

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَرْفَعُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ

وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ

**Allāh exalts those of you who
believe and those who are given
knowledge to high ranks**

Holy Qur'ān (58 : 11)

MESSAGE OF THAQALAYN

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1. To provide a forum for scholars to make analytical studies of Islamic topics and themes.
2. To advance the cause of better understanding of the Qur'ān and the Ahl al-Bayt's ('a) contribution to Islam.
3. To publish English translations of Arabic and Persian works of Muslim scholars.
4. To endeavour to find Islamic answers to questions relating to the contemporary social, political, and moral problems.

* * * * *

Scholars and writers from all over the world are invited to contribute to this journal.

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SYSTEM OF TRANSLITERATION OF ARABIC CHARACTERS

CONSONANTS:

ء	'	س	s	ل	l
ب	b	ش	sh	م	m
ت	t	ص	s	ن	n
ث	th	ض	z	هـ	h
ج	j	ط	t	و	w
ح	h	ظ	z	ی	y
خ	kh	ع	'	Persian Letters	
د	d	غ	gh	پ	p
ذ	dh	ف	f	چ	ch
ر	r	ق	q	ژ	zh
ز	z	ک	k	گ	g

VOWELS:

Long:	ا	ā	Short:	ـِ	a	Doubled	ـِی	iyy (final from i)	
	و	ū		ـُ	u		ـُو	uww (final from ū)	
	ی	ī		ـِ	i		Diphthongs:	ـِو	au or aw
				ـِ				ـِی	ay or ai

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The Message of *Hajj* of the Leader of the Islamic Revolution

**In the Name of Allah,
the Compassionate, the Merciful**

The assemblage of Muslims in millions during the *Hajj* pilgrimage is a unique and wonderful phenomenon. Muslims from all over the world and from all walks of life gather together during these days at the House of Allah and in the birthplace of Islam, where the great prophet was born, for performing these symbolic rites. During these splendid rituals Muslims learn how to tie their hearts to Allah, how to stay together soul and body, how to rally around the axis of *tawhīd* (monotheism), how to strive (*sa'y*) in unison, how to dispel the Satan, disavow infidels and evil forces, recite, pray, supplicate and prostrate before divine glory, and feel dignity and honour under the light of Islam. The lessons we learn from the *Hajj* rituals are about compassion, togetherness, fraternity, steadfastness in the face of hardships and against enemies, freedom from all forms of egotism and selfishness, and joining the ocean of divine grandeur.

Hajj symbolizes the model of behaviour the Ummah must adopt to achieve happiness. *Hajj* can be briefly interpreted as a purposeful and conscious journey of the entire Ummah in the same direction. Its theme is remembering the Almighty, and staying in harmony together. Its goal is to build a solid spiritual base for mankind to live a life of happiness and dignity:

Allah has made the Ka'bah, the Sacred House, a Sanctuary for the people, and the sacred month and the offerings and the (animals with the) garlands. (al-Mā'idah, 5:97)

The Muslim Ummah must seek inspirations from the model of *Hajj* in building the foundations of an all-out and purposeful movement. This is a crucial responsibility of all Muslim peoples and states.

Over the past century, Islamic states have endured a life of pain and anguish. Colonialism and expansionist world powers inflicted heavy losses on Muslims. They looted their wealth and resources, making them the target of their most horrific oppressions and ambitions.

As a result of these encroachments, Muslims felt captive to colonial powers economically, politically and culturally. During this period of sufferings, colonialists benefited much from the material and human resources of Muslim lands through war, brutality, violence and occupations.

After long years, Islamic awakening took shape and movements began to emerge. The flags of liberation started to rise throughout the entire Islamic world, opening new horizons for freedom. Finally, Islam gained victory, as the Islamic Republic system was established in Iran, and a new chapter was opened in the history of Islam.

Obviously, world powers, with all their material resources and destructive forces, will never easily submit to truth and righteousness. Muslim peoples still will have a long painful way

to go. However, the future ahead of us is bright and the outlook is promising. If we follow this path persistently with vigour and perseverance, we can save the future generations from the humiliation of political, economic and cultural captivity and the time will come when they can experience a life of dignity and freedom under Islam.

This is the path to knowledge and scientific campaigns. This is the path to political struggles, and this is the path of fighting for and defending our cause. And in these campaigns, Muslims become the defenders of dignity seeking to restore their rights. It is human conscience, which consciously and uncompromisingly endorses the *jihād* for freedom, and it is the divine tradition that gives them the promise of final victory.

Permission (to fight) is given to those upon whom war is made because they have been oppressed, and most surely Allah is well able to assist them. (al-Hajj, 22: 39)

The World Arrogance, which is a complicated network of oil and arms cartels, international Zionism, and puppet regimes, has now felt the threat from the spread of Islamic movements. It has hysterically mobilized its forces to attack Islamic states. The manifestations of new offensives involving political, propaganda, military and terrorist campaigns, can be clearly seen in the behaviour, words and aggressive remarks of the military cliques ruling the United States and the Zionist regime.

Oppressed and blood-smeared Palestine continues to be the target of the most barbaric and brutal crimes of the Zionist usurpers. The Palestinians are being massacred, tortured and humiliated, with their property being pillaged and their houses demolished, only because they have now found the courage and the motives to fight for the restoration of their inalienable and downtrodden rights after half a century.

The people of Iraq are facing war threats, because the United States needs to be militarily present in Iraq besides the borders of Palestine, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Syria, in order to dominate the entire energy resources in the region, and control all Middle East countries.

During the past year, Afghanistan has suffered heavily with bombs, missiles and weapons of mass destruction poured on the Afghan population by the American and British forces. They have been forced to tolerate the bitterness of a foreign occupation, because the illegitimate interests of the United States have been defined in this way.

There is no limit for the greed and ambitions of this inhuman arrogant network. If in the past half a century the US considered Latin America as its backyard, now it has proclaimed itself as the undisputable ruler and dictator of the entire Islamic world. All international strategies and plans of the Americans suggest the same megalomaniac, yet stupid claims.

There is no doubt that the United States and its allies will fail to achieve their goals, and once more the world will witness the collapse of another empire which is intoxicated with its evil power and whims. We saw how they miscalculated the situation in Afghanistan and Palestine. However, unless the Muslim Ummah – both states and peoples – make wise and bold decisions, once again it will suffer heavy losses and pains.

Following the September 11th, 2001 attacks, which still remain a mystery, the United States staged a new round of its hysteric moves using its propaganda machines. It started its campaigns by flying the flag of democracy and anti-terrorism, uttering harsh rhetorics and admonishing Islamic states on the consequences of the development of weapons of mass-destruction or chemical weapons. Does it not think that Muslims

may have questions to ask: what government or companies gave all these weapons to the Ba‘thist of regime Iraq? You try to justify military action because you keep saying that Iraq had 19,000 chemical bombs in its arsenals, used 13,000 of those bombs against Iranians, and is now hiding the remaining 6,000 bombs. Who has provided all these chemical bombs and facilities for the regime of Iraq? Is there anybody else other than you and your allies who created this catastrophe in the history of mankind?

Does it ever think that it cannot deceive Muslim peoples with its rhetorics against terrorism and against an unknown group, while supporting widely the Israelis, who have proven to be the most barbaric and dreadful terrorists of the world. With these costly campaigns and hysteria, the United States has now become the symbol of lie, deceit and deception before the public opinion in the entire Islamic world.

The United States, with all its arrogance and illusions, has not been able to realize its goals in Palestine and Afghanistan, while suffering heavy spiritual and material losses. And *In Shā’ Allah*, the course of events will continue in the same direction.

The US says it is going to overthrow Saddam Hussein and the Ba‘thist regime. It is lying. Its real intention is to control OPEC, dominate oil fields in the region, provide greater support to the Zionist regime, and redouble its conspiracies against the Islamic Republic of Iran, Syria and Saudi Arabia. The people of Iraq – their dignity, wealth and honour – will be the first victim of such a scenario. If the Iraqi people and neighbouring countries remain vigilant, the alien forces cannot accomplish their goals, *In Shā’ Allah*.

The World Arrogance knows that the lofty teachings of Islam are the main source of inspirations for all Islamic

resistance or movements towards freedom. Therefore, the enemies started worldwide psychological war against Muslims and Islam after September 11th, 2001. Although, there was strong evidence suggesting the involvement of the underground Zionist networks in those terrorist acts, they never hesitated to point their fingers at Muslims and Islam. A number of Muslims from the United States, Afghanistan and other places were taken captive, tortured, and sent to horrific prison cells. Charges against them were never proven, and no names ever announced. But, the psychological war against Muslims and Islam continues and it seems it will not stop in the foreseeable future.

Islam is the religion of freedom and justice. Real popular rule is a religious one, that must be founded on the strong pillars of faith and religious responsibility, as it is evident in Islamic Iran. The kind of rule we promote is much more reliable, sincere and popular than the western democracies, such as the one in the United States. The democracy that Americans claim they want to offer to Islamic and Arab states will certainly bring the same devastation and losses as their missiles and bombs did. Even a single date offered by the enemy can be contaminated by poison. The Muslim Ummah in Africa, the Middle East, and the West Asia has experienced all these agonies and pains over the years.

At this sensitive juncture and at this crucial time, the Muslim Ummah needs, ever than before, to seek blessings from the great pilgrimage of *Hajj*; a movement that embraces our purpose and aspirations; a movement of awareness and universality that guides us by the lofty principles and teachings of the Holy Qur'ān on the path of Islam, as Allah says:

Those who believe fight in the way of Allah, and those who disbelieve fight in the way of Satan. Fight therefore against the friends of Satan; surely the strategy of Satan is weak. (al-Nisā', 4: 76)

Allah also says:

Moses said to his people: Ask help from Allah and be patient; surely the land is Allah's; He causes such of His servants to inherit it as He pleases, and the end is for those who guard (against evil). (al-A'rāf, 7: 128)

***Wa al-Salāmu 'Alaykum
wa Rahmatullāh wa Barakātuh
Sayyid 'Ali Khāmene'i,
Dhū al-Hijjah 5, 1423,
February 7, 2003.***

The Philosophy of the Martyrdom of Imam Husayn ('a)

By: Rasūl Ja'fariyān

Translated by Zahrā' Shujā' Khānī

As a sacred religious movement and as a revolutionary political step the epic of Karbalā is the most crucial religio-political uprising in the political culture of the Shi'ah. This movement aimed at the revival of the religious laws, the elimination of religious and political deviation, and (as some believe) the replacement of the Umayyid regime with the Alawid rule and Imamate. As far as the achievement of its objectives is concerned, the Karbalā movement (depending on the perspective) could be said to have been successful from one angle and unsuccessful from another – a political setback, if it is said that its aim was to solely eliminate the rule of the Umayyids and to establish Alawid rule; and a spiritual victory if we took into view that it did succeed in establishing the religious and the fundamental spiritual objectives in the Islamic society. However, if one does not consider the elimination of the Umayyid rule as one of the objectives of Imam Husayn ('a), the concept of political setback no longer holds any meaning.

The Karbalā movement could be considered as a feasible political endeavour for returning the power of the state to the household of Imam ‘Alī (‘a). This matter however requires a deeper explanation. There is not the slightest doubt that following the passing away of the Prophet of Allah (S), Imam Ali (‘a) found himself deprived of his rightful position, but preferred to keep silent for certain reasons. After the death of ‘Umar bin al-Khattāb, it was expected that his rights would be restored to him and, therefore, his followers like Miqdād bin Aswad and ‘Ammār bin Yāsir made serious efforts in this direction but these efforts did not bear much fruit. Consequently, during the period of ‘Uthmān bin ‘Affān, the Imam (‘a) could foresee that under the new circumstances the leadership of the society faced a gloomy future. At the same time, the insistence of the people – after the murder of ‘Uthmān – gave rise to optimism. Nevertheless, his hopes for – establishing the Qur’ānic concept of – the leadership of the Ummah, in its truest sense, despite his tireless struggle during the four year and nine month period of his rule, were stifled. The efforts of Imam Hasan (‘a), too, were soon crushed and a 20-year period until the death of Mu‘āwiyah lay in wait. Imam Husayn (‘a) patiently endured this period – the first ten years along with his brother Imam Hasan (‘a) – although he did raise political objections against Mu‘āwiyah from time to time, and particularly, on the issue of the killing of the prominent adherents of the Prophet’s Ahl al-Bayt (‘a).

Talks of Yazīd taking on as his successor were raised during the last years of the dishonourable life of Mu‘āwiyah – against the clauses of the treaty with Imam Hasan (‘a). Imam Husayn (‘a) protested even though there was not much hope and moreover, as the Imam, he could not remain silent.

After Yazīd assumed power and demanded allegiance from him, Imam Husayn (‘a) left Medina in protest and set out

for Mecca. It was at this point that some rays of hope appeared to shine on the eastern horizon. Although Iraq had in the past been the cause of disappointment and let-down, the fresh rays could not be ignored; and if at all any change could be expected it would have to be from Iraq and not from Syria or Hijāz. The important question was: would it be possible to overthrow the Umayyid regime with the help of the Iraqī Muslims, among whom the number of Shi'ahs was substantial, and to establish an Alawid rule? From the look of it, it appeared that the widespread support of the people of Iraq – the news of which had reached the Imam ('a) – spoke encouragingly of such a possibility to some extent. However, when Imam Husayn ('a) arrived in Kufa the conditions had changed and he was faced with the army of Ibn Ziyād who insisted on his surrender and on bidding allegiance to Yazīd, which the Imam ('a) firmly declined to do, as a result of which, he and his handful of companions were forced to martyrdom in Karbalā.

To explain the above discussion in other words, the Karbalā movement could also be called a political endeavour towards the establishment of Alawid rule in a society that was considered to be an Islamic society!

All the prominent figures of the Tālibiyyīn family, except Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah, 'Ali bin al-Husayn ('a), 'Abdullāh bin Ja'far and a few others, were martyred in Karbalā, revealing what could be considered as a very dangerous move to eliminate the entire household of the Prophet of Islam (S). The question that now lurked was regarding what the remaining members of this family would have to do. If one is familiar with the life-history of Imam 'Ali bin al-Husayn ('a) – popularly known as Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) – it would not be hard to realize how the Imam ('a) had to bid farewell to any military policies and it becomes clear that he saw no room for any politico-military move under the given conditions. Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a)

neither deliberated upon waging an uprising nor did he cooperate with the anti-Umayyid and the pro-Alawid politico-military movements, although he might have had sympathy for them. He adhered to this policy to such an extent that he instead managed to launch an academic campaign and benefited others with his vast religious knowledge. It is apparent that had there been even the slightest suspicion of the Imam ('a) being involved in any political move, people like Ibn Shihāb Zuhārī would not have praised him to the extent that they did. Despite this stand adopted by him, The 4th Imam ('a) continued to remain the rightful Imam of the Shi'ahs and his *fiqh*, his supplications, and his personality were acclaimed among them to be exemplary within the conception of the Imamate.

Following the martyrdom of Imam 'Alī bin al-Husayn ('a), the Shi'ite community was divided into two groups. One group followed the Imam's ('a) approach while the other group believed in a revolutionary approach. While the leadership of the first group lay with 4th Imam's ('a) oldest son, Imam Muhammad al-Bāqir ('a) – the testamentary legatee – who was later martyred in 114 or 117 AH, the other group thought that the leader was his younger son Zayd bin 'Alī who was martyred at around forty years of age in 122 AH. Zayd respected his brother – as the 5th Imam – but at the same time seriously believed in a revolutionary movement. At the time when he began his military move, his brother Imam Bāqir ('a) had already departed from this world and the leadership of his followers lay with his son Imam Ja'far al-Sādiq ('a). The Shi'ite mood was divided with some supporting Zayd and believing in a revolutionary move, the majority, however, followed Imam Sādiq ('a), who continued to follow the policies of Imam Zayn al-'Abidin ('a) and Imam Bāqir ('a). Although Imam Sādiq ('a) and his followers had great respect for Zayd and even considered the intention and motive behind his uprising as pure,

they did not however see any wisdom in taking revolutionary action under the prevalent conditions. According to Imam Sadiq ('a), who was now the leader of the Imāmi Shi'ahs, such moves would only end in martyrdom.

An interesting point is that Zayd had discovered a lack of support from a section of the Shi'ahs and due to a shortage of supporters, he invited all the Muslim groups to participate in his uprising. There are many evidences that people from all sects were active in his uprising and sympathized with his approach.

This issue of the participation of non-Shi'ites in the uprising fell outside the general line that the Shi'ahs normally maintained for themselves. Following the Karbalā incident, the Shi'ahs had lost faith in what was called the common Muslim populace. In other words, they considered them as deviants from the original Islamic path. At this juncture, Zayd might not have stressed this conviction since the *Khawārij*, the *Murji'ah*, and the *Mu'tazilah* participated in his uprising; and even if any of the Imāmi Shi'ahs had intended to be the *ashāb al-sayf* (lit. the men of sword), they would have been left with no choice but to follow the path of Zayd. On the other hand, the limited Shi'ite population was in no position to initiate any widespread movement.

The problem that lay ahead was that if a movement were to be initiated along with the cooperation of all the Muslim sects not only would the stability of such a movement be subject to doubt but it would also demand that the Shi'ites move out of their basic paradigms of belief and jurisprudence. Moreover, even if such a movement were to succeed in establishing a rulership, it would not be left with much future choice but to end up as the Abbasid were to do – in future. It is well-known that although the Abbasids had initiated a Shi'ite movement, after gaining power it was not possible for them (chiefly because of their lack of legitimacy compared to the Alawids) to establish a

Shi'ite rule in a society loosely made up of the common populace. The only thing they could manage to do was to coerce the society into pursuing another path through extremely violent means.

Having said this, the question that faces us now is: how and why the Imāmi Shi'ahs, in spite of preferring to be known as the *ashāb al-Imāmah* rather than as the *ashāb al-sayf* managed to keep alive the revolutionary spirit of the Karbalā movement? As regards the followers of Zayd (later to be called the *Zaydiyyah*), Karbalā was the beginning of a revolutionary-military movement that culminated in the movements of Zayd and his son Yahyā. However, the question that remains is: what was the interpretation given by the Imāmi Shi'ahs to the Karbalā uprising?

It is supposed that there were two basic approaches towards the Karbalā incident with several other intermediate approaches leaning towards either of these two main ones. While according to one of these basic approaches, the Karbalā incident was related exclusively to the person of Imam Husayn ('a) who had in mind certain specific objectives, as per the second approach, the Karbalā movement was of a political nature and was initiated either for the purpose of overthrowing the Umayyid rulership or was launched with some other political objectives in consideration. Our aim in the course of this discussion is to throw light upon the causes that led to the popularity of the Sufi interpretation of the Karbalā movement. For now we would need to admit that whenever the Shi'ahs were faced with, either internal or external problems, one of these two interpretations became predominant. At this point we will put aside the historical approach in analysing this development and will focus mainly on the intellectual themes.

Sentimentality and a Political Interpretation

One of the dimensions of the Karbalā incident is its sentimental angle. There is no doubt that with the martyrdom of more than sixteen members of the household of the Prophet (S) and the brutal nature of the incident, the Karbalā episode inflicted a deep wound in the heart of the Shi'ite community and the sentimental effects of that incident immediately manifested within the Shi'ites. The *Tawwābīn* (Penitents) were the first group to have been affected by this aspect of the incident and since they considered themselves guilty for their earlier actions – of failing to come to the Imam's help in Karbalā' – in this case they chose the path of martyrdom without any clear political aspirations. It is known that before leaving Kufa for Syria, they visited the grave of Imam Husayn ('a) and spent several days mourning bitterly for him. This was indeed a remarkable phenomenon even in the society of those times. In any case, the martyrdom of more than sixteen members of the household of the Prophet (S) and that too in such an exceptionally gruesome manner was hard to bear and, thus, the grief that ensued planted itself as a permanent phenomenon within the hearts of the Shi'ites. Considering the importance that the Imams ('a) gave to the mourning for Imam Husayn ('a) and to visiting his tomb, it is not hard to understand that the sentimental dimension of the Karbalā incident carved a niche for itself rapidly within the Shi'ah community and even attracted the attention of some Sunni groups; and gradually the custom of the annual '*Ashūrā*' mourning ceremonies took shape. The Shi'ite literature, too, became an elegy-based literature under the impact of this incident and the other gruesome incidents that were inflicted upon the Shi'ahs (both Zaydi and Imāmi).

Thus, it would be important to trace the effects of this sentimental-literary move in the Shi'ah community. Since then the name of Imam Husayn ('a) became inevitably attached with

mourning and the *'Ashūrā* incident came to be considered as the most significant tragedy of history. Mourning and visiting the blessed tomb of the Imam ('a) promised unlimited *thawāb* (Divine reward). This sentimental angle gradually grew in dimension and the martyrdom anniversaries of the other Imams ('a), too, came to be considered as days of mourning.

A review of the sentimental dimensions of the Karbalā incident could help us to shed more light on the subject under discussion. Our question was regarding what was the cause of the political and the Sufi interpretation of the Karbalā incident and which of these two approaches had a stronger hold among the Shi'ah community. There is no doubt that giving importance to the sentimental aspect of an incident could indirectly keep the memories of that incident alive and in some ways transfer its political importance to the future generations. However, it should be kept in mind that this kind of an approach would not directly help in arriving at any specific political interpretation. The purpose of arriving at a direct political interpretation would be to make Imam Husayn's ('a) movement a model to be repeated. But then such an interpretation would not be commensurate with the notion of considering that movement as unique in its nature and effect.

The Two Experiences of Peace and Revolt

The other point to be taken into consideration is that according to the Imāmi Shi'ah different and diverse actions taken by all the Imams ('a) are all of equal religious validity. Prior to the Karbalā incident, the Shi'ite community had experienced Imam Hasan's ('a) peace treaty. The specific conditions of those days called for a compromise with the tyrannical rule (of Mu'āwiyah). Moreover, if we took into consideration the arguments relating to the differences in the general conditions that prevailed within the Islamic society

during the two different periods of Imam Hasan's ('a) peace treaty and Imam Husayn's ('a) uprising, we would certainly be left at least with an understanding for the need and wisdom of the two diverse policies during the two different periods. Although such varying decisions are logical and rational by their very nature, the question that arises is that: which of the two policies were repeated by the other Imams ('a) in the following periods? As stated earlier, following the revolutionary Karbalā movement, the infallible Imams ('a) adopted a peaceful strategy whereas the Zaydi leaders proceeded on the basis of the revolutionary stance of the Karbalā movement. The purpose here is not to make an evaluation of the outcomes of these two different approaches, the intention is rather to recognize why the following Imams ('a) opted apparently for a peaceful strategy rather than a revolutionary one. This is an undeniable fact that history testifies. At the same time, it is necessary to pay attention to the fact that the adoption of the peaceful policies by the Imams ('a) did not mean that they gave consent to the legitimacy of the rule of the time, nor did it in any way imply that they had given up their rights towards the official and political leadership of the society. Rather, it only meant that they did not find it feasible to resort to military and revolutionary means in the given conditions. A similar type of experience can be witnessed in the life of the Shi'ite scholars and jurists during different periods through history. To get a better glimpse of this experience, attention should be paid to the arguments between Shaykh Ibrāhim Qatifi and Muhaqqiq Karakī over the issue of cooperating and collaborating with the newly established Safawid rule (in Iran at the start of the 16th century CE) in which Muhaqqiq Karakī bases his reasons for cooperation with the Safawid government on the historical experience of Imam Hasan ('a).¹

Having explained the above points it is now possible to arrive at another conclusion on the political and Sufi interpretations of the Karbalā incident, that is, the adoption of such a policy could reduce the importance of the political interpretation of the Karbalā movement and instead add to the importance of its Sufi interpretation.

What needs to be emphasized here is that the aim of this paper is not to discuss the characteristics of the policies adopted by the Imams (‘a) for in that case we would have to mark two distinct periods in the policies adopted by them viz., the period of academic and scholarly activities that continued until the times of Imam Sādiq (‘a) and the period of the *wikālat* system (system of representation) that began during the days of Imam Mūsā al-Kāzim (‘a). Prior to this, the Abbasids had begun the system of sending ‘*Dā’īs*’ – a system in which they would invite people to religiosity – which was also practiced by the Imāmī Shi‘ites as well as the Ismā‘ilis. But, like the Zaydiyyah, these two movements, too, were never distinguished as the periods of ‘academic and scholarly activities’.

The Experience of Politics or Culture

It should be noted that since the policy adopted by the Imams (‘a) was to indulge in cultural activities and to avoid any serious involvement in politics – mainly for the purpose of forming a Shi‘ite community, which they did manage to form, protect, and lead in those days – the Imāmī Shi‘ites did not give any credibility to the ruling powers and instead awaited the reappearance of the 12th Imam (‘a), who is popularly known as the Mahdī al-Qā‘im (‘a), without feeling any need to get directly involved in politics. Later on, based on the policy of *taqiyyah* (dissimulation) and also as a general policy adopted by them from the time of the Imams (‘a) in order to penetrate into the caliphate system, gradually the Shi‘ites began to gain proximity

with the rulers. The outcome of this trend was that despite its significant political background, the Shi'ahs gradually came to lean towards mysticism or at least their *fiqh* became devoid of any politics. Thus, the question that arises is: how Imam Husayn's ('a) martyrdom would be interpreted under such conditions? Was there any other alternative but the upsurge in the Sufi interpretations of the philosophy behind this incident? In this regard, Hamid 'Ināyat a contemporary Iranian writer expresses his view in the following words (this point of view should, however, be taken into consideration with due caution):

With the increasing inclination of the Shi'ites towards the compromising policy of *taqiyyah* and their acceptance of the ruling system, the issue of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn ('a) as being a sacrificial move for the *Ummah*, was interpreted by the revolutionary Shi'ahs as a move that breathed strength into their struggle. At the same time, mourning and weeping over the incident rather than relating to it as the source of political awareness, popularly became the only recognized objective of Imam Husayn's ('a) movement and struggle. This trend can notably be observed from the titles of most of the *Maqtals* and the narrations written on the Karbalā episode, viz., the *Miftāh al-Bukā'* (The Keys to Tears), *Tufān al-Bukā'* (The Storm of Tears), *Muhīt al-Bukā'* (The Ocean of Tears), *Muthir al-Ahzān* (The Evoker of Sorrows), *Luhūf* (Height of Grief). Interestingly, one rarely comes across a narration of the incident, suggesting gallant retribution; and the overall inclination is to render a lamenting, elegy like narration of the incidents that took place in Karbalā.²

What needs to be mentioned here is that throughout Shi'ite history there have been people who have emphasized on the political aspect of the Karbalā movement. However, it would be important to identify the popularly predominant approach towards this tragedy.

