

Alhassanain (p) Network for Islamic Heritage and Thought

The Beliefs of Shia Islam

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Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	4
1. Doctrine of the Necessity for Seeking Knowledge.....	4
2. Doctrine of the Necessity for Imitation (taqlid) in the Various Branches of the Religion (furu' ad- din)	5
3. Doctrine of the Necessity for Juristic Reasoning.....	5
4. Doctrine Concerning the Position of mujtahid	5
CHAPTER 2: TAWHID	7
5. Doctrine of Belief in Allah.....	7
6. Doctrine of Divine Unity (tawhid).....	7
7. Doctrine of the Attributes of Allah	8
8. Doctrine of the Justice of Allah.....	9
9. Doctrine of the Commands of Allah.....	10
10. Doctrine of al-qada' (Predetermination) and al-qadar (Divine Decree).	11
11. Doctrine of bada'.....	12
12. Doctrine of Religious Ordinances	13
CHAPTER 3: PROPHETHOOD	14
13. Doctrine of Prophethood	14
14. Prophecy is from Divine Grace (lutf)	14
15. Doctrine of Prophetic Miracles.....	15
16. Doctrine of the Infallibility of the Prophets	16
17. Doctrine of the Attributes of the Prophet	17
18. Doctrine of the Prophets and their Books	17
19. Doctrine of Belief In Islam	18
20. Doctrine of the Lawgiver of Islam	19
21. Belief in the Qur'an	19
22. The Proof of Islam and the Previous Religions	20
CHAPTER 4: IMAMATE	23
23. Doctrine of the Imamate.....	23
24. Doctrine of the Infallibility of the Imam	23
25. Doctrine of the Attributes of the Imam and Knowledge of the Imam.....	24
26. Doctrine of Obedience to the Imams	25
27. Doctrine of Love for the Household of the Prophet.....	26
28. Our Belief in the Imams	27
29. The Imamate must be from Allah	27
30. Doctrine of the Number of the Imams	28
31. Doctrine of the Mahdi	29
32. Doctrine of the Return (raj'ah).....	30
33. Doctrine of Dissimulation (taqiyyah)	33
CHAPTER 5: TEACHINGS FOR THE SHI'A FROM THE HOUSEHOLD OF THE PROPHET	35
34. The Doctrine Concerning du'a'	35
35. Themes in the ad'iyah from.....	38
37. The meaning of "Shi'a" in the Opinion of the Household of the Prophet	46
38. The Avoidance of Oppression	47
39. Doctrine of Non-Cooperation with Oppressors	48

40. Doctrine of Non-Participation in	50
41. The Imams call People to Islamic Unity	50
42. Doctrine of the Rights of Brotherhood between Muslims	53
CHAPTER 6: ESCHATOLOGY	56
43. Doctrine of the Resurrection	56
44. Doctrine of Bodily Resurrection	56
CHAPTER 7: APPENDIX	59
CHAPTER 8: NOTES TO TEXT	62

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1. Doctrine of the Necessity for Seeking Knowledge

We believe that Allah has endowed us with the faculty of the intellect ('aql), and that He has ordered us to ponder over His Creation, noting with care the signs of His Power and His Glory throughout the entire universe as well as within ourselves. It is stated in the Qur'an:

We shall show them Our signs on the horizons and in themselves,
till it is clear to them that it is the Truth. (41;53)

Allah has shown His disapproval of those who blindly follow the ways of those who were before them:

They say "No, but we will follow such things as we found our father doing."

What! And if their fathers had no understanding of anything. (2;170)

and he has shown his dislike for those who follow nothing but their own personal whims:

They follow naught but an opinion. (6;117)

Indeed, our intellect forces us to reflect upon Creation so as to know the Creator of the universe, just as it makes it necessary for us to examine the claims of someone to prophethood and to consider the truth of his miracles. It is not correct to accept the ideas of someone without criticism, even if that person has the gift of great knowledge or holds an esteemed position.

The reason that the Qur'an has urged us to reflect upon Creation and to study the natural world and acquire knowledge is so that it may confirm in us mankind's instinctual freedom of thought upon which all sages are in agreement, in order that the power of human understanding and thinking may be so enlightened that it may fulfil the function for which it was created.

Thus it is wrong for a man to neglect the fundamentals of his faith and to put his confidence in what his instructors or other persons have said to him. On the contrary, it is necessary for him, on account of his natural intelligence as confirmed in the Qur'an, to search for, examine and come to a clear understanding of the fundamentals of his religion (usul ad-din), the most important of which (in Islam) are the Oneness of God (tawhid), Prophecy (nubuwwah), the Imamate (imamah) and the Resurrection (ma'ad). One who follows the dictates of his forebears or any other person in these matters has, in truth, committed an error and has wandered from the straight path, and there can be no excuse for such an action.

In short, there are two points:

(a) that it is necessary to examine and understand the fundamentals of our beliefs and not to follow what anyone else might say,

(b) that this is a requirement that stems from reason, and not one that we must accept from the religion (i.e. such knowledge is not only to be gained from religious texts, even if, as we have seen, it is confirmed there, but it is also to be obtained through the exercise of the intellect). The meaning of a requirement that stems from reason' is that reason enjoins us to acquire such knowledge and to examine these matters for ourselves.

2. Doctrine of the Necessity for Imitation (taqlid) in the Various Branches of the Religion (furu' ad- din)

By the branches of the religion we mean those religious laws which govern our actions (shari'ah), but concerning which not everyone is required to exercise juristic reasoning (ijtihad). However, it is the duty of everyone to take one of the three following ways in regard to them:

- (a) he should exert himself in study until he becomes a mujtahid,
- (b) he should exercise juristic precaution (ihtiyat) if he is able to,
- (c) he should follow one who is a recognised mujtahid, who must be a man of wisdom and justice, “who keeps himself from sin, not following the dictates of his own desires, but obeying the commands of Allah.”

It follows that one who is neither a mujtahid, nor exercises ihtiyat, nor follows a mujtahid, does all the actions of his din in vain, and that neither his prayer nor his fasting will be accepted by Allah, even though he has carried out his duties in these matters for the whole of his life; unless he begins to follow a mujtahid, in which case, those of his actions prior to his following the mujtahid which were done for the sake of Allah will be accepted.

3. Doctrine of the Necessity for Juristic Reasoning

We believe that ijtihad in matters of religion is a sufficient necessity (wajib al-kifa'i) for all Muslims in the absence of the Imam, that is to say that should one of them become proficient in ijtihad and become a mujtahid it is enough for them to follow the mujtahid in all the branches of the religion.

All Muslims must strive to gain knowledge and to ascend to the position of mujtahid or, if that is not possible, they must give all their encouragement to one of their number to attain this position. If no-one living holds the position of mujtahid, it is not permissible to follow a dead mujtahid.

Ijtihad is the examination of the sources of the shari'ah to reach knowledge of the commandments (al-ahkamm al-far'iyyah) which the Prophet brought with him. and which do not change or alter with changes in time or situation. according to the hadith:

What Muhammad (S.A.) made halal will be halal till the Day of Judgement, and what he made haram will be haram till the Day of Judgement.

These sources for the shari'ah are the Qur'an, the sunnah (of the Prophet and the Imams), consensus (ijma') and reasoning ('aql), as have been mentioned in the texts of usul al-fiqh. Attaining the position of mujtahid requires many years of study and acquiring knowledge, and this is not obtained except by one who tries his utmost.

4. Doctrine Concerning the Position of mujtahid

We believe that a fully qualified mujtahid is a representative of the Imam, in the case of the latter's absence. Thus he is an authority over Muslims and he performs the functions of the Imam as regards judgement and administration among the people. Because of this, Imam Ja'far as Sadiq said:

To deny the authority of a mujtahid is to deny the authority of the Imam, and to deny the authority of the Imam is to make an objection to the authority of Allah, and this is tantamount to polytheism (shirk).

Therefore the qualified mujtahid is not only one who issues fatwas, but he also has general authority over Muslims who must consult him if they require judgement, this being obtainable only from him. It is correspondingly wrong for anyone to give judgement except him or one who is appointed by him, as no-one can pass sentence without his permission. Also, all that which belongs to the Imam should be given to the mujtahid.

Such authority has been bestowed upon the qualified mujtahid by the Imam so that he may represent him in his absence; hence he is known as the representative of the Imam (na'ib al-imam).

CHAPTER 2: TAWHID

5. Doctrine of Belief in Allah

We believe that Allah is One (wahid), Alone (ahad), Peerless (laysa kamithlihu shay'), Eternal (qadim), without Beginning or End; He is the First and the Last (al-awwal wa al-akhir). He is the All-Knowing (al-alim), the Wise (al-hakim), the Just (al-'adil), the Living (al-hayy), the Omnipotent (al-qadir), Independent of all things (al-ghaniy), the All-Hearing (as-sami'), the All-Seeing (al-basir). He is not to be likened to His creatures, therefore He has neither body nor appearance nor substance nor form; He is neither heavy nor light, neither moving nor motionless; He has no place nor any time, and no-one can point to Him as there is no-thing like Him. Nothing is equal to Him, nor has He any opposite. He has no wife, no child, no partner and there is none comparable to Him. Vision does not perceive Him, yet He perceives everything. Anyone who likens Him to His creatures, for example one who supposes that Allah has a face, hands and eyes, or says that He comes down to the lowest heaven, or that He will appear to the people of paradise like a moon, and so forth, he is as one who does not believe in Allah and is ignorant of the true nature of Allah, Who is above all deficiency. Yet everything we imagine will be a creature like ourselves. As Imam Baqir (A.S.) said:

He is far greater than the explanation of the wise, and far beyond the reach of discriminative knowledge ('ilm daqiq).

Similarly, one who believes that He will be seen by His creatures on the Day of Judgement is an unbeliever. even though he does not liken Allah to anyone in appearance. Such pretenders have merely accepted the letter of the Qur'an and the hadith without using their intelligence. Indeed, they have chosen to ignore their intelligence, for they have not taken note of the use of figures of speech which the nature of language necessitates. Thus they have misunderstood the true meaning of the Qur'an and the hadith.

6. Doctrine of Divine Unity (tawhid)

We believe that the Unity of Allah (tawhid) must be in all respects, just as for His Unity of Essence (tawhid dhati) we believe that Allah must be One in His Essence and in the .Necessity of His Existence (wujub alwujud). Secondly, His Essence must be one with His various attributes, as we shall explain below. Likewise, nothing is similar in its attributes to Him. His Knowledge and Ability are unparalleled and He has no partner in Creation nor in Providing for His creatures; therefore none is like Him in any of His Perfections. Thirdly, His Unity must exist in the worship of Him, and worship of any other than Him is not permitted. Nothing must be made a partner to Him in worship, whether the worship be obligatory (e.g. salat) or not (e.g. du'a'). One who ascribes a partner to Him in worship is a polytheist, like one who pretends to be worshipping for the sake of Allah but is in fact worshipping for the sake of some other being. In the eyes of Islam he is akin to an idolator, and both of them are polytheists.

However, pilgrimages to sacred place, such as the graves of the Holy Prophet (S.A.) or the Imams (A.S.), and mourning are not kinds of polytheism, as some people who have attacked the Shi'a have alleged.

These people have not looked to the reason behind the pilgrimages, for they are a way of approaching near to Allah through good deeds, in the same way as we can approach near to Allah by the performance of such good acts as visiting the sick, escorting a funeral, visiting our brothers in Islam and helping poor Muslims. For example, visiting a sick person is a good act through which a believer obtains nearness to Allah. It is not for the glorification of the sick person himself; therefore it is not an act of polytheism. In the same way, other good acts, such as pilgrimage, mourning, attending a funeral and meeting with our brothers are not kinds of polytheism. Moreover, it is known from religious jurisprudence ('ilm al-fiqh) that pilgrimage and mourning are among the good deeds of the religion, but this is not a place to go into an exposition of this. In brief, these actions are not a kind of polytheism as some people suppose, neither is the intention behind them that of worshipping the Imams (A.S.). Rather, their meaning is to bring the deeds of the Imams (A.S.) to life again, to renew their memory in the minds of the people and to glorify the rites of the religion.

And whosoever venerates the rites of the religion, that is of the godliness of their hearts. (22;32)

It has been shown in the law (shar') that these acts are mustahabb. If a man performs these actions with the intention of pleasing Allah, he deserves to be rewarded for them.

7. Doctrine of the Attributes of Allah

We believe that Allah's primary, positive attributes (as-sifat ath-thubutiyyah al-haqiqiyyah), which we call the attributes of Beauty and Perfection (al-jamal wa al-kamal), such as Omniscience ('ilm), Omnipotence (qudrah), Self-Sufficiency (ghina), Divine Will (iradah), Everlasting Life (hay'ah), are identical with His Being and are not in addition to Him, and that His attributes are not apart from His Being.

Thus His Omnipotence is dependent on His Everlasting Life, and His Everlasting Life is dependent on His Omnipotence. He is Powerful because He is Living, and He is Living because He is Powerful. In fact, there is no duality either between Him and His attributes, or between the attributes of perfection themselves; they must be considered as a unity. They differ in their meaning and their sense, but not in their substance and existence. For, if they differed in their substance, and given that they are eternal in the same way as is His Essence, it would become necessary to assume that the Self-Existence of Allah had number, and the very foundation of tawhid would be destroyed.

However, the positive attributes other than the attributes of perfection (the secondary, positive attributes, as-sifat ath-thubutiyyah al-idafiyah), such as those of being the Creator (khaliqiyyah), the Provider (raziqiyyah), being Without Beginning (taqaddum) and being the First Cause ('illiyyah), are all contained within one attribute which is His Self-Subsistence (qayyumiyyah), and we extract these other attributes from the central attribute when we observe the several effects (at har) of its manifestation (e.g. when we observe His Self-Subsistence in its Creating aspect, we call Him the Creator).

In contrast to this, negative attributes, which are called attributes of Majesty (jalal), are contained in only one negative attribute which is the negation of the possibility (imkan) of these things. This means that He has no body, no appearance, no movement, nor is He motionless; He has no heaviness, nor any lightness, etc.; in reality He has no imperfection. The result of the negation of these possibilities is a return to the Necessity of His Being (wujub al-wujud), which is one of the positive attributes of perfection. So the negative attributes of Majesty ultimately refer back to the positive attributes of perfection, and Allah is One in all respects; there is no number in His Holy Existence, and there is nothing compound in His Essence.

It is not surprising that some persons, accepting that the positive attributes are, as it were, reflected in the negative attributes, but failing to understand that Allah's attributes are One with His Essence, have imagined, in order to reassure themselves of the Unity of Allah, that the positive attributes depend on the negative ones. However, in this they have committed a great wrong, for they suppose that Allah's Essence, which is Absolute Being without the possibility of imperfection, is complete negation and therefore non-existence.

Neither is it surprising that some persons say that His positive attributes are in addition to (idafah) His Essence, therefore saying that His attributes are pre-existent like His Essence, the result being that they are partners of His Being. Similarly, others say that Allah is a compound of His attributes, but Allah is far above these things. As the first Imam, Amir al-Mu'minin, 'Ali (A.S.) said:

The perfection of His purity is to deny Him attributes, because every attribute is a proof that it is different from that to which it is attributed, and everything to which something is attributed is different from the attribute. Thus, whoever attaches attributes to Allah recognises His like, and whoever recognises His like regards Him as two, and whoever regards Him as two recognises parts for Him, and whoever recognises parts for Him has mistaken Him. (Nahj al-Balaghah, Khutbah 1)

8. Doctrine of the Justice of Allah

We believe that one of Allah's positive attributes is that He is Just beyond all injustice ('adil ghayr zalim). He does not treat His creatures without justice, nor does He rule them unfairly or cruelly, He rewards His obedient servants and punishes those who fall into sin. He does not compel His servants to do things which are not within their capabilities, nor does he punish them for more than the sins they have committed.

We believe that He does not omit to do any good act, nor does He perform an evil one, because it is in His power to do every good act and to abstain from every evil one. For, since He knows the excellence of good and the badness of evil, He is not constrained to leave what is good and to do what is evil. Again, since doing good cannot harm Him, there is no reason for Him not to do it. Moreover, since evil is not constrained upon Him, He is not forced to do evil. But Allah is Wise and His works must display His Wisdom, and they must be arranged in the best possible way.

Now, suppose that He treats a creature with cruelty or commits an evil, then it must be because of one of four reasons. (1) He is ignorant of the action, and does not know that it is evil; (2) He knows what He does, but He has been compelled to do it, and is unable to desist from it; (3) it is necessary for Him to do it, although He is aware that it is evil, but He is not compelled to do it; (4) He does it at His pleasure, without cause, or as an amusement, although He is neither ignorant of it, nor constrained to do it, and neither is it necessary for Him to do it.

Each of these is an impossibility for Allah, as each one entails a deficiency in Him. But He is Absolute Perfection; therefore we must say that He is glorified from oppression and from doing what is evil.

Nevertheless, there are Muslims who say that Allah can do evil. They say that Allah can punish the obedient and bring the evildoers and the unbelievers into paradise. They also say that Allah can order His servants to perform actions which are beyond their capabilities and endurance, and, at the same time, that He can punish them for not doing those things. In short, they say that Allah can be an oppressor, can do what is in error, can deceive His servants, and do things which are without interest, purpose or benefit, because

He is not asked about that which He has done, but they will be asked. (21;23)

Let it be known that this is blasphemy concerning Allah for He has said in His Book, the Qur'an:

Allah does not desire injustice for (His) servants. (40;31)

and

Allah does not love corruption. (2;205)

and

We did not create the heavens and the earth and all that is between them in jest. (21;16)

and

I have not created the jinn and mankind except to serve Me. (51;56)

and He has said similar things in other verses.

