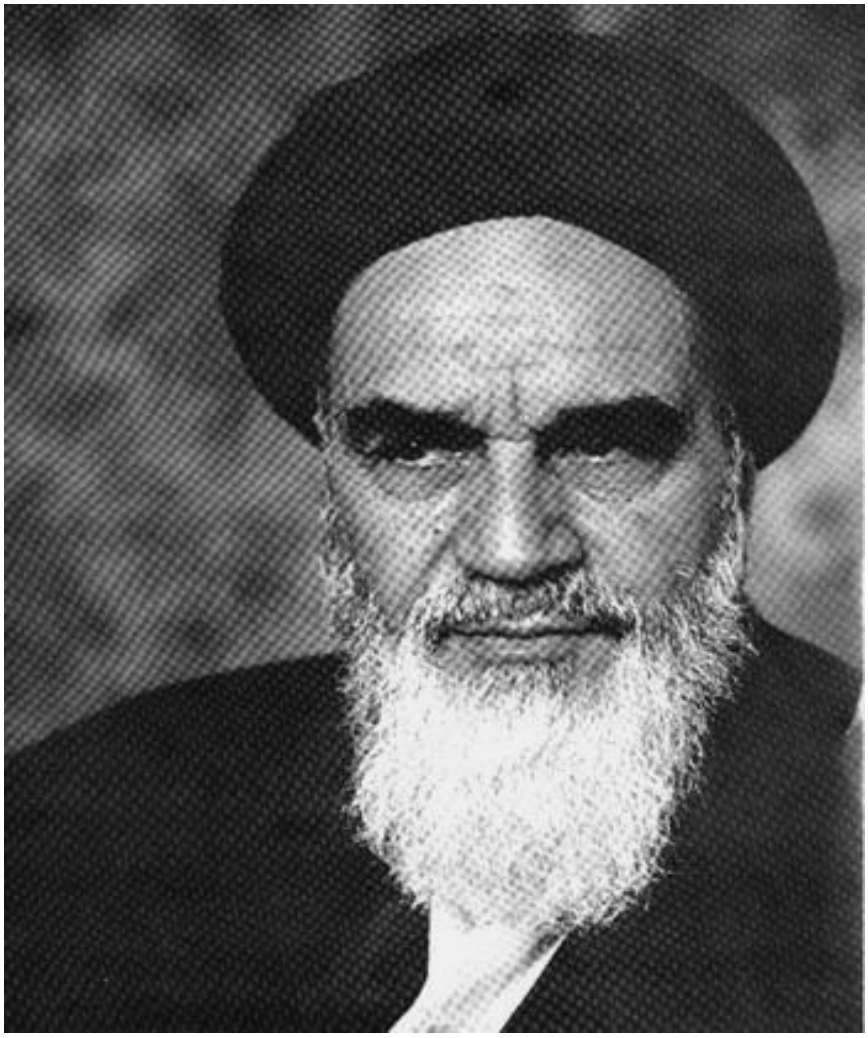


**In the Name of Allah,**
**the Compassionate, the Merciful**



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# FORTY *HADITHS*

## AN EXPOSITION OF

## ETHICAL AND MYSTICAL TRADITIONS

**Imam Khomeini**

*The Institute for Compilation and Publication*
*of Imam Khomeini's Works*
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR ..... 1**

Childhood And Early Education ..... 1

The Years of Spiritual and Intellectual Formation in Qum, 1923 to 1962 ..... 5

The Years of Struggle and Exile, 1962-1978 ..... 10

The Islamic Revolution, 1978-79 ..... 19

1979-89: first decade of the Islamic Republic, last decade of the Imam's life ..... 25

**INTRODUCTION ..... 35**

Purpose of Writing the Book ..... 35

**First *Hadith*: *JIHAD* OF THE SELF ..... 39**

Verbal Translation ..... 39

**Exposition ..... 39**

First Grade ..... 40

Contemplation ..... 41

Will and Resolution ..... 42

Effort and Struggle (Spiritual) ..... 43

Self-Examination and Stipulation (*musharatah*) ..... 44

Guarding Against Evil (*muraqabah*) ..... 44

Remembrance (*tadhakkur*) ..... 45

Remembrance of God, remembering the graces bestowed by Him ..... 45

The Second Stage ..... 47
Hidden or Inner Powers (*Quwwa-ye batini*) ..... 49
How to Regulate Human Instincts ..... 51
How to Bridle Fancy and Imagination ..... 52
Estimation and appraisal ..... 53
How to Cure Moral Maladies ..... 60
**Conclusion ..... 63**
**Second *Hadith*: OSTENTATION (*RIYA* ) ..... 65**
*Riya* in Faith or Creed ..... 66
Difference Between Knowledge and Belief ..... 68
Dangerous Effects of *Riya* ..... 69
An Advice for Getting Rid of the Curse of *Riya* ..... 70
Sincerity in Action ..... 74
The Second Stage of *Riya* ..... 77
The Value of Human Existence as a Trustee of Divine honor ... 79
*Riya* in Worship ..... 80
**Section I ..... 80**
How to Combat *Riya* ? ..... 81
*Riya* in Congregational Prayers ..... 83
How Does *Riya* Infiltrate the Ranks of the Congregation? ..... 84
An Invitation to Sincerity ..... 85
**A Tradition of Imam Ali (a) ..... 89**
Variation in Grades and Degrees of Qualities among Different Individuals ..... 91
**What is *Sumah*? ..... 92**
**Third *Hadith*: SELF-CONCEIT (*ujb*) ..... 93**
**What is *Ujb*? ..... 93**
*Ujb* of the Faithful ..... 95
The *Ujb* of the Faithless ..... 97
Snares and Wiles of the Devil ..... 99

The Evil Effects of *Ujb* ..... 101
Contempt of Others ..... 102
Temptation to *Riya* ..... 103
The Factor of Pride ..... 103
Self-Love as the Source of *Ujb* ..... 105
**Fourth *Hadith*: PRIDE (*KIBR*) ..... 113**
What is *Kibr*? ..... 113
Kinds and Degrees of *Kibr* ..... 114
The Causes of *Kibr* ..... 116
Spiritual and Social Harms of Pride ..... 121
Other Causes of Pride ..... 126
How to Cure Pride? ..... 130
The Punishment in the Hereafter ..... 133
Humility and Modesty of the Prophet (*S*) ..... 134
**To Cure Pride, One Should Act Against Its Dictates ..... 134**
**A Reminiscence of a Teacher ..... 135**
***Yaqazah* (Awakening) is the First Step ..... 136**
The Vicious Subtleties of the Self ..... 138
**Fifth *Hadith*: ENVY (*HASAD*) ..... 141**
Definition of *Hasad* ..... 142
Kinds of *Hasad* ..... 142
The Causes and Motives of *Hasad* ..... 143
Some Evil Effects of Envy ..... 144
The Punishment of the Grave ..... 147
The Source of Moral Corruption ..... 149
The Practical Remedy for Envy ..... 151
The Tradition Regarding Remission of Envy ..... 152
**Sixth *Hadith*: LOVE OF THE WORLD ..... 155**
Exposition of the Tradition ..... 156

**Mawlana Majlisi on the Reality of the World ..... 156**
**The Author's View ..... 157**
Factors that Promote Worldliness ..... 159
**Seventh *Hadith*: ANGER (*GHADAB*) ..... 169**
**Exposition ..... 169**
Advantages of *al-quwwah al-ghadabiyyah* (The Power of Anger) ..... 170
Vice of Immoderation in Anger ..... 172
Moral Hazards of Anger ..... 175
**Its Behavioral Hazards ..... 176**
Controlling Anger ..... 177
How to Eradicate the Roots of Anger: ..... 179
**Eighth *Hadith*: PREJUDICE (*ASABIYYAH*) ..... 183**
**Exposition ..... 183**
The Evils of *asabiyyah* ..... 185
**A Prophetic Tradition ..... 187**
The Otherworldly Form of *asabiyyah* ..... 187
A Colloquy With the Self ..... 189
On the *asabiyyah*s of the Intellectuals ..... 190
**Ninth *Hadith*: HYPOCRISY (*NIFAQ*) ..... 193**
**Exposition ..... 193**
Degrees of *Nifaq* ..... 194
Effects of *Nifaq* ..... 195
Cure of the Disease of *Nifaq* ..... 197
Some Forms of *Nifaq* ..... 198
**Tenth *Hadith*: DESIRE AND HOPE ..... 205**
**Exposition ..... 205**
1. On the Evil of Following One's Desires ..... 206
**(A): ..... 206**

**(b) The Quran and *Hadith* on the Evil of Submission to Desire ..... 208**

**(c) On Numerousness of Desires ..... 212**

2. On the Evil of Endless Hopes ..... 213

**(*a*) On the Endlessness of Hopes ..... 213**

**(b) Provisions for the Long Journey Ahead ..... 214**

**Eleventh *Hadith*: MAN'S GOD-SEEKING NATURE ..... 219**

**Exposition ..... 219**

1. The Meaning of *Fitrah* ..... 220

Laws of Human Nature ..... 221

Innateness of Religious Truths ..... 222

**1. Man's Love of Perfection ..... 223**

**2. The Innateness of Divine Attributes ..... 226**

**3. Innateness of-the Belief in Resurrection: ..... 227**

**Twelfth *Hadith*: CONTEMPLATION (*TAFAKKUR*) ..... 231**

**Exposition ..... 231**

What is Heart? ..... 232

Merits of Contemplation ..... 233

The Desirable and the Forbidden Contemplation on the Divine Essence ..... 235

Contemplation on Creation ..... 240

**The Earth and the Sun: Two Masterpieces of Creation ..... 241**

**Contemplation on the States of the Soul ..... 243**

**A Conclusive Proof ..... 246**

Virtues of the Midnight Prayer ..... 247

What is *Taqwa*? ..... 253

*Taqwa* for the Common People ..... 254

**Thirteenth *Hadith*: TRUST IN GOD (*TAWAKKUL*) ..... 261**

**Exposition ..... 262**

*Tawakkul* and its Degrees ..... 262

Difference Between *Tawakkul* and *Rida* ..... 266
*Tafwid*, *Tawakkul* and *Thiqah* ..... 266
**Fourteenth *Hadith*: FEAR OF GOD ..... 269**
**Exposition ..... 270**
Between Hope and Fear ..... 270
Stages and Degrees of Fear ..... 273
Hope and Prayer ..... 275
Contemplation, Fear and Hope ..... 277
The Difference Between Hope and Delusion ..... 278
The Opinion of Al-Majlisi ..... 281
**Fifteenth *Hadith*: THE BELIEVER'S TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS ..... 283**
**Exposition ..... 284**
The Meaning of Trial ..... 285
The Prophets and Divine Trial ..... 288
God's Remembrance ..... 291
The Prophets' Suffering ..... 293
The World is Not a Place of Reward or Punishment ..... 296
**Sixteenth *Hadith*: PATIENCE (*SABR*) ..... 301**
**Exposition ..... 302**
Desire, the Source of All Bondage ..... 303
*Sabr*, the Outcome of Freedom from Lust ..... 309
Results of *Sabr* ..... 311
The Degrees and Levels of *Sabr* ..... 316
The *urafa'*s Degrees of *Sabr*: ..... 318
**Seventeenth *Hadith*: REPENTANCE (*TAWBAH*) ..... 321**
**Exposition ..... 322**
*Tawbah* and Postponement ..... 323
**An Important Point ..... 324**

The Essentials of *Tawbah* ..... 325
The conditions of *Tawbah* ..... 328
The Result of *Istighfar* ..... 332
On the Interpretation of *Tawbah Nasuh* ..... 333
All Beings are Endowed with Life and Knowledge ..... 334
**Eighteenth *Hadith*: REMEMBRANCE OF GOD ..... 337**
**Exposition ..... 338**
The Difference between *Tafakkur* and *Tadhakkur* ..... 342
The Complete *Dhikr* ..... 344
Some Traditions Concerning *Dhikr* ..... 346
**Nineteenth *Hadith*: BACKBITING (*GHIBAH*) ..... 349**
**Exposition ..... 349**
The Definition of *Ghibah* ..... 351
The Social Harms of *Ghibah* ..... 362
the Cure of this Malady ..... 365
The Priority of Abstinence from Permissible *Ghibah* ..... 368
On the Prohibition on Listening to *Ghibah* ..... 369
al-Shahid al-Thani's Discourse ..... 372
**Twentieth *Hadith*: PURE INTENTION (*IKHLAS*) ..... 377**
**Exposition ..... 378**
The Meaning of 'Test' in Relation to God ..... 379
Fear, Sincere Intention and Rightness of Action ..... 381
The Definition of *Ikhlas* ..... 385
*Ikhlas* is Subsequent to Action ..... 387
**Twenty-First *Hadith*: THANKFULNESS (*SHUKR*) ..... 393**
**Exposition ..... 394**
A Mystical Interpretation ..... 400
The Reality of *Shukr* ..... 403
Ignorance and Ingratitude ..... 406

The Different Levels of *Shukr* ..... 407
The Station of *Shukr* in *Hadith* ..... 409
**Conclusion ..... 412**
**Twenty-Second *Hadith*: THE AVERSION FOR DEATH ..... 417**
**Exposition ..... 418**
The Reality of Heaven and Hell ..... 423
**Twenty-Third *Hadith*: THE SEEKERS OF KNOWLEDGE ..... 427**
**Exposition ..... 429**
**Section 1 ..... 432**
**Section II ..... 436**
**Section III ..... 440**
**Section IV ..... 443**
**Twenty Fourth *Hadith*: THE CLASSIFICATION OF SCIENCES ..... 445**
**Exposition ..... 446**
**Section I ..... 447**
**Section II ..... 451**
**Section III ..... 454**
**Section IV ..... 457**
**Section V ..... 459**
**Twenty-Fifth *Hadith*: SATANIC INSINUATION ..... 461**
**Exposition ..... 461**
2. A Simpler Explanation of the Character of *Waswas* ..... 464
3. The Remedy for *Waswas* ..... 469
**Twenty Sixth *Hadith*: THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE ..... 473**
**Exposition ..... 474**
the Path of Knowledge and the Way to Paradise ..... 474
**An Important Point ..... 476**
the Angels' Spreading their Wings for the Seekers of Knowledge ..... 476

the Inhabitants of the Heaven and Earth Asking Forgiveness for the Seeker of Knowledge ..... 480
The *Alim*'s Superiority over the *Abid* ..... 482
the *ulama* Being the Heirs of the Prophets ..... 486
**Twenty-Seventh *Hadith*: PRAYER AND CONCENTRATION ..... 489**
**Exposition ..... 490**
The Significance of Prayer ..... 490
The Various Levels of Concentration ..... 499
Attention to Worship ..... 500
Attention to the Worshipped One ..... 501
The Incarnation of Works in the Hereafter ..... 504
Worship and Freedom from Need ..... 514
**A Last Point ..... 517**
**Twenty-Eighth *Hadith*: MEETING GOD ..... 519**
**Exposition ..... 520**
*Liqa Allah* and Its Character ..... 522
Death: The Moment of Truth ..... 528
The Significance of 'Love' and 'Hate' when Ascribed to God .. 535
**Twenty-Ninth *Hadith*: THE PROPHET'S COUNSEL TO Ali ..... 539**
**Preface ..... 542**
The Evils of Lying ..... 543
The Meaning of *Wara* and Its Levels ..... 547
The Evils of Treachery and the Meaning of Trustworthiness .. 549
Concerning Some Divine Trusts ..... 555
the Fear of God Almighty ..... 557
The Disparity of People in Observing the Divine Presence .... 559
the Virtues of Lamentation ..... 561
Doubts Regarding Disproportionate Award ..... 561
Raising the Hands in Prayer and Turning Them ..... 564
The Secret Behind the Raising of the Hands ..... 566

A Warning Concerning one of the Satanic Ruses ..... 568
the Merit of Brushing the Teeth..... 569
Moral Virtues and Vices..... 570
**Thirtieth *Hadith*: THE INDESCRIBABILITY OF GOD, THE PROPHET, AND THE IMAMS.....579**
**Exposition ..... 580**
the Indescribability of God..... 581
Impossibility of Knowing the Reality of the Names and the Attributes ..... 585
Knowledge of the Spiritual Reality of the Prophets and the *awliya* is Unattainable through Rational Thought ..... 586
the Waiting of 'the Seven *Hijab*s' Mentioned in Relation to the Prophet..... 589
the Delegation (*tafwid* ) of the Affair to the Messenger of God (*s*), as indicated by this and many other traditions..... 591
Brief Allusion to the Meaning of *Tafwid* ..... 594
the Station of the Imams (a) ..... 595
Reality of *ismah* ..... 597
the Indescribability of Faith ..... 598
**Thirty-First *Hadith*: THE KINDS OF HEARTS .....601**
**Exposition ..... 602**
Reforming the Heart..... 603
The Basis for the Classification of the Hearts..... 604
The Reason why the Kinds of Hearts are Confined to the Four ..... 606
the States of the Hearts..... 607
the Luminosity of the Believer's Heart..... 607
Explanation of the Believer's being on the Straight Path..... 608
Some Stratagems of Satan ..... 609
The Hypocrite's Heart and the Difference Between it and the Believer's Heart ..... 612

Neglect of the Truth Results in the Inversion of the Heart ..... 613

**Thirty-Second *Hadith*: CONVICTION IN FAITH ..... 615**

**Exposition ..... 616**

**Section ..... 616**

Reconciling Traditions Concerning Livelihood being Apportioned and Traditions Exhorting Effort ..... 617

the Signs or Soundness or Conviction ..... 619

The Twofold Classes of the People ..... 620

The Views of the *Mutazilah* and the *Ashairah* and the Correct Position ..... 621

**Section ..... 623**

**Thirty-Third *Hadith*: *WILAYAH* AND WORKS ..... 625**

**Exposition ..... 626**

Explanation of Absence of Contradiction between Traditions that Exhort one to Perform ..... 626

***Ibadah* and Abstinence from Sins and other Traditions which Apparently Conflict with Them ..... 626**

*Wilayah* of the *Ahl al-Bayt*, the Condition for Acceptability of Works ..... 639

**Thirty-Fourth *Hadith*: THE STATION OF THE FAITHFUL BEFORE GOD ..... 643**

**Exposition ..... 644**

**A Noteworthy Point ..... 648**

Interpretation of the 'Hesitation' Ascribed to God ..... 648

An *Irfani* Explanation ..... 649

Another interpretation of the Tradition of Hesitation ..... 652

God's Reforming of the State of the Faithful through Poverty and Wealth ..... 653

the Nearness relating to Obligatory and Supererogatory Acts and their Result, in accordance with the Approach of the Wayfarers ..... 654

The Secret of the Variance Among the Prophets in Respect of

Prophethood ..... 658

**A Citation from the Most August Shaykh Bahai..... 659**

A Citation from Khwajah Tusi..... 661

**Concluding Note..... 661**

**Thirty-Fifth *Hadith*: GOD AND MAN, GOOD AND EVIL .....663**

**Exposition ..... 664**

Two Stations of Divine Names ..... 664

An Allusion to the Topic of *Jabr* and *Tafwid* ..... 667

God, the Exalted, is not Answerable Concerning what He does and other Existents are Answerable..... 669

**Thirty-Sixth *Hadith*: THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.....673**

**Exposition ..... 674**

the Identity of God's Attributes with His Essence ..... 675

The Statements of the Philosophers on the Division of Divine Attributes ..... 676

the Identity of the Attributes with the Sacred Essence ..... 678

the Priority of Knowledge to Creation ..... 679

The Meaning of Hearing and Sight in Relation to God ..... 682

Character of the Relation of God's Knowledge to the Knowables ..... 685

The Criterion Relating to Positive and Negative Attributes ..... 688

**Thirty-Seventh *Hadith*: THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.....693**

**Exposition ..... 693**

the Meaning of the Phrase 'Know God by God' ..... 695

Traditions dealing with the Higher Teachings should not be interpreted in a Plebeian Sense ..... 701

**Thirty-Eighth *Hadith*: THE MEANING OF GOD'S CREATION OF ADAM IN HIS IMAGE.....705**

**Exposition ..... 706**

Adam is the Complete Manifestation of God and the Greatest Name of God..... 709

**Thirty-Ninth *Hadith*: Good and Evil** ..... **715**

**Exposition** ..... **716**

The Reality of Good and Evil ..... 717

the Relation of Good and Evil to Creation and the Occurrence of Evil in the Divine Ordainments (*Qada*) ..... 720

God's Carrying Out Good and Evil Acts at the Hands of the Servants ..... 722

The Refutation of Compulsion (*jabr*) ..... 724

**Fortieth *Hadith*: EXEGESIS OF *SURAT AL-TAWHID* AND SOME VERSES OF *SURAT AL-HADID*** ..... **727**

**Exposition** ..... **728**

A Hint Concerning the Exegesis of *Surat al-Tawhid* ..... 729

A Hint Concerning *Bismi'llah* ..... 730

A Brief Hint concerning the Exegesis of the Noble Verses of *Surat al-Hadid* until the words *Alimun bi dhati's-sudur* ..... 734

**Conclusion** ..... **741**

Prayer and Epilogue ..... 742

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**By Hamid Algar**[1]

It is in many ways remarkable that ten years after his death and twenty years after the triumph of the revolution that he led no serious, comprehensive biography of Imam Ruhollah al-Musavi al-Khomeini has yet been written, whether in Persian or any other language. He was, after all, the pre-eminent figure of recent Islamic history, for his impact, considerable enough in Iran itself, has also reverberated throughout much of the Muslim world and helped to transform the worldview and consciousness of many Muslims. Indeed, it may be precisely this magnitude of the Imam's achievement, together with the complexity of his spiritual, intellectual, and political personality, which has so far discouraged potential biographers. The materials available for the task are, however, as abundant as his accomplishments were varied, and the present writer hopes to take up the challenge in the near future. What follows is therefore nothing more than a preliminary sketch, intended to acquaint the reader with the outlines of the Imam's life and the main aspects of his person as an Islamic leader of exceptional stature.

## CHILDHOOD AND EARLY EDUCATION

Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini was born on 20 Jamadi al-Akhir 1320AH/ 24 September 1902, the anniversary of the birth of Hadrat Fatima, in the small

[1] English-born Hamid Algar received his Ph.D. in oriental studies from Cambridge. Since 1965, he has served on the faculty of the Department of Near Eastern Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, where he teaches Persian and Islamic history and philosophy. Dr. Algar has written extensively on the subject of Iran and Islam, including the books, *Religion and State in Iran, 1785-1906* and *Mirza Malkum Khan: A Biographical Study in Iranian Modernism*. He has been following the Islamic movement in Iran with interest for many years. In an article published in 1972, he assessed the situation there and forecast the Revolution "more accurately than all the U.S. governments political officers and intelligence analysts," in the words of Nicholas Wade, *Science* magazine. Dr. Algar has translated numerous books from Arabic, Turkish, and Persian, including the book, *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*.

town of Khomein, some 160 kilometers to the southwest of Qum. He was the child of a family with a long tradition of religious scholarship. His ancestors, descendants of Imam Musa al-Kazim, the seventh Imam of the *Ahl al-Bayt*, had migrated towards the end of the eighteenth century from their original home in Nishapur to the Lucknow region of northern India. There they settled in the small town of Kintur and began devoting themselves to the religious instruction and guidance of the region's predominantly Shii population. The most celebrated member of the family was Mir Hamid Hosein (d. 1880), author of *Abaqat al-Anwar fi Imamat al-Aimmat al-Athar*, a voluminous work on the topics traditionally disputed by *Sunni* and Shii Muslims.[1]

Imam Khomeini's grandfather, Sayyed Ahmad, a contemporary of Mir Hamid Hosein, left Lucknow some time in the middle of the nineteenth century on pilgrimage to the tomb of Hadrat Ali in Najaf.[2] While in Najaf, Sayyed Ahmad made the acquaintance of a certain Yusof Khan, a prominent citizen of Khomein. Accepting his invitation, he decided to settle in Khomein to assume responsibility for the religious needs of its citizens and also took Yusof Khan's daughter in marriage. Although Sayyed Ahmad's links with India were cut by this decision, he continued to be known to his contemporaries as "Hendi," an appellation, which was inherited by his descendants; we see even that Imam Khomeini used "Hendi" as penname in some of his *ghazal*s.[3] Shortly before the outbreak of the Islamic Revolution in February 1978, the Shah's regime attempted to use this Indian element in the Imam's family background to depict him as an alien and traitorous element in Iranian society, an attempt that as will be seen backfired on its author. By the time of his death, the date of which is unknown, Sayyed Ahmad had fathered two children: a daughter by the name of Sahebeh, and Sayyed Mostafa Hendi, born in 1885, the father of Imam Khomeini. Sayyed Mostafa began his religious education in Isfahan with Mir Mohammad Taqi Modarresi before continuing his studies in Najaf and Samarra under the guidance of Mirza Hasan Shirazi (d.1894), the principal authority of the age in Shii jurisprudence. This corresponded to a pattern of preliminary study in

[1] See *Mohammad Reda Hakimi*, Mir Hamid Hosein, Qum, 1362 AHS /1983.

[2] However, according to a statement by the Imams elder brother, Sayyed Mortada Pasandideh, his point of departure was Kashmir, not Lucknow; see Ali Davani, *Nahdat-e Ruhaniyun-e Iran*, Tehran, n.d., vi, p. 760.

[3] See *Divan-e Imam*, Tehran, 1372 AHS /1993, p. 50.

Iran followed by advanced study in the *atabat*, the shrine cities of Iraq, which for long remained normative; Imam Khomeini was in fact the first religious leader of prominence whose formation took place entirely in Iran.

In Dhul-Hijja 1320AH/ March 1903, some five months after the Imam's birth, Sayyed Mostafa was attacked and killed while traveling on the road between Khomein and the neighboring city of Arak. The identity of the assassin immediately became known; it was Jafar-qoli Khan, the cousin of a certain Bahram Khan, one of the richest landowners of the region. The cause of the assassination is, however, difficult to establish with certainty. According to an account that became standard after the triumph of the Islamic Revolution, Sayyed Mostafa had aroused the anger of the local landowners because of his defense of the impoverished peasantry. However, Sayyed Mostafa himself, in addition to the religious functions he fulfilled, was also a farmer of moderate prosperity, and it is possible that he fell victim to one of the disputes over irrigation rights that were common at the time. A third explanation is that Sayyed Mostafa, in his capacity of *sharia* judge of Khomein, had punished someone for a public violation of the fast of Ramadan and that the family of the offender then exacted a deadly revenge.[1] The attempts of Sahebeh, Sayyed Mostafa's sister, to have the killer punished in Khomein proved fruitless, so his widow, Hajar, went to Tehran to appeal for justice, according to one account carrying the infant Ruhollah in her arms. She was followed there by her two elder sons, Mortada and Nur al-Din, and finally, in Rabi al-Awwal 1323AH/ May 1925, Jafar-qoli Khan was publicly executed in Tehran on the orders of Ayn al-Dawla, the prime minister of the day.

In 1918, the Imam lost both his aunt, Sahebeh, who had played a great role in his early upbringing, and his mother, Hajar. Responsibility for the family then devolved on the eldest brother, Sayyed Mortada (later to be known as Ayatollah Pasandideh). The material welfare of the brothers seems to have been ensured by their father's estate, but the insecurity and lawlessness that had cost him his life continued. In addition to the incessant feuds among landowners, Khomein was plagued by the raids mounted on the town by the Bakhtiyari and Lor tribesmen whenever they had the chance. Once when a Bakhtiyari chieftain by the name of Rajab Ali came raiding, the young Imam was obliged to take up a rifle together with his brothers and

[1] Interview of the present writer with Haj Sayyed Ahmad Khomeini, son of the Imam, Tehran, 12 September 1982.

defend the family home. When recounting these events many years later, the Imam remarked, "I have been at war since my childhood."[1] Among the scenes, he witnessed during his youth and that remained in his memory to help shape his later political activity mention may also be made of the arbitrary and oppressive deeds of landowners and provincial governors. Thus, he recalled in later years how a newly arrived governor had arrested and bastinadoed the chief of the merchants' guild of Gulpaygan for no other purpose than the intimidation of its citizens.[2]

Imam Khomeini began his education by memorizing the Quran at a *maktab* operated near his home by a certain Mulla Abo'l-Qasem; he became a *hafiz* by the age of seven. He next embarked on the study of Arabic with Shaykh Jafar, one of his mother's cousins, and took lessons on other subjects first from Mirza Mahmud Eftekhar al-Ulama and then from his maternal uncle, Haji Mirza Mohammad Mahdi. His first teacher in logic was Mirza Reda Najafi, his brother-in-law. Finally, among his instructors in Khomein mention may be made of the Imam's elder brother, Mortada, who taught him Najm al-Din Kateb Qazvini's *al-Mutawwal* on *badi* and *maani* and one of the treatises of al-Suyuti on grammar and syntax.

(Although Sayyed Mortada –who took the surname Pasandideh after the law mandating the choice of a surname in 1928– studied for a while in Isfahan, he never completed the higher levels of religious education; after working for a while in the registrar's office in Khomein, he moved to Qum where he was to spend the rest of his life).

In 1339AH/1920-21, Sayyed Mortada sent the Imam to the city of Arak (or Soltanabad, as it was then known) in order for him to benefit from the more ample educational resources available there. Arak had become an important center of religious learning because of the presence of Ayatollah Abdol-Karim Haeri (d.1936), one of the principal scholars of the day. He had arrived there in 1332AH/1914 at the invitation of the townspeople, and some three hundred students –a relatively large number– attended his lectures at the Mirza Yusof Khan Madrasa. It is probable that Imam Khomeini was not yet advanced enough to study directly under Haeri; instead, he worked on logic with Shaykh Mohammad Gulpayagani, read the *Sharh al-Lumah* of Shaykh Zayn al-Din al-Amili (d. 996/1558), one of the principal texts of

[1] Imam Khomeini, *Sahife-ye Nur*, Tehran, 1361 AHS /1982, x, p. 63.
[2] *Sahife-ye Nur*, xvi, p. 121.

Jafari jurisprudence, with Aqa-ye Abbas Araki, and continued his study of *al-Mutawwal* with Shaykh Mohammad-Ali Borujerdi. Roughly a year after the Imam's arrival in Arak, Haeri accepted a summons from the *ulama* of Qum to join them and preside over their activity. One of the earliest strongholds of Shiism in Iran, Qum had traditionally been a major center of religious learning as well as pilgrimage to the shrine of Hadrat-e Masumeh, a daughter of Imam Musa al-Kazim, but it had been overshadowed for many decades by the shrine cities of Iraq with their superior resources of erudition. The arrival of Haeri in Qum not only brought about a revival of its *madrasa*s but also began a process whereby the city became in effect the spiritual capital of Iran, a process that was completed by the political struggle launched there by Imam Khomeini some forty years later. The Imam followed Haeri to Qum after an interval of roughly four months. This move was the first important turning point in his life. It was in Qum that he received all his advanced spiritual and intellectual training, and he was to retain a deep sense of identification with the city throughout the rest of his life. It is possible, indeed, although not in a reductive sense, to describe him as a product of Qum. In 1980, when addressing a group of visitors from Qum, he declared, "Wherever I may be, I am a citizen of Qum, and take pride in the fact. My heart is always with Qum and its people."[1]

## THE YEARS OF SPIRITUAL AND INTELLECTUAL FORMATION IN QUM, 1923 TO 1962

After his arrival in Qum in 1922 or 1923, the Imam first devoted himself to completing the preliminary stage of *madrasa* education known as *sutuh*; this he did by studying with teachers such as Shaykh Mohammad Reda Najafi Masjed-Shahi, Mirza Mohammad-Taqi Khwansari, and Sayyed Ali Yathrebi Kashani. However, from his early days in Qum, the Imam gave an indication that he was destined to become more than another great authority on Jafari jurisprudence. He showed an exceptional interest in subjects that not only were usually absent from the *madrasa* curriculum, but were often an object of hostility and suspicion: philosophy, in its various traditional schools, and Gnosticism (*irfan*). He began cultivating this interest by studying the *Tafsir-e Safi*, a commentary on the Quran by the Sufistically-inclined Mulla Mohsen Feyd-e Kashani (d.1091AH/1680), together with the late Ayatollah Ali Araki (d. 1994), then a young student like himself. His

[1] *Sahife-ye Nur*, xii, p. 51.

formal instruction in Gnosticism and the related discipline of ethics began with classes taught by Haji Mirza Javad Maleki-Tabrizi, but this scholar died in 1304/1925. Similarly, the Imam was not able to benefit for long from his first teacher in philosophy, Mirza Ali-Akbar Hakim Yazdi, a pupil of the great master Mulla Hadi Sabzevari (d.1295AH/1878), for Yazdi passed away in 1305/1926. Another of the Imam's early instructors in philosophy was Sayyed Abu'l-Hasan Qazvini (d. 1355AH/1976), a scholar of both peripatetic and illuminationist philosophy; the Imam attended his circle until Qazvini's departure from Qum in 1310/1931.

The teacher who had the most profound influence on Imam Khomeini's spiritual development was, however, Mirza Mohammad-Ali Shahabadi (d. 1328 AHS /1950); to him the Imam refers in a number of his works as *shaykhona* (our *shaykh*) and *aref-e kamel*, and his relationship with him was that of a *murid* with his *murshid*. When Shahabadi first came to Qum in 1307 AHS /1928, the young Imam asked him a question concerning the nature of revelation, and was captivated by the answer he received. At his insistent request, Shahabadi consented to teach him and a few other select students the *Fusus al-Hikam* of Ibn Arabi. Although the basis of instruction was Dawud Qaysari's commentary on the *Fusus,* the Imam testified that Shahabadi also presented his own original insights on the text. Among the other texts that Imam Khomeini studied with Shahabadi were the *Manazil al-Sairin* of the Hanbali Sufi, Khwajeh Abdollah Ansari (d.482AH/1089), and the *Misbah al-Uns* of Mohammad b. Hamzah Fanari (d. 834/1431), a commentary on the *Mafatih al-Ghayb* of Sadr al-Din Qunavi (d. 673/1274).

It is conceivable that the Imam derived from Shahabadi, at least in part, whether consciously or not, the fusion of gnostic and political concerns that came to characterize his life. For this spiritual master of the Imam was one of the relatively few *ulama* in the time of Reda Shah to preach publicly against the misdeeds of the regime, and in his *Shadharat al-Maarif,* a work primarily gnostic in character, described Islam as "most certainly a political religion."[1]

Gnosis and ethics were also the subject of the first classes taught by the Imam. The class on ethics taught by Haji Javad Aqa Maleki Tabrizi was resumed, three years after his death, by Shahabadi, and when Shahabadi left for Tehran in 1936, he assigned the class to Imam Khomeini. The class consisted in the first place of a careful reading of Ansari's *Manazil al-Sairin,*

[1] *Shadharat al-Maarif,* Tehran, 1360 AHS/1982, pp. 6-7.

but ranged beyond the text to touch on a wide variety of contemporary concerns. It proved popular to the extent that the townsfolk of Qum as well as the students of the religious sciences attended, and people are related to have come from as far a field as Tehran and Isfahan simply to listen to the Imam. This popularity of the Imam's lectures ran contrary to the policies of the Pahlavi regime, which wished to limit the influence of the *ulama* outside the religious teaching institution. The government therefore secured the transfer of the lectures from the prestigious location of the Feydiyyeh Madrasa to the Mulla Sadeq Madrasa, which was unable to accommodate large crowds. However, after the deposition of Reda Shah in 1941, the lectures returned to the Feydiyyeh Madrasa and instantly regained their former popularity. The ability to address the people at large, not simply his own colleagues within the religious institution, which the Imam displayed for the first time in these lectures on ethics, was to play an important role in the political struggles he led in later years.

While teaching ethics to a wide and diverse audience, Imam Khomeini began teaching important texts of gnosis, such as the section on the soul in *al-Asfar al-Arbaah* of Mulla Sadra (d. 1050/1640) and Sabzevari's *Sharh-e Manzumeh*, to a select group of young scholars that included Mortada Motahhari and Hosein-Ali Montazeri, who subsequently became two of his principal collaborators in the revolutionary movement he launched some three decades later.

As for the earliest writings of the Imam, they also indicate that his primary interest during his early years in Qum was gnosis. In 1928, for example, he completed the *Sharh Dua al-Sahar*, a detailed commentary on the supplicatory prayers recited throughout Ramadan by Imam Muhammad al-Baqir; as with all Imam Khomeini's works on gnosis, the terminology of Ibn Arabi is frequently encountered in this book. Two years later, he completed *Misbah al-Hidayah ila al-Khilafah wa'l-Wilayah*, a dense and systematic treatise on the main topics of gnosis. Another product of the same years of concentration on gnosis was a series of glosses on Qaysari's commentary on the *Fusus*.

In a brief autobiography written for inclusion in a book published in 1934, the Imam wrote that he spent most of his time studying and teaching the works of Mulla Sadra; that he had for several years been studying gnosis with Shahabadi; and that at the same time he was attending the classes

of Ayatollah Haeri on *fiqh*.[1]

The sequence of these statements suggests that *fiqh* was as yet secondary among his concerns. This situation was to change, but gnosis was for the Imam never simply a topic for study, teaching, and writing. It remained an integral part of his intellectual and spiritual personality, and as such infused many of his ostensibly political activities in later years with an unmistakably gnostic element.

The Imam did not engage in any overt political activities during the 1930's. He always believed that the leadership of political activities should be in the hands of the foremost religious scholars, and he was therefore obliged to accept the decision of Haeri to remain relatively passive toward the measures taken by Reda Shah against the traditions and culture of Islam in Iran. In any event, as a still junior figure in the religious institution in Qum, he would have been in no position to mobilize popular opinion on a national scale. He was nonetheless in contact with those few *ulama* who did openly challenge Reda Shah, not only Shahabadi, but also men such as Haji Nurollah Esfahani, Mirza Sadeq Aqa Tabrizi, Aqazadeh Kefai, and Sayyed Hasan Modarres. He expressed his own opinions of the Pahlavi regime, the leading characteristics of which he identified as oppression and hostility to religion, as yet only allusively, in privately circulated poems.[2]

He assumed a public political stance for the first time in a proclamation dated 15 Ordibehesht 1323AHS/ 4 May 1944 that called for action to deliver the Muslims of Iran and the entire Islamic world from the tyranny of foreign powers and their domestic accomplices. The Imam begins by citing Quran, 34:46 ("**Say: 'I enjoin but one thing upon you**, **that you rise up for Allah**, **in pairs and singly**, **and then reflect**"). This is the same verse that opens the chapter on awakening (*bab al-yaqazah*) at the very beginning of Ansari's *Manazil al-Sairin*, the handbook of spiritual wayfaring first taught to the Imam by Shahabadi. The Imam's interpretation of "rising up" is, however, both spiritual and political, both individual and collective, a rebellion against lassitude in the self and corruption in society.

The same spirit of comprehensive revolt inspires the first work written by the Imam for publication, *Kashf al-Asrar* (Tehran, 1324 AHS /1945). He is

[1] Sayyed Ali-Reda Yazdi Hoseini, *Aine-ye Daneshvaran*, Tehran, 1353/1934, pp. 65-7.

[2] Sayyed Hamid Ruhani, *Barrasi va Tahlili az Nahdat-e Imam Khomeini*, i, Najaf, n.d., pp. 55-9.

said to have completed the book in forty-eight days from a sense of urgency, and that it indeed met a need is proven by the fact that it went through two impressions in its first year. The principal aim of the book, as reflected in its title, was to refute Ali-Akbar Hakamizadeh's *Asrar-e Hezarsaleh*, a work calling for a "reform" of Shii Islam. Similar attacks on Shii tradition were being made in the same period by Shariat-e Sangalaji (d.1944), an admirer of Wahhabism despite that sect's marked hostility to Shiism, and Ahmad Kasravi (d. 1946), competent as a historian but mediocre as a thinker. The Imam's vindication of such aspects of Shii practice as the mourning ceremonies of Muharram, pilgrimage (*ziyarat*) to the tombs of the Imams, and the recitation of the supplicatory prayers composed by the Imams, was therefore a response to the criticisms made by all three. Imam Khomeini connected their assaults on tradition with the anti-religious policies of Reda Shah and bitterly criticized the Pahlavi regime for destroying public morality. He stopped short, however, of demanding the abolition of the monarchy, proposing instead that an assembly of competent *mujtahid*s should choose "a just monarch who will not violate God's laws and will shun oppression and wrongdoing, who will not transgress against men's property, lives, and honor."[1]

Even this conditional legitimacy of monarchy was to last "only so long as a better system could not be established."[2] There can be no doubt that the "better system" already envisaged by Imam Khomeini in 1944 was *velayat-e faqih*, which became the constitutional cornerstone of the Islamic Republic of Iran established in 1979.

When Shaykh Abdol-Karim Haeri died in 1936, the supervision of the religious institution in Qum had been jointly assumed by Ayatollah Khwansari, Ayatollah Sadr, and Ayatollah Hujjat. A sense of lack was nonetheless felt when Ayatollah Abol-Hasan Esfahani, the principal *marja-e taqlid* of the age residing in Najaf, died in 1946, the need for a centralized leadership of Shii Muslims became more felt more acutely, and a search began for a single individual capable of fulfilling the duties and functions of both Haeri and Esfahani. Ayatollah Borujerdi, then resident in Hamedan, was seen to be the most suitable person available, and Imam Khomeini is said to have played an important role in persuading him to come to Qum. In this he was no doubt motivated in part by the hope that Borujerdi would adopt a firm

[1] *Kashf al-Asrar*, p. 185.
[2] *Kashf al-Asrar*, p. 186.

position vis-a-vis Mohammad Reda Shah, the second Pahlavi ruler. This hope was to remain largely unfulfilled. In April 1949, Imam Khomeini learned that Borujerdi was engaged in negotiations with the government concerning possible emendations to the constitution then in force, and he wrote him a letter expressing his anxieties about the possible consequences. In 1955, a nationwide campaign against the Bahai sect was launched, for which the Imam sought to recruit Borujerdi's support, but he had little success. As for religious personalities who were militantly active in the political sphere at the time, notably Ayatollah Abo'l-Qasem Kashani and Navvab Safavi, the leader of the Fedaiyan-e Eslam, the Imam's contacts with them were sporadic and inconclusive. His reluctance for direct political involvement in this period was probably due to his belief that any movement for radical change ought to be led by the senior echelons of the religious establishment. In addition, the most influential personage on the crowded and confused political scene of the day was the secular nationalist, Dr. Mohammad Mosaddeq.

Imam Khomeini therefore concentrated during the years of Borujerdi's leadership in Qum on giving instruction in *fiqh* and gathering round him students who later became his associates in the movement that led to the overthrow of the Pahlavi regime, not only Motahhari and Montazeri, but younger men such as Mohammad Javad Bahonar and Ali-Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. In 1946, he began teaching *usul al-fiqh* at the *kharij* level, taking as his text the chapter on rational proofs from the second volume of the *Kifayat al-Usul* of Akhund Mohammad Kazim Khorasani (d. 1329AH/1911). Initially attended by no more than thirty students, the class became so popular in Qum that five hundred were in attendance the third time it was offered. According to the reminiscences of some of those who took the class, it was distinguished from other classes taught in Qum on the same subject by the critical spirit the Imam instilled in his students, as well as his ability to connect *fiqh* with all the other dimensions of Islam – ethical, gnostic, philosophical, political, and social.

## THE YEARS OF STRUGGLE AND EXILE, 1962-1978

The emphases of the Imam's activity began to change with the death of Borujerdi on March 31, 1961, for he now emerged as one of the successors to Borujerdi's position of leadership. This emergence was signaled by the publication of some of his writings on *fiqh*, most importantly the basic handbook of religious practice entitled, like others of its genre, *Tawdih al-*

*Masail*. He was soon accepted as *marja-e taqlid* by a large number of Iranian Shiis. His leadership role was, however, destined to go far beyond that traditional for a *marja-e taqlid* and to attain a comprehensiveness unique in the history of the Shii *ulama*.

This became apparent soon after the death of Borujerdi when Mohammad Reda Shah, secure in his possession of power after the CIA-organized coup of August 1953, embarked on a series of measures designed to eliminate all sources of opposition, actual or potential, and to incorporate Iran firmly into American patterns of strategic and economic domination. In the autumn of 1962, the government promulgated new laws governing elections to local and provincial councils, which deleted the former requirement that those elected be sworn into office on the Quran. Seeing in this a plan to permit the infiltration of public life by the Bahais, Imam Khomeini telegraphed both the Shah and the prime minister of the day, warning them to desist from violating both the law of Islam and the Iranian Constitution of 1907, failing which the *ulama* would engage in a sustained campaign of protest. Rejecting all compromise measures, the Imam was able to force the repeal of the laws in question seven weeks after they had been promulgated. This achievement marked his emergence on the scene as the principal voice of opposition to the Shah.

A more serious confrontation was not long in coming. In January 1963, the Shah announced a six-point program of reform that he termed the White Revolution, an American-inspired package of measures designed to give his regime a liberal and progressive facade. Imam Khomeini summoned a meeting of his colleagues in Qum to press upon them the necessity of opposing the Shah's plans, but they were initially hesitant. They sent one of their number, Ayatollah Kmalvand, to see the Shah and gauge his intentions.

Although the Shah showed no inclination to retreat or compromise, it took further pressure by Imam Khomeini on the other senior *ulama* of Qum to persuade them to decree a boycott of the referendum that the Shah had planned to obtain the appearance of popular approval for his White Revolution. For his own part, Imam Khomeini issued on January 22, 1963 a strongly worded declaration denouncing the Shah and his plans. In imitation, perhaps, of his father, who had taken an armored column to Qum in 1928 in order to intimidate certain outspoken *ulama*, the Shah came to Qum two days later. Faced with a boycott by all the dignitaries of the city, he delivered a speech harshly attacking the *ulama* as a class.

On January 26, the referendum was held, with a low turnout that reflected the growing heed paid by the Iranian people to Imam Khomeini's directives. He continued his denunciation of the Shah's programs, issuing a manifesto that also bore the signatures of eight other senior scholars. In it he listed the various ways in which the Shah had violated the constituent, condemned the spread of moral corruption in the country, and accused the Shah of comprehensive submission to America and Israel: "I see the solution to lie in this tyrannical government being removed, for the crime of violating the ordinances of Islam and trampling the constitution, and in a government taking its place that adheres to Islam and has concern for the Iranian nation."[1] He also decreed that the Nōruz celebrations for the Iranian year 1342 (which fell on March 21, 1963) be cancelled as a sign of protest against government policies.

The very next day, paratroopers were sent to the Feydiyyeh Madrasa in Qum, the site where the Imam delivered his public speeches. They killed a number of students, beat and arrested a number of others, and ransacked the building. Unintimidated, the Imam continued his attacks on the regime. On April 1, he denounced the persistent silence of certain apolitical *ulama* as "tantamount to collaboration with the tyrannical regime," and one day later proclaimed political neutrality under the guise of *taqiyyah* to be *haram*.[2] When the Shah sent his emissaries to the houses of the *ulama* in Qum to threaten them with the destruction of their homes, the Imam reacted contemptuously by referring to the Shah as "that little man (*mardak*)." Then, on April 3, 1963, the fortieth day after the attack on the Feydiyyeh Madrasa, he described the Iranian government as being determined to eradicate Islam at the behest of America, Israel, and himself as resolved to combat it.

Confrontation turned to insurrection some two months later. The beginning of Muharram, always a time of heightened religious awareness and sensitivity, saw demonstrators in Tehran carrying pictures of the Imam and denouncing the Shah in front of his own palace. On the afternoon of Ashura (June 3, 1963), Imam Khomeini delivered a speech at the Feydiyyeh Madrasa in which he drew parallels between the Umayyad caliph Yazid and the Shah and warned the Shah that if he did not change his ways the day would come when the people would offer up thanks for his departure from the country.[3]

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[1] *Sahife-ye Nur*, i, p. 27.
[2] *Kauthar*, i, p. 67; *Sahife-ye Nur*, i, p. 39.
[3] *Sahife-ye Nur*, i, p. 46.

This warning was remarkably prescient, for on January 16, 1979, the Shah was indeed obliged to leave Iran amidst scenes of popular rejoicing. The immediate effect of the Imam's speech was, however, his arrest two days later at 3 o'clock in the morning by a group of commandos who hastily transferred him to the Qasr prison in Tehran.

As dawn broke on June 3, the news of his arrest spread first through Qum and then to other cities. In Qum, Tehran, Shiraz, Mashhad and Varamin, masses of angry demonstrators were confronted by tanks and ruthlessly slaughtered. It was not until six days later that order was fully restored. This uprising of 15 Khordad 1342 AHS (the day in the Iranian calendar on which it began) marked a turning point in Iranian history. Henceforth the repressive and dictatorial nature of the Shah's regime, reinforced by the unwavering support of the United States, was constantly intensified, and with it the prestige of Imam Khomeini as the only figure of note –whether religious or secular– willing to challenge him. The arrogance imbuing the Shah's policies also caused a growing number of the *ulama* to abandon their quietism and align themselves with the radical goals set forth by the Imam. The movement of 15 Khordad may therefore be characterized as the prelude to the Islamic Revolution of 1978-79; the goals of that revolution and its leadership had already been determined.

After nineteen days in the Qasr prison, Imam Khomeini was moved first, to the 'Eshratabad military base and then to a house in the Davudiyyeh section of Tehran where he was kept under surveillance. Despite the killings that had taken place during the uprising, mass demonstrations were held in Tehran and elsewhere demanding his release and some of his colleagues came to the capital from Qum to lend their support to the demand. It was not, however, until April 7, 1964 that he was released, no doubt on the assumption that imprisonment had tempered his views and that the movement he had led would quietly subside. Three days after his release and return to Qum, he dispelled such illusions by refuting officially inspired rumors that he had come to an understanding with the Shah's regime and by declaring that the movement inaugurated on 15 Khordad would continue. Aware of the persisting differences in approach between the Imam and some of the other senior religious scholars, the regime had also attempted to discredit him by creating dissension in Qum. These attempts, too, were unsuccessful, for early in June 1964 all the major *ulama* put their signatures to declarations commemorating the first anniversary of the uprising of 15 Khordad.

Despite its failure to sideline or silence Imam Khomeini, the Shah's regime continued its pro-American policies unwaveringly. In the autumn of 1964, it concluded a status of forces agreement with the United States that provided immunity from prosecution for all American personnel in Iran and their dependents. This occasioned the Imam to deliver what was perhaps the most vehement speech of the entire struggle against the Shah; certainly one of his close associates, Ayatollah Mohammad Mofatteh, had never seen him so agitated.[1] He denounced the agreement as a surrender of Iranian independence and sovereignty, made in exchange for a $200 million loan that would be of benefit only to the Shah and his associates, and described as traitors all those in the *Majles* (Parliament) who voted in favor of it; the government lacked all legitimacy, he concluded.[2]

Shortly before dawn on November 4, 1964, again a detachment of commandos surrounded the Imam's house in Qum, arrested him, and this time took him directly to Mehrabad airport in Tehran for immediate banishment to Turkey. The decision to deport rather than arrest Imam Khomeini and imprison him in Iran was based no doubt on the hope that in exile he would fade from popular memory. Physical elimination would have been fraught with the danger of an uncontrollable popular uprising. As for the choice of Turkey, this reflected the security cooperation existing between the Shah's regime and Turkey.

The Imam was first lodged in room 514 of Bulvar Palas Oteli in Ankara, a moderately comfortable hotel in the Turkish capital, under the joint surveillance of Iranian and Turkish security officials. On November 12, he was moved from Ankara to Bursa, where he was to reside for another eleven months. The stay in Turkey cannot have been congenial, for Turkish law forbade Imam Khomeini to wear the cloak and turban of the Muslim scholar, an identity which was integral to his being; the sole photographs in existence to show him bareheaded all belong to the period of exile in Turkey.[3] However, on December 3, 1964, he was joined in Bursa by his eldest son, Haj Mostafa Khomeini; he was also permitted to receive occasional visitors from Iran, and was supplied with a number of books on *fiqh*. He made use of his forced stay in Bursa to compile *Tahrir al-Wasilah*, a two-volume compendium on questions of jurisprudence. Important and distinctive are the

[1] Interview with the present writer, Tehran, December 1979.

[2] *Kauthar*, i, pp. 169-178.

[3] See Ansari, *Hadith-e Bidari*, p. 67.

*fatwa*s this volume contains, grouped under the headings of *al-amr bi'l-maruf wa'l-nahy an al-munkar* and *difa*. The Imam decrees, for example, that "if it is feared that the political and economic domination (by foreigners) over an Islamic land will lead to the enslavement and weakening of the Muslims, then such domination must be repelled by appropriate means, including passive resistance, the boycott of foreign goods, and the abandonment of all dealings and association with the foreigners in question." Similarly, "if an attack by foreigners on one of the Islamic states is anticipated, it is incumbent on all Islamic states to repel the attack by all possible means; indeed, this is incumbent on the Muslims as a whole."[1]

On September 5, 1965, Imam Khomeini left Turkey for Najaf in Iraq, where he was destined to spend thirteen years. As a traditional center of Shii learning and pilgrimage, Najaf was clearly a preferable and more congenial place of exile. It had moreover already functioned as a stronghold of *ulama* opposition to the Iranian monarchy during the Constitutional Revolution of 1906-1909. But it was not in order to accommodate the Imam that the Shah arranged for his transfer to Najaf. First, there was continuing disquiet among the Imam's followers at his forced residence in Bursa, away from the traditional milieu of the Shii *madrasa*; such objections could be met by moving him to Najaf. Second, it was hoped that once in Najaf, the Imam would either be overshadowed by the prestigious *ulama* there, men such as Ayatollah Abo'l-Qasem Khui (d. 1995), or that he would challenge their distaste for political activism and squander his energies on confronting them. He skirted this dual danger by proffering them his respect while continuing to pursue the goals he had set himself before leaving Iran. Another pitfall he avoided was association with the Iraqi government, which occasionally had its own differences with the Shah's regime and was of a mind to use the Imam's presence in Najaf for its own purposes. The Imam declined the opportunity to be interviewed on Iraqi television soon after his arrival, and resolutely kept his distance from succeeding Iraqi administrations.

Once settled in Najaf, Imam Khomeini began teaching *fiqh* at the Shaykh Mortada Ansari Madrasa. His lectures were well attended, by students not only from Iran but also from Iraq, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Persian Gulf states. In fact, a mass migration to Najaf from Qum and other centers of religious learning in Iran was proposed to the Imam, but he

[1] *Tahrir al-Wasilah*, i, p. 486.

advised against it as a measure bound to depopulate Qum and weaken it as a center of religious guidance.

It was also at the Shaykh Mortada Ansari Madrasa that, between January 21 and February 8 1970, he delivered his celebrated lectures on *velayat-e faqih*, the theory of governance that was to be implemented after the triumph of the Islamic Revolution. (The text of these lectures was published in Najaf, not long after their delivery, under the title *Velayat-e Faqih ya Hokumat-e Eslami*; a slightly abbreviated Arabic translation soon followed). This theory, which may be summarized as the assumption by suitably qualified *ulama* of the political and juridical functions of the Twelfth Imam during his occultation, had already been put forward, somewhat tentatively, in his first published work, *Kashf al-Asrar*. Now he presented it as the self-evident and incontestable consequence of the Shii doctrine of the Imamate, citing and analyzing in support of it all relevant texts from the Quran and the traditions of the Prophet (*s*)[1] and the Twelve Imams (a)[2]. He emphasized also the harm that had come to Iran (as well as other Muslim countries) from abandoning Islamic law and government and relinquishing the political realm to the enemies of Islam. Finally, he delineated a program for the establishment of an Islamic government, laying particular stress on the responsibilities of the *ulama* to transcend their petty concerns and to address the people fearlessly: "It is the duty of all of us to overthrow the *taghut*, the illegitimate political powers that now rule the entire Islamic world."[3]

The text of the lectures on *velayat-e faqih* was smuggled back to Iran by visitors who came to see the Imam in Najaf, as well as by ordinary Iranians who came on pilgrimage to the shrine of Hadrat Ali (a) The same channels were used to convey to Iran the numerous letters and proclamations in which the Imam commented on the events that took place in his homeland during the long years of exile. The first such document, a letter to the Iranian *ulama* assuring them of the ultimate downfall of the Shah's regime, is dated April 16, 1967. On the same day he also wrote to primeminister Amir Abbas

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[1] For maintaining readability, (*s*) which is an abbreviation for "*SallAllahu alayhi wa alihi wa sallam*" is used throughout the book to denote "May peace and benedictions of God be upon him and his family." It is used for Prophet Muhammad.

[2] For maintaining readability, (*a*) which is an abbreviation for "*Alayhi* (*alayhim*) *al-salam*" is used throughout the book to denote "May peace of God be upon him/her/them." It is used for the Prophets, Imams, and saints.

[3] *Wilayat-e Faqih*, Najaf, n.d., p. 204.

Hoveida accusing him of running "a regime of terror and thievery."[1] On the occasion of the Six Day War in June 1967, the Imam issued a declaration forbidding any type of dealing with Israel as well as the consumption of Israeli goods. This declaration was widely and openly publicized in Iran, which led to the ransacking of Imam Khomeini's house in Qum and the arrest of Haj Sayyed Ahmad Khomeini, his second son, who had been living there. (Some of the unpublished works of the Imam were lost or destroyed on this occasion). It was also at this time that the Shah's regime contemplated moving the Imam from Iraq to India; a location from which communications with Iran would have been far more difficult, but the plan was thwarted. Other developments on which the Imam commented from Najaf were the extravagant celebrations of 2500 years of Iranian monarchy in October 1971 ("it is the duty of the Iranian people to refrain from participation in this illegitimate festival"); the formal establishment of a one-party system in Iran in February 1975 (the Imam prohibited membership in the party, the *Hezb-e Rastakhiz*, in a *fatwa* issued the following month); and the substitution, in the same month, of the imperial (*shahanshahi*) calendar for the solar Hijri calendar that had been official in Iran until that time. Some developments were met with *fatwa*s rather than proclamations: for example, the Imam rejected as incompatible with Islam the Family Protection Law of 1967 and classified as adulteresses women who remarried after obtaining a divorce under its provisions.[2]

Imam Khomeini had also to deal with changing circumstances in Iraq. The Bath Party, fundamentally hostile to religion, had come to power in July 1967 and soon began exerting pressure on the scholars of Najaf, both Iraqi and Iranian. In 1971, as Iraq and Iran entered a state of sporadic and undeclared war with each other, the Iraqi regime began expelling from its territory Iranians whose forebears had been in some cases residing there for generations. The Imam, who until that point had scrupulously kept his distance from Iraqi officialdom, now addressed himself directly to the Iraqi leadership condemning its actions.

Imam Khomeini was, in fact, constantly, and acutely aware of the connections between Iranian affairs and those of the Muslim world in general and the Arab lands in particular. This awareness led him to issue from Najaf a proclamation to the Muslims of the world on the occasion of the *hajj* in

[1] *Sahife-ye Nur*, i, pp. 129, 132.

[2] Imam Khomeini, *Resale-ye Ahkam*, p. 328.

1971, and to comment, with special frequency and emphasis, on the problems posed by Israel for the Muslim world. The Imam's strong concern for the Palestine question led him to issue a *fatwa* on August 27, 1968 authorizing the use of religious monies (*wujuh-e shari*) to support the nascent activities of *al-Asifah*, the armed wing of the Palestine Liberation Organization; this was confirmed by a similar and more detailed ruling issued after a meeting with the Baghdad representative of the PLO.[1]

The distribution in Iran, on however limited a scale, of the proclamations and *fatwa*s of Imam Khomeini was in itself enough to ensure that his name not be forgotten during the years of exile. Equally important, the movement of Islamic opposition to the Shah's regime that had been inaugurated by the uprising of 15 Khordad continued to develop despite the brutality unhesitatingly dispensed by the Shah. Numerous groups and individuals explicitly owed their allegiance to the Imam. Soon after his exiling there came into being an organization called *Heyatha-ye Motalefe-ye Eslami* (the Allied Islamic Associations), headquartered in Tehran but with branches throughout Iran. Active in it were many who had been students of the Imam in Qum and who came to assume important responsibilities after the revolution, men such as Hashemi Rafsanjani and Javad Bahonar. In January 1965, four members of the organization assassinated Hasan-Ali Mansur, the prime minister who had been responsible for the exiling of the Imam.

There were no individuals designated, even clandestinely, as Imam Khomeini's authorized representatives in Iran while he was in exile.

However, senior *ulama* such as Ayatollah Mortada Motahhari, Ayatollah Sayyed Mohammad Hosein Beheshti (d. 1981) and Ayatollah Hosein-Ali Montazeri, were in contact with him, directly and indirectly, and were known to speak on his behalf in important matters. Like their younger counterparts in the *Heyatha-ye Motalefe-ye Eslami*, all three went on to perform important functions during and after the revolution.

The continued growth of the Islamic movement during Imam Khomeini's exile should not be attributed exclusively to his abiding influence or to the activity of *ulama* associated with him. Important, too, were the lectures and books of Ali Shariati (d. 1977), a university-educated intellectual whose understanding and presentation of Islam were influenced by Western ideologies, including Marxism, to a degree that many *ulama* regarded as

[1] *Sahife-ye Nur*, i, pp. 144-5.

dangerously syncretistic. When the Imam was asked to comment on the theories of Shariati, both by those who supported them and by those who opposed them, he discreetly refrained from doing so, in order not to create a division within the Islamic movement that would have benefited the Shah's regime.

The most visible sign of the persisting popularity of Imam Khomeini in the pre-revolutionary years, above all at the heart of the religious institution in Qum, came in June 1975 on the anniversary of the uprising of 15 Khordad. Students at the Feydiyyeh Madrasa began holding a demonstration within the confines of the building, and a sympathetic crowd assembled outside. Both gatherings continued for three days until they were attacked on the ground by commandos and from the air by a military helicopter, with numerous deaths resulting. The Imam reacted with a message in which he declared the events in Qum and similar disturbances elsewhere to be a sign of hope that "freedom and liberation from the bonds of imperialism" were at hand.[1] The beginning of the revolution came indeed some two and a half years later.

## THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION, 1978-79

The chain of events that ended in February 1979 with the overthrow of the Pahlavi regime and the foundation of the Islamic Republic began with the death in Najaf on October 23, 1977 of Haj Sayyed Mostafa Khomeini, unexpectedly and under mysterious circumstances. This death was widely attributed to the Iranian security police, SAVAK, and protest meetings took place in Qum, Tehran, Yazd, Mashhad, Shiraz, and Tabriz. Imam Khomeini himself, with the equanimity he customarily displayed in the face of personal loss, described the death of his son as one of the "hidden favors" (*altaf-e khafiyyeh*) of God, and advised the Muslims of Iran to show fortitude and hope.[2]

The esteem in which Imam Khomeini was held and the reckless determination of the Shah's regime to undermine that esteem were demonstrated once again on January 7, 1978 when an article appeared in the semi-official newspaper *Ettelaat* attacking him in scurrilous terms as a traitor working together with foreign enemies of the country. The next day a furious mass protest took place in Qum; it was suppressed by the security forces with

[1] *Sahife-ye Nur*, i, p. 215.

[2] Shahedi digar az ruhaniyyat, Najaf, n.d., p. 27.

heavy loss of life. This was the first in a series of popular confrontations that, gathering momentum throughout 1978, soon turned into a vast revolutionary movement, demanding the overthrow of the Pahlavi regime and the installation of an Islamic government.

The martyrs of Qum were commemorated forty days later with demonstrations and shop closures in every major city of Iran. Particularly grave were the disturbances in Tabriz, which ended only after more than 100 people had been killed by the Shah's troops. On March 29, the fortieth day after the killings in Tabriz was marked by a further round of demonstrations, in some fifty-five Iranian cities; this time the heaviest casualties occurred in Yazd, where security forces opened fire on a gathering in the main mosque. In early May, it was Tehran itself that saw the principal violence; armored columns appeared on the streets for the first time since June 1963 in order to contain the trend to revolution.

In June, the Shah found it politic to make a number of superficial concessions – such as the repeal of the "imperial calendar"– to the forces opposing him, but repression also continued. When the government lost control of Isfahan on August 17, the army assaulted the city and killed hundreds of unarmed demonstrators. Two days later, 410 people were burned to death behind the locked doors of a cinema in Abadan, and the government was plausibly held responsible. On Id al-Fitr, which that year fell on September 4, marches took place in all major cities, with an estimated total of four million participants. The demand was loudly voiced for the abolition of monarchy and the foundation of an Islamic government under the leadership of Imam Khomeini. Faced with the mounting tide of revolution, the Shah decreed martial law and forbade further demonstrations. On September 9, a crowd gathered at the *Meydan-e Zhaleh* (subsequently renamed *Meydan-e Shohada*) in Tehran was attacked by troops that had blocked all exits from the square, and some 2000 people were killed at this location alone. Another 2000 were killed elsewhere in Tehran by American-supplied military helicopters hovering overhead. This day of massacre, which came to be known as Black Friday, marked the point of no return. Too much blood had been spilt for the Shah to have any hope of survival, and the army itself began to tire of the task of slaughter.

As these events were unfolding in Iran, Imam Khomeini delivered a whole series of messages and speeches, which reached his homeland not only in printed form but also increasingly on tape cassettes. His voice could be

heard congratulating the people for their sacrifices, denouncing the Shah in categorical fashion as a criminal, and underlining the responsibility of the United States for the killings and the repression. (Ironically, US President Carter had visited Tehran on New Year's Eve 1977 and lauded the Shah for creating "an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world."[1]

As the façade of stability dissolved, the United States continued its military and political support of the Shah uninterrupted by anything but the most superficial hesitation). Most importantly, the Imam recognized that a unique juncture had been reached in Iranian history, that a genuinely revolutionary momentum had come into being which if dissipated would be impossible to rebuild. He therefore warned against any tendency to compromise or to be deceived by the sporadic conciliatory gestures of the Shah. Thus on the occasion of Id al-Fitr, when mass demonstrations had passed off with deceptive peacefulness in Tehran, he issued the following declaration: "Noble people of Iran! Press forward with your movement and do not slacken for a minute, as I know full well you will not! Let no one imagine that after the blessed month of Ramadan his God-given duties have changed. These demonstrations that break down tyranny and advance the goals of Islam are a form of worship that is not confined to certain months or days, for the aim is to save the nation, to enact Islamic justice, and to establish a form of divine government based on justice."[2]

In one of the numerous miscalculations that marked his attempts to destroy the revolution, the Shah decided to seek the deportation of Imam Khomeini from Iraq, on the assumption, no doubt, that once removed from the prestigious location of Najaf and its proximity to Iran, his voice would somehow be silenced. The agreement of the Iraqi government was obtained at a meeting between the Iraqi and Iranian foreign ministers in New York, and on September 24, 1978, the Imam's house in Najaf was surrounded by troops. He was informed that his continued residence in Iraq was contingent on his abandoning political activity, a condition he was sure to reject. On October 3, he left Iraq for Kuwait, but was refused entry at the border. After a period of hesitation in which Algeria, Lebanon and Syria were considered as possible destinations, Imam Khomeini embarked for Paris, on the advice of his second son, Haj Sayyed Ahmad Khomeini, who by now had joined

[1] *New York Times*, January 2, 1978.
[2] *Sahife-ye Nur*, i, p. 97.

him. Once arrived in Paris, the Imam took up residence in the suburb of Neauphle-le-Château in a house that had been rented for him by Iranian exiles in France.

Residence in a non-Muslim land was no doubt experienced by Imam Khomeini as irksome, and in the declaration he issued from Neauphle-le-Château on October 11, 1978, the fortieth day after the massacres of Black Friday, he announced his intention of moving to any Muslim country that assured him freedom of speech.[1] No such assurance ever materialized. In addition, his forced removal from Najaf increased popular anger in Iran still further. It was, however, the Shah's regime that turned out to be the ultimate loser from this move. Telephonic communications with Tehran were far easier from Paris than they had been from Najaf, thanks to the Shah's determination to link Iran with the West in every possible way, and the messages and instructions the Imam issued flowed forth uninterrupted from the modest command center he established in a small house opposite his residence. Moreover, a host of journalists from across the world now made their way to France, and the image and the words of the Imam soon became a daily feature in the world's media.

In Iran meanwhile, the Shah was continuously reshaping his government. First, he brought in as Prime Minister Sharif-Emami, an individual supposedly close to conservative elements among the ulama. Then, on November 6, he formed a military government under General Gholam-Reda Azhari, a move explicitly recommended by the United States. These political maneuverings had essentially no effect on the progress of the revolution. On November 23, one week before the beginning of Muharram, the Imam issued a declaration in which he likened the month to "a divine sword in the hands of the soldiers of Islam, our great religious leaders, and respected preachers, and all the followers of Imam Husayn, Sayyid al-Shuhada'." They must, he continued, "make maximum use of it; trusting in the power of God, they must tear out the remaining roots of this tree of oppression and treachery." As for the military government, it was contrary to the *Shariah* and opposition to it a religious duty.[2]

Vast demonstrations unfurled across Iran as soon as Muharram began. Thousands of people donned white shrouds as a token of readiness for

[1] *Sahife-ye Nur*, ii, p. 143.
[2] *Sahife-ye Nur*, iii, p. 225.

martyrdom and were cut down as they defied the nightly curfew. On Muharram 9, a million people marched in Tehran demanding the overthrow of the monarchy, and the following day, Ashura, more than two million demonstrators approved by acclamation a seventeen-point declaration of which the most important demand was the formation of an Islamic government headed by the Imam. Killings by the army continued, but military discipline began to crumble, and the revolution acquired an economic dimension with the proclamation of a national strike on December 18. With his regime crumbling, the Shah now attempted to co-opt secular, liberan-nationalist politicians in order to forestall the foundation of an Islamic government. On January 3, 1979, Shahpur Bakhtiyar of the National Front (*Jebheh-ye Melli*) was appointed prime minister to replace General Azhari, and plans were drawn up for the Shah to leave the country for what was advertised as a temporary absence. On January 12, the formation of a nine-member regency council was announced; headed by Jalal al-Din Tehrani, an individual proclaimed to have religious credentials, it was to represent the Shah's authority in his absence. None of these maneuvers distracted the Imam from the goal now increasingly within reach. The very next day after the formation of the regency council, he proclaimed from Neauphle-le-Château the formation of the Council of the Islamic Revolution (*Shōra-ye Enqelab-e Eslami*), a body entrusted with establishing a transitional government to replace the Bakhtiyar administration. On January 16, amid scenes of feverish popular rejoicing, the Shah left Iran for exile and death.

What remained now was to remove Bakhtiyar and prevent a military coup d'état enabling the Shah to return. The first of these aims came closer to realization when Sayyed Jalal al-Din Tehrani came to Paris in order to seek a compromise with Imam Khomeini. He refused to see him until he resigned from the regency council and pronounced it illegal. As for the military, the gap between senior generals, unconditionally loyal to the Shah, and the growing number of officers and recruits sympathetic to the revolution, was constantly growing. When the United States dispatched General Huyser, commander of NATO land forces in Europe, to investigate the possibility of a military coup, he was obliged to report that it was pointless even to consider such a step.

Conditions now seemed appropriate for Imam Khomeini to return to Iran and preside over the final stages of the revolution. After a series of delays, including the military occupation of Mehrabad airport from January 24 to 30,

the Imam embarked on a chartered airliner of Air France on the evening of January 31 and arrived in Tehran the following morning. Amid unparalleled scenes of popular joy – it has been estimated that more than ten million people gathered in Tehran to welcome the Imam back to his homeland– he proceeded to the cemetery of Behesht-e Zahra to the south of Tehran where the martyrs of the revolution lay buried. There he decried the Bakhtiyar administration as the "last feeble gasp of the Shah's regime" and declared his intention of appointing a government that would "punch Bakhtiyar's government in the mouth."[1] The appointment of the provisional Islamic government the Imam had promised came on February 5. Its leadership was entrusted to Mahdi Bazargan, an individual who had been active for many years in various Islamic organizations, most notably the Freedom Movement (*Nahdat-e Azadi*).

