



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



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"Say: Are those who know
and those who do not know
alike? Only the men of
understanding are mindful."
(The Holy Qur'an, 39:9).

EDITORIAL

Marjaiyyah (supreme religious authority) is a sacred and dynamic institution developed in the course of the history of *Shii* Islam. It thrived on special religious and political exigencies of a minority religious group living as a part of a bigger community having its own viewpoints on certain areas in religion and politics. As such *Shii* community needed a leadership, competent of passing decrees on religious matters and having a good command over current political affairs to meet the challenges.

Playing a central role in the community, *Marjaiyyah* over several centuries, has gained a special status in *Shia* world (the highest authority to pass decrees and commandments related to the daily life of the Muslims).

Although sectarian disputes and resistance against the necessary innovations in religious edicts have always created problems, *Marjaiyyah* have admirably succeeded in putting off the difficulties as well as guarding the interests of the community as a whole against the avarice of dictatorial forces.

It is difficult to assume that such a holy institution could have functioned better than it did during the hardships which befell the *Shias* in Iran and other parts of the world, while non-religious and even anti-religious governments ruled over the biggest part of the community. However after the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the situation of the community has changed drastically. Today that the *Shias* have managed to constitute an Islamic government of

their own in a country populated by about 60 million *Shias* and have influence over many other millions, the function and characteristics of *Marja'iyyah* should be revised.

Marja'iyyah characterized by what it has been in the past, is no more tenable and fruitful in the new situation. The only way out is to unite the *Marja'iyyah* with political leadership as Imam Khomeini did so.

According to *Shia* traditions, the most knowledgeable person in both religious as well as political matters is qualified to be the *Marja*. *Maraji* are more or less unanimous in worships such as prayer, fasting, etc. Thus, to have expertise in these issues is not the central factor for becoming a *Marja*, but to be knowledgeable in political, economic, legal and social problems pertaining to today's life and having the capability to issue decrees in these respects is very significant. Following the establishment of the Islamic Government in Iran, Imam Khomeini succeeded to combine both religious and political leadership. At present the Grand Ayatullah Khamenei seems to be the real successor of the late Imam. Owing to his expertise in jurisprudence and other branches of Islamic teachings as well as his background in politics and his experience in social engineering, he can be an ideal *Marja*. As it is reported by his students, his comments on certain *Fiqhi* issues are remarkable. He is a God-fearing jurist, well-versed in Islamic teaching and law and pious enough to seek the grace of God.

Before Revolution, he was considered to be one of the leaders of Revolution. After the Revolution also he undertook many assignments and became the president of Iran in two terms as well.

Such exclusive experiences have provided unique and valuable qualifications in this well-versed religious scholar, which make him almost the only person fit for this very important institution at present.

Tehran
27, Rajab, 1415
10, Day, 1373
31, Dec. 1994

List of Personalities and Organizations Supporting Marjaiyyah of Grand Ayatullah Khamenei

A life sketch of Grand Ayatullah Khamenei

Sayyid Ali Khamenei was born in 1939 in the holy city of Mashhad in Khurasan Province, northeastern Iran. His parents belonged to religious scholarly families, hence, he spent his childhood in a religious atmosphere. He received his early education in his birth place and soon went to Qum, the renowned center of theological studies in Iran. While in Qum, he attended classes of Grand Ayatullah Burujirdi and Haeri, and later on joined the ranks of pupils of Imam Khomeini.

After the exile of Imam Khomeini in 1963, Ayatullah Khamenei returned to Mashhad where he taught at religious seminaries for seven years.

During the rule of the defunct Shah, Ayatullah Khamenei was one of the most prominent and trusted leaders of the Islamic movement. In defying Shah's regime, he was repeatedly imprisoned or exiled to remote places with one of the worst climate conditions.

In 1978, upon his return from exile and at the height of the revolutionary struggle of Iranian Muslims, Grand Ayatullah Khamenei together with a few of his close associates led the struggle of the people in Khurasan. Later in the same year when Imam Khomeini headed the Islamic revolutionary movement from Neauphle Le Chateau at Paris, he was elected to be a member of the Revolutionary Council. After the downfall of the monarchy and formation of the revolutionary government, he was entrusted with the responsibility of representing the Revolutionary Council of the Army. He also served as Deputy for Revolutionary Affairs at the Ministry of Defence, and later on was appointed as the Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC).

He was also chosen to lead the Friday Congregational Prayers in Tehran, by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution, Imam Khomeini, and was elected to the First Islamic Consultative Assembly, as the representative of Tehran in 1980. After the formation of the Supreme Defence Council, Grand Ayatullah Khamenei was nominated to be the representative of the Leader of the Revolution. Grand Ayatullah Khamenei was one of the founding members of the Islamic Republic Party in Iran and was appointed as its first Secretary-General as well.

He was the victim of an unsuccessful assassination attempt on 27 June 1981. His speech at the Consultative Assembly was instrumental in the

dismissal of Bani-Sadr from the presidency of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and while addressing the congregation after leading the prayer in a mosque in Tehran, a time bomb exploded nearby, seriously injuring his hand, face and chest. He was immediately rushed to hospital by the devoted people of Tehran and miraculously survived. His right hand, however, is still not functioning properly.

In 1981, following the martyrdom of Mr. Muhammad Ali Rajazi, the second President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, he became a candidate, and was elected to the presidency with 95% of the votes cast in his favour by the Iranian people (the total number of votes was 16,847,717). He was re-elected as president in 1985 for a second four-year term. He also headed the Supreme Defence Council and Supreme Council for the Cultural Revolution.

During the imposed war, Ayatullah Khamenei visited various war fronts, and continuously inspected the frontlines in order to boost the morale of the Islamic combatants and to give advice on organizational matters. After the sad departure of Imam Khamayni, the Father of the Islamic Revolution, the Assembly of Experts selected him as the next leader of the Islamic Revolution, on June 4, 1989.

He has a good command of the Persian, Arabic and Azari (Turkish) languages and is also well acquainted with English. Ayatullah Khamenei is a prominent scholar and jurisprudent, and could be ranked as one of most fluent orators in the Islamic world at present. In addition to writing, he has a sense of appreciation for literary and poetic works. Although Grand Ayatullah Khamenei was very busy with official commitments in the aftermath of Islamic Revolution, nevertheless, he never stopped his research and theological studies.

He has translated and written numerous books on Islam and history. His translations include: *Future of the Islamic Lands*; *An Indictment Against the Western Civilization*; *Imam Hasan's Peace Treaty*; and *The Role of Muslims in the Independence of India*. From among his writings, one may mention: *General Pattern of Islamic Thoughts in the Qur'an*; *Discourse on Patience*; *Mysteries of Prayers*; *Understanding Islam Properly*; *Imam Sadiq's Life*, and a *Collection of Lectures on Wilayah*.

List of Personalities and Organizations Supporting Marjisiyyah of Grand Ayatullah Khamenei:

IRAN

1. Ayatullah Shaykh Ahmad Janati, from the Religious Seminary of Qum.
2. Ayatullah Shaykh Muhammad Yazdi, from the Religious Seminary of Qum.
3. Ayatullah Shaykh Muhammad Ali Taskhiri, member of the Society of International Islamic Jurisprudence.
4. Ayatullah Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Hakim, President of Higher Assembly of the Islamic Revolution of Iraq.
5. Ayatullah Ahmad Adhari Qumi, from Religious Seminary of Qum.
6. Ayatullah Sayyid Ahmad Sihri, Lebanon.
7. Ayatullah Sayyid Jalal Karimi, from the Religious Seminary of Qum.
8. Ayatullah Murtada Bani Fadl, from Religious Seminary of Qum.
9. Ayatullah Sayyid Huseyn Razi Kashani, from Religious Seminary of Qum.
10. Ayatullah Sayyid Mahmud Hashemi, from the Religious Seminary of Qum.
11. Ayatullah Sayyid Hashim Rasuli Mahallati, from the Religious Seminary of Qum.
12. Ayatullah Rida Ustadi, from the Religious Seminary of Qum.
13. Ayatullah Shaykh Muhammad Waiz-Zadeh Khurasani, Secretary General of the Society for Rapprochement of Islamic Sects, Tehran.
14. Ayatullah Muhammad Ibrahim Jannati, Lecturer in Religious Seminary of Qum.
15. Ayatullah Musawi Jazairi, Friday Prayer Leader of Awwaz.
16. Ayatullah Shaykh Hadi Ruhani.
17. Ayatullah Saheri Hamadani, from the Republic of Azerbaijan.
18. Ayatullah Sayyid Abbas Khatami Yazdi.
19. Hujjat al-Islam wal Muslimin Sayyid Ali Qurayshi, Member of Experts Assembly.
20. Hujjat al-Islam wal Muslimin Nuraddin Husayni Ashkvari, Lecturer of the Seminary of Qum.
21. Ayatullah Abbas Waiz Tahasi, Custodian of Imam Rida's Holy Shrine, Mashhad.
22. Hujjat al-Islam wal Muslimin Ali Asgar Awhadi, International Department, Ahl al-Bayt World Assembly, Tehran.
23. Hujjat al-Islam wal Muslimin Ahmad Muhsini Gurgani, Friday Prayer

Leader of Arak.

24. Hujjat al-Islam wal Muslimin Sayyid Sahir Jabbari.

25. Hujjat al-Islam wal Muslimin Ali Asqar Masumi, Member of Experts Assembly.

26. Ayatullah Abulfadl Khwansari, Qum.

27. Hujjat al-Islam wal Muslimin Muhammad Husayn Zarandi.

28. Hujjat al-Islam wal Muslimin Sayyid Jamal al-Din Tahiri, Friday Prayer Leader of Lahijan.

29. Friday Prayer Leader of Chahar Mahal Bakhtiari.

30. Hujjat al-Islam wal Muslimin Barik, Friday Prayer Leader of Qazvin.

31. Hujjat al-Islam Sulaymani, Friday Prayer Leader of Bahulsar.

32. Hujjat al-Islam wal Muslimin Rabbani, Friday Prayer Leader of Dandar Gaz.

33. Hujjat al-Islam Muhammadiyan, Friday Prayer Leader of Zahidan.

34. Hujjat al-Islam wal Muslimin Murtahidi.

35. Hujjat al-Islam wal Muslimin Faqih Imani, Friday Prayer Leader of Quchan.

36. Hujjat al-Islam wal Muslimin Murawwij, Friday Prayer Leader of Quchan.

37. Hujjat al-Islam wal Muslimin Gharawiya, Friday Prayer Leader of Nishabour.

38. Hujjat al-Islam Yaqubi, Friday Prayer Leader of Ilam.

Syria

39. Hujjat al-Islam Nasrullah Kacimi, Lecturer of Imam Khumayni Seminary, Damascus.

40. Hujjat al-Islam Shaykh al-Latif Khafaji, ibid.

41. Hujjat al-Islam Nazir Akhlaqi, ibid.

42. Hujjat al-Islam Sayyid Mir Husayn Mutahhari, ibid.

43. Hujjat al-Islam Muhammad Husayn Shariki, ibid.

44. Hujjat al-Islam Khudayar Nasiri, ibid.

45. Hujjat al-Islam Zamin Ali Tawassuli, ibid.

46. Hujjat al-Islam wal Muslimin Muslimi-Far, Representative of Islamic Propagation Organization in Philippines.

47. Hujjat al-Islam Sayyid Shafaqat Shirazi, Lecturer of Religious Teaching Center, Damascus.

48. Hujjat al-Islam Azhar Husayn Naqvi, ibid.

49. Hujjat al-Islam Jafar Husayn Naqvi, ibid.

50. Hujjat al-Islam Muhsin Rida Naqvi, *ibid*.
51. Hujjat al-Islam Askari Musawi, *ibid*.
52. Hujjat al-Islam Ghulam Abbas Asghar, *ibid*.
53. Hujjat al-Islam Ghulam Mustafa Jafari, *ibid*.
54. Hujjat al-Islam Mulazim Husayn Alawi, *ibid*.
55. Hujjat al-Islam Qusur abbas, *ibid*.
56. Hujjat al-Islam Ahmad Iqbal, *ibid*.

India:

57. Hujjat al-Islam wal Muslimin Dinparwar.
58. Hujjat al-Islam Sayyid Zakir Husayn Jafari.
59. Hujjat al-Islam Sayyid Mukhtar Husayn Jafari.
60. Hujjat al-Islam Sayyid Akhtar Jafari.
61. Mawlawi Mir Husayn Jafari.
62. Hujjat al-Islam wal Muslimin Sayyid Mustafa Musawi, Lecturer of Seminary of Imam Rida (a), Kashmir.
63. Hujjat al-Islam wal Muslimin Sayyid Hasan Musawi, *ibid*.
64. Hujjat al-Islam wal Muslimin Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi, *ibid*.
65. Hujjat al-Islam Shaykh Ghulam Husayn Najafi, *ibid*.
66. Hujjat al-Islam wal Muslimin Sayyid Muhammad Husayni, Principle of Theological Center of Inamiyah, Varanasi.

United Arab Emirates

67. Hujjat al-Islam wal Muslimin Akhayan, Representative of Wali Faqih in Emirates.
68. Muhammad Mahdi Mahmudi, Principal of Iranian Schools in Emirates.
69. Hujjat al-Islam Abdullah Sharifi, Representative of Supreme Religious Authorities in Emirates.

United States

70. Hujjat al-Islam wal Muslimin Muhammad Ali Ilahi, Director of Islamic Center, Michigan.
71. Hujjat al-Islam Shaykh Asifi, Los Angeles.
72. Hujjat al-Islam Sayyid Talmidh Hasnayn, New Jersey.
73. Hujjat al-Islam Sayyid Rifq Haqvi, Washington.
74. Hujjat al-Islam Sayyid Sirtaj Zaydi, Detroit.
75. Hujjat al-Islam Shaykh Faizi, New York.

121. Ghulam Husayn Qasim Ali, Assistant Secretary of Shia community.
122. Hujjat al-Islam Sarwar Hasan.

List of the Organizations

South Africa

1. Islamic Center of Africa
2. Institute of al-Kawthar
3. Al-Hujjat Journal
4. Islamic Society of Kwahana
5. Islamic Foundation of Kala Hlong
6. International Center for Islamic Studies
7. Institute of Ahl al-Bayt (a) of South Africa

Sweden

1. Tajammu al-Wahdat al-Islamiyyah, Sweden
2. Tajammu al-Wahdat al-Islamiyyah, Upsala
3. Tajammu al-Wahdat al-Islamiyyah, Kirshiyana
4. Masjid Imam Husayn (a), Mltnu
5. Tajammu al-Urwat al-Wuthqa

Syria

1. Imam Khumayni Islamic Teaching Center
2. Sayyidah Zaynah (a) Islamic Teaching Center
3. Representative of Tahrirk-e Fiqh Jafari in Syria
4. Representative of Wahdat Islami, Party of Afghanistan in Syria

India

1. Majlis Ulama-e Kashmir
2. Islamic Seminary of Bahr al-Ilm, Kashmir
3. Islamic Seminary Imamiyyah, Varanasi
4. Islamic Seminary Jamiat al-Ghadir, Delhi
5. Organization of Imamiyyah Youth, Delhi
6. Hizb al-Muminin, J.K.
7. Anjuman Imamiyyah Gursai, Poonch
8. Anjuman Jafariyyah, Poonch
9. Center of Islamic Teaching, Kashmir
10. Zaynabiyyah Society, Gursai

11. Jamiat al-Muntazar, Madras
12. Ahl al-Bayt Islamic Center
13. Islamic Seminary of Imam Rida (a), Kashmir
14. Nuhzat Ingilay-e Islami, Kashmir
15. Mutahhari School, Kashmir
16. Imam Khumayni Memorial Institute

Lebanon

1. Hizbullah
2. Al-Shahid Institute
3. Jamiat al-Ala lil Amal al-Khayr al-Islami al-Nisaiyyah
4. Jamiat al-Qur'an al-Karim Qism al-Akhawt
5. Jamiat Kashafat al-Mahdi Far al-Murshadiat
6. Jamiat Kashafat al-Mahdi
7. Tajammu Ulama Muslimin in Baya

Pakistan

1. Jamia Imam Sadiq (a), Quete
2. Hawza Ilmiyyah, Quete
3. Markaz Itta wa Huquq Shar'iyyah

U.S.A.

1. Center of Islamic Guidance
2. Islamic Association, U.S.A. & Canada

U.K.

1. Cultural Center and Islamic Propagation, London

Austria

1. Centre of Islamic Culture

Uganda

1. Khoja Ithna-Ashari, Shia Society

Zambia

1. Islamic Center of Zambia
2. Imam Juma of Masjid al-Rida (a)

The Concept of Al-Ta'wil in the Qur'an

By: Allamah Tabataba'i

"*Al-Ta'wil* is derived from the word *al-wal* (to return). *Al-Ta'wil* of an ambiguous verse is its "returning base" to which it is returned. *Al-Ta'wil* of the Qur'an is the source from which it gets its realities. For want of a better word, it is mostly translated as interpretation, final interpretation, or the end; although these words do not convey its true connotation.

The word *al-Ta'wil* is used in various places in the Qur'an:

1. And certainly We have brought them a Book which We have made clear with knowledge, a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe. Do they wait for aught but its final interpretation? On the day when its final interpretation comes about, those who neglected it before will say: "Indeed the apostles of our Lord had brought the truth..." (7:72-53).

That is, what the apostles told their people was all truth: that Allah is their True Lord; that what they call upon besides Allah has no reality at all; that the prophethood is truth and the religion is truth; that Allah will surely raise those who are in graves; in short, all the information about the unseen, truth of which will be manifest on the Day of Resurrection.

Keeping in view this manifestation, it has been said that *al-Ta'wil* of a verse is the fact with which that verse conforms, and that it would be manifested later on; like the happenings on the Day of Judgment that would be in conformity with the information given by the prophets and the Books.

But this explanation is not comprehensive. It covers only those verses that describe the Divine attributes and actions, and explain the events of the Day of Judgment. But many more verses have no "facts" that would manifest themselves later on: the verses containing law and rules -- they give orders, not information, and thus have no facts to conform with; the ones describing what is a clear rational proposition, for example, many ethical teachings -- their *Ta'wil* (in the proposed events) is within themselves, it is not to appear later; those narrating the stories of the prophets and past nations -- their *Ta'wil* has already appeared, it is not to appear on the Day of Judgment. And the verse under discussion is talking about *al-Ta'wil* of the whole Book: i.e., Book's, final interpretation. Clearly the suggested meaning of *al-Ta'wil* cannot be applied here, because, as described above, it is true for only a portion of the Book, not for the whole.

2. And this Qur'an is not such as could be forged by those besides Allah, but it is a verification of that which is before it and a clear explanation of the Book, there is no doubt in it, from the Lord of the worlds. Or do they say: "He has forged it?" Say: "Then bring a chapter like this and call whom you can besides Allah, if you are truthful." Nay, they have rejected that of which they have no comprehensive knowledge, and its final interpretation has not yet come to them; even thus did those before them reject (the truth); see then what was the end of the unjust (10:37-39).

Here again *al-Ta'wil* has been attributed to the whole Book.

The above definition has been improved upon by suggesting that: *al-Ta'wil* is the real fact upon which the talk depends. If the talk contains an information, then the event or fact mentioned is its "interpretation" -- it does not matter whether the events have already passed, like those of the prophets and past nations, or will be manifested in future, as concerning the verses describing the attributes, names and promises of Allah and all that is to happen on the Day of Judgment; and if it promulgates a law, then the benefit emanating from it is its "interpretation". Look, for example, at the words of Allah: And give full measure when you measure out, and weigh with a true balance; this is good and the fairest "in the end" (17:35). The original word, translated here as "in the end", is "*Ta'wila*". It shows that the "final interpretation" of giving full measure and weighing with true balance is the benefit accruing to the society from honest dealing.

But this explanation too is defective, as will be seen from the following clarifications.

First: The verse of measure and weight is clear on one point: the "final interpretation", that is, the social benefit, depends on people's doing what they have been told to do, that is, on their actually giving full measure and correct weight: those benefits would not occur merely by promulgating this rule. In other words, the final interpretation is a real fact (benefit to the society) that emanates from a real fact (measuring and weighing correctly).

Obviously, the "final interpretation" is a real fact; and the thing that "returns" to it, or, let us say, through which that final interpretation emanates is also a real fact -- it is not only an information or order. When Allah says that the verses of the Book have "final interpretation", it means that those verses narrate some real facts (as, for example, in the stories) or are concerned with actually-existing practical matters (as, for example, in the verses

promulgating laws), which, in their turn, have a final interpretation. This capability of having a final interpretation is not an attribute of the speech: it is the property of the subject matter of the speech.

Second: As explained earlier, *al-Ta'wil* literally means to return, or the returning base. But it is not every return or returning base, but a special type of it. A dependent returns to his principal, but the principal is not his "final interpretation"; all numbers return to "one", but "one" is not their final interpretation.

To understand it more clearly let us look at the Qur'anic story of Musa and Khidr (s). Khidr (s) used the word *al-Ta'wil* twice when he told Musa: ...now I will inform you of the interpretation of that with which you could not have patience (18:78). This is the interpretation of that with which you could not have patience (18:82).

What he explained to Musa (s) was the true significance of his three actions which Musa (s) had misjudged because of his unawareness of their real purposes.

The three events were as follows:

1. ...until when they embarked in the boat he made a hole in it... (18:71).
2. ...until when they met a boy, he slew him (ibid. 74).
3. ...until when they came to the people of a town, they asked them for food, but they refused to receive them as guests. Then they found in it a wall which was on the point of falling, so he set it upright (ibid. 77).

And this is how Musa (s) misconstrued these events:

1. (Musa) said: "Have you made a hole in it to drown its inmates? Certainly you have done a grievous thing" (ibid. 71).
2. (Musa) said: "Have you slain an innocent person otherwise than for manslaughter? Certainly you have done a horrible thing" (ibid. 74).
3. (Musa) said: "If you had pleased, you might certainly have taken a recompense for it" (ibid. 77).

And the following are the "final interpretations" of them, as explained by Khidr (s):

1. "As for the boat, it belonged to (some) poor men who worked on the river and I wished that I should damage it, and there was behind them a king who seized every boat by force" (18:79).
2. "And as for the boy, his parents were believers and we feared lest he should oppress them by disobedience (to them) and

disbelief (in God). So we desired that their Lord might give them in his place one better than him in purity and nearer to having compassion" (ibid., 80-81).

3. *"And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city, and there was beneath it a treasure belonging to them, and their father was a righteous man; so your Lord desired that they should attain their maturity and take out their treasure, a mercy from your Lord..." (ibid., 82).*

Then he answered all the objection of Musa (s) in a short sentence: "And I did not do it of my own accord" (ibid.).

It is now obvious that the "return" mentioned in these verses is just as a punishment given to a child "returns" to his character-building -- he is punished for the "purpose" of his reform. It is this type of "return" that is meant by *al-Ta'wil* in the above-mentioned verses. It does not mean that conformity which a true information has with its fact -- as the sentence, Zayd came, has with the coming of Zayd.

For further clarification let us look at uses of this word in Chapter 12 (Joseph):

1. *When Joseph said to his father: "O my father! surely I saw eleven stars and the sun and the moon -- I saw them prostrating before me" (12:4); And he raised his parents upon the throne and they (all) fell down in prostration before him, and he said: "O my father! this is the interpretation of my vision of old; my Lord has indeed made it to be true..." (12:100).*

In this instance, the dream he saw of the sun, the moon and eleven stars prostrating before him "returned" to the prostration of his parents and eleven brothers. But his "returning" was just as an allegory returns to the thing for which it is used.

The same is the case with the following verses:

2. *And the king said: "Surely I see eleven fat kine which seven lean ones devoured; and seven green ears and (seven) others dry; O Chiefs! explain to me my dream, if you can interpret the dream." They said: "Confused dreams, and we do not know the interpretation of (such) dreams." And of the two (prisoners) he who had found deliverance and remembered after a long time said: "I will inform you of its interpretation, so let me go." Joseph! O truthful one! explain to us seven fat kine which seven lean ones devoured, and seven green ears and (seven) others dry, that I may go back to the people so that they may know."*

He said: "You shall sow for seven years continuously, then what you reap leave it in its ear except a little of which you eat, then there shall come after that seven years of hardship which shall eat away all that you have beforehand and laid up in store for them, except a little of what you shall have preserved" (12:43-48).

3. *And two youths entered the prison with him. One of them said: "I saw myself pressing wine," And the other said: "I saw myself carrying bread on my head, of which birds ate. Inform us of its interpretation; surely we see you to be of the doers of good" (ibid. 36); "O my two mates of the prison! as for one of you, he shall give his lord to drink wine; and as for the other, he shall be crucified, so that the birds shall eat from his head; the matter is decreed concerning which you enquired" (ibid. 41).*

4. *"...and teach you the interpretation of saying..." (ibid. 6).*

5. *...and that We might teach him the interpretation of sayings... (ibid. 21).*

6. *"...and taught me of the interpretation of sayings..." (ibid. 101).*

The word *al-Ta'wil* in all these verses is used for the events to which the dreams referred. The dreamers say the events not as they actually happened but in their allegorical forms; and Joseph "returned" those allegories to the real events which they represented. The dreams were the forms, and their interpretations were the substances behind those forms. In other words *al-Ta'wil* (interpretation) is the reality that is allegorically represented by the words or expressions; those words or expressions must be "returned" to the realities which they represent, if one wants to know their true significance.

The verse quoted above in the story of Musa and Khidr (peace be on them) also were of the same nature, as are the words of Allah mentioned earlier: And give full measure when you measure out, and weigh with a true balance; this is good and the fairest "in the end" (17:35).

Pondering over the verses about the Day of Judgment, one realizes that this word has been used in the same meaning in the earlier-mentioned verses: Nay, they have rejected that of which they have no comprehensive knowledge, and its final interpretation has not yet come to them (10:39); Do they wait for aught but its final interpretations? On the day when its final interpretation comes about... (7:53). Look at verses such as: Certainly you were heedless of it, but now We have removed from you your veil, so your sight today is

sharp (50:22). It shows that the vision with which man will see the information brought by the prophets and the Book turning into reality will be of a different kind — that perception will not be like this physical perception, which we are used to in this world. Even the manifestation of the Day of Judgment as well as the governing principle of that day shall be something beyond the worldly perception of ours. (It will be further explained somewhere else.) Therefore, when it is said that the information given in the Book and tradition shall "return" to their true meanings on the Day of Judgment it is not the same thing as fulfilment of a forecast in future.

From the above discourse, it becomes clear that:

First: The sentence, "This verse has an *al-Ta'wil* to which it returns", conveys a meaning different from the sentence, "this verse is ambiguous (*mutashabih*) and it returns to a decisive (*muhkam*) verse".

Second: *al-Ta'wil* is not a peculiarity of the ambiguous verses; it is an attribute of the whole Qur'an; decisive verses have their *al-Ta'wil*, as do the ambiguous ones.

Third: *al-Ta'wil* is not the meaning of a word; it is some real fact found outside the imagination. When we say that this verse has an *al-Ta'wil*, we mean that the verse describes a real fact (past or future) or a real happening, which in its turn points to another reality — and that is its *al-Ta'wil*, or final interpretation.

Note: In later days, this word was taken to mean "the interpretation that is against the apparent meaning of the word." But it is not interpretation; it is misinterpretation, an abuse of language. This wrong connotation was unknown at the time when the Qur'an was revealed, and there is no evidence to suggest that this late meaning is intended in this verse.

The Meanings of "*al-Ta'wil*" According to Other Exegetes

According to some exegetes *al-Ta'wil* (interpretation) is synonymous for exegesis, explanation or meaning of the sentence. Meanings of some parts of the Qur'an are certainly known to the people. Accordingly, the interpretation mentioned in the verse (seeking to give it their own interpretation, but none knows its interpretation except Allah) must be restricted to the meaning of the ambiguous verses. Therefore, they say that none can know, in any way, the meaning of an ambiguous verse, except Allah — or except Allah and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge.

This means that at least some of the Qur'anic verses are unintelligible; that its "interpretation", that is, exegesis cannot be understood from its words. But

there is no such verse in the Qur'an; the Qur'an clearly says that it has been revealed so that an average mind may easily understand it.

A man having this opinion cannot avoid this difficulty except by saying that the only ambiguous verses are the letter-symbols at the beginning of some chapters, as their meanings are not known to the people. But, there is no proof that only the letter-symbols are "ambiguous"; and just because al-Ta'wil means to return and *al-Ta'fīr* (exegesis) also has a shade of this meaning in it, it does not follow that both are synonymous — a mother is the returning place for her children, but she is not their "interpretation"; a principal is the returning place of his dependents, but he is not their "interpretation". Moreover, according to the verse, one of the characteristics of the ambiguous verses is that perverted persons follow them to mislead the people. But who has ever been misled by letter-symbols? Most of the misguidance in Muslim community has occurred because of following those verses that describe the attributes of Allah and other such things.

Another group says that "interpretation" is the meaning that is against the apparent meaning of the word. This explanation has become so wide spread that, at present, it has become the real meaning of al-Ta'wil, while originally this word meant "to return" or "the returning place". Anyhow, this explanation is popular among the later exegeses, while the first-mentioned explanation was familiar to the ancients, whether they believed that its knowledge was restricted to Allah only, or said that they too, who were firmly rooted in knowledge, knew it; for example, it has been narrated from Ibn 'Abbas that he used to say: "I am one of those who are firmly rooted in knowledge and I know its interpretation."

According to this opinion, there are verses in the Qur'an whose intended import is against their apparent meanings, and those apparent meanings cause misguidance in religion as they are against the decisive verses. This statement boils down to this: The verses of the Qur'an are contradictory to each other and that contradiction cannot be removed unless some verses are deprived of their open meanings and given some such connotations that, in normal course, would not be understood from them.

This, in its turn, would invalidate the argument contained in the words of Allah:

"Do they not then meditate on the Qur'un? And if it were from any other than Allah, they would have found in it many a discrepancy" (4:82).

If the discrepancy between two verses can be removed only by saying that

one or both do not mean what their words apparently say; that they have an interpretation (i.e., a meaning against the apparent one) that is not known to anyone other than Allah, then the verse 4:82, written above, cannot prove that the Qur'an is from Allah. One can easily remove contradiction and discrepancy from any literary or academic work of any author, if one were to change the apparent meanings of contradictory statements and give them new connotations unknown to any linguist. But such removal of contradiction would not prove that that work is a Divine revelation. The fact is that every speech -- even one that is admittedly false or is just a jumble of words -- can be presented as a true fact or a serious discourse if its words were given some hitherto unknown meanings against their clear connotations. But such an absence of discrepancy would not mean that that speech was from a Speaker Who is above the changes, Whose decrees and statements do not contradict each other, Who is not liable to forgetfulness and error, Who is All-perfect by Himself and has not acquired perfection through trial and error, experience and passage of time.

The verse 4:82, proves that the Qur'an is understandable to common minds and may be pondered and meditated upon; that no verse of it has a meaning that is against the clear dictate of Arabic language; in short, it does not contain puzzles and riddles.

A third group says: "Interpretation" is that meaning of the verse which is not known except to Allah (or to Allah and the ones firmly rooted in knowledge), and which is against the apparent meaning of the word. In other words, an ambiguous verse has many meanings -- one behind the other; some meanings are showing themselves just behind the words, and may be perceived by one and all; others are far behind and none knows them except Allah (or except Allah and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge).

There is, within this group, a difference of opinion as to how those various meanings are related to the word. It is sure that all of them are not on the same level; otherwise, it would mean that one word is used in more than one meaning at the same time, and that is not permissible in language (as has been established in the Fundamentals of Jurisprudence). Therefore, those meanings must be taken consecutively. Now comes the difference: Some say that one meaning is the real one; the second is its concomitant; the third is the second's concomitant and so on. Others say that the meanings are all ranked one behind the other, as an esoteric meaning is hidden behind a manifest one. When a man speaks a word, he intends it to convey its familiar meaning, and with the same intention he aims at its esoteric meaning. You say: "Give me water

to drink.' You ask only for drink; but that very word is also a demand to satiate your thirst; and this in its turn is a call to satisfy a need of life, and then a determination to acquire the perfection of existence. Note that you had not given four orders; you only told him to give you water to drink, but this one demand contained in itself all the unspoken but intended demands -- one inside the other.

