Shi'ahs and The Holy Qur'an

Shi`ahs believe that "The Qur`an is the Divine wahi revealed by Allah Almighty to His greatest Prophet (S.A.W.) in order to explain everything. It is His eternal miracle which has proven that humans are unable to challenge its oratory and clarity. While it contains facts and sublime knowledge, no falsehood can approach it nor can its words be replaced, changed or distorted. What we recite is the same Qur`an which was revealed to the Prophet (S.A.W.). Anyone who claims anything else different from this is a violator or a promoter of falsehood or simply confused,
and all these are not on the path of guidance. It is the speech of Allah (S.A.W.) which no falsehood can approach from before it or from behind it."1 The mentor of traditionists, Muhammad ibn Ali al-Qummi, who is given the title "al-Saduq" [the truthful], says, "Our belief in as far as the Qur`an which was revealed by Allah Almighty to His Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) is concerned is that it is the one in existence among both branches of the Islamic nation [Sunnis and Shi`ahs], and it is what people have in circulation and nothing more. Anyone who claims that we [Shi`ahs] say anything more than this is a liar."2
The above is underscored by Prof. al-Bahinsawi, one of the intellectuals of Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun [the Muslim Brotherhood], who adds saying, "The Shi`ah Ja`fari Twelvers are of the view that anyone who distorts the Qur`an about which all the nation agrees since the dawn of Islam... The book [Qur`an] which exists among Ahl al-Sunnah is the same in existence at mosques and homes of the Shi`ahs." He goes on to say the following in the field of rebutting the claims of Zahir and a-Khateeb: "What is known among the Muslims is that the Qur`an has never suffered any distortion, and that what we have is all the Qur`an revealed to the greatest Prophet."3
As for Shaykh Muhammad al-Ghazali, he says the following in his book titled Difa` an al-`Aqeeda wal Shari`ah dhidd Mata`in al-Mustashriqeen (a defense of the faith and the Islamic legislative system against the charges of the Orientalists): "I heard someone at a scholarly meeting saying that the Shi`ahs have another Qur`an which is more and less than the well known Qur`an. I, therefore, said to him, `Where is this Qur`an? And why neither mankind nor the jinns have seen a copy of it throughout this lengthy history?
And why such a charge is created? Why should there be lies against people and against the wahi?`"4 As regarding the erroneous "traditions" upon which some people may depend and which claim that the Qur`an has been distorted and which exists among the Shi`ahs in the

books of hadith, these charges are totally rejected. They are indicted and rejected because their likes exist in the books which the Sunnis consider as containing authentic traditions. Al-Bukhari has traced a tradition to `A`isha saying, "The Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) heard a man reciting a [Qur`anic] chapter at night, so he said to him, `May Allah have mercy on him! He has reminded me of such-and-such a verse in such-and-such a chapter..."5 Of course, nobody can believe what this "tradition" means and which points to the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) NOT knowing the Qur`an in full by heart, or to his having forgotten some of its verses...! Following are proofs that they found a portion of Surat al-Tawba ONLY with Khuzaymah al-Ansari during the compilation of the Qur`an according to what al-Bukhari states in his Sahih: Zayd ibn Thabit has said, "When we recorded the tablets, I missed a verse from Surat al-Ahzab which I used to hear the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) recite and which I found with none except Khuzaymah al-Ansari whose testimony the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) equalled to that of two believers: `... Men who proved true to their promise to Allah...`"6] And in another narrative by Zayd ibn Thabit, the latter said, "... So I traced the Qur`an, collecting its text from sheets, shoulders and leaves and also from men`s memory till I found from Surat al-Tawba a couple of verses with Khuzaymah al-Ansari which I found with nobody else."7 So, how can one compromise this narrative with the fact that the Qur`an has been transmitted consecutively?! And among the numerous traditions recorded by al-Bukhari and other Sunni traditionists in their books of "Sahih" (authentic) traditions and "Musnads" (reliable sources) and which openly claim that the text of the Holy Qur`an is distorted is one narrated about caliph `Umar ibn al-Khattab, with the narrator relying on the authority of Abdullah Ibn Abbas as follows: "`Umar ibn al-Khattab went out. When I saw him coming, I said to Sa`id ibn Zayd ibn `Amr ibn Nafeel, `Tonight, he [`Umar] will say something which he never said since he became caliph. ` He did not like what I said and responded by saying, `What could he tell you what he never said before?` `Umar sat on the pulpit. Once the caller to the prayers finished calling the adhan, `Umar stood up then sat on the pulpit.