Glory be to Thee Who did not create without aim. (3;190)

9. Doctrine of the Commands of Allah

We believe that Allah does not command His servants without there being evidence for the command, nor does He require them to do that which they cannot endure or which they do not understand, because it would be an injustice to give a command to somebody who is unable to do it or who has not been warned even though he had previously carried out his duties. However, somebody who is ignorant and has failed to carry out his obligations to Allah is in error for his omission and he will be punished, for it is incumbent on all mankind to learn the necessary duties of his din.

We believe that Allah has commanded his servants and given them laws for all that is in their interest to know, and that He guides them to the ways of everlasting goodness and prosperity, and that He similarly makes them tremble before that which is against their interest and that which is harmful to them. This is an example of His Grace and Mercy (lutf wa rahmah)

towards His servants, who are unaware of most of what is in their interest, and do not know what is harmful for them.

Allah is the Beneficent, the Merciful in His Essence. His Mercy and His Grace are of His Absolute Perfection and One with His Essence, and it is impossible for them to be separated from Him. The disobedience of the disobedient does not cause Him to withhold His Mercy and Grace from His creatures.

10. Doctrine of al-qada' (Predetermination) and al-qadar (Divine Decree)

The sect of the Mujabbirah maintained that Allah was entirely responsible for the actions of His creatures; that he forced them to do evil and then punished them for it, and forced them to do good and then rewarded them for it. They maintained that the actions of people were really His actions, but that they were figuratively attributed to people because humans are the locus of Allah's activity. The reason for this view was that the Mujabbirah denied natural causes (as-sababiyyah at- tabi'iyah) between things, and said that Allah was the real cause (as-sabab al-haqiqi). there being no other cause besides Him.

They denied natural causes between things because they supposed that this followed from the necessity of believing that Allah is the Creator without any partner. But one who has made such a claim has in truth attributed injustice to Allah.

Another sect, the Mufawwidah, maintained that Allah had given full power to His creatures for their actions, and that the power, foreordaining and decree of Allah had no part to play. The reason they held this belief was because they considered that the attribution of man's actions to Allah necessitates attributing imperfection to Him, and that all existing things have particular causes (asbab al-khasah), and that this can be traced back to the cause of causes, the first cause, which is Allah. However, those who made this claim had separated Allah from His Power, and had given Him partners in His Creation.

Now our belief in this matter follows the teachings of our Imams, that the reality is between these two extremes, a middle way between the two opinions, something which cannot be understood by these disputants in theology (ahl al-kalam) who have gone some to one extreme, some to the other. Knowledge and philosophy were unable to clarify this matter until after many centuries, so it is not surprising that those who are not familiar with the wisdom of our' Imams (A.S.) and their sayings suppose that our belief comes from an investigation of the most recent western philosophers, whereas the truth is that our Imams were ahead of them by ten centuries in this matter.

Imam Sadiq (A.S.) truly said in clarifying the middle way that:

There is no compulsion (jabr) (from Allah), nor is there absolute delegation of power (tafwid) (from Allah to man), but the real position is between the two extremes.

What marvellous significance lies in this saying, and how exact is its meaning! It points out that our actions are, from one angle, really our own

actions, and we are the natural cause so that they are under our control and subject to our free choice; and from another angle they are decreed by Allah and are subject to His Power, because it is He Who gives existence. He does not compel us in our actions in such a way that He wrongs us by punishing us for evil deeds, for we have the power and the choice in what we do. But He has not delegated to us the creation of our actions so that they become beyond His Power, for to Him belongs Creation, Judgement and Command. He is Powerful over all things, and He has complete authority over people.

For, after all, our belief is that predetermination (qada') and Divine decree (qadar) are one of the secrets of Allah, and if someone can understand them as they should be understood, without going to either of the extremes, he is correct. Otherwise, it is not necessary for him to force himself to understand them exactly, for he may then be lead astray, and his belief may be corrupted. It is one of the most difficult topics in philosophy which can only be understood by a few people, and because of this many theologians (mutakalimun) have been led astray.

The obligation to arrive at an understanding of this matter is an obligation which is too great for the understanding of an ordinary man. It is enough for someone to believe in this in a general way following the sayings of our Imams (A.S.): that it is a reality between the two extremes, i.e. that there is neither compulsion nor absolute free-will. Anyway, this matter is not one in which it is necessary to have faith based on investigation and profound thinking.

11. Doctrine of bada'

The meaning of bada' for a man is this: the appearance (bada' literally means 'appearance') of an idea about some action which the man did not have previously, in such a way that it changes his intention to do that action. That is to say that something happens which alters his understanding and knowledge about that action, so that he conceives the intention of leaving the work after he had previously intended to do it. This is due to man's ignorance concerning what is of benefit to him, and because he comes to regret doing or having to do what he had intended to do.

Bada' in this sense is impossible for Allah, because ignorance and imperfection are the cause of it, and this is impossible for Allah. The Imamites do not believe in this. Imam Sadiq (A.S.) said:

Someone who supposes that bada' occurs to Allah about some matter, causing Him to regret, is considered by us to be an unbeliever in Allah (kafir).

And he also said:

I will keep at a distance from me someone who supposes that bada' occurs to Allah about some matter which He had not realised previously.

Some traditions have been related from our Imams which have caused people to suppose that we believe in bada' in the sense described above. For example, Imam Sadiq (A.S.) Said:

There was no bada' for Allah like the bada' in the case of my son Isma'il.

Because of such traditions, some writers of certain Islamic sects have accused the Imamites of belief in bada', attacking our group and the way of

the Household of the Prophet (ahl al-bayt), and using this supposed belief to denounce the Shi'a.

The correct aspect of this question is according to what Allah revealed in His Book:

Allah blots out, and He establishes whatsoever He will; and with Him is the Essence of the Book (13:39)

And the meaning of this is that Allah makes something appear on the tongue of the Prophet or his wali or in some other way according to the situation because of some benefit which calls for this revelation, then he abolishes that revelation so that it becomes other than what it was before, although Allah knew about this from the beginning. We can see an example of this in the incident of Isma'il when his father Ibrahim saw in his dream that he was slaughtering his son. The meaning of the saying of Imam Sadiq is that Allah has not revealed any matter as He had done in the case of Isma'il (the son of Imam Sadiq), by taking his life before He took his father's. This was so that people would understand that Isma'il was not the Imam, although it had appeared in the situation as if he were, because he was the eldest son.

And similar to this meaning of bada' is the abrogation of previous shara'i' (pl. of shari'ah) by the arrival of the shari'ah of our Prophet (S.A.), and even the abrogation of some of the commandments which were brought by Muhammad (S.A.)

12. Doctrine of Religious Ordinances

We believe that Allah has sent His ordinances in the interest of His servants: that whatever is greatly to our advantage he has made incumbent upon us (wajib); that whatever is to our disadvantage he has forbidden to us (haram); and that whatever is to our advantage, but not greatly so, He has made mnustahabb, and has recommended us to do it.

And this is of His Justice and Mercy.

It is clear that Allah must give His commandments to cover any eventuality, and that nothing can be found which is outside the scope of His commandments, although we may not be in a position to understand this.

We also say that it is impossible for Him to order something of which a part is evil, or to prohibit something of which a part is good. But some Muslims say that evil is what Allah prohibits, and good is what He commands, and that therefore there is no intrinsic good or evil in the acts themselves.

This is not in accord with reason, however, as the same people also say that Allah can do things which are evil; thus He can order what includes evil and prohibit what includes good. It has previously been mentioned that this opinion is erroneous, because it requires that Allah is ignorant and unable to do certain things; far be He glorified and exalted above what they say!

In short, the correct belief is that there is neither interest nor benefit to Allah in His commandments to us, but that the interest and benefit is entirely for ourselves. It is impossible for Allah to command what is without interest or benefit, or to forbid that which contains no evil, because none of His laws are without aim, and He has no need of His servants.

CHAPTER 3: PROPHETHOOD

13. Doctrine of Prophethood

We believe that prophethood is a Divine duty and a mission from Allah; He appoints to it those whom He selects from among His good servants, from those who are exalted among mankind. He sends them to the rest of humanity to be a guide to what is of benefit to them and is in their interest in this world and the next; to purify them from immorality, evil deeds and harmful customs, and also to teach people wisdom and knowledge and the ways of happiness and goodness until they attain to the perfection for which they were created, and reach the highest position in both worlds.

We believe that the Grace of Allah (lutf) requires that He send His messengers to His servants to guide them, to carry out reforming work, and to be intermediaries (sufara', pl. of safir) between Allah and his gerents (khulafa', pl. of khalifah). For we believe that Allah does not allow mankind to appoint, nominate or select a person as a prophet; indeed only Allah can choose and appoint someone as a prophet, because:

Allah knoweth best with whom to place His message. (6;125)

It follows that people have no right to dispute over those whom Allah sends as guides, bringers of good tidings and warners of what is to come, nor over that which they bring, i.e. the commandments and religious laws.

14. Prophecy is from Divine Grace (lutf)

Man is a changeable creature, a complex structure containing his being, his nature, soul and intelligence. Every individual personality is similarly of a complex nature, in which there are causes of good and evil. On the one hand, man has been created with emotions and instincts, such as self-love, desire and pride; he obeys the call of his desires, has a natural disposition to show his superiority over others, to own things, and to take for himself that which belongs to others; he rushes recklessly at the objects and ornaments of this world. As Allah has said:

Lo! Man is in the way of loss. (103;2)

and:

Surely man waxes insolent, for he thinks himself self-sufficient. (96;6&7)

and also:

Surely the soul of man incites to evil. (12;53)

There are other verses which clearly talk about and point to the desires and feelings of the human soul which was created with man.

On the other hand, Allah has given intelligence (aql) to man to guide him to what is in his interest and to the way of goodness, and He has also bestowed on him a conscience which prevents him from doing evil and oppressing others, and which also upbraids him when he has sinned.

There is continual enmity and struggle between man's desires and his intelligence. One whose intelligence overcomes his desires will attain the highest position among mankind and a perfect spirituality, but one whose desires to conquer his intelligence will be among the great losers, the lowest of mankind and comparable in nature to the beasts.

The desires and their legions are stronger than intelligence and its armies, and this is why most people go astray and wander far from the straight path of guidance, through obeying their desires and answering the call of their emotions. As is said in the Qur'an:

And though thou try much, most men will not believe. (12;103)

Besides, man is reluctant and unaware of all the facts and secrets of the world around him, and since he is also ignorant of his own self, how can he know all that will make him prosperous and what will make him suffer. how can he know everything that is in his own interest or in the interests of mankind as a whole? Whenever he advances with a new discovery, he sees his own ignorance and realises that he knows nothing. It is because of this that Man has an insistent need for someone to show him the clear, straight path to prosperity and to give support to his intelligence, so that it may overcome its unruly, persistent enemy, and so that he may prepare to fight his emotions.

Man is desperately in need of someone to help him to the path of goodness and happiness, especially when his emotions deceive him, disguising his bad actions as good and his good actions as bad, as a result of which his intelligence is confused and cannot find the right path to prosperity and distinguish between the real good and the real evil.

Everyone of us has succumbed on this battlefield, either consciously or unconsciously. except the man whom Allah protects. It is difficult for an enlightened, civilised man to attain the way of goodness and happiness, so how much more difficult is it for an ignorant, unschooled man!

When all people co-operate and consult with one another and deliberate together they are still unable to understand what is useful and what is harmful for themselves and for society. So Allah through His Grace and Mercy for mankind sends them a messenger. The Qur'an says:

He it is who sent among the unlettered ones a messenger of their own, to recite unto them His signs, and to purify them and to teach them the Book and Wisdom. (62;2)

and he (the messenger) warns them concerning what is evil and gives glad tidings to them about what is good for their welfare.

(The giving of) this Grace is necessary for Allah, because it is a sign of His Perfection, and He is Kind and Generous to His servants. When a man deserves His Mercy and Grace, Allah must grant it to him, because there is no deficiency or withholding in the Being of Allah. The meaning of "necessary for Allah" is not that anyone forces Him to act in this way and that it is necessary for Him to obey, but it means that this is an inseparable attribute of Allah, i.e. Mercy and Grace cannot be separated from Him, in the same way as we say that His Existence is inherent in Him, or that He is Necessarily Existent, i.e. His Existence is co-existent (with Him) and cannot be separated (from Him).

15. Doctrine of Prophetic Miracles

We believe that when Allah appoints someone as a leader and a messenger for His creatures, He must point him out to them. In the perfection of His Grace and Bounty, He must give His prophet some evidence and a testimony for His message to show to the people, and this

must be of a kind that is only within the capability of the Creator of all beings and Provider for all creatures, and beyond the ability of man.

This evidence He hands through His messenger, so that He may introduce him to humanity, and this evidence we call a miracle. It is also necessary that the prophet should manifest his miracle to people when he calls them to his prophecy, and similarly it should be clear (i.e. all people should know that it is beyond the ability of man), and such that all men of knowledge and all the experts of his time are unable to perform anything like it, much less the ordinary people. Also, the miracle must coincide with the time of his claim to prophecy so as to constitute evidence of his calling.

When the men of knowledge and the experts are unable to repeat the miracle, people can understand that it is beyond human ability and that it is 'supernatural', and thus that the prophet, through a spiritual relationship with the Provider of all beings, is above mankind. Consequently, when such a prophet brings his miracle and calls people to his prophecy, it is incumbent upon all to accept his call, believe in his message, and obey his command; but some shall believe and some shall deny him.

We therefore see that the miracles of each prophet are in accordance with the important arts and sciences of his time. For example, the miracle of Musa (A.S.) was a rod which swallowed up the lies of the magicians, for magic was the most popular art of his time. His rod destroyed what the magicians had done, and they understood that it was beyond their ability and their skill, and humanly impossible, and that science and art were worthless in comparison with it. Also the miracle of 'Isa (A.S.) was his curing of those born blind and leprous and his restoring to life the dead, because he lived in times when medical science was well thought of among the people, and scientists and physicians held high esteem in society. But all their science could not equal his miracle.

The miracle of our Prophet, Muhammad (S.A.), is the glorious Qur'an, which silenced by its eloquence and fluency all those who were eloquent, at a time when rhetoric was the art of the day and orators were held in high esteem. The Qur'an humiliated and astonished them, warning them that they were unable to produce anything like it, and they surrendered to it. The occasion for their inability was when the Qur'an challenged them to produce ten comparable surahs, but they could not; then it challenged them to produce one such surah, and they could not. We know that they failed the challenge to produce a surah like those contained in the Qur'an, and we know that they took refuge in fighting with the sword instead of the tongue. We understand that the Qur'an is a miracle and that Muhammad (S.A.) brought it with him calling the people to his message. So we know that he is Allah's messenger, and that he brought the truth.

16. Doctrine of the Infallibility of the Prophets

We believe that all the prophets are infallible, and also that the Imams (A.S.) (the successors to the Prophet of Islam) are infallible, but some non-Shi'a Muslims do not believe in the infallibility of the prophets, let alone of the Imams. Infallibility means purity from all sins, both major and minor ones[1], and from mistakes and forgetfulness. It is necessary that a prophet should not even do what is contrary to good manners.

that is, he should not behave vulgarly, for example by eating in the street, by laughing aloud, or by doing anything which may be unacceptable to public opinion.

The reason for the necessity of the infallibility of a prophet is that if he commits a sin or mistake, or is forgetful or something similar, we have to choose between two alternatives: either we obey his sins and mistakes, in which case, in the view of Islam, we do wrong, or we must not obey his sins and mistakes, which too is wrong, because this is contrary to the idea of prophethood where obedience is necessary; besides, if everything he says or does has the possibility of being either right or wrong, then it is impossible for us to follow him. The result is that the benefit of his mission is lost; it becomes unnecessary, and the prophet becomes like ordinary people whose acts and speech do not have the excellent worth that we seek, with the result that there will be no obedience and his actions will be unreliable.

The same reason is adduced for the infallibility of the Imams (A.S.), because we believe that the Imam is appointed by Allah as the Prophet's representative (khalifah) to guide mankind. This will be explained in the section on the Imamate.

17. Doctrine of the Attributes of the Prophet

Just as we believe in a prophet's infallibility, so also we believe that he must be endowed with the most perfect human attributes - bravery (ash-shaja'ah), diplomacy (as-siyasah), sagacity (at-tadbir), patience (as-sabr), intelligence (al-fitnah) and quick-wittedness (adh-dhaka'), so that there is no-one who excels him in such qualities. Otherwise, it is not fit that he should lead people and administer the affairs of the whole world.

He must also be of good descendency, honest, truthful and free from all vices, from before the beginning of his prophecy as well, so that people can trust in him and so that he may deserve this great, Divinely-given position.

18. Doctrine of the Prophets and their Books

We believe, in general, that all prophets follow the right path, are infallible and pure, and that to deny their prophecy, to revile or deride them, results in a loss of faith and insincerity in belief. For the denial of them entails the denial of our Prophet Muhammad (S.A.) who spoke concerning them and confirmed them.

As for the prophets whose names and shara'i' (pl. of shari'ah) are well-known, i.e. Adam, Nuh, Ibrahim, Dawud, Sulayman, Musa, 'Isa and others that are mentioned in the Qur'an, we must believe in each of them. In truth, one who denies one of them has denied them all, and he has especially denied the prophethood of our own Prophet.

Likewise, we must believe in their books and in what has been revealed to them. But the Torah (Turah - the Book of Musa (A.S.)) and the Gospels such as we have them in our hands now have been proved not to be what was revealed to Musa and 'Isa (A.S.). Some persons who were confused by their own desires and by covetousness have changed them by adding to them, so that most of them, or all of them, were compiled after their time by some of the followers of the prophets Musa and 'Isa (A.S.).