The decisive confrontation came less than a week later. Faced with the progressive disintegration of the armed forces and the desertion of many officers and men, together with their weapons, to the Revolutionary Committees that were springing up everywhere, Bakhtiyar decreed a curfew in Tehran to take effect at 4 p.m. on February 10. Imam Khomeini ordered that the curfew should be defied and warned that if elements in the army loyal to the Shah did not desist from killing the people, he would issue a formal *fatwa* for *jihad*.[2] The following day the Supreme Military Council withdrew its support from Bakhtiyar, and on February 12, 1979, all organs of the regime, political, administrative, and military, finally collapsed. The revolution had triumphed.

Clearly, no revolution can be regarded as the work of a single man, nor can its causes be interpreted in purely ideological terms; economic and social developments had helped to prepare the ground for the revolutionary movement of 1978-79. There was also marginal involvement in the revolution, particularly during its final stages when its triumph seemed assured, by secular, liberan-nationalist, and leftist elements. But there can be no doubting the centrality of Imam Khomeini's role and the integrally Islamic nature of the revolution he led. Physically removed from his countrymen for fourteen years, he had an unfailing sense of the revolutionary potential that had surfaced and was able to mobilize the broad masses of the Iranian people for the attainment of what seemed to many inside the country

[1] *Sahife-ye Nur*, iv, pp. 281-6.
[2] *Sahife-ye Nur*, v, p. 75.

(including his chosen premier, Bazargan) a distant and excessively ambitious goal. His role pertained, moreover, not merely to moral inspiration and symbolic leadership; he was also the operational leader of the revolution. Occasionally he accepted advice on details of strategy from persons in Iran, but he took all key decisions himself, silencing early on all advocates of compromise with the Shah. It was the mosques that were the organizational units of the revolution and mass prayers, demonstrations and martyrdom that were – until the very last stage – its principal weapons.

## 1979-89: FIRST DECADE OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC, LAST DECADE OF THE IMAM'S LIFE

Imam Khomeini's role was also central in shaping the new political order that emerged from the revolution, the Islamic Republic of Iran. At first it appeared that he might exercise his directive role from Qum, for he moved there from Tehran on February 29, causing Qum to become in effect a second capital of Iran. On March 30 and 31, a nationwide referendum resulted in a massive vote in favor of the establishment of an Islamic Republic. The Imam proclaimed the next day, April 1, 1979, as the "first day of God's government."[1] The institutionalization of the new order continued with the election, on August 3, of an Assembly of Experts (*Majles-e Khobregan*), entrusted with the task of reviewing a draft constitution that had been put forward on June 18; fifty-five of the seventy-three persons elected were religious scholars.

It was not however to be expected that a smooth transition from the old regime would prove possible. The powers and duties of the Council of the Islamic Revolutionary, which was intended to serve as an interim legislature, were not clearly delineated from those of the provisional government headed by Bazargan. More importantly, significant differences of outlook and approach separated the two bodies from each other. The council, composed predominantly of *ulama*, favored immediate and radical change and sought to strengthen the revolutionary organs that had come into being – the revolutionary committees, the revolutionary courts charged with punishing members of the former regime charged with serious crimes, and the Corps of Guards of the Islamic Revolution (*Sepah-e Pasdaran-e Enqelab-e Eslami*), established on May 5, 1979. The government, headed by Bazargan and

[1] *Sahife-ye Nur*, v, p. 233.

comprising mainly liberal technocrats of Islamic orientation, sought as swift a normalization of the situation as possible and the gradual phasing out of the revolutionary institutions.

Although Imam Khomeini encouraged members of the two bodies to cooperate and refrained, on most occasions, from arbitrating their differences, his sympathies were clearly with the Council of the Islamic Revolution. On July 1, Bazargan offered the Imam his resignation. It was refused, and four members of the council – Rafsanjani, Bahonar, Mahdavi-Kani, and Ayatollah Sayyed Ali Khamenei – joined Bazargan's cabinet in an effort to improve the coordination of the two bodies. In addition to these frictions at the governmental level, a further element of instability was provided by the terrorist activities of shadowy groups that were determined to rob the nascent Islamic republic of some of its most capable personalities. Thus on May 1, 1979, Ayatollah Mortada Motahhari, a leading member of the Council of the Islamic Revolution and a former pupil close to the Imam's heart, was assassinated in Tehran. For once, the Imam wept in an open display of grief.

The final break between Bazargan and the revolution came as a consequence of the occupation of the United States embassy in Tehran on November 4, 1979 by a coalition of students from the universities of Tehran. Despite declarations of willingness to "honor the will of the Iranian people" and its recognition of the Islamic Republic, the American government had admitted the Shah to the United States on October 22, 1979.

The pretext was his need for medical treatment, but it was widely feared in Iran that his arrival in America, where large numbers of high-ranking officials of the previous regime had gathered, might be the prelude to an American-sponsored attempt to restore him to power, on the lines of the successful CIA coup of August 1953. The Shah's extradition to Iran was therefore demanded by the students occupying the embassy as a condition for their liberating the hostages they were holding there.

It is probable that the students had cleared their action in advance with close associates of Imam Khomeini, for he swiftly extended his protection to them, proclaiming their action "a greater revolution than the first."[1] Two days later, he predicted that confronted by this "second revolution," "America would be unable to do a damned thing (*Amrika hich ghalati*

[1] *Sahife-ye Nur*, x, p. 141.

*nemitavanad bekonad*)."[1] This prediction seemed extravagant to many in Iran, but a military expedition mounted by the United States on April 22, 1980 to rescue the American hostages and possibly, too, to attack sensitive sites in Tehran, came to an abrupt and humiliating end when the American gunship crashed into each other in a sandstorm near Tabas in southeastern Iran. On April 7, the United States had formally broken diplomatic ties with Iran, a move welcomed by Imam Khomeini as an occasion of rejoicing for the Iranian nation.[2] It was not until January 21, 1981 that the American hostages were finally released.

Two days after the occupation of the US embassy, Bazargan once again offered his resignation, and this time it was accepted. In addition, the provisional government was dissolved, and the Council of the Islamic Revolution temporarily assumed the task of running the country. This marked the definitive departure of Bazargan and like-minded individuals from the scene; henceforth the term "liberal" became a pejorative designation for those who questioned the fundamental tendencies of the revolution. In addition, the students occupying the embassy had access to extensive files the Americans had kept on various Iranian personalities who had frequented the embassy over the years; these documents were now published and discredited the personalities involved. Most importantly, the occupation of the embassy constituted a "second revolution" in that Iran now offered a unique example of defiance of the American superpower and became established for American policymakers as their principal adversary in the Middle East.

The enthusiasm aroused by the occupation of the embassy also helped to ensure a large turnout for the referendum that was held on December 2 and 3, 1979 to ratify the constitution that had been approved by the Assembly of Experts on November 15. The constitution, which was overwhelmingly approved, differed greatly from the original draft, above all through its inclusion of the principle of *velayat-e faqih* as its basic and determining principle. Mentioned briefly in the preamble, it was spelled out in full in Article 5:

"During the Occultation of the Master of the Age (Sahib al-Zaman; i.e., the Twelfth Imam)… the governance and leadership of the nation devolve

[1] *Sahife-ye Nur*, x, p. 149.
[2] *Sahife-ye Nur*, xii, p. 40.

upon the just and pious *faqih* who is acquainted with the circumstances of his age; courageous, resourceful, and possessed of administrative ability; and recognized and accepted as leader (*rahbar*) by the majority of the people. In the event that no *faqih* should be so recognized by the majority, the leader, or leadership council, composed of *fuqaha* possessing the aforementioned qualifications, will assume these responsibilities." Article 109 specified the qualifications and attributes of the leader as "suitability with respect to learning and piety, as required for the functions of *mufti* and *marja*." Article 110 listed his powers, which include supreme command of the armed forces, appointment of the head of the judiciary, signing the decree formalizing the election of the president of the republic, and – under certain conditions – dismissing him.[1]

These articles formed the constitutional basis for Imam Khomeini's leadership role. In addition, from July 1979 onwards, he had been appointing *Emam Jomeh*s for every major city, who not only delivered the Friday sermon but also acted as his personal representatives. Most government institutions also had a representative of the Imam assigned to them. However, the ultimate source of his influence was his vast moral and spiritual prestige, which led to him being designated primarily as Imam, in the sense of one dispensing comprehensive leadership to the community.[2]

On January 23, 1980, Imam Khomeini was brought from Qum to Tehran to receive treatment for a heart ailment. After thirty-nine days in hospital, he took up residence in the north Tehran suburb of Darband, and on April 22 he moved into a modest house in Jamaran, another suburb to the north of the capital. A closely guarded compound grew up around the house, and it was there that he was destined to spend the rest of his life.

On January 25, during the Imam's hospitalization, Abo'l-Hasan Bani-Sadr, a French-educated economist, was elected first president of the Islamic Republic of Iran. His success had been made possible in part by the Imam's decision that it was not opportune to have a religious scholar stand for election. This event, followed on March 14 by the first elections to the *Majles*, might have counted as a further step to the institutionalization and stabilization of the political system.

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[1] *Qanun-e Asasi-ye Jomhuri-ye Eslami-ye Iran*, Tehran, 1370 AHS/1991, pp. 23-24, 53-58.

[2] Suggestions that the use of this title assimilated him to the Twelve Imams of Shii belief and hence attributed infallibility to him are groundless.

However, Bani-Sadr's tenure, together with the tensions that soon arose between him and a majority of the deputies in the *Majles*, occasioned a severe crisis that led ultimately to Bani-Sadr's dismissal. For the president, his inherent megalomania aggravated by his victory at the polls, was reluctant to concede supremacy to Imam Khomeini, and he therefore attempted to build up a personal following, consisting largely of former leftists who owed their positions exclusively to him. In this enterprise, he inevitably clashed with the newly formed Islamic Republic Party (*Hezb-e Jomhuri-ye Eslami*), headed by Ayatollah Beheshti, which dominated the *Majles* and was loyal to what was referred to as "the line of the Imam" (*khatt-e Imam*). As he had earlier done with the disputes between the provisional government and the Council of the Islamic Revolution, the Imam sought to reconcile the parties, and on September 11, 1980 appealed to all branches of government and their members to set aside their differences.

While this new governmental crisis was brewing, on September 22, 1980, Iraq sent its forces across the Iranian border and launched a war of aggression that was to last for almost eight years. Iraq enjoyed financial support in this venture from the Arab states lining the Persian Gulf, above all from Saudi Arabia. Imam Khomeini, however, correctly regarded the United States as the principal instigator of the war from the outset, and American involvement became increasingly visible as the war wore on. Although Iraq advanced territorial claims against Iran, the barely disguised purpose of the aggression was to take advantage of the dislocations caused in Iran by the revolution, particularly the weakening of the army through purges of disloyal officers, and to destroy the Islamic Republic. As he had done during the revolution, Imam Khomeini insisted on an uncompromising stance and inspired a steadfast resistance, which prevented the easy Iraqi victory many foreign observers had confidently foretold. Initially, however, Iraq enjoyed some success, capturing the port city of Khurramshahr and encircling Abadan.

The conduct of the war became one more issue at dispute between Bani-Sadr and his opponents. Continuing his efforts at reconciling the factions, Imam Khomeini established a three-man commission to investigate the complaints each had against the other. The commission reported on June 1, 1981 that Bani-Sadr was guilty of violating the constitution and contravening the Imam's instructions. He was accordingly declared incompetent by the *Majles* to function as president, and the next day, in accordance with Article 110 section (e) of the constitution, Imam Khomeini dismissed him. He went

into hiding, and on July 28 fled to Paris, disguised as a woman.

Toward the end of his presidency, Bani-Sadr had allied himself with the *Sazman-e Mojahedin-e Khalq* (Organization of People's Strugglers; however, the group is commonly known in Iran as *monafeqin*, "hypocrites," not *mojahedin*, because of its members' hostility to the Islamic Republic). An organization with a tortuous ideological and political history, it had hoped, like Bani-Sadr, to displace Imam Khomeini and capture power for itself. After Bani-Sadr went into exile, members of the organization embarked on a campaign of assassinating government leaders in the hope that the Islamic Republic would collapse. Even before Bani-Sadr fled, a massive explosion had destroyed the headquarters of the Islamic Republic Party, killing more than seventy people including Ayatollah Beheshti. On August 30, 1981, Mohammad-Ali Rajai, Bani-Sadr's successor as president, was killed in another explosion. Other assassinations followed over the next two years, including five *Emam Jomeh*s as well as a host of lesser figures. Throughout these disasters, Imam Khomeini maintained his customary composure, declaring, for example, after the assassination of Rajai that the killings would change nothing and in fact showed Iran to be "the most stable country in the world," given the ability of the government to continue functioning in an orderly manner.[1] The fact that Iran was able to withstand such blows internally while continuing the war of defense against Iraq was indeed testimony to the roots the new order had struck and to the undiminished prestige of Imam Khomeini as the leader of the nation.

Ayatollah Khamenei, a longtime associate and devotee of the Imam, was elected president on October 2, 1981, and he remained in this position until he succeeded him as leader of the Islamic Republic on his death in 1989. No governmental crises comparable to those of the first years of the Islamic Republic occurred during his tenure. Nonetheless, structural problems persisted. The constitution provided that legislation passed by the *Majles* should be reviewed by a body of senior *fuqaha* known as the Council of Guardians (*Shōra-ye Negahban*) to ensure its conformity with the provisions of Jafari *fiqh*. This frequently led to a stalemate on a variety of important legislative issues. On at least two occasions, in October 1981 and January 1983, Hashemi Rafsanjani, then chairman of the *Majles*, requested the Imam to arbitrate decisively, drawing on the prerogatives inherent in the doctrine of

[1] *Sahife-ye Nur*, xv, p. 130.

*velayat-e faqih*, in order to break the deadlock. He was reluctant to do so, always preferring that a consensus should emerge. However, on January 6, 1988, in a letter addressed to Khamenei, the Imam put forward a far-reaching definition of *velayat-e faqih*, now termed "absolute" (*motlaqeh*), which made it theoretically possible for the leadership to override all conceivable objections to the policies it supported. Governance, Imam Khomeini proclaimed, is the most important of all divine ordinances (*ahkam-e elahi*) and it takes precedence over secondary divine ordinances (*ahkam-e fariyye-ye elahiyyeh*). Not only does the Islamic state permissibly enforce a large number of laws not mentioned specifically in the sources of the *sharia*, such as the prohibition of narcotics and the levying of customs dues; it can also suspend the performance of a fundamental religious duty, the *hajj*, when this is necessitated by the higher interest of the Muslims.[1] At first sight, the theory of *velayat-e motlaqe-ye faqih* might appear to be a justification for unlimited individual rule by the leader (*rahbar*). One month later, however, Imam Khomeini delegated these broadly defined prerogatives to a commission named the Council for the Determination of the Expediency of the Islamic Order (*Majma-e Tashkhis-e Maslahat-e Nezam-e Eslami*) This standing body has the power to settle decisively all differences on legislation between the *Majles* and the Council of Guardians.

The war against Iraq continued to preoccupy Iran until July 1988. Iran had come to define its war aims as not simply the liberation of all parts of its territory occupied by Iraq, but also the overthrow of the regime of Saddam Husayn. A number of military victories made this goal appear attainable. On November 29, 1981, Imam Khomeini congratulated his military commanders on successes achieved in Khuzestan, remarking that the Iraqis had been obliged to retreat before the faith of the Iranian troops and their eagerness for martyrdom.[2] The following year, on May 24, Khurramshahr, which had been held by the Iraqis since shortly after the outbreak of war, was liberated, and only small pockets of Iranian territory remained in Iraqi hands. The Imam marked the occasion by condemning anew the Persian Gulf states that supported Saddam Husayn and describing the victory as a divine gift.[3] Iran failed, however, to follow up swiftly on its surprise victory and the momentum, which might have made possible the destruction of Saddam

[1] *Sahife-ye Nur*, xx, pp. 170-71.
[2] *Sahife-ye Nur*, xv, p. 234.
[3] *Sahife-ye Nur*, xvi, pp. 154-5.

Husayn's regime, was lost as the tide of war flowed back and forth. The United States was, in any event, determined to deny Iran a decisive victory and stepped up its intervention in the conflict in a variety of ways. Finally, on July 2, 1988, the US navy stationed in the Persian Gulf shot down a civilian Iranian airliner, with the loss of 290 passengers. With the utmost reluctance, Imam Khomeini agreed to end the war on the terms specified in Resolution 598 of the United Nations Security Council, comparing his decision in a lengthy statement issued on July 20 to the drinking of poison.[1]

Any notion that the acceptance of a ceasefire with Iraq signaled a diminution in the Imam's readiness to confront the enemies of Islam was dispelled when, on February 14, 1989, he issued a *fatwa* calling for the execution of Salman Rushdie, author of the obscene and blasphemous novel, *The Satanic Verses*, as well as those responsible for the publication and dissemination of the work. The *fatwa* received a great deal of support in the Muslim world as the most authoritative articulation of popular outrage at Rushdie's gross insult to Islam. Although its demand remained unfulfilled, it demonstrated plainly the consequences that would have to be faced by any aspiring imitator of Rushdie, and thus had an important deterrent effect. Generally overlooked at the time was the firm grounding of the Imam's *fatwa* in the existing provisions of both Shii and *Sunni* jurisprudence; it was not therefore innovative. What lent the *fatwa* particular significance was rather its issuance by the Imam as a figure of great moral authority.

The Imam had also gained the attention of the outside world, albeit in a less spectacular way, on January 4, 1989, when he sent Mikhail Gorbachev, then general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, a letter in which he predicted the collapse of the Soviet Union and the disappearance of communism: "Henceforth it will be necessary to look for communism in the museums of political history of the world." He also warned Gorbachev and the Russian people against replacing communism with Western-style materialism: "The basic problem of your country has nothing to do with ownership, the economy, or freedom; it is the lack of a true belief in God, the same problem that has drawn the West into a blind alley of triviality and purposelessness."[2]

Internally, however, the most important development in the last year of

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[1] *Sahife-ye Nur*, xxi, pp. 227-44.

[2] *Ava-ye Tōhid*, Tehran, 1367 AHS/1989, pp. 3-5.

Imam Khomeini's life was, without doubt, his dismissal of Ayatollah Montazeri from the position of successor to the leadership of the Islamic Republic. Once a student and close associate of the Imam, who had gone so far as to call him "the fruit of my life," Montazeri had had among his associates over the years persons executed for counterrevolutionary activity, including a son-in-law, Mehdi Hashemi, and made far-reaching criticisms of the Islamic Republic, particularly with regard to judicial matters. On July 31, 1988, he wrote a letter to the Imam questioning what he regarded as unjustified executions of members of the Sazman-e Mojahedin-e Khalq held in Iranian prisons after the organization, from its base in Iraq, had made a large-scale incursion into Iranian territory in the closing stages of the Iran-Iraq war. Matters came to a head the following year, and on March 28, 1989, the Imam wrote to Montazeri accepting his resignation from the succession, a resignation that under the circumstances he was compelled to offer.[1]

On June 3, 1989, after eleven days in hospital for an operation to stop internal bleeding, Imam Khomeini lapsed into a critical condition and died. The outpouring of grief was massive and spontaneous, the exact counterpoint to the vast demonstrations of joy that had greeted his return to Iran a little over ten years earlier. Such was the press of mourners, estimated at some nine million that the body ultimately had to be transported by helicopter to its place of burial to the south of Tehran on the road leading to Qum. A still expanding complex of structures has grown up around the shrine of the Imam, making it likely that it will become the center of an entire new city devoted to *ziyarat* (religious pilgrimage) and religious learning.

The testament of Imam Khomeini was published soon after his death. A lengthy document, it addresses itself principally to the various classes of Iranian society, urging them to do whatever is necessary for the preservation and strengthening of the Islamic Republic. Significantly, however, it begins with an extended meditation on the *hadith-e thaqalayn*: "I leave among you two great and precious things: the Book of God and my progeny; they will never be separated from each other until they meet me at the pool." The Imam interprets the misfortunes that have befallen Muslims throughout history and more particularly in the present age as the result of efforts precisely to disengage the Quran from the progeny of the Prophet (*s*).

The legacy of Imam Khomeini was considerable. He had bequeathed to

[1] *Sahife-ye Nur*, xxi, p. 112.

Iran not only a political system enshrining the principles both of religious leadership and of an elected legislature and head of the executive branch, but also a whole new ethos and self-image, a dignified stance of independence vis-à-vis the West are in the Muslim world. He was deeply imbued with the traditions and worldview of Shii Islam, but he viewed the revolution he had led and the republic he had founded as the nucleus for a worldwide awakening of all Muslims. He had sought to attain this goal by, among other things, issuing proclamations to the *hojjaj* on a number of occasions, and alerting them to the dangers arising from American dominance of the Middle East, the tireless activity of Israel for subverting the Muslim world, and the subservience to America and Israel of numerous Middle Eastern governments. Unity between Shiis and *Sunni*s was one of his lasting concerns; he was, indeed, the first Shii authority to declare unconditionally valid prayers performed by Shiis behind a *Sunni imam*.[1]

It must finally be stressed that despite the amplitude of his political achievements, Imam Khomeini's personality was essentially that of a gnostic for whom political activity was but the natural outgrowth of an intense inner life of devotion. The comprehensive vision of Islam that he both articulated and exemplified is, indeed, his most significant legacy.

[1] *Esteftaat*, i, p. 279.

# INTRODUCTION

الحَمْدُ للهِ رَبِّ العَالَمِينَ وَالصَّلاةُ عَلَى مُحَمَّدٍ وَآلِهِ أَجْمَعِينَ وَلَعْنَةُ اللهِ عَلَى أَعْدَائِهِمْ إِلى يَوْمِ الدِّينِ.

Lord! Grant brightness of sincerity to the mirror of the heart, cleanse the rust of hypocrisy from the tablet of the heart, and show the path of virtue and salvation to the helpless wanderers in the mazes of the bewilderment and error and confusion. Endow us with the nobleness and generosity of character. Reveal to us Your glory and splendor that you have reserved only for Your chosen servants. Expel the legions of Satan and ignorance from the realms of our heart; implant the divine hosts of knowledge and wisdom in their stead. Enrich our hearts with the profusion of Your love and that of Your Chosen in this transitory world, this ephemeral lodging place. And shower Your choicest blessing upon us at the time of death and thereafter. Extend to us Your mercy, and grant us proximity to the Highest Good.

## PURPOSE OF WRITING THE BOOK

I, a humble servant of God, was contemplating for some time, to select forty *hadith*s from among the *ahadith* of the members of the Household of the Prophet (*s*) from the authentic books of the *sahabah*, and scholars, and was trying to compile them with an appropriate explanation of each of them that can be applied to the general conditions of the people. I chose to write them in Persian, so that the Persian knowing people may also be benefited from them. God willing, this compilation would be an attempt to serve the command of the Prophet (*s*) who said:

**مَنْ حَفِظَ عَلَى أُمَّتِي أَرْبَعِينَ حَدِيثاً يَنْتَفِعُونَ بِهَا بَعَثَهُ اللهُ يَوْمَ القِيَامَةِ فَقِيهاً عَالِماً.**

From among my followers, one who shall preserve and protect my forty *ahadith*, so that my people may be benefited from them, God Almighty will treat him on the Day of Resurrection with great men of wisdom and learning (jurisprudence).



The Holy Mausoleum of Imam Ruhollah al-Musavi al-Khomeini

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# First *Hadith*: *JIHAD* OF THE SELF

عَنِ الشَّيْخِ ثِقَةِ الإِسْلامِ مُحَمَّدٍ بنِ يَعْقُوبَ الكُلَيْنِي، صَاحِبِ الكَافِي، عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنِ النَّوْفَلِي عَنِ السُّكُونِيِّ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ، عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ، أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ، صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ، بَعَثَ سَرِيَّةً فَلَمَّا رَجَعُوا قَالَ: «مَرْحَباً بِقَوْمٍ قَضَوُا الجِهَادَ الأَصْغَرَ وَبَقِيَ عَلَيْهِمُ الجِهَادُ الأَكْبَرُ.» فَقِيلَ يَا رَسُولَ اللهِ، مَا الجِهَادُ الأَكْبَرُ؟ قَالَ: «جِهَادُ النَّفْسِ.»

## VERBAL TRANSLATION

Al-Sukuni relates on the authority of Abu Abd-Allah al-Sadiq (a): Verily on seeing the returning armies from the battlefront, the Prophet (*S*) of God said, "Blessed are those who have performed the minor *jihad*, and have yet to perform the major one." When asked, "What is the major *jihad*?" the Prophet replied, "the *jihad* of the self" (struggle against self).

## EXPOSITION

السَّرِيَّةُ قِطْعَةٌ مِنَ الجَيْشِ. يُقَالُ: خَيْرُ السَّرَايَا أَرْبَعُمِائَةِ رَجُلٍ.

*Sariyyah* is the section (contingent) of a big army, and it has been said that four hundred is an optimum number for the best *sariyyah*. According to the wordings of the tradition, this can be inferred that man is a marvel possessing two lives and two worlds within one existence. That is, apparent life or the outward world, which is this worldly existence, and is associated

with his body, and the other is 'inner life', the inward world, associated with the hidden, invisible, higher other world, his soul in short, which belongs to the realms of invisible and celestial world, and consists of several levels and grades. These levels are generally divided sometimes into seven sections and sometimes into four. They are sometimes divided into three, and sometimes into just two sections. For each one of them is specified host of guardians. The host related with the divine and intellectual powers attracts him towards the sublime, heavenly spheres, and summons him to the acts of virtue and goodness. The other host of guardians is the ignoble and satanic, which attracts man towards the baser realms of darkness and shame, and invites him to the acts of villainy and destruction. There is always a state of conflict and strife between these two forces, and human existence serves as the battleground of these two bands. When the divine forces of good become successful, man emerges as a virtuous and blessed being, attains the high station of angels, and is congregated under the category of prophets, saints and the pious. When the satanic forces of darkness dominate, man becomes a rebellious and vicious being, and is flocked with the fiendish group of the infidels and cursed. Since this is not an occasion to discuss it here, I shall take up this issue of the crusade of the self whenever the self and causes of its deterioration and perfection would be discussed in the latter passages.

## FIRST GRADE

This grade itself consists of different stages (*fusul*). You have to know that the lowest of them is the worldly and outward human existence comprising the initial stages of the self and its apparent manifestations. The divine spark is blended with the physical to form man's earthly existence. It is here in this body that the armies of good and evil are stationed, and the visible potentialities of body function as warring forces. It has seven quarters. They are ears, eyes, tongue, stomach, private parts, and arms and legs. All these diffused faculties under the control of the self are employed by the self in seven spheres of life. The seat of imagination also is an important faculty, as the thought and imagination are sovereign over all visible and invisible human faculties. If the faculty of thought resolves to employ all other faculties to move in the fiendish directions, all of them are converted into satanic forces and the whole territory (of existence) is turned into a satanic domain, and the forces of piety, rationality and good are weakened and subjugated by them. As a result, they wind up their business and leave off the scene, vacating the empire for the possession of Satan. If the faith and reason

take possession of the mind, and they command all human faculties to work in their own direction, man acts according to the dictates of reason and faith (*shar*), thus making the empire (of his existence) a domain of divine and rational powers, and compel satanic forces to retreat with all its weaponry accepting defeat.

Thus, the *jihad* of the self is the *jihad* of greater importance. This *jihad* is superior to being killed in the way of God, since this condition implies overpowering one's own powers and faculties, and placing them under the yoke of God's command, and purging the domain of our body of satanic elements and their forces.

## CONTEMPLATION

The first and foremost condition for one's strife with his own self, and hence his movement towards God essentially means introspection and self-reflection. Some of the moral philosophers have given it the fifth position in priorities, which is also correct. Here introspection is used in the sense of devoting some time, however insignificant it is, contemplating about our duties towards our Master and Creator, Who has brought us into this world, and Who has bestowed upon us all the means of pleasure and joys of life, Who has equipped us with a sound body and faultless faculties and senses, each of whom serves a specific purpose of its own, and whose functioning bewilders human intellect. In addition to all these endowments and graces, He has sent so many prophets and His Holy Book for our guidance and invited us to receive His blessings. Whether all these things have been granted to us by the Master and Emperor of all kings merely to serve this animal existence and to satisfy our appetites and instincts, which we share with other animals, or whether there is some higher aim? Whether all the prophets of God, great sages, thinkers and scholars of every nation have invited the people to follow certain rational principles and Divine legislation, and asked the people to abstain from all animal tendencies and detach themselves from this mortal and perishable habitation were their enemies, or they had conceived an entirely different idea of salvation, which we ordinary human creatures, blindly obeying the dictates of lust, could not conceive?

If we reflect in a rational manner for a moment, we shall realize that the aim of imparting to us all these graces and endowments is something else, superior to and higher than what is visible. This world is a stage of action and its aim is a higher and more sublime sphere of existence. This lower and

animal existence is not an end in itself. A rational man should think of his own self introspectively and should feel pity for his state of helplessness. With a sense of pity he should address his own self, saying, "O callous self! Thou has wasted precious years of thy short life in pursuance of hedonistic and sensuous propensities! And nothing is gained except regret and sense of loss. Thou should be regretful before God for thy past deeds, and commence a new journey in the direction of His prescribed goal, the journey that leads to the life of eternity and perpetual bliss. Thou should not bargain short-lived transitory joys, which are hard to obtain for eternal bliss and felicity. Think for a while, O callous self! Thou should think over the conditions of the people from the dawn of civilization up to the present time that is witnessed by thee. See and balance their hardships and torments with the comforts and pleasures they could attain, and thou shall see their pains and sufferings always overwhelmed and cancelled their joys and pleasures. Joys and pleasures are not for everyone in this life. One who invites and induces thee to pursue the worldly joys and material gains, is evidently one of the satanic hosts in the human form, who undoubtedly is an emissary of the Satan. 'He always induces other men to join him in his indulgence in sensualities, and declares his conviction in material life herewith. At this juncture, O self, thou should pause for a moment, and think whether he is satisfied with his own condition, or whether all this points to one who himself is inflicted, and wants to taint others' poor life with the same vice. O self, thou should entreatingly ask God's approval of thine acts, and seek His pleasure. Pray to Him that thine acts be approved by Him. Between Him and thee there is always a spark of hope. This hope is realized in thy thinking with firm resolution to fight against the Satan and thine own baser self. This strife with the self leads thee to a higher stage, and try thy best to attain that through sincere struggle."

## WILL AND RESOLUTION

The next stage, after the stage of contemplation and ponderance through which an individual striving to progress on the spiritual path has to pass, is the stage of resolution. (This is a different thing from volition, which al-Shaykh al-Rais Ibn Sina, in *al-Isharat* alludes to as the initial stage of *irfan*). Some of our revered scholars (may God grant them longevity) also state that resolution is the essence of humanity and criterion of human freedom. The differences in human gradation are actually indicative of the discrepancy of the stages of human resolution. The resolution which is required for this

particular stage is synonymous with laying the foundation of a good life, a resolution to purge life from sin, and to perform all obligatory (*wajib*) acts, and a resolution to compensate for the days lost (in sinfulness), and finally resolve to behave as a rational and religious person ought to. That is, he should adopt a behavior that is in accordance with the codes of religious law, which would acknowledge him as a real human being, a rational man. His gait and manner should be an imitation and copy of the Prophet's life. He must, in appearance, follow the Prophet (*s*) as a model in his manner and actions, in his abstinences and his choices. This is quite possible, since it is in the powers of ordinary servants of God seemingly to act in the way of that great leader of human beings.

You should know that no path for the realization of divine existence can be undertaken unless one familiarizes himself with the apparent or overt form of *Shariah*. Unless a person fully acquaints himself with the knowledge of the *Shariah* laws and follows them faithfully, the higher values of morality cannot be attained by him. Without adhering to the apparent teachings of Islam it is not possible that the light of the Divine Knowledge could descend upon his heart, and the wisdom of the invisible, and the mysteries of the holy law be revealed to him. After attaining this stage, the truth unveiled for him and enlightenment bestowed upon his heart, a person would act with greater observance of the manifest forms of religion. This falsifies the claims of pseudo spiritualists, who say that the inner perfection can only be acquired by relinquishing outer accomplishments, or, that after acquiring inner excellences, necessity of observing outward forms does not remain obligatory. This is a mistaken conception born of ignorance about the stages of worship and the different grades of human progress. We shall deal with this subject in the latter chapters, may God grant it so.

## EFFORT AND STRUGGLE (SPIRITUAL)

Dear friend: try to be a man of strong will power and resolution, so that you may not go from this world as a person without resolution, and hence rise on the day of resurrection as a brainless-being, not in the form of human being. For the otherworld is the place where what is hidden is unveiled and secrets are exposed. One's audacity to commit sin, converts him little by little into a man devoid of will power, and takes away the noble essence of humanity from him. Our respected teacher used to say that more than anything else, giving the ears to the sounds of music and songs, steal from men their will power and the power of resolution. Hence, my brother, desist

from transgression, resolve to return to God, and acquire a mien similar to that of true human being. Join the community of the men of religion and in seclusion pray to God, so that He may assist you in your mission, and pray that the Prophet (*s*) and the members of his Household (a) intercede for you. May God bestow His graces and favors upon you. May He escort you in the coming dangers, since the path of life is full of great risks and hazards. On the way of life there are very deep crevices and it is possible that one may stumble and fall in them in such a manner that none of his efforts could save him from the coming catastrophe. It is also probable that in some cases the intercedings of an intercessor cannot save him either.

## SELF-EXAMINATION AND STIPULATION (*MUSHARATAH*)

Self-conditioning, contemplation and self-examination are essential pre-requisites for a seeker (*mujahid*) of truth who is battling with his self. Self-conditioning or stipulation means binding oneself with the resolve not to do anything against God's commands. This is called *musharatah*, such as 'I will not violate the Law of God today.' It is very easy to stick to such condition for one day. Try to resolve, abide by your own resolve, and experiment, and you will see that how easy this task is. Satan, the cursed creature, and his legions may magnify the volume of the task in your eyes, but these are the guiles played by the cheat. Curse, and drive the Devil and evil thoughts from within the depths of the heart and the domain of your mind. Experiment for one day and you will verify how easy this task is.

## GUARDING AGAINST EVIL (*MURAQABAH*)

After stipulating about his acts, man should enter this stage. It is essential that throughout the period of stipulation the *mujahid* struggling against his own self should constantly concentrate upon his actions. If any time any idea of violating Divine commands occurs to him, he should know that this idea has been instilled into his mind by the Satan and his allies, who want to deter him from his good resolutions. He ought to curse them, and seek God's compassionate protection, and banish those villainous ideas from the realm of his heart, and tell the Satan that this day also he has to abide by the condition imposed upon his own self that he would not go against God's commands, as He is the One Who has provided him with all the excellences and bounties. It is He, Who has given him the riches of health, security, and peace year after year in this world. In recognition of all God's graces, it is not sufficient even if he serves Him until eternity, let alone a trivial thing like

this. I hope that Satan will be driven away, and the Divine forces will prevail. I assure you that this practice of self-criticism and self-examination would not hinder your day-to-day activity. I advise you to remain in the same state of mind until night – the time for introspection and inner deliberation – and evaluate your deeds of the whole day. This is the time to see whether you have been honest to the Giver of all, to whom everybody is accountable. If you have been faithful to Him, you should be thankful to Him, that He has made you successful in your intentions. And realize that you have gone a step forward in His direction and became an object of His attention. God willing, God will help you in performing all worldly and religious duties, and will diminish your pains for the next day. If you repeat this many times, it is imminent that you will be accustomed to the acts of piety. You will see then that all this does not require you to make hard efforts. You will also notice that obedience to God gives ample pleasure. Though this world is not where one is immediately rewarded, yet faithfulness to God and abstaining from sins is fruitful in this world also. God never entrusts His creatures with cumbersome and heavy tasks, which are beyond their powers, but it is the Satan and his allies who magnify them in your view. God forbid, if there are any lapses on your part, ask God's forgiveness, and beseechingly implore Him that you will be more careful in the future, so that the Almighty may throw open the doors of His grace and compassion to you, and may guide you in the straight path.

## REMEMBRANCE (*TADHAKKUR*)

The factor that fully assist man in his *jihad* with his self and the Satan, and to which a treader *mujahid* has to pay greater attention is constant remembrance of God. Though there are many other important stages, I will be content to discuss this stage here.

## REMEMBRANCE OF GOD, REMEMBERING THE GRACES BESTOWED BY HIM

You know that thankfulness is natural and man's nature commands man to be grateful to his benefactor. If one tries to read the book of his own heart, he will see that this law is written there. The sense of veneration and gratitude for the benefactors increases with the amount of benefaction, particularly if the benefactor's generosity has no selfish motive. Greater the selfless generosity, greater is sense of gratitude. For example, compare the

extent of veneration for one who presents you a horse with a selfish motive, with the respect you have for a person, who grants you a village of several hectares, without any inkling of selfish motives. If a doctor rescues you from the darkness of blindness, you naturally owe to him a lot of respect, and if someone saves you from the clutches of death, you owe him a lot more. You yourselves reflect and estimate the seen and unseen favors bestowed on us by the Almighty, even a small fraction of which all men and the *jinn* cannot even provide us with. Take for instance the air we breathe day and night, upon which our existence as well as that of other living beings is dependent, nothing can remain alive even if it is taken off merely for a quarter of an hour. What a marvelous gift it is! If all men and the *jinn* of the world labor hard to contrive such a thing, they cannot do that. In the same way, try to recall other gifts of God also, like external bodily senses, viz. sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch, etc., and inner faculties like thinking, imagination and reason, etc., each one of which carries unlimited benefits and which are granted to us by Our Lord. Besides these valuable gifts, there are several other gifts also. Moreover, He has sent His messengers and prophets and His Books as well to show us which path is right and which one is wrong, which path leads us to Heaven or Hell. He fulfills all our needs in this world and the Hereafter, without having any need of our adoration. Observance of His commands, or transgressing them does not make any difference to Him, it is for the sake of our own benefit that He has enjoined good and forbidden indecencies. While remembering all these and various other favors, whose reckoning is beyond the powers of human beings, do we not see that respecting and obeying such a Benefactor is essential for us, or does our reason approve of the acts of violating His commands?

This is an evident fact that we respect great people and those older in age. This is also true that people respect the wealthy and powerful persons, and rulers and kings, since they are recognized as great. Can their greatness be matched with the grandeur and magnificence of that King of kings, in Whose kingdom this world of us is merely a particle of dust. He is the Creator and King of this vast cosmos, whose infiniteness cannot be measured or even conceived by human intellect. Human being, a creature crawling on one of the smallest planets miserably fails to grasp the extent of his own small world, whose sun cannot be compared with far greater suns of innumerable galaxies. Our solar system is nothing as compared to lesser several other solar systems, which still elude the keen eyes (and refined telescopes) of great explorers and investigators of the world. Is that Greatest of the great,

who can know and cover not only minute details of these known worlds, but of many more unknown worlds, in a twinkling of an eye, is not venerable according to the dictates of reason, as well as in the light of the great book of nature? If any one fails to do this, he ought to be extra watchful and careful, since God Almighty is present everywhere, and no odd corner of the world can delude his Omnipresent sight. Every living being is within the range of His view and all knowledge is in His infinite attendance, so never forget Him. A speck of penitence in one's heart would not melt any person into water, and he would not fall to the ground. Therefore, my dear friend, remember God and remember all His favors and graces, and stop disobeying Him. Overpower and subdue the satanic band in this great war, and convert the spheres of your mind into divine realm by driving out the satanic legions and inviting the divine hosts, so that God may succor and protect you in the dangers threatening to befall you in this battle. The battlefield, which is more immense than this one, is the scene of the battle (*jihad*) against thine own self, the invisible world of within and the second stage of this *jihad*. We shall deal with this subject afterwards. By the time, I remind you not to have any expectations from anyone but God. Except Him, the Almighty, nobody can help you. With all humility and with all the tears your eyes can offer (to wash your sins), pray to God and seek His assistance to emerge victorious in this crucial battle. *Wa innahu waliyy al-tawfiq* (and He is the owner of success).

## THE SECOND STAGE

The second stage also consists of several steps:

The human soul inhabits another realm and another territory also, which is the world of the hidden and the sphere of the sublime world. In that world, the role of the sensual forces assumes graver dimensions. This is the place, where the struggle and conflict between the divine forces and the fiendish ones is more severe and also more significant. Everything that exists in the external or visible world drifts to this hidden world, and is manifested there. Whichever of the forces whether godly or devilish, is victorious here is essentially triumphant there also. So, the *jihad al-nafs* or the internal struggle is of great significance for all great religious thinkers, mystics, and moralists. It can be rather considered as the origin and the source of all felicities or woes, and of promotion and sublimation or debasement and degradation of self. One should be extremely self-conscious while undertaking this *jihad*. Because, it is possible that, God forbid, due to the defeat of heavenly forces, the self is left vacant for the unholy occupation of the vicious and unworthy

satanic legions, and hence causing an eternal loss to the human being that cannot be retrieved. Even the intercession of an intercessor cannot save him from becoming an object of the wrath and indignation of the Most Merciful of the merciful. It is also possible that man's intercessor may become his adversary. It is a pity that such a thing should happen to anyone that one who pleads for him should become his opponent. God alone knows that what misfortunes, what perils and what hardships are to follow Divine wrath and antagonism of God's friends, compared to which all the infernal fires, plagues, evils, serpents and scorpions are insignificant and mild. God forbid, whatever sufferings of hell have been described by saints, ascetics, and mystics, compared to them all the imaginable pains and sufferings of this world are very mild. All of the torments about which we have heard, are trifle and insignificant when compared to the miseries one has to undergo in the Hereafter. Heaven and hell whose account has been given in the Book and in the traditions of prophets of God are certainly the heaven and hell of wicked actions, and are prepared for rewarding or punishing good and bad human deeds. There is a subtle allusion also to the heaven and hell of morality, which is more significant than even the *Behesht-e leqa'*, the heaven of beatific vision, and the *Jahannam-e feraq*, the hell of separation from Him. This is considered to be of great significance but is hidden from our eyes and is opened to them alone who deserve it. You and me who do not deserve it should not doubt it. We should have faith in it, since God and His friends have told us that this non-detailed (*ejmali*) faith also is beneficial for us. Sometimes, it is also possible that unbelief arising out of ignorance, and unreasonable rejection, without any knowledge and understanding of the truth may bring great harm to us, the extent of which is unthinkable. In this world we cannot understand those harms. If you hear something, which has been, reported from any thinker, mystic or ascetic, do not refute it or consider it invalid just because it is not in accordance with your taste, or does not fit in your mode of thinking. This idea may have its origin in a higher source, inaccessible to you like the Quran, *hadith*, or reason. How strange it will be that a *faqih* issues a *fatwa* (a religious or legal opinion) regarding a certain *ayah* (a pecuniary compensation for any offence against a person) of which you are ignorant, and you reject it without checking the relevant evidences; or, when a holy person or a mystic speaks something concerning religious learning, or he refers to the conditions of heaven or hell, it is easy for you to refute him or even dare to insult him. For it does not need much thinking or knowledge. But do not forget that it is possible that the person, who is an

authority on that subject and a master in that field, might have traced it back to the Holy Book, or has access to some traditions transmitted from infallible Imams (a), and you may not have come across it. In that case, you would be guilty of rejecting God and His Prophet (s) without any plausible excuse. You have no justification to say later that your judgment was not correct, your knowledge was limited, or that you had heard a certain person speaking otherwise on the *menbar* (pulpit); such excuses are unfounded, and in any case let not your objective be blurred.

Whatever has been related about the paradise of good morals and deeds and about the inferno of bad morals and deeds refers to the states, which we cannot experience here. Thus, my friend, take great care, search for remedy, and try to discover the ways and means of deliverance for yourself. Seek refuge in God, the Most Merciful, and Beneficent, and beseech His mercy with humble supplications and lamentation, so that He may help you in this holy war against your carnal self and you may be victorious and the domain of your heart may be liberated from evil influences. The fiendish legions may be turned out of the place so that it may be given in the possession of its rightful Owner, and the felicities, honors and joys may be granted to you by God. All the praises that you have heard of the Heaven, its hours and its mansions, are nothing compared to Divine Bliss, nothing can be estimated higher. That domain is absolutely a divine sphere, which has been described by the friends of God from this rightly guided luminous *ummah* (*millat-e bayda'*). This is a world of pleasures, which no ear has ever heard of, and no human heart has ever experienced.

## HIDDEN OR INNER POWERS (*QUWWA-YE BATINI*)

You should know that with His Wisdom and Authority, God Almighty has created certain powers and faculties in the invisible world of the inner self. They are of enormous benefits for us. Here we shall mention three of them: they are *al-quwwah al-wahmiyyah* – the power of invention or imagination, *al-quwwah al-ghaḍabiyyah* – the power of passion or anger, and *al-quwwah al-shahawiyyah* – the power of lust or sensuality. Each of these powers is of great benefit to the humankind, like the preservation of the human individual and species, advancement of human interests in this world as well as in the Hereafter, of which religious scholars have given elaborate accounts and I need not repeat them. What is essential to state here is that these three powers are the source and origin of all virtuous and vicious deeds, and the source of all invisible and sublime forms. Briefly speaking, as man

possesses a physical and a terrestrial form in this world, which is devised and contrived by the Almighty in such a wonderful manner that all great philosophers and scientists are puzzled, and the science of anatomy is not fully equipped to discover and understand its functioning rightly even to this day. God has made man superior to other living beings by endowing him a superb constitution and a beautiful appearance. Yet there is another form and a different face of him, which is heavenly and invisible, which is determined by the qualities of his soul and his inner nature. In the Hereafter, whether it is in the *Barzakh* (an interval of time between the death of man and his resurrection) or whether on the Last Day, if one's inner nature, his deeds, and his inner self are really human, his heavenly visage also will be man-like. However, if his deeds are inhuman, he will not possess human form; it will be rather subject to the state of his inner self and his psyche. For instance, if his inner self is dominated by the power of lust or sensuality (*al-quwwah al-shahawiyyah*), animality, and brutality overwhelm and govern his inner self, his otherworldly visage will be of a brute and the reign of his inner world would be under the control of one of the beasts, corresponding to that quality of his soul. If the power of passion or anger conquers one's inner self and his psyche, his otherworldly appearance will resemble one of the bestial forms, corresponding to that attribute of his nature. And if the power of imagination and invention is governed by fiendish forces and his inner self is made vicious, governed by the vices like deceit, dishonesty, slandering, backbiting, which are the attributes of Satan, he may undergo a metamorphosis and assume one of the forms of Satan. Sometimes it is also possible that he would have an appearance that symbolizes two or several vices. In that case, a form which does not resemble any of the brutes, but an unusual and queer form, with which cannot be compared the most terrible and ugliest monster in the world, will be acquired by him.

It has been recorded from the Prophet (s) of God that some persons will be raised on the Last Day in such a mien that even monkeys and dog flies will appear better looking than that. It is also possible that several forms may be prescribed for one individual in that world. Because that world is not like this world, where one individual cannot acquire more than one form. This account itself is logical as well as self-evident. Because, the criterion of those different forms (of which human form is one) would be the state of soul at the time of death the state in which the soul departs from the body. It is in this very state and form that man's soul enters the realm of *Barzakh*. At the time of entering the other world, that is, the domain of the Hereafter, the first

stage of which is *Barzakh*, in whichever state one's soul departs from the body, it assumes a form suited to it in the next world also. It is the same form in which he is perceived by the inhabitants of *Barzakh* and by himself, when he first opens his eyes there, if he has not lost his sight to do so. Because, it is not necessary that man may enter the next world in the same physical state as he had in this world. God Himself says that on the Last Day some of the persons will ask God that why has He raised them as blind while they possessed eyes in the world. God will answer them that as they disregarded His clear signs in the world, they are forgotten and disregarded by God today.

O poor fellow! You had only external sight and were blind inwardly. You are realizing your blindness now, while you were already blind from the very beginning. You did not possess the inner vision, which could perceive His clear signs. You, the poor creature, who was endowed with a perfect earthly body and proportionate form, alas you did not know that the measures of the hidden and sublime world are different from this world. You should strive for inner uprightness, so that you may be upright on the Last Day. Your spirit should be a human spirit, so that your form in the *Barzakh* and the Hereafter may be a human form. You are mistaken to consider the world of the hidden realities, where the secrets of this world are to be unveiled and your deeds are to be disclosed, as similar to this world of appearances, where one can deceive others and can create chaos, confusion, and misjudgment. Your eyes and ears, your hands and feet, and other parts of your body will bear witness against your deeds in this world with their supernatural tongues. Some of them may also appear in their celestial forms. So, my friend, it is necessary to keep open the ears of your heart. Be brave, and have mercy on your own self, so that you may leave this world in a human form, and may be counted as redeemed and virtuous. Mind you, these words repeatedly occur in the speeches and teachings of great thinkers, in the inspirations of mystics and in the transmissions of the truthful and infallible servants of God.

## HOW TO REGULATE HUMAN INSTINCTS

It is possible that *wahm*, the power of imagination and invention, *ghaḍab* – the power of passion and anger, and *shahwah* – the power of lust or sensuality, also possess divine aspect, and may bring about felicity and good luck to man, if these powers are subjected to the dictates of reason and good sense and the teachings of prophets of God. They may become satanic forces if they are unleashed and the power of invention and imagination is allowed

to rule and lead other two powers. It is not a secret that none of the prophets of God ever tried to eradicate the powers of passion, sensuality or imagination completely. None of the messengers of God have ever demanded to completely kill sensuality and desire or to extinguish the fire of passion or anger and ignore the inventions of imagination. But they have rather advocated for controlling and bridling them and making them function under the command of reason and Divine Laws. For each one of these powers struggles to dominate others and win its goal, whatever mischief, chaos, and confusion may be stirred up. For instance, the obstinate bestial self is determined to reach its goal even if it is resolved on committing adultery with married women in the Holy *kabah.* Intractable power of passion arouses the self to win its objective even if it is contemplating to kill prophets and the friends of God. And the power of imagination, while devising satanic instruments, wants to go its own way, to cause corruption of the whole climate on earth, and to create chaos and disorder in the world.

The great prophets of God were sent to this world with the light of Divine Laws. God revealed to them heavenly books, so that they may prevent people from indulging into extravagances and immoderations, and bring the human self under the control of reason and the law of *Shariah*. To bridle the human self is essential so that it may not exceed the measures of reason and *Shariah*. Hence, every individual who subordinates himself to the Divine Laws and principles of good sense is fortunate, and it is he who attains salvation. He finds refuge in God, the Most Exalted and the Most High, from the dangers and misfortunes, which might befall him, and thus is saved from the disgrace of assuming those beastly and hideous forms that may accompany him in the *Barzakh*, in the grave and on the Last Day, as the result of his vicious deeds and corrupt practices.

## HOW TO BRIDLE FANCY AND IMAGINATION

The first condition for a *mujahid* in his struggle that he has to observe and abide by, at this juncture and at all other stages, is to control the flight of one's imagination, so that he can subjugate the Devil and his armies. Imagination is like a bird restless to fly, and sit on any tree it reaches. This flight may bring about many great misfortunes. Fancy is one of the tools of the Devil, with which he enslaves man and renders him helpless. With the help of fancy, he entices men to committing villainies and indecencies.

A *mujahid* who is determined on self-rectification, and who has made up

his mind to purify his inner self and banish satanic forces from there, should firmly hold the bridle of his imagination and not let it soar and wander about wherever it likes. He should try to prevent his mind from nursing corrupt and sinful thoughts, and always divert it to high and noble ideals. In the beginning, it appears to be a little difficult, since Satan and his forces may glorify bad things in your eyes. But with little concentration and attention everything becomes easy. It is possible that as an experiment you may just think for a while, and will not be able to concentrate upon an object. Whenever you see that your thoughts are stooping to lowly and mean things, turn your attention aside from them and think about the worthier and nobler things. If you have been successful in your attempts, thank God Almighty for His help, and pursue these matters further. May God, out of His mercy, open the path of spiritual progress for you, and may you be invisibly guided in the straight path. May human deeds and right conduct be made easy for you. Be careful that vicious thoughts and vain fancies are induced by Satan, who wishes to fortify its forces in the domain of your inner self. You, who are at war with Satan and his legions, and want to make the realm of your inner self a heavenly domain, are expected to be on guard against the guiles of the cursed villain. You should drive away those thoughts that counter Divine command. God willing, you will be able to recapture this significant fortification from the unholy occupation of Satan and his allies, in this internal war. This fortification serves as a boundary (between good and evil). If you are victorious here you may hope for greater and nobler victories.

My dear friend, seek for God's help at every moment. Pray and beg humbly in the court of your Lord.

O God Almighty! Satan is a great enemy, who has enticed Your great friends and prophets. O God! Help this weak and entrapped servant of yours, and guard him against these vain ideas and these infirm thoughts that inflict me, so that he may succeed in his war against this strong enemy, who is threatening to destroy my felicity and humanity. O God! Please accompany Thy servant and guide him so that he may drive the Satan's armies from Your seat, and may clip the hands of this usurper.

## ESTIMATION AND APPRAISAL

The thing, which is to be strictly followed during this process, is the estimation and evaluation (of vices and virtues). An intelligent person should carefully examine the effects and demerits of each one of moral vices and

bad deeds, which are the product of sensuality, passion and imagination, and are under the control of Satan. He has to compare them with the benefits and blessings of good deeds and moral and spiritual excellences, which are under the guidance of reason and religious law (*Shariah*) and then decide which way is better to act. For instance, the advantages of obeying the dictates of uninhibited sensuality that gets hold of the human soul and firmly takes its roots there, and gives rise to many vices to flourish, may be taken into consideration. In the course of time the sensual aptitudes develop, and a person does not hesitate to commit any of the vices, and tries all means and ways to obtain the sensual pleasure at any cost, and does not fail to perpetrate any crime, which he desires to commit, even if it results in something extremely vicious. As a result of letting loose one's passions several other vices are born and become his second nature. And he is more than ready to maltreat and subdue everyone who comes in his way. Those who react against oppressive activities and try to defend themselves, or show any signs of disagreement or hostility are crushed and oppressed by him. He tries to repel all oppositions by all means, although it may lead to an outbreak of corruption in the world. In the same way, the person, who has surrendered himself to the demoniac power of imagination and lets it to be firmly rooted in his soul, does not hesitate to indulge in a fit of excessive passion and sensuality with all his satanic designs and treacheries and rule over the creatures of God by all kinds of unjust means, even if it is to dispossess a family of their belongings or stripping a city or a country of its resources.

These are the achievements of these faculties, while they are active under the ignoble supervision of Satan. If we think about it, and examine the plight of such people, we shall notice that every one of them, despite the enormous strength they possess, and most of their wishes being fulfilled, they still nurture thousands of new desires that are yet to be fulfilled. It is not possible in this world that all the desires and ambitions that we cherish be fulfilled here, since this world is the abode of obstacles. The elements of this world dispirit our wishes. Our desires are also not limited. For instance, the power of sensuality and lust acts in man in such a way that if he is given one woman, he is attracted to other women. If he is given an empire, he will hanker after some other empire. Man always desires for what he does not possess. In spite of this vanity of imagination and futility of human desire, the kiln of sensuality is always hot, and its heat ever increasing, and our desires are never cooled down. Similarly, the forces of passion are implanted in human nature in such a way that even if he is made an absolute monarch

of a state, he will be attracted towards another state, which he cannot get, and he will try to pounce on it with all the force he can muster. This power is also ever increasing. Anyone who has any doubt is advised to examine his own self and other human beings belonging to the classes of poor, rich and powerful; he will agree with me. It is obvious that man is always allured by something, which he does not own. This is the human nature as conceived by various great Islamic thinkers and holy men, especially one should refer to a great master of divinity, Mirza Mohammad Ali Shahabadi.

Anyhow, even if man attains his goals, for how long can he be benefited from them? How long his youthful years are to continue? When the spring of youth fades out and the autumn of his life sets in, his heart has no more a zest for mirth and joy, his organs lose their vitality and those activities lose their relish. His eyes dim, his hearing is impaired, his sense of touch and other senses and faculties weaken. Ability to get pleasure declines or is completely lost. Then hosts of ailments make him an easy prey. His digestive, assimilative and excretory system fails, and his respiratory system cannot perform it: function properly. Nothing but deep sighs, displeasure, regret and remorse are left to accompany him. Thus, the duration of our exploitation of these bodily powers, from the days when one gains consciousness of good and bad till the process of decline sets in, is not more than thirty or forty years, even for a person of very strong constitution. That too, if one does not happen to come across all sorts of diseases and afflictions, which we witness every day and forget about. If, for the time being, we take it for granted (although it has no reality), that a man can attain the age of one hundred and fifty years, with all opportunities of involving oneself fully in all the three indulgences – sensuality, passion and imagination, excluding all the chances of coming across any adversities and misfortunes, even this period of time would prove short, and pass soon like the winds and what would be in store for you for the next world? What benefit will you derive from all these treasures of amusements for your eternal life? What will save you from the horrors of the day of doom, helplessness, desolation and loneliness? What will you present on the Day of Judgment, and how would you face God, His angels, and His chosen servants and prophets? Of course, nothing will accompany you except your wicked and sinful deeds, which will metamorphose you in such a form that would not be known to anybody except God. Everything that you have heard and conceived about the infernal fire, torments of the grave and agonies of the Doomsday, etc., you measured them with the worldly fire and worldly pains. What a gross error you

committed! Fire of this world is relatively an accident, and all the horrors are easy to bear. Your estimation of the other world on the basis of this one is imperfect and faulty. Even if the fire burning throughout the world is accumulated at one place, it will not be hot enough to burn the human soul. In the next world, besides burning and roasting the body it will burn the soul and incinerate the heart also. Whatever you have been listening about until now, is actually the hell of one's actions, which you will see in the Hereafter as a reality, for God Almighty has said:

﴿وَوَجَدُوا مَا عَمِلُوا حَاضِرًا.﴾

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

You will have to face whatever you did in this world. If you thrived on the property of orphans, God alone knows in what state you will appear in hell and what comforts you will have to enjoy there as your reward. If here your harsh words have injured the hearts of people, this pain and discomfort caused to the hearts of the creatures of God, God alone knows, what punishment it will incur upon you in the Hereafter. You will know it only when you experience it what sort of pain and torture you have procured for yourselves. Because of your detractions, the other worldly and sublime form that was conceived for you is denied to you and you will have to undergo the pains of chastisement.

This will be the hell of one's actions, which is comparatively milder, cooler and tolerable, and is reserved for those who committed sins in this world. But for those who have acquired the viciousness of character and villainy of conduct like greed, lust, hoarding, avarice, contentiousness, love of wealth, power and corporeal things, rapacity, ravenousness and other vices, the hell is their place, a place beyond human apprehension, a state and form which can never be anticipated by any stretch of the imagination, and emanates from within the soul itself. The inhabitants of that hell will be so distressed that they will try to escape from it, (but in vain). In some of the authentic narrations, it occurs that there is a valley in hell, which is reserved for the proud, and which is named as *saqar* once it complained to God about the intensity of its heat, and asked Almighty for a relief, so that it might take a breath. After the relief was granted, when it breathed, its breath filled the hell with fire.

Sometimes one's vices may cause a human being to become a permanent dweller of hell, because they take away from him his faith and belief. For

instance, a vice like jealousy, according to authentic traditions, eats away faith as the fire consumes wood. Another example is that of the love of the world, worldly power and riches, which, according to authentic narrations, consume the faith of a believer more rapidly than two wolves let loose on a sheep herd without a shepherd, one attacking from the front and the other from the back.

Adoration for the worldly things and lust for power deprives a believer of his belief, and God forbid, this sinfulness results in dark and ugly deeds, which finally leads to the loss of faith and one's end as an infidel, and the hell of the false beliefs and erroneous faith is severer, hotter and darker than those two other hells mentioned above.

My friend, the higher knowledge has proved that the grades of intensity are infinite. The punishment is severer than what you imagine or what others imagine. If you do not believe in the arguments advanced by philosophers, or the revelations made to mystics, thanks to God, being a true believer, you have faith in the teachings of the prophets of God, and you consider all the reports recorded in the authentic books of the traditions which are accepted by all the Imamiyyah scholars as true and authentic. I hope that you believe in the prayers of infallible Imams, and have read the prayers and sermons uttered by Imam Ali (a), and the invocation by Imam Sayyid al-Sajidin (a) uttered in the prayer of Abu Hamzah al-Thumali. My friend, reflect a little upon their subject matter and think for a while on their wordings. It is nowhere required to make a rapid reading of the lengthy prayer in a hurry without pondering over its meaning. You and I are not blessed with the spiritual state of Imam Sayyid al-Sajidin (a) to recite that lengthy prayer in a state of sustained ecstasy at one time. Try to read one third or one fourth of it every night with feeling, and meditate upon its words. You may feel ecstatic while reading it. Apart from this, pay a little more attention to the meaning of Quranic verses, and see what punishment has been prescribed for the inhabitants of hell, to escape which they will pray to the Lord for death, and alas, death also will not help, as God Almighty says:

﴿أَنْ تَقُولَ نَفْسٌ يَا حَسْرَتَا عَلَى مَا فَرَّطْتُ فِي جَنْبِ اللَّهِ وَإِنْ كُنْتُ لَمِنْ السَّاخِرِينَ.﴾

*Alas, my grief that I was unmindful of Allah, and I was indeed among the scoffers!* (39:56)

What kind of regret it will be, of which Almighty is making an emphatic mention. Do not pass quickly, without pausing and meditating upon such verses of the Quran:

﴿يَوْمَ تَرَوْنَهَا تَذْهَلُ كُلُّ مُرْضِعَةٍ عَمَّا أَرْضَعَتْ وَتَضَعُ كُلُّ ذَاتِ حَمْلٍ حَمْلَهَا وَتَرَى النَّاسَ سُكَارَى وَمَا هُمْ بِسُكَارَى وَلَكِنَّ عَذَابَ اللَّهِ شَدِيدٌ.﴾

*On the day when ye behold it, every nursing mother will forget her nursling and every pregnant will be delivered of her burden, and thou* (*Muhammad*) *will see mankind as drunken, yet they will not be drunken, but the Doom of Allah will be strong upon them.* (22:2)

Here God Almighty is depicting the Doomsday. My friend, think yourself that, God forbid (*naudhu billah*), the Quran is neither a story book, nor is it making jokes with you. What sort of condemnation it will be that will make people abandon their dear ones, and relieve pregnant women of their burden? What a great calamity it will be about which God Almighty, Whose greatness knows no extent, Whose supremacy and authority has no limits and bounds, is commenting upon in such solemn terms. What is going to happen, God alone knows. Our intellect is insufficient to measure the extent of its magnanimity. If we study the transmissions and writings of the infallible Members of the Holy Household, and think over them, we shall see that the sight of misery and agony in that world will be quite different from this world, and cannot be equated with the misfortunes of this world.

Here I would like to quote a tradition from the great Shaykh of the Imamiyyah, al-Saduq, for you to demonstrate the meaning and extent of the misery, mentioned above. Nevertheless, this tradition narrated by him refers to the hell of the evil deeds and is comparatively a cooler place than other severer hells. I consider it essential to point out that, al-Shaykh al-Saduq is the person who is held in great esteem and respect by all great religious scholars of *rijal*. He was born as the result of the prayer of the Imam (a), was the object of great favor of Imam Mahdi (*aj*)[1], and was among the great writers of Shiite religious books. I quote this tradition with reference to a chain of great Imamiyyah scholars, all of whom are considered as authentic narrators of *hadith*. Hence, if you are a true believer, you should have faith in

[1] "*aj*" stands for "*ajjalallahu taala farajah*," (May God Almighty expedite his advent), used after the name of the Twelfth Imam.

the following tradition. The gist of the *hadith* is as follows:

رَوَى الصَّدُوقُ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ مَوْلانَا الصَّادِقِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ، قَالَ: بَيْنَا رَسُولُ اللهِ، صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ، ذَاتَ يَوْمٍ قَاعِداً إِذْ أَتَاهُ جِبْرِيلُ، وَهُوَ كَئِيبٌ، حَزِينٌ، مُتَغَيِّرُ اللَّوْنِ، فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ، صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: يَا جِبْرِيلُ، مَا لِي أَرَاكَ كَئِيباً حَزِيناً؟ فَقَالَ: يَا مُحَمَّدُ، فَكَيْفَ لا أَكُونُ كَذٰلِكَ وَإِنَّمَا وُضِعَتْ مَنَافِيخُ جَهَنَّمَ اليَوْمَ. فَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ: وَمَا مَنَافِيخُ جَهَنَّمَ يَا جِبْرِيلُ؟ فَقَالَ: إِنَّ اللهَ تَعَالىٰ أَمَرَ بِالنَّارِ فَأَوْقَدَ عَلَيْهَا أَلْفَ عَامٍ، حَتَّى احْمَرَّتْ. ثُمَّ أَمَرَ بِهَا فَأَوْقَدَ عَلَيْهَا أَلْفَ عَامٍ حَتَّى ابْيَضَّتْ. ثُمَّ أَمَرَ فَأَوْقَدَ عَلَيْهَا أَلْفَ عَامٍ حَتَّى اسْوَدَّتْ وَهِيَ سَوْدَاءُ مُظْلِمَةٌ، فَلَوْ أَنَّ حَلَقَةً مِنَ السَّلْسَلَةِ الَّتِي طُولُهَا سَبْعُونَ ذِرَاعاً وُضِعَتْ عَلَى الدُّنْيَا لَذَابَتِ الدُّنْيَا مِنْ حَرِّهَا. وَلَوْ أَنَّ قَطْرَةً مِنَ الزُّقُّومِ وَالضَّرِيعِ قَطَرَتْ فِي شَرَابِ أَهْلِ الدُّنْيَا لَمَاتَ أَهْلُ الدُّنْيَا مِنْ نَتَنِهَا. قَالَ: فَبَكَى رَسُولُ اللهِ، صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ، وَبَكَى جِبْرَئِيلُ، عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ، فَبَعَثَ اللهُ إِلَيْهِمَا مَلَكاً فَقَالَ: إِنَّ رَبَّكُمَا يُقْرِؤُكُمَا السَّلامَ وَيَقُولُ لَكُمَا إِنِّي قَدْ أَمِنْتُكُمَا مِنْ أَنْ تُذْنِبَا ذَنْباً أُعَذِّبُكُما عَلَيْهِ.

One day the Prophet (*S*) of God was seated when Gabriel came into his presence, with a sad face and changed complexion. The Prophet (*S*) asked as to why he was looking so sad and grieved. Gabriel answered, 'O Muhammad (*S*), why should I be not grieved, while today I saw the bellows of hell being set in. The Prophet (*s*) asked him what the bellows of hell were. Gabriel told him that it referred to the hell-fire, which according to the Commandments of God Almighty was ablaze for one thousand years. After it became red hot, He ordered it to burn for another one thousand years until it was white-hot. Then He commanded it to burn for one thousand years more till it turned black. Now that it was black and dark, if a slice of seventy cubits of it was to drop on this world, verily its heat would be sufficient to melt the

> whole world into fluid. If a single drop of its *Zaqqum* (an infernal tree, mentioned in the Quran proverbial for its extreme bitterness) and *dari* (something in hell more bitter than aloe, more fetid than carrion, and hotter than fire, which will be the food of the condemned) trickles down in the water reservoirs of the earth, everybody therein would die due to its stench. Thereupon the Prophet (*S*) wept and Gabriel also wept with him. On seeing this, God sent His angel, who came to them and said that God sent *salam*s to them along with the message that He exempted them both from the committing of sins and the consequent punishments.

My friend, there are a number of *ahadith* in this regard. Existence of hell and its horrible chastisements are among the essentials of all the religions of the world, which bring forward many arguments in favor of their necessity. And the great mystics and saints have envisioned it even in this world. Try to imagine sincerely and contemplate the disheartening account of hell given in the tradition. If you consider it as probable only, even then should it not be sufficient to drive us to woods like the mad? What is the reason for our complacence and ignorance? Have the angels of God given us the tidings of being exempted from this punishment as they had given one to the Prophet (*s*) and Gabriel? Whereas the Prophet (*s*) and the friends of God could not be oblivious of the fear of God till the ends of their lives. They could not eat and sleep properly because of that fear. Look at the life of Imam Ali ibn al-Husayn (a), whose weeping and moanings, lamentations and supplications melted human hearts. What is wrong with us that we do not feel ashamed? Even in our supplications to God, we so much violate and insult Divine principles, that a thousand pities on our thoughtlessness! Have pity on yourself and the extremity of the pangs of death. Again a thousand pities on our condition in *Barzakh*, the agonies of the Hereafter, and the Doomsday and its darkness! How pitiable are we who have to face the horrors of hell and its chastisement!

## HOW TO CURE MORAL MALADIES

My friend! Arise, awake from the slumber, be aware of your negligence and make an effort till there is time to repent. Consider this opportunity as valuable, until you are alive, your faculties and your powers are still under control, and you are young. Think about a cure before it is too late, and

before moral maladies overpower your existence, and evils take deep roots in your existence and take you in the grips of their tentacles. Drive them away, find out a way of extinguishing the fire of your sensuality and passion. The best remedy prescribed by mystics and moralists is to concentrate upon each one of the evil habits that you detect in yourself, and offer an effective resistance against them. Fight bravely against your carnal self. Act unceasingly all the time against those vicious yearnings. Pray Almighty to assist you in this battle. Undoubtedly after sometime hideous habits would leave you, and Satan and his legions would vacate the fortress, and the battalions of heavenly armies would be installed in their stead.

One of the moral maladies, which may destroy one, cause torment of the grave, and plague man in this world, is the maltreatment of the people of his household, his neighbors, his colleagues and others around him. It is the product of passion and sensuality. If the *mujahid* is determined on correcting himself, he can counter those impulses of indignation, resentment and vituperation with gentleness and kindness, remembering the Hereafter and the chastisements therein. He should curse the Devil in his heart and take refuge in God. I give you word that if you behave persistently like this, after some time you will realize that your nature is totally transformed and good habits have taken the place of the bad ones. But if you behave according to the propensities of your nature, it is possible that they consume you in this world itself. I seek refuge in God from the anger, which when present in an individual destroys him in both the worlds. At the same time it kills his spirit also, because possibly one may use some indecent words against Divine principles in a fit of anger, as so many times we hear people uttering words of heresy and being guilty of apostasy thus.

Philosophers say that the chances of being saved in a ship without a captain from the stormy waves of ocean are brighter than those of a man being saved in an outburst of wild passion. God forbid that we should ever belong to that category of people who become aggressive during academic discussions, as some of our students suffer from this intemperance. You have to resist against this bad tendency. Act against it, especially on the occasions of formal functions, which are attended by a great number of scholars and common people. During the discussions, if you see that the other party is justified in its argument, you are expected to admit your fault and confirm what opponents say. God willing, these meannesses will be eliminated in a short time. God forbid, that the words of some scholars, who claimed to be divinely inspired and said that it was revealed that the quarrel among the

inhabitants of hell, mentioned by God, is that of the scholars and transmitters of *ahadith*, should ever be true. Even if you do not believe in the authenticity of this tradition, even then you should carefully try to get rid of this habit. See the following account:

رُوِيَ عَنْ عِدَّةٍ مِنْ أَصْحَابِنَا أَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا: خَرَجَ عَلَيْنَا رَسُولُ اللهِ، صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ، يَوْماً وَنَحْنُ نَتَمَارَى فِي شَيْءٍ مِنْ أَمْرِ الدِّينِ فَغَضِبَ غَضَباً شَدِيداً وَقَالَ: إِنَّ الْمُمَارِي قَدْ تَمَّتْ خَسَارَتُهُ. ذَرُوا الْمِرَاءَ فَإِنَّ الْمُمَارِي لا أَشْفَعُ لَهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ. ذَرُوا الْمِرَاءَ فَإِنِّي زَعِيمٌ بِثَلاثِ أَبْيَاتٍ فِي الْجَنَّةِ؛ فِي رِيَاضِهَا وَأَوْسَطِهَا وَأَعْلاهَا، لِمَنْ تَرَكَ الْمِرَاءَ وَهُوَ صَادِقٌ. ذَرُوا الْمِرَاءَ، فَإِنَّ أَوَّلَ مَا نَهَانِي عَنْهُ رَبِّي، بَعْدَ عِبَادَةِ الأَوْثَانِ، الْمِرَاءُ.

