Prayer And Concentration

بِالسَّنَدِ المُتَّصِلِ إِلَى الشَّيْخِ الأَجَلِّ والثِقَةِ الجَلِيلِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ الكُلَيْنِي، رِضْوَانُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ، عَنْ عِدَّةٍ مِنْ أَصْحَابِنَا عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنِ ابْنِ مَحْبُوبٍ عَنْ عُمَرَ بْنِ يَزِيدَ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: فِي التَّوْرَاةِ مَكْتُوبٌ: يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ، تَفَرَّغْ لِعِبَادَتِي أَمْلَأْ قَلْبَكَ غِنىً وَلا أَكِلْكَ إِلَى طَلَبِكَ وَعَلَيَّ أَنْ أَسُدَّ فَاقَتَكَ وَأَمْلَأْ قَلْبَكَ خَوْفاً مِنِّي. وَإِنْ لا تَفْرَغْ لِعِبَادَتِي أَمْلَأْ قَلْبَكَ شُغْلاً بِالدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ لا أَسُدَّ فَاقَتَكَ وَأَكِلْكَ إِلَى طَلَبِكَ.

With my chain of transmitters reaching up to the most venerable shaykh and the trustworthy authority Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni (R) who reports from a group of our companions, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad, from Ibn Mahbub, from 'Umar ibn Yazid, from Abu 'Abd Allah (A)that he said, "It is written in the Torah: O son of Man, if you 'empty' yourself (i.e. disengage yourself from all other preoccupations to make yourself available) for My worship, I will fill your heart with richness and I will not abandon you to what you seek and long for. And it will be upon Me to close the door of poverty upon you and to fill your heart with awe for Me. And if you don't 'empty' yourself for My worship, I will fill your heart with preoccupation with the world and I will not close upon you the door of poverty and will abandon you to what you seek."[1]

Exposition

Tafarrugh belongs to the verbal form tafa'ul, and tafarragha li kadha means 'he has devoted all his time to such and such a thing without being occupied with anything else.' The tafarrugh of the heart for the sake of worship ('ibadah) means 'emptying' it for the sake of worship of attention to anything else. The lexicographers explain the verb mala'a (filled) as follows:

مَلأَ الإِنَاءَ ماءً ومِنَ الماءِ وبالماءِ: وضعَ فيهِ بقَدرِ ما يأخُذُهُ.

He 'filled' the vessel with water, i.e. he put in it a quantity that it can hold.

Akilu is a variant in the first person of yakilu. The lexicographers explain its usage as follows:

وَكلَ إليهِ الأمرَ: أيْ سلَّمَهُ وفَوَّضهُ وترَكه ُإلَيه واكتَفَى به.

He 'entrusted' him with the matter, means, he turned it over to him, delegated it to him, left it to him, and put it completely in his charge.

Asuddu, a verb in the first person derived from sadda, yasuddu saddan, means closing, and is the opposite of al-fath, opening. Faqah means hajah and faqr, i.e. poverty and need. As to وَأَمْلَأْ,

represents the first person in the imperfect tense (أملأ apparently it (i.e. the verb قَلْبَكَ خَوْفاً مِنِّي and its being in the imperative case in conjunction with the first clause is unlikely. We shall, God willing, expound that which needs explanation in the noble tradition in the course of a few .sections

The Significance Of Prayer

Know that freedom from other preoccupations for the sake of absorption in worship (‘ibadah) is obtainable through possessing unoccupied time and an unoccupied heart. And this is one of the most important points regarding worship, without which the presence of heart cannot be realized, and a worship performed without an attentive heart is devoid of value. That which brings about attentiveness of the heart consists of two matters.

The first of these lies in possessing unoccupied time and an unoccupied heart, and the second lies in making one’s heart understand the importance of worship. That which is meant by ‘unoccupied time’ is that one should set aside a certain time out of his day and night hours exclusively for the sake of worship wherein he should devote himself solely to worship without engaging in any other preoccupation. If one were to understand that worship is an important thing whose significance is greater than any other activity, or, rather, that it is something of incomparable significance, he would allocate a certain time to it and be careful to observe its timings. In the following, we shall try to cast some light on this matter.

A devout person should be observant of the times of his worship under every circumstance. Of course, he should observe the timings of salat, which is the most important of the acts of worship, and carry it out in the most meritorious part of its time, refraining from engaging in any other work during those times. In the same way as he assigns a certain time to making an earning and for study and debate, he should do the same in respect of these acts of worship, in whose time he must be free from other preoccupations, so that he can achieve concentration of the heart, which makes up the quintessence and kernel of ‘ibadah.

But should he, like this author, offer his prayers out of compulsion and consider the performance of the worship of the Lord as a superfluous matter, he would, of course, delay it as long as it can be delayed and when he offers it offer it in a perfunctory manner, considering it as an impediment in the way of what he imagines to be important tasks. However, such a worship has not only no spiritual brilliance, it deserves Divine wrath, and such a person is one who makes light of salat and neglects it as something trivial. I seek refuge in God from making light of salat and not giving it its due importance. These pages cannot contain all the traditions .that exist in this context, and sere we will mention a few of them for the sake of lesson

عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: لا تَتَهَاوَنْ بِصَلاتِكَ فَإِنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ قَالَ عِنْدَ مَوْتِهِ: لَيْسَ مِنِّي مَنِ اسْتَخَفَّ بِصَلاتِهِ، لَيْسَ مِنِّي مَنْ شَرِبَ مُسْكِراً، لا يَرِدُ عَلَيَّ الحَوْضَ لا وَاللهِ.

Muhammad ibn Ya'qub (al-Kulayni) reports with his isnad from Abu Ja'far (A) that he said to Zurarah (R): Don't be negligent in regard to your prayers. Verily, the Prophet (S) said on his death-bed, "The one who makes light of his prayers does not belong to me, nor the one who takes intoxicating drinks, and, by God, he will not return to me at the Pond (of al-Kawthar)."[2]

وَبِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي بَصِيرٍقَالَ: قَالَ أَبُو الحَسَنِ الأَوَّلُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: لَمَّا حَضَرَتْ أَبِي الوَفَاةُ قَالَ لِي: يَا بُنَيَّ، لا يَنَالُ شَفَاعَتَنَا مَنِ اسْتَخَفَّ بِالصَّلاةِ.

Al-Kulayni reports with his isnad from Abu Basir that Abu al-Hasan al-Awwal (Imam al-Kazim) (A) said: At the time of his death my father said to me, "My son, the one who makes light of salat will not receive our intercession."[3]

There are a large number of traditions concerning this matter, but these that have been cited are sufficient for those who will take a lesson. God knows what a great calamity it is to be separated from the Noble Messenger (S) and to be deprived of the support of that master! What a great humiliation is it that is entailed by deprival from the intercession of that master and his majestic Household! Don't imagine that anyone will receive Divine forgiveness and enter the promised Paradise without the intercession and protection of that noble personage.

Now see for yourself whether preferring every trivial matter, or rather something which is of imaginary benefit, to prayer, which is the apple of the eye of the Noble Messenger (S) and a great means of Divine mercy, and treating it with negligence, delaying it without any excuse until the end of its time and not observing its prerequisites is not equal to-slighting it and making light of it. If it is, know that you have, in accordance with the testimony of the Noble Messenger (S) and that of the immaculate Imams (A) gone out of their wilayah and will not attain to their intercession.

Now if you stand in need of their intercession and wish to belong to the ummah of the Noble Messenger (S) then treasure this divine trust and give it importance, or face the consequences of your neglect. God, the Most Exalted, and His awliya' have no need of the works of yours and mine, but it is feared that if you fail to give it its due importance, it will lead you to abandon it altogether and that will ultimately lead you to deny it as duty, bringing you to certain damnation and everlasting wretchedness.

More important than finding free and unoccupied time for salat is possessing a free and unoccupied heart. Rather, the former is a prerequisite for obtaining the latter. Having an

unoccupied heart means that at the time of worship one must disengage himself from mundane engagements and cares and turn his heart away from all kinds of matters and cares and make it entirely empty and unencumbered for attending to worship and supplication with God Almighty. As long as one cannot purge his heart of these matters, he cannot obtain the necessary state of extrication for himself and his worship.