19. Doctrine of Belief In Islam

We believe that:

The true religion with Allah as Islam. (3;18)

and that it is the true. Divine shari'ah that has abrogated all previous shara'i'. It is the most perfect shari'ah, according with man's happiness and containing all that is in his interest, in this world and in the next. It call never become obsolete. and will last for ever; it is not changeable and will not be transformed in any way; it contains all that mankind needs: individual, social and political rules. For it is the last shari'ah, and there is no hope for another religion to come and reform humanity, which is sinking into oppression and corruption. Therefore the day must come when the Islamic religion will become strong and its justice and laws will be spread over the entire world. When all the people of the world act correctly in accordance with all the laws of Islam. peace and prosperity will increase and spread among mankind, and man will attain the highest peak which he can imagine: well-being, dignity, plenitude, contentment and ideal morality will arise, and oppression. poverty and indigence will disappear from the surface of the earth to be replaced by love and brotherhood among men.

The reason that at the present time we see such a shameful condition among the people who call themselves Muslims is that their behaviour, from the very beginning, has not been truly in accordance with Islamic law. This dishonourable state has continued and has become worse and worse. The acceptance of Islam has not been the cause of this disgraceful situation of backwardness among Muslims. On the contrary, it has been caused by their disobedience of its teachings, their negligence of Islamic laws, the prevalence of oppression and the enmity of their rulers towards the poor and of certain groups towards the common people, and this it is that has paralysed their progress, weakened them, broken their spirit and brought calamity and tragedy upon them. Allah has destroyed them by their sins:

That is because Allah never changes the Grace He has bestowed on any people until they first change what is in themselves. (8;53)

Thus does Allah treat His creatures.

Lo! the guilty never are successful. (10;17)

In truth, thy Lord would never destroy their cities unjustly while as yet their folk were doing right. (11;117)

Even thus is the grasp of the Lord when He grasps the cities while they are doing evil. Lo! His grasp is painful, terrible. (11;102)

How can we expect the religion to save the community from the depths of perdition, when the teachings of the religion are just ink on paper and people do not act one little bit in accordance with them?

The basic foundations of Islam are: faith in Allah, honesty, truthfulness, sincerity. good behaviour and generosity, and a Muslim must want for his brother what he wants for himself But Muslims left this all behind them a long time ago.

Daily we see them (the Muslims) dispersing into various sects and groups. competing for the things of this world, each one attacking and accusing the other of impiety for unknown or imaginary reasons, or for useless purposes, ignoring Islam and the interests of both themselves and

society. Thus do they dispute: Is the Qur'an created or not? Have paradise and hell been created or will they be created (in the future)? and so on. The nature of these disputes shows that they have deviated from the right path which they have been shown, and are heading towards ruin and destruction, and day by day they deviate further. Ignorance and perversion surround them, but they Occupy themselves with useless and superficial matters, superstitious and imaginary things. Fighting, bickering and boasting cause them to descend further into the bottomless abyss. At the same time, the West, ever vigilant, but a persistent enemy of Islam, has become powerful and colonised Islamic territory, while Muslims remain unaware and half asleep. Only Allah can know the extent and the end of these misfortunes.

In truth the Lord would never destroy their cities unjustly while as yet their folk were doing right. (11;117)

There is no alternative for assuring the Success of the Muslims either today or tomorrow, but for them to wake up, consider well what they do, educate themselves and their generation by correct Islamic teachings and thus remove the oppression and cruelty. In this way can they save . It is their responsibility to establish themselves from this great calamity, justice throughout the world, after having done away with oppression and cruelty, just as was affirmed by Allah and His Messenger. For their religion is the last religion, and the world can not be set right again without it. Of course, people are in need of an Imam to erase imaginings, innovations and deviations from Islam, and to save mankind and rescue them from complete corruption, continual oppression and enmity, and contempt for morality and human life. May Allah hasten his reappearance.

20. Doctrine of the Lawgiver of Islam

We believe that the message of Islam is contained in the person of Muhammad ibn 'Abdillah (S.A.), and that he is the last prophet, the Seal of the Prophets, the Chief among messengers, and the best of them, just as he is at the apex of all humanity, and none can compare with him in excellence and grace, generosity and intellect, and no-one can approach him in his virtuousness. Verily he has a lofty moral behaviour, and no-one will be like him up to the Day of Judgement

21. Belief in the Qur'an

We believe that the Qur'an was Divinely inspired, and revealed by Allah on the tongue of His honourable Prophet, making clear everything, an everlasting miracle. Man is unable to write anything like it because of its eloquence, clarity, truth and knowledge, and no alteration can be made to it. The Qur'an we have now is exactly what was sent to the Prophet, and anyone who claims otherwise is either an evil-doer, a mere sophist or else a person in error, and all of them have gone astray, because it is the speech of Allah, and:

Falsehood cannot come at it from before it or from behind. (41;42)

One of the testimonies to the miraculous nature of the Qur'an is that. as time moves on and the arts and sciences advance, it remains as fresh and harmonious as ever, its supreme aims and ideals preserved. There can be no grounds for dispute with it, nor does it contradict true scientific facts, and

there is nothing in it contrary to positive philosophical thinking. On the contrary, it is the books of scientists and even the greatest of philosophers, at the pinnacle of learning, which contain at least a few trivialities and contradictions and even incorrect assertions. Moreover, with advances in scientific research and with modern scientific theories, even the greatest philosophers of Greece, such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, whom all those who have come after have recognised as the fathers of science and the masters of thought, have been shown to have made some errors.

We also believe that we must respect and give dignity to the Glorious Qur'an, and this both in word and in deed. Therefore, it must not be defiled intentionally, not even one of its letters, and it must not be touched by one who is not tahir. It is said in the Qur'an:

None can touch it save the purified. (56;79)

This subject is dealt with in books of Islamic law.

Neither is it permitted to burn it or to be impious towards it by any behaviour which is deemed to be insulting, such as throwing it, making it unclean, or putting one's foot on it; nor is it permitted to put it in a filthy place. If someone intentionally does any of these things or anything similar, he is not a believer in the Qur'an and its sanctity, and he is considered to be an unbeliever. In fact he has rejected the Lord of all the worlds.

22. The Proof of Islam and the Previous Religions

If someone (a non-Muslim) should argue with us and ask us for reasons to demonstrate the truth of Islam, we could prove it through the eternal miracle of the Qur'an, and by reference to its miraculous nature, as we have explained before.

Here, however, it is our intention to satisfy our own minds, in the event that we should wish to find assurance concerning the truth of Islam; for sometimes it happens that such a question arises on the mind of a liberal-thinking man, when he desires to strengthen his faith.

As for the previous religions such as Judaism and Christianity, there is no way to prove the truth of them or to satisfy ourselves or anyone else who doubts them, without there being faith in Islam; for they have no eternal miracle like the Qur'an. And the miracles of the former prophets which their followers bring forward as evidence are unacceptable, because the verity of the narration is suspect. The books of the former prophets which have been handed down to us, that is to say the books which are related to these prophets such as the Torah and the Gospels, are in no way an eternal miracle which can be put forward as a convincing reason for the truth of their religions, which, nevertheless, have been confirmed by Islam.

It is clear that when we accept and believe in Islam, we must also believe in whatever it has brought and confirmed, and one of its teachings is the prophethood of many previous prophets, as we have described above. It therefore follows that a Muslim, after he has accepted the teachings of Islam, is not required to evaluate the truth of Christianity or Judaism or other such religions, because belief in Islam necessarily entails belief in the former religions and prophets. What is more, the Muslim does not need to verify the truth of the miracles of the former prophets.

However, if someone investigates the Islamic religion, but is not convinced of it, it is incumbent on him, as a rational necessity, to evaluate the truth of Christianity, because it is the last religion previous to Islam.

Then, if he is not convinced by Christianity he must consider Judaism, because it is the religion previous to Christianity and Islam, and he must continue in this way until he finds a religion about whose truth he feels certain.

By similar reasoning, it is clear that someone who has grown up believing in Judaism or Christianity must consider other religions to which people have been called by a prophet who came after their own prophet. For example, the Jews must evaluate Islam and Christianity according to what was said previously about the necessity to consider religions rationally, and Christians must consider the truth of Islam. It follows that neither of them can be excused for believing in their own religions while ignoring the subsequent religions because there is nothing in Judaism or Christianity which could contradict these religions, for neither Musa (A.S.) nor 'Isa (A.S.) stated that no prophet would come after them. It is surprising how Christians and Jews can be sure in their belief and in their religions without considering the truth of the subsequent and last religion.

Wisdom dictates that they weigh the truth of the subsequent religion or religions. And if the truth is not established, then they should continue with their original beliefs. The Muslim, on the other hand, as we stated earlier, because of his belief in Islam, has no need to consider the truth of the previous religions or of any future ones. As for the previous religions.

Islam has confirmed them; however, the Muslim should not follow their commandments or their books, because Islam has superseded them. And as regards future religions, the Holy Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (A.S.) said:

No prophet will come after me.

Since in the eyes of a Muslim the Prophet is honest and truthful, and, as Allah has said:

Nor does he speak from his own desire. This is nought but a revelation revealed. (53;3-4)

there is no need to prove the falsity of any new religion.

Now it is the duty of a Muslim, when a long period has elapsed since the time of the Prophet, and many opinions, beliefs and sects have arisen, to choose the way which he can be sure will guide him to the commandments of Allah as they were sent to Muhammad (S.A.), because the Muslim must carry out all the commandments as they were revealed to the Prophet. So how can he be sure that these commandments are the same as were revealed to the Prophet? Just as Muslims are divided into different sects on the basis of their opinions, so their prayer, worship and behaviour vary. What, then, should he do? What school should he follow in his worship and in such matters as marriage, divorce, inheritance, buying and selling, punishment, blood-money and the like?

It is not correct that he should follow his father, family or friends, for he must be certain of what he believes in. There can be no insincerity, partiality or fanaticism in religion. He is obliged to select rationally the way he believes to be the best, so as to be sure of his religious obligations and his

responsibility towards Allah, and so that Allah will not punish him or reproach him for what he has done, believing it to be correct. Also, he should no listen to those who deride him for following the true path. Allah has said:

Does man think that he is to be left aimless. (75;36)

Also he has said:

Nay, man shall be a clear proof against himself. (75;14)

and

Lo! this is a reminder, that whosoever will, may choose a way unto his Lord. (76;29)

The first question he must ask himself is whether the way of the Household of the Prophet, or another way, should be followed. Then if he chooses the way of the Household of the Prophet, he must choose between the ithna 'ashariyyah and other sects. Or, if he choose the Sunni path, he must choose which of the four madhahib (pl. of madhhab) he should follow. All these questions arise for a liberal-minded person, so he should keep a clear mind and not be confused.

Let us therefore consider the Imamate, on which the beliefs of the ithna 'ashariyyah depend.

CHAPTER 4: IMAMATE

23. Doctrine of the Imamate

We believe that the Imamate is one of the fundamentals of Islam (usul ad-din), and that man's faith can never be complete without belief in it.

It is wrong to imitate our fathers, family or teachers in this matter, even if we respect them, for it is just as necessary rationally to consider the Imamate as it is to consider tawhid and nubuwwah. If a man does not believe in it, and supposes that it is not a fundamental of Islam, he should, nevertheless, examine the concept of the Imamate, if only to absolve himself of responsibility in this matter. The reason for this consideration is that, since we do not receive commands concerning our religious duties directly from Allah, we must refer in this matter to someone in whom we can trust, by following whom we may be sure that we will not be held responsible by Allah for having committed errors. According to our belief, the members of the Household of the Prophet fulfil such requirements.

We believe that, just as it is necessary for Allah to send someone as a prophet, so it is also necessary for Him to appoint an Imam. It is necessary that at all times there should be an Imam to represent the prophet, and that he should perform the duties of the prophet, such as guiding the people, and showing them the way of goodness and prosperity in this world and the next. He ought also to hold the highest position as a public authority in all aspects of people's lives, so that he may cause Justice to increase among them and eliminate enmity and oppression from between them. The Imamate is therefore a continuation of the prophethood, and the reasoning which proves the former's necessity is the same as that which proves the latter's.

It is for this reason that we may say that the appointment of someone as Imam can only be accomplished by the Will of Allah through the Prophet or through the previous Imam. People cannot choose someone as an Imam because they have no authority to do so, and, should they seek to depose him: "He who dies without knowing the Imam of his time, it is as if he dies in jahiliyyah (the time of ignorance)". It will be seen from the above that it is impossible for there to be a time without an Imam appointed by Allah, and that it makes no difference if human beings deny him or not, help him or not, obey him or not, or if he is absent from people's sight. Just as the Prophet was absent from people in the cave and in the mountain pass[2], so is it possible for the Imam to be absent. It also makes no difference, logically, if the absence is long or short.

Allah has said:

And there is a guide for every people. (13;7)

and

There is not a nation but a warner has passed among them. (35;24)

24. Doctrine of the Infallibility of the Imam

We believe that, like the prophet, an Imam must be infallible, that is to say incapable of making errors or doing wrong, either inwardly or outwardly, from his birth to his death, either intentionally or unintentionally, because the Imams are the preservers of Islam and it is under their

protection. Their position in regard to Islam is the same as the Prophet's, and the reasoning which necessitates their infallibility is the same as that which necessitates the Prophet's infallibility, and there is no difference between them in these matters.

An Arabic verse says:

“For Allah it is not impossible:
to unite all the world in one person.”

25. Doctrine of the Attributes of the Imam and Knowledge of the Imam

We believe that the Imam, like the prophet, must be the best among mankind, and that he must excel in all human qualities, such as bravery, generosity, chasteness, truthfulness, justice, prudence, reason, wisdom and morality. The reason for this is the same as that which we gave for the prophet's superiority. He derives his education, the Divine commandments and all his knowledge from the Prophet or from the previous Imam. When a new question arises, he knows the answer from Divine Inspiration through the pure mind that Allah has given him. If he gives attention to some matter in order to know it, he will obtain a perfect understanding with no error, for the Imams do not derive their knowledge from methodological reasoning, or from the teachings of men of knowledge, although it is possible for their knowledge to be increased and strengthened. For the Prophet said:

O Lord, increase my knowledge!

It has been shown by psychological investigations that every man has, during his lifetime, one or two moments in which he is able to understand something by intuition. In fact, this is a kind of inspiration from Allah. This power has not been given to mankind equally, but in different degrees, according to their capacities. At such a time the human mind is capable of discovering certain facts without thinking or reasoning, and without guidance from someone else. Everyone acknowledges this condition from his own personal experience many times during his life.

Therefore it is possible that a human may attain to the highest degree of this state, one which both ancient and contemporary philosophers have described. We maintain that the powers of the Imams to receive inspiration have reached the highest degree of excellence, and we say that it is a Divinely-given power. By this means the Imam is able to understand information about anything, anywhere, and at any time, and he understands by means of this Divinely -given power at once, without recourse to methodological reasoning or guidance from a teacher. When he desires to know about some matter, it is reflected in his pure mind as if in a polished mirror. It is clear from the histories of their lives that, like the Prophet, the Imams were not trained or taught by anyone at all, not even in reading and writing, from their childhood's to the maturing of their minds. No author or teacher was seen to instruct one of them, but they were incomparable masters of knowledge, so that they were never asked about any problem without being able to answer it immediately, and they never said that they did not know. They never required time to consider a question before replying.

In comparison with this, it has never been said of any Islamic scholar, narrator or scientist, in his biography, that he did not study or was not educated by some other scholar, or that he never had any doubts about any problem, for human nature has always been thus.

26. Doctrine of Obedience to the Imams

We believe that the Imams have authority, and that Allah has ordered people to obey them. They are witnesses for mankind, doors opening the way of Allah, guides to Him, guardians of His knowledge, interpreters of His revelation, pillars of His Unity, and custodians of His Wisdom. They are the cause of peace among the inhabitants of the earth, just as the stars are for the heavens. And so the prophet said:

My household is like the ark of Nuh; whosoever embarks upon it will be saved, and whosoever turns away from it will be drowned.

In accordance with the Qur'an, the Imams are:

Honoured servants who speak not until He has spoken and act by His command (21;26-7)

those whom he has kept away from uncleanness and cleansed with a thorough cleansing.

We believe that their orders and prohibitions are Allah's orders and prohibitions, that obedience and disobedience to them, friendship or enmity towards them, are all the same as if towards Allah. It is a sin to deny them, for everyone who denies them in fact denies the Messenger, and that is the same as denying Allah.

It is incumbent on all people to submit themselves to the Imams, to follow their commandments and to obey their sayings. So we believe that all commandments must be learned from their pure teachings, and that if one refers to another person concerning a commandment of the din, one will not be cleared of responsibility towards Allah and will not be sure that he has correctly performed his duty. Like the ark of Nuh, everyone who goes on board is saved, but those who remain behind are drowned in the stormy sea of doubt, wandering, pretension and strife.

We do not seek at this time to prove that they were the legal khulqfa' and that they possessed Divine authority, because this is not the place to do so, and discussing this question cannot bring back times gone by, nor restore things to their rightful owners. We only mean to show that we are obliged to refer to them to obtain the Divine commandments and to find out what the prophet truly said.

The path of those who were not educated by the Imams, or whose minds are not enlightened by knowledge of the Imams is in deviation from the straight path of Islam, and such a person will never be sure that he is free from the obligations and necessary duties that were revealed by Allah; for, granted that there are differences in opinion between Muslim groups as regards the commandments of the din, and that there is no hope that they will agree with each other in their opinions, one cannot just follow them blindly. It is necessary to consider each one until one gains positive assurance of the truth from one of them and is sure that he is doing what Allah commanded him to do. For if one is under an obligation, one must clear oneself of that obligation with certainty through rational means.