However, no one who has meditated on the Qur'an would deny that the Qur'anic verses have various consecutive connotations -- one behind the other. But all those connotations are, in fact, various levels of the meanings of the words -- and especially so if we say that they are concomitants of the first meaning. And their understandability varies according to the intelligence levels of the readers. But this idea has no resemblance with al-ta'wil (interpretation). Remember what Allah has said about the "interpretation" of the Qur'an that none knows it except Allah. And note the fact that one does not need piety and spiritual purity to understand a complicated or deep philosophical discourse; what one requires is a sharp intelligence. Then you will realize that it would be inappropriate to say that only Allah knew the interpretation (in the meaning given in this opinion) of the Qur'an. (It does not mean that piety and spiritual purity do not help in comprehension of Divine knowledge and realities; but they are not the main foundation of this comprehension. This place is reserved for intelligence and scholarship.)

There is a fourth explanation: Interpretation is not a sort of a meaning intended from the word. It is a thing really existing outside imagination, upon which the talk is based. If the speech is of imperative mood -- enjoining or forbidding -- then its interpretation is that reason for which the said commandment is given. There is an order: Establish prayer. Its interpretation is that spiritual perfection which illuminates the soul of the one who prays, and prevents him from evil and sin. If the speech is an information -- of a past event -- then that event itself is its interpretation. Look, for example, at the verses narrating the stories of the prophets and their peoples. And if it is an information of a present or future happening, then it is of two kinds:

(1) If the subject may be perceived by one of the senses or comprehended by mind, then its interpretation is the same subject as it exists or shall exist in reality: For example, Allah says: ...and among you are those who hearken for their sake (9:47); and: The Romans are vanquished, in a near land, and they, after being vanquished, shall overcome within a few years (30:2-4).

(2) If it is a future event of unseen that cannot be perceived by worldly perceptions, nor can it be comprehended by our minds, like the affairs of the

Day of Resurrection, the time of its happening, the raising of the dead and their gathering together, the questioning, the reckoning, the flying of the books of deeds etc., and like the reality of the Divine Attributes and Actions. (These latter are above the reach of time and beyond the limit of minds), then too their interpretation is the same reality that exists or shall exist outside imagination.

There is a big difference between the verses that describe these last-mentioned realities (attributes and actions of Allah and the affairs related to the Day of Resurrection) and those describing other subjects. It is possible to know the interpretation of the verses that describe other subjects; but so far as the verse describing the Divine Attributes etc., are concerned, none knows their interpretation except Allah; although those who are firmly rooted in knowledge may be given this knowledge by Allah to the extent of their mental capacities and spiritual perfection. Still, the reality, that is, the full and final interpretation, is not given to any creature at all.

However, it is right to say that *al-Ta'wil* (interpretation) is not restricted to the ambiguous verses, but is found in the whole Qur'an. Also, it is right to say that interpretation is not the meaning of the word; it is a real fact on which the speech is based. But it is wrong to say that every fact, referred to by the verse, is its interpretation, and that the past events or the future happenings are the interpretations of the relevant verses. Again, it is wrong to think that only the verses describing the Divine Attributes and the events of the Day of Resurrection are ambiguous.

For what is the meaning of the words: "and seeking to give it (their own) interpretation, but none knows its interpretation except Allah?" Do the pronoun "it" and "its" refer to "the Book?" In other words, does the verse say that none knows the interpretation of the whole Book except Allah? If the interpretation means real events and causes mentioned in the verses, then the above statement would not be correct, because interpretations (in the meaning just described) of a great many verses are known to many other than Allah and other than those who are firmly rooted in knowledge; in fact, it may be known to even those in whose hearts there is perversity -- such are the verses narrating the stories of the past nations and the current events, and even the verses dealing with laws and ethics. Everyone can acquire the knowledge of these things, and no one can fail to understand their interpretation (in this meaning).

Or, do the pronouns, "it" and "its" refer to "the part of the Book that is ambiguous?" If so, then it will be correct to restrict the knowledge of its

interpretation to Allah (or to Allah and those firmly rooted in knowledge). And then it would be the import of the verse that none, except Allah (and those firmly rooted in knowledge) should seek to interpret the ambiguous verses; otherwise, the people would be misled and misguided.

But it would be wrong in this case to say that only the verses describing the attributes and actions of Allah, and those connected with the Day of Judgement were ambiguous. Misguidance is caused by misinterpretation of other types of verses too; for example, the verses related to the shari'ah and the stories of the prophets and their nations. It has been claimed by a group that the main purpose of the law is to reform and develop the society; if the good of the society depends on a law other than the one ordained by religion, or if that ordained law is no longer suitable for this enlightened era, a new law should be adopted and the religious command should be discarded. Likewise, it has been claimed that the miracles attributed by the Qur'an to the prophets were not supernatural events; they were normal occurrences, which the Qur'an narrated in a way as to put on them a halo of mystery; as a result of this dramatic style, it succeeded in attracting the attention of the audience and to make them submit to what they thought to be a superpower, above all powers. Such misleading explanations and interpretations are found in their hundreds in all the sects that have deviated from true Islam. And all are the result of interpreting the Qur'an according to one's own liking, seeking to mislead the people. Therefore, it is wrong to say that only those verses are ambiguous which describe the Divine Attributes and the affairs of the Day of Resurrection.

These are the four main opinions concerning the meaning of "interpretation". There are some other views also; they are, in fact, various branches of the first opinion although those who expressed them have not acknowledged this fact:

1. Exegesis (*al-Tafsir*) is more general than interpretation (*al-Ta'wil*). Exegesis is mostly used for explanation of words; interpretation is mostly used for explanation of the meanings and sentences. The term, "interpretation" is generally used only for the Divine Books; while exegesis is used for other books too.

2. Exegesis is explanation of a word that has only one meaning; interpretation is choosing, with the help of some rules and reason, one meaning out of several possible ones.

3. Exegesis shows the definite meaning of the word; interpretation chooses one among many possible meanings. (It is not very different from no.2.)

4. Exegesis shows the reason of the meaning; interpretation explains the reality of the meaning. For example, look at the verse: Most surely your Lord is on watch (59:14). Its exegesis shall be as follows: "*al-Mirsaad* (watching place) is on paradigm of *al-mis'al* from the verb *rasada*; *yarsudu* (he watched; he is watching). And its interpretation is the warning against slackening in matters of the shari'ah and thinking little of the commandments of Allah.

5. Exegesis is a description of the clear meaning of a word; interpretation is the explanation of its difficult meaning.

6. Exegesis is concerned with tradition and narration; interpretation is related to reason.

7. Exegesis is limited to following and listening (what the ancients said); interpretation is concerned with inference and reason.

These seven are in fact various facets of the first opinion; and all objections levelled against that are valid about these too. Anyhow, one cannot rely on any of the four opinions or their branches.

One defect is common to all: They presume that "interpretation" is the meaning of the verse, or that it is the happening or cause to which the verse refers. But it has been explained that "interpretation" is not the meaning of a verse -- it does not matter whether the meaning is the apparent one or is against it. Also, it has been clarified that although interpretation is a real event or fact, but not every event -- it is that fact with which the word has the same relation as a proverb has with its purpose; or as an exterior has with its interior.

Interpretation is that reality to which a verse refers; it is found in all verses, the decisive and the ambiguous alike; it is not a sort of a meaning of the word; it is a real fact that is too sublime for words; Allah has dressed them with words so as to bring them a bit nearer to our minds; in this respect they are like proverbs that are used to create a picture in the mind and thus help the hearer to clearly grasp the intended idea. That is why Allah has said: (I swear) by the Book that makes manifest (the truth); surely We have made it an Arabic Qur'an, so that you may understand. And surely it is in the original of the Book with Us, truly elevated, full of wisdom (43:2-4). And this thing has been explicitly and implicitly mentioned in several Qur'anic verses.

Does Anyone, Other than Allah, know the "Interpretation" of the Qur'an

This issue too has caused sharp controversy among the exegetes. The main reason of the controversy is the meaning of "and", in the sentence, "and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge say: We believe in it, it is all from our

Lord. ' Is it a conjunctive? Or, has it been used only to begin a new sentence?

Some early exegetes, some Shafi'ites and most of the Shi'ites believe that it is a conjunctive; that the verse says that those too who are firmly rooted in knowledge know the interpretation of the ambiguous verses of the Qur'an.

Most of the early exegetes and the Hanafites believe that with this "and" a new sentence begins; that none knows the interpretation of the ambiguous except Allah, Who has kept this knowledge to Himself. Both groups bring in their support a lot of academic explanations and traditions; the polemics goes on, arguments are put forward, are refuted by the opposite group, then the refutations in their turn are refuted; thus it goes on and on.

Both sides suffer from confusion about the issue to be decided. They have confused the interpretation of the Qur'an with returning the ambiguous verse to the decisive. Therefore, it will be a waste of time and space to quote here their arguments and counter-arguments. So far as the traditions are concerned they are against the clear meaning of the Qur'an:

1. Let us look, to begin with, at the traditions that say that those who are firmly rooted in knowledge know the interpretation. These traditions use "interpretation" as synonymous for the 'intended meaning of the ambiguous'; but, as mentioned repeatedly, interpretation of the Qur'an is something else.

It has been narrated through the Sunni chains that the Prophet prayed for Ibn 'Abbas: "O Allah! give him knowledge of the religion and teach him the interpretation." And Ibn 'Abbas is reported as saying: "I am among those who are firmly rooted in knowledge and I know its interpretation." Also he said: "The decisive are the verses that abrogated and the ambiguous are the abrogated ones." All these traditions put together give an impression that the decisive verse is the interpretation of the ambiguous one.

But we have already explained that this verse is not concerned with this sort of interpretation.

2. Now we come to those traditions that show that knowledge of the interpretation of the ambiguous verses is restricted to Allah:

a) Ibn 'Abbas is reported to recite the verse in this way: "and none knows its interpretation except Allah, and say those who are firmly rooted in knowledge: 'We believe in it...'" The same recitation is ascribed to Ubay ibn Ka'b. Likewise, Ibn Mas'ud is reported to recite: "And its interpretation is not except with Allah, and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge say: 'We believe in it...'"

But such traditions can prove nothing: First, because such uncommon recitations are of no value at all; secondly, utmost that can be shown from

them is that this verse does not prove that those who are firmly rooted in knowledge know the interpretation; but there is a word of difference between not proving that Zayd exists and proving that he does not exist.

b) It is narrated by at-Tabarani from Abu Malik al-Ash'ari that he heard the Messenger of Allah saying: "I am not afraid for my ummah but from three things: that their wealth would increase, and they would envy each other and kill each other; and that the Book would be opened for them, and the believer would take it seeking to interpret it, and none knows its interpretation except Allah; and those who are firmly rooted in knowledge say: 'We believe in it, it is all from our Lord'; and none do mind except those having understanding; and that their knowledge would increase and they would waste and neglect it." (*ad-Durrat al-manthur*)

This tradition -- if we accept that it has any relation with the subject matter -- would only show that common believers did not know the interpretation; but it could not be proved from it that those too who were firmly rooted in knowledge did not have its knowledge. And the controversy is about this latter group; it is not about general believers.

c) Some people offer those traditions as their proof which say that the decisive verses should be followed and ambiguous ones should only be believed in.

But such traditions have no relevance to the issue under dispute.

d) al-Alusi has quoted in his *al-Tafsir al-Majma'*¹ tradition through Ibn Jarir from Ibn 'Abbas that he said: "The Qur'an has been revealed on four words: The lawful, and the prohibited (none is excused from acquiring its knowledge); and the explanation (it is done by the scholars); and the ambiguous, none knows it except Allah, and the one who claims to know it (except Allah) is a liar."

Let us have a cursory glance at this tradition: First, some names from the chain of its narrators are omitted. Secondly, it is against the previously mentioned traditions that say that the Prophet prayed for him to be given the knowledge of interpretation, and against his own claim that he had this knowledge. Thirdly, it is against the clear import of the Qur'an that interpretation is something other than the meaning of the ambiguous.

What is, then, the reply to the question asked in the beginning? Does anyone, other than Allah, know the interpretation of the Qur'an? The answer is: Yes, the Qur'an proves the possibility of the knowledge of its interpretation to someone other than Allah; although this verse does not prove it.

Let us explain the second statement first. The context shows the theme of

this verse: It wants to say that the Book is divided in two types: there is a group which, because of perversity of hearts, seeks to follow the ambiguous verses; and there is another group that is firmly rooted in knowledge and therefore follows the decisive verses and believes in the ambiguous ones. It is clear, in this light, that the phrase, "those who are firmly rooted in knowledge", is used here primarily to describe their good faith and behaviour vis-a-vis the Qur'an, and to extol their virtue in contrast to those in whose hearts there is perversity. The sentence aims at nothing else. And there is no reason, so far as this verse is concerned, to join those who are firmly rooted in knowledge, with Allah, in knowledge of the Book's interpretation. The arguments put forward in this respect are defective, as we have shown above.

In short, the restriction, "none knows its interpretation except Allah", remains valid, without any opposing or qualifying clause — there is no conjunction, exception or qualification in this absolute statement. Therefore, so far as this verse is concerned, the knowledge of the Qur'an's interpretation is reserved for Allah.

Nevertheless, there may be other proofs to show that someone, other than Allah, may be knowing this interpretation. There are in the Qur'an instances in which an absolute restriction of one verse has been qualified by another. Take the example of the knowledge of the unseen. The Qur'an has declared in many verses that it is confined to Allah:

Say: "No one in the heavens and the earth knows the unseen but Allah" (27:65).

Say: "The unseen is only for Allah" (10:20).

And with Him are the keys of the unseen — none knows them but He (6:59).

And after all these restricting statements, comes the following verse:

The Knower of the unseen! so He does not reveal His secrets to any, except to him whom He chooses of an apostle" (72:26-27).

This verse clearly says that some persons other than Allah, that is, the chosen apostles, are given the knowledge of the unseen.

Now time has come to discuss the first statement: Other verses of the Qur'an prove that it is possible for someone, other than Allah, to have the knowledge of the Qur'an's interpretation:

As repeatedly explained, interpretation is a real fact existing outside imagination, and the meaning of the verse has the same relation with it as a proverb has with its purpose and purport. Interpretation is not the meaning of

the verse; rather it transpires through that meaning -- a special sort of transpiration. There is a proverb in Arabic used when someone intends to do a work but has already destroyed its means: "In summer you spoiled the milk." When it is used, its literal meaning (a woman's spoiling the milk in summer) does not fit the occasion, yet it presents a clear picture before the eyes of the audience, and that picture leads to the purpose of the talk.

The same is the case of the interpretation. There is a spiritual reality which is the main objective of ordaining a law, or basic aim of describing a Divine Attribute; there is an actual significance to which a Qur'anic story refers. That spiritual reality or actual significance is not seen in the words or the meaning of the verse -- that order, prohibition, explanation, or narration does not mention that spiritual reality or actual significance in its words. But it transpires from that order etc., because the order etc., is founded on it. We may as well say that the order or story etc., points to that spiritual reality or significance. A man tells his servant: "Give me water to drink." This order emanates from the natural instinct of man to perfect his existence. It is this basic reality that demands preservation of self; this in its turn arranges to replace what is used up in the body; this requires replenishment with food and drink; this need is announced through hunger and thirst; thirst demands satiation, which in its turn causes the man to give that order to his servant. The interpretation of the said order, therefore, is the natural instinct of man to perfect his existence. If this reality, this natural instinct, changes for any reason, the order, "Give me water", also would change.

Likewise, various societies have some recognized ethical and social norms based on what they think to be good or evil. This in its turn, depends on a set of customs and traditions that are firmly settled in the door's mind, through heredity and environment. This compound cause is the interpretation of his action and inaction. If these social factors change for any reason, his action and inaction will also change.

A subject -- whether it is an order, a story or any other topic -- that has an interpretation will certainly change if that interpretation changes. Now ponder on the words of Allah; then as for those in whose hearts there is perversity, they follow the part of it which is ambiguous, seeking to mislead, and seeking to give it (their own) interpretation, but none knows its interpretation except Allah. Note that they have been condemned because they try to give that verse their own interpretation which is not the real one; and this misinterpretation causes misguidance and makes people go astray. Had they followed its true interpretation then it could not be condemned. They would have followed

truth and reality, it would have led them to the relevant decisive verses, and it would have been a praiseworthy act.

Now it is clear that the interpretations of the Qur'an are the facts actually existing outside imagination; the Qur'anic verses -- its spiritual realities, laws and stories -- are based upon them; if supposedly any of those facts changes for any reason, the relevant verses would also surely change.

This fits perfectly the purport of the verse: (We swear) by the Book that makes manifest (the truth), surely We have made it an Arabic Qur'an so that you may understand. And surely it is in the original of the Book with Us, truly elevated, full of wisdom (43:2-4). This verse shows that the Qur'an, when it was with Allah, was too precise and firm to admit any break or fragmentation. But Allah, because of His mercy, made it into a Book to be recited, and clothed it with Arabic language, so that people may understand what they could not comprehend as long as it was in the original, or basis, of the Book. This original or basis of the Book has been mentioned in these verses:

Allah effaces what He pleases and establishes (likewise), and with Him is the basis of the Book (13:39); Nay! it is a glorious Qur'an, in a guarded tablet (85:21-22).

And in a general way the following verse also proves it:

(This is) a Book, whose verses were confirmed (or, made decisive), then they were divided, from one Wise, All-aware (11:1). The confirmation and decisiveness refers to its condition when it was with Allah without any fragmentation or break, and the division refers to that state when it was made into chapters and verses and was revealed to the Prophet.

This last condition (division), which is based on the first (confirmation), is mentioned in the verse:

And a Qur'an which We revealed in portions so that you may read it to the people by slow degrees, and We sent it down (i.e., revealed it) in portions (17:106). It is clear that the Qur'an, in its original, was undivided, then it was made into portions and sent down piecemeal and revealed gradually.

The above statement does not mean that the whole Qur'an, when it was with Allah, was arranged in chapters and verses, a sort of a book written and bound, and then it was divided into pieces and sent to the Prophet a little bit at a time, so that he might read to the people by slow degrees, as a teacher divides a book in portions and teaches the student every day a portion according to his mental capacity. There is a basic difference between revealing

the Qur'an to the Prophet in portions and Teaching a student a book, piece by piece. The verses were revealed according to the events that had a bearing on their revelation. But there is no such thing in teaching of a student. Various pieces that are to be taught to a student may be, and are, gathered and put together in a book form beforehand; then the teacher teaches a piece or a portion every day, as he thinks fit. But it cannot be said about many Qur'anic verses, such as the following: So forgive them and pass over them (5:13); fight those of the unbelievers who are near to you (9:123); Allah has surely heard the plea of her who pleads with you about her husband and complains to Allah (58:1); Take alms out of their wealth, you would cleanse them and purify them thereby (9:103); there are numerous such verses. It is not possible to ignore the reasons and occasions that resulted in their revelation; one cannot arbitrarily say that this or that verse was revealed in the earlier or later days of the Call, discarding the reasons of its revelation. Therefore, it cannot be said that the Qur'an was with Allah in chapters and verses, as we know it today.

And it shows that the "Qur'an" mentioned in the verse, "And a Qur'an which We revealed in portions", refers to a Qur'an other than this one which is made of chapters and verses.

What one understands from the above verses, is that there is something, beyond this Qur'an which is read and understood by us. And that "something" has the same relation with this Qur'an as the spirit has with the body, or as the significance of a proverb has with that proverb. It is that spirit of this Qur'an which is called by Allah as: the confirmed (or wise) Book (10:1). The Qur'anic teachings and meanings depend upon it. That spirit of the Qur'an is not made of words or words' meanings.

The above-mentioned characteristics of the spirit of the Qur'an are the same as those of the "interpretation" of the Qur'an. The above discourse makes it even clearer; and makes us realize why it is said that the interpretation of the Qur'an cannot be even touched by common minds and unclean spirits.

Then Allah says: Most surely it is an honoured Qur'an, in a Book that is hidden; none do touch it save the purified ones (56:77:79). These verses clearly say that the purified servants of Allah do touch the honoured Book which is hidden and protected from any change; minds cannot reach it, because that also would be a sort of a change. Anyhow, the purified ones do touch it -- the only meaning of the words -- "touch" in this context is that they know it and understand it. Also, it is known that this hidden Book is the same "basis of the Book" and "original of the Book" mentioned in the verses:

Allah effaces what He pleases and establishes (likewise), and with Him is the basis of the Book (13:39); and surely it is in the original of the Book with Us, truly elevated, full of wisdom (43:4).

Those are the people whose heart are purified; and this purification emanates from none other than Allah, because He has attributed this purifying to Himself:

Allah only desires to keep away the uncleanness from you, O People of the House! and to purify you a (thorough) purifying (33:33); ...but He intends to purify you (5:6). Wherever in the Qur'an, the spiritual purification is mentioned, Allah has attributed it to Himself or to His permission. What is this purity? It is removal of impurity and uncleanness from the heart. What is meant by "heart" in this context? It is the means of perception, understanding and will. The purity of heart, then, is the purity of the soul in knowledge and belief as well as in will. Thus, the heart remains firm in its true beliefs, without any doubt or confusion; and this firmness makes it steadfast in following and acting upon that true belief and knowledge, obeying the commandments of Allah, without deviating to the path of desire, without breaking the covenant of knowledge. Such a man is said to be firmly rooted in knowledge. Because the same are the characteristics, described by Allah, of those who are firmly rooted in knowledge, Allah has praised them that they are rightly guided and steadfastly firm on what they know; that there is no perversity in their hearts and they do not seek to mislead the people. These are the same characteristics as of the purified ones. It means that the purified ones are firmly rooted in knowledge.

But there is a fine distinction that should not be overlooked. What has been proved above is this: The purified ones know the interpretation of the Qur'an; and it is a concomitant of their purity that they are also firmly rooted in knowledge -- because that purification is attributed to Allah Who cannot fail in what He intends.

But it does not mean that the knowledge of the Qur'anic interpretation is given to them because of their being firmly rooted in knowledge. In other words, the firmly rooted knowledge is not the cause of their knowledge of the Qur'anic interpretation, because the verse does not prove it; rather it may be inferred from its context that they were not conversant with that interpretation:

"(they) say: 'We believe in it, it is all from our Lord'". Moreover, Allah has praised some of the people of the Book that they were firmly rooted in knowledge, and has extolled them for their acceptance of true faith and good deeds; and still it does not show that they knew the interpretation of the Book. The relevant verse is as follows: But those firmly rooted in knowledge among them as well as the believers believe in what has been sent down to you and what has been sent down before you... (4:162).

Also, it should be noted that the verse: None do touch it save the purified ones (56:79), proves only that the purified ones "touch" the hidden Book; in other words, they know the interpretation of the Qur'an to a certain extent. But it does not say that they have comprehensive knowledge of its complete interpretation, or that they are not unacquainted of any portion of its interpretation at any time. The verse is silent on this matter. If it is to be proved, some other evidence should be brought for it.

Footnote

1) al-Marfu' is a tradition in which a narrator mentions the name/s of person/s from whom he narrates, but a later narrator omits his/their names. (17.)

* The present article is extracted from Allamah's book "Al-Mizan" translated into English by Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi.

A Letter from Imam Ali (a) to His Son

Amir al-Mu'minin Imam Ali (a) wrote a letter to his son,¹ on his return from the Battle of Siffin, a year before his martyrdom. Every sentence deserves hours of pondering. It contains principles of ethics, codes for righteous action, frameworks for looking at this world and the next, and the summary of experiences gathered by a spiritual man through his divine sight. Going through it, one could surely find it a truthful speech and a strong incentive for recalling the lessons forgotten, reviving ethical social dealings and raising the standard of morality to humanity.

The Letter

From the father who is (shortly) to die, who acknowledges the hardships of the times, who has turned away from life, who has submitted himself to the (calamities of) time, who realizes the evils of the world, who is living in the abode of the dead and is due to depart from them any day.

To the son who yearns for what is not to be achieved, who is treading the path of those who have died, who is the victim of ailments, who is entangled in the (worries of the) days, who is a target of hardships, a slave of the world, a trader of its deception, a debtor of wishes, a prisoner of mortality, and ally of worries, a neighbor of griefs, a victim of distresses, who has been overpowered by desires, and who is a successor of the dead.

Now (you should know that) what I have learned from turning this world away from me, the onslaught of time over me, and the advancing of the next world towards me, is enough to prevent me from remembering anyone except myself and from thinking beyond myself.

But when I confined myself to my own worries, forgetting the worries of others, my intelligence saved me and protected me from my desires. It clarified to me my affairs and led me to seriousness which contains no trickery and truth which is not tarnished by falsehood. Here, I found you a part of myself, rather I found you my whole, so much so that if anything befell you, it was as though it befell me and if death came to you it was as though it came to me. Consequently, your affairs meant the same to me as my own.

So, I have written this advice (to you) as an instrument for seeking help

through it, whether I remain alive for you or cease to exist.

I advise you to fear Allah, O, my son, to abide by His commands, to fill your heart with remembrance of Him and to cling to hope from Him.

No connection is more reliable than the connection between you and God provided you take hold of it.

Enliven your heart with preaching, kill it with renunciation, energize it with firm belief, enlighten it with wisdom, humiliate it by recalling death.

Make it believe in mortality, make it see the misfortunates of this world, make it fear the authority of time and the severity of some changes during the nights and the days.

Place before it the events of past people, recall to it what befell those who were before you and walk among their cities and ruins, then see what they did and from what they have gone away and to where they have gone and stayed. You will find that they departed from (their) friends and remain in loneliness. Shortly, you too will be like one of them. Therefore, plan for your place of stay and do not sell your next life to this world.

Give up discussing what you do not know and speaking about what does not concern you.

Keep off the track from which you fear to go astray; because refraining (from moving) when there is fear of straying is better than embarking on dangers.

Ask others to do good; you will thus be among the good doers.

Desist others from evil with your action as well as your speech and keep off, to the best of your ability, from he who commits it.

Struggle for God as is His due; and the reviling of a reviler should not deter you in matters of God.

Leap into dangers for the sake of right wherever it be.

Acquire insight into religious law.

Habituate yourself to endure hardships; since the best trait of character is endurance in matters of right.

In all your affairs resign yourself to God, because you will thus be resigning yourself to a secure shelter and a strong protector.

You should ask only from your Lord; because in His hand is all the giving and depriving. Seek good (from God) as much as you can.

Understand my advice and do not turn away from it, because the best saying is that which benefits.

Know that there is no good in that knowledge which does not benefit, and if knowledge is not made use of; then its acquisition is not justified.

O, my son, when I noticed that I was of goodly age and noticed that I was increasing in weakness, I hastened with my will for you and wrote down salient points of it lest death overtook me before I divulged to you what I have in my heart, or lest my wit be affected as my body has been affected, or the forces of passions or the mischief of the world overtake you making you like a stubborn camel.

Certainly, the heart of a young man is like uncultivated land. It accepts whatever is strawn on it. So, I hastened to mould you properly before your heart hardened and your mind became occupied, so that you might be ready to accept, through your intelligence, the results of the experience of others and be saved from going through these experiences yourself. In this way, you would avoid the hardship of seeking them and the difficulties of experimenting. Thus, you are getting to know what we had experienced and even those things are becoming clear to you which we might have missed.

O, my son, even though I have not reached the age which those before me have, yet I looked into their behavior and thought over events of their lives. I walked among their ruins until I was as one of them. In fact, by virtue of those of their affairs that have become known to me, it is as though I have lived with them from the first to the last. I have therefore been able to discern the impure from the clean and the benefit from the harm.

I have selected for you the choicest of those matters and collected for you their good points and have kept away from you their useless points.

Since I feel for your affairs as a living father should feel and I aim at giving you training, I thought it should be at a time when you are advancing in age and new on the stage of the world, possessing upright intention and clean heart and that I should begin with the teachings of the Book of Allah, to Whom belongs Might and Majesty, and its interpretation, the laws of Islam and its commands, its lawful matters and unlawful matters and that I should not go beyond these for you.

Then I feared lest you should get confused as other people were confused on account of their passions and (different) views. Therefore, in spite of my dislike for you being so warned, I thought it better for me to make this position strong rather than leave you in a position where I do not regard you safe from falling into destruction.

I hope that Allah will help you in your straightforwardness and guide you in your resoluteness. Consequently, I wrote this piece of my will for you.

Know, O, my son, that what I love most for you to adopt from my will is to fear Allah, to confine yourself to what God has made obligatory on you,

and to follow the actions of your forefathers and the virtuous people of your household, because they did not fall short in seeing from themselves what you will see for yourself, and they did about their affairs as you would like to think (about your affairs). Thereafter, their thinking led them to discharge the obligations they came to know of and to desist from what they were not required to do. If your heart does not accept this without acquiring knowledge as they acquired it, then your search should first be by way of understanding and learning and not by falling into doubts or getting entangled in quarrels.

And before you probe into this, you should begin by seeking God's help and turning to Him for competence and keeping aloof from everything that throws you into doubt or flings you toward misguidance.

When you have made sure that your heart is clean and humble and your thoughts have come together and you have only one thought which is about this matter, then you will see what I have explained to you. But if you have not been able to achieve that peace of observation and thinking which you should like to have, then know that you are only stamping the ground like a blind she-camel and falling into darkness while a seeker of religion should not grope in the dark or create confusion. It is better to avoid this.

Appreciate my advice, O, my son, and know that He Who is the Master of death is also the Master of life. That the Creator causes death as well. That He Who destroys is also the restorer of life, and that He Who inflicts disease is also the cured. This world continues in the way God has made it with regard to its pleasures, trials, rewards on the Day of Judgment and all that He wishes and you do not know.

If anything of this advice is not understood by you, then attribute it to your ignorance of it, because when you were first born you were born ignorant. Thereafter you acquired knowledge.

There are many matters of which you are ignorant and in which your sight first wonders and your eyes wander, then after this you see them.

Therefore, cling to Him Who created you, fed you and put you in order.

Your worship should be for Him, your eagerness should be towards Him and your fear should be of Him.

Know, O, my son, that no one received message from God, the Glorified, as the Prophet (s) did. Therefore, regard him as your forerunner and leader toward deliverance. Certainly, I shall spare no effort in giving you advice and surely even if you try, you cannot acquire that insight for your welfare as I have for you.

There is only one God as He has described Himself.

No one can dispute with Him in His authority. He is from ever and will be for ever. He is before all things without any beginning. He will remain after all things without any end. He is far too great to have His divinity proved by the encompassing heart or eye.

O, my son, I have informed you about the world, its condition, its decay and its passing away and I have informed you of the next world and of what has been provided in it for its people. I have recounted to you parables about it so that you may draw instruction from them and act upon them.

The example of those who have understood the world is like those travellers who, being disgusted with drought-stricken places set off for greenery and a fruitful place. Then they endure difficulties on the way, separation from friends, hardships of the journey and unwholesome food in order to reach their fields of plenty and place of stay. Consequently, they do not feel any pain in all this and do not regard any expenditure to be waste. Nothing is more lovable to them than what takes them near their goal and carries them closer to their place of stay.

(Against this), is the example of those who are deceived by this world like the people who were in a green place but they became disgusted with it and went to a drought-stricken place. Therefore, for them nothing is more detestable or abominable than to leave the place where they were to go, to a place which they will reach unexpectedly and for which they are heading.

O, my son, make yourself the measure (for dealings) between you and others.

Thus, you should desire for others what you desire for yourself and hate for others what you hate for yourself.

Do not oppress as you do not like to be oppressed.

Do good to others as you would like good to be done to you.

Regard bad for yourself whatever you regard bad for others.

Accept that (treatment) from others which you would like others to accept from you.

Do not talk about what you do not know even though what you know be very little.

Do not say to others what you do not like to be said to you.

Know that self-admiration is contrary to propriety (of action) and is a calamity for the mind. Therefore, increase your striving and do not become a treasurer for (wealth to be inherited by) others.

When you have been guided on the right path humble yourself before God as much as you can,

Know that in front of you lies a road of long distance and severe hardship and that you cannot avoid seeking it. Take your requirements of provision keeping the burden light. Do not load your back beyond your power lest its weight become a mischief for you. Whenever you come across a needy person who can carry for you your provision to hand it back to you on the Day of Judgment when you will need it, then accept him as a good opportunity and get him to carry it. Put in that provision as much as you are able to, for it is likely that if you may need him (afterwards), you may not get hold of him. If a person is willing to borrow from you in the days of your affluence to pay it back to you at the time of your need then make use of this opportunity.

Know that in front of you lies an impassable valley wherein the light-burdened man will be in a better condition than the heavy-burdened one, and the slow-paced will be in a worse condition than the swift-paced. Your terminating point at the other end of this passage will necessarily be either Paradise or Hell. Therefore, reconnoitre for yourself before alighting, and prepare the place before getting down, because after death there can be no preparation nor return to this world.