وَعَنْهُ، صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: مَنْ لَقِيَ اللهَ، عَزَّ وَجَلَّ، بِهِنَّ دَخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ فِي أَيِّ بَابٍ شَاءَ: مَنْ حَسُنَ خُلُقُهُ وَخَشِيَ اللهَ فِي الْمَغِيبِ وَالْمَحْضَرِ وَتَرَكَ الْمِرَاءَ وَإِنْ كَانَ مُحِقّاً.

It is narrated from many companions of the Prophet (*S*) that once as the Prophet (*S*) came to them they were engaged in wrangling over a religious issue. The Prophet (*S*) of Islam was greatly displeased and was indignant to this extent that they had never seen him before in such an anger. The Prophet (*S*) told them it was because of this habit of wrangling that their precursors were destroyed, and he added that a true believer would never wrangle. The Prophet (*S*) asked them to stop wrangling and told them that he would not act as an intercessor to any wrangler. Wrangling occupies the second place after idolatry among the things forbidden by God Almighty.

He (*S*) also has been reported as saying: Whosoever meets God Almighty with the following will be allowed to enter the Paradise through any of its gates: One who is good-tempered, fears God in public or private, and gives wrangling up, even if he is right.

The Prophet (*S*) is reported to have also said that unless a believer

refrains from wrangling and altercation he cannot know the truth, in spite of his position being correct.There are various traditions in this regard. How abominable it will be if we deprive ourselves of the intercession of the Prophet (*S*) for the sake of merely a trivial thing, which has no value, no merit whatsoever. Intellectual discussions, which would otherwise be the highest order of service and worship if undertaken with sincere motives, end in such a catastrophe and wipe out all his good deeds and acts of worship. In all circumstances, man should focus his attention on each of his vices individually, and eradicate them from the domain of his soul by restraining his carnal self. Once the trespasser is driven out, the rightful owner of the house can readily come to take possession.

## CONCLUSION

Since the struggle of the self concludes here and man succeeds in driving off the legions of satanic armies from the empire of his soul, this land becomes the abode of angels of God and a place of worship of truthful servants of God. Thus, the task of pursuing the journey towards God becomes easier, and the road to humanity is illuminated. The doors of blessings from heaven and their ascending steps are opened to him, and the doors of hell and the descending steps thereof are closed on him. God Almighty views him with mercy and benevolence and unites him with His faithful and His blessed servants. The path to divine knowledge, which is the ultimate purpose of creation of mankind and *jinn*, is opened to him. God Almighty guards him through this hazardous path.

I wished to refer to the third stage of self (*nafs*), wherein another struggle against the deceptions and temptations of Satan takes place. But, on later thought, this description seems to be out of place here, so I left it undiscussed.

2

# Second *Hadith*: OSTENTATION (*RIYA* )

بِالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلى مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنِ ابْنِ أَبِي عُمَيْرٍ، عَنْ أَبِي الْمَغْرَا عَنْ يَزِيدَ بْنِ خَلِيفَةٍ قَالَ: قَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: كُلُّ رِيَاءٍ شِرْكٌ. إِنَّهُ مَنْ عَمِلَ لِلنَّاسِ كَانَ ثَوَابُهُ عَلَى النَّاسِ، وَمَنْ عَمِلَ للهِ كَانَ ثَوابُهُ عَلَى اللهِ.

(On the authority of the above-mentioned narrators), Yazid ibn Khalifah reports from Imam al-Sadiq (a) that he said, "*Riya* in any of its forms amounts to *shirk*, (polytheism); verily, one who works for the people, his reward lies with them, and one who works for God his reward lies with God."[1]

*Riya* means to falsely make oneself appear to be virtuous, good natured or a true believer in God before the people for the sake of earning their respect and admiration, or with the purpose of gaining good reputation among them. The hypocrite feigns integrity, uprightness, virtue, honesty and piety without an authentic intention of acquiring these traits for the sake of God. It has several grades and degrees.

The first stage is comprised of two steps:

1. At the first step an individual makes a display of his religious beliefs, and shows off his knowledge of the religious teachings in order to project himself as an honest person in the eyes of people to gain their confidence and respect. Such a kind of person tries to make a display of his trust in God and

[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 402.

His Power, saying that he does not believe in any being except Him. He also tries to present himself as a staunch believer through various means, especially by declaring that he depends on none but God. Or such a person, with his gestures and utterances, poses himself to be a staunch follower of the true faith, and this is a more common kind of *riya* than the first one. For instance, when the trust in God or submission to His Will is discussed, he wags his head in affirmation with a sigh, and thus deceives people giving an impression that he is one of the true believers.

2. The second step on the path of *riya* is represented by those who eradicate false belief from their hearts and, through such purification, want to attain power and respect among people; they sometimes articulate their belief overtly, sometimes make a covert display of their purity.

The second stage, too, is comprised of two steps:

1. At the first step, an individual demonstrates his piety and virtuous deeds.

2. At the second step, one pretends to have done away with the antitheses of piety and virtue, and behaves in such a manner as if he is free from all vices, and the aim of all this is to win the confidence of others.

The third stage of *riya*, which is considered overt by the *fuqaha*, also consists of two steps:

1. The first step is marked by an individual's performance of the prescribed forms of piety, prayers and good deeds in front of other people with the intention of demonstrating his good qualities and praiseworthy habits, or by his posture as a person who strictly adheres to the religious commands on purely rational grounds, and thus wishing to win the hearts of people and attracting their attention towards himself. Such acts, whether performed in total or in part, with the motive of *riya*, to please the others, are discussed in the books of *fiqh*.

2. At the second step, one abstains from evil deeds for the purpose of *riya* only.

## *RIYA* IN FAITH OR CREED

Remember that hypocrisy in religious faith is the worst kind of hypocrisy; its retribution also is the severest and its bad effects are far greater and more dangerous than those of other forms of hypocrisy. One who is guilty of this sin, if he does not believe genuinely in those ideas which he pretends to

believe in, is counted among the *munafiqun* (hypocrites), whose place is in the Fire, and he is doomed to eternal damnation and his punishment is the severest of punishments. But if he believes in them, and for the sake of winning peoples' hearts and for obtaining worldly honor and dignity he makes an ostentation of them, though he is not reckoned among *munafiqun*, this kind of hypocrisy will cause the light of faith to fade away from his heart and to make the darkness of infidelity and faithlessness to occupy the domain of his heart. Because in the first instance this person commits polytheism (*shirk*) of the covert type; while his religious beliefs and acts should purely be meant for God and His Holy Essence, he is guilty of committing the sin of doing them for others and thus makes them to share what should absolutely belong to Him only. In this way, he makes others partners to God and gives permission to the Devil to occupy his heart as if it does not belong to God. It has been mentioned earlier that faith emerges from the depths of the heart, and in this matter, mere abstract knowledge does not suffice. It has been stated in the tradition that any kind of *riya* is polytheism, but this vice, this disastrous atrocity, this hidden cruelty (to one's own self), and this vicious habit, results in nullifying the good deeds, and in surrender of the realm of the heart to other than God. The darkness of this vice causes man to leave this world as an unbeliever in God, and the feigned faith that he had assumed proves nothing more than a senseless and empty profession; it is a form without content, a body without soul and a skull without brain; and in no way is acceptable to God. This fact is confirmed by a tradition mentioned in *al-Kafi*, narrated by Ali ibn Salim:

**سَمِعْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِاللهِ، عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ، يَقُولُ: قَالَ اللهُ، عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: أَنَا خَيْرُ شَرِيكٍ؛ مَنْ أَشْرَكَ مَعِيَ غَيْرِي فِي عَمَلٍ عَمِلَهُ لَمْ أَقْبَلْهُ إِلا مَا كَانَ لِي خَالِصاً.**

> The narrator of the tradition says that he heard Imam al-Sadiq (a) that God Almighty said, "I am the best of friends; one who makes others My partners in any matter, his deeds are not acceptable to Me. I accept only those acts that are purely done for My sake."[1]

Hence, it is clear that if the spiritual acts (of the heart) are not performed with sincerity of the heart, they will neither be the object of attention of the Almighty, nor will He acknowledge them, and they will be credited in the account of that partner – the person, for whose sake they were performed.

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[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 450.

Thus, the spiritual acts performed for the sake of somebody else, not for God, will surpass the limits of polytheism, and will enter the domain of *kufr* (infidelity). It may even be said that the performer of such adulterated acts would be treated as one of the *munafiqun*.

As his polytheism is not visible, his hypocrisy also is hidden. He, the poor fellow, considers himself a believer, whereas in reality, he is an idolater, and he is condemned to taste the chastisement prescribed for the *munafiqun*. How pitiable is the plight of one whose good deeds are to terminate in *nifaq*!

## DIFFERENCE BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF

Know that faith or belief is something different from the knowledge of God, the Unity of His Being, and His other Attributes – like *sifat-e kamaliyyah* (the Attributes of Perfection), the Positive Attributes (*sifat-e thubatiyyah*), *sifat-e jalaliyyah* (the Attributes of Glory), and the Negative Attributes (*sifat-e salbiyyah*), etc, and the knowledge of angels, holy scriptures, and the Last Day. Anyone who possesses the knowledge of all these things is not necessarily a believer. The Devil possesses the knowledge of all these things more than you and I or any other individual, but still he is an unbeliever. The faith is a yearning of the heart – an inner experience, which if not genuine, does not become faith. Anyone who has gained knowledge of religion through rational demonstrations and arguments, ought to submit to them whole-heartedly with the totality of his being and obey the call of his heart dutifully i.e. with complete surrender to God, with humility and fear – and accept all the responsibilities expected of him sincerely without any question. Only then, he can become a perfect *mumin*. Culmination of the faith is tranquility and peace of mind. When the light of faith is stabilized, it brings with it tranquility of the heart, and this is something which does not issue from knowledge.

It is possible that reason may accept something, which is according to its dictates and logic, but the heart may not be ready to agree with it, thus making knowledge useless. For instance, you know through your reason that a dead person cannot do any harm and that all the dead in the world do not possess any power of action, even as much power as is possessed by a fly, and that all the physical and spiritual faculties depart as soon as one is dead; but since your heart has not accepted it and has not approved of the judgment of the mind, you cannot spend a dark night with a dead body. But if your heart yields to your mind and approves of its judgment, this job will no more be difficult for you. After some effort the heart resigns to the dictates of

reason, then no dread of the dead remains in the heart.

Therefore, it is clear that the submission, which is the gratification and comfort of the heart, is quite a different thing from knowledge, which is the gratification of the mind. It is possible that one can logically prove the existence of the Great Intelligent Designer, the Unity of His Divine Being, the Day of Judgment and other true beliefs, but such a belief cannot be considered as faith (*iman*), and the person cannot be regarded as a *mumin*, but he may be counted among the non-believers, hypocrites and polytheists.

Today my eyes and yours are closed, and we do not possess any divine vision. Our terrestrial eyes are unable to perceive, but when the hidden is revealed and the kingdom of heaven is manifested, the physical world vanishes and reality is disclosed; you will realize that you were not a believer in God, and your rational judgment was not congruous with your faith. Unless the words, (**لا إله إلا الله**) – there is no god except God – are inscribed on the tablet of the heart with the pen of reason, man is not a true believer in the Unity of God. When this sacred and holy dictum is impressed on the heart, the domain of the heart turns by itself into the kingdom of God Almighty. Then only man does not see anyone else as efficient in the realm of truth; he does not expect any rank, any distinction or riches from anybody else; he does not seek for honor and fame with the help of others; and his heart does not become hypocritical and profane. Therefore, if you see that *riya* is stealing into your heart, you should realize that your heart has not really surrendered itself to reason, and faith has not illuminated your heart yet; for you consider others to be your God and see them as efficient agents in the world, and you do not trust Him, the only God; it means that you have joined the company of hypocrites, polytheists and idolaters.

## DANGEROUS EFFECTS OF *RIYA*

O, you given to *riya*, who have entrusted your truthful beliefs and religious understanding to the custody of the enemy of God – the Devil, and have attributed to others what specifically belongs to God, you have exchanged those lights which would have illuminated your heart and spirit, and would have proved to be the source of your salvation and eternal bliss, which would have been responsible for being blessed with Beatific Vision and acquiring Divine nearness, with the dreadful darkness of eternal misfortunes; you have lost the other-worldly treasures, and have alienated yourself from the most sacred threshold of the Beloved, and have deprived

yourself of the sight of the visage of the Most High. Be prepared for the darkness, which is not to be followed by any ray of light; the scorn and shame from which there is no release; the diseases which have no cure; the death after which there is no life; and the fire which is ignited from within the depths of the heart to engulf the whole region of your spirit, as well as the realm of the body. It is beyond your capacity and mine to conceive or perceive the intensity of that fire, as God Almighty has mentioned in His Holy Book:

﴿نَارُ اللَّهِ الْمُوقَدَةُ. الَّتِي تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى الْأَفْئِدَةِ.﴾

(*It is*) *the fire of Allah, kindled, which leapeth up over the hearts of men*. (104:6-7)

The effect of the fire, which is kindled by God, will be that it would consume the hearts as well. No fire can consume the heart except that which is kindled in the hell. If the belief in the Unity of God, which is inherently engrained in human nature, is abandoned and is replaced with idolatry and infidelity, no intercession of any intercessor will be available to him, and man will be destined to suffer eternal damnation. What kind of chastisement will it be? It will be the effect of the Divine wrath, issuing from His sense of Honor.

Thus, my friend, do not make yourself an object of the Divine wrath for the sake of an illusion, an insignificant and trivial popularity in the eyes of weak creatures of God, and for the sake of worthless attention of hopeless human beings. Do not make a bargain of those Divine blessings, those infinite favors and benevolences with popularity among people, which is not even effective and long-lasting, from which you cannot derive any benefit except inviting ultimate shame and regret. And while your relations are severed with this world of illusion and deception and you cease to act, no regret and sorrow will be of avail.

## AN ADVICE FOR GETTING RID OF THE CURSE OF *RIYA*

What I am going to mention here to you is expected to work effectively for curing this disease of the heart, yours as well as others'. It shall be also according to the rational dictates as well as is in conformity with the truths of revelation and tradition of the *Masumin* (the infallibles). It is as well verifiable on the basis of the teachings of the Quran and your and my reason. God Almighty, by means of His all-embracing power and might, which

governs the whole universe and is immanent in the realms of all possible beings, takes under His control the hearts of all His servants, as no one is outside the range of His power and the domain of His domination; and no one should occupy the hearts of human beings without His permission and His creative Will; not even the person himself has any control over his own heart without the permission of God Almighty. This fact has been revealed implicitly and explicitly in the Quran as well as the traditions of the members of the Household (*Ahl al-Bayt*) of the Prophet (*s*). Hence, God Almighty is the real owner of the hearts and has sovereignty over them, and you, a helpless and weak creature of Him, you cannot claim to be the master of your heart, without His leave. His Will is predominant over ours and other creatures' resolution. Therefore, your hypocrisy and deceit, if it is meant for attracting the attention of His servants and for earning respect and popularity among them, know that it cannot bear any fruits, for this is totally beyond your powers, and it belongs to the jurisdiction of His power. He is the owner and the ruler of the hearts. He makes the hearts of the people a seat of love for whomsoever He likes. It is possible that your act produces a result just contrary to your wish. Pay attention to what we have seen and heard about the double-faced hypocrites, whose hearts were not pure; they were ultimately condemned to be disgraced; whatever they intended, they could not achieve, but something that they did not desire happened to them. The following tradition in *al-Kafi* points to the same fact:

**عَنْ جَرَّاحٍ المَدَائِنِيِّ، عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ، عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ، فِي قَوْلِ اللهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: ﴿فَمَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُو لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلاً صَالِحاً وَلا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَداً﴾ قَالَ: الرَّجُلُ يَعْمَلُ شَيْئاً مِنَ الثَّوَابِ لا يَطْلُبُ بِهِ وَجْهَ اللهِ إِنَّمَا يَطْلُبُ تَزْكِيَةَ النَّاسِ يَشْتَهِي أَنْ يُسْمِعَ بِهِ النَّاسَ، فَهٰذَا الَّذِي أَشْرَكَ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ. ثُمَّ قَالَ: مَا مِنْ عَبْدٍ أَسَرَّ خَيْراً فَذَهَبَتِ الأَيَّامُ أَبَداً حَتَّى يُظْهِرَ اللهُ لَهُ خَيْراً، وَمَا مِنْ عَبْدٍ يُسِرُّ شَرّاً فَذَهَبَتِ الأَيَّامُ أَبَداً حَتَّى يُظْهِرَ اللهُ لَهُ شَرّاً.**

The narrator of the tradition, Jarrah al-Madaini, reports from Imam al-Sadiq (a) that he asked the Imam about the words of the Almighty that 'whosoever is desirous of meeting his Creator, he should perform virtuous deeds and should not ascribe any partner to God in his worship,' seeking an explanation. Imam al-Sadiq (a) said, 'A person

> who performs good deeds but not for the sake of being blessed with the vision of his God, his acts are aimed at being considered as pious by the people, and he wishes that people should know about his deeds; such a person is counted among polytheists, who have ascribed partners to God.' The Imam (a) continued: 'There is none in the world, who has concealed his good deeds and after passage of time God has not revealed them. And there is none in the world who could conceal his wicked deeds for ever, for they were exposed by God before he passed away from the world.'[1]

Hence, my dear friend, try to be worthy in the eyes of God. Try to win the hearts of the creatures by first pleasing the real Owner of the hearts, so that He comes to your rescue. Work for the sake of God. As a consequence, God Almighty, besides showering His favors and excellences upon you in the Hereafter, will bestow His honors and favors on you in this world as well, and will befriend you. He will raise your status in the eyes of people and will exalt you in both the worlds. But the only thing that you have to do is to sincerely cultivate the love of God in your heart, untainted and unspoiled, with struggle and effort. Purify your inner self so that your actions also will be pure and untainted by the love of the world or hatred of fellow beings; your spirit should be pure and untainted and all the infirmities and corruptions of the soul should be eliminated. Of what advantage is the love or hatred of the weak creatures of God, and gaining favor and name among them? Even if it has some benefit, it is insignificant and short-lived. It is possible that this love of the world may lead you to hypocrisy, and God forbid, it may convert you into a polytheist, a hypocrite, or an unbeliever. If you are not disgraced in this world, you will be surely disgraced in the other world, in Almighty's court of justice, in front of His truthful and worthy servants, in front of His esteemed prophets and those angels who are nearest to God, and you will have to hang down your head in shame, and you will be left in a state of utter helplessness. Can you imagine the disgrace of that day? God alone knows what sort of darkness is to follow that disgrace. It will be the day, as God Almighty has said:

﴿وَيَقُولُ الْكَافِرُ يَا لَيْتَنِي كُنتُ تُرَابًا.﴾

[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 453.

*And the disbeliever will cry: 'Would that I were dust'.* (78:40)

Then it will be of no good. You, poor fellow, for the sake of a trifling love, for the sake of a fame of no avail among the creatures of God, you did not care for the promised Divine favors and have failed to gain His good pleasure, and have incurred His indignation and wrath instead.

The deeds by means of which you could have gained Divine favors, could have secured a happy and blissful life in eternity, and could have attained the highest station in the highest heaven; you have replaced it with the darkness of polytheism and hypocrisy, and have procured for yourself regret, shame and the severest chastisement, and have converted yourself into a '*sijjini*' (an inhabitant of the lowest or dungeon of hell) instead. It occurs in the tradition in *al-Kafi* that it has been reported from Imam al-Sadiq (a) that the Prophet (*s*) said: 'Indeed when the angel of God joyously takes to the higher heaven the good deeds of a man, as he carries the good deeds heavenward, God Almighty orders him to place those deeds in '*sijjin*', since they were not performed for Him alone.[1] You and I cannot imagine what '*sijjin*' is, and which kind of demons are appointed there; and you cannot contemplate the horrors inflicted upon the sinners there. And once we have been made to face it, it will not be possible for us to get rid of it, as all the means of repentance shall be cut off. Wake up my friend! and cast away your negligence and carelessness, and weigh your actions in the balance of your reason, before they are weighed and measured in the other world. And cleanse the mirror of your heart of the rust of polytheism, hypocrisy, and two-facedness. Do not allow the rust of impurity of polytheism and infidelity to gather in such a way that it cannot be cleansed with the fire of the other world. Do not allow the light of your nature to be turned into the gloom of apostasy. Do not be a traitor to yourself and do not destroy what God has entrusted to you, calling it:

﴿فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا.﴾

(*It is*) *the nature* (*framed*) *of Allah in which He hath created man.* (30:30)

Therefore, burnish the mirror of the heart, so that the light of Divine magnificence may be reflected in it, and may make you forget this world and everything in it, and your heart is kindled with the fire of His love, so that all

[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, the chapter concerning *riya*.

other attachments and associations may be dissolved in such a manner that you do not spurn a single moment for the sake of the worldly things; and you derive such a pleasure from His remembrance that all the animal pleasures may appear to you a gimmick. If you cannot attain this station, even then do not give up the gifts of God that are promised to be given in the next world and are mentioned in the Quran and the traditions of the *Masumin* (a), for the sake of gaining the short-lived favor of the weak creatures of God. Do not deprive yourself of all the Divine favors and do not make a bargain of the eternal felicity with the everlasting distress.

## SINCERITY IN ACTION

Know that the real King of kings, the true Giver of real bounties, has bestowed upon us all these favors. He created all these things for us and prepared them for us even before we came into this world. He made our food a balanced diet and acceptable to our weak stomach – a patron and servant who serves us with an instinctive and natural love. He created for us suitable climes and weathers and has bestowed upon us all other seen and unseen favors here and in the other world, and after piling up all these gifts for us, He asks us to keep our hearts pure for His occupation, so that we ourselves may be benefited from His presence. In spite of all these warnings and cautions, we still do not obey Him, do not pay heed to His words, and do not act according to His wish. What an act of gross transgression! With whom are we trying to wage a war, the consequences of which we will have to face? Any slightest harm cannot be caused to His Kingdom, and we cannot exclude ourselves from His reign of power either. If we are acting like the polytheists, we are causing harm to ourselves, because:

﴿فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ.﴾

*Lo! Allah is independent of* (*all*) *creatures*. (3:97)

He does not need our worship, our service or our obedience. Any disobedience, polytheism and two-facedness on our part will not cause any harm to His Empire, but as He is *arhamu'r-rahimin* (أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ) –the Most Merciful of the merciful–, His boundless mercy and compassion, and His perfect wisdom require of us the pursuance of the right path, and for this purpose He made clear the difference between good and evil, beautiful and ugly to us and warned us of the perils and hazards to be met on the road of human perfection and the path of true felicity. We are indebted to God

Almighty for this great guidance and we have to show, with all humility, great respect towards Him in our worships, our devotion and our supplications, whose importance we cannot comprehend unless we gain an otherworldly vision. As long as we sojourn in this narrow physical world, confined to the limits of the sequence of time and shackles of space, we cannot comprehend the infiniteness of the realm of His power, and we cannot even thank Him in our prayers and supplications for His guidance. Never let the idea enter our mind, that by our service and devotion we are doing some favor to His prophets, His chosen servants, and the great *ulama* of the *ummah*. They are our benefactors, who have taken the charge of leading the *ummah* towards felicity and deliverance, and who have accepted the responsibility of our emancipation from the darkness and shadows of ignorance and misfortunes, taking us towards the realms of light and joy and greatness. What a great responsibility they took upon themselves, and what horrible pains and troubles they underwent for the sake of our instruction, in order to deliver us from those obscurities and darknesses, that were the result of vain beliefs and compound ignorance, and the chastisements that were to befall us as a result of our bad habits and villainies! They wanted to save us from those hideous forms and dreadful figures in the other world that would be the outcome of our wicked deeds, and they helped us to reach the regions of light, joy and comfort and the spheres of serenity and composure, whose image our mind would fail to visualize. This physical world in spite of its vastness is so limited and narrow that we cannot imagine a heavenly hour with our this-worldly vision. Our vision does not possess enough power to behold the magnificence of that world, which has been described in the speeches of the holy prophets of God, especially in the all-embracing revelations of the *Khatam al-nabiyyin* (Seal of the prophets), who perceived those truths through Divine revelations, saw them, heard them, and then asked us to acquire them. And we, like recalcitrant children, disobey the commands of the wise, and even do not pay heed to the dictates of our own reason, always being more than ready to oppose the Divinely guided ones. And those sanctified pious souls, out of the love and kindness that they possessed for the creatures of God, did never fall short of their duty, did never appeal to our meaner and baser faculties by bribing them to attract us towards heaven and felicity; they never tried to make us yield through intimidation or force. They did not either demand any remuneration or reward for the services they rendered. The remuneration asked by the Prophet (*s*) (**مَوَدَّةُ ذِى الْقُرْبَى**) –kindness for his kinsfolk–, which is not really a

payment for his services, is also meant for our own benefit, being the brightest of our achievements in the next world. Our sense of indebtedness to them in fact serves ourselves and we are benefited more from it than they are. How are they benefited by the righteous acts of poor beings like us? In what way will our sincerity and obedience do them any good? In what way do you and I consider our humble selves benefactors of the guides of the *ummah*, from an ordinary *faqih* to the great Prophet (*s*) and God Almighty? All of them in their own right have fulfilled their function of guiding us and showing the right path, for which we are indebted to them and even a fraction of it we cannot pay back in this world. Nothing of this world is worthy of the repayment of their debt:

فَلِلَّهِ وَلِرَسُولِهِ وَلأَوْلِيَائِهِ المِنَّةُ.

It is to God, His Prophet (*S*), and His saints to whom all owe gratitude.

As God Almighty has said:

﴿قُلْ لَا تَمُنُّوا عَلَيَّ إِسْلَامَكُمْ بَلْ اللَّهُ يَمُنُّ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ هَدَاكُمْ لِلْإِيمَانِ إِنْ كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ.﴾

*Say: Deem not your surrender a favor unto me; nay, but Allah does confer a favor on you, inasmuch as He hath led you to the faith, if ye are earnest. Lo, Allah knows the Unseen of the heavens and the earth. And Allah is Seer of what you do.* (49:17-18)

Hence, if we are sincere in our faith in God, it is in itself a favor bestowed upon us by God. God Almighty is Omniscient, and has the knowledge of the hidden. He is Omniscient, knows the inner, hidden reality of all our actions, and He is fully aware of the nature of our faith and the extent and degree of our submission to His Will.

We, the helpless creatures, who do not know the reality, acquire our knowledge from the *faqih* and think that we have done favor to him. We offer congregational prayers behind an *Alim*, and we assume that we have conferred a favor on him, whereas, in fact, we are indebted to him. We do not realize this, and, therefore, this faulty outlook turns the effects of our deeds upside down and drags us into *sijjin* making our actions worthless.

## THE SECOND STAGE OF *RIYA*

At this stage, though *riya* is of lesser intensity than it is at the first stage, but it is possible that if the hypocrite does not heed the warnings, and repeatedly behaves in the same way (the *riya* of action) it is likely to terminate in the *riya* of the former stage –the *riya* of faith. We have already mentioned in the exposition of the previous tradition that in the *Alam al-malakut* (the celestial world) man may have a different form other than the human form. Those forms will be in accordance with the state of one's soul and its traits. If you possess good human qualities, in the other world those qualities will retain you in the human form, provided they are not deviated from the path of moderation. Good faculties will be considered as true merits only when the sensual self does not interfere with them, and the self does not play any role in their formation. Our respected teacher and Shaykh Ayatollah Shahabadi used to say that the measure of the false and invalid spiritual practice and true religious spiritual struggle is as to what extent selfishness is involved in such practices, i.e. whether all spiritual effort is for God or for selfish motives. If the wayfarer on the heavenly journey treads a selfish path and his spiritual exercises are meant for acquiring powers for worldly ends, his efforts are rendered invalid, and his *suluk* (progress on mystic path) will lead him to the calamity of the other world. The false claims of spirituality are usually made by such people. And if the wayfarer treads the right path, and is genuinely in search of God, his devotion is within the bounds of the *Shariah,* and God will help him, as promised in the following verse of the Quran:

﴿وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا﴾

*As for those who strive for Us, We surely guide them to Our paths*. (29:69)

Hence, his actions will lead him to felicity; egoism will be eliminated and self-conceit and pride will recede. This is quite clear that anyone who demonstrates his good deeds before people, his aim is a selfish aim, and he will be branded as a selfish, self-conceited, egoistic and egocentric person, and his godliness will be considered as nothing but false and pretentious, which will invalidate his good deeds. As the domain of your existence is replete with the feelings of self-love, the lust for wealth, power and fame, and the wish for ruling over the creatures of God, your good deeds and your excellences cannot be adjudged as virtuous deeds, and your moral behavior is

far away from truly religious morality. The operating force in your realm is satanic and your inner state is not a human condition. When you will open your eyes in the other world, you will perceive yourself in an inhuman form, similar to one of those of the devils. For such selves, which are dens of the Satan, it is impossible to gain religious knowledge and learn the spirit of *tawhid*. Unless the realm of your inner self is converted into a human state and your heart is purged of impurities and unholiness, you cannot be benefited from spiritual exercises, as God Almighty states in a *hadith-e qudsi:*

**لا تَسَعُنِي أَرْضِي وَلا سَمَائِي، بَلْ يَسَعُنِي قَلْبُ عَبْدِيَ الْمُؤْمِنُ.**

> Neither [the vastness of] My earth, nor [that of] My heaven can contain Me. Indeed it is the heart of the man of faith, which can contain Me.

There is no clearer sign in the earth and in the heavens of the elegance of the Beloved than the heart of a true believer (*mumin*).

The believer's heart is in the occupation of God, not at the disposal of the self. The heart of the believer is not self-willed, nor is it vagrant. It is said of it:

**قَلْبُ الْمُؤْمِنِ بَيْنَ إِصْبَعَيِ الرَّحْمَانِ، يُقَلِّبُهُ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ.**

> The heart of the true believer (*mumin*) lies between two fingers of God, that He may turn it whatever way He pleases.

O you, the poor creature, who worships the self and the Devil and ignorance are the agencies operating in the realm of your heart, you yourself have prevented the hands of God from handling your heart. What sort of faith you are required to possess that your heart be the object of Divine illumination, absolute rule of the Truth may prevail there? Make it a point that unless you change yourself, and as long as the bad habit of ostentatiousness and vanity dominates your deeds, you will be branded as an unbeliever and you will be grouped with the *munafiqun* (hypocrites), even though you imagine yourself to be a believer in God and as one who has resigned himself to the Will of God.

## THE VALUE OF HUMAN EXISTENCE AS A TRUSTEE OF DIVINE HONOR

My friend, wake up from the slumber of forgetfulness and carelessness, be aware, do not let sleep overtake your senses, and know that God Almighty has created you for His own sake, as stated in one *hadith-e qudsi:*

يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ؛ خَلَقْتُ الأَشْيَاءَ لَكَ وَخَلَقْتُكَ لأَجْلِي.

> O progeny of Adam, We have made everything for you and you for Our service.

He has made your heart His own habitation. You and your hearts are the abodes of Divine honor. God Almighty is intolerant regarding His Dignity and Honor. Do not be careless in this regard, and do not justify any violation of the Divine principles; and be afraid of His retribution so that you may not be disgraced and made infamous in this world in such a way that despite all efforts you are not able to undo what may befall you. You are guilty of violation of Divine honor in your heart that belongs to the celestial world, in front of the angels of God and His prophets. The moral excellences through which the saints of God (*awliya Allah*) acquired resemblance to Him, are being surrendered by you to others than God, and you are surrendering your heart, the seat of God, to His enemy, thus committing *shirk* (polytheism) in the heart of your hearts. Be afraid of God Almighty, Who besides bringing down your other-worldly image and degrading you in front of His angels and His prophets, will also expose and dishonor you in this world itself and you will be condemned to unmeasured indignity which shall be also irreparable, and irremediable, an infamy that cannot be redressed. God Almighty is *sattar*, He conceals the sins, but He is jealous also. He is *arhamu'r-rahimin* (أَرْحَمُ الرّاحِمِينَ) –the Most Merciful of the merciful–, but at the same time He is *ashaddu'l-muaqibin* (أَشَدُّ المُعَاقِبِينَ) –the severest of the punishers– also. He Himself says that He covers up bad deeds as long as they do not cross certain limits. God forbid, lest the gravity of your deeds should arouse His anger and should it overcome His tolerance and willingness to conceal sins, as you have read in the *hadith*.

Hence, come to your senses, seek refuge in God and turn back to Him, for God Almighty is the Compassionate and always seeks for an excuse to shower His mercy. If you ask for His forgiveness, He will readily forgive you, and will cover up your blemishes and past deeds, so that no one will be able to know about them, and He will make you a man of great distinctions, a

paragon of virtues and an image of His Attributes. He will make your will consummate in the next world as His own Will is executed throughout the cosmos. It is narrated in a *hadith* that when the people are placed in the Paradise, a message from the Almighty will be given to them and its purport will be as follows: 'From the One who is Eternal and Immortal to him who is also eternal and immortal: Whatever I desire to bring into existence I command it to be and it comes into being; from this hour it has been decreed that you also command whatever you desire to bring into existence and your wish would be obeyed.'

Therefore, do not be egocentric, and subordinate your will to the Will of God Almighty; He will then make you an instrument and manifestation of His Will. He will give you power in the realms under His control, and bestow upon you the capacity to create in the Hereafter. (Of course, this is not the same as *tafwid*, which is a false notion, as proved elsewhere.)

Now my friend, do as you please; either accept it or reject it. But know, that God Almighty is not in need of you or me or any other creature, and He has no need of our service and sincerity.

## *RIYA* IN WORSHIP

The third stage also is divided into several sections.

### SECTION I

The *riya* of this kind is more common and manifest than those mentioned above. Because we ordinary human beings usually do not belong to the above-mentioned two states. For this reason, the Devil cannot get hold of us in the way he encroaches upon those who belong to the other states. But since the majority of the worshippers express their devotion to God through formal prayers, the Devil commonly intervenes at this stage more frequently. Sensual temptations are also commoner at this stage. In other words, since such type of people tend to seek the physical pleasures of heaven through their actions, and they aspire to attain higher station by performing good deeds and abstaining from performing wicked ones, the Devil finds an access through this way; and he nurtures the roots of *riya* and deceit with great care, so that it may bear the fruits that are desired by him. He transforms their virtues into vices, and makes them to enter hell through the path of ritual worship. The acts by means of which they aim to secure paradise for themselves are transformed by him into the means of their destruction and

doom. The deeds, which would have led one to *'illiyyin* –the highest heaven– are so distorted that their performer is thrown into *sijjin by* angels at the command of God. Therefore, persons who lay greater emphasis on this aspect (i.e. formalistic) and ignore other aspects, have nothing except apparently good deeds to secure salvation in the next world; they are required to be more cautious, so that this provision also may not be snatched away from their hands and they may not be consigned to the flames of hell and deprived of felicity for ever. They should watch over their acts lest the doors of heaven be closed and the doors of hell be opened to them.

## HOW TO COMBAT *RIYA* ?

Most often the sanctimonious person himself does not know that this particular vice has penetrated his deeds and his deeds have now assumed hypocritical proportions and hence become worthless. Because the temptations of the Devil and the self are so unobservably shadowy and subtle and the path of humanity is so delicate and tenuous that unless anyone is extremely discriminate, he cannot understand their inherent evil. He imagines that his actions are meant for pleasing God, whereas they are serving the interests of the Devil. Since man is naturally created self-centered, the veil of self-love and egoism covers his flaws and vices from his own eyes. God willing, we shall also discuss this subject while commenting upon certain other *ahadith*; I ask for God's help in this regard.

For instance, the acquisition of religious knowledge, is one of the important religious duties and a kind of worship; but a man busy attaining excellence in this field is liable to fall an easy prey to the vice of *riya*, which seizes his heart in such a way that he himself is not aware and the same thick curtain of self-love obstructs his vision. He desires to gain an important position in the eyes of great scholars and men of distinction and honor, by solving an important problem in such a way that no other person has solved it before; he tries to project himself as a person distinguished from others by presenting the subject in a unique way, to make himself the focus of everyone's attention; with an air of self-assurance, he assumes that if anyone among the scholars and dignitaries eulogizes him in flattering terms, he will be able to receive the applause and praise of the whole gathering. The poor fellow fails to realize that even if he earns worldly fame and honor among scholars or the elite, he will be disgraced in the eyes of the King of kings, and these actions of his will lead him to *sijjin*. This act of *riya* is also accompanied with some other vices, like the wish for humiliating and

insulting others, or injuring the feelings of his brother in faith, or sometimes being rude to a believer; each one of these vices is enough for landing him in hell. If again your deceptive self falls in the snares of its own guiles and succeeds in convincing you that your aim has been to make known a tenet of *Shariah* and pronouncing the word of truth, which is one of the most meritorious acts of religious devotion, and that you do not aim at demonstrating your spiritual superiority, you ought to interrogate your self by asking that if a friend of yours had solved the same religious issue in a better way and had defeated you in the gathering of those scholars and highly placed persons, even then would you have taken the same position? If it is so, you were true to your own self. But if your self again is bent upon deceiving others and does not refrain from committing another treachery and contends that the utterance of truth is a meritorious act, and possesses a spiritual reward also, and that it is in your interest to attain an elevated station in the Hereafter, you are advised to ask your self: Suppose if God Almighty accords you the real glory for your defeat in case you gracefully accept it, would you still desire to prevail? If you see that your self loves to dominate others in academic discussion for gaining publicity among the scholars for your knowledge and scholarship, and the discussion that you undertake is aimed at winning others' respect and honor, then know that the intellectual discourse, which is the highest form of worship and prayer, is transformed into the sinful act of *riya*, which, according to the narration of *al-Kafi*, will lead you to *sijjin*, you are classed as a polytheist, and this act was performed with the motive of gaining respect in the eyes of the people. This act of yours, according to a tradition, will cause more harm to your faith than the harm done by two wolves that attack a herd of sheep without a shepherd from both sides. Therefore, you who are a scholar and responsible for reforming the *ummah* and paving the way to the Hereafter, and curing spiritual infirmities, it is necessary for you first to correct yourself and maintain a sound spiritual state, so that you do not fall under the category of the scholars who do not act upon what they profess.

Pray to God Almighty to purify our hearts of the stains of polytheism and hypocrisy, and cleanse the mirror of our hearts of the rust of the love of the world, which is the source of all vices. O God! Kindly help us and protect us helpless beings, afflicted with the disease of vanity and the lust for power and honor, and guard us in this hazardous journey along the intricacies of the labyrinthine dark path, O the Mightiest and the Most Powerful!

## *RIYA* IN CONGREGATIONAL PRAYERS

Congregational prayer is an eminent form of Islamic worship, and the leader of this prayer holds a distinctive position of honor. For this reason, Satan also intrudes more in this worship. He is much more envious of the *imam* (leader) of the *jamaah* (congregation) than anybody else. He is always busy finding the ways of keeping away the believers from receiving this Divine honor, and deprives their action of the element of sincerity and truth and drives them to *sijjin*. He tries to convert them into polytheists, and for this purpose he invades the hearts of the *imam*s through various means, such as *ujb* (self admiration), which we shall discuss later on, and *riya*, which is a display of religiosity through this significant worship for impressing the people, gaining publicity, and earning their admiration and respect; for instance, when an *imam* sees that a certain pious person is attending the congregational prayer, he tries to make an ostentation of his humility and devotion in order to capture his attention and win his admiration; he tries to find various ways of mentioning him in the gatherings of people not present in the congregation; in order to show his importance, he drags the name of that pious man again and again and tries to inform the people about his presence as a follower in the congregational prayer; thus, he tries to create a false impression of a close association with him, especially if he belongs to the business class, and expresses such a great love and friendship for him which he never expressed even for a single moment for God or His favored servants. And if, God forbid, any of the aristocrats loses his way and comes to pray with the congregation, it is a bigger disaster. The Devil is not unmindful, of the leader of a small congregation either. He approaches him and makes him aware that he is so unmindful of worldly gains that he is content to spend his time in a small local mosque of a poor neighborhood. This feeling is also similar to the first, or even worse than that; as the vice of jealousy spreads its tentacles in the hearts of such people, who do not enjoy the bounties of this world; the Devil deprives them of the glories of the other world too, and they are condemned to suffer in both the worlds. At the same time, the Devil, does not lose his grip on the collars of people like you and me, who have no access to the leadership of a congregation, and who lament the absence of proper means; he makes us doubt the utility of congregations of Muslims, and makes us scorn and flout them. We may be led to look upon our failure to capture a congregation as otherworldly seclusion, and ourselves as free from love of station and honor. Then we become worse than both of the groups, we neither belong to the first category of people, who enjoy the

good things of this life, nor do we belong to the second category, whose achievements are comparatively humbler; nor do we have any claim to the next world; nevertheless if we get an opportunity, we might prove to be more power-hungry, honor-thirsty, and greedy than either of the groups.

## HOW DOES *RIYA* INFILTRATE THE RANKS OF THE CONGREGATION?

The Satan is not content with dragging the leader of the congregation to the hell. His lust is not satiated with that. He infiltrates the ranks of the worshippers also. Since the first row is more esteemed than other rows, and its right wing superior to the left, he makes them his target more often than any other row. He attracts the pious towards the right part of the first row, and incites them to pose to be superior to others in the eyes of the people. The helpless fellow, unconscious of the Satan's whispering, tries to demonstrate his superiority through a sanctimonious glance or gesture, which displays his inner polytheism, which is enough for sending him to *sijjin*. From here, the Satan then steals into other rows to allure other people on account of his awkward gestures and funny behavior a devotee becomes the target of jeer and sneer of others, who consider themselves to be free from all sort of faults. Sometimes it has been observed that a respectable person, especially a scholar of rare distinction and high intellectual caliber, is made to sit by the Devil in the last row, in order to make people realize that though his position is much higher, but since he does not care for worldly position and is free of self-esteem, he has come to sit in the last row. Some people of this kind will never be seen sitting in the first row.

The Satan is not satisfied with influencing the *imam* and his followers; he sometimes catches hold of one of the loners by the beard, persuading him to leave his house or shop, and by means of his allurements he launches him into a corner of the mosque over a prayer mat. For such a man, no *imam* is *adil*, or qualified to lead prayers. The Satan makes him perform a prolonged prostration and *ruku* and an extended prayer. In his heart of hearts, this individual wishes to make people believe that he is pious and conscientious to such a degree that he avoids the congregation, so that he may not be trapped into following an unjust *imam*. This person, besides being conceited and sanctimonious, is also ignorant of the laws of the *Shariah*. The *marja-e taqlid* (religious reference authority) whom he follows may not have laid any condition for praying behind an *imam* except acceptability of his outward

behavior. But the loner is not concerned with that, for his real motive is *riya*. He merely wants to present himself as a man of piety in order to gain the favor and admiration of people.

In the same way, our other activities also are interfered with by the Satan. This damned creature, whenever he finds a murky heart, he makes it his resting place and tries to spoil our visible and invisible deeds, and transforms our good deeds into such as lead us directly to the hell.

## AN INVITATION TO SINCERITY

My friend, be judicious and careful in your actions. Demand from yourself an account of every deed. Cross-examine yourself for every detail; try to evaluate your deeds through introspection whether they were meant for the realization of virtue or motivated otherwise. What motivated you to ask questions about mid-night prayers? Was it purely for the sake of God with an intention to perform such prayers, or for projecting your image as a deeply religiously person? Why is it that you are eager to inform others about your pilgrimage by all possible means and about the number of times you undertook it? Why are you not content with confining your charitable deeds to yourself alone, and what do you want to gain by informing the others of your acts of charity, for as soon as you find an opportunity you announce them? If it is undertaken for the sake of God, and you intend that people should imitate you, and you think in terms of **الدَّالُّ عَلَى الخَيْرِ كَفَاعِلِهِ**. (the one who shows the path of virtue is as worthy as the doer of it) while performing this deed, its display is justified; thank God, for He has enabled you to act with a clear conscience and pure heart. But beware of the guiles of Satan while interrogating your self, for he can project the acts adulterated with *riya* as selfless and sacred. If your action is not for the sake of God, then it is better to abstain from doing what you have been doing, for it amounts to *sumah*, i.e. advertisement of false virtues, which is a branch of the accursed tree of *riya*; for God Almighty does not approve of it and condemns its perpetrator to *sijjin*. We ought to seek refuge in God from the vice of deceit, whose guiles are very subtle. We have a general idea that our deeds are not pure and sincere, because had we been His true servants, why does the Devil, despite promising not to impede the actions of His true servants, disturb our sanctity and make us an instrument of his evil designs? In the words of my respected teacher, the Devil is the watchdog of the Almighty's court; he does not bark at the person who is near to God, and does not bother him. As the watchdog does not drive the friends of the master away from the house, in

the same way, the Satan also recognizes God's friends, and does not allow any stranger to get access to Him. Therefore, whenever you realize that the Satan interferes in your affairs, you should immediately know that your actions are not performed with sincere intentions and are not meant for the Almighty. If you are a sincere believer in God, why doesn't your tongue pour forth words of wisdom, coming from the heart? For about forty years you imagine that you have been performing virtuous deeds in order to please God, whereas it occurs in a *hadith* that whosoever remains faithful to God for forty days, springs of wisdom emanate from his heart. This is, therefore, a sign for us to comprehend that our deeds were not performed for the sake of God, though we ourselves are not conscious of it, and this is the main cause of our irremediable sickness.

Pitiable is the condition of the devotees, worshippers, leaders and followers of Friday congregations and men of high knowledge and learning! When they will open their eyes in the court of the Most High on the Day of Judgment, they will come to know that they are not only among the sinners, perpetrators of major sins, but even worse than infidels and idolaters, and their record of deeds even darker than theirs.

It is a matter of pity for a person that his prayers and other devotional acts should serve as fuel for the fires of hell. May God save us from the moment when, in spite of one's alms-giving and *zakat* and piety, one's appearance will be distorted to such hideousness that it is not even imaginable. You, a helpless creature, are branded as a *mushrik*, an idolater, and a sinner despite your belief in the Unity of God. God willing, He will forgive the sinners by His mercy, but for the *mushrik*, He has said that He will not forgive him if he dies without repentance.

It is stated in the *ahadith* that one used to *riya* –the one who makes a display of his religiosity, devotion, high religious status, his preaching and leading of prayers, his fasting, his *namaz* (*salat*) and even his pious deeds for the sake of gaining respect in the hearts of people– is a polytheist. His *shirk* (idolatry) is confirmed by the traditions of the Imams of the Holy Household (a) and the Quranic text, and hence his sin is unpardonable. It would have been better for you to be among the perpetrators of major sins, to be one notorious for his evil conduct and perpetration of obvious indignities, while being a monotheist, instead of becoming a polytheist.

Now, my friend, introspect seriously and find some remedy to cure your (spiritual) sickness, and realize the futility of acquiring honor in human

hearts, a small piece of flesh which will not satisfy a bird's appetite. These weak creatures possess no power, and their estimation is insignificant. The real power is to be sought in Him; He is the Absolute Cause of all causes-the Ultimate Cause. Even if all creatures make a joint effort to create a single mosquito, they will not be successful in doing so, and if the mosquito causes them a slight harm, they will not be able to avert it if God does not will so.

All power belongs to the Almighty. He is the Mover of the universe. Whenever you do something and make an effort to perform something, inscribe on your heart with the pen of reason:

**لا مُؤَثِّرَ فِي الوُجُودِ إلا اللهُ.**

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

By all possible means equip your heart with the principle of unity of Divine Action (*tawhid-e afAli*), which is the first stage of the belief in the Unity of Being, and thus convert it into the heart of a true believer. Illuminate your heart with the holy dictum of (**لا إله إلا الله**) –there is no god but Allah; and mould it accordingly. Lead your heart to the stage of tranquility (*itminan*), and make it realize that human beings can cause neither harm nor good, and that God alone is capable of doing any harm or good to anybody. Cure your vision, which suffers from blindness, so that you will not be raised blind on the Day of Judgment and complain to the Almighty:

﴿رَبِّ لِمَ حَشَرْتَنِي أعمى وَقَدْ كُنْتُ بَصِيراً.﴾

*My Lord! Wherefore have You raised me* (*here*) *blind?* (20:125)

The Will of the Almighty prevails over the wills of other beings. If your heart surrenders to these holy words, and has faith in them, this can be hoped that your deeds will be rewarded and all the traces of polytheism, *riya*, infidelity and hypocrisy will be wiped out from the face of your heart. This profound faith is in accordance with reason and revelation, and there are no traces of determinism (*jabr*) present in it. It is possible that some people who do not know the meaning, the basic principles, and ingredients of determinism, may mistake it as such, whereas it is not *jabr* but *tawhid*. Determinism is a kind of *shirk*; whereas *tawhid* is right guidance, determinism is misguidance. This occasion is not proper for discussing determinism and freedom. But those who fully understand this issue can appreciate the import of what I say. Moreover, the Prophet (*s*) has asked us not to indulge in such discourses. Anyway, ask God Almighty, through

supplication and humble entreaties all the time, especially in loneliness, to guide you and to illuminate your heart with the light of *tawhid*. Ask Him to endow you with the vision of the hidden, the perception of the unity (in diversity) –the Unity of Divine Being– so that you may not attach importance to anything else and consider every other thing as insignificant and trifle. Beseech His Holy Essence to make your actions pure and sincere, and lead you to the path of sincerity and love. And if you have reached such a spiritual station that your prayers are responded and you can do something for this helpless creature of God, who has squandered his life in meaningless pursuits, devoid of any real purpose, hankering after desires and lusts, whose sins have sickened the heart to a point where no exhortation, advice, Quranic verse, or tradition of the Prophet (*s*), or argument or wise saying can have any effect, do pray for him; may be your prayer shall secure his deliverance. God never turns away a believer from His court, and He grants his prayers. By ever remembering these things, which you already know and are not new to you, be heedful and sincere from within the heart, and, without ceasing, critically reevaluate your movements, pauses, and your behavior. Always scrutinize your secret intentions, and strictly take account of everything in the same manner as one business partner is accountable to the other. Abstain from everything that resembles *riya* and simulation, however virtuous it may appear to be. Even in the matter of obligatory religious duties, if you believe that you cannot perform them sincerely in public, perform them secretly, though it is preferable to perform them openly. It is rare for *riya* to occur in obligatory duties themselves; more often it relates to their mode of performance and to acts which are *mustahabb* or supererogatory. In any case, purge your heart from the dirt of polytheism with perfect solemness and severest self-criticism, lest, God forbid, you should pass away from this world in this state that your performance is deplorable, and there is no hope of salvation for you. Then you will invite the wrath of God, as mentioned in the tradition quoted in *Wasail al-Shiah* from *Qurb al-Asnad*, and reported from Amir al-Muminin Ali (a):

**عَنْ أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلِيٍّ، عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ، عَنْ رَسُولِ اللهِ، صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ، (أَنَّهُ قَالَ) مَنْ تَزَيَّنَ لِلنَّاسِ بِمَا يُحِبُّ اللهُ وَبَارَزَ اللهَ فِي السِّرِّ بِمَا يَكْرَهُهُ اللهُ لَقِيَ اللهَ وَهُوَ عَلَيْهِ غَضْبَانَ وَلَهُ مَاقِتٌ.**

Amir al-Muminin Ali (a) reports that the Prophet (*S*) said, "One who does some act liked by God in order to show

> off to people, and in secret manifests such qualities as are abominations to God, he shall encounter God's anger and wrath on the Day of Resurrection."[1]

There are two probable interpretations of this *hadith*. Firstly, it is about such a person who presents himself as paragon of virtue before people, while his inner self is immersed in ugly vices. Secondly, it may be about a person who performs outwardly virtuous deeds with the intention of *riya*. In any case, it is obvious that the *hadith* condemns *riya*, because the performance of the obligatory acts and duties if not motivated by *riya*, cannot be the object of Divine wrath. In all probability, the second meaning is closer to the import of the *hadith*, as the open performance of wicked deeds is a greater evil.

This is a warning for us to be cautious lest, God forbid, we do something to incur the wrath of the King of kings and the Most Merciful of the merciful:

أَعُوذُ بِاللهِ مِنْ غَضَبِ الحَلِيمِ.

## A TRADITION OF IMAM ALI (A)

We conclude this section with a tradition reported from the commander of the pious, Amir al-Muminin (a), recorded in *al-Kafi*. al-Shaykh al-Saduq has also reported the same tradition from Imam al-Sadiq (a), which forms a part of the last will and testament of the Prophet (*s*) to Ali (a):

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: قَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ : ثَلاثُ عَلامَاتٍ لِلْمُرَائِي: يَنْشِطُ إِذَا رَأَى النَّاسَ، وَيَكْسِلُ إِذَا كَانَ وَحْدَهُ، وَيُحِبُّ أَنْ يُحْمَدَ فِي جَمِيعِ أُمُورِهِ.

> Said Imam al-Sadiq (a) that Amir al-Muminin (a) said: 'There are three distinguishing features of one accustomed to *riya*: he expresses joy and cheerfulness when he is greeted by people; he becomes cheerless and sullen when alone; and he wishes to be praised for everything he does.'[2]

Since this vice is so hidden and subtle that it remains unnoticed by the person himself, he is unaware of the fact that inwardly he is a hypocrite, and

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[1] *Wasail al-Shiah*.

[2] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 295.

he imagines his actions to be pure and untainted. Therefore, the signs of this characteristic have been described so that men should be able to identify their hidden motives by examining their inner self in their light and be able to prevent and treat them accordingly. An individual may introspect and know that he is not inclined to perform his religious duties when he is alone; even if with great compulsion he forces himself to perform them, or even if he performs them habitually, he does not perform with real sincerity and purity of heart, but rather as a physical exercise; but while performing his prayer in the mosque, in the congregation of the people and in the presence of others, he becomes animated, performing his prayer with utmost joy and enthusiasm. He is inclined to perform long and protracted *ruku*s and prostrations; he performs the *mustahabb* actions properly, caring about their minutest particulars. If one pays a little attention to one's inner state, one may come to know the reason for this vigor. Why is it so that he spreads the net of his (pretended) piety for catching the attention of people? He may mislead himself by saying that he is more pleased with praying in the mosque, as it is more meritorious to do so, and that it brings more rewards also. He will convince himself by saying that it is preferable to say prayer in a better way in front of others, in order that they may follow his example and be attracted towards the religion. Man deceives himself by all means and never thinks of correcting himself. For a sick person who considers himself to be sound there is no hope of being cured. The ill-fated man's innermost being not only secretly aims to parade his good deeds before people, remaining unconscious of its inner urge, but is also bent upon presenting his sin as worship and his conceit as propagation of religion, despite the fact that the performance of the *mustahabbat* prayers is *mustahabb* in seclusion. Why is it that your self always responds in public, and why do you relish weeping out of the fear of God in the gathering of people, though in loneliness in spite of squeezing your eyes you cannot bring out a single tear? Where is the fear of God? Does it grip you in the gatherings of people only? Does it overwhelm you only on the occasion of the Night of Great Value (**ليلة القدر**) in front of several thousands of people? Such a man offers one hundred *rakah*s of *namaz* and recites the *Dua-e Jawshan-e Kabir* and *Dua-e Jawshan-e Saghir* in addition to several *surah*s of the Quran and is not bored and does not feel the slightest weariness. If man performs something purely for the sake of God or for gaining His blessings, or out of fear of hell or in the hope of heaven, why should he desire that his deeds be praised by men and admired by them? His ears are all the time eager to listen something in his praise, and his heart is

after those who observe his devotion and notice how venerable this gentleman is, for he is so punctual about the prayer and is so concerned about the supererogatory duties. If your deeds are meant for God, what does this exaggerated craving mean? If the fear of hell and the hope of heaven force you to perform these deeds, what does this love of publicity mean? You ought to realize that this desire issues from the accursed and abominable tree of *riya*. Therefore, try as much as you can to purify yourself of these absurd inclinations (to the extent possible), and try to reform yourself.

## VARIATION IN GRADES AND DEGREES OF QUALITIES AMONG DIFFERENT INDIVIDUALS

At this stage it is essential to remind you that each one of the qualities of the soul, both the good ones and the bad, has numerous grades and degrees. Those who acquire virtues and give up vices are grouped with the *urafa*, saints and friends of God (*awliya Allah*). As for other individuals, the nature of vices and virtues is determined by the spiritual station to which they belong. It may be that the qualities, which are considered vices for those belonging to higher spiritual station, are not considered vices for those belonging to a lower stage. On the contrary, in a way, they may even be regarded as their accomplishments. And similarly the qualities that are regarded as virtues for the people of a lower category may be vices for men of a higher category. *Riya* is also one of such (relative) vices that we are discussing presently. Authenticity (*ikhlas*) is the highest stage of freedom from *riya* and is characteristic of the saints (*awliya Allah*); others do not share this quality. The common people generally attain a lower stage of it, and this does not harm their *iman* or *ikhlas*, because, generally, they have a natural inclination that their virtues be known to others. Though they may not have intentionally performed them for the sake of demonstrating them, but their self is instinctively inclined to make them known. This tendency does not annul their action, nor does it make them infidels, hypocrites (*munafiqun*) or polytheists either. But the same trait is considered to be a shortcoming in the case of a *wali* or *arif bi'llah*, as for them it amounts to *nifaq* or *shirk*. Absolute purification from the impurity of polytheism and obtaining perfect authenticity (*ikhlas*) of devotion is essentially a primary condition for attaining the stage reserved for *awliya Allah*, and there are even higher stages which they can attain, but, here, it would be out of place to go into these details. Our Imams (a) have declared that their worship was the worship of emancipated souls (*ahrar*), which was performed for the sake of love of God

alone, neither due to the fear of hell nor in the hope of heaven; and they considered this stage to be the first step of their *wilayah*. *To* them worship is a state of ecstasy and rapture which is beyond the reach of our imagination and understanding. Apart from the above-mentioned *ahadith* narrated from the Prophet (*s*) and Amir al-Muminin (a), there is another *hadith* also, reported by Zurarah from Imam Abu Jafar (a), which is as follows:

عَنْ زُرَارَةَ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ؛ قَالَ (زُرَارَةُ): سَأَلْتُهُ عَنِ الرَّجُلِ يَعْمَلُ الشَّيْءَ مِنَ الخَيْرِ فَيَرَاهُ إِنْسَانُ فَيَسُرُّهُ ذَلِكَ. قَالَ: لا بَأْسَ! مَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ إِلا وَيُحِبُّ أَنْ يَظْهَرَ لَهُ فِي النَّاسِ الخَيْرُ إِذَا لَمْ يَكُنْ صَنَعَ ذَلِكَ لِذَلِكَ.

> Zurarah reports that he questioned Imam al-Baqir (a) about the status of a person who performed good deeds, which were seen by others and it made him happy. Said the Imam (a): There is no harm in it; there is no one who does not like that his good deeds be made known to the people, in case he does not perform them [solely] for the sake of attracting their admiration.[1]

In one of the two *ahadith*, the tendency of performing good deeds for the sake of earning respect and admiration is considered as the sign of *riya*, while in another *hadith* it is stated that there is no harm in the joy resulting from the demonstration of a good deed. These two different positions are taken in view of the category to which an individual belongs. There are certain other reasons also for such a view, but we shall abstain from mentioning them.

### WHAT IS *SUMAH*?

At the end, it is to be noted that *sumah* means to orally transmit one's good qualities to the ears of people for the purpose of attracting them and publicizing oneself, and this tendency is a branch of the vicious tree of *riya*. For the same reason we have dealt with *sumah* as a part of *riya*, not as a distinct vice, and have not elaborated its meaning separately.

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[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 297.

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# Third *Hadith*: SELF-CONCEIT (*ujb*)

بِالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إلى مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ أَسْبَاطٍ، عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ عُمَرَ الحَلاّل، عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ سُوَيْدٍ، عَنْ أَبِي الحَسَنِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: سَأَلْتُهُ عَنِ العُجْبِ الَّذِي يُفْسِدُ العَمَلَ، فَقَالَ: العُجْبُ دَرَجَاتٌ؛ مِنْهَا أَنْ يُزَيَّنَ لِلعَبْدِ سُوءُ عَمَلِهِ فَيَرَاهُ حَسَناً فَيُعْجِبُهُ وَيَحْسَبُ أَنَّهُ يُحْسِنُ صُنْعاً. وَمِنْهَا أَنْ يُؤْمِنَ العَبْدُ بِرَبِّهِ فَيَمُنُّ عَلَى اللهِ عَز وَجَلَّ وَاللهُ عَلَيْهِ فِيهِ المَنُّ.

Muhammad ibn Yaqub (al-Kulayni) from Ali ibn Ibrahim, from his father, from Ali ibn Asbat, from Ahmad ibn Umar al-Hallal, from Ali ibn Suwayd from Abu al-Hasan (Imam al-Rida [a]): Says Ali ibn Suwayd that he asked Abu al-Hasan (a) about the *ujb* (self-conceit, vanity) that vitiates the quality of human deeds. Said the Imam (a): There are several levels of *ujb*, one of them is when one's bad qualities appear to him as good; he reckons them as good ones and congratulates himself imagining that he is performing virtues. Another level of *ujb* is represented by a person who believes in God and thinks that he has done a favor to God; whereas God Almighty has conferred a favor on him (by endowing him with faith).[1]

## WHAT IS *UJB*?

[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. ii, p. 313.

In the opinion of the *ulama* (*r*)[1] *ujb* is magnification of one's virtues and good deeds, their overestimation, and satisfaction with them accompanied with a feeling of superiority on their account, while one exonerates and exculpates himself from all failings and faults. But to feel pleasure and delight on performing virtuous deeds accompanied with a sense of humility and modesty before God and gratitude to God for His favors, and to ask Him to increase them, is not *ujb*, but is a praiseworthy (*mamduh*) trait. The great compiler of *hadith*, al-Allamah al-Majlisi, may his grave be filled with fragrance, quotes the great scholar and thinker al-Shaykh Baha al-Din al-Amili (*r*) as having said,

> There is no doubt that when anyone performs good deeds, like fasting, night vigils, etc., he feels some kind of joy and pleasure within him. This pleasure and joy, if it is on account of the feeling that God Almighty has conferred on him favor and grace, which caused him to perform such acts of piety, while he is afraid of their loss and is anxious about their disappearance, and asks God Almighty for their continuity and abundance-this kind of exultation and gladness is not *ujb*. But if the exultation and pride is felt on account of the belief that he is the doer of such deeds and that it is he who possesses all such good qualities, and if he glorifies his own deeds with confidence in his goodness, considering himself to be free from all faults and vices, it reaches such a point that one believes that he is conferring some favor upon God in performing these deeds. This feeling of exultation and pride is *ujb*.

In my opinion, this definition of *ujb* is correct, but the deeds and actions referred to should be considered to include the external as well as the internal acts, and at the same time to apply both to good and bad actions. Because, while affecting the bodily or external actions *ujb* also affects one's inner (mental and spiritual) actions also and corrupts them. In the same way as a virtuous person may become conceited and vain about his good deeds, so also the doer of wicked deeds may think highly of his qualities, and feel proud of himself on their account. The tradition explicitly mentions both of them, as they are frequently ignored by a majority of men. We shall discuss them in the course of our discourse.

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[1] For maintaining readability, (*r*) which is an acronym for "*Radiyallahu anhu*(*m*)" is used throughout the book to denote "May God have mercy upon him/them."

This should also be remembered that the delight which is considered to be different from *ujb* and is reckoned among praiseworthy qualities, is according to its specific nature, as will be explained in the subsequent discussion.

*ujb* has various degrees, as is also indicated by the *hadith*; the following are some of them:

*First Degree: ujb* with regard to faith and belief in true doctrines; its opposite is the *ujb* in *kufr* (infidelity), *shirk* (polytheism), and fallacious creeds.

*Second Degree:* The *ujb* in good traits and qualities, as opposed to the *ujb* in moral vices and ugly qualities.

*Third Degree:* The *ujb* in pious deeds and good actions, as opposed to the *ujb* in abominable deeds and repulsive acts.

There are certain other degrees also, but they are not so significant as to be put in a separate class; we shall, by the help of the Almighty, discuss these three degrees of *ujb*, their causes, the ways of their remedy and cure.

## *UJB* OF THE FAITHFUL

Among the above-mentioned states of *ujb*, some of them can be clearly detected if one tries to discover them and pays a little attention and is vigilant; but some others, being very subtle and concealed, cannot be detected unless one is carefully critical of oneself and minutely analyzes one's deeds and actions. Certain stages are more dangerous and fatal than the other stages.

The first and foremost stage which is the extreme and most fatal kind of *ujb* is a state in which the person believes to have conferred a favor on his Supreme Benefactor, the King of kings, by having faith in Him, or by performing the duties enjoined by Him. He imagines that through his belief he has caused the boundaries of the kingdom of Heaven to expand, or he has contributed to the splendor and magnificence of the Religion of Truth by having faith in Him. He thinks that by propagating and disseminating His message, preaching His *Shariah*, His laws or His doctrine, or by enjoining good behavior and forbidding evil conduct or by implementing the *hudud* prescribed by Him, or by his sermons from the pulpit or his prayers in the niche, he is imparting a certain splendor and glory to His religion. Or he also may think that by joining the congregation of Muslims, or by holding the

mourning ceremonies to commemorate the tragedy of Imam al-Husayn's martyrdom, he is glorifying the religion and hence doing a favor to God, to the Martyred Imam (a), and to the Prophet (s). Though he would not reveal it openly, but in his heart of hearts he may think in this manner. In the same way, while serving the creatures of God in matters prescribed or recommended by the religion –like giving of obligatory and recommended alms, helping and protecting the weak and the destitute– he thinks that he is putting them under obligation. Sometimes this feeling of doing a favor to them is so concealed that it is not known to the person himself (the subject of doing of favor to God by men and doing of favor to men by God has been discussed in detail in the second *hadith*).

At the second level is the state in which an individual is exultant in his heart taking a coquettish air before God. This attitude is different from the one of conferring a favor on God, though many people see no difference between these two states. In this state the individual considers himself as a favorite of God, and includes himself in the clan of the saintly and among those nearest to God. If he hears the names of saintly persons, of those near to God or those captivated by Divine love, he associates himself with them in his heart, although, overtly he makes a simulation of humility and tries to project an opposite image of himself.

In order to make credible his assumed role, he may act against his real belief in such a way, which appears to negate it, but in fact posits it by its very negation. If any misfortune comes to him, he blows trumpet of **البَلاءُ لِلوَلاءِ** (lit. 'misfortune in exchange for friendship', which implies that the saintly are beset in hardships). Those people who claim being guides of others, *urafa*, mystics, and ascetics are susceptible to its dangers more than other people.

In the next state, the individual considers himself worthy of being rewarded by God Almighty in return for his faith, good behavior, and good deeds, and considers it obligatory on God to befriend him in this world and grant him higher stations in the Hereafter. He counts himself among the true believers and considers himself to be a pure, innocent, and pious being. Whenever a pious person is praised in his absence, he believes that even if God where to adjudge him with justice, he also would deserve to be rewarded. And sometimes, with utter shamelessness and brazenness, he dares to speak in such terms emphatically. If a misfortune befalls him, or he faces any adversities, he complains about the ways of God in his heart and

questions the justness of His actions that causes sufferings for the pious, the sincere, and the truthful, and showers His kindness and generosity upon the hypocrites (*munafiqun*). He nurses the sentiments of resentment against God inside his heart, while apparently expressing the sense of gratification and satisfaction. He shifts the responsibility of his misfortunes to the Supreme Benefactor, and pretends to be happy and contented with His will and Judgment outwardly. And when he hears that God smites the believers in this world, he consoles his heart without knowing the fact that the *munafiqun* are also smitten, and that every individual who is smitten is not a believer.

In the other stage of *ujb* the individual considers himself as superior to others, and regards himself as better than other human beings. He considers himself to be more pious than others and considers his own faith to be sounder than that of other believers and immaculate. He considers himself to be more perfect and unfailing than others in the observance of the *wajibat* (compulsory duties) and the *muharramat* (prohibited things). He thinks himself to be more regular than others in the observance of *mustahabbat* (recommended religious precepts) and more regular in joining the Friday prayer congregation and other ceremonies and rites. He considers himself to be superior to others and treats others as imperfect and insignificant beings. He views them disdainfully in his heart, or treats them with contempt. He excludes every individual from Divine grace and mercy, and considers them a right belonging to himself or to some people like him. The person who has reached this stage comes to a point when he denies whatever virtue he perceives in others and is disposed to regard its presence in others as disputable. Somehow he suspects the sincerity of their virtues in his heart and considers his own deeds as free from any kind of fault. He underrates others' good deeds, but if he himself performs those deeds he magnifies them. He is sensitive to others' errors, but overlooks his own faults.

These are some of the signs and symptoms of *ujb* though one may be unaware of their presence in oneself. There are certain other stages of *ujb* also which I did not mention, and there might be some others of which I am, unavoidably, unaware.

## THE *UJB* OF THE FAITHLESS

The bad deeds of unbelievers, hypocrites, polytheists, atheists, villains, sinners, and transgressors occasionally reach such a point when they become proud of their evil deeds and think highly of themselves. They, on account of

their vicious beliefs and deeds, consider themselves to be men of liberal thinking and open minds, free from all fetters and bonds and free from superstitions. They consider themselves as men of courage and valor, link the faith and belief in God with superstition, and consider the observance of religious precepts as a kind of narrow-mindedness. They consider good character and moral behavior as signs of weakness of the personality. They look down on the performance of good deeds and observance of religious duties and rites as the signs of a weak mind and evidence of the lack of common sense. They regard themselves as free-men, who, for not believing in nonsensical superstitions and indifference to religious rules, are worthy of praise. Wicked and vicious qualities having sunk down their roots within the deep layers of their hearts, and their eyes and ears having become accustomed to those acts, and they having gained great charm and grace in their eyes, they consider them as accomplishments. As pointed out in the *hadith*, at one stage bad deeds appear to be good to the evil person and he perceives them as virtues. This is all allusion to the verse of the Quran, which says:

﴿أَفَمَنْ زُيِّنَ لَهُ سُوءُ عَمَلِهِ فَرَآهُ حَسَنًا.﴾

*And what of him, the evil of whose deeds has been decked out fair to him, so that he thinks them good?* (35:8)

The words **وَيَحْسَبُ أَنَّهُ يُحْسِنُ صُنْعاً** ('and he considers that he is doing something good') refer to the following verse:

﴿قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالًا. الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا. أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَلِقَائِهِ فَحَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ فَلَا نُقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَزْنًا.﴾

*Say: Shall We inform you who will be the greatest losers in their works? Those whose striving goes astray in the life of the world, while they think that they are doing something good. Those are they who disbelieve in the signs of their Lord and in the encounter with Him. Therefore their works have failed, and on the Day of Resurrection We shall not assign to them any weight.*
(18:103-5)

Such people, who are ignorant and negligent but consider themselves to

be learned and aware, are the most wretched of human beings, or rather the most wretched of creatures. Spiritual doctors are incapable of curing them. No admonition or advice can have any influence on them, but can even produce opposite results. They do not listen to any argument. They do not pay any heed to the guidance of the prophets (a), the arguments of the philosophers, and the teachings of the great sages. We should seek refuge in God from the mischief of the self, whose wiles draw men from sinfulness into infidelity and from infidelity into *ujb*. The self and the Devil make people accustomed to a sin by diminishing the gravity of that sin. When that vice sends out its roots into the heart, it appears to be a very ordinary and trivial thing to the person, who commits another sin bigger than the one with which he has become familiar. After committing this second sin repeatedly, it also casts away its gravity in his view and appears to be an ordinary thing, and he does not hesitate to commit a still bigger sin. In this way, step by step, all major sins become diminutive in his eyes, and the Divine laws of the *Shariah*, belittled by him, recede into insignificance. His evil deeds culminate in infidelity, apostasy, and *ujb*. We shall take up this subject later on.