The Concept of “Imam”

The third point that could throw light on this discussion is the perception of the concept and the status of the Imam in the political and spiritual thought of Imāmī Shī‘ah. As we know, except for Imam ‘Alī (‘a) and his son Imam Hasan (‘a), none of the other Imams (‘a) held any political position and this fact also applies to Imam Rizā (‘a) with the only exception being that the 8th Imam (‘a), who had openly declined Ma’mūn’s invitation, was forced by him to accept his offer. Moreover, Imam Rizā (‘a) had laid down the condition that he would not get involved in any political affairs – major or minor. The question now is regarding the impact that the distancing of the Imams (‘a) from political leadership would have on the concept of Imamate among the Shi‘ites. There is no doubt that this would naturally add to the spiritual importance of the concept of “Imam”. The trend of the growth of *tajarrud* (seclusion from involvement in worldly affairs) in the concept of *wilāyah* could have stemmed from this non-political, historical experience of the concept of “Imam”. *Wilāyah* was originally a kind of political guardianship³ that was defined on the basis of the sublime and matchless qualifications of knowledge and action in the Imam. However, the Sufī interpretation of this concept came to gain precedence as a result of the political abstinence opted by the Imams (‘a) in the given conditions, and thus, instead of being employed in political affairs this concept came to be applied popularly in its metaphysical sense.

Likewise, a non-involvement in active politics in its true sense, induced a focusing on different aspects of the *ahādīth*. Discussions on the characteristics of the Imam as well as the purview of his power and authority reveal that more attention was paid to the Imam’s (‘a) “meta-political” dimension rather than his political dimension as that of a ruler.

Under such conditions it would not be difficult to guess how an incident like that of Karbalā, which also had a clear and well-defined political and revolutionary message, dissolved into a Sufi trend in the interpretation of Imamate.

The Influence of the *Ghulāt* (pl. of *Ghālī*)

It should be noted that the *Ghulāt*, too, did not play any less of a role in converting the concept of Imamate and the gruesome Karbalā incident into a non-political one. They exerted a strong influence in segregating the concept of Imamate from politics by attributing an exaggerated metaphysical character to the Imams ('a). A glance at the narrations from and about the *Ghulāt* could reveal the extent of their insistence and obduracy in rendering a non-political essence to the concept of Imamate. The dispute between the Shi'ites and the *Ghulāt* was principally over the attribution of a divine status to the Imamate. It is interesting to take note that in explanation of the Qur'anic verse which states, "*Huwa alladhī fī al-samā' Ilāh wa fī al-arz Ilāh*" (He is God in Heaven and God on Earth), the *Ghulāt* claim that the terms "*ilah* on earth" is in reference to the Imams ('a). However, this very misinterpretation prompted Imam Sādiq ('a) to declare them as having deviated further than the Zoroastrians, the Christians, the Jews, and even the polytheists.⁴

The question that arises at this point is whether such exaggerated *Ghulāt* claims and beliefs over the divinity of the Imams ('a) were merely confined to the concept of Imamate or whether they applied to other areas as well. The point to note is that since the authorities on the science of *hadīth* have insisted on declaring some of the Ghālī narrators (*ruwāt*) as unreliable, while also expressing doubts on such works as *Basā'ir*, proves that their exaggerations were not confined to the attribution of divine status to the concept of Imamate. Instead of attempting to pass any judgement on the *Ghālī* outlook, the main purpose of

this inquiry is to reveal that the attributes given to the Imams ('a) in such works prove that the *Ghulāt* were more interested in highlighting the role of *Wilāyah* in the metaphysical realms than in the realm of active politics.

It is now appropriate for us to enter into a discussion on the *Ghālī* views on Imam Husayn ('a) and the political aspect of his movement that apparent to have ended in defeat. It can be discovered that very strangely, the *Ghulāt* have gone to the extent of comparing the martyrdom of Imam Husayn ('a) in the Karbalā incident, to the fate of Prophet Jesus ('a). Their main concern was to find a way to gracefully justify the sufferings of the *Waliyy Allāh* and, thus, they decided to liken the situation of Imam Husayn ('a) on the day of '*Ashūrā*' with that of Prophet Jesus ('a) on the day of his claimed crucifixion! According to the *Ghulāt*, in the same way that the Jews unknowingly crucified someone else in the place of Prophet Jesus ('a), the people of Kufa, too, had killed a person by the name of Hanzalah bin As'ad al-Shāmī in place of Imam Husayn ('a). It would not be out of place to quote a certain narration on this topic. 'Allāmah Majlisī has recorded this narration in the following words:

Ibn Bābawayh has narrated, based on an authentic source, that one day Abā Salt Hirawī related to Imam Rizā ('a) that there was a group in Kufa which claimed that Husayn bin 'Ali ('a) was not killed in Karbalā and that instead Allah had caused Hanzalah bin As'ad al-Shāmī to resemble him, and had drawn Imam Husayn ('a) into the heavens in the same manner as Prophet Jesus ('a); and they narrate the following verse as a proof to their claim: '*...And Allah will by no means give the unbelievers a way against the believers.*' (4:141) (To this) The Imam ('a) replied: 'They are lying. May the wrath and curse of Allah descend upon them! By refuting the news that the Prophet of Allah (S) had given regarding the martyrdom of (Imam) Husayn ('a) they have turned into unbelievers. I swear by Allah

that (Imam) Husayn ('a) was killed and even those superior to him, like the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali ('a), and (Imam) Hasan ('a) were killed. Every single member of the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a) has been and shall be killed; and I too, shall be poisoned to martyrdom with deceit and malice. This news has reached me through the Messenger of Allah (S) who was informed about it by Gabriel, who was in turn made aware of this by Allah. What is implied in this verse by Allah is that the unbelievers shall never succeed in invalidating the reasoning (*hujjah*) of the believers. How could their interpretation of the verse be valid when Allah has informed us of the unjust killings of His Prophets ('a) in the Glorious Qur'ān, and (it was in fact) the reasoning of the prophets ('a) (that) had always prevailed over that of their opponents and their veracity was known to one and all.⁵

There is another narration according to which there was a note written in the handwriting of the 12th Imam ('a) himself, stating that "the allegation of those who claim that Imam Husayn ('a) was not killed is blasphemous, and is equal to refuting the words of the Prophet of Allah (S) and the Imams ('a), and proves that they are deviated and have gone astray."⁶ The source books of the *Ghulāt*, too, contain such beliefs on the martyrdom of Imam Husayn ('a). In the book *al-Haft al-Sharīf min Fazā'il Mawlānā Ja'far al-Sādiq* there is a section entitled *Fī Ma'rifah Qatl al-Husayn 'alā al-Bātin fī Zaman Banī Umayyah* (On the Esoteric Knowledge of the Killing of Husayn ('a) in the Times of the Banī Umayyah) that contains similar exaggerations on the issue.⁷

As stated earlier, such exaggerations about the Imams ('a) basically resulted in the reduction of the political importance of the concept of Imamate among the Shi'ites. If we took into consideration the fact that the Christians only give importance to the metaphysical aspect of their alleged crucifixion of Prophet

Jesus ('a) rather than its political aspect, it would then not be very difficult to gauge the depth of the impact of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn ('a) and its comparison to Prophet Jesus ('a). In a discussion on the comparison between Imam Husayn ('a) and Prophet Jesus ('a), in his book *Himāsih-ye Husaynī*, Martyr Mutahharī also makes a reference to the error made by some people in applying the belief of the Christians about the supposed sacrifice of the Masih to the martyrdom of Imam Husayn ('a).⁸ According to this belief, just as Prophet Jesus ('a) consented to being crucified in order to compensate for the sins of his followers, in the same manner Imam Husayn ('a), too, opted for martyrdom.

Politics and the Philosophy of Martyrdom

This discussion can begin by providing the answer to an important question on the incident of Karbalā, as regards the basic philosophy behind Imam Husayn's ('a) martyrdom. What was the philosophy of Imam Husayn's ('a) martyrdom? Was this martyrdom political in nature or was it spiritual? Had the incident ended in a political victory there would be no room for the presence of such a question, however, Imam Husayn ('a) was killed by the Umayyid army and the members of his household were taken captives and were dragged from one town to another. Keeping this in consideration, what could the aim of such a move be? In other words, what was Allah's purpose in putting His chosen servant (*waliyy*) through such a plight? The answer provided by some people was that Allah decreed this tragedy on Imam Husayn ('a) and his companions so that they could be given a more exalted status in heaven. This answer distances the Imam's move from its political aspect, even though there may be two different evaluations about the achievements of the Karbalā movement. The concept of *Inna Allaha shā'a an-yarāka qatīlā* could have led some people to

believe that Imam Husayn ('a) and his companions were martyred for their own sake; implying that since they were dear to Allah and because Allah loved them so dearly, they were called to Him in this manner.

We have mentioned earlier in the discussion that although this view does not possibly contradict the political objectives of the movement, it does however apparently promote the idea that the Karbalā episode was merely a personal, spiritual movement rather than a general political one. This answer would certainly lead to another question, viz., "What was the outcome of this move for the followers of the Imam ('a)?" One possible conclusion was that Imam Husayn ('a) was martyred so that others could benefit in the Hereafter from the rewards for mourning his martyrdom. We have repeatedly mentioned that our argument is not over the issue of gaining of *thawāb* by mourning and weeping for the Imam ('a), but the point to note is rather that these kinds of answers and conclusions gave the impetus and paved the path for the prevalence of Sufi and not the political interpretations of the Karbalā incident. 'Allāmah Majlisī, who also held a politically inclined interpretation about the Karbalā movement, makes a mention of the benefits that Imam Husayn ('a) offers his followers, in these words:

And it should be understood that these apparent worldly humiliations have in fact added to their [the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a)] honour, because a friend of Allah is never degraded. Those who intended to belittle them are only mentioned on the face of the earth with curse and despise; their children have perished, and no one knows the whereabouts of their graves. Allah, the Almighty, has elevated the names of those noble beings [the *Ahl al-Bayt* ('a)] and their knowledge and charisma has filled the world; and both their friends as well as their enemies send them salutations in their *salāt* or otherwise, and seek their mediation (*shifā'at*) in appealing to Allah for their worldly requirements.

The surfaces of pulpits and edifices as well as coins are beautified with their names and even kings and rulers bow at their doorsteps wholeheartedly and earnestly.

Everyday thousands of people are granted forgiveness for their sake and thousands of people become worthy of entering Paradise for cursing their enemies. Thousands of people shed their sins by weeping and mourning for them and thousands of people achieve eternal salvation for spreading their words and their *ahādīth*. Thousands of people gain *ma'rifah* and certitude through their *ahādīth* and thousands more achieve sublime levels in ethics by following their Tradition and works. Thousands of physically and spiritually blind people are healed in their holy shrines and thousands more who suffer from physical and psychological diseases are cured through the elevated stations of their healing shrines and their unparalleled knowledge.⁹

The Sufi Outlook

A glance at the Sufi tenets on the concept of '*Wilāyah*' and its applicability could make our task easier. It should not be taken for granted that despite the existing political inclinations of some Sufis, Sufism is essentially a spiritual trend and is, by its very nature, separated from politics. The concept of leadership has changed into *Wilāyah* in Sufism and the term *awliyā'* (pl. of *waliyy*) is a part of the identity of Sufi thought. For the Sufis, the concept of *Wilāyah* was more of a metaphysical nature and did not have much to do with earthly affairs; and if at all it had anything to do with the people on earth it was merely in order to connect them with the heavens and to disconnect them from the world. When the concept of Sufism prevailed in the sixth century AH, the Imams ('a), too, came to be included in the chain of *awliyā'* and *aqtāb* (spiritual poles). Prior to this, the life history of some Imams ('a) had

appeared in Abū Na‘īm Isfahānī’s book, *Hulyah al-Awliyā’*, but this trend became widespread when the life sketches of all the twelve Imams ('a) appeared in some Sufi works, following which, the *Wilāyah* of the Imams ('a) came to be accepted, along with that of the other Sufi *aqtāb*. There was, however, an issue that remained unresolved and over which there existed some disputes. This was the issue of the *Khātām al-Wilāyah* (the Seal on Divine Guardianship), who according to Muhy al-Dīn bin al-‘Arabī was Prophet Jesus ('a), and to which the Shi‘ite Sufi, Sayyid Haydar Amuli had sharply reacted, proving that the *Khātām al-Awliyā’* was Imam ‘Alī bin Abī Tālib ('a) and not Jesus ('a).¹⁰

Gradually, Sufism became so widespread in the world of Islam, and particularly in the East, that it came to influence, both the Sunnis and the Shi‘ites. The Sunni Sufis got interested in the Imams ('a) and began to mention them in their books. Khwajah Muhammad Pārsā, an outstanding *Naqshbandiyyah* Sufi leader, in his book *Fasl al-Khitāb* then included the life histories of the twelve Shi‘ite Imams ('a), and Hāfiz Husayn Karbalā’ī, too, followed suit through his book, *Rawzāt al-Jinān wa Jannāt al-Jinān*. Similarly, the Sufi Fazlullāh bin Ruzbihān Khunjī wrote a commentary on the sending of *salawāt* (salutations) to the fourteen Infallibles ('a) in his book, *Wasilah al-Khādīm ilā al-Makhdūm*, and also declared that he accepted the '*Wilāyah*' of the Imams ('a) on the condition that it is separated from the issue of caliphate.¹¹ It was at this juncture that in Sufi thought, the Imams ('a) came to be granted a non-political identity despite possessing *Wilāyah*. And it was in such an atmosphere that the famous Sufi, Mullā Husayn Kāshifi Sabziwārī, wrote the book *Rawzah al-Shuhadā’* that became the chief source for *rawzah-khwānī* or the traditional recitation of events of the tragedy of Karbalā, from the Safawid period onwards.

The question that is raised is whether his book included his Sufi interpretation of the Karbalā incident and the personality of Imam Husayn (‘a) or not? The answer cannot obviously be negative, because it would not be possible for a person of such calibre to exclude his Sufi thoughts while writing this kind of a book. It is interesting to notice that from then onwards, the book written by a Sunni Sufi became the basis of most analyses on the Karbalā movement and this had a great influence in transforming the movement from a political to a non-political or rather into a spiritual and emotional one, containing Sufi tendencies. It should also not be forgotten that the Safawids, too, had a Sufi background and for years, their government was under the obvious sway of a Sufi influence. As a result, the social atmosphere was also affected by this trend and despite all the struggles of the Shi‘ite jurists, this concept continued to persist and was never completely eradicated.

The Objective and the Issue of Prior Knowledge

Another issue that seems to have had a considerable impact on the disputes over the varying interpretations (the political and the Sufi) of the Karbalā incident and the philosophy of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn (‘a) is the argument of whether the Imam (‘a) had prior knowledge of the fate of his uprising or not. The point is that for someone who is unaware of the fate of a struggle, there would naturally remain no option but to strive for victory over the enemy; and his victory would not merely remain confined to the struggle for the sake of victory but would eventually lead to the establishment of a new rule. The question, thus, would be that if Imam Husayn (‘a) was supposed to have advanced knowledge about the incident, in such a case the assumption of a political victory, or the victory over the enemy, and the establishment of his rule would weaken. In other words, how could someone possibly

follow specific political objectives if he were aware of his impending martyrdom? The views –not necessary correct – that have so far been expressed in this regard are as follows:

A) According to one view the issue of any kind of prior awareness is basically rejected, thus making it easy to reach an analysis over the issue under discussion. A glance at available sources reveals that this view is not widely supported by Shi'ite theologians and there also exist a large number of contrary historical evidences and *ahādith*, opposing this view.

B) Another reply that has been provided to this question is that Imam Husayn ('a) did know about his eventual martyrdom, but prior to his arrival in Karbalā, he was not certain that it would occur in that very journey. In other words, he was aware of his martyrdom in general, but did not know about its details, time, and place. Based on this assumption, it would be possible to consider a specific political goal for the movement before arriving at Karbalā and this objective could be the establishment of his rule.

C) The third reply is that we define the objective in a manner that would be commensurate with the Imam's ('a) prior knowledge of the incident. If the objective is considered merely to be the ouster of the existing rule, then it seems at least apparently, that there existed some paradoxes in the whole issue; but if the objective is taken to be a kind of sacrifice in order to set off a revolutionary movement, in that case the Imam's ('a) martyrdom would itself become of a political nature. This means that Imam Husayn ('a) was aware of his imminent martyrdom and yet chose to make this move in order to save the religion from further distortion. This kind of a move is not unusual among the revolutionary people of the world; however, the only problem is that such a political interpretation can be considered to be very limited. In other words, Imam Husayn's ('a) movement was mainly directed in order to reject certain existing

conditions, but would it also indicate the intention for establishing new conditions? It means that this view does not prove that the Imam ('a) had any intentions of taking over from the existing rule but it only indicates that he made this move in order to expose the existing critical conditions and the corruption of the ruler. Of course, this objective should not be mistaken as being of a suicidal nature, as projected by some Sunnī theologists of the yesteryears as well as some modern writers with a view to objecting to the Shi'ite beliefs, because as mentioned earlier, such a revolutionary approach is widely accepted by the intellect and the intellectuals. This overall view is advocated by many people.

D) Yet another view in this regard is that Imam Husayn's ('a) objective was *amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa nahy 'an al-munkar* (enjoining of good and forbidding from evil), and does not basically differ too much from the earlier view, excepting that if it is aimed at providing an answer to what has been referred to by some people as "suicidal" action, it would have to deny the Imam's ('a) prior knowledge about the incident. It should also be pointed out that if the advocates of this view do not wish to find an appropriate answer to the said objection and are merely concerned with highlighting Imam Husayn's ('a) specific political objective, they would have to find a way to prove the Imam's ('a) intention of taking over the government. The inclusion of the purpose of *amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa nahy 'an al-munkar* does not provide an escape from the questions under discussion, since in that case it would be immaterial whether the Imam ('a) aimed at establishing his rule or not. Under such conditions the first question of how anyone could possibly think of forming a government in spite of being aware of his imminent martyrdom remains unanswered.

Now that the issue of the political interpretation of the Karbalā movement has concluded in the principle of *amr bi'l-*

ma'rūf wa nahy 'an al-munkar it would not be out of place to mention that by accepting *amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa nahy 'an al-munkar* as a political objective for the Imam's ('a) uprising we have taken a huge step towards highlighting the political aspects of the Karbalā movement. This objective would prompt us not to view the movement as a personal one. In other words, should the whole episode conclude in the issue of a prior awareness as a special Divine Commandment for martyrdom, the political dimension of the movement would to a great extent become limited, even though it would apparently elevate the status of the Imam ('a). At this point, it would be appropriate to quote Martyr Ayatullah Mutahhari who was an advocate of the theory of *amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa nahy 'an al-munkar*. As it shall be clearly observed, Martyr Mutahhari was deeply concerned about an extremist Sufi interpretation of the Karbalā movement. In his own words:

One of the things that could deviate the Karbalā episode from its genuine path and would thwart its usability for the masses, eventually resulting in the deviation of the main objective behind mourning for Imam Husayn ('a), is some people's claim that the Imam's ('a) move was the outcome of a personal and confidential Divine Commandment that was transmitted to him through dreams or otherwise. This is because if the Imam ('a) had made this move on the basis of a personal command, in that case, it would not be possible for others to take him as their Imam ('a) and as their role model. [Please notice the concern over the political interpretation of the Karbalā movement for the followers of the Imam ('a)]. At the same time, in such case it would also become impossible to identify Imam Husayn ('a) with a particular school of thought, which is contrary to the belief that Imam Husayn's ('a) move was extracted from the basic teachings and principles of Islam... Usually many people let their imaginations run wild

and comment that it was a personal command for the Imam ('a) to fight Yazid and Ibn Ziyād, believing that in this way his status would be elevated... We Easterners tend to believe that if it is said that a certain person can perform certain unusual feats and miracles (*mukāshifah*, *kirāmat*, *mu'jizah*), or has *jinn*s under his command, or is in contact with the angels he possesses a high spiritual status! There is no doubt that Imam Husayn ('a) does command a high spiritual status, but that status is much more superior than such things; he is the *al-Insān al-Kāmil* (the Perfect Man) and his status is higher than that of the angels.¹²

The second distortion that has taken place in the understanding of the Karbalā incident is because some people say things like: "Do you know why Imam Husayn ('a) revolted and got killed? It was because it was a personal Divine Command for him. He was ordered (by Allah) to go and get killed and, thus, it does not concern us and it is not something that should be followed! It does not concern the general Islamic teachings..." Can there be a treachery worse than this?¹³

When it is said that it is necessary to know the Imam of the Age ('a), it implies that the philosophy of Imamate is based on leadership and is about having a living role model. The Imam ('a) is very much a man of superior qualities and is not a super human and it is for this reason that he can be a role model for everyone. If he were a super human he could not serve as a role model for human beings and, thus, the more we attribute mystery and super human qualities to such personalities the more we have pushed them aside from playing their roles as leaders."¹⁴

E) The other answer provided to our question is that it is important to distinguish the *zāhir* (manifest to the general people) from the *bātin* (veiled from the general people) aspects

while relating to the Prophets ('a) and the Imams ('a). It is argued that they were obliged to abide by the externals and, thus, performed their social duties accordingly. At the same time, within themselves they were aware of what Allah had destined for them. As regards this answer, what pertains to our discussion is that even if it is presumed that Imam Husayn's ('a) objective was to overthrow the Umayyid rule and to establish a new rule under his own leadership on the basis of a natural human move it could be a rational decision. One example given in this regard is that when the Prophet of Allah (S) had lost his camel, he dispatched some people to find it, in spite of being aware of its whereabouts, and did not reveal his knowledge until it was necessary. If one does not theologically doubt this view, it could be said that this argument supports the political interpretation of the movement. 'Allāmah Majlisi is an advocate of this view and has tried to highlight the political aspect of the Karbalā movement, even though he did not believe that the Imam's ('a) intention was to establish a rule. As a matter of fact, he has given a political as well as a spiritual interpretation – both in equal measure – to the Karbalā incident. In the words of the 'Allāmah:

It was not obligatory on the Prophets ('a) and the Imams ('a) to leave matters to (divinely-inspired) knowledge of fate and, in fact, they shared the same religious obligations as the common man. Thus, they were obliged to abide by the general practical laws pertaining to cleanliness and uncleanness (*tahārah wa nijāsah*) and in matters concerning the faith and disbelief of people. And if they were obliged to act exclusively upon their divinely-inspired knowledge, they would be forced to keep aloof from everyone and would have to consider everything as unclean and would regard most people as unbelievers. Thus, Imam Husayn ('a) was obliged to act upon the natural laws and fight the hypocrites and the disbelievers along with his

companions and since more than twenty thousand people had sworn allegiance to him and since he had received over twelve thousand letters from the disloyal Kufans, if he had not acted upon their request they would have had an excuse against the Imam ('a) and the Divine decree upon them would not have been completed.¹⁵

Most of the Shi'ite theologians have recognized the existence of the *zāhir* and the *bātin* aspects and the distinction between the two. While referring to the historical evidences had which may suggest Imam Husayn's ('a) trip to Kufa did not guarantee any certainty, Ayatullah Mutahhari states:

At the same time, this aspect does not contradict the other one, and at a different level which was at the level of spirituality and Imamate, the Imam ('a) knew that he would finally arrive in Karbalā and be martyred in that land.¹⁶

The writer Sālihi Najaf Abādi, however, disagrees with the above argument. In his opinion, if one were to argue that Imam Husayn ('a) "both knew before reaching Kufa that he would be martyred in Karbalā and yet, in spite of that knowledge, decided to go to Kufa to form a government", it would lead to an argument that "it would be impossible at any level, for Imam Husayn ('a) to have decided, both, to go to Kufa as well as not go to Kufa at the same time, since these are two contradictory decisions."

On the whole, Sālihi should have known that for there to be a contradiction at least eight conditions would be necessary, and one of them would be the presence of a single common direction. If the Imam ('a) or if any of the Divine Prophets ('a) is obliged to decide on two different things, based on the *zāhir* as well as on the *bātin* aspects of any situation, why would it cause any contradiction when one has an overt impact while the other is a covert one? Do we not witness exactly this kind of a

situation time and again in the interactions of a father and his little child? The father is well aware of many things within himself, even then, he often deals with situations at two different levels – one, upon the wishes of his child and in the direction of training the child, and the other on the basis of his own prior knowledge of the situation.