Clear reasoning thus obliges one to refer to the Household of the Prophet. We must refer to them concerning Islamic doctrine and legislation as they were revealed to the Prophet. The Prophet said:

I leave two great and precious things among you: the Book of Allah and my Household. If you keep hold of both of them, you will never go astray after me. One of them is greater than the other.

The Book of Allah is like a rope hanging from heaven to earth, and the other is my Family and Household. Remember, these two will never be separated from each other until they encounter me at Kawthar (in paradise).

This tradition is narrated by Sunni and Shi'a traditionalists alike. If you consider it carefully, you will be amazed and convinced by its good sense and by its excellent expression, because at first it says "if you keep hold of both of them, you will never go astray after me". What the Prophet left among us were two worthy things; together he considered them to be one, and he did not say that one need only hold on to one of them, but that one should hold on to both of them so as not to be misled. He explained the reason in the next phrase very clearly. "these two will never be separated from each other until they encounter me at Kawthar". So, if a man separates them and takes hold of only one of them, he will never be rightly guided. So they are the ship of Nuh, and peace for the inhabitants of the earth. All those who do not take refuge with them will be drowned in the depths of perdition.

It is not correct to say that the meaning of this tradition is that it is necessary merely to love the Household of the Prophet, without following and obeying them; no-one can apply this interpretation unless he be a fanatic or totally ignorant, because this is an incorrect interpretation of the Arabic sentence.

27. Doctrine of Love for the Household of the Prophet

Allah said:

Say (O Muhammad, unto mankind): I do not ask of you a wage for this except love of my kinsfolk. (42;23)

We believe that in addition to the obligation to hold fast to the Household of the Prophet, it is necessary for every Muslim, from the point of view of his din, to love them. For Allah, in this verse, has told mankind to love them.

It is narrated from the Prophet:

Love of them (my Household) is a sign of belief, and to show enmity towards them is a sign of unbelief. Whosoever loves them, loves Allah and His Messenger. And whosoever shows enmity towards them shows enmity towards Allah and His Messenger.

Naturally we must love them; it is one of the necessary Islamic duties over which there can be no dispute or doubt. All the sects of Islam have accepted this, apart from a few people who are recognised to be enemies of the Household of Prophet, and they have been given the derisive name of Nawasib[3] (i.e. those who have planted enmity of the Household in their hearts). They are counted among those who deny one of the necessary beliefs of Islam.

One who denies one of the Islamic commandments about which there is no doubt, such as the obligation to pray or to pay zakat, undoubtedly ranks with a denier of Prophethood, even though he may utter the two testimonies of the Islamic faith (i.e. *ashhadu an la ilaha ila 'llah wa ashadu anna Muhammadan rasul Allah*. I testify that there is no god but Allah, and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah). Enmity towards Muhammad's Household is a sign of unbelief, and love of them is a sign of faith. Therefore enmity towards them is the same as enmity towards Allah and His Messenger.

Allah has ordered us to love the Imams, because they merit this, and because of their high degree of obedience to the commands of Allah, their high position in the presence of Allah, their purity from polytheism, sin and that which keeps His servants away from the Mercy of Allah.

It is impossible that Allah should enjoin us to love someone who commits sin and does not obey Him as he should be obeyed; for all mankind are His slaves and created equally, and none have a special relationship or friendship with Him. The noblest of them in the sight of Allah is the best in conduct. So, if He instructs all people to love someone, that person must be the best among them in virtue and above them all, otherwise he would not deserve to be loved, and Allah would never prefer some person to another for no reason, or if that person had no merit.

28. Our Belief in the Imams

We do not exaggerate about the Imams as some sects have done:

A monstrous word it is, issuing from their mouths. (18:5)

but we believe that they are human beings like ourselves, i.e. that if they do good they are rewarded and if they commit sin they are punished. Indeed, they are honoured servants and Allah has given them great dignity and authority, for they have the highest perfections, namely knowledge, goodness, bravery, generosity, chastity and every virtue and worthy quality. Nobody can equal them as far as morality is concerned. Thus, they deserve to be Imams; guides and authorities after the Prophet in those matters in which people require help: religious commandments (*ahkam*), judgement (*hukm*), legislation (*tashri'*), and the commentary (*tafsir*) and interpretation (*ta'wil*) of the Qur'an.

Imam Ja'far Sadiq said:

Whatsoever is reported about us, if it is possible for one of mankind and you do not understand or comprehend it, do not deny it, but you can attribute it to us. However, if it is impossible for anyone of mankind, then deny it, and do not attribute it to us.

29. The Imamate must be from Allah

We believe that the Imamate, like the Prophethood, must be an appointment from Allah, through His Messenger, or an appointed Imam. From this point of view, the Imamate is the same as the Prophet hood.

It is wrong for people to dispute against him whom Allah has sent as a guide and leader for all people, for they cannot elect him. One who is able to bear the responsibilities of the Imam of the people and the guide of mankind can only be recognised and appointed by Allah. We believe that the Prophet

declared who was to come after him (his khalifah), and that he appointed his cousin 'Ali ibn Abi Talib as the Commander of the Faithful (Amir al-mu'minin), guardian Of the revelation and Imam for the people on several occasions. The Prophet obliged everyone to take an oath to agree to 'Ali's succession on the day of Ghadir,[4] and he said at that time:

O faithful! for whomsoever I am his master (mawla) and the authority whom he obeys, 'Ali will be his master. O Allah! be friendly towards the friends of 'Ali; help those who help him, and hinder those who hinder him, and may the Truth always be with him.

The first place in which the Prophet declared the Imamate was when he had gathered his close relatives and kinsfolk and said to them:

He ('Ali) is my brother, inheritor (wasi) and vicegerent (khalifah).

You must listen to him and obey him.

At the time the Prophet said this, 'Ali had not yet come of age.

The Prophet spoke many times on this matter:

O 'Ali! your place in relation to me is the same as that of Harun in relation to Musa; except that there will be no prophet after me.

Other traditions indicate that 'Ali had guardianship over the people, as do the verses in the Qur'an such as:

Your friend is only Allah and His Messenger, and the believers who perform the prayer and pay the alms while they do ruku'. (5:55)

The last part of this verse was revealed about 'Ali who gave his ring to a beggar while doing ruku' in prayer. Naturally we are not able, in a book such as this, to quote all such traditions and verses, and to consider them.

Imam 'Ali publicly declared the Imamate of Hasan and Husayn, and the latter declared the Imamate of his son 'Ali Zayn al-'Abidin, and similarly each Imam was appointed by the previous one.

30. Doctrine of the Number of the Imams

We believe that the Imams are twelve in number; that the Prophet publicly announced them by name; and that each of them announced his successor. They are:

We believe that the Imams are twelve in number. that the Prophet publicly announced them by name; and that each of them announced his successor. They are:

1) Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, al-Murtada.

Born 23 years before the hijrah (601 A.D.), died in the year 40 A.H. (661 A.D.)

2) Abu Muhammad Hasan ibn 'Ali, called Zakiy. (2-50/623-670)

3) Abu 'Abdillah Husayn ibn 'Ali, called Sayyidash-Shuhada'. (3-61/624-680)

4) Abu Muhammad 'Ali ibn Husayn, called Zayn al-Abidin. (38-95/658-713)

5) Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn 'Ali, called al-Baqir. (57-114/678-732)

6) Abu 'Abdillah Ja'far ibn Muhammad, called as-Sadiq. (83-148/702-765)

7) Abu Ibrahim Musa ibn Ja 'far, called al-Kazim. (128-183/745-799)

8) Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali ibn Musa, called ar-Rida. (148-203/765-818)

9) Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Ali, called al-Jawad. (195-220/810-835)

10) Abu 'l-Hasan 'Ali ibn Muhammmad, called al-Hadi. (212-254/827-868)

11) Abu Muhammmad Hasan ibn 'Ali called al-'Askari. (232-260/846-870)

12) Abu'l-Qasim Muhammad ibn Hasan, called al-Mahdi (256- /870-)

The last is the Imam of our time, but he is absent and we are waiting for his reappearance, may Allah hasten it to spread justice and equity throughout the world, filled as it is with oppression and wrong.

31. Doctrine of the Mahdi

Many people have narrated from the Prophet concerning the reappearance, at the end of time, of the Mahdi, who is a descendent of his daughter Fatimah, and how he will spread justice and equity throughout the world, after it has been overcome by injustice and oppression. All sects of Muslims have accepted this good tidings, but with different interpretations.

It is not a new opinion or idea that has come into existence only among the Shi'a, and in which they were prompted to believe by oppression, dreaming of someone who would come to clear the world of injustice, as some malevolent sophists have suggested. On the contrary, the concept of the reappearance of the Mahdi has been well known among all Muslims, and they have believed in it. Proof of this is that some persons falsely called themselves Mahdi during the first century after the advent of Islam; such were the leaders of the Kaysaniyyah,[5] the 'Abbasids and the 'Alawiyyah. Only because people believed in the Mahdi could these persons have deceived them, exploited their belief and seized power. So they made their claims in order to impress the people and spread their influence.

We, the Shi'a, on the one hand, believe in the truth of the Islamic religion as the last Divine religion, and have no expectation of another religion to come and reform humanity. But, on the other hand, we observe oppression and corruption spreading day by day throughout the world, resulting in a total lack of justice and improvement anywhere in the inhabitable countries of the globe. We have also witnessed Muslims forsaking every Islamic principle, commandment and law in every single Islamic country. We know that we must wait for the reestablishment of Islam in all its power, to reform this world, drowned as it is in oppression and corruption.

Naturally, with such diversity of opinion among people pretending to be Muslim as we see today, it is impossible that the superiority of Islam should return, unless a great reformer appears to protect it, and, through Divine providence, unite people and eradicate the error, perversion and wrong which has become admixed with Islam. To be sure, this guide must possess such a great position, such general authority and such supernatural power as to fill the earth with justice and equity when it is full of evil, injustice and wrong.

In short, the observation that humanity is in a pitiful condition, the assertion of the truth of Islam, and its position as the last religion leads to the expectation of such a great reformer (mahdi) to bring salvation to the world. All Muslim sects and the peoples of other religions believe in this expectation, the difference being that the Imamate sect believes that this reformer is a definite person, that he is the Mahdi, and that he was born in

256 A.H. (870 A.D.), that he is alive now, the son of Imam Hasan al-'Askari, and that his name is Muhammad. Many narrators have passed to us ahadith (pl. of hadith) from the Prophet and his Household concerning his birth and his absence.

The Imamate must continue uninterrupted, although the Imam may live hidden among mankind until Allah wills that he reappear on a certain day, a Divine mystery known only to Him. The fact that he has lived for such a long time is a miracle granted to him by Allah, and it is no more amazing than the miracle of the start of his Imamate for humanity at the age of five, when his father's life was taken away. Nor is it any more surprising than the miracle whereby 'Isa talked with people from his cradle, and was appointed a prophet when still an infant. From the physiological point of view, it is quite certain that to live more than the natural span of life, or more than the imagined natural span, is not impossible, even though medical science is not yet able to prolong human life as much as possible. But while medicine is unable to do this, Allah can, for He is All-Powerful and Omnipotent. For the Qur'an states that Nuh lived to a very old age, and that 'Isa is alive now, and once one has accepted Islam, there can be no denying what the Qur'an says. It is incomprehensible that a Muslim should dispute the possibility of these things, while at the same time calling himself a believer in the Glorious Qur'an.

We should remember at this point that the expectation of this saviour and reformer, the Mahdi, does not mean that Muslims should stand idle in their religion, or abandon their religious duties, but that they should perform all the Divine commandments and make every endeavour to seek out the way of Truth. It is an obligation for them to fight for Islam, to put the principles of Islam into practice, to order others to do likewise and to prohibit them as far as possible from doing wrong. As the Prophet said:

Every one of you is a shepherd, and every one is responsible for his flock.

Therefore it is wrong for a Muslim to pay no attention to his religious duties, and to abandon them because he is expecting the Mahdi, the one who brings good tidings; because such an expectation must not induce us to have no responsibility or duty, or to postpone any of our actions, and it will not leave people aimless like animals.

32. Doctrine of the Return (raj'ah)

In this question the Shi'a follow what has been said by the Household of the Prophet : that Allah will cause people to return to this world in the same form as they were before; that He will distinguish between the righteous and the wrong-doers, and between the oppressed and the oppressors; and that this will take place during the time of the Mahdi.

Allah will not cause anyone to return unless he has attained a high degree of faith or has sunk deep into corruption. After this they will die again, and on the Day of Resurrection they shall be raised again to be rewarded or punished, for Allah has mentioned in the Qur'an the desire of these people who have come twice into this world to come yet a third time in order to repent of their sins.

They shall say: "Our Lord! Thou hast caused us to die two deaths, and Thou hast given us twice to live; now we confess our sins. Is there any way to go forth?" (40;11)

Truly the Qur'an came to proclaim raj'ah in this world, as did many traditions from the house of Infallibility, and all the Imamites believe this, except a few .who have interpreted the pronouncement on raj'ah as meaning that the government will return to the Household of the Prophet together with the power to forbid and command, and that this will be when the Awaited One reappears, without involving the return of people or the giving of life to the dead.

Belief in raj'ah is considered among the Sunni to be repugnant, and they deem it a heretical belief. Their collectors of ahadith considered one who had transmitted ahadith about raj'ah to be discredited, and caste aspersions on the characters of such people so as to undermine the value of their transmission. Moreover, they considered one who believed in raj'ah to have descended to the ranks of unbelief (kufr) or polytheism (shirk), or worse. This belief was therefore one of the biggest causes for the despising of the Shi'a by the Sunni, and their slandering of them.

Undoubtedly, this was all part of the sabre-rattling engaged in by some Islamic sects in the past to damage each other and cause dissention. In fact, there is no evidence to substantiate their accusations, because belief in raj'ah cannot cause any blemish on belief in tawhid or nubuwwah; it only emphasizes the correctness of the two, because raj'ah testifies to the supreme ability of Allah to resurrect and raise from the dead, and is one of the supernatural events that will testify as a miracle for Muhammad (S.A.) and his Household. It is similar to the miracle of the raising from the dead performed by 'Isa, only more important, as it involves raising those bodies that have rotted away.

Says he (man): "Who will give life to the bones when they are rotten?"

Say: "He will give life to them Who brought them into existence at first, and He is cognisant of all Creation." (36;78-9)

One who denegrates raj'ah as being a kind of transmigration of the soul, which we know to be incorrect, has not differentiated between transmigration and bodily resurrection, because the meaning of transmigration is that the soul moves into another body, and this is not the same as bodily resurrection. The meaning of this latter is that the soul returns to the same body with all its individual characteristics; and raj'ah is the same as this. If raj'ah were a kind of transmigration, the restoring to life by 'Isa must also be transmigration, and the Resurrection (ma'ad) would be as well.

Now there remain two points to discuss concerning raj'ah: firstly , that it is impossible that it should take place; secondly, that the traditions relating to raj'ah are not true. Now, if it is worth discussing these two subjects, raj'ah cannot be as despicable a subject as the enemies of the Shi'a have suggested. How many beliefs of other sects of Islam which are either extremely improbable or else entirely unsubstantiated by religious texts have led to these sects being accused of being unbelievers or of being beyond the pale of Islam? And for this there are many examples : the belief that the Prophet

was liable to forget or to disobey Allah's Will; the belief that the Qur'an is eternal; the belief that when Allah said He will punish, he is obliged to do so (al-wa'id); the belief that the Prophet did not appoint a khalifah after him.

As for our two points of discussion, and for there being no basis in truth for raj'ah due to its being impossible, we hold that it is a kind of bodily resurrection, differing only in that it takes place in this world.

Therefore the same evidence that proves the possibility of resurrection will also prove the possibility of raj'ah. There is no reason for amazement, except in that it is unusual for us and we are not accustomed to such things in the life of this world. But we know of no cause or impossibility that would bring us near to an understanding or refutation of raj'ah, only that human imagination does not find it easy to accept what is out of the ordinary. So there is no more reason to refute it than there is to refute resurrection.

Who will revive these bones when they have rotted away. (36;78)

Say: "He will revive them Who brought them into existence at first, and He is Cognizant of all Creation." (36;79)

In such a situation, where there is no intellectual evidence either to deny or to prove raj'ah, or even if it is just our imagination that says that there is no evidence, we must have recourse to the Islamic texts which are from the source of Divine inspiration. For there is proof in the Qur'an to substantiate the occurrence of raj'ah in this world for some of the dead, as there is also for the miracle of 'Isa in restoring the dead to life.

And I heal the blind and the leprous and bring the dead to life with Allah's permission. (3;49)

And Allah said:

When will Allah give it life after its death? So Allah caused him to ***die for a hundred years, then raised him to life. (2;259)***

And also in the verse we have seen before:

They shall say: "Our Lord! Thou hast caused us to die two deaths . . ." (40;11)

And the meaning of the verse will not be fulfilled unless there is a return to this world after death, although some commentators of the Qur'an have tried to give an exigesis (ta'wil) which cannot, however, satisfy us or reveal the true meaning of the verse.

Concerning the second point of discussion, which claims that the traditions referring to raj'ah are not authentic, this has no foundation in truth, because raj'ah is a necessary belief according to the Household of the Prophet, and this has been narrated by many transmitters.

After this, it is rather surprising that a famous writer, Ahmad Amin, who claims to be knowledgeable, says in his book "The Dawn of Islam' (Fajr al-Islam): "Judaism makes its appearance in Shi'ism in the belief in raj'ah." We would say to him: Judaism also makes its appearance in the Qur'an through raj'ah, as it has been mentioned in those verses of the Book which have been quoted above.