He praised Allah as He deserves then said, `Having said what I have said, I am going to make a statement which I am destined to say. I do not know; perhaps I am saying it before my demise. Anyone who understands it and who realizes its significance should disseminate it wherever his destination may be. And if one is afraid he will not realize it, I do not permit him to tell a lie about me. Allah sent Muhammad (S.A.W.) with the truth. He revealed the Book to him. Among what Allah revealed was Ayat al-Rajm [the verse of stoning], so we recited it, understood it and absorbed it. The Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) stoned, and we stoned after him.

I am afraid if a long period of time passes by, someone may say, `By Allah we do not find the

verse of stoning in the Book of Allah.` They will thus go astray by abandoning an obligation mandated by Allah. Stoning in the Book of Allah is right against married men or women once the evidence is established, or when there is a pregnancy, or when one confesses it."8 The other narrative, which is also recorded by al-Bukhari, explains that `Umar ibn al-Khattab wished to add that verse which he, according to his claim, was dropped by himself, but he was afraid of what people might say: "`Umar said, `Had it not been for the possibility that people may say that `Umar increased the text of the Book of Allah, I would have written the verse of stoning with my own hand and thus back what instruction the Prophet (S.A.W.) had had regarding stoning an adulterer in the presence of four witnesses.`"9] As for this alleged "verse," it supposedly says the following: "As for the mid-aged [sheikh] man or woman, if he or she commits adultery, you should absolutely stone them."10 Ibn Majah, too, has narrated the same in his Sahih. Since we unequivocally believe that the Qur`an in our hands has never suffered any diminution or addition, caliph `Umar must have been confused, and the source of this confusion may be the existence of the stoning verse not in the Holy Qur`an but in the Torah of the People of the Book as this becomes evident from the narrative of Ibn `Umar who says, "A Jew and a Jewess who had committed adultery were both brought to the Prophet (S.A.W.). He (S.A.W.) asked the Jews, `What do you do to them?` They said, `We blacken their faces and expose them to shame. ` The Prophet (S.A.W.) said, `Bring me the Torah and recite it if you are telling the truth.` They came with a one-eyed man of their own choice whom they asked to recite. When the man came to a certain place in the verse, he put his hand on it. The Prophet (S.A.W.) told him to raise his hand. When he did, the stoning verse became quite evident. The man said, `O Muhammad! They are to be stoned, but we have been hiding it among ourselves.` The Prophet (S.A.W.) ordered them stoned."11 What strengthens the possibility that `Umar was confused between the Wise Book of Allah and the Torah of the People of the Book is what al-Jaza`iri says in his book titled "This is my advice to every Shi`a man". He says the following: "... and how can such distorted and altered books be recited while the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) rebuked `Umar ibn al-Khattab holding in his hand a sheet of the Torah, so he (S.A.W.) rebukes him saying, `Have I not brought it [Islam] to you white and pure?!`? The Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) did not accept that `Umar should even look at one page of the Torah."12 It is also narrated that caliph `Umar had also said, "We used to recite the following in the Book of Allah: `If you turn away from your parents, it is apostasy if you turn away from your parents," or "It is apostasy in you if you turn away from your parents."13 It is not a secret that neither this verse nor its predecessor exists in the Book of Allah. As for Abdullah ibn Mas`ud, it is

narrated about him that he used to add both words "al-thakar" (the male) and "al-untha" (the female) to this sacred verse: "By the night as it conceals (the light)" (Qur`an, 92:1). `Alqamah has said, "... How does Abdullah recite `By the night as it conceals (the light)`? I recited to him the following: `By the night as it conceals (the light), and by the daytime when it manifests itself, and by the male and the female...` He said, `By Allah! [Thus did] the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) recite it to me; from his mouth to mine."14

Thus does al-Bukhari, who records this incident, let us fall into a new contradiction because he also narrates saying that the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) ordered the Muslims to learn how to recite the Qur`an from Abdullah ibn Mas`ud. For example, a narrative from Ibn `Umar says that the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) used to say, "Learn the recitation of the Qur`an from four men: Abdullah ibn Mas`ud...," thus starting by his name, or he said, "Learn the Qur`an from four men: Abdullah ibn Mas`ud, Salim slave of Abu Hudhayfah, Ubayy ibn Ka`b and Mu`adh ibn Jabal."15 So, how can the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) order us to learn how to recite the Qur`an from those who do not memorize it very well?! We leave the answer to this question to al-Bukhari, of course, and to those who follow in his footsteps and who believe everything in his Sahih.