Let us return to the political interpretation of the late 'Allāmah Majlisī who was also a proponent of the existence of a contradiction between the *zāhir* and the *bātin* aspects. According to him, the Karbalā episode was in order to expose the levels of oppression that had permeated the Islamic world and to revive the true religion of Islam. We have already pointed out that the possibility of the two, *zāhir* and *bātin* aspects does not create any contradictions in the political interpretation of the Karbalā episode in spite of the fact that on the basis of some other arguments that we mentioned earlier, it clearly shows a leaning towards Sufi interpretations. It should be noted that as a moderate *Akhhbārī* scholar, 'Allāmah Majlisī has paid attention to both spiritual as well as the non-spiritual leanings in spite of the fact that in the *ahādīth* on this particular subject, there are a large number of *ahādīth* available that give more weightage to the spiritual inclination. We have already thrown light on his spiritual interpretation of the Karbalā incident, earlier in this discussion. Now let us focus upon the 'Allāmah's political interpretation of this historical episode. In his words:

And if you studied the facts, that the oppressed Imam ('a) sacrificed his gracious life for the cause of the religion of his noble grand-father, and had he agreed to a peace agreement with Yazīd and had he not exposed his evil acts, in a very short while the religious *shari'ah*, the basic fundamentals (*usūl*), as well as the practical laws (*furū'*) of the *ummah* of the *Sayyid al-Mursalīn* (S) would have been disintegrated and gone into oblivion. Mu'āwiyah had made all possible attempts towards

concealing the efforts of the Prophet (S) to the extent that very little of his true teachings had managed to survive, and even what had managed to survive would have soon be destroyed. The evil acts and the actions of that accursed one (Yazīd) would appear as beautiful in the eyes of the people and *kufr* (disbelief) would have pervaded the world. The martyrdom of the Imam ('a), to some extent, shook up the people from their sleep of neglect and they could now see the deterioration of their beliefs and the actions; and such revolutionaries like Mukhtār bin Abi 'Ubaydah al-Thaqafi and others gathered together and shook up the pillars of the government of Bani Umayyah and that lead to their eventual fall.¹⁷

Towards a Political Interpretation

It must be mentioned that the Shi'ah – especially in Iran – became more political and social-oriented after the period of the Safawids (1501 CE). This was as a result of a closer and more serious interaction in politics. There was active interaction in the Safavid era but the Qājār rule in Iran resented this trend. At the time when the constitutional monarchy was faced with the crisis of a constitutional movement and there were talks of finding an alternative, the issue of the power of *Wilāyah* became more serious even though it did not come to be defined into a social theory. From the angle of active political participation, following the constitutional movement, the *ulamā'* exhibited a kind of serious reaction. This was both because of its isolation as well as the pressure of the ruling power to remove religion from the general scene and to restrict it. At the same time there were some people who kept this flame burning. Religious sentiments reached new heights after 20 Shahrivar/September 1941 CE . Following that, both the western as well as the eastern influences on the political and social views challenged the Shi'ite scholars and their participation in the constitutional

movement and their efforts towards defining and explaining the political side of Islam in the treatises that were written in those times brought in dormancy for some time. This stagnation came to an end following the fresh changes that took place in the 1960s and once again the demands for an Islamic leadership that would promote a religious leadership gained escalation. It could be said that even though these treatises did not contain any specific or direct discussions on leadership, the writings however, were full of the Islamic contention for leadership. The combination of an intellectual as well as a political resistance opened the way for benefiting from the movement of Imam Husayn ('a). The need for this discussion was clear from several angles. The issue was that of an oppressive regime which needed to be toppled. The issue was that of the martyrs whose executions took place at the hands of the tyrannical Pahlavi regime. The issue was of mobilizing the Shi'ite society from its dormancy – a dormancy that was the result of an extremist Sufi interpretation of the Karbalā movement. At the time when Imam Khumayni wrote his book *Wilāyat al-Faqīh* (Guardianship of the Jurisprudent) and defined the concept of *wilāyat-i faqīh* into the form of a comprehensive state theory, in Iran books like *Rāh-e Husayn ('a)* [The Path of Husayn ('a)], *Alefba-ye Qiyāme Imam Husayn ('a)* [The ABC's of Imam Husayn's ('a) Uprising], *Shahīd-e Jāwīd* (The Immortal Martyr), and *Shahādat* (Martyrdom) were being published. In spite of the fact that these books – as also the speeches of Martyr Murtazā Mutahhari in the solar year 1348 AH (1969-70) – were written on the basis of various approaches and also sometimes revealed differences of opinion, everyone had unanimously reached the conclusion that a more serious political interpretation of the movement of 'Ashūrā should be made. From among all these books, the *Shahīd-e Jāwīd* (The Immortal Martyr) had proved to be the most controversial.¹⁸ If we were to put aside the theological

discussions and some of the objections that were raised against this book from the theological angle – and some have only criticized that the book from that angle – it was written with the aim of politicizing the movement of Imam Husayn (‘a) upto the point of claiming that the Imam’s (‘a) intention was to overthrow the existent rule. However, the writer of this book, Sālihi Najaf Abādi, refused to even accept the view that the aim of Imam Husayn (‘a) could have been a kind of martyrdom that is essentially vital for the revival of Islam. He also refused to accept that Imam Husayn (‘a) had revolted in order to take over the government. It seems that for expressing his point, Sālihi indulged in some kind of extremism in politicizing the issue and was, thus, forced to oppose some of the obvious matters. But we must not forget that the mentioned work certainly stood in clear defiance of the Sufi extremist interpretation.

Dr. Hamīd ‘Ināyat’s analysis of this dimension of the book demands attention. He writes:

As is very clear, the main purpose of *Shahīd-e Jāwīd* was politicizing the aspects of Shi‘ite Imamology, which until recently was purely based on mystical, poetic, and sentimental terminology. This work generated a cautious but increasing inclination among the Shi‘ite revolutionaries so that they could relate to the Karbalā incident as a fundamental human tragedy and as a result, not relate to the heroic act of the Imam (‘a) as a unique and ‘one-time’ (that cannot be emulated) historical incident and not look at it as something humanly impossible.¹⁹

The Political Aim: Martyrdom

We must pay attention to the point that generally-speaking the political interpretation of Karbalā, among the works that were mentioned earlier, cannot plainly be summarized to mean that Imam Husayn (‘a) took this step simply to take over the government. In fact, in the view of some of those writers,

basically, this idea has also been refuted and they considered martyrdom as the aim of the movement. This is an issue that, although not in its purely politicized form but in any case, in the form of an analysis, was present even earlier. In the preface of his work *Luhūf*, Ibn Tāwūs, after quoting the *ahādith* relating to the martyrdom of Imam Husayn ('a) before the Karbalā incident, points out to those who cannot relate to the martyrdom of Imam Husayn ('a) as good fortune (*lā-ya'rifu haqā'iqā sharafī al-sa'ādah bi'l-shahādah*); they are those who have related to it as a suicidal act. He replies to such people by presenting the *hadith* that was quoted through Abū Ayyūb Ansārī that the verse “*wa lā-tulqū bi-aydikum ilā al-tahlukah*” – ... and cast not yourselves with your own hands into perdition – (2: 195), interpret it exactly opposite to this view.²⁰

From among contemporaries we could name those like Dr. 'Alī Shari'ati who has extracted his political interpretation of the Karbalā incident right from the heart of the concept of “martyrdom” and along with that formally rejects the idea that Imam Husayn ('a) had revolted in order to take over the rule.²¹ Actually speaking, the political interpretation could be that the Imam ('a) took this selfless step as an attempt to compel the people to revolt against the rule. From this angle, mourning and shedding tears for Imam Husayn ('a), not based on the Sufi interpretation, but in the form of a political step could prove to be very effective. It is very difficult for those who have taken an extremist point of view in their political interpretation to accept the fact that Imam Husayn ('a), like many other selfless leaders of the world wished to shed his blood in order to revive the true message of Islam. It should also be mentioned that many of the revolutionaries who have written books on Imam Husayn ('a) in the last few decades have readily accepted that Imam Husayn ('a) wanted to shed his blood in order for Islam to be revived. We could recall that Martyr Hāshimī Nizhād's book, *Darsī keh*

Husayn ('a) beh Insānhā Amūkht [The Lesson that Imam Husayn ('a) gave Mankind] has accepted this viewpoint.

In Conclusion

What is left for us to say is that the Islamic Revolution of Iran, under the resolute, enlightened, and revolutionary leadership of the great leader of the Islamic Revolution, Imam Khumaynī (rah), was inspired by the approach of the political interpretation of the movement of Karbalā and the late leader had, from time to time, spoken to this effect. A collection of his speeches has been compiled and published under the title *Qiyāme 'Ashūrā dar Kalām wa Payām Imam Khumaynī* (The 'Ashūrā Movement in the Words and the Message of Imam Khumaynī), a study of which, on the basis of what has been presented in this discussion thus far, calls for a separate paper. For now, let us suffice by presenting a few sentences from the speeches of Imam Khumaynī in conclusion to this discussion:

When the Leader of the Martyrs ('a) arrived in Mecca, and when he left Mecca under those circumstances, it was a grand political move; all the moves of the Imam ('a) were political moves – religio-political (*Islāmī-siyāsī*) moves; and it was this very religio-political move that eliminated the Banī Umayyah, and but for this movement, Islam would have been crushed.²²

Elsewhere Imam Khumaynī says:

The Leader of the Martyrs ('a) had also come in order to take over the rulership; in fact he had come for this (purpose) and this is an honour. Those who think that the Leader of the Martyrs ('a) had not come to take over the rulership (are mistaken); no, they had come for the rulership because rulership must lie in the hands of the likes of the Leader of the Martyrs ('a), in the hands of the likes of those who are the Shī'ah (followers) of the Leader of the Martyrs ('a).²³

Notes:

¹ Ja'fariyān, Rasūl, *Safawiyyah dar 'Arsah-ye Dīn, Siyāsāt, wa Farhang*, Vol. 1, pp. 173 – 174.

² 'Ināyat, Hamīd, *Andīshah-ye Siyāsī dar Islam-e Mu'āsir*, p. 312.

³ Refer to Holy Qur'ān, “*al-Nabiyyu awlā bi'l-Mu'minīna min anfusihim*” –The Prophet has a greater claim on the believers than they have on their own selves – (33: 6).

⁴ *Rijāl Kashshī (Ikhtiyār Ma'rifah al-Rijāl, Abū Ja'far Tūsī*; A Research Work by Mustafawī, Mashhad) p. 300.

⁵ 'Uyūn Akhbār al-Rizā, Vol. 2, p. 203; Majlisi, Muhammad Bāqir, *Bihār al-Anwār* Vol. 44, p. 271.

⁶ *Bihār al-Anwār* Vol. 44, p. 271.

⁷ *Al-haft al-Sharīf*, (researched and edited by Mustafā Ghālib, Beirut: Dār al-Andalus) p. 96.

⁸ Mutahhari, Murtazā, *Himāsih-ye Husaynī*, Qum: Sadrā, 1986, Vol. 3, pp. 224-237.

⁹ *Majmū'ah Rasā'il I'tiqādī 'Allāmah Muhammad Bāqir Majlisi* (Compiled by Sayyid Mahdī Rajā'i, Mashhad: Bunyād Pazuhishhā-ye Islāmī, 1987), pp. 198 – 199.

¹⁰ *Jāmi' al-Asrār wa Manba' al-Anwār*, p. 396 onwards.

¹¹ Refer to the preface of the book *Wasīlah al-Khādīm ilā al-Makhdūm*, Fazlullāh bin Ruzbihān Khunjī, Edited by Rasūl Ja'fariyān, Qum: The Library of Ayatullah Mar'ashī, p. 29 onwards.

¹² Mutahhari, Murtazā, *Himāsih-ye Husaynī*, Qum: Sadrā, 1986, Vol. 3, pp. 84-86.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 66-67.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 66-67.

¹⁵ *Majmū'ah Rasā'il I'tiqādī 'Allāmah Muhammad Bāqir Majlisi*, pp. 200-201.

¹⁶ Mutahhari, Murtazā, *Himāsih-ye Husaynī*, Vol. 3, p. 189.

¹⁷ *Majmū'ah Rasā'il I'tiqādi 'Allāmah Muhammad Bāqir Majlisī*.

¹⁸ Refer to Ja'fariyān, Rasūl, *Jarayānhā wa Jonbeshhā-ye Madhhabī dar Iran (Religious Trends and Movements in Iran)*, Tehran: Pazhuheshgāh-e Farhang wa Andisheh-ye Islāmī, pp. 214-308,

¹⁹ *Andisheh-ye Siyāsī dar Islam-e Mu'āsir*, pp. 330 – 331.

²⁰ *Luhūf*, pp. 16, 17.

²¹ Refer to *Shahādat (Martyrdom)*, 'Alī Shari'ati, pp. 35-36.

²² *Sahīfah-ye Nūr*, p. 140

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

A Fair Exposition of the Difference between the Truth and Abberation¹

By Muhsin Fayz Kāshānī (d. 1091/1680)

Translated by Dr. Muhammad Legenhausen²

Praise be to Allah Who has saved us by our clutching the rope of the two weighty things³ which He has extended for us into the abyss of error, and salutations and peace be on our Prophet Muhammad (S) and his Family, the good Prophet and the good Family.

7

¹ Fayz Kāshānī, “A Fair Exposition of the Difference between the Truth and Abberation” (*Al-Insāf fī Bayān al-Farq bayn al-Haqq wa al-I’tisāf*), ed., N. Māyil Harawī, published in *A Collection of Persian Manuscript Treatises, Book I (Majmū‘ah Rasā’il-e Khatṭī-ye Fārsī, Daftar-e Awwal)* (Mashhad: Islamic Research Foundation Āstān Quds Razavī, 1368/1989), pp. 108-119.

² I would like to express my gratitude to Amir Diwānī, without whose help I would not have been able to make this translation. I accept responsibility for all the infelicities that remain in the translation.

³ According to the famous *hadīth*, the Prophet (S)^(c) announced that he was leaving behind two weighty things (*thaqalayn*): the Qur’ān and his ‘*itrat* or household, and that these two would never be separated.

This essay on the exposition of the path of knowledge of the mysteries of religion for the most elite and noble is called “A Fair Exposition” (*al-Insāf*) because it is free from deviation and aberration.

As one who has been guided to the most noble road of Mustafā (S), Muhsin bin Murtazā—may Allah increase his guidance upon guidance—when in the prime of his youth he completed his studies of religion and attaining insights into doctrine and the qualities of worship according to the teachings of the Immaculate Imams, Peace be with them, so that by the success granted me by God, glory be to Him, in no problem have I needed to imitate anyone other than the immaculates, it then occurred to me that I should try to acquire gnosis (*maʿrifat*) of the mysteries of religion, the sciences of the most profound thinkers, so that the soul might achieve some perfection. However, since the intellect was not the way to this, and on the basis of what faith I had, no doors were open to my soul, and since I had no patience with ignorance, and I was constantly suffering, I plunged into the study of some of the disputes of the theologians and I tried to remove ignorance using ignorant means, and I studied and learned some of the ways of the discourses of the would be philosophers, and I saw bit of the high flying of the would be Sufis in their sayings, and I saw a bit of the light-headedness of those who propounded their own speculations. Finally, sometimes, I wrote books and essays on the basis of summaries of the sayings of these four sects, and sometimes I kneaded them together to join them and bring them into agreement, although I myself was not in agreement with all of them nor was my heart resolved, but I comprehended all they knew, and as an exercise I wrote some compositions. I did not

discover among any of their allusions a cure for my illness,⁴ nor did I find any moisture for my burning thirst in their turns of phrase, until I feared for myself, for I saw myself becoming like one of their progeny, so I likened my situation to that of the saying, “They cheated me, they robbed me, they took me, they oppressed me, they double-crossed me, they belied me, so to whom can I resort for this wrong?!”

So, I escaped to Allah from that, and I sought refuge in Allah from that which had delayed me there, and I sought protection in the saying of the Commander of the Faithful—salutations of Allah to him—in some of his supplications: “O Allah protect me from using opinion about that which my vision does not grasp to its depths, and into which my thinking does not sink.”⁵

I returned to God, so He led me by the blessing of following the clear *sharī‘ah* to the depths of understanding the mysteries of the Qur’ān and the *ahādīth* from the Household of the Master of the Apostles—may the Peace of Allah be with them—and He made me understand to the extent of my capacity and the degree of my faith until I achieved some certainty and he negated from me the temptation of Satan. Praise to Allah for guiding me and thanks to Allah for that with which He entrusted me, and I wrote the verses:

Malik al-sharq tasharraḡ wa ilā al-rūh ta‘allaḡ

Ghasaq al-naḡsa taffaraḡ rafaza al-kufra tahddam.

*The king of the East shone from the East and reached
to my spirit,*

⁴ The words “*ishārah*” (indicate) and *shifā’* (remedy) are allusions to the works of Ibn Sīnā known by these titles.

⁵ *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 87.

The darkness of my soul separated, infidelity was rejected and destroyed.

Then I experienced things, and I examined the darkness and the light until it became clear to me that a group of the religious scholars who claim to be followers of the Prophet had closed both their eyes and turned away from the two weighty things (*thaḳalayn*), and they created innovations in doctrine, and they formed parties among the groups none of which were in agreement with any of the others and there was no affection among them nor brotherly love except for hypocrisy, because they circle about four groups without insight, and they do not obey those of insight, and it is suitable to recite the following for them:

(And among men is he who disputes in respect of Allah though having no knowledge, nor guidance, nor a book giving light.) (31: 20)

And Allah hates them because of this work of theirs, for He did not provide them with camaraderie, mutual affection or agreement, and He abandoned them to the love of position and to vicious competition and hypocrisy, until because of the evil of their deeds they achieve the evil of opposition, turning their back on one another. Mutual hatred and denial, and furthermore jealousy and arrogance become aspects of their soul, and they refuse to obey any of their contemporaries of the same type. And their enmity to each other becomes most intense when they live in the same locale, unless one of them dies or is not yet born. Their love of position makes them into dictators regarding opinion and they have various lusts, and they are conceited about what they have, and they are proud of themselves, and they ridicule others and their situations:

(Each party rejoices in that which is with them. So leave them in their overwhelming ignorance till a certain time.) (23: 53-54)

The Commander of the Faithful, may Allah's salutations be upon him, said:

Not all who have hearts have understanding, not all who have hearing listen, and not all who look have insight. I am astonished! And why should I not be astonished at the error of these groups differing over arguments about their religion! They do not follow the footsteps of the Prophet, nor do they observe the commands of the *wasī* (executor, Imam); they do not believe in the unseen, nor do they avoid the flawed result. They act according to their suspicions and are moved by their inclinations. That which is commendable for them is whatever they commend; that which is forbidden for them is whatever they forbid. Their sanctuary from troubles is themselves, and in important matters they rely on their opinions. In every affair, they are their own leaders. Whatever they get out of their opinions they take to be very weighty and sure.⁶

In another *hadith* he ('a) says:

Did Allah command them to oppose one another, so that they are obeying Him? Or did Allah forbid them from such opposition so that they are offending Him? Or did Allah, glory be to Him, send down an imperfect religion, to be perfected with their help? Or are they partners to Allah so that it is for them to say and for Allah to be content? Or did Allah send down a complete religion, while the Prophet failed in the propagation and explanation of it, although Allah, glory be to

⁶ *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 88.

Him, says, (*We have not forgotten anything in the Book*) (6:38).
And in the Qur'ān there is an (*explaining of all things*) (41:89).⁷

All of these [bad things] are for nothing but their turning away from clutching the rope of the *thaqalayn* and abandoning what was entrusted by the Master of the two weighty things [the Prophet]. You see one of them very interested in the books of the philosophers and throughout their lives they have no other aim, and they have no desire other than that, even though they have not yet gained any wisdom from the principles or branches of the *shari'ah*, and sometimes they never heard anything from the Prophet and his Household except for what they heard when small from their mothers and fathers. They did not learn anything of manners and traditions of the *shari'ah*, nor do they imitate those possessed of knowledge of these two.

Glory be to God! I am astonished at these people to whom the best Prophet has been sent to direct them to guidance and to whom the best religion has been given with mercy and providence. And their Prophet set a Book before them, and in his place he assigned successors with knowledge of the Book, one after another, according to the explicit instruction of God, whose radiance will remain until the Resurrection. They [the Imams] will give water to those who are thirsty for knowledge and wisdom according to their capacity and the degree of their faith. The Prophet (S) said: "I am leaving among you the *thaqalayn*. If you take hold of them, you will not stray after me: the Book of Allah and my kindred, my Household (*Ahl al-Bayt*)."⁸ But they do not pay attention to the guidance of him [the Prophet] and they go begging for knowledge at the doors of previous communities and the look for a bit of moisture in the

⁷ *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 18.

⁸ *Tafsir al-Sāfi*, vol. 1, 473, after the verse (5: 67).

gutters of those peoples, or they satisfy themselves with flawed reasons.

Mustafā andar jahān, āngah kasi gūyad ze 'aql

Āftāb andar jahān, āngah kasi jūyad sahā.

Who would speak of reason when Mustafā is in the world?!

Who would look for a star⁹ when the sun is in the world?!

It is reported that some Muslims came to the Apostle of Allah (S) with the shoulder bone of an animal on which was written something that was said by the Jews. Then he (S) said: "It is sufficient for the error of a people to turn away from what their prophet brought them and to turn toward what one who was not a prophet brought." So, it was sent down: (*Is it not enough for them that We have sent down to you the Book which is recited to them? Verily in this there is mercy and a reminder for a people who believe.*) (29: 51).

It is reported that in a meeting at which the Prophet (S), was present, Aristotle was mentioned. He (S) said, "If he were alive and knew what I brought he would have followed me in my religion."

Bāz archeh gāh gāhi bar sar nahad kolāhi

Morghān-e qāf dānand āyyīn-e pādshāhi.

*Even if the hawk sometimes wears a crown,
It is the birds of Mt. Qāf who know the ways of
kingship.*

These are the same people who imagine that some of the religious sciences are not found in the Qur'ān or *hadīth*, and that

⁹ The star mentioned is *sahā*, an obscure star in the minor bear.

they can be learned from the books of the would be sufis and philosophers and must be sought there. The miserable ones do not know that the gaps and shortcomings are not in the *hadith* and Qur'ān but the gaps are in their understanding and the shortcomings in the degree of their faith. Allah, glory to Him, says: (*And We have sent down the Book to you clearly explaining everything and a guidance and mercy and glad tidings to the Muslims.*) (16:89). And there are other verses with the same meaning. Wherever there are gaps and shortcomings in their understanding and faith, their study of the books of the philosophers and would be sufis do not profit them because they cannot understand the real meanings of them.

Kū jahān rā por dor-e mahnūn konam

Rūzi-ye to chun nabāshad chun konam.

If I filled the world with hidden pearls

then if you have no part of it, what am I to do?

“O you with short sleeves, how long will you stretch your hand?”¹⁰ They should know that if they went to the sky they would still not be able to understand more than their capacity and the degree of their faith. If they are able, they should expand their capacity by strengthening their faith; perhaps they will be able to go higher, (*if they knew*) (2: 103). Otherwise, however much they delve into these problems, they will become more lost, (*from where they do not perceive*) (39:25). I seek refuge in Allah from error after guidance.

¹⁰ The saying here is somewhat like the English “being too big for one’s britches,” so that he means to complain that they are stretching beyond their capacities.

Nuqtehhā chun tigh-e fulād ast tiz

Chun nadāri to separ vāpas goriz

Pish-e in fulād bi espar mayyār

Kaz buridan tigh rā nabvad hayā.

*Points like those of the steel blade
since you have no shield, you must flee.*

*Do not come near the steel without a shield
For the blade is not ashamed to cut.¹¹*

Our Master, Imam Bāqir ('a) said, "Verily, Allah is the Clement (*al-Halīm*) the Omniscient (*al-'Alīm*). His wrath is only for those who do not accept His satisfaction, and He only prevents those who do not accept His forgiveness, and He leads astray only those who do not accept His guidance."

Har cheh hast, as qāmat-e nāsāz-e bi andām-e mast

Var na tashrif-e to bar balā-ye kas kutāh nist.

*Everything unsuitable is due to the disproportion of our limbs,
Otherwise the robe of honour that You bestow is not short for
anyone.*

O Brother! Try to strengthen your faith and certainty through asceticism and piety (*taqwā*) until knowledge and wisdom is increased. (*Fear Allah and Allah will give you knowledge*) (2:282). Otherwise do not continue your journey. Do not stretch your feet beyond the length of your carpet. May Allah have mercy on he who knows his size and who does not transgress its limits.

Cho musta'idd-e nazar nisti visāl majuy

Keh jān-e jam nakonad sud vaqt-e bi basari.

¹¹ Mawlavi.

If you do not have the capacity to see your beloved, do not search for union,

The magic mirror is useless to one who lacks vision.¹²

Yes, the summit of gnosis is too lofty for the flight of any bird, and the canopy of insight is too hidden for the inspiration of any wayfarer.

Sharh-e majmū 'eh-ye gol morgh-e sahar dānad va bas

Keh na har ku varaqī khwānd ma 'ānī dānest

Na har keh chehreh barafrukht delbarī dānad

Na har keh āyeneh sāzad sekandari dānad

Hezār nuqteh-ye bāriktar ze mu injāst

Na har keh sar betarāshad qalandari dānad.

Only the pre-dawn bird knows the explanation for the collection of flowers

Not all who read the pages know their meaning.

Not all who show their faces know how to capture hearts.

Not all who make mirrors know how to make magic mirrors.

There are a thousand points finer than a hair here.

Not all who shave their heads know the way of the Qalandars.¹³

These words are related to the pseudo-philosophers and pseudo-sufis and their followers. But the disputes of the theologians and the self-satisfied egotists, who are said by some to have pulled their heads from the bridle of imitation, and to have destroyed their innate principles and become discontented with the outward aspects of prophecy and its branches unless

¹² According to legend Alexander had a magic mirror in a tower in Alexandria from which could be seen all the events of the world.

¹³ The Qalandars were a sect of sufis who shaved their heads completely. These lines are from Ḥāfiz.

they carve some speech for themselves out of it. Their nature does not let them imitate anyone; they are not successful to smell the scent of inquiry. (*Wavering between this [and that belonging] to neither this nor that*) (4:143).

Az bahr-e fesād o jang jam 'i mardom

Kardand be kuy-e gomrahi khod rā gom

Dar madrasah har 'ilm keh āmukhtehand

Fi al-qabr yazurruhum wa lā yanfa 'uhum.

Because of corruption and war a group of people

Went astray on the lost alley

*Every knowledge they studied in the school
will be harmful for them in the grave and of no benefit.*

In short, a group of them speak of the necessary and the possible, and another sect calls them cause and effect, and another bunch names them existence and existent, and the egotist says whatever he likes. But we, the pupils and imitators of the Household of the Prophet, the inerrant, we, who are obedient to the clear religion, we say, "Glory be to Allah" and we say that Allah is Allah and His servants are His servants. Allah, the Exalted, says: (*There is none in heaven and earth but will come to the Merciful as a servant.*) (19:93). We do not carve names for ourselves and are content with what we have heard.

There is no doubt that in the firmness of the *thaqalayn* there is nothing like what is well-known among the groups, and the expressions spoken by their tongues is not founded on reports or narrations; and the esoteric interpretation of the ambiguous verses is not easy for anyone, but it is specific to those who are well grounded in knowledge (*al-rāsikhūna fi al-'Ilm*), and they admit all that is not known by interpretation and

they confess their weakness about that which they do not comprehend.