Know that He Who owns the treasures of the heavens and the earth has permitted you to pray to Him and has promised you acceptance of the prayer.

He has commanded you to beg from Him in order that He may give you and to seek His mercy in order that He may have mercy on you.

He has not placed anything between you and Him that may veil Him from you.

He has not required you to get a mediator for you to Him, and if you err, He has not prevented you from repentance.

He does not hasten with punishment.

He does not taunt you for repenting, nor does He humiliate you when humiliation is more appropriate for you.

He has not been harsh in accepting repentance.

He does not severely question you about your sins. He does not disappoint you of His mercy. Rather, He regards abstention from sin as a virtue. He counts your one sin as one while He counts your one virtue as ten.

He has opened for you the door of repentance. Therefore, whenever you call Him He hears your call, and whenever you whisper to Him He knows the whisper. You place before Him your needs, unveil yourself before Him, complain to Him of your worries, beseech Him to remove your troubles, seek His help in your affairs and ask from the treasures of His mercy that which no one else has power to give, namely length of life, health of body and

increase in sustenance. He has placed the keys of His treasures in your hands in the sense that He has shown you the way to ask Him.

Therefore, wherever you wish, open the doors of His favor with prayer, and let the abundant rains of His mercy fall on you. Delay in acceptance of the prayer should not disappoint you because the granting of prayer is according to the measure of (your) intention. Sometimes acceptance (of prayer) is delayed with a view to its being a source of greater reward to the asker and of better gifts to the expectant. Sometimes you ask for a thing but it is not given to you, and a better thing is given to you later, or a thing is taken away from you for some greater good of yours, because sometimes you ask for a thing which contains ruin for your religion if it is given to you. Therefore, your request should be for things whose beauty should be lasting and whose burden should remain away from you. As for wealth, it will not last for you, nor will you live for it.

O, my son, know that you have been created for the next world, not for this world, for destruction (in this world) not for lasting, and for dying not for living.

You are in a place which does not belong to you, a house for making preparations and a passage towards the next world. You are being chased by death from which the runner cannot escape, as it would surely overtake him. So, be on guard against it lest it overtakes you at a time when you are in a sinful state and you are thinking of repenting but it creates obstructions between you and repentance. In such a case you will run yourself.

O, my son, remember death very much and the place where you have to go suddenly after death, so that when it comes, you are already on your guard against it and have prepared yourself for it and it does not come to you all of a sudden and surprise you.

Beware, lest you become deceived by the leanings of the people towards worldly attraction and their rushing upon it. God has warned you about it and the world has informed you of its mortal character and unveiled to you its evils.

Surely, those (who go) after it are like barking dogs or devouring carnivore who hate each other. The stronger among them eat away the weaker and the big among them trample the small. Some are like tied cattle and some like untied cattle who have lost their wits and are running in unknown directions. They are flocks of calamities wandering in rugged valleys. There is no herdsman to detain them nor any tenderer to take them to grazing. The world has put them on the track of blindness and taken away their eyes from the

beacons of guidance. They have therefore been perplexed in its bewilderings and sunk in its pleasures. They took it as a god so it played with them. They too played with it and forgot what is beyond it.

Darkness is disappearing gradually. Now it is as though travellers have got down and the hasteners will soon meet. Know, O, my son, that everyone who is riding in the carriage of night and day is being carried even though he may be stationary, and he is covering the distance even though he is staying and resting.

Know with certainty that you cannot achieve your desire and cannot exceed your destined life. You are on the track of those before you. Therefore, be humble in seeking and moderate in earning because often seeking leads to deprivation. Every seeker of livelihood does not get it, nor is everyone who is moderate in seeking deprived.

Keep yourself away from every low thing even though they may take you to your desired aims, because you will not get any return for your own respect which you spend.

Do not be the slave of others, for God has made you free.

There is no good in good which is achieved through evil and no good in comfort that is achieved through (disgracing) hardship.

Beware lest hearers of greed should carry you and make you descend to the springs of distraction. If you can manage that there be no wealthy person between yourself and God, do so, because in any case you will find what is for you and get your share. A little received directly from God, the Glorified, is more dignified than that which is more but is received through (the obligation of) His creatures, although (really) all is from God.

It is easier to rectify what you miss by silence than to secure what you lose by speaking. Whatever is in a pot can be retained by closing the lid.

I should prefer you to retain what is in your hands rather than to seek what is in other's hands. Bitterness of disappointment is better than seeking from people. Manual labor with chastity is better than the riches of a vicious life.

A man is the best guard of his own secrets. Often a man strives for what harms him. He who speaks much speaks nonsense. Whoever ponders perceives.

Associate with people of virtue; you will become one of them. Keep aloof from people of vice; you will remain safe from them.

The worst food is that which is unlawful. Oppressing the weak is the worst oppression.

Where leniency is unsuitable, harshness is lenience.

Often cure is illness and illness is cure.

Often the ill-wisher gives correct advice while the well-wisher cheats.

Do not depend upon hopes because hopes are the mainstay of fools.

It is wise to preserve one's experience.

Your best experience is that which teaches you a lesson.

Make use of leisure before it changes into (the hour of) grief.

Every seeker does not achieve (what he seeks); and every departer does not return.

to lose provision and to earn evil for the Day of Judgment means ruin.

Every matter has a destination and what is destined for you will shortly come to you.

A trader undertakes a risk, and often a small quantity is more beneficial than a large quantity.

there is no good in an ignoble helper, nor in a suspicious friend.

Be compliant with the world as long as it is in your grip. do not put yourself to risk as regards anything in expectation for more than that.

Beware lest the feeling of enmity should overpower you.

Bear yourself towards your brother in such a way that if he disregards kinship you keep to it; when he turns away be kind to him and draw near to him; when he withholds spend for him; when he goes away approach him; when he is harsh be lenient, when he commits wrong think of (his) excuse for it, so much so as though you are a slave of his and he is the benevolent master over you.

But take care that this should not be done inappropriately, and that you should not behave so with an undeserving person.

Do not take the enemy of your friend as a friend because you will thus antagonize your friend. Give true advice to your brother, be it good or bitter.

Swallow your anger because I did not find a sweeter thing than it in the end, and nothing more pleasant in consequence.

Be lenient to him who is harsh to you for it is likely that he will shortly become lenient to you.

Treat your enemy with favors, because this is sweeter of the two successes (the success of revenge and the success of doing a favor).

If you intend to cut yourself off from a friend leave some scope for him from your side by which he may resume friendship if it so occurs to him some day. If anyone has a good idea about you prove it to be true.

do not disregard the interests of your brother depending upon your terms with him, for he is not your brother if you disregard his interests.

Your household should not become the most miserable people through you.
Do not lean towards him who turns away from you.

Your brother should not be more firm in his disregard of kinship than you in paying regard to it, and you should exceed in doing good to him than his evil to you.

Do not feel too much the oppression of a person who oppresses you, because he is only busy in harming himself and benefiting you.

The reward of him who pleases you is not that you displease him.

Know, O, my son, that livelihood is of two kinds—a livelihood that you seek and a livelihood that seeks you—which is such that if you do not reach it, it will come to you.

How bad it is to bend down at the time of need and to be harsh in riches. You should have from this world only that with which you can adorn your permanent abode.

If you cry over what has gone out of your hands then also cry for what has not at all come to you.

Infer about what has not yet happened from what has already happened, because occurrence are ever similar.

Do not be like those whom preaching does not benefit unless you inflict pain on them, because the wise take instruction from teaching while beasts learn only from beating.

Ward off from yourself the onslaught of worries by firmness of endurance and purity of belief.

He who gives up moderation commits excess.

A companion is like a relative.

A friend is he whose absence also proved the friendship.

Passion is a partner of distress.

Often the near ones are more remote than the distant ones.

A stranger is he who has no friend.

He who transgresses right narrows his own passage.

He who stays in his position remains constant upon it.

The most trustworthy intermediary is that which you adopt between yourself and God, the Glorified.

He who does not care for your interests is your enemy.

When greed leads to ruin deprivation is an achievement.

Not every defect can be reviewed, and not every opportunity recurs.

Often a person with eyes misses the track while a blind person finds the correct path.

Delay an evil because you will be able to hasten it whenever you desire.

The disregard of kinship of the ignorant is equal to the regard for kinship of the wise.

Whoever takes the world to be safe, it will betray him. Whoever regards the world as great, it will humiliate him.

Every one who shoots does not hit the mark.

When authority changes the time changes too.

Consult the friend before adopting a course and the neighbor before taking a house.

Beware, lest you mention in your speech what may rouse laughter even though you may be relating it from others.

For everyone among your servants fix a work for which you may hold him responsible. In this way, they will not fling the work one over the other.

Respect your kinsmen because they are your wings with which you fly, the origin towards which you return and your hands with which you attack.

Place your religion and your world at God's disposal and beg Him to ordain the best for you in respect of the near and the far, this world and the next; and that ends the matter.

Endnotes

1. The son, Allamah al-Sayyid al-Radi believes to be Imam al-Hasan (a), while Ibn Maythum al-Baharini has quoted Abu Ja'far for Babwaih al-Qummi to have stated that Amir al-Mu'minin wrote this commandment to his son, Muhammad ibn al-Hanafsiyyah.

Mutah (Fixed-term Marriage) in Shia

Mutah (Fixed-term Marriage) in Shia: An Appraisal

By: Murtada Mutahhari

One of the brilliant laws of Islam, according to the Shi'ite School, is that marriage may take place in two ways: permanently or for a fixed period, i.e., temporarily.

Permanent and temporary marriages are alike in some of their arrangements and different in certain others. One of the features that distinguishes the two from each other, in the first instance, is that in temporary marriage a woman and a man take a decision that they will undertake a marriage for a fixed period, and at the end of that period, if they are inclined to extend the period, they may extend it, and if they do not wish to do so, they may separate from each other.

Another feature is that they have more freedom in the settling of terms and conditions in fixed-term marriage. For example, in a permanent marriage a man is responsible, whether he likes it or not, for daily expenses, clothing, lodging and other necessities of life, such as medicine and medical treatment, but in a fixed-term marriage, the couple join by a free contract agreed upon by them. It is possible that the man may not wish, or cannot afford, to bear these expenses, or the woman does not wish to use the money of the man.

In a permanent marriage the wife, whether she likes it or not, must accept the man as the head of the household and obey him in the interest of the family, but in a fixed-term marriage everything depends upon the terms of the agreement they conclude between themselves.

In permanent marriage, the wife and the husband, whether they like it or not, will have mutual rights of inheritance from each other, while in a fixed-term marriage this is not so. Thus, the real and essential difference between the fixed-term and the permanent marriage, is that the former as far as the limits and conditions are concerned is free, that is, it depends upon choice and the contract between the two parties. The fact of the marriage being temporary gives to both parties a sort of liberty.

In the case of permanent marriage, neither of the two parties (without the consent of the other party), has the right to exercise restraint in having children or to practise birth-control, but in fixed-term marriage, the consent of the

other party is not necessary. In fact, this is another sort of freedom that has been given to the couple.

The children born to the couple who have temporarily married are in no way different from the issue of a permanent marriage.

Mahr (dower) is also a prerequisite in a permanent marriage as well as in a fixed-term marriage, with the difference that in a fixed-term marriage non-specification of the amount of the *mahr* nullifies the marriage, whereas in a permanent marriage the marriage itself is not nullified and an unspecified *mahr* can be arranged.

In permanent marriage, the mother and the daughter of the wife, and the father and the son of the husband are forbidden (for marriage) and are *mahrām*; it is similarly the case with the above relations in temporary (fixed-term) marriage. Besides, just as proposing marriage to a permanently married woman is prohibited, so is it in the case of a fixed-term married woman; just as adultery with a permanently married woman makes her prohibited to the adulterer for ever, so also does it in the case of a temporarily married woman; just as a permanent wife has to observe a period of *iddah* (during which she may not marry) after divorce, so a temporary wife also has to observe a period of *iddah* after the termination of the agreed period of the marriage or its dissolution. The period of *iddah* for a permanently married woman after divorce is (the time of) three periods of menstruation, while for a temporarily married woman it is (the time of) two periods of menstruation or 45 days. In the case of a permanent marriage, a man cannot marry wife's sister while she is alive. In the case of a fixed-term marriage, also, two sisters cannot be married to the same person at one time.

These are some of the relevant principles of temporary or terminable marriage as mentioned in Shi'ite jurisprudence, and our civil law has observed them.

We, of course, uphold this law which has the above distinctive features. If some people have, in the name of this law, misused it and are still misusing it, the law itself is not at fault. If this law were nullified, the objectionable practices would not stop; only the form may change. Besides, there would be hundreds of evils that would result from the annulment of this law. We must not attack the spirit of the law, when we should be reforming and awakening man, simply because of man's lack of capability and fitness for reform, and then exonerate man and hold the law responsible.

Now, let us examine what necessity there is for a law regarding fixed-term marriage, when there is already a law of permanent marriage. Is a fixed-term

marriage, incompatible with the dignity of a woman as a human being and against the spirit of the Charter of Human Rights? Is not temporary marriage, if it ever was a necessity at all, a necessity of a bygone era? And is it not true that the contemporary life-style, the conditions and demands of present day life, argue against it?

We shall examine this point under two headings:

- a) Contemporary life and fixed-term marriage.
- b) The defects and evils of fixed-term marriage.

Contemporary Life and Fixed-term Marriage

As we already know, permanent marriage creates a great deal of responsibilities and duties for the couple. This is why a boy and a girl in their early youth, when they enter the period in which natural puberty brings them under the pressures of the instincts, are not ready for a permanent marriage. The characteristic feature of our modern age is the lengthening of the span of time between natural puberty and social maturity, when one becomes capable of establishing a family. If, in the simple old days, a boy at the beginning of his natural puberty could take up a vocation in which he could stay till the end of his life, this is no longer possible. A student who successfully passes through his education in primary school, secondary school and university without interruption, and gets his school certificate and passes the university entrance examination, will graduate at the age of 25. Surely, it will then take 3 to 4 years to arrange things to get married permanently. The same applies in the case of an educated girl who has to pass through all the stages of study.

Modern Youth, the Time of Puberty, and the Onset of Sexual Activity

If you ask a boy-student of 18 years of age whose sexual ardour is naturally at its height, to get married permanently, people would laugh at you. The same is the case with a girl-student of 16 years. It is not practically possible for this category of people to burden themselves at such an early age with the responsibilities of permanent marriage and commit themselves to a life with many duties and obligations towards each other and also towards the children which they will have.

Monasticism For a Fixed Period, Sexual Communism, or Fixed-Term Marriage?

Under the circumstances, with these natural instincts, how should we

behave? Is nature prepared to delay the advent of puberty till we complete our education and bring our sexual instinct to a standstill at 16 or 17 years of age?

Are the young ready to undergo a period of temporary asceticism and put themselves under the strain of rigid austerity till such time as there may arise an occasion for permanent marriage? Suppose a young person is prepared to undergo temporary asceticism, will nature be ready to forego the formation of the dreadful and dangerous psychological penalties which are found in the wake of abstention from instinctive sexual activity and which psychiatrists are now discovering?

There remain two alternatives only. We may leave the young to themselves and ignore what they do. Or, we may allow a boy to have unlawful sexual relations with tens of girls, and allow a girl to have unlawful sexual relations with tens of boys and have so many abortions.

Can such young men and women, who have had unlimited sexual relations during their student life, turn out to be true men of life and women of the family when they become permanently married?

The other course is fixed-term marriage. Fixed-term marriage puts the limit on a woman that she must not be the wife of two men at the same time. Evidently such a restriction upon the woman itself necessitates a restriction upon the man. When every woman has exclusive attachment to a particular man, every man will necessarily be attached to a particular woman, unless the number on one side is more than the other. With this arrangement a young man and woman may live through the time of their education without falling back upon temporary asceticism and enduring its penalties, and without falling into the abyss of sexual communism.

Experimental Marriage

The occasion for such a marriage is not confined to the period of study. It may arise in other circumstances too. In principle it is possible that a man and a woman who want to marry permanently, but have not had the opportunity to get to know each other well enough, may marry temporarily for a specified period as an experiment. If they are fully confident and satisfied with each other, they may give permanence to this marriage, otherwise, they can separate.

Why do the Europeans think it necessary and unavoidable to maintain a number of prostitutes in a specified area in every town under the control and observation of the state? Is there any other reason except to make sure that the number of bachelors who cannot afford to marry permanently do not

become a great danger for families.

Russell's Views on Fixed-term Marriage

Bertrand Russell, the well-known British philosopher in his book *Marriage and Morals* writes;

"So long as the virtue of respectable women is regarded as a matter of great importance, the institution of marriage has to be supplemented by another institution which may really be regarded as a part of it – I mean the institution of prostitution. Everybody is familiar with the famous passage in which Lecky speaks of prostitutes as safeguards of the sanctity of the home and of the innocence of our wives and daughters. The sentiment is Victorian, and the manner of expression is old-fashioned, but the fact is undeniable. Moralists have denounced Lecky because his remark made them feel furious and they did not quite know why, but they have not succeeded in showing that what he said was untrue. The moralist asserts, of course, quite truly that if men followed his teaching there would be no prostitution, but he knows quite well that they will not follow it, so that the consideration of what would happen if they did, is quite irrelevant.

This is a Western formula for finding a remedy against the danger to men and women who cannot afford to marry permanently, and previously we saw the formula which Islam has put forward. If this Western formula is accepted and put into practice and a group of unlucky women are specifically allocated for fulfilment of this "social duty", will woman then rise to her real position and be given human respect?

Bertrand Russell has written a full chapter on the subject of experimental marriage in his book, *Marriage and Morals*. He writes;

"Judge Ben B. Lindsey, who was for many years in charge of the juvenile court at Denver, and in that position had unrivalled opportunities for ascertaining the facts, proposed a new institution which he calls 'companionate marriage'. Unfortunately he has lost his official position, for when it became known that he used it rather to promote the happiness of the young than to give them a consciousness of sin, the Klu Klux Klan and the Catholics combined to oust him.

Companionate marriage is the proposal of a wise conservative. It is an attempt to introduce some stability into the sexual relations of the young, in place of the present promiscuity. He points out the obvious fact that what prevents the young from marrying is lack of money, and that money is required in marriage partly on account of children, but partly also because it is not the thing for the wife to earn her own living. His view is that young people should be able to enter upon a new kind of marriage, distinguished from ordinary marriage by three characteristics:

First, there should be for the time-being no intention of having children, and then accordingly the best available birth-control information should be given to the young couples.

Secondly, so long as there are no children and the wife is not pregnant, divorce should be possible by mutual consent. And third, in the event of divorce, the wife should not be entitled to alimony. He holds, and I think rightly, that if such an institution were established by law, a very great many young people, for example students at university, would enter upon comparatively permanent partnerships, involving a common life, and free from the Dionysian characteristics of their present sex relations.

He brings evidence to bear that young students who are married, do better work than those who are unmarried. It is indeed obvious that work and sex are more easily combined in a quasi-permanent relation than in the scruple and excitement of parties and alcoholic stimulation. There is no reason under the sun why it should be more expensive for two young people to live together than to live separately, and therefore for economic reasons which at present lead to postponement of marriage would no longer operate. I have not the faintest doubt that Judge Lindsey's plan, if embodied in the law, would have a very beneficial influence, and that this influence would be such as all might agree to be a gain from the moral point of view." (See Companionate Marriage, pp. 167-199)

What Judge Lindsey and Russell call "Companionate Marriage" though slightly different from temporary Islamic marriage, clearly shows that thinkers

like them have gone to the root of the problem and realized that the usual permanent marriage is not by itself sufficient to meet the requirements of modern social life.

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An Islamic Approach To the Age Of Maturity Among Girls

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Maturity has a special place in Islamic jurisprudence, because the Islamic laws are applicable only to the mature Muslims and the underage have to be treated differently from the adults from the Islamic point of view. In fact, the prescriptive and descriptive canonical laws are applicable only to the adults. For instance, the rituals (including Hajj, fasting, alms, etc.), the transactions including (marriage, administering the marriage contract, leasing, setting up firms, etc.), and the legal issues (including bearing a witness, ruling a judgement, enforcing penal codes, etc.), are binding on the adults only.

Maturity relates to physiological and spiritual changes which take place in one's growth and which entrusts the individual with certain responsibilities.

The present article is an attempt to elaborate the girls' maturity as envisaged by *shari'a*. The following aspects of the girls maturity will be taken up in this article:

- 1- Maturity from the viewpoint of the psychologists and *Faqih*s.
2. Extrinsic aspects of maturity.
3. Impact of climate on maturity.
4. Age of maturity in civil laws.
5. Maturity from religious point of view and its indicators.
6. Obligatory canonical indicators.

What is Maturity?

Every individual in a certain stage of life faces particular changes in his/her physique, feelings and thinking which is called maturity.

In almost all societies, this stage is a turning point in individual's life as she/he becomes eligible to shoulder certain responsibilities in the society. The psychologists, jurists and *Faqih*s have studied this stage from their concerned aspects.

The psychologists are mainly concerned with the origin of these changes, whereas, the jurists consider the implications of maturity.

According to psychologists, *"The period of the development and emergence of sexual instinct (puberty) in child, is the beginning of maturity. This period is a source of a considerable change in the individual's self,*

Maturity is accompanied with transformation in feeling, behaviour, and world view of a person towards himself and others."¹

In *Jawahir al-Kalam*, maturity has been defined as

*"The natural perfection. Human generation is sustained with maturity and his wisdom attains a certain stage of perfection at this stage. It is a period of transition from childhood to perfection, manhood or womanhood. If nocturnal emission occurs at its appropriate time, it is a sign of maturity. Indeed, maturity is a natural phenomenon and it does not need religious decree to indicate it."*²

Maturity has also been defined as follows:

*"Maturity is the beginning of preparedness for sexual activities. At this stage the genital organs develop enough to be able to function properly (age of puberty). This is called adolescence age. It appears among the girls between the age of twelve to fourteen. At this stage, the girls menstruate (period, menstruation) and their bosoms grow up. Among boys, maturity is accompanied with the emission of semen, change of voice, and growth of beard, it usually occurs between the age of twelve to sixteen."*³

Dominant Extrinsic Signs of Maturity

Psychologists argue that maturity is accompanied with certain covert and overt changes:

*"The most important psychological changes in adolescent's may be divided into primary and secondary changes. The primary changes include the development of genital organs and the ability to reproduce. The secondary changes in boys include growth of beard and moustache on their face and change in their voice. In girls, these changes include development of bosoms and expansion of pelvis. After menstruation begins in girls and erection in boys, the reproduction power develops in them."*⁴

The beginning of menstruation opens a new chapter in girls' life. The normal age of girls' puberty is between 9 to 18 years.⁵ Among boys it is between the age of 11 to 18.⁶

According to K. Shartle Worth, menstruation among girls begin between 9 to 17 years of age and its average age is 13. If menstruation begins before

9 or after 18, it is due to abnormal functioning of concerned glands. Among three-fourth of the girls, it begins at 12, 13 or 14.

Factors Influencing Maturity

Climate and nutrition as well as culture have the greatest impact on maturity among boys and girls.

According to an expert, "race, nutrition as well as physical and psychological factors influence the time of the development of signs of maturity and the secretion of the glands. For instance, vitamin E is one of the nutritional factors influencing the time of maturity. Geographical factors like climate also influence the time of maturity. For example, in countries located near the equator, the girls mature earlier than those living in cold areas. In Ethiopia, the physical signs of maturity appear in girls between the age of nine to ten, whereas in the northern spot of Europe, they appear at the age of 18.

TABLE I
Age of Menstruation in Different Countries

Continent	Country	Year of investigation	Average age of first menstruation
Asia	Hong Kong	1962	Rich family 12.5
			Middle Class Family 12.5
			Poor Family 13.3
	Sri Lanka	1950	12.8
	India	1965	12.8
Africa	Nigeria	1960	14.1
	South Africa	1938	15.00
Europe	Norway	1952	13.4
	Sweden	1951	13.9
	Denmark	1950	13.8
	Netherlands	1956	13.7
	Switzerland	1956	13.5
	England	1959	13.1
	Hungary	1959	12.8
	Former Soviet Union	1965	13.0
	Italy	1960	12.5
America	Cuba	1963	12.3 (Blacks)
			12.1 (Whites)
	United States	1955	12.6

Moreover, the cultural and social milieu including the sexual behaviour of individuals and groups in the society also have a determining impact on the time of maturity of girls and boys.

The age of maturity differs in different regions, races and families. For instance, the age of maturity among the Indian girls is higher than that of the British or American girls. Even the age of maturity, according to a study, changes. In Europe, for instance, the age of maturity among the girls comes down by four months every ten years. In Iran also girls' menstruation begins at a lower age compared to two generations ago.⁷

Some experts believe that the impact of nutrition, health and social conditions on maturity is more than that of the climate. According to these experts the moderate climate accelerates maturity compared to that of cold climate.

The normal age of the first menstruation among the girls is 10 to 16. Certain chemicals may also accelerate the time of maturity.⁸

Age of Maturity in Civil Laws

The law-makers consider different ages for different persons in assigning social rights to them. People are eligible to enjoy different rights in different stages of life. The civil laws divide the people into the following five groups on the basis of applicability of law to them:

1. Eligibility for civil rights: ownership, transactions.
2. Eligibility for family rights: marriage, divorce.
3. Criminal and penal codes: imprisonment and other punishments.
4. Political rights: voting, nomination, etc.
5. Social issues: military service, passports and driving licence.

Civil Rights

In Egypt a 21-year old man or woman is eligible to enjoy civil rights provided he/she is not interdicted.⁹

Article 1207 of the civil law of Iran, states: "Following persons are interdicted and cannot own their property: the minor, the immature, and the insane. According to Articles 1209 and 1210, the age of maturity for exercising civil rights is 18 years for men and women.

Political Rights

According to the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, minimum required age for exercising the right to vote is 15 years.

In Egypt, according to the law (1971), the citizens can exercise their political rights at the age of 18.

Social Rights

According to the labour law of the Islamic Republic of Iran (Article 79), employing people below the age of 15 years is forbidden.¹⁰ Individuals above the age of 18 years can apply for government services, passport, driving licence and military service.¹¹

Maturity in *Sharia*

There is no clear definition of maturity in the *Quran* or *Sunnah*, rather, there is explanation of the signs of maturity such as: Menstruation, wet-dream, etc. Besides, there are natural signs of maturity, we come across the age of maturity also.

Natural Signs of Maturity

Wet-dream is one of the signs of maturity in boys. There are several traditions in this regard. For instance, Ammar Sabati says:

"I asked Imam Jafar Sadiq (a) as to when was it obligatory for the boys to say prayer?"

He replied:

"When they complete their 13 years of age. If before this age, they develop the semen emission power, prayer becomes obligatory for them. The same case is applicable to the girls. If she completes her 13 years of age or menstruates, prayer and other religious rites become obligatory for her."

Since almost all *Faqih*s are unanimous in this regard, it is not necessary to quote more *hadith* here.

Khadem has quoted from Imam Jafar Sadiq (a) as saying:

"An orphan can own his property as soon as he develops the semen emission power."

Khadem asked the Imam that sometimes boys do not reach puberty up to the age of 18 years. Imam replied that if he is mature and he is considered to be a responsible person and pubes have grown up around his hypogastric organ, he can own his property unless he is insane or helpless.

Maturity Among Girls in the *Sharia*

The main question regarding the maturity of the girls in the *sharia* is

whether the age of maturity is determined on the basis of canonical injunctions or other factors are taken into account while the girls' maturity age is determined by the *sharia*. Another question which is a corollary of the first one is: at which age a girl is considered mature in the *sharia*?

Majority of Shi'i *Faqihs* have implicitly indicated that the girls' maturity age as mentioned in traditions, is fixed on the basis of canonical indicators or conventions. Some of the *Faqihs* even explicitly have referred to this issue. Muhammad Hussain Kashif al-Ghita writes: "Maturity has certain signs and indicators some of which are natural and some canonical.... However, on the basis of canonical indicators, the boys' maturity age is 15 while among the girls it is 9 years."¹²

Almost all the *Faqihs* unanimously agree that the girls' maturity age, on the basis of canonical indicators is 9-year of age. Shaykh Tusi claims that all the *Faqihs* are unanimous on this issue, whereas, Ibn Idris Hilli writes:

*"In accordance with the sharia, the maturity age (among the girls) is apparently 9 years."*¹³

Ibn Zohreh also opines that the *Faqihs* unanimously believe that the age of maturity among girls is 9 years.¹⁴ Also, Muhaqiq Ardebili referring to Allamah Hilli, has made the same remark.¹⁵

Apparently, this issue has been so clear for them that without assessing and analyzing the letter and spirit of religious texts and the reasons, they have issued decrees on the issue.

Sayyed Ahmad Khunsari writes:

*"There are numerous traditions indicating that the maturity age of the girls is 9 years of age. Hence, this age is acceptable to all."*¹⁶

However, there are traditional and contemporary *Faqihs* who do not agree with this view.

Shaykh Tusi, in the third chapter of his book *Mabsut*, says that the age of the girls' maturity is 10 years, whereas, in other books, *i.e.*, *Hajr* and *Khilaf*, he says that 9 years is the girls' maturity age.¹⁷

Among the contemporary *Faqihs*, Fayz Kashani has rejected 9 years as the girls' maturity age. On the differences we face in traditions on the issue, he says: "A comprehensive study of all traditions on girls' maturity age, will reveal that the maturity age differs for different duties and responsibilities. For instance, traditions on fasting indicate that it is not necessary for the girls to fast before the age of 13 unless they menstruate before this age. So far as canonical punishments are concerned, the girls can be punished for violating rules at the age of 9. In case of writing the will and testament, girls can write

it at the age of 10.¹⁸

There are other contemporary *Faqih*s who appose the age of 9-year for girls' maturity.

Ayatullah Shaykh Yusuf Sane'i in a commentary on Imam Khomeini's *Tahrir al-Wasilah*, writes:

"The Faqih almost unanimously believe that the age of 9-year is girls' maturity age. However, it is not irrational to accept 13-year as the girls' maturity age."

According to Ayatullah Muhammad Hadi Ma'arufi: The age of maturity differs among the girls and boys, likewise, it differs regarding different affairs and responsibilities in the society as well as with regards to personal affairs: rituals, transactions, religious penal codes, etc. So far as the age of maturity for embracing Islam is concerned, it depends on the understanding and wisdom of the individual (not on his/her age). Even if a child grows mentally in lower age to the extent that she/he can testify the Unity of God (there is no god But God) and the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad (I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of God), she/he is considered mature and can follow Islam independent of her/his parents.

With regards to other issues like purchasing, leasing, mortgaging, writing will and testament and divorce, the age of 10-year is the maturity age provided the girl has enough mental maturity.

So far as the commercial affairs are concerned, the age of 15-year is maturity age among the boys. Also, nocturnal seminal emission is another indicator of maturity among the boys. Among the girls, womanhood signs are indicators of maturity which include physical growth, even though they have not completed 10-year of age. So far as the religious obligations and rituals are concerned (prayer, fasting, going on pilgrimage to Hajj), the age of maturity among the boys in this regard is 15 years and nocturnal seminal emission, as for the girls it is 13 years (especially for fasting) or the beginning of menstruation.

There are numerous authentic traditions on the age of fasting for girls. Almost all the *Faqih*s unanimously believe that fasting is not obligatory for girls unless they menstruate (*Wasail*, vol.7, p.169, traditions 7 & 12; vol.1, p.32, traditions 10 & 12).

In certain traditions special emphasis has been laid on the ability of girl for fasting (irrespective of her age). (See, *Wasail*, vol.7, p.1679, tradition 2; vol.169, tradition 9).

Sayyid Muhammad Hassan Marashi, writes: Although the girls may reach puberty at the age of 9 years, they do not mature in other respects at this age.