But our misfortune is that we store up all the various kinds of stray thoughts and cares for the time of worship. As soon as we say the takbirat al'ihram of salat, it is as if we have opened a shop or a ledger of accounts or an album. Our heart wanders away to other matters and we become totally oblivious of worship. When we come to ourselves, it is when we have reached the moment of salam, having passed through the salat as a matter of habit! Truly, this kind of worship is a disgrace and this mode of supplicating with the Lord is shameful.

My dear, consider the prayers you offer to God by comparing them with talk and conversation with one of His insignificant creatures. When talking to a stranger-to say nothing of a friend you attend to him with all your attention and are oblivious of anyone else as long as you are engaged in conversation with him. But why is it that while engaging in communication and prayer with your Provider and the Lord and Sustainer of the worlds you are totally heedless of Him and attentive to other matters? Is the station and worth of creatures greater than that of the Sacred Essence of the Lord?

Is conversation with them more valuable than supplication with the Fulfiller of needs. Yes, I and you do not know the significance of supplication with God. We consider these divine duties as a cumbersome burden, and, of course, a matter that is a cumbrous weight on one will not be significant for him.

Hence, that which needs correction is the source of this stream. We must obtain faith in God and the exhortations of the prophets so as to reform our sorry state. All our misfortunes arise from the weakness of our faith and the shaky character of our conviction. The faith of Sayyid ibn Tawus (R)had brought him to such a point that he used to celebrate every year the anniversary of the day of his becoming mukallaf, for on that day God had bestowed upon him the permission to engage in His worship and had dressed him in the robes of taklif. Really, just imagine, what purity and brilliance that heart of his had!

And if the practice of that glorious Sayyid is 'tot it binding proof (hujjah) for you, the practice of the Master of Monotheists (Sayyid al-Muwahhidin, i.e. the Prophet [S]) and his infallible descendants is, of course, a hujjah for you. Study the condition of those noble souls and the character of their worship and prayers. At the time of salat the color of their blessed faces would pale and their bodies would tremble with the fear lest there should occur some lapse in

the course of this divine observance, although they were infallible.

It is well-known concerning the Mawla (‘Ali) that ail arrow that had pierced his blessed foot and removing which was intolerably painful for him, was taken out when he was engaged in salat and he did not even notice its removal.

My dear, such a thing is not impossible. Such things occur quite often for people in the ordinary course of life. At times, a man becomes totally oblivious of everything in the state of anger or love. One of our reliable friends used to narrate that “Once during a fight with a group of ruffians in Isfahan, I noticed that some of them struck me with their fists and I did not know what kind of blows they were. Later when the fight was over and I came to myself, I realized that. I had several wounds made by a knife with which they had struck me. I was bedridden for several days before I recovered from those wounds.”

Of course, the reason behind it is obvious: when the total attention of the soul is concentrated on a certain matter, it becomes totally oblivious of the body and insensitive to its feelings. All its attention is absorbed by that single thing. In our own fights, encounters or heated debates in a gathering - may God be our refuge from these—we have often noticed that we become totally heedless of everything else that takes place around us. However, regrettably, everything absorbs our total attention except the worship of the Lord, and that is why we tend to regard such episodes (as that of Imam ‘Ali) as improbable.

In any case, detachment of the heart from everything except God is an important matter and one must try to attain it at all costs. The means of achieving it is also possible and attainable. It can be achieved with the exercise of some care and vigilance. One should make effort for some time to bring the flights of the bird of his thought under control and restrain it whenever it wishes to fly from one branch to another. After a period of watchfulness, the mind becomes tractable and docile and refrains from engaging in random thoughts. In accord with the aphorism وَالخَيـرُ عـادَةٌ- goodness becomes a habit with it and, attaining detachment from other preoccupations, it becomes attentive to God and His worship.

Of foremost importance amongst the prerequisites of worship is the attention of the heart, on which depends the soul and essence of worship and without which it has no value and acceptability near God, the Exalted, as mentioned in sacred traditions.

الكَافِي بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ وَأَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلامُ أَنَّهُمَا قَالا: إِنَّمَا لَكَ مِنْ صَلاتِكَ مَا أَقْبَلْتَ عَلَيْهِ مِنْهَا، فَإِنْ أَوْهَمَهَا كُلَّهَا أَوْ غَفِلَ عَنْ آدَابِهَا لُفَّتْ فَضُرِبَ بِهَا وَجْهُ صَاحِبِهَا.

In al-Kafi, al-Kulayni reports with his isnad from Abu Ja’far and Abu ‘Abd Allah (A) that they said to Fudayl ibn Yasar: The reward that you derive from your salat is limited to the extent that

you offer it with an attentive heart. And if someone should vitiate all of it or neglect its etiquette, it is wound up and thrown at the face of its offerer.[4]

وَرَوَى الشَّيْخُ الأَقْدَمُ مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الحَسَنِ رِضْوَانُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ فِي التَّهْذِيبِ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنِ الثُّمَالِيِّ قَالَ: رَأَيْتُ عَلِيَّ بْنَ الحُسَيْنِ عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلامُ يُصَلِّي فَسَقَطَ رِدَاؤُهُ عَنْ مَنْكِبِهِ فَلَمْ يُسَوِّهِ حَتَّى فَرَغَ مِنْ صَلاتِهِ. قَالَ: فَسَأَلْتُهُ عَنْ ذَلِكَ، فَقَالَ: وَيْحَكَ! أَتَدْرِي بَيْنَ يَدَيْ مَنْ كُنْتُ؟ إِنَّ العَبْدَ لا يُقْبَلُ مِنْهُ صَلاةٌ إلا مَا أَقْبَلَ مِنْهَا. فَقُلْتُ: جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ، هَلَكْنَا! قَالَ: كَلا، إِنَّ اللهَ مُتَمِّمٌ ذَلِكَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ بِالنَّوَافِلِ.

Al-Shaykh Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Tusi (R) reports in al-Tahdhib with his isnad from Abu Hamzah al-Thumali that he said, "I saw 'Ali ibn al-Husayn, Imam al-Sajjad (A), offering prayer, when the cloak slipped from his shoulders. The Imam did not arrange it until he had finished his prayer. When I questioned him about it, he said, "Woe to you, don't you know before whom I stood? Nothing is accepted of a devotee's prayer except what he offers with the proper attention of his heart." Thereupon, I said to him, "May I be ransomed for you, (if that is so) then we (i.e. the like of us) are doomed!" He replied, "No indeed. Verily God compensates for that for the faithful by the means of supererogatory prayers."[5]

وَعَنِ الخِصَالِ: بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ عَلِيٍّ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ فِي حَدِيثِ الأَرْبَعْمِائَةِ قَالَ: لا يَقُومَنَّ أَحَدُكُمْ فِي الصَّلاةِ مُتَكاسِلاً وَلا نَاعِساً، وَلا يُفَكِّرَنَّ فِي نَفْسِهِ فَإِنَّهُ بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَبِّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ، وَإِنَّمَا لِلْعَبْدِ مِنْ صَلاتِهِ مَا أَقْبَلَ عَلَيْهِ مِنْهَا بِقَلْبِهِ.

In al-Khisal, (al-Shaykh al-Saduq) reports with his isnad from 'Ali (A) that he said, "None of you should ever stand for salat in a lazy or drowsy state, nor should you let (random) thoughts pass through your mind (in the state of salat). For, in that state, you stand before your Glorious and Almighty Lord. Verily, the reward a devotee derives from prayer is equal to the extent of it that he offers with an attentive heart."[6]

There are many traditions on this theme and concerning the merit of attentiveness. Here we will cite some of them, which are sufficient for those who will take lesson.

عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَلِيِّ بْنِ الحُسَيْنِ صَدُوقِ الطَّائِفَةِ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ عَبْدِاللهِ بْنِ يَعْفُورَ قَالَ: قَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِاللهِ الصَّادِقُ جَعْفَرُ بْنُ مُحَمَّدٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: يَا عَبْدَاللهِ، إِذَا صَلَّيْتَ صَلاةَ فَرِيضَةٍ فَصَلِّهَا لِوَقْتِهَا صَلاةَ مُوَدِّعٍ يَخَافُ أَنْ لا يَعُودَ إِلَيْهَا، ثُمَّ اصْرِفْ بِبَصَرِكَ إِلَى مَوْضِعِ سُجُودِكَ، فَلَوْ تَعْلَمُ مَنْ عَنْ يَمِينِكَ وَعَنْ شَمَالِكَ لأَحْسَنْتَ صَلاتَكَ، وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّكَ بَيْنَ يَدَيْ مَنْ يَرَاكَ وَلا تَرَاهُ.

Muhammad ibn 'Ali ibn al-Husayn, the saduq of the community, reports with his isnad from 'Abd Allah ibn Abi Ya'fur that Imam al-Sadiq (A) said to him, "O 'Abd Allah, when you offer salat, pray like someone who bids farewell and fears that he will never return (i.e. pray in such a manner as if it were the last prayer of your life). Then fix your gaze on the point of your

prostration. If you know that there is someone on your left or right, you take more care in offering your salat; then know that you stand in front of Someone Who sees you and you don't see Him."[7]

وَبِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ فِي حَدِيثٍ أَنَّهُ قَالَ: إِنِّي لأُحِبُّ الرَّجُلَ المُؤْمِنَ مِنْكُمْ إِذَا قَامَ فِي صَلاةٍ فَرِيضَةٍ أَنْ يُقْبِلَ بِقَلْبِهِ إِلَى اللهِ تَعَالَى وَلا يُشْغِلَ قَلْبَهُ بِأَمْرِ الدُّنْيَا فَلَيْسَ مِنْ عَبْدٍ يُقْبِلُ بِقَلْبِهِ فِي صَلاتِهِ إِلَى اللهِ تَعَالَى إلا أَقْبَلَ اللهُ إِلَيْهِ بِوَجْهِهِ وَأَقْبَلَ بِقُلُوبِ المُؤْمِنِينَ إِلَيْهِ بِالمَحَبَّةِ بَعْدَ حُبِّ اللهِ إِيَّاهُ.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said, "Dear to me is the believer from among you who attends to God with his heart at the time of prayer and does not preoccupy his heart with any mundane matter. For whenever a devotee turns with his heart to God, the Exalted, during prayer, God turns His face towards him, and turns towards him the hearts of the faithful who regard him with affection, following God's love of him."[8]

Just reflect what kind of good news is this that the Truthful One (al-Sadiq) of the Family of Muhammad (A) gives to the faithful! Alas, we, poor folk, who dwell in nescience and are devoid of attentiveness to God, the Exalted, unaware of His friendship, and liken His love to that of His creatures! Those who possess gnosis (ma'rifah) state that God, the Exalted, removes blindfolds from the sight of those whom He loves, and God knows what nobilities lie in freedom from such a blindness. The ultimate hope and goal of the awliya' has lain in this freedom from nescience. And the Commander of the Faithful (A) and his noble descendants say in the supplications known as the Munajat al-Sha'baniyyah:

اِلَهِي هَبْ لِي كَمَالَ الانْقِطَاعِ إِلَيْكَ وَأَنِرْ أَبْصَارَ قُلُوبِنَا بِضِيَاءِ نَظَرِهَا إِلَيْكَ حَتَّى تَخْرِقَ أَبْصَارُ القُلُوبِ حُجُبَ النُّورِ فَتَصِلَ إِلَى مَعْدِنِ العَظَمَةِ وَتَصِيرَ أَرْوَاحُنَا مُعَلَّقَةً بِعِزِّ قُدْسِكَ.

My God, grant me the utmost absorption in Thee and illuminate the vision of our hearts with the light of Thy Vision, until the sight of the hearts can penetrate the curtains of light and reach the source of Greatness and until our spirits get anchored to the threshold of Thy Sanctity.[9]

My God! What is this illumination of the heart's vision that Your awliya' beseech of You and seek to attain? O Lord, what are those concealing curtains of light that our Infallible Imams spoke about? What is that source of Greatness, Glory, Sanctity, and Perfection, reaching which is the cherished goal of those sacred souls and which for always lie beyond the ken of even our theoretical knowledge, to say nothing of our experiencing and witnessing it? O God, be gracious to us, wretched and fallen creatures that we are, who neither know anything beyond gluttony and slumber, hatred and lust, nor seek to discover anything beyond them! Awaken us from this waking slumber and this stupefied sanity.

In any case, this single hadith is sufficient to induce those who are worthy of it and receptive to spend all their lives for attaining to God's love and to seek His Face. But as to the like of us, who don't belong to this field and valley, we would do better to stick to other traditions like the following ones:

عَنْ ثَوَابِ الأَعْمَالِ: بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَمَّنْ سَمِعَ أَبَا عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ يَقُولُ: مَنْ صَلَّى رَكْعَتَيْنِ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَقُولُ فِيهِمَا انْصَرَفَ وَلَيْسَ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ اللهِ ذَنْبٌ إلا غُفِرَ لَهُ.

*In the Thawab al-a'mal, al-Shaykh al-Saduq reports with his chain of transmitters from someone who heard Imam al-Sadiq (A) that he used to say: "One who offers two rak'ahs of salat with the knowledge of what he says therein, he does not finish them without God forgiving him every sin that there is between him and God."*10

The Various Levels Of Concentration

Having known that an attentive heart is the soul and heart of worship and that its luminosity and degree of excellence depend on the attentiveness of the heart and its degree, it should be known that there are different levels of the heart's attention. Some of these levels are special to the awliya' of God and others are incapable of climbing to those heights; but some of its levels are attainable for the common people. And it should be known that attention in worship is generally divisible into two main kinds: one of these is attention of the heart to worship and the other is attention of the heart to God.

Before explaining this issue, we are forced to mention one preliminary matter, which is this. The gnostics say that worship is, absolutely, glorification of the Lord. However, each of the various kinds of worship is a praise of God in accordance with one of His Names and Attributes, excepting salat, which is glorification of God with all of His Names and Attributes. Earlier it was mentioned in the exposition of some traditions that praise of the Worshipped One is a proclivity ingrained in all human beings.

It is a necessity demanded by nature that makes man submit in humility to the absolutely Perfect One, the absolutely Beautiful One, the absolute Provider and the absolutely Great. And since no one can discover the real significance of the praise of the Sacred Essence-for that depends upon the knowledge of the Essence and its Attributes and the reality of the relation between the Manifest and the Hidden it is impossible except through the means of revelation and divine inspiration.

Accordingly, the acts of worship are absolutely prescriptive and laid down by God, and no one

has the right to legislate in this regard and innovate some rite of worship. The kind of ceremonies of homage and reverence that are in vogue in the courts of kings and princes have no worth or value before His Sacred Essence. Hence, man should sit up and take notice, and learn the manner of worship or devotion through the agency of revelation and prophethood and refrain from making any kind of unauthorized dispensations in this regard.

Having known that worship is glorification of the Worshipped One, one should note, as pointed out earlier, that attention of the heart is of two main kinds: attention to worship and attention to the Worshipped One.

Attention To Worship

There are various degrees of this kind of attention, which are divisible into two main levels. One of these is attention of an incomplete and summary character. In this kind of attention, while performing an act of worship - whatever that may be, whether related to taharah, such as wudu' or ghusl, or to prayer, fasting, or Hajj pilgrimage or something else-one is attentive in a general way that he is magnifying the Lord, though he himself does not know the nature of his own glorification nor understands the significance of any of the Divine Names. Our shaykh, the perfect 'arif that he was, and may my soul be his ransom, used to mention an analogy comparing this kind of worship to the recital of a child who is asked to recite a panegyric in the praise of someone.

The child, who himself does not understand the panegyric, is told that it is meant to eulogize the person in whose presence it is read. As he recites it, the child knows summarily that he is eulogizing the person praised without knowing the character of the praise. We, too, who are children singing the praise of God, do not know the secrets that lie in these acts of worship. Neither do we understand the character of relation that each of these divine forms has to some Divine Name, nor do we know in what way it is glorification of God.