A man said to the Commander of the Faithful ('a), "Describe our Lord for us, so that our love for Him may increase, and so that our knowledge of Him may increase." The Imam ('a) became angry. After mounting the pulpit he delivered a glorious sermon in which he said: "O questioner! Whatever the Qur'ān indicates of His attributes, keep before you, and seek light from the light of its guidance. Whatever Satan obliges you to know, but which is not obligatory in the Book or in the *sunnah* of the Prophet (S) and the guiding Imams, leave the knowledge of it to Allah, glory be to Him. This is the extent of the right Allah has over you. Be sure of this, that the firmly rooted in knowledge are those who Allah has made needless of penetrating past the barriers before the hidden (*ghuyūb*), and they acknowledge all their ignorance of the interpretation of the hidden that is covered. Allah praises them for their admission that they are unable to get to knowledge of what they cannot comprehend. Their abandonment of delving into what Allah has not made it obligatory to seek to get to the bottom of is what Allah has called firm-rootedness. Be content with this and do not limit the greatness of Allah according to the measure of your own intelligence, or else you would be among the destroyed ones."¹⁴

Imam 'Alī ('a) made allusion to the following saying of Allah, the Mighty and Magnificent, (*they say: "we believe in it, all is from our Lord"*) (3:7).

He ('a) said to his son, Hasan ('a), in the will that he wrote for him, "Give up talking about what you do not know and speaking about what you have not been obliged, and stop from going down a road if you fear going astray by it, for stopping

¹⁴*Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 91, *Khutbah al-Ashbah*.

when one wanders astray is better than falling into horrors.” And in the same will, he wrote, “O my son! The best thing that I would love you to get from my will is to have *taqwā* of Allah, that you restrict yourself by what Allah has obliged you and that you continue of the way of your father and of the righteous of the folk of your household, for they have never stopped paying attention to their affairs, just as you pay attention to yours, and they think about them like you think. The end of this was that they obtained what they knew about, and they left off what they were not obliged to do.”¹⁵ This is the advice which Imam ‘Ali (‘a) gave to his son, so what about the likes of us!

Ḥāfīz injā āshnāyān dar tariq-e hayratand

Dur nabvad gar neshinad khasteh o miskin gharib.

Ḥāfīz! Here even those who are familiar are on the way of wonder.

It is no wonder if the stranger sits down tired and destitute.

And Imam ‘Ali, may Allah bless him, said, “He who assigns to Him qualities does not attribute oneness to Him, nor does he who likens Him [to anything else] grasp His reality, and He is not the object of intention of he who analogizes Him, and He is not considered self-sufficient by one who points to Him and imagines Him.”¹⁶

Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin (‘a) said: “Allah, the Mighty and Magnificent, knows that there will be groups at the end of time who are very profound, and for them Allah has sent the *sūrah*, (*Qul huwa Allahu ahad*) (*Say, Allah, He is One*), and the *āyāt* of *Sūrah al-Ḥadīd* to His saying (*the Knower of what is in their*

¹⁵ *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Will 31.

¹⁶ *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 186.

breasts) (57:6). Whoever seeks beyond this will destroy himself.”¹⁷

And He (‘a) said: “Even if all the beings of the heavens and the earth were gathered to describe the greatness of Allah, they would not be able to.”¹⁸

Imam Bāqir (‘a) said: “Should one be called knowing and powerful except He who grants knowledge to those who know and power to those who are powerful? Whatever you distinguish, in its exact meaning, is something created and made, like yourselves, and returns to you. The Exalted Creator is the granter of life and it is He Who destines death, and perhaps the small ant imagines that Allah has two antennas, for they are its perfections and it supposes that the absence of them would be a flaw in one who lacked them.”¹⁹ This is the state of the rational when they try to describe Allah, the Exalted.

Abū Ja‘far (‘a) (Imam Bāqir) said: “Speak about the creatures of Allah and do not speak of Allah, for speech about Allah increases nothing but the confusion of the speaker.”²⁰

Imam Sādiq (‘a), said, “How can I describe Him by quality when it is He Who makes qualities. Quality is known by He Who has given us qualities.”²¹

And he (‘a) said: “Do not go beyond the Qur’ān for you will become lost after its explanation.”²²

Imam Kāzīm (‘a) said: “Allah is too High, Magnificent, and Grand for the reality of His description to be reached.

¹⁷ *Tafsīr al-Sāfi*.

¹⁸ *Kāfi, Bāb al-nahy ‘an al-sifah*.

¹⁹ *Fayz Kāshānī, Kalimāt-e Maknūnah, kalimah 7*.

²⁰ *Kāfi*, 1, 165.

²¹ *Bihār al-Anwār*, 4, 298.

²² *Bihār al-Anwār*, 3, 262.

Describe Allah as He has described Himself. You must refrain from going beyond this.”²³

It was said to Imam Kāzīm (‘a): “By what can the unity of Allah be known?” He said: “Do not innovate. He who opines according to his own speculations perishes. He who abandons the *Ahl al-Bayt* of the Prophet goes astray, and he who abandons the Book of Allah and the sayings of His Prophet disbelieves.”²⁴

Imam Rizā (‘a) said: “O Allah! I do not describe You except by that with which You describe Yourself.” And he said: “You must understand imagine that Allah is other than anything that you imagine.”²⁵

jahān muttafiq bar illāhiyyatash

Forumāndeh dar konh-e māhiyyatash

Na edrāk dar konh-e dhātesh rasad

Na fekrat bighawr-e sifātesh rasad

Na bar awj-e dhātash parad morgh-e vahm

Nar dar dhayl-e vasfash rasad dast-e fahm

Keh khāssān dar in rah faras rāndehand

Bi lā uhsī as tak furūmāndehand.

All the world is in agreement with His divinity,

But it stops before the reality of His quiddity.

Neither can understanding reach the reality of His essence,

Nor can thought reach the depths of His attributes.

*Neither can the bird of imagination reach the summit of His
essence.*

²³ *Kāfi*, 1, 137.

²⁴ *Kāfi*, 1, 73.

²⁵ *Bihār al-Anwār*, 3, 266.

*Nor can the hand of apprehension grasp the skirts of His
attributes.*

*The experts in this way have mounted swift steeds,
But their galloping is halted by "I cannot reckon".*

So, do not pay attention to those who fancy that they have reached the core of holy reality (*haqīqah al-muqaddasah*), but throw dust at them; indeed they are astray and misled, they belie the truth and attribute falsehoods to others. The affair is too lofty and too manifest to be polluted with human thought. Whatever one imagines is miles away from the precincts of the cherubim. The furthest that deep thought reaches is only the furthest limit of its precision.

Ancheh pish-e to ghayr az ān rah nist

Ghāyat-e fikr-e tost Allah nist

Goftam hameh mulk-e hasan sarmāyeh-ye tost

Khorshid-e falak chaw dharreh dar sāyeh-ye tost

Goftā ghalati ze mā neshān natvān yāft

Az mā to har āncheh dīdeh 'i pāyeh-ye tost.

*The way before you, and beside which there is no other
Is the limit of your own thought, not Allah.*

*I said that the entire beautiful kingdom is your property.
The sun of the celestial spheres is like a particle in your shadow.*

*He said, "You err; no sign can be found of Us;
Whatever you have seen of Us is your own level."*

Glory to Him in the wilderness of Whose magnificence and greatness the most subtle imaginations are left wandering. Glory be to Him Who placed no way for creatures to know Him. It should be known that these four groups, even if they are wandering astray, are judged in fairness, despite the differences

in their views, not to have departed from Islam because of their statements and beliefs. They have not brought forth anything that would require them to be called disbelievers, for all of them are in agreement on confessing Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers and the Last Day; they oblige themselves to abide by Islamic law (*sharī'ah*) with great firmness of heart; and they seriously try to find what they have lost and desire. If it is conclusively established that one of them has not been guided to the *wilāyah* of the immaculate Imams, peace be with them, he is outside of the faith in the specific sense, but not outside of Islam, as can be gathered from the reports attributed to the impeccable ones. If, however, he is one of the *nāsibīn* (those who exhibited enmity toward the Imams), he is outside of Islam, and is deserving of malediction and curses, if he insists on this until the time of his death without repenting. Since it has been established by our Imams that there is a station between the two stations, that is error without disbelief, between faith and disbelief, and they established that the affair of these people pertains only to Allah, glory be to Him, it is not permissible to curse one who is true to his innate nature even if he has gone astray, until his disbelief is proven with certainty, and until it is proven that he remained in disbelief until he became aware of death.

A man said to Imam Sādiq ('a), "We disassociate ourselves from a group that does not say what we say." He ('a) said, "Do you disassociate yourselves from those who love us, although they do not say what you say?" He said, "I said so." He ('a) said, "Then, there is something with us that you do not have. So, would it be appropriate for us to disassociate ourselves from you?" He said, "I said, 'No.'" He ('a) said, "There is something with Allah that is not with us. Do you consider us spurned [by Allah]?" He said, "I said, 'No.' By Allah, what are we to do?" He said, "Love them, and do not disassociate

yourself from them. Among the Muslims are some who have one share, and some who have two shares, and some who have three shares.” The *hadīth* at length is in *Kāfi*. What sort of people could open their mouths to curse someone who said something one day that made them upset? Perhaps what was said had a correct meaning that was not understood by those who cursed him, or maybe he had repented of what he said, or maybe he only said it because of some emergency, or something else.

Our master Imam Bāqir (‘a) said, “When a curse comes out of the mouth of one who curses, it swirls about and if access is found [to an appropriate target, it goes there], otherwise, it returns to the one who uttered it.”²⁶

So, it is not hidden from those of intellect that those who cast aside the way of the *thaḳalayn* in the acquisition of knowledge and follow some of these groups have gone astray from the way of guidance, except for those (*who repent and believe and do good, then follows the guidance*) (20:81). O brothers! Bear witness, with a testimony that I will ask from you when I am in need, that I have not been guided by anything but the light of the *thaḳalayn*, and I have followed none but the chosen Imams, and I disassociate myself from whatever is other than the guidance of Allah, and seek refuge in Him. (*Verily, the guidance of Allah is guidance*) (2:119).

I am not a theologian, not a pseudo-philosopher, not a pseudo-sufi, and not a sham (*mutakallif*), but I am a adherent of the *hadīth*, and the Qur’ān of the Prophet, and I am a follower of his *Ahl al-Bayt*. I am fed up with and have parted company from the misleading speeches of those four groups, and I have alienated myself from everything but the Noble Qur’ān and the

²⁶ *Kāfi*, 4, 65.

hadith of the *Ahl al-Bayt*, peace be with them, and what is unrelated to them.

Man har cheh khwāndeham hameh az yād-e man beraft

Illā hadīth-e dust keh tekrār mikonam.

Whatever I have read I have forgotten,

Except the narration of the friend that I repeat.

Because during the period when I was discussing, investigating and trying to penetrate farsighted thoughts I tested the paths of various groups, and I reached the core of what each of them was saying, and with the vision of insight I saw that the eye and intellect are impotent for perceiving the sublimity of the ambit of eternity. The light of thought fails to reach the canopy of the magnificence of oneness. Whenever the intellect wants to see something, it is reflected back to the eye spurned and wearied. Whenever the light of thought shines to illuminate, it is destroyed, so it dims and is wearied, and none can inform you as can the All-aware. When I saw that it was so, I cried out from behind the curtain of worship: (*Glory be to You! Verily, I was of the unjust ones*) (21:87); I implore your forgiveness, I (*do not love those that set*) (6:76); (*Verily I have turned my face wholly unto Him Who originated the heavens and the earth being upright, and I am not of the idolaters.*) (6:79); (*Verily my prayer and my sacrifice, my life and my death are all only for Allah, Lord of the worlds./ He has no partner and this I have been commanded and I am the first of those who submit*) (6:162-163).

Har jamili keh bedidim bedu yār shodim
 Har jamāli keh shenidim gereftār shodim
Kebriyā-ye haram-e husn-e to chun rūy nemud
 Chār takbīr zadim az hameh bizār shodim
Parto-ye husn-e to chun tāft beratiim az hush
 Chun keh hush az sar-e mā raft khabardār shodim
Dar pas-e pardeh-ye pendār bisar mibordim
 Khoftah bodim ze hayhā-ye to bidār shodim
Sharbat-e la'le labat bud shafā-ye del-e mā
 Be 'abath mā ze pey-e noskkeh-ye Attār shodim
Mushaf-e ruy-e hadith-e labat az yād bebord
 Har cheh khwāndim, digar bar sar-e tekrār shodim
Rāh raftim basi tā keh beh rah pay bordim
 Kār kardim keh tā vāqef-e in kār shodim
Rūz-e mā nīktar az day bud o mā beh ze parīr
 Sāl o mah khush keh beh az pār o pari pār shodim
Har cheh dādand beh mā az digari behtar bud
 Tā sezāvār-e sarāpardeh-ye asrār shodim
Dar del o dideh-ye mā nur-e tajalli afrukht
 Tā beh niru-ye yaqīn mazhar-e anvār shodim
Sar ze daryā-ye haqāyiq cho borun āvardim
 Bar sar-e ahl-e sokhan abr-e goharbār shodim
Ashnā Fayz az in guneh sokhan bahreh barad
 Nazd-e bigāneh 'abath bar sar-e goftār shodim.
I became the companion of every beauty I saw,
I was taken with every beauty of which I heard.

*When the greatness of the precincts of your beauty were shown,
I said "God is the greatest" four times and turned away from all
else.*

*I lost consciousness when the beam of your beauty shined;
When I lost consciousness, I became informed.*

*I lived behind a curtain of fantasy.
I was asleep. I awoke at the noise you made.*

*The ruby wine of your lips is the cure of my heart.
There was no point in seeking the prescription of the physician.
The scripture of your face and the narrations of your lips made
me forget*

*Whatever I had read, afterward I became preoccupied with
repetitions.*

*I went far along the way until I found the right way;
I worked much until I found the skill of working.*

*One of my days was better than December. My month is better
than last year.*

*My year and month were better than last year and the year
before that.*

*Whatever I was given was better than all else,
Until I became worthy of the canopy of secrets.*

*The light of disclosure was ignited in my heart and vision,
Until by the strength of certainty I became the place for the
disclosure of lights.*

*When my head emerged from the sea of truths,
Above the heads of the speakers I became a cloud that rains
jewels.*

*Those who know Fayz (grace) can appreciate these words.
Before those strange to me, I have spoken in vain.*

My master! My master! You are the One who has become garbed in eternal divinity (*lāhūtiyyah al-azaliyyah*) and You are unique in eternal pleasure. Before Your constancy, the chain of the tongue is cut off. At the attribute of Your self-subsistence, prattle ceases. You have manifested Yourself in the Easts of splendor and beauty. You became covered by the canopy of greatness and magnificence. The eyes of the intellect are blind to uncovering Your greatness. The tongues of the great ones are dumbfounded at transcribing Your blessings. By Your manifestation the gloomy dark night became illuminated. You became covered from the views of intellects by the radiance of that light. You set free the hearts of the seekers distracted and in wonder in the desert of Your greatness. You made no way for the feet of the intellects to reach the precincts of Your greatness. How far from the mark! How far off from understanding the sublimity of the magnificence of divinity! How can the lowly worldly ones travel to reach the canopy of the beauty of the divine realm (*lāhūt*). Glory to You! Glory to You! Praise does not comprehend You. You are as You have praised Yourself! You are beyond what has been said of You. Keep our hearts from the whirlpools of error by the light of Your guidance. Grant us the success of being able to knock at the door of service to You morning and evening. Apply the salve of the light of Your knowledge to the vision of our eyes until we see Your magnificence by Your radiance. Make splendour, refulgence and perfection plain to us so that when they are illumined we despise every other good and beauty, are burdened most heavily by all that takes us from Your contemplation and Your company, and are turned toward You with our deepest fervour with hope of being joined with You never to part. O God! Open the way for souls that have gone off the road of guidance and are lost in gloomy darkness. Summon us to the knowledge of guidance and veil us from the darkness of

blindness, and shear us of the darkness of pretense and affectation. Let the suns of *tawhīd* and the moons of *tanzih* (abstraction, immateriality) shine upon us. Teach us knowledge from You to heal the pain of our hearts, brighten the blindness of our bosoms, cure the diseases of our bodies, better us from the corruptions of our breasts, and purify us from the pus of our souls. Make Your love our maxim, and garb us in Your remembrance by Your generosity and nobility. O Caring One! O Kind One! (*Glory be to your Lord, the Lord of Majesty, beyond what they attribute! And peace be with the apostles. And all praise is Allah's, Lord of the worlds.*) (37:180-182).

A Brief Survey of the Publication of the Glorious Qur'ān in the West

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The term “West” in this discussion is used to imply the cultural, political, social and economic sense of the word and is not to be understood in its geographical sense. In other words, it is meant to denote all those countries that share a Westernized culture and have Westernized political, economic, and social systems. Therefore, when we speak of “publication”, we mean to include all the efforts made by the Westerners in the printing, translation, indexing, bibliography, and the historiography of the writing of the Qur'ān and in the translation of this Celestial Book; or in a nutshell, it indicates all the efforts that have resulted in the spread of this Glorious Book in the West and have been employed in the field of Islamic studies. It is undeniable that voluminous work has taken place in this field; however, since all the works cannot possibly be addressed in this brief study, we will refer to the most significant efforts in

this field following the Middle Ages, with a view to help us to gain a correct picture of “Islamic studies in the West”.

The Sources

In a study of the relations between Islam and the West or the Muslims and the Christians/Westerners/Europeans we should keep in mind the fundamental fact that these relations, from the very onset, were permeated with certain pre-conceived notions or rather misunderstandings and were, thus, later on too inflicted with political, commercial, and sometimes even imperialistic prejudices. Such a background, would only naturally result in either a dearth or a complete lack of wholesome and unbiased studies and in spite of the fact that Islam and the West have shared age-old relations. Some researchers interpret the confrontation and conflict between Islam and the West, or to put it more correctly, between the East and the West as if it were an indispensable tradition of history¹ and even look for its inevitable repetition in modern history². It is obvious that in such a heavy and fiery atmosphere, filled with belligerence and conflict, both sides would fail to see and recognize each other correctly and would remain stuck in their own distorted views.³ It would thus become inevitable to first attempt to eliminate the old prejudices and misunderstandings between the East and the West and to instead make efforts towards better mutual understanding.⁴

The Christians initially faced the Muslims when the latter rapidly spreading were towards the Syria, Egypt, and the other colonies of the Christian Byzantine Empire. Islam was also spreading fast and was attracting more and more followers from all parts of the world. Thus, almost within the batting of an eyelid the Christians found the world in the hands of the Muslims and were left perplexed about what to do next. Were they to remain silent witnesses or were they to attempt to

destroy what they considered as their rival? The Christians of those times chose the second option. Moreover, their military efforts did not prevent them from identifying the driving force of their powerful rival.⁵ In this manner, the attention of the Westerners was gradually drawn towards attempting to know more about Islam and the Glorious Qur'ān. Their efforts took a more serious shape following the Crusades and as the result of the attempts made by people like Peter the Venerable⁶, Raymond Lulio, and Roger Bacon⁷, although the Christians tried to highlight what they thought to be the weaknesses and the contradictions in the Qur'ān, in a vain lid to undermine the fountainhead of the belief of the Muslims. Thus, it could probably be said that the first step taken by the Westerners in the field of Islamic and Qur'ānic studies was a confrontational and denigrating movement against Islam and the Qur'ān. Some examples of their arguments and criticisms against the Glorious Qur'ān are presented in the following section.

The initiator of this confrontational approach towards the Qur'ān was a person named John of Damascus (Yūhannā Dimashqī 675-749 CE). He was from among the renowned Greek theologians and is considered as the father of the Christianity of the Middle Ages and was the first person to have started an organized and comprehensive onslaught against Islam and the Qur'ān, in order to defend the belief in Trinity. According to researchers, the efforts of John of Damascus - the influence of which can also be traced in the works of the later Orientalists and Islamologists – initiated the trend of Islamic studies in the West.⁸ In his attempts to refute the Qur'ān and Islam, John of Damascus was left with little option but to acquire some information (even if it did not hold any credibility) about Islam and its Divine Book. Of course, his onslaughts and criticisms were not left unresponded, and right from the beginning, there were some people like Abū 'Isā Warrāq who,

on realizing the dangers of his moves, responded to his criticisms appropriately.⁹

Similarly, mention should also be made regarding the steps taken by Peter the Venerable in France and Spain, i.e. the Christianity of the West. Peter the Venerable was the head priest of the Cluniac Churches and had appointed several people including Robertos Katnansis, Itermann Dalmatia, Peter of Toledo, and a person by the name of “Muhammad” to translate the Glorious Qur’ān and the other Islamic texts with a view to starting a big movement of learning about Islam. We shall briefly review the translation of Robertos Katnansis later on in our discussion, however, the important point to be mentioned at this stage is that the efforts of this group – notwithstanding the existing disagreements among scholars about the translators and the writers¹⁰ - resulted in a collection called *Toledo Corpus* or the *Cluniac Corpus*; and, interestingly, certain parts of this collection contain the same anti-Islamic waves that were present in the writings of John of Damascus and, thus, as regards the general attitude there is no difference between the Christianity of the East and the Christianity of the West in their repudiation of Islam.

Some parts of this collection are presented under titles like *The Birth and the Place of the Emergence of Muhammad*, *The Flawed and Amusing Narrations of the Muslims*, *Muhammad’s School of Thought*, and *The Queries of ‘Abdullāh bin Salām*.¹¹ For centuries, this collection was the sole source of the acquaintance of the Christians with Islam and the Qur’ān and was considered of great importance in the critical evaluation of Islam and in the area of Islamic studies in the West.¹²

Nevertheless, one of the most serious steps taken by the Westerners in their association with the Glorious Qur’ān was the effort made by two church authorities sometime around the 15th century CE when the fear of the Europeans in relation to the

Ottoman army was on the rise. It all began when a person by the name of John of Segovia who had retired from the church made up his mind to find a solution to end the opposition between Islam and Christianity. To fulfill this ideal he arranged for a Latin translation of the Glorious Qur'ān which has apparently been lost. As per the preface of this translation which is available at hand and contains his critical views, he was of the opinion that the problems and disagreements between Islam and Christianity could be solved through "contra ferentia", meaning "dialogue" (among the followers of Islam and Christianity).¹³

John of Segovia made great efforts in this regard and wrote letters to some of his friends and attempted to persuade them to support him in fulfilling on his vision. Apparently, some of his friends including Pope Pius II who did not share his enthusiasm did not respond to his call. However, on going through the names of the people who had received John of Segovia's letter we come across the German Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church, Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464), who was a Neo-Platonist and shared John's views. A little later on, Nicholas wrote a book entitled, *Cribratio Alcorani* that was a relatively fair book as compared to the existing superstitious and unjust views held about Islam, the Qur'ān, and the noble Prophet of Islam (S) in those times. Although Nicholas was of the opinion that his writings had correctly highlighted what he presumed to be the distortions in the Qur'ān and that his methodology of limiting the subject and defining it had been quite successful, it is however quite obvious that he had adopted a critical approach. Nicholas' reason for choosing this methodology was because he was hopeful that by limiting the subject he would be able to arrive at solutions for issues of dispute between Islam and Christianity.¹⁴ This critical approach continued through out the following centuries and in the year 1691 CE on the order of the Church authorities a book entitled,

Prodromus ad Refutatie Alcorani, was published in Rome which actually trained its readers on how to criticize and refute Islam and the Qur'ān. Nevertheless, many harsh and vulgar refutations were written on Islam and the Qur'ān and despite the fact that new scientific research methodologies had emerged in the nineteenth century, encouraging people like Higgins¹⁵ to write in defense of Islam and the Qur'ān, there were yet other fanatical people like Father Inchbald who repeated the earlier trend – apparently to reject Higgins's views but in fact to reject Islam – that resembled the writings of the Christian priests of the Middle Ages who did not hold a correct perception of Islam. Fortunately, as a result of an improvement in the cultural level of the masses, and particularly after the Vatican issued a declaration recognizing Islam as a divine religion¹⁶ in 1967, the earlier trend of targeting Islam gradually waned.¹⁷ This move as well as the efforts made in the area of the publication of researches, translations, and the analyses of Islamic texts, including the Qur'ān, increased the hopes for a more realistic perception of Islam and a more impartial attitude on the part of the Westerners.

The Publication of the Qur'ān

At this point, after referring to certain basic matters on our topic of discussion, let us enter into the main subject viz., the publication and translation of the Qur'ān in the West. Here we need to keep in mind that since the printing machine was invented by Guttenberg only in the fifteenth century, the publication of Islamic texts began much later than their translations. The reason for the translations to have taken place earlier was that the Europeans were unable to read the Qur'ān in its original language. The truth of the matter is that prior to the establishment of chairs in Islamic-Arabic studies in the universities of the West and prior to the beginning of the trend

of studying Arabic by the Europeans, the need for the publication of the Arabic texts of the Qur'ān and the other Islamic texts was never experienced. However, later on the employment of the printing industry in the improvement of teaching and research techniques became indispensable, and this industry, too, provided researchers with their desired texts in well-printed forms. According to the investigations of researchers, the Qur'ān was first published in the West by a person named Paganini in Venice. This work was published some time between the years 1503 and 1523 but was soon confiscated and destroyed on the orders of the Pope. The sole researcher to have seen this translation is apparently a person called Von Erpe (Thomas Erpenius) who has made a mention of the translation in his book entitled, *The Fundamentals of the Arabic Language*. In later times, some people like Von Erpe, Johanne, Kristanos Ravios, Mathias Beckius, and others also published certain sections of the Glorious Qur'ān, until a complete version of this noble Book came to be published by Abraham Hinckelmann (1652-1692) in Hamburg. Following him, a cleric from the "Society of the Monks of the Divine Path" by the name Ludovico Marracci published a better version of the same. In Russia, too, a person called Mullā 'Uthmān Ismā'il was commissioned by Queen Catherine to publish a Qur'ān for the benefit of her Muslim subjects living in St. Petersburg. The last section of this work contained a list of the thirty parts of the Qur'ān as well as a corrected list of the printing errors in the Book and also contained some useful notes to facilitate the reading. However, the best Qur'ān published in Europe, which later on became the main source material for all the researchers, was the one published by Gustav L. Flugel,¹⁸ the renowned German orientalist and bibliographer. This Qur'ān was printed by Caroli Tauchnitii in Leipzig in the year 1834. The first page of this work is left blank and is followed by an Arabic title on

the second page; the third page is blank, too, and the next page which is left unnumbered contains the Opening Chapter of *al-Hamd* (The Praise). This work was reprinted several times and was made widely available. However, within a short while a person by the name of Gustav Maurice Redslob who had a doctorate in philosophy somehow succeeded in manipulating for the book to be printed under his name by the very same publishers.