Hence it is an early maturity and we cannot consider age of 9 as an indicator of maturity among the girls. Indeed, an indicator can be reckoned with only when it is a permanent or predominant indicator. There has been a serious misunderstanding in finding out the age of girls' maturity, i.e., in certain traditions the age of 9 has been referred to as girls' maturity age and the *Faqih*s, though aware of the fact that this is the age of puberty, thought that the same age could be an indicator for abiding by canonical injunctions. However, it must be borne in mind that although girls may reach sexual maturity at the age of 9 years or even before this age, since this is not predominant among the girls, this age cannot be considered an indicator for them to abide by canonical injunctions at this age. Even though most of the *Faqih*s consider the age of 9 as an indicator of maturity, since it is not a dominant factor on the one hand, and is not in conformity with the Holy Quran (age of maturity in Quran is when the ability of nocturnal semen emission is developed in human being), this age cannot be considered an indicator for them to abide by canonical injunctions at this age.¹⁹

Muhammad Sadiq Tehrani, writes in *Tatseratul-Faqahah*: "Every religious obligation has a corresponding maturity age. It implies that we cannot fix an age for maturity with regard to observing all religious obligations. In fact, age cannot be a criteria for determining the maturity of girls or boys. For instance, should we consider a girl who has completed 13 years of age but is not physically and mentally mature as a mature person who should abide by all canonical injunctions? Can we consider a boy who is physically and mentally mature and is economically well-off, but has no nocturnal semen emission as an immature person? This is an unfair classification. Therefore, in marriage and fasting (both are accompanied with heavy responsibilities) which need mental and physical preparedness, the main criteria for maturity is sexual maturity. Fasting undermines the stamina of a 9-year old girl specially in tropical areas."²⁰

We may divide the religious decrees on the girls' maturity into the following categories:

1. 9-year of age, the well-known view.
2. 10-year of age, the view of Shaykh Tusi and Ibn Hamzah.
3. 13-year of age, the idea of Ayatullah Sane'i.
4. Different ages corresponding to the nature of religious injunctions or responsibility. For instance, fasting becomes obligatory at the age of 13 according to Fayz Kashani and Ayatullah Marefat.
5. The age of 9 is not a canonical indicator of maturity.

It is pertinent here to see whether Islamic texts and teachings consider the

age as an indication of maturity. If age is an indication of maturity, does religion consider a single age for all religious obligations or it fixes different ages corresponding to each religious duty?

Quranic Verses on Maturity

There is no direct reference to age in the *Quran* but to other indicators of maturity such as wet-dream, marriage maturity and full maturity.

Wet-dream as an Indicator of Puberty

Wet-dream has been referred to in the Quran as an indicator of puberty: "And when your children reach puberty, let them as leave as those before them asked leave. So God makes clear to you His signs; and God is All-knowing, All-wise." (24:59).

In the same chapter wet-dream has been referred to as a sign of puberty:

"O believers, let those your right hands own and those of you who have not reached puberty ask leave of you three times - before the prayer of dawn, and when you put off your garments at the noon, and after the evening prayer - three times of nakedness for you...." (24:58)

These two verses elaborate on the wet-dream as an indicator of puberty. According to these two verses, when children develop the ability of semen emission, they have reached the age of puberty and should enter their parents' room only after they have sought their permission. However, children at the threshold of puberty should only three times (as mentioned above) seek their parents' permission before entering their room. The exegesis books describe wet-dream as an indication of the age of puberty.

Although here wet dream is an indicator of the age of puberty, it refers to a particular case and it is difficult to generalize it for other religious duties.²¹

Age of Maturity for the Marriage

In the *Quran*, we come across different indicators as signs of maturity for various religious duties. For instance, in the case of marriage, the *Quran* states;

"Test well the orphans, until they reach the age of marrying; then, if you perceive in them the right judgement, deliver to them their property; consume it not wastefully and hastily." (6:6)

The word orphans here refers to fatherless girls or boys.²²

Indeed, the age of maturity for marriage is when the boys and girls develop the ability to marry.

Shaykh Marghi in his exegesis writes: *"The age of puberty for marriage is the age when the youth develops the ability and acquires preparedness for marriage. At this stage, youth develops an inclination towards the opposite sex (spouse) and is eager to have an spouse."*

There are other exegetes who have offered similar interpretation of the above verse.

Certain traditions (*Ahadith*) indicate that wet-dream is the age of maturity for marriage. For instance, Imam Jafar Sadiq (a), the sixth Imam of the holy Prophet's household, in explaining the above issues as mentioned in verses of the *Quran* said:

"And that you approach not the property of the orphan, save in the fairer manner, until he is of full age." (6:159)

"And when he was full grown, We gave him judgement and knowledge. Even so We recompense the good-doers." (12:22)

"And do not approach the property of the orphan save in the fairest manner, until he is of full age." (17:34)

"As for the wall, it belonged to two orphan lads in the city, and under it was a treasure belonging to them. Their father was a righteous man; and thy Lord desired that they should come of full age and then bring forth their treasure as a mercy from thy Lord." (18:82)

The interpretation of these verses indicate that guardian of an orphan child cannot hand over his/her property to the orphan unless he/she reaches the age of sexual puberty and develops the ability of wet-dream.²³

Maturity here refers to the ability to safeguard property and prevent its wastage. This word is well-known by the common sense. The author of *Jawahir* also is of the opinion that maturity refers to the ability to safeguard property.²⁴

The *Faahis* and exegetes believe that not only the under age orphans are not allowed to own their property, but the under age children whose parents are alive also are not allowed to own their property.

Full Or Perfect Maturity

We come across these concepts in the holy *Quran*:

"And when he attained his full maturity and become full grown, We granted him wisdom and knowledge; and thus do We reward

those who do good." (28:13)

"He is Who created you from dust, then from a small life-germ, then from a clot, then He brings you forth as a child, then that you may attain your full maturity, then that you may be old—and of you there are some who are caused to die before-- and that you may reach an appointment term, and that you may understand." (40:67)

"And We have enjoined on man doing of good to his parents: with trouble did his mother bear him and with trouble did she bring him forth; and the bearing of him and the weaning of him was thirty months; until when he attains his full maturity and reaches forty years, he says: 'My Lord! grant me that I may give thanks for Thy favour which Thou hast bestowed on me and on my parents, and that I may do good which pleases Thee and do good to me in respect of my offspring; surely I turn to Thee, and surely I am of those who submit.'" (46:15)

In the above verses, full maturity refers to different stages in life. In the 2nd and 5th verses, full maturity refers to a time when the prophets are entrusted with the prophethood. In the first and third verses, it refers to a time when a child is allowed to own his property. In the 6th and 7th verses, it refers to one stage after childhood. In the 4th verse, it refers to a time when the two lads can own their treasure.

Out of these verses, five verses are directly related to our discussion because they consider the end of childhood as the beginning of maturity when the child is allowed to own his property.

However, the main objective of our analysis is to find out the age of full maturity.

The exegetes are not unanimous on the issue of the age of full maturity. Some of them consider the development of the ability to semen emission as an indicator of full maturity. Others consider mental maturity²⁵ as an indicator of full maturity, while some others believe that the age of 30 or 33 mark the stage of full maturity.

Allamah Tabataba'ie in his exegesis of the above verses, writes that man reaches full maturity when different physical faculties are fully grown up.... when the childhood disappears.... and this has been referred to in the verse 6 of the Chapter 4 of the *Quran*, i.e., the age of maturity for marriage.... (verses 128-130) the beginning of this stage is the age of 15.²⁶

In some traditions wet-dream or age of 13 have been referred to as indicators of perfect maturity.

1. Imam Hussayn (a) has been quoted as saying: "The end of childhood is the beginning of developing the ability of semen emission and the full maturity."²⁷

If a child develops the ability of semen emission but does not grow (mentally), he is retarded and weak and his guardian should take care of his property.

2. In another tradition, Imam Hussayn (a) has been quoted as saying: "Once Najdeh Harawi wrote a letter to Ibn Abbas and inquired about the age of perfect maturity of an orphan lad." He answered:

*"When a child develops the ability of semen emission, his childhood is over and he is considered fully matured. If it is not felt that the child is mature or he is mentally retarded, then the guardian of the child must take care of his property."*²⁸

These traditions are in conformity with Allamah Tabatabaie's interpretation of the complete maturity, i.e., wet-dream along with mental maturity can be considered as an indicator of perfect maturity.

3. In another tradition Imam Jafar Sadiq (a) has been quoted as saying:

*"Age of 13 and beginning of 14 mark the full maturity of a child. It becomes necessary for the child to perform all religious obligations whether he/she actually has nocturnal emission or not. The child's good and evil deeds are recorded unless he/she is not mentally mature."*²⁹

This tradition is in contradiction with the idea of Allamah Tabatabaie who believes that 18 is the age of full maturity.

The following inferences may be drawn from the above traditions and verses:

- 1) The age of maturity for both girls and boys are the same.
- 2) *The Holy Quran* does not refer to any specific age as the beginning of maturity, rather, natural and inner signs and indicators of maturity have been referred to: nocturnal emission, maturity for marriage, and perfect maturity.
- 3) The end of childhood marks the beginning of perfect maturity.
- 4) The child is allowed to own his/her property after he/she reaches perfect maturity or maturity for marriage.
- 5) When the child reaches the stage of puberty, he/she should seek the permission of his/her parents before entering their room three times a day (as mentioned earlier). However, it is not necessary for the child to perform other religious duties on attaining puberty (there are other requisites for perfect maturity).

Girls' Maturity

As mentioned at the beginning of the article, most of the *Faqih*s believe that girls reach maturity at the age of 9.

However, it seems that there is not enough evidence to support this idea. Indeed, the age of 9 is neither a predominant natural indication or a necessary canonical indication of maturity among girls. The girls usually reach natural maturity after the age of 12. If we consider the growing of pubes as a sign of natural maturity, about 43.9% of Iranian girls grow pubes by the age of 11 whereas about 78.2% grow them by the age of 12.

If we consider menstruation as an indication of maturity, the average age of first menstruation among the girls in the world is the age of 13 and 3 months. In cold regions of the world, the average age of first menstruation is higher than this. Most of the *Faqih*s acknowledge this idea, Ayatullah Khomeini writes: "*Normally, girls menstruate before the age of 13.*"

Research studies conducted on the issue indicate that about 18.5% of girls in Iran menstruate before the age of 11, about 56% before 12 and about 83.5% before 13.

Hence the age of 9 cannot be a natural indicator of maturity because it is not a predominant or permanent factor. This is not also a necessary indicator of maturity because we do not have enough evidence to support it. Even there is not enough evidence in the traditions to support this idea.

In one of the above-mentioned traditions, Imam Jafar Sadiq (a) says: The good and evil deeds of a girl is recorded at the age of 9, because she menstruates. Even in this tradition, the age of 9 has been referred to as the age of maturity because a girl menstruates. Indeed, age is a dependent of menstruation.

Moreover, there is no certainty about the age of maturity in Islamic traditions. For instance, some of the traditions refer to the age of 9 or 10, whereas others even refer to 14 or 16. If age should be considered as a necessary canonical indicator of maturity, there should be no uncertainty about it.

For example Imam Jafar Sadiq (a) says: *A Boy should observe fasting when he reaches the age of 15 and 16.*"

Quoting a tradition, Shaykh Saduq writes: *"Boys should be advised to observe fasting between 14 and 16 years of age."*

Muawiyah bin Wahab has quoted Imam Sadiq (a) as saying: *"It becomes necessary for boys to observe fasting between 14 and 15 years of age."*

These traditions indicate that *Sharia* does not consider age as an indicator of maturity, rather sexual puberty is an indicator of maturity.

Indeed, indicating the approximate age of maturity is not the duty of infallible Imams, the uncertainty in indicating the age of maturity is on the part of the informant of the tradition.³⁰ Therefore, reference to uncertain age of maturity in traditions is aimed at pointing at approximate age of puberty.

Psychological Studies

Psychological studies indicate that there are not much differences in the mental and even physical growth of boys and girls. Boys have even a faster growth in their height and weight compared to that of girls. Hence if we assume that religious duties become obligatory for girls of 9 years old and boys of 15 years old, a question may arise as to what are the similarities between a boy of 15 years old and a girl of 9 years old?

The following information show the differences between the two:

1) A 15-year-old boy is about 45.78 kilograms, whereas a 9-year-old girl is less than 30 kilograms.

2) A 15-year-old boy is about 152.53 cm of height, whereas a 9-year-old girl is about 135 cm.

3) About 96.3% of 15-year-old boys have the primary conditions for maturity, whereas about 26.6% of the 9-year-old girls have the same conditions.

4) So far as the mental ability is concerned, the 9-year-old girls at this stage acquire limited new mental abilities and potential powers, whereas the boys undergo maximum mental transformation at 15 years.

According to certain studies, boys and girls have almost similar height and weight at 11. At this age boys are about 140 cm of height and girls are about 139.9 cm. At the same age boys are about 32.53 kilograms and girls are about 31.33 kilograms.

From sexual point of view and pubes, there are great differences between the two sexes. At this age about 67.2% of boys are sexually mature and grow pubes, whereas these developments are seen in 42.9% of the girls of the same age.

Therefore, it is concluded that there are not great differences between the age of maturity of girls and boys.³¹

It may be argued that this analysis is theoretically preferential and, therefore, we cannot be as a canonical decree on this discussion. However, the author of this article has based his discussion on the following arguments:

1) In the Quranic verses and numerous traditions, there is no reference to age as an indicator of maturity, rather, emphasis has been laid on sexual puberty.

2) Renown *Faqih*s such as the author of *Jawahir al-Kalam* has stressed that the concept of maturity depends on common sense.

The Language Through Which Sharia Has Talked About Maturity

There is no reference to age as an indicator of maturity in the *Quran*. Neither there is any reference in the Holy Prophet's speeches nor in the Imams of the household of the Prophet, until Imam Muhammad Baqir (a).

With the departure of the Holy Prophet (s) the canonical laws also were complete and the Imams only functioned as protectors and exegetes of the canonical laws.

Sayyed Muhammad Baqir Sadr in this regard writes:

"With the departure of the Holy Prophet(s), canonical laws also were complete and the traditions quoted from the Imams are explanations of the canonical laws."

On the basis of this argument, we may conclude that the age of maturity has not been a subject of canonical laws, otherwise it would have been cleared by the time of the Holy Prophet(s). Indeed, it was a serious problem concerning women and it could have not been delayed or cancelled. The age was given as an easy indicator later on by the Imams, but only as an indicator.

In summary, all these issues and other issues such as universality of Islam, differences in the growth of men and women in different parts of the world, etc., indicate that the law-giver (*sharia*) has not laid any emphasis on age as necessary canonical indicator of maturity. Ayatullah Sayyed Ahmad Khansari, referring to the definition of the author of *Jawahir al-Kalam* of maturity (i.e., maturity refers to natural perfection of man and with that generation is sustained and mental faculty gains strength, and this happens when one completes childhood), writes: *"This definition of maturity entails that if we are sure that (a girl) has not reached this stage of maturity, she is immature and she is not considered mature even if she is 15-year-old."*

Referring to the probable existence of human beings in other planets, Imam Khomeini overrules age as an indicator of maturity;

"If children in other planets reach maturity at the age of one, having nocturnal emission and pubes, there is no problem if we consider them mature. Although it is difficult to omit age as an indicator of maturity, if it is sure that they have reached maturity, age can be omitted as an indicator of maturity. If a child does not gain the qualities of manhood up to the age of 13, he is not considered mature. If the natural process of growth becomes slower or faster due to artificial factors, or other

factors like sunshine, age will not be considered as an indicator of maturity."

It is clear from Imam Khomeini's decree that age is not an indicator of maturity whether on the earth or on other planets.

Indeed in numerous traditions there is no reference to age as an indicator of maturity for performing religious duties such as fasting, prayer, paying alms, going on Hajj pilgrimage etc., rather the first menstruation has been referred to as an indicator of maturity for performing religious duties.

Conclusion

1. Age is not a necessary canonical indicator of maturity for girls. Menstruation is the main indicator of maturity of the girls.

2. If we accept that the age of 9 is the age of maturity, there is no reason to conclude that it is an indicator for performing all religious duties, such as: prayer, fasting, going on pilgrimage to Hajj, paying alms, etc.

3. If one argues that age of 9 is the age of maturity for performing all religious duties, then we will face a contradiction between those traditions which state that 15 is the age of maturity and those narrations which say that 9 is an appropriate age for girls' maturity. In this case either we should do away with all the traditions on maturity or we should be free to follow anyone.

Summary

1. There is no explanation about maturity in *the Quran* and *Sunnah*, rather there are ample references to its indicators and signs.

2. Menstruation (for girls) and pubes (for boys) are external indications and signs of maturity, and the *Faqaha* have acknowledged these.

3. Pubes are not considered as signs of maturity of girls and this sign is only limited to boys.

4. The traditions do not clearly explain whether age is a necessary canonical indicator of maturity, rather external indicators have been referred to as signs of maturity.

5. There is no clear evidence indicating age as an indicator of maturity of girls. In fact, there are contradictory traditions on the age of maturity of girls (some consider nine while others thirteen as the age of maturity). Moreover, those traditions which indicate age of nine as the age of maturity of girls, refer to certain duties at this age and are not considered as a general age for girls' maturity.

Notes:

1. William A., *Psychology of Puberty*, Transl. by Fazlullah Shahidi-pur and Parvin Qaimi into Persian. Hisham Publication, Tehran.
2. *Jawahir al-Kalam*, vol. 4, p.26.
3. *Al Mustad al-Arabiyah al-Mayarah*, p. 403.
4. *Psychology of Children and Youth*, p. 219.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p. 230.
7. Dr. Ahmad Sahar Urdowadi, *Balugh (Puberty)*, pp.149-153.
8. *Psychology of Puberty*.
9. Abdul Razzaq al-Sanhani, *Al-Waqr*. Beirut, vol.1, p. 777.
10. Shahr Ebrahi, *Right of Children*, Roshangran Publication, Tehran, p. 237.
11. Ibid., pp. 35-36.
12. Muhammad Husayn al-Kashif al-Qita, *Tahree al-Majalah*, vol. 3, p. 766.
13. Ibn Idris, *Azhar*, vol. 1, p. 367.
14. *Yanabi al-Fajriyah*, vol. 5, p.191.
15. Mullaqqiq Ardabili, *Majma al-Fa'idah wal Burhan*, vol. 9, Al-Nashr al Islami Publication, Qum, p.192.
16. Ayatullah Sayyid Ahmad Kawayani, *Jam'ia al-Madarik*, vol. 3, p. 365.
17. Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 282-283.
18. Muhammad Mahsin Fays Kashani, *Mafatih al-Sarak*, vol.1, p.14.
19. Journal of Law Published in I.R. Iran. The article "An Enquiry into the Age of Puberty", No. 4, 1371 Shams, pp.59-60.
20. Muhammad Sadiq Tezani, *Taharat al-Fajr*, vol. 2, Farhang Islami Publication, Qum, p. 44.
21. Allamah Tabataba'i, *Al-Mizan*, vol.15, pp.163-164. *Tafsir al-Muraghi*, vol.18, p.129; *Mishab al-Munir*, vol.1, p.182, *Mufasshat al-Quran*, p.129.
22. *Mishab al-Munir*, vol. 3, p. 423.
23. *Mustadrak al-Wasail*, vol. 2, p. 436; *Tafsir al-Safi*, vol.1, p.391.
24. *Jawahir al-Kalam*, vol. 26, p. 48.
25. Al-Shaykh al-Tusi, *al-Tibyan*, vol. 7, p. 292.
26. Ibid., vol.11, p.118, vol. 16, p. 11.
27. *Wasail al-Shia*, vol. 13, p. 141.
28. Al-Shaykh al-Sadiq, *Khisal*, vol. 1, p. 225; *Mustadrak al-Wasail*, vol. 1, p. 7.
29. *Wasail al-Shia*, vol. 13, p. 431; *Mustadrak al-Wasail*, vol. 1.
30. *Jawahir al-Kalam*, vol. 26, p. 33.
31. *Ta'lim wa Tarbiyat (Quarterly)*, Nos. 7-8, p. 16.

*Expiation of Blood-Money by the Next of Kin of Murderer**

Translated by Dr. Sadroddin Moosavi

According to Muslim Faqih's the blood-money for an unintentional murder should be expiated by the next of kin of the murderer. In fact, it is not obligatory on the part of the culprit to expiate the blood-money, rather it is the obligation of his next of kin to expiate it. Again in case of underage murderers and the insane, their next of kin have to expiate the blood-money to the slain's relatives.

This is an Islamic decree incorporated in the contended code of the Islamic Republic of Iran. However, it is contended that such a penal law would not be applicable or even desirable in a society without strong tribal bounds which was found in the Arabian Peninsula at the time of the advent of Islam. In order to elaborate this decree, here we will reproduce the opinions of some of the contemporary Muslim *Faqih's* on the issue. The main focus of our discussion is whether this decree is applicable only in the context of a tribal social structure, or it is still valid and can be applied today too?

Ayatollah Ja'far Sobhani's Views

With regard to this issue, in the first instance, two points are to be made clear; a) whether this decree is valid for today and; b) whether the decree is obligatory or conventional.

A conventional decree refers to a case whereby the guardian of the murderer is really considered as indebted and must expiate the blood-money. Whereas in accordance with an obligatory decree, it is a religious obligation of the next of kin of the murderer to expiate the blood-money of the slain. However, if the next of kin evade expiating the blood-money, they have only committed a sin and would not be considered as indebted.

Answer to the First Question

At the time of the advent of Islam in Arabian Peninsula, tribalism was the predominant social order and tribal zeal and bounds made them to unconditionally defend the life of tribe members. The tribe was considered as

* This article is translation of a Persian article which appeared in *Rahnamae*, vols. 4 and 5, Spring and Summer 1372 H/1953. (Quarterly Journal of Martyr Matabhary School of Theological Studies, Tehran).

a collective, united body and in accordance with the tribal spirit, any encroachment upon the tribe—its members, property—had to be defended by the tribe as a single collectivity. Even if a tribe member committed a crime or intentional murder, the tribe members were duty-bound to defend him not only by expiating blood-money but by force and sword too.

Shahheed al-Thani in his commentary on Sharh-e Lom'ah writes:

"The word Aqilah means 'prevention'. Since the tribe members and the family of the murderer used to protect him against any revenge by the next of kin of the slain (a deterrent measure, indeed), the kin, paying the blood-money were called Aqilah, meaning the preventers."¹

Al-Thani in *Masalik* writes:

"The Arab tribes in ignorance age used to support a culprit member of the tribe and prevented the guardians of the slain from any revengeful reaction."²

According to a tradition narrated by Kulayni (who relates it from Salamah bin Kuhayl): a person who had committed a murder by mistake was brought to Imam Ali (a). In the first instance Imam asked, "What is your tribe and who are your family members? The man answered, "I do not have any relative in Kufa." Imam asked, "Which city are you coming from?" He said that he was born in Mousel and added that his relatives were residing in that city. Imam Ali asked the man to go to Mousel and present himself to the governor of Mousel. He then wrote a letter to the governor of Mousel and asked him to investigate about him. If the man had any paternal relative in Mousel, Imam said, they should expiate the blood-money to the family of the slain within three years. If he did not have any relative, but he belonged to Mousel, the inhabitants of Mousel should expiate the blood-money. If he did not belong to Mousel, he should be sent back to Kufa and the blood-money would be expiated by Islamic government (under Ali (a)).³

Muhammad bin Abu Bakr wrote a letter to Imam Ali (a) and asked: "An insane has intentionally killed a man. What is his punishment?" Ali (a) said: "His next of kin should expiate the blood-money."⁴

Expiation of Blood-Money and Social Structure

During the ignorance age the tribe used to extend its unconditional support to a culprit tribe member. However, Islam tried to rationalize this rule by attaching certain conditions to it. These conditions include: 1) the murder

should not be intentional; 2) the murder should be proved by adequate evidence; 3) the murder should have happened by mistake and; 4) the next of kin of the slain should compromise the blood-money while the expiation of the blood-money is the duty of the culprit not the tribe.

The tradition related by Salameh (mentioned above) is not an authentic tradition because he was born in 47 Hijra while Imam Ali (a) was martyred in 40 Hijra. Hence he could not relate any direct tradition from the Imam. Moreover, according to this tradition, in case the murderer did not have any next of kin in Mousal, the blood-money should have been expiated (on instalment) by the inhabitants of that city. At least this part of the tradition has not been confirmed by any Muslim scholar, and none of the companions have ever issued any decree on the basis of this part of the tradition. Therefore, it is difficult to consider the tradition as an authentic one. Besides, according to the first section of the tradition, the expiation of blood-money has been considered to be the obligation of the paternal relatives of the murderer. This is totally contradictory to the prevailing norms at that time, i.e., expiation of blood-money by the next of kin of the murderer.

In the tradition related by Muhammad bin abu Bakr (*supra*), the expiation of blood-money has been considered to be the obligation of the next of kin (*qoum*) of the murderer which here refers to those relatives who are among the inheriting relatives. This is also different from what prevailed among the Arabs in ignorance age.

When the decree on the expiation of blood-money by the next of kin of the murderer was issued by Islam, the social structure in the Arabian Peninsula was predominantly tribal, but social structure was different in other parts of the world. For instance, the Iranian and Greek civilizations were at the apex of their development at that time. Not only the social structure was not tribal in these two countries, but a well-developed urban system was a salient feature of these two civilizations. Hence, it is quite possible that the members of a family had to live away from each other in different cities. Since the decree on the expiation of blood-money by the next of kin was issued taking into account the social structure of other societies, it was and has been a universal decree. Therefore, the decree is not confined to the tribal social structures, rather it is a divine universal decree.

In the ignorance age the blood-money was divided among the tribe members of the murderer's tribe. Whereas, in Islam the expiation of blood-money is the duty of the next of kin of the murderer. In fact, next of kin refers to brother, uncle and children of the murderer. It, however, does

not refer to other relatives, or members of the tribe. Therefore, this Islamic decree has nothing to do with the rule of expiation of blood-money by the tribe in the ignorance age.

A question may rise here as to why innocent persons--next of kin--who have not been involved in the murder, should contribute to the expiation of blood-money.

In such cases Islam recommends cooperation and mutual help among members of a Muslim family. Since the blood-money for murder of a person is very heavy and more often the murderer cannot singly afford to expiate the blood-money, therefore, by distributing the blood-money among the next of kin of the murderer (in unintentional murder cases), Islam tries to help the murderer. Of course, the murderer is also personally bound to pay a specified atonement as specified by the Holy Qur'an:

"And whoever kills a believer by mistake, he should free a believing slave, and blood-money should be paid to his people."
(4:92)

Although in certain cases the murderer is quite well-off and can afford the expiation of the blood-money, exception does not make a rule, hence, the decree remains to be universal.

Ibn Qudameh Says:

"Unintentional offenses are frequent in life, however, it is usually difficult for the offender to expiate the penalty alone. Therefore, the divine decree ordains that the next of kin of the offender help him/her in such cases, but he has to pay the atonement."

Shahheed al-Thani Writes:

"The expiation of blood-money by the next of kin of the murderer is a kind of assistance extended by relatives. It is somewhat similar to the alms tax that a Muslim pays in order to help his coreligionist."

There is another issue in Islam which is similar to the issue of expiation of blood-money by the next of kin of the murderer, i.e., bilateral agreement on expiation of blood-money and hereditament (*Zaman-ul Jarirah*). On the basis of this agreement, two persons may conclude an agreement whereby one party agrees to inherit the other party in exchange for paying his/her blood-money. They may also agree to pay each other's blood-money or inherit each other's hereditament in exchange for helping each other during their lifetime.

Ayatollah Safi Golpayegani's Opinion

Divine laws are universal, they remain valid forever. Since Islam is the most complete and the last Divine religion, Islamic decrees remain valid forever, hence, in this case (the expiation of blood-money by the next of kin of the murderer), the decree is neither confined to tribal social structures nor to a specific era:

"And whoever desires a religion other than Islam, it should not be accepted from him and in the hereafter he shall be one of the losers." (3:85)

It has also been related from Imam Sadiq (a) as saying:

"The lawful (halal) of Muhammad will be lawful till the Day of Judgment and his unlawful (haram) will be unlawful till the Day of Judgment."

Ayatullah Muhammadi Gilani's Views

The idea of expiation of blood-money by the next of kin of a murderer is as follows.

When a murder occurs by mistake, the next of kin of the murderer are bound to expiate the blood-money of the slain. The next of kin here refers to paternal and maternal (or paternal alone) male relatives of the murderer, e.g., brother, uncle and their children (potential inheritors of the murderer). If the murderer does not have any of the above relatives, his master who has set him free (in case he had been a slave) will have to expiate the blood-money. If none of the above is the case, the person responsible for the payment is *Zaman-ul Jarrah*.

Indeed, the blood-money, in case of a murder by mistake, should be expiated by the next of kin of the murder only when the next of kin confesses the murder or it is proved by evidence, hence, the confession oath of the murderer alone is not sufficient in this case. If the murder is not proved by evidence or the confession of the next of kin, the blood-money should be expiated by the murderer alone.

In the present article we are not supposed to discuss the *Fiqhi* and canonical reasons of the expiation of blood-money by the next of kin of a murderer. Rather the main thrust of our discussion is that expiation of blood-money by the next of kin of a murderer, in case of an unintentional murder, does not contradict the Qur'anic verse: *"... and no bearer of burden shall bear the burden of another..." (6:164)*

Hence, we may conclude that this Divine decree is universal and is not limited to any time, place or social structure.

Without doubt any person damaging or destroying anything will be responsible to compensate for that. No any other person is accountable for misdeed of others. This is indeed a clear natural principle. The lawmaker, whether *Sharia* or human being, does not overlook this principle. However, if the murderer is a criminal, the expiation of blood-money is the sole obligation of the murderer alone.

Thus, expiation of blood money by the next of kin of a murderer is just like other canonical rules such as the alms paid by the rich to the poor. It is one of the Divine devices to spread justice in the society. For instance, charging interest on money (*Rebo*) is unlawful, whereas, helping the poor is recommended.

Expiation of blood-money by the next of kin is also like other canonical injunctions that God the Almighty has ordained. There are other rights and injunctions like the rights of the spouse, the rights of the guests, the relatives and the slaves. Therefore, expiation of blood-money by next of kin of a murderer does not imply punishment of a person for some other person's sins or crimes, it is not "bearing the burden of others."

Indeed, society has an independent personality which is different from the personality of the individual's who constitute it. According to Qur'an, every society has a personality, a period of life and a death. The relationship between the society and individual is a real objective one. The Holy Qur'an states:

"I will not waste the work of a worker among you, whether male or female, the one of you being from the other..." (3:195)

In another verse Qur'an states:

"And for every nation there is a doom, so when their doom is come they shall not remain behind the least while, nor shall they go before." (7:34)

In such a relationship the personality of the society is predominant and individuals spontaneously follow the collective spirit of the society.

Islamic laws, injunctions, and rituals are based on social justice and in case of expiation of blood money by next of kin of a murderer too, social justice has been considered as a basis for this rule.

According to Ibn Qayem:

"The blood-money of a slain is very heavy. But only in case of unintentional murder, it should be expiated by the next of kin

of a murderer. No human being is infallible, in case of an unintentional murder, a heavy loss is inflicted upon the murder if he is to expiate the blood-money of the slain alone. On the other hand, killing a human being, besides being a heinous crime, causes lot of problems for their children and wife of the slain. Therefore, it is necessary to compensate the loss by expiating the blood-money. At the same time, it is also an obligation of the next of kin of the murderer to help him at the time of trouble. This is similar to other cases of Islamic aims aiming at helping the needy in the Islamic society.

In intentional murder cases, the murderer is a criminal and should be punished, hence, he has to personally expiate the blood-money of the slain."

Ayatullah Mousavi Bojnourdi's Views

Before the advent of Islam, this rule—expiation of blood money by next of kin of the murder—was in force in the Arabian Peninsula and in other places, that is, the tribal rule prevailed before the advent of Islam. Every tribe had a chieftain, and the rules and regulations that prevailed were tribal rules and customs. On the basis of tribal rules and regulations, the blood-money was expiated by the next of kin of a murderer.

At the time of the advent of Islam, this rule was practiced in Najd, Hejaz and other parts of the Arabian Peninsula. Islam also acknowledged this rule.

However, the implementation of this rule depends on the structure of the society, i.e., if the social structure is tribal, the expiation of blood-money is the obligation of the next of kin of the murderer. Whereas, in other societies, where the social structure is non-tribal, the next of kin of a murderer is not bound to expiate the blood-money.

Indeed, on the basis of a tribal social structure, the tribe members are committed to certain collective defensive measures and this commitment obliges them to pay the blood-money collectively. On the other hand, in a non-tribal social structures, there is no such commitment among the next of kin.

Even today in certain Arab settlements, the tribe members settle their differences on the basis of tribal rules and regulations. For instance, in order to settle a dispute, they may offer money to each other or marry each other's daughter in order to bring about peace through strengthening tribal ties.

