

The Blessed Sunnah: The Imam (Khaleefah) is a Shield

The Messenger of Allah (saw) said، «مَنْ أَطَاعَنِي فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللَّهَ وَمَنْ عَصَانِي فَقَدْ عَصَى اللَّهَ وَمَنْ يُطِعْ الْأَمِيرَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَنِي وَمَنْ يَعُصِ الْأَمِيرَ فَقَدْ عَصَانِي وَإِنَّمَا الْإِمَامُ جُنَّةٌ يُقَاتَلُ مِنْ وَرَائِهِ وَيَنْتَقَى بِهِ فَإِنْ أَمَرَ بِتَقْوَى اللَّهِ وَعَدَلَ «Whoever obeys, me obeys Allah and whoever disobeys me has disobeyed Allah. Whoever obeys the Amir obeys me and whoever disobeys the Amir disobeys me. The Imam alone is a shield behind whom they fight and are protected by. If he enjoins fear of Allah, the Exalted and Glorious, and dispenses justice, there will be reward for him. If he enjoins otherwise, it will count against him.» [Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim]

Ibn Khaldun (ابن خلدون) stated in his Introduction to History (مقدمة ابن خلدون) that، "وإذ قد بيننا حقيقة هذا المنصب، وأنه نيابة عن صاحب الشريعة في حفظ الدين وسياسة الدنيا به، تسمى خلافة وإمامة، والقائم به "Where we have already explained the reality of this post. It is regarding the responsible in Shariah law for preserving the Deen and governing the politics of the world by the Deen. It is called a Khilafah and an Imamah. The one in charge of it is a Khaleefah and an Imam."

Imam al-Nawawi (النووي) stated in al-Rawdat al-Talibeen (روضة الطالبين) that، "يجوز أن يقال للإمام الخليفة، والإمام، وأمير المؤمنين" "It is permitted to call the Imam, the Khaleefah, the Imam or the Amir of the Believers."

Imam an-Nawawi wrote in his Commentary of Sahih Muslim (شرح صحيح مسلم) that، "الإمام جنة أي، كالمستتر، لأنه يمنع العدو من أذى المسلمين، ويمنع الناس بعضهم من بعض، ويحمي بيضة الإسلام، وينقيه "…because he is like a covering protection. He protects the Muslims from the enemy that harms them. He protects some people from others. He also safeguards the sanctified entity of Islam. The people seek protection within him and they fear his power."

He continued to say "وَمَعْنَى يُقَاتَلُ مِنْ وَرَائِهِ أَي يُقَاتَلُ مَعَهُ الْكُفَّارُ وَالْبُغَاةُ وَالْخَوَارِجُ وَسَائِرُ أَهْلِ الْفُسَادِ وَالظُّلْمِ" "The meaning of "behind whom they fight" is that they fight the kuffar, traitors, rebels and all the people of sedition and oppression, absolutely."

Imam ibn Hajr Al-Asqalani (العسقلاني) said in his Commentary on Bukhari, Fath al-Baari (فتح الباري) that، "إِنَّمَا الْإِمَامُ جُنَّةٌ بِضَمِّ الْجِيمِ أَي سِتْرَةٌ لِأَنَّهُ يَمْنَعُ الْعَدُوَّ مِنْ أَدَى الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَيَكْفِي أَدَى بَعْضِهِمْ "The Imam alone is a shield (Junnah)," has a "u" vowel sound on the letter jeem. It means a protective shield, because he prevents the enemy from harming the Muslims. He prevents them from harming each other. What is meant by the Imam is every ruler that takes care of the affairs of the people by Islam."

Imam Sayuti (السيوطي) stated in his Commentary of Muslim (الديباج على صحيح مسلم بن) "إِنَّمَا الْإِمَامُ جُنَّةٌ أَي سَائِرُ لِمَنْ خَلْفَهُ وَمَانِعٌ لِحُلُلٍ يَعْزُضُ لِمُصَلَّتِهِمْ بِسُهُوٍ أَوْ مُرُورٍ مَارَ كَالْجَنَةِ وَهِيَ التَّرْسُ، "The Imam alone is a shield" which means he protects those behind him. He prevents any disruption that would expose their Salah to distraction or trespassing. He is like a shield. It is the armored shield behind which he protects, and he prevents the harmful thing from reaching."

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