The Publishing of Bibliographies and Qur'ānic Indexes (*Ma'ājim*)

The Westerners, unlike the Muslims of those days who were in the practice of memorizing most of the Qur'ān, did not know the Qur'ān by heart. Therefore, keeping in mind the Western expectations and for the purpose of an easy access to the Qur'ān in the course of their Islamic studies, certain researchers began to write indexes for it. The oldest printed index of the Qur'ān was entitled, *Nujūm al-Furqān* which was compiled by a person called Mustafā bin Muhammad in Calcutta who had also written a preface for it in the Persian language. Despite the fact that the book was compiled by a Muslim author and was published in a country under Muslim rule (India) with a preface in the Persian language, since it was published by the publishing department of the College of Fort William in Calcutta, a subsidiary of the East India Company, it could be considered as a Western Qur'ānic research. This book was reprinted several times and was in wide use. However, Gustav Flugel was the first person to publish the first index of the Qur'ān in Europe in the year 1842. This index was based on the roots of the Arabic words and was alphabetically ordered and contained about 219 pages. Another index comprising 343 pages was also compiled and lithographically printed by a person by the name of Mirzā Muhammad Kāzim Beik, apparently an

Iranian, in the printing house of the Academy of Sciences of the Russian Empire in the year 1859. This index has a preface of ten pages in the Persian language and contains most of the words and phrases required by Orientalists in their studies. The book has been compiled on the basis of the *hijā'* letters of Arabic and also contains some key words that could be beneficial for research purposes as well as some examples for each word. With the passage of time and with the growth of science and technology the trend of indexing the verses of the Glorious Qur'ān became more advanced until some people like Jule La Beaume¹⁹ compiled the subject-wise index of the Divine Book for the first time. Jule La Beaume has presented a subject-wise compilation of the Qur'ānic verses and has, thus, made a subject-wise reference to the Qur'ān simpler. His book was accepted very widely and some Muslim scholars like Muhammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī have made use of his work as the source book in compiling their own indexes.²⁰

Translation of the Glorious Qur'ān

According to most researchers,²¹ the Qur'ān was first translated into Latin by Robertos Katnansis on the orders of Peter the Venerable. However, some others believe that it was Peter of Toledo who first translated the Qur'ān.²² They were also of the opinion that another person by the same name (Peter) was in charge of the supervision of the translation work.²³ It appears that this work had been a group effort since another person by the Muslim name "Muhammad" has also been listed among its translators. There are some researchers who have also mentioned the name of Hermann of Dalmatia among the translators of the Qur'ān.²⁴ However, this is not a valid belief and as a matter of fact, Hermann of Dalmatia had translated some other parts of the *Cluniac Corpus* but not the Qur'ān itself.²⁵ This translation, along with some other writings like

Robertos Katnansis' preface to the translation as well as some other articles that we have mentioned earlier on in our discussion were mainly translated by Hermann and collectively formed the famous *Cluniac Corpus* which occupies an important place in the field of Islamic studies in the West.²⁶ Robertos Katnansis' translation came to be recognized as a model for the later translations and became one of the most important sources for the Westerners in the study of Islam. However, it must be mentioned that his work is an abridged translation containing vile and caustic remarks against Islam and its noble Prophet (S). It appears that for his work, Robert had tried to select the most vulgar and obsolete phrases instead of best ones.²⁷ A copy of the manuscript of this translation in Robertos' own writing is currently housed in the Arsenal Library of Paris.²⁸ Despite the fact that this translation was presented to St. Bernard before the second Crusades and was displayed publicly, it remained in its original manuscript form for a long time. Finally, in the year 1542 and as a result of the joint efforts of Von Erpe and Bibleander, with a preface by Martin Luther and Phillip Melanchton, the Protestant leaders, and after undergoing great effort, it was published in the year 1542 and had it not been for Luther's support it was most likely that this book would never have been published.²⁹ There is also a dispute among researchers as regards the place of its publication and while some believe it to be Zurich³⁰ others say that it was published in Basle³¹. But if we were to take into consideration the ban that was placed on the publication of this work in Basle in the year 1542 according to which this book would need to be published elsewhere, it appears that this book was indeed published in Zurich in 1542 and if at all any publication of the work did take place in Basle it was only in the later years.³² Another Latin translation of the Qur'ān worth mentioning is the one by Ludovico Marracci (1612-1700) which was published alongside

the Arabic text of the Qur'ān with many explanatory notes 1698.³³ A person by the name of Andre Arrivabene, too, translated the Qur'ān into the Italian language in the year 1547 and although he claimed to have translated it directly from the Arabic version, it was obviously a translation of the work of Robertos Katnansis.³⁴ It was Solomon Schweigger, a preacher of the Frauen Kirche Church of Nuremburg who translated the Qur'ān into the German language from the work of Andre Arrivabene and this work in turn became the source for a translation into the Dutch language by an unknown translator. The first French translation of the Qur'ān is by Andre du Ryer which was reprinted many times between the years 1647 and 1775 and contained a preface entitled, *A Summary of the Religion of the Turks*; and this translation and its preface became the source for the English translation of Alexander Ross. However, the first English translation of the Qur'ān belongs to George Sale, who also wrote an introduction to his translation. The outstanding feature of this work is that it was translated directly from the original Arabic text of the Book.³⁵

The other famous English translations of the Qur'ān are those of Ross, Palmer, Rodwell, Bell, Arthur J. Arberry who was also a poet and a litterateur, and Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall who was a sincere Muslim and whose translation is in the biblical style.³⁶ Among the modern and reliable French translations of the Qur'ān, mention should be made of the work of R. Blachere.

In our times, besides the fact that the number of translations of the Glorious Qur'ān is on the increase, the number of Muslim scholars well-versed in various Western languages as well as the number of Western Muslims interested in the translation of the Qur'ān is on the rise too, and the trend of the translation of the Qur'ān into the various Western

languages, which began in the Indian subcontinent has seen much progress and promises brighter future horizons.³⁷

History of the Qur'ān

The historiography of the writing of the Qur'ān in the West has paid the maximum attention to aspects such as the structure, the phraseology, the background of the Revelation of the various verses, recitation, accents, compilation, and calligraphy.³⁸

The first person to have conducted a research in these fields and particularly on what he alleged as the influence of other religions on the Qur'ān was Boutierre.³⁹ Later on, Gustav Weil⁴⁰ continued in his footsteps and did some research on the historical methodology and the subjects covered by the Qur'ān; however, he has made some arbitrary divisions of the Meccan Chapters of the Book.⁴¹ But it was probably Theodor Noldeke, the renowned German Orientalist, who was the first person to have paid serious attention to the history of the Qur'ān and who became a pioneer in the activities of the Orientalists in this field. He had selected to work on the history of the Qur'ān (*Geschichte des Qorans*) for his doctoral thesis and received an award for conducting a research on a novel subject in the Latin language.

He published his work in Guttingen in the year 1860 and later on his student, Schwally, republished the work between the years 1909 and 1919 with a useful commentary. The book of Noldeke became the basis for the efforts of the Westerners in the field of Qur'ānic studies – which is one of the most important and favorite topics among the Westerners – and even today there are many who strive to follow in Noldeke's footsteps.⁴² Nevertheless, his book contains some grave mistakes such as his discussion on the use of the certain letters of the Arabic alphabet that appear at the beginning of some *Sūrahs* (*al-Hurūf al-*

Muqatta'ah) which has unfortunately also influenced the works of the later Orientalists.⁴³ However, the attention that he has paid to the linguistic analysis is interesting.⁴⁴ Blachere, the renowned French Orientalist, too, has done some research on the Qur'ān, one of which works is entitled, *An Introduction to the Qur'ān*.⁴⁵ In spite of the fact that this book mainly concentrates on Qur'ānic sciences and exegesis it also contains some interesting and controversial points in the field of the historiography of the text of the Glorious Qur'ān.⁴⁶

In any case, by taking a fleeting glance at such works or at the Qur'ānic entries of the *Encyclopedia of Islam* (2nd Edition) or the works of Eastern non-Muslim researchers such as Toshihiko Izutsu and Western Qur'ānic researchers like R. Hawting⁴⁷ as well as hundreds of others we could say that the trend of Qur'ānic studies in the West is on the rise and it is hoped that after centuries of varied experiences in the publication, the translation, and the printing of the Glorious Qur'ān, the Westerners take on a more fair approach in their researches on this sacred Book so that their links with the scientific methods of Islamic studies gain more strength.

The Eastern Muslims, too, should endeavour to take on new methods and the queries of the Westerners on Islamic and Qur'ānic studies more seriously and in this way they should try to enter into a genuine interaction and dialogue with their Western counterparts because for the Muslims the Qur'ān is the Book of their faith and guidance even though for the Westerners it is merely their main source of Islamic studies.

Notes:

¹ Zarrinkūb, 'Abd al-Husayn, *Kārnāmeḥ-ye Islām*, Tehran: Amīr Kabīr, p. 17.

² Like some new views in this regard such as the theory of *The Clash of Civilizations* of Samuel Huntington.

³ For further details and the impact of such relations on the trend of Islamic studies in the West, see Martin, *The History of Islamic Studies in the West*, the section on *Religious Conflicts and the Crusades*.

⁴ One of the important factors in building a deeper understanding for paying more attention to dialogue among civilizations and cultures.

⁵ From the viewpoint of Islam and the Glorious Qur'ān, the different religions compliment one another and there is no rivalry among them. For e.g. see the Glorious Qur'ān; 2:136 and 285; and 5:82.

⁶ For more details on Peter the Venerable and his views, see Martin, op cite; the research section of the Cluniac Corpus; Badawī, *Farhang-e Kāmil-e Khāvar Shenāsān*, p. 85.

⁷ For more details on Lulio and Bacon and their activities, see *Tārīkh Arab*, vol. 2, p. 839; Mīnavī, *Islām az Darīcheh-ye Chashm Masīhiyān*, p. 23 onwards; Martin, commentary notes by the translator.

⁸ As'adī, Murtazā, *Yūhannā Dimashqī wa Āghāz Mujādalāt*, p. 63.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Badawī, p. 475; compare with Wardenberg, *Orientalists*, 737/EI 2; and Martin, section on *Cluniac Researches*.

¹² Martin, section on *Reforms*.

¹³ Refer to the article, *Islam and Christianity*, 281/OEMIW

¹⁴ Minavī, op cite, pp. 79-84

¹⁵ Godfrey Higgins, Author of the book, *Defending Muhammad (S)*; Minavī, op cite, p. 114

¹⁶ Ahmadvand, *Guzarī bar Mutāla'āt Shī'ī dar Gharb*, pp. 175-176.

¹⁷ Although one can occasionally witness the impact of such false views even today, it should however be admitted that the general view has been altered and a majority of the Westerners consider the Qur'ān to be a divinely-inspired Book.

¹⁸ For more details on Gustav L. Flugel and his biography and works, see Badawī, op cite, 257-261.

¹⁹ For more information on La Beaume's works, see Khorram Shāhī, *Dāneshnāmeḥ*, vol. 1, p. 1166

²⁰ Badawī, op cite, p. 474.

²¹ Arberry, Preface to the Translation of the Qur'ān, p. 7; Minavī, op cite, p. 62; Zaryāb Khu'ī, 'Abbās, *Qur'ān*, p. 438; Badawī, op cite, p. 747; Salmāsī Zādeh, *Tārīkh Tarjamah-ye Qur'ān dar Jahān*, p. 96; As'adī, Murtazā, *Kitābshenāsī Jahānī*, p. 48; Saghīr, *Khāvarshenāsān wa Pazhuhishhā-ye Qur'ānī*, p. 59; Pearson, the article *Qur'ān*, section on the translation of the Qur'ān, EI2; Khorram Shāhī, Bahā' al-Dīn, op cite, vol. 1, p. 566.

²² Zaryāb Khu'ī, 'Abbās, op cite.

²³ Badawī, op. cite.

²⁴ As'adī, op. cite.

²⁵ Badawī, op. cite, p. 475.

²⁶ Kritzeck, James, *Peter the Venerable and Islam*, Princeton University Press, 1964.

²⁷ Pearson, op. cite, the section on Latin Translations.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Martin, op. cite.

³⁰ Arberry, op. cite.

³¹ Saghīr, op. cite, p. 59; Martin, op cite; Minavī, op cite, pp. 95-97.

³² Badawī, op. cite, pp. 474-475

³³ Zaryāb Khu'ī, 'Abbās, op cite.

³⁴ Pearson, op. cite.

³⁵ For a critical evaluation of his translation and some other English translations, refer to Arberry, The Preface to the Qur'ān

³⁶ Khorram Shāhī, Bahā' al-Dīn, *Qur'ānpazhuhi*, pp. 532-536.

³⁷ To see a complete list of the translations of the Qur'ān in various languages including.

³⁸ Saghīr, op cite, p. 31.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Weil, Gustav, the writer of a critical historical Introduction on the Holy Qur'ān.

⁴¹ Saghīr, op. cite.

⁴² Like John Burton, the author of the book, *The Compilation of the Qur'ān*, Cambridge, 1979

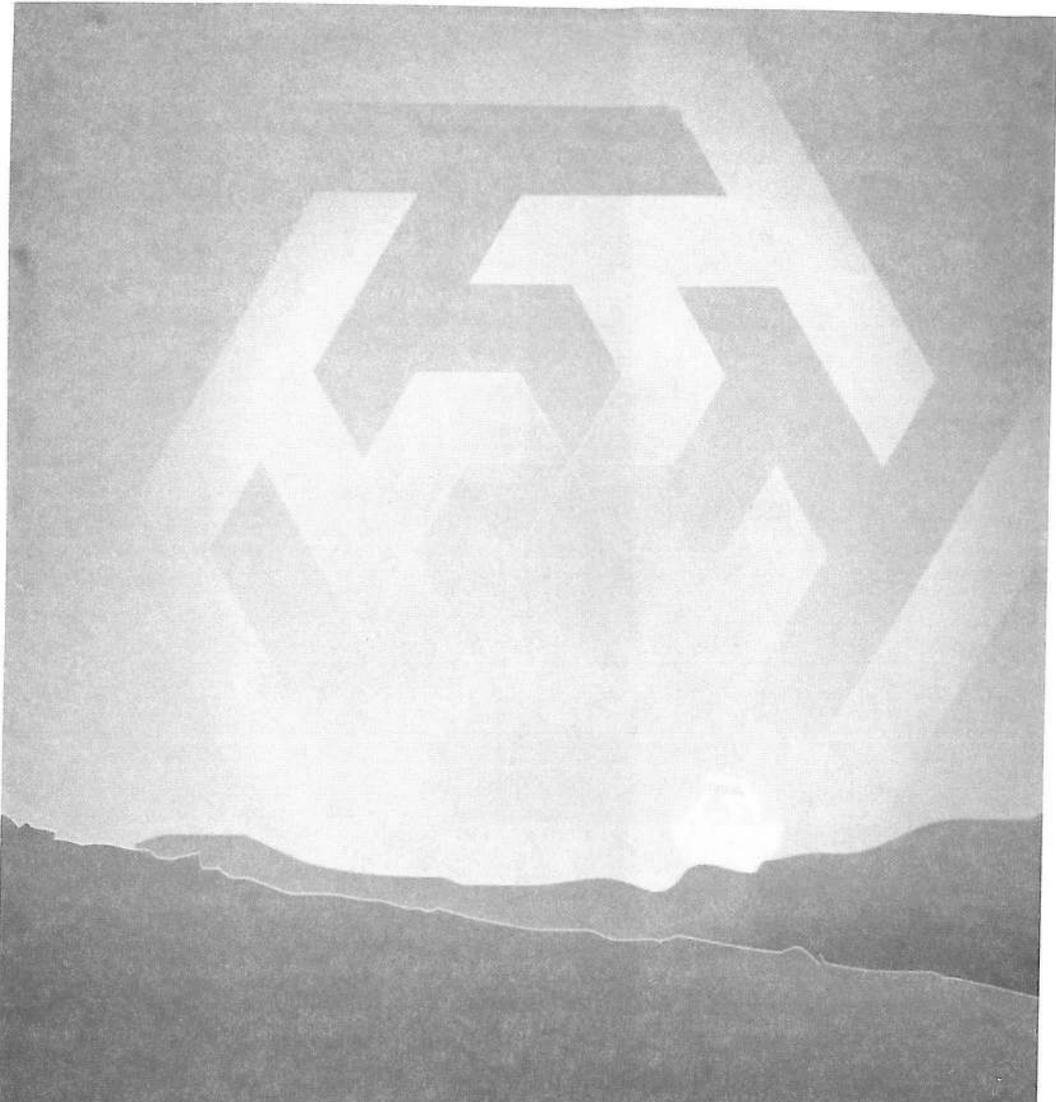
⁴³ Tabātabā'ī, *Naqd Athār Khāvarshenāsān*, pp. 61-69.

⁴⁴ Arghūn, *Islām Diruz wa Emruz*, pp. 32-33.

⁴⁵ The translation of Dr. Asadullāh Mubashsheri, Arghanūn Publications, First Edition, Tehran, 1993

⁴⁶ The entire book.

⁴⁷ Professor of the London University and one of the editors of a new book entitled, *Approaches to the Glorious Qur'ān*, 2000.



GLIMPSES
OF
THE NAHJ AL-BALĀGHAH

By Martyr Murtaḍa Muṭahhari

THE BIBLE

A Forged Truth or A True Forgery?

TRANSLATION OF al-RIHLAH al-MADRASIYYAH

THE LATE **MUHAMMED JAWÂD al-BALÂGHI**

The Islamic Ummah and the Phenomenon of Globalization

Dr. Sayyid Mustafā Muhaqqiq Dāmād

Like many other concepts that come to be commonly employed at a particular juncture, the concept of “globalization” (a term that was originally taken from the field of social sciences), too, has turned into a common term with varying connotations in the different economic, political, and religious fields as well as numerous definitions given by the experts of various fields. Nevertheless, globalization can be briefly defined as a particular way of living that encompasses and covers all the peoples of the globe. It is a trend that leads to an interaction and interdependence in the mutual relations between certain realities, viewpoints, concepts, and people. Or in other words, it is a process that brings about mutual interdependence, not only in the field of thought, but also in the areas of politics, economics, and the organization of the time.

However, globalization is not a new historical phenomenon but it is a trend that has repeatedly occurred

through the course of human history. When the Roman Empire conquered ancient Greece in the year 146 BC it was a kind of “globalization” that took place in the form of “Hellenizing” in the different areas of culture including philosophy, religion, art, et cetera. The military conquerors, except in such affairs as legislation, administration, and military affairs, came to be widely influenced by the superior civilization from the cultural angle. In other words, Rome became a global power through Athens and thereby experienced a cultural revolution, and on its own part, spread Greek knowledge and thought. The result was that even until the mid twentieth century, no one would be considered as “elite” in countries like England, Germany, and Italy unless he had mastered the ancient Greek and Latin languages.

Another example of globalization was the dominance of Islamic culture and civilization over Europe in the Middle Ages which took place at the hands of the Muslims of Andalusia. It is a well known fact that in the 2nd century AH and as a result of a revolution in the field of translation, the doors of the Islamic civilization were flung open to the knowledge of the Greeks. However, the Muslims did not lose their identity to this cultural onslaught and did not surrender unconditionally to it. On the other hand, neither did they adopt the policy of total rejection. Instead, by relying on their own rich cultural heritage and the teachings of the Divine Book and the Prophetic Traditions (*sunnah*), they acted as a powerful, living cell and absorbed all the useful and valuable elements of the foreign culture so as to enrich and elevate the levels of their own culture and civilization. Thus, it was not long before the Muslim culture and civilization came to possess all the positive elements of the invading culture but devoid of all its superstitious and unfounded beliefs.

Through Andalusia, Europe opened its arms to this great culture and gained knowledge about the views of Aristotle, Arab medicine, scientific experimentation, agricultural methods and machinery, the numerical system of the Arabs, and administrative skills from the near East. As a result, the superior culture came to dominate the inferior one leading to some astounding, long term results. The philosophy of Ibn Rushd (Averroes) that surfaced in the form of Neo-Platonism greatly influenced and played an important role in the emergence of Renaissance in the 16th and the 17th centuries CE in Europe, the outcomes of which can be witnessed largely throughout the world, even today.

Thus, based on experiential facts it can be concluded that globalization is not a project that could either be accepted or rejected by means of mere words. Neither is it an extraordinary occurrence but is rather a natural course of events. The superior culture and its related technology flows unpreventable like the course of water from the higher to the lower levels. At a time when the European mathematicians realized the capacity and the precision of the Arabic numeral system, no government could successfully pass a law to protect the cumbersome Roman numerals, as a result of which they had to bow out and pave the way for the entry of the more practical Arabic numerals.

Based on these very principles, in the contemporary world, the process of globalization is welcomed by some and is a cause of concern to others. Owing to its political and technological prowess, the Western world considers itself as superior and hopes to spread its culture to the entire world through the phenomenon of globalization and conversely, the weak societies are concerned and fearful about being crushed under the boots of the cultural onslaught. This is a very natural concern because the universal attraction to Western products and trends is very palpable and evident and the mechanism of this trend remains

the same as ever. In other words, this trend is not the outcome of the decisions made by any particular person or group and the present process of globalization is rather the result of the dominant Western science and technology which is interpreted as cultural power and attraction. It is for three centuries now that all the scientific revolutions in the various fields including micro and macro physics, nuclear sciences, advanced mathematics, research in all the medical fields, computer sciences, and communicational technology have taken place in the West.

However, it should not be left unsaid that the term “weak societies” does not merely imply those countries commonly referred to as the “third world” because according to this writer, globalization is an intra-occidental phenomenon. The Europeans and especially the French have for quite some time felt the threats of Americanization exerting its influence through the medium of Hollywood films. For more than fifty years now the people of Europe have held on possessively to their traditions, their mother tongue and their relationships in the fear of losing their identity. It seems that the new nationalistic movements taking place in Europe are in response to the trend of Americanization. The fierce opposition to the meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund that can be observed in the different parts of the world all indicate the same response. This is a very justified concern as far as the Europeans are concerned. After all, it would naturally be difficult for the Europeans to swallow that in spite of the fact that all the pioneers of science and philosophy during the 18th, the 19th and the 20th centuries such as Immanuel Kant, Hegel, August Comte, Bach, Marx, Freud, Einstein, Nietzsche were all Europeans, today it is the American universities that have become the Mecca of the global seekers of knowledge and philosophy, both the Eastern as well as the Western.

The Muslims and Globalization

Globalization is a reality that the Islamic *Ummah* is facing today and whether the Muslims like it or not, they are forced to encounter this phenomenon. However, they should strive to emerge victorious from this encounter by adopting a judicious stance.

In order to emerge victorious in this encounter with globalization, they should first attempt to gain a precise hold of the concept of globalization and should study its various fundamental and crucial aspects such as the impact of globalization on the world cultures and the role of religions in general, and Islam in particular. It is only then that they could expect to be able to take effective measures to encounter it.

As regards the fundamental features of globalization it is important to keep the following important points in mind:

1. The positive feature that is put forward by the advocates of globalization is the impact that globalization will have on the expansion of global participation. However, it should also be kept in mind that although on the one hand, globalization will increase global participation, on the other it will lead to monopolization. In other words, globalization comprises two paradoxical concepts to which we are witnesses today and which we can observe in the contemporary political life of our world. On the one hand, different countries get together to exchange views in the area of politics, apparently encouraging global participation, but on the other hand the big powers succeed in imposing their own views on the weaker nations. Globalization encourages the smaller nations to participate in the arena of world economics but, conversely, it is these very smaller nations that end up facing further economic deprivation while the powerful nations land up dominating the global economy.

2. It is this writer's belief that globalization will destroy national identities and will lead to the expansion of universality

at the cost of local characteristics and in fact, will devour the identity of the smaller nations.

3. This writer also holds the view that globalization will diminish the political sovereignty of the weaker governments. The powerful governments intend to gain a stranglehold upon the weaker countries and to dictate their political course.

4. Although it is true that globalization will increase the productive capacity of man but at the same time it will lead to the disintegration of the human society. This is because the nations will end up losing their grips over their environments, their economies, their political lives, and their cultures very easily.

5. Globalization will upset our value judgements, will destroy religious traditions and values and will, in fact, create a completely new human society by having an impacting effect upon the nature of human life. Or in other words, it will end up creating what is generally referred to as a “network society”. Such a society will alter our thinking, our beliefs, our psyche, our ways of life, and our very perceptions about ourselves such that we will be distanced from ourselves and our God and a new human being will emerge in a new world.

6. Globalization will assault human cultures in different parts of the world and will make them face great crises. It will lead the world towards a singular culture and smaller cultures will be dominated by the global culture; and a singular global culture will stand out as the dominant world culture.

The dominant culture, for the moment, is the product of the West and is led through the principles of materialism and secularism, having its own values. These values are devised by transnational corporation, under the dominance of consumerism. This dominant world culture will probably consider such values as spiritual, ethical, and religious beliefs as baseless. In this culture, the only criterion is production and competitive progress

and there is no room for such concepts as faith, hope, ethics, Divine Revelation, civility, and piety (*taqwā*). This culture distances mankind from God because it is human-oriented, or in other words, it denies the pivotal role of God in the creation of man and the world and instead attributes supreme power to man-made products. Economy, technology and communication, and not Divine power are the foundations of the power of this global culture!