## SNARES AND WILES OF THE DEVIL

In the same way as the victims of *ujb* (who think highly of themselves), by advancing step by step in transgression and sinfulness, ultimately reach the stage of apostasy, in the same way those affected by *ujb* in their devotional activities and worship also advance day by day from the lower stages of *ujb* to its higher levels. The snares and designs of Satan and the self are not haphazard, but according to a calculated plan. It is not possible that the Devil would induce a God-fearing person of a clean character to commit a sin like murder or fornication, nor would he provoke a person possessing an honest nature and a pure soul to commit theft or a highway robbery. It is not the case that from the very first day he will ask you to consider your good deeds as a favor done to God or to include yourself in the category of the Divine saints, His favorite servants, and those nearest to Him. In the beginning he starts at the bottom and in a low key. He steals into your heart and persuades you to be extremely careful and dedicated regarding the recommended duties (*mustahabbat*), prayers, and acts of piety. While you do this, he will turn your attention towards the sins of a certain sinner and will make you compare his deeds with your own. Then he will whisper into your ears that you have enough grounds, both on a rational as well as a religious

basis, to consider yourself superior to that person. Indeed your deeds will be the source of your redemption and that by the grace of God you are pious and pure and free from all vices. He achieves two things through these kind of insinuations: first, it inculcates a feeling of general distrusts regarding the creatures of God; second, it makes the person imbued with a feeling of self-satisfied conceit. Both of these qualities are destructive and the sources of various vices and evils.

At this juncture, you should tell your self and the Devil that it is possible that this person who is guilty of committing that sin may possess other good qualities unknown to you or might have performed certain good deeds for which God may bless him with His grace and mercy, and the light of his good deeds and good qualities may guide him and ultimately lead him to deliverance. Perhaps God Almighty has afflicted him with this sin, so as to protect him from *ujb*, which is worse than sin. It is said in a *hadith* of *al-Kafi:*

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: إِنَّ اللهَ عَلِمَ أَنَّ الذَّنْبَ خَيْرٌ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ مِنَ العُجْبِ، وَلَوْلا ذَلِكَ لَمَا ابْتُلِيَ مُؤْمِنٌ بِذَنْبٍ أَبَداً.

> Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a) said: Verily God Almighty knows that sin is better for a *mumin* (a true believer) than *ujb*. If it was not thus, He would not have afflicted any *mumin* with sin.[1]

Maybe on account of the same mistrust in others, my acts will lead me to a miserable life in the Hereafter. Our great master, the accomplished *arif*, Shahabadi –*ruhi fidah*[2]– used to say, 'Do not look down on even a *kafir* (non-believer) in your heart. It is possible that the divine light of his inner nature may lead him to faith and your rebuke and disdain may lead you towards a wretched life in the Hereafter. Of course to practice *al-amr bi'l-maruf wa'n-nahy an'l-munkar* (enjoining right conduct and forbidding bad behavior) is something different from the inner feeling of contempt.' He would even say, 'Never curse the unbelievers regarding whom it is not known that they will leave the world in the state of unbelief. If they leave the world as rightly-guided servants of God, their spiritual rectitude may prove

[1] *Al-Kafi*, vol. ii, p. 313.

[2] May my soul be his ransom

to be an obstruction in the way of your own spiritual advancement.' In any case, beware that the Devil and the carnal self make man enter the preliminary stages of *ujb*; and from this place, step by step, they slowly take him to higher stages of *ujb*, and in this way, in degrees, they lead man to the wretched state in which he thinks that he is conferring a favor on God by having faith in Him and performing virtuous deeds. This is the final stage of *ujb*.

## THE EVIL EFFECTS OF *UJB*

Know that *ujb* in itself is a destructive and dangerous vice which spoils the faith and the deeds. In answer to the question by the narrator of the tradition about *ujb* which corrupts human deeds, the Imam (a) mentions the *ujb* in faith as one of its forms. We have read in the previous tradition that *ujb* is considered by God Almighty to be something worse than sin, so much so that He makes a believer commit sin so that he may be saved from *ujb*. The Holy Prophet (*s*) has reckoned *ujb* as one of the greatest of spiritual dangers. In *al-amali* of al-Shaykh al-Saduq, Imam Ali (a) has been reported to have said:

**مَنْ دَخَلَهُ الْعُجْبُ هَلَكَ.**

> The one into whose heart *ujb* permeates is destined to be destroyed.

After death and in the purgatory (*barzakh*), the possessor of this evil experiences a dreadful loneliness, which is incomparable and unimaginable; in an advice given by the Prophet (*s*) before his death to Imam Ali (a). he says:

**وَلا وَحْدَةَ أَوْحَشُ مِنَ الْعُجْبِ.**

> No loneliness can be compared in dreadfulness to the one, which is the result of *ujb*.

Moses (a) asked Satan to tell him about the sin by means of which he infiltrates into the hearts of the progeny of Adam (a) and conquers them. Satan replied, it is the time when they feel *ujb* about themselves, overestimate their good deeds and the gravity of their sins becomes diminutive in their eyes.

God Almighty commanded David (a) to convey 'glad tiding to the sinners

and to terrify the pious.' David (a) asked God as to why he should convey glad tiding to sinners and frighten the pious. Replied God Almighty, 'Give glad tidings to the sinners that verily I accept their repentance and forgive their sins, and frighten and warn the pious that they should refrain from *ujb*. Verily there is not a single man who does not stand condemned if I bring him to account.'

I seek refuge in God from the rigors of His reckoning, which if applied would completely ruin the sincere servants of God and even those belonging to a higher station.

In his *al-Khisal*, *al*-Shaykh al-Saduq reports from Imam al-Sadiq (a) that he said: The Devil says: If I subdue the son of Adam in three things I do not care for whatever he may do, as his good deeds will not be accepted: (1) when he overestimates his good deeds, (2) is forgetful about his sins, and (3) when *ujb* permeates him.

Apart from the vices which belong to this vicious tree of *ujb*, about which you have read, there are a number of major sins and evil traits that are its products. When its roots permeate the human heart, they lead men to apostasy and *shirk*, and things even worse than these. One of those vices is the vice of belittling of one's sins. A person afflicted with *ujb* never cares to rectify himself; rather, he considers himself as a pious and virtuous person, and never thinks of purging himself from sins. The curtain of *ujb* and the thick veil of conceit prevents him from seeing his shortcomings. It is a great misfortune, which not only precludes him from achieving all kinds of perfections, but also afflicts him with all sorts of vices, leading him to eternal damnation. Even the doctors of the psyche are helpless in curing them. He has so much confidence in himself and in the deeds he performs that he thinks himself as independent of God Almighty, and does not care for His grace. In his limited mind, he considers God obliged to reward him. He imagines that he is worthy of being rewarded even if God were to reckon his deeds with justice. God willing, we shall take up this matter again later.

## CONTEMPT OF OTHERS

Among other vices present in the person who is afflicted with *ujb* is that of viewing others with contempt. He considers their deeds as insignificant, however superior they may be to his own. This is also one of the ways of human destruction, and a peril on the path of true humanness.

## TEMPTATION TO *RIYA*

Another of the evil effects of *ujb* is that man becomes inclined towards *riya* (ostentation, hypocrisy). Because, when a person considers his deeds insignificant and regards himself as morally imperfect and his faith as of no consequence, then, he would not be proud of himself, or his qualities and deeds. Considering himself and everything that is done by him as deformed and unworthy, he will not make a display of them; soiled and ugly goods are not put up for show in a prestigious market. But, since, he perceives himself as a perfect human and his own deeds as good and worthy, he is encouraged to make a show of them, and hence behave so imprudently. The vices which have been mentioned in the second tradition about *riya* are applicable to *ujb* also.

## THE FACTOR OF PRIDE

Another ill effect of this vice is that it manifests itself in the form of another fatal disease that is, the sin of pride (of which we shall have to say more later) and other vices, which are direct or indirect products of it. A full treatment of all of them would make our discussion lengthy; it is enough to mention it that a person afflicted with *ujb* should know that this vice sows the seeds of many other vices and serves as the source of such offences, each one of which is enough for earning everlasting damnation by itself. If one tries to properly understand these vices, and studies the traditions and teachings handed down by the Prophet (*s*), or the Imams of his household (a), he will realize the necessity of rectifying his self, and will seek to get rid of this vice before, God forbid, he carries it with him to the next world. If this happens, once his eyes are closed on this world and opened to world of *barzakh* and, thereafter, to the Day of Resurrection, he will see that the persons who committed major sins are better off than him. He will see that God Almighty has immersed them in the ocean of His grace and mercy ‘for the remorse and penitence that they expressed, or for the sake of the trust and confidence that they had in the grace and compassion of the Almighty; whereas this poor fellow, since he had considered himself as not in need of His grace and had believed himself, in the depth of his being, to be above needing His compassion and mercy, God Almighty has dealt with him rigorously in regard to his account, and as he himself wished his account is being examined in the scales of justice. God Almighty will show him that he not only did not perform any worship for His sake, but also that his works of

devotion and piety only took him away from God and have removed him away from his goal. Not only his faith and deeds have been invalid, but they have also served as the cause of eternal damnation and painful chastisement in hell. God forbid, lest God Almighty judges anybody with the criteria of His justice, because, as mentioned previously, not a single individual, from the first to the last, will find any way of redemption. The prayers and supplications of His chosen servants and the infallible Imams (a) are replete with the confessions of their failure to do justice to the demands of the worship and the service of Lord. While the most perfect of all creatures and the man nearest to God (i.e. the Prophet [s]) utters:

مَا عَرَفْنَاكَ حَقَّ مَعْرِفَتِكَ وَمَا عَبَدْنَاكَ حَقَّ عِبَادَتِكَ.

> We did not know You as You deserve to be known. We did not worship You as You deserve to be worshipped.

what will others do? Of course, they were aware of His greatness and they knew the relation between the contingent and the Necessary Being perfectly well. They knew that if they spent their lives in His worship, service, and praise, they would not be able to thank Him for His favors, let alone paying the proper tribute due to His Essence and Attributes.

They knew that no thing does possess anything of its own. Life, power, knowledge and other accomplishments are shadows of His attributes. Every contingent being is absolutely poor in every respect, a dependent shadow not an independent 'thing'. What merits does a contingent being possess that it could seek to market them? What power does it possess to make a display of it? They (the Prophet and the Imams) possess the knowledge of God; they have the cognition of His Attributes of beauty and grandeur. They are the people who have realized, with certainty, their own abjectness, imperfection, and weakness and the perfection of the Necessary Being, through immediate knowledge. It is we, wretched creatures, whose vision is blotted because of the thick veils of ignorance, folly, neglect, and conceit, and whose faculties of intellect, hearing, sight, and other senses are shrouded with veils of inward and outward sins, who behave with pretensions in front of the Almighty and consider ourselves as independent beings.

O you, ephemeral, contingent being! You, who are forgetful of your own self and are oblivious of the relation between you and your Creator. O you unfortunate dependent being! You have forgotten your duty towards the King of kings! This ignorance and foolishness on our part is responsible for all our

misfortunes and has engulfed us in the midst of all these woes and disasters. There is a source of all these evils. The source of contamination is the fountain itself. We have lost our sense of perception and our hearts have become lifeless. This is the root cause, of all our afflictions, and yet we are not worried about the cure either.

God Almighty, grant us the capacity to realize our responsibilities. Grant us a share of the light of Your knowledge with which You filled the hearts of Your *urafa* and *awliya* Grant us the comprehension of the realm of Thy power and Thy kingdom, and guide us to discover our weaknesses and faults. Unfold the mystery of the meaning of (**الحَمْدُ للهِ رَبِّ العَالَمِينَ**) –All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord of the worlds– to us, wretched beings, who ascribe all the praiseworthy attributes to the creatures. Make it known to us that none of the praiseworthy attributes belongs to any created being . Reveal to us the truth of:

﴿مَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنْ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَفْسِكَ.﴾

*Whatever of good befalleth thee* (*O man*), *it is from Allah, and whatever evil befalleth thee it is from thyself*. (4: 79)

Inscribe the principle of *tawhid* (unity of the Divine Being) on the crude tablets of our hardened heart. We are the people of dark realms who languish behind several veils, wavering between apostasy and hypocrisy. We are conceited and egoistic. Purge away the evil of self- love and the love of mundane things from our hearts and convert us into Your lovers and worshippers:

﴿إِنَّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ.﴾

*Verily, Thou art able to do all things*.

## SELF-LOVE AS THE SOURCE OF *UJB*

The vice of *ujb* is the product of self-love; since the human being is plagued with the evil of self-love, it is the source of all human faults and moral vices. It is on account of this self-love that man overvalues his trivial deeds and hence includes himself in the category of the saintly and the nearest to God. Because of it, he not only considers himself applaudable and commendable on the basis of those paltry deeds, but sometimes even reckons his wicked deeds as good ones. If he perceives moral goodness and piety in others more than himself, he not only never gives any importance to them,

but tries to project them in grim colors as far as possible. He is disposed to see a kind of goodness even in his own wicked deeds, and tends to paint them in glowing colors. He scorns other creatures of God in his heart and views them cynically, while he contemplated himself with optimism, having a very high opinion of himself. It is on account of this same self-love that he hopes a trivial act of his, and that too tainted with one thousand defilements, to be worthy of being rewarded by God.

It is better if today we reflect upon our good deeds, and rationally evaluate our worships. We should try to judge them justly, and see whether we deserve to be rewarded and praised on their basis, or if we should be reproached, punished, and condemned because of them. And if God Almighty were to deliver us into the flames of His wrath on account of these deeds, which are good and virtuous in our own view, is He justified or not in doing so?

Now I make you arbiter to judge with justice the following matter after deliberation and profound thinking. My question is that if the Holy Prophet (*s*), whose truthfulness is confirmed, were to say to you, 'It makes no difference in afterlife whether you worship God throughout your life, obey His commands, and resist lusts and carnal desires, or if you lead a life violating His commands and following your wishes and sensual desires. This behavior of yours will not affect your station in the Hereafter. In both cases you will attain salvation and will be sent to Paradise and saved from His chastisement. It will not make any difference whether you offer prayers or whether you indulge in fornication and sin. However, the good pleasure of God Almighty lies in this that you should worship Him, praise Him and thank Him, and resist your sensual desires in this world, although you will not be rewarded for it.' Were you offered this option, would you choose to be His worshipper or a sinner? Would you resist your carnal desires and forbid yourself from indulging in lusts for the sake of His good pleasure, or not? And would you still adhere to the *mustahabbat*, the Friday and the congregational prayer, or would you become immersed in luxuries, play, amusements, and lusts? I request you to answer justly, without any self-assumption and hypocrisy. As to myself and others like me, let me tell you, we would have been among the sinners, neglecting our duties towards Him and hankering after our sensual appetites.

From this, we come to the conclusion that all our deeds serve as the means for satisfying our desires and gratifying the carnal appetites. We are

the worshippers of our flesh. We give up one pleasure for the sake of a bigger one. Our desired goal, our relentless hope is to widen the scope of sensual achievements. *Salat*, which is a means of acquiring nearness to Him, we perform in the hope of the company of the houris of Paradise. Our worship is not aimed at acquiring nearness to the Almighty. It has nothing to do with the obedience of His command either, and is thousands of miles away from the good pleasure of God.

You, poor fellow, ignorant of the Divine teachings, you who cannot comprehend anything except your own bestial motives, you who take pride in your resorting to His remembrance, chanting of His Name, observance of the obligatory and recommended religious duties, avoidance of prohibited and abominable things, you who take recourse in refined morals and abstain from the unlawful and the abominable, put in the scales of justice all the acts that you have performed for obtaining sensual ends, and for the purpose of reclining on seats studded with rubies in the Paradise, in the midst of cheerful and charming rewards of Paradise, wearing silk and brocade, and occupying magnificent mansions therein and for realizing your hopes -is it just to think that all these actions, which are performed for the sake of satisfying our ego and the fulfillment of the self, are being performed for the sake of God and for His adulation alone? You, who are performing your deeds in the hope of receiving fair rewards, are you different in any respect from a laborer who toils for wages but says that he works solely for the master? Are you not a liar when you say that you perform prayers for the sake of God?

Is your *salat* meant for the sake of acquiring nearness to God, or for the sake of the company of the houris of Paradise and for sensual ends? Let me state openly without any reservations that all such prayers that we perform are considered by *urafa* and the friends of God as equivalent to major sins. You, wretched creature, you act against the good pleasure of God Almighty in the presence of the archangels, and the worships that are meant for making an ascension near to Him, you are misusing them for satisfying your carnal self; yet you do not feel any sense of shame for the lies uttered in front of the Almighty and His archangels during your prayers. And as if this were not enough, you made several accusations, thinking as if you were obliging God, exulting in your *ujb*, and not feeling any sense of shame or regret while doing all this! What is the difference between this kind of worship performed by you and me, and the sinful acts of the sinners, the extreme form of which is *riya*? *Riya* is a kind of *shirk*, and its ugliness and gravity lies in worship being not for the sake of God, not meant for God. All our worships and

devotional exercises are sheer *shirk*, which does not contain a speck of sincerity. The aim of earning the good pleasure of God does not play even a partial role in it, but the only motive is gratification of lust and service of the stomach.

My friend, beware that the prayer performed for the sake of a feminine mate, whether this-worldly or other-worldly, is not the prayer performed for God. The prayer, which is performed for the attainment of worldly benefits or for acquiring the other-worldly rewards is not for God. If so, where is the room for self-pride and conceit? What right do you have for looking down upon the creatures of God and for counting yourself as someone of consequence in the court of the Almighty? Wretched man, you deserve punishment for this prayer and devotion of yours and for it you deserve to be chained by the seventy cubit chain. Why consider yourself as a person deserving a reward then?

Why procure another chastisement for yourself by continuing in this absurd expectation and by persisting in *ujb*? Perform the duties assigned to you properly and keep in your mind that your worship is not purely for the sake of God; and if God Almighty sends you to heaven by His mercy and compassion, remember that He has given a waiver to His servants for a certain kind of *shirk* in view of their infirmity. By means of His forgiving compassion, He covers their sins with a concealing screen. Do not let this screen to be ripped off and the curtain of His remission to be raised from the face of those vices, which we wrongfully call, worship. God forbid, if that waiver were withdrawn and our deeds are adjudged according to the standards of justice, remember this that our false worships are not less fouler than the mortal sins of the sinners. Earlier we referred to a tradition narrated by Thiqat al-Islam al-Kulayni, in his book *al-Kafi*, on the authority of Imam al-Sadiq (a); here I am copying a part of that verbatim in order to draw upon its blessing (*barakah*)*:*

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: قَالَ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لِدَاوُدَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: يَا دَاوُدُ بَشِّرِ الْمُذْنِبِينَ وَأَنْذِرِ الصِّدِّيقِينَ. قَالَ: كَيْفَ أُبَشِّرُ الْمُذْنِبِينَ وَأُنْذِرُ الصِّدِّيقِينَ؟ قَالَ: يَا دَاوُدُ بَشِّرِ الْمُذْنِبِينَ بِأَنِّي أَقْبَلُ التَّوْبَةَ وَأَعْفُو عَنِ الذَّنْبِ، وَأَنْذِرِ الصِّدِّيقِينَ أَنْ لا يُعْجَبُوا بِأَعْمَالِهِمِ، فَإِنَّهُ لَيْسَ عَبْدٌ يَتَعَجَّبُ بِالْحَسَنَاتِ إِلاّ هَلَكَ.

> Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a) reports from the Prophet (*S*) that he said: God Almighty said to David (a), "O David give good news unto the sinners and warn the righteous." Said David (a), "How should I give good news unto the sinners and warn the righteous?" Said the Almighty, "O David, give good news to the sinners that I accept their repentance, and warn the righteous that they should not have *ujb* (self admiration) for their acts, for there is no servant who does not stand doomed when I take an account of his deeds (and deserve chastisement, since, according to the requirements of justice, a man with all his worship cannot thank God properly even for one of His favors).

While the righteous, who are free from sins, deserve to be condemned after a fair trial, what will be the fate of people like you and me? And that too if our deeds be pure and free from worldly *riya*; a verboten quality, of which there is very little chance. Now be proud if there is an occasion for being proud and feeling *ujb*; but if you realize that it is an occasion for being ashamed and hanging the head in shame and making confession of our sin after every worship, then repent before the Almighty for uttering those solemn lies, and for falsely assigning those virtues to ourselves. Does it not call for repentance when you make this declaration in front of God. While standing for prayer:

﴿وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِي لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا أَنَا مِنْ الْمُشْرِكِينَ. إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ.﴾

*I have turned my face, in sincerity and submission, towards Him who created the heavens and earth, and I am not of the mushrikun* (*those who include others while worshipping God, i.e., polytheists*). *Verily, my prayer and my worship, my living and my dying, are for Allah, the Lord of the Worlds*.

Is your face really turned towards the Creator of the heaven and earth? Are you really a *'Muslim'* and free from the dirt of *shirk*? Is your prayer and worship, your living and dying really for God? Shouldn't we feel some shame while uttering this sentence in our prayer:

﴿الحَمْدُ للهِ رَبِّ العَالَمِينَ.﴾

*All praise be to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.*

Do you sincerely consider all laudable qualities to be derived from God, while you pay tribute not only to His creatures but also to His enemies? Is it not a lie to apparently admit that God is **رَبُّ العَالَمِينَ** (The Lord of the Worlds), while practically you subscribe to the authority and lordship of the other-than-God?

Is there any inkling of shame and repentance in your heart, while you utter:

﴿إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ.﴾

*Thee alone we worship*; *Thee alone we ask for help?*

Do you truly worship God, or worship your own flesh? Do you actually seek God, or aspire for the houris? Do you seek help from God alone? In your deeds, do you consider God alone? When you go to perform *Hajj* of the *Bayt Allah* (the Holy *kabah*) is God the only goal and end? And is the Master of the House your only pursuit, as the poet says:

**وَمَا حُبُّ الدِّيَارِ شَغَفْنَ قَلْبِي وَلَكِنْ حُبُّ مَنْ سَكَنَ الدِّيَارا**

It is not the dwelling that attracts my heart,
But he who dwells in it draws my heart.

Are you in search of God, and desire for His beatific vision? Do you hold the *majalis* (mourning ceremonies for Imam al-Husayn [a]) and beat your head and breast for his sake, or for the sake of the fulfillment of your wishes and desires? Is it not your selfish desires, which motivate you to hold *majalis*, to join congregational prayers, and to perform devotional rituals?

My brother, be cautious regarding the guiles of the self and Satan, who do not want your pieties to be taintless, and if they might be accepted by God by His grace, despite their taint, the Devil and the carnal self do not desire them to reach their final destination. Through misplaced *ujb* and improper pride they bring all your deeds to nothing, and the little benefit that you aimed at is also not obtained. Having lost His good pleasure, even the hopes of houris will come to nothing. Now having lost everything eternal damnation in the flames of hell does not seem distant. By means of your faulty, rotten actions tainted with *riya*, *sumah*, and a thousand other vices, each one of which is

enough for preventing our deeds from being accepted, you imagined to have done God a favor, having become His beloved servant. Poor fellow, you, who cannot comprehend the state of His beloved servants and the fire that is kindled in their hearts, you unlucky wretch with your little knowledge of their heartfelt sincerity and the bright radiance emanating from their glorious deeds, do you think that their deeds are similar to yours and mine? Do you think that the *salat* of Amir al-Muminin Ali (a) differed from ours only in the manner of uttering وَلا الضَّالِّينَ in the correct pronunciation of some words, or in the prolongation of prostrations and profusion of *rakaat*, prayers, and supplication? Do you imagine that my prayer differs from his only in the number of *rakah*s a few hundred every night? Are the prayers and the supplications of Imam Sayyid al-Sajidin (a) (the Fourth Imam) similar to the mutterings of yours and mine? Do you think he moaned and sobbed for the sake of houris or pomegranates or pears of Paradise like us? I swear by Him –and indeed it is a great oath– that even if all of us come together and try to say one (لا إِلَهَ إِلا اللهُ) –There is no god except God– in the manner of Amir al-Muminin (a), we will not be able to do so. Dust be upon my head, I and my little knowledge of the high station of Imam Ali (a)! I swear by the station of Ali ibn Abi Talib (a) that even if all the archangels and all the prophets of God, except the Seal of the Prophets (*s*), who is the lord of Ali (a) and all others, if they try to utter a single *takbir* (i.e. *Allahu Akbar*, 'God is very great') of Ali 's, they will not be able to do it. The inner state of their hearts is known only to themselves and is unknown to others .

My friend, do not babble so much about God. Do not exaggerate your love for God. O *arif!* O Sufi! O philosopher! O *mujahid!* O ascetic! O *faqih!* O believer! O sage! You poor ensnared wretches! You unfortunate creatures entangled in the snares of the self and its desires! You helpless creatures bewildered in the perplexities of false hopes, aspirations and self-love! You, who are all wretched, being thousands of miles removed from true godliness and love of God. Do not have such a good opinion of yourselves. Do not be so boastful and proud of yourselves. Ask your heart whether it is in search of God or whether it is in love with itself. Is it a monotheist (*muwahhid*) and devotee of the One, or a *mushrik* (polytheist) or a dualist? What for this *ujb*, then? What does this exultation mean? Even if, supposedly, these acts of yours fulfill all the conditions and requirements, and are free from *riya*, *shirk*, *ujb* and other vices, isn't their goal acquirement of sensual ends? What merit do they possess that you consider them to be worthy of being presented before the angels? These acts are to be concealed from the sights of people.

These acts, which are exercises in impudence and vulgarity, shouldn't we be shameful of them and think of doing something to cover up these abominable performances?

God! We seek refuge in Thee from the mischief of Satan and the guiles of *al-nafs al-ammarah* (the carnal self). You Yourself protect us from their wiles for the sake of Muhammad (*s*) and his Progeny (a).

4

# Fourth *Hadith*: PRIDE (*KIBR*)

**بِالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلى مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عِيسَى، عَنْ يُونُسَ، عَنْ أَبَانَ، عَنْ حَكِيمٍ قَالَ: سَأَلْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ عَنْ أَدْنَى الإِلْحَادِ، فَقَالَ: إِنَّ الكِبَرَ أَدْنَاهُ.**

Muhammad ibn Yaqub (al-Kulayni) from Ali ibn Ibrahim, from Muhammad ibn Isa, from Yunus, from Aban, from Hakim; who says: I asked Abu Abd-Allah (Imam al-Sadiq) (a) as to the lowest degree of *ilhad* (apostasy). He answered, "Verily *kibr* (pride) is its lowest degree."[1]

## WHAT IS *KIBR*?

*Kibr* is the name of a psychic state in which a person feels a sense of superiority and behaves high-handedly with others. Its signs are discernible in his actions and its symptoms are clearly noticed by others by which they know that he is proud. *Kibr* is something different from *ujb*, and, as mentioned earlier, this vice is the offspring and fruit of the tree of *ujb*. *ujb* consists of self-love and conceit, and the meaning of *kibr* is to consider oneself superior to others. When someone perceives a merit in himself and is overcome by a sense of pleasure, exultation, and vanity, that state is called *ujb*. And when he considers others to be lacking in the imagined merit within himself, he perceives himself to be superior. This perception of superiority and supremacy over others causes in him a state of vanity, which is pride.

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[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi* (Tehran), vol. iii (Arabic text with Persian translation by Haj Sayyed Javad Mostafavi), pp. 421-422.

*Kibr*, in this sense, is an inner state, and when its effects are reflected in his behavior and his speech, it is called *takabbur*. In short, the self-indulgent person becomes self-seeking, and his self seeking tendency grows into self-love, and when this self-love is filled to the brim it manifests itself as haughtiness and high-handed treatment of others.

Here, it is necessary to mention that the psychic traits, whether vices and infirmities or virtues and accomplishments, are extremely complicated and complex matters. It becomes extremely difficult to discern one from the other. On account of this, there is often a great difference of opinion even among great scholars in precisely defining them and it may be impossible to give a faultless definition of inner states. Therefore, it is better for us to leave this matter to the inner conscience of individuals and not to entangle ourselves in the maze of finding precise definitions, and turn attention to our main purpose.

## KINDS AND DEGREES OF *KIBR*

It should be noted that there are different degrees of *kibr*, similar to the stages and degrees that were mentioned during the discussion about *ujb*. However, there were some stages that could be mentioned with regard to *ujb*, but since they were not so important in that context we abstained from mentioning them. Yet it is important to mention those stages in the context of *kibr*. But at first let us note that the stages of *kibr*, similar to those of *ujb*, are six in number:

1. *Kibr* on account of possessing true faith and belief.
2. As opposed to it is the pride in invalid faith and false belief .
3. Pride on account of good qualities and praiseworthy attributes.
4. Pride in moral vices and undesirable qualities.
5. Pride in one's righteous deeds and devotional exercises.
6. Pride in sinful and wicked deeds.

It is possible that each one of these stages may be caused by the equivalent degree of *ujb* present in one's soul, or it may have some other reason, which we shall discuss afterwards. For the time being, of our main concern here are the external factors as sources of pride –like the pride in one's family, descent, wealth, status, position, and the like. Following that, God willing, we shall discuss the evils of this vice and their remedies,

according to my ability. And I implore God's help and assistance in making it effective upon others as well as my own self.

There are certain other aspects and levels of *kibr* when considered in another perspective. They are: (1) *kibr* towards God; (2) *kibr* towards His prophets, messengers, and *awliya* (*3*) *kibr* in regard to the Divine Commandments, which also amounts to *kibr* towards God; (4) *kibr* towards the creatures of God, which, too, according to the *urafa*, amounts to *kibr* towards God.

As to the *kibr* towards God, it is the most abominable, the most destructive, and the highest degree of pride, and is present in infidels, those who contest God's authority, and those who make claims to divinity. Sometimes its traces are seen among some men of faith as well (whose description is not appropriate here). This kind of *kibr* signifies the extreme of ignorance and the absence of knowledge about one's limits and the majesty of the Necessary Being.

As to the *kibr* towards the prophets and *awliya* of God, it was an attitude, which was more prevalent during their own days, and the Quran reports about it in this verse:

﴿أَنُؤْمِنُ لِبَشَرَيْنِ مِثْلِنَا؟﴾

*Shall we put faith in two mortals like ourselves?* (23:47)

And someone from his people is reported to have said (about the Prophet [ *S* ]):

﴿لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ هَذَا الْقُرْآنُ عَلَى رَجُلٍ مِنْ الْقَرْيَتَيْنِ عَظِيمٍ.﴾

*If only this Quran had been revealed to some great man (of the two towns.* [*i.e. Makkah and al-Ta'if*] (43:31

During the early days of Islam, the instances of such pride towards the *awliya* of God were very frequent, examples of which are still manifested in the behavior of some professors of Islam.

As to the *kibr* towards the commands of God, it is seen among some sinners, such as those who abstain from performing *Hajj* as they do not consider the dress of ihram appropriate for themselves; abstain from *salat* because they consider the state of prostration as not in accordance with their position and status. Such kind of pride is sometimes seen among persons of faith, devotees, and scholars who abstain from *adhan* on account of it.

Similarly there are those who would not accept a word of truth if it comes from anybody belonging to the same status as themselves, or lower. Sometimes it happens that one hears something from his colleagues or friends, and vehemently rejects it and derides the speaker, but he readily agrees with it when it is uttered by someone superior to him in religious or worldly status. It is even possible that he would accept it with the same seriousness with which he had rejected it earlier. This person is not a seeker of truth, but his pride has drawn a curtain over the truth, to which his obsequiousness has blinded and deafened him. It is the same kind of pride, which prevents a scholar from teaching a certain subject or a certain text because he considers it below his dignity, or dissuades him from giving lessons to persons devoid of any outwardly significant position. Or one may stand away from a small mosque attended by a small number of persons for the same reasons despite knowing that the pleasure of God lies in his doing so. Sometimes the traces of pride are so subtle that the person who is afflicted by this evil, unless he is careful and serious about correcting himself, cannot know that his actions testify to the presence of *kibr* in his character.

As to the *kibr* towards the creatures of God, *kibr* towards men of divine knowledge and scholars is the worst form of it, and its evil effects are graver and its harms more serious than of any other type of *kibr*. Of this category of *kibr* is the pride, which avoids the company of poor people and seeks out prominence in gatherings and meetings, and displays itself on the road and in one's carriage. Yet this evil is prevalent and inflicts all the classes of society; from the elite to the class of *ulama* and scholars of *hadith*; from the rich to the poor and deprived classes; no one can elude it, except for those whom God Almighty saves. Sometimes it is so difficult to discern between humbleness and humility aimed at popularizing oneself, and between pride and self-containedness, that one should seek refuge in God Almighty, that He may guide us on the right path. If one is eager to reform oneself and tries to reach one's goal, the Holy God guides him with His infinite mercy on the right path and eases one's journey on this path.

## THE CAUSES OF *KIBR*

There are various causes of *kibr*, but all of them derive from the delusion, which occurs when men imagine themselves to possess some kind of excellence. This illusion leads to *ujb*, which, blending with self-love, conceals others' merits and virtues from their eyes. When that happens, the

afflicted individual believes others to be inferior to himself and begins to cherish a feeling of self-esteem in his heart, as well as manifesting a similar demeanor. For instance, one may find an individual among the *ulama* and *urafa* who considers himself to be a visionary and a man of mystic knowledge and insight, classing himself in the category of saintly persons with a high record of good deeds. Such persons make an absurdly ostentatious show of their superiority over others, dismissing the *hukama* and philosophers as nuts, the *fuqaha* and *muhaddithun* as superficial bums, and all ordinary people as subhuman creatures and beasts. They scorn and look down on all the creatures of God; while claiming to follow the dictum of **فناء في الله** and **بقاء في الله** they beat the drum of their truth-seeking, whereas the Divine teachings require of them to contemplate the creatures of God with goodwill and optimism when the least knowledge of God demands that he should not scorn these manifestations of His Glory and Beauty. He himself would affirm this while speaking about Divine teachings, pronouncing something, which contradicts his own inner state. Yet this happens because those teachings have not penetrated his heart. The poor fellow has not attained even the station of a true believer, yet he often speaks of *irfan*. Although *irfan* has not touched him, he claims to have realized the ultimate Truth.

Among philosophers, too, there are such persons who consider themselves to be in possession of the proofs and knowledge of certain truth. They class themselves among men of certain knowledge of God who possess confirmed belief in angels and scriptures; yet they look down on others in disdain. They dismiss all other sciences as fiction and all human beings as defective in faith and knowledge, viewing them with haughty contempt in their hearts as well as their arrogant demeanor, whereas the knowledge of the majesty of the Lord and the utter destitution of the ephemeral creature (that he is), necessitates an opposite behavior. The truly wise (*hukama*) are those whose knowledge of the secrets of human origin and end makes them modest and humble-God Almighty had bestowed upon Luqman the gift of wisdom; yet the Quran reports of him as saying to his son:

﴿وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ﴾

*Turn not thy cheek in scorn toward people, nor walk with pertness on the earth. Verily, God loveth not any*

*braggart boaster*. (31:18)

Sometimes such people are found among those who claim to be mystic masters and guides of consummate inner purity, yet, they treat the common people with pride and look down on *fuqaha*, *ulama* and their followers, and speak disparagingly of philosophers and *hukama*. They consider everyone except themselves and their associates as doomed creatures. Since they themselves lack in knowledge and learning, they consider knowledge a thorn in the path of spiritual journey, and those who possess it are considered by them as devils who mislead the wayfarers in their inward journey, although their own claims to high spiritual station would tend to contradict such a viewpoint. A spiritual guide of people must himself be free from all kinds of mortal and destructive sins and qualities; one who claims the capacity to guide the astray should have transcended the narrowness of mundane existence and its attachments, being absorbed in the beatific vision of His Glory. He should not be haughty and disdainful towards the creatures of God.

Also among the class of *fuqaha*, scholars of *fiqh* and *hadith* and the students of these sciences sometimes such people are seen who view other people with scorn and treat them high-handedly, considering themselves to be worthy of every praise and appreciation. They think that everybody should obey their commands without any hesitation, and apply the following criterion to themselves:

﴿لَا يُسْأَلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْأَلُونَ.﴾

*He* (*i.e. God*) *will not be questioned as to that which He does, but they will be questioned*. (21:23)

Except for themselves and a handful of persons like themselves, they do not consider anybody to be fit to enter Paradise. Whenever something is spoken about other field of learning, they dismiss it with scorn. They unhesitatingly reject every other discipline except their own field –of which they possess very little knowledge– considering it not only unworthy of study but destructive. They denounce the scholars of other sciences due to their own ignorance. They present their own views as if their religiosity necessitates such a contempt, whereas knowledge and religion are free from such prejudices. The *Shariah* forbids men from speaking about anything without having its proper knowledge, and considers it obligatory to respect every Muslim. This wretched fellow without possessing enough knowledge

of religion or sciences is sinful of doing something, which is against the scripture of God and the teachings of His Prophet (s). Yet he moulds his ideas into the form of religion; though the conduct and behavior of all the great scholars of every generation was unlike this. Each one of the branches of religious sciences demands the scholars who are associated with it to be humble, and requires them to obliterate all signs of pride from their hearts. None of the sciences gives rise to pride and none of them is against humility. Later I will explain the causes behind this sharp contrast between their knowledge and behavior.

Also among the experts of other sciences, like medicine, mathematics, physics, engineering, industrial crafts, etc., the instances of pride and arrogance are seen. They underestimate all other sciences however important they may be, and scorn the scientists belonging to them. Each one of them believes that whatever he knows is the real knowledge. They scorn people in their hearts, as well as manifest it in their demeanor; whereas their knowledge does not require this.

Some others who do not belong to any of the branches of science, like the people devoted to prayers and other devotional rites, also tend to behave high-handedly with others. They disdain people and treat them with contempt, and do not consider even great scholars as worthy of redemption. Whenever there is a discussion about knowledge, they point out that knowledge without action is useless. They give great importance to the little knowledge that they themselves possess and view all others with *ujb* and haughty contempt, forgetting that if their worship were true and sincere it would have reformed them. The prayer forbids one from performing indecent deeds and sins and is considered as the culmination of a Muslim's attainment (*miraj al-mumin*). But such a person, even after performing the *salat* for fifty years and meticulously performing all obligatory (*wajibat*) and recommended (*mustahabbat*) religious duties, is immersed in the vice of pride which is a kind of apostasy from head to toe, and is afflicted with *ujb* – which is uglier than any other indecency– and comes to resemble Satan and acquires his attributes. The *salat* that does not forbid one from indecencies and indignities, the prayer which does not protect the heart, rather whose excessive performance vitiates the heart, is not worthy of being named as *salat*. The *salat* about which you were so particular, but on account of which you come to resemble Satan acquiring pride, his characteristic trait, is not *salat*; for the *salat* does not result in pride either.

All these are dangers of knowledge and deeds, but pride can also arise from other causes, all of which relate to a sense of one's worth and excellence which others are imagined to lack. For instance, someone who comes of a noble descent looks down on those who are not like him. Other reasons relate to personal beauty and charm, one's tribe, the number of one's supporters, followers, or pupils, which cause arrogance and pride with respect to others who do not possess these advantages. In all cases, therefore, pride is caused by an illusion of some kind of perfection in oneself, elation on its account and *ujb*, while others are seen to lack such an imagined merit or advantage.

Even the bad characters and persons of vicious morals, also, sometimes look down on others with haughty contempt, because they consider whatever they possess as a kind of merit and asset. Though the person afflicted with the vice of pride tries to conceal it due to some reason or other and tries to show no sign of it, but since this evil tree of pride has run its roots in his heart, its effects nevertheless manifest themselves. As soon as any change occurs in the natural condition of the possessor of this vice, as when he loses control over himself due to anger, he starts boasting of his superiority and enumerating his merits, whether they belong to the category of knowledge or deeds or whatever. At other times, a proud person exhibits his pride, not paying any attention to its outward revelation. The intensity of his pride makes him lose control over himself. Then, his pride finds expression in his movements and pauses. In social gatherings he shows his self-importance by taking a lead over other people while entering and leaving. He neither allows the poor to join his company, nor does he himself attend their gatherings. He creates an artificial halo of sacredness around himself and every action of his, the gait, the manner of looking at other people, the manner of speaking to them, everything is indicative of his pride and haughtiness. One of the researchers, from whom I have borrowed the fundamentals of this discourse and have translated them, says that the lowest degree of pride in a scholar is that he should turn his back on other people as if he wants to avoid them. The lowest degree of pride in a devotee (*abid*) is manifested in his stern attitude towards people and his frown, as if he wants to avoid them, or as if he is angry with them. The poor fellow does not know that piety and continence (*wara*) does not lie in the frowns on one's brow or forehead, not in a disdainful look and a wry face, not in avoiding the people, not in bending the head or turning the neck, but it lies inside one's heart. The Prophet (*s*) once, pointing at his chest, said, 'Piety lies here.' On some occasions, the devotee

boasts about himself in his speech; while expressing the purity of his soul, he makes a display of his devotional exercises, brags about himself by mentioning his pious deeds, and denounces others for their shortcomings, thus highlighting the superiority of his piety. Sometimes he does not say anything explicitly but makes some gesture, which implicitly exhibits his piety. A scholar afflicted with *kibr* may brag about his own intellectual achievements, saying, "What do you know!" Then he would mention the books read and written by him, the universities visited by him, the professors and authorities whom he has met, and his own scholarly endeavors. Therefore, at all times, it is necessary to seek refuge in God from the mischiefs of the self and its wiles.

## SPIRITUAL AND SOCIAL HARMS OF PRIDE

Whereas there are many vices inherent in pride itself, it generates many other vices as well. It prevents men from acquiring inward and outward merits and from enjoying the blessings of this world and the Hereafter. It causes hatred and rancor in human hearts, disgraces man in the eyes of his fellow human beings, and brings about humiliation for him. It forces other people to retaliate against him and despise him and insult him. In *al-Kafi*, Imam al-Sadiq (a) is reported to have said, "There is no person who does not have a harness on his head, and an angel who attends to it. Whenever he is proud, the angel says, 'Be humble, lest God should disgrace you'. Thus, he is the greatest of human beings in his own eyes, whereas in other people's eyes he is the smallest of creatures. When he is humble and modest, God removes the harness from his head and the angel says to him, 'Elevate yourself, as God Almighty is elevating you'. Thus, he is the smallest of persons in his own eyes, while the most elevated and exalted in the eyes of others."[1]

My friend, others also possess a mind similar to yours. If you behave humbly, other people will be forced to respect you and you will rise in their estimation. But, if you show arrogance, there is no good for you in it; they may even disgrace you if they find an opportunity, and treat you with indifference. And if they cannot find an opportunity of insulting you, they will despise you in their hearts and you will not find any respect in their eyes. It is, therefore, better for you to conquer their hearts with modesty and humility. Everyone with whom you associate will somehow show the signs

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. iii, p. 426.

of his attitude towards you, and if their hearts turn against you it will be something, which is against your desire. Therefore, even if, presumably, you are interested in obtaining greatness and respect, you will have to adopt a proper course for it, which is to cultivate cordial relations with others and to, adopt a humble demeanor towards them. The result of pride will be against your aim and purpose. It does not even fulfill your worldly aspirations, which are easier to be fulfilled, and instead of this what you receive is its opposite. Besides all these, this habit will bring you disgrace and shame in the next world. In the same way as you scorned people and considered yourself to be superior to the creatures of God, and expressed an inordinate sense of pride and arrogance here, in the other world this same arrogance and pride will bring you disgrace and humiliation, as mentioned in a tradition reported in *al-Kafi*:

بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ دَاوُدَ بْنِ فَرْقَدٍ، عَنْ أَخِيهِ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ يَقُولُ: إِنَّ الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ يُجْعَلُونَ فِي صُوَرِ الذَّرِّ فَيَتَوَطَّؤُهُمُ النَّاسُ حَتَّى يَفْرَغُوا مِنَ الحِسَابِ.

From Dawud ibn Farqad, from his brother, who said: I heard Imam al-Sadiq (a) saying: Verily the proud [on the Judgment Day] will be created in the form of ants and people will trample them down under their feet until God is finished with the reckoning.[1]

In his last will, al-Imam al-Sadiq (a) told his companions:

قَالَ: وَإِيَّاكُمْ وَالعَظَمَةَ وَالكِبَرَ فَإِنَّ الكِبَرَ رِدَاءُ اللهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ، فَمَنْ نَازَعَ اللهَ رِدَاءَهُ قَصَمَهُ اللهُ وَأَذَلَّهُ يَوْمَ القِيَامَةِ.

Refrain from pride and self-glorification, since pride is God Almighty's mantle, and one who contests with God regarding His cloak, God will shatter him and disgrace him on the Day of Resurrection.[2]

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[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. iii. p. 424.

[2] Al-Hasan ibn Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn Shubah al-Harrani, *Tuhaf al-uqul* (Ketab Forushi Eslamiyyeh, Tehran, 1402 H.), Arabic text with Persian translation by Ahmad Jannati Atai, p. 327.

What will be the plight of the person whom God Almighty disgraces? For the things will be different in the Hereafter. Disgrace in the Hereafter will be an affair different from the disgrace and humiliation in this world. In the same way as the comforts and torments of that world bear no similarity with those in this world, and its comforts and bounties are beyond one's imaginative power, the torments and tortures in that world are also far above the reach of our imaginative faculty. Its honors are beyond the possibilities of what we can think, and its humiliations also cannot be compared with our ideas of humiliation and disgrace. And the ultimate abode of the proud person is eternal damnation and hell. The tradition states:

الكِبَرُ مَطَايَا النَّارِ.

i.e. 'one who rides the mount of pride is taken by it into the hell-fire.' He will not get any glimpse of Paradise as long as the traces of this vice are present in his heart. The Prophet (*s*) has been reported to have said:

لَنْ يَدْخُلَ الجَنَّةَ مَنْ فِي قَلْبِهِ مِثْقَالُ حَبَّةٍ مِنْ خَرْدَلٍ مِنْ كِبَرٍ.

> Never can the person who possesses a speck of pride inside his heart enter Paradise.[1]

Imam al-Baqir (a) and Imam al-Sadiq (a) have also said something almost similar to this statement. In *al-Kafi* Imam al-Baqir (a) is reported to have said:

العِزُّ رِدَاءُ اللهِ وَالكِبَرُ إِزَارُهُ. فَمَنْ تَنَاوَلَ شَيْئاً مِنْهُ أَكَبَّهُ اللهُ فِي جَهَنَّمَ.

> Honor is God's robe and pride His mantle; one who wants to acquire it will be thrown into hell by God Almighty.[2]

And that too, what kind of hell! The hell, which is prepared for the proud, is different from the hell into which other sinners will go. Here, I shall again quote the same tradition the translation of which was given earlier:

مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنِ ابْنِ أَبِي عُمَيْرٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِاللهِ بْنِ بُكَيْرٍ، عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: إِنَّ فِي جَهَنَّمَ لَوَادِياً

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[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. iii, p. 423.

[2] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. iii, p. 423.

لِلْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ يُقَالُ لَهُ سَقَرٌ. شَكَا (جَهَنَّمُ) إِلَى اللهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ شِدَّةَ حَرِّهِ وَسَأَلَهُ أَنْ يَتَنَفَّسَ، فَأَذِنَ لَهُ، فَتَنَفَّسَ فَأَحْرَقَ جَهَنَّمَ.

This is a highly trustworthy tradition, and can even be compared to *Sahih*.

> Ibn Bukayr reports from al-Imam al-Sadiq (a) that he said, "Verily there is a valley in hell for the proud called *Saqar*. Once it complained to the Almighty about the intensity of its heat, and requested Him to relieve it for some time so that it may take a breath. As soon as it breathed, its breath filled the entire hell with fire."[1]

I take refuge in God from a place, which in spite of its being a place of torment complains about its hotness, and the hell starts burning because of its breath. We cannot comprehend in this world the extent of the intensity and strength of the fire of the Hereafter, as the difference between the intensity and weakness of torment is dependent upon several factors. One is the strength and weakness of perception, and the second is the dissimilarity of different kinds of material and their different capacities for tolerating heat. For example, gold and iron can be exposed to more heat than lead and tin, which can endure more heat than wood and coal, which are less sensitive than flesh and skin. Another factor is the sensitivity of perception; for example the human brain, which despite being less tolerant to heat is more sensitive to it than the bones, for its power of perception is stronger. And the feebleness and intensity of the heat itself is another factor. It is more painful at a hundred degrees than at fifty. One more factor is the relative distance between the source of heat and the material exposed to it; for instance, when fire is very near to the hand it will inflict a different kind of burn than when it affects the hand from a distance.

All these five above-mentioned factors exist at their weakest degree in this world, and at their utmost strength and force in the Hereafter. All our perceptive faculties are imperfect and weak in this world and at the same time covered with several veils. Today our vision is incapable of perceiving angels and the hell; our ears cannot hear the queer sounds of *Barzakh* (the Purgatory) and the cries of its inhabitants, and the clamor of the Day of

[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. iii, p. 424.

Resurrection and the people thereof. Our senses cannot even perceive the heat of that place. This is on account of their own infirmity. The Quranic verses and the traditions of the Imams (a) are full of explicit and implicit references to this issue, and it is also in accordance with discursive reason. The human body of this world is incapable of enduring heat. The cold fire of this world is strong enough to turn it into ashes in moments. But God Almighty is capable of recreating it in a form on the Day of Resurrection so that it would not be consumed by the fire of the Hereafter, a fire of so great intensity that, according to the testimony of Gabriel (a), if a link of the seventy-cubit chain of fire prepared for the inhabitants of hell is thrown into this world it would melt all the mountains due to its excessive heat. Therefore, the resistance of the human body will also be incomparably great in that world. Also the relationship between the body and soul is very fragile in this world. This world does not allow the soul to manifest its real faculties and powers. But that world is the world of the soul's manifestation and domination. There, the relationship of the soul with respect to the body is loaded with action and creativity –as has been established in its proper place– and this relationship is the most complete and thorough of all relationships.

This worldly fire is a faint and coldish glow and an ephemeral phenomenon combined with impurities of all kinds; whereas the fire of hell is a fire free from all impurities, and its substance is self-subsisting and self-perpetuating. It is a living substance, which burns its inhabitants with a will and consciousness, and uses all its strength to overwhelm them. You have heard about its properties from Gabriel (a), the truthful witness. The Quran and the traditions of the Imams (a) are full of the descriptions of hell and the fire therein. However, its similitude cannot be found in this world. If all the fires of this world were to surround a human being from all sides, they will envelop only the outer surface of his body; but the hell-fire will encompass the human being from within and without and envelop the senses and the perceptive faculties. It is a fire, which consumes the heart, the soul, and all the human faculties, pervading them and uniting with them in a fashion, which is unexemplified in this world.

Hence it is obvious that the requirements of Divine chastisement are not at all to be found in this world. Neither the material is capable of enduring its heat, nor is the agent of heat a complete one, nor are the perceptive faculties at their complete acuteness. The fire the heat of whose breath fills the hell with flames, we and our perceptive senses fail to comprehend it, unless, God forbid, we, belonging to the clan of the proud, leave the world without

purifying ourselves from this abominable vice, and see it face to face:

﴿فَلَبِئْسَ مَثْوَى الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ﴾

*What an evil abode is that of the arrogant!*

## OTHER CAUSES OF PRIDE

Besides the above-mentioned factors that cause pride, there are some others also, such as narrow-mindedness, lack of capacity, petty-mindedness, baseness, and lack of fortitude. Being a person with a narrow mentality, as soon as he beholds any merit in himself he imagines himself to enjoy a kind of superiority. He thinks he has acquired a high station, whereas, if he justly evaluates it and judges his accomplishments and merits, he would see that what he imagined to be perfection and is so proud of is not at all an accomplishment or merit, and even if it were a merit how insignificant it was when compared to other persons' accomplishments. Poor fellow, he has made his cheeks ruddy with a slap to give an impression of healthiness. The *arif* who disdains others on account of his pride in his mystic knowledge, and considers others superciliously to be superficial and shallow, what knowledge does he possess about God, except for a handful of concepts and terms that are in reality veils of realities and hindrances in his religious path? What is this knowledge except for a number of glamorous and gaudy terms which do not have any relevance whatsoever to the knowledge of God? How far are they from the knowledge of God and the knowledge of His Names and Attributes. Knowledge is a quality of the heart, and in the view of this writer all these are practical sciences, and consist not of mere acquaintance with certain abstract concepts or artful juggling of terms. With this short life and limited knowledge, I have seen certain people among these so-called mystics and other scholars who, I swear by *irfan* and knowledge that these terms have not made any mark on their hearts; nay, they have rather left on them an opposite effect! My friend! the knowledge of God, in your own words, makes the heart a place where His Names, Attributes, and Essence are manifested, a stage for the appearance of the Real Monarch, who obliterates all signs and purges it of all stains and removes from it all limitations:

﴿إِنَّ الْمُلُوكَ إِذَا دَخَلُوا قَرْيَةً أَفْسَدُوهَا وَجَعَلُوا أَعِزَّةَ أَهْلِهَا أَذِلَّةً﴾

*Indeed, kings, when they enter a township, ruin it and degrade its men of honor.* (27:34)

It converts your heart into a Unitarian and the one filled with the praise of the Lord. But why did it make your heart a place of your own glorification? Why has it added unnecessary colors to it, and accumulated trappings and accretions that deter you from obtaining nearness to God Almighty and from beholding the effulgent glory of His Names? Why, it has made your heart an abode of Satan and so you look down on the servants of God and His chosen, the signs and reflections of His Glory and Splendor! Woe unto you for your wretchedness, O *arif*, whose condition is worse than of anybody else, and all the doors of defense and pretext are sealed upon him! You are proud towards God and have assumed a Pharaonic arrogance towards His Names, Attributes, and all the manifestations of His Essence. O amateurish student of concepts who has gone astray of the realities! Deliberate over the matter for a while, and think as to what knowledge you possess of God. What impact has the knowledge of God and His Attributes made on your self? Perhaps the study of music and musical rhythms may be more exact and precise than your knowledge. Astronomy, mechanics, other physical sciences, and mathematics can match your learning as to the precision of their terminology. Yet in the same way as they are not concerned with the knowledge of God, your knowledge also is a thick curtain consisting of the veils of words, terms, and concepts. They can neither make one ecstatic nor send anyone into a trance. Rather, in the eyes of the *Shariah*, the physical sciences and mathematics are better than your knowledge, since they produce some result, whereas your knowledge not only gives no good results, but gives opposite ones. An engineer draws results from his calculations, and a goldsmith is benefited from his craftsmanship; but your knowledge, apart from not gaining any material benefits, has failed to fulfill any transcendental ends as well. Rather, the veil before your eyes is so thick that when you try to picture the Unity of the Divine Being a world of utter darkness fills your imagination, and when His Names and Attributes are mentioned an infinite plurality is pictured by your mind. Therefore, these terms did not lead you to the path of Truth, but on the contrary they have become a source of pride and arrogance towards the righteous scholars. A knowledge, which darkens the heart and increases it in its blindness is not knowledge. A learning, which ultimately makes its possessor an heir of the Devil, woe unto such learning! *Kibr* is the property of Satan's nature. He was arrogant to your father, Adam, and was expelled from the Almighty's court. You who are arrogant towards all human beings and all the sons of Adam are also worthy of banishment. From this you can infer the plight of the scholars of other sciences also.

A *Hakim*, a man of wisdom, if he is a real sage, having comprehended the relationship between God Almighty and His creatures and himself, the sense of superiority remains no more in his heart. But the unfortunate seeker of terminology and terms has mistaken them for *hikmah* (wisdom) and *ilm* (knowledge) and imagines himself to be an *Alim* and *Hakim*. He even associates himself with the Attributes of the Necessary Being and says that *hikmah* is one of the Attributes of God Almighty:

الحِكْمَةُ هِيَ التَّشَبُّهُ بِالإِلَهِ.

Wisdom is what makes [man] similar to God.

At other times he groups himself with the prophets and messengers of God, and recites the Quranic phrase,

﴿وَيُعَلِّمُهُمْ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ.﴾

*He teaches them the Book and Wisdom*.

And sometimes reiterates the Prophet's *hadith*:

الحِكْمَةُ ضَالَّةُ المُؤْمِنِ، وَمَنْ يُؤْتَ الحِكْمَةَ فَقَدْ أُوتِيَ خَيْراً كَثِيراً.

*Hikmah* is the lost property of a *mumin*; one who is endowed with *hikmah* has been given an immense measure of good.

While his heart is unaware of *hikmah* and several thousand stages away from all good and he is himself a stranger to *hikmah*. The great Muslim thinker and philosopher Muhaqqiq Damad (*r*) states that a *Hakim* is a person who can discard his body like a dress whenever he wants to. What does he say and what are we saying! What meaning did they understand from *hikmah* and how do we conceive it? And you with your pride in your knowledge of a handful of concepts and a few terms, who treat the creatures of God with haughty contempt, it becomes quite clear that you are a petty minded and shallow person.

Those who style themselves as *murshid*s (leaders of mystic orders) and guides of God's creatures, offering spiritual assistance and pretending Sufi insight, their state is worse than that of the two former groups, and their conceit is greater than theirs. They appropriate the terminology of those two groups, and set out their goods for sale in the marketplace. They have distracted the attention of the creatures of God from Him, attracting them

towards themselves, having made those simple-hearted creatures to view the *ulama* and other people with suspicion. For the sake of some mean profit, they have coined some attractive terms to deceive credulous people, thinking that titles like 'Majdhub-Ali-Shah' and 'Mahbub-Ali-Shah' will produce love for God or create some kind of ecstasy or bliss. O seeker of the world! You thief of concepts and ideas, this activity of yours does not call for pride and exultation. Poor fellow, he is befooled by his own petty-mindedness and narrowness of capacity, considering himself to be a person of high spiritual station. His own tricks have fooled him. His infatuation with himself, his love of the world, and his obsession with some stolen ideas and conceptual trappings and auxiliaries have coalesced to form strangely vicious and perverse admixture. Yet with all these flaws, the poor fellow imagines himself to be a *murshid*, a guide and liberator of mankind, and knower of the secrets of the *Shariah*! No, sometimes this impudence surpasses all limits and he imagines himself to be at the pinnacle of *wilayah*! This situation arises due to the lack of capacity, the poverty of merits, the narrowness of the mind and the heart, and the suffocating contraction of the breast.

You too, O student of *fiqh*, *hadith* and other religious sciences, you also have no share of knowledge except for some terms which have gained currency in *usul* and *hadith*. If this learning, which is altogether related to practice and action, has not brought any improvement in you and has not rectified you, but instead of this given rise to moral and practical vices in you, your performance is inferior to that of the experts of other sciences and incomparable in its worthlessness with the baser activities of all other people. All those concepts, verbiage, rivalries, and disputations –most of which have no relevance to the religion of God and cannot be considered to be belonging to any sciences either, nor could be regarded as the fruit of knowledge– that does not call for so much of pride and exultation. I make God my witness – and suffices He for testimony– if the result of your knowledge is that it cannot guide you on the right path, nor can it guard you against vices of morals and deeds, the meanest and basest of vocations is better than this learning, because it shows some immediate results and has fewer this-worldly and other-worldly harms.

You, poor fellow, who acquire nothing but a painful burden, hard to carry, your burden does not bring you anything but corrupt morals and perverse deeds. Therefore, your knowledge does not call for any pride and exultation either. Nevertheless, the horizon of your mind is so narrow that as soon as you prepared a hotchpotch of some terms you started thinking yourself to be

a great scholar, fit to walk over the plumes of archangels under your feet, and other people as ignorant creatures. Your arrogant gait restricts the passage for the servants of God in alleys and your conceit encroaches on the roominess of social gatherings.

Yet the meanest among the arrogant is the person who is proud of outward matters like wealth, position, family and descent. This poor fellow is far from all human excellences and moral sense; his hands are empty of all learning and knowledge; but since his clothes are made of sheep's wool, or since his father is somebody, he is arrogant with the people. What a petty mind and a dark and narrow heart it is that leaves all accomplishments and perfections to be content with the niceties of a robe and hat! For his beautiful cloak and cap, he has given up all other beauties of character and soul. Poor fellow, he is satisfied to survive on the plane of beasts and is happy with bestial pleasures, having forgone the dignity of human station for what he considers to be some sort of status, choosing a meaningless and hollow existence, and a blank form devoid of reality and truth. He is so base and hollow that if he meets someone who is superior to him in respect of worldly advantages, he behaves with him like a slave with his master. Of course, one whose goal is nothing but the world, is a slave of the worldly and the world…

In any case, narrowness of vision, pettiness of mind, and lack of capaciousness of personality, together, are a strong factor responsible for pride, which makes its victim to have *ujb* and *kibr* and makes him highly sensitive to qualities which are neither a kind of perfection nor any merit of note. And the more one is infatuated with one's self and with the world, the more he is likely to be affected by these things.

## HOW TO CURE PRIDE?

Now that you have known the viciousness of pride, it is now your duty to resolve to cure yourself of this disease and to make up your mind to purge your heart from its taints and remove its traces and its heavy dust from the mirror of your heart. If you are among the people of strong will power and an open heart, and the worldly desires have not driven their tentacles deep into it, and if the worldly allurements and ornaments have not blinded it by their light, and if you are still capable of judging and criticizing yourself with justice, the suggestions given in the previous chapter can be most useful for you in this regard. But if you have not reached this level, it is better for you

to meditate upon your state; it is possible that your heart may wake up. O man, who were initially nothing; who were hidden in the folds of nothingness for ages and epochs, more insignificant than nothingness itself and absent from the realms of existence, when God Almighty resolved to create you, you were the most deficient of the recipients, mean, and insignificant. You were incapable of receiving the Divine effusion (*fayd*). He created you from the matter (*hayula*) of the universe, which is absolute potentiality and pure weakness, and moulded you into an elemental bodily form, which was the lowest, and the meanest of the existents of the universe. After that you were given the form of sperm, which you will loathe to touch and will take great pains for cleansing your hands if by chance they are made dirty by it. Then you were kept in a very narrow and unclean place, the twin reproductive glands of the father. And after that through the urinary tract in a terribly ugly state you were brought into the mother's womb and you were given such a place to live in, whose description will be disgusting to you. After being placed there, you were given the form of a fetus and a lump of clotted blood. There you were nourished with such a food that you will go mad if you are told about it, and will feel ashamed. But since everyone has to pass through this tribulation, it abates our shame of it.

**وَالبَلِيَّةُ إِذَا عَمَّتْ طَابَتْ.**

A distress, which is common, becomes tolerable.

During all these stages of evolution and change you were the lowest and meanest of creatures. You lacked in all external and internal perceptive faculties and devoid of every kind of merit. After that, with His great kindness and mercy, He made you capable of receiving the gift of life, the life that was manifested in you was so imperfect and fragile that it was, even inferior to that of a worm in its biological functions. In order to improve your deficient capacity, He gradually improved your functions with His mercy and compassion, until you became fit for entering this world and facing its climes. Through the meanest of corridors and in the worst possible condition you were made to enter this realm. Yet you were still weaker than and inferior to the young ones of all the animals. After that, despite acquiring the maximum of your internal and external powers and abilities, you are still so weak and vulnerable that none of your own powers is under your full control You can neither safeguard your health, nor can you guard your own life and energies, nor can you preserve your beauty and youth. If any calamity of an illness befalls you, you do not possess enough power to repel it. In short, you

don't have any control over any aspect of your own being and existence. If you face starvation for one day, you will not resist from eating any kind of rotten cadaver. If your thirst were to overwhelm you, you will be ready to drink from dirty and fetid water. Similarly, in all matters you are a helpless and abject slave who has no power over anything. If you compare yourself with the existence and perfection of the existence and other living beings, you will realize that you and your entire planet, or even the whole solar system, have no significance whatsoever in front of the whole physical world, which is the meanest and the smallest of all other worlds.

My dear, you have not seen anything except yourself, and whatever you have seen you did not compare it with the world around you. Compare whatever you possess, from your life to the worldly treasures in your possession, with your city, your city with your country, and your country with all the hundreds of the countries of the world, whose names you might not have even heard of, and all those countries with the whole solar system and its vast spheres which are not more than tiny fragments of the sun, and the whole solar system with the Milky Way, of which our sun along with its planets is one of millions of other stars and a part of the huge galaxy, and there are several million of such galaxies like the Milky Way. All these are a part of the physical world, whose vastness is not known to anyone except its Creator and the discoveries of the discoverers have succeeded in revealing only a small fraction of it. Yet this physical world has no significance whatsoever as compared to the supra-physical world, whose realms lie beyond the powers of imagination of the human intellect. In the light of this, let us reexamine the extent and scope of our lives and the share of our fortune in the realm of existence.

Thereafter, when God Almighty resolves to take you away from this world, He commands all your powers to deteriorate and your perceptive faculties to halt their activities. The mechanism of your life is broken down; your auditory and visual senses, and your energies are taken back from you and you become an inanimate inorganic substance. After the passage of a few hours, people will not be able to tolerate the stench emanating from your body and they will be averse to the view of your body and face. All your bodily members and organs will decompose and disintegrate after a few days. Such is the state of your body, and what will happen to your wealth and glory is also quite obvious. But as for your life in *Barzakh* (the Purgatory), if you depart, God forbid, without reforming yourself, God alone knows what conditions and states will be prescribed for you therein. Perceptions of the

inhabitants of this world are incapable of seeing, hearing, and smelling the affairs of that world. Whatever you hear of the darkness, the dreads, and the pressures of the grave, you compare them with this-worldly dreads and pressures, but you are mistaken. O God, help us, and rescue us from the calamity of what we ourselves have prepared with our own hands. The punishment of the grave, which is a model of the punishment in the Hereafter –and according to some traditions we will not be able to avail in the *Barzakh* any intercession of the intercessors– God alone knows what kind of punishment it will be! The state of affairs on the Day of Resurrection will be worse and more dreadful than all the past phases. It, will be the day of the revelation of secrets, the manifestation of truths, and the day of the embodiment of morals and actions. It will be the day of reckoning and the day of disgrace. Such is the Day of Resurrection!

## THE PUNISHMENT IN THE HEREAFTER

As to the conditions of the hell after the Day of Resurrection, they are also known to you. Would you like to know more about the hell? The punishment of hell will not be confined to the torments of fire alone; a dreadful door will be opened to your eyes, which if opened to this world its dread will destroy all of its inhabitants. A similar door will open to your flesh, another to your nose, each of which will be sufficient to kill the inhabitants of this world. One of the experts in the knowledge of the Hereafter says that in the same way as the heat of hell will reach the climax of its extremity, its coldness will also be at the highest point of coldness. God Almighty is capable of bringing together these two extreme opposites. Such are the dreads of the Hereafter. In the light of all this, one whose beginning lies in infinite nothingness; one who from the point he steps into the world of existence, all whose stages of development are ugly and indecent; all whose states are shameful; whose conditions in the world, the Purgatory and the Hereafter, each one is more horrible and disgraceful than the other –what reason has he for pride? What merit or glory makes him so boastful? Therefore, those whose ignorance is more and whose rational faculties are more defective, are more proud of themselves; and those whose knowledge is greater, whose souls are more capacious, and whose breasts are spacious– they are humbler and more modest.

## HUMILITY AND MODESTY OF THE PROPHET (*S*)

The Prophet (*s*), whose knowledge was derived from the Divine Revelation, and whose soul was so great that it could preponderate over the spirits of millions upon millions of human beings, who rejected all the practices and customs of the pagan Arabs, who shattered under his feet all the false creeds, abrogated all the scriptures, and the circle of prophethood achieved its completion in his noble existence; who was the ruler of the world and the hereafter, and who was the master of all the worlds, with the permission of God Almighty; yet his humility towards the creatures of God was more than of any other human being. He hated to see his Companions stand up in his respect. Whenever he entered a gathering, he used to sit in the lowest place He used to dine on the floor and used to sit on the floor and used to say, "I am a slave of God; I dine like a slave and sit in the manner proper for a slave." It has been reported from Imam al-Sadiq (a) that the Prophet (*s*) preferred to ride a donkey without a saddle, preferred to dine in a lowly place with the slaves, and offered alms to beggars with his two hands. That holy personage used to ride a donkey and used to sit on the mount with a slave or some other man. It is written about him (*s*) that he used to share with the members of his household the duties of housework himself used to milk the sheep, stitch his own clothes and shoes, grind the flour and knead the dough, and carry his belongings himself. He liked the company of the poor and the destitutes and used to dine with them. Such, and better than what we have described, was the character and the modesty of this great personage, although besides holding his high spiritual station he held to perfection the authority of a temporal sovereign. Similar was the life and character of Ali ibn Abi Talib (a), who also followed the Prophet's way, and his character was identical to that of the Prophet (*s*).

### TO CURE PRIDE, ONE SHOULD ACT AGAINST ITS DICTATES

Therefore, my friend, if you are proud of your spiritual attainments, they (i.e. the Prophet and Imam Ali ) were over and above all of us in this respect; and if you have pride in your office and authority, they possessed true sovereignty. Yet, in spite of it, their humility and modesty was more than of anybody else. This shows that humility is the product of knowledge and wisdom, and pride is the outcome of ignorance. Therefore, free yourself from the ignominy of ignorance and the disgrace of petty-mindedness; acquire the attributes of the prophets and shed the qualities of Satan. Do not contend with your God regarding His mantle of Pride and Glory, as His wrath will

subdue the contender and he will fall on his face into hell-fire. If you make up your mind for rectifying your self, the way to do so is also easy if you are somewhat persevering. You will not encounter any peril on this way if you move with manly resolve, freedom of thought, and high-mindedness. The only way of overpowering your carnal self and repelling the insinuations of Satan is to act against their incitements. No other way is better for crushing the desires of the self as adopting the traits and qualities of the modest and following their behavior and character. In whatever stage of pride you may be, and to whatever scientific or professional field you belong, you are advised to act against the inclinations and desires of the self. By discovering and meditating about this-worldly and other-worldly consequences of pride, it is hoped, your journey will become easier and you will reach the desired goal. If your self wishes that you should take the seat of chairmanship of the gathering or to take precedence over your colleagues and equals, you should act against its desire. If your self incites you to refrain from joining the company of the poor and indigent, admonish it severely and resolutely go and sit in their company, dine with them and travel with them. It is possible that your inner self would try to prevent you by arguing that you are a person of a higher position and that it is essential to keep up your esteem and dignity for the sake of the propagation of the *Shariah*, that sitting with the poor will undermine your respect in society, that humor with the subordinates will be injurious to your authority, that occupying a lowly place in gatherings will affect your status and then you will not be able to perform your religious duties properly... and so on. Be certain that all these are guiles of the Devil and wiles of the self. You have read and heard about the behavior and character of the Holy Prophet (*s*), whose worldly position was incomparably superior to you.

## A REMINISCENCE OF A TEACHER

Among the scholars of our own times, I have seen a person who enjoyed great eminence throughout the *Shiah* world and followed the footsteps of the Holy Prophet (*s*). The respected teacher and the revered *faqih* Haj Shaykh Abdol-Karim Haeri Yazdi enjoyed the sole *marjaiyyah* (Shiite jurisprudential authority) of the Shiite world from 1340/1921 to 1355/1936. We have all seen his simplicity. He used to travel and dine with his servants. He used to sit on the floor and make all kind of strange jokes with the most junior of students. During his last days, when he had taken ill, with slippers on, he used to walk in the alley after the sunset, without a cloak and turban and with a piece of cloth wrapped around his head. Regard and respect for him grew in

the hearts of the people, and these acts of him did not affect his high station either.