However, we should at least be cognizant of the fact that each of those acts of worship is magnification of the absolutely Perfect One, of the One Who is absolutely worthy of all praise and worship, a form that the Sacred Essence Itself has prescribed for Its glorification and commanded us to magnify It through its means in Its sacred presence.

Another of the levels of attentiveness of the heart is its detailed attention to worship; its complete attainment is not possible for anyone except the sincere awliya' and the gnostics. However, some of its lower degrees are attainable for others, the first stage wherein is concentration on the meaning of the words during salat and prayer. The tradition cited earlier from the Thawab al-'a'mal refers to this stage.

Another stage of it is that one should understand to the extent of his capacity the mysteries of worship and the character of glorification of the Worshipped One underlying each of the ritual forms. The gnostics have, to a certain extent, described the mysteries of salat and other forms of worship and have benefited to the extent of their capacity from the statements contained in the traditions of the Infallible Ones (A). Although an understanding of the reality of the matter is rarely attained by anyone, whatever extent of it that has been mentioned is a free gift for those who have an aptitude for it.

Attention To The Worshipped One

As to the heart's attention to the Worshipped One, that also consists of various degrees that fall into three main levels. One of them pertains to concentrating the heart, on revelations (tajalliyat) of Divine Acts. Another of them relates to concentrating the heart on revelations of Names and Attributes. The third consists of concentrating with the heart on revelations of the Essence. Each of these levels consists of four planes that may be generally put as the plane of knowledge, the plane of faith, the plane of direct experience, and the plane of absorption (or annihilation, fana').

That which is meant by concentrating the heart on revelations of Acts on the plane of knowledge is that in it the wayfaring devotee knows on the level of theoretical knowledge and metaphysical proof that all the levels of existence and all the visible and unseen domains of being are manifestation of the effusion of the Most Sacred Essence, and that all of them, right from the lower levels of the world of nature to the fountainhead of the higher malakut and the greater jabarut, are equally and uniformly present before His Sanctity. They are all manifestations of His unfolding Will, as mentioned in the following sacred tradition from al-Kafı

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: خَلَقَ اللهُ المَشِيَّةَ بِنَفْسِهَا ثُمَّ خَلَقَ الأَشْيَاءَ بِالمَشِيَّةِ.

Imam al-Sadiq (A) said, "God created the Will by itself. Then He brought all things into existence through the agency of the Will."[11]

Hence, the Will by itself is manifestation of the Essence and other existents have been created through its means. We don't however intend to give here the proof of this sublime matter. The devotee who understands this matter on the plane of theory and metaphysical proof, knows that his own being, as well as his worship, knowledge, will, heart, the actions of his heart, and his inward and outward being all of them are present before His Sanctity or, rather, they are

presence itself. Should the pen of his intellect inscribe this truth on the tablet of his heart and should the heart attain conviction in this certain, axiomatic premise by the means of theoretical and practical exercises, he will obtain attention of the heart to the revelations on the plane of faith.

After the perfection of this faith and following the exercises and austerities and attainment of the perfect piety of the heart, the wayfarer is afforded by Divine guidance to partake of the tajalliyat of Acts, directly experiencing them with his heart, until his heart becomes the complete mirror of those tajalliyat and he achieves the state of swoon (sa'q) and annihilation (fana'). This is the ultimate stage of attention that ultimately leads the attentive one to be absorbed in the tajalliyat of Acts. Many of the wayfarers of the path of gnosis remain forever immersed in this state of swoon and do not come to themselves.

And should the wayfarer's heart have a greater capacity than this as a result of the light of the Most Sacred Effusion (fayd al-aqdas) in pre-eternity, he will recover from this swoon, resume his sociability (uns) and return to his domain and receive the tajalliyat of Names and, traversing similar stages, reach annihilation in Attributes (fana' al-sifati) in proportion to his permanent prototype ('ayn al-thabit), becoming annihilated in one of the Divine Names. Many wayfarers of the mystic path remain in the state of annihilation in Names (fana' al-asmai) and do not come to themselves. Perhaps the following sacred tradition is a reference to this group of awliya':

إنَّ أَوْلِيائِي تَحْتَ قِبابِي لا يَعْرِفُهُمْ غَيْرِي.

*Verily, My awliya', under My vault (i.e. the sky), are known to none except Me.*12

And should his capacity, endowed to him by manifestation of the Most Sacred Effusion (in pre-eternity), be of a greater extent than this, he will recover from this swoon and annihilation, regain sociability, come to himself and receive the tajalliyat of the Essence, until, on reaching the last stage of annihilation in Essence and total swoon, his journey ends and complete annihilation is attained. Some have said that the verse:

﴿وَمَنْ يَخْرُجْ مِنْ بَيْتِهِ مُهَاجِرًا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ يُدْرِكْهُ الْمَوْتُ فَقَدْ وَقَعَ أَجْرُهُ عَلَى اللَّهِ.﴾

Whoso goes forth from his house an emigrant to God and His Messenger, and then death overtakes him, his wage shall have fallen on God.(4:100)

And sometimes the wayfarer may recover from this station, whereupon, by virtue of his capacity and in accordance with the scope of his permanent prototype, he devotes himself to the guidance of the creatures:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُدَّثِّرُ. قُمْ فَأَنذِرْ.﴾

O thou shrouded in thy mantle, arise, and warn! (74:1-2)

And should his permanent prototype be subject to the Greatest Divine Name, he would be the completing arc of the circle of prophethood, such as was the case with the Noble Messenger and the Great Seal of the Prophets (S). For the permanent prototype of none among the creatures, from the first to the last one, or that of any of the prophets and messengers, conformed to the Greatest Divine Name nor did it reveal the Divine Essence in all its aspects. Hence, the Essential Reality of the Messenger manifests all the aspects of the Essence and this manifestation culminated in guidance, intuiting the total span of Reality and bringing prophethood to its culmination by his sacred existence. And if, supposedly, any of the awliya' were to reach this station by following the sacred essence (of the Prophet) and through his guidance, his intuition (kashf) would be identical to it and repetition in legislation would not be permissible. Thus, the circle of prophethood was completed by his sacred being and the last brick was laid in the circle of prophethood, as mentioned in hadith.

It should be known that the worship and spiritual states of those who stand on each of the stations mentioned, are very different and extremely various. Each of them partakes of prayer a portion that is not possessed by one who has not reached that station. Of course, that which was experienced by Imam al-Sadiq (A) during the course of 'ibadah is something that is not possible for others. It is narrated from Sayyid Ibn Tawus (Q) as mentioned in the Falah al-sa'il, that he said:

فَقَدْ رُوِيَ أَنَّ مَوْلانَا جَعْفَرَ بْنَ مُحَمَّدٍ الصَّادِقَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ كَانَ يَتْلُو القُرْآنَ فِي صَلاتِهِ فَغُشِيَ عَلَيْهِ. فَلَمَّا أَفَاقَ سُئِلَ: مَا الَّذِي أَوْجَبَ مَا انْتَهَتْ حَالُكَ إِلَيْهِ؟ فَقَالَ مَا مَعْنَاهُ: مَا زِلْتُ أُكَرِّرُ آيَاتِ القُرْآنِ حَتَّى بَلَغْتُ إِلَى حَالٍ كَأَنَّنِي سَمِعْتُهَا مُشَافَهَةً مِمَّنْ أَنْزَلَهَا عَلَى المُكَاشَفَةِ وَالعِيَانِ. فَلَمْ تَقُمِ القُوَّةُ البَشَرِيَّةُ بِمُكَاشَفَةِ الجَلالَةِ الإِلَهِيَّةِ.

It has been narrated that our master, Ja'far ibn Muhammad al Sadiq (A) was once reciting the Qur'an in his salat. He went into a swoon, and when he emerged from it he was asked, "What was that that led you into that state?" He gave a reply, which meant, "I continued repeating verses of the Qur'an until I reached a state wherein it was as if I heard them directly from Him Who had sent them down. And it is beyond human power to witness Divine glory."[13]

The states that occurred to the Noble Messenger (S) were such that the like of them have not been experienced by any other creature, as mentioned in this famous tradition:

لِي مَعَ اللهِ حَالٌ لا يَسَعُهُ مَلَكٌ مُقَرَّبٌ وَلا نَبِيٌّ مُرْسَلٌ.