In this culture, man strives to ignore his dependence and connection with the Absolute and Transcendent Truth and considers himself as independent of reliance on anyone outside of himself. Even more, he attempts to take the place of God and will strive to control the entire creation placing himself as the creator. It could be said that mankind has turned to a new kind of polytheism (*shirk*) and man-made products have become the new gods of this new culture. Man has been vanquished by these gods and he somehow considers himself dependent and in need of these gods and, thus, finds himself under their absolute domination. This phenomenon is an evident example of what has been described in the Divine and traditional literature of the world and resembles what has been described in the Glorious Qur'ān when it mentions: "... *What! Do you worship what you hew out?*" (37:95)

7. The dominant world culture or in other words the Western culture is the product of the industrial development in the past few centuries. In this culture, knowledge has completely succeeded in the objective of de-sanctifying the world. For this culture, nature viz. the seas, the mountains, the forests et cetera are not the signs (*āyāt*) of God and nor are they the vessels of the manifestation of Divine Grandeur. Man sees himself victorious in this challenge against nature and has exultantly been exploiting and wasting natural resources. In this way, he has corrupted and polluted his own natural environment to such

an extent that he is even unable to breathe healthily in it. God's command in the words, "*And do not make mischief in the earth after its reformation...*" (7:56) does not reach his ears and he continues to destroy his own living environment. In this regard, the Qur'an also adds, "*Corruption has appeared in the land and the sea on account of what the hands of men have wrought...*" (30:41).

The above discussion highlighted some of the important features of globalization. Now let us examine the responsibility of the religious societies as regards this cultural onslaught.

At the onset it should be mentioned that although Divine Religion has manifested in numerous different forms, in this writer's opinion, the cultural aspect of globalization is the enemy of the common belief among all these different systems, viz. the belief in God and monotheism. This is owing to the fact that as mentioned, on the one hand, the global culture emphasizes on agnosticism and atheism and encourages irreligiousness, and on the other hand, it propagates a new and modern form of polytheism (*shirk*). We should invite the followers of all the Divine Calls in the words of the Glorious Qur'an that says: "... *Come to an equitable proposition between us and you that we shall not serve any but Allah*" (3:64) or in other words, let us not worship any but the One and only God.

Under the banner of this commonality we should all challenge the values and manifestations of the global invading culture that are not commensurate with the primary ethical values of schools of Divine Religion. Moreover, in this challenge, we should adopt the stance that the Divine Prophets ('a) adopted in the early days of their encounter with the dominant cultures of their times.

The various schools of Divine Religion, firstly, critically evaluate the values that are incommensurate and in contradiction with religious ethics and, thus, today the religious thinkers

should critically examine the three fundamental elements of the dominating global culture viz. consumerism, materialism, and secularism. In this writer's opinion, religious schools are faced with the responsibility of liberating the cultures from these three elements and particularly the element of materialism which manifests itself in various forms. The distorted form of humanism is one of the manifestations of materialism. The global culture today attributes Divine qualities to itself. One of these qualities that it attributes to itself is being self-sufficient (*ghani*), very much in contradiction to the words of the Glorious Qur'an which states: "*O mankind! You stand in need of Allah and Allah is He Who is the Self-Sufficient, the Praised One*" (35:15). One of the effects of globalization is that it makes everything easily available to man such that man begins to feel absolutely self-sufficient whereas the main role of the schools of Divine Religion is to make man aware of God and to remind him of the fact that he is dependent upon a Transcendent and Exalted Power called God and that he loses his self-identity with the absence of God in his life. This is because the entire creation is totally dependent upon Him and the truth is that mankind cannot possibly exist without a sense of need and belonging to an Exalted Truth.

Furthermore, the global culture endeavours to negate any other realms that are beyond the human sphere whereas from the viewpoint of Divine religious schools man finds meaning and purpose only in going beyond his individual self. From among the Divine religious schools, Islam and the Islamic Ummah will have a serious and distinctive encounter with and will forward an exclusive stance against the global culture and if this Ummah responds judiciously, not only will it not face defeat but it will in fact certainly emerge triumphant and victorious.

The Islamic Ummah should have an unshakable faith in its own identity and values and only in such case will it be able to safeguard them. Only in such case will it be ensured a certain victory over the invading cultures. This Divine Promise in the Glorious Qur'ān reassures the believers in the following words: *“And be not infirm, and be not grieving, and you shall have the upper hand if you are believers”* (3:139). In this *āyah* it is the Islamic Ummah which is being addressed and this verse makes it clear that the gaining of an “upper hand” for the Muslims is conditional to the level of their firmness and faith.

In its struggle to conquer the hearts and the minds of people, the phenomenon of globalization has targeted values rather than focusing its endeavours on beliefs. If the base of Christianity in the West has weakened over the centuries it was not merely because such fundamental concepts as the “Lordship of Christ” [attribution of divinity to Prophet Jesus (‘a)], the concept of trinity, and such other deviated beliefs were not justifiable; and the downfall of the Church was to a great extent rather because it had lost its credibility as being the stronghold of ethical values in society, which had in turn stemmed from weakness in faith.

Fortunately, many of the Western thinkers today are quite aware of the existing ethical crises in the West and know that with the further weakening of the pillars of belief and faith of the Church, globalization will lead to a lack of moral values as regards such issues as homosexuality, abortion, etc.

Fortunately, in contemporary times, both within and outside of the world of Islam, a lot of opportunities exist for Islamic reformist movements. The Muslims should develop a deep conviction in the fact that Islam is the exclusive solution for the salvation of the global civilization. They should powerfully act upon the principles and values that exist in their Islamic traditions and which have their roots in the Glorious

Qur'ān and the Prophetic Traditions (*ahādīth*) and they should exert firmness in this regard. The examples that are presented hereunder are the Islamic traditions and values which will come into direct confrontation with the invading global culture:

1. Strong Family Ties: Based on the *āyah* 21 of the *Sūrah al-Rūm* that says, “*And one of His signs is that He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find rest in them and He put between you love and compassion...*”, the institution of the Islamic family is based upon three principles:

a) Peace: A Muslim has peace of mind within his family and lives in a way that is far from unnecessary struggle and strife.

b) Love: The relationship between the members of the family (husband, wife, and children) is based on love and compassion. Although it is true that the term “men are the maintainers of women” is also a legal principle in Islam and that man is appointed as the head of the family, what really plays the main role between a couple, however, is love.

c) Benevolence: This principle leads to kindness and generosity within the family.

It is important to point out here that globalization weakens the institution of the family because the presence of this institution proves as a barrier for many of its interests.

2. Ties of Kinship: This principle does not merely refer to the importance of the presence of an attitude of thoughtfulness among the father, mother, and the children but it rather also leads to solidarity among all the kith and kin. This is a value that the Western world of today has lost, but the Islamic society, in abidance to the Prophet's *hadīth* that says, “Ties of kinship flourishes the habitations and increases the age”, has still retained this important value. This value of thoughtfulness and compassion among family members leads to mutual reliability, respect for elders, and gentleness towards children and young

adults and it is for this reason that the Muslims have stuck to the Prophet's *hadīth*, "Respect your elders and be kind towards the youngsters". Kindness among family members prevents cultural disintegration whereas globalization promotes the disintegration of culture and cultural values. According to the Glorious Qur'ān, one of the factors leading to corruption on earth is the severing of the elements that provide binding in a family and a society. This Divine Book explicitly warns us that "*... (those) who break the covenant of Allah after its confirmation and cut asunder what Allah has ordered to be joined and make mischief in the land; these it is that are the losers*" (2:27).

3. Refraining from Extravagance and Wastefulness: As mentioned earlier, the global culture propagates consumerism and convinces man to increase his consumption. However, the Glorious Qur'ān and the tradition of its noble Prophet (S) teach man to use natural resources according to their needs (and not according to endless greed). The Divine Book advises mankind in these words: "*... and eat and drink and be not extravagant...*" (7:31) and "*Surely the squanderers are the brethren of the Satans...*" (17:27).

According to these *āyāt* the natural resources which are part of the *takwīnī* (original) ownership of Allah have been conferred upon all the human beings and for all time and not for a particular period of time such that everyone can benefit from them according to their needs. An overexploitation of these resources and using them for more than one's needs is being extravagant and is a violation of the rights of the others and is also a major sin. The unnecessary squandering of these resources, too, is from among the acts of the brothers of the Satan.

The noble Prophet (S) has advised us to be moderate in matters of eating and to avoid gluttony. Moreover, Imam 'Alī ('a) in his letter to his governor of Basra, 'Uthmān bin Hunayf,

too, has written the following: "I have not been created to keep myself busy in eating good foods like the tied animal whose only worry is his fodder or like a loose animal whose activity is to swallow. (*Nahj al-Balāghah*; Letter No. 45)

Besides, the Glorious Qur'ān has referred to "indifference towards others" as well as extravagance as wicked and despicable qualities.

The society of *mu'minīn* (true believers), while abstaining from wastefulness and extravagance, take refuge in thoughtfulness, reflection, graciousness, and dignified behaviour. The Qur'ān describes the believers in the following words: "*Those who remember Allah standing and sitting and lying on their sides and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! Thou hast not created this in vain!*" (3:191); and "*And the servants of the beneficent God are they who walk on the earth in humbleness, and when the ignorant address them, they say: Peace*" (25:63).

The way of the *mu'minīn* is based on moderation and temperance. The Qur'ān says: "*And they who when they spend are neither extravagant nor parsimonious and (keep) between these the just mean*" (25:67)

4. Daily Worship and Constant Remembrance of Allah: As regards this principle, the Glorious Qur'ān says: "*Keep up prayer from the declining of the sun till the darkness of the night...*" (17:88); "*And glorify Him morning and evening*" (33:42); and "*... and glorify your Lord by the praising of Him before the rising of the sun and before its setting, and during hours of the night do also glorify (Him) and during parts of the day, that you may be well pleased*" (20:130).

5. Cordiality and Compassion in Human Relations: The global culture turns men into cold bricks among which there exists no binding. However, the Glorious Qur'ān has commanded the relationships between the different members of

the society of believers to be based upon friendship and proximity. In the words of the Qur'ān: "*And (as for) the believing men and the believing women, they are the guardians of each other*" (9:71).

The noble Prophet (S) has said:

The example of the true believers who love and respect each other is like a single body, whose all parts are affected whenever one feels pain.

The closest relationship of proximity is that of brotherhood and that is the expected relationship between the members of the society of *mu'minin*. The Qur'ān says: "*The believers are but brethren*" (49:10). In the opinion of the writer, this verse implies that this kind of relationship is one of the exclusive characteristics of Islamic culture and this type of relationship cannot exist in any other culture and it is for this reason that the verse continues by commanding the members of the society to strive and to create peace among its various members. In the words of the Qur'ān: "*Therefore make peace between your brethren*" (49:10). Elsewhere, God says in the Qur'ān: "... and Allah will by no means give the unbelievers a way against the believers" (4:141). The contents of the verse are not merely suggestive of a jurisprudential obligation as interpreted by some jurists and it, in fact, refers to the fact that Allah, the Exalted, has not even created any way for the unbelievers to gain victory over the believers. The noble Prophet (S) has said: "Islam is at the apex and nothing is superior to it." The contents of this Prophetic Tradition, too, are not merely confined to the interpretation of the grand jurists in the matters of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) but rather imply that in practical and social conflicts and contradictions, too, Islam is more successful than any other school of Divine Religion because its reasoning and its rationales are superior to those of the other schools. In the words of the Qur'ān: "... then Allah's is the

conclusive argument” (6:149). And since Islam is more beneficial for the human society than the other schools of Divine Religion, it will ultimately last out while the others will fade away into oblivion. The Qur’ān says: “*Then as for the scum, it passes away as a worthless thing; and as for that which profits the people, it tarries in the earth...*” (13:17).

Islam itself declares that it is a global invitation and addresses all mankind. The Divine Book or the Glorious Qur’ān has been sent down for the guidance of the entire mankind and in the Islamic worldview, the future of mankind is based on well-being and goodness and not on corruption and evil. The fate of those who make mischief and corruption on earth is destruction and annihilation and the earth will be filled with justice at the hands of the believers and the doers of good and will be managed and administered by them. The Qur’ān has emphasized on this fact in the following verses: “*Allah has promised to those of you who believe and who do good that He will most certainly make them rulers in the earth as He made rulers those before them, and that He will most certainly establish for them their religion which He has chosen for them...*” (24:55); and “*And certainly We wrote in the Psalms after the Reminder (Torah) that (as for) the land, My righteous servants shall inherit it*” (21:105).

This bright future which promises the triumph and victory of Islam over global *kufir* is only possible through superiority in logic and a judicious worldview and not through acts of violence. The Glorious Qur’ān emphasizes: “*Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and have disputation with them in the best manner...*” (16:125).

This Divine verse has limited the ways of extending invitation to others to merely the following three ways:

1. Logic and judicious thinking;
2. Compassionate advice;

3. Amicable dialogue (by adhering to the principles of dignified and productive dialogue).

There is no fourth way! And in order to gain final victory, the believers should base all their interactions with others only on these three ways.

Islamic Personalities:

‘Allāmah Shaykh Muhammad Jawād Balāghī Najafī

By: Muhammad Rizā Hakīmī .

Translation by Zahrā’ Shujā’ Khānī

He lived a life like the *Masīh* [Prophet Jesus (‘a)] – pious, simple, humble and thoughtful; and with a deep concern for others and for saving them from deviation.

His thoughts and zeal were like Socrates – always enthusiastic about spreading awareness and shedding the light of truth upon dark hearts.

He spent time working away from the futile distractions of name and fame. He led a life with no support from anyone; and neither did he surround himself with servants and helpers. He performed his own chores and shopped personally for his frugal needs and the needs of his family. No one ever heard of what he possessed and what he lacked and of how he handled his material problems and of how he managed his life.

This great soul, a lover of spirituality and service, kept himself isolated but with an isolation that was filled with

awareness, insight, perception, a sense of social service and a deep sense of commitment!

He was a scholar who held aloft the torch of social guidance – a scholar who had dedicated his knowledge to light the hearts of mankind and to illuminate the social path and not just to gain personal name and fame. He was a great man with great thoughts and was a faithful believer (*mu'min*) in the truest sense of the term.

How auspicious and fruitful are such lives! Such was the life of Shaykh Muhammad Jawād Balāghī Najafī.

Before elucidating upon the works, the thoughts, and the social and human values of Shaykh Balāghī, let us take a brief look at his life.

His Life and Teachers

Shaykh Aqā Buzurg Tihirānī has narrated the life account of Shaykh Balāghī in his biographical work, *Tabaqāt A'lām al-Shī'ah*, and presented below is a concise translation of the same:

Shaykh Muhammad Jawād Balāghī Najafī Raba'ī – from the famous Rabi'ah tribe – was one of the most famous Shi'ite scholars of his times and was a grand *'allāmah*, a great *mujāhid*, and a bright and diligent writer.

The Balāghī family is one of the oldest as well as one of the most scholarly, cultured, and literary families of Najaf. It has presented many a famous scholarly and religious personality to the world. Jawād Balāghī was one of the most renowned personalities of this family and was the pride of his age in the fields of both, knowledge and action. According to the information provided by him to me, he was born in Najaf in the year 1282 AH. He grew up there and gained his initial learning from the learned teachers of Najaf. He left for Kāzimayn in the year 1306 AH and returned to Najaf in the year 1312 AH and studied under the following teachers:

Shaykh Muhammad Tāhā Najaf (d. 1323 AH); Hāj Aqā Rizā Hamadāni (d. 1322 AH); Akhūnd Mullā Muhammad Kāzim Khurāsāni (d. 1329 AH); and Sayyid Muhammad Hindī.

He later migrated to Samarrā in the year 1326 AH and attended the classes of Mirzā Muhammad Taqī Shirāzi along with us and continued these lessons for ten years. He wrote many of his books in Sāmarrā. He then returned to Kāzimayn and stayed there for a period of two years. In these two years, he joined hands with the other religious scholars in inviting people to rise up and revolt against (British) imperialism and persuaded the people of Iraq to seek freedom and independence. He then returned to Najaf and dedicated his life to writing.

Balāghī was a rare and unique person who had a dedicated all his time and in fact his entire life to the service of religion (*dīn*) and truth (*haqīqah*).

He stood in opposition to Christian propaganda and rose up against the Western onslaught. He proved the grandeur of Islam and its superiority over all other religions. Balāghī’s sincerity in his extensive service to the research and correct understanding of Christianity earned him a great status among fair and unbiased Christian scholars and men of learning.

He had reached such great heights in purity of intention and sincerity in action that he even declined from having his name appear on the cover of his published books. He said: “I have no other intention but to defend the Truth. Thus, it makes no difference under whose name the book is published.” In spite of his own humbleness and self-restraint, it should be said that Balāghī shone like the beautiful flames that are lit by shepherds on the mountain tops in the dark desert nights and are visible from all sides and attract attention. His fame soon reached far and wide. The scholarly status that he came to gain and the international fame that he earned were due to the intelligent solutions provided by him for many intricate religious issues

and problems. His expertise in solving complex religious problems had even left the European centres of learning in awe of him and many of their researchers corresponded with him and sought his advice in solving their own problems. Some of Balāghi's significant works have also been translated into the English language because of their academic importance.

Shaykh Muhammad Jawād Balāghi was a very humble and modest man. He was very independent and chose to do all his own work by himself. [He never burdened others with his work and never allowed himself the arrogance and pride to expect others to serve him.] He went to the bazaar himself to shop for his daily needs. He led the prayers in a small mosque close to his home in Najaf and many reputed scholars and goodly persons joined him in prayer in that mosque. He left this worldly abode on the eve of Monday, 22 Sha'ban, 1352 AH. Najaf was left in great sorrow at his passing away and gave him a grand funeral. His remains were buried in the third southern cubicle of the auspicious western wing of the sacred shrine of Imam 'Ali ('a)... the world of Islam was plunged into grief at the demise of such a great scholar and the religion of Islam suffered a great loss with his passing away.

Alas! It is most unfortunate that the void left by the demise of such sincere scholars is felt most deeply even though we should remember that writers like Shaykh Balāghi, who have left invaluable works behind, are immortal – works that provide guidance to coming generations and serve as sources of knowledge for champions of research and learning. Shaykh Balāghi left behind him a rich and deep culture for the seekers of knowledge and Truth. He had mastered the Hebrew language besides being fluent in Persian and English – in addition to his native tongue, Arabic. Moreover, besides commanding a high position in religious and divine sciences, jurisprudence, and theology, he was also a man of literature to reckon with and an

innovative poet. To sum it up, Balāghī was a perfect example of the early Islamic scholars, rare to be found in our times. May Allah’s infinite blessings be upon him!¹

In his account of Shaykh Balāghī, the author of the book, *Rayhānah al-Adab*, describes him in the following words:

This skilled jurisprudent, a wise orator, a perfect scholar, a grand narrator of Traditions (*muhaddith*), the backbone of the *Imāmiyyah* scholars, the invincible guardian of the Islamic *hawzah*, the patron of Qur’ānic sciences, the discoverer of religious truths, the guardian of religious secrets, one of the prides of Tashayyu’, a student of the likes of Mirzā Muhammad Taqī Shirāzī, Hāj Aqā Rizā Hamadānī, Akhūnd Khurāsānī and Shaykh Muhammad Tāhā Najaf, wrote a number of innovative books on different subjects, each of which is a matter of pride for the Easterners and a blow to the Westerners.¹

Similarly, Khayr al-Dīn Ziriklī, pays him tribute in his book, *al-A’lām*, in these words:

Al-Balāghī, Muhammad Jawād bin Hasan bin Tālib bin ‘Abbās al-Balāghī al-Najafī al-Raba’ī was a great Shi‘ite researcher, and one of the great scholars of Najaf belonging to the Balāghī family which was a reputed family from Najaf. He has written a number of books including *al-Hudā ilā Dīn al-Mustafā*, *Anwār al-Hudā*, *Nahāyah al-Hudā*, *al-Tawhīd wa al-Tathlith*, and *Alā’ al-Rahmān fī Tafsīr al-Qur’ān*. Balāghī was also well-versed in Persian and English, and participated in the independence movement (from the Britishers) of the people of Iraq in the year 1338 AH (1920 CE).²

His Virtues

A great deal has been said about the virtues and the ethical merits of this great Islamic scholar as well his sublime efforts in

the way of spreading Truth and uncovering falsehood and superstition, and his biography has appeared in more than twenty books.³ We suffice here with narrating from two writers who have written about him.

Mīrzā Muhammad ‘Alī Urdūbādī

Mīrzā Muhammad ‘Alī Urdūbādī was one of the students of Shaykh Muhammad Jawād Balāghī who was himself a great scholar, a man of literature, an author, and a poet of his times and was one of the honorable examples of the Shi‘ite culture of Najaf. He was a pious, ascetical, well-mannered, and pure soul.

Urdūbādī was born in Tabrīz but migrated with his father and the rest of his family members to Najaf at the age of four, where he grew up and studied under great scholars, jurisprudents, and theologians. He had a powerful command over the Arabic language and literature and composed beautiful Arabic poems with great skill and mastery.

His father, Mīrzā Abū al-Qāsim Urdūbādī (d. 1333 AH), whose ancestors were originally from the Urdūbād city of the Russian-controlled Caucasus was born in Tabrīz and later on chose to reside in Najaf. He, too, was a great scholar, a jurisprudent, a narrator of *ahādīth*, and was one of the greatest *ithnā ‘asharī* jurisprudents of the early 14th century AH.⁴

As mentioned earlier, Mīrzā Muhammad ‘Alī Urdūbādī, had also written many works of prose and poetry. Three of his most important books were, *al-Hadīqah al-Mubhijah*, *Zuhar al-Riyādh*, and *Zuhar al-Rubā*, which contained the life histories of Islamic personalities and scholars. He has also written a book about the birth of Imam ‘Alī bin Abī Tālib (‘a) in the Holy Ka‘bah as well as a book on the life of Mukhtār bin Abī ‘Ubaydah al-Thaqafī, who punished some of the chief culprits of the tragedy of Karbalā.

Urdūbādī praises his teacher in the following words:

The unique exemplar, the revolutionary ‘*Allāmah*, the sign of Allah, the brilliant visage of the philosophers of the East, the outstanding example of Islamic scholars, a jurist (faqīh), a theologian, a theosophist, a narrator of *hadīth* (*muhaddith*), a research scholar, a philosopher, and an unparalleled one! The books written by him were an adornment for the East and thunderbolts for the (anti-religious culture of the) West, thereby strengthening the foundation of the *dīn al-hanīf* (the pure Religion). He was indeed the supporter of Islam and the voice of the Qur’ān. He was a man of deep curiosity and research and was a revolutionary champion - wise and learned! For his outstanding virtues, no orator can describe those and not even the most skilled of speakers can do justice to them and would need to suffice by simply saying that he was gentle, pleasant, well-mannered, appealing and praiseworthy. But he was much more than this.⁵

Urdūbādī has also composed the following three verses of poetry in praise of his teacher:

As long as the religion of salvation stands erect;
This man is its lifeline!

Celebrate in joy, O the Religion of Mustafā;
A lion of this calibre is guarding your entrance!

If they turn their backs on the religion of Islam,

And if they take it for a jest;
This one who has risen in battle,

Armed with knowledge, steadfastness, and logic,
Will surely overpower them!⁶

Dr. Tawfiq al-Fukayki

The literary research scholar and learned Iraqī writer, Dr. Tawfiq al-Fukayki, who has himself authored several books⁷ describes Balāghī in his scholarly preface to the Shaykh's famous book, *al-Hudā ilā Dīn al-Mustafā*, in the following words:

Balāghī was brought up on the esteemed foundations of Islamic upbringing and earnestly practiced Islamic teachings and ethics in his life. He, therefore, became an example of a Qur'ānic Muslim of pure faith and true belief and came to shine out as the model of *al-Insān al-Kāmil* (The Perfected Man). The best thing he loved was works of kindness and striving towards goodly acts. According to him, the worst and the ugliest of things was the dominance of evil forces (the forces of Satan) and evil people on human society. Thus, Balāghī was one of the callers to virtue and was the founder of a mobile school for religious guidance and for raising the level of thinking through teaching the principles of knowledge and theosophy and the philosophy of existence... As a result of his vast knowledge and pure wisdom, Balāghī was a haven for confused souls from going astray due to the misleading arguments of the materialists. He was a reliable source for the Orientalists who were sincere seekers of Truth and were in search of the secrets of Eastern wisdom and the teachings of Muhammad (S), since they had discovered that he was a rare intellectual genius with an elevated soul and that a deep intellectual power sprung from his large heart and flowed from his tongue and his pen.⁸

His Books and his Thoughts

'Allāmah Balāghī has written more than forty-eight books which manifest his writing genius, his vast knowledge, his

intellectual meticulousness, his powerful logic, his skills in literature, and his expertise in clear expression and reasoning.

Another feature of his writings is their correlation with issues concerning life and living and their powerful stand against elements that are insidious to society and history.

At this point, let us briefly review three of Shaykh Balāghī’s books:

Ālā’ al-Rahmān:

This book is a concise and rich exegesis of the Glorious Qur’ān containing clear and perceptible explanations. Unfortunately, this book remained incomplete. What managed to come on paper is one volume comprising two parts. The first part comprises a preface and the exegesis of the *Sūrah al-Hamd*, the *Sūrah al-Baqarah*, and the *Sūrah Al-i ‘Imrān*. The second part contains the exegesis of the *Sūrah al-Nisā* upto verse 58 and the verse 6 of *Sūrah al-Mā’idah*.

This book covers the exegesis of four *juz’* and one *hizb* of the glorious Qur’ān. Despite its brevity the preface consists of a wide range of valuable discussions including a discussion on the uniqueness of the Qur’ān and its significance from the viewpoint of guidance and leading towards the right path.

The Uniqueness of the Glorious Qur’ān

In the preface to his exegesis, Shaykh Balāghī has discussed a number of subjects and has explained them proficiently. These subjects include:

What is a miracle?

Why is a miracle a proof?

What is the cause of difference in the miracles of the Prophets (‘a)?

What makes the Qur’ān a unique miracle?

The Qur’ān is the most superior of all the miracles.

The matchlessness of the Qur'ān on the basis of historical evidences.

The matchlessness of the Qur'ān from the rational viewpoint.

The matchlessness of the Qur'ān as regards its lack of contradiction and inconsistency.

The matchlessness of the Qur'ān in its imparting of rules for a just system.

The matchlessness of the Qur'ān from the ethical viewpoint and a comparative study of ethics in the Qur'ān, the Torah, and the Evangel (*Injil*).