There were other great scholars in Qum besides him, for whom these barriers that are created for you by the Devil did not exist. They used to buy their foodstuffs and goods by themselves, used to fetch water from the water tanks and attend to the duties of housework also. They meted out equal treatment to the senior and the junior and did not differentiate between the first rankers and others of a subordinate rank. Their humanity and modesty made people wonder and their respect was also not lowered; rather it was enhanced in the hearts of the people. Anyhow, the attributes of the Prophet (*s*) and Imams (a) do not derogate people. But one should be cautious of the guiles of the self while opposing it, as it may lure you into its snares and use other tactics for defeating your purpose. For example, you will observe some person occupy an inconspicuous place in a gathering, but in a fashion, which is meant to make others understand that his position is superior to all the others present and that it was but a gesture of humility and modesty on his part that he has occupied that place. Or, for instance, if he had declined in favor of a person of uncertain superiority over himself, he will give priority over himself to someone who it is certain is of a lower rank, thus immediately making it clear that he had declined in favor of the first one because of his own humility. These, and hundreds other like this, are the wiles of self, which add *riya* and hypocrisy to pride, and unless one does not resolve to combat them with a sincere determination one will not succeed in rectifying one's self. All the vices of the soul are rectifiable, but a little diligence is needed in the beginning. After one has entered the process of self-correction, everything becomes easier for him. The main thing is to realize the need for the rectification of the self and to wake up from the spell of self-negligence,

## *YAQAZAH* (AWAKENING) IS THE FIRST STEP

The first stage of humanness is *yaqazah*. It signifies the awakening from the slumber of obliviousness and the intoxication of physical nature, and the realization of the fact that man is a traveler and like any other traveler he also needs some provisions for this journey. His morality and character are his provisions for this journey. The only means of undertaking this hazardous and perilous journey on this dark and narrow path, which is sharper than the sword's blade and thinner than a hair, is manly courage. The light of this path is one's faith and one's good qualities. If he is lazy and negligent and gives in to weakness, he will not be able to cross it with safety and will fall

headlong into the hell of disgrace and into the gorge of perdition. And one who cannot pass safely over this path will, also, not be able to pass over the *Sirat* in the Hereafter.

My dear, be brave and tear apart the curtain of ignorance and folly and deliver yourself from this terrible abyss. Ali (a), the Lord of the Pious, the unique wayfarer of the paths of heavens and the real guide, used to cry out in the mosque so loudly that he could be heard in the neighborhood:

تَجَهَّزُوا – رَحِمَكُمُ اللهُ – فَقَدْ نُودِيَ فِيكُمْ بِالرَّحِيلِ.

> Equip yourselves and be ready, your departure has already been announced.

No preparations will be more beneficial to you than your good moral characteristics and merits, the heart's piety, the righteous deeds, and the purity and spotlessness of your conscience. If, supposedly, you are a person of incomplete and apparent faith, you should cleanse yourself of these impurities so that Divine mercy will put you amongst the righteous and pious servants of God. Only the fire of repentance (*tawbah*) will clean these impurities, when the self is melted in the furnace of self-reproach with the fuel of remorse and return towards God. Today perform this smelting yourself, in this world; otherwise only God knows how many centuries of the Hereafter it will take for your soul to be refined in the furnace of Divine chastisement, and with a fire of which it has been said:

﴿نَارُ اللَّهِ الْمُوقَدَةُ. الَّتِي تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى الْأَفْئِدَةِ.﴾

*It is the fire of Allah, kindled, which leapeth up over the hearts.* (109:6-7)

It is much easier to purify oneself in this world, as changes occur rapidly in this world; but in the next world, the process of change will be a prolonged process, and the effacement of one evil attribute of the soul will take several centuries.

Therefore, my dear, try to reform your self as long as you possess life, youth, energy, and freedom. Do not pay any attention to this-worldly fame and glory. Trample such phantoms under your feet. You are the. son of Adam (a), so free your self from the trait. of Satan Perhaps the Devil gives more importance to see that this vice, which is characteristic of his own nature and for which he was driven out of the court of the Almighty God, is shared by everyone, the sage or the commoner, the scholar or the unlettered, and that they join his fold. Then if you meet him in the next world, having carried this vice with you, he will rebuke you for having adopted this vice. he

will say to you, 'O son of Adam! Didn't the prophets inform you that my haughtiness towards your father drove me out of the court of the Almighty? I was cursed due to my scorning of Adam and my self glorifying. Why did you allow yourself to be afflicted by this vice?" At that time, you, wretched creature that you would be, besides confronting all kind of humiliations and tortures, besides all the regret and remorse, will also have to face the rebukes of the most wretched of beings and the basest of creatures. Satan was not guilty of pride towards God, but of pride towards the creature of God and had said to Him:

﴿خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ نَارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ.﴾

*Thou createdst me of fire, and him Thou didst create of clay*. (7:12)

In this manner he glorified himself and looked down on Adam (a). You, also, who look down on the progeny of Adam and glorify yourself, have disobeyed God's Commands; for God has commanded His creatures to be modest and humble towards other human beings. You who treat people with haughty contempt, why do you curse the Devil alone? Why don't you include your vicious self also in this curse, as it also shares this vice with him? The proud man is a personification of all Satans; perhaps in the purgatory and on the Day of Resurrection, his appearance will be that of Satan. The criterion of man's form in the Hereafter are his spiritual qualities. It's possible that you will acquire the form of Satan as well as the size of an ant. The standards in the Hereafter will be different from those in this world.

## THE VICIOUS SUBTLETIES OF THE SELF

Sometimes it happens that a person who lacks a certain merit is proud towards the possessor of that merit, such as when a poor person is proud towards a rich one or when an ignorant one is proud towards a learned person. It should be remembered that in the same way as *ujb* is sometimes the source of pride, jealousy (*hasad*) may also be the source of pride. One may perceive himself as lacking in a certain merit, which is present in another; then he becomes jealous of him and this serves as the cause of pride towards the other person, whom he tries to insult in all possible ways.

> In *al-Kafi* it has been reported from Imam al-Sadiq (a) that he said, "Pride is found in the most vicious of human beings, to whatever kind they may belong." Then he added: "Once the Prophet (*S*) was passing through one of

> the lanes of al-Madinah where a negress was gathering dung. She was told to move aside and allow the Prophet (*S*) to pass. She answered that the passage was wide enough. One of the persons who accompanied the Prophet (*S*) tried to threaten her, but the Prophet (*S*) prevented him from doing so, saying: Leave her alone, she is a proud woman."

Sometimes this vicious habit is seen among some scholars, who make an excuse that to act with humility with the wealthy is not a virtue. Their vicious self makes them believe that modesty with the rich weakens faith. The poor fellow cannot differentiate between the humility before wealth and humility towards the rich and others. It is true that sometimes the vice of love of the world and the ambition for worldly honor and glory makes men to adopt modest and humble behavior. This cannot be counted as modesty; it is flattery, and is reckoned as a moral vice. The possessor of this trait does not show humbleness to the poor, except when his self-interest requires it or when he uses it as a bait. But it is also true that the virtue of humility of men invites man to act with modesty and humility towards the others, irrespective of whether they are rich or poor, whether of enviable conditions or not. That is, their modesty is sincere and pure. Their souls are clean and unstained by the love for popularity in society and honor, which have no charm for them. This kind of humility and modesty is good with the poor, and it is good with the rich as well. Everyone should be treated with the respect that is due to him. But this pride and contempt of yours towards the rich and wealthy is not on account of the fact that you are not a sycophant, but it is because you are a jealous person, and you do not understand this. If the same rich man were unexpectedly to show you respect, you will be humble and modest with him. In any case, the snares and the skilful guiles of the self are so subtle that one cannot do anything except taking refuge in God.

وَالحَمْدُ للهِ أَوَّلاً وَآخِراً.

> And Praise is God's, in the beginning and the end.

5

# Fifth *Hadith*: ENVY (*HASAD*)

بِالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلى مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عِيسَى عَنْ يُونُسَ عَنْ دَاوُدَ الرَّقِّيِّ قَالَ: قَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: قَالَ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لِمُوسَى عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: يَا بْنَ عِمْرَانَ لا تَحْسدَنَّ النَّاسَ عَلَى مَا آتَيْتُهُمْ مِنْ فَضْلِي وَلا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ إلى ذَلَكَ وَلا تُتْبِعْهُ نَفْسَكَ، فَإِنَّ الحَاسِدَ سَاخِطٌ لِنِعْمَتِي ضَادٌّ لِقِسْمِي الَّذِي قَسَمْتُ بَيْنَ عِبَادِي، وَمَنْ يَكُ كَذَلِكَ فَلَسْتُ مِنْهُ وَلَيْسَ مِنِّي.

Muhammad ibn Yaqub (al-Kulayni), from Ali ibn Ibrahim, from Muhammad ibn Isa, from Yunus, from Dawud al-Raqqi, who reports from Abu Abd-Allah (Imam al-Sadiq) (a) that the Apostle of God (S) said that God Almighty addressed Musa ibn Imran (a) thus: "O son of Imran, never be envious of people concerning the favors I have conferred on them by My grace, do not glower at them, and do not succumb to your (envious) self. Indeed the envious man is indignant at the bestowal of My favor, and contests My apportioning of gifts among My creatures. Whoso is such, he neither belongs to Me nor do I belong to him."[1]

[1] *Usul al-Kafi* (Pub. by Entesharat-e Elmiyyeh Eslamiyyeh, Arabic text with Persian translation by Haj Sayyed Javad Mostafavi), vol. iii, p. 418.

## DEFINITION OF *HASAD*

*Hasad* or envy is a psychic state in which a person wishes for the deprivation of a blessing, talent or merit, real or imagined, possessed by another person. It does not make any difference to the envious man whether he possesses it or not, whether he can acquire it or not.

The term 'imagined' is used here for the reason that it is not necessary that there should be any real merits or advantage in the true sense of the word. For it has been established by observation that even things which are vices and defects, on account of their being considered by the envious as excellences and merits, he desires their destruction. Sometimes it is also true that certain attributes, which are a defect in a human being but are bestial accomplishments are envied by the envious man on account of the significance that he attaches to such qualities. He sees them as merits on account of his animal state, and desires that the other man should be deprived of them. For instance, there are certain persons who consider ruthlessness and brutality as virtues, and when they see a person possessing these qualities they envy him. There are some who consider the capacity for idle talk and vulgar jokes as virtues, and they feel jealous of those skilled at them. Therefore, the criterion for identifying this psychic disease is the imagined existence of merits and the suspected presence of accomplishments in the mind of the afflicted person, not the real presence of merit and accomplishment itself. In short, whenever a person notices any merit (real or imaginary) in others and wishes for their loss and destruction, such a person is described as *hasid* or envious.

## KINDS OF *HASAD*

There are various kinds and degrees of *hasad* according to the state and condition of the *mahsud* (the one envied), the *hasud* (the one who envies), and the nature of *hasad* itself.

*According to the condition of the* mahsud*:* Qualities like certain intellectual, spiritual, and moral merits, or good and pious deeds, or outward factors like wealth, honor, and prestige can cause envy. Also their antithetical qualities, when they are imagined to be merits, can also cause envy and jealousy.

*According to the condition of the envious person:* The feeling of envy in the heart of the person who harbors it is sometimes caused by enmity,

sometimes by pride, and at other times by fear and the like-causes which will be discussed later on.

*According to the condition of envy itself:* As for envy itself, the classification performed on its basis is an essential one, not those performed on the previous bases. There are several stages and grades of intensity and weakness according to their various causes and effects. God willing, we will deal with their harmful effects and the methods of curing them in several sections according to our capabilities, and hope to receive His assistance in this regard.

## THE CAUSES AND MOTIVES OF *HASAD*

There are numerous causes of *hasad*, and the main among them, as opposed to *kibr*, are products of a feeling of one's inferiority. In the same way as a person contemplating his own merits considers others to lack them, with a sense of elation, exultation, and rebelliousness overcoming him; in the same manner when someone perceives others to be more perfect, a feeling of inferiority and dejection seizes him, which, with the help of external factors and inner propensities, generate the feeling of envy in his heart. Sometimes it may happen that he feels dejected on account of someone sharing his merit, such as when a person endowed with a merit feels jealous of those on an equal or lower footing than himself. Therefore, it may be said that envy is a state of abjectness and dejection, which finds an expression in the desire for the destruction, or deprival of others' merits and advantages. Accordingly, some scholars, like al-Allamah al-Majlisi, have confined the causes of envy to the following seven:

1. Enmity.

2. The sense of one's supremacy: It may happen that the envious man anticipates the pride of the envied on account of a merit and advantage that he enjoys. Not having the patience to put up with the pride, he earnestly desires the loss of those merits and advantages.

3. *Kibr* (pride): The envious person desires to treat high-handedly the person who is conferred some merit or favor, which is not possible unless those favors and merits are lost.

4. Wonder: The envious person is puzzled to see the great blessing enjoyed by the object of his envy. God Almighty reports the nations of the past as saying to the prophets:

﴿إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُنَا.﴾

*Ye are but mortals like us*. (14:10)

And:

﴿فَقَالُوا أَنُؤْمِنُ لِبَشَرَيْنِ مِثْلِنَا؟﴾

*And they said: 'Shall we put faith in two mortals like ourselves?'* (23:47)

They wondered as to how a mortal like them could reach the high station of prophethood and be inspired by God; so they felt envious on account of it.

5. Fear: The envious man is apprehensive of some hindrance on the part of the person enjoying an advantage or merit that may, he fears, frustrate his cherished aims and objectives.

6. Love of authority: This becomes a cause of envy when one's acquiring or preserving authority over others requires that nobody should share his advantages or merits.

7. Viciousness of nature: The man of vicious nature does not like to see others enjoying any kind of good whatsoever.

In the view of this writer, most, or rather all, of these causes are derived from the feeling of inferiority and dejection.

## SOME EVIL EFFECTS OF ENVY

Envy itself is one of the deadliest diseases of the heart. The mortal diseases of the heart, like pride and other vices, though each is a mortal sin in itself, produces additional vices each of which is fatal independently. We shall discuss here a few of them, which are apparent and known to this author. There may be others, which are hidden and unknown. In two *Sahih* traditions Imam al-Sadiq (a) and Imam al-Baqir (a) inform us about the evil effects of *hasad:*

عَنْ مُعَاوِيَةَ بْنِ وَهَبٍ قَالَ: قَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: آفَةُ الدِّينِ الحَسَدُ وَالعُجْبُ وَالفَخْرُ.

Muawiyah ibn Wahab reports that Imam al-Sadiq (a) said,

"*Hasad*, *ujb*, and vainglory are a bane of faith."[1]

**عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ مُسْلِمٍ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: إنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَأْتِي بِأَدْنَى بَادِرَةٍ فَيُكَفَّرُ. وَإنَّ الحَسَدَ لَيَأْكُلُ الإيمَانَ كَمَا تَأْكُلُ النَّارُ الحَطَبَ.**

Muhammad ibn Muslim reports that Imam al-Baqir (a) said, "A man may be forgiven for something done in a fit of anger; but envy devours faith as fire consumes wood."[2]

It is a known fact that faith is a Divine light that illumines the human heart with the radiance of His glory, as has been related by the *hadith-e qudsi* quoted before:

**لا تَسَعُنِي أَرْضِي وَلا سَمَائِي، بَلْ يَسَعُنِي قَلْبُ عَبْدِيَ الْمُؤْمِنُ.**

Neither [the vastness of] My earth, nor [that of] My heaven can contain Me. Indeed it is the heart of the man of faith, which can contain Me.

The spiritual light and the divine spark, which makes the human heart greater than anything else in the world does not go along with the darkness and narrowness, caused in it by this grievous vice. This hideous quality makes the human heart so narrow and dejected that its effects become apparent throughout the realm of one's inner and outer being. The heart becomes grieved and depressed, the chest narrow and suffocated, and the face grim and frowning. This state extinguishes the light of faith and deadens the human heart. The more it gains in strength, the more it diminishes the brightness of faith. All the inward and outward attributes of faith are negated by the effects of envy, which are manifested within and without one's personality. The man of faith is optimistic and has a hopeful attitude towards God, and is satisfied with the way He has divided and apportioned His bounties among His creatures. The envious person is displeased with God and is resentful of the fate apportioned by Him. As mentioned in tradition, a believer is not malicious towards other believers; he loves them, whereas the envious man acts in an opposite manner.

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[1] *Usul al-Kafi* (Pub. by Entesharat-e Elmiyyeh Eslamiyyeh, Arabic text with Persian translation by Haj Sayyed Javad Mostafavi), vol. iii, p. 418.

[2] *Usul al-Kafi* (Pub. by Entesharat-e Elmiyyeh Eslamiyyeh, Arabic text with Persian translation by Haj Sayyed Javad Mostafavi), vol. iii, p. 416.

A true believer is not possessed by the love of mundane things, whereas the envious man is afflicted with this vice due to his love of the world. A believer has no fear or grief whatsoever in his heart, except for that which is associated with the Ultimate Source and End of all being. But the fears and griefs of the envious man revolve around the person of whom he is jealous. The believer has a beaming countenance, which depicts his cheerful nature. The envious man has a frowning face and a grim countenance. The believer is humble, and is (most of the time) not proud or envious.

Envy destroys faith in the same way as fire burns up wood. Therefore, there does not exist any doubt about the danger of this vice, which wrests from man his faith, the source of his salvation in the Hereafter and the life and vigor of his heart, and reduces him into a helpless wretch.

A great evil that is an inseparable ingredient of envy is indignation with the Creator and the Beneficent Nourisher and annoyance with His ordainments. Deprived of vision by the dark veils of carnal nature, our immersion in the world of senses has blinded the eyes and deafened the ears. We do not understand that we are angry with the King of kings, nor know as to what form our anger and resentment will acquire as the result of this vice in the next world, our permanent abode. We hear the words of Imam al-Sadiq (a):

وَمَنْ يَكُ كَذَلِكَ فَلَسْتُ مِنْهُ وَلَيْسَ مِنِّي.

> Whoso is such, he neither belongs to Me nor do I belong to him.

Yet we do not understand the magnitude of the misfortune of God Almighty's disowning us, and what His disgust with us will bring for us. One who is driven out from the sphere of His *wilayah* (guardianship) and is not accepted under the standard of the Mercy of the Most Merciful, there is no hope of his salvation. He will, not be able to receive any intercession of the intercessors either:

﴿مَنْ ذَا الَّذِي يَشْفَعُ عِنْدَهُ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ.﴾

*Who is he that intercedeth with Him save by His leave?*
(2:255)

Who will act as an intercessor for one who is wrathful and resentful towards God, outside the pale of His *wilayah*, and whose bonds of love

between him and his Lord have been severed? Woe to us for the calamity we have invited for ourselves! Despite all the warnings and alarms sounded by the apostles of God to awaken us from the slumber, our neglect and our wretchedness only grew day by day.

## THE PUNISHMENT OF THE GRAVE

According to the *ulama*, the punishment of the grave and the darkness therein is one of the evil consequences of this vice. They maintain that the bearer of this vice, with its associated spiritual tension and gloom, is oppressed by pressure and darkness in the grave and in *Barzakh*. One's condition in the grave depends upon the spaciousness of the hearts and the narrowness thereof.

Imam al-Sadiq (a) is narrated to have said that the Prophet (*s*) went to attend the funeral of Sad. While seventy thousand angels accompanied the ceremonies, the Prophet (*s*) of God raised his head towards the heavens and said, "Does anyone face the squeeze (of the grave) as Sad faced?" The narrator of the tradition said to the Imam: "May I die for your sake, we have been told that Sad was not very particular of *taharah* while passing urine." The Imam said, "God forbid, his only fault was that he was harsh in his treatment of the people of his household..."

The state of darkness, narrowness, tension and constriction that appears in one's heart due to this vice is not likely to occur in other moral vices. In any case, the person possessing this vicious trait suffers torments in this life, then the oppressive darkness and constriction in the grave, and will ultimately be helpless and wretched in the Hereafter. All these are the evil effects of envy alone, on condition that it does not breed any other vice or induce any other evil deed. But it rarely happens that it does not generate some other affliction. Rather, it often begets many other moral vices and misdeeds, such as pride, as mentioned earlier, and other sins like backbiting, slandering, abusing, and torturing, etc., each one of which is a deadly and mortal sin.

Therefore, it is necessary for a wise person to make up his mind immediately and strive to get rid of this shame and indignity, saving his faith from the blaze of this fire and its disaster, he should rid himself of this mental torture and narrow-mindedness, which is the perpetual lifelong punishment in this world, followed by distress and darkness in the grave and the Purgatory, and incurs Divine wrath. One should consider that a malady, which has so many, harms needs to be treated urgently. His envy does not

harm the person of whom he is envious. It does not make him lose any of the favors and merits either. It may even give him some satisfaction, in this world as well as in the other, to see the distress of one who is jealous of him and is his enemy. While he continues to enjoy all those advantages, which cause you distress and anguish, it is yet another gift for him. And if you are again jealous of him for the second one, it will multiply your torment and anguish, which will again be a blessing for him, and so on. Hence you shall ever remain in grief, pain, and anguish and he in a state of bliss, joy, and exuberance. In the Hereafter, also, your envy will benefit him, especially if it culminates in backbiting, slandering, and other such acts of malice; as your good deeds will be assigned to him. You will be reduced to utter destitution and he will enjoy bounties and eminence. If you deliberate upon the matter for a while, you shall of course purge yourself from this vice and save your soul from its destructive effects. Don't think that psychic, moral, and spiritual vices are not curable; this is an erroneous notion that has been inspired in you by Satan and your carnal self, who want to keep you from treading the path of the Hereafter and to frustrate your efforts at rectifying your self. As long as man exists in this realm of transition and change, it is possible for him to transform all his attributes and moral characteristics. However strong his habits may be, as long as he is living in this world he can quit them. The only thing is that the effort required to throw them off varies with the degree of their strength and intensity. A bad habit in the early phase of its formation, of course, requires only a little self-discipline and effort to eradicate it. It is like uprooting a young plant that has not run its roots deeply into the ground. But when a quality becomes firmly rooted in one's nature, becoming a part of one's spiritual makeup, it is not easily uprooted, but requires much effort, like the tree that becomes old in age, having sent down its roots deep into the earth; it cannot be easily extirpated. The more you delay the decision to eradicate the iniquities of the heart, the more time and effort it will require.

My dear, in the first place do not allow any moral vice, bad habit or evil deed to enter the realm of your inner and outer being. This task is much easier than that of expelling them after they enter, establish themselves, and start flourishing. And if they enter, the more you delay the action required to expel them, the more time and effort will it require, and they will corrupt your inner faculties in the mean time. Our great Shaykh, the accomplished *arif* Shahabadi –my soul be sacrificed for him– used to say that it is better to take an action against moral vices when one's youth and its powers and

vivacity are still there. At that stage one can fulfill one's responsibilities as a human being in a better way. One should not allow oneself to delay until one's powers have departed; as it becomes more difficult to achieve success in this regard when old age sets in. Even if, presumably, one succeeds, the effort required for the reform is, in comparison, much greater.

Therefore, if a wise person considers the evil effects of anything and realizes that he is not afflicted by it, he does not involve himself in it and does not allow it to contaminate him; and if, God forbid, he is afflicted he tries to get rid of it and correct himself as soon as possible, not allowing it to strengthen its roots. If, God forbid, it has taken roots, he makes every effort to root it out so as to avoid its evil consequences in the Purgatory and the Hereafter. If he is transferred in the state of affliction from this world of material change, he will no longer be able to do anything about it. Woe to the man who is such, for it will take ages of the *Barzakh* and the Hereafter to transform a single moral characteristic.

In a tradition, the Holy Prophet (s) has been reported to have said that every inhabitant of Paradise or Hell is consigned to it eternally on account of his or her intentions and aims. Bad intentions, which result from evil morals, cannot be shed unless their source and origin is destroyed. In that world human qualities will manifest themselves with such an intensity and power that either it is not possible for them to perish at all –in which case one is lodged eternally in the Hell– or it is possible to purge them only through torment, distress, and flames –in which case it will take a time of several centuries of the Hereafter. Therefore, O wise man, do not allow a vice which can be removed by little effort of a month or a year or two, and whose removal is fully within your capacity and means, to linger on and cause the distresses of this world and the Hereafter and ultimately destroy you.

## THE SOURCE OF MORAL CORRUPTION

It was mentioned earlier that faith, which is the joy and fortune of the soul, is different from knowledge, which is the pleasure and satisfaction of the intellect. All moral and behavioral corruptions ensue from the absence of faith in one's heart i.e. whatever the intellect and reason have comprehended through rational proofs or the reports of the prophets fails to enter the heart, and the heart is unaware of their truth. One of the doctrines which every *arif, Hakim, mutakallim,* as well as the laity and the legists, affirm and regard as indubitable is that whatever has come into existence as the result of the

stroke of the Pen of the absolutely Wise Creator, from the viewpoint of being and perfection to the apportioning of the means of sustenance among creatures and the ordination of their terms of life, everything demonstrates the utmost beauty of design and the utmost perfection of a system which is in complete accordance with the *sumum bonum* of the creatures and the most complete and perfect system imaginable.

However, each one of them describes this graciousness of God and His absolute wisdom in his own specific language and in accordance with the terminology of his discipline. The *arif* says, "It is the shadow of the Absolute Beauty." The *Hakim* says, "The system of the real world is in accordance with a scientific scheme free from any defect and evil; that which is presumed to be evil in particular instances is nothing but a means for the creatures to acquire their deserved degree of perfection." The *mutakallim* and the legist believe that God's Acts are based upon wisdom and the general good, and man's limited intellect is incapable of comprehending the higher good intrinsic in Divine ordainments. All subscribe to this idea and everyone sets forth an argument to prove it according to his own knowledge and intelligence. But since they do not go beyond words and have not entered the heart, voices of protest and objection can still be heard, and yet the same man, not enjoying the bounty of faith, counters his own words and confutes his own arguments. Moral vices, too, are rooted in this weakness of faith. The one who feels jealous of others and desires for the loss of a good enjoyed by another and harbors spite against those who possess it in his heart, should know that he does not believe that it is in his own interest that God Almighty has not bestowed upon him that favor. Our limited understanding fails to comprehend the wisdom of His determinations. He should realize that he does not have faith in Divine Justice and the justness of His apportioning. Verbally he may declare his belief in the doctrine of Divine Justice. But his declaration is mere words; for the belief in the justness of God is contrary to envy. If you deem Him just, then consider His ordainment to be just too, for the *hadith* says expressly that the envious man is resentful at God's apportioning of gifts among His creatures and indignant at the favors conferred by Him. In accordance with the Divine instincts inherent in him, man by nature is a lover of justice. Modesty and reverence before justice and hatred and rebellion before injustice are rooted in his nature. However, if an opposite attitude is observed, it is because of a defect in his premises. If he is indignant at the advantages enjoyed by others and is contentious about the Divine apportioning of bounties, it is on account of the fact that he does not

consider it as just, but, God forbid, regards it as unjust and cruel. It is not because he considers the Divine apportioning as just and is yet resentful of it. It is not that he considers the Divine plan to be a perfect system and absolutely good and yet is displeased with it. Alas, our faith is not complete and the intellectual proofs have not crossed the limits of reason and intellect to enter the realm of the heart. Faith is not [solely] a matter of utterance. It is not mere reading, discussing, or quoting others; it requires sincerity of intention. One who seeks God succeeds in finding Him. Those who are interested in Divine knowledge, seek it:

﴿وَمَنْ كَانَ فِي هَذِهِ أَعْمَى فَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ أَعْمَى وَأَضَلُّ سَبِيلاً.﴾

*Whoso is blind here will be blind in the Hereafter, and yet further from the road.* (17:72)

﴿وَمَنْ لَمْ يَجْعَلْ اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ نُورٍ.﴾

*And he for whom Allah hath not appointed light, for him there is no light.* (24:40)

## THE PRACTICAL REMEDY FOR ENVY

Besides the theoretical cure that has been mentioned above, there is a practical remedy also for this hideous vice. It consists of this: Try, forcibly, to be affectionate with the person of whom you are jealous. By making a display of your affection, your purpose should be to cure yourself of this internal malady. Your inner self will ask you to hurt him and malign him. It will demand that you treat him like an enemy and recount to you his vices and mistakes. But you act against the inclinations of your self and be friendly with him. honor him and respect him and force yourself to speak in his praise. Try to see his virtues yourself and make them known to others too, concentrating upon his good qualities. Though your behavior will be affected and unnatural in the beginning, being artificial and feigned, but since your aim is self-rectification and curing of this vice, your behavior will gradually become less artificial. Day by day this affectation will be lessened and your self will become accustomed to it and that which was affectation will become reality. You convince your self and make it understand that he is a creature of God; perhaps it is God's grace, which has selected him for the advantage that he enjoys. If the object of your envy is a scholar endowed with knowledge and piety, and you are jealous of him due to these merits, your envy is all the

more abominable and this enmity will bring you greater harm in the Hereafter. It is for you to make your self understand that they are chosen servants of God, who, through Divine grace, have been distinguished by that great merit and favor. Such a gift ought to make one feel affectionate and kindly towards its possessors, inclining one to respect them and to be humble towards them. Hence, if one perceives that anything that should stir up love and respect in his heart is causing something that is contrary to it, he should know that the baser emotions have overpowered him and their darkness has conquered his inner self. Now it is time for him to positively resolve to get rid of it by all theoretical and practical means. If he tries to stimulate the feelings of love and friendship in his heart, he will succeed soon, since the light of love conquers the darkness of hatred. God Almighty has promised that He will guide those who struggle and help them through His invisible grace and increase their capacities:

إِنَّهُ وَلِيُّ التَّوْفِيقِ وَالْهِدَايَةِ.

> 'Indeed He possesses the authority to grant ability and to guide.'

## THE TRADITION REGARDING REMISSION OF ENVY

In some of the holy traditions, it has been reported from the Prophet (*s*) that he enumerated nine things from which his *ummah* have been granted remission; *hasad*, in case it is not expressed in one's words or deeds, is one of them. This tradition, and others similar to it, should not, of course, prevent one from seriously uprooting the vicious tree of envy from the self and freeing the soul from this faith-consuming fire. Because, it rarely happens that this vicious thing enters the soul without breeding diverse abominations there, without its signs becoming visible, and without harming one's faith. It is mentioned in *Sahih ahadith* that envy devours faith and is baleful to it, and that God Almighty disowns the envious person and would have nothing to do with him. Therefore, a thing, which is a major source of corruption and endangers all that matters to a human being should not be taken lightly due to misunderstanding the Prophetic *hadith* about remission of the sin of *hasad*.

Therefore, it is for you to take the matter seriously and snip off its branches and try to rectify yourself. Do not allow its venom to spill over in your outward behavior, as it will weaken its roots and stop its growth. And if you die during this period of spiritual reform and struggle, you will be

blessed with Divine Mercy. With His infinite mercy and the boon provided by the spiritual station of the interceding Holy Prophet (*s*), you will be granted forgiveness. The spark of Divine beneficence will burn up any remaining traces of it, and the soul will be purged and purified.

As to the following tradition narrated by Hamzah ibn Humran:

**عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: ثَلاثَةٌ لَمْ يُنَجَّ مِنْهَا نَبِيٌّ فَمَنْ دُونَهُ: التَّفَكُّرُ فِي الوَسْوَسَةِ فِي الخَلْقِ وَالطِّيَرَةُ وَالحَسَدُ، إلا أَنَّ المُؤْمِنَ لا يَسْتَعْمِلُ هَذَا (الحَسَدَ).**

> Abu Abd-Allah (Imam al-Sadiq) (a) said, "There are three things from which neither any prophet nor others below his rank are Immune: doubts about the creation, anticipation of misfortune for others, and envy, although a believer does never make use of them."[1]

Either the statement is hyperbolic, the intention being that these form the most frequent basis of their tribulations, without their being actually subject to these vices; or *hasad* is used here to connote *ghibtah* (envy which is free of ill will); or what is meant is the inclination to wish for the loss of some of the advantages enjoyed by infidels who propagate false beliefs. Otherwise, the prophets of God and the saints are free from any taint of *hasad* in the real sense of the word. A heart, which is defiled with moral evils and inner impurities, cannot receive Divine inspiration and revelation. Such a heart does not become a mirror of the light of Divine Attributes and the radiance of the Essence. Therefore, this tradition ought to be interpreted in the manner indicated above or in some other fashion, or it should be referred back to its speaker (*s*):

**وَالحَمْدُ للهِ أَوَّلاً وَآخِراً.**

> And Praise is God's, in the beginning and the end.

[1] *Wasail al-Shiah, bab al-amr bi al-maruf.*

6

# Sixth *Hadith*: LOVE OF THE WORLD

بِالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلى مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَحْيَى، عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ، عَنِ ابْنِ مَحْبُوبٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِاللهِ بْنِ سِنَانٍ وَعَبْدِ العَزِيزِ العَبْدِيِّ، عَنْ عَبْدِاللهِ بْنِ أَبِي يَعْفُورَ، عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: مَنْ أَصْبَحَ وَأَمْسَى وَالدُّنْيَا أَكْبَرَ هَمِّهِ جَعَلَ اللهُ تَعَالَى الفَقْرَ بَيْنَ عَيْنَيْهِ وَشَتَّتَ أَمْرَهُ وَلَمْ يَنَلْ مِنَ الدُّنْيا إِلا مَا قَسَمَ اللهُ لَهُ. وَمَنْ أَصْبَحَ وَأَمْسَى وَالآخِرَةُ أَكْبَرَ هَمِّهِ جَعَلَ اللهُ الغِنَى فِي قَلْبِهِ وَجَمَعَ لَهُ أَمْرَهُ.

Muhammad ibn Yaqub (al-Kulayni) from Muhammad ibn Yahya, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad, from Ibn Mahbub, from Abd-Allah ibn Sinan and Abd al-Aziz al-Abdi from Abd-Allah ibn Abi Yafur, who report Abu Abd-Allah (Imam al-Sadiq) (a) to have said, "One who passes his evenings and mornings in such a way that the world is his biggest concern, God ordains poverty between his two eyes and causes his affairs to become disjointed and dissipated, while he does not attain anything except what has been apportioned for him. And as for one who passes his evenings and mornings while his biggest concern and goal is the Hereafter, God puts contentment to his heart and gives a wholeness and unity to his affairs."[1]

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi* (Tehran), vol. iv (Arabic text with Persian translation by Sayyed Hashem Rasuli), p. 8.

## EXPOSITION OF THE TRADITION

There are various interpretations of the terms 'the world' and 'the Hereafter' according to different views offered by mystics and scholars. Here, our objective is not to plunge into any involved discussion about hair-splitting definitions, an absorption, which keeps the wayfarer from proceeding towards his goal. What is essential here is to understand the meaning of 'the disapproved world' (i.e. 'the world' in the sense in which it is necessary for the person seeking the Hereafter to shun it) and the factors that assist man and guide him on the path of salvation. These we shall discuss, God willing, in a few sections, and implore His help and guidance in this regard.

### MAWLANA MAJLISI ON THE REALITY OF THE WORLD

The great researcher and peerless traditionist Mawlana Majlisi (*m*)[1] states: "Let it be known to you that that which can be deduced from all the verses of the Quran and the traditions in this regard, according to our understanding of them, is that 'the accursed world' is the sum total of all those things that prevent man from obeying God and keep him from His love and from seeking the Hereafter. Therefore 'the world' and 'the Hereafter' are antithetical to each other: whatever causes His good pleasure and one's nearness to Him belongs to 'the Hereafter,' even though apparently it should seem to be a matter of the world –such as the trade, the agriculture, the industry and the crafts whose purpose is to provide subsistence for one's family for the sake of obedience to God's command, for spending one's income for charitable purposes and the welfare of the poor and needy, and to avoid dependence on others and beseeching their help. All these activities are meant for the Hereafter, though people should consider them to be for the sake of the world. On the other hand, heretical exercises in spiritual self-discipline, sanctimonious deeds and the like, though they might be performed with great devotion and care, are meant for the world, as they cause alienation from God and do not bring man near to Him. Such are the deeds and the practices of the infidels and those who oppose the right path."[2]

Another researcher remarks: "Your 'world' and 'Hereafter' are two inner

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[1] For maintaining readability, (*m*) which is an acronym for "*Rahimahu*(*m*) *Allah*" is used throughout the book to denote "May God have mercy upon him/them."

[2] Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar*.

states of your heart: that which is nearer and is concerned with the life before death is 'the world', and whatever that follows it and is concerned with the life after death is 'the Hereafter'. Therefore, everything that earns you pleasure and joy and provokes your lust before death, it is 'the world' for you."

## THE AUTHOR'S VIEW

This pauper says: 'the world' may sometimes be regarded as meaning the lowest level of existence and the abode of change, transition, and annihilation. 'The Hereafter' signifies return from this lower mode of existence to the higher, celestial plane, one's inner world, which is the abode of permanence, stability, and eternity. These two worlds exist for every individual. The first one is the terrestrial realm of development and emergence, which is the lower plane of observable worldly existence. The other is the hidden, inward, and celestial level of existence, which is the higher plane of being of the Hereafter. Although worldly existence is a lower and defective realm of being, but since it is a nursery for the training of lofty souls and a school for acquiring higher spiritual stations, it is a field for cultivating the Hereafter. In this sense it is the most sublime of the realms of being and the most profitable of worlds for the lovers of God and the wayfarers of the path of the Hereafter. And were it not for this terrestrial realm of matter, the domain of physical and spiritual substantial transformation and change, and if God Almighty had not made it a realm of transition and annihilation, not a single imperfect soul would have attained its promised state of perfection nor would it have been able to reach the realm of permanence and stability, nor the embodiments of imperfection would have been able to enter the Kingdom of God.

Accordingly, that which is mentioned in the Quran and tradition regarding the disapproval of 'the world' does not actually apply to the world itself, but is meant to refer to absorption in it and love and attachment for it. This shows that man has two 'worlds' one of them is condemned, while the other is extolled and praised.

The world, which is approved, is that which one acquires in this earthly abode, this school, and this marketplace, where higher stations and lasting spiritual merits are exchanged for transitory goods and where arrangements are made for the abiding abode. These cannot be possibly acquired without entering this world, as has been stated by the *Mawla* of the *Muwahhidun*,

Amir al-Muminin Imam Ali (a), in one of his sermons delivered on hearing a person abuse 'the world':

إنَّ الدُّنْيَا دَارُ صِدْقٍ لِمَنْ صَدَقَهَا وَدَارُ عَافِيَةٍ لِمَنْ فَهِمَ عَنْهَا وَدَارُ غِنىً لِمَنْ تَزَوَّدَ مِنْهَا وَدَارُ مَوْعِظَةٍ لِمَنِ اتَّعَظَ بِهَا. مَسْجِدُ أَحِبَّاءِ اللهِ وَمُصَلَّى مَلائِكَةِ اللهِ وَمَهْبِطُ وَحْيِ اللهِ وَمَتْجِرُ أَوْلِيَاءِ اللهِ: إكْتَسَبُوا فِيهَا الرَّحْمَةَ وَرَبِحُوا فِيهَا الجَنَّةَ.

Indeed this world is the abode of truth for him who appreciates its truthfulness, a place of safety for him who understands it, a mine of treasures for him who collects provisions from it [for the next world], and a house of instructions for him who draws lessons from it. It is the shrine of worship for those who love Allah, the house of prayer for His angels, the place where the revelations of Allah descend, and the marketplace for those devoted to Him. Herein they earn His mercy and herein they acquire Paradise by way of profit.[1]

God Almighty's words, (**وَنِعْمَ دَارُ المُتَّقِينَ**) –What a good abode is the house of the pious– relate to the world, according to the interpretation of Imam al-Baqir (a) reported in a tradition by al-'Ayyashi. Therefore, this world, being as it is the manifestation of and witness to His Beauty and Majesty, is not at all condemnable in this sense. That which is condemnable is the world of man himself in the sense of his absorption in the world of carnal nature and his attachment and love for it. That world is the source of all vices and all inward and outward sins, as reported in *al-Kafi* from Imam al-Sadiq (a):

قَالَ الإمَامُ الصَّادِقُ عَلَيْهِ السّلامُ: رَأْسُ كُلِّ خَطِيئَةٍ حُبُّ الدُّنْيَا.

Imam al-Sadiq (a) said, "The love of the world is the source of all transgressions."[2]

And it has been reported from Imam al-Baqir (a) that he said:

مَا ذِئْبَانِ ضَارِيَانِ فِي غَنَمٍ قَدْ فَارَقَهَا رِعَاؤُها: أَحَدُهُمَا فِي أَوَّلِهَا وَالآخِرُ فِي آخِرِهَا، بِأَفْسَدَ فِيهَا مِنْ حُبِّ المَالِ. وَالشَّرَفُ فِي دِينِ المُسْلِمِ.

[1] *Nahj al-balaghah* (ed. Subhi al-Salih), Hikam, no. 131.
[2] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. iv, p. 2.

> The harm done by two ferocious wolves, one attacking from the front and the other from the rear, to a herd without a shepherd, is less rapid than the one done by the love of the world to the faith of the faithful.[1]

Therefore, the attachment of the heart and the love of the world is synonymous with the accursed world, and the greater the attachment, the thicker the veils between man and the realms of sublimity, and denser the curtain between the heart of the human being and its Creator. It occurs in some *ahadith* that there are seventy thousand veils of light and darkness between God and His creatures. The veils of darkness may be no other than the attachments of the heart to this world, and the deeper they are, the greater the number of the veils and greater the difficulty of their removal.

## FACTORS THAT PROMOTE WORLDLINESS

Man is the child of this physical world, nature being his mother, and he the offspring of water and dust. The love for this world is implanted in his heart since the early time of his development and growth. As he grows this love also increases. On account of the faculties of desire and the organs of deriving pleasure that have been granted to him by God Almighty for the sake of the preservation of individual and species, this love grows day by day. Since he considers this world as a place of pleasure and luxury, and death as the end of these activities, even if he is led to believe in the Hereafter, its states, conditions, and rewards by the arguments of the *hukama* or the traditions of the prophets (a), yet his heart remains unfamiliar with them and does not accept them, let alone obtaining certainty of their reality. Due to these reasons, his love for this world and his attachment to it increase considerably. Since man naturally loves immortality, detests and evades decline and annihilation, and mistakes death for annihilation, even if his reason were to confirm this world as the house of transition and annihilation and that world as eternal and everlasting, his heart does not accept the findings of his reason if they have not entered the heart itself. The main thing is that the belief should have entered the heart and the best state is that of complete certainty. It is for this reason that Ibrahim Khalil Allah (a) asked God to bestow upon him certainty, and that was granted to him. Therefore, as the hearts do not have faith in the Hereafter –like those of ours– though

[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. iv, p. 3.

rationally we may posit its existence, they desire to remain in this world and are averse to the thought of dying and quitting this lower mode of existence. But if our hearts become aware of the fact that this world is the lowest of the worlds and the house of decline and change and the realm of imperfection and destruction, and that there are other realms beyond death each of which is eternal and stable, perfect and permanent, where life is bliss and beatitude, our hearts would naturally acquire the love of that world and would abhor this world. And if one were to rise above this world and awake to the realities of that world, and observe the real inward form of this world and the attachment to it, this world will become unbearable for him. He will detest it, desire to leave this abode of darkness and to get rid of the shackles of time and transition, an attitude which is apparent in the words of the *awliya*.

Imam Ali (a), the *Mawla* of the *awliya*, said:

وَاللهِ، لابْنُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ آنَسُ بِالمَوْتِ مِنَ الطِّفْلِ بِثَدْيِ أُمِّهِ.

> By God, the son of Abu Talib is more intimate with death than an infant with its mother's bosom.[1]

That great soul had considered the reality of this world from the viewpoint of *Wilayah*, and had chosen the blessed vicinity of the Most High. And were it not for the sake of the higher goals, those pure and chaste souls would not have tarried in this murky and gloomy gathering even for a single moment. To inhabit this phenomenal world of plurality, to meditate upon the worldly affairs, even with the spiritual favors, is a matter of great pain and sorrow for those absorbed in the love of God, a sorrow which we cannot even imagine. Their lamentations, as reflected in their prayers and supplications, were on account of the pain of separation from the Beloved and His magnanimous vicinity, although there were no mundane or spiritual veils for them, and they had left behind them the subdued hell of nature and its attachments, their hearts being free of the defilements of physical nature. Nevertheless, the very presence in the confines of physical nature and the inevitable pleasures associated with it, even if they be very few, acts like a veil. It is on this account that the Holy Prophet (*s*) is quoted to have said:

لَيُغَانُ عَلَى قَلْبِي، وَإِنِّي لأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللهَ فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ سَبْعِينَ مَرَّةً.

> Lest my heart should be covered by [the veils of] lust, I

[1] *Nahj al-balaghah*, *Khutab*, no. 5.

ask God's forgiveness seventy times a day.

Perhaps the fault of Adam (a), the father of mankind, was the result of this innate attraction towards physical nature, symbolized by the wheat, and his attention to the mundane aspect of life-something which is considered wrong by the *awliya* and the lovers of God. If Adam (a) had remained faithful to the divine passion and had not set foot into the domain of the mundane, this entire toilsome tale, winding through the world to the Hereafter, would not have assumed such proportions.

Let it be known to you that each and every pleasure that man derives from this world leaves its trace on his heart that is indicative of its susceptibility to the physical world and a cause of its further attachment to the world. The more the enjoyments and the pleasures, the greater their impression upon the heart and the more intense its attachment to the world and love for it. This process continues until the heart completely yields to the world and its allurements. Such a condition is the source of a great many evils. All the human transgressions, sins, and moral vices are on account of this love and attachment, as mentioned in the *hadith* quoted from *al-Kafi*. One of the greatest evils of this love, according to our Shaykh –my soul be sacrificed for him– is that if the love of the world captures the human heart and the attachments become strong, at the time of death man finds that God Almighty is separating him from his beloved and causing separation between him and the darling of his desire. As a result, he leaves the world in a state of indignation and rancor against Him. This greatly shocking warning is enough to awaken man, that he should be extremely cautious in guarding his heart. God forbid, lest one should be indignant with the real King of kings, the Bestower of favors and the Nourisher, for none except God knows the ugly form of such a rancor and resentment.

Our honored Shaykh also related of his father that he was extremely disturbed during the last years of his life regarding his love for one of his sons. But after doing exercises in spiritual self-discipline for some time he was relieved of this attachment. He was greatly satisfied on this account before he retired to the abode of eternal bliss. May God be pleased with him.

There is a tradition in *al-Kafi*, reported on the authority of Talhah ibn Zayd, from Abu Abd-Allah Imam al-Sadiq (a) that he said:

**مَثَلُ الدُّنْيَا كَمَثَلِ مَاءِ البَحْرِ؛ كُلَّمَا شَرِبَ مِنْهُ العَطْشَانُ ازْدَادَ عَطَشاً حَتَّى**

يَقْتُلَهُ.

> The example of the world is that of sea water; the more a thirsty person drinks from it, the thirstier he becomes until it kills him.[1]

The love of the world destroys man eternally, and it is the source of his affliction with inward and outward villainies.

The Holy Prophet (s) is reported to have said:

> The Dirham and the Dinar have destroyed many a people before you and they will destroy you too.

Even if a person is not, supposedly, afflicted by other vices, which is improbable or rather impossible, the sole attachment to the world is sufficient to cause many an affliction. The criterion of the length of the period of detention in the world beyond the grave and the *Barzakh* is the amount of intensity of these associations and attachments. The lesser they are, the more spacious and brighter his place in the grave and the *Barzakh*, and consequently the lesser the period of one's detention therein. Hence the *awliya*, according to some traditions, do not have to experience the conditions of the grave for more than three days, and that too for the sake of the inherent and natural attachment that they had in the life of this world.

Among the evil effects of the love of the world and attachment to it is that it makes man afraid of death. The fear of death, being the product of the love of the world and attachment to it, is highly objectionable; it is different from the fear of the Day of Resurrection, which is one of the attributes of true believers. The greater part of the sufferings and pangs experienced by a dying man are on account of the severance of the worldly ties, not the fear of death itself.

A brilliant researcher and a judicious analyzer of the world of Islam, Mir Damad –*karram Allah wajhah*– in his *al-Qabasat*, a book of rare excellence, writes:

لا تَخافَنَّكَ المَوْتُ، فَإنَّ مَرَارَتَهُ فِي خَوْفِهِ.

> Death itself will never frighten you; its bitterness lies in

[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. iii, p. 205.

being afraid of it.[1]

Another great evil caused by the love of the world is that it keeps man from religious exercises, devotional rites, and prayers, and strengthens his physical nature. It inculcates disobedience within his physical nature to the commands of his spirit. As a result it weakens his power of resolution and debilitates the will, whereas one of the main secrets and aims of worship and religious exercises is to make the body, the physical faculties, and the natural instincts subordinate to the spirit, so that the will may control them and force the body to act according to its wishes and prevent it from whatever the spirit wants it to abstain from. If the spirit dominates the body, the domain of the body and the physical faculties is brought under the control of the spirit in a way that everything it wishes the body to perform would be performed without the slightest hardship and hindrance. One of the virtues and secrets of austere worships and laborious devotional exercises is that they are more conducive to the attainment of this goal. Through them man can acquire a strong will and resolution, and overcome his physical nature. If the will becomes complete and perfect and the resolution strong and powerful, the domain of the human body and its external and internal faculties acquires angelic characteristics, and he becomes similar to the angels of God who never transgress Divine commands, obey readily, without any resistance or compulsion, whatever He orders them to do, and refrain from doing whatever they are forbidden from. If the physical faculties of man come under the domination of his spirit, all hardships and hindrances disappear and a state of ease and tranquility prevails. When that happens, the 'seven realms' of physical nature will become subservient to the heavenly forces, and all the faculties will act as their functionaries.

Therefore, my dear, the strength of will power and resolution is very important and effective in that world. In fact, the strength of will is the criterion of entry into one of the levels of Paradise, which is one of the highest heavens. Unless one possesses a strong will and powerful resolution he cannot gain that heaven and that high station. It is reported in a tradition that when the virtuous are stationed in Paradise, a message will be sent to them from the Holy God, saying, "This is the message sent by the Eternal and the Immortal to the one who is also eternal and immortal: Whatever I command to be, it comes into existence; today I bestow on you authority to

[1] Mir Damad, *al-Qabasat*, p. 72.

command whatever you desire to bring into existence and it would come into existence." You can see what a great authority and distinction that would be. What sort of power they have whose resolution and will shall be the manifestation of the Divine Will so that they will be able to grant the apparel of existence to non-existents. It shows that the power of will and resolution is superior to all the physical faculties. And it is also obvious that this message will not be sent out of extravagance and without proper Judgment. Those whose will is subordinated to their bestial desires and whose resolution has become dead and inert, they cannot attain this station. The Almighty's Acts are free from extravagance and vain indulgence. In this world everything is based on a system in which all means and ends are arranged according to an order. In that world, too, all matters will be arranged in a similar manner, or rather that world represents the highest harmony between causes and effects, means and ends. The power and authority of the will is to be cultivated in this world. This world is the sowing ground of the Hereafter; it is the substance out of which the rewards of heaven as well as the misfortunes of hell are carved out.

Therefore, each one of the worships and the rites prescribed by the *Shariah*, besides themselves possessing heavenly and angelic forms, are elements for building the physical paradise and procuring all the paraphernalia of heavenly life. This is confirmed by tradition and affirmed by reason. In the same way as every worship produces its own specific effects on the soul, it also, little by little, strengthens the will and perfects its strength. Therefore, the greater the effort required for a worship, the more productive it is

**أَفْضَلُ الأَعْمَالِ أَحْمَزُهَا.**

The best of deeds are those, which are the most difficult.[1]

For instance, waking up for the sake of praying to God Almighty in the biting cold of a winter night and sacrificing the delights of sound sleep makes the soul triumphant over the body and strengthens the will. Though it is a bit difficult and unpleasant in the beginning, but after a little practice its hardship and inconvenience becomes lesser and lesser and the subservience of the body to the soul grows. We see the people who perform it doing all this without any trouble, and if we are lazy and find it difficult, it is because

[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. iv, p. 9.

we do not take action. But if we force ourselves to act, gradually the difficulty turns into ease. The people who offer the nightly prayer derive great enjoyment out of it, even more than the pleasure we derive from carnal enjoyments. The self becomes habituated through action, and goodness becomes enduring by becoming habitual.

These worships have several advantages, one of them is that the form that they acquire in that world is so beautiful that its parallel cannot be found in this world, and we are unable to visualize it. Another is that the soul acquires will power and resolution, which by itself has numerous advantages, and we have mentioned one of them. Yet another is that it familiarizes man with the worship and remembrance of God, bringing the unreal to the Real, and turning the heart towards the King of kings, stirring in it the love for the Beauty of the Real Beloved, and diminishing the attachment to and concern for the world and the Hereafter. Perhaps, if this divine passion is produced and a state is achieved in which he knows the real objective of worship and the real secret of meditation and remembrance, both the worlds would lose their significance for him; the vision of the Beloved wipes out the dust of duality from the mirror of the heart, and God alone knows how magnanimously He will treat such a devotee. Therefore, the practice of the exercises prescribed by the *Shariah*, the worships and the rites, and abstention from carnal desires and lusts, strengthen the human will power and resolution. On the other hand, immersion in sinful physical nature weakens human resolution and will, as mentioned earlier.

It is known to every man of conscience that man is drawn towards Absolute Perfection in accordance with his nature and inherent disposition. The better part of his heart is attracted towards Absolute Beauty and the Most Perfect in all aspects. This characteristic of man is innate in his nature and ingrained in it by God Almighty. Accordingly, the will is a means for the fulfillment of the search of the lovers of Absolute Beauty. However, everyone, in accordance with his own state and condition, has his own idea of perfection, and he sees perfection in something towards which he is attracted. Those who work for the sake of the Hereafter perceive perfection in otherworldly stages and grades and their hearts are turned towards them. And the men of God, who, beholding perfection in His beauty and beauty in His perfection, say:

﴿إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِي لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ.﴾

*I have turned my face towards Him who created the heavens and the earth*. (6:79)

And they say:

وَلِي مَعَ اللهِ حَالٌ.

My ecstasy lies in God.

They long for union with Him, and are in love with His Beauty. The worldlings, since they perceive perfection in worldly comforts and luxuries, those things having acquired beauty in their sight and charmed them, are naturally attracted towards them. Nevertheless, since man's natural inclination is towards absolute perfection, all the worldly attachments are basically errors of Judgment. Therefore, the greater his mastery over worldly or otherworldly benefits, whether they are spiritual accomplishments, authority, power, or material treasures, his longing for them increases and the flame of love grows brighter and more ferocious. For example, the sensual appetites of a lusty man will increase if he is given more chances of fulfilling his sensual desires; he will desire some other fulfillment that is not available to him, and the furnace of his lust will become hotter and wilder. In the same way, if the man ambitious for power and authority is allowed to establish his authority over one region, he will turn towards yet another. If the whole earth comes under his domination, he will think of invading other spheres in order to bring them under his dominion. He is not aware that his natural instincts crave for something else. The instinctive love and the natural quest of man is directed towards the Absolute Beloved. All substantial, physical, and intentional motions, all attentions of the heart and the inclinations of the self are directed towards the beauty of Absolute Beauty, yet human beings do not realize it. They abuse this love, this desire, and this longing, which is meant to be the *Buraq* (the mount upon which the Prophet (*s*) is said to have performed the nocturnal journey through the universe called *Miraj*) meant for ascension to heaven, the wings to fly to union with the Absolute, by wasting it on unworthy ends and by confining it within absurd barriers and limits, thus missing their goal.

In short, since man's inclination towards absolute perfection is innate, the greater his greed for worldly allurements the more he accumulates them and the more is his heart attracted towards them. Since he mistakenly believes the world and worldly fascinations to be the desired ultimate goal his greed grows day by day and his desire for them multiplies. His need for the world

increases and poverty and deprivation becomes his fate. On the contrary, those who work for the Hereafter, their attention towards the world diminishes, their attention towards the Hereafter increases with their interest therein, and the love for this world and the interest therein diminishes in their hearts till they care no more about the world and its allurements. A sense of richness and plentitude is lodged within their hearts and the treasures of this world lose their value in their sight. Therefore, the men of God are oblivious of both the worlds and free of care for both of them. Their only need is related to Absolute Plentitude. Absence of need and presence of plentitude are infused in their hearts by the light of the Needless-in-Itself.

In the light of the above exposition, the tradition means to say that whosoever makes the world his biggest concern from morning till night, God Almighty puts poverty into his eyes. And whosoever spends his morning and evening making the Hereafter his biggest concern, God Almighty puts plentitude into his heart. It is obvious that the one whose heart attends to the, Hereafter, for him all the worldly matters become insignificant, trivial, and easy. He views the world as temporary, transitory; and short-lived, a place where he is for the sole purpose of educating and training himself. He is indifferent to its sufferings and joys. His needs become few, and his dependence on the matters of the world and its inhabitants becomes lesser, and reaches a point where he has no need of them at all. His affairs become integrated and organized, and an inalienable sense of contentment enters his heart. Therefore, the more you look at this world with wonder and love, the more your heart will be attached to it, and your need for it will also increase proportionally to your love. A sense of poverty and privation will appear on the surface of your personality, your affairs will become disjointed and dissipated. Your heart will become anxious, melancholic, and fearful, and your affairs will not be carried out according to your wishes. Your hope and greed will increase day by day. Grief and regret will seize you; bewilderment and despair will invade your heart. Some of these points have been alluded to in the following traditions from *al-Kafi*:

عَنْ حَفْصِ بْنِ قُرْطٍ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: مَنْ كَثُرَ اشْتِبَاكُهُ بِالدُّنْيَا كَانَ أَشَدَّ لِحَسْرَتِهِ عِنْدَ فِرَاقِهَا.

On the authority of HafS ibn Qurt, Abu Abd-Allah (a) is reported to have said, “The greater one’s involvement with the world, the greater shall be his regret at the time

of parting from it."[1]

عَنِ ابْنِ أَبِي يَعْفُورَ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ يَقُولُ: مَنْ تَعَلَّقَ قَلْبُهُ بِالدُّنْيَا تَعَلَّقَ قَلْبُهُ بِثَلاثِ خِصَالٍ: هَمٍّ لا يَفْنَى وَأَمَلٍ لا يُدْرَكُ وَرَجَاءٍ لا يُنَالُ.

Ibn Abi Yafur says: I heard Abu Abd-Allah as saying, "Whoever has a heart attached to the world, has three things attached to his heart: unremitting sadness, unfulfilled desire, and unachievable hope."[2]

But the otherworldly, the nearer they come to the Court of the Beneficent, the more joyful and tranquil their hearts become; they become oblivious, nay disgusted, of this world and whatever is in it. If the Almighty had not decreed their terms of life, they would not have tarried for a single moment in this world. The *Mawla* of the *Muwahhidun*, Imam Ali (a), says about them: "They are not sad and dejected here like the people of this world, and in the Hereafter they will be immersed in the oceans of His Mercy." May God include you and us with them, God willing.

So, my dear, now you know about the evils of this love and attachment, and have learnt how this love can destroy a human being. It deprives the human being of his faith, and makes a mess of his life in the Hereafter as well as in this world. Make up your mind, and try to curtail your love and loosen the bondage to this world as far as possible. Eradicate its roots, and consider this short life in this world as insignificant. Do not attach any value to its pleasures, mixed as they are with punishment, sorrow, and pain. Seek help from God, so that He may succor you in relieving your self from its scourge and suffering, and familiarize your heart with the noble abode that lies with Him. And whatever lies with God is better and lasting.

[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. iv, p. 9.
[2] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. iv, p. 9

7

# Seventh *Hadith*: ANGER (*GHADAB*)

بِالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلى مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عِيسَى، عَنْ يُونُسَ، عَنْ دَاوُدَ بْنِ فَرْقَدٍ، عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: الغَضَبُ مِفْتَاحُ كُلِّ شَرٍّ.

Muhammad ibn Yaqub (al-Kulayni), from Ali ibn Ibrahim, from Muhammad ibn Isa, from Yunus, from Dawud ibn Farqad, who reports al-Imam al-Sadiq (a) to have said, "Anger is the key (that opens the door) to all kinds of vices."[1]

## EXPOSITION

The great researcher Ahmad ibn Muhammad, popularly known as Ibn Maskawayh, in his book *Taharat al-araq*, which is a fine book of rare excellence in beauty of style and orderliness of contents, writes something which can be summarized as follows: Anger, in fact, is an inner psychic movement due to which a state of agitation is produced in the heart's blood, arousing a desire for vengeance. And when this agitation becomes more violent, it intensifies the fire of anger. A violent commotion in the blood seizes the heart, filling the arteries and the brain with a flurry of dark smoke, on account of which the mind and the intellect lose control and become powerless. At that time, as the *hukama* maintain, the inner state of the person resembles a cave where fire has broken out, filling it with flames and

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi* (Tehran), vol. iii (Arabic text with Persian translation by Sayyed Javad Mostafavi), p. 412.

suffocating clouds of smoke that leap out of its mouth with intense heat and a fiery howl. When that happens, it becomes extremely difficult to pacify such a person and to extinguish the fire of his wrath; whatever is thrown in it to cool it down becomes a part of it, adding to its intensity. It is for this reason that such a man becomes blinded to propriety and deaf to guidance. In such a condition, there is no hope for him. Then Ibn Maskawayh adds: "Hippocrates says that he is more hopeful about a ship encircled by a fierce storm and violent winds which has been knocked away from its course by the sea waves into rocky waters, than about an enraged person. Because, in such conditions, the sailors may somehow manage to save the ship by means of clever maneuvers, but there is no hope of deliverance for the soul engulfed in rage; for all such efforts as counsel, advice, and exhortation fail to appease him. The more one tries to pacify it through humble entreaties and tearful supplications, the more violent it becomes."

## ADVANTAGES OF *AL-QUWWAH AL-GHADABIYYAH* (THE POWER OF ANGER)

It should be known that the Power of Anger is one of the biggest favors of God conferred upon His creatures, by means of which they are enabled to pursue activities constructive to their world and Hereafter, are assured the continuity of the species as well as, the safety and survival of the individual and the family. It also plays a great role in the establishment and maintenance of social order and civic life.' If this noble faculty were not ingrained in the animal's nature, it would not have been able to defend itself against natural adversities, and would have been defenseless against the dangers of destruction and extinction. And if it were absent in the human nature, man would have failed to achieve most of his accomplishments and attainments. Moreover, even its deficiency and insufficient presence below the moderate level is itself considered a moral weakness and flaw which gives rise to innumerable vices and defects like: fear; timidity; weakness; laxity; laziness; greed; lack of restraint, patience and tolerance; lack of constancy and perseverance when needed; love of comfort; torpor; lethargy; submissiveness to oppression and tyranny; submitting to insults and disgraces to which an individual or his family may be subjected; dastardliness; spiritlessness, etc. Describing the qualities of the believers God Almighty says:

﴿أَشِدَّاءُ عَلَى الْكُفَّارِ رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ﴾

(*The believers*) *are hard against the unbelievers and merciful among themselves*. (48:29)

The fulfillment of the duty of *al-amr bi al-maruf wa al-nahy an al-munkar* (to enjoin good conduct and forbid indecency), the implementation of *hudud* (punishment prescribed by the Islamic penal law), *tazirat* (punishments adjudged by a judge), and the carrying out of other policies set forth by religion or guided by reason, would not have been possible without the existence of this noble Power of Anger. On this basis, those who believe in eradicating the Power of Anger and consider its destruction as an accomplishment and mark of perfection are highly mistaken and in great error, ignorant as they are about the signs of perfection and the bounds of moderation. Poor fellows, they do not know that God Almighty has not created this noble faculty in vain in all the species belonging to the animal kingdom. To the children of Adam (a) He bestowed this power as the source of securing a good life in this world and the Hereafter, and a vehicle for procuring various blessings and felicities. The holy *jihad* with the enemies of the *Din*; the struggle for the preservation of mankind's social order; the defense and protection of one's own life, property and honor, as well as the Divine values and laws; and above all the combat with one's inner self, which is the biggest enemy of man, none of these could be possible without the existence of this noble faculty. It is under the banner of this noble faculty that aggressions and encroachments upon rights are repelled, borders and frontiers are protected, and other social and individual offences, noxious practices, and harmful deeds are checked. It is for this very reason that the *hukama* have recommended various remedies for treating any deficiency in this Power, and prescribed numerous practical and theoretical remedies for the purpose of its regeneration, like participation in acts of heroism and going to battlefronts on the occasion of war with the enemies of God. It is even narrated of some sages that they used to visit risky places, stayed there and exposed themselves to great perils and dangers. They would board a ship at a time while the sea was turbulent and stormy, so that they might get rid of fear and overcome their timidity and sluggishness. In any case, the Power of Anger is ingrained in the nature of human beings and animals, except that in some cases it is dormant and torpid, like a fire smouldering under the ashes. If someone perceives in himself any signs of torpor and lack of the sense of honor, he must try to overcome this condition by means of its antidote, courage, which is a commendable quality and a moral virtue, to return to a normal state. We shall have occasion to refer to it again in due course.

## VICE OF IMMODERATION IN ANGER

In the same way as the deficiency and lack of moderation is considered a moral vice and source of numerous moral corruptions, the excess and going beyond the upper limits of moderation is also regarded, morally, as a vice and source of countless deviations. The tradition quoted in *al-Kafi* is sufficient to indicate the dangers of such a state:

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: الغَضَبُ يُفْسِدُ الإِيمَانَ كَمَا يُفْسِدُ الخَلُّ العَسَلَ.

It is reported on the authority of Imam al-Sadiq (a) that the Apostle of God (*s*) said, "Anger spoils faith in the same way as vinegar destroys honey."[1]

It may happen that someone gets angry and, in a bout of extreme anger, turns away from the *Din* of God. The hot flames and the dark fumes of anger not only destroy his faith by consuming his righteous beliefs, they also lead him to apostatize by rejecting God, thus leading him to eternal damnation. And when he becomes aware of it, his remorse is of no avail, as the fire of anger, which was lit by a spark thrown in by Satan, continues to roar in his heart, as Imam al-Baqir (a) has said:

إِنَّ هَذَا الغَضَبَ جَمْرَةٌ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تُوقَدُ فِي قَلْبِ ابْنِ آدَمَ.

Indeed, this anger is the spark lit by Satan in the heart of the son of Adam.[2]

In the next world, this fire will acquire the form of the fire of Divine Wrath, as reported from al-Baqir (a) in *al-Kafi*:

مَكْتُوبٌ فِي التَّوْرَاةِ فِي مَا نَاجَى اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ بِهِ مُوسَى عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: يَا مُوسَى أَمْسِكْ غَضَبَكَ عَمَّنْ مَلَّكْتُكَ عَلَيْهِ أَكُفَّ عَنْكَ غَضَبِي.

It is recorded in the Torah regarding that which God Almighty confided to Moses (a), saying: "O Moses,

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[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi* (Tehran), vol. iii (Arabic text with Persian translation by Sayyed Javad Mostafavi), p. 412.

[2] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi* (Tehran), vol. iii (Arabic text with Persian translation by Sayyed Javad Mostafavi), p. 415.

> control your anger towards those over whom I have given you authority, so that I may spare you from My Wrath."[1]

It must be known that no fire is more painful than the fire of Divine Wrath. It is mentioned in a tradition that Jesus, the son of Mary, was asked by his disciples as to which of the things is the hardest to bear. "The Fury of the Most High God is the hardest thing to bear," he replied. They questioned him, "How can we save ourselves from it?" "By not getting angry," Jesus said.

Therefore, it must be obvious that God's Wrath is more painful and severer than any thing else, and the fire of His Fury is most destructive. The Hereafterly form of our anger in this world is the fire of Divine Wrath in the next world. In the same way as anger emanates from the heart, perhaps the fire of Divine Wrath, which is the abode of our anger and all other inner vices, will also emanate from the inner depths of the heart and spread over the external being, and its tormenting flames will emerge from the external sense organs like the eyes, the ears, and the tongue. Rather, the external senses are themselves the doors which shall be opened to the fire of Hell. The fire of the hell of deeds and the physical hell encompasses the without and travels towards the within. Hence man is tortured from both the sides by these two hells: one emanates from within the heart and its flames enter the body through pia mater of the brain, and the other, which is the result of the vicious deeds, advances towards the inner being from without, and man is subjected to torments and pressures. What sort of torment and torture it will be? God alone knows what pain and distress it will bring in addition to the burning and melting. You imagine that the topological mode of the Hell's encompassment is something that you know. Here things are surrounded only externally and outwardly; but in that world, encirclement will occur both externally and internally; it will cover the outer surface of the body as well as the inner depths of the human heart and being.

And if, God forbid, anger becomes permanent part of one's nature, it will be more catastrophic; for the form that such a one shall acquire in the *Barzakh* and on the Day of Resurrection will be a beastly form, that too one which has no match in this world; for the brutality of the person in this state cannot be compared with any of the ferocious beasts. In the same way, as

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[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi* (Tehran), vol. iii (Arabic text with Persian translation by Sayyed Javad Mostafavi), p. 415.

none of the creatures can touch this marvel of nature from the aspect of attainment of nobility and perfection, so also from the aspect of his capacity for degeneration and meanness and his leaning towards perverseness, man cannot be compared with any creature. It is about his perverseness that the Holy Quran says:

﴿أُوْلَئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ.﴾

*Those are as the cattle –nay, they are worse in misguidance*. (7:179)

It is about the hardness of the human heart that it says:

﴿فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً.﴾

(*Then the hearts of the Jews*) *became hardened like stones, or even yet harder*. (2:74)

All this that you have heard about the evil effects of this consuming fire of anger is merely a fraction of its danger. It holds true in cases where no other vice and offence spring from it, that is, if this inner fire lies dormant in the inner darkness, having been choked and suffocated, although having extinguished the light of faith by its dense smoke. However, it is very rare, or rather impossible, that in a fit of its intense conflagration one should remain immune from committing other, even mortal, sins. It happens that in a brief outburst of anger, this cursed firebrand thrown by the Devil, man falls over the precipice of destruction and doom. He may even, God be our refuge, abuse the prophets of God and saints, assassinate an innocent person, or desecrate something holy, thus bringing about his own destruction in the world as well as in the Hereafter, as is mentioned in a *hadith* of *al-Kafi*:

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ فِي حَدِيثٍ: كَانَ أَبِي يَقُولُ: أَيُّ شَيْءٍ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الغَضَبِ؟ إنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَغْضَبُ فَيَقْتُلُ النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللهُ وَيَقْذِفُ المُحْصَنَةَ.

> It is reported from Imam al-Sadiq (a) that he said that his father used to say: "Is there anything more violent than anger? Verily, a man gets angry and kills someone whose blood has been forbidden by God, or slanders a married woman."[1]

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi* (Tehran), vol. iii (Arabic text with Persian translation by Sayyed

Many atrocious deeds have been committed under a spell of anger and its agitation. Therefore, one, while in a state of tranquility of mind, should be apprehensive of his own anger if he is in a habit of often getting angry. He should contemplate upon its cure, when in a state of mental composure, and think about its causes, its bad consequences and repercussions, and he should strive to get rid of it. He should consider that a faculty which was granted by God Almighty for the sake of the preservation of the world's order, for the continuity and survival of human species and individual, for the discipline and order of the family system, for the advancement and progress of humankind, and for protecting human rights and safeguarding Divine laws, a faculty under whose shadow the visible as well as the invisible system of the visible world and the hidden world is to be reformed and maintained, if he acts contrary to this purpose and makes use of this power against the Divine design, it will be a breach of trust of a severe kind that deserves censure and punishment. What an act of ignorance and injustice it is not to fulfill the Divine trust, by employing what could be easily employed for the purposes of justice in incurring His Wrath. It is clear that such a person will not be sheltered from the Divine Wrath. Hence it is in order to think seriously about the moral vices and vicious deeds that are the outcome of anger, and to try to remove the effects of this crooked quality, each one of which is capable of afflicting a person till eternity, causing many a calamity in this world as well as chastisement and damnation in the Hereafter.

