it (sin, that is)? Allah and His Angels, send blessings on the Prophet: O you who believe! Send your blessings on him, and salute him with .all respect. (Quran: 33:56) Wassalam