The matchlessness of the Qur'ān in informing about the unseen and the standing of the several Christian versions of the Gospel in this matter.

How the Qur'ān was compiled?

We shall now reproduce parts of Shaykh Balāghī's discussions on the uniqueness and matchlessness of the Qur'ān under fifteen topics.

1. A miracle implies an extraordinary event which is beyond human capacity and is above available knowledge and the general laws of science. Thus, a miracle is something that human beings are unable to perform whether through their natural abilities and powers or through the power of science and by using scientific methods. Hence, that which can be brought about through natural and scientific laws and as a result of the qualities of different objects cannot be classed as a miracle. For example, flying through the skies in an airplane, travelling to other planets and galaxies with the help of space ships, viewing distant planets with the help of a telescope, or curing severe diseases through medical knowledge and medicines, et cetera, cannot be considered as miracles. This is because these acts are not extraordinary and are not outside absolute human power. In fact, experts and specialists can, with the help of instruments,

scientific methods, and knowledge of the natural or artificial qualities of different things, make it possible.

2. In reality, miracles are acts of Allah and stem from Divine Power, that are sometimes manifested through His Messengers (‘a) in order that people build faith in them and follow them and prove sincere to them.

3. The one who claims to be a prophet should be able to perform miracles to authenticate his truthfulness and his Prophethood.

4. A miracle does not take place at the hands of ordinary people because a miracle is a Divine act and is supernatural. Divine acts and actions do not take place at the hands of ordinary and ungodly people. Thus, when a sincere and trustworthy person - known for his truthfulness and honesty - declares a religion whose principles and other fundamental issues do not conflict with the intellect and logic, and if a miracle is seen at his hands, then he must truly be a Divine Prophet. If this were not the case, then we would be (committing the blasphemy of) saying that Allah has granted miraculous powers to a liar and has, authenticated him. Since it is repulsive to authenticate a liar, such an act could never be Allah’s, since He never commits repulsive acts. Thus, if someone exhibited miracles and at the same time offered a complete, comprehensive, and logical religion, he is certainly a Divine prophet. I repeat: The quiddity and the reality of a miracle are supernatural, and a supernatural act cannot but be a Divine act. Therefore, a miracle is an act of Allah and He never authenticates anyone except the ones who are truly Prophets and Saints and have come through Him and never gives any other the power to perform a miracle. Thus, care should be taken so that not all and any random acts are mistaken for miracles.

5. In the same manner that a miracle cannot be performed at the hands of ordinary people, a genuine and truthful Prophet

must have a miracle and through this he must possess Divine authentication. It is true that people - naturally and based upon their pure and unpolluted nature (*fitrah*) - consider a person whom they find capable, truthful, reliable and honest to be a good person and assume that his inner self is the same as his outer self. Thus, they develop a trust in him; yet all these are not enough reason for that person to be considered as infallible (*ma'sūm*) and these factors do not give us sufficient grounds to consider him as being immune from falsehood and error and to take all his calls and commands as valid and to submit to him and to begin to believe in him. In fact, it is also possible that people may harbour doubts about such a person if he claims prophethood and they may also fall into perplexity and may fall into dishevel. And if that comes to be the case, the guidance and instruction of the people cannot be possible at his hands and the Prophet would, thus, fail in his mission. It is here that the significance and the impact of miracles is experienced and it is here that Divine Mercy and Grace come in and a miracle takes place at the hands of the Prophet in order that the people gain full certainty about his prophethood and that pure souls and untarnished and healthy hearts recognize his sincerity and believe in him and consider his words as Divine Commands. In this manner, the religion (*dīn*) penetrates into the hearts of people and Allah's Command spreads and establishes itself in the world.

6. The life histories of the Prophets have recorded various miracles. Three prominent Prophets – Prophet Moses (‘a), Prophet Jesus (‘a), and Prophet Muhammad (S) – too, had their own exclusive miracles. What was the reason for the differences in their miracles?

We have mentioned earlier that the benefit of a miracle is that people are convinced to have faith in the prophethood of the owner of that miracle. In this manner, the Prophet is able to

spread faith and certitude into the hearts of people. After gaining release from their initial scepticism, the people begin to believe in him and act upon his commands and reach dignity, honour, and felicity and follow in the footsteps of the Prophet in their quest for absolute perfection. Thus, miracles are sent for the benefit of mankind and are a mercy from Allah to His creation, just as the presence of a Prophet who is a favour and mercy from Allah. They act as rain and purify stains from the hearts, and like the sun, they illuminate man’s intellect and they are like life which is breathed into the inner being of man. Therefore, it would also be important for the miracle to be in accordance with the period and the location of its manifestation as well as the norms, habits, perception, and awareness of the people to whom it is manifested, so that it can be recognized and accepted in such a way that the mentioned benefits can be gained from it.

7. During the times of Prophet Moses (‘a), the knowledge of sorcery was rampant among the people of Egypt. A group of educated and intellectual people had acquired this knowledge and knew about its impact. It was taught and practiced widely. Therefore, the people were aware of the laws of the knowledge of sorcery, the extent of its applicability, and the extent of its power, and they also knew what lay beyond the purview of the power of this knowledge. For this reason, wisdom demanded that the miracle of Prophet Moses (‘a) be of a kind that people could recognize but only of a more superior nature to what they were capable of and had knowledge about, so that it would be considered as a miracle as against the knowledge and power of the magicians, thereby gaining victory over them. This demanded that the kind and the nature of the work would be of the same kind as that of the magicians.

8. In the times of Prophet Jesus (‘a), Palestine and Syria were under Greek dominance. Many Greeks were settled in these countries and healing and curative practices were widely

practiced. It is for this reason that certain chapters of the Torah that are existent with the Jews contain comprehensive instructions on curing patients from such diseases as edema, small pox, leprosy, and scabbiness. These instructions are based on the methods used by the Jewish priests and it seems that they stemmed from the spiritual practices of these priests even if medicines were used in the process. These are all indicative of the widespread practice and use of the arts of healing and curative practices and the powers and effects of medicine among those people. It was with this background that Prophet Jesus' ('a) miracle was his extraordinary ability to heal lepers and the congenitally deaf and blind. His community could relate easily to such acts and knew well that such acts were beyond the powers of the priests and the doctors and were even beyond the realm of medical treatment and in fact stemmed from another power which was Divine in nature.

9. The awareness of the Arabs among whom Islam emerged (Allah's Wisdom deemed it best for this religion to emerge from among this people) was mainly centred around literature and the skills of eloquence and oration. There were no other fields of knowledge and science that were prevalent and were taught and learnt among them. The dominant culture in that society was based on eloquence and oratory skills and the powers of speech. Many poetry sessions and sittings were organized for enjoying good poetry. It was customary for the men of eloquence to compete and flaunt their skills in these fields and the favourite and widely prevalent topic of discussion was poetry, eloquence, and the importance of poets, orators, and skillful speakers. Thus, the environment of that society was well-versed in gauging the limits of beautiful oration and the extent of eloquence and who had those skills and to what extent one can progress in those fields. Therefore, Allah's Wisdom which is based on logic and rationality demanded that the

miracle of Prophet Muhammad (S) fall in the realms of eloquence but that which was beyond human power and the power of human eloquence and that it be different from the speech, writings, and the compositions of human beings.

10. As the verses of the Qur’ān were revealed and recited to the eloquent and literary Arabs, they recognized this degree of eloquence as being of a miraculous nature which was beyond their knowledge and capacity. They realized that they could never produce a book or even a chapter like that of the Qur’ān and even though they spent years opposing the Prophet (S), and waged many bloody battles they could not succeed in competing with the Qur’ān because if they could, then it would have been much easier and preferable an ordeal than the battles, and they would have replied the Prophet (S) with at least one chapter like those of the Qur’ān and would have eliminated Islam for good. But they did not do this, simply because they were helpless and incapable and, instead, they continuously engaged in conflict with the Prophet (S) and his followers and began many wars.

11. It was very clear to the eloquent Arabs who were well-versed in recognizing the nuances of oration and eloquence and the limits of human ability in these fields that the Qur’ān that was revealed in their language was a miracle and was beyond human power. It was a Divine act and not an ordinary phenomenon. Thus, the Qur’ān stood as a proof against them and as the grounds for the mission of Prophet Muhammad (S). Similarly, the miraculous nature of the Qur’ān is also clear to other communities. This is because, as a rule, whenever the elite, the learned, and the experts among people approve of the authenticity of something, the rest take it as a sign of validity and submit to their superior discretion. Human intelligence, too, demands the same.

12. The Glorious Qur'ān is the most superior of all miracles because its miraculousness and its extraordinariness are in its very essence that does not need anything outside of itself.

13. The Glorious Qur'ān is an everlasting and eternal miracle and has been and shall be protected, both, in its matter and its form. Anyone, anywhere, and at any time can refer to it, ponder upon it, seek inspiration from it and be guided by it.

14. The Glorious Qur'ān has testified its own extraordinariness and has explicitly and repeatedly invited people to challenge it, saying: *“If you think that this Qur'ān has been forged by a man then you too bring the like of it; then bring ten forged chapters like it”* (11:13); *“If not ten, then bring a chapter like this”* (10:38). In other words, if you can bring one verse like the verses of the Qur'ān, the call to Islam which is so heavy on you and opposes all your customs and beliefs will be withdrawn from you, and if you fail to do this, then submit that this Book is a Divine Revelation and is not the word of any man. In spite of all these open invitations and opportunities, the Arabs failed to produce anything even close to the Divine Word and it was because of their own failure that they bad-mouthed the Prophet (S) and pelted him with stones and prevented people from listening to the verses of the Qur'ān. If they had the power to do so, they would have produced a book like the Qur'ān and would have recited it in their sessions of poetry and oration and would have summoned the Prophet (S) and would have convinced him of his defeat. Then they would have declared openly that Muhammad (S) had conceded and that he was defeated, and in this way, they would have put an end to the call of Islam. In fact even if they had succeeded in bringing two lines of verse like those of the Qur'ān which would have been acceptable to the skilled ones as being of the calibre of the Qur'ān, the forces of evil and deviation would have glorified their success to such an extent that its word would have spread

all over the world. This would have been the best and the most peaceful challenge that they could have posed against Islam.

15. The Qur’ān is a miracle from other aspects too and is beyond ordinary human power. Recognizing its extraordinary nature from various aspects is not exclusive to the Arabs, and in fact anyone can (through a good translation) reach this conclusion. One of the matters that the Qur’ān contains is historical narrations. This Book narrates the events and stories pertaining to earlier communities and famous personalities of the past, and that too through a person [the Prophet (S)] who had never attended school and had never undergone any kind of studies. What is important to note is that many of these narrations are also present in the Torāh and the Evangel (Christian Bible) that are currently available among the Jews and the Christians and which are considered as heavenly scriptures by them. The only difference is that much of what has been narrated in the Torāh and the Evangel is tinged with superstition and blasphemy and is illogical and delirious. For example, in the Torāh, as regards the narration of the story of Prophet Adam (‘a) and the forbidden fruit, Allah the Almighty has actually been alleged with falsehood and deceit! A similar example is about Prophet Abraham (‘a) and his alleged misgivings about the promise of God... and how the angels came to Prophet Abraham (‘a) and gave him the good tidings of the birth of Prophet Isaac (‘a). A third example is the claim that Prophet Aaron (‘a) was himself responsible for creating an idol! Now compare these narrations from the current Torāh with what the Qur’ān has revealed.

Prior to the Revelation of the Qur’ān the only sources available to have recorded such narrations were the sacred teachings of the Jews and the Christians, samples of which we saw in the above paragraph. This was what was in circulation among the Jews and the Christians of those times, but what has

been revealed in the Qur'ān is free from blasphemy and insult to the Divine Prophets ('a). What has appeared in the Qur'ān was certainly not extracted from the sources that were available in those times otherwise it would also have contained similar fiction. In fact, what has come in the Qur'ān is through Divine Revelation.

As we have mentioned earlier, the exegesis of Shaykh Balāghī remained incomplete and only the exegeses of four parts (*juz'*) of the Qur'ān, one *hizb*, and one verse of the Glorious Qur'ān were accomplished. A scholar has remorsefully written a few lines at the end of the book, *Alā' al-Rahmān*, about Balāghī's death that left his exegesis incomplete, the translation of which is given below:

Alas for us and all the Muslims that this great and invaluable piece of writing remained incomplete because of this pillar of the religion and the support of the Muslims, Shaykh Muhammad Jawād Balāghī departed from the world. He expressed scholarly matters in the exegesis of the glorious Qur'ān like shining pearls of wisdom. He was unique and in our times it happens rarely that such a child is born. He engaged in an endless struggle and managed to rectify the problems of the Islamic Ummah to a great extent. He prepared himself for defending religion like a warrior and rose to protect the world of Islam. It was as if the pen was attached to him like one of his own fingers and the paper were his constant companion, day and night. He was always present at his place of work whether it was in the scorching summers of Najaf or its chilling winters and had no other ideal or preoccupation but helping religion with his words and his pen and being concerned about the welfare of the Muslims. A courageous leader, a champion of knowledge and action, a sign of Islam and the Muslims, the proof of religion and the Qur'ān - this was Ayatullah Balāghī! He was always engaged in writing and was constantly involved

in work, and strove until he began to weaken and gradually lose his eyesight. Despite his advanced years, his striving and determination were active to such an extent that even while he explained the concluding parts of his exegesis for his students, many of who took down notes, he was gravely ill and was very weak and was on his deathbed. May Allah give him the best rewards.¹¹

Al-Hudā ilā Dīn al-Mustafā

This book is an invaluable sample comprising the principles of religious tenets and the methodology of research and evaluation. From the point of view of the interests of the East and Islam, it occupies an important place. In order to highlight the importance of this book we shall now quote from the writings of Dr. Tawfiq al-Fukaykī so that the exigency of writing such a book and its importance are better known:

After the fires of the Crusades had cooled down (the battles that took place for about two centuries between Islam and its enemies until finally monotheism became victorious over the belief in trinity and the European warriors who were defeated poured into the sea and returned to their own lands) the Arab and Islamic lands and their sacred places got rid of the Crusaders – the army which was established and equipped by the whole of Europe, their kings, their priests, and their commanders in order to dispatch them to the Eastern Islamic lands to capture them and to ruin their independence and grandeur and in this way to destroy the culture and legacy of Islam.

But Almighty Allah had willed thus to destroy those warriors. It was for this reason that they were defeated and returned to their own lands in despair and a large number of them became prey to the fish in the sea or the vultures in the deserts. This victory was granted through Allah’s support and

the endeavour and struggle of the steadfast believers and the guardians of the mission of the Qur'an.

But Europe did not forget its victims and its defeats and did not give up the thoughts of revenge. With this aim, the European governments, their politicians, and their clergy constantly plotted and schemed against Islam in the name of friendship and coexistence and did not leave any stone unturned on this path. They established sessions of debate and discussion and destructive associations and forums in the name of schools and hospitals in the Islamic countries while these institutions were actually missionary organizations at the service of religious and political colonialism.

With the advent of the industrial revolution in Europe, scientific discoveries increased by the day and awesome inventions were constantly emerging. As a result of these developments the evil forces in Europe gained might and the filth and evil of colonialism became powerful, prompting them to avenge their losses during the Crusades.

On the other hand, the countries of the Eastern part of the Islamic world were caught in the clutches of division and partition, the cause of which was the love of the thrones of power and the rule of a few. Thus, the flames of true faith and belief dwindled and ignorance spread its shadow over the East and a large number of kings and rulers who had been lulled to sleep by the hypocritical preachers and the pseudo '*ulamā*', emerged. In this way, the number of people who adhered to the practice of *amr bi'l-ma'rūf wa nahy 'an al-munkar* (enjoining good and forbidding evil) diminished and the Muslim masses fell into a deep slumber at a time when Europe was awake and engaged in churning out astonishing inventions in the air, the land and the sea. They were in deep sleep when the Christian Orientalists and the colonial missionary delegations that were

sent to these lands were fully alert and actively endeavoured towards achieving their aims.

Yes, these associations and delegations were sent with the purpose of weakening the religious beliefs of the Muslim youth and for sowing the seeds of doubts and suspicion regarding the everlasting miracle of Islam which is the Glorious Qur’ān. The Christian colonial governments could overpower the Islamic countries – sometimes by peaceful means and at other times with military power and threats – and in this way restart the Crusades. This claim is proved by the words of Field Marshall Edmund Allenby (1861-1936) who victoriously entered Damascus and standing at the grave of Salāh al-Dīn Ayyūbī, declared: “O’ Salāh al-Dīn! It is at this moment that the Crusades have come to an end (implying that the Crusades were not over when you had won)”! However, this time around the Crusades were not confined to the battlefronts but had rather spread to the areas of thought, beliefs, and the intellect. And this is the most dangerous form of battle to eliminate nations and to eradicate their heritage.

In order to achieve this objective, which is mental and intellectual domination, the leaders of Western politics stood up and united and signed up hidden agreements among themselves and swore to break up and tear apart the Islamic countries and Arabic lands. Thus, to begin with, they mobilized the Christian missionary groups (comprising priests, physicians, engineers, Orientalists, experts, counsellors, etc) to prepare the grounds for the neo-Crusades, or the war which targeted faith and belief and attempted to introduce religious beliefs as outdated, reactionary, and redundant, and to rob the young Muslim boys and girls from their belief systems and to make them irreligious and faithless. A French Orientalist, in one of his conferences is known to have said: Even if we did not succeed in converting the Muslim youth in Europe and America to Christianity, it is

enough that we could sow the seeds of doubt into the hearts of these youths and make them doubt the Qur'ān. Within the Islamic countries, too, the missionary schools of the foreigners used the same strategy. We will not get into any further details on this subject lest we stray from our main subject of discussion.

However, our purpose for mentioning the above facts was to offer a glance at the factors and incentives that prompted the great Muslim reformists to endeavour to awaken the people and to rejuvenate Islam, to protect its cultural boundaries, and to revive the Qur'ānic philosophy that had not lost its pace with the progress and development of time and the centuries, at the dawn of the reformist movements of the East. This is because the Qur'ānic philosophy is a complete philosophy - neither Eastern nor Western - but encompassing both, matter and spirit, in the very manner that the laws of human life and nature and the universal laws demand. It is from this angle that Islam is known as the religion of innate nature (*fitrah*) or the religion of humanity. It holds true, since Islam opposes mere materialism and rejects the materialism that is devoid of the human spirit. In the same way, Islam also condemns mere spiritualism that isolates itself from benefiting from good and wholesome material benefits. The Glorious Qur'ān, the *hadith*, and the teachings of the infallible Imams ('a) contain many convincing evidences that refer to this universal truth but we shall not get into details on this subject.

Incidentally, the pioneers from among those who devoted their lives to confront the disconcerting onslaught of Christian propaganda on Islam and the Islamic countries included the brave and courageous reformists who were an honour to the world of Islam and the East like Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn Afghāni (Asadābādi Hamadāni) and his freedom-loving students, headed by the great Mufti of Egypt, Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh and

other self-respecting reformists like Sayyid ‘Abd al-Rahmān Kawākibi.

One of the works of Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn that was in opposition to irreligiousness is his famous book in rejection of materialism and naturalism. Following him, his student Shaykh Muhammad ‘Abduh wrote a number of books to counter the attacks on the Prophet (S) and the Qur’ān by the Orientalists which included, *al-Islām wa al-Radd ‘alā Muntaqidih* and *al-Islām wa al-Nasrāniyyah*. As regards Kawākibi’s efforts we will suffice with a mention of two of his most valuable books, *Tabāy’i’ al-Istibdād* and *Umm al-Qurā’*.

However, there was only one person in the land of the Tigris and the Euphrates (Iraq) who single-handedly prepared himself for this sacred *jihād* (confrontation) and threw himself into its battlefield. He was the late scholar of the East and Islam, the *hujjah* (proof) of religion, Shaykh Muhammad Jawād Balāghī! He drew out his pen like a sword out of its sheath and attacked the atheists, the misguided Christian priests, and the Orientalists, both in the East and in the West. His many invaluable books clearly narrate this long and propitious sacred battle and his continuous defense of Islam and Islamic truths. Some of his important books include the *al-Hudā ‘ilā Dīn al-Mustafā*, the *al-Rahlah al-Madrasiyyah*, the *Anwār al-Hudā*, and the *Nasāy’ih al-Hudā*.¹²

Yes, as rightly mentioned by the great Iraqi researcher, Dr. Tawfiq al-Fukayki, this divine *mujāhid*, this wise sage (*hakīm*), and this great Islamic scholar, Shaykh Muhammad Jawād Balāghī, had realized his Islamic and human responsibility and had arisen with his heart and soul to fulfill on this great divine duty.

Balāghī had manifestly gauged how the treacherous elements of Christian colonialism were attacking the boundaries of Islamic beliefs and with what plots and tricks they were

shaking up the belief system of the Muslim youth. Since they could clearly see that they would never succeed in even convincing a simple nomadic Muslim shepherd to accept the meaningless and baseless preaching of the Church and the forged Christianity, let alone the educated youth, they gave up on their ideas of converting the Muslims to their faith and instead worked upon weakening their Islamic beliefs. They used all possible means to gain this objective like the establishing of hospitals and schools, high schools, colleges, libraries, etcetera, adding fuel to the sparks of internal differences, creating new faiths and strengthening those suspicious and colonial faiths with a view to crafting a rift among the Muslims.

The wise and well-prepared Balāghī was aware of these plots and since unlike some other sleepy heads, he was not ignorant about issues pertaining to society, politics, and colonialism and since he was committed to religion and his religious duties he began a continuous and widespread *jihād*. By writing a large number of books that were unique from the points of view of their matter and research, he engaged in a struggle against the ominous Christian colonialism.

As mentioned earlier, one of his best books was the great work, *al-Hudā 'ilā Dīn al-Mustafā*. In his introduction to this book, Tawfiq al-Fukaykī, has presented a brief analytical view about this work. Keeping in view his introduction we shall now introduce this book hereunder:

Al-Hudā is the most outstanding of Shaykh Balāghī's books and works. It is an example of his innovative wisdom and expansive knowledge, and is the evident proof of his command over the history of religions and faiths. By writing this book, Balāghī exposed the fallacious Western writers and discarded their invalid objections. He took up this task with a spirit of selflessness and self-sacrifice. He has personally explained his reasons for writing this book in his preface and has explained

his methodology and has exposed how those who criticized Islam and its laws and the Glorious Qur’ān have not stuck to the principles of healthy debate and have instead resorted to lies, accusations, deceit, and sophistry. Balāghī has exposed them and their crimes. The book, *al-Hudā* that comprises two volumes (412 pages and 324 pages), is the best document for the history of religions and the comparative study of religions and is a best guide to the techniques of debate and logical reasoning.

One of the important features of this book is that it throws light upon the intrigues of the Christian missionaries and their animosity towards the Qur’ān and the noble Prophet (S). This book shows how as a result of such intrigues, the Muslim youth were deceived and how the academicians were influenced. This book proves that the threat of the Christian missionaries was greater than that of the Orientalists who were the stooges of the colonial powers.

Tawfiq al-Fukaykī then makes the reference of a Muslim who had been thrown into doubt about his religious beliefs by the propaganda of the Christian missionaries and how he returned to his original faith after reading the book *al-Hudā* and was thereby freed from the vicious promptings of the vested interests. He also mentions having witnessed the same person kiss a copy of this book in gratitude.

Al-Rahlah al-Madrasīyyah

This book, known popularly as *al-Rahlah* or *al-Madrasah al-Sayyārah*, is from among the invaluable and rich Islamic books. In this book, too, Balāghī has compiled the answers to many issues and has presented them in a new style. The second edition of this book in 592 pages and three parts was published in Najaf.¹³ This edition contains an introduction by the great research scholar, Hujjat al-Islam Sayyid Ahmad Husayni

Ishkiwari. This introduction describes the book in the following words:

This book has been written in the form of a discussion between some people who have gathered to do an unbiased research on the Torah, the Evangel, the Psalms and the Qur'ān and to make a comparative study of them with a view to discovering simple and undeniable truths. The participants have not neglected discussing other issues related to monotheism (*tawhīd*) as well as the rejection of materialists. The book, notwithstanding its brevity and simplicity of style, is full of information and knowledge for those who seek religious truths and wish to research upon Divine Books and religions. The author has successfully managed to present the topics of discussion in such a manner that all sections of people can benefit from it.

In this book, the author has reviewed the religion of Islam and has presented its plus points over other faiths and has proved that Islam is the very everlasting religion that is suitable for every generation at all times and places. It is a religion that is not confined to any particular group or people and rather belongs to one and all and contains all that the human societies need such as economic, political, social, ethical, as well as belief issues and other aspects of human life. In this book, the author has discussed such principles of Islam as *tawhīd* (monotheism), *nabuwwah* (prophethood), and *ma'ād* (resurrection) and has discussed them in detail and has proved his points by presenting rational and related proofs from the Torah, the *Evangel*, and the Qur'ān. The book also contains philosophical discussions on such issues as *jabr* (compulsion) and *tafwīz* (choice), *husn wa qubh 'aqlī*, the *haqīqah* (reality) of the human soul, *zarrīh* (the substance of man), *wujūb wa imkān wa imtinā'* (necessity, possibility, and impossibility), *hudūth* (accident) *wa qidam maddi'* (the antiquity of matter), survival

and natural selection, etcetera. Similarly, the book also contains discussions on the wisdom behind the creation of the different parts of the human body, the marvels of the creation of animals, the creation of the skies, the earth, the air, and the sea as well as the other wonders of the world, each of which is enough to prove the existence of the One God.¹⁴

As regards this book, Dr. Tawfiq al-Fukayki says:

The book *Al-Rihlah al-Madrisiyyah*” is the product of Shaykh Balāghī’s extensive and powerful imagination, deep thinking, enormous talent, and innovative style in the field of writing. The discussions and dialogues that are presented in this book have taken place between a group of learned and sincere people who desired to discover truths and to arrive at accurate religious beliefs through Divine teachings and their historical evolution, particularly from the period of the Torāh through to the Psalms, the Evangel and the Qur’ān which is the final Divine message for the guidance of mankind. The Qur’ān invited mankind towards pure and complete monotheism after man had crossed such stages as the worshipping of rocks, trees, animals, stars, fathers, mothers, and various other forms of idolatry. ‘Allāmah Balāghī (God’s mercy upon him) has dealt with all these philosophical and theological issues with the competent talent of a great intellectual and a highly knowledgeable scholar who remains distant from fanaticism and bias and who refrains from indulging in any kind of prejudice towards the followers of other faiths. He expresses his arguments in a simple and lucid language such that even ordinary people can grasp them easily.

