10521 - Claim that the Sunnah cannot be trusted

the question

Some people reject the Sunnah on the basis that there are many weak and fabricated ahaadeeth and that the fabrications of many liars weaken the Sunnah and make it such that it cannot be trusted. What is your opinion about this claim?

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

This is the view of some heretics and misguided people, both in the past and nowadays. In modern times, those who expressed this view include Saalih Abu Bakr in his book al-Adwaa' al-Qur'aaniyyah; Husayn Ahmad Ameen in Daleel al-Muslim al-Hazeen; Ahmad Ameen in Fajr al-Islam; 'Abd-Allaah al-Na'eem in Nahwa Tatweer al-Tashree' al-Islaami; Sa'eed al-'Ashmaawi in Haqqeeqat al-Hijaab; Saalih al-Wardaani in his misleading book Rihlati min al-Sunnah ila al-Shee'ah; 'Abd al-Jawaad Yaaseen in al-Sultah fi'l-Islam; Nasr Abu Zayd in Imaam al-Shaafa'i; Zakariya 'Abbaas Dawood in Ta'ammulaat fi'l-Hadeeth; Hawlat Nahr in Diraasaat Muhammadiyyah; Maurice Bucaille in Diraasat al-Kutub al-Muqaddisah; Murtada al-'Askar in Khamsoon wa Mi'ah Sahaabi Mukhtalaq; Dr. Mustafa Mahmood in Maqaalaat 'an al-Shafaa'ah.

We say: it is true that there were fabricators and liars who made up words and attributed them to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), but the matter is not quite so simple as imagined by those doubters who also spread doubts among others. They are unaware of the facts about how the Muslims took care of the Sunnah. Alongside the fabricators, there were great numbers of narrators who were trustworthy and highly skilled, and a large number of scholars who surrounded the hadeeths of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) with a strong barrier which was difficult for the liars to penetrate. By means of their vast knowledge and deep insight, these muhaddithoon (scholars of hadeeth) were able to spot the liars and understand their intentions and motives, and they were able to detect everything that

was falsely attributed to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him). These fabricators were not given free rein to do as they wished with the ahaadeeth of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him), and they were given no room to penetrate the ranks of trustworthy narrators of ahaadeeth without being detected.

Who else exposed the lies of these kaafirs, heretics and extreme innovators?

Who were the ones who gave us the definition of what is fabricated, the reasons for fabrication, different types of fabrications and the signs by which a fabricated report may be recognized? Who wrote so many books on this issue?

They are the guardians of Islam, the vicegerents and troops of Allaah on His earth. They are the brilliant scholars of whom Haaroon al-Rasheed spoke when he arrested a heretic and ordered that he be executed. The heretic said, “Why are you executing me?” Haaroon al-Rasheed said, “To rid the people of you.” The heretic said: “O Ameer al-Mu’mineen, what will you do about the thousand ahaadeeth – according to one report, four thousand ahaadeeth – which I have fabricated and spread among you, in which I made what is halaal haraam and what is haraam halaal, of which the Prophet uttered not one letter?” Haaroon al-Rasheed said to him: “What will you do, O enemy of Allaah, about Abu Ishaaq al-Fazaari and ‘Abd-Allaah ibn al-Mubaarak? They will go through them and sift them letter by letter.” (Tadhkirat al-Huffaaz by al-Dhahabi, 1/273; Taareekh al-Khulafaa’ by al-Suyooti, p. 174).

Professor Muhammad Asad said: “The existence of fabricated ahaadeeth cannot be taken to prove that the entire system of hadeeth is not to be trusted, because these fabricated ahaadeeth never deceived the muhadditheen as some European critics claimed, oversimplifying the matter, and as was echoed by some who claim to be Muslims.” (al-Islam ‘ala Muftaraq al-Tareeq, p. 96)

We will end this discussion by quoting what was said by Imaam Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah: Imaam Abu’l-Muzaffar al-Sam’aani said: “If they say: there are too many reports in the hands of the people and they have become confused, we say: no one is confused except those who are ignorant. Those who have knowledge of them (the reports) check them as stringently as those who

deal with money check dirhams and dinars. So they single out (and discard) the false reports and keep the good reports. If there happens to be a narrator who made a mistake, this will not go unnoticed by the brilliant scholars of hadeeth. These scholars listed the mistakes made in both the isnaad (chain of narrators) and matn (texts) of reports; so you can see that for each narrator they made a list of the mistakes that he had made and the letters that he had mispronounced. If the mistakes of the narrators – in both the isnaad and the matn – did not go unchecked, then how could the fabricated ahaadeeth manufactured by the heretics have slipped past those brilliant scholars? How could people have narrated ahaadeeth from heretics without the scholars noticing? That is the view of some heretics, but no one would say such a thing except one who is ignorant, misguided, an innovator and a liar who wants to undermine the saheeh ahaadeeth and true reports of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and confuse ignorant people by means of this lie. There is no evidence for rejecting the reports of the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) that is weaker or more impossible than this. The one who voices this view deserves to be silenced and expelled from the Muslim lands.