As for Muslim, the same is found in him, too. `A`isha is quoted as having said, "From among what was revealed in the Qur`an this: `ten known sucklings.` The Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.) passed away and they were still recited as part of the Qur`an."16 This claim of `A`isha contains a clear answer to those who advocate narratives such as these have been fabricated; otherwise, what does she mean when she claims that the recitation of such verses went on despite the death of the Prophet (S.A.W.)?!

Abu al-Aswad quotes his father saying, "Abu Musa al-Ash`ari sent a message to those who recited the Qur`an in Basra, and they were three hundred men. From among what he said to them was this: `We used to recite a Chapter which we used to liken in its length and strength to [Surat] Bara`a, but I memorized from it only this: `Had the son of Adam had two valleys full of wealth, he would have desired a third, and nothing fills the stomach of the son of Adam except dust`."17

In the book titled Al-Itqan fi `Uloom al-Qur`an by al-Suyuti, it is stated that some narratives indicate that the Qur`an has only 112 suras (Chapters), or they add two other chapters: those of Hafd and of Khal`18 or other such narratives from which we believe we have cited enough.

Having stated all the above, is it fit for a Shi`ah to say that the Qur`an of the Sunnis is incomplete, or it has an addition, due to the narrative advocating the same in their books of hadith? Certainly not. The consensus of the Sunnis is to say that the text of the Qur`an has

never been altered.

As for the issue of the existence of narratives saying that such a text has been altered and which exist in books of "Sahih" (authentic) traditions, especially those recorded by al-Bukhari and Muslim and which the Sunnis have taken upon themselves to accept in their entirety in the pretext that all what is narrated in them is regarded by them as authentic, the interpretation of it is one of two possibilities without the existence of a third: 1) Such narratives are "authentic" but they contain confusion which took place to those who narrated them as is the case with the stoning chapter, or 2) These narratives are not authentic as is the case with the other narratives which we mentioned above. Thus, there is no alternative to reconsidering the labeling of both books by al-Bukhari and Muslim as the two "Sahih" (authentic) books.

How can we, then, explain such a rabid campaign undertaken by writers such as Zahir, al-Khateeb and their likes who accuse the Shi`ahs of distorting the text of the Qur`an because of the existence of weak traditions in their books of traditions which make such a claim and which they themselves reject especially since their likes are many traditions recorded by Sunni traditionists in their "Sahih" books?! One whose house is made of glass should not throw stones at others` houses.

Notes:

1 Muhammad Ridha al-Muzaffar, `Aqa`id al-Imamiyya, p. 41 (third edition).

2 I`tiqadat al-Saduq.

3 Al-Sunnah al-Muftara `Alayha, p. 60.

4 Difa` an al-`Aqeeda wal Shari`ah dhidd Mata`in al-Mustashriqeen.

5]Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Vol. 6, p. 508 in the book dealing with the merits of the Qur`an in a chapter about forgetting the text of the Qur`an.

6 Ibid., Vol. 6, p. 291 in the book of tafsir where "... so among them were those who died..., etc." is explained.

7 Ibid., Vol. 6, p. 162 in the book of tafsir in a chapter discussing "... A Messenger has come to you from your own selves..."

8 Ibid., Vol. 8, p. 539 in the book of fighters from among the people of apostasy in a chapter about stoning a woman who became pregnant out of wedlock.

9 Ibid., Vol. 9, p. 212 in the book of Ahkam (religious injunctions) in a chapter about testimony before a judge.

10 Ibn Dawud, Sunan.

11 Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Vol. 9, p. 476 in the book of Tawhid in a chapter about what can be interpreted of the Torah.

12 Abu Bakr al-Jaza`iri, This is my Advice to Every Shi`ah man.

13 Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Vol. 8, p. 540 in the book of fighters from among the people of apostasy in a chapter about stoning a woman who became pregnant through adultery.

14 Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 71 in the book dealing with the virtues of the sahabah in a chapter about the merits of Abdullah ibn Mas`ud.

15 Ibid., Vol. 5, p. 71 in the book dealing with the virtues of the sahabah in a chapter about the merits of Abdullah ibn Mas`ud.

16 Muslim, Sahih, Vol. 2, p. 1075 (edition of Dar Ihya` al-Turath al-`Arabi) in the book of nursing babies in a chapter about prohibition in five sucklings.

17 Ibid., Vol. 2, p. 726 in the book of zakat (edition of Dar Ihya` al-Turath al-`Arabi) in a chapter titled "Had the son of Adam had two valleys full of wealth, he would have desired a third".

18 Al-Suyuti, Al-Itqan fi `Uloom al-Qur`an, p. 65