In summary, the law of expiation of blood-money by the next of kin of a

murderer should be practised where a tribal social structure prevails and the tribe members are committed to a collective covenant.

If we consider the law of expiation of blood-money by the next of kin of a murderer as a universal law, then even those relatives who are living in another continent, and are not committed to any covenant must also give their share of the blood-money expiation. This does not seem sound and rational.

Therefore, we may conclude that in unintentional murder cases, if the social structure is tribal (and there is a covenant among the tribe members), the blood-money should be expiated by the next of kin of the murderer. But, if the social structure is not tribal, this law is irrelevant because all the necessary conditions do not exit for the law to be enforced and implemented. We cannot take this law as universal, because in societies where family members live separate and even far away from each other, and where there is no commitment to a collective covenant, no member is accountable to what other members do or perform. Thus, we cannot declare this law as a universal law.

Islam has not established this law, rather it acknowledged a law which was practised among the tribe members and was considered to be rational at that time. But, today, where there is no tribal social structure, it is not rational to practice this law. However, even today, if there is a tribal social structure and the tribe members are committed to a collective covenant, this law is perfectly applicable.

In modern societies where the individuals live on their own not as members of different tribes, the blood-money should be expiated by the murderer alone and there is no question of expiation of blood-money by the next of kin of a murderer.

Taqiyya: Its Meaning and Origin

Sayyid Murtada Muhri

Translated by H. Karamyar

There are certain authors who accuse the *Shias* of concealing the veracity of their religion by practicing *Taqiyya* (prudential dissimulation of one's true beliefs under conditions of acute danger) which constitutes one of the *Shii* principles. They believe that what the *Shias* express may not be trusted and one cannot assess their real religion.

This question was posed at the time of some of the Imams (a), and its practice was justifiable because in those days the *Shias* were a tiny group, subject to constant persecution of the rulers of Banu Umayyad and Banu Abbas.

Today, however, when millions of *Shias* live throughout the world and exercise sovereignty in a vast country such as Iran and when numerous books, written by *Shii ulama* in the course of history are available and explain their religious beliefs, such questions are no longer valid.

Nevertheless, to illustrate the point, it is necessary to clarify the notion of *Taqiyya* which the *Shias* consider obligatory under certain circumstances.

Taqiyya in the Holy Qur'an

The obligatory *Taqiyya* has two connotations both of which have been recommended in the Holy Qur'an, and cannot be confined to *Shias*. The reason for ascribing the doctrine to *Shias* is that during the reign of Banu Umayyad and Banu Abbas, the *Shias* were forced to practice *Taqiyya*, whereas other sects and religions were free and had no reason to practice it. Foregoing this, the principle of the enacting *Taqiyya* as obligatory is an Islamic and a rational decree.

Taqiyya has two implications applying to two cases: Symbiotic and precautionary.

Symbiotic Taqiyya

Symbiotic *Taqiyya* is practiced when one is sure of a loss of life, property or prestige and is compelled to speak or treat others with reservation to please

the enemy and prevent harm.

The rule also applies to cases when life or material loss is inflicted on one's relations. It is too applicable to protect those whose lives are endangered. That is to say, if one feels that by expressing a false statement and by practicing *Taqiyya*, the life of a Muslim may be saved, it is necessary and even obligatory to do so. If by telling the truth, the life of an individual is endangered, one has committed a major sin and is even an accomplice to the murder.

This is a fact for which no religious evidence is required to substantiate. It is rather a rational argument based on consideration of the rule of *aham wa mohem*. When both of the options are unfavorable, one will naturally calculate in order to chose the best way. Although making a false statement to satisfy the enemy may be difficult to express, it is easier than sustaining human and material losses and, therefore, one prefers the latter.

This practice is neither exclusive to Shias nor to Islam; it has also been recommended in the Holy Qur'an that in such cases it is permissible to make false statements which are not only authorized but are obligatory if a human being is threatened.

In *Surah al-Imran*, verse 28 of the Holy Qur'an, God says:

"Say: 'Whether you hide what is in your hearts or manifest it, Allah knows it, and He knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, and Allah has power over all things.'"
(3:28)

And in *Surah al-Nahj*, verse 106 it says:

"He who disbelieves in Allah after his having believed, not he who is compelled while his heart is at rest on account of faith, but he who opens (his) breast to disbelief—on these is the wrath of Allah, and they shall have a grievous chastisement." (16:106)

According to some informants, the above verse was revealed regarding Ammar ibn Yasar, who, with his parents were subjected to unbearable harassment and torture at the hands of the polytheists of *Quraysh* during which his parents were martyred. Ammar, who observed the scene expressed in a trembling voice what the torturers wanted him to say regarding praise for their idols and thereafter released him.

After his release, Ammar fearfully came to the Holy Prophet (s) thinking that expression of praises for the idols in those conditions would incur the wrath of God and His Messenger. The Holy Prophet (s), however, wiped the

tears on the face of Aunmar with his own blessed hands and said:

"If you were again forced to say what they wanted, express what they want and do not be worried."

Amid this consolation of the Holy Prophet (s) the verse was revealed.

In any case what has forced the *Shi'as*, through the history of the caliphs of Banu Umayyad and Banu Abbas, to practice Taqiyya has been protection of the lives of themselves and their Imams. The rulers of the time employed every excuse and subjected the *Shia* Imams to torture, harassment, insult and imprisonment. For this reason, the infallible Imams pronounced Taqiyya as the *Shia*'s necessary principle in those days, ordering them to conceal their religion in dealing with their ill-willed and blood thirsty enemies. The leaders and *fugaha* of other religions did not suffer such pressures on the part of the oppressors and were not subjected to persecution (except for a few cases in which certain caliphs showed sensitivity to some viewpoints such as the question of creativity of the Qur'an). Most of these leaders and *fugaha* were confirmed and supported financially and psychologically by the caliphs who necessitated the following of these leaders and *fugaha*. For this reason, the Sunni Muslim sects have only four *fajih*s, but there is no reason or narration to substantiate the confinement, while there are many general *fugaha*. In fact their notion of obedience to government has contributed to this monopoly. It is, therefore, natural for them not to talk about *Taqiyya*, for there has been no ground for its practice.

Precautionary Taqiyya

The second type is *Taqiyya* for precautionary measures, in which one is cautious to express one's real beliefs openly because of certain social concerns to avert alerting the public. Such a treatment is, generally speaking, a rational practice and almost all individuals employ it on different occasions.

The principle of circumspection and social considerations in speech and writing is a desirable and rational exercise. If we want to forward convincing examples in support of this argument, the best evidence is to study the gradual descending of the *'ahkam* (divine commands). Why did God not send the laws in their entirety? Rather He made them obligatory for man to execute only in gradual degrees.

Naturally, there is no reason for this gradual revelation except for the notion of precaution. As a matter of fact, people cannot bear so many heavy

responsibilities all at once. If, from the beginning, the people, who were thoroughly free from restraints of *Shari'ah*, were called upon to practice all the laws at once, only a few could bear to respond to such a call. For this reason, the *Shari'ah* was sent down gradually in the course of 23 years!

The infallible Imams (a) practiced both types of *Taqiyya*. Symbiotic *Taqiyya* was necessary against those who slayed the innocent people and who were not committed to any human or divine law. *Taqiyya* for precaution was necessary against ignorant people who have been deceived. The Imams (a), however, used any opportunity to impart the truth to the people and establish the *Hujjat* (proof). Each of the Imams (a) taught the truth in their own way and as demanded by the exigency of the time, though not so outright as to disrupt the unity of the Muslim community. According to some narrations, the infallible Imams (a) exercised *Taqiyya* even in dealing with the Shias in certain cases. They could not frankly and openly disclose the truth to every listener. This is something natural.

Revealing certain facts to ordinary people bears no result but entangling them in misgiving. For example, if some people inquired about *Qada* and *Qadar*, (free will and determinism), the Imams (a) provide an answer convincing enough for the inquirer, arguing that he could not comprehend beyond his capacity and that if he wished to delve into it, he would go astray and become a disbeliever. The Imams (a), however, provided clear and outright answers when talking with some narrators, thus helping us unravel our questions today. The non-Shias ulama have also accepted that the Imam's approached dealing with this intricate question correctly. In any case, *Taqiyya* for precaution is necessary for all, especially religious and social leaders who are bound to practice it. It is not exclusive to the Shias or Muslims.

Scope of *Taqiyya*

The important point, however, in regard to both types of *Taqiyya* is that both have their own limits. For example, take the coercive *Taqiyya*. Where the fundamentals of Islam are at stake, triggering the feeling that by practicing *Taqiyya*, the essence of religion is threatened, one should not conceal the truth or tell a lie in order to save one's life or property.

Muhammad ibn Abi Amir was one of the companions of Imam Kazim (a). Haroun al-Rashid marked a very hard and difficult period for the Shias whose leaders were subject to government persecution, harassment and torture. Muhammad ibn Amir was once beaten by the agents of the Caliph so as to

disclose the names of the Shias personalities who did not openly express their faith. Ibn Amir, however, refused to do so. He has been quoted as saying that one day his resistance was broken under severe strikes of the flog and was forced to say:

"Stop lashing me so that I may tell you. His friend, who was also in chains cried, 'Ibn Abi Amir, remember the day when you will be called to account for your deeds in the presence of God.' This caused me to regain my resistance and continue to remain silent."

Examples of this type of event have existed, exist and will continue to exist in all eras in all revolutions. Therefore, those who compromised with the taghut (forces of evil) and openly confirmed it when Islamic revolution was blossoming, may not have excusable pretext before God.

However, reservation with people and preservation of unity of Muslims and solidarity of Islamic society should be observed to the extent that it does not cause one to conceal the basic tenets of the true religion. In accordance with the recommendations of the infallible Imams (a), the Shias participated in the congregational prayer and Islamic rites of the other Muslim sects. They even officiated their congregational prayer, said *azan* (call to prayer) and performed other religious rituals in the time of the infallible Imams (a). The Shias never permitted ill-speaking, vilification and execration of those whom, in our opinion, have tyrannized the infallible Imams (a). Basically, insult or slander will not resolve a problem, nor will it guide anyone.

Nevertheless, reservation should not encourage concealing the fundamental truth of the one right religion. To stress this point, concealing the truth is in no way permissible unless in conditions in which hiding the truth causes a damage to part of the religion. It is also not authorized when its publication is of no avail and which one's life is not threatened in which case the practice of symbiotic *Taqiyya* applies. Hence, the assumption that the Shi'i concept of *Taqiyya* implies denying the varieties of the faith is incorrect. Perhaps this assumption originated from the concept of *Taqiyya* as introduced by the infidels who described themselves as the Ismaili sect and who were regarded as a ramification of Shism. This concept might have remained in the minds of certain people who link it to Shias.

As a matter of fact, the Ismailis developed into a powerful political party in a span of time and organized many individuals by hiding the truth of their

ideas by way of *Taqiyya*. They displayed amazing political, military and terrorist activities in an attempt to gain control over countries such as Iran, Syria, Egypt and other Islamic countries. In those days, Islamic society, both Sunnis and Shias, regarded the Ismailis as infidels. The Muslim people believed that the Ismailis denied the truth of Islam and deceived the young and credulous individuals. They interpreted Qur'anic verses according to their personal understanding and considered the Day of Resurrection to be the very movements launched by shackled nations.

At any rate, the *Taqiyya* practiced by them signified concealing the realities of their ideas in a bid to gain a foothold among simple-minded people in the name of religion, Shiaism and revenge for the Household of the Holy Prophet (s). Foregoing this, their leaders were not apparently committed to any religion.

Some Sunni writers still imagine that the Shias are the very Ismailis and infidels who still hide their religion, whereas in the Shias literature and even in jurisprudent books, the Ismailis are considered *kafar* (disbelievers in the fundamentals of religion).

METHODS OF RELIGIOUS THOUGHT ACCORDING TO SH'ITES

By : Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabatabai

By "religious thought" we mean that form of thought which is concerned with any of the problems of a religious nature within a particular religion, in the same sense that mathematical thought is the form of thought which deals with mathematical questions and solves mathematical problems.

Needless to say religious thought, like other forms of thought, must have reliable sources from which the raw material of its thought originates and upon which it depends. Similarly, the process of reasoning necessary for the solution of mathematical problems must have a series of established mathematical facts and principles.

The single source upon which the divinely revealed religion of Islam depends and upon which it is based, inasmuch as it is based on a revelation of celestial origin, is none other than the Holy Qur'an. It is the Qur'an which is the definitive testament of the universal and ever-living prophethood of the Prophet and it is the content of the Qur'an that bears the substance of the Islamic call. Of course the fact that the Qur'an is alone the source of Islamic religious thought does not eliminate other sources and origins of correct thinking, as will be explained later.

There are three methods of religious thought in Islam. The Holy Qur'an in its teachings points to three paths for Muslims to follow in order to comprehend the purposes of religion and the Islamic sciences: (1) the path of the external and formal aspect of religion (the *Shari'ah*); (2) the path of intellectual understanding; and (3) the path of spiritual comprehension achieved through sincerity (*ikhlas*) in obeying God.

These three methods differ from each other in several ways. For instance, since the external forms of religion are verbal expressions in the simplest language, they are in the hands of all people, and everyone benefits from them according to his own capacity.¹ On the other hand, the other two paths, which are appropriate to a particular group (the elite--*khawass*), are not common to all. The path of the external forms of religion leads to the understanding of the principles and the obligations of Islam and results in knowledge of the substance of the beliefs and practices of Islam, and of the principles of the

Islamic sciences, ethics, and jurisprudence. This is in contrast to the other two paths. The intellectual path can discover the problems connected with faith, ethics, and the general principles governing practical questions, but the intellectual method cannot discover the specific religious injunctions given in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The path of purification of the carnal soul, since it leads to the discovery of God-given spiritual truths, can have no limits nor measure of its results or of the truths revealed through this divine gift. Men who have reached this knowledge have cut themselves off from everything and forgotten everything but God and are under the direct guidance and dominion of God Himself—May His Name be Glorified. Whatever He wants and not what they want is revealed to them.

We will now take up in detail the three methods of religious thought in Islam.

FIRST METHOD:

THE FORMAL ASPECT OF RELIGION

The Different Facets of the Formal Aspect of Religion

It has become clear from what has been said thus far that the Holy Qur'an, which is the principal source of religious thought in Islam has given full authority to the external meanings of its words for those who give ear to its message. The same external meaning of the Qur'anic verses has made the sayings of the Prophet complementary to the words of the Qur'an and has declared them to be authoritative like the Qur'an. For as the Qur'an says: "And We have revealed unto thee the Remembrance that thou mayst explain to mankind that which hath been revealed for them" (Qur'an, XVI, 44). And, "He it is who hath sent among the unlettered ones a messenger of their own, to recite unto them his revelations and to make them grow, and to teach them the scripture and Wisdom" (Qur'an, LXII, 2). And, "And whatsoever the messenger giveth you, take it. And whatsoever he forbiddeth, abstain (from it)" (Qur'an, LIX, 7). And, "Verily in the messenger of Allah ye have a good example" (Qur'an, XXXIII, 21).

It is quite evident that such verses would not have any real meaning if the words and deeds of the Prophet and even his silence and approval were not authority for us just as the Quran itself is. Thus the words of the Prophet are authoritative and must be accepted by those who have heard them orally or received them through reliable transmission. Moreover, through such a

completely authentic chain of transmission it is known that the Holy Prophet said, *"I leave two things of value amidst you in trust which if you hold on to you will never go astray: the Qur'an and the members of my household. These will never be separated until the Day of Judgment"*. According to this and other definitely established *hadiths* the words of the Family and Household of the Prophet form a corpus that is complementary to the Prophetic *hadith*. The Household of the Prophet in Islam have authority in religious sciences and are inerrant in the explanation of the teachings and injunctions of Islam. Their sayings, received orally or through reliable transmission, are reliable and authoritative.

Therefore, it is clear that the traditional source from which the formal and external aspect of religion is derived, which is an authoritative document and which is also the basic source for the religious thought of Islam, consists of two parts: the Book (the Qur'an) and the Sunnah. By the Book is meant the external aspect of the verses of the Holy Qur'an; and by the Sunnah, *hadith* received from the Prophet and his revered Household.

Traditions of the Companions

In Shi'ism *hadiths* transmitted through the companions are dealt with according to this principle: if they deal with the words and actions of the Prophet and do not contradict the *hadiths* of the Household of the Prophet, they are acceptable. If they contain only the views or opinions of the companions themselves and not those of the Prophet, they are not authoritative as sources for religious injunctions. In this respect the ruling of the companions is like the ruling of any other Muslim. In the same way, the companions themselves dealt with other companions in questions of Islamic law as they would with any Muslim, not as someone special.

The Book and Tradition

The Book of God, the Holy Qur'an, is the principal source of every form of Islamic thought. It is the Qur'an which gives religious validity and authority to every other religious source in Islam. Therefore, it must be comprehensible to all. Moreover, the Qur'an describes itself as the light which illuminates all things. Also it challenges men and requests them to ponder over its verses and observe that there are no disparities or contradictions in them. It invites them to compose a similar work, if they can, to replace it. It is clear that if the Holy Qur'an were not comprehensible to all there would be no place for such assertions.

To say that the Qur'an is in itself comprehensible to all is not in any way contradictory to the previous assertion that the Prophet and his Household are religious authorities in the Islamic sciences, which are in reality only elaborations of the content of the Qur'an. For instance, in the part of the Islamic sciences which comprise the injunctions and laws of the *Shari'ah* the Qur'an contains only the general principles. The clarification and elaboration of their details, such as the manner of accomplishing the daily prayers, fasting, exchanging merchandise, and in fact all acts of worship (*ibadat*) and transactions (*mu'amalat*), can be achieved only by referring to the traditions of the Holy Prophet and his Household.

As for the other part of the Islamic sciences dealing with doctrines and ethical methods and practices, although their content and details can be comprehended by all, the understanding of their full meaning depends on accepting the method of the Household of the Prophet. Also each verse of the Qur'an must be explained and interpreted by means of other Qur'anic verses, not by views which have become acceptable and familiar to us only through habit and custom.

Ali has said: *"Some parts of the Qur'an speak with other parts of it revealing to us their meaning and some parts attest to the meaning of others."*² And the Prophet has said, *"Parts of the Qur'an verify other parts."*³ And also: *"Whoever interprets the Qur'an according to his own opinion has made a place for himself in the fire."*⁴

As a simple example of the commentary of the Qur'an through the Qur'an may be cited the story of the torture of the people of Lot about whom in one place God says, *"And we rained on them a rain,"*⁵ and in another place He has changed this phrase to, *"Lo! We sent a storm of stones upon them (all)."*⁶ By relating the second verse to the first it becomes clear that by "rain" is meant "stones" from heaven. Whoever has studied with care the *hadiths* of the Household of the Prophet, and the outstanding companions who were the followers of the Prophet, will have no doubt that the commentary of the Qur'an through the Qur'an is the sole method of Qur'anic commentary taught by the Household of the Prophet.⁷

The Outward and Inward Aspects of the Qur'an

It has been explained that the Holy Qur'an elucidates religious aims through its own words and gives commands to mankind in matters of doctrine and action. But the meaning of the Qur'an is not limited to this level. Rather, behind these same expressions and within these same meanings there are

deeper and wider levels of meaning which only the spiritual elite who possess pure hearts can comprehend.

The Prophet, who is the divinely appointed teacher of the Quran, says: *"The Qur'an has a beautiful exterior and a profound interior."*⁸ He has also said, *"The Qur'an has an inner dimension, and that inner dimension has an inner dimension up to seven inner dimensions."*⁹ Also, in the sayings of the Imams there are numerous references to the inner aspect of the Qur'an.

The main support of these assertions is a symbol which God has mentioned in Chapter XIII, verse 17, of the Qur'an. In this verse divine gifts are symbolized by rain that falls from heaven and upon which depends the life of the earth and its inhabitants. With the coming of the rain, floods begin to flow and each river bed accepts a certain amount of the flood, depending on its capacity. As it flows, the flood is covered with foam, but beneath the foam there is that same water which is life-giving and beneficial to mankind.

As is indicated by this symbolic story, the capacity for comprehension of divine sciences, which are the source of man's inner life, differs among people. There are those for whom there is no reality beyond physical existence and the material life of this world which lasts but a few days. Such people are attached to material appetites and physical desires alone and fear nothing but the loss of material benefits and sensory enjoyment. Such people, taking into consideration the differences of degree among them, can at best accept the divine sciences on the level of believing in a summary fashion in the doctrines and performing the practical commands of Islam in a purely outward manner without any comprehension. They worship God with the hope of recompense or fear of punishment in the next world.

There are also those who, because of the purity of their nature, do not consider their well-being to lie in attachment to the transient pleasures of the fleeting life of this world. The losses and gains and bitter and sweet experiences of this world are for them no more than an attractive illusion. Memory of those who have passed before them in the caravan of existence, who were pleasure-seekers yesterday and no more than subjects of stories today, is a warning that is continuously present before their eyes. Such men who possess pure hearts are naturally attracted to the world of eternity. They view the different phenomena of this passing world as symbols and portents of the higher world, not as persisting and independent realities.

It is at this point that through earthly and heavenly signs, upon the horizons and within the souls of men,¹⁰ they "observe" in a spiritual vision the Infinite Light of the Majesty and Glory of God. Their hearts become completely

enamored with the longing to reach and understanding of the secret symbols of creation. Instead of being imprisoned in the dark and narrow wall of personal gain and selfishness they begin to fly in the unlimited space of the world of eternity and advance ever onwards toward the zenith of the spiritual world.

When they hear that God has forbidden the worship of idols, which outwardly means bowing down before an idol, they understand this command to mean that they should not obey other than God, for to obey means to bow down before someone and to serve him. Beyond that meaning they understand that they should not have hope or fear of other than God; beyond that, they should not surrender to the demands of their selfish appetites; and beyond that, they should not concentrate on anything except God. May His Name be Glorified.

Likewise when they hear from the Qur'an that they should pray, the external meaning of which is to perform the particular rites of prayers, through its inner meaning they comprehend that they must worship and obey God with all their hearts and souls. Beyond that they comprehend that before God they must consider themselves as nothing, must forget themselves and remember only God.¹²

It can be seen that the inner meaning present in these two examples is not due to the outward expression of the command and prohibition in question. Yet the comprehension of this meaning is unavoidable for anyone who has begun to meditate upon a more universal order and has preferred to gain a vision of the universe of reality rather than his own ego, who has preferred objectivity to an egocentric subjectivism.

From this discussion the meaning of the outward and inward aspects of the Qur'an has become clear. It has also become evident that the inner meaning of the Qur'an does not eradicate or invalidate its outward meaning. Rather, it is like the soul which gives life to the body. Islam, which is a universal and eternal religion and places the greatest emphasis upon the "reformation" of mankind, can never dispense with its external laws which are for the benefit of society, nor with its simple doctrines which are the guardians and preservers of these laws.

How can a society, on the pretense that religion is only a matter of the heart, that man's heart should be pure and that there is no value to actions, live in disorder and yet attain happiness? How can impure deeds and words cause the cultivation of a pure heart? Or how can impure words emanate from a pure heart? God says in His Book, *"Vile women are for vile men, and vile*

men for vile women. Good women are for good men, and good men for good women." (Qur'an, XXIV, 26). He also says, "As for the good land, its vegetation cometh forth by permission of its Lord; while as for that which is bad, only evil cometh forth (from it)." (Qur'an, VII, 58). Thus it becomes evident that the Holy Qur'an has an outward and an inward aspect and the inward aspect itself has different levels of meaning. The *hadith* literature, which explains the content of the Qur'an, also contains these various aspects.

The Principles of Interpretation of the Qur'an

At the beginning of Islam it was commonly believed by some Sunnis that if there were sufficient reason one could ignore the outward meaning of Qur'anic verses and ascribe to them a contrary meaning. Usually the meaning which opposed the outward, literal meaning was called *ta'wil*, and what is called 'ta'wil of the Qur'an' in *Sunni* Islam is usually understood in this sense.

In the religious works of *Sunni* scholars, as well as in the controversies that have been recorded as taking place between different schools, one often observes that if a particular point of doctrine (that has been established through the consensus of the *ulama* of a school or through some other means) is opposed to the outward meaning of a verse of the Qur'an, that verse is interpreted by *ta'wil* to have a meaning contrary to its apparent meaning. Sometimes two contending sides support two opposing views and present Qur'anic verses in proof of their contentions. Each side interprets the verses presented by the other side through *ta'wil*. This method has also penetrated more or less into *Shi'ism* and can be seen in some *Shi'ite* theological works.

Yet, sufficient deliberation upon Qur'anic verses and the *hadith* of the Household of the Prophet demonstrates clearly that the Holy Qur'an with its attractive language and eloquent and lucid expression never uses enigmatic or puzzling methods of exposition and always expounds any subject in a language suitable for that subject. What has been rightly called *ta'wil*, or hermeneutic interpretation, of the Holy Qur'an is not concerned simply with the denotation of words. Rather, it is concerned with certain truths and realities that transcend the comprehension of the common run of men; yet it is from these truths and realities that the principles of doctrine and the practical injunctions of the Qur'an issue forth.

The whole of the Qur'an possesses the sense of *ta'wil*, of esoteric meaning, which cannot be comprehended directly through human thought alone. Only the prophets and the pure among the saints of god who are free from the druss

of human imperfection can contemplate these meanings while living on the present plane of existence. On the Day of Resurrection the *ra'wil* of the Qur'an will be revealed to every one.

This assertion can be explained by pointing to the fact that what forces man to use speech, create words and make use of expressions is nothing other than his social and material needs. In his social life man is forced to try to make his fellow-men understand his thoughts and intentions and the feelings which exist within his soul. To accomplish this end he makes use of sounds and hearing. Occasionally also he uses to a degree his eyes and gestures. That is why between the mute and the blind there can never be any mutual comprehension, for whatever the blind man says the deaf cannot hear, and whatever the mute makes understood through gestures the blind man cannot see.

The creation of words and the naming of objects have been accomplished mostly with a material end in view. Expressions have been created for those objects, states, and conditions which are material and available to the senses or near to the sensible world. As can be seen in those cases where the person addressed lacks one of the physical senses, if we wish to speak of matters which can be comprehended through the missing sense we employ a kind of allegory and similitude. For example, if we wish to describe light or color to one who is born blind, or the pleasures of sex to a child that has not reached the age of adolescence, we seek to achieve our purpose through comparison and allegory and through providing appropriate examples.

Therefore, if we accept the hypothesis that in the scale of Universal Existence there are immense levels of reality which are independent of the world of matter (and this is in reality the case), and that in each generation there are among mankind but a handful who have the capability of comprehending and having a vision of these realities, then questions pertaining to these higher worlds cannot be understood through common verbal expressions and modes of thought. They cannot be referred to except by allusion and through symbolism. Since religious realities are of this kind, the expression of the Quran in such matters must of necessity be symbolic.

God says in His Book, *"Lo! We have appointed it a Lecture in Arabic that haply ye may understand. And Lo! In the Source of Decrees, which We possess, it is indeed sublime, decisive,"* (Common comprehension cannot understand it or penetrate into it.) (Qur'an, XI.III, 3-4). He also says, *"That (this) is indeed a noble Qur'an, In a book kept hidden, Which none toucheth save the purified"* (Qur'an, LVI, 77-79). Concerning the Prophet and his Household he says,

"Allah's wish is but to remove uncleanness far from you, O Folk of the Household, and cleanse you with a thorough cleansing" (Qur'an, XXXIII, 33).

As proved by these verses, the Holy Qur'an emanates from sources beyond the comprehension of common man. No one can have a full comprehension of the Qur'an save those servants of God whom He has chosen to purify. And the Household of the Prophet are among those pure beings.

In another place God says, "Nay, but they denied that (the Qur'an), the knowledge whereof they could not compass, and whereof the interpretation (in events) [ta'wil] hath not yet come into them" (Qur'an, X, 40), (meaning the day of Resurrection when the truth of things will become known). And again he says, "On the day (the Day of Resurrection) when the fulfillment [ta'wil] thereof [of the whole Qur'an] cometh, those who were before forgetful thereof will say: The messengers of our Lord did bring the Truth!" (Qur'an, VII, 53).

Hadith

The principle that the *hadith* possesses validity, as attested by the Qur'an, is not at all disputed among Shi'ites or in fact among all Muslims. But because of the failure of some of the early rulers of Islam in preserving and guarding the *hadith*, and the excesses of a group among the companions and followers of the Prophet in propagating *hadith* literature, the corpus of *hadith* came to face a certain number of difficulties.

On the one hand, the caliphs of the time prevented the writing down and recording of the *hadith* and ordered any pages containing texts of *hadith* to be burnt. Sometimes also any increase in activity in the transmission and study of *hadith* was forbidden.¹² In this way a certain number of *hadiths* were forgotten or lost and a few were even transmitted with a different or distorted meaning. On the other hand, another tendency also prevailed among another group of the companions of the Holy Prophet who had had the honor of seeing his presence and actually hearing his words. This group, which was respected by the caliphs and the Muslim community, began an intense effort to propagate the *hadith*. This was carried to such an extent that sometimes *hadith* overruled the Qur'an and the injunction of a Qur'anic verse was even considered abrogated by some people through a *hadith*.¹³ Often the transmitters of *hadith* would travel many miles and bear all the difficulties of travelling in order to hear a single saying.

A group of outsiders who had worn the dress of Islam and also some of

the enemies within the ranks of Islam began to change and distort some of the *hadith* and thus diminished the reliability and validity of the *hadith* that was then heard and known.¹⁴ For this very reason Islamic scholars began to think of a solution. They created the sciences concerned with the biography of learned men and chains of transmission of *hadith* in order to be able to discriminate between true and false *hadith*.¹⁵

The Method of Shi'ism in Authenticating the Hadith

Shi'ism, in addition to seeking to authenticate the chain of transmission of *hadith*, considers the correlation of the text of the *hadith* with the Qur'an as a necessary condition for its validity. In *Shi'ite* sources there are many *hadiths* of the Prophet and the Imams with authentic chains of transmission which themselves assert that a *hadith* contrary to the Qur'an has no value. Only that *hadith* can be considered valid which is in agreement with the Qur'an.¹⁶

Basing itself on these *hadiths*, *Shi'ism* does not act upon those *hadiths* which are contrary to the text of the Qur'an. As for *hadiths* whose agreement or disagreement cannot be established, according to instructions received from the Imams they are passed by in silence without being accepted or rejected.¹⁷ Needless to say there are also within *Shi'ism* those who, like a group among the *Sunnis*, act on any *hadith* whatsoever which they happen to find in different traditional sources.

The Method of Shi'ism in Following the Hadith

A *hadith* heard directly from the mouth of the Prophet or one of the Imams is accepted as is the Qur'an. As for *hadiths* received through intermediaries, the majority of *Shi'ites* act upon them if their chain of transmission is established at every step or if there exists definite proof concerning their truth, and, if they are concerned with principles of doctrine which require knowledge and certainty, according to the text of the Qur'an. Other than these two kinds of *hadith*, no other *hadith* has any validity concerning principles of doctrine, the invalid *hadith* being called "tradition with a single transmitter" (*khabar wāhid*). However, in establishing the injunctions of the *Shari'ah*, because of reasons that have been given, *Shi'ites* act also on a tradition which is generally accepted as reliable. Therefore, it can be said that for *Shi'ism* a certain and definitely established *hadith* is absolutely binding and must be followed, while a *hadith* which is not absolutely established but which is generally considered as reliable is utilized only in the elaboration of the injunctions of the *Shari'ah*.

Shi'ism and the Transmitted Sciences

The Islamic sciences, which owe their existence to the *ulama* of Islam who organized and formulated them, are divided into the two categories of intellectual (*'aqli*) and transmitted (*naqli*). The intellectual sciences include such sciences as philosophy and mathematics. The transmitted sciences are those which depend upon transmission from some source, such as the sciences of language, *hadith*, or history. Without doubt the major cause for the appearance of the transmitted sciences in Islam is the Holy Qur'an. With the exception of a few disciplines such as history, genealogy, and prosody, the other transmitted sciences have all come into being under the influence of the Holy Book. Guided by religious discussions and research, Muslims began to cultivate these sciences, of which the most important are Arabic literature (grammar, rhetoric, and the science of metaphors) and the sciences pertaining to the external form of religion (recitation of the Qur'an, Qur'anic commentary (*tafsir*), *hadith*, biography of learned men, the chain of transmission of *hadith*, and the principles of jurisprudence).