And we would also tell him : there is no way in which Judaism and Christianity cannot appear in Islam, because the Prophet came to confirm what existed of the Divine shara'i', even though he abrogated some of their

laws. So the appearance of Judaism and Christianity is not a disgrace in Islam, even if, as the writer claims, raj'ah is one of the beliefs of the Jews.

Anyway, raj'ah is not one of the fundamentals of Islam, belief in which is compulsory; but our belief stems from the authenticated traditions of the Household of the Prophet, whom we know to be infallible. For it is one of the unseen things which they relate, and there is nothing which suggests that it cannot take place.

33. Doctrine of Dissimulation (taqiyyah)

It is related from Imam Sadiq in an authenticated tradition:

Taqiyyah is my din and the din of my forefathers.

Whosoever has no taqiyyah has no din.

It was the motto of the Household of the Prophet. so as to protect themselves and their followers from harm and bloodshed, and to better the condition of the Muslims and to cause agreement among them, and restore them to order.

3 And this is still a sign by which the Shi'a are known, and which distinguishes them from other sects and other peoples. Everyone, when he feels that there is danger to himself or to his property through the preaching of his beliefs or through the practicing of his beliefs in public, should practice taqiyyah. And this is something which appears reasonable to our natural intelligence. It is known that the Shi'a and their Imams have suffered much and have been denied their freedom throughout history, and that no sect or people have suffered like them. Thus they have been forced on many occasions to practice taqiyyah in order to conceal themselves from those with other beliefs; to keep themselves and their practices hidden, as long as their religion and their survival was threatened. And this is their cause for being distinguished from others by their taqiyyah.

Taqiyyah has rules and observations which indicate whether it is obligatory (wajib) or not, and these are mentioned in the relevant chapters of the books of those learned in jurisprudence (fiqh). It is not obligatory at all times, but is sometimes optional; and sometimes it is obligatory not to do it, as when it is necessary to proclaim the truth publicly, to protect Islam and save it, or to fight in the cause of Islam. On these occasions, property is of no value, and individual souls are of no importance. Taqiyyah is forbidden (haram) when someone's life is in danger, or when falsehood is being propagated, or when anything is threatening Islam, or when Muslims are menaced, or injustice and iniquity are spreading among them. The purpose of taqiyyah, in the view of the Shi'a, is not to form a secret organisation dedicated to destruction and subversion, as some of their enemies, who are not able to see things in their true light, have imagined, for such people have made no effort to really understand what we say. The point is not to make Islam and its rules a secret which cannot be divulged to those who do not believe. No, the books of Shi'a and their writings in the fields of jurisprudence (fiqh), law (ahkam) and theological studies, as also their beliefs, are in great abundance in the world, more than any other sect that is sure of its way. Our belief in taqiyyah has been abused by those who want to denigrate the Shi'a, and they consider it to be one of their weak points, for it seems that they are not satisfied with the necks that fell to the sword in

the attempt to finish them off in that age when it was enough to say that someone was a Shi'i to assure his death at the hands of the enemies of the Household of the Prophet, from the Umayyids and the 'Abbasids up to the Ottomans.

If our attackers wish to say that there is no evidence for taqiyyah in Islam, we can refute this. Firstly we follow our Imams and are guided by their guidance, and they have ordered us to practice taqiyyah when it is necessary, and it is to them an integral part of Islam, as we saw from the saying of Imam Sadiq:

Whosoever has no taqiyyah has no din.

Secondly, it has been commanded in the Qur'an:

Not he who is compelled while his heart is at rest on account of his faith. (16;106)

This verse was revealed about 'Ammar ibn Yasir, who took shelter by proclaiming unbelief in order to protect himself from the enemies of Islam. Also Allah has said:

And a believing man of Pharoah's people who hid his faith . . . (40;28)

CHAPTER 5: TEACHINGS FOR THE SHI'A FROM THE HOUSEHOLD OF THE PROPHET

Introduction

The Imams of the Household knew that power would not return to them in their own lifetimes, and that the Shi'a would remain under the rule of others, and that they would be obliged to use force and violence to struggle against this rule.

At the same time, it was natural for them to conceal their religion and the way that they followed, as long as taqiyyah did not cause bloodshed and did not bring harm to others or to Islam; thus they endeavoured to stay in this sea of troubles, treachery, hatred and vengeance against the Household.

It was necessary, because of this, for the Imams to devote their time to teaching their followers the fundamentals of the Islamic shari'ah in a special way, and to guide them in correct social behaviour so that they might become examples of perfect, just Muslims.

The way of the Household as regards teaching cannot be explained in this short book, and the famous books of ahadith can be consulted for examples of their teachings on religious education. However, it is not a bad idea to indicate here some of these teachings which can be gathered together under the general heading of their doctrines concerning the teaching of their followers. These concern their moral teachings dealing with social behaviour and those things which may bring their followers closer to Allah, how to cleanse the heart from unclean things, and how to be honest. We have already mentioned, in the discussion of taqiyyah, some of the things about useful social behaviour, and in the following pages we shall mention some further important matters.

34. The Doctrine Concerning du'a'

The Prophet said:

Du'a' is a weapon for the believer, a pillar of din, and a light of the heaven and the earth.

and here is truth. It became one of the peculiarities of the Shi'a by which they are distinguished. They have written many books mentioning its importance, and the correct way of performing these supplications, and from these ad'iyah (pl. of du'a') which have been transmitted from the Household, hundreds of books, large and small, have been written, wherein are stored the aims of the Prophet and his Household, urging their followers and encouraging them to recite du'a'. From them have been transmitted:

The best worship is du'a'.

The most beloved action in the view of Allah on earth is du'a'.

Du'a' can remove calamities and retribution (which would otherwise have been ordained by Divine decree).

Du'a' is the cure for every sickness.

The first Imam, Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali (A.S.), was much given to du'a', and this is clear because he was the leader in monotheism (Sayyid al-muwahhiddi) and the Chief among believers (Imam al-alihiyyin) and his ad'iyah and sermons are masterpieces of Arabic eloquence: for instance, the du'a' of Kumayl ibn Ziyad al-Mashhur. And they contain enough Divine and

religious education to enable one to tread the right path to being a perfect Muslim.

In fact, the ad'iyah which are transmitted from the Prophet and his Household are the best guidance for a Muslim. When he thinks deeply about them, they will stimulate in him strength of faith and belief and the spirit of sacrifice in the path of Allah, and will reveal to him the mystery of worship, and the sweetness of praying to Allah and abandoning everything but Him. They will teach him what is incumbent on a human being to know about his religion, and what will bring him close to Allah, and take him far from corruption, his desires and false innovations. In short, in these ad'iyah have been stored the summary of education as regards morality, training of the soul and Islamic beliefs; but they are, at the same time, the most important source of philosophical ideas for investigating theology and for the study of ethics.

If people could follow the guidance contained in the elevated meanings of these ad'iyah - but, alas, they will not be able to do so - no trace of the corruption which fills the earth would be found, and those souls which are bound by their sins could go to the Heaven of Truth freely. But it is a near impossibility to pay attention to these reformers who have called humanity to the way of Truth. So the word of Allah has revealed to mankind:

Most surely (man's) soul is wont to command (him to do) evil. (11;53)

And most men will not believe though you desire it eagerly. (11;103)

The source of badness in man is self-deception and an ignorance of his faults caused by denying their existence, thus making them seem good. So he oppresses others, seizes their property, lies, flatters, obeys his own desires, and then deceives himself that he is not really obeying his desires, but that these things need to be done, so as to make his sins seem very insignificant. The following transmitted du'a', which takes its strength from Divine revelation, influences man to withdraw himself and to be alone with Allah, and shows him how to confess his sins and to understand that he is an evil-doer, and that he must devote his time to asking forgiveness from Allah, and reminding himself of his self-deception. Thus the reciter supplicates Allah from the du'a' of Kumayl ibn Ziyad:

Would that I knew my Lord, my Master! How canst Thou bring down Fire on faces who fall down in prostration to Thy Greatness, or on tongues who speak sincerely of Thy Unity and- thank Thee with their praises, or on hearts who attest to Thy Divinity with certainty, or on minds who have acquired knowledge of Thee to such an extent that they are humbled, or on limbs who have travelled afar to worship Thee obediently and to show their repentance through their submission to Thy Will. We cannot imagine that Thou wilt deal with us thus; this is not what we have been taught of Thy Generosity.

Repeat the recitation of this passage and reflect on the delicateness of the remonstrance, its eloquence and the enchantment of its exposition.

At the same time as it inspires the soul to confess its short-comings and its servitude, it also instructs it not to despair of the Mercy and Kindness of Allah. Then it speaks to the soul in a clever and subtle manner, and instructs it in its highest duties, and makes incumbent upon it the thorough

performance of these duties. It teaches the soul how man, through the performance of these duties, may deserve the granting of forgiveness by Allah, and this is what causes man to listen to his soul and to do what is necessary for him to do, when formerly he was not carrying out his obligations. Then follows another style of remonstrance from the same du'a':

Answer me, O my God, my Master and my Lord!

I may endure Thy punishment, but how can I endure separation from Thee?

O, answer me, my Lord!

I may endure the heat of Hell, but how can I endure not to look upon Thy Munificence?

This is instruction for the soul in the necessity of taking pleasure in the nearness of Allah, and observing His Kindness and His Power, and loving and desiring what He possesses. Taking pleasure in nearness to Him may reach such a degree that to be without it is worse for the soul than punishment and the heat of Hell. It may be that man can endure the fire of Hell, but he cannot endure to be abandoned. As these passages lead us to understand, love and taking pleasure in closeness to Allah is the best intercession for a guilty person, that Allah may forgive and pardon him. The delicateness of this kind of wonder and adulation of Allah Who accepts repentance and forgives sin will not remain unheard.

It would not be a bad thing to end this exposition with a short du'a' which lists the highest virtues, and also tells us what is necessary in order that every part and category of humanity may be endowed with the best qualities.

O Lord! Give us steadfastness in obedience and keep us far from sin,
give us sincerity in intention, and knowledge of that which is sacred;
bestow on us guidance and constancy,
seal our tongues with reason and wisdom,
fill our hearts with knowledge and learning,
keep us clean within from what is forbidden and
from those things of which we are uncertain,
keep our hands from oppression and stealing,
hide from our eyes immorality and treachery,
and close our ears to foolish talk and calumny.
Bestow on our 'ulama' freedom from concupiscence
and the ability to give good counsel;
on our scholars, application and desire for their studies;
and on those who listen to them, obedience to their spiritual advice.
And on those Muslims who are sick, bestow comfort and cure;
and on our dead, compassion and mercy.
And on our aged, dignity and calm,
on our youth acceptance and the true faith and repentance.
And on women, modesty and chastity,
on the rich, humility and generosity,
and on the poor, patience and contentedness.
And on the fighters for Islam, victory and triumph,
on those who are prisoners of the enemy,

freedom and peace.

And on the rulers, justice and kindness,

and on the people they rule, fairness and good behaviour.

And help the pilgrims to Mecca and the Holy Shrines to be charitable with their provisions

and their wealth, and help them to perform

what is proscribed for the hajj and the 'umrah.

Grant this through Thy Overflowing Generosity and Thy Mercy,

O Merciful and Compassionate!

I recommend you, my brothers, the readers, not to miss the opportunity of reciting these ad'iyah, paying attention to their meaning and their purpose, and through presence of mind drawing near and listening to Allah with humility, reading them as if they are speaking of oneself, and following the rites that are proscribed with them by the Household of the Prophet; because reading them mindlessly, merely mouthing the words, will not increase man's knowledge, or cause him to draw near to Allah, none of his troubles will be resolved, and his du'a' will not be accepted.

Allah does not accept du'a' from a darkened heart, so when you recite a du'a', draw near with your heart and do not doubt that it will be accepted.

35. Themes in the ad'iyah from

as-Sahifat as-Sajjadiyyah

After the deplorable tragedy (of Karbala'), and after the Ummayyids had taken over the leadership of the Islamic community, they committed excesses in oppression, revelled in bloodshed and made a mockery of Islamic teachings. There was no alternative for Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, Sayyid as-Sajidin (A.S.) but to remain in the seclusion of his own home, dejected and full of sorrow. No-one dared to approach him in his house, and he was forbidden to guide the people as they should have been.

He was forced to adopt the method of du'a' (as we have mentioned, this is one of the methods of nurturing purity of character) as a means of propagating the teachings of the Qur'an, the principles of Islam, and the message of the Household of the Prophet, of instilling in the minds of the people a sense of spirituality and piety, and as a means to the necessary purification of the soul and morality. This was a method of dissemination that he adopted to teach people without arousing the suspicions of the tyrannical rulers, and without giving them any evidence with which to condemn him. That is why we see that most of these eloquent ad'iyah, some of which have been collected together in as-Sahifat as-Sajjadiyyah, also known as Zabur Ali Muhammad (The Psalms of the Household of the Prophet), consist of various topics in Islamic learning. Their style and meaning count them among the greatest examples of authorship in Arabic literature; they are the embodiment of the teachings of the true religion; they contain the innermost subtleties of tawhid and nubuwwat; and they constitute the best way to propagate the ethics of Muhammad and Islamic morality. Thus they are spiritual and ethical teachings in the style of ad'iyah, or ad'iyah in accordance with spiritual teachings and ethics. Without doubt, after the Qur'an and Nahj al-Balaghah these are the greatest examples of

literary style in Arabic, and the best philosophical discussions of theological matters and ethics.

From then, we understand how to praise Allah and how to sing his glories and how to thank Him and turn to Him in repentance; and it is in this way that we can understand how to establish communion with Allah and to express our secrets to Him in private, and how to become solely dependent on Him. It is by this method that we are made to understand the meaning behind invoking benedictions on the Prophet of Allah, on His Messengers and Chosen Ones from His creation, and the manner of doing this. It is thus that we can understand how we should do good towards our parents - the obligations of the father towards the son, and of the son towards the father, as well as the obligations towards one's relatives and neighbours, and the obligations of all Muslims in general obligations of the poor towards the rich, and vice versa.

We are warned about repaying our debts towards others, about how we should act in commerce and business, and about how we should cooperate with our relatives, friends and all people with their interests at heart. In this way, all the good qualities in man are brought out. These ad'iyah comprise a comprehensive system of instructions in the science of ethics.

By reciting them we can come to know how to show patience in the midst of hardships and difficulties, and how to face both sickness and health. They explain the duties of Islamic armies and their soldiers, and the duties of the people towards these soldiers, and many other things which are in accordance with the essence of Islam and the revealed shari'ah, and all this has been done only in the form of the du'a'.

The following themes are recurrent in the Sahifah, and are frequent.

a) A description of Allah and His Grandeur and Power and a description of His Oneness and Transcendence, couched in the most exact and scholarly terms. This theme occurs in almost all of the ad'iyah in various styles and ways of expression. For instance, in the first du'a' we come across the following passage:

All praise is due to Allah, the First before Whom no being preceded, and the Last after Whom will be no other.

Whom the eyes of those who see cannot perceive, and Whom our descriptive imagination cannot envisage.

With His Power He brought Creation into being out of nothingness, and made His creatures totally subservient to His Will.

In this passage, he has explained the exact nature of the eternity of Allah, and has set Him above the level at which sight and mind may encompass His Being and has referred to the true nature of the Creation of Allah.

In the sixth du'a' the Power of Allah and His regulation of the universe are referred to in a different manner.

All praise is due to Allah Who created day and night by His Might, and made them different from one another by His Power, confined them both to specific limits, each following on the heels of the other, so that people might obtain their sustenance and might grow;

He created night for them so that they might relax from the stress of life, and from excessive fatigue, and made it a garment of comfort and rest for

people so that it might be for them a gathering of new strength, and an enjoyment of leisure and sensual delights.

He continues mentioning the wisdom of the days and the nights, and how it is a duty for man to be thankful and grateful to Allah for them.

In the seventh du'a' the fact that everything is in the hand of Allah is described in the following way:

O Allah! through Whose Will the knots of problems are unravelled.

O Allah! with Whom we take refuge in times of hardship.

O Allah! to Whom we look for relief in times of misfortune.

It is Thy Might before which even the most brazen are humiliated, and it is through Thy Grace that the ways to make better our situation are provided.

Destiny is determined by Thy Power, and things follow the dictates of Thy Will.

That which Thou dost order hastens to the bidding of Thy Will without waiting for Thy Command, and according to Thy Wish is withheld without Your Forbidding.

b) The second recurring theme of as-Sahifat as-Sajjadiyyah concerns the Bounties and Grace of Allah towards man, and the inability of man to pay back what is due through worship and obedience to his Lord, and through sole reliance on Him. Thus we read in the thirty-eighth du'a':

O Allah! No-one is able to complete his thanksgiving to Thee without new bounties being bestowed upon him which require further gratitude;

and no-one reaches the level of complete obedience, try he ever so hard, without being short by that which Thy Grace bestows on him;

thus Thy most thankful servant offers his thanks to Thee, but not as he ought to, and Thy most devoted servant obeys Thee, but always short of perfect obedience.

Due to the magnitude and multitude of the bounties of Allah, which never stop, even for one moment, it is impossible for man to thank Allah as he should (even if he is grateful and obedient to Him), so how could one who has committed one act of ingratitude make up for it, even if he were to do all that was in his power to make amends. This is what is suggested in the following quotation from the sixteenth du'a':

O Allah! Were I to weep until I became blind, were I to moan until I lost my voice, were I to stand in prayer until my feet could no longer support me, were I to bow in ruku' until my back was paralysed, were I to prostrate before Thee until I became a skeleton, were I to eat clay all my life or to drink the most filthy water until the end of my days, were I to sing Thy Glory until my tongue dried up,

even then I could not raise up my eyes to the heavens because of my shame, undeserving to request the erasing of even a single one of the sins which I have committed in my life.

c) The third most common theme of the ad'iyah concerns Divine reward and punishment, Hell and Paradise; and it is pointed out again and again that Allah rewards his servants solely on the basis of His Grace and Mercy; for man deserves nothing but punishment even for the minutest of his sins. All the ad'iyah of as-Sahifat as-Sajjadiyyah make mention of this theme, in

order to produce in man a sense of fear of the punishment of Allah and hope for His reward and Mercy. All this is conveyed to such an effective manner and style that it generates in the heart an intense fear and awe, and saves man from falling into the abyss of sin. For instance, we read in the forty - sixth du'a':

The signs are clear, and Thy Supremacy is eternal and will not diminish, therefore eternally beset with misfortune is he who disobeys Thee, and ignominiously lost is he who turns away from Thee, and the worst calamity befalls he who strays from Thee.