*I experience a state with God for which neither an archangel nor an apostolic prophet has the capacity.*14

Let us leave this discourse here for we do not partake of it anything except words. That which is important for the like of us is that, now that we are incapable of attaining to the stations of the awliya', we must refrain from negating their truth. Rather, we must acquiesce to them, for acquiescence to the affair of the awliya' is very beneficial and its negation—may God be our refuge—is greatly harmful.

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي مُسَلِّمٌ لأَمْرِهِمْ صَلَوَاتُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِمْ أَجْمَعِينَ.

O God, I acquiesce in their affair, may God's benedictions be upon them all.

The Incarnation Of Works In The Hereafter

Know that concentration of the heart in worship cannot be obtained without making it understand the significance of the acts of worship, and that is not possible without understanding their mysteries and realities. Although such a thing is beyond our ken, I will, to the extent of the capacity of someone like me, mention here that which can be inferred from the traditions of the infallible Ahl al-Bayt (A)and the statements of the gnostics, to the extent that is appropriate for these pages.

You should know-as has been repeatedly mentioned earlier-that every one of virtuous actions and acts of worship has an esoteric and malakuti form and makes an effect on the devotee's heart. As to the esoteric and inward form, they are what go into the building of the worlds of Barzakh and the physical Paradise, for the grounds of Paradise are empty plains as mentioned in traditions. Our prayers and works are the material for their building, as mentioned in hadith, and there are many verses in the Sacred Book of God that indicate the incarnation of works, like these statements of God Almighty:

﴿فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَه. وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَه.﴾

And whoso doth good an atom's weight will see it, and whoso doth ill an atom's weight will see (it. (99:7-8

﴿وَوَجَدُوا مَا عَمِلُوا حَاضِرًا.﴾

And they find all that they did confronting them. (18:49)

The traditions that indicate the incarnation of works and their possession of hidden malakuti

forms are many and scattered throughout the various chapters and here we will confine ourselves to a few of them.

رَوَى الصَّدُوقُ قُدِّسَ سِرُّهُ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ جَعْفَرِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ الصَّادِقُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: مَنْ صَلَّى الصَّلَوَاتِ المَفْرُوضَاتِ فِي أَوَّلِ وَقْتِهَا فَأَقَامَ حُدُودَهَا، رَفَعَهَا المَلَكُ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ بَيْضَاءَ نَقِيَّةً وَهِيَ تَهْتِفُ بِهِ: حَفِظَكَ اللهُ كَمَا حَفِظْتَنِي وَاسْتَوْدَعَكَ اللهُ كَمَا اسْتَوْدَعْتَنِي مَلَكاً كَرِيماً. وَمَنْ صَلاّهَا بَعْدَ وَقْتِهَا مِنْ غَيْرِ عِلَّةٍ فَلَمْ يُقِمْ حُدُودَهَا رَفَعَهَا المَلَكُ سَوْدَاءَ مُظْلِمَةً وَهِيَ تَهْتِفُ بِهِ: ضَيَّعْتَنِي ضَيَّعَكَ اللهُ كَمَا ضَيَّعْتَنِي وَلا رَعَاكَ اللهُ كَمَا لَمْ تَرْعَنِي.

*Al-Shaykh al-Saduq (Q) reports with his isnad from Imam al-Sadiq (A) that he said: When someone offers an obligatory salat at the beginning of its time and observes its prerequisites, an angel takes it up to the heaven. White and pure, it (i.e. the salat) says, "May God take care of you as you took care of me. I have been delivered into the custody of a noble angel." But when someone offers it without any excuse after its time has elapsed and does not observe its requisite manners, black and dark, it is taken up by an angel, while it calls out to him (i.e. its offerer), "You neglected me. May God neglect you in the same manner that you neglected me. May God not take care of you in the same way that you did not take care of me."*15

Aside from the malakuti forms of works, that which can be inferred from this noble tradition is that they possess life and its properties. This is also inferable from a certain metaphysical proof and the traditions indicate that all existents have a malakuti life, or rather the world of malakut is Life and consciousness through and through, as spelled out by this Qur'anic verse:

﴿وَإِنَّ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ لَهِيَ الْحَيَوَانُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ.﴾

(Surely, the abode of the Hereafter is life, did they but know. (29:64

وَفِي الكَافِي بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ فِي حَدِيثٍ طَوِيلٍ: إِذَا بَعَثَ اللهُ المُؤْمِنَ مِنْ قَبْرِهِ خَرَجَ مَعَهُ مِثَالٌ يَقْدِمُ أَمَامَهُ. كُلَّمَا رَأَى المُؤْمِنُ هَوْلاً مِنْ أَهْوَالِ يَوْمِ القِيَامَةِ قَالَ لَهُ المِثَالُ: لا تَفْزَعْ وَلا تَحْزَنْ وَأَبْشِرْ بِالسُّرُورِ وَالكَرَامَةِ مِنَ اللهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ، حَتَّى يَقِفَ بَيْنَ يَدَيِ اللهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ فَيُحَاسِبُهُ حِسَاباً يَسِيراً وَيَأْمُرُ بِهِ إِلَى الجَنَّةِ، وَالمِثَالُ أَمَامَهُ، فَيَقُولُ لَهُ المُؤْمِنُ: يَرْحَمُكَ اللهَ، نِعْمَ الخَارِجُ! خَرَجْتَ مَعِيَ مِنْ قَبْرِي وَمَا زِلْتَ تُبَشِّرُنِي بِالسُّرُورِ وَالكَرَامَةِ مِنَ اللهِ حَتَّى رَأَيْتُ ذَلِكَ. فَيَقُولُ مَنْ أَنْتَ؟ فَيَقُولُ: أَنَا السُّرُورُ الَّذِي كُنْتَ أَدْخَلْتَ عَلَى أَخِيكَ المُؤْمِنِ فِي الدُّنْيَا، خَلَقَنِيَ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ مِنْهُ لأُبَشِّرَكَ.

In al-Kafi, al-Kulayni reports with his isnad from Imam al-Sadiq (A) that he said in the course of a long tradition: When the man of faith is resurrected from his grave by God, an ethereal form emerges with him that walks in front of him. Every time the man of faith beholds any horror from among the horrors of the Day of Resurrection, that form says to him, "Don't fear and don't grieve, and receive the good news of joy and dignity from God, Almighty and

*Glorious." Until he stops before God, Almighty and Glorious, Who makes a lenient reckoning of his deeds and orders him to enter Paradise, (and he enters it) with the form walking ahead of him. Thereupon the believer will say to it, "May God be gracious to you, you were a good companion to come out with me from my grave. You have continued to give me the glad tidings of joy and dignity from God until I saw them for myself." Then he will ask it, "Who are you?" The form will reply, "I am the joy that you used to bring to your brother in faith in the world. God, Almighty and Glorious, created me from it in order to give you the good news."*16

This noble tradition also clearly indicates the possession of body and form by works in the life of the Hereafter. The most venerated Shaykh Baha' al-Din (Q) also remarks in his commentary on this noble tradition, "Some traditions indicate the incarnation of beliefs as well. Hence righteous actions and beliefs will appear in bright and fair-looking forms, causing extreme joy and delight to their owners. Evil deeds and beliefs will appear in dark and ugly forms, causing extreme grief and agony to their owners, as stated by a group of exegetes under this noble verse:

﴿يَوْمَ تَجِدُ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ خَيْرٍ مُحْضَرًا وَمَا عَمِلَتْ مِنْ سُوءٍ تَوَدُّ لَوْ أَنَّ بَيْنَهَا وَبَيْنَهُ أَمَدًا بَعِيدًا.﴾

The day every soul shall find what it has done of good brought forward, and what it has done n f evil; it will wish if there were only a far span between itself and that, (3:30)

And we are led to the same interpretation by this statement of God, the Exalted:

﴿يَوْمَئِذٍ يَصْدُرُ النَّاسُ أَشْتَاتًا لِيُرَوْا أَعْمَالَهُمْ. فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَه. وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ شَرًّا يَرَه.﴾

Upon that day men shall issue in scatterings to see their works, and whoso has done an atom's weight of good shall see it, and whoso has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it. (99:6-8)

And those who believe that there is an assumed omission in this noble verse and argue that what is meant is لِيُــرَوا جَــزَاءَ أَعْمــالِهِم i.e. to see the reward of their works), not considering the pronoun in يَــــــرَهُ statements, may God elevate his noble station. to refer to works, have missed the point."17 Here ends the translation of his

Here some eminent traditionists have expressed certain views, which better remain unsaid. These views arise from their surmise that belief in the incarnation of works contradicts the belief in bodily resurrection, although the former supports the latter and the word tamaththul (assumption of bodily form) in this noble tradition has a similar signification to what it has in this statement of God, the Exalted:

﴿فَأَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهَا رُوحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا.﴾

Then We sent unto her [i.e. Mary) Our Spirit,) that presented itself to her in the form of a man) without fault. (19:17)

Here the spirit did really assume a bodily form, which was not something imaginary, like the form that appears in dreams. In any case, divesting such verses as these and traditions of their literal meanings and that despite their conformity to firm metaphysical proofs which are established in their own proper place–solely because they do not fit in with our intelligence and are in conformity with the creed of the philosophers and metaphysicians is not a commendable thing. The best approach is to adopt acquiescence before the Sacred Lord and the infallible awliya'.

'Thus, it is known that every work that receives acceptance in the sacred Divine court has a fair and beautiful form in accordance with its nature–such as the houris, palaces, the high gardens and the flowing stream of Paradise. No being comes into existence arbitrarily and extravagantly. Rather, there are certain rational relationships that are involved, whose discovery is not possible for anyone except the perfect awliya'. The matter, to put it in a nutshell, is subject to rational and metaphysical criteria.

Now that it is known that the life of the Hereafter and its joys depend on works, whose consummate forms are transferred to that world, those works are acts of worship that this community has come to know about through the consummate intuition of Muhammad (S). The excellence and beauty of these works depend on one's intentions and attention of one's heart as well as the observance of its requisite manners.

Should a work be devoid of all or some of these conditions, it would be devoid of validity or, rather, would possess an ugly and distorted form which he will encounter in the other world, as we came to know through the traditions.

Hence it is incumbent upon every person who believes in the unseen world and the traditions of the prophets, the awliya' and the gnostics, and cares about eternal and immortal life, to improve his works through every possible effort and austerity. And after that their outward aspect and form is brought into conformity with the rules of ijtihad or the opinion of the fuqaha' (R), he should endeavor to reform their inner character, taking all the care that he can to perform at least the wajibat with the due attention of the heart and try to remove their shortcomings and, then, those of the nawafil, for as mentioned in the noble traditions the nawafil compensate for the defects of the fara'id and cause them to be accepted.

فِي العِلَلِ: بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: إِنَّمَا جُعِلَتِ النَّافِلَةُ لِيَتُمَّ بِهَا مَا يَفْسُدُ مِنَ الفَرِيضَةِ.

In the 'Ilal al-shara'i, (al-Shaykh al-Saduq) reports with his isnad from Abu Ja'far (A)that he

said; "Verily the supererogatory acts of worship have been laid down in order to compensate for that which is vitiated out of the obligatory acts."[18]

وَرَوَى الشَّيْخُ قُدِّسَ سِرُّهُ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي بَصِيرٍ قَالَ: قَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: يُرْفَعُ لِلرَّجُلِ مِنَ الصَّلاةِ رُبُعُهَا أَوْ ثُمُنُهَا أَوْ نِصْفُهَا أَوْ أَكْثَرُ بِقَدَرِ مَا سَهَا. وَلَكِنَّ اللهَ يُتِمُّ ذَلِكَ بِالنَّوَافِلِ.

Al-Shaykh al-Tusi (Q) reports with his isnad from Abu Basir that Imam al-Sadiq (A) said, "Out of the salat offered by a man only .a half of it or a one-fourth or a one-eighth rises to heaven in However, God the Exalted, (بِقَــدَرِ مَــا سَــهَا) *accordance with the extent of his lapses therein compensates for it through the means of the supererogatory prayers."*[19][20]

There are many other traditions of this kind, and it is obvious that we are not free from lapses, forgetfulness, absentmindedness and other matters that vitiate prayer or its perfection. God, the Exalted, with His consummate grace, has appointed the nawafil to enable us to compensate for such shortcomings. Of course, it is essential to avoid, as far as possible, any kind of negligence in this matter and not to neglect the nawafil.

In any case, my dear, do come out a bit from this state of neglect; reflect about your affair and examine the record of your deeds. Beware lest the works that you imagine to be righteous deeds, such as prayers, fasts, Hajj and the like, should themselves become the means of your wretchedness and disgrace in the other world.

Hence, so long its the opportunity remains, examine your own conduct and place your acts in the balance of scrutiny and in the scales of the Shari'ah and the wilayah of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) and find out the extent of their soundness and viciousness, their perfection and defectiveness, and make amends as long as there remains time and opportunity. And should you fail to examine your own account here and to put it straight, your account-taking will be carried out there and your deeds will be placed in the Balance of Works and there great calamities may lie in wait for you.

Be fearful of the scales of Divine justice, never be proud of anything, and don't leave off serious effort. For a while observe the book of works of the Messenger's Ahl al-Bayt (A) who were inerrant and infallible, and contemplate regarding them. See what a tremendous difficulty lies ahead of us, and how narrow and dark is the path! Now consider the following tradition and guess the enormousness of the matter from this brief hadith:

عَنْ ذُخْرِ الطَّائِفَةِ وَفَخْرِهَا وَعِمَادِهَا مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ النُّعْمَانِ المُفِيدِ، رِضْوَانُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ، فِي الإِرْشَادِ: عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ كُلْثُومٍ قَالَ: كُنْتُ عِنْدَ الصَّادِقِ جَعْفَرِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلامُ فَذَكَرَ أَمِيرَ المُؤْمِنِينَ عَلِيَّ بْنَ أَبِي طَالِبٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ فَأَطْرَاهُ وَمَدَحَهُ بِمَا هُوَ أَهْلُهُ، ثُمَّ قَالَ: وَاللهِ، مَا أَكَلَ عَلِيُّ بْنُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا حَرَاماً قَطُّ