Shi'ites played an essential role in the foundation and establishment of these sciences. In fact, the founders and creators of many of these sciences were *Shi'ites*. Arabic grammar was put into a systematic form by Abu'l-Aswad al-Du'ali, one of the companions of the Holy Prophet, and by Ali. Ali dictated an outline for the organization of the science of Arabic grammar.¹⁸ One of the founders of the science of eloquence (rhetoric and the science of metaphors) was Sahib ibn 'Abbad, a *Shi'ite*, who was a vizier of the Buyids.²⁰ The first Arabic dictionary is the *Kitab al-Ayn* composed by the famous scholar, Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Basra, the *Shi'ite* who founded the science of prosody. He was also the teacher of the great master of grammar, Sibawayh.

The Qur'anic recitation of Asim goes back to Ali through one intermediary, and 'Abdallah ibn 'Abbas, who in *hadith* was the foremost among the companions, was a student of Ali. The contributions of the Household of the Prophet and their associates in *hadith* and jurisprudence are well known. The founders of the four *Sunni* schools of law are known to have associated with the fifth and sixth *Shi'ite* Imams. In the principles of jurisprudence the remarkable advances accomplished by the *Shi'ite* scholar Wahid Bihbahani and followed by Shaykh Murtada Ansari have never been matched in *Sunni* jurisprudence according to existing evidence.

SECOND METHOD:

THE WAY OF INTELECTION AND INTELLECTUAL REASONING

Philosophical and Theological Thought in Shi'ism

It has been mentioned before that Islam has legitimized and approved rational thought, which it considers a part of religious thought. Rational thought in its Islamic sense, after confirming the prophecy of the Prophet, provides intellectual demonstrations of the validity of the external aspect of the Qur'an, which is a divine revelation, as well as of the definitely established sayings of the Prophet and his noble Household.

Intellectual proofs, which aid man in finding solutions for these problems through his God-given nature, are of two kinds: demonstration (*burhan*) and dialectic (*jadal*). Demonstration is a proof whose premises are true (accord with reality) even if they be not observable or evident. In other words, it is a proposition which man comprehends and confirms by necessity through his God-given intelligence, as for example when he knows that "the number three is less than four." This type of thought is called rational thought; and in case it concerns universal problems of existence, such as the origin and end of the world and of man, it becomes known as philosophical thought.

Dialectic is a proof all or some of whose premises are based on observable and certain data, as for example the case of believers in a religion for whom the common practice is to prove their religious views within that religion by appealing to its certain and evident principles.

The Holy Qur'an has employed both these methods and there are many verses in the Holy Book attesting to each type of proof. First of all, the Qur'an commands free investigation and meditation upon the universal principles of the world of existence and the general principles of cosmic order, as well as upon more particular orders such as that of the heavens, the stars, day and night, the earth, the plants, animals, men, etc. It praises in the most eloquent language intellectual investigation of these matters.

Secondly, the Qur'an has commanded man to apply dialectical thought, which is usually called theological (*kalami*)¹⁹ discussion, provided it is accomplished in the best manner possible, that is, with the aim of manifesting the truth without contention and by men who possess the necessary moral virtues. It is said in the Qur'an, "Call unto the way of the Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and reason [*"jaddil", from jadala*] with them in the better way" (Qur'an, XVI, 125).

Shi'ite Initiative in Islamic Philosophy and Kalam

As for theology, *kalam*, it is clear that from the beginning, when the *Shi'ites* separated from the *Sunni* majority they began to debate with their opponents concerning their own particular point of view. It is true that a debate has two sides and that both the opponents share in it. However, the *Shi'ites* were continuously on the offensive, taking the initiative, while the other side played the defensive role. In the gradual growth of *kalam*, which reached its height in the 2nd/8th and 3rd/9th centuries with the spread of the *Mu'tazilite* school, *Shi'ite* scholars and learned men, who were students of the school of the Household of the Prophet, became among the foremost masters of *kalam*. Furthermore, the chain of theologians of the *Sunnī* world, whether it be the *Ash'arites*, *Mu'tazilites* or others, goes back to the first Imam of the *Shi'ites*, Ali.

As for philosophy,²⁰ those who are acquainted with the sayings and works of the companions of the Prophet (of which the names of 12,000 have been recorded and 120,000 are known to exist) know that there is little in them containing an appreciable discussion of philosophical questions. It is only Ali whose compelling metaphysical utterances contain the deepest philosophical thought.

The companions and the scholars who followed them, and in fact the Arabs of that day in general, were not acquainted with free intellectual discussion. There is no example of philosophical thought in the works of the scholars of the first two centuries. Only the profound saying of the *Shi'ite* Imams, particularly the first and eighth, contain an inexhaustible treasury of philosophical meditations in their Islamic context. It is they who acquainted some of their students with this form of thought.

The Arabs were not familiar with philosophical thought until they saw examples of it during the 2nd/8th century in the translation of certain philosophical works into Arabic. Later, during the 3rd/9th century, numerous philosophical writings were translated into Arabic from Greek, Syriac, and other languages and through them the method of philosophical thought became known to the general public. Nevertheless, most jurists and theologians did not look upon philosophy and other intellectual sciences, which were newly arrived guests, with favor. At the beginning, because of the support of the governmental authorities for these sciences, their opposition did not have much effect. But conditions soon changed and through strict orders many philosophical works were destroyed. The *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity*, which is the work of a group of unknown authors, is a reminder of those days

and attests to the unfavorable conditions of that epoch.

After this period of difficulty, philosophy was revived at the beginning of the 4th/10th century by the famous philosopher Abu Nasr al-Farabi. In the 5th/11th century, as a result of the works of the celebrated philosopher Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Peripatetic philosophy reached its full development. In the 6th/12th century Shaykh al-Ishraq Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi systematized the philosophy of illumination (*ishraq*) and because of this was executed by the order of Salah al-Din Ayyubi. Thereafter, philosophy ceased to exist among the Muslim majority in the Sunni world. There was no further outstanding philosopher in that part of the Muslim world except in Andalusia at the edge of the Islamic world where at the end of the 6th/12th century Ibn Rushd (Averroes) sought to revive the study of philosophy.²¹

Shi'ite Contributions to Philosophy and the Intellectual Sciences

In the same way that from the beginning Sufism played an effective role in the formation of Islamic philosophical thought, it was also a principal factor in the further development and propagation of philosophy and the Islamic sciences. Although after Ibn Rushd philosophy disappeared in the *Sunni* world, it continued to live in *Shi'ism*. After Ibn Rushd there appeared such celebrated philosophers as Kiwajah Nasir al-Din Tusi, Mir Damad, and Sadr al-Din Shirazi, who studied, developed and expounded philosophical thought one after another. In the same manner, in the other intellectual sciences, there appeared many outstanding figures such as Nasir al-Din Tusi (who was both philosopher and mathematician) and Birjandi, who was also an outstanding mathematician.

All the sciences, particularly metaphysics of theosophy (*falsafah-i ilahi* or *hikmat-i ilahi*), made major advances thanks to the indefatigable endeavor of *Shi'ite* scholars. This fact can be seen if one compares the works of Nasir al-Din Tusi, Shams al-Din Turkun, Mir Damad, and Sadr al-Din Shirazi with the writings of those who came before them.²²

It is known that the element that was instrumental in the appearance of philosophical and metaphysical thought in *Shi'ism* and through *Shi'ism* in other Islamic circles was the treasury of knowledge left behind by the Imams. The persistence and continuity of this type of thought in *Shi'ism* is due to the existence of this same treasury of knowledge, which *Shi'ism* has continued to regard with a sense of reverence and respect.

In order to clarify this situation it is enough to compare the treasury of knowledge left by the Household of the Prophet with the philosophical works

written over the course of the centuries. In this comparison one can see clearly how each day Islamic philosophy approached this source of knowledge ever more closely, until in the 11th/17th century Islamic philosophy and this inspired treasury of wisdom converged more or less completely. They were separated only by certain differences of interpretation of some of the principles of philosophy.

THIRD METHOD:

INTELLECTUAL INTUITION OR MYSTICAL UNVEILING

*Man and Gnostic Comprehension*²³

Even though most men are occupied with gaining a livelihood and providing for their daily needs and show no concern for spiritual matters, there lies within the nature of man an innate urge to seek the ultimately Real. In certain individuals this force which is dormant and potential becomes awakened and manifests itself openly, thus leading to a series of spiritual perceptions.

Every man believes in a permanent Reality despite the claim of sophists and skeptics who call every truth and reality illusion and superstition. Occasionally when man views with a clear mind and a pure soul the permanent Reality pervading the universe and the created order, and at the same time sees the impermanence and transient character of the diverse parts and elements of the world, he is able to contemplate the world and its phenomena as mirrors which reflect the beauty of a permanent reality. The joy of comprehending this Reality obliterates every other joy in the eye of the viewer and makes everything else appear as insignificant and unimportant.

This vision is that same gnostic "divine attraction" (*Jadhbat*) which draws the attention of the God-centered man toward the transcendent world and awakens the love of God in his heart, through this attraction he forgets all else. All his manifold desires and wishes are obliterated from his mind. This attraction guides man to the worship and praise of the Invisible who is in reality more evident and manifest than all that is visible and audible. In truth it is this same inner attraction that has brought into being the different religions within the world, religions which are based on the worship of God. The gnostic (*arif*) is the one who worships God through knowledge and because of love for Him, not in hope of reward or fear of punishment.²⁴

From this exposition it becomes clear that we must not consider gnosis as a religion among others, but as the heart of all religions. Gnosis is one of the paths of worship, a path based on knowledge combined with love, rather than fear. It is the path for realizing the inner truth of religion rather than remaining satisfied only with its external form and rational thought. Every revealed religion and even those that appear in the form of idol-worship have certain followers who march upon the path of gnosis. The polytheistic religions²⁵ and Judaism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Islam all have believers who are gnostics.

Appearance of Gnosis (*Sufism*) in Islam

Among the companions of the Prophet, Ali is known particularly for his eloquent exposition of gnostic truths and the stages of the spiritual life. His words in this domain comprise an inexhaustible treasury of wisdom. Among the works of the other companions which have survived there is not a great deal of material that concerns this type of question. Among the associates of Ali, such as Salman Farsi, Uways Qarani, Kuttayl ibn Ziyad, Roshaid Hajari, Maytham Tammar and Rabi' ibn Khaytham are famed for this discipline.

However, there are figures who have been considered by the majority of the *Sufis*, *Sunni* and *Shi'ite* alike, as the heads of their spiritual chain (*silsilah*) after Ali.

After this group there appeared others. Such as Tawus Yamani, Shayban Ra'i, Malik ibn Dinar, Ibrahim Adham, and Shaciq Balkhi, who were considered by the people to be saints and men of God. These men, without publicly talking about gnosis and *Sufism*, appeared externally as ascetics and did not hide the fact that they had been initiated by the earlier group and had undergone spiritual training under them.

After them there appeared at the end of the 2nd/8th century and the beginning of the 3rd/9th century men such as Bayazid Bastami, Ma'ruf Karkhi, Junayd Baghdadi and others like them, who followed the *Sufi* path and openly declared their connection with *Sufism* and gnosis. They divulged certain esoteric sayings based on spiritual vision which, because of their repellent external form, brought upon them the condemnation of some of the jurists and theologians. Some of them were imprisoned, flogged, and even occasionally killed.²⁶ Even so, this group persisted and continued its activities despite its opponents. In this manner gnosis and the "Way" (*Tariqah*, or *Sufism*) continued to grow until in the 7th/13th and 8th/14th centuries it reached the height of its expansion and power. Since then, sometimes stronger and at other

times less, so it has continued its existence to this very day within the Islamic world.

Gnosis of *Sufism* as we observe it today first appeared in the *Sunni* world and later among the *Shi'ites*. The first men who openly declared themselves to be *Sufis* and gnostics, and were recognized as spiritual masters of *Sufi* orders, apparently followed *Sunnism* in the branches (*fiara*) of Islamic law. Many of the masters who followed them and who expanded the *Sufi* orders were also *Sunnis* in their following of the law.

Even so, these masters traced their spiritual chain, which in the spiritual life is like the genealogical chain of a person, through their previous masters to Ali. Also the results of their visions and intuitions as transmitted to us convey mostly truths concerning divine unity and the stations of the spiritual life which are found in the sayings of Ali and other *Shi'ite* Imams. This can be seen provided we are not affected by some of the striking and even sometimes shocking expressions used by these *Sufi* masters and consider the total content of their teaching with deliberation and patience.

Guidance Provided by the Qur'an and *Sunnah* for Gnostic Knowledge

God -- exalted be His Name -- has commanded man in several places in the Qur'an to deliberate upon the Holy Book and be persistent in this effort and not to be satisfied with a merely superficial and elementary understanding of it. In many verses the world of creation and all that is in it without exception are called portents (*ayat*), signs and symbols of the Divine.²⁷ A degree of deliberation upon the meaning of portents and signs and penetration into their real significance will reveal the fact that things are called by these names because they manifest and make known not so much themselves but a reality other than themselves. For example, a red light placed as a sign of danger, once seen, reminds one completely of the idea of danger so that one no longer pays attention to the red light itself. If one begins to think about the form or quiddity of the light or its color, there will be in his mind only the form of the lamp or its glass or color rather than the conception of danger. In the same manner, if the world and its phenomena are all and in every aspect signs and portents of God, the Creator of the Universe, they have no ontological independence of their own. No matter how we view them they display nothing but God.

He who through guidance of the Holy Qur'an is able to view the world and the people of the world with such an eye will apprehend nothing but God. Instead of seeing only this borrowed beauty which others see in the attractive

appearance of the world, he will see an Infinite Beauty, a Beloved who manifests Himself through the narrow confines of this world. Of course, as in the example of the red light, what is contemplated and seen in "signs" and "portents" is God the Creator of the world and not the world itself. The relation of God to the world is from a certain point of view like $(1 \div 0)$ not $(1 - 1)$ nor (1×1) (that is, the world is nothing before God and adds nothing to Him). It is at the moment of realization of this truth that the harvest of man's separative existence is plundered and in one stroke man entrusts his heart to the hands of Divine love. This realization obviously does not take place through the instrument of the eye or the ear or the other outward senses, nor through the power of imagination or reason, for all these instruments are themselves signs and portents and of little significance to the spiritual guidance sought here.²⁸

He who has attained the vision of God and who has no intention but to remember God and forget all else, when he hears that in another place in the Qur'an God says, "*O ye who believe! Ye have charge of your own souls. He who erreth cannot injure you if ye are rightly guided*" (Qur'an, V, 105), then he understands that the sole royal path which will guide him fully and completely is the path of "self-realization". His true guide who is God Himself obliges him to know himself, to leave behind all other ways and to seek the path of self-knowledge, to see God through the window of his soul, gaining in this way the real object of his search. That is why the Prophet has said, "*He who knows himself verily knows the Lord.*"²⁹ And also he has said, "*Those among you know God better who know themselves better.*"³⁰

ENDNOTES

1. It is with reference to this truth that the Holy Prophet in a *hadith* accepted by *Sunni* and *Shi'ites* alike says, "*We prophets speak to mankind according to the degree of their understanding.*" *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol.I, p.37; *Usul al-Kafi*, Kulayni, Tehran, 1357, vol.I, p.303.
2. *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Sermon 231.
3. *Al-Durr al-Ikhtisar*, vol.II, p.6.
4. *Tafsir al-Safi*, Mulla Mahdi Fayd Qashani, Tehran, 1269, p.8; *Rihac al-anwar*, vol XIX, p.28.
5. Qur'an, XXVI, 173.
6. Qur'an, I, IV, 34.
7. It may be added that this is the method employed by the author in his monumental Qur'anic commentary, *al-Mizan*.
8. *Tafsir al-Safi*, p.4.
9. This has been recounted of the Prophet in the *Tafsir al-Safi*, p.15; *Safinat al-Bihar* of Abbas Qumi, Najaf, 1352-55, and other well-known commentaries.

10. This is in reference to the Qur'anic verse, "We shall show them our portents upon the horizons and within themselves, until it be manifest unto them that it is the Truth" (XII, 53).
11. This is a direct reference to the practice of *dhikr* or invocation which also means remembrance and is the fundamental technique of spiritual realization in *Sufism*.
12. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. I, p.117.
13. The question of the abrogation or substitution of certain verses of the Qur'an is one of the difficult problems of the science of the principles of jurisprudence and at least some of the *talama* in *Isfahan* seem to have accepted abrogation. The incident of *Fadak* seems also to involve the question of different kinds of interpretations given to Qur'anic verses through the use of *hadith*.
14. The proof of this question lies in the large number of works written by traditional religious scholars on fabricated *hadith*. Also in books dealing with the biography of learned men, some transmitters of *hadith* have been described as unreliable and others as weak.
15. The traditional Islamic criticism of *hadith* literature and the question of criteria for distinguishing between true and false *hadith* must not be in any way confused with the criticism of European orientalis made against the whole corpus of *hadith*. From the Islamic view this is one of the most diabolical remarks made against the whole structure of Islam.
16. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. I, p.139.
17. *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. I, p.117.
18. *Wafayat al-A'yan* of Ibn Khallikan, Tehran, 1384, p.78; *A'yan al-Shi'ah* of Muhsin Amili, Damascus, 1935 onward, vol. XI, p.231.
19. *Kalam* is a special discipline in Islam; the word is totally rendered into European languages as theology, although the role and scope of *kalam* and theology are not the same. Henceforth, the word *kalam* itself, which is now gradually coming into use in English, will be employed in its original Arabic form and will not be translated.
20. As pointed out before, philosophy in this context means traditional philosophy, which is based on certainty, and not the specifically modern philosophy that begins with doubt and limits the intellect to reason.
21. These matters are amply treated in *Adhkar al-Hukama'* of Ibn al-Qutbi, Leipzig, 1921, *Wafayat al-A'yan*, and other biographies of learned men.
22. These are all outstanding philosophers of the later period (from the 7th/13th to the 11th/17th centuries) and are nearly unknown in the West, except for Tusi who is, however, known more for his mathematical works than for his philosophical contributions.
23. Islamic esotericism is called *Sufism* (*tasawwuf*) or *gnosis* (*irfan*); the first word concerns more the practical and the second the theoretical aspect of the same reality. It has been common among *Shi'ite* religious scholars since the Safavid period to refer to Islamic esotericism more often as *irfan* than as *tasawwuf*. This is due to historical reasons connected with the fact that the Safavids were at first a *Sufi* order and later gained political power, with the result that many worldly men sought to put on the garb of *Sufism* in order to gain political or social power, therefore, discrediting *Sufism* in the eyes of the devout.
24. The sixth Imam has said, "There are three kinds of worship: a group worship God in fear and that is the worship of slaves; a group worship God in order to receive rewards and that is the worship of mercenaries; and a group worship God because of their love and

devotion to Him and that is the worship of free men. That is the best form of worship." *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol.XV, p.208.

25. The author has here in mind the religions of India and the Far East in which different aspects of the Divinity are symbolized by mythical and symbolic forms and deities and which therefore appear in the eye of Muslims in general as "polytheism".
26. See the works of the biographies of learned men and also *Tadhkirat al-Awliya'* of Astar, Tehran, 1331 (A.H. solar), and *Tar'iq al-Haqiq* of Ma'sum Ali Shahr, Tehran, 1318.
27. There is a difference between a sign which signifies a meaning through agreement and a symbol which reveals the meaning symbolized through an essential and ontological bond between the symbol and the symbolized. Here the author is using the concept of signs and portents (*ayat*) in the world in the sense of true symbols.
28. Ali has said, *"God is not that which can enter under one of the categories of knowledge. God is That which guides reasoning toward Himself."* *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol.11, p.186.
29. A famous hadith repeated especially in works of well-known *Sufis* and *gnostics*, *Shi'ite* and *Sunni* alike.
30. This *hadith* is also found in many *gnostic* works, both *Shi'ite* and *Sunni*.

The West Struggles to Divide and Break Up Islam's Global Challenge

By: Kalim Siddiqui

Three recently published books have these titles: '*Global Visions*', '*Globalization*', and '*Global Culture*'. All are American publications and deal with 'social movements' in the world, including Islam. They talk of a 'world system' that has a global vision and a global culture. The 'world system' is an euphemism for the US-European white Western domination of the world. But within this world system there are other visions and cultures seeking globalization or even partial domination. Islam is one such 'destabilising' factor that needs to be contained, managed and eventually 'modernized' and absorbed by the world system. A version of Islam that does not threaten the world system and is, in fact, compatible with it already exists and thrives at official levels in most post-colonial nation-states, especially in Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Egypt, Turkey, Morocco and so on.

There is, however, one strain of the Islamic virus that is life-threatening to the world system. This is the 'fundamentalist' Islam or the Islamic movement that wants to overthrow the post-colonial order and the West's client regimes. In the West's taxonomy there are the good and moderate parts of the Islamic Movement. These are, in the main, the subcontinental Jama'at-e-Islami (founded by Mawdoodi in 1941), and the Ikhwan al-Muslimoon (founded by Hasan al-Banna in 1928). The Jama'at and the Ikhwan are 'good' and 'moderate' because they want change through established, partially 'democratic' order introduced by the West. In particular these two 'Islamic parties' founded in the colonial period endorse the Islamic legitimacy of the Saudi monarchy and of the 'republican' or militaristic secular order in Muslim Asia and Africa. There are numerous similar Islamic parties in many Muslim countries. Their moderation and democratic, modernist credentials are applauded by the world system.

The life-threatening Islamic virus is not exactly new. The West had encountered it in the early colonial phase in the form of the various *jihad* movements in Africa and Asia. The most recent life-threatening virus has come from the Islamic Revolution in Iran. It is fundamentalist, terrorist, barbaric, undemocratic, medieval, anti-modernist, anti-rationalist and so on. Because it is life-threatening to the world system, it needs to be isolated,

contained and, wherever possible, crushed and destroyed. But the Western academic commentators acknowledge that Islamic fundamentalism, too, is a global movement. This realization creates enormous difficulties for them. How can they contain, isolate and destroy something that is also global?

The West is very scientific in its approach. It has realized that the power of fundamentalism comes from its global worldview; from the fact that Muslims of all schools of thought, race and nationality belong to it. The West's first priority therefore is to try to break it up into pieces. If possible, such pieces should be hostile to each other. The first and obvious division is achieved by separately identifying the *Shi'a* and *Sunni* wings of the Islamic movement. Then the 'fundamentalist' Islamic movements among *Sunnis* has to be divided into pro- and anti-Irani wings. For the West, the most desirable form of Islamic fundamentalism is the anti-Irani variety even if it is also anti-Saudi in its rhetoric. If such fundamentalism is also deeply *Sunni* and anti-*Shi'a* on doctrinal grounds, it is much better. Similarly, if there is, as indeed there is, anti-*Sunni* fundamentalism among the *Shi'a* then it is to be encouraged.

Why this is so needs very careful understanding of the historical process. First and foremost, if Islam is divided into two warring or at least hostile camps, *Shi'a* and *Sunni*, the global appeal of Islam is greatly diminished. In this way a great deal of Muslim attention and resources are diverted away from the West as Islam's primary opponent and deployed in fighting the 'enemy within'. This cuts down the total mobilizable power of Islam against its external enemies. A substantial part of the total global power of Islam is consumed in fighting the so-called enemy within instead of fighting the West and its clients.

The anti-Irani animus among fundamentalist *Sunnis* is especially useful to the West. This is because the only part of the Islamic movement that has so far succeeded in actually defeating the West and establishing an Islamic State is the movement in Iran. A track record of success is very important for the future success of any movement. Nothing succeeds like success. The *Sunnis* who can be persuaded to disown the Islamic Revolution in Iran is a role model for their own future success and in fact taking the sting out of their own movement. The West need not fear a movement that is prepared to disown the most successful episode in its recent history. The Islamic Revolution in Iran is the only success that Islam has recorded against the West since the fall of Spain just over 500 years ago. To remove the memory of a victorious battle from your own memory bank is to restore to your enemy an enormous psychological advantage.

The Islamic movement, or any part of it, cannot succeed unless all part of it stand for the whole of Islam, all schools of thought in Islam, and for Islam's historical experience in its entirety. Islam's historical experience, good or bad, success or failure is part of Islam. Any attempt to cobble together a selected, eclectic Islam from its historical experience would weaken and fragment the whole House of Islam. Fragmentation inevitably leads to defeat and failure and greater fragmentation. The acceptance of any division in the House of Islam is a victory for the West and a nail in the political coffin of Muslims.

To say this is not to deny the diversity that is found in Islam and the competing approaches that exist within the global Islamic movement. Any history and tradition that is rich in its depth of experience and range of intellectual inquiry is bound to throw up competing ideas at any one time.

The diversity and range of these ideas and approaches guarantee that the best of those would ultimately succeed. Those that do not succeed are not necessarily 'wrong' or based on blasphemy (*kuf'r*). Even ideas and approaches that fail may contribute to the success of others coming after them.

In this respect the Islamic movement must be enriched by the all-inclusive integrated nature of Islam. In Islam there is no such thing as separation between religion and politics. The political core of Islam is an integral part of Islam's belief system. Hence, early in the history of Islam when political differences emerged among Muslims, everyone felt compelled to present their position in theological forms. While the differences were on rational and/or political grounds of expediency, the arguments for them were written into theology and often justified as 'received truth'. Subsequently these issues became the cornerstone of sectarianism in Islam. In the last 200 years a number of political thinkers such as Shah Waliullah of Delhi, Syed Ahmed Shahid, Othman dan Fodio, Jamal al-Din Asadzhadi, Hasan al-Banna, Maulana Mawdoodi and Imam Ruhullah Khomeini have managed to put forward powerful political ideas on purely rational basis without having to resort to establishing their own schools of thought. This emergence of rationalism in Muslim thought was also responsible for the *usuli* revolution in the *Shi'a* tradition that eventually made the Islamic Revolution possible.

There now appears to be a new attempt afoot to try to lock up, once again, rationalist thought behind the iron bars of 'belief' (*aqida*). Such is the approach of the *Wahabi/Salafi* movements among some *Sunni* groups in the Arabian peninsula and Egypt. Among the *Shi'a* the *hujjatiah* are believed to be of a similar mind. It is also noticeable that these groups claim to be political,

insisting only on 'Islamic purity'. In fact in the name of purity these groups represent a kind of neo-fascism among Muslims.

The Islamic movement must resist and reject this type of reversion of Muslim thought to the narrow confines of an age of decline, defeat and dismemberment. Belief (*aqida*) is not designed to restrict rational thought but to guide it. The scientific approach of exploratory thought and the experimental method are as important in guiding the Islamic movement as in any other field of human activity where a wide range of choice is available. Beliefs are a set of lamp-posts to stop us drifting into the abyss of primordial chaos. A large number of competing approaches (hypotheses) thrown up by exploratory rationalist thought and developed by parallel but friendly groups within the wide spectrum of the global Islamic movement is the only way to develop and perfect the formula that would eventually restore Islam to its victorious ways. For example, in the last 50 years the assumption that 'Islamic political parties' would establish Islamic States after winning democratically organized elections has been tried out in many parts of the world. It has failed everywhere. A new phase has been inaugurated by the Islamic Revolution in Iran. Every part of the Islamic movement is now claiming to be 'revolutionary'. Some, especially the erstwhile political parties, are trying to retain their democratic credentials and take on board a redefined version of the 'Islamic Revolution'. Still others are saying that their revolution would be 'peaceful, not bloody'. Thus a whole brigade of half-baked revolutionaries will muddy the waters for a few years. But, like the democrats before them, they too will in time fall by the wayside. Some, like FIS in Algeria, might discover the revolutionary path by experience.

A whole range of new ideas and experiences will enrich and eventually refine the global Islamic movement and all parts of it. The historical validity of Islam will be established by its record of history-making, not by mere assertions and claims of being 'according to the Qur'an and *Sunnah*'. Those who claim the validity of their position 'according to the Qur'an and *Sunnah*' usually forget the essential fact that the 'Qur'an and *Sunnah*' are what they are because they combined to change the historical situation permanently. The authority of the Qur'an and *Sunnah* are based on their initial success in transforming the world. The Book was revealed interwoven in a dynamic programme of action (*Sunnah*) to change the world as it was at that time. Any part or programme or movement that fails by this acid test of history also fails by the standards set by the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, upon whom be peace. All parts of the Islamic movement, even the erstwhile democrats,

are now trying to emulate the Islamic Revolution, in whole or in part, because the Islamic Revolution in Iran has succeeded where other attempts before it had failed. The Islamic Revolution has also changed the way Muslims will always think of the political method that is required of them for similar successes in other parts of the world.

The West's global pretensions are based on their real or perceived global successes. The West acknowledges the global potential of Islam but insists that Islam does not have a comparable global success story to go with it. It is for the global Islamic movement to prove them wrong.

A Glimpse at Imam Ali's Life

By: Al-Shaykh Al-Mufid

INTRODUCTION:

Al-Shaykh al-Mufid is one of the most outstanding scholars of the 11th century (4th-5th century). The period during which he lived in Baghdad was a period in which Shi'ite scholars enjoyed particular freedom, and hence we see a blossoming of Shi'ite scholarship in Baghdad. Al-Mufid was the first scholar after the Occultation of the Twelfth Imam who pioneered the tradition of comprehensive scholarship in the Shi' world. He was a prolific writer who has the authorship of about two hundred books and treatises to his credit. Their subject ranges from family, exegesis of the Qur'an, philosophical and theological interpretation. The present article is extracted from one of his books namely Kitāb al-Irshād (the book of guidance). This book has been translated into English by I. K. A. Howard and published by the Muhammadi Trust. It is written by Ibn al-Nadīm. It is written in answer to a request for guidance about the lives of the Imams (a). The book is in two halves. The first deals with the first Imam and the second half deals with the other eleven Imams.

Henceforth, an abridged form of the life of each Imam will be published in each issue of this journal. The present article deals with the life of Imam Ali (a).

This is an account of the life of the Commander of the faithful, the brother of the Apostle of God and his paternal cousin, and his helper (*awālī*) in his affair, his son-in-law (being married) to his daughter, Fatima the chaste, mistress of the women of the universe, The full name of the Commander of the faithful is Ali b. Abi Talib b. Abd al-Muttalib b. Hashim b. Abd Manaf. He was the Lord of the testamentary trustees of authority (*wasīyyān*), the best of blessing and peace be on him, His nickname (*kunyah*) was Aḥul al-Ḥaṣan.

He was born in the Sacred House (i.e., the Ka'ba) in Mecca on Friday, the thirteenth day of the month of Rajab, thirty years after the Year of the Elephant (c.570). Nobody before or after him has ever been born in the House of God, the Most High. It was a mark of him being honoured by God, the Most High, and of his position being dignified in its greatness.

His mother was Fatima, daughter of Asad bin Hashim bin Abd Manaf, may God be pleased with her. She was like a mother to the Apostle of God,

and his family, and he (the Apostle) was brought up under her care.

He was grateful for her kindness and she was among the first to believe in him and she emigrated with him in the group of the emigrants. When she died, the Prophet shrouded her with his own shirt in order to protect her from the insects of the earth, and he laid her to rest in her grave in order that, through that, she might be protected from (the crushing pressure of) the narrow space within the grave. He dictated to her, her last words (which were) the statement of the authority (*wilaya*) of her son, the Commander of the Faithful, peace be on him, so that at the examination after burial, she would be able to reply with those words. He singled her out with this great favour because of her position with God, and with him. The report of that is well known.

The Commander of the faithful, Ali bin Abi Talib, and his brothers were among the leading members of the second generation of descendants of Hashim. In this way he gained two marks of nobility, through his growing up under the care and education of the Apostle of God. He was the first male whom the Prophet summoned to Islam and who answered. He never ceased to support the religion and to strive against the polytheists. He constantly defended the faith and fought against those who supported deviation (from the truth) and despotism. He spread the teachings of the *sunnah* (the practice of the Prophet) and the Qur'an, judged with justice and enjoined people to do good.

He was with the Apostle of God for 23 years after the coming of the prophetic mission. Of these, 13 years were in Mecca before the emigration when he shared with him all the persecutions and bore most of his hardships. Then there were 10 years in Medina after the emigration when he defended him against the polytheists and strove with him against the unbelievers. He protected him with his own life from the enemies of religion until the time God, took him (the Prophet) to His heaven, raised him to the highest place in the heaven and bestowed His blessings and peace on him and his family. On that day the Commander of the faithful, was 63 years of age.