## MORAL HAZARDS OF ANGER

As to the moral hazards, it may cause malice towards creatures of God, leading sometimes even to the enmity not only of prophets and *awliya*, but also of the Holy Essence of the Necessary Being and the Nourisher. This shows how dangerous and disgraceful its consequences may be. I seek refuge in God from the evil of the rebellious self, which, if left reinless for a moment, throws one down rolling in the dust of ignominy or dashes with him towards eternal damnation. It may also give rise to other vices, like *hasad*, about whose evils you have read in the exposition of the fifth tradition, and many more besides it.

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Javad Mostafavi), p. 415.

## ITS BEHAVIORAL HAZARDS

There is no limit to the behavioral hazards that are products of this vice. Perhaps, it may lead one, God save us, to use abusive language or revile the prophets of God and *awliya*. Or he may desecrate sanctities and utter slanders about venerable persons. He may murder a pious soul, wreck the lives of innocent creatures, wreck a family, or reveal the secrets of others tearing up the veils that cover them. There seems to be no limit to such monstrous acts that man may commit at the time of outbreak of this faith-consuming fire that also destroys many homes. As such, it can be said that this habit is the mother of all spiritual maladies and the key to each and every evil action. As opposed to this vice is the ability to restrain one's anger. This ability to extinguish the fire of anger has been considered the essence of wisdom and the focus of all virtues and noble qualities, as stated in this tradition of *al-Kafi:*

**عِدَّةٌ مِنْ أَصْحَابِنَا، عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ خَالِدٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنِ النَّضْرِ بْنِ سُوَيْدٍ، عَنِ القَاسِمِ بْنِ سُلَيْمَانَ، عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أَبِي عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ يَقُولُ: أَتَى رَسُولَ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِه رَجُلٌ بَدَوِيٌّ فَقَالَ: إِنِّي أَسْكُنُ البَادِيَةَ، فَعَلِّمْنِي جَوامِعَ الكَلامِ. فَقَالَ: آمُرُكَ أَنْ لا تَغْضَبَ. فَأَعَادَ عَلَيْهِ الأَعْرَابِيُّ المَسْأَلَةَ ثَلاثَ مَرَّاتٍ حَتّى رَجَعَ الرَّجُلُ إِلَى نَفْسِهِ فَقَالَ: لا أَسْأَلُ عَنْ شَيْءٍ بَعْدَ هَذَا.مَا أَمَرَنِي رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ إلا بِالخَيْرِ.**

**قَالَ: وَكَانَ أَبِي يَقُولُ: أَيُّ شَيْءٍ أَشَدُّ مِنَ الغَضَبِ؟ إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَغْضَبُ فَيَقْتُلُ النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللهُ وَيَقْذِفُ المُحْصَنَةَ.**

(Al-Kulayni says) From a number of our (i.e. al-Kulaynis) companions, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid (al-Barqi), who narrates on the authority of a chain of narrators from Imam al-Sadiq (a) that he heard his father (Imam al-Baqir [*a*]) as saying: "A Bedouin came to the Prophet (*S*) and said: 'I live in the desert. Teach me the essence of wisdom.' Thereupon the Prophet (*S*) said to him: 'I command you not to get angry' After repeating his

> question thrice (and hearing the same reply from the Prophet every time) the Bedouin said to himself: 'After this I will not ask any question, since the Apostle of God (*S*) does not command anything but good'." Imam al-Sadiq (a) says, "My father used to say, 'Is there anything more violent than anger? Verily, a man gets angry and kills someone whose blood has been forbidden by God, or slanders a married woman."[1]

After that a wise person coolly ponders upon its evil consequences and the benefits of restraint, he should make it incumbent upon himself to put out this fire in the region of his heart with every possible effort and to clear from his heart the black soot of its smoke. This is something which is not very difficult when one resolves to act against one's inner self and its desires, after having reflected upon their evil effects and by admonishing one's self. In fact, one may get rid of all moral evils and ugly spiritual traits and acquire all good qualities and excellences of character and soul whenever he resolves to improve his spiritual condition.

## CONTROLLING ANGER

There are also several practical and theoretical remedies for curing anger when it has flared up. The theoretical remedy involves reflecting upon the matters mentioned above, which is also a kind of practical remedy in this case. But among the practical remedies the important ones involve withholding of the self in the initial stages of anger. This is because it is ignited little by little, becoming more intense until its furnace is set burning fiercely and its flame becomes violent and furious. When that happens, it gets completely out of control and shuts off the lights of one's faith and intellect. Blowing off the lamp of guidance, it reduces man to an utterly wretched state. Therefore, one should be on one's guard so as to dissociate oneself by some means before its fierceness mounts and its fire becomes more violent. He should either leave the place where his anger may be provoked, or change his posture: that is, if seated, he should stand up, and if standing sit down, or engage his mind in the remembrance of God (some people consider it even obligatory), or he should make himself busy in some

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi* (Tehran), vol. iii (Arabic text with Persian translation by Sayyed Javad Mostafavi), p. 415.

other activity to divert his attention. In any case, it is easier to put a curb on it in the beginning. It has two results. Firstly, he will be able to pacify his self at that early stage and the flames of anger will be put out. Secondly, the experience will always remain with one as a primary cure for treating one's self. If one always pays attention to one's condition and treats one's self in this way, one will undergo a complete transformation as one's inner state moves towards the point of moderation. An allusion to this matter is made in the following traditions from *al-Kafi*:

عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: إِنَّ هَذَا الغَضَبَ جَمْرَةٌ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ تُوقَدُ فِي قَلْبِ ابْنِ آدَمَ. وَإِنَّ أَحَدَكُمْ إِذَا غَضِبَ احْمَرَّتْ عَيْنَاهُ وَانْتَفَخَتْ أَوْدَاجُهُ وَدَخَلَ الشَّيْطَانُ فِيهِ. فَإِذَا خَافَ أَحَدُكُمْ ذَلِكَ مِنْ نَفْسِهِ فَلْيَلْزَمِ الأَرْضَ، فَإِنَّ رِجْزَ الشَّيْطَانِ لَيَذْهَبُ عَنْهُ عِنْدَ ذَلِكَ.

It is reported from al-Imam al-Baqir (a) that he said, "Verily, anger is a spark ignited by the Devil in the human heart. Indeed, when anyone of you gets angry, his eyes become red, the veins of his neck become swollen and Satan enters them. Therefore, whosoever among you is concerned about himself on account of it, he should lie down for a while so that the filth of Satan may be removed from him at the time."[1]

And:

عَنْ مَيْسِرٍ قَالَ: ذُكِرَ الغَضَبُ عِنْدَ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ فَقَالَ: إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لَيَغْضَبُ فَمَا يَرْضَى أَبَداً حَتَّى يَدْخُلَ النَّارَ. فَأَيُّمَا رَجُلٍ غَضِبَ عَلَى قَوْمٍ وَهُوَ قَائِمٌ فَلْيَجْلِسْ مِنْ فَوْرِهِ ذَلِكَ، فَإِنَّهُ سَيَذْهَبُ عَنْهُ رِجْزُ الشَّيْطَانِ. وَأَيُّمَا رَجُلٍ غَضِبَ عَلَى ذِي رَحِمٍ فَلْيَدْنُ مِنْهُ فَلْيَمِسَّهُ. فَإِنَّ الرَّحِمَ إِذَا مُسَّتْ سَكَنَتْ.

Maysir reports that once anger was discussed in the presence of Imam al-Baqir (a). He said, "Verily, it

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi* (Tehran), vol. iii (Arabic text with Persian translation by Sayyed Javad Mostafavi), p. 415.

> happens that an angry person would not be satisfied until he enters the Fire (i.e. his anger does not subside unless it drags him into the hellfire). Therefore, whoever is angry with someone let him sit down immediately if he is standing; for, indeed, it would repel from him the uncleanliness of Satan. And whoever gets angry with his kinsman, let him approach him and pat him; for the feeling of consanguinity, when stimulated by touch, induces calmness."[1]

These two traditions suggest two practical remedies of anger in its initial stage. One is general and recommends sitting down and bringing about a change in posture (according to another tradition, if somebody be seated at the time of getting angry, he should stand up). It is reported by *Sunni* sources that the Apostle of God (*s*), if he ever got angry while standing, would sit down, and if seated, would recline, and his anger would subside. The other remedy which is particular is concerned with blood relations and suggests that if anybody gets angry with someone related to him by blood, if he touches him with his hand his anger will cool down.

These are the methods of curing oneself of one's anger; but if others want to treat an enraged person, if his anger is in the initial stage, any one of the methods from among the various practical and theoretical ones suggested may be useful. But if he is in extreme anger, advice and counsel give opposite results, and it becomes very difficult to treat him in this stage, except by being put in a state of alarm by someone whom he holds in high esteem; for anger vents itself on those whom one deems weaker and inferior to oneself or at least as equal in power and position. But in front of those persons with whom he is impressed, his anger is never provoked. Rather his outer excitement and agitation will be transformed into an internal fury confined to his inner self. Not finding any outlet, it will change into a grief within the heart. Hence, it is not at all an easy task to appease a person undergoing outbursts of extreme rage. We seek refuge in God from it.

## HOW TO ERADICATE THE ROOTS OF ANGER:

Among the fundamental remedies of anger, one is to exterminate the

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi* (Tehran), vol. iii (Arabic text with Persian translation by Sayyed Javad Mostafavi), p. 415.

factors responsible for its provocation. They are many, and here we can mention only a few of them. One of them is self-love, which in turn begets the love of wealth, glory, and honor and the desire to impose one's will and expand one's domain of power. These factors are inherently responsible for exciting the fire of anger, as the individual infatuated with these things tends to hold them in high regard and they occupy a high place in his heart. He, improperly, gets angry and excited if any one of these aspired goals is not achieved or when his desire faces any obstacle and loses control over himself. Greed, avarice, and such other vices that take root in his heart as a result of self-love and the love of glory, snatch the reins of reason from his hands, leaving the self to commit deeds that deviate from the path of Divine Law and reason. But if his love and interest in these things is not intense and he gives lesser importance to these matters, his inner calm and contentment, obtained by giving up the love of wealth, honor and the like, will not allow his self to act against the demands of justice. Then, he will not find it difficult to maintain his patience in hardships, and will not lose grip of self-restraint. He would not get angry unnecessarily and abnormally. If the love of the world is eradicated from his heart and this vice is completely wiped out, then all other vices also take leave and vanish from it, vacating the realm of the soul to be taken over by moral virtues.

Another factor that arouses anger is that sometimes anger and its evil manifestations, which are in fact great moral defects and indecencies, are imagined to be merits and accomplishments on account of ignorance and lack of understanding. Some fools reckon those vices as marks of bravery and courage and brag about themselves on account of them. They confuse the virtue of valor, which is a superb attribute of the believer's character and a commendable quality, with this pernicious vice. However, it should be noted that courage or valor is a different thing, and its source, its causes, effects and characteristics differ totally from those of that injurious vice. Courage originates in the strength of one's spirit, serenity of mind, moderateness, faith, and lack of concern for the vanities of life and indifference to its vicissitudes; whereas anger is the product of spiritual weakness and degeneration, insufficiency of faith, immoderation of character and soul, love of the world and concern for mundane things and the fear of losing the pleasures of life. Hence this vice is found more frequently in women than in men, more in sick individuals than in healthy people, more in children than in grown ups, more in the elderly than in young people. Valor and courage is its opposite. Those suffering from moral infirmities are more liable to get angry

sooner than those who are morally sound. Thus, we often see such people get angry sooner and becoming fiercer if any encroachment is made upon their property than the others.

This was about the origins and motives of anger and courage. However, they are also different as to their effects. The irascible person, when under the spell of anger and its excitement, behaves unreasonably like a lunatic or like an animal which acts without rationally considering the consequences of its actions, and commits ugly and indecent acts. His tongue, limbs, and other parts of the body go out of his control. His eyes, lips and mouth are distorted in such an ugly manner that he will be ashamed of his ugly features if he is shown a mirror at the time. Some persons who are afflicted with this vice not only do not refrain from venting their anger on innocent animals, but do not spare even inanimate things. They curse air, water, earth, snow, rain and other elements of nature if anything happens against their wish. Sometimes they vent their fury on a book, pen, glass or jug, tearing it up or breaking it into pieces.

But the behavior of a courageous person is different in all these matters. His acts are based on reason and tranquility of soul. He gets angry on the proper occasion and is patient and restrained when required to be so. He is not provoked or incensed by each and every annoyance. He becomes angry on the proper occasion to the proper extent and takes his vengeance with reason and discretion. He knows well as to against whom to take his revenge, on what occasion, to what degree and in what manner, and as to whom he should forgive and what to overlook and ignore. In the state of anger, he does not lose control of his reason, and he never makes use of indecent language nor acts indiscreetly. All his acts are based on rational considerations and are in accordance with the norms of justice and Divine Law. He always acts in such a manner so as not to regret later on.

Thus an aware human being should not confuse this quality, which is one of the attributes of prophets, *awliya* and true believers and is considered a spiritual accomplishment and achievement, with the vice which is one of the attributes of Satan, a diabolical incitement, a spiritual abomination and a flaw of the heart. Yet, the veils of ignorance and folly and the curtains of self-love and attachment to the world cover man's hearing and blind his vision, rendering him helpless and bringing about his destruction.

Certain other causes of anger have also been pointed out, such as *ujb*, bragging (*iftikhar*), pride (*kibr*), disputatiousness (*mira*), obstinacy (*lajaj*),

jesting and the like; but to go into their details will prolong this discussion and might be cumbersome. Possibly most or all of them, directly or indirectly, originate in the two sources already discussed. And praise be to God.

8

# Eighth *Hadith*: PREJUDICE (*ASABIYYAH*)

بِالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلى مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنِ النَّوْفَلِيِّ، عَنِ السَّكُونِيِّ، عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: مَنْ كَانَ فِي قَلْبِهِ حَبَّةٌ مِنْ خَرْدَلٍ مِنْ عَصَبِيَّةٍ بَعَثَهُ اللهُ يَوْمَ القِيَامَةِ مَعَ أَعْرَابِ الجَاهِلِيَّةِ.

Muhammad ibn Yaqub (al-Kulayni), from Ali ibn Ibrahim, from his father, from al-Nawfali, from al-Sakuni, who reports on the authority of Abu Abd-Allah (Imam al-Sadiq) (a) that the Prophet (*S*) said, "Whosoever possesses in his heart *aSabiyyah* (prejudice in any of its forms such as tribalism, racism, nationalism) even to the extent of a mustard seed, God will raise him on the Day of Resurrection with the (pagan) Bedouins of the *Jahiliyyah* (the pre-Islamic era)."[1]

## EXPOSITION

Although now *khardal* is current in modern Persian for the mustard seed, the word for it in old Persian was *espandan*. It is said that the mustard seed has many medicinal uses and is also used for making candles. As to the word *asabiyyah* it is the characteristic of the person who supports his kinsmen and relatives even for a wrong and unjust cause. *Usbah* refers to paternal

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi* (Entesharat Elmiyyeh Eslamiyyeh, Tehran), vol. iii (Arabic text with Persian translation by Sayyed Javad Mostafavi), p. 419.

relatives, as they are more likely to be those among whom one is surrounded (*asaba*: to wrap around) and those from whom one derives strength (*asaba* means, also, to bind). *Asabiyyah* and *taassub* in general give the sense of favoring and defending. So much for the lexical meaning.

As to its nature, I believe that *asabiyyah* is an inner psychic quality which is manifested in patronizing and defending one's kindred and those with whom one has some kind of affinity or relation, whether it be religious creed or ideology, or whether it be soil or home. The affinity may also be similarity of profession or the relationship of teacher and pupil, or something else. It is a moral vice and an abominable trait which itself begets many more moral and behavioral deviations and vices as well. In itself a condemnable quality, it may take the form of defense of truth or religion, but in reality it is not aimed to defend a just and truthful cause but for extending one's own influence or that of one's co-religionists and allies.

As to the defense of truth, the efforts to disseminate it and to posit something which is true, are either not *asabiyyah*, or, if they are, represent a commendable kind of it. The criterion lies in the distinct aims and purposes, and to the extent to which it involves selfish and diabolical ends or serves just and godly purposes. In other words, when a man supports his kinsmen and friends, if he does so purely for the sake of upholding justice and defeating injustice, this kind of *asabiyyah* is commendable and praiseworthy; because supporting justice and truth is among the sublimest of human qualities, being one of the attributes of the prophets of God (a) and His *awliya*. Its sign is that one should support the party which is on the side of truth and justice, even though it may consist of one's enemies. Such a person is a defender and lover of truth; he will be counted among the champions of human sublimity, a rightful citizen of the ideal human society, and a wholesome member of society whose presence exerts a reforming influence on the evils of the public. And if one's selfish and tribal instincts arouse him to defend and patronize the vices and wrongs of his kinsmen and associates, he is inflicted with the vice of *asabiyyah*; he is a corrupt member of society, who corrupts it by confusing vice with virtue, and stands with the Bedouins of the *Jahiliyyah*, who were a group of nomadic Arabs who inhabited the desert before the advent of Islam, in an era of prevalence of darkness and ignorance. This vice had taken hold of them to the highest degree, and among Arabs in general, who are guided by the light of guidance (through Islam) this vice is more than in any other nation. According to a tradition reported from Imam Ali (a), God Almighty will punish six groups of people for six

kinds of sins: He will punish the Arabs for *asabiyyah*, the peasants for pride, the rulers for oppression, the jurisprudents for jealousy, the merchants for dishonesty, and the villagers for ignorance.

## THE EVILS OF *ASABIYYAH*

From traditions narrated from the Household of the Prophet (*s*) it may be inferred that the vice of *asabiyyah* is one of the fatal sins, which results in an evil life in the Hereafter and drives man out from the precincts of faith, being one of the abominable traits of the Devil:

**عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: مَنْ تَعَصَّبَ أَوْ تُعُصِّبَ لَهُ فَقَدْ خَلَعَ رِبْقَةَ الإِيمَانِ مِنْ عُنُقِهِ.**

> [In *al-Kafi*, through a chain of authentic narrators], it is reported from Abu Abd-Allah (Imam al-Sadiq [*a*]) that the Prophet (*S*) said, "The one who exerts *aSabiyyah* or the one on whose behalf it is exerted, the tie of faith is taken off his neck."[1]

That is, such a man is deprived of faith and abandoned. As to the person in whose interest *aSabiyyah* is exerted, perhaps he is also included in the *hadith* due to his compliance to the behavior of the one exerting *asabiyyah* and hence made to share his lot jointly. And it is stated in *hadith* that whosoever approves of the action of a certain group is counted amongst it. However, if he does not approve of it and detests it, this tradition would not apply to him.

And:

**عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: مَنْ تَعَصَّبَ عَصَبَهُ اللهُ بِعِصَابَةٍ مِنْ نَارٍ.**

> Imam al-Sadiq (a) is reported to have said, "Whosoever practices *aSabiyyah* (against someone), God shall wrap around him (*asabahu*) a fold (*iSabah*) of Fire."[2]

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[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi* (Entesharat Elmiyyeh Eslamiyyeh, Tehran), vol. iii (Arabic text with Persian translation by Sayyed Javad Mostafavi), p. 419.

[2] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi* (Entesharat Elmiyyeh Eslamiyyeh, Tehran), vol. iii (Arabic text with Persian translation by Sayyed Javad Mostafavi), p. 419.

عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ الحُسَيْنِ عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلامُ قَالَ: لَمْ يَدْخُلِ الجَنَّةَ حَمِيَّةٌ غَيْرَ حَمِيَّةِ حَمْزَةَ بْنِ عَبْدِ المُطَّلِبِ – وَذَلِكَ حِينَ أَسْلَمَ – غَضَباً لِلنَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِه.

> Imam Ali ibn al-Husayn (a) is reported to have said: No *hamiyyah* shall ever enter Paradise, except the *hamiyyah* of Hamzah ibn Abd al-Muttalib, which was (expressed) at the time when he became a Muslim on account of his anger in support of the Prophet (*S*)."[1]

The episode of Hamzah's conversion to Islam has been reported variously, and is not relevant to our discussion. In any case, it is obvious that faith –which is the invisible holy gift of God to His special servants, the sincere devotees of His Court, and the champions of His love– is contrary to a quality that disregards truth and reality and tramples truthfulness and uprightness under its feet. Of course, if the mirror of the heart be covered with the dust of self-love and the love of the kindred and improper and blind *asabiyyah*, the light of faith will not shine in it; it will not be fit to be the hidden abode of the Most High. The person whose heart has been the mirror for the light of faith and gnosis, the one whose neck has been tied in the firm and unbreakable rope of faith, the one who is the hostage of reality and Divine knowledge, the one who remains wedded to the religious precepts and confined to rational principles and laws, the one who derives all his impulses from reason and Divine Law-no force of customs, ways, or familiar things can cause him to quiver or deviate from the right path. One can profess Islam and claim *iman* only when he is submissive to truth and humble in front of it, and when he deems his own aims and purposes, no matter however great they may be, as trivial and transitory, before the aims and purposes of his Lord and Provider; he annihilates his own will in the Will of his real Lord. Of necessity, such a person will be free from all traces of ignorant *asabiyyah*; his face will be turned towards reality, and thick curtains of ignorance and *asabiyyah* would not obstruct his vision. When called to administer justice and utter the word of truth, he puts a firm foot on the head of all associations and ties, sacrificing all ties of kinship and customary affinities at the altar of

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi* (Entesharat Elmiyyeh Eslamiyyeh, Tehran), vol. iii (Arabic text with Persian translation by Sayyed Javad Mostafavi), p. 419.

the aims and objectives of his Lord. If there is a clash between the Islamic *asabiyyah* and the *asabiyyah* of the *Jahiliyyah*, he gives precedence to his Islamic *asabiyyah* and his *asabiyyah* for truth. An enlightened human being knows that all the *asabiyyah*s and all associations and relationships are merely transitory accidents and are perishable. The only relationship that is permanent and lasting and the only *asabiyyah* that is true, is the relationship between the Creator and the created being, and is essential and unbreakable; it is firmer, higher, and prior to all the ties of lineage and alliance.

## A PROPHETIC TRADITION

The Prophet of God (*s*) is reported to have said:

كُلُّ حَسَبٍ وَنَسَبٍ مُنْقَطِعٌ يَوْمَ القِيَامَةِ إلا حَسَبِي وَنَسَبِي.

> All the ties of lineage and affinity will be broken on the Day of Resurrection except the ties of my lineage and affinity.

It is obvious that the ties of lineage and affinity of that holy personage are spiritual and lasting, and free from all pre-Islamic biases and *asabiyyah*s. In fact the spiritual ties of lineage will be more vivid in that world and its merits more conspicuous. On the other hand, the physical and terrestrial relationships that are rooted in human habits and customs are very weak and fragile and are broken easily. None of them have any worth and value whatsoever in the next world, except those relationships that are established according to the Divine celestial system and under the auspices of the precepts of the Law and dictates of reason: only they are unbreakable and unseverable.

## THE OTHERWORLDLY FORM OF *ASABIYYAH*

It was mentioned in some of the *ahadith* discussed previously that the criteria of the otherworldly forms, which human traits will acquire in the *Barzakh* and on the Day of Resurrection, are the habits and qualities and their strength. That world is the domain of the dominance of the spirit and the subservience of the body. It is possible that men should be raised in the forms of animals or Satans. The present tradition which we are expounding, and which maintains that 'the person who possesses in his heart *asabiyyah* even to the extent of a mustard seed, God Almighty will resurrect him on the Day of Judgment with the Bedouins of the pre-Islamic era', may also refer to the

above-mentioned point. The man possessing this vice, after being transferred to the other world may behold himself as one of the pre Islamic heathen Bedouins, who neither had faith in God Almighty nor believed in prophets and prophethood. Whatever the inner and outer form of that tribe had been, he will find himself when resurrected as one of them. Perhaps he will himself not understand as to why such a thing would happen to him, while in the world he professed the true religion of God and claimed to be an adherent of the faith of the Holy Prophet (*s*). It is mentioned in a tradition that the inhabitants of Hell will not be able to remember the name of the Prophet (*s*), and, as such, would not be able to introduce themselves as his followers, unless God Almighty resolves on their deliverance. And since, according to some of the traditions, the trait of *asabiyyah* is one of the attributes of Satan, may be the heathen Bedouins of the pre-Islamic era, as well as the individuals possessing the primitive habit of *asabiyyah* would be resurrected in the form of Satan:

وَعَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: إِنَّ المَلائِكَةَ كَانُوا يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّ إِبْلِيسَ مِنْهُمْ وَكَانَ فِي عِلْمِ اللهِ أَنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنْهُمْ، فَاسْتَخْرَجَ مَا فِي نَفْسِهِ بِالحَمِيَّةِ وَالغَضَبِ فَقَالَ: خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ نَارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ طِينٍ.

(According to a reliable *hadith* of *al-Kafi*), Abu Abd-Allah (Imam al-Sadiq) (a) is reported to have said, "Verily, the angels counted Satan as one of themselves, and it was in the knowledge of God that he was not of them; then he spoke out whatever was inside him, out of *hamiyyah* and anger, and said (to God): 'Thou createdst me of fire, and him (Adam) Thou didst create of clay.'"[1]

Thus my dear, you should know that this vice belongs to Satan and is a fallacy inspired in you by that accursed being based on false analogical inference. He committed the mistake because of the dense veils of *asabiyyah.* This veil conceals all realities from the sight, or rather shows all one's vices as virtues and the virtues of others as vices. And it is obvious as to where the deeds of the person who beholds things in a contrary perspective would lead him. Besides being itself a source of human ruin and doom, it gives rise to a

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi* (Entesharat Elmiyyeh Eslamiyyeh, Tehran), vol. iii (Arabic text with Persian translation by Sayyed Javad Mostafavi), p. 419.

number of moral, spiritual and behavioral villainies, the description of which would be cumbersome. As such, a wise person, who understands these villainies as the products of this vice and confirms the testimony of the truthful Holy Prophet (*s*) –whose truthfulness has been confirmed by God– and the Members of his Household (a), who all state that this trait leads man to destruction and makes him an inhabitant of the Fire, should seriously consider about curing himself, and if, God forbid, there is the slightest speck of this vice in his heart, equal to the size of a mustard seed, he should purge it, so that he may be thoroughly purified before leaving this world and being transferred to the next. He should be free from this vice at the hour of his death, so as to put his feet into the other world with a pure soul. He should keep in his mind that he has fiery little time and very limited opportunity; for he does not know as to when he will have to depart from this world.

## A COLLOQUY WITH THE SELF

O my vicious self! Perhaps your death may approach while you are still busy in writing these pages, and transfer you with all your moral vices to the next world from where there is no return. And O you dear reader of these pages, draw a lesson from the life of this writer who may be today under the ground and in the other world, a victim of his ugly acts and wicked behavior. As long as he was given opportunity, he spent the precious days of his life in vain pursuit of lusts and desires and squandered that gift of God with vain profligacy. Yet you must be careful as you too shall be in a condition similar to his, and you don't know when. Perhaps as you are reading these pages, the opportunity may slip if you go on procrastinating. O brother! Do not put off these matters; they are not to be postponed. Remember, how many hail and hearty people have suddenly been snatched away by the claws of death, and we have no knowledge about what awaited them in the Hereafter.

Therefore, do not let the chance slip and consider every second as precious; for the matter matters a lot and the journey is a perilous one. If you lose the opportunity of doing something in this world, which is the field whose harvest is the Hereafter, you will not be able to do anything any more and you will not be able to straighten your crookedness. There will be nothing left except regret, perplexity, chastisement, and degradation. The men of God were never at ease even for a little while; they were never oblivious of the perilous and hazardous journey ahead. The condition of the fourth Imam Ali ibn al-Husayn (a) was amazing. The laments of Amir al-Muminin Imam Ali (a) are stunning. What is the matter with us that we are

so negligent? Who has given us assurance except the Devil, who makes us put off our actions for tomorrow and wants to bulge the number of his followers and companions by making us share his attributes? Doesn't he, in this way, want to include us in his company so that we may be resurrected in his retinue? The accursed creature always diminishes the importance and seriousness of the matters of the Hereafter in our eyes, and makes us oblivious of the remembrance of God and obedience to His commands by means of the promises of His mercy and the intercession of the intercessors. But, alas, such temptations have no truth and belong to the deceitful paraphernalia of the snares of that accursed creature. Of course, even at present, you are immersed in the mercy and compassion of God, rejoicing in the gifts of sound health and well-being, life and safety, guidance and reason, opportunity and directions for the reformation of the soul and other such myriad favors. Yet you are not drawing benefit from these favors in this world by complacently following the Devil. Beware if you fail to draw any benefit from God's mercy in this world, in the next world also you will not be able to benefit from the infinite mercy of God and the intercession of the intercessors. The guidance provided by them is this-worldly reflection of the intercession of the intercessors in the next world and the otherworldly reflection of the guidance provided by them here is intercession. But if you cannot benefit from the guidance, remember that you will not be able to receive the benefit of intercession either; it depends on the guidance you utilize here. The intercession of the Holy Prophet (*s*) is general and universal; however, like the blessings of God, the receiver must have capacity to receive it. If, God forbid, Satan robs you of the faculty of faith, you will be incapable and unworthy of receiving Divine mercy and the intercession of the intercessors. Yes, God's bounties in the two worlds are plenty and His mercy unlimited; but if you really seek His mercy, then why do you neglect His unceasing bounties in this world that are like seeds of His favors in the other? All the prophets of God and the *awliya* have invited you to the Divine feast, yet you turn away and you do not accept it on account of the evil insinuations of the Devil. You sacrificed the *muhkamat* (the firm verses) of the Book of God, the *mutawatirat* of the prophets and *awliya*, the compelling rational arguments of the wise, and the definite proofs of the *hukama* for the fiendish fantasies and fancies of your own. Woe to you and me for our state of neglectfulness, blindness, deafness, and ignorance.

## ON THE *ASABIYYAH*S OF THE INTELLECTUALS

One of the types of *asabiyyah*s is stubbornness in intellectual matters and the habit of supporting the statements and ideas of one's own or that of one's teacher or spiritual master not for the sake of defending truth and refuting falsehood. It is obvious that such a kind of *asabiyyah* is worse and more improper in some ways than other types of *asabiyyah*. This, because a scholar and an intellectual ought to be an instructor of mankind, scholarship being a branch of the tree of prophethood and *wilayah* itself. He should be aware of the evil effects and bad consequences of moral vices. If, God forbid, he himself possesses the vice of *asabiyyah* and attaches to himself the mean attributes of Satan, he will have scarcely anything to offer in self-defense and will be taken to task severely. The person who poses himself as a guiding beacon of light, a source of enlightenment in the assembly of mankind, as a guide to the path of felicity, and as one who is charged with the duty of guiding men on the path of Hereafter, if, God forbid, he does not remain faithful to his words and his inner being contradicts his outward appearance, he will be grouped with the hypocrites and the pretentious. He will be branded as an evil scholar, a man of knowledge devoid of good deeds, whose retribution is a painful chastisement, as described by God Almighty in the Holy Quran:

﴿بِئْسَ مَثَلُ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ.﴾

*Wretched is the likeness of those who deny the revelations of Allah. And Allah guideth not wrongdoing folk.* (62:5)

Hence it is essential for scholars to retain their integrity and to keep themselves free from such vices, so that having corrected themselves they may be able to reform their society through a truly effective preaching and exhortations that can penetrate the hearts and minds. The corruption of a scholar can lead to the corruption of a nation. And it is obvious that the vice which generates multiple vices and the transgression which begets other transgressions is worse and greater than an isolated, non-contagious vice in the eyes of the Almighty.

Another hideous aspect of this vice in intellectuals is the atrocity done to knowledge itself; as this *asabiyyah* on the part of an intellectual amounts to the abuse of knowledge and disrespect to it. The one who is entrusted with this valuable trust and enrobed in its precious robes, it is his duty to preserve its sanctity and deliver it safely to its owner. And if one is guilty of the *asabiyyah* of pagan Bedouins with regard to it, he is of course guilty of the

sin of breach of trust, an injustice and a major sin and offense. The other ugly side of this vice is the wrong done to the other side. Because, the other side that participates in intellectual discourses also comprises of scholars. He too enjoys a sanctity which it is obligatory to observe and to safeguard his honor. Insulting him will be synonymous with violating Divine sanctities, and it is a great sin. Sometimes, senseless *asabiyyah*s make one insult scholars. I seek refuge in God from this major offense.

Yet another aspect of *asabiyyah* relates to the person in whose favor asabiyyah is exercised, who may be one's instructor and tutor. He may be forced to disown his pupil, because all the great masters and saints *–karram Allah wujuhahum–* are naturally attracted towards truth and justice and are abhorrent to untruth and injustice. They detest him who violates justice and gives currency to falsehood through his acts of *asabiyyah*. Of course, the harms of spiritual disownment are greater than the harms of parental disownment, for spiritual fatherhood is above physical parenthood. Thus, it is incumbent upon scholars –may God increase their station and honor– to protect themselves from all moral and behavioral vices, to adorn themselves with the ornaments of good deeds and moral virtues, and not to be unmindful of the duties of the holy office which the Most High has bestowed on them, the failure to do which may bring ruin whose extent is not known to any one except God Almighty alone. *Wa'ssalam.*

9

# Ninth *Hadith*: HYPOCRISY (*NIFAQ*)

بِالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلَى ثِقَةِ الإِسْلامِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ الكُلَيْنِي عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَحْيَى، عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عِيسَى، عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ سِنَانٍ، عَنْ عَوْنٍ القَلانِسِيِّ، عَنِ ابْنِ أَبِي يَعْفُورَ، عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: مَنْ لَقِيَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ بِوَجْهَيْنِ وَلِسَانَيْنِ جَاءَ يَوْمَ القِيَامَةِ وَلَهُ لِسَانَانِ مِنْ نَارٍ.

Thiqat al-Islam Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulayni, from Muhammad ibn Yahya, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Isa, from Muhammad ibn Sinan, from Awn ibn al-Qalanisi, from Ibn Abi Yafur, who reports Abu Abd-Allah (Imam al-Sadiq) (a) to have said, "One who meets Muslims with a double face and a double tongue, on the Day of Judgment he will come with two tongues of fire."[1]

## EXPOSITION

Double-facedness is the characteristic of the person who assumes an outward appearance and simulates a behavior which is contrary to his inner state. For instance, one may give an impression of friendship and affection and pretend to be sincere and sympathetic, while in his heart he harbors an opposite feeling. Such a person displays sympathy and friendship in front of people, but is different in their absence.

Double-tonguedness is the quality of the person who praises and flatters people whenever he meets them, appearing to befriend them, but denounces

[1] Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi* (Akhundi), vol. 2, p. 343.

them and speaks slanderously of them in their absence. Therefore, in the light of this description, the first quality may be specified as ‘behavioral *nifaq* and the second as ‘verbal *nifaq*. Perhaps the tradition refers to the evil of *nifaq*, since these two features are among the prominent and peculiar characteristics of the *munafiqun* (hypocrites).

*Nifaq* is one of psychic maladies and a vicious quality with its own specific signs and symptoms. It has also numerous grades and degrees, which, God willing, we shall discuss, together with their method of treatment, in the following sections.

## DEGREES OF *NIFAQ*

It should be known that, like other vices and virtues, there are different degrees and stages of intensity and weakness of *nifaq*. In the case of any vice, if one does not take steps to cure it and does not persevere in the course of its treatment, it would lead him towards its extreme degrees, for there is no limit to the degree of intensity of vices and virtues. If man leaves his carnal self to its wishes, its innate propensity towards corruption, its instinctive appetite for worldly pleasures, the assistance of the Satan and the insinuations of the *Khannas*, all together incline it towards evil, and its vices, increasing day by day in intensity, reach the stage when they become an intrinsic, essential and ultimate quality of the soul. Then the regions of one’s inner being as well as outer self come under its sovereignty and rule. And if the vice is characteristic of the Devil, such as *nifaq* and double-facedness, which are attributes of that cursed being whom the Quran quotes as having said to Adam and Eve:

﴿وَقَاسَمَهُمَا إِنِّي لَكُمَا لَمِنْ النَّاصِحِينَ﴾

*And he swore unto them* (*saying*)*: Lo! I am a sincere adviser unto you*. (7:21)

Whereas in reality he was the opposite of what he claimed the realm of your being will be annexed by the Devil’s empire. When that happens, the ultimate form the spirit acquires will be satanic, and its inner essence and substance will also be satanic in nature. It is also possible that the external appearance in the next world will be of the Satan, though here you have a human form and appearance.

Thus, if man does not try to guard himself from this vice and allows his carnal self to act according to its wishes, within a short time all the means of

control will be so thoroughly gone that all his labors and efforts will be put into the service of this vice. With whomever he will come in contact, he will meet and greet him double-facedly and with a double tongue. Socially, his intercourse and relations with others will become tainted with the vice of duplicity, dissemblance and hypocrisy. He will have no other objective except his own personal benefit and no goal except self-aggrandizement. Having trampled upon all the values of truthfulness, sincerity, magnanimity and courage, he will employ duplicity in all of his pauses and deeds, not abstaining from any indecency or perversion. Such a person is away from the domain of humanity and humanness, and on the Day of Judgment he will be raised as a member of the legions of the Satan.

All that was stated above was regarding the degrees of intensity and weakness of *nifaq* per se, but it also varies according to that to which it is related. Sometimes one practices *nifaq* in relation to the religion of God, sometimes with respect to virtues, sometimes in regard to righteous deeds and holy rites, and sometimes in ordinary matters of day-to-day life and common civilities. Also, sometimes one may act with *nifaq* with respect to the Prophet (*s*) or the Imams (a), and sometimes with regard to the *awliya*, the scholars and the believers. Sometimes one may behave with *nifaq* with Muslims and sometimes with God's creatures belonging to other communities and creeds.

Of course, these types of *nifaq* vary in the degree of their ugliness and indecency, though all of them are similar in that they share the quality of ugliness and indecency and are the buds and leaves of the same vicious tree.

## EFFECTS OF *NIFAQ*

*Nifaq* and double-facedness, besides being an abominable, ignoble and vicious quality itself, which no decent person would like to adopt and whose possessor is not only excluded from the human category, but cannot be likened to any of the beasts as well, it is a cause of humiliation and ignominy in this world in front of one's fellows and friends, and brings about disgrace and punishment in the Hereafter also. As mentioned in the tradition, in the Hereafter such a person will be resurrected with two tongues of fire in his mouth. This will be a source of disgrace for him in front of the creatures of God and will bring about his infamy in the presence of His prophets, apostles and archangels. The severity of the punishment is also indicated by this tradition. Because, if the substance of the body becomes that of fire, imagine

how severely it will be felt and what a great pain and suffering it will inflict. I seek refuge in God from its severity.

It is reported in another tradition that the Prophet (*s*) said that the double-faced person will come on the Day of Resurrection in such a condition that one of his two tongues will protrude from the back of his head and the other from the front, and both the tongues will be aflame, making his entire body ablaze with fire.[1] Thereupon, it will be announced that he was double-faced and double-tongued in the world.

He will be known on that day by this vice of his, the following Quranic verse having become applicable to him:

﴿وَيَقْطَعُونَ مَا أَمَرَ اللَّهُ بِهِ أَنْ يُوصَلَ وَيُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ أُوْلَئِكَ لَهُمُ اللَّعْنَةُ وَلَهُمْ سُوءُ الدَّارِ﴾

*And sever that which Allah hath commanded should be joined, and make mischief in the earth*; *theirs is the curse and theirs the ill abode*. (13:25)

*Nifaq* is source of many an evil and destructive trait, each one of which may bring about one's doom and eternal damnation. One of them is causing discord and sedition (*fitnah*), which, according to an express text of the Quran, is worse than homicide. Another is slandering (*namimah*), which is denounced by Imam al-Baqir (a) in the following tradition:

مُحَرَّمَةٌ الجَنَّةُ عَلَى الفَتَّانِينَ المَشَّائِينَ بِالنَّمِيمَةِ.

(Entry to) Paradise is prohibited to slanderers who walk on the path of calumny (i.e. are habitual slanderers).[2]

The sins of slandering others and backbiting are worse than the sin of adultery, according to a statement of the Prophet (*s*), and are equivalent to subjecting a believer to torture, reviling him, and divulging his secrets; each one of which alone is enough to bring about one's destruction.

Let it be known to you that other bad habits which belong to the category of *nifaq* are: making gestures, allusions, winking, making signals with the eyes and so on-things that some persons do in order to mock some others,

[1] Al-Shaykh al-Saduq, *Iqab al-amal* (Maktabat al-Saduq), p. 319.
[2] *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 369.

whereas they pose to be friendly and sincere in front of them. One should be very cautious of his own state and be careful of his deeds and behavior, because the snares of the self and the designs of the Satan are very subtle, and there are very few people who are able to save themselves from them. It is possible that on account of an inappropriate act of beckoning or an improper winking one may be branded as double-faced and double-tongued. Perchance one may possess this bad habit as long as he is alive and imagine himself to be morally healthy, sound and pure. Therefore, it is essential for an individual to take care, like a devoted and sympathetic physician, of his spiritual and moral health and constantly keep an eye on his own deeds and habits, like a careful and vigilant nurse, and never fall short of his duty. He should know that none of the diseases of the heart is more concealed and elusive, and at the same time so fatal, than this disease, and no nurse should be more sympathetic and kind than an individual to himself.

## CURE OF THE DISEASE OF *NIFAQ*

There are two ways of getting rid of this greatly evil vice:

The first is to think about the harms that proceed from this vice, in this world as well as in the Hereafter. One should deliberate upon the matter that if he becomes known in this world for having this bad habit, he will be degraded in the eyes of his fellows and become infamous among his fellow human beings. They will avoid his company and he will be deprived of their friendliness. Moreover, he will fail to achieve any merit and to reach his higher goals. Thus it is necessary for a man of honor and dignity endowed with the conscience to purge himself of this ignominy that consumes honor, and not to allow himself to be entrapped in its disgraces. Besides, in the other world, which is the realm of the unveiling of secrets, where things that remained concealed from the eyes of people shall not be hidden, there, he will be raised a deformed, ugly creature possessing two tongues of fire and punished along with the hypocrites and devils. Therefore, it is incumbent upon a man of wisdom, who sees no good in it but harm, ugliness and abomination, to get rid of this vice.

The other treatment, which involves action, is another method of curing the self. It requires the individual to be extremely vigilant regarding his acts and pauses, and that he should act deliberately against his base wishes, wage a war against himself and try to improve his self inwardly as well as outwardly, in deed as well as in speech. He should abstain from affectation,

coquetry and dissemblance in practice, and beseech the Almighty's help and assistance during this period to give him supremacy over his carnal self and its desires and to guide and accompany him in this undertaking. His mercy and grace towards His creatures are boundless, and whosoever advances towards Him wishing to reform himself, He extends His support and help to him.

If one perseveres in this for several days, it is hoped that the soul would become purified and the rust of hypocrisy and double-facedness will be removed from it. The mirror of his heart and his inner being will be cleansed of this vice, and it will be ready again to receive the favors and blessings of the Bestower. Because it has been established through rational proofs, and also confirmed by experience, that as long as man lives in this world, he is conditioned by the deeds and actions committed by him, and every one of his deeds, the pious as well as the vicious ones, leave their impressions and effects on the soul. If the deeds are pious and good, they leave a luminous and sublime effect; if not, a dark and negative impression is left on the soul. Thus, as a result, the heart is either rendered bright and luminous or dark and gloomy, according to the deeds. He is either grouped with the good and virtuous, or with the vicious and corrupt. Therefore, as long as we tarry in this house of action and this place of cultivation, we can freely steer our hearts in the direction of felicity or in the direction of wretchedness. We are hostages of our actions, about which the Quran says:

﴿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)

## SOME FORMS OF *NIFAQ*

Let it be known to you, dear friend, that one of the forms of *nifaq*, double-facedness and double-tonguedness is *nifaq* with the Almighty, the King of kings, and the Bestower and the Nourisher, with which we are inflicted in this world but are not aware of it. Thick curtains of ignorance and folly and dark veils of the love of the self and the world have obstructed our vision in such a way that it is not possible for us to know our defects before the time of the divulging of secrets and the raising of these curtains and veils and before departing from this world of nature and saying farewell to this house of illusion and this zone of neglect and stupor. Although now we have receded

into a state of physical stupor and obliviousness, and are intoxicated by the attractions of physical life and sensual existence, which beautify all moral and behavioral villainies in our eyes, the moment shall come when we shall wake up and come to our senses, and realize that there is nothing left for us to be done, that we have lost the opportunity-and have been branded as *munafiqun*, double-faced, and double-tongued, and resurrected with two flaring tongues or with two hideous faces. Then, even if we weep and wail, and yell out, "Lord, send me back into the world," the answer will come, "Never." Such will be the fate of our double-faced ness; while, in this life, you and I have been claiming faith in the Unity of God throughout, and professing to be Muslims and true believers untiringly, and even making ardent claims of His love.

If we are laymen, we boast of our faith in Islam, our sincerity of faith and our piety. If we belong to the class of *ulama* and jurisprudents, we pretend the highest degree of sincerity (*ikhlas*) and put forth claims to the *wilayah* and the *khilafah* of the Prophet (*s*). We imagine that the words uttered by the Prophet (*s*):

**اللَّهُمَّ ارْحَمْ خُلَفَائِي.**

O God! Have mercy upon my successors.

And by the present Imam (a) –may my soul be sacrificed for him:

**إِنَّهُمْ حُجَّتِي.**

Verily they are my proofs.

And all other statements of the Imams (a) about *ulama* and *fuqaha*, to have been spoken about ourselves.

And if we belong to the class of scholars of philosophy and the rational sciences, claiming to possess true faith based on deductive proofs, we deem ourselves to be men of certain knowledge (*ilm al-yaqin*), and those who possess *ayn al-yaqin* and *haqq al-yaqin*, considering all others as possessing imperfect knowledge and infirm faith, and applying all the pertinent Quranic verses and traditions to ourselves.

And if we count ourselves among the mystics and men of *irfan*, claiming mystic knowledge, ecstasies of love, states of annihilation in God and subsistence through Him (*fana fi Allah*, *baqa bi Allah*) and His vicegerency (*wilayat al-amr*), we apply such appellations, and whatsoever that appears to

be attractive, to ourselves.

Thus, each one of our various groups claims some kind of high station by employing a vocabulary that it considers suitable for itself and for the display of its particular relation to the Truth. If this outward display complies with his inner reality and this appearance corresponds to his secret inward, he is of course truthful in claims and his blessed condition indeed deserves congratulations:

هَنِيئاً لَهُ وَلأرْبَابِ النَّعِيمِ.

> May the blessing do much good to him and to its other possessors.

But if he is, like this writer, a deformed wretch, he should know that he belongs to the class of *munafiqun* and the double tongued. He should set out to treat himself and make use of the opportunity before it slips away, and do something about his unfortunate condition and the day of darkness and humiliation that awaits him.

My dear, you who claim adherence to Islam, there is a tradition in *al-Kafi* reported from the Apostle of God (*s*):

الْمُسْلِمُ مَنْ سَلِمَ الْمُسْلِمُونَ مِنْ يَدِهِ وَلِسَانِهِ.

> A Muslim is one whose hand and tongue spare all Muslims.[1]

What is the matter with us that we give ourselves the right to harass and hurt, by all possible means, our subordinates, and never hesitate to cause them inconvenience or to create problems for them? Or, if we cannot do any harm by our hands, why do we hurt them with the dagger of our tongue, by using derogatory language in their presence, or, in their absence, by opening their secrets, by slandering them and making false accusations against them? Therefore, we, whose hands and tongues do not spare Muslims, our claim of adherence to Islam contradicts our reality, and the state of our hearts is opposite to what our knowledge of Islam tells us. Hence we belong to the category of *munafiqun* and the double-faced.

O you who profess to adhere to the true faith and to submit your heart to the sovereignty of the Almighty! If you have full faith in the Oneness of God,

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[1] *Al-Kafi*, vol. 2; Fayd al-Kashani, *al-Mahajjat al-bayda*, vol. 3, p. 358.

and your heart is devoted to the worship of the One and yearns for the One, and that if you do not believe in the existence of any deity except God, if your heart mirrors your outward and your inner is true to your claims, what is wrong with you that you are so subdued and humble in front of the people? Why do you worship and idolize them? Is it for some other reason than this that you believe them to be powerful and influential, and you imagine their power and wealth to be of some consequence? Perhaps the only thing that you do not believe to be effective and active in this world is the Will and Determination of God Almighty. Aren't you humble and subdued in front of all the external phenomena, yet neglectful towards the really Powerful, the First Cause? Yet in spite of this state of mind, you assert your faith in the Unity of God! You should know that you are a foreigner to the community of believers, and belong to the group of *munafiqun* and the double-tongued and will be resurrected with them.

You who profess to be a genuine monotheist and of sincere piety, if you are really sincere and abstain from worldly pleasures only for the sake of God and His abode of bliss, what is wrong with you that you are so eager to hear people say in your praise that so and so is such a pious man, and are jubilant when someone says such a thing? Why are you willing to die for the company of the rich and affluent and flee from that of the poor and needy? You must know that neither your monotheism nor your piety are genuine. Your piety and abstinence are for the sake of the world, and your heart is not sincerely devoted to God. Your claims are false and you belong to the category of the double-faced and *munafiqun*.

And you who claim to be an appointee to the office of *wilayah* (leadership) by the *Waliyy-Allah* (i.e. the Twelfth Imam) and to that of *khilafah* by the Apostle (*s*) of God, if your condition is in accordance with the specifications mentioned in the tradition of *al-Ihtijaj*:

**صَائِناً لِنَفْسِهِ حَافِظاً لِدِينِهِ مُخَالِفاً لِهَوَاهُ مُطِيعاً لأَمْرِ مَوْلاهُ.**

> He who keeps his soul chaste, safeguards his faith, opposes his desires, and obeys the commands of his Master.[1]

[1] Al-Tabarsi, *al-Ihtijaj*, vol. 2, p. 106; al-Hurr al-Amili, *Wasail al-Shiah*, vol. 18, p. 99; al-Kulayni, op. *cit*., vol. 1, p.412; al-Shaykh al-Tusi, *al-Tahdhib*, vol. 6, p. 301; al-Shaykh al-Saduq, *Man la yahduruh al-faqih*, vol. 3; al-Nuri, *Mustadrak al-Wasail*, vol. 3, p. 187 ;

If you are yourself a branch of the tree of *wilayah* and *risalah* (prophethood), and if you are neither inclined towards the world, nor yearn for the nearness of kings, rulers and nobles, nor you are averse to the company of the poor, then indeed you deserve your name and title and you are certainly one of the proofs (*hujjah*) of God among the humankind; otherwise you are one of the wicked *ulama* and the *munafiqun*, and your plight is worse than that of the aforementioned group of people, and your deeds more abominable and your life far more wretched and miserable; since there is no ground for any plea or pretext for the *ulama*.

And you who claim to possess the Divine *hikmah* and the knowledge of the realities of the origin and the end (*al-mabda wa'l-maad*), if you do possess the knowledge of the realities of causes and effects, and if in reality you know the forms assigned to men in *Barzakh* and the matters of heaven and hell, you should not have found peace for a while and should have spent each and every moment of your life in the construction of the life in eternity. You should have sought refuge from this world and its temptations. You know as to what sort of torments lie ahead and what darkness and severities await you. Yet why didn't you step out from behind the curtain of terms and concepts? Why haven't the rational demonstrations and proofs exerted any influence on your heart, even to the extent of the wing of a fly? Hence, in such a state, know that you stand outside the class of true believers and *hukama*, and on the Day of Judgment you will be resurrected in the ranks of *munafiqun*. Woe unto the man who spent his whole life and energies in acquiring the knowledge of the metaphysical, yet could not overcome his intoxication and infatuation with the physical, so that not even one of the truths ever entered his heart!

And you who claim the gnosis of God, and speak of spiritual fervor, of wayfaring, of His love and your wish to annihilate yourself in the Divine Essence, if you are sincere in your devotion to God and belong to the category of *ashab al-qulub*, men of enlightenment with a record of virtuous past, then may it do you much good. Otherwise, inflated, theopathetic utterances (*shathiyyat*), pretentious ecstasies, and extravagant claims reveal only your self love and your satanic tendencies, which are opposed to the love of God and godly fervor, for God says:

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Shaykh Muhammad Hasan, *al-Jawahir*, vol. 40, p. 32.

**إنَّ أَوْلِيائِي تَحْتَ قِبابِي لا يَعْرِفُهُمْ غَيْرِي.**

Verily, My *awliya*, under My vault (i.e. the sky), are known to none except Me.[1]

If you do belong to the category of the *awliya* of God, His lovers and those absorbed totally in His love, it is indeed known to God. There is no need for you to boast about your high station in front of people. Do not distract the unsteady hearts of the creatures of God from their Creator, by inclining them towards a creature of His. Do not trespass upon the house that belongs to God. Know that those creatures are dear to God, and their hearts are valuable and precious they are to be employed in the service of God. Do not make a sport of the house of the Lord, and do not put your hands on His sanctities, for it has been said,

**فَإنَّ لِلْبَيْتِ رَبّاً.**

Indeed the house has a Master.

Hence, if you are not true in your claims, you will be grouped with the double-faced and the men of *nifaq*. But let me stop here, since it isn't proper for a wretch like me to speak any further.

O you vile self of the writer, who make much pretence: do something about the dark days of your life and find a way out of your wretchedness. If you are really sincere and your heart agrees with your tongue and your inner intention is compatible with your outward appearance, why are you so heedless, your heart so blackened, and your lusts so indomitable? Why don't you think about the journey of death, which is so full of perils? Your days are past, yet you have not given up your lusts and desires. You have spent your days in satisfying lusts and in neglect and mischief. The time of your death draws near, yet you are enmeshed in your vicious deeds and entrapped in your indecent conduct. O preacher, who would not learn any lesson, you stand in the midst of *munafiqun* and the double-faced. Being one of them, it is feared that you will be resurrected with two tongues of fire and two faces of fire, if you continue in your present state.

O God, awaken us from this protracted spell of deep slumber, and bring us back to our senses from this state of intoxication and unconsciousness.

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[1] *Ahadith qudsi*. Source untraced.

Illumine our hearts with the light of faith and have mercy on us. We are not champions of this field. You Yourself succor us and deliver us from the talons of the Devil, for the sake of Your chosen servants, Muhammad and his undefiled progeny, upon all of whom be God's benedictions.

10

# Tenth *Hadith*: DESIRE AND HOPE

بِالأَسْنَادِ الْمُتَّصِلَةِ إِلَى رَئِيسِ الْمُحَدِّثِينَ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ رِضْوَانُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ، عَنِ الْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ، عَنْ مُعَلَّى بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ، عَنِ الوَشَّاءِ، عَنْ عَاصِمِ بْنِ حُمَيدٍ، عَنْ أَبِي حَمْزَةَ، عَنْ يَحْيَى بْنِ عَقِيلٍ قَالَ: قَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: إِنَّمَا أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمُ اثْنَتَيْنِ: إِتِّبَاعَ الهَوَى وَطُولَ الأَمَلِ. أَمَّا اتِّبَاعُ الهَوَى فَإِنَّهُ يَصُدُّ عَنِ الحَقِّ وَأَمّا طُولُ الأَمَلِ فَيُنْسِي الآخِرَةَ.

Muhammad ibn Yaqub (al-Kulayni) (*r*) reports from al-Husayn ibn Muhammad, he from Mualla ibn Muhammad, from al-Washsha, from ASim ibn Hf, he from Abu Hamzah, who narrates on the authority of Yahya ibn Aqil that the latter reported that Amir al-Muminin Ali (a) said, "I am apprehensive for you on account of two things: submission to desire and cherishing of inordinate hope. As to desire, it prevents one from *haqq* (Truth, righteousness, God); and as to inordinate hope, it makes man oblivious of the Hereafter."[1]

## EXPOSITION

Literally *hawiya* means 'to love', 'to desire' and 'to become fond of something'. It may either be something commendable or abominable, or it may be something towards which one is inclined as a result of natural urge. The carnal self is inclined towards lust and desire, if it is not bridled by

[1] Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 336.

reason and the *Shariah*. But the possibility of *hawa* being used here as a legal term (*haqiqah Shariyyah*) with a special meaning, as maintained by some scholars, seems remote.

The phrase (صَدَّ عَنْ) gives the sense of repelling something, turning away, preventing or dissuading from something. But here the verb *sadda* is used in the transitive sense of stopping and preventing. God willing, we shall discuss the two evils and their consequent conditions: first, that of being prevented from the truth and from God; and, secondly, that of obliviousness of the Hereafter. We implore God's assistance in this regard.

## 1. On the Evil of Following One's Desires

(A)**:**

Though it is not directly relevant to our topic, it is essential to know that the human soul is by nature and instinct inclined to believe not only in the principle of *tawhid* (monotheism), but to follow all truthful doctrines also. Yet, since the moment of birth and stepping into this universe, man starts growing and developing along with his natural urges and animal desires, except for those who are protected and assisted by God, the Holy Preserver. The latter being exceptions and among the marvels of existence, are not our concern here. We are here concerned with the condition of the species in general. It is evident that at the time of his birth, after passing through certain stages, man is no better than a weak animal and has no distinction over other animals, except for his potentiality of becoming a human being. That is, his humanness is potential, not present. Therefore, man is an animal in actuality in the initial stages of his life in this world. No power but the law of animal nature, which governs through the faculties of Desire (*shahwah*) and Anger (*ghaḍab*), rules over him. And since this marvel of nature is capable of acquiring all kinds of attributes, in order to cater to the needs of these two faculties he employs another fiendish power, the faculty of imagination (*quwwah wahmiyyah*) also in this direction through such means as: lying, deceit, hypocrisy, slander and all the other kind of tools. He grows and develops with these three powers, which are the roots of all other vices and fatal sins, and they too develop and flourish within him with age. If he is not influenced by an instructor or guide, after having grown and reached the age of maturity he becomes a beast of uncommon rarity which surpasses all other beasts and devils in the above-mentioned qualities, becoming only stronger and more completely devilish and bestial. If he retains the same pattern of

growth, he will not do anything except follow the desires of the carnal self and servilely obey these three powers. No sign of Divine knowledge or awareness, moral excellence or righteous deed can be found in him, and the innate light of nature gets stifled within his personality.

Thus all the dimensions of spiritual health –which do not go beyond the three above-mentioned things, i.e., Divine knowledge, moral virtues and righteous deeds– are suppressed by the desires of the carnal self. His servility to sensual inclinations and bestial comforts does not allow any of the manifestations of righteousness to appear in his being. The darkness of sensual desire extinguishes the light of reason and faith. He does not experience the second birth which in reality is the birth of the human being. He continues to exist in the same state and is cut off and removed from God and truth. When he departs from this world in this state and enters the next world, which is the realm of unveiling of reality, he does not find himself in any other form except that of a beast or a devil. With no reminiscence and memory whatsoever of a human existence, he dwells in this state in the abode of eternal darkness, torment and dread, until God Almighty wills what He may. Such is the fate of total servility to sensual desires which causes one to be cut off absolutely from God and righteousness.

It can be concluded from this that the amount of alienation from God is the measure and criterion of the extent of servility to the desires of the self. Conversely, the extent of such alienation can be gauged by means of the extent of such servility. For instance, a person who had espoused these three faculties since the initial stages of his life, having developed and grown with them, if he is influenced and trained by means of the teachings of the prophets and instructions of scholars and sages, gradually submitting himself to the educative influence of the prophets and the *awliya* of God (a) it is possible that the innate potentiality for perfect humanness, which is inherent in his nature, may soon become an actuality. When that happens, all the modes of his inner being acquire a human dimension and the inner devil of the carnal self is converted to faith, as the Prophet of God remarked about himself:

**إنَّ شَيْطَانِي آمِنٌ بِيَدِي.**

> The devil inside me has been converted to faith at my hand.

The bestial self then surrenders itself to the human self in such a way that

it carries its rider like a docile and subdued celestial mount on the journey towards the skies of perfection, becoming a *buraq* carrying its rider swiftly towards the horizons of the Hereafter, never turning wild again. The powers of Desire and Anger having been subdued by the forces of justice and law (*shar*), spiritual peace, balance and justice rule over the domain of man's being, establishing there the Kingdom of God and the rule of righteousness and Divine Law. Nothing that is opposed to justice and truth can occur in it, and the whole kingdom is absolutely freed from all sorts of untruth and injustice.

Therefore, in the same way as the criterion of deprival from truth and righteousness is the pursuit of desire, the criterion of attainment of truth and achievement of righteousness is submission to reason and Divine Law. In between these two extremities, that is, total servility to desire and total subservience to reason, are an infinite number of stages so that every step towards desire is a step away from righteousness. With every such step the reality is further hidden behind misty veils and the lights of human excellence and the secrets of human existence grow dimmer. And, contrarily, every step that is taken away from desire is instrumental to the same extent in removing the veils and in brightening the gleams of Divine light in the domain of the inner being.

### (B) THE QURAN AND *HADITH* ON THE EVIL OF SUBMISSION TO DESIRE

Denouncing submission to desires, God Almighty says in the Quran:

﴿وَلَا تَتَّبِعْ الْهَوَى فَيُضِلَّكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ.﴾

*And follow not desire lest it lead thee astray from the way of God.* (38:26)

﴿وَمَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّنْ اتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ بِغَيْرِ هُدًى مِنْ اللَّهِ.﴾

*And who is further astray than he who follows his desire without guidance from God?* (28:50)

And in a tradition of *al-Kafi* from Imam al-Baqir (a), the Imam is reported to have said:

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: يَقُولُ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: وَعِزَّتِي وَجَلالِي

وَعَظَمَتِي وَكِبْرِيَائِي وَنُورِي وَعُلُوِّي وَارْتِفَاعِ مَكَانِي، لا يُؤْثِرُ عَبْدٌ هَوَاهُ عَلَى هَوَايَ إلا شَتَّتُّ عَلَيْهِ أَمْرَهُ وَلَبَسْتُ عَلَيْهِ دُنْيَاهُ وَشَغَلْتُ قَلْبَهُ بِهَا وَلَمْ أُؤْتَهُ مِنْهَا إلا مَا قَدَّرْتُ لَهُ. وَعِزَّتِي وَجَلالِي وَعَظَمَتِي وَكِبْرِيَائِي وَنُورِي وَعُلُوِّي وَارْتِفَاعِ مَكَانِي، لا يُؤْثِرُ عَبْدٌ هَوَايَ عَلَى هَوَاهُ إلا اسْتَحْفَظْتُهُ مَلائِكَتِي وَكَفَّلْتُ السَّمَاوَاتِ والأَرَضِينَ رِزْقَهُ وَكُنْتُ لَهُ مِنْ وَرَاءِ تِجَارَةِ كُلِّ تَاجِرٍ وَأَتَتْهُ الدُّنْيَا وَهِيَ رَاغِمَةٌ.

The Prophet (*s*) said: God Almighty said: "By My honor, My Glory, My Greatness, My Light, My Loftiness, and by the Highness of My Station! When My slave gives preference to his desire over My wish, I put his affairs into confusion, make his life baffling in this world and his heart preoccupied with the world, although I do not give him anything of it except what I have preordained for him. And by My honor, My Glory, My Greatness, My Light, My Loftiness and by the Highness of My Station! If My slave prefers My wish to his desire, My angels protect him, the heavens and the earth guarantee his sustenance, and I look after his trade and bring the world to him though it should be reluctant and recalcitrant."[1]

This tradition is a very authentic one, whose text and wording bear testimony to its pure origin, that its source is no other than God Almighty, the Fountainhead of all knowledge, though its chain of transmission may be a weak one, and to discuss this matter further is not possible here. There is another tradition reported from Amir al-Muminin (a), which is different from the one we have expounded:

إِنِّي أَخْوَفُ مَا أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمُ اثْنَتَيْنِ: إِتِّبَاعُ الهَوَى وَطُولُ الأَمَلِ.

I am apprehensive for you concerning two things: Submission to desire and entertaining of endless hope.[2]

In *al-Kafi* Imam al-Sadiq (a) is reported to have said:

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[1] Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 336.

[2] Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 336.

إِحْذَرُوا أَهْوَاءَكُمْ كَمَا تَحْذَرُونَ أَعْدَاءَكُمْ، فَلَيْسَ شَيْءٌ أَعْدَى لِلرِّجَالِ مِنِ اتِّبَاعِ أَهْوَائِهِمْ وَحَصَائِدِ أَلْسِنَتِهِمْ.

> Be apprehensive of your desires in the same way as you are apprehensive of your enemies. For there is no greater enemy for human beings than their own desires and what their tongues reap.[1]

My dear, remember that desires are endless and ever insatiable. If man takes one step in following them, he will be bound to take a few more. If he submits to one of the desires, he will soon be forced to yield to a number of them. If you open one door to the desires of the self, you will soon be forced to open several other doors to them. Thus a single act of submission will expose you to a number of vices following it and through them you will fall victim to a thousand abominations, until, God forbid, all the roads to God are closed to you, as stated by God Almighty in the Holy Book. That is why the Commander of the Believers (a), the *Waliyy al-amr* and the spiritual master and instructor of mankind, who was assigned the task of guiding the human family, has expressed so much concern and apprehension on account of it. Rather, the Holy Prophet (*s*) and all the Imams (a) are anxious lest the tree of *nubuwwah* (prophethood) and *wilayah*– of which the believers are the leaves– should shed its foliage and become as if autumn stricken. Look what the Prophet (*s*) has said:

تَنَاكَحُوا وَتَنَاسَلُوا، فَإِنِّي أُبَاهِي بِكُمُ الأُمَمَ، وَلَوْ بَالسَّقْطِ.

> Marry and procreate, for indeed I shall be proud of you over other nations, even though it should be on account of an aborted fetus.[2]

Obviously, if man happens to stand on such a dangerous path as this, where it is feared that he may fall over the precipice of annihilation, being disowned by his real father-the Holy Prophet (*s*), who is a mercy for all the worlds-having caused his indignance, what a great misfortune it would be and what disasters and woes it would involve? Thus if you know the Holy Prophet (*s*) and love the Master of the Faithful (a) and befriend their pure

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[1] Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, vol. 2, p. 336.

[2] Al-Hurr al-Amili, *Wasail al-Shiah*, *bab* 1, *hadith* 2.

progeny, relieve their blessed hearts from their fear, anguish and uncertainty on your account. In a verse of the *surat Hud* of the Quran the Prophet (*s*) is addressed thus:

﴿فَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ وَمَنْ تَابَ مَعَكَ.﴾

> *So be steady as thou hast been commanded, thou and those who have turned* (*unto Allah*) *with thee*. (11:112)

And the Prophet (*s*) is reported to have said:

شَيَّبَتْنِي سُورَةُ هُودٍ لِمَكَانِ هَذِهِ الآيَةِ.

> The *surat Hud* caused my hair to turn grey on account of this verse of it.[1]

Shaykh Shahabadi, the accomplished *arif* –may my soul be ransomed for him– has said:

Although the same verse occurs in the *surat al-Shura* –though without the phrase **وَمَنْ تَابَ مَعَكَ** (and those who have turned with thee)–, the reason that the Prophet (*s*) has made special mention of the *surat Hud* is that in it God Almighty has demanded from the Prophet (*s*) the steadiness of his *ummah* also. The Prophet (*s*) feared that this task might not be carried out, otherwise he himself had the steadiness, or, rather, he was in fact the very incarnation of justice and righteousness.

So, my brother, if you consider yourself one of the followers of that holy personage and a participant of his mission, come and don't be an embarrassment to him in its fulfillment on account of your ugly, vicious deeds. Think yourself that if one of your children or your kinsmen does something odious or improper by your norms, how ashamed you feel in front of others on their account! And you know that the Prophet of God (*s*) and Amir al-Muminin (a) are the true fathers of the *ummah*, for in the Prophet's own words:

أَنَا وَعَلِيٌّ أَبَوَا هَذِهِ الأُمَّةِ.

> I and Ali are the two fathers of this *ummah*.[2]

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[1] al-Tabarsi, *Majma al-bayan*, vol. 3.

[2] Al-Amini, *al-Ghadir*, vol. 3, p. 100.

If we are taken into the presence of the Almighty and are called to account in front of them, and should the record of our deeds reflect nothing except evil and odiousness, it would be very hard upon them, for they would feel ashamed in front of the angels and prophets of God. What a great injustice it would be! What a catastrophe we shall have invited for ourselves and what treatment will be meted out to us by God Almighty?

So, O unjust and ignorant man who have not only done injustice to yourself but are guilty of injustice to your benefactors, who laid down their lives and sacrificed their worldly possessions and comforts of life for the sake of your guidance, who were assassinated after undergoing the hardest sufferings and the harshest tortures and whose women and children were taken captive for the sake of your guidance and your deliverance, should you, instead of being grateful to them for their merciful efforts, be guilty of such a flagrant injustice and imagine that you have been unjust to yourself alone? Wake up for a while from this deep slumber and be a little ashamed of yourself. Don't allow yourself to commit the same inequities that were committed by the enemies of the *Din*. You, who claim to be a friend, do not be unjust, for the acts of injustice committed by a friend and the one who claims to be a friend are more grievous and odious.

### (C) ON NUMEROUSNESS OF DESIRES

It should be remembered that the desires of the carnal self are numerous and of diverse kinds, varying according to their intensity as well as the desired object. Sometimes they are so subtle that one is not aware of them as suspect wiles of Satan and of the self, unless he is made conscious and waken up. With all their variety, all of them work together in obstructing people from the Divine path and deviating them from it. Their grades are various. There are the victims of desire who take gold and wealth and the like to be their god; there are others about whom Almighty God informs us in these words:

﴿أَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ؟﴾

*Hast thou seen him who has taken his desire* (hawa) *to be his god?* (25:43)

Again, there are those who, according to the holy tradition under discussion, are alienated from God by following the desires of the self and the fabrications of the Devil, in the form of false creeds, corrupt norms or

something else. There are the perpetrators of mortal and major or minor and venial sins who are kept from the path of God in a measure proportional to the degree of their transgressions. Then there are the followers of legitimate pleasures and desires who, on account of their overindulgence in them, are kept back from treading the Divine path in a different way. There are the devout given to prayers and formal rites, which are aimed to secure a good life in the Hereafter or to satisfy some worldly purpose or are meant to secure higher spiritual stations or to avoid spiritual decline, who are prevented from the path of God in a different way. There are the practitioners of ethics devoted to purification of the soul and spiritual disciplining for the sake of attaining self control or reaching the paradise of moral excellence, who are kept from God and righteousness in their own manner. There are the practitioners of *irfan*, the wayfarers of the Path, the seekers of ecstasies and of mystic stations and states, who have no other purpose except His vision and His vicinity, yet whose vision is obstructed in a different way and are kept from receiving the special illuminations.

Besides, there are other stages whose description is not possible here. Thus it is necessary for every individual, in accordance with the category to which he belongs, to examine his own condition and purge himself of the desires of the self in order not to be kept from the path of righteousness and of truth, so that the doors of compassion and benevolence are opened to him, whatever his station and stage:

وَاللهُ وَلِيُّ الهِدَايَةِ.

Indeed God is the Lord of guidance.