حَتَّى مَضَى لِسَبِيلِهِ. وَمَا عُرِضَ لَهُ أَمْرَانِ قَطُّ هُمَا للهِ رِضىً إلا أَخَذَ بِأَشَدِّهِمَا عَلَيْهِ فِي دِينِهِ. وَمَا نَزَلَتْ بِرَسُولِ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ نَازِلَةٌ إلاّ دَعَاهُ فَقَدَّمَهُ ثِقَةً بِهِ. وَمَا أَطَاقَ أَحَدٌ عَمَلَ رَسُولِ اللهِ مِنْ هَذِهِ الأُمَّةِ غَيْرُهُ. وَإِنْ كَانَ لَيَعْمَلُ عَمَلَ رَجُلٍ كَأَنَّ وَجْهَهُ بَيْنَ الجَنَّةِ وَالنَّارِ؛ يَرْجُو ثَوَابَ هَذِهِ وَيَخَافُ عِقَابَ هَذِهِ. وَلَقَدْ أَعْتَقَ مِنْ مَالِهِ أَلْفَ مَمْلُوكٍ فِي طَلَبِ وَجْهِ اللهِ وَالنَّجَاةِ مِنَ النَّارِ مِمَّا كَدَّ بِيَدَيْهِ وَرَشَحَ مِنْهُ جَبِينُهُ. وَإِنْ كَانَ لَيُقَوِّتُ أَهْلَهُ بِالزَّيْتِ وَالخَلِّ وَالعَجْوَةِ. وَمَا كَانَ لِبَاسُهُ إلاّ الكَرَابِيسُ. إذَا فَضَلَ شَيْءٌ عَنْ يَدِهِ مِنْ كُمِّهِ دَعَا بالجَلَمِ فَقَصَّهُ. وَمَا أَشْبَهَهُ مِنْ وُلْدِهِ وَلا أَهْلِ بَيْتِهِ أَحَدٌ أَقْرَبُ شُبْهاً بِهِ فِي لِبَاسِهِ وَفِقْهِهِ مِنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ الحُسَيْنِ عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلامُ. وَلَقَدْ دَخَلَ أَبُو جَعْفَرٍ - ابْنُهُ - عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلامُ عَلَيْهِ فَإِذَا هُوَ قَدْ بَلَغَ مِنَ العِبَادَةِ مَا لَمْ يَبْلُغْهُ أَحَدٌ فَرَآهُ قَدِ اصْفَرَّ لَوْنُهُ مِنَ السَّهَرِ وَرَمَصَتْ عَيْنَاهُ مِنَ البُكَاءِ وَدَبِرَتْ جَبْهَتُهُ وَانْخَرَمَ أَنْفُهُ مِنَ السُّجُودِ وَوَرِمَتْ سَاقَاهُ وَقَدَمَاهُ مِنَ القِيَامِ فِي الصَّلاةِ، فَقَالَ أَبُو جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: فَلَمْ أَمْلِكْ حِينَ رَأَيْتُهُ بِتِلْكَ الحَالِ البُكَاءَ، فَبَكَيْتُ رَحْمَةً لَهُ. وَإِذَا هُوَ يُفَكِّرُ، فَالْتَفَتَ إِلَيَّ بَعْدَ هُنَيْهَةٍ مِنْ دُخُولِي فَقَالَ: يَا بُنَيَّ، أَعْطِنِي بَعْضَ تِلْكَ الصُّحُفِ الَّتِي فِيهَا عِبَادَةُ عَلِيِّ بْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ. فَأَعْطَيْتُهُ، فَقَرَأَ فِيهَا شَيْئاً يَسِيراً ثُمَّ تَرَكَهَا مِنْ يَدِهِ تَضَجُّراً وَقَالَ: مَنْ يَقْوَى عَلَى عِبَادَةِ عَلِيٍّ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ؟

The pride of the community and its authority, its treasure and pillar, Muhammad ibn Muhammad ibn al-Nu'man al-Mufid (R) reports in al-Irshad from Sa'id ibn Kulthum that Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq (R) said, "By God, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (A)never ate anything forbidden as long as he lived in the world, and never were two things wherein lay God's good pleasure presented to him without his choosing that which was more taxing of the two for his body, And never did the Messenger of Allah (S) face any hardship without calling out to 'Ali (A), out of his trust in him, and none out of this Ummah except him has possessed the capacity, endurance and strength of the Messenger of Allah (S). In his conduct, he would act like someone in trepidation whose face was between heaven and hell and who looked forward to the reward of heaven and was frightful of the punishment of hell.

Indeed, he set free in the way of God and for sake of deliverance from Fire a thousand slaves out of his own money, earned with the toil of his hands and the sweat of his brow. The food of his household consisted of oil, vinegar, and dates, and his dress was never made of anything but coarse cotton, and if his blessed sleeves were too long he would ask for a scissors and cut them short.

Among his descendants and family no one ever came closer to resembling him in his learning and dress than 'Ali' ibn al-Husayn (A). His son Abu Ja'far - Imam al-Baqir (A), once, entered upon him and saw that he had reached an unprecedented state in worship. His complexion had paled due to keeping awake at nights; his eyes were sore from weeping; his forehead and nose were bruised due to prolonged prostrations; and hiss feet and ankles were swollen as a result of standing in prayer."

Abu Ja'far (A) said: 'When I saw him in this condition I could not stop myself from breaking into tears. So I wept out of compassion that I felt for him, while he was sunk in contemplation.

*Some time passed after I had entered. Then noticing me, he said to me, "My son, give me one of those books which describes the worship of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (A)." I gave it to him. He read a little from it and then set it aside in exasperation. Then he declared, "Who has the strength to worship like 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (A)!"*21

وَعَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: كَانَ عَلِيُّ بْنُ الحُسَيْنِ عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلامُ يُصَلِّي فِي اليَوْمِ وَاللَّيْلَةِ أَلْفَ رَكْعَةٍ، وَكَانَتِ الرِّيحُ تُمَيِّلُهُ مِثْلَ السُّنْبُلَةِ.

*Imam al-Baqir (A) said, "Ali ibn al-Husayn (A) used to offer one thousand rak'ahs of salat in every day and night. The wind would sway him like an ear of corn."*22

My dear! Give some thought to these noble traditions. See how Imam al-Baqir (A)who was an infallible Imam fell weeping on observing the austerities of the worship of his father and on observing his state in worship. Observe how Imam al-Sajjad (A)despite the severe care and total dedication that he exercised in worship, expressed his weakness on reading a little from the book -of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (A). Of course, all are incapable of worshipping like the Master of Masters (Mawla al-Mawali) and the common lot are incapable of the worship offered by the Infallible Ones. However, when one is incapable of attaining to a high station he should not give up altogether.

We must understand that this worship of theirs was not - may God be our refuge - a feigned performance. Rather, the path is so perilous, and the way is so narrow, and the passes of death and Resurrection are so difficult that it impelled those who have the knowledge of the reality to implore and admit their weakness. This nonchalance of ours arises from the weakness of our faith and the insufficiency of conviction, from our ignorance and nescience.

O Lord! You are aware of the character of Your servants and know our deficiencies and shortcomings, our weakness and impotence. You immersed us in Your mercy even before our asking for it. Your bounties are given unasked and Your favors are prior to requests of help. Now we confess to our shortcomings and our ingratitude in the face of Your unlimited bounties. We confess that we deserve painful punishment and are worthy of being confined to Hell. We have no excuse and no means of seeking Your pardon except what You have said through the tongues of Your prophets, concerning Yourself and Your mercifulness, Your compassion, pity, grace and generosity. We know You through these attributes of Yours and to the extent of our capacity. How will You deal with this handful of dust? Will it be with anything except compassion and magnanimity?

أَيْنَ رَحْمَتُكَ الوَاسِعَةُ؟ أيْنَ أيَادِيكَ الشَّامِلَةُ؟ أيْنَ فَضْلُكَ العَمِيمُ؟ أَيْنَ كَرَمُكَ يَا كَرِيمُ؟

Where is Your all-inclusive compassion? Where is Your all-inclusive help? Where is Your universal magnanimity? Where is Your generosity, O Generous One?

Worship And Freedom From Need

It should be known that ghina (self-sufficiency, richness, independence, and being without need of others) is a virtue of the soul or, rather, a virtue of being qua being. Hence, ghina is an Essential Attribute of the Sacred Essence of God, Glorious and Exalted. Wealth and riches do not bring spiritual self-sufficiency. Rather, it may be said that those who lack spiritual self-sufficiency are made more greedy and avaricious due to the possession of property, riches and wealth, and their need becomes greater. True richness is unattainable except through God, Glorious and Exalted, Who is Self-sufficient-by-Essence, and all other existents, from humble dust to the topmost heaven and from primal matter to the higher jabarut, all are 'poor' and needy.

Hence the more the heart's attention is turned to other-than-God and the more is one's inner self attentive to the cultivation of the mundane and the corporeal world (mulk), the more one's poverty and need become day by day.

The spiritual aspect of this poverty is quite obvious, because attachment and love is need by itself. The external aspect of this poverty, which reinforces spiritual poverty, also becomes stronger; for one who is not independent in managing his own affairs inevitably stands in need of others. Even if the rich and the wealthy should outwardly appear to be without need, a closer look will reveal that their need increases in proportion to the amount of their wealth. Hence, the wealthy are the poor in the garb of rich and needy in the garb of self-sufficient.