On the day of the death of the Prophet, the community differed over his Imamate. His Shi'a who were all the Banu Hashim, Salman, Ammar, Abu Dharr, al-Miqdad, Khuzayma b. Thabit --the man who is known as the possessor of two testimonies-- Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, Jabir b. Abd Allah al-Ansari, Abu Sa'd al-Khudri and people like them among the important emigrants and Ansar (all these), maintained that he was the successor (*khaliifa*) after the Apostle of God, and the Imam. They did this because of his outstanding merit (*fadl*) above all mankind, through the fact that there were

gathered in him the qualities of outstanding merit, judgement and perfection, such as him being the first of the community to enter the faith, his superiority over them in knowledge of the laws, his precedence over them in fighting (*jihad*) and the distinction which set him apart from them in the extent of his piety, asceticism and righteousness.

Furthermore he had been specially singled out by the Prophet from among (all) his relations because of the qualities which no other relation, apart from him, shared with the Prophet and because of the nomination (*nass*) of his authority (*wilaya*), without there being any opposition to this definition. If the Commander of the faithful was, by the stipulation of the Qur'an, more appropriate for authority among the people than themselves because of his being their *wali* according to the textual nomination (*nass*) in the Clear Explanation (i.e., the Qur'an, *shāhīd*), it was obviously necessary for all of them to obey him, just as obedience to God, the Most High, and obedience to His Apostle, peace be on him and his family, was required because of the information about their authority (*wilaya*) over creatures which is given in this verse with clear proof.

Another reason for their support for the Commander of the faithful was because of what the Prophet said on the day of the assembly at his house. He had especially gathered the Banu Abd al Muttalib there in order to make the following solemn pledge:

"Whoever helps me in this matter will be my brother, my testamentary trustee (wasi), my helper (nadir), my heir and my successor after me."

Then the Commander of the faithful stood up before him (the Prophet) among all the gathering of them, and on that day he was the youngest of them, and he said: *"O Apostle of God, I will help you."* Then the Prophet said: *"Sit down, you are my brother, my trustee, my helper, my inheritor and successor after me."*

This is a clear statement about the successor after the Prophet. In addition, there is also what the Prophet said on the day of *Ghadir Khumm*. The community had gathered to listen to the sermon in which he asked: *"Am I not more appropriate for authority (awla) over you than yourselves?"* "Yes," they answered.

Then he spoke to them in an ordered manner without any interruption in his speech: *"Whomsoever I am the authority over (mawla), Ali is also the authority over."*

Thus the Prophet required for him (Ali), through laying down obedience

to him and his authority over them, the same authority as he had over them, and which he made them acknowledge and which they did not deny. This is clear evidence of the nomination (*nass*) of him for the Imamate and for succession to his position.

Furthermore there is the Prophet's statement to him at the time of setting out to Tabuk: *"You are in the same position with respect to me as Aaron (Harun) was to Moses (Musa) except that there is no prophet after me."* Thus he required him to have the office of helping (administering) and to be characterized by love and outstanding merit over everyone. He also required his deputizing for him both during his life and after his death. The Qur'an gives evidence for all that coming to Aaron from Moses, when God said in giving a report of what Moses said:

"Make Aaron, my brother, a helper for me from my family. Give me support through him and make him participate in my affair so that we may glorify You much and we may remember You frequently in that You have been a watcher over us."
(Qur'an, 20:29-35).

God, the Most High, said: *"Your request is granted, Moses"* (20:36). This verse confirmed that Aaron had a share with Moses in prophecy, and in helping in delivering the message and his support was strengthened through him by his aid. Moses also told him of deputizing for him, when he said: *".... Deputize for me among my people. Act for their benefit and do not follow the path of the corrupters."* (Qur'an, 7:142). This confirms his succession by the precise statement of revelation. Therefore when the Apostle of God gave all the ranks which Aaron had from Moses to the Commander of the faithful in the same extent, except for prophecy, all such things were required of him as helping the Apostle, giving him support, outstanding merit and love, because these qualities were definitely required by that. Then by the clear statement there is his deputizing for him during his life and after the prophethood which gives evidence of his succession by specification of the exception of the prophethood when he excludes him from it by mentioning *"after"*.

Proofs similar to these are so numerous that it would make the article unduly long to mention them all.

The death of the Commander of the faithful occurred before dawn of Friday 21st of the month of Ramadan, in the year 40 AH. He was a victim of the sword, Ibn Muljam al-Muradi, may God curse him, killed him at the mosque of Kufa, which he had come out to in order to wake the people for the dawn prayer on the night of the 19th of the month of Ramadan. He had been lying

in wait for him from the beginning of the night. When the Commander of the faithful passed by him while the latter was hiding his design by feigning sleep amid a group of people who were asleep, Ibn Muljam sprang out and struck him on the top of his head with his sword which was poisoned. He lingered through the day of the 19th and the night and day of the 21st and the first third of the night of the 21st. Then he died a martyr and met his Lord, the Most High, as one who has been wringed. He knew of that before its time and he told the people of it before its time. His two sons, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, peace be on them, performed the tasks of washing him and shrouding him according to his bequest. Then they carried him to al-Ghazl at Najaf in Kufa and they buried him there. They removed the traces of the place of his burial according to his bequest which was made about that to both of them by him, because of what he knew about the regime of the Umayyads (which would come) after him, and their hostile attitude towards him. For he knew the evil action and abuse to which they would be led by their wicked intentions if they had been able to know the place. His grave, peace be with him, remained hidden until Imam al-Sadiq Ja'far b. Muhammad pointed it out during the Abbasid regime. For he visited it when he came to visit Abu Ja'far (al-Mansur) while the latter was in al-Hira. Then the *Shi'a* knew of it and they began from that time to make visitation to his grave, peace be on him and on his pure offspring. On the day of his death he was 63 years of age.

Virtues, Qualities and Achievements of the Commander of the Faithful

Abu al-Jaysh al-Muzaffar b. Muhammad al-Balkhi informed me: Abu Bakr Muhammad b. Ahmad b. Abi Thaj informed us: Abu al-Hasan Ahmad b. Muhammad b. al-Qasim al-Barqi told us: Abd al-Rahman b. Salih al-Azdi told me: Asad b. Ubayda told us on the authority of Yahya b. Afif b. Qays, on the authority of his father (Afif b. Qays), who said:

"I was sitting with al-Abbas b. Abd al-Muttalib in Mecca, before the affairs of the Prophet became known to the public. A man came and looked up towards the sky where the sun hovered above. He turned in the direction of the Ka'ba and stood to pray. Then a youth came and stood at his right and a woman came and stood behind them both. The man bowed, and the youth and the woman bowed. The man raised his hands and the youth and the woman raised their hands. Then he prostrated and they both prostrated."

"Abbasi!" I exclaimed, "It is a fantastic affair!"

"Indeed, it is a fantastic affair," replied al-Abbas. "Do you know who that man is?" He is Muhammad b. Abd Allah b. Abd al-Muttalib, my cousin. Do you know who that woman is? She is Khadija, daughter of Khuwaylid. This cousin of mine (i.e., Muhammad) has told me that his Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, Who has ordered him to carry out this religion which he is practising. No, by God, there are not any on the face of the earth, who practise this religion except these three.

Abu Hafs Umar b. Muhammad al-Sayrafi informed me: Muhammad b. Ahmad b. Abi Thalj told me on the authority of Ahmad b. Muhammad b. al-Qasim al-Barqi, on the authority of Abu Salih Sehl b. Salih - it was about the year 100 AH - who said I heard Abu al-Mu'ammir Abi al-B. Abd al-Samad who said: I heard Anas b. Malik, say:

"The Apostle of God said:

"The angels bless me and Ali for 70 years, because for a time only Ali and I raised the testimony to heaven that there is no god but God and Muhammad is the Apostle of God."

Abu Nasr Muhammad b. al-Hasayn al-Mugri al-Basri al-Sayrawani informed: Abu Bakr Muhammad b. Ahmad b. Abi Thalj told us: Abu Muhammad al-Nawfali told us on the authority of Muhammad b. Abd al-Hamid, on the authority of Umar b. Abd al-Ghaffar al-Faqini who said: Ibrahim b. Hayyan reported to me on the authority of Abu Abd Allah, remainder of Banu Hashim, on the authority of Abu Sukhayla, who said:

"I and Ammar went on the pilgrimage. We stopped at the house of Abu Dharr and stayed with him for three days. When the time of our departure was at hand, I said to him: 'Abu Dharr, we consider that nothing except confusion has come over the people. What is your view?'"

"Cleave to the Book and Ali b. Abi Talib," he replied, "then bear witness to the Apostle of God who said: 'Ali was the first to believe in me and will be the first to shake my hand in greetings on the Day of Resurrection. He is the greatest testifier of the truth (siddiq) and discernor of truth and falsehood. He is the chief of the believers and money is the chief cause of wrong-doing.'"

His Qualities

As for his many qualities, the fact that they are so famous, so well-authenticated and reported by tradition and by the consensus of the religious scholars (means) that they do not need their chains of authority to

be put forward; for since they are also so numerous their full explanation would make the article too long. In our outline, an extract from them will do instead of reporting them all.

The Circumstances of the Prophet's Emigration from Mecca

An example of his qualities occurs when the Prophet ordered the emigration after the council of Quraysh had decided to kill him and he would not have been able to defeat their plans by leaving Mecca. For he wanted to keep his departure secret and keep the reports about him hidden from them so that he could carry out his departure in safety from them. He told his news to the Commander of the faithful and made him keep it secret. He gave him the responsibility of protecting him by spending the night on his (i.e., the Prophet's) bed so that they would think that the Prophet was sleeping there as he had normally done on previous nights. The Commander of the faithful, dedicated his life to God, the Exalted, devoted it to God, in obedience and exchanged it for His Prophet in order that he might save him from the plots of his enemies and thus make sure of his safety and survival and also arrange properly his purpose in summoning the people to the faith, establishing the religion and making public God's law (*shari'a*). He spent the night on the bed of the Apostle of God hidden by his waist-cover (*izar*). The people who had plotted to kill the Prophet came to him and surrounded him. They were carrying weapons. They waited until the dawn rose so that they could kill him openly and thus his blood would be shed in such a way that Banu Hashim would see that his murderers were from all the clans (of Quraysh). Then it would not be possible for them to take vengeance on them for him because everyone had shared in taking his blood and every tribe would be spared from fighting his group and being separate from his family.

Ali's action was the reason for the Prophet being saved, his blood being kept safe and his survival until he died at the time of his Lord's command. If it had not been for the Commander of the faithful and his action, it would not have been possible for the Apostle of God to propagate and carry out his mission, nor would he had remained alive and continued to survive. Thus through him he overcame the envy of the people and his enemies. In the morning when the people were intending to rush upon him, he rushed towards them. They scattered from him when they recognized him and departed. Their plot against the Prophet had gone wrong. The preparations they had made to kill him had been destroyed. Their plans had been betrayed and their hopes brought to nought. In this way was the faith properly set up, Satan humiliated

and the people of the unbelief and enmity betrayed. None of the people of Islam share this achievement with the Commander of the faithful, nor is any equal to it in any circumstances known, nor is there anything approaching it in merit according to any correct consideration. Concerning the Commander of the faithful, and the night he spent on the Prophet's bed, God, glory be to Him, revealed:

"Whoever among the people sells his life out of a desire to please God, God is kind to such servant." (Qur'an, 2:207)

The Commander of the Faithful fulfils the Prophet's Obligations in Mecca

Another example of that is that the Prophet was the one trusted by the Quraysh with the things which they wished to deposit. When the situation occurred which required his sudden flight from Mecca, he could not find anyone among his people and his family to entrust the things which he had been entrusted with except the Commander of the faithful. He appointed him (i.e., the Commander of the faithful) as his deputy to return the things deposited with him to their owners and to pay the debts which he owed. Then he gathered his daughter, the womenfolk of his family and his wives and their emigration was entrusted to him for he did not consider that anyone could take his place among all the people. Thus he set his trust on his faithfulness, depended upon his courage and bravery, and in the defense of his family and his close associates he relied upon his fearlessness and his ability. He rested upon his reliability to look after his family and his womenfolk. He recognized in his piety and protection from error by which the soul could feel sure of his reliability in those matters.

Ali (a), carried out these tasks very well. He returned every deposit to its owner; he paid every debt to the person to whom it was owed; he looked after the daughter and womenfolk of the Prophet; and he emigrated with them, he himself going on foot to protect them from the enemies and guard them against adversaries; he took them from the gently on the journey until he brought them to him at Medina (having provided them) with complete protection and guarding, good companionship and excellent organization. The Prophet gave him accommodation in his house when he arrived in Medina and allowed him to stay with him and mix with his womenfolk and children. He did not exclude him from anything which was special to himself, nor did he withhold from him the inner meaning and the secrets of his affair. This is a quality which is uniquely held by him (the Commander of the faithful) from

among all his house and companions. None of his followers or supporters shared in it and there occurred in no other creature any merit like it, which equalled it in appearance and came near to it in its testing quality. It was in addition to his outstanding achievements which we have mentioned and their overwhelming merit and their nobility in the hearts of those who think.

Islam in Yemen

Another example which is agreed upon by all the historians, biographers (*ahli al-sira*), is that, the Prophet sent Khalid b. Walid to the people of Yemen to call them to Islam. With him, he sent a group of Muslims, among whom was al-Bara b. Azib. Khalid stayed with the people for six months calling them to Islam but not one of them responded. That depressed the Apostle of God. He summoned the Commander of the faithful and ordered him to send back Khalid and those who were with him. However, he told him that if anyone of those who had been with Khalid wanted to stay, he should let him.

Al-Bara' reported:

"I was one of those who followed him. When we came to the first people among the Yemenis and the news reached the people (generally), they gathered before him. Ali b. Abi Talib prayed the dawn prayer with us, then he advanced in front of us. He praised and glorified God. Then he read the letter of the Apostle of God. The whole of Hamdan became Muslim in one day. The Commander of the faithful wrote about that to the Apostle of God. When he read his letter, he was pleased and delighted. He prostrated in thanks of God, the Exalted. He raised his head and sat. He said: 'Greetings to Hamdan. After the submission to Islam of Hamdan, the rest of the people of Yemen will follow them into Islam.'"

Taking up the Standard at Khaybar

Similar to that was the putting to flight of those who were put to fight at Khaybar. The exalted rank of carrying the standard is considered highly. By the standard-bearer's being put to flight, there occurred such disarray as could not be hidden from those with discernment. Then the standard was given to another man after that. However, he was put to flight in the same way as the first man had been before. In that there was fear for Islam and its position after two men carrying its standard had been put to flight. That troubled the Apostle of God and made public the disobedience to him and the bad attitude

towards him. So he said in a public announcement:

"Tomorrow I will give the standard to one whom God and His Apostle love. God and His Apostle love him as one who returns to the battle without fleeing; he will not come back until God has brought victory at his hands."

Then he gave the standard to the Commander of the faithful, and victory came at his hands. His words guided and prevented those who wanted to flee from leaving the rank which had been assigned to the Commander of the faithful. Thus by the Commander of the faithful's coming out to attack, giving support to the battle and restoring the situation at Khaybar, which had been beyond everyone else, there is evidence of his unequalled merit which no one else shared.

Concerning that al-Hasan b. Thabit al-Ansari, said:

Ali was ashen-eyed needing medicine, even then he did not find the help of anyone to nurse him.

The Apostle of God healed him with saliva. He blessed the healer (raqi) and He blessed the healed.

He said: I will give the standard today to a doubtless man, brave, one who loves God as a follower.

He loves my God and God loves him. Through him God will overcome the fortress returning it to God.

He distinguished ALI by that apart from all other creatures and he named him his helper (wazir) and brother.

The Deputation of Christians from Najran and the Contest of Prayer

When Islam had spread after the conquest of Mecca and the raids already described, which followed it, and its authority had become strong, delegations began to visit the Prophet. Some of them submitted to Islam while others sought protection so that they might return to their people (to tell) their people about his view towards them. Among those who came in a delegation to him were Abu Haritha, the Bishop of Najran, with thirty of the Christians who included the deputy (*al-ugib*), the chief (*al-sayyid*) and Abd al-Masih. They arrived at Medina at the time of the afternoon prayer. They were wearing robes of silk and crosses.

The Jews approached them and they began to interrogate each other. The Christians said: "You are not believing in anything correctly." And the Jews replied to them: "You are not believing in anything correctly." Concerning

that, God, may He be praised, revealed:

"The Jews say that the Christians are not believing in anything (correctly) and the Christians say that the Jews are not believing in anything (correctly)"... (Qur'an, 2:113)

When the Prophet had prayed the afternoon prayer, they came forward. At their head was the Bishop. He said to him: "O Muhammad, what do you say about the Lord, the Messiah?"

"He is a servant of God," replied the Prophet. "whom God chose and he answered Him."

"Do you know, Muhammad, whether a father caused him to be born?" asked the Bishop.

"He was not born as a result of intercourse so he could not have a father," answered the Prophet.

"How can you say that he is a servant who has been created, when you can only consider a servant who has been created to be born as a result of intercourse and so to have a father?" he asked.

God, may He be praised and exalted, revealed these verses in the Qur'an in answer to him:

"The likeness of Jesus according to God is like the likeness of Adam. God created him from earth. Then God said to him: 'Be.' That is the truth from your Lord. Therefore, do not be one of those who go beyond the bounds of reason. If anyone disputes with you concerning him, after knowledge has been given to you, say to him: 'Come, let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, and ourselves and yourselves. Then let us call on God to witness against each other and let us make the curse of God fall on those who lie.'" (3:61)

The Prophet, may God bless him and his family, recited it to the Christians and challenged them to a contest of prayer to God (*mubahala*). He said: "God, the Mighty the High, has informed me that dread torment will come down on him who has spoken falsely after the contest of prayer (*mubahala*). By this the truth will be distinguished from the false."

The Bishop held a meeting of consultation with Abd al-Masih and the deputy. Their unanimous view was to wait until the early morning of the next day. When they both returned to their men, the Bishop told them:

*"Watch Muhammad tomorrow morning. If he comes out with his children and his family, then be warned against the contest of prayer (*mubahala*) with him. However, if he comes out with*

his Companions, then make the contest of prayer with him, for he believes in something other than the true religion."

On the next morning, the Prophet, may God bless him and his family, came and took Ali b. Abi Talib by the hand, while al-Hasan and al-Husayn, peace be on them, were walking in front of him and Fatima, peace be on her, walked behind him. The Christians came out, at their head, their Bishop. When the Bishop saw the prophet was advancing with those who were with him, he asked about them. He was told:

"That is his cousin Ali b. Abi Talib, who is his son-in-law and the father of his two grandsons and the most lovable of creatures to him. Those children are the sons of his daughter by Ali. They are the most lovable of creatures to him. That girl is his daughter, Fatima, the dearest of people to him and the closest to his heart."

The Bishop looked at the deputy, the chief and Abd al-Masih and said:

"Have you seen that he has come with the special members of his children and his family so that he may make the contest of prayer with them, trusting in his truthfulness. By God, he would not have come with them while he was afraid that the proof would be against him. Therefore, he warned against the contest of prayer with him. By God, if it was not for the position of Caesar (i.e., the Byzantine emperor), I would submit to him. But (now) make peace with him on what can be agreed between you and him. Return to your land and think about it yourselves."

"Our view conforms with your view," they replied.

"O Abu al-Qasim," the Bishop called out, *"we will not make a contest of prayer with you but we will make peace with you. Therefore, make peace with us as we propose."*

So the Prophet made peace with them on the condition of the payment of two thousand protective breastplates, each breastplate being forty standard dirham (the value). If they varied in value, it would be taken into account. The Prophet, may God bless him and his family, had a document written (laying out the terms) by which he had made peace with them.

Examples of what we have mentioned are so numerous that our work in presenting them would lengthen this article, and the speeches would encompass it. It is sufficient for those of intelligence to include what we have set out in the aims which we have outlined.

The Track of Blood
(A Poem on Imam Husayn)

By: Musavi Garmarudi

Trees I like them --
In your reverence they stand firm;
Likewise the water,
It's the dowry of your mother.
It's your blood brightened the honour,
It's your nobility the horizon does mirror.
The dusk is that niche,
In the morn by martyrdom you did pray.

* * *

In my mind thoughts about that valley flood
The soil of which sucked your blood.
No, indeed not, a vale so high I saw never.
It is you, only you, in a downfall dear,
Better from the vale itself hear!

* * *

A sword which at your throat did ply
Cut every thing into two under the sky.
Turned Hussaini whatever at your side
While Yazidi the other side.
Now rocks and we!
Waters and we!
Hills, canals, meadows, trees --
Some are Yazidis
Else, they are Hussainis.
Blood your neck irrigated
Everything under the sky into two divided --
Even the color
Resided in every particle
In a dazzling garish carbuncle.
Else, not Hussaini nur does concur.

* * *

Your death, lo, what a gage!
Laughed at life and vilified its stage

That to the death desired life to page.
 Your blood stood there
 and stood the Truth in its care:
 One it is but a face.
 Determination stood a security;
 Rivetted the world into its guarantee.
 Although false espouses the world
 Truth in canopy of your name brides the world.

* * *

Peep into truth if to see you
 And the grass when it is to grow,
 The water in a drink when it's to flow,
 The stone as challenges a throw,
 Into a sword when it cuts into two
 Or the lion when its roar the winds blow,
 Into the horizon which is bloody,
 In the smile of dusk which is ruddy,
 In a stand,
 In a demand.
 You to be found in crevices,
 To be smelled in roses
 And the burning sun to be demanded,
 The early morn to be commanded.
 Should be opened heart of the night,
 Seeds scattered the delight
 And the winds carry your sight;
 To be plucked from the bunches' height.
 In God alone you to be seen,
 Waits never upon Truth if to lean,
 Gory is he and his fingers beam
 The glow of your blood and its sheen.
 Eternity is the mirror
 Hung before you for every viewer.
 Alas, the sun, it is no better;
 Hence, we wouldn't utter:
 'It is your looks' glitter.'

* * *

In a cosy corner of history's conscience
 Guarding the Truth stands he in vigilance.

In his smile facts flow in mellifluence,
 Strong, straight, star striking--
 Such the determinations are demonstrating
 The elevations if to be viewed by a human being.
 Lo, infancy of reason astonishes in a daze confusing
 It is the lake of your own blood--
 A gateway of history where you have stood
 Holding a jug of civilization for human good
 To quench the caravan of mankind
 In a martyrdom pacing onward pressing the hind.

* * *

Your name disturbs the sleep under moon
 And deluges in water a typhoon,
 Lo, rests the law in your tone,
 To battle your determination only fools prone,
 Your distinction is blood, only blood, blood alone,
 O, you, not a divine but in divinity down,
 Death is vile in your hold
 As a fly a plaything among children's fold
 And Yazid, a pretext, an excuse, if to be told,
 As though a handkerchief before you unrolled
 and you spitted the filth of tyranny in its shroud
 and threw into the history's dustbin for other to scold,
 A huge blood sucker,
 Not an entity but a lier;
 Such was Yazid an idler,
 Sin personified in him
 And he to mankind a megrim,
 Robbery of name it is if to name him
 'A man' however the sense be dim,
 O, you! O, Glorious victim!
 Be upon you blessing!
 Not because thirsty you met martyrdom
 But your enemy is of such a sum,

* * *

Your death red
 Broke Yazid's name into a shred,
 And made the sense in the word tyranny dead
 Troops of words with barracks of description fled.

Indeed, defeated is every human toil;
 Battle with you is foul and fail,
 Fretted are the lions in your coil.
 Your blood overflows the expression's soil.
 Beyond the words is the flow for history's turmoil.
 Out of the track of time proceeds as a procession Royal.
 O, "Zabeehullah"! Divinity in your blood flows;
 You the "Ismayeel" of God, in you oneness glows,
 "Abraham's vision" - from a dream reality barrows,
 Karbala where your appointment wallows,
Moharram the hour of love when the love loves.
 And, lo, you are that sole person
 Carried forty days the pilgrim's season.
 "And We have complete it in ten"
 Ah, burns me the desire of comprehension;
 The incomplete pilgrimage pawned in suspension,
 Gained in your kiss at the dagger its perfection;
 For the "BLACK STONE" virtual the best compensation!
 Begins the love's history,
 The red gains its entity,
 From your death- to life a treaty.

* * *

Letter commences from your blood
 Religion found way the time you stood
 As you fell the truth stood
 And took the Right a mould good.
 Weakened the tyranny's base in your blood's flood.
 Autumn of your death delivered eternal spring.
 Grass and trees in a pleasant ring,
 And a blossom of red at every branch to swing,
 Else, a dry fuelwood it is to the trees cling.

* * *

Secret of death you have opened.
 No knot remained under your will's nail unopened.
 Wailing and weeping is the honour;
 You ahead and it entails you for ever.
 Beyond the manliness you are far and further,
 Prayers: you; intention: you;
 Oneness: you; and the one you.

Oh, the verdure, the ever green!
 Oh, the red that fills the green,
 Nobler than every pure and clean.
 No human a parallel to you ever has been.
 O, sweet but staunch and staunch but sweet,
 Gapes wide history its mouth for you to spit.
 You an iron arm, you the scale of balance;
 You sense of the Book and you the Qur'an's essence.
 In your looks interpretation glow,
 And the paces to the earth dignity bestow.
 And become a gravity for galaxies on onward grow.
 Divine verses lip and your lips utter--
 Wherever you be in you heavens glimmer.
 Wonder! Oh, wonder! you a wonder!
 My astonishment ends not if I to ponder;
 Foolhardy it is to fathom oceans by a finger.

o * *

Weep we --
 Gains your blood in our tears constancy;
 Our tears a polish and sword in tendency,
 Its seat is in the arena of tyranny.
 You are a Qur'an in red;
 Verses of your bravery wrote the blood
 In the desert as far as the sands scud.
 These sands turned into a field--
 Rich in red bunches as a shield.
 Blood is the crop, blood is the yield.
 Its every branch is a sword, a dagger
 Uproots the tyranny in the noon of its summer.
 Hence, red is the field and shall be for ever.

* * *

O, *Tharallah!*
 The garden of Eden; lo, what a mania!
 You planted in the burning desert of Karbela.
 With fruits red,
 Rivers bloody from head to heel,
 Buds to bloom martyrdom's red,
 And trees in a row forming a green shade.
 Only loveful eyes see with looks in love fed.

Akbar -- you and in a quality bred;
And the palm trees of consummate red,

* * *

HUR -- not a person but an attribute.
At that side of the river to contribute:
He parted the caravan and its plenitude,
Bridges to a man your word, your look;
Towards you he is in a hook
As a food in a caravan for a cook.
The brains in search of refuge
Obtain from you light in a deluge.
Desire for envy is a befitting subterfuge.
HUR's bleeding head and your skirt -- a fate profuse!

* * *

Good is red after your martyrdom;
Tears are daggers in your kingdom.
Your pain is the pabulum
For a journey -- destination not datum.
The track of your blood is the way
Terminates at the God's gateway.
You are from the blood's strain
And we in your love mad remain,
Your blood sands were to sustain
To gush from stones in a fountain.
Oh, the fertile view--
Tyranny has no enemy better than you,
To a victim no acquaintance nearer than you.
History gets brief in your class
Hands do not meet at KARBALA's pause,
Galaxy of Existence there beats the brass;
The worship moves round it, solarium draws.

* * *

Here the word ends,
End too to end tends,
At you no end bands.

* * *

Islam and Modern Age

An Interview with Sayyid Fadlullah

Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlullah is known in the Islamic world in general, and in Lebanon in particular, for his scholarship and activism in the religious, political, and social arenas. He strives to defend Islam and Muslims, contributing mostly with intellect and jurisprudence. He was born in Najaf, Iraq in 1235. Since childhood, he was surrounded by an atmosphere of celebrated Islamic scholars, beginning with his father, the Islamic scholar Sayyid Abd al Ra'uf, who took it upon himself to observe and nurture his son's education. Later, despite his young age and equipped with the basics of the transmitted (naqli) and intellectual sciences ('aqli), Sayyid began to develop his higher education with the most celebrated and eminent Shi'ite scholars such as Sayyid Khou'i, Sayyid Hakim, and Sayyid al-Badrabi. Later, upon his return to Lebanon he resided in Beirut, where he dedicated his life to continuous studies of Islamic jurisprudence and intellectual issues. He established many charitable organizations for orphans and the poor, founded many schools for Islamic education, and is also known as a writer, poet, and literateur. We took the opportunity to interview him at the First Annual Convention of Ahl al-Bayt Assembly in Tehran, hoping to share with him some of our intellectual concerns and to seek answers for questions that many intellectuals grapple with today. Of course, the ideas presented by Sayyid does not necessarily reflect those of Thaumplayn.

Q: Sayyid, the Islamic world is struck by a general state of retrogression; is this state a result of Western hegemony or is it a result of internal factors, a responsibility which the Muslims bear?

A: When we study the issue of retrogression in the Islamic world, we find that there are internal factors contributing to this state which the Muslims are responsible for. Since the deterioration of the Islamic world, Muslims have passed through a general state of ignorance, the residuals of which exist today. This state of ignorance manifests itself on two levels of illiteracy that of scholastic illiteracy and cultural illiteracy. By "cultural illiteracy", I mean that the Islamic world was asleep and not tuned to the

changes in the world: Muslims failed to keep up with progress and failed to address important issues which in turn created lack of representation of Islamic ideologies to the changing world. The new world continued to progress, to change, to expand all spheres of knowledge, while the Islamic world remained stagnant, limited to mere textual commentaries and explications, to the degree of dropping behind even the earliest years of the Islamic movement. Foreign domination of the Islamic world has further deepened this retrogressive state, by operating through one avenue or another, benefiting itself. It instigated regional patriotism, with the objective of creating a schism between one reality and another, one man and another, and one country and another. This systemized hegemony drove Muslims away from the core of civilization, marginalizing them into a facade. In addition, the West worked by many Western educated intellectuals to create a state of confusion and doubt in the minds of people about their history and the authenticity of the course that they adhered to. This spawned a condition which led many Muslim scholars to work on severing their ties with the past and to burden the past for failures that the present was experiencing. We believe that Western hegemony was and will continue to operate within a well organized plan to deepen the retrogression. Our Islamic world's crisis today is that it is living in cultural, scientific, and spiritual retrogression.

Q: Sayyid, you mentioned that retrogression in the Islamic world is a result of internal factors that the West worked on deepening it; and that Muslims suffer from living in a civilizational facade. The question then is: How does Islam deal with civilization and is it able to face the challenges of the modern era?

A: Islam established, in the crux of its civilizational movement, essential concepts. In the forefront are the scientific and rational elements. Human intellect was considered an inner messenger and the prophet an outer rationality; this transforms prophethood into a rational state and secures divine revelation to a unique rational path. Although Islam valued theory and rationality, they became meaningless if man did not actively pursue life in terms of these concepts. Islam bids man to make use of his knowledge by raising any question that might be of concern to him in relation to his convictions, religion, law, and life, or in relation to his existence in general. Islam did not set limits on human intellect in its quest to reach its highest potential. Reason and intellect acquired such a revered place in Islam, that Muslim scholars and their predecessors were guided by

rationality in interpreting a Sacred Text and judged in favor of reason whenever the text was in apparent contradiction. Islam encourages man to move in life in order to understand that his movement carries responsibility. When we unite science, intellect, movement, and interrelationship with one another, we believe the result of this integration will be a civilization. According to Albert Nahra, the Islamic civilization is "the mother of modern civilization" because it originated by considering induction and experimentation as a means of knowledge, in addition to rationality; this, the Westerners learned from Muslims in Andalus, Spain. We know that they studied the Muslims' books of medicine and other subjects for many years. Therefore, this civilizational energy which exists in the Islamic concepts and which was able to create a civilization under unfavorable and undesirable circumstances, presupposes that Islam is able to face the challenges of this era and able to make a civilization compatible with the movement of the world's progress.

Q: Does this mean that you believe that Contemporary Western civilization is a result of the Islamic civilization?

A: I am not saying it is a result of it, *per se*, but that each civilization proceeds on the premise that the Islamic civilization was able, at one point in its progress, to discover two sources of knowledge: rationalism and empiricism. Empiricism gave the Western civilization its starting point and its movement. The educated Westerners and the Western world work by means of induction, experimentation, and observation. This lead the Westerners to uncover and to understand the mysteries and phenomena of life, societies, mankind, and the universe. I do not mean that the Western civilization is a copy of the Islamic civilization; rather, the Islamic civilization established the foundation from which Western civilization has sprung.

Q: In the past, Muslims possessed this civilizational foundation and benefited from it, but under present circumstances, are Muslims able to benefit from this foundation to face the challenges of the modern era?