## 2. ON THE EVIL OF ENDLESS HOPES

This discussion also consists of two sections:

### (*A*) ON THE ENDLESSNESS OF HOPES

Remember that the first and foremost step towards authentic humanness is that of awareness and awakening (*yaqazah*), as mentioned by the leading mystics (*mashayikh*) concerning the stages of wayfaring. There are ten stages in this step, as enumerated by the great Shaykh Shahabadi, which we are not in a position to elaborate here. However, it is essential to mention here that unless man does not wake up to the fact that he is a traveler with an inescapable journey lying ahead and a destination towards which he must

move, he will not muster the resolution necessary to reach his goal. Each of these matters needs an elaboration from which we must abstain for brevity's sake. However, it is enough to say that one of the biggest obstacles in the way of the awakening that leads one to forget his destination and neglect his journey and deadens his will and resolution is the feeling that there is plenty of time for the journey, that if one does not set out today he may do it tomorrow, if not this month then the next and so on. Such a state of extended and outstretched hope, together with a false assurance of unlimited life and unbounded availability of time, make man oblivious of his ultimate goal, the Hereafter, and prevent him from preparing for the unavoidable journey and securing provisions for it, ultimately leading him to completely forget the Hereafter and his goal. May God save us from the state in which one who has a long and perilous journey before him and is given a limited time in which to procure the provisions and dire necessities of the way, does not possess anything having forgotten both about the journey and his destination. It is obvious that if such a state of neglect befalls one, he will fail to procure the necessary provisions for his way, being helpless and at a loss at the time of departure. Such a man will perish on his way and his journey will not take him to his desired destination.

### (B) PROVISIONS FOR THE LONG JOURNEY AHEAD

And so, my dear, remember that you have a perilous journey ahead, for which the provisions of sound knowledge and fruitful action are needed. The time of departure is unknown. Possibly, there is little time and opportunity left. No one knows when the call for departure will come and one would be forced to depart. This prolonging of hope by you and me arises from self love and is the most masterly of the guiles of the accursed Satan. Through it he distracts our attention from the Hereafter and keeps us from attending to its affairs. And with the perils of the journey and the obstacles in the way of preparing for it, if we fail to repent or to return to God and if we fail to procure provisions for the journey, the appointed call shall come unexpectedly and send us unprepared and unprovided on the way, without any store of righteous deeds and useful knowledge which together make up the provisions of the Hereafterly journey.

For even if we have performed good deeds, they are not pure and untainted. A thousand contaminations, each of which is enough to make them unacceptable to God, afflict them. If we acquired any knowledge, it was futile and fruitless for us, our learning being either nonsensical and absurd or

itself a big impediment in the path of the Hereafter. Had the deeds that we have done and the knowledge that we have learnt been beneficial, they should have left some mark on us who have been in their pursuit for years and should have transformed our habits and morals. What went wrong that our forty or fifty years' labor has produced an opposite result and has hardened our hearts, harder even than flint? What did we achieve from *salat*, which is the *miraj* of a *mumin*? Where is that fear of God which is the outcome of true knowledge? God forbid, if we are called to depart from this world in this present state of ours, there are many a lasting disappointment and remorse in store for us!

Therefore, if obliviousness of the Hereafter caused by endless hope is something on account of which the greatest *Wali* of God, Amir al-Muminin Ali (a) is concerned for us, he is justified; for he knows as to how perilous a journey awaits us and that with such a journey in view no one should ever be complacent even for a while. At all times, one should be busy, without a moment of rest, in gathering the provisions for the Hereafterly journey. If one becomes oblivious of that world or considers it a mere dream, as if that world did not exist and there was no journey to be undertaken, one cannot imagine the calamities that one will have to face and the misfortunes that are in store for him.

It would do us much good if we think for a while about the general state of mind of the Prophet (*s*) and of Amir al-Muminin (a) who were the best of God's creatures and free from error, lapse or forgetfulness –in order to understand our own state in relation to theirs. Their cognition of the hardships and perils of the journey had made them renounce ease and rest, while our ignorance has bred forgetfulness in us. The Seal of the Prophets (*s*) subjected himself to such austerities and strenuously stood in prayer before his Lord for such lengthy hours that his blessed feet became swollen and the following verse was sent down to him by the Most Exalted:

﴿طه. مَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَى.﴾

*Taha. We have not sent down the Quran upon thee to cause thee distress.* (20:1, 2)

The state of Amir al-Muminin during prayers and his fear of God Almighty are also well known.

Hence, we should know that the journey is full of perils and this spell of obliviousness and forgetfulness of ours is nothing except a ruse of the Devil

and a guile of our own self. These endless hopes and unlimited expectations are the biggest snares of *Iblis* and the most artful of his ruses. So wake up from this sleep and remember that you are a traveler with goal and purpose. Your destination is the next world and you will be forced to leave this world ultimately. If you are prepared to set out on this journey and have procured the provisions needed, you will not be rendered helpless or stranded on this journey. Otherwise you will find yourself in a distress which knows no relief, a wretchedness that is not followed by felicity, a humiliation that will last and never be followed by honor, a poverty that does not terminate in abundance, a torment that is not followed by comfort, a fire that never cools down, and a regret and shame which knows no end.

My dear, look what the Commander of the Faithful (a) says, in *Dua Kumayl*, in his supplications to the Almighty:

وَأَنْتَ تَعْلَمُ ضَعْفِي عَنْ قَلِيلٍ مِنْ بَلاءِ الدُّنْيَا وَعُقُوبَاتِهَا وَمَا يَجْرِي فِيهَا مِنَ الْمَكَارِهِ عَلَى أَهْلِهَا، عَلَى أَنَّ ذَلِكَ بَلاءٌ وَمَكْرُوهٌ قَلِيلٌ مَكْثُهُ يَسِيرٌ بَقَاؤُهُ قَصِيرٌ مُدَّتُهُ، فَكَيْفَ احْتِمَالِي لِبَلاءِ الآخِرَةِ وَجَلِيلِ وُقُوعِ الْمَكَارِهِ فِيهَا وَهُوَ بَلاءٌ تَطُولُ مُدَّتُهُ وَيَدُومُ مَقَامُهُ وَلا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْ أَهْلِهِ لأَنَّهُ لا يَكُونُ إلا عَنْ غَضَبِكَ وَانْتِقَامِكَ وَسَخَطِكَ وَهَذَا مَا لا تَقُومُ لَهُ السَّمَاوَاتُ وَالأَرْضُ.

(My Lord) You know my frailness before a little of the afflictions and torments of this world and before the kind of calamities that affect its inhabitants, though such afflictions and adversities are transitory and short-lived. And how shall I endure the afflictions of the Hereafter and the severity of its calamities, which are enduring, perpetual and unabating on its inhabitants, since they are nothing other than Your wrath, Your retribution and Your displeasure, which neither the heavens nor the earth can bear.

A torment which the heavens and earth cannot stand has been reserved for you, and it is not enough to awaken you from your deepening slumber and your obliviousness increases day by day!

O slumberous heart! Awake and arise! Get ready for the journey to the Hereafter!

فَقَدْ نُودِيَ فِيكُمْ بِالرَّحِيلِ.

The call of the caravan's departure has been sounded and all around there is the clamor of those who depart and take leave. The agents of *Izrail* (the angel of death) are at work and they are driving you every moment nearer and nearer to the gates of the Hereafter and yet you are neglectful, unmindful and ignorant!

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْأَلُكَ التَّجَافِي عَنْ دَارِ الغُرُورِ والإِنَابَةَ إِلَى دَارِ السُّرُورِ والإِسْتِعْدَادِ لِلْمَوْتِ قَبْلَ حُلُولِ الفَوْتِ.

O God, I implore Thee to save me from the house of illusion and the abode of delirium and help me return to the abode of joy. Grant me the ability and preparedness to die before such an opportunity is lost.

11

# Eleventh *Hadith*: MAN'S GOD-SEEKING NATURE

بِالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلى مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَحْيَى، عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ، عَنِ ابْنِ مَحْبُوبٍ، عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ رِئَابٍ، عَنْ زُرَارَةَ قَالَ: سَأَلْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ عَنْ قَوْلِ اللهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: ﴿فِطْرَةَ اللهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا.﴾ قَالَ: فَطَرَهُمْ جَمِيعاً عَلَى التَّوْحِيدِ.

Muhammad ibn Yaqub (al-Kulayni), from Muhammad ibn Yahya, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad, from Ibn Mahbub, from Ali ibn Riab, from Zurarah, who said, I asked Abu Abd-Allah (Imam al-Sadiq) (a) regarding the words of God: *God's creation* (fitrah) *upon which He originated mankind* (30:30). The Imam(a) answered: "He originated mankind upon *tawhid*."[1]

## EXPOSITION

According to lexicographers and exegetes, *fatr* means creation. According to *al-Sihah* (Arabic dictionary compiled by al-Jawhari), the word *al-fitrah* means *al-khilqah*, i.e. creation. Also, possibly, the word may have been derived from *fatr* in the sense of splitting and tearing; for creation, in a sense, tears the curtains of non-being and the veils of the hidden. The phrase *iftar al-saim*, used for the breaking of the fast, also has a similar meaning, for *iftar* severs the continuity of the fast. This much is sufficient here, for lexical

[1] Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi* (Akhundi), ii, 12, *hadith* no.2.

consideration is not our purpose here.

The tradition refers to the following verse of the Quran:

﴿فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ.﴾

*So set thy face to the Din, as a man of pure Faith-God's fitrah upon which He originated mankind. There is no changing God's creation. That is the right Din, but most men know it not.* (30:30)

God willing, we shall discuss this *fitrah*, its characteristics, and the manner in which human nature is based on the principle of *tawhid*, dividing our discourse in a number of sections.

## 1. THE MEANING OF *FITRAH*

It should be known that *fitrat Allah*, as the condition and state in which God fashioned mankind, refers to the essential condition of their existence. It is something which is present in the very essence of their creation and is inextricably kneaded into the very substance of their nature. God's *fitrah* is one of His favors with which He has endowed the human species out of all creatures. Other creatures are either altogether without these attributes, or have been endowed with a weaker degree of them. It should be remembered that though in this tradition, as in some other *ahadith*, the word *fitrah* is interpreted as a natural inclination towards *tawhid*, but this amounts to mentioning one from among a host of correlatives, or to describing the most significant component of something. This is characteristic of the expositions and interpretations handed down from the Imams(a). Often they cite one of the several meanings that apply to a verse in accordance with the propriety of a context and occasion, leading ignorant persons to imagine that there is a contradiction (between the different interpretations). A proof of that is the present case. In the above-mentioned verse, *Din*, which is equated to *fitrat Allah*, is inclusive of the doctrine of *tawhid* and other religious teachings as well. In the *Sahih* tradition of Abd-Allah ibn Sinan, *"fitrah"* here has been interpreted as *al-Islam*; in the *hasan hadith* narrated by Zurarah from Abu Jafar –Imam al-Baqir (a)– it is defined as *marifah* (knowledge of God); and in the well-known *hadith*:

كُلُّ مَوْلُودٍ يُولَدُ عَلَى الفِطْرَةِ.

Every child is born on the *fitrah*.

*Fitrah* is placed in opposition to *tahawwud* (being a Jew), *tanassur* (being a Christian), and *tamajjus* (being a Zoroastrian). From this it becomes obvious that *fitrah* does not exclusively mean *tawhid*; rather it includes all the true teachings which God Almighty has ingrained in the nature of His slaves.

## LAWS OF HUMAN NATURE

We know that there is not a single soul outside the laws of nature, for they are the essential conditions of human existence and the elemental forms which are innate to human nature and creation. No one escapes them; the ignorant and the learned, the barbarian and the civilized, the dwellers of cities and the inhabitants of deserts-all share it equally. None of the factors, such as diversity of customs, religious traditions and ways, can affect them or interfere with their working. The differences of geographical region, climate, association, opinion, which affect everything- even rational verities – and create disparity and diversity of all sorts, have no effect whatsoever on the essentials of nature. The disparity of intelligence and the strength and weakness of understanding do not affect it. Anything that is not such, is not a law of nature and it should be excluded from the realm of nature. Hence the *ayah* states, (فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا), *–He originated mankind in accordance with it–* that is, no specific group or race is meant. The verse further says:

﴿لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ.﴾

*There is no changing God's creation.*

It is not changed by anything, like other factors which change according to habit and custom and other such things.

But what is astonishing is that in spite of being uniform regarding their natural instincts, from the beginning of the world until the present, people have been generally ignorant of the uniformity of their nature. They imagine that it varies, unless they are made aware of its uniform and unchangeable quality. It is only then that they can understand that there has been unity despite apparent disparity. God willing, we will clarify this point further at a later stage. However the verse refers to this point when it says:

﴿وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ.﴾

*But most men know it not.*

From what has been said till now, it may be inferred that the laws of nature are the most self-evident of all self-evident truths. Because amongst all rational principles there does not exist such a law which is not contradicted even by a single individual, and such a thing is the most evident of logical necessities and the most self-evident of all self-evident realities. And all those things that are its necessary corollaries should also be among the most evident of logical necessities. Thus, if the doctrine of *tawhid*, or other related doctrines, are from among the laws of nature and one of its prerequisites, it should be the most manifest of all self-evident truths and the most evident of manifest necessities, but strangely enough:

﴿أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ.﴾

*Most men know not!*

## INNATENESS OF RELIGIOUS TRUTHS

Every exegete of the Quran, *Sunni* or Shii, has written about the innateness of *Din* or *tawhid* in his own specific way. Here we shall not base our discussion on their opinions. Rather, we shall describe the original ideas of the accomplished *arif*, Shaykh Shahabadi (*d*)[1] who was unique in this field, although some of the ideas can be found in the form of allusions in the writings of researchers in the field of *irfan*, and some of them have occurred to this incapable writer.

Let it be known that among God-given instincts one is the belief in the existence of the Sacred and Sublime Source of everything; the second is the belief in Its Unity, i.e. *tawhid*; the third is the innate belief that that Sacred Being encompasses all perfection; the fourth is the instinctive belief in the Day of Resurrection; and the fifth is the innate faith in *nubuwwah* (prophethood); the sixth is the instinctive belief in the existence of angels, of holy spirits, in the revelation of scriptures and the path of Divine guidance. Some of the above-mentioned are laws of nature and some others are their

[1] For maintaining readability, (*d*) which is an acronym for "*Dama zilluhu*(*m*)" is used throughout the book to denote "May God extend his/their shadow." It is used for the alive *urafa*, *ulama*, and *awliya*.

necessary corollaries. The faith in God, the belief in angels, the belief in the revelation of Scriptures, in God-sent Apostles, in the Day of Resurrection, and in the *Din* –which is firm, stable and straight– is a truth which underlines the entire life of the human species. We shall discuss here some of them which are relevant to the *hadith* under consideration, and beseech the Almighty's assistance in this regard.

## 1. MAN'S LOVE OF PERFECTION

To understand that the belief in the existence of the Sublime and Supreme Source is innate in human nature, one needs to understand certain preliminaries. One of the qualities innate in human nature is the love and yearning for perfection. It is something which pervades the entire chain of humanity's generations and not a single individual in the entire human species can be found without it. No custom or tradition, religious or legal institution can transform or obstruct this tendency. The natural inclination to seek perfection is so universal that if all the eras of human existence are probed and each of human individuals, no matter to what group or nation he may belong, is questioned, a love of perfection will be found to be part of his nature and his heart will be found to be pulled towards it. In all the pauses and activities, in all the efforts, endeavors and earnest toils which engage the energies of the individuals of this species in various fields of life, it is the love of perfection which drives them onwards. Although people vary regarding their identification and understanding of perfection, and although there is the greatest conceivable variance in what they regard as perfect and whom they regard as the beloved, yet each of them, having perceived his beloved in something and deeming it his ideal; turns his attention towards it. He serves it with all his heart and with the utmost love of which he is capable. Whatever the field to which he belongs and whatever the object of his love, since he identifies perfection with it, he concentrates his attention upon it. In the same manner, the men of science and crafts, each of them seeks what he considers as perfection and loves what appears to him as the beloved. The same is true of the other-worldly and of those who give themselves up to reflection and meditation.

In brief, all of them are turned towards perfection, and since they see it in a real or imaginary object, they love it earnestly. But it should be remembered that in spite of it all, their infatuation and obsession is really not for those ideals or objects which they imagine to be their beloved. The object of their love and the *kabah* of their hopes is not that which they have fancied.

For, if he is to ponder over his nature, he will realize that to whatever object his heart is devoted, if he attains something superior to it his heart turns away from the original ideal and towards another, a higher one. And when he attains that higher one, he turns towards one which is higher and more perfect, and the fire of eagerness grows more intense day by day and his heart does not settle down at any one of the stages. For example, if you are in love with physical beauty and see it in some beauty, your heart drives you towards her abode and alley. But if you happen to see a face more beautiful, and you find it to be so, you will inevitably turn your attention towards it, or, at least, both of them will now hold your attention, and the fire of your passion will not cool down. Your condition is that of the man who said, "I haven't a penny but would buy the entire estate," and you would desire to possess every beauty. Not only this, even a probability may excite your eagerness. If you have an inkling that there is someone prettier in a certain place, your heart may take you on a journey to that place and your state of mind will be like him who said, "Though in the midst of the crowd, my heart is somewhere else." Mere wish will add to your eagerness. If you listen to the descriptions of Paradise and about the enticing beauties therein, even though, God forbid, you should be a disbeliever in it, nevertheless, your natural instinct will make you say, " O that such a heaven did exist and such lovely dames would fall to my share."

In the same manner, a man who seeks perfection in domination, power and expansion of territories and develops eagerness for such things, if he is given the possession of one country, he will turn towards another; when that too comes under his domination, he will desire for some more territory. If he is given a quarter of the earth, he will try to own the remaining ones also. Rather, the intensity of his desire grows more and more, and if the whole planet is brought under his domination, he will contemplate about the possibility of expanding it to other spheres of the cosmos as well. His heart views the celestial spheres with the desire of conquest: "O that man could fly towards those worlds, that I could annex them to my empire." Similar is the case of men of science and craft and that of the entire human species. Whatever the activity and field of their concern, their eagerness grows with achievement and is directed towards the higher degrees of perfection. The more they progress and advance, the more their eagerness grows for the higher degrees of perfection; its fire is never extinguished and becomes more intense every day.

Thus, this light of nature guides us to the fact that the hearts of all the

members of human species, from the people inhabiting far-flung regions of the world to the dwellers of civilized countries, from believers in materialism to the followers of various religious creeds, all yearn by nature and from the core of their hearts to attain immaculate perfection. They long for an absolute beauty and perfection which has no defect, for a knowledge that has no trace of ignorance in it, for a power acid domination that is not accompanied with impotence and weakness, for a life that has no death, and, ultimately, the Absolute Perfection that is the beloved of everyone. All the existents and the entire human species declare unanimously with one heart and in eloquent and lucid terms: We are lovers of Absolute Perfection; we are enamored to Absolute Beauty and Majesty; we are in search of Absolute Knowledge and Absolute Power.

Does anyone know of any being in the entire realm of existence, or in the spheres of fancy and imagination, or in the realm of rational abstractions, which possesses the attributes of absolute perfection and absolute beauty, except the Sacred Essence of the Supreme Majestic Source of the cosmos? Does anybody know of any absolute, immaculate beauty, except that of the Absolute Beloved?

O wanderers of the valley of regret! O the lost ones in the wilderness of error! Rather, O lovers of the lamp of Absolute Beauty! O Seekers of the immaculate and the eternal Beloved! Look again into the book of your nature; turn the pages of the book of your being. Look, the pen of Divine creation has written into it:

﴿إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِيَ لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ حَنِيفًا.﴾

*I have turned my face towards Him who created the heavens and the earth.*

﴿فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا.﴾

(*It is*) *God's nature upon which He originated mankind.*

(6:79; 30:30)

That nature is innate attention to the Absolute Beloved, and it is unchanging:

﴿لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ.﴾

It is a nature which seeks the knowledge (*marifah*) of God. How long will you lavish this natural God-gifted love and this trust of God on this or that beloved on account of your misconceived ideas? If the object of your love

were these imperfect beauties and these finite perfections, then why doesn't the fire of your love subside after reaching them and why does the flame of your love grow fiercer on attaining them? Now wake up from the slumber, receive the glad tiding, and rejoice that you have a beloved who has no decline, no defect, no infirmity. The Light you seek is one whose brilliance illuminates the Universe:

﴿اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ.﴾

*God is the Light of the heavens and the earth*. (24:35)

لَوْ دَلَّيْتُمْ بِحَبْلٍ إِلى الأَرْضِينَ السُّفْلَى لَهَبَطْتُمْ عَلَى اللهِ.

Your Beloved is such that He encompasses everything.

Thus, this actual love of yours seeks the Actual Beloved. It cannot be an imaginary beloved of your fancy, since every imaginary thing is imperfect, and your nature yearns for perfection. Thus an actual lover and an actual love is not possible without an actual beloved. And there is no other beloved except the Perfect Being, towards whom human nature is directed. Hence the prerequisite for the love of absolute perfection is the existence of the Absolutely Perfect Being. And, as mentioned earlier, the laws of nature and their necessary correlatives are the clearest, the most self-evident and the most obvious of prepositions. Hence it has been said:

﴿أَفِي اللَّهِ شَكٌّ فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ.﴾

*Can there be doubt concerning God the Creator of the heavens and the earth?!* (14:10)

## 2. THE INNATENESS OF DIVINE ATTRIBUTES

That the belief in the unity of the Divine Essence is innate and so is the belief that the Divine Being encompasses all the attributes of perfection became known in the above section; here we shall prove this in a different manner.

It should be known to you that one of the characteristics of the nature upon which God has fashioned mankind is a loathing for imperfection. Man is by nature averse to everything he perceives as defective and faulty.

Thus imperfection and defectiveness are repulsive to human nature, for it is inclined towards absolute perfection. Now, the pole of attraction of human nature should be one and unique, because everything capable of plurality and

everything made up of parts is imperfect and defective. Plurality is always associate with finitude, (which is a defect), and everything that is defective is repelled by human nature, which is not attracted towards it. The presence of these two natures-that is, the nature of attraction towards perfection and the nature of repulsion towards defectiveness –not only posits the principle of *tawhid*, it also pits that the Being of God encompasses every perfection and that It is free from every defect. The blessed *surat al-Tawhid*, which is about the Being of God, the Exalted and the Supreme, relates, in the words of our revered Shaykh, may my soul be his ransom, to the Ipseity of the Absolute, which is the pole of attraction of the human nature. At the outset of the *surah*, it is referred to as *huwa* (He), followed by the six attributes mentioned in the following verses. Since His sacred Essence has an absolute ipseity (*huwiyyah*) (an absolute ipseity must be absolutely perfect; otherwise it is a finite ipseity), the Divine Being encompasses all perfections. '*Allah*', (which follows the pronoun *huwa* in the *surah*), shows that in spite of encompassing all perfections, It is simple (*basit*); otherwise It would not have an absolute ipseity . Thus, He is *ahad* (unique) and His *ahadiyyah* (uniqueness) necessitates His *wahidiyyah* (oneness). And since absolute ipseity includes all perfections and is free from all defects-which originate in finite ipseity He is *Samad* (Eternal, the End, Goal and Refuge of every thing) and is not vacuous. On account of His being absolute ipseity, nothing is begotten or separated from Him, nor is He Himself separated from anything. He is *lam yalid wa lam yulad*, i.e. He begetteth not, nor was begotten; rather, He is the Source of everything and the End to which all existents return without having separated from Him, for separation necessitates defectiveness. Absolute Ipseity has no equal either, since absolute perfection precludes recurrence. Thus, the blessed *surat al-Tawhid* is about the laws of human nature and is concerned with the attributes of the Divine Being.

### 3. INNATENESS OF-THE BELIEF IN RESURRECTION:

Here we shall discuss the innateness of the belief in Resurrection (*al-maad*) as something ingrained in human nature. Like the other beliefs dealt with in the previous sections, it can be proved in a number of ways. Here we shall mention only some of them.

Know that one of the God-given innate tendencies that are ingrained in the nature of the entire human species is the love of comfort. If all the epochs of human existence –from civilized existence to barbarian subsistence, from eras of piety to that of pagan rebellion-are studied and if all the different

kinds of individuals-from the learned to the ignorant, from the noble to the mean, and from the savage to the urbanized-are questioned as to the aim of all their various attachments and pursuits and their diverse desires, and if they are asked about the purpose of their hardships and labors, all will unanimously answer in one voice with the unambiguous tongue of nature that whatever we desire is for the sake of our comfort. They will say that the ultimate goal and the purpose underlying all their aspirations and hopes is absolute comfort, untainted with labor, toil and distress. Since such a toilless, painless comfort is the goal of all, everyone imagines that lost comfort to lie in something and develops an interest in every such thing which he believes to be associated with that desired goal. This, in spite of the fact that such an absolute comfort is not to be found in any part of this world of ephemeral existence, nor is such an undisturbed peace and rest possible here. All the bounties and blessings of this world are mixed with tiresome effort and exhausting toil. All the pleasures of the world are surrounded with unnerving pains. Pain and agony, anguish and sorrow, anxiety and grief prevail all over the world. Throughout the entire history of human existence, not a single individual is to be seen whose pains and sufferings are equal to his comforts and whose joys and blessings are equal to his sorrows, distresses and toils, let alone the possession of untainted comfort and undisturbed rest.

Accordingly, the ultimate human goal is not to be found in this world, and no natural, inherent and actual love-and that too a love which pervades the entire species-is possible without the existence of an actual beloved. Hence, there should exist such a world in the realm of existence where comforts will not be adulterated with labor and pain, whose ease and repose be absolute and pure, unmixed by pain, whose joys should be pure, unmarred by grief and suffering. That world is the House of Divine bounty (*dar al-naim*), the world of the manifestation of His magnanimity.

That world can also be posited by means of the freedom-loving nature of man and the insistence of the human will, which are ingrained in the nature of every human individual. Since the material forces of this world and the conditions therein, with its impediments and restrictions, are opposed to human freedom and contrary to the human will, there should be a world in the realm of existence where man's will can be influential and whose material forces are not opposed to the dictates of the human will. Man would be there a free actor, accomplishing the aspirations of his sovereign will, a sovereignty which is demanded by his nature. Thus the aspects of the innate love of comfort and love of freedom are two natural tendencies that have

been embedded by God in the unchanging nature of the human being. They are the two wings with which man flies towards the higher kingdom of heaven and into the Nearness of God.

There are certain other matters which are not of immediate relevance to these pages. There are other natural tendencies in man which posit other Divine teachings, such as the affirmation of prophethood, the raising of Divine apostles and the descent of the scriptures, and so on. Each of the above-mentioned natural tendencies proves all the sacred doctrines, but we have confined our discussion in order not to digress much from the main topic, which is exposition of the glorious tradition at hand. Hitherto our discussion showed that the knowledge of the Source, Its Perfection and Unity, and that of the Hereafter is innate in human nature. And all praise is God's.

12

# Twelfth *Hadith*: CONTEMPLATION (*TAFAKKUR*)

بِسَنَدي الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلى مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ رِضْوَانُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ، عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنِ النَّوْفَلِيِّ، عَنِ السُّكُونِيِّ، عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: كَانَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ يَقُولُ: نَبِّهْ بِالتَّفَكُّرِ قَلْبَكَ وَجَافِ عَنِ اللَّيْلِ جَنْبَكَ وَاتَّقِ اللهَ رَبَّكَ.

Muhammad ibn Yaqub (al-Kulayni), from Ali ibn Ibrahim, from his father, from al-Nawfali, from al-Sokuni, from Abu Abd-Allah (Imam al-Sadiq) (a) that he said: Amir al-Muminin (a) used to say: "Arouse your heart to contemplation; keep your side clear off the night; and be heedful towards your Lord."[1]

## EXPOSITION

The phrase *kana yaqul* (used to say) has a meaning different from *qala* (said) or *yaqulu* (says), as it indicates continuation and perpetuation. It shows that Amir al-Muminin (a) repeatedly used to utter these words. The word *tanabbuh* means 'to arouse', 'to warn', 'to call attention to', and 'to awaken from sleep.' Here all of these meanings are suitable, for the hearts are in a state of neglectfulness and sleep prior to contemplation, and they come out of this state by means of it. Sleep and awakening, unconsciousness and consciousness are different for the realm of the body and the kingdom of the soul. Many a time the outward eye is awake, the corporeal personality is

[1] *Usul al-Kafi* (Akhundi, ed. by Ali-Akbar Ghifari), ii, 54.

conscious but the inner eye and the inward vision is deep asleep, and the spiritual regions and the domain of the soul are heedless and unconscious. *Tafakkur* (contemplation, intellection) is the activity of the intellect. It is the reordering of known matters for the purpose of reaching hitherto unknown conclusions. It includes the kind of contemplation which is one of the characteristics of mystics and wayfarers of the Path. Khwajah Abd-Allah al-Ansari has described it in these words:

إعْلَمْ أَنَّ التَّفَكُّرَ تَلَمُّسُ البَصِيرَةِ لإِسْتِدْرَاكِ البُغْيَةِ.

> Know that contemplation is the inquisitive groping of the inner vision for attaining the coveted end.[1]

It is obvious that *marifah* (gnosis) is the desired object of the heart. Accordingly, in this *hadith* also contemplation has a specific sense concerned with the heart and its life.

## WHAT IS HEART?

There are various applications and denotations of the word 'heart'. For physicians and the common people it is a tiny piece of flesh, whose contractions and expansions cause the flow of blood through arteries and veins, which generates a subtle élan vital. The philosophers (*hukama*) use it for a certain seat of the psyche (*nafs*). The *urafa* assign to it grades (*maratib*) and stages (*maqamat*), and to go into their details is not our concern here. In the Holy Quran and the *ahadith*, it has been used both in its general as well as its particular senses in different places.

In the verse:

﴿ وَبَلَغَتْ الْقُلُوبُ الْحَنَاجِرَ.﴾

*The hearts reached to the throats*. (33:10)

'Heart' is used in the same sense as used by physicians. And in:

﴿لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا.﴾

*They have hearts wherewith they understand not, and they have eyes wherewith they see not*. (7:179)

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[1] *Manazil al-sairin*, i, 57.

It is used in the sense used by the philosophers. And in:

﴿إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَذِكْرَى لِمَنْ كَانَ لَهُ قَلْبٌ أَوْ أَلْقَى السَّمْعَ وَهُوَ شَهِيدٌ.﴾

*Therein verily is a reminder for him who hath a heart, or giveth ear with full intelligence.* (50:37)

'Heart' is used in the same sense as used by the *urafa*.

In the tradition, *tafakkur* is used in the sense as is generally used by *hukama*, but the 'heart' as meant by *urafa* has no relation to *tafakkur*, especially on its certain levels, as those who are familiar with their terminology know well.

In the statement: (**جَافِ عَنِ اللَّيْلِ جَنْبَكَ جفاً**) gives the sense of *bud*, to keep away, to shun, and such is its meaning in (**جَافَاهُ عَنْهُ فَتَجَافَى عَنِ الفِرَاشِ**) as given by *al-Sihah*. 'Night', here, has been used allegorically for 'bed' and as discussed in detail by the *usuli-e faqih* Aqa Shaykh Reda Esfahani in *Jaliyyat al-hal*, the avoiding of 'night' refers to getting up from the bed for night prayers God willing, we shall discuss the holy tradition in a number of sections.

## MERITS OF CONTEMPLATION

It should be known that there is a great merit in contemplation. Contemplation is the key to the doors of *marifah* and to the treasure chests of knowledge and excellence. It is the necessary and the surest first step on the path of genuine humanness. It has been highly commended and glorified by the Glorious Quran and in traditions, and one who abandons it has been censured and denounced.

In *al-Kafi it* is reported from Imam al-Sadiq (a) that:

**أَفْضَلُ العِبَادَةِ إِدْمَانُ التَّفَكُّرِ فِي اللهِ وَفِي قُدْرَتِهِ.**

> The best form of worship is to contemplate about God and His Power.[1]

In another *hadith*, it is stated that an hour's contemplation is better than a night's worship.'[2] And according to a Prophetic tradition, the contemplation of an hour is better than a year's worship. In another tradition it is stated that

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[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, ii, 55.

[2] *Usul al-Kafi*, ii, 55.

an hour's contemplation is better than sixty years of worship (according to another *hadith*, seventy years). And some traditionists and *fuqaha* have even mentioned it as being better than a thousand years of worship. In any case, there are different grades and levels of contemplation, and every grade gives certain results and consequences. Here we shall mention a few of them.

1. The first kind of contemplation is about God, His Names, Attributes and His Perfections, the result of which is the knowledge of His existence and His irradiations (*tajalliyat*) from which the archetypes (*ayan*) and the manifestations (*mazahir*) emerge. And this is the most superior level of contemplation which yields the sublimest of the kinds of knowledge, and the firmest of the arguments (*burhan*); for thinking about the essence of the Cause and meditating on the Absolute Cause imparts knowledge about Him and the understanding of the effects. Such is the outline of the revelations on the hearts of the Truthful (*siddiqun*), and it is for this reason that it is called *burhan al-siddiqin*, the Proof of the Truthful; since the Truthful observe the Names and the Attributes, and view the first essences (*ayan*) and manifestations (*mazahir*) in the mirror of the Names through the witness of the Essence. The reason, however, that this type of proof is called *burhan al-siddiqin* is that if a Truthful one (*siddiq*) wishes to set forth his observations in the form of a proof and give his gnostic, intuitive experience the apparel of words, it would appear in this form; not that anyone who gains the knowledge of the Essence and its irradiations through this proof becomes one of the Truthful, or that the knowledge of the Truthful belongs to the category of proofs, even especial ones. How far from the truth to imagine that their knowledge is of the category of contemplation, or that their cognitions are like arguments and their premises! As long as the heart is covered within the wrapping of arguments and one is in the stage of contemplation, one has not yet reached even the first grade of the Truthful. And when the thick curtains of knowledge and proof are set aside and contemplation brushed aside, it is at the extremity of the Path drat there, without the mediation of contemplation – in fact without any means or agency whatsoever– that he ultimately succeeds in viewing the glory and beauty of the Absolute at the end of his voyage; it is then that he experiences perpetual and everlasting delight. He transcends the world and everything therein, covered under the mantle of the Almighty to remain existent in total annihilation. Nothing remains of him, and he passes into absolute oblivion, save that Divine favor should take him back to his realm and to the regions of (relative) being, in accordance with the capacity of his unchanging essence (*al-ayn al-thabitah*). In the state of this return, the

spheres of Divine glory and beauty are revealed to him, and he perceives (the meaning of) the Names and the Attributes in the mirror of the Essence. Through that he witnesses his own unchanging essence and everything that is under His shelter and protection, and discovers the tracks of the manifestations and the ways of recourse to the heart's exterior. Then he is conferred with the robes of prophethood and the difference of the stations of the apostles and prophets becomes evident to him. The vastness or narrowness of the circle of prophethood and that of those from whom the prophet is raised and those towards whom he is sent are revealed to him. And to enlarge on this topic further is not proper for these pages. So we shall leave it here and part, too, with the theme of *burhan al-siddiqin*, as it needs a preparatory introduction with its elaborate details.

## THE DESIRABLE AND THE FORBIDDEN CONTEMPLATION ON THE DIVINE ESSENCE

It should be known that what we said about the possibility of contemplation on the Essence, the Names and the Attributes may lead the ignorant to imagine that it is forbidden in accordance with certain *riwayat*, knowing not that that which is forbidden is to attempt to fathom the quality and depths of the Essence, as is clear from the traditions.'[1] Sometimes those who are not capable of such (otherwise desirable) contemplation are also forbidden from reflecting on certain kinds of *maarif* which require initiation into certain subtleties. The *hukama* confirm both of these points. The impossibility of fathoming the Essence is demonstrated in their writings, and the prohibition on contemplation on it is acknowledged by all of them. Also the conditions of entry into these sciences and the prohibition of the unworthy from learning them is also mentioned in their books; it is a customary advice which is mentioned by them either in the beginning or at the end of their works. For instance, the two great philosophers of Islam and authorities in this field, Shaykh Abu Ali Sina and Sadr al-Mutaallihin (*r*) have stated this at the end of *al-Isharat*[2] and at the beginning of *al-Asfar*.[3] They have given eloquent counsels in this regard. But to contemplate the Essence for positing the principle of *al-tawhid* and affirming Its

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[1] *Al-Mahajjat al-bayda*, viii, 193:

تَفَكَّرُوا فِي خَلْقِ اللهِ وَلا تَتَفَكَّرُوا فِي اللهِ، فَإِنَّكُمْ لَنْ تَقْدِرُوا قَدْرَهُ.

[2] *Al- Isharat wal-tanbihat* (Tehran: Heydari), iii, 419.

[3] *Al- Asfar al-arbaah* (Dar al-Maarif al-Islamiyyah), i, 10.

transcendence (*al-tanzih*) and sanctity was the ultimate goal and purpose of the sending of the prophets and the cherished end of the *urafa*. The Holy Quran and the sacred *ahadith* are loaded with the knowledge of the Essence, Its Perfections and the Divine Names. Reliable books of traditions, like *Usul al-Kafi* and *al-Tawhid* of al-Shaykh al-Saduq, also do not forbid contemplation for the purpose of affirmation of the Essence, the Names and the Attributes. The difference between the scriptures and traditions of the prophets and the writings of the philosophers is regarding their terminology and their synoptic or elaborate treatment of the subject, as is the case with the difference between *fiqh* and traditions. But the calamity is that certain ignorant persons have appeared in the garb of scholars during the last few centuries, who, being bereft of the knowledge of the Quran and the *Sunnah*, consider their sheer ignorance as the sole proof of the vanity of the knowledge of *al-mabda* and *al-maad*. Such a man for the sake of promoting his trade, labels these *maarif*, which were the ultimate goal of the apostles and the *awliya* (a) of God and with whose description the entire Book of God and the traditions of the Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (a) are replete, as *haram*. Not sparing any charge and calumny against those who pursue these *maarif*, he diverts the hearts of the creatures of God from the knowledge of *al-mabda* and *al-maad*, in addition to sowing the seeds of discord and disharmony in the community of Muslims. When asked about the reason for all this *takfir* (calling someone *kafir*) and *tafsiq*, (calling someone *fasiq* ), he immediately clings to the tradition:

**لا تَتَفَكَّرُوا فِي ذَاتِ اللهِ.**

Do not contemplate upon the Essence (of God).

The ignorance and the error of this wretch is for two reasons: Firstly, he believes that the *hukama* contemplate on the Essence, whereas they consider its intellection as impossible and probing deep into its mysteries as forbidden, and this itself is one of the established issues of their discipline. Secondly, having misunderstood the meaning of the tradition, he believes that not a single word be uttered regarding the Sacred Essence.

Here we shall cite some of the related traditions and, in our humble capacity, try to reconcile them, leaving the Judgment to the (reader's sense of) justice. Though this makes us digress from the proposed exposition of the *hadith* –our original goal– it is essential for eliminating doubts and refuting misconceptions. The following tradition is mentioned in *al-Kafi:*

**عَنْ أَبِي بَصِيرٍ قَالَ: قَالَ أَبُو جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامِ: تَكَلَّمُوا فِي خَلْقِ اللهِ وَلا تَتَكَلَّمُوا فِي اللهِ، فَإِنَّ الكَلامَ فِي اللهِ لا يَزْدَادُ صَاحِبُهُ إلا تَحَيُّراً.**

Abu Basir reports Abu Jafar (a) as having said: Speak (*takallamu*) about the creation of God, and do not speak about God (*fi Allah*), for discourse about God will bring nothing but confusion (*taHayyur*) to the discourser.[1]

This tradition itself indicates that the purpose of the prohibition is to discourage discourse aimed at fathoming the depths (*iktinah*) of the Essence and Its *kayfiyyah* (quality) with a view to discovering its cause. Otherwise, discoursing about the Essence with a view to affirming It, Its Perfections, Its Unity and Transcendence does not cause confusion. It is also possible that the prohibition here relates to such persons in whom discourse about these matters will cause perplexity and confusion. The late *muhaddith* al-Majlisi (*r*) has allowed both of these possibilities without elaborating them, but he gives more weight to the first one. Another tradition of *al-Kafi* states:

**وَفِي رِوَايَةٍ أُخْرَى عَنْ حَرِيزٍ: تَكَلَّمُوا فِي كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَلا تَتَكَلَّمُوا فِي ذَاتِ اللهِ.**

From Hariz, from Abu Abd-Allah (a) that he said, "Discuss everything, but do not discuss the Essence of the Almighty."[2]

There are other traditions which are identical or close in import to this *riwayah*, and to cite them all is not essential. Another tradition of *al-Kafi* states:

**عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: إِيَّاكُمْ وَالتَّفَكُّرَ فِي اللهِ وَلَكِنْ إِذَا أَرَدْتُمْ أَنْ تَنْظُرُوا إِلَى عَظَمَتِهِ فَانْظُرُوا إِلَى عَظِيمِ خَلْقِهِ.**

Abu Jafar (a) said, "Beware of *tafakkur* in God. But if you wish to view His grandeur, observe the great of His creations."[3]

Apparently, this *riwayah* also seems to forbid probing into the reality of

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[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, i, 92, *hadith* 1.
[2] *Usul al-Kafi*, i, 92, *hadith* 1.
[3] *Usul al-Kafi*, i, 93, *hadith* 7.

the Essence, for the tradition adds that if someone wants to perceive the glory of the Almighty he should infer it from the grandeur of His creation. This kind of parabolic approach is intended for various types of persons whose knowledge of God is derived through the means of the creation.

This and other such traditions which appear to forbid discourse and contemplation on God by themselves support our claim, which is expressly confirmed by the following tradition of *al-Kafi* on contemplation:

أَفْضَلُ العِبَادَةِ إِدْمَانُ التَّفَكُّرِ فِي اللهِ وَفِي قُدْرَتِهِ.

> The best form of worship is to contemplate about God and His Power.[1]

Accordingly, contemplation on God for positing His Essence and contemplating His Power, His Names and Attributes is not only not prohibited, but is the most superior kind of worship. Another tradition of *al-Kafi* states:

سُئِلَ عَلِيُّ بْنُ الحُسَيْنِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ عَنِ التَّوْحِيدِ فَقَالَ: إِنَّ اللهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَلِمَ أَنَّهُ يَكُونُ فِي آخِرِ الزَّمَانِ أَقْوَامٌ مُتَعَمِّقُونَ، فَأَنْزَلَ اللهُ تَعَالَى: ﴿قُلْ هُوَ اللهُ أَحَدٌ﴾ وَالآيَاتِ مِنْ سُورَةِ الحَدِيدِ إِلَى قَوْلِهِ: ﴿وَهُوَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ﴾ فَمَنْ رَامَ وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ فَقَدْ هَلَكَ.

> Ali (a) ibn al-Husayn (a) was questioned about *tawhid*; he answered "Verily, God Almighty knew that during the Last Age there would be a people of profound thinking. Hence the Almighty revealed *surat al-Tawhid* and the verses of the *surat al-Hadid* up to '*And God is the Knower of all that is in the hearts*.'[2] So whosoever goes beyond that will perish."[3]

This shows that these verses about *tawhid* and *tanzih*, the verses about the emergence and the return of the creation mentioned therein, are for those who contemplate profoundly. Can then anyone still claim that contemplating

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[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, ii, 55.

[2] The first six *ayah*s of Surat *al-Hadid*.

[3] *Usul al-Kafi*, i, 91, *hadith* 3.

on God Almighty is prohibited? What *arif* and *Hakim* has brought anything that goes beyond the commencing verses of the *surat al-Hadid*? The ultimate of their achievement is that:

﴿سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ.﴾

*All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifieth Allah.*

Is there any better way of describing God Almighty and the aspects of His Sacred Essence than the verse:

﴿هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ.﴾

*He is the First and the Last, and the Outward and the Inward, and He is the Knower of all things.* (57:3)

By the Life of the Beloved, had there been nothing besides this verse in the Glorious Book of God, it would have been sufficient for the men of heart!

If one were to consider the Book of God and the sermons and the traditions of the Holy Prophet (*s*) and his infallible vicegerents (a), one shall notice that no *arif* or *Hakim* has said anything on any of the conceivable sub-issues of the Divine teachings that goes beyond these; all their statements are replete with the description (*tawsif*) of the Almighty and full of arguments about His sacred Essence and Attributes, so that every class of scholars benefits from them according to the capacity of its comprehension.

Then all of these traditions show that contemplating and meditating on the Essence is forbidden on a certain level, which is to probe into the inmost mysteries (*kunh*) of the Essence and Its Quality (*kayfiyyah*), as stated in this tradition of *al-Kafi:*

مَنْ نَظَرَ فِي اللهِ كَيْفَ هُوَ هَلَكَ.

> Whosoever contemplates in God to see how He is, perishes.[1]

Moreover, the traditions forbidding contemplation and those enjoining it, when reconciled, give the conclusion that a group of people who do not possess the strength of giving ear to philosophical arguments (*burhan*), having no capacity of entering into such discussions, are forbidden from doing so, and there are indications in the *riwayat* which testify to this. But as

[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, i, 93, *hadith* 5.

for those who have an aptitude for it, it is not only proper but is the highest form of worship. In any case, we have digressed completely from our proposed theme, but there was no way we could avoid examining those degenerate views and the kind of calumnies, displeasing to God, which have acquired circulation during recent times on tongues, with the hope that it will make some effect on some hearts, and if one person were to accept this it would be sufficient for me. And praise is God's and to Him do we complain.

وَالحَمْدُ للهِ وَإِلَيْهِ المُشْتَكَى.

## CONTEMPLATION ON CREATION

Another level of contemplation is reflecting on the subtleties of creation, its perfection and refinement, to the extent that it is in human power. Such contemplation leads to the intellection of its Perfect Source, its Wise Maker, and is a process which is the reverse of the *burhan al-siddiqin*; for, in the latter, the point of departure is the station of God Almighty, glorious is His Name, wherefrom is acquired the knowledge of the manifestations of His Sovereignty (*wilayah*). Here, however, the point of departure is creation, whereafter is acquired the knowledge of its Source and Maker. This proof (*burhan*) is for ordinary people, who do not partake of the *burhan al-siddiqin*. Therefore, perhaps, many of them would negate that the contemplation of God can bring the knowledge of Him and that the knowledge of the Origin can lead to the knowledge of the creation.

Hence, the contemplation of the subtleties and the marvels of creation and the firmness and finesse of the system of creation belongs to the category of beneficial knowledge; it is the most meritorious of the actions of the heart and superior to all worships, since its result is the noblest of all results. Although in all forms of devotional rites (*ibadat*) the main aim and the real secret is the acquisition of transcendental knowledge (*maarif*), yet the likes of us find no access to such secrets and such results. They are for their own people, to whom every devotional rite is like a grain of one or several revelations.

In any case, man has not been able to acquire the real knowledge of the subtleties and secrets of creation. So subtle are its foundations and so firm its design, so beautiful and perfectly planned is its system that if we consider any creature, however insignificant and humble it should appear to be, with all the scientific development acquired during centuries of studies man has

been unable to discover even one of its thousand secrets, let alone the majesty of the cosmic system of creation whose intricacies and mysteries are beyond the reaches of our vision and inaccessible to our imperfect, limited ideas. Now we shall draw your attention to one of the subtleties of creation which is relatively near to understanding and comprehension and is considered to lie in the realm of the sensible.

## THE EARTH AND THE SUN: TWO MASTERPIECES OF CREATION

My dear, observe and reflect on the relationship between the earth and the sun, the fixed distance and the suitable speed with which the earth spins on its axis and revolves in its orbit around the sun, causing day and night and the seasons. What a perfection of creative skill and what a work of immaculate wisdom it is that had it been not exactly so – that is had the earth been a little away or nearer to the sun – there would not have been any vegetation and animal life, on account of chilling cold due to the former and excessive heat due to the latter. And, similarly, had the earth remained static, there would not have been any days and nights and seasons either, and the earth would have been without any trace of life despite possessing everything else to support life. Yet He did not suffice at this; He made its north furthest from the sun (in the northern hemisphere), so as to ensure that excessive heat does no harm to the creatures; the point nearest to the sun was situated towards the south, so that coldness should not harm the inhabitants of the earth. This was also not enough; the moon, which also influences the earth's creatures, was assigned a different course than the earth, in such a way that when the sun is the northern region of the earth, the moon appears in the southern, and vice versa. This was for the sake of the utmost benefit of their positions relative to the earth. These are essentially sensible phenomena, yet to encompass their subtleties and secrets is not possible for anybody but their omnipotent Creator.

Why should we go so far? If one contemplates his own creation, according to the scope of his knowledge and capability, beginning with the external senses he will see that they have been contrived according to the kind of sensations and sense perceptions they receive. For every group of sensible objects a separate faculty of perception has been created, and that too with what astounding propriety and skill! And for matters of a supra-sensible nature, which cannot be perceived through the outward senses, internal senses have been fashioned to perceive them. Let alone the knowledge of the soul and its spiritual faculties, which the human intellect

cannot comprehend, and contemplate upon the human body, its anatomy, its physical constitution and the functioning of each and every external and internal organ. See what a wonderful system and what a striking order they constitute! In spite of a hundred centuries of scientific study, man has not been able to understand a thousandth fraction of it, and all the scientists declare their inability in this regard in unambiguous terms, although this body of man is no more than an insignificant speck in comparison to other creatures on the earth's crust, and the earth with all its inhabitants is of little significance as compared with the solar system and our complete solar system is of no consequence when compared with other solar systems and galaxies; and all these macro and micro systems are parts of a disciplined and orderly system, no speck of which can be found faulty by anyone and all the human intellects are unable to understand even a single secret of its myriad recondite subtleties and secrets.

Does your intellect still need something more after this reflection to believe that an Omniscient, Omnipotent and All-Wise Being, who does not resemble any other being in anything, has created all these creatures with their firm orderliness and subtlety?

﴿أَفِي اللَّهِ شَكٌّ فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ.﴾

*Can there be any doubt concerning God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth?* (14:10)

All this orderly and systematic artistry, whose general laws no human mind can comprehend, has not come into existence by itself and spontaneously. Blind be the inner eye that fails to perceive the Truth and cannot observe its beauty in these creatures! Perish the man who is skeptical and doubtful despite seeing all these effects and signs! But, what else can helpless man, captivated by fantasies, do? If you take out your rosary and claim that its beads got assembled on the thread by themselves, without anybody arranging them, everyone will laugh at your intelligence. You will invite a calamity if you take out your pocket watch and make similar claims about it; if you do such a thing will you not have stuck off your name from the list of the sane and wouldn't all the sane people of the world consider you a lunatic? If one who considers this simple and small mechanical system to originate without a cause and as being outside causality is considered insane and is likely to be stripped of all the rights belonging to men of reason, what is to be done with the person who claims not the whole cosmic system but

even man and the complex system of his body and soul alone to have come into existence by itself? Is he still to be reckoned among men of reason? What fool is more stupid than such a man?

﴿قُتِلَ الْإِنْسَانُ مَا أَكْفَرَهُ!﴾

*Perish man! What has made him an unbeliever?* (80:17)

Death to him whose knowledge cannot revive and who is drowned in the sea of his own error!

## CONTEMPLATION ON THE STATES OF THE SOUL

One of the levels of contemplation is meditation on the states of the soul, which is of immense benefit being the source of vast transcendental knowledge. Here we intend to discuss two benefits: one is the knowledge of the Day of Resurrection, and the other is the knowledge of (the necessity of) prophethood and revealed scriptures – that is, of general prophethood (*al-nubuwwat al-ammah*) and systems of Divine Law (*sharai haqqah*). One of the issues pertaining to the soul is its state of independence (from the body), a problem which has been given more significance than any other philosophical issue by all the eminent *hukama* about which they have given numerous proofs and explanations. Here we are not in a position to offer an elaborate proof of this. We shall confine ourselves to mentioning some simple preliminaries and then return to our subject.

All the physicians, scientists and anatomists unanimously agree that all the human organs, from the pia mater –which is the centre of sense perceptions and the stage for the manifestation of all psychic faculties– to the coarser parts and organs of the body, weaken, deteriorate and decline after the age of thirty or thirty-five years. We ourselves have experienced how weakness and sluggishness overtake all the organs of the body after that age. However, at the same time, that is at the age of thirty and forty and after that, the spiritual faculties and intellectual perceptions become more refined and gain in growth and strength. This implies that the rational faculties are not physically based, for had they been corporeal like other physical faculties, they would also have declined. It is not right to imagine that it is the extent of intellectual activity as well as experience which strengthen the intellectual faculties, because all the physical faculties weaken and decline despite prolonged use and do not grow in strength and perfection. This proves that the intellectual faculty is not physically rooted.

It is also improper to say that the faculty of intellect also declines with age, because, firstly, none of the physical faculties grows strong till middle age, so that it may be said that a certain organ of the body has been the centre of intellectual perception that grows in strength till middle age and then becomes weaker, thus rendering weak the faculty of intellect as well.

Secondly, the weakness which continues into middle age is associated with rational thought, which is either a faculty present in the body or is dependent on the physical faculties. The purely intellectual and higher faculties continue to become stronger than ever before during middle age, although their expression and outward manifestation may be lesser. In short, the strength of the faculty of intellectual perception at the age of forty or fifty years is enough for proving our contention.

Moreover, every such faculty which is nearer to the physical and corporeal domain is inclined to deteriorate and decay more rapidly, and that which is more removed from it weakens more latterly. But the powers belonging to the world of the transcendent and the celestial become stronger and their vitality increases. This proves that the soul is not corporeal and physical in nature. Since the properties, effects and activities of the soul are opposed to the properties, effects and activities of the purely corporeal organs, it proves that the soul is not corporeal in nature. For instance, through prior knowledge we know that a body does not accept more than one form. If it is to receive another form, it will have to part with the form it earlier had. For example, if a picture is drawn on a paper, another picture cannot be painted on that page as long as the first picture is not erased completely. This principle is applicable to all bodies; but for the soul, while one form is impressed on it, other totally different forms can also be stamped on it without the first form being wiped out. Every corporeal body can receive only finite forms, whereas the soul can receive infinite forms, and it is for this reason that it can posit infinity. Also, every corporeal body, if it loses one form, that form cannot be restored to it without a renewed cause; but in the case of the soul, any form, after having left it, may return to it without any resumption of the cause. This shows that the soul is opposed to all corporeal bodies regarding properties, effects and action. Hence it has a non-corporeal existence of its own and does not belong to the category of bodies and physical objects.

Anything that is non-corporeal is not subject to decay –as has been demonstrated in its own place– because decay cannot occur without matter,

and the non-corporeal is independent of matter. Matter is the precondition of corporeal bodies; therefore, decay is not possible for the soul. Hence we come to the conclusion that the soul does not weaken and decay or is destroyed with the weakening, decay or destruction of the body, or after separating from it. It remains in another world and there is no death and extinction for it; this is a spiritual resurrection for the souls, prior to the Day of Resurrection, when they are united with the bodies by the will of God.

Now we reach the point of absolute affirmation of Resurrection, and stand opposed to those who negate it absolutely. From these preliminaries it should be clear that there is health and disease, reform and corruption, knowledge and wretchedness for souls, and to discover their source and to know the secrets of their corruption and welfare is not possible for anyone except the Holy Essence of the Almighty. In the perfect system of the cosmos, which is the best of possible systems ordered by the Absolutely Wise and the Omniscient, it is impossible that there should be any negligence regarding the education of mankind as to the ways of its felicity and wretchedness, its guidance towards the causes of spiritual soundness and corruption, and the prescription of remedies for curing the soul. This is because such a negligence would imply a defect either in God's knowledge or His power, either His generosity or His justice, whereas it is known that His Holy Being is free from all these defects. He is absolutely perfect and absolutely generous. Any neglect providing guidance pointing out the paths of knowledge and wretchedness will imply a great defect in Divine wisdom, which would lead to cosmic disorder and chaos. Therefore, the perfect system necessitates the declaration of the paths of felicity and the road to guidance. This explanation leads to two clear conclusions.

One is that the *Shariah* is the prescription for spiritual maladies and is known to none except the Sacred Being of the Almighty. The other is that it is necessary for God to bring it to the knowledge of man. It is obvious that such a momentous, perfect and precise knowledge, whose apprehension is not possible through the intellectual faculties of men –none of which can grasp either the relationships between tile corporeal and transcendental worlds or the effects of the transcendental forms on the inner depths of the soul– can only be accessible through the agency of *wahy* or revelation, that is, by means of Divine teaching. It is clear that every human individual is not worthy of this office and does not have the capability of occupying this station and performing this duty. It is only once in several centuries that one such individual is to be found who is worthy of performing this task and who

can undertake such a great mission. God Almighty assigns to him the task of expounding the paths of felicity and wretchedness to humanity, to make them aware of that wherein lies their welfare. This is general prophethood (*al-nubuwwat al-ammah*). Now that we have arrived at this point in our discussion, we may explain a further point which should be considered as one of self-evident truths.

## A CONCLUSIVE PROOF

Now that we know that there should necessarily be a *Shariah* laid down by the Divine Lawgiver for mankind, when we turn to the *Shariah*s prevailing amongst mankind we see that there are three principal ones: the *Shariah* of Jews, the *Shariah* of Christians, and the *Shariah* of Islam. We find that in all the three essential foundations which constitute the basis of all *Shariah*s (of which the first is concerned with the true doctrines and Divine teachings about God's Attributes and His transcendence, the knowledge of angels and the qualities of the prophets (a) and their infallibility, which are the principal and main component of the *Shariah*s; the second is about praiseworthy qualities, purification of the soul and moral excellences; the third is about outward individual and social acts and rites pertaining to political and civic actions and their like), the Islamic *Shariah* is more complete than the others. Anyone who tries to judge without prejudice will discover that it is incomparable to the others, and there does not exist any religious law pertaining to all the aspects and stages of life more perfect regarding its worldly and otherworldly aspects than this Law. This is itself the biggest proof in favor of its Divine origin. Accordingly, after affirming the doctrine of universal prophethood and the doctrine that God Almighty has legislated a Divine *Shariah* for humanity, showing them the path of guidance and bringing them under the cover of one discipline and system, no preliminaries are required for proving the truthfulness of the Islamic *Din* except for examining it and comparing it with other religious laws on every conceivable level of human need –from righteous qualities and spiritual learning to individual and social responsibilities. And this is the meaning of the following sacred tradition:

الإسْلامُ يَعْلُو وَلا يُعْلَى عَلَيْهِ.

> Islam surpasses (every creed) and is not surpassed (by anything).

This is because the more the intellects of men progress and the more they

gain in understanding, they bow their heads in front of its light of guidance when they consider its proofs (*hujaj*) and arguments (*barahin*), and no *hujjah* in the world can refute them.

The result of our arguments relating to the positing of the prophetic mission of the Seal of Prophethood (*s*) is that in the same way as the creative perfection manifest in the creation of the cosmos and its perfect arrangement and order directs us towards the intellection of a Being who has ordered it and whose omniscience encompasses all its particulars, subtleties and grandeurs, the perfection of the *Shariah* –whose perfect order and methodical finesse is capable of guaranteeing all the material and spiritual, this-worldly and otherworldly, collective and individual needs– guides us to the fact that the system of this *Shariah* has been ordered by a knowledge which encircles all the needs of the human species. And since our intellects tell us that the intellectual faculties of a man whose biography has been written by all the historians of religion and who was an unlettered person brought up in a society devoid of all higher knowledge and virtues, could not have produced such a perfect and systematic *Shariah*. Hence, of necessity, we have to acknowledge that this *Shariah* has a metaphysical and transcendental source, and reached that glorious personage (*s*) by means of Divine revelation and *wahy*. And praise is God's for the clarity of proofs.

We had intended to describe another stage of contemplation –the contemplation on this world, and *zuhd* is its fruit– but since this pen broke its reins in the earlier stages of this discourse making it somewhat lengthier than intended, we shall refrain from going into it.

## VIRTUES OF THE MIDNIGHT PRAYER

Now remains the exposition of these two phrases of the *hadith*:

**جَافِ عَنِ اللَّيْلِ جَنْبَكَ وَاتَّقِ اللهَ رَبَّكَ.**

> Keep your side clear off the night; and be heedful towards your Lord.[1]

In this blessed pronouncement, the Commander of the Faithful, Imam Ali (a), has placed the actions of the heart, contemplative awareness, and the *taqwa* of God by the side of night vigils and keeping aloof from the bed for

[1] *Usul al-Kafi* (Akhundi, ed. by Ali-Akbar Ghifari), ii, 54.

the sake of worship. This proves the distinction and merit it commands, and the practice has been greatly glorified in the traditions. The biographies of the Imams of guidance (a), and those of great sages and eminent scholars, indicate that they not only assiduously observed it, but attached great importance to the practice of staying awake until the late hours of night, aside from the aim of worship.

There are forty-one *ahadith* recorded in *Wasail al-Shiah* (the greatest of Shii books, which is the pivot of the Shii legal school and the source book of Shii scholars and *fuqaha*) about the benefits and merits of observing this practice, and there are several *ahadith* about the undesirability of giving up this habit. There are, of course countless of similar traditions in the books of supplications and prayers, but we shall quote only a few in the following, as a token of *barakah* and blessing:

عَنِ الكَافِي بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ مُعَاوِيَةَ بْنِ عَمَّارٍ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ يَقُولُ: كَانَ فِي وَصِيَّةِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ لِعَلِيٍّ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ أَنْ قَالَ: يَا عَلِيُّ، أُوصِيكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ بِخِصَالٍ فَاحْفَظْهَا. ثُمَّ قَالَ: اللَّهُمَّ أَعِنْهُ. إِلَى أَنْ قَالَ: وَعَلَيْكَ بِصَلاةِ اللَّيْلِ وَعَلَيْكَ بِصَلاةِ اللَّيْلِ وَعَلَيْكَ بِصَلاةِ اللَّيْلِ.

It is reported in *al-Kafi* from Muawiyah ibn Ammar who said that he heard Imam al-Sadiq (a) say: "In the *waSiyyah* addressed to Ali (a) by the Prophet (*S*), he (*S*) said: "O Ali , I enjoin you regarding certain habits that you must safeguard." Then the Prophet (*S*) prayed, "O God, succor him." Then (continuing his advice) he said, "Observe the midnight prayer. Observe the midnight prayer. Observe the midnight prayer."[1]

Its great significance may be understood from the entire tradition:

وَعَنِ الخِصَالِ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ لِجِبْرَئِيلَ: عِظْنِي. فَقَالَ: يَا مُحَمَّدُ، عِشْ مَا شِئْتَ فَإِنَّكَ مَيِّتٌ، وَأَحْبِبْ مَا شِئْتَ فَإِنَّكَ مُفَارِقُهُ، وَاعْمَلْ مَا شِئْتَ فَإِنَّكَ مُلاقِيهِ. شَرَفُ

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Rawdat al-Kafi*, p.162; al-Hurr al-Amili, *Wasail al-Shiah*, v, 268; al-Shaykh al-Saduq, *Man la yahduruh al-faqih*, i, 484; al-Kulayni, *Furu al-Kafi*, i, 73.

**الْمُؤْمِنِ صَلاتُهُ بِاللَّيْلِ، وَعِزُّهُ كَفُّهُ عَنْ أَعْرَاضِ النَّاسِ.**

In *al-KhiSal*, Abu Abd-Allah (a) is reported to have said, "The Prophet (*S*) asked Jibrail to exhort him about something. Jibrail said, "O Muhammad! Live you as you wish, for verily you will die one day. And love whatever you like, for verily you will have to part from it. Act as you wish, for verily you will have to face it. Know that the distinction of a believer lies in his establishing the night vigil and his nobleness lies in refraining from (maligning) the people's honor."[1]

The high degree of its significance can be understood from Jibrail's especially recommending it to the Messenger of God (*s*); for had Jibrail (a) deemed anything else as more important, he would have mentioned it while giving advice.

**وَفِي الْمَجَالِسِ؛ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنِ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ، قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ فِي حَدِيثٍ: فَمَنْ رُزِقَ صَلاةَ اللَّيْلِ مِنْ عَبْدٍ أَوْ أَمَةٍ؛ قَامَ لله عَزَّ وَجَلَّ مُخْلِصاً، فَتَوَضَّأَ وُضُوءاً سَابِغاً وَصَلَّى لله عَزَّ وَجَلَّ بِنِيَّةٍ صَادِقَةٍ وَقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ وَبَدَنٍ خَاشِعٍ وَعَيْنٍ دَامِعَةٍ، جَعَلَ اللهُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى خَلْفَهُ تِسْعَةَ صُفُوفٍ مِنَ الْمَلائِكَةِ، فِي كُلِّ صَفٍّ مَا لا يُحْصِي عَدَدَهُمْ إلا اللهُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى، أَحَدُ طَرْفَيْ كُلِّ صَفٍّ بِالْمَشْرِقِ وَالآخَرُ بِالْمَغْرِبِ. فَإِذَا فَرَغَ كَتَبَ لَهُ بِعَدَدِهِمْ دَرَجَاتٍ.**

It is reported in *al-Majalis* on the authority of Ibn Abbas that the Prophet (*S*) said in a *hadith*: "When God Almighty appoints the night vigil as sustenance for His slave, man or woman, when he/she wakes up at night with sincere devotion towards God, performs a full ablution, and says prayer for the Almighty God with the purity of intention, with whole heartedness and with tearful eyes, God Almighty appoints seven rows of angels (to pray)

[1] Al-Shaykh al-Saduq, *Thawab al-amal*, p.63, *hadith* 41; *Man la yahduruh al-faqih*, i, 471.

behind him/her. No one except God can count their number on each side of each row, which extends from the east to the west. When he concludes the prayer, God Almighty writes grades for him equal to their number."[1]

**وَعَنِ العِلَلِ (عِلَلِ الشَّرَائِعِ)، بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَنَسٍ، قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ يَقُولُ: الرَّكْعَتَانِ فِي جَوْفِ اللَّيْلِ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَمَا فِيهَا.**

In *Ilal al-sharai*, it is reported from Anas that he heard the Messenger of God say: "Two *rakah*s of prayer performed in the middle of night are dearer to me than the entire world and everything therein."[2]

In a number of *ahadith* it has been reported that the midnight prayer is the *mumin*'s honor and dignity, and his adornment in the Hereafter, in the same way as children and wealth are the adornments of this world.

**وَعَنِ العِلَلِ (عِلَلِ الشَّرَائِعِ)، بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ جَابِرِ بْنِ عَبْدِاللهِ الأَنْصَارِيِّ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ يَقُولُ: مَا أَتَّخَذَ اللهُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ خَلِيلاً إلا لإِطْعَامِهِ الطَّعَامَ وَصَلاتِهِ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّاسُ نِيَامٌ.**

In *Ilal al-sharai*, Jabir is reported to have heard the Prophet (*S*) say: "God did not befriend Ibrahim (a) except for his feeding people and offering prayers by night while the people were fast asleep."[3]

Had there been no other merit besides this for the midnight prayer, it would have been enough –but for those alone who deserve to practice it, not the likes of me. We do not know what honor and distinction it is and what it means to possess the station of being befriended by God. All intellects fail to comprehend it. If all the adornments of Paradise were displayed before his eyes, such a man would not even glance at them. You also, had you a beloved dear to your heart, or a very dear friend, were he to be present in

[1] *Wasail al-Shiah*, v, 275.
[2] Al-Shaykh al-Saduq, *Ilal al-sharai*, p.138.
[3] *Ibid.*, p.23; *Wasail al-Shiah*, v, 276.

front of you, it will cause you to neglect all the good and delicious things, absorbing your attention entirely with the vision of the beloved and the radiance of the countenance of the dear one, though this similitude is out of proportion for describing this condition, to the extent that the east is far from the west.

وَعَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ إبْرَاهِيمَ بِإسْنَادِهِ، عَنْ أبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: مَا مِنْ عَمَلٍ حَسَنٍ يَعْمَلُهُ العَبْدُ إلا وَلَهُ ثَوَابٌ فِي القُرْآنِ إلا صَلاةَ اللَّيْلِ، فَإنَّ اللهَ لَمْ يُبَيِّنْ ثَوَابَهَا لِعَظِيمَ خَطَرِهَا عَنْدَهُ، فَقَالَ: ﴿تَتَجَافَى جُنُوبُهُمْ عَنْ الْمَضَاجِعِ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ خَوْفًا وَطَمَعًا وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ. فَلَا تَعْلَمُ نَفْسٌ مَا أُخْفِيَ لَهُمْ مِنْ قُرَّةِ أَعْيُنٍ جَزَاءً بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ.﴾

> From Ali ibn Ibrahim who, with his chain of narrators, reports from Imam al-Sadiq (a) that he said, "For every good deed that a slave of God performs, the reward for it is specified in the Quran, except for the midnight prayer, which commands an unusually high reward on account of its great worth. (God says in the Quran): *Their sides shun their beds as they call on their Lord in fear and hope*; *and they expend of what We have provided them*. *No soul knows what delight is laid up for them secretly, as a recompense for that they were doing* (32:16,17)."[1]

What can be the delight that God Almighty has kept in store for them, concealing it from the eyes of all? Had it been something similar to the flowing streams, the magnificent mansions, and the diverse bounties of Paradise, He would have described it –as in the case of other deeds, of which (at least) the angels are aware. This shows that this reward is above all these and of a different kind; its greatness stands beyond that which can be communicated to anyone, especially the inhabitants of this lowly world. Do not liken the bounties of this world to those of the other. Do not imagine that the Paradise and the gardens therein are similar to the gardens of this world, only somewhat vaster and of a greater degree of grandeur. There is the abode of Divine beneficence and the house of the hospitality of the Lord. The entire world is not comparable in grandeur to a single hair of a houri of Paradise.

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[1] *Ilal al-sharai*, p.23; *Wasail al-Shiah*, v, 276.

Rather it is not comparable even to a thread of the garments made for its inhabitants.

Despite all this, God Almighty has named none of these as reward for the performers of the midnight prayer, and has only referred to the high station of theirs in the words of the above verse. But, alas, we are indolent, being not men of certitude. Otherwise, it would not have been possible for us to be neglectful to such a degree and to be so drowned in deep sleep till morning. If the night vigils were to make man aware of the mysteries of *salat*, were he to preoccupy his mind with the remembrance and contemplation of the Lord, and were his nights to become mounts of ascent into the Divine Proximity, his reward would be nothing other than the vision of the Absolute Beauty.

And woe to us, the negligent who do not wake up from slumber till the end of life and remain under the intoxication of nature! Woe to us, whom every day increases in stupefaction! Woe to us, who live on the animal plane, comprehending nothing but eating, drinking and lovemaking! Whatever we do, even if it is worship, that too is merely meant for catering to the needs of the belly and the underneath. Do you imagine that the *salat* of Khalil al-Rahman, the Friend of the Beneficent (Ibrahim), was similar to that of ours? He did not speak of his wishes even to Jibrail –and we? We do not hesitate to beg even Satan (if we believe him to be mighty enough to grant our prayers) to fulfill our desires!

Yet there is no need to lose hope. It is possible that after a period of performing the night vigil and habituating ourselves to it God Almighty may gradually help you and cover you, with an invisible gesture of grace, with the robe of His mercy. But, on the whole, do not be oblivious of the mysteries of worship, and do not devote yourself merely to the outward refinements of Quranic recitings. If you cannot perform it with a sincerity of intention, strive at least for the delight that God Almighty has kept hidden from all the sights. And remember in your prayers, should it be your wish, this rebellious and beastly sinner who has forgone all higher stations to remain content to thrive on the animal plane. And chant with full attention and sincerity of intention this prayer:

اللَّهُمَّ ارْزُقْنِي التَّجَافِي عَنْ دَارِ الغُرُورِ والإِنَابَةَ إِلَى دَارِ الخُلُودِ والإِسْتِعْدَادِ لِلْمَوْتِ قَبْلَ حُلُولِ الفَوْتِ.