The more is the attention of the heart and its attachment to mundane matters and cultivation of the world, the more does it get covered with the dust of abasement and poverty and the greater become its need and darkness of abasement. Conversely, if someone should turn his back upon attachment to the world and orient the heart toward absolute richness and self-sufficiency, convinced in the essential poverty of all beings, understanding that no existent possesses anything of itself and that there is no power, honor or authority except through God, and listens to the voice of the malakuti caller and the call from the Unseen that:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ أَنْتُمْ الْفُقَرَاءُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ.﴾

O mankind, you have the ones that have need of God; He is the All-sufficient, the All-laudable, (35:15)

he would attain freedom from need of both the worlds and his heart would become so free from need that the kingdom of Solomon would have no worth in his eyes. If the keys of the earth's treasures be offered to him, he would be indifferent to that offer, as narrated in tradition that when Gabriel brought from God, the Exalted, the key to the world's treasures to the Seal of the Prophets (S)he declined them out of humility, considering his poverty to be his pride. The Commander of the Faithful (A) said to Ibn 'Abbas, "This world of yours has lesser worth in my eyes than this old shoe of mine which is full of patches." The Imam 'Ali ibn al-Husayn (A)says, "It is a matter of disdain for me to ask the world's Creator to do me a mundane favor, to say nothing of asking it of other creatures like myself."

Out of the common lot, Najm al-Din Kubra, after swearing some formidable oaths, declares: "If the world's wealth as well as the other world's Paradise with its houries and palaces be offered to me on condition that I should associate only with the rich and wealthy, and if the world's adversities and those of the Hereafter be offered to me together with association with the poor-given this choice I will select the company of the poor and will not surrender myself to the disgrace of associating with the rich and:

النّارُ خَيرٌ منَ العَارِ.

The Fire is better than dishonor.

Yes, they know well the nature of the darkness and rust formed in the heart as a result of attachment to worldly treasures and riches and due to the company and association with those who possess these. They know how these weaken the will and afflict the heart with need and poverty, making it inattentive to the Centre of absolute perfection. But when you surrender the heart to its Owner and this house to its Master, abstaining from making any dispensation in it, turning away from it all strangers, and refraining from handing it over to an usurper, the Master of the house will reveal Himself therein. The presence in it of the absolutely All-sufficient will bring absolute self-sufficiency, immersing the heart in the ocean of honor and contentment and filling it with freedom from need:

﴿وَلِلَّهِ الْعِزَّةُ وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ.﴾

Yet honor belongs to God, arid to His Messenger and the faithful. (63:8)

Then, the affairs of the house are managed by its Master and one is not left to one's own devices. He takes care of all the matters of Isis servant, or, rather, He becomes his hearing, vision, and limbs, and this nearness is the outcome of the nawafil as mentioned in this tradition of al-Kafı:

الكَافِي: بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ فِي حَدِيثٍ: وَإِنَّهُ لَيَتَقَرَّبُ إِلَيَّ بِالنَّافِلَةِ حَتَّى أُحِبُّهُ، فَإِذَا أَحْبَبْتُهُ كُنْتُ سَمْعَهُ الَّذِي يَسْمَعُ بِهِ وَبَصَرَهُ الَّذِي يُبْصِرُ بِهِ وَلِسَانَهُ الَّذِي يَنْطِقُ بِهِ وَيَدَهُ الَّتِي يَبْطِشُ بِهَا.

In al-Kafi, (al-Kulayni reports) with his isnad from Abu Ja'far (A) that in a hadith qudsi God says, "...And verily he seeks nearness to Me through the .means of the nawafil, until I love him. And when I love him, I become the hearing with which he hears and the vision with which he beholds, and the tongue with which he speaks, and the hand by which he grasps…"[23]

Thus, the servant's poverty is totally removed and he becomes free from the need of both the worlds. Of course, in this revelation of the Divine (within the heart), the fear of all the existents is removed from him, giving its place to the fear of God, the Exalted, Whose Greatness and Majesty fills the entire heart of the devotee, who no longer sees any greatness, majesty or efficiency in anything other than God, having perceived in his heart the fact signified by this statement:

لا مُؤَثِّرَ فِي الوُجُودِ إِلا اللّٰهُ.

No one is effective in the realm of existence except God.

There is a reference to this point in the hadith under exposition, where it says:

تَفَرَّغْ لِعِبَادَتِي أَمْلَأْ قَلْبَكَ غِنىً.

Empty yourself for My worship so that I may fill your heart with ghina.

This 'emptying' of the heart for the sake of worship may gradually lead one to the higher degrees of heart's concentration in worship.

These are the effects, some of which have been mentioned. Should the heart turn away from attention to God and fail to achieve the detachment necessary for paying attention to Him, such a neglect would be the source of all forms of wretchedness, defects and diseases of the heart. If that happens, a darkness and obscurity will grip the heart on account of this neglect, and thick curtains through which the light of guidance cannot pass will become an obstruction between it and God, depriving it of Divine succor and making the heart totally absorbed in the world and the pursuit of corporeal pleasures. Then he will be enveloped by the walls of egoism and egotism. The soul will become self-willed and its movements will become subject to its egoism.

Thereupon, its essential baseness and its real poverty will become manifest; all its movements and pauses will lead it further away from God, and total failure and defeat will be its lot. The noble tradition refers to some of these consequences where it declares, 'I will fill your heart

with preoccupation with the world and I will not block the entry of poverty and need into it, and I will leave you to your own devices.'

A Last Point

It should be known that that which is meant by leaving a creature to its own devices does not mean delegation of its affairs to itself, for such a thing is impossible from the viewpoint of the mystical creed and the metaphysical doctrine, in addition to being contrary to the true religious doctrine. No existent can dissociate itself from the realm of Divine power and dispensation, and neither can it have (total) freedom to direct its own affairs.

When a creature turns away from God and becomes absorbed in the world, carnal nature begins to rule over it and it is dominated by egoism, and autistic, self-seeking and narcissistic tendencies direct his conduct. And this is what is meant by leaving it to its own devices. However, a servant whose heart is turned towards God and the higher malakut and is totally submerged in the Divine light, all its dispensations assume a godly character or, rather, at certain levels, his entire being becomes divine, as alluded to in the noble tradition of al-Kafi that refers to some of these stations while hinting at the nearness attained through supererogatory acts of worship. And God is All-knowing

Notes

1. Al-Kulayni, Usul al-Kafi, ii, "kitab al-'iman wa a1-kufr', "bab al-'ibadah", hadith no. 1.
2. Furu' al-Kafi, iii, 269.
3. Furu' al-Kafi, iii, 270.
4. Furu' al-Kafi, iii, 363.
5. Al-Hurr al-'Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, iv, 688.
6. Al-Hurr al-'Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, iv, 687.
7. Al-Hurr al-'Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, iv, 685.
8. Al-Hurr al-'Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, iv, 686.
9. Mafatih al-jinan, "al-Munajat al-Sha'baniyyah."
10. Mafatih al-jinan, iv, 688.
11. Usul al-Kafi, "kitab al-tawhid", "bab al-'iradah, annaha min sifat al-fi'l' hadith no. 4.
12. Ahadith qudsi. Source untraced.
13. Falah al-sa'il, 107.
14. See Furuzanfar, Ahadith al-Mathnawi. 39.

15. Wasa’il al-Shi’ah, iii, 90, with a slight difference of wording.

16. Usul al-Kafi, ii, “Kitab al-’imam wa al-kufr” “bab idkhal al-surur ‘ala al -mu’minin”hadith no. 8.

17. Al-Shaykh al-Bahai, al- Arba’in, p. 202, see the commentary on the thirty third hadith.

18. Wasa’il al-Shi’ah, ii, 54.

19. Author’s note: As to the words of the Imam بقــدر مــا ســها that which is meant by the noble tradition is that, as mentioned in other traditions, the amount of a prayer that ascends to God and is accepted by Him is that which is offered with an attentive heart. Hence the words بقدر ما here is meant refer to the ratio, not to the amount that ascends. It is probable that by ســها ســهو tranquillity and softness of the heart, as remarked by al-Jawhari.

20. Wasa’il al-Shi’ah, iii, 54.

21. Al-Shaykh al-Mufid, al-’Irshad, 255-256.

22. Al-Shaykh al-Mufid, al-’Irshad, 256.

.23. Usul al-Kafi, ii, “kitab al-’iman wa al-kufr” “bab man adha al-muslimin” hadith no. 8