At the end of this book, Balāghī has concluded that Islam is the religion of humanity and of innate natural disposition. No matter how much man progresses and knowledge advances and new schools of philosophical thought emerge, Islam will remain

Islam - the upright, eternal religion. None of the principles of materialism and dark atheist beliefs will be able to conceal the brilliant light of Islam and its congenital teachings. The felicity of man, desperate for truth and freedom is in turning towards Islam... This was the main topic of discussion in the book, *al-Rahlah al-Madrassiyah*. Considering its importance in discussing theological, philosophical, and Islamic topics and the explanation that it provides on the philosophy of the creation of the universe and the wonders of creation as well as its amazing creatures, this book has attracted the attention of a large number of research scholars and has been translated into several languages. In this way Shaykh Balāghī has discussed monotheist thought in his writings and has proved the belief in trinity as invalid. His great *jihād* is by the power of his pen and with a simple and humble style and without any harshness, in a literary manner with high and pure ethical principles. It appears that Balāghī has always kept this saying in mind as his operative principle: "The one who argues with you is like you."¹⁵

His Personality

The personality of this great Divine scholar can be studied from several aspects. All these aspects can serve as lessons for others and for the young students of theology, in particular. We shall refer to some of these here under:

A. Knowledge of Literature: In my book, *Adabiyyāt wa Ta'ahhud dar Islām* (Literature and Commitment in Islam), I have discussed the importance of literature and have explained why it is important for religious scholars and students to be well-versed in this field of learning. I have also mentioned that the flag bearers of Islamic culture who intend to protect this culture and pass it on to others must be well informed in the fields of literature, poetry, and literary thought and criticism.

I would now say that one of the important aspects of the personality of this religious scholar – like all other true renowned Islamic scholars – has been the literary aspect of his personality. All those who have written his biography have verified this fact. Tawfiq al-Fukaykī, too, has offered an explanatory note on the high position of Shaykh Balāghī in the field of literature and has quoted some of his poems, including his famous *qasīdah* (panegyric) which comprises 109 couplets. This *qasīdah* was composed in response to a controversial *qasīdah*, penned by a denizen of Baghdad on the Awaited Imam of the Age – al-Mahdī - (the 12th Imam who is currently in occultation – may Allah hasten his return), in which Balāghī proves the existence of the Awaited Imam (‘a).

It has been said that Balāghī stayed on in Baghdad for a long time and learnt Arabic literature beyond of what is normally taught as part of the *hawzah* curricula.

B. Knowledge of Languages: The biographers of the life of Shaykh Balāghī have mentioned that he was well-versed in the English and the Hebrew languages and that he had also written a book in English on *wuzū’* (ablution), *salāt* (formal prayers), and *siyām* (fasting) which has also been published. It is important to note that in those days it was rare to find anyone well-versed enough in these two languages to be able to teach them. The Shaykh managed to learn these two languages to the extent of being able to understand them fully and to be able to write books in the English language? It is not known how he learnt the English language but we do know that he learnt Hebrew from the Jews in Baghdad.

In those days, there were some groups of Jews living in the different cities of Iraq who carried goods like fabrics on their backs and sold them on the streets and in the bazaars. Balāghī made use of this opportunity and asked them questions about Hebrew grammar. He would sometimes be compelled to buy all

the goods of the vendor before he could extract information about a single term or a phrase from him because the Jews are known to be very stingy in teaching their language to others.

C. Love for People: As a committed Islamic scholar Balāghī tried to beam the light of the Qur’ān into the hearts and souls of others and to acquaint them and their thoughts with the everlasting truths of Divine Revelation. He also endeavoured to bring about awareness regarding the poisonous propaganda of the foreign sources, the biased Orientalists, the Christian missionaries, and the treacherous elements, and to deliver the hearts and souls of people from the evil clutches of doubt, scepticism and irreligiousness in order to acquaint one and all with the light of faith and the shining rays of Truth (*haqq*) and to make them aware of their true spiritual identity.

Yes, he was a great man who, like a candle, burnt himself in order to shed light upon others; he chose to glow in order to enlighten hearts and with his writings spreading warmth to others. He had great respect for his fellow beings, and was at the service of religion and pure learning, besides being a committed guardian of the exalted boundaries of Truth and the spiritual teacher (*murshid*) to the masses.

D. Knowledge of Other Faiths and Beliefs: One of the most significant features of the scholarly life of Balāghī was his extensive knowledge about the science of religions. He had striven patiently in order to gain knowledge of the other scriptures and the other false faiths and had then dedicated himself to proving their invalidity in the establishment of truths. One of the most important duties of Islamic scholars is to have a precise knowledge of other scriptures and faiths in order to be able to pinpoint their defects. These scholars should primarily gain knowledge of the views, the thoughts, and the philosophies of the various schools of thought and should study their books and principles and then illuminate the minds of masses with

their findings. Shaykh Balāghī’s vast knowledge, his literary way of thinking, and his skills in several languages had helped him in this great task.

His Ethical Values

True Islamic scholars are the living exemplars of adherence to Islamic laws and manners. The young students of theology, too, should follow in the footsteps of these scholars (past and present) and should mould themselves according to the sublime ethical teachings and manners of the Prophet (S). One such great religious scholar who had equipped himself with the lofty Islamic ethical values was Shaykh Muhammad Jawād Balāghī, some of whose virtues we shall refer to here under:

A. Purity of Intention: Shaykh Balāghī disliked his name from appearing on his books in the manner of ascetical sages who shy away from being in the limelight. His motto was service to the Truth and its defense. The following sentence clearly manifests his truthfulness and the sincerity of his ethical principles. He often said: “My sole intention is to serve the cause of Truth and to defend it for the satisfaction of Allah, irrespective of whether the credit goes to me or to someone else”.¹⁷

B. Strength of Character: Another feature of Shaykh Balāghī’s personality was his humbleness in the face of criticism. He willingly examined criticism and if necessary accepted his faults or else gracefully and politely rejected the criticism. He did not dislike listening to his critics and opponents like all those great souls who love knowledge and learning and are in search of true understanding and Divine knowledge in order to purify their own souls and to guide others.¹⁸

C. Humbleness: Many references have been made to the humbleness of Shaykh Balāghī. It has been said that he

performed all his own chores and never accepted help from others for his personal work. He would say: “In the religious traditions all those who burden others with their tasks have been cursed”.

D. Asceticism: Balāghī lived in a small and simple room which was devoid of any other furnishing except an ordinary straw mat on which he sat. He did not possess any heating or cooling equipment for the scorching summers and the freezing winters, despite his frailness of health. He never left his room except for necessities.¹⁹

E. Endeavour: The Shaykh was very labourious in reading, taking notes, and writing. He was always surrounded with open books and papers with a pen in his hand, either reading, writing, or researching.²⁰

Notes:

1. Shaykh Aqā Bozorg Tehrani, *Tabaqāt A'lām al-Shī'ah*.
2. Mudarris Khiyābānī Tabrīzī, Muhammad 'Alī, *Rayhānah al-Adab*. vol. 1, p. 179.
3. Zirikli, Khayr al-Dīn, *al-A'lām*, vol. 6, p. 302.
4. Refer to *al-Hudā ilā Dīn al-Mustafā*, vol. 1, 2nd print, Najaf: Maktabah al-Haydariyyah, 1385 AH, Introduction: pp. 20-21.
5. *Rayhānah al-Adab*. vol. 1, p. 128.
6. Urdūbādī, Muhammad 'Alī, *'Ulamā' Mu'āsirīn*, pp. 162-3.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 162.
8. The book *al-Rā'ī wa al-Ra'īyah* is a commentary on Imam 'Alī's ('a) famous epistle to Mālik Ashtar on his appointment as governor of Egypt; *Siyāsah al-Imam al-Sādiq*; and *al-Mut'ah wa Atharuhā fī al-Islāh al-Ijtimā'ī*.
9. *Al-Hudā ilā Dīn al-Mustafā*, Introduction: p. 7.
10. *Alā' al-Rahmān* means “Blessings of the Merciful”.

11. *Alā’ al-Rahmān*, the end part.
12. Introduction of *al-Hudā ilā Dīn al-Mustafā*.
13. Najaf: Matba‘ah al-Nu‘mān, 1382 AH.
14. *Al-Rahlah al-Madrasīyyah*, Introduction to 2nd print.
15. *Ibid.*
16. *Ibid.*, Introduction: p. 8.
17. *Al-Hudā ilā Dīn al-Mustafā*, Introduction: pp. 27-28.
18. *Al-Rahlah al-Madrasīyyah*, Introduction: p. 13.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 6, quoted from one of his disciples.
20. *Ibid.*

Obituary

‘Allāmah Sayyid Sa‘eed Akhtar Rizvī

The Islamic world suffered an irreparable loss last June with the sudden death of the multi-lingual scholar ‘Allāmah Sayyid Sa‘eed Akhtar Rizvī. A prolific writer who needs no introduction to scholarly circles as well as those familiar with the culture of book-reading, he strove to promote the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt in all spheres of life. He travelled widely and during his 75 years of fruitful life spared no efforts in undertaking charity work for the poor and the downtrodden and establishing cultural and educational institutes. Following is a short biography.

Birth & Education

‘Allāmah Sayyid Sa‘eed Akhtar Rizvī, son of Mawlānā Hakīm Sayyid Abū al-Hasan, was born on 1st Rajab 1356 AH (5th January 1927) in ‘Ushri Khurd, in the district of Siwan, Bihar State, India.

He was the fifth in the consequent generations of ‘ulamā’ of his family. Besides his father, there were four other ‘ulamā’ among his immediate ancestors, of whom the most famous was Mawlānā Sayyid Muhammad Mahdī (d. 1929), the author of the book *Lawā’ij al-Ahzān* (in two volumes) which has been printed in India and Pakistan.

‘Allāmah Rizvī’s education began at his ancestral home in Gopalpur (Siwan District), and at the age of eight he moved to the provincial capital Patna where his father was the vice-principal of *Madrāsah-ye ‘Abbāsiyyah*. Here he studied under his father and other ‘ulamā’. In 1942, he travelled to Benaras and enrolled in *Jāmi‘ah al-‘Ulūm al-Jawādiyyah*, which was one of the three prominent *hawzas* in India. While he was in Benaras, he also appeared in the advance level examinations for linguistics in Arabic, Persian and Urdu conducted by the Allahabad Board. The diplomas for the examinations for these three languages were known as *Fāzil*, *Munshī*, and *Qābil* respectively. The ‘Allāmah passed all the examinations with distinction.

In 1946, at the age of nineteen, he graduated from *Jāmi‘ah al-‘Ulūm al-Jawādiyyah* with distinction and was awarded its highest theological degree, *Fakhr al-Afāzil*.

The teachers under whom ‘Allāmah Rizvī studied were his father, (1) Mawlānā Hakīm Sayyid Abū al-Hasan Rizvī (Patna), (2) Mawlānā Sayyid Farhat Husayn (Patna), (3) Mawlānā Sayyid Ghulām Mustafā (Patna), (4) Mawlānā Sayyid Mukhtār Ahmad (Patna), (5) Mawlānā Shaykh Kāzim Husayn (Benaras), (6) Hujjat al-Islām wa al-Muslimīn Sayyid Zafar al-‘Ulamā’ Zafar al-Hasan Rizvī (Benaras), and (7) Hujjat al-Islām wa al-Muslimīn Sayyid Muhammad Rizā Zangipuri (Benaras).

Under these ‘ulamā’, in addition to the classical texts of Arabic language and literature, he studied logic, philosophy, jurisprudence (*fiqh*), *usūl al-fiqh*, theology and *hadīth*. It is also

worth mentioning that years after having become active in the educational and propagation spheres and while working as a teacher of linguistics in a high school, he appeared for the secular education final examinations at the Aligarh Muslim University and was awarded the certificate with distinction.

Religious and Social Activities

Right from his teens, he was actively engaged in the social, educational and religious upliftment of the community. In 1948, at the age of twenty-one, he succeeded his father as the Prayer Leader of Hallaur in the Basti district of Uttar Pradesh State and continued in that position till 1951. From 1952 to 1959, he was the Friday Prayer Leader of Husaynganj in Siwan (Bihar), and at the same time worked as the Urdu and Persian teacher at the Husaynganj Higher Secondary School.

During all these years, he spent his holidays and free time in community work like promoting the cause of Anjuman-e Wazifah-ye Sādāt wa Mu‘minin (AWSM) and Anjuman-e Taraqqi-ye Urdu (ATU). AWSM promoted education among the Shi‘ah youth by giving them scholarship for higher studies whereas ATU aimed at promoting Urdu language among the Muslims in India. Some youth of those days who now hold good jobs were morally as well as financially helped by the ‘Allāmah to pursue their higher studies.

While he was in Hallaur, he was instrumental in completing the construction of the mosque. In the 1950s he was the trustee of the Mosque and Imambargah (*Husayniyyah*) of Gopalpur. When the Indian government confiscated the vast land (agricultural land as well as the big pond which produces fishes), which was endowment property (*waqf*) for maintenance and upkeep of the Mosque and the Imambargah, he successfully fought against the government’s decision in the court and got the land back for the community.

During the late 40s and 50s, the ‘Allāmah was also very active in writing articles and books in Urdu on various Islamic issues. From June 1949 to June 1950, a series of articles were published in the monthly *al-Wā‘iz* (Lucknow) entitled *Islām awr Tadbīr-e Manzil* (Islam and Organization of Family Life). These twelve articles formed the basis of his English book, *The Family Life in Islam* (published in 1971). The Urdu version was published in book form in 1997 as *Islam ka Nizām-e Khānewādīgī*.

In 1955, an editor of a Sunnī monthly, *Rizwān* (Lahore – Pakistan), published some questions as a challenge to the Shi‘ahs. The late ‘Allāmah was requested to respond and he wrote the reply that was published in a series of twelve articles in the monthly *al-Jawād* (Benaras) from 1955 to 1958. The second of these articles on the issue of *badā’* (innovation in religious tenets) was so much liked by the scholars that Adīb-e A‘zam Mawlānā Zafar Hasan, the editor of the *Nur* magazine of Karachi, published it in 1955 in dialogue form entitled *Mas‘alah-ye Badā’*. He wrote a note saying that he had not yet seen a clear and better writing on this subject in Urdu. These twelve extended articles (444 pages) were then published in book form titled *Itmām Hujjat* (Conclusive Proof) in 1986.

Migration to East Africa

In December 1959, he went to Tanzania (then known as Tanganyika) where he served the community as Resident ‘Alim at Lindi (December 1959-1962), Arusha (1963-1964) and Dar esSalaam (1965-1969).

Within a week of his arrival in East Africa, he started learning the Swahili language and observing the local conditions with a view to propagating true Islam among the indigenous population. In those days, there was not a single Shi‘ah Ithnā ‘Asharī of African origin in East Africa since the ‘ulamā’ were

oblivious of their duty of spreading the message of the Prophet’s Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) among the black Africans. In 1962, he prepared a plan for *tabligh* and sent it to the Secretariat of the Khoja Shī‘ah Ithnā ‘Ashari Supreme Council, then located in Arusha. In 1963, the plan was discussed at length. At that stage it could not be implemented as suggested, but a pilot scheme was put into effect. (Also in 1963, he visited all the *jamā‘ats* of East Africa and emphasized on strengthening the *madrrasah* system and its evaluation, and, as a result of that tour, he also worked for standardization of the syllabus for the *madrrasahs*.) In 1964, the Secretariat prepared a memorandum based on his *tabligh* scheme that was included in the agenda of the Tri-Annual Conference of the Federation of the Khoja Shī‘ah Ithnā ‘Ashari Jamā‘ats of Africa held at Tanga. Thus, the Bilal Muslim Mission came into being.

From that day onwards ‘Allāmah Rizvi spent all his free time in *tabligh* activities. In 1968, the Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania was registered. When the work increased, Grand Ayatullāh Sayyid Muhsin al-Hakīm (Najaf, Iraq) asked the Khoja Shī‘ah Ithnā ‘Ashari Supreme Council of Africa to release ‘Allāmah Rizvi from the Jamā‘at’s responsibilities. The request was granted and from then onwards the ‘Allāmah worked directly under the patronage of Grand Ayatullāh al-Hakīm and after him under Grand Ayatullāh Sayyid Abū al-Qāsim al-Khu‘ī.

Global Reach of the Mission: As result of the Mission’s efforts, tens of thousands of indigenous Africans have embraced the path of the Prophet’s Ahl al-Bayt (‘a). Gradually through education, publications and correspondence course the Mission’s field of activities has widened to include Thailand, Indonesia and Japan in the East, as well as Europe, USA and the Caribbean islands in the West. As a direct result of the Islamic Correspondence Course, now a Shī‘ah Ithnā ‘Ashari community

is flourishing in Guyana under Mr. Latif ‘Ali who has successfully spread the message up to Trinidad and Tobago.

Activities of the Mission

The Mission has a training centre for preachers (*hawzah-ye ‘ilmiyyah*) at Dar esSalaam equipped with a spacious boarding house. There is nursery, primary, secondary schools and Qur’ānic *madrasahs* as well as a Teachers’ Training College. The Mission also works on various charitable projects in Tanzania.

The Mission conducts three correspondence courses through which the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) have reached far and wide. The Mission has published more than one hundred books in English and Swahili, the major portion of which consists of ‘Allāmah Rizvī’s books or their translations.

There are now branches of the Bilal Muslim Mission in Kenya (established simultaneously with the Tanzanian Mission), Burundi, Malagasy, Congo, Rwanda and Mozambique. Inspired by the Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania, organizations with similar names have been established in Senegal, Nigeria, Ghana, Sweden and America.

A Long Sojourn in India and the West:

In 1978, ‘Allāmah Rizvī returned to India and settled in his hometown where he started the English translation of *Tafsīr al-Mizān* of the great exegete of the Holy Qur’an, ‘Allāmah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn al-Tabātabā’i. Eleven volumes of this translation have already been published. Besides this academic work, he was also a source and means of many charitable works including rebuilding of the ‘Idgah (*musallā* for the ‘*‘Id* prayers) and the Imambargah (*Husayniyyah*), and repairing the mosque in Gopalpur.

His first visit to Britain and the United States of America was in 1981. Although the purpose of visit was for *tabligh* during the month of Ramadhan, he asked the central office of AWSM for list of Shi‘ahs who had been given *qarz al-hasanah* (interest-free loan) for higher studies and were now well established in the USA but had not paid the loan back. He did that with the intention of calling them up so that with payment of their loan other deserving students of the community could be helped.

In December 1982, he went to London on invitation of the Imam Sāhib al-Zamān Trust. In Britain he also worked with Hujjat al-Islām Sayyid Mahdi al-Hakīm in establishing the World Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) Islamic League (WABIL). He was one of its three founding trustees. He also chaired the preparatory committee that drafted WABIL’s constitution and organized its conference in August 1983 in which eighty delegates from 30 countries participated. At the conference, the ‘Allāmah was elected as WABIL’s Director General for two years.

In 1982-1983, he visited almost all the major Shi‘ah centres of the USA and Canada and gave lectures at the first summer camp held in Toronto.

Return to Tanzania

He flew to Tanzania in 1985 for a short visit, but the situation of the Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania compelled him to return for a more permanent stay to supervise and strengthen its activities. In 1986 he decided to make his base in Dar esSalaam, and divided his time between Tanzania, India, and Canada.

In the late 80s, he was invited to help with the setting up of the first Shi‘ite *madrasah* in North America, which was founded in the town of Medina in New York State under the title *Hawzah-ye ‘Ilmiyyah-ye Waliyy-e ‘Asr*.

In 1991, the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) World Assembly (ABWA) was established in Tehran, and ‘Allāmah Rizvī was appointed as one of the committee members of the supreme council. He was also the founder and chairman of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) Assembly of Tanzania (ABATA).

In 1996, he established the Bilal Charitable Trust (BCT) of India in his hometown Gopalpur. BCT was founded to formalize the charity work that was done by and through him in Bihar for the past several decades. The Africa Federation, the al-Imān Foundation of Bombay and people in various countries have contributed to the strengthening of the BCT, which has so far repaired or built more than 25 mosques and *husayniyyahs* and more than 39 houses for people without shelter. BCT has also established and operates the al-Mahdī Institute of Gopalpur, which runs the al-Mahdī English Medium School and the al-Mahdī Institute of Information Technology. It is also busy in the normal charity work of providing for food, clothing, marriage expenses, and medical help to the deserving brethren in faith in that region of India. BCT also conducts eye camps in different parts of *Bihār*.

His Writings & Publications

From 1949 to 2002, ‘Allāmah Rizvī wrote about 150 books of different sizes ranging on various topics from theology to comparative religions, from laws and ethics to history, from *tafsīr* to *hadīth*, from Urdu poetry to bibliographical and biographical works of ‘ulamā’. Of his works, 85 are in English, 32 in Urdu, 12 in Arabic and 17 in Kiswahili; of which 98 have been published and six are in the process of publication. Presently he was engaged in writing three books in English, Arabic and Urdu. Some of his books have been translated into various languages including Arabic, Persian, Urdu, English, Turkish, Japanese, Gujarati, Indonesian, Thai, Burmese, Hindi,

Sindhi, Kashmiri, Swahili, Hausa, Shona, Italian, French, Swedish, Bosnian and Dutch.

The importance of his academe can be gauged by the second text-book he wrote for the Islamic correspondence course, *God of Islam*, published in 1971. *God of Islam* is on the topic of existence and *tawhīd* (monotheism) of the Almighty Allāh. A comparison of this book with volume 5 of *Usūl-e Falsafah wa Rawish-e Realism* by ‘Allāmah Tabātabā’i with very extensive commentary by Ayatullah Murtazā Mutahharī (published in 1975), will show the level of erudition of ‘Allāmah Rizvi on Islamic theology. The basis of arguments in both works are very similar but there is one important difference; while the commentary by Martyr Mutahharī was put in philosophical jargon and style with description of how the philosophical arguments evolved historically, *God of Islam* never lets the reader sense that he or she is treading through a philosophical area of expertise. And therein lies the beauty of ‘Allāmah Rizvi’s work: the most complicated theological or philosophical issue could be presented in a very simple style devoid of technical intricacies.

In 1972, *Nāmeḥ-ye Astān-e Quds* (vol. 9, nos. 1-2), the organ of the Shrine of Imam Reza (‘a) in Mashhad published in Persian the translation of some chapters of the ‘Allāmah’s book, *Prophethood*. In its introductory note, the editor writes: “In various chapters very beneficial and deep subjects have been explained in simple language, which has increased its usefulness and catches the attention; we are giving the translation of a few chapters of this beneficial book.”

His book on the divinely-designated leadership of Amīr al-Mu‘minīn Imam ‘Alī bin Abī Tālib (‘a) entitled *Imamate and Vicegerency of the Prophet* has been published many times and distributed in tens of thousands the world over by the Tehran-based World Organization for Islamic Services (WOFIS). Dr.

Sayyid Khalīl Tabātabā'i once mentioned to 'Allāmah Rizvī that his book on imamate and other books on *usūl-e dīn*, in spite of their brevity, cover all the important issues and should also be made available in the Arabic language. He said that books in Arabic on those subjects were either very brief or very detailed. The 'Allāmah himself translated into Arabic his book *Imamate* which was published by the Imam Husayn Foundation of Beirut in 1999.

He also worked with the late research scholar 'Allāmah Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Tabātabā'i of Qum in revising and updating *al-Dharī'ah ilā Tasānīf al-'Shī'ah*, the great bibliographical work of the late Aqā Bozorg Tehranī in more than twenty volumes. 'Allāmah Rizvī went through the entire set of *al-Dharī'ah* and wrote an addendum in Arabic for that monumental work. About twenty Grand Ayatullāhs of Najaf (Iraq) and Qum (Iran) had granted him the *ijāzah* (authorization) for *riwāyah* (narration of *hadīth*), for judicial affairs, and for handling any issue in which the *mujtahid's* authority is necessary.

'Allāmah Rizvī was a linguist, and composed poems in Urdu. He wrote, spoke and delivered lectures in Urdu, Arabic, English, Swahili and Persian. He also had knowledge of Hindi and Gujarati. Apart from extensive and repeated tours within Eastern and Southern Africa, he visited about 45 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and North America.

The Last Journey

On Thursday morning, 8th of Rabī' al-Thānī 1423 (20th of June 2002), 'Allāmah Sayyid Sa'eed Akhtar Rizvī as usual started his work at his desk in his bedroom. He was doing the translation of the 13th volume of *al-Mizān*. At around 7:45 a.m., he had a massive stroke. The doctor and ambulance were called immediately. While in the ambulance, he had brain hemorrhage

and went into coma. By evening, it seemed that his condition was stabilizing, but, unfortunately, soon after *maghrib* he passed away peacefully at 7:40 p.m.

The funeral was held on Saturday, June 22. For many Dar esSalaam residents, the day dawned on Saturday to the sound of *Sūrah Yāsīn* being recited from the mosque. It indeed was a grave day. The death of an ‘*ālim* (scholar) is the death of an ‘*ālam* (world).

The funeral prayer was led by his son, Hujjat al-Islam wa al-Muslimīn Sayyid Muhamamd Rizvi (who is based in Toronto, Canada), with a very large attendance, which in addition to the huge and diverse crowd consisting of people of all races, communities, age and status, included officials of the Africa Federation, the ambassador and staff of the Iranian embassy in the Tanzanian capital, representatives of various *Jamā‘ats* of East Africa, representatives of the Bilal Mission and its branches in Zanzibar and Kenya, and scores of ‘*ulamā*’ of all Muslim communities. In view of his popularity the traffic police stopped the busy Saturday morning traffic to make way for the cortege. Many non-Muslims were seen joining the funeral procession on the way to the cemetery, for the man who from virtually none, had turned thousands of indigenous people in Africa into devoted followers of the school of the Prophet’s Ahl al-Bayt (‘a).

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