How fiercely he will be overtaken by Thy punishment, and how long he will linger in that terrible state, how far he will be from any remission, and how hopeless a state he will be in.

The sentence passed by Thee will be the just sentence, and the Justice of Thy decision cannot be challenged. Thou hast made all things exceedingly clear, and no room for excuse has been left. . . .

Or as we read in the thirty-first du'a':

O Allah! Have Mercy on the one standing alone in front of Thee, my heart beating through fear of Thee, my limbs trembling in awe of Thee.

O Lord! My sins cause me to stand ashamed before Thee; if I keep silence, no-one will speak on my behalf. even if someone would intercede for me, I have no right to intercession.

We also read in the thirty-third du'a':

If Thou shouldst punish me justly, I should perish, but if Thou shouldst pour on me Thy Mercy, I should retain my existence. . . .

And lift from me the burden of my sins whose weight has bent my back, and I beg help from Thee for the heaviness which brings my knees to the ground.

May peace be upon Muhammad and his Family. Have Mercy on my soul for the wrong I have done to myself, and let Thy Mercy take up the load of my sins. . . .

d) The fourth merit of those ad'iyah is to lift the one who recites them towards perfection, away from evil deeds and badness of character, to cleanse his conscience and purify his heart, as we read in the twentieth du'a':

O Allah! Increase the sincerity of my intentions by Thy Kindness, and strengthen my certainty of Thee, and by Thy Power correct my faults. . . .

O Lord! Bring peace to Muhammad and his Family, grant me correct guidance that I may not change, and a true path from which I may not deviate, and integrity of intention that I may not doubt. . . .

O Allah! Do not leave me any characteristic which may be a blemish on me without correcting it, or any defect which is a misfortune for me without improving it, or any imperfect quality without perfecting it.

e) The fifth theme is to inspire the one who recites the ad'iyah to realise the necessity for independence from others, not to demean himself in front of them, and not to rely for his needs on any but Allah. For greediness for things which belong to others is one of the worst characteristics a man can have. We read in the twentieth du'a':

Do not tempt me to beg from anyone but Thee, or to demean myself by asking from anyone but Thee when I am in need, or to implore anyone but Thee when I am afraid,

so that from these things I merit being abandoned by Thee, being deprived of Thy blessings, or being ignored by Thee.

And in the twenty-eighth du'a':

O Allah! Verily I have sincerely devoted myself to Thee, and I have turned away from (relying on) those who (in fact) need Thy help, and I no longer beg from those who are in need of Thy Favour, for I have realised that for someone in need to beg from someone else in need shows the foolishness of one's views and the delusions of one's mind.

And again in the thirteenth du'a':

For someone who seeks gratification of his needs from Thee and relies for the relieving of his poverty on Thee, surely he has taken his need to the proper place, and has approached his wants from the right direction.

And someone who comes for his needs to one of Thy creatures and has considered that someone other than Thee will be the cause of his succeeding, surely he will deserve an end to Thy Beneficence.

f) Sixthly, these ad'iyah teach people the necessity of considering the rights of others, of helping them, of being compassionate and kind towards each other, of making sacrifices for somebody else's sake, so as to make a reality of Islamic brotherhood. For example, we read in the thirty -eighth du'a':

O Allah I beg forgiveness from Thee for ill-treatment meted out to someone in my presence without my coming to his aid, and for kindness shown to me without my giving thanks,

and for something unpleasant for which the doer asked forgiveness from me but I refused, and for any hungry person who asked from me but I ignored,

and for the rights of a deserving believer which it was my duty to see to but to which I did not attend,

and for the defect in a believer which I noticed but did not conceal.

This asking for forgiveness is a most effective way of admonishing the soul to do those things which are necessary for exalted, divine morality.

In the thirty-ninth du'a' there is something more important than this. It teaches how it is your duty to forgive someone who has wronged you, and stops you from taking revenge on him, and can elevate you to the ranks of the saints.

O Allah! Anyone who has taken from me when Thou hast forbidden,

and has slandered me when Thou hast prohibited,

and has died with my shadow on him, or did this to me and is still alive, forgive him for that through which he harmed me, and do not rebuke him for that which he has done to me, and do not humiliate him for what he has taken from me.

Make the forgiveness with which I forgive them, and the gift which I have offered to them, the purest offering that anyone can offer, and the highest liberality of those near to Thee, and reward me for my forgiveness

by forgiving me, and for my du'a' for them by Thy Mercy, so that everyone of us may rejoice through Thy Grace.

How amazing are these last phrases! and how beautifully they enter the souls of the good to warn them of the necessity for pure intentions towards all people, to make them ask for happiness for everyone even for those who have been unjust or iniquitous to them.

There are many examples of this in the ad'iyah of as-Sahifat as Sajjadiyyah, and if people would only listen to their guidance, they are full of all kinds of teachings in Divine morality.

36 Our Belief in Pilgrimage (ziyarah)
to the Holy Shrines

One of the practices which distinguish the Shi'a from all other Islamic sects is the attention paid to pilgrimage to the Holy Shrines, such as those of the Prophet (S.A.) and the Imams (A.S.), and the building of magnificent domes and buildings over their tombs by good will and faith.

All of these things are done through the recommendations of the Imams, for they were continually persuading and encouraging their followers to make pilgrimages, so as to derive great reward from Allah. It is one of the best forms of worship after the obligatory ones, and the shrines are the best places for supplicating and approaching Allah.

Furthermore, according to the sayings of the Imams, this, is a form of fidelity to them. Imam Rid . a (A.S.) said:

For every one of the Shi'a and their followers has an understanding with them (the Imams), and pilgrimage is a way of fulfilling and being faithful to that understanding. Whosoever undertakes a pilgrimage of his own free will, believing in it, for him the Imams will intercede with Allah on the Day of Resurrection.

There are social and religious advantages in making ziyarah. Thus our Imams have stressed its performance, for it fortifies the bond between them and their followers and reminds us of their virtues and their struggle for the truth. Moreover, it gathers Muslims together in one place so that they can get to know and establish friendships with one another, in order that the condition of obedience to Allah and devotion to his commandments becomes firmly imprinted in their hearts. And it confirms in them the true meaning of pilgrimage: the truth of tawhid, the sanctity of Islam, the prophethood of Muhammad, the various Islamic duties such as the striving for an elevated morality, bowing down and prostrating before the Commander of all creatures, and how to thank Allah for His gifts by means of those prayers which are recited during pilgrimage. And these prayers are among those with the most exalted meanings. For example, the du'a' "Amin Allah" composed by Imam Zayn al-'Abidin (A.S.) when he made a pilgrimage to the grave of his grandfather 'Ali, Amir al-Mu'minin (A.S.).

Also the recitations during the pilgrimage point out the magnificent characters of the Imams, their sacrifices in defending the truth and elevating the religion, and their perseverance in obedience to Allah. They are written in the most excellent Arabic, full of great eloquence and easily understandable phrases, and they contain the best exposition of tawhid, and supplication and prayer to Allah. Truly, among them is the greatest religious

literature after the Qur'an, Nahj al-Balaghah and the other prayers of the Imams, because they have included in them summaries of their teachings on Islamic matters and morality. There are also teachings and guidance in certain pilgrimage ceremonies mentioned below for the spiritual progress of the Muslim, the cultivation of sympathy for the poor, and encouragement for fostering brotherhood, good behaviour and understanding between people.

These rites must be performed before entering the shrine and reciting the special prayer of pilgrimage, and some others must be said during or after. Here we shall indicate some of them in order to make clear what we have already said.

Firstly the pilgrim must wash himself (ghusl) as commanded in the books of Islam, and clean his body before beginning. This is so that he may rid himself of dirt, prevent disease and suffering, so that his odour does not offend others,[6] and at the same time to cleanse his spirit from moral impurities. Traditions have been narrated instructing that after completing this washing, and in order to fix his attention on these high aims, the pilgrim should say.

O Allah! Give me light and purity, and preserve me from all disease, sickness, calamity or corruption, and also through this washing purify my heart, my body, my bones, flesh and blood, my hair and skin, my brain and nerves and every place I touch the earth, and provide me with a witness on the Day of my poverty, necessity and requirement.

Secondly, the pilgrim should wear the best and cleanest clothes that he has, because in such days of gathering it causes people to love and be kind to one another, increases their dignity and thus enables them to understand the importance of pilgrimage. It should be noted that the pilgrim should put on the best clothes that he can afford, not the finest that are obtainable. For not everyone can wear the best, and such a command would cause despair among the poor, and thus it would go against the favour of Allah. So it is said that there is a two-fold meaning, i.e. that people should be well-dressed and that they should pay due regard to the condition of the poor.

Thirdly, the pilgrim should wear perfume where possible, for its benefit is like that of being well-dressed.

Fourthly, he should give alms to the poor, according as he is able. The purpose of this is, firstly, to help the poor, and then to instill in the pilgrim a sense of generosity .

Fifthly, the pilgrim should proceed towards the shrine slowly and Quietly without gazing around. This is clearly in respect for the sacred place (haram), the pilgrimage and those who are buried there, but also that the pilgrim may give his undivided attention to Allah, and avoid inconveniencing others along his way.

Sixthly, he must say "Allahu akbar" (Allah, the Supreme) and repeat it as much as he can. Some traditions instruct the pilgrim to repeat it one hundred times. By this he becomes aware of Allah's Greatness and Magnificence, and realises that nothing is greater than He. This is for the sake of Allah and His Dignity and to revive the sacred rites of Islam and to strengthen the religion.

Seventhly, after visiting the tomb of the Prophet or an Imam, the pilgrim should pray at least two rak'ah. This is in order to worship Allah and give thanks to Him, and to ask for success in one's pilgrimage', then he should ask that the spiritual reward for the prayer should go to the soul of he who is buried in that place.

The special du'a' that follows, which the pilgrim must recite after his prayer, serves to show him that prayer and worship during pilgrimage are only for Allah, that no-one deserves to be worshipped save Him. It is a means of winning Allah's favour, for the pilgrim says:

O Allah! To Thee alone do I pray, to Thee alone do I bow down and prostrate myself.

Thou art One,

Thou hast no partner,

and it is a sin to pray, bow down or prostrate oneself before anyone else but Thee.

O Allah! Praise be to Muhammad and his Family.

Accept my pilgrimage, and grant my request for the sake of Muhammad and his Immaculate Descendants.

This du'a' explains to those who want to know, the purpose of pilgrimage to the shrines as it was performed by the Imams and their followers, and it answers those who suppose that pilgrimage is a kind of idolatry and polytheism.

No doubt, the purpose of such detractors is to discourage the Shi'a from the benefits of meeting one another, and the solidarity which increases in the times of pilgrimage, because such brotherhood is like the shafts of arrows in the eyes of the enemies of Muhammad, for they cannot be unaware of the Imams' intention. It is not possible to believe that those whose every saying and doing were for the sake of Allah, and who gave their blood in the cause of the religion of Allah, should call the people to polytheism and idolatry.

Finally, one of the necessities of the pilgrimage is that "the pilgrim should behave towards and treat his fellow pilgrim with politeness, that he should say few words but ones of benefit and purpose, that he should remember Allah,[7] be humble, worship often, ask for the Mercy of Allah on Muhammad and his Descendants, lower his eyes and not stare around, assist his brothers when they have nothing and console them, remain far from what is unlawful, avoid quarrelling and arguing about one's beliefs."

The reality behind the pilgrimage is the salutation of Muhammad or the Imam, because, in accordance with the Qur'an:

They are alive and are provided with sustenance from their Lord. (3;168)

And they hear the words of the pilgrim and answer his salutations. It is enough to say, for example, before the tomb of the Prophet: "As-salamu 'alayka ya rasulallah" (Peace be upon thee, O Messenger of Allah), but it is much better to say the words prescribed by the Household of the Prophet, for they express the highest intentions and the greatest religious significance by their eloquence, and they are the most excellent prayers through which the pilgrim may contemplate Allah.

37. The meaning of “Shi'a” in the Opinion of the Household of the Prophet

The Imams of the Household (A.S.) did not receive the leadership of Islam, although, however, they never had any designs towards it. So they devoted themselves to educating the Muslims, and to instructing them as Allah had ordered. They remained with those who were faithful to them, and confided in them their secrets, took great pains to teach them all the religious commandments and instill in them religious knowledge, and showed them what is of advantage to man and what is harmful. They recognised no-one as Shi'i or as one of their followers unless he obeyed the commands of Allah, kept himself apart from his desires and carried out what they taught and guided him towards. Only to love them will not suffice to save someone, it. that person also follows his desires. making excuses for his disobedience to Allah, because they have clearly said that love of them will save no-one unless it is accompanied by pure actions, truth, honesty, piety and virtue.

Imam Baqir (A.S.) said:

O Khuthayma! Say to our friends that we can be of no help to them before Allah unless their actions are pure, and that they cannot attain our friendship and love except through their virtue.

For surely, one who reveres justice, but does not act in accordance with it, will be stricken with grief and remorse more than anyone else.

The Imams desired and expected their followers to guide others and show them the correct path of goodness, and they instructed them to call the people to the truth by good actions, saying that this was more important than calling by word.

Call the people unto the truth by your behaviour, so that they can see your obedience, and know that you are truthful and obedient.

We shall give some extracts here from conversations between the Imams and their followers, so that the reader may see how they were anxious to educate the people.

1. From Imam Baqir's conversation with Jabir al-Ju'afi:

O Jabir! How can someone who claims to follow us be content with only loving us? I swear that our follower is one who carries out his duty to Allah and fears Him. Our followers are known by their humility. modesty, exceeding remembrance of Allah, fasting, prayer, being sympathetic and helpful towards the poor, their reading of the Qur'an, saying nothing about a person except concerning his good actions, and they are most trustworthy among those close to them. (O ye who follow!) Observe your duty to Allah, and perform good actions for His reward, for there is no preference by Allah towards anyone. The most beloved of His servants in the presence of Allah is the best in conduct and obedience to Him.[8] O Jabir! Nobody can come close to Allah except through obedience. Without this nobody will be saved from Hell, nor can anybody excuse himself before Allah without it. Whosoever obeys Him, he is our friend, but whosoever disobeys Him, he is our enemy. You cannot attain to our friendship except through good actions and virtuousness.

2. From Imam Baqir's conversation with Sa'id ibn al-Hasan:

al-Imam: 'Does it happen to you that one of you approaches his brother and puts his hand into his brother's pocket to take some money of which he is in need, without his brother preventing him?'

Sa'id: 'I do not know of such a thing.'

'Then truly, there are no real Shi'i among you.'

'Shall we all perish, in that case?'

'Yes, indeed, for such people do not put into action what they say.'

3. From Imam Ja'far's conversation with Abi as-Sabah al-Kanani:

al-Kanani: 'How much harassment we receive from people for your sake!'

al-Imam: 'What harassment do you receive from them?'

'When there is a dispute between one of us and one of them, they immediately condemn us for following you.'

'Do they condemn you for my sake?'

'Yes, indeed!'

'But there are only a few of my followers among you. Only those who possess great and real virtue, whose acts are only for the sake of the Creator and to obtain his reward, only these are my followers.'

4. There are many traditions from Imam Ja'far concerning these matters. Here we have chosen some of them and written them down.

- If a man lives in a town with a hundred thousand inhabitants or more, and there is someone in that town whose virtue is greater than his, then that man is not one of my followers.

- We do not count among the believers anyone unless he obeys all our commandments. Indeed, righteousness is the only sign of one who follows us. Adorn yourselves with it, and may Allah have Mercy on you.

- One whose chasteness and abstinence from unlawful sexuality is not the subject of talk among women is not one of our followers. And one who lives in a town with ten thousand inhabitants, and one of them is greater in righteousness than he, then that man is not one of our followers.

- Truly, a follower of Ja'far is one who does not listen to his stomach or to his carnal desires, who endeavours in the path of Islam, who acts for the sake of Allah, hoping only for His reward and fearing His chastisement. Yes, indeed, such are the followers of Ja'far.

38. The Avoidance of Oppression

In the opinion of the Imams, one of the worst sins among men is enmity and iniquity between themselves. Just as it is said in the Qur'an:

Deem not that Allah is heedless of what the iniquitous do; He is only deferring them to a day when eyes shall stare.(14:42)

Likewise, 'Ali, Amir al-Mu'minin (A.S.) had a strong aversion to iniquity, and he told the truth when he said:

I swear by Allah that if all the continents of the earth and all that is under the sun were offered to me in exchange for sinning towards Allah even by stealing a grain of barley from an ant, truly I should never do such a thing.

And this shows how much a person can be aware of the evil of iniquity and hold himself back from doing it. 'Ali would not do wrong even to an ant by stealing a grain of barley from it, even though all the lands of the earth were offered to him. How then does one stand who sheds the blood of

Muslims, plunders their property, and pours scorn on their reputation and honour? How should he be compared with 'Ali? Where does he stand compared to the wisdom of 'Ali? Truly, 'Ali's behaviour is a shining example of the excellent religious education which Islam seeks to instill in humanity.