A: If Muslims open up and grasp the grounds of their scientific, intellectual, and political awareness, they will be able under the present conditions to benefit from the Islamic civilizational foundation, and will be able to face the challenges of this era. Islam's concepts are open to life. They are dynamic, vibrant, and capable of viewing life with new, fresher outlooks without sacrificing the unique characteristics of the basic elements which constitute the core of Islamic thought. Muslim scholars and intellectuals

tracked and observed the Western civilizational movement and all aspects of its organization. They discovered that Islam offers countless perspectives and a wide spectrum of approaches to any given subject and intellectual trend. This is a clear indication that leading secure, peaceful, and balanced life, enables Muslims to procure the components of progress and to discard the components of retrogression; they are able to create for man his new civilization.

Q: Why do Muslims take Western thought and present it to the world as Islamic thought?

A: The essence of man's reality presupposes that there are general subject matters that man embarks upon a journey to discover them. When Muslims partake of these subject matters from the West, they are exactly like someone purchasing the raw material to make something according to his wishes and plans. The progress of Western civilization created for man specific intellectual material needs. It created for him various living styles and different methods of organization and management. And yet subject matters do not represent thought, rather they are characteristic topics that any school of thought would be interested in examining, from rules, and operation methods, to man's views and attitudes towards them. Because Muslims examine these subject matters which are a result of Western progressive movement in Western thought, does not mean that Islamic thought is being subjugate to Western thought, nor are Muslims searching to reconcile differences. For example, it is exactly as if you make a television and then ask the Muslim legislator if it is forbidden in Islam; or if you create a system of management before asking Islam its view on the system: Is it in agreement with Islamic methods of organization; and if it is not, then what needs to be done to make it so. This process does not mean that there is a transformation of Western thought into Islamic thought. Around the turn of the century in Egypt, when Western civilization invaded Muslim reality and when Muslims came in contact with Western reality, there was an attempt by some Muslim intellectuals and scholars to reconcile Islamic and Western thoughts. This reconciliatory process dealing with particulars in order to understand Islam is superficial and not in accordance with the correct and accurate methodology. If there is an apparent agreement between Western thought and Islamic thought, this does not necessarily mean that both thoughts stem from the same foundation. When comparing Islamic and Western thoughts, it is important to investigate the foundations from which each thought springs. For instance, take the issue

of freedom. The West believes in absolute freedom: Man is a material being, and like all living and non-living entities. He is not limited in his pursuit of freedom except when nature's pressure or law and order might limit some of this freedom. Islam, on the other hand, based its freedom ideology on a different foundation. Man, according to Islam, is God's vicegerent; he must relate, prostrate, and obey God; he must act in this life on the premise that he is part of a cosmological order, which must integrate on all levels. From this we see that the issue of man's freedom must be related to the issue of morality and spirituality, to man's relation to God, to life, and to the universe. Therefore, we must assign boundaries and rules for freedom which differ from the ones within which the West works. Therefore, it is essential to study the foundation of any thought. When the West speaks of human rights, they speak of man as a material entity, while we speak of human rights on the premise that man is God's creature and he is responsible before God and connected to God's will (May He be exalted). Therefore, this reconciliatory process based on particulars is not valid.

Q: Some intellectuals contend that issues such as human rights, women's rights, and freedom, were proposed for debate and research by Western intellectuals and that Muslim intellectuals strived to transform them and present them to the people as part of Islam. The question is, if Muslim scholars dealt with them, and the discourse on these subjects is derived from Islam, then why Islamic thought did not initiate them?

A: Muslims have discussed these subjects and their technical terminologies. There are numerous traditions (hadith), various verses, and many analyses about human rights and women's freedom in Islam, but the problem lies in the stagnant state that Muslims were experiencing. This retrogression allowed specific concepts and ideas to prevail in the general mentality of people, and might have affected some Muslim scholars who create society's ideologies. The issues in vociferous debate in the West originated as a result of specific process within civilizational progress. They became imbedded in reality and symbolized challenge for any society. In the face of this, Muslim intellectuals, invested in protecting their own reality, did not use the retrogression as an excuse to destroy the Islamic reality, and to follow in the footsteps of Western thought, emulating and imitating Western models, in relation to women's issues and human rights. They were interested in establishing the issues on solid ground, exclaiming we are behind the humanity of women but still within Islamic context, that we

are for human rights but according to Islamic doctrine. Thus, a middle ground arose between a total abandonment of the Islamic reality in all its traditions in favor of the West, and protection of this reality with all its retrogressive factors in favor of retrogression. In the past, Muslims did not feel a need to study and to investigate these issues. The challenges of the West lead them to re-examine their own religious roots and equip themselves with the necessary knowledge and ability to face the movement of progress and say to the West, "you speak of women's rights, we have a discourse on women's rights that might view women in a more humanistic sense." And you speak of human rights. Islam in relation to this has a different methodology that might be more open to man's best interest.

Q: Islam encourages its followers to seek higher education, but knowledge is divided into two categories, Divine knowledge and scientific knowledge. What is Islam's view on the scientific discoveries that pertain to the sciences and humanities?

A: I believe that Islam does encourage all forms of knowledge. The Holy Qur'an directs man to contemplate and observe phenomena within the universe, the earth, and himself. Many issues in the Islamic faith are grounded in scientific fact. This compels me, in my research to proclaim to people that the path to faith passes through knowledge and education. As man increases in them, he will increase in faith; as man increases in ignorance, he distances himself from faith. Therefore, Islam not only emphasizes the religious connections to the quest for knowledge, but also embraces its relationship to intellectual, realistic, and universal issues that man might question. This issue does not comprise a problem in Islam because we all know that the Islamic civilization was a scientific one, diverse in its positions and approaches. There were Muslim scientists in medicine, chemistry, and numerous other fields, that still makes use of modern knowledge.

Q: What criteria will determine the degree of Muslims' approach to the sciences?

A: One criterion we must observe, is realizing that there is a difference between humanities and sciences. The former encompasses all moral, intellectual, ideological, and spiritual aspects of man's thought. The latter relates to the cosmological, natural, and material discoveries of the world. According to Islam, Muslims are free to study any science. But when endeavoring to study the humanities, a Muslim must conduct a comparison between what he has learned from his intellectual foundation—the

ideologies which give man life values, moral codes, and methods for approaching life--and between the foundations that Western humanities stand upon. Muslims do not loose their life's path in the name of education, an education which the West has established in an attempt to dispossess us of our own intellectual foundations and make us adopt foreign foundations, creating duality where there is no unification and balance. Moreover, the West moves in specific ways in its moral, social and spiritual beliefs, and its power juxtaposed with the weakness of other nations paved the way for Western values to gain precedence, but power does not create truth. Muslims must not succumb to these Western values and approaches on the assumption that they represent the spirit of the modern era, but instead realize that they are only the reflections of certain intellectual who were able to imbue their ideas into reality, just as we have been able, in past centuries, to define the world's intellectual reality. Therefore, it is essential that we face the issue in an intellectual way embarking on a comparison between the two positions.

Q: Have Islamic codes been derived primarily from an abstraction apart from reality, or does reality participate in the formulation and crystallization of Islamic laws?

A: Reality represents the subject matter of Islamic law, and Islamic law changes with the change of subject matters. In addition, for each subject matter, there is a corresponding Islamic law. Therefore, it is natural that if reality changes to the degree that its subject matter changes, Islamic laws, products will also change. For instance, we know that drinking water is allowed. However, when man is in a situation where drinking water becomes a risk to his health, then the same subject matter (which is drinking water) becomes prohibited. Moreover, a Muslim is obliged to drink water if his life is contingent upon it. What we see is one subject matter lawful in one incident, prohibited in another, and obligatory in yet third. Therefore, reality changes in the subject matters of Islamic rules, and these rules are different according to the different subject matters. Thus, there is no problem with the bilateralness of text and reality: The Islamic law accompanies reality in all its particulars and if the particulars change, then the Islamic law will change in accordance with the changes that take place in man's life.

Q: In relation to Islamic Jurisprudence, why do Muslim jurists differ in their verdicts and what are the reasons behind these differences?

A: The difference springs from the method that Muslim jurists use in

authenticating or understanding the Holy Texts. For example, we might find two scholars, one of whom refers to one *hadith* (tradition) because he finds it authentic and another disregards it because he does not find it authentic. Or one scholar understands one thing in the *hadith* while the other might understand and interpret it in different manner. In cases where there are no detailed *hadith* for a subject matter, there are general principles that jurists differ in nature and application. There is a dispute between (*Usuli*) *Shiite* and (*Akhbari*) *Shiite* in Islam, on the issue of prohibition matters: Is this prohibited or not, in the absence of Holy Texts, the *Akhbari* maintain that the principle necessitates the administration of precautionary measures while the *Usuli* maintain that the principle necessitates permissibility. This difference is based on the nature of the principle that governs this situation.

Q: In relation to Islam's laws on women, many believe that they are androcentric: that women has not been taking into account, that they are repressive and confining to them, and that this is because men have interpreted these laws to their own benefit?

A: I do not believe that Muslim scholars who have reached the higher levels of Islamic jurisprudence and were trustworthy in extracting the Islamic laws from the texts, were operating on the premise of gender discrimination. It is possible that a jurist might be affected by his surroundings and might approach a specific text and ignore another, but the door of *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) is still open and contemporary jurists can study and investigate the related texts from the Qur'an and the *Sunna* (Prophet Muhammad and *Ahl al-Bayt* praxis) objectively and correct predecessors' mistakes. Women can do the same. Women are not far from the door of *ijtihad*, the success of women in fields is a living proof of their abilities.

Q: Now the question is: How does Islam view the issue of intellectual and political plurality and does Islam endorse a single mode in ideological domains?

A: Islam does not object to ideological plurality, when various methods engage, oppose, and interact together. And the same applies to political plurality. But under an Islamic government, political freedom must be subjugated to the higher Islamic good because it is not logical for the Islamic government to grant political freedom, in the general and absolute meaning of political freedom, with the intent to overthrow its rule. When speaking of internal opposition, there are no obstacles to political freedom

in facing economic, political, and social policies. Any person may object to a ruler. There are multiple examples in our Islamic history in which criticism of Islamic rule was encouraged, even during the time of Prophet Muhammad and Imam Ali who were considered infallible, according to our conviction. Our cautiousness in the issue of political freedom is a concern that an ideological and political path might contradict our own and consequently overthrow the Islamic course. However, the Islamic government does not object to political opposition which works to overthrow governmental forms in order to replace them with better ones; or to overthrow governmental officials and appoint in their positions new individuals, or to overthrow political, economic, and social policies in the quest for better policies. I do not believe that Islam calls for a single approach towards intellectual, social, and political aspects, except to the degree of what might jeopardize general Islamic ethics and order.

Q: It is said that minorities in the West practice their religious convictions in freedom. For example, Muslim women have the freedom to wear the *hijab* (head and body cover). How is it that Islam claims to protect freedom in Islamic countries and yet still requires the Christian and secular women to observe the *hijab*?

A: There is a difference. When a Muslim woman wears the *hijab* in the West, she is not offending society's moral codes; because the issue of *hijab* is a private matter to her. In the West, some women completely cover themselves and others are clad in less clothing. The Western moral code is not disturbed when it gives the Muslim women the opportunity to wear the *hijab*. But if the Islamic world allowed the Christian women and non-Muslim women, and the non-devoted Muslim women to discard the *hijab*, it might offend the moral code of society, just as anything that might be offensive to the government. Therefore, Islam grants non-Muslim women their freedom, but only in the context of not offending general Islamic morality.

SEMINAR ON SOCIAL SCIENCE AND ISLAMIC STUDIES: SOME REFLECTIONS

By: Dr. A. N. Baqirshahi

By social science it means disciplines such as sociology, economics, political science, etc. The main thrust of these disciplines is to deal with human behavior. But there is controversy over the methodology of such pursuits. Advocates of unified science such as Comt, Mill, Hempel and Nagel stress the methodological unity of the natural and social science, claiming that progress in social science requires adoption of the methods of natural science, that is, construction of causal explanation of human behavior, based on general laws and theories that can be verified by empirical observation and are not influenced by the personal values of the scientists.

In contrast to such reductionist trend in the West and increasing domination of positive science and the threat of totalitarian control over human intelligence, modern European philosophers stress that the question of meaning could no longer be taken for granted and new models of understanding are required. To this end new trends of thought such as phenomenology, existentialism try to relocate the origin of meaning in our concrete lived experience and structuralism emphasis the hidden or unconscious structure of language.

In Islamic World, Muslim thinkers try to reconstruct the methodology of social science in the light of the Islamic principles. Believing that Islamization warrants, *ipso facto*, can liberate people from the world views of the West so they have to strive to found an Islamic science as S. H. Nasr says that "Muslims must seek to create their own science by incorporating what is positive in modern science into a world view where God reigns supreme, where all causes are ultimately related to Him, where there is no realm of secularity independent of His law, where every phenomenon reflects the wisdom of the creator and is a sign or *ayah* of the Bestower of all existence." Regarding Western social science, he says that Western social science is anthropomorphic in nature in that it accepts individual human existence as the criterion of reality, to the total neglect of any higher principle. For the same reason, Western social science is reductionist, for it not only separates reason from revelation but rejects the latter as a means of knowledge."

In his article "Science and Islamic Science", S.A. Saeed is not favouring this approach and believes that science is essentially a refinement of rational

method of obtaining knowledge and therefore, that the search for an Islamic science is not likely to be fruitful. Though he does not deny that there can be non-rational means of acquiring knowledge. But they do not constitute science in any form. He is of the view that first the concept of science should be clarified and then a distinction should be made between science and technology. He says that an alternative technology is not only possible but also desirable, but this possibility has no intrinsic connection with the possibility or otherwise of an alternative science. Dr. Saeed's arguments refer mainly to the natural science but he believes that the same argument can be applied to the social sciences as well with some modifications. The fact remains that there are important differences between the practice of the natural science and that of social or human sciences. The most crucial difference lies in the fact that human sciences contain a significant normative content. It is not possible to eliminate this normative content altogether since it is impossible to adequately and meaningfully describe a human activity without at the same time taking an attitude towards it. For this reason the human sciences are particularly vulnerable to cultural and allied assumptions. It is naturally necessary to guard against such assumptions. But the right way to guard against them is by evolving a broad, inter-subjective perspective which can serve as a grid against which the curvature, so to speak, of any bias can be assessed and systematically neutralized.

Following the outbreak of Islamic Revolution in Iran a serious discussion began as to how social sciences can benefit from Islamic teachings. In this regard many articles were written and several seminars were held to explore this issue. It should be pointed out that some contemporary Muslim thinkers like Allamah Tabatabai, Shahid Sadr and Murtada Mutahhari try to clarify Islamic approach towards contemporary human problems. Having a philosophical background and being well-versed in Islamic studies, they develop their social philosophy. Their arguments against the contemporary Western trends are not polemical but employ philosophical and logical methods to meet these challenges. Mutahhari, for instance, develops his theory of Fitrat (Man's nature). It enables Mutahhari to assess existentialism of Sartre who denies that man has a nature, the orthodox Marxism interpretation of culture as a product of historical circumstances, the Marxist view of economy as the basis of social change, and the Marxist view of class-morality. Anyhow the concept of Fitrat helps Mutahhari set his face against Marxism and Existentialism. He is of the view that fundamental dimension of human existence cannot be interpreted in terms of matter.

Proceedings of the Seminar:

A seminar was held by graduate student of Imam Sadiq University of Tehran on Islamic studies and social science. Many eminent scholars attended this seminar and presented thought-provoking papers concerning the interplay of Islamic studies and social science. Ayatullah Mahdavi Kani vice-chancellor of Imam Sadiq University, made the keynote address and pointed out that the theme of the seminar is very interesting, so it should be dealt with seriously by the experts of this field. In fact the aim of establishing this university is to serve this purpose.

Mr. Alam al-Huda from Imam Sadiq University was the second speaker. He referred to the experience of the university in bringing together these two branches of knowledge, that is, Islamic studies and social science like political science, economics, laws, administration. He stated that if social science enjoy Islamic outlook, then it would be easy to run the human society.

The third speaker was one of the graduates of Imam Sadiq University. He stressed that satisfactory steps have not been taken so far in bringing these branches together. He further said that there are some merits and demerits in curriculum of the universities notwithstanding.

Muhi al-Din, Friday prayer leader of Shiraz, spoke on comprehensiveness of Divine and human duty of Islam and the necessary of incorporation of Islamic teaching and human science. He lambasted the present condition of art faculties in Iran for admitting the Western ideas blindly. He added that all the prophets came to present the content but it is for scholars to investigate about its form. So far as natural science is concern, we can employ them but if we employ social science of others, then we will be employed. We cannot benefit from social sciences of the West for we have different picture from man.

Dr. Ghulam Rida Haddad Adil, from Tehran University was one of the participant of the seminar. In his speech he said: "It was worthy to hold such seminar ten years ago so that we would have benefited its consequences at present, and witnessed the development of thoughtful theories in this field." He said that two theories were evolved following the cultural revolution in Iran some people believe that each branch of human science has its own identity independent from others and it is vain attempt to try to incorporate them. Take for instance, we do not have Islamic physics, Islamic chemistry. Similarly we cannot have also Islamic psychology, Islamic political science and Islamic sociology. According to the second theory it is possible to incorporate them and we have to work out to bring them together. Dr. Haddad

subscribed to the second theory and asked the authorities of cultural and scientific affairs to work out on this direction.

Ayatullah Imami Kashani, principal of the Shahid Murtazhari School of Advanced Theological Studies spoke at the seminar on the relation of Islamic studies and human science. He said that some people believe that there is no relation between these two branches, for human sciences are on the basis of observation and experiment, but Islamic sciences are subjective in nature and have certain sources. Thus, there is no relation between these branches of science. In fact according to this theory, there is no relation between the facts (is) and values (ought to). By referring to the Qur'an he added that our belief is comprised of world views (is) and values (ought to). We should have a reliable source for our values. Our values should be on the bases of our world views. At present there is interplay between the sciences like sociology which deals with "is" and sciences like law which deals with "ought to". Thus we can constitute a science on the basis of Islamic values. The present world is in need of such science.

The last speaker of the seminar was Muhammad Taqi Mishah from the religious studies center of Qum. He spoke on the social science and Islamic studies. The following is selected from Ayatullah Mishah's speech at the seminar:

He said that first of all we have to make clear, as to what is meant by social science and Islamic studies. By Islamic studies here we mean the content of the book (the Qur'an) and the tradition of the Prophet (S) which comprises issues such as dogmas of the religion, Islamic values and certain commandments. But human science has got many connotations. This pursuit in general sense comprises the widest and deepest sciences from the anthropological and epistemological point of view.

Accordingly we have to clarify these two concepts and examine the interplay between the social science and Islamic studies and shed light on the impediment, before such interplay, then we will be in a better position to locate the position of Islam in such enterprise. As a matter of fact this is a wide and controversial topic. Following the Islamic Revolution in Iran many discussions were made and several seminars were held on this topic. Even a center was set up to unite the universities and religious seminaries in Iran. They decided to work out and publish a book for students concerning this topic. But they could not materialize it for there were some ambiguity over incorporating social sciences and Islamic studies. Anyhow, the main question was: Is there a science with the epithet of Islamic sciences? Though there is

no Islamic mathematics or European mathematics. In the case of social science some people are of the view that it is absurd to add the prefix of Islamic to such sciences. Around 10 years ago a seminar was held on the same topic to bring closer the religious seminaries and universities. The theme of that seminar was: Ideology and science, culture and Islam.

Advocates of Islamic social sciences bring two reasons for their claim. First, they say: there are certain elements in social sciences which have relevance to the principles of Islam. For instance, philosophy and its relevant branches like philosophy of ethics deal with certain anthropological and epistemological issues which involve Islamic response. For example, when it is discussed about the reality of being, Islam oppose with materialism. For it believes that God exists, soul exists and abstract things exist. Therefore materialism is rejected in Islam. In the field of the ethics also many questions may arise as to what is the origin and nature of values. Whether they depend on human sentiments and tastes or they are rational and real (objectives). Here Islamic ethics subscribe to the view that believe moral values have real foundation. This is called Islamic ethics.

Thus, there are many issues in human sciences which have relevance to the religious text. One can easily work out Islamic approach towards such disciplines.

Accordingly when we add the prefix 'Islamic', before the disciplines such as philosophy, ethics, law; we mean Islamic approach towards these pursuits. Therefore there is Islamic social science. Now a question may bear in mind as: Is there Islamic theories for such sciences while discipline such as library science or accountancy have nothing to do with Islam. So how can we claim Islamic library science or Islamic accountancy. In fact library science is a scientific method in maintaining the books and it has got practical usage.

The Qur'an talks about the creation of the heavens, the earth, mountains, seas, animals, etc., but only to lead man to know his God and these are not considered to be Islamic sciences, these are the signs of God. Thus, if any theory tries to deny the existence of God, then Islamic view would be involved.

It is believed that everything is available in the Qur'an and Sunnah. So, if we follow them we can have access to every knowledge. This statement is right but it should be kept in mind that the Qur'an enjoys different inner beings (butan) and there are certain codes to understand them and only the Prophet and Imams know such codes. Some people believe that even laymen also can derive the formula of for example atom from the Qur'an but such claim is absurd.

Concluding his speech, Ayanullah Misbah stated that it is better first to study the Islamic sources and be familiar with the principles of Islam and then attempt to study the other views and in this way deal with social science in Islamic perspective.

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BOOK REVIEW

By: Iqbal N. Siddiqui,
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SUBVERTING ISLAM: THE ROLE OF ORIENTALIST CENTRES

By Dr. Ahmad Ghorab. Pub: Minerva Press, 10 Cromwell Place, London SW7 2JN (also Washington DC, Montreux), 1994. ISBN: 1 85863 202 1 (pbk only). Pp: 80. Price: 7.99.

At first glance, *Subverting Islam: the Role of Orientalist Centres* seems little different from most other books in the vast ocean of polemic modernity which dominates English-language Islamic literature today. Were it to sink without trace, however, as so many books mercifully do, the loss would be tremendous, for it is of potentially great value to all Muslims, and especially to students and others who have links with academia generally, and departments or centres of Islamic studies in particular.

Often the most difficult statements to objectively consider and justify are those which seem self-evidently true: the result is that, when challenged by sceptics, one is left floundering pathetically for convincing arguments. In this book, Professor Ahmad Ghorab simply and directly presents irrefutable arguments to establish two such truths, the anti-Islamic function of Western academic interest in Islam, and the enmity to Islam of the Aale Sa'ud. He also shows the close link between these two apparently distinct phenomena: the patronage of the Aale Sa'ud is used to disguise both the West's true agenda in 'studying' Islam, and their own true role as servants of the *kuffar*. Moreover, and perhaps even more importantly, Dr. Ghorab clearly and unequivocally condemns those Muslims who allow themselves to be used as tools of the Aale Sa'ud in these endeavours: the mercenary scholars of Islam who have been known as the *Ulama as-Sultani*.

The book opens with an introduction to orientalism and the modern forms it takes, in particular the establishment since the early eighties of Western academic centres for 'Islamic studies' and 'Christian-Muslim relations' or 'inter-faith dialogue', which Dr. Ghorab clearly states to be part of "the long term strategy of response to the revival of Islam... that intensified around the time of the Islamic Revolution in Iran." Their purpose, however, remains the same as it has always been: to wilfully distort Islam in order firstly "to create revulsion against Islam in the hearts and minds of non-Muslims," and secondly

"to embarrass Muslims themselves about their beliefs, traditions and history, so as to cause them to doubt and, ultimately, to apostasise."

Islam's civilizational drive was always underpinned by its academic and intellectual excellence, which provided stability and solidity at the heart of Muslim society even when the loss of political legitimacy at its head was crucially weakening it. It is not surprising, therefore, that Islam's centres of intellectual excellence provided the most important bases for resistance against the powers of the *kuffar* during the colonial period, and were consequently ruthlessly suppressed. Now, Dr. Ghorab shows, the West is consciously working to counter the emergence of a new wave of revolutionary Islamic intellectual leadership by trying to establish its own agenda for Islamic scholarship through these Western centres of "Islamic studies".

These centres, Dr. Ghorab reveals, operate "a twin-track strategy", giving importance to those Muslims who (knowingly or unknowingly) collaborate with their programme, and "condemning, vilifying and marginalizing" those who refuse to. "This means according the authority and prestige of Western scholarship to Muslims who agree with Western purposes, and neglect or contempt of Western scholarship to those Muslims who refuse Western purposes. Prestige and funds are allowed to the former and denied to the latter."

The nature of the West's distortion of the study of Islam, Dr. Ghorab shows to be fundamental. He points out that any genuine Islamic study of Islam has four *minimal* conditions: 1) that Islam be studied as a revealed religion; 2) that Islam be taken from its own original sources, the Qur'an and *Sunnah*; 3) that Islam be taken as both knowledge and practice; and 4) that instruction on Islam be taken from qualified Muslim scholars. Dr. Ghorab then shows that the minimum requirements for studying Islam in the Western tradition are precisely the opposite: Islam must *not* be studied as a revealed religion, but rather as a social phenomenon; Islam must *not* be studied from its own sources, but rather from outside them, in order to get a 'true picture'; Islam must *not* be promoted in any way, but rather seen as a thing of the past; and that the student of Islam must *not* display in his work any personal commitment to Islam, for this would make his academic objectivity suspect.

To demonstrate how the Orientalists pursue their objectives in practice, Dr. Ghorab uses the example of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, which was established as a part of the world-renowned Oxford University in the mid-eighties. Dr. Ghorab begins by bringing forward a statement of the Centre's objectives, which declares the Centre to be intended to promote

research and publishing from a moderate Islamic or non-Islamic point of view. Not only this is clearly in conflict with the principles for Islamic scholarship outlined above, in that it is promoting Muslim and non-Muslim scholarship equally, but it also begs the question of how, and by whom, 'moderate' is to be defined.

To confirm his suspicion that moderate actually means "whatever is cruelly insulting to Muslim belief and sensibility is presented in a form that promises to be less cruel, although substance and content remain," Dr. Ghorab turns to the Centre's main organ, its *Journal of Islamic Studies*. Despite the Journal's prefatory editorial announcement that it is open to a range of opinions and a range of subjects having to do with Islam and Islamic civilization, Dr. Ghorab demonstrates amply that:

"The reality is that the whole, i.e., the overall, character of the Journal is Western in its perspectives and its style: it makes no room whatever for articles or authors whose style or content of thought belongs within the Islamic tradition. On the contrary, all of those writers whose names suggest they are Muslims, by submitting work to the Journal have submitted their being Muslim to the ethos of modern Western academic attitudes, which dominate the Journal absolutely..."

Thus, Muslim writers are expressly forbidden from beginning any article with *bismillāh* or writing '*sallu llahu alaihi wa sallam*' after the mention of the Prophet; behind which apparently small matter, Dr. Ghorab points out, is the unspoken assumption that intellectual worth, quality and coherence of information or argument can only be found in disassociation from the manners proper to a Muslim writing as a Muslim. He then goes on to demonstrate at length the Journal's anti-Islam bias in the editorial selection of essays and articles for publication, and of books selected for review.

In thus revealing the subtleties of the West's strategies against Islam, Dr. Ghorab's own demeanour is admirably dispassionate; he clearly understands the futility of attacking the enemies of Islam for doing what they must. The real target of his book are those Muslims whom he calls collaborators with the West in their task. The Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, and other such centres, are sponsored and supported by the Saudi and other Arab government, whose roles are more than merely financial:

"Their support... includes the appointment to the boards of these centres of Ulama as-Sultan ('court scholars') in the role

of 'trustees' or 'consultants'. These Muslim names help to legitimize the 'Islamic studies' and so deceive the Muslims further. Examples of such names are Abdullah Naseef, Abdullah al-Turki, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Sayyid Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi and Ja'afar Sheikh Idris, each of whom works with the Oxford Centre of Islamic Studies either as a trustee or a consultant or both."

These 'court scholars', Dr. Ghorab points out, are rarely, if ever, present at the centres, attending only ceremonial occasions, at most once a year. "They do not supervise or monitor or direct or decide anything." Their authority is far less than that of the atheist, Christian and Jewish scholars who hold high positions at the university, and are always available for consultation and decision making, thus framing the agenda for the Centre's research into Islamic history and civilization, and the teaching of Islam to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. "The only role [of the Muslim names] is to provide a facade of legitimacy and to establish the fact of collaboration."

This collaboration of the Aale Sa'ud and their 'court scholars' with the Western centres of Islamic studies amounts, Dr. Ghorab argues, to their allying with the *kuffar* in support of their purposes, in direct defiance of the command of Allah *subḥān wa ta'ālā* in the Qur'an:

"O believers, do not take the Jews and Christians for allies. They are allies of each other. He among you who takes them for allies is of them [has become one of them]. Indeed, Allah does not guide those who do wrong." (Al-Ma'idah, 5:51)

Moreover, Dr. Ghorab also shows that the Aale Sa'ud's support for the Western academic agenda for Islam goes far beyond such wellpublicized examples as this patronage of Western centres for Islamic studies. It also has more subtle, underhand facets which are not immediately obvious to the casual observer, which Dr. Ghorab has only come to appreciate through years of experience of Western academia, both in the west and in Muslim countries; since completing his Ph.D from Oxford University, he has worked there, as well as at the Universities of Cairo and Kano (Nigeria), the Islamic University of Constantine (Algeria) and the King Sa'ud University in Riyadh. He is thus able to cite numerous examples of the Aale Sa'ud's deliberate and knowing promotion of Western academics both at their own universities, and at universities and centres of Islamic studies in the rest of the Muslim world and in the West where they have influence. These Western 'scholars of Islam'

include men such as John Esposito, teacher at New York's Holy Cross College, a missionary-academic centre; Bishop Kenneth Cragg of the Church of England; the Reverend Montgomery Watt, also a Protestant Christian clergyman; and Dr. Hans Kung, a radical Catholic intellectual. The court *ulama* who help the Saudis in this work are also suitably rewarded and promoted: Abdullah Naseef and Abdullah al-Turki, both linked to the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, have recently been appointed Deputy Chairman of Saudi Arabia's so-called *Majlis ash-Shura*, and Minister of Islamic Affairs respectively. It was court *ulama* such as these, Dr. Ghorab points out, who signed the Makkah Document of October 10, 1994, authorizing the Saudis' invitation of U.S. troops to occupy the Arab peninsula to defend them from Saddam Hussain.

This, Dr. Ghorab argues, is in sharp contrast to the Saudi's treatment of Muslim scholars who oppose the Western agenda; truly Muslim scholars are simply ignored, or, where they are too well-known to be ignored, as in the cases of Mawlana Mawdudi of Pakistan and Sayyid Qutb, are labelled politicians rather than scholars, and are dismissed as extremists, fanatics or fundamentalists. To demonstrate this strategy, he quotes at length an attack on Sayyid Qutb by Ja'afar Shaikh Idris in the Oxford Centre's *Journal of Islamic Studies*, which is disguised as an academic article entitled "The Issue of method in Sayyid Qutb's Milestones".

Numerous less prominent Muslim academics who have spoken out against these strategies have been dismissed from their posts in Saudi Arabia, and have either been imprisoned or placed under house arrest. In his appendix, updated in May 1994, he names 13 such academics, many of whom are now active in the anti-Saudi Islamic movement, and including two, Dr. Muhammad al-Mas'ari, formerly Professor of Physics at King Saud University, and Dr. Sa'ad al-Faqih, formerly a member of the faculty of medicine at King Saud University, who have since escaped the country and are now seeking political asylum in Britain. Only in this appendix does Dr. Ghorab reveal that he himself was dismissed from King Saud University for his views.

Apart from Dr. Ghorab's incisive analysis of the situation, his brief and clear exposition, and his courage in speaking out as he does, there is one other quality in this book which could, in the unfortunately unlikely event of its reaching the audience it deserves, achieve for it the rare status of a minor classic. That is that, unlike so many books of its type, it goes beyond merely diagnosing the ill; it also prescribes a treatment. The need, Dr. Ghorab feels, is for intelligent young Muslims all over the world to recognize the pernicious

influence of Western academia and its Muslim collaborators; and knowingly, deliberately make the sacrifice of turning down the prestige and financial rewards that Western institutions can offer in favour of scholarship which is vigorously relevant rather than academic in the Western sense. To undertake research and scholarship, that is to say, not for their own sake, or for the sake of worldly rewards, but for the sake of properly informed and wisely directed action in the path of Allah, *subhana wa ta'ala, insha'Allah*.

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