Iniquity is, then, one of the greatest of the sins Allah has prohibited, and this is why the Household of the Prophet have cautioned their followers against it above all else, through their words and prayers. Thus was their policy and behaviour, and they acted justly not only towards their friends, but also towards those who showed disrespect for them and treated them with rudeness.

The story of the forbearance of Imam Hasan (A.S.) with the man of Sham (Damascus) who insulted him[9] is well known. On that occasion, the Imam spoke gently with him and treated him kindly, letting him understand that he had done wrong. Even as the fourth Imam, Sayyid as-Sajadin asked for forgiveness for iniquitous persons in his ad'iyah.

This is the utmost generosity and nobility of mind that a perfect man can reach. Although it is correct from an Islamic point of view to avenge an oppressor in one's own manner, and to curse him before Allah, it is better to forgive than to avenge, for forgiveness is a sign of virtue; indeed, in the opinion of the Imams, to curse him is to be iniquitous oneself.

Imam Sadiq (A.S.) said:

Verily, a slave is oppressed so long as he refrains from cursing his oppressive master excessively, but if he should do so, then he becomes an oppressor too.

How sublime this is! But if to curse an oppressor is oppression itself, what is the condition of those who instigate oppression and iniquity, who commit aggression against people, or cast aspersions on their reputations, who plunder their property, denounce them before oppressors, or deceive them so that they fall into danger or are hurt, or who spy on them? How do they stand in the wisdom of the Imams? Truly, such persons are the farthest from the generosity of Allah, their sins and their punishment are the most horrible, just as are their actions and morality.

39. Doctrine of Non-Cooperation with Oppressors

Because oppression is very dangerous and has evil consequences, Allah has forbidden men to cooperate with the iniquitous or to associate with them. He has said:

And do not incline towards those who are unjust, lest the fire touch you, and you have no guardians besides Allah, then you shall not be helped. (11;113)

This is exactly what the Descendants of the Prophet have taught us, and their teachings are the same as the Qur'an's. It is narrated that they had the greatest aversion to those who form ties with, help or cooperate with oppressors at any price, even to the extent of half a date. Without doubt, the greatest misfortune that has beset Islam and the Muslims is their lack of firmness in dealing with the evils of oppressors, and their connivance with them, not to mention their cooperating with them and protecting them in their oppression. There is no greater reason for the weakness and

backwardness of the Muslims than their deviation from the straight path of Islam, and, as a result, the religion loses its power and disintegrates day by day, becoming foreign to the people. The Muslims, or rather those who call themselves Muslims, become powerless and far from the protection of Allah, so that they are unable to defend themselves against the most feeble and lowest enemies like the abject Jews let alone their powerful Christian opponents.

As far as they were able, the Imams always endeavoured to prevent their companions and relatives from cooperating with oppressors or helping them, and concerning this innumerable traditions have been related by the narrators. One of these traditions is from Imam Zayn al'Abidin (A.S.), who had written to Muhammad ibn Muslim az-Zuhari after warning him not to engage in oppression himself.

The reason they ask for you is only to use you as a grinding stone, a bridge whereby they can progress to their evil aims, a ladder to their deviations, so that you may be an agent and a propagandist for their crimes. Through you, they can hide their affairs from wise men, and attract the ignorant to themselves. Neither their own ministers nor their followers can disguise their faults as you can; what little will they give to you compared with what they take away. Take care of yourself, examine yourself and reckon with your actions as a responsible person.

The last sentence is full of meaning. Because, as long as man is conquered by his desires he considers himself worthless, and feels no responsibility for what he does; he cannot feel the evil of his bad deeds and he supposes that what he does is as nothing and will not be taken account of. Truly this is one of the secrets of man's unruly soul.

Then the Imam wanted to make az-Zuhari aware of this spiritual secret which mysteriously is part of his nature, so that he would not be deluded by his imagination and exceed his responsibility.

One conversation that is more forceful than the above, but which is on the same subject, comes from Imam Musa Kazim. He was speaking to Safwan al-Jammal who was a Shi'i and a faithful narrator of his traditions, according to al-Kishshi, who has given a biography of al-Jammal.

It is narrated that al-Jammal went to see Imam Musa.

'O Safwan! All of your actions are good, except one.'

'And what is that!'

'Your hiring of camels to that man Harun.'

'I swear by Allah that I did not do this so that he might live in pleasure, nor that he might hunt, or amuse himself, hut only that he might make the pilgrimage to Mecca. I have not taken charge of the camels myself, but have entrusted them to a servant.'

'Does he have to pay for them?'

'Yes.'

'Do you wish him to live until he pays.'

'Yes.'

'Whosoever wishes them (i.e. the oppressors) to stay alive is in fact one of them, and he shall enter Hell.'

Safwan relates that he immediately went and sold all his camels.

If such is the future for one who only wishes the iniquitous to live, then how bad it must be for one who helps them or joins with them, or does their work or who obeys them.

40. Doctrine of Non-Participation in

Oppressive Government

Since our Imams have firmly warned us not to help oppressors, even to the extent of giving them half a date, and not to hope for their lives, the situation of one who cooperates with them and joins their government is indeed a bad one. Similarly, for one who is in their employment, or is one of the founders of their state, or is devoted to preserving their government. Because:

being loyal to an oppressive government completely undermines the truth, and rehabilitates and propagates falsehood, iniquity and corruption.

This is related from Imam Ja'far Sadiq (A.S.).

However, joining the oppressors or their government is permitted by our Imams if, by so doing, we can increase justice and perform the commands of Allah. if it is for the good of the believers, encourages what is right or forbids what is evil. Imam Musa (A.S.) said:

Verily, there are among the company of the oppressors those through whom Allah has made bright His path. He gives them the power to protect His friends and to resolve the difficulties of the Muslims. They are among those who truly believe. They are the guides of Allah and a light among His slaves.

Many traditions have been passed down concerning these things, which have clarified the duties of governors and government employees, who should act in accordance with them. For example, (the letter which) Imam Sadiq wrote to 'Abdullah al-Najashi, the governor-general of Ahwaz.

41. The Imams call People to Islamic Unity

It is well known that the Household of the Prophet tried hard to preserve the rites of Islam, to call Muslims to restore its glory, to unify their beliefs, and that they also strived to maintain the brotherhood of Islam and to remove malice and enmity from the hearts of the Muslims.

We cannot ignore Imam 'Ali's dealings with his predecessors to the khilafah. He treated them with consideration although he believed that they had taken what was his right. He agreed with them and kept his peace with them. and refrained from expressing his opinion about his own right to the khilafah in public until after he had attained to it. Then he called together the remaining followers of the Prophet (those who were still alive and who had been present on the day of Ghadir when the Prophet had appointed 'Ali as his khalifah), so that they could bear witness to his appointment to the khilafah.

He never withheld his opinion about what was helpful or in the interests of Islam and the Muslims, and he often said:

I was afraid lest I should not help Islam and the Muslims, and that they would fail.

He said and did nothing against the position, power and authority of the khulafa', but kept himself to his house and remained silent, despite the fact that he saw what they were doing.

He acted thus for the sake of Islamic interests, up to the point where he was famous for his admirable qualities. The second khalifah, 'Umar ibn Khattab, said many times: "I would never encounter a difficulty without Abu 'l-Hasan being there to contribute to its solution." And "If it were not for 'Ali, 'Umar (himself) would have perished."

History cannot forget the way Imam Hasan (A.S.) dealt with Mu'awiyah. He made peace with him, because he realised that if he continued to fight, the light of the Qur'an and just government would be extinguished, and moreover the name of Islam would vanish for all time, the Divine shari'ah would be lost and the Imams that were to come would be obliterated. So he chose to protect the edifice of Islam and its name. For this reason, he made peace with Mu'awiyah, who was a resolute hated Imam Hasan and enemy of the religion and of Muslims, and who his followers. He knew that Mu'awiyah would deal unjustly with him and his companions, and, although he could have counted on his family and followers to fight for their rights and defend themselves, he believed that the highest interests of Islam were above all these things and more important than them.

It was for the same reason that the third Imam, Husayn, the Holy Martyr, rose up against the Banu Ummayah; for he realised that if they continued in their vicious ways without anyone taking arms against them and proclaiming their wicked intentions, they would eradicate Islam and its glory. Thus he wished to point out their oppression and iniquity for posterity, so as to expose their evil plans against the Prophet's religion. Naturally, events turned out as had been predicted. If it had not been for his holy campaign, Islam would have been recorded as a religion of the past, and it would have been thought a false religion.

In completing his holy campaign, following through and pursuing his sacred aim against iniquity and oppression, the Shi'a revive and remember the tragedy at Karbala' every year and in various ways, as the Imams have commanded.

We should obtain a better and clearer understanding of how the Descendants of the Prophet tried hard to preserve the glory of Islam if we study the behaviour of Imam Zayn al-' Abidin towards the Umayyid kings, despite the fact that his family had been killed and that his reputation had been destroyed by them. He was continually despondent and heart-broken over the murder of his father and family by the Umayyids at Karbala', but, in spite of these things, he always prayed that the armies of the Muslims would be victorious, and secretly asked Allah to keep the Muslims in safety and to ensure the increase and glory of Islam. He propagated knowledge of Islam, and by means of prayer alone he taught his followers how they should ask Allah for victory for the Muslims. He said in his famous du'a', for the guardians of the frontiers of Islam:

O Allah! Send down peace upon Muhammad and his Family,
increase their numbers, sharpen their swords, protect their homes,
preserve their country, cause friendship to spread among them,

improve their conduct,
provide them with sustenance and the means of livelihood,
help them, bestow on them patience, teach them the ways of cleverness .

.. .
(and then after calling for the wrath of Allah on the unbelievers)

O Allah! In this way strengthen the people of Islam, protect their lands,
increase their property,

let the soldiers of Islam be free from fighting that they might worship
Thee privately.

Let nothing be worshipped over the whole of the earth but Thee.

Let no-one prostrate himself before anyone but Thee.

Thus he continued his du'a' (it is one of his longest), telling of the duties
of the Muslims armies, how they must behave and be of good character and
have good equipment. It contains teachings on the Holy War (jihad),
showing its purpose and its results, warning Muslims to keep clear of their
enemies, instructing them how to deal with their attacks and defend
themselves. It also contains instructions on their obligations, such as
continual remembrance of Allah, avoidance of unlawful things and keeping
the jihad pure for Allah.

Likewise, other Imams have dealt with the kings of their times, although
they were being tortured and cruelly and severely maltreated by these kings
with many kinds of suffering and pain. When they realised that an' Islamic
government was not going to be re-established, they tried their best to teach
the religion to the people, pointing out to them the excellence of Islamic
knowledge. No insurrection which happened either through some of their
family or through others during these times was ordered by them; on the
contrary, these were in opposition to their explicit orders, because they
made the utmost effort to protect the government of Islam. No-one, not even
the 'Abbasid khulafa' tried harder than them to protect it.

It is enough just to look at the advice of Imam Musa ibn Ja'far (A.S.) to
his followers:

I charge you to obey your king and not to lose your strength through
disobedience. If he is just, ask Allah to protect his life; if he is an oppressor,
ask Allah to reform him. For your interests are identical with his interests.
Verily, a just king is really like a father - wish for him what you wish for
yourselves, and do not wish for him what you do not wish for yourselves.

This is one of the best sayings on the subject of the protection of a king
by his people: "wish for him what you wish for yourselves, and do not wish
for him what you do not wish for yourselves."

Compare with this the great offence some writers who are contemporary
with us have committed. They have spoken of the Shi'a as a hidden
destructive group, as a band of revolutionaries and avengers. Now, it is
correct that every Muslim who obeys the teachings of the Household
should, from the moral point of view, despise oppression and oppressors,
keep clear of them and their evil deeds, feel repugnance and contempt for
them and their fellows and helpers and dislike them all. The Shi'a have had
these feelings engrained in their souls from generation to generation.
However, they are not rebels. Nor do they like to stir up trouble or foment

insurrection against a rebellious government which says that it is an Islamic government, neither secretly nor openly.

The teachings of the Imams do not allow them suddenly to take the life of someone who is a Muslim, or to betray him, although his beliefs may differ from theirs. But, according to their teachings, a Muslim who professes tawhid and the nubawwah of Muhammad (S.A.) is to be respected; his blood, his property and his family is secure. "It is not right to take the property of a Muslim except by his leave." All Muslims are brothers to each other, and to each of them belong the rights of brotherhood, as we shall now explain.

42. Doctrine of the Rights of Brotherhood between Muslims

One of the highest and most excellent instructions of Islam to all Muslims is brotherhood without distinction of birth, rank or position. But, unfortunately, Muslims have always neglected this. One of the smallest duties of Islamic brotherhood is that a Muslim should wish for his brother what he wishes for himself, and that he should not wish for his brother what he does not wish for himself, as we shall point out in a tradition from Imam Sadiq.

One must study this duty well, and it is accounted a very small one in the opinion of the Descendants of Muhammad. One sees that Muslims find it difficult to fulfil this small duty, for their morals and behaviour are not in accordance with the Islamic spirit. Concentrate carefully on this small responsibility; if people were to respect it, neither oppression, nor enmity, nor theft, nor falsehood, nor back-biting, nor informing would be found anywhere among them. If they realised the result of this and were careful in carrying out this duty, oppression and enmity would disappear; they would live as brothers with each other and attain the height of happiness among themselves. Madinah al-Fadilah[10] of the ancient philosophers would become a reality, no government would be needed, no court of law, no police, prison or criminal law. they would be free from colonisers and tyrants; oppressors could not force their iniquity on them; and the earth would become paradise.

Furthermore, if Islamic brotherhood reigned among people, as Islam has said it should, then the word justice would disappear from our dictionaries; justice and its laws would not be needed, and brotherhood alone would suffice to ensure goodness, peace, happiness and pleasure among us. For humanity, in such a situation, would have no need for justice and its laws; these are only needed when there is a lack of love between people. A mother is kind and good towards her children because of her love and compassion, not because of the commandments of justice. We can understand why a man loves only himself and that which is agreeable to him; it is impossible for him to love something or someone unless it belongs to him. And when he does love something or someone, it is impossible for him to give them to someone else whom he dislikes. unless there exists a principle which is stronger than his desires, like a belief in justice and kindness, and in this case, he may devote his interests to someone else whom he does not like.

Such an ideal, when it dwells in the human mind, keeps it in a position above all material things, so that it is able to realise the superiority of justice

and goodness. and to show kindness to others. It will be seen that man needs such superior ideals when there is no kindness and brother hood between him and his fellow men. That is to say that as long as he lacks the feeling of brotherhood - and the fact that he does is because of his egotism and desires as long as this feeling is missing, he must believe in the goodness of justice and kindness, following the guidance of Islam. And if he fails to believe in this as well, then he does not deserve to be thought of as a Muslim; such a man. even in name, is not a friend of Allah; he has done nothing for the sake of Allah. as we shall see in the tradition of the Imam which follows. Usually human desires overcome man, and it is difficult for him to prepare himself even to believe in justice, and so it is much more difficult for him to attain that perfect belief through which he can vanquish his desires.

We can see that the brotherhood of man is very difficult to obtain as long as its desirability is not sensed. For this reason, Imam Sadiq did not wish to explain to al-Mu'alla ibn Khunays more than he could understand, because Ja'far was afraid to teach him what he could not put into practice. Mu'alla asked:

'What does one Muslim owe another?'

'There are seven duties incumbent upon him. Should he neglect but one of them. he is not a friend or servant of Allah. and truly he has done nothing for the sake of Allah.'

'What may these things be?'

'I feel compassion for you. I am afraid lest you learn them, but you neglect to put them into practice, or you cannot. There is no power but in Allah.'

Mu'alla then relates that the Imam told him the seven:

'First. the smallest duty is that you should wish for your brother what you wish for yourself, and that you should wish that what you do not desire for yourself should not befall your brother.'

So, this is a small duty'. Do we find this easy? That is to say, we present-day Muslims? May those who call themselves Muslims but do not act in accordance with this small but strict duty find themselves disgraced.

It is amazing that the backward state of the Muslims should be ascribed to Islam, while the only reason for it is the behaviour of the Muslims, that is those who call themselves Muslims but do not carry out this humble duty.

Having reminded ourselves and mentioned our present circumstances, we shall now list the seven duties as related by Mu'alla from Imam Ja'far (A.S.).

(a) Wish for your brother what you wish for yourself, and wish that what you do not desire for yourself should not befall your brother.

(b) Do not make your brother angry, but seek to please him and obey his wishes.

(c) Help him with your soul, your tongue, your hands and your feet.

(d) Be his eye to see by, his guide to lead him and his mirror.

(e) Do not eat your fill when he is hungry, nor drink and clothe yourself when he is thirsty and naked.

(f) If he has no servant, but you do, it is incumbent on you to send your servant to him to wash his clothes, cook his food and spread out his mattress.

(g) Accept his promise and his invitation; visit him when he is sick, attend his funeral, and see to his needs before he asks you, hurrying to do them if you can.

When he had finished, Imam Ja'far said:

If you fulfil these duties you can call yourself his friend, and he will be your friend also.

There are many traditions told from our Imams, and most of them are collected in 'Kitab al-Wasa'il'il in the relevant sections.

Some people have imagined that the Imams meant brotherhood only among the Shi'a, but if they were to read the traditions they would understand that their imagination is deceiving them, although the Imams did strongly repudiate those whose way was against the Shi'a and who did not follow their guidance. Let us mention here the conversation of Imam Sadiq with Mu'awiyah ibn Wahab.

'How should we treat those who do not follow our ways?'

'Look to your Imams whom you obey, and obey them and imitate them. They visit them (i.e. those who are not Shi' a) when they are sick, go to their funerals, give evidence for or against them. and repay their trust.'

No, the brotherhood that the Imams envisaged among their followers is higher than ordinary Islamic brotherhood, and it has been mentioned briefly in the introduction. It will suffice to read the following conversation between Imam Sadiq and Aban ibn Taghlab.

Aban relates: While I was circumambulating the Ka'bah with Imam Sadiq, one of our friends signalled to me that I should immediately go with him to help him. The Imam noticed and said to me:

'O Aban, does he mean you?'

I replied: 'Yes.'

'Does he believe in what you believe in?'

'Yes.'

'Then go with him and break your circumambulation.' I asked if it was incumbent on me to do so, and he said that it was. Then I went with the man to help him, and after doing so I returned to the Imam and asked him about the rights of the believers.

'Do not ask me concerning them,' he said.

But I insisted.

'Give your brother half of what you own,' he told me, and looked at me. He understood my surprise and said: 'O Aban! Do you know that Allah admires those believers who prefer others to themselves?'

I replied: 'Yes.' 'When you give your brother half of what you own you do not prefer him above yourself, but only when you give him the other half do you really prefer him above yourself.'

If we feel shame at this, then really we should not call ourselves believers. We are quite remote from the teachings of the Imams. Everyone who reads this tradition becomes astonished as did Aban, but then he pays no further attention to it and forgets it, as if he were not the person addressed, and as if he were not responsible.

CHAPTER 6: ESCHATOLOGY

43. Doctrine of the Resurrection

We believe that Allah, the Exalted, will revive all people after their death on a certain day which he has promised them, and that He will then reward the obedient and punish the wrong-doers. In this simple form, this is what all the Divine religions and philosophies have accepted, but Muslims must believe in it because it is contained in the Qur'an which our Prophet brought, and one who believes in Allah and Muhammad, His Messenger, must also believe in what is related in the Qur'an: resurrection on the Day of Judgement, reward and punishment, Paradise (al-jannah) and its blessings (an-na'im), the Fire (an-nar) and Hell (al-jahim). About one thousand verses in the Qur'an have mentioned the Day of Resurrection. There is no reason to doubt it, unless one doubts Allah, His Power and His Messenger. In fact this amounts to doubting all religions.

44. Doctrine of Bodily Resurrection

This is one of the fundamentals of Islam, as it is said in the Qur'an:

What! Does man reckon We shall not gather his bones. Yes, indeed, We are able to shape again his fingers. (75;4)

If thou wouldst wonder, surely wonderful is their saying : What, when we are dust shall we indeed then be raised up again in a new creation. (13;5)

To state it succinctly, bodily resurrection means that man's terrestrial body will be revived after having been destroyed, and it will return to its first form after it has rotted in the earth. It is not necessary to believe in resurrection in its details, and more than has been revealed in the Qur'an. But we must believe in those particulars which are mentioned in the Book, such as al-hisab (the reckoning), as-sirat [12] (the bridge), al-mizan (the balance), al-jannah (Paradise) and an-nar (Hell), ath-thawab (reward) and al-'iqab (punishment).

“Knowledge of these subjects in detail is not incumbent upon us:

whether these earthly bodies will return or identical ones; whether souls will be lost like bodies or whether they will wait to join their bodies on the Day of Resurrection; whether resurrection is only for humans or if it is for all animals as well; whether it will happen suddenly or gradually. As long as we believe in Paradise and Hell, it is not necessary for us to know if they have already been created or whether they will be created in the future; if they are in the sky, or on the earth or in various different places. Similarly, when we believe in al-mizan, it is unnecessary to know if it is a spiritual entity or a physical one with two pans, nor is it necessary to know if as-sirat is a thin material object or a spiritual straightness”.

So Islam has stated these things about the resurrection in outline. If someone wants to question about them further than their mention in the Qur'an, in order to satisfy himself and remove doubts which have been raised by those who seek a rational explanation or to understand these things through the senses, such a person does wrong, and will fall into difficulties and disputes that have no end. There is nothing in the religious texts concerning those details with which the philosophers and theologians have

filled their books. Nor is there any religious, social or political necessity which causes them to fill their books with such writings and discussions. There is no use in these inquiries, unless it is to consume energy by thinking. It is enough to say that the details of resurrection raise doubts which we are unable to dispel and problems which are beyond our understanding.

That the resurrection will come is beyond doubt, because Allah, Who is Omniscient and Omnipotent, has announced it. Human knowledge, experiments or other methods of verification are incapable of discovering anything which is beyond human experience, and man can neither observe nor see the resurrection until after his death and his removal from the terrestrial world to the everlasting world, so how can he prove or deny it independently by thought or experiment? And he is even less capable of understanding its details and peculiarities. because he depends for this on prediction, intuition, and mere fascination with amazing and surprising things. This is what human nature is accustomed to do with anything with which it is unfamiliar through its senses or through the sciences.

It is the same with the man who shows his ignorance concerning the strangeness of resurrection. So Allah has mentioned his amazement in the Qur'an:

Who shall quicken the bones when they are decayed. (36;78)

The only reason for his amazement is that man has never seen any decayed or rotten corpse that has been brought back to life, but he forgets how he was when he was created in the first place, when he was nothing, and the components of his body were scattered here and there. Then they were collected from the earth, from this place and that, so that he became a perfect, intelligent man possessing speech. The Qur'an says:

Has not man regarded how We created him of a sperm-drop? Then lo, he is a manifest adversary. And he has struck for us a similitude and has forgotten his creation. (36;77-78)

It should be said to such a man:

Say, He shall quicken them (the bones) Who originated them the first time; He knows all creation. (36;79)

While he professes faith in the Creator of all beings, His Power. His Messenger and what he brought, how can he deny the resurrection? His science is so limited that he does not know how he was created and how he changed from a sperm drop which has no sense, will or wisdom, into higher states, climbing gradually; how he was built up from different particles so that he became a perfect man possessing wisdom, foresight, sense and feeling. So, after noting these facts, how can he still find it so strange that he will be resurrected after having rotted away? Is it so very surprising that, with his limited knowledge and experience, he cannot understand what he can see? There is no way, except he must believe, submit and profess this truth which has been taught by the Disposer of all beings, Who is Omniscient and Omnipotent and has created man from nothing.

Every discussion about seeking knowledge which is impossible to find, and which present knowledge is unable to discover, is as useless as a man who is lost in the desert, or who wants to distinguish between two colours in

pitch darkness. Man, who has discovered radar, electricity and split the atom still hasn't discovered the true nature of either electricity or the atom. If someone had mentioned these discoveries in previous centuries, man would have thought them impossible and ridiculed them at once. So how can he hope to investigate Creation? or discover the facts about resurrection?

He must, after accepting Islam, avoid following his desires, and start doing that which has value for his hereafter and this world, and that which will raise his rank in the presence of Allah, the Exalted. He should think about that which can help him when he dies, and those difficulties which he will encounter in his grave and at his resurrection, when he will find himself in the presence of the Omniscient King. So he should:

beware of a day when no soul for another shall give satisfaction, and no intercession shall be accepted from it, nor any compensation be taken from it, neither shall they be helped. (2;48)

CHAPTER 7: APPENDIX

The life of ash-Shaykh Muhammad Rida al-Muzaffar

The writer of this book comes from a respected family called by the name of al-Muzaffar. This family of academics and scholars has been recognised by this name in Najaf since the twelfth century of the hijra. Some members of the family reside in al-Jaza'ir, which is in the district of Basra (in Iraq).

The father of ash-Shaykh Muhammad Rida al-Muzaffar, ash-Shaykh Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah, a jurist and a mujtahid, was a marja' at-taqlid. Born and educated in Najaf, he spent his youth in studies, his only other activity being prayer and teaching, until he had distinguished himself as a great jurist. He wrote a very comprehensive commentary on the 'Shara i' al-Islam'[13] which he named 'Tawhid al-Kalam'.

Muhammad Rida al-Muzaffar was born on the 5th of Sha'ban, 1322 A.H., .1904 A.D., five months after the death of his illustrious father. Since his father died before he was born neither could meet each other, and Muhammad Rida grew up under the guardianship of his elder brother ash-Shaykh 'Abdu 'n-Nabi, who devoted so much love and affection on the child that he did not feel the absence of his father.

Ash-Shaykh al-Muzaffar grew up in the learned atmosphere of Najaf. He took part in the meetings of its groups and circles of learning, as well as attending lectures and classes. He took part in the most advanced seminars, and received recognition of the highest order from the most celebrated jurists and teachers. He developed his full potentiality within one of the most scholarly families in Najaf, under the guardianship of his two elder brothers, ash-Shaykh 'Abdu 'n-Nabi and ash-Shaykh Muhammad Hasan.

After he had completed the syllabus which is customarily taught in the Islamic madrassahs in Najaf, and after he had achieved great distinction, he attended the classes given by his brother, ash-Shaykh Muhammad Hasan, as well as the classes of ash-Shaykh Aqa Dia'd-din al-Iraqi in Islamic jurisprudence, and the lectures of Mirza Muhammad Husayn Na'ini in law (fiqh) and jurisprudence. However, he was most deeply impressed by the classes of ash-Shaykh Muhammad Husayn al-Isfahani and was most particular in attending all the talks and lectures of this eminent scholar of law, jurisprudence and philosophy. He was so impressed by this teacher that he never failed to pay him the highest tributes whenever the occasion presented itself. He followed the method of this scholar in the arrangement of his own famous work on Islamic jurisprudence, 'Usul al-Fiqh'.

His keen interest in his studies was noted by all his teachers, and by the authorities of the religious academies of Najaf. so he was given the highest degree of ijthihad. It will he remembered that all throughout his studies, ash-Shaykh al-Muzaffar remained an active teacher of law, jurisprudence and philosophy. However, his chief occupation was the establishment of 'Muntada an-Nashr', an institute for the publication of books on modern lines, with the purpose of renovating the syllabus of the madrassahs. He devoted his life to the growth and development of this institute, the need for which he was most aware of because he had undertaken to acquaint himself

with modern ways of thinking and intellectual trends right from the very beginning.

He made it the main purpose of his life to bring about a rebirth of Islamic learning, and to achieve this aim he wrote many books in a more modern style for students, and in this he was extremely successful. He combined beauty of expression with exactitude of meaning, and he had such a command over words he neither sacrificed his simple style to the exigencies of the subject matter, nor a correct exposition of his themes to the demands of style. He wrote with a fluency and conviction that carries the reader along with him wherever he wants to take him. He is at the height of his powers in his book 'Ahlam al-Yaqzah' (The Waking Dreams) where he enters into a kind of communion with his spiritual teacher Mulla Sadra (ash-Shirazi). This book places him securely among the masters of metaphysics, for in it he puts questions before his mentor and then supplies answers on his behalf, clarifying the deepest metaphysical problems by means of the most beautiful anecdotes. He manages to preserve this same superb style in his book on logic 'al-Mantiq'.

No less remarkable is his ability as a story-teller when he relates the eventful meeting at the Saqifah of the Banu Sa'idah after the death of the Holy Prophet, which has proved to be the cause of all the differences and divergences among Muslims.

Eventually, ash-Shaykh al-Muzaffar, because of his zeal to improve the educational and academic status of the traditional Islamic teachers and speakers, became a most active member of all organisations formed for this purpose. Because of his sincere efforts, he succeeded in discovering the cause of the prevailing mental lethargy, and took positive steps to eliminate it. He felt that reform was necessary not only in the academic field but also in the field of the propagation of Islam.

It should be pointed out here that the teaching in the madrassahs of Najaf comprises two stages. The first stage is a preparatory one in which the main texts are taught so as to prepare the student to move on to the second stage in which he must attend the classes of the leading teachers and acquire specialised knowledge. It was the preparatory stage which was in need of reshaping and revising. Muzaffar realised that new books had to be written and new subjects added to the curriculum, and in furtherance of his aims he founded Kulliyah al-Fiqh' the College of Islamic Studies.

As far as the presentation of Islamic thought is concerned, this also consists of two branches : speaking and writing, and ash-Shaykh alMuzaffar paid attention to both of them. Through his Muntada an-Nashr, the institute mentioned above, he was able to form a new generation of speakers and teachers, and publish a new style of books. The College, Kulliyah al-Fiqh' also mentioned above, was founded in 1355 A.H., and in 1376, Muzaffar managed to lay the foundation stone of a complete educational institute, which obtained government recognition from the Ministry of Education in 1377 A.H. Both of these establishments remained his responsibility up to the end of his life, and he spared neither energy nor money to see his institutes flourish and prosper.

As a man he was free from egotism, and never held any grudge against any person. He rendered his services to the Creator alone, and paid no attention to rewards from others. His selflessness knew no bounds. It is fitting to end this short biography with his own words.

“We are prepared for new sacrifices, we are ready to resign and give up our activities as soon as we find someone else to take on these responsibilities, all the more so if this were to result in a widening of these institutions. These people should be confident that after we have given over the reins of office into their hands we should not cease serving this venture in whatever capacity it may be. These expressions of ours are sincere, and not merely to show our good intentions. It is no significance that we should play a part, what is important is that the venture should go ahead in a way befitting Najaf, and that persons perform their duties to perfection.

It is of no importance what price is demanded, even if it be the price of our souls, and how cheap this price is if one's duty is done.”

CHAPTER 8: NOTES TO TEXT

1. The major sins (al-kuba'ir) from the point of view of Islam are, according to some, seven, but according to others uncountable. The latter say that they are arranged in degrees. They include Shirk (associating anything or anybody with Allah) which is the greatest sin and cannot be forgiven by Allah (see Qur'an, 4:48 & 116), killing a believer unjustly, fleeing from jihad, causing distress to one's parents, falsely accusing a woman of adultery, usury, appropriating the property of orphans. The punishment for these is mentioned in the Qur'an.

2. When the Prophet fled from Madinah to Mecca, he spent three days in a cave (Thawr) with Abu Bakr. He was pursued from Mecca by the Quraysh, but they were unable to find him even though they approached the cave, for a spider had built its web across the mouth of the cave and they went away thinking it impossible for someone to have entered. A few years before the Hijrah, the Quraysh decided to cut off all relations with Muhammad (S.A.) and his followers, and to have no exchange with them of any kind. The Prophet moved with his followers to a mountain pass near Mecca where they stayed for nearly three years. They suffered many hardships, and the only time they could communicate with the outside world was during the months of truce.

3. This is not a particular group, but is used in general for anyone who insults or shows disrespect for the family of the Prophet.

4. 18th Dhu'l-Hijjah 10 A.H.

5. The Kaysaniyyah were followers of Kaysan, a freed slave of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib and supposedly a student of his son Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyah. They exaggerated in their belief about him, ascribing complete knowledge to him. They held an esoteric belief that religion involved following a human, that Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyah was immortal and the Mahdi. There were subsequent divisions into the Mukhtariyyah, the Hashimiyyah, the Bayaniyyah and the Razamiyyah sects.

6. Amir al-Mu'minin (A.S.) said: "Clean yourselves by water from offensive odours and examine your bodies carefully. Surely Allah detests those of his servants who are not clean, so that when people sit with them they are repelled by their odour."

7. This does not only mean verbal remembrance of Allah such as say "Subhanullah wa'l-hamdulillah" (Glory be to Allah, and praise be to Allah) and the such-like repeatedly, but it means what Imam Ja'far Sadiq (A.S.) said in interpretation of the remembrance of Allah: "We do not only say subhanullah wa'l-hamdulillah wa la illaha illa 'llah wa allahu akbar although this is a means of remembering Allah, but rather Allah should be remembered everywhere whether we obey him or not."

8. In illustrating the same point, Imam 'Ali, Amir al-Mu'minin, (A.S.) said in his sermon known as 'al-Qasi'at'. "Verily, for all creatures of the heaven and the earth His command is the same, and there is no leniency in His law between Allah and anyone, so that he may do unlawful things."

9. "It is said that a man from Sham saw Imam Hasan riding and began to insult him, but the Imam did not answer him. When the man had finished Imam Hasan looked at him and smiled and said: 'O Shaykh! I think you are

a stranger and perhaps you have some misunderstanding (about us), so if you have some criticisms we shall accept what you say, and if you ask for something we shall give it to you, and if you want guidance we shall guide you, and if you want to ride we can give you a mount, and if you are hungry we can feed you, and if you have no clothes we can provide you with some; if you need something we can help you, and if you have no refuge we can protect you, if you have any aim we can assist you, and if you come and be our guest until such time as you wish to leave It will be an excellent idea because we have a large property with many servants and provisions.' When the man heard this he wept and said : 'I testify that you are vicegerant of Allah on earth Allah knows best where to put His message. You and your father were the most hated of men for me, but now you are the most beloved of creatures for me.' He took his baggage to the Imam's house and was his guest until the time that he continued his journey, and he believed in and loved the Imams."

10. The Virtuous City /State. Notably the ideal in government and politics as described by al-Farabi (259-339/872-950), and modelled by him on Greek political theory.

11. Wasa'il ash-Shi'a. The largest and most widely referred to collection of Shi'i traditions relevant to all branches of fiqh, compiled by Muhammad Hasan al-Hurr al-'Amili (d. 1104/ 1693). The latest printing in Iran is in 20 vols.

12. As-sirat is the way of Allah as in the first surah of the Qur'an, 'Al-Hamd, .but. such things, it is believed will take a material form on the Day of Judgement, and there are hadith which describe it then as a bridge. Shaykh Saduq said: "our belief about sirat is that it is true, and that it is the bridge over Hell, and that over it all people shall pass. Allah has said: Not one of you there is, but he shall enter it (Hell); that for thy Lord is a thing decreed, determined.' (19;71)

13. By Najm ad Din al Muhaqqiq al-Hilli (d. 676/1277). A text in fiqh used In teaching to this day.

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