My God, I implore Thee to rescue me from the house of

> illusion and this abode of delirium, and help me to return to the abode of eternity. Grant me the ability and preparedness to die before such an opportunity is lost.[1]

## WHAT IS *TAQWA*?

This should be known that *taqwa* (derived from *wiqayah*, defense) is a kind of defense and shielding. In common speech, as well as in the vocabulary of traditions, it means to restrain or bridle oneself from violating Divine commands (*awamir* and *nawahi*) and from going against what is pleasing to God. It is usually used for efficacious guarding of the soul and total control of it from falling into illegal and illegitimate acts, by refraining from all that is suspect (i.e. not known to be permissible for certain):

وَمَنْ أَخَذَ بِالشُّبُهَاتِ وَقَعَ فِي الْمُحَرَّمَاتِ وَهَلَكَ مِنْ حَيْثُ لا يَعْلَمُ. وَمَنْ رَتَعَ حَوْلَ الحِمَى يُوشَكُ أَنْ يَقَعَ فِيهِ.

> Whosoever pursues dubious things, falls into forbidden things (*muharramat*) and is destroyed on account of his ignorance, such as an animal that grazes around a mire is liable to soon get entrapped in it.[2]

This should be known that although mere *taqwa* does not by itself constitute the higher stages of perfection and spiritual accomplishment, but reaching a high station is also not possible without it; for as long as the soul is smeared with commission of prohibited deeds, one cannot enter the door of humanity and cannot be a wayfarer of its path. As long as man remains obedient to his carnal wishes and sensual pleasures and their sweetness hangs in his mouth, he cannot even reach the preliminary grades of human perfection. As long as he cherishes the love of the world in his heart and has the fondness: for mundane things, he cannot reach the station of even those who are halfway on the road (*mutawassitun*) and the *zuhhad*. And as long as self-love lies embedded in his essence, he will not reach the station of the sincere (*mukhlisun*) and the lovers of God. Until the love for the pluralities of the world (*mulk*) and the Hereafter (*malakut*) is evident in his heart, he will not reach the high station of the *majdhubun* (those immersed in the Divine

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[1] Shaykh Abbas al-Qummi, *Mafatih al- jinan.*

[2] *Wasail al-Shiah*.

and detached from all worldly attachments). And until the plurality of the Names is manifest within the core of his essence, he cannot attain total annihilation (*fana*). As long as his heart is turned towards the spiritual station, he has not attained the station of complete extinction. And until his essence is prone to take up different colors (*talwin*), he has not reached the station of stable endurance, and the Essence; as the referent of the Name of the Essence, will not cast Its eternal and everlasting radiance into his heart. Thus, for ordinary men *taqwa* is with respect to the forbidden things; for the elect it is vis-a-vis sensual pleasures; for the ascetics it is in relation to the world, for the sincere it is in relation to the love of the self; and for the *majdhubun* it is in relation to the plurality of Act; for the *faniyun* (those who have annihilated themselves in the Essence) it is in relation to the plurality of the Names; for, the *wasilun* (those who have reached the Essence) *taqwa* is in relation to absorption in the annihilation; and for the *mutamakkinun* it is in regard to inner instabilities (*talwinat*), and hence the Quran enjoins:

﴿فَاسْتَقِمْ كَمَا أُمِرْتَ.﴾

*So be as steadfast as thou art commanded*. (11: 112)

There is much that can be said for each one of these stations, the description of which would not lead the likes of us anywhere except into confusion and bafflement over terms, blind as we are to the meanings concealed by the veils of concepts, and there are a people who befit every field. Now we shall turn our attention to *taqwa* in its elementary form, which is more significant for mankind.

## *TAQWA* FOR THE COMMON PEOPLE

Remember, my dear, that in the same way as there is health and sickness for the human body and remedies and cures for correcting it, there is also health and disease and remedies and cures for the human soul as well. Its health and well-being is observance of moderation, it lies in treading the human path, and sickness and affliction is the result of deviating from the right path of humanity. The spiritual maladies and diseases are a thousand times more significant than the physical maladies; for at the most the latter ultimately lead to death. As soon as death approaches and the soul leaves the body, all physical maladies and corporeal defects and infirmities disappear for one, and one does not feel any bodily pain and affliction any more.

But if, God forbid, one is afflicted with spiritual maladies and diseases of

the soul, the time of death is withdrawal of the soul's attention from the body and its redirection towards the domain of the spirit: that is the beginning of the experience of these sicknesses and afflictions. The similitude of attention toward the world and its attachments is like the narcotics which makes its addict oblivious of himself. The breaking of the soul's bonds with the realm of the physical world makes the soul gain self-consciousness. As soon as it becomes self-conscious, all the pains, diseases and indispositions that lie latent within the depths of the essence, now overwhelm it and each and every thing that remained invisible until that time, like fire smouldering under ashes, becomes evident. Those diseases and maladies either cannot be driven away and adhere firmly to one, or if they are remediable, it is only after being subjected to tortures, pains, fire and burning for thousands of years that they can be wiped away:

آخِرُ الدَّوَاءِ الكَيُّ.

The last cure is cauterization.

God Almighty says:

﴿يَوْمَ يُحْمَى عَلَيْهَا فِي نَارِ جَهَنَّمَ فَتُكْوَى بِهَا جِبَاهُهُمْ وَجُنُوبُهُمْ وَظُهُورُهُمْ.﴾

*It will be heated in the fire of hell, and their foreheads and their flanks and their backs will be branded therewith.* (9:35)

The apostles of God are similar to kind physicians who out of great concern for treating illnesses prescribe different remedies in accordance with the severity of the disease. They have strived to guide mankind on the right path of genuine guidance (We are God-trained physicians). The effect of the spiritual deeds and actions of the heart, as well as the external deeds and actions of the body, is similar to that of a medicine. In the same way, the effect of *taqwa*, on each of its levels, is similar to abstaining from those things that aggravate the disease. Unless the sick man does not abstain from harmful things, it is not possible that his malady be replaced by well-being and the prescribed remedy be effectual. During physical illness, sometimes, despite a little intemperance, medicine and nature do their work and one may regain his health and well-being; for nature itself is a protector of health and medicine acts as its assistant. But the matter is more serious in the case of spiritual maladies, as here the nature dominates the spirit from the very beginning and the spiritual side heads towards corruption and decline:

﴿إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ﴾

*Verily, it is the self which incites to evil* (12:53)

Accordingly, the disease overwhelms it on the slightest indulgence and intemperance, making inroads and destroying its health and vigor completely. Therefore, anyone who is concerned with his spiritual soundness, will try to improve his condition after finding the ways of getting rid of painful chastisement. His well-being rests upon two things: one is to adopt those things which bring spiritual health, and the other is to abstain from things which bring spiritual harm and affliction.

It should be remembered that the spiritual harm inflicted by the forbidden things is greater than all other vices, and it is for this very reason that they have been forbidden. And to perform the obligatory and incumbent duties is also most necessary, and it is for this reason that they have been made obligatory and given priority over all other things. These have been considered as the foremost and the most essential steps in the direction of spiritual advancement.

Treading the path of felicity and reaching the highest human grades and stations depends upon having traversed these two stages. Anyone who observes them acquires felicity and salvation. Of these two, *taqwa*, or abstinence from *muharramat*, is the more significant. The mystics and the wayfarers have also considered it more significant than the other step. A study of the traditions (of the Prophet [*s*] and the Imams [*a*]) and the sermons of the *Nahj al-balaghah* further confirms this that the Infallible Ones (a) also laid great emphasis on this step.

Therefore, O dear, consider the first stage to be of utmost importance and be greatly heedful and attentive regarding these matters. If the first step is taken rightly and this foundation is laid solidly, there is hope of reaching the other stations; otherwise it is impossible to attain the higher stations and very difficult and painstaking to obtain salvation. Our precious Shaykh used to enjoin us to attend constantly to the following verses of the *surat al-Hashr:*

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَلْتَنْظُرْ نَفْسٌ مَا قَدَّمَتْ لِغَدٍ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ. وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ أُوْلَئِكَ هُمْ الْفَاسِقُونَ. لَا يَسْتَوِي أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ وَأَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ هُمْ

الْفَائِزُونَ. لَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ عَلَى جَبَلٍ لَرَأَيْتَهُ خَاشِعًا مُتَصَدِّعًا مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَالُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ. هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ هُوَ الرَّحْمَانُ الرَّحِيمُ. هُوَ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْمَلِكُ الْقُدُّوسُ السَّلَامُ الْمُؤْمِنُ الْمُهَيْمِنُ الْعَزِيزُ الْجَبَّارُ الْمُتَكَبِّرُ سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ. هُوَ اللَّهُ الْخَالِقُ الْبَارِئُ الْمُصَوِّرُ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ.﴾

*O ye who believe! Observe your duty* (*taqwa*) *to God. And let every soul look to that which it sendeth on before for the morrow. And observe your duty* (*taqwa*) *to God! Verily, God is informed of what ye do. And be not ye as those who forgot God, and He caused them to forget their souls. Such are the evildoers. Not equal are the people of the Fire and the people of the Garden. The people of the Garden, they are the victorious. If We had caused the Quran to descent upon the mountain, thou* (*O Muhammad*) *verily hadest seen it humbled, rent asunder by the fear of God. Such similitudes coin We for mankind that haply they may reflect. He is God, than Whom there is no other god, the Knower of the invisible and the visible. He is the Beneficent, the Merciful. He is God, than Whom there is no other god, the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, Peace, the Keeper of faith, the Guardian, the Majestic, the Compeller, the Superb. Glorified be God from all that they ascribe as partners* (*unto Him*)*! He is God, the Creator, the Shaper out of naught, the Fashioner. His are the most beautiful names. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifieth Him, and He is the Mighty, the Wise.* (59:18-24)

Our Shaykh would ask us to recite these verses after daily prayers and to contemplate over their meaning, especially in the late hours of night when the heart is relaxed, stating that it is very effective for curing the soul and for holding the mischief of the self and Satan at bay. He would recommend us to be with ablution (*wudu*) all the time, for, he would say, it is like a warrior's armor.

In any case, beseech and entreat God Almighty with supplications and tears to succor you and assist you during this trial and to help you in acquiring the faculty of *taqwa*. Remember that in the beginning it will appear to be a little hard, but after strict observance of a few days discomfort will change into comfort and hardship into leisure and tranquility; rather, it will give you a unique spiritual joy, which those who have tasted value higher than all other enjoyments.

God willing, after strict vigilance and total *taqwa*, you will progress towards the station of *taqwa* attained by the elect, which is *taqwa* against sensual pleasures. When you taste the sweetness of spiritual enjoyment, you will gradually turn away from physical pleasures and try to evade them. Traversing the path will become easier for you and you will not attach any value to transitory physical enjoyments; rather, you will abhor them. The worldly treasures will appear ugly and coarse to your eyes.

In this state of consciousness, you will realize that each one of the worldly pleasures leaves its trace on the soul, a black blot on the heart: it intensifies the love for this world, which itself causes one to cling to this place, and, at the time of the wrenching away of the soul from the body, takes the form of the agony of death and its distresses and squeezes. Mainly, the anguish and agony of death and its severity are the result of these pleasures and these attachments to the corporeal world, as said earlier. As soon as man gains consciousness of this fact, all the physical pleasures lose their significance in his eyes.

He becomes abhorrent towards the world, its treasures and adornments. This itself is another success, whence the wayfarer advances towards the third grade of *taqwa*. Thereupon, treading the Path of God becomes easier for him and the road to humanness becomes illuminated and spacious. Every step that he takes carries him further on the way of Truth.

His exercises assume sacred validity. He becomes averse to the self, its ways and its demands. He senses within his being the love of God and he is no more satisfied now with the promises of Paradise and the palaces and the houris thereof. He yearns for a higher ideal and end hating his (earlier) self-seeking and self-love. His *taqwa* is now directed against self love and he becomes *muttaqi* in regard to his own self-indulgence. This is a high and lofty attainment and the first step in the direction of sensing the fragrance of *wilayah*. God Almighty specifies a seat for him under the shelter of His grace and succors him with His special favors.

The matters that the wayfarer on the Divine path experiences after this are beyond the ken of expression. And praise belongs to God, in the beginning and the end, outwardly and inwardly, and may His benedictions be upon Muhammad and the pure of his progeny.

13

# Thirteenth *Hadith*: TRUST IN GOD (*TAWAKKUL*)

بِالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلَى الشَّيْخِ الجَلِيلِ ثِقَةِ الإِسْلامِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ عَنْ عِدَّةٍ مِنْ أَصْحَابِنَا، عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ خَالِدٍ، عَنْ غَيْرِ وَاحِدٍ، عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ أَسْبَاطٍ، عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ عُمَرَ الحَلال، عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ سُوَيْدٍ، عَنْ أَبِي الحَسَنِ الأَوَّلِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: سَأَلْتُهُ عَنْ قَوْلِ اللهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: ﴿وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ.﴾ فَقَالَ: التَّوَكُّلُ عَلَى اللهِ دَرَجَاتٌ؛ مِنْهَا أَنْ تَتَوَكَّلَ عَلَى اللهِ فِي أُمُورِكَ كُلِّهَا، فَمَا فَعَلَ بِكَ كُنْتَ عَنْهُ رَاضِياً، تَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُ لا يَأْلُوكَ خَيْراً وَفَضْلاً وَتَعْلَمُ أَنَّ الحُكْمَ فِي ذَلِكَ لَهُ، فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللهِ بِتَفْوِيضِ ذَلِكَ إِلَيْهِ وَثِقْ بِهِ فِيهَا وَفِي غَيْرِهَا.

Muhammad ibn Yaqub (al-Kulayni): from a group of our teachers, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid, from more than one transmitter, from Ali ibn Asbat, from Ahmad ibn Umar al-Hallal, from Ali ibn Suwayd, from Abu al-Hasan al-awwal (a). Ali ibn Suwayd says, 'I asked him concerning the utterance of God Almighty: '*And whoever puts his trust in God, then God suffices him* (65:3).' The Imam (a) said: "There are various degrees of trust in God. Of them one is that you should put your trust in God in all your affairs, being well-pleased with whatever God does to you, knowing for certain that he does not cease in His goodness and grace towards you, and that the command therein rests with Him. So put your trust in God, leaving that to Him and relying upon Him in

regard to that and everything other than that."[1]

## EXPOSITION

*Hallal*, with a *shaddah* on the *lam*, means the seller of *hill*, oil. Abu al-Hasan al-awwal is Imam al-Kazim (a), and it is he who is meant (in traditions) when just Abu al-Hasan is mentioned. Abu al-Hasan al-Thani is Imam al-Rida (a) and Abu al-Hasan al-Thalith is Imam al-Hadi (the Tenth Imam). *Tawakkul* literally mean, admission of one's inability and reliance on one other than oneself.

(**إِتَّكَلْتُ عَلَى فُلانٍ فِي أَمْرٍ**) means, as the lexicographers, 'I relied upon him in a certain matter', the word (**إِتَّكَلْتُ**)originally being (**إِوْتَكَلْتُ**), which means considering someone sufficient.

(**يَأْلُوكَ**) derived from (**ألا**) and (**ألواً**) meaning 'to fail', 'to neglect', 'to refrain'. In the transitive form, some have said, when it requires two *mafu*ls (grmmatical objects), the sense of preventing and depriving (*man*) is assured ....

*Tawakkul*, is something other than *tafwid*; and the two are different from *rida* and *wuthuq*, as will be explained later on. We will now explain this noble tradition in a number of sections:

## *TAWAKKUL* AND ITS DEGREES

Know, that closely related meanings have been ascribed to *tawakkul* by the various definitions proposed by different schools, each according to its own approach. The author of *Manazil al-sairin* says:

**التَّوَكُّلُ كِلَةُ الأَمْرِ كُلِّهِ إِلَى مَالِكِهِ وَالتَّعْوِيلُ عَلَى وَكَالَتِهِ.**

*Tawakkul* means entrusting all the matters to their Master and relying upon His trusteeship.[2]

Some *urafa* have said:

**التَّوَكُّلُ طَرْحُ البَدَنِ فِي العُبُودِيَّةِ وَتَعَلُّقُ القَلْبِ بِالرُّبُوبِيَّةِ.**

*Tawakkul* means throwing the body down (as in prostration) in servitude (to God) and attaching the heart

[1] *Usul al-Kafi* (Akhundi), ii, 391, *hadith* 3.

[2] Khwajeh Abd-Allah al-ansari, *Manazil al-sairin*.

to (His) Lordship.

That is, it means using one's bodily powers in obedience to God and refraining from interfering in the matters (of the heart) and consigning it to the Lord. Some others have said:

التَّوَكُّلُ عَلَى اللهِ انْقِطَاعُ العَبْدِ فِي جَمِيعِ مَا يَأْمُلُهُ مِنَ المَخْلُوقِينَ.

> *Tawakkul* upon God means the severance by the servant of all hopes and expectations from the creatures (and attaching, them to God).

The meanings mentioned are closely related and there is no need to delve further on the meaning of the word. However, that which should be mentioned is that *tawakkul* has various degrees in accordance with the stations of the devotees. Since the knowledge of these degrees of *tawakkul* depends on the knowledge of the various degrees of the devotee's knowledge of their Lord, the Almighty and the Glorious, we cannot avoid discussing them here.

Let it be known to you that one of the esoteric principles of the wayfarers of the Path, without which no progress is possible, is the knowledge of God's Lordship and Mastership and the quality of the sway of the Holy Essence over all affairs. We shall not discuss the theoretical aspect of this issue, for it calls for an examination of questions related to free will and predestination, which is not suitable for these pages. Here, we will only mention the different degrees of the people's knowledge of it.

People are very different in regard to the knowledge of the Lordship of the Sacred Essence .of God. The commoners among the monotheists consider God Almighty the Creator of the general essences of things and their elements and substances; but they do not believe in the all-embracing Lordship of God, and consider His authority over things as limited. As a matter of verbal habit they may often declare that God decrees all matters and has power over all things, that nothing can come into existence without His sacred Will. Yet, their actual station is not at a par with their verbal profession, neither in respect of knowledge, nor faith, neither experience nor conviction. This class of people, to which we also belong, have no knowledge of God's Lordship; their faith in *tawhid* is deficient and the sovereignty of the Lord is concealed from their sight by the veils of apparent causation. Hence they do not occupy the station of *tawakkul*, which is our concern here, except on the level of mere verbal claim. Accordingly, they do

not rely in their worldly affairs on anything except the superficial causes and material factors. If sometimes they turn their attention to God and beseech something of Him, that is either on account of imitation or for reasons of caution; since not only they see no harm in it but allow a possibility of benefit. Thus there is a scent of *tawakkul* in them, although whenever they deem the apparent causal factors as favorable they totally forget God and His efficacy.

Now that which is staid regarding *tawakkul*, that it is not opposed to action and effort is quite right and in accordance with reason as well as revelation. But to fail to see God's Lordship and His efficacy and to consider material causes as independent is contrary to *tawakkul*. Although this kind of people is devoid of *tawakkul* in respect to their worldly affairs, they make vigorous claims of *tawakkul* when it comes to the matters of the Hereafter. They justify their sluggishness and neglect in the matters of acquisition of transcendental knowledge, spiritual development and fulfillment of moral and devotional duties by easy professions of reliance on God and *tawakkul* on His beneficence. With such verbal declarations as 'God is great' and 'My trust lies in God's beneficence' they hope to attain the stations of the Hereafter. However, in regard to worldly matters, they declare, "Effort and endeavor are not contrary to *tawakkul* on God and reliance upon His munificence." This is nothing except one of the guiles of the carnal self and the Devil. For this sort has *tawakkul* on God neither in the matters of the world nor in the affairs of the Hereafter. But since they consider worldly matters as paramount, they put their reliance on material causes, not relying on God and His efficacy. On the other hand, since the affairs of the Hereafter are not important in their eyes and as they have no real faith in the Day of Resurrection and its details, they conjure up pretexts to conceal their neglect. Hence they say, 'God is great', and they declare trust in God and faith in the intercession of the Intercessors, although such professions are nothing but empty verbiage and meaningless oscillations of the tongue.

There is another class of people, who, having been convinced either by reason or revelation, affirm that God Almighty is the sole determiner of matters, the cause of all causes, efficacious in the realm of being, there being no limit to His power and influence. On the level of rational belief, they have *tawakkul* in God; that is the complete grounds of *tawakkul* have been furnished for them by reason and revelation. Hence they consider themselves as *mutawakkil* and are able to supply rational proofs in justification of *tawakkul*, having confirmed rational conviction in all the essential

preliminaries of *tawakkul*, which are: God's knowledge of the needs of His creatures; His power and ability to satisfy those needs; His freedom from stinginess; and His Love and mercy for His creatures. On the basis of these, it is necessary to have trust on the Omniscient, Powerful, unniggardly and Merciful Lord, Who takes care to provide whatever is good for His creatures and in their interest, Who does not allow them to remain deprived of what is good for them, even though they themselves should be incapable of distinguishing between that which is beneficial or harmful for them.

This group, although they are *mutawakkil* on the level of rational knowledge, has not yet attained the stage of faith; they are shaky when confronted with the matters of life. There is a conflict between their reason and their heart, in which reason is dominated by the heart which has faith in material causes and is blind to God's power and efficacy.

There is a third group in which the conviction in God's sway over creation has penetrated into the heart, which has firm faith in God's Sovereignty and Mastership over things. The pen of reason has inscribed all the essentials of *tawakkul* on the tablet of their heart. It is they who possess the station of *tawakkul*. But the members of this group also differ from one another in regard to the level and degree of faith, whose highest degree is contentment (*itminan*) at which the most perfect degree of *tawakkul* appears in their heart. Then, their heart is detached from causation and attached to the Lordship of God, on Whom they rely and in Whom they-are content, in accordance with the words of the mystic who defined *tawakkul* as "casting the body away in servitude to God and attaching the heart to His Lordship."

That which was mentioned above holds true in the case when the heart still dwells in the stage of plurality (*kathrat-e afal*) otherwise it leaves behind the station of *tawakkul* to attain to a higher station whose discussion lies outside the scope of this exposition.

Thus, it was seen that *tawakkul* has various stages and degrees, and perhaps the degree of *tawakkul* referred to in the *hadith* is the one pertaining to the second group, for it mentions knowledge as its preliminary condition. Or perhaps it refers to a degree of *tawakkul* according to some other mode of gradation, for *tawakkul* is amenable to another kind of gradation, as described in relation with the various stages of wayfaring by the experts of mystics knowledge and spiritual discipline, as a gradual gradation from plurality to unity; for absolute extinction (*fana-e mutlaq-e afAli*) is not attained instantaneously but gradually. In the first stage, the wayfarer

observes unity in his own self and then in all other beings. The stations of *tawakkul*, *rida*, *taslim* and all the other stations are attainable gradually. The wayfarer may at first exercise *tawakkul* in some of his affairs and with respect to hidden and unobservable causes. Then, gradually, his *tawakkul* becomes general, in that it extends from hidden and inner causes to manifest and observable ones and from his own affairs to that of his relatives and associates. Accordingly, it is stated in the holy tradition that one of the degrees of *tawakkul* is trust in God in all one's affairs.

## DIFFERENCE BETWEEN *TAWAKKUL* AND *RIDA*

Let it be known to you that the station of *rida* is different from the station of *tawakkul*, being higher and more luminous. This is because whereas the *mutawakkil* seeks his own good and benefit and entrust his affairs to God considering Him the provider of good, the *radi* (one who has attained the station of *rida*) is one who has annihilated his will in the Divine Will, having no more a separate will of his own. When a mystic was asked, "*Ma turid*?" (What is your wish?), he replied, "*Urid an la urid*" (My wish is not to wish at all). What he meant is the station of *rida*.

As to the words of the Imam (a) in the *hadith*, "that you should be well-pleased (*radiyan*) with whatever God does to you," they do not refer to the station of *rida*. Hence, he (a) says thereafter, "Know for certain that whatever He does to you, your good and benefit lies therein." It appears that the Imams (a) intended to bring about the station of *tawakkul* in the listener. For this he mentions certain preliminaries. First, he (a) says, "Know that He does not cease to be good and benign towards you." Then he (a) says, "Know that the authority therein lies with Him." Of course, one who knows that God Almighty has power over everything and that He does not cease to be graceful and benign, he would attain to the station of *tawakkul*, because the two main pillars of *tawakkul* are the same as stated by the Imam (a); although he (a) does not explicitly state the other two or three pillars. After mentioning the explicit and implicit preliminaries –that whatever God Almighty does is welcome because in it lies one's good and benefit– the preliminaries which guide to the station of *tawakkul*, he (a) draws the conclusion and says, "Then have *tawakkul* on God."

## *TAFWID*, *TAWAKKUL* AND *THIQAH*

Know that *tafwid* is also different from *tawakkul*, and so also *thiqah* is

different from these two. Hence each of the three has been considered a different station on the wayfarer's path. The Khwajah says:[1]

التَّفْوِيضُ أَلْطَفُ إِشَارَةً وَأَوْسَعُ مَعْنىً مِنَ التَّوَكُّلِ. التَّوَكُّلُ شُعْبَةٌ مِنْهُ.

That is, *tafwid* is subtler and more refined than *tawakkul*, for *tafwid*, means that the devotee should see no power and capacity in himself and that he should consider himself ineffectual and regard God as All-effectual. This is not so in *tawakkul*, for the *mutawakkil* makes God his own substitute, one in charge of his affairs, for attaining that which is good and beneficial. *Tafwid* is wider and *tawakkul* is a branch of it, because *tawakkul* is in regard to one's interests and *tafwid* is in regard to absolutely all the affairs.

Moreover, *tawakkul* does not occur except after the presence of its cause, that is the matter in regard to which the devotee comes to rely upon God. An example of it is the *tawakkul* of the Apostle (*s*) and his Companions in regard to security from the evil of the idolaters, at the time when they were told:

﴿الَّذِينَ قَالَ لَهُمُ النَّاسُ إِنَّ النَّاسَ قَدْ جَمَعُوا لَكُمْ فَاخْشَوْهُمْ فَزَادَهُمْ إِيمَانًا وَقَالُوا حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ وَنِعْمَ الْوَكِيلُ.﴾

> *Those unto whom men said, 'Lo! the people have gathered against you, therefore fear them'. But it increased them in faith and they said, 'God is sufficient for us and an excellent trustee is He.'* (3:173)

*Tafwid*, however, is mostly antecedent to its referent cause, as indicated by the supplication narrated from the Apostle of God (*s*):

اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَسْلَمْتُ نَفْسِي إِلَيْكَ وأَلْجَأْتُ ظَهْرِي إِلَيْكَ وَفَوَّضْتُ أَمْرِي إِلَيْكَ.

> My God, I surrender myself to Thee; I seek refuge with Thee, and I hand over my matter to Thee.

At times *tafwid* is subsequent to the occurrence of its cause, such as in the case of the *tafwid* of the believer belonging to the Pharaoh's people (40:44).

The account given above is a condensed translation of the exposition by the famous *arif* Abd al-Razzaq Kashani of the words of the perfect *arif* Khwajah Abd-Allah al-Ansari, and that which the Khwajah says is also substantially the same. However, I have reservations about considering *tawakkul* to be a branch of *tafwid*, and there is an obvious lack of rigor in

[1] Khwajeh Abd-Allah al-ansari, *Manazil al-sairin*.

regarding *tafwid* as being the more general of the two. Also, there is no reason to regard *tawakkul* as being subsequent to the cause, for *tawakkul* can be both antecedent as well as subsequent.

As to the words of the holy tradition,

فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللهِ بِتَفْوِيضِ ذَلِكَ إِلَيْهِ.

Possibly, since *tawakkul* is accompanied by viewing oneself as being in charge of one's affairs –because in *tawakkul* one makes God one's *wakil* in an affair that he deems as pertaining to himself– the Imam (a) wished to lift the questioner from the station of *tawakkul* to that of *tafwid*, making him understand that God Almighty is not your substitute and deputy in regard to the charge of your affairs; rather, He is the master of His own realm and the Lord of His own kingdom (to which you and your affairs belong). In *Manazil al-sairin*, the Khwajah has also pointed out this while discussing the third degree of *tawakkul*.

And as to *thiqah* (reliance), it is different from *tawakkul* and *tafwid*, as the Khwajah says:

الثِّقَةُ سَوَادُ عَيْنِ التَّوَكلِّ وَنُقْطَةُ دَائِرَةِ التَّفْوِيضِ وَسُوَيْدَاءُ قَلْبِ التَّسْلِيمِ.

> *Thiqah is* the eye *of tawakkul*, the (moving) point of the circle of *tafwid*, and the inmost heart of *taslim* (surrender).[1]

That is, the three stations cannot be attained without *thiqah*. Rather *thiqah* on God Almighty is the soul of those stations, and the devotee cannot attain them without *thiqah*. This allows us to understand the Imam's allusion to it, after the mention of *tawakkul* and *tafwid*, when he says:

ثِقْ بِهِ فِيهَا وَفِي غَيْرِهَا.

[1] Khwajeh Abd-Allah al-ansari, *Manazil al-sairin*.

14

# Fourteenth *Hadith*: FEAR OF GOD

بِسَنَدي الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلى مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ ثِقَةِ الإِسْلامِ وَعِمَادِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ، عَنْ عِدَّةٍ مِنْ أَصْحَابِنَا، عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ، عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ حَدِيدٍ، عَنْ مَنْصُورِ بْنِ يُونُسَ، عَنِ الحَارِثِ بْنِ الْمُغِيرَةِ أَوْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: قُلْتُ لَهُ: مَا كَانَ فِي وَصِيَّةِ لُقْمَانَ؟ قَالَ: كَانَ فِيهَا الأَعَاجِيبُ. وَكَانَ أَعْجَبَ ما كَانَ فِيهَا أَنْ قَالَ لِابْنِهِ: خَفِ اللهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ خِيفَةً لَوْ جِئْتَهُ بِبِرِّ الثَّقَلَيْنِ لَعَذَّبَكَ. وَارْجُ اللهَ رَجَاءً لَوْ جِئْتَهُ بِذُنُوبِ الثَّقَلَيْنِ لَرَحِمَكَ. ثُمَّ قَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: كَانَ أَبِي يَقُولُ: إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ مِنْ عَبْدٍ مُؤْمِنٍ إلا [و] فِي قَلْبِهِ نُورَانِ: نُورُ خِيفَةٍ وَنُورُ رَجَاءٍ، لَوْ وُزِنَ هَذَا لَمْ يَزِدْ عَلَى هَذَا وَلَوْ وُزِنَ هَذَا لَمْ يَزِدْ عَلَى هَذَا.

Thiqat al-Islam wa Imad al-Muslimin Muhammad ibn Yaqub (al-Kulayni): From a number of our companions, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad, from Ali ibn Hadid, from Mansur ibn Yunus, from al-Harith ibn al-Mughirah or his father, from Abu Abd-Allah (a) (Imam al-Sadiq). Al-Harith, or his father, says, "I asked him (a), 'What was (mentioned) in the testament of Luqman?' 'There were marvelous things in it', he said, 'and the most wonderful of that which he said to his son was this: "Have such a fear of God Almighty that were you to come to Him with the virtues of the two worlds (*thaqalayn*) He would still chastise you, and put such a hope in God that were you to

> come to Him with the sins of the two worlds He would still have compassion for you." Then Abu Abd-Allah (a) added: 'My father used to say, "There is no believer who does not have two lights in his heart: the light of fear and the light of hope. Were one of these to be measured it would not exceed the other, and were the other one to be measured, it would not exceed this one."[1]

## EXPOSITION

According to al-Jawhari in his *al-Sihah*, *aajib* is the plural of *ujubah*, in the same way as *ahadith* is the plural of *uhduthah*. Some lexicographers state that *ujubah* is something amazing, either on account of its beauty or its ugliness, and the former (i.e. beauty) is meant in this tradition. It appears that the word primarily has the specific sense of something of striking beauty, and is used in a wider sense, parasitically, *birr* is the opposite of *uquq*, disobedience. فُلانٌ بَبَرٌّ خَالِقَهُ means so and so is obedient to his Creator, as pointed out by al-Jawhari. '*Thaqalayn*' means mankind and the *Jinn*.

This noble *hadith* means that the fear of God and hope in Him should be at the highest degree. Despairing of Divine mercy and considering oneself secure from God's devising (*makr*) are totally prohibited, as indicated by a great number of traditions and explicitly stated by the Noble Quran. Secondly, none of these should exceed the other. God willing, we shall elaborate upon this and other aspects of the holy tradition in the course of a few sections.

## BETWEEN HOPE AND FEAR

Let it be known to you that the man cognizant of the realities and the relationship between possible existents (*mumkin al-wujud*) and the Necessary Being (*wajib al-wujud*), exalted and sublime is He, holds a two-sided viewpoint: The first thing he has in view is the essential defectiveness of his own, of all possible beings, and the wretchedness of the entire universe. Through direct experience or through indirect knowledge he discovers that the entire existence of a possible being is immersed in lowliness and want, drowned in the dark ocean of possibility, poverty and need, always and for

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[1] Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, ed. Ali-Akbar al-Ghifari, (4th edition, Dar Musab and Dar al-Taaruf, Beirut), 1401 H., ii, 67, *hadith* 1.

ever. The possible existents have nothing of their own: they are utterly insignificant, thoroughly devoid of majesty, and absolutely defective. Rather, none of these expressions can adequately express their utter neediness, and we use them for lack of proper words. Otherwise, defectiveness, poverty and need are a part of the quality of thingness. None of the possible beings and none of tile creatures has anything that is its own. Accordingly, even if a man were to accomplish all the worships, follow all the Divine teachings and obey the Holy Lord most perfectly and meticulously, he has nothing but shame, humiliation and fear to his share. What obedience can he offer? what worship? from whom? and to whom? Are not all the attributes of excellence His own, without the possible having any share whatsoever therein? Rather when the possible being approaches the threshold of these excellences, in order to praise God Almighty, it throws the shadow of its defectiveness on His praise and soils the purity and infinitude of His holy Names. It is regarding this station (of finitude and possibility vis-a-vis the infinitude of the Necessary Being) that He declares:

﴿مَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنْ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَفْسِكَ.﴾

*Whatever good visits thee, it is from God*; *whatever evil visits thee is of thyself*. (4:79)

And it is regarding the first station (of the absolute neediness of the possible existent) that He declares:

﴿قُلْ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ.﴾

*Say* (*O Muhammad*)*: Everything is from God*. (4:78)

And it is about these stations that the poet (Hafiz, the Persian poet) says:

**پیر ما گفت خطا بر قلم صنع نرفت  آفرین بر نظر پاك خطا پوشش باد**

*Our master said, 'The pen of creation did not make any error.'*
*Praised be the immaculate eye that conceals all defects!*

The statement of the mystic master (*pir*) relates to the second station, and the statement of the speaker himself relates to the first one. Hence, this view fills mall with dread, grief, shame and humiliation.

In the other view, he beholds the Perfection of the Necessary Being, the expanse of His mercy, compassion and love. Therein, he sees the unlimited vastness of His various bounties and favors whose number is beyond limit

and number and which are bestowed without any prior capacity or deservedness (on the recipient's part). He has opened the doors of favor and bounty on His creatures without any deservedness. The initiative lies with His bounteousness, which precedes request and demand. The Imam Sayyid al-Sajidin Zayn al-Abidin (a) in the prayers of *al-Sahifeh al-Kamilah* and his other prayers has recurrently pointed out this matter.

This view gives strength to his hope, making him hopeful of Divine mercy. He sees his magnanimous Lord Whose bequests are purely due to His care and compassion, the Lord of all kings Who bestows without asking and prior to the receiver's capacity. All the intellects fall short in knowing even an iota of His nobility. The disobedience of the sinners can not cause any disturbance in the order of His vast dominion, and the obedience of the obedient does not add anything to it. Rather, the guidance of the Holiest Essence to the paths of obedience, and His prohibition of disobedience, are for the sake of the creatures, in order that they may attain to His beneficence, His vast mercy and bounty, that they may attain the stations of perfection and higher degrees of freedom from defect, deformity and ugliness. Hence, should it be that when tomorrow when we enter the court of the Almighty and stand in the presence of His compassion and mercy, we should be able to say: "O God, Who clothed us with the robes of existence and provided us all the means of our life and comfort, over and above the perception of perceivers, Who showed to us all the paths of guidance – all these of Your favors were for our own good and in order to benefit us further from the vast store of Your love and bounty. Now that we stand in Your glorious and magnanimous presence, we have come with the sins of the two worlds. Yet the sins of the sinners have not created any defect in the order of Your dominion, nor diminished the infinitude of Your mercy. What will You have for this handful of dust, that has no significance in front of Your greatness, except pity and compassion? Can anything except pity and compassion be hoped from You, O Lord?"

Hence, man should always be moving back and forth between these two views: neither should he ever close his eyes to his defects and shortcomings in fulfilling the duties of creaturehood, nor should he ever take his eyes off the expansive and all-encompassing mercy, love and compassion of God Almighty.

## STAGES AND DEGREES OF FEAR

My dear, know that there are various levels and degrees of fear and hope in accordance with the condition of persons and the level of their knowledge (*marifah*). The fear of the common people is in regard to chastisement. The fear of the elect is in regard to the wrath. The fear of the elect is from concealment (*ihtijab*) (i.e. deprivation from beatitude). Here, it is not our purpose to describe these stations and we will confine our discourse to certain points pertinent to what has been said earlier.

You should know that no creature can worship God Almighty as He deserves to be worshipped; for worship means extolling the praise of that Sacred Essence, and the praise offered by every creature is derived from its knowledge of Him, which in reality does not apprehend His Sacred Essence. Thus, it is not possible for them to praise His beauty and grandeur. Hence the Noblest of creatures and the Most knowledgeable of beings about His Lordship (i.e. the Prophet [*s*]), confesses his inadequacy in this regard, and declares:

مَا عَرَفْنَاكَ حَقَّ مَعْرِفَتِكَ وَلا عَبَدْنَاكَ حَقَّ عِبَادَتِكَ.

> We did not know You as You deserve to be known. We did not worship You as You deserve to be worshipped.[1]

The second sentence is intended to explain the cause of what is stated in the first one. And he (*s*) said:

أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ.

> You are as You have praised Yourself.[2]

Therefore, imperfection is essential to possible being and Absolute Sublimity belongs exclusively to the Sacred Essence of the Almighty. And since the creatures are unable to attain to the praise and worship of the Sacred Essence without the knowledge and worship of God, none of them can attain to the degrees of perfection and the stations of the Hereafter (as has been demonstrated in its own place for the knowers of the Hereafter, and in regard to which the common people are oblivious, as they consider the Hereafterly stations as extravagances and the like, and regarding their fancies

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[1] *Safinat al-Bihar*, ii, 180.
[2] *Safinat al-Bihar*, ii, 180.

it must be said,

وَتَعَالَى اللهُ عَنْ ذَلِكَ عُلُوّاً كَبِيراً.

‘High indeed is He exalted above that (they say)’!, God Almighty, with His expansive favor and His all-inclusive compassion, opened a door of His mercy upon them, out of His love, of the teachings regarding the hidden and of revelation and inspiration, through His angels and prophets. That is the door of worship (*ibadah*) and knowledge (*marifah*). He, thus, indicated the paths of worship to His servants and threw open the road of knowledge to them, that they may, as far as is possible, remove their shortcomings and defects and attain to the possible degrees of perfection, that they may be guided by the light of servitude to the world of Divine magnanimity, to the domain of the spirit and the aroma, to the paradise of His bounties, or, rather, to the good pleasure of God, which is greater than all that.

Thus, the opening of the gates of worship and service is one of the greatest of bounties, for which the creatures owe their deepest gratitude, although it is a favor for which they can never offer adequate thanks, for each expression of gratitude is itself the key that opens a further door to sublimity. Thus, they are ever incapable of offering adequate thanks for His bounties.

Thus when man attains the knowledge of this fountainhead and his heart becomes familiar with it, he confesses to his own shortcoming, and even if he is able to enter into the court of the Almighty with a record of service and worship equal to that of the worship and service of all mankind, *Jinn*, and angels near to God, he would still be fearful and conscious of inadequacy. Also, the knowing servants of God and His elect friends, on whom the sacred doors of Providence have been opened and whose hearts have been illumined by the light of *marifah* – their hearts are so full of dread and trembling that even if all tree excellences were accessible to them, and were all the keys to the treasures of Divine knowledge be given them, and should their hearts be filled with Divine irradiation, that would not reduce their fear by an atom’s weight nor diminish the trembling of their quaking hearts. Hence, one of them says: ‘All are afraid of the End, and I am dreadful of the beginning.’

سُبْحَانَ اللهِ وَلا حَوْلَ وَلا قُوَّةَ إلا بِاللهِ.

May glory be to God, and there is no power or might which is not by God! I seek refuge in God Almighty! God knows, these words tear a man’s heart to pieces. They make the heart melt, and take away his wits. But, alas!

How negligent is man!

Another thing is that which we mentioned while expounding an earlier tradition, that all our obedience and worship are for the sake of selfish aims and motivated by self-love. In reality, it is abstinence from the world for the sake of the rewards of the Hereafter – which, nevertheless, for free men, is abstinence from the world for worldly rewards. Hence, were we to come to our Lord with the worship of the two worlds, we would not deserve anything except expulsion from the Divine proximity. This is because, God, the Blessed and the Exalted, has invited us into His sacred proximity and love, declaring:

وَخَلَقْتُكَ لأَجْلِي.

I have created thee for Myself.

He has made the knowledge of Him the end of our creation and shown to us the paths of knowledge and servitude. Despite it, all that we are occupied with is catering to our belly and our carnal lusts, with no purpose in view except self-seeking and self-love!

Then, O wretched man, whose worship and devotion do not entitle thee to anything except expulsion and remoteness from His sanctified proximity and to His wrath and chastisement! What have thee to rely upon? Why, shouldn't the fear of God's Might unsettle you and make your heart bleed? Do you, have anything to rely upon? Do you rely upon your works and trust your deeds? If that be so, woe to you and your estimation of yourself! And woe to you for your estimation of the Master of all masters! However, should your reliance and trust be upon the bounty of your Lord, His expansive compassion and the all-inclusive love of the Sacred Essence, your reliance is indeed well placed; you have relied upon a truly reliable thing, and have sought a firm refuge.

## HOPE AND PRAYER

O God! O Lord! Our hands are empty, and we know that we are imperfect and insignificant. We have nothing that is worthy of Thy sacred court. We are faulty, head to foot, and full of defects. Our inward and outward being is soaked in mortal sins, deserving eternal damnation. What are we that we should be worthy of praising Thee, when Thy friends (*awliya*) declare:

أَفَبِلِسَانِي هَذَا الكَالِّ أَشْكُرُكَ.

How shall I thank Thee with this dumb tongue of mine?

And confess to their incapacity, weakness and shortcoming? What can we, blindfolded sinners that we are, have to say about His Majesty, except declaring with the inconsequent oscillations of our tongue: "Our hope lies with Your mercy and our reliance in Your favor and forgiveness, and our trust in the generosity and magnanimity of Your Holy Essence, as expressed in the prayers of Your friends:

الكَافِي بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: قَالَ اللهُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالى: لا يَتَّكِلِ العَامِلُونَ لِي عَلَى أَعْمَالِهِمُ الَّتِي يَعْمَلُونَهَا لِثَوَابِي، فَإِنَّهُمْ لَو إِجْتَهَدُوا وَأَتْعَبُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ – أَعْمَارَهُمْ – فِي عِبَادَتِي كَانُوا مُقَصِّرِينَ غَيْرَ بَالِغِينَ فِي عِبَادَتِهِمْ كُنْهَ عِبَادَتِي فِيمَا يَطْلُبُونَ عِنْدِي مِنْ كَرَامَتِي وَالنَّعِيمِ فِي جَنَّاتِي وَرَفِيعِ الدَّرَجَاتِ العُلَى فِي جِوَارِي وَلَكِنْ بِرَحْمَتِي فَلْيَثِقُوا وَفَضْلِي فَلْيَرْجُوا، وَإِلَى حُسْنِ الظَّنِّ بِي فَلْيَطْمَئِنُّوا، فَإِنَّ رَحْمَتِي عِنْدَ ذَلِكَ تُدْرِكُهُمْ، وَمَنِّي يُبَلِّغُهُمْ رِضْوَانِي وَمَغْفِرَتِي تُلْبِسُهُمْ عَفْوِي. فَإِنِّي أَنَا اللهُ الرَّحْمَنُ الرَّحِيمُ وَبِذَلِكَ تَسَمَّيْتُ.

Al-Kulayni, in *al-Kafi*, reports with his chain of narrators from Imam Baqir (a) that he said: The Messenger of Allah (*S*) said: God, the Sublime and the Blessed, said, "The workers (of deeds) for My sake should not, for My reward, trust the works they have done: for, verily, should they labor and toil for all their lives in My service and worship, they would fall short in their worship and will not attain to the reality of My service in what they seek with Me of My magnanimity and bounty, My paradise and the high stations in My proximity. Rather, they should rely upon My mercy and put hope in My favor and be contented of their good opinion (*husn al-zann*) of Me; for, verily, therein My mercy will reach them, My good pleasure will go forth to them, and My forgiveness shall envelop them. For, indeed, I am Allah, the Beneficent and

the Merciful, and I have been named so on that account."[1]

## CONTEMPLATION, FEAR AND HOPE

Of things that cause fear of God, is contemplation of the extremeness of Divine Might, the precision and sharpness of the path (*Sirat*) of the Hereafter and the perils that man has to face during the days of his life and at death, as well as the hardships of the Purgatory (*barzakh*) and the Resurrection and the scrutinies of the Reckoning (*hisab*) and the Balance (*mizan*). In the same way, reflection over the verses and traditions about the promises of God Almighty can bring about complete and perfect hope. It is reported in traditions that on the Day of Resurrection God Almighty's mercy shall be so abundant that even Satan will aspire for God's pardon. In this world, at which God has never looked with favor, and on which since its creation His mercy has not descended (in comparison to the other worlds) except for a droplet of it, we encounter so much of the abundance of God's mercy, bounty and care, which has enveloped everything, apparent and the invisible, that the world is a vast table of the bounties and gifts of the Almighty, so widespread that were all the world's intellects attempt to encompass even a fragment of it, they would be unable to do so. If this is so, then what would be a world which is the house of the hospitality of the generous Lord and the abode of the expansive mercy and compassion of the All-merciful and the Compassionate? Of course, Satan would be justified in his aspiring for His pity and his hoping from God's generosity. Hence, make perfect your good opinion of Him and rely upon His grace, as He has declared:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا.﴾

*Verily, God shall forgive all the sins.* (39:53)

And immerse all in the ocean of His mercy and beneficence. It is impossible that God should break His promise, although it is possible that He may withdraw His threats, and how often He does that! So gladden your heart with the hope of His mercy, for had it not enveloped you, you would not be a creature; every creature is the recipient of His mercy, for He has said:

﴿وَرَحْمَتِي وَسِعَتْ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ.﴾

[1] *Al-Kafi*, ii, 71, *hadith* 1.

*My mercy embraces all things*. (7:156)

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HOPE AND DELUSION

However, my dear, you should be careful of distinguishing between hope and delusion, for it may be that you be a deluded man, but imagine yourself to be a man of hope. Yet it is easy to distinguish between them on the basis of their grounds. You should reflect over the state of yours that makes you regard it as hope, to see whether that state of yours has come into being as a result of your belittling of Divine commands or as a result of conviction in the all-embracing character of Divine mercy and the greatness of the Holy Essence. Should that prove to be difficult, the distinction can be made on the basis of their effects. Should the greatness of God be imprinted on the believer's heart and should it be content in the expansive mercy and bounty of His Holy Essence, he would be committed to His obedience and service, for esteem for someone great and gratitude and willingness to serve one's benefactor are inviolable features of human nature. Hence, should you be committed to the duties of slavehood and unsparing in your efforts to obey and worship; should you not rely on your works and consider them insignificant; should your hope rest on God's mercy, grace and bounty; should you consider yourself entitled to every kind of blame, disfavor, reproof and wrath on account of your deeds; and should your sole reliance be the mercy and generosity of the Absolutely Magnanimous –should you be such, then you are indeed in possession of the state of hope. Then, thank God Almighty for that, and implore His Holy Essence to establish it firmly in your heart and to elevate you to a higher degree of it. But if, God forbid, should you be one who belittles and takes lightly the commands of God, one who considers unimportant and insignificant the Words of the Holiest Essence, then rest assured that it is delusion that has appeared in your heart as a result of the guiles of Satan and your carnal self. Had you any faith in God's greatness and His expansive mercy, its effects would have been obvious in you. A claimant whose acts are contrary to his claims is one who falsifies himself, and there are many traditions to this effect.

الكَافِي بِإسْنَادِهِ عَنِ ابْنِ أَبِي نَجْرانَ، عَمَّنْ ذَكَرَهُ، عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: قُلْتُ لَهُ: قَومٌ يَعْمَلُونَ بِالمَعَاصِي وَيَقُولُونَ نَرْجُو، فَلا يَزَالُونَ كَذَلِكَ حَتّى يَأْتِيَهُمُ المَوْتُ. فَقَالَ: هَؤُلاءِ قَوْمٌ يَتَرَجَّحُونَ فِي الأَمَانِي. كَذِبُوا،

لَيْسُوا بِرَاجِينَ. مَنْ رَجَا شَيْئاً طَلَبَهُ، وَمَنْ خَافَ مِنْ شَيءٍ هَرَبَ مِنْهُ.

In *al-Kafi*, al-Kulayni, with his chain of narrators, reports from Imam al-Sadiq (a) on the authority of an unnamed narrator who narrated it to Ibn Abi Najran, that he said to the Imam (a): "There are some people who commit sins and say we are hopeful. They remain in this condition until death comes to them." The Imam said, "They are a people who have been swept away by false hopes. They lie, they are not the hopeful; for verily, one who has hope of something pursues it, and one who fears something flees from it."[1]

Close to this in meaning is another tradition of the noble *al-Kafi*:

الكَافِي بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنِ الحَسَنِ بْنِ أَبِي سَارَةَ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ يَقُولُ: لا يَكُونُ الْمُؤْمِنُ مُؤْمِناً حَتَّى يَكُونَ خَائِفاً رَاجِياً، وَلا يَكُونُ خَائِفاً رَاجِياً حَتَّى يَكُونَ عَامِلاً لِمَا يَخَافُ وَيَرْجُو.

(Al-Kulayni), with his chain of narrators reports from al-Husayn ibn Abi Sarah that he said: I heard Abu Abd-Allah (a) say: "A believer is not but fearful and hopeful, and he is not (truly) fearful and hopeful unless he responds in action in regard to that which he fears and hopes."[2]

Some have said that the person who is hopeful without doing anything is like the one who awaits the result without preparing its needed means, like the farmer who awaits a ready harvest without sowing the seeds, without tilling and watering his land and without removing the hindrances in the way of a sufficient produce. Such a man cannot be said to have hope. What characterizes him is stupidity and folly. The similitude of the person who does not reform his morals and acts without refraining from sins, is the farmer who sows his seeds in barren, saline soil: of course, such farming does not yield any produce.

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[1] *Al-Kafi*, ii, 68, *hadith* 5.

[2] *Al-Kafi*, ii, 71, *hadith* 11, from al-Hasan ibn Sarah.

Therefore, the genuine kind of hope is that man should first prepare all the means that are available to him and have been provided to him by the grace of God Almighty, Who has also guided him regarding the paths of right and corrupt conduct and commanded him to make ready those means, and only then he should wait and hope that God, with His favor, will provide the remaining means over which he has no power, and remove the hindrances and perils from his path. Hence, when the devotee has cleared the field of his heart of the thorns of moral vices and of the stones, rocks and salinity of sins, sowing therein the seeds of good works and watering it with the clear waters of beneficial knowledge and sincere faith and guarded his field against the pests of pride (*ujb*) and ostentation (*riya*), which like weeds hinder the wholesome growth of the harvest, then he may sit and wait for God's grace, hoping that the Almighty may keep him firm and on the straight path until the last moment of his life. This is the desired and genuine kind of hope, as declared by God Almighty:

﴿إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أُوْلَئِكَ يَرْجُونَ رَحْمَةَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ.﴾

*But the believers, and those who migrate and struggle in the way of God –those have hope of God's compassion; and God is All-forgiving, All-compassionate.* (2:213)

The noble tradition at its end mentions that neither fear nor hope should exceed one another, and the same thing is stated in the *mursal hadith* of Ibn Abi Umayr from Imam al-Sadiq (a). When man observes his extreme shortcoming in fulfilling the demands of servitude and creaturehood and when he contemplates the narrowness of the path of the Hereafter, a high degree of fear seizes him. And when he observes his own sins and reflects over the condition of those persons who were righteous at the start but fell into wretchedness and departed from the world in a state of unbelief and without good works, ultimately meeting an evil goal, his fear is intensified. And in a noble tradition of *al-Kafi*, Imam al-Sadiq (a) is reported to have said:

**المُؤْمِنُ بَيْنَ مَخَافَتَيْنِ: ذَنْبٍ قَدْ مَضَى لا يَدْرِي مَا صَنَعَ اللهُ فِيهِ وَعُمُرٍ قَدْ بَقِيَ لا يَدْرِي مَا يَكْتَسِبُ فِيهِ مِنَ المَهَالِكِ. فَهُوَ لا يُصْبِحُ إلا خَائِفاً وَلا يُصْلِحُهُ إلا الخَوْفُ.**

The believer stands between two dreadful things: the past sins, regarding which he does not know what God will do

> (with him), and the remainder of his life, regarding which he does not know what mortal sins he will commit therein. So he does not wake up except in a state of dread, and nothing keeps him righteous except fear.[1]

The same thing is stated in the sermon of the Noble Messenger (*s*) reported in a *hadith* of Imam al-Sadiq (a) in *al-Kafi*.[2] The gist of the matter is that the self is in a state of utter imperfection and shortcoming, and God at the height of greatness, glory, all-embracing mercifulness and grace, and the devotee is always in a median state of fear and hope between these two views. And since the Divine attributes of glory and perfection cast their light simultaneously on the wayfarer's heart, none of the two, fear or hope, exceeds the other.

Some have said that sometimes fear is more beneficial for man -as in the state of health and robustness – in order that he may endeavor in attaining perfection and performing good works, and that hope is better in some conditions – as when the signs of approaching death appear – so that man may meet God in a state which He loves more. But this opinion does not agree with the above discussion and the traditions mentioned, for the genuine and lovable hope also induces one to good works and hereafterly conduct. Fear of God is also always desirable and is not contrary to confirmed hope in Him.

And some have said that fear is not a moral or intellectual merit in the Hereafter, and that its benefit is limited to the world, which is the abode of works and; deeds, for inducing obedience and service and for restraining men from sin. It is of no use after this world is left behind. On the other hand, hope will never end and shall endure in the Hereafter, for the more of God's beneficence man receives, the more does he aspire to 'His grace and bounty, because the stores of God's mercy axe inexhaustible. Hence, fear comes to an end, while hope continues.

## THE OPINION OF AL-MAJLISI

The great *muhaddith* al-Allamah al-Majlisi (*m*) says, "The truth is that as long as the devotee is in the abode of duty, i.e. this world, he is bound to have both fear and hope. However, after his witnessing of the matters of the

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[1] *Al-Kafi, hadith* 12.
[2] *Al-Kafi, hadith* 2.

Hereafter, one of them, of necessity, must surpass the other."

This writer says: That which has been said regarding the dominance of fear or hope in the Hereafter does not agree with the above discussion about the meaning of hope and fear. Even if supposedly true, it would apply only to those of middle stations, for the state of the elect and the *awliya* is different from that; for their witnessing of the Divine majesty and glory and the irradiations (*tajalliyat*) of the Names of love and beauty, which are attained in the heart, are not effaced by the witnessing of the matters of the Hereafter; as a result their fear and hope do not surpass each other. Rather, the effects of Divine majesty and glory and the irradiations of His beauty and love are greater in the world of the Hereafter, and the awe resulting from God's majesty is one of the spiritual pleasures, which on reflection will not be found to be contrary to the noble verse:

﴿أَلَا إِنَّ أَوْلِيَاءَ اللَّهِ لَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ.﴾

*Surely God's friends – no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow.* (10:62)

And that which has been said regarding fear, that it is not a spiritual merit–it is not true of the awe in front of God's greatness and glory, for it is an excellence and is more intense in those of perfect and complete character (*kamilun, mukammalun*) than others. And praise belongs to Allah, for His majesty and His beauty, and may His benedictions be upon Muhammad and his Family.

15

# Fifteenth *Hadith*: THE BELIEVER'S TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS

بِسَنَدي المُتَّصِلِ إلى مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ رِضْوَانُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ، عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ إبْرَاهِيمَ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنِ ابْنِ مَحْبُوبٍ، عَنْ سُمَاعَةَ، عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: إنَّ فِي كِتَابِ عَلِيٍّ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ أنَّ أَشَدَّ النَّاسِ بَلاءً النَّبِيُّونَ، ثُمَّ الوَصِيُّونَ، ثُمَّ الأَمْثَلَ فَالأَمْثَلَ. وَإنَّمَا يُبْتَلى المُؤْمِنُ عَلَى قَدْرِ أَعْمَالِهِ الحَسَنَةِ، فَمَنْ صَحَّ دِينُهُ وَحَسُنَ عَمَلُهُ اشْتَدَّ بَلاؤُهُ، وَذَلِكَ أنَّ اللهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لَمْ يَجْعَلِ الدُّنْيَا ثَوَاباً لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلا عُقُوبَةً لِكَافِرٍ، وَمَنْ سَخُفَ دِينُهُ وَضَعُفَ عَمَلُهُ قَلَّ بَلاؤُهُ، وَإنَّ البَلاءَ أَسْرَعُ إلَى المُؤْمِنِ التَّقِيِّ مِنَ المَطَرِ إلَى قَرَارِ الأَرْضِ.

Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulayni (*r*) from Ali ibn Ibrahim, from his father, from Ibn Mahbub, from Abu Abd-Allah (a) that he (a) said: "Verily, it is mentioned in the Book of Ali that of all mankind the prophets undergo the severest of trials, and after them the *awsiya*, and after them the elect to the extent of their nobility. Indeed, the believer undergoes trial in proportion to his good deeds. So one whose faith is sound and whose deeds are good, his trials are also more severe. That is indeed because God Almighty did not make this world a place for rewarding the believer and punishing the unbeliever. And one whose faith is feeble and whose (good) deeds are few faces fewer tribulations. Verily, tribulations hasten

towards the believer with greater speed than rainwater towards the earth's depths."[1]

## EXPOSITION

Some have said by *nas* (people, mankind) in this noble tradition and its like are meant perfect human beings (*kamilun*) such as the prophets and the *awsiya*, and that in reality it is they who are the *nas*, whereas other people are *lil-nas* (for the people), as mentioned in some traditions. However, that interpretation does not apply here and it seems proper that mankind and people in general should have been meant in this place. This is evident from the other traditions of this chapter of *al-Kafi*, and if it has been said in some traditions that by *nas* are meant the *kamilun*, it does not mean that the word has this meaning in every place that it occurs. Also, *bala* means trial, test and examination, and it applies to the good as well as the bad among people, and the lexicographers have stated this expressly. Al-Jawhari in *al-Sihah* says in this regard:

وَالبَلاءُ الإخْتِبَارُ يَكُونُ بِالشَّرِّ وَالخَيْرِ. يُقَالُ: أَبْلاهُ اللهُ بَلاءً حَسَناً. وَأَبْلَيْتُهُ مَعْرُوفاً.

And God Almighty' says:

﴿وَلِيُبْلِيَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مِنْهُ بَلَاءً حَسَنًا.﴾

*And that He may try the believers with a fair trial*. (8:17)

All that with which God, to Whom belongs Glory and Majesty, tries His servants is *bala* and *ibtila*, whether it is one of the diseases and ailments, or adversities like poverty, humiliation and loss of worldly fortunes, or a thing of an opposite kind such as acquisition of power and glory, wealth, riches, high status, honor, and the like. However, whenever *bala*, *baliyyah* or *ibtila* and the like are mentioned, it is the former kind of things that are meant. Amthal means 'nobler and better':

يُقَالُ: هَذَا أَمْثَلُ مِنْ هَذَا. أَيْ أَفْضَلَ وَأَدْنَى إِلَى الخَيْرِ.

Hence, the phrase (ثُمَّ الأَمْثَلَ فَالأَمْثَلَ) means that one who is better and nobler after the prophets and the *awsiya* has to face a severer kind of *bala* than the

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. ii, p.259, *hadith* no.29.

others, and those who are better and nobler than others after them have to face a severer degree of trial. The degree of the severity of *bala* is in accordance with the decree of merit. This kind of expression (i.e., like ثُمَّ الأَمْثَلَ فَالأَمْثَلَ ) does not exist in Persian.

'*Sukhf*' means 'feebleness of the rational faculty' or 'foolishness', as mentioned by *al-Sihah*, and other lexicographical works. *Qarar* means 'resting place,' as mentioned in the dictionaries:

القَرَارُ وَالقَرَارَةُ: مَا قَرَّ فِيهِ والمُطْمَئِنُّ مِنَ الأَرْضِ.

The apology means that in the same way as the earth is the resting place where rainwater comes to rest and abide, the believer is the resting place of sufferings and tribulations, which rush toward him, come to rest in him, and do not depart from him. God willing, we will mention that which is needed for the exposition of this noble tradition in the course of a few sections.

## THE MEANING OF TRIAL

Let it be known to you that the human souls exist at a level of potentiality from the beginning of their origin, their attachment to the bodies, and their descent to the realm of corporeal existence (*mulk*), in respect of all things, including knowledge, good and evil traits, and all kinds of perceptive and behavioral faculties. Gradually they move from potentiality to actuality with the grace of God, the Almighty and the Sublime. At first, weak impressions related to particulars (as opposed to universals) emerge in the soul, such as impressions of touch and other outward senses, moving from the lower to the higher. Following that, the inward perceptions also arise in it. However, all its faculties exist only at a level of potentiality, and they do not grow without proper stimulation. For instance, if the base kind of faculties come to dominate it, it becomes disposed to ugliness and evil, for its inner powers, such as *shahwah* (lust), *ghaḍab* (anger), etc., impel it towards sin, licentiousness, aggression and tyranny. After following them for some time it grows into a strange monster and a highly grotesque devil.

However, since the grace and mercy of God Almighty have been accompanying the Children of Adam since eternity, He bestowed upon them two educators and teachers which are like two wings with which they can fly from the depths of ignorance, defectiveness, ugliness and wretchedness to the heights of knowledge, perfection; beauty and felicity, and deliver themselves from the narrow valley of nature to reach the expansive and open horizons of

the realms of the spirit (*malakut*). The first of these is the faculty of intellect and discernment, which is the inner teacher; and the second, the outward teacher, is represented by the prophets and the divine guides who shove the path of felicity as distinct from the ways of wretchedness. None of these two can singly achieve this end without the other. For the human intellect by itself can neither identify the paths of felicity and wretchedness nor find the way to the hidden world and the realm of Hereafterly existence. Similarly, the guidance of the prophets cannot be effective without the exercise of the discerning faculties of the intellect.

Thus God, the Beneficent and the Sublime, gave them these two educators so that through them all the potentialities and hidden faculties and capacities, latent in the human soul, should be realized and actualized. God Almighty blessed them with these two great bounties in order to try and test human beings, for it is through these bounties that individual human beings are separated into the felicitous and the wretched, the obedient and the rebellious, the perfect and the defective. And so the Great *Wali* of God said:

وَالَّذِي بَعَثَهُ بِالحَقِّ، لَتُبَلْبَلُنَّ بَلْبَلَةً وَلَتُغَرْبَلُنَّ غَرْبَلَةً.

> And by Him Who sent him (the Prophet [*S*]) with the Truth, you shall indeed be mixed and intermingled and then separated in the sieve (of Divine trial and tribulation)?[1]

In the noble *al-Kafi*, in the chapter relating to Divine test and trial (*bab al-tamhis wa'l-imtihan*), Ibn Abi Yafur reports Imam al-Sadiq (a) as having said:

قَالَ: لا بُدَّ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ أنْ يُمَحَّصُوا وَيُمَيَّزُوا وَيُغَرْبَلُوا وَيُسْتَخْرَجَ فِي الغِرْبَالِ خَلْقٌ كَثِيرٌ.

> It is inevitable that mankind should be purified, separated and sieved so that a great number is excluded by the sieve.[2]

Also al-Kulayni reports with his *isnad* from Mansur the following tradition:

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[1] *Nahj al-balaghah*, *Khutbah* no.16.

[2] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol ii, p.370, *hadith* no.2.

**قَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: يَا مَنْصُورُ إنَّ هَذَا الأَمْرَ لا يَأْتِيكُمْ إلا بَعْدَ إيَاسٍ وَلا واللهِ حَتَّى تُمَيَّزُوا وَلا وَاللهِ حَتَّى تُمَحَّصُوا وَلا وَاللهِ حَتَّى يَشْقَى مَنْ يَشْقَى وَيَسْعَدُ مَنْ يَسْعَدُ.**

Imam al-Sadiq (a) said, "O Mansur! Indeed this affair (i.e. the appearance of al-Mahdi [*a*]) will not come to you except after despair and not, by God, until you have been separated, and not, by God, until you have been purified, and not, by God, until the wretched attain wretchedness and the felicitous attain felicity."[1]

In another tradition, Abu al-Hasan (a) is reported to have said:

**يُخْلَصُونَ كَمَا يُخْلَصُ الذَّهَبُ.**

You shall be purified in the way gold is purified.[2]

In *al-Kafi*, *bab al-ibtila wa'l-ikhtibar*, the following tradition is reported with *isnad* from Imam al-Sadiq (a):

**قَالَ: مَا مِنْ قَبْضٍ وَلا بَسْطٍ إلا وَلِلهِ فِيهِ مَشِيئَةٌ وَقَضَاءٌ وَابْتِلاءٌ.**

He said, "There is no *qabd* (contraction) and *bast* (extension) except that in it there is for God a purpose, a decree, and a trial."[3]

In another tradition he is (a) reported to have said:

**إنَّهُ لَيْسَ شَيْءٌ فِيهِ قَبْضٌ أَوْ بَسْطٌ مِمَّا أَمَرَ اللهُ بِهِ أَوْ نَهَى عَنْهُ إلا وَفِيهِ لِلهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ ابْتَلاءٌ وَقَضَاءٌ.**

Indeed there is no *qabd* and *bast* in that which God has commanded or forbidden except that there is in it from God a trial and a decree?[4]

*Qabd* means *imsak* (withholding), *man'* (obstruction, prevention) and

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[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol ii, p.370, *hadith* no.2.
[2] *Usul al-Kafi*, *hadith* no.4:
[3] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. i, p.152.
[4] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. i, p.152.

*akhdh* (seizure). *Bast* is *nashr* (unfolding, spreading, resurrection) and *ata* (gift, bestowal). Hence every gift, expansion and obstruction, and every command, prohibition and duty is for the sake of trial.

Thus we came to know that the sending of prophets and the revelation of heavenly scriptures is all for the sake of the separation of humanity, of the separation of the wretched from the happy and the felicitous, of the obedient from the sinful. And the meaning of Divine testing and examination is this very separation of men from one another, not the *knowledge* of their separateness, because the knowledge of God Almighty is pre-eternal; it encompasses all things prior to their creation. The *hukama* have elaborately discussed the reality of trial and *ibtila* and it is beyond the scope of this exposition to mention their opinions.

In any case, the result of this trial and examination is the separation of the felicitous from the wretched. In the course of it the proof (*hujjah*) of God is established against the creatures. Thereafter, their life, felicity and salvation, or their destruction and damnation occurs after the establishment of the proof and testimony (*bayyinah*), and there remains no room for objection for anyone. One who attains felicity and eternal life does so through Divine succor and guidance, for God has bestowed all the means of attaining them. Also, one who earns wretchedness and falls into destruction, following Satan and his carnal self, his wretchedness and damnation are also earned by him out of his own free will, because he does so despite the availability of all the means of guidance and felicity. The conclusive proof of God is established against him and there is no room for any pretext. Hence the Quran says:

﴿لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ.﴾

*For it* (*the soul*) *is what it has earned and against it is what it has merited*. (2:286)

## THE PROPHETS AND DIVINE TRIAL

It was mentioned earlier that every act of the human being, or rather every event that occurs in the realm of the body and is related to the soul's perceptions, leaves a kind of impression in the self. This is true of both good and evil deeds (whose impression upon the soul is mentioned in traditions as the appearance of a 'white dot' or a 'black dot' respectively) as well as of pleasures and pains. For instance, every experience of pleasure, derived either from food, drink, sex or something else, leaves an impression upon the

soul and creates or increases the love and attachment for that kind of, pleasure in the soul. The more that one plunges into such pleasures and lusts, the greater becomes the self's love and attachment for this world and its reliance upon it. Thus the self is nourished with the love of the world and trained in accordance with it. The greater the sensual pleasures that it derives, the stronger become the roots of this love; and the more the available means of comfort and luxury, the sturdier becomes the tree of attachment to the world. And the more the soul's attention is directed towards the world, the greater is proportionately its negligence toward God and the world of the Hereafter. Thus when this reliance upon the world becomes complete, the soul assumes a worldly and materialistic form, and the absence of attention towards God Almighty and the 'realm of His munificence and bounty also becomes total and complete. It is about such a soul that, the Quran says:

﴿أَخْلَدَ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ﴾

*He inclined towards the earth and followed his lust*.
(7:176)

The inevitable result of this inner immersion in the sea of pleasure and lust is the love of the world, and the love of the world creates antipathy towards that which is unlike it; attention towards the corporeal realm (*mulk*) brings negligence towards the spiritual world (*malakut*).

On the contrary, if one has a bad and painful experience of something, the impression of that experience creates an antipathy in the soul. The stronger that impression is, the greater is that inward antipathy. For instance, if after moving to a city one has to face there numerous torments and ailments and undergo outer and inner adversities, he will inevitably abhor that place. The greater the number of adversities that he faces therein, the more will be his abhorrence for that place. If he knows a better place, he will migrate to it, and if he is unable to make the journey, his heart will migrate and go out to the city of his liking.

Thus if a man faces adversities, pain and torments in this world and is overtaken therein by waves of calamities and tribulations, he will inevitably come to resent it. His attachment to it will diminish and he will come to distrust it. If he believed in another world, a vast world free of every kind of pain and grief, he will inevitably want to migrate to it, and if he were unable to make the journey physically, he will send his heart out to it.

Moreover, it is evident that all the spiritual, moral and behavioral evils

arise from the love of the world and negligence of God Almighty and the Hereafter. The love of the world is the source of all sins, in the same way as the love of God, the aspiration for the eternal abode of His bounty, the renunciation of the world and absence of reliance upon and trust in its adornments are the source of all spiritual cures and moral and behavioral reform.

After these preliminaries we come to know that whenever God Almighty has a greater consideration and love for someone, and when someone is the object of the mercy of His Sacred Essence to a greater extent, He restrains him from this world and its charms with the waves of calamity and tribulation, so that his soul turns away in disgust from the world and its adornments and turns his face and his heart, to the extent of his faith, toward the world of the Hereafter. If there weren't any other reason except this one for endurance of severe calamities it would have been sufficient, and a noble tradition also points towards this matter.

عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: إنَّ اللهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لَيَتَعَاهَدُ الْمُؤْمِنَ بِالبَلاءِ كَمَا يَتَعَاهَدُ الرَّجُلُ أَهْلَهُ بِالهَدِيَّةِ مِنَ الغَيْبَةِ وَيَحْمِيهِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَا يَحْمِي الطَّبِيبُ المَرِيضَ.

> Imam al-Baqir (a) said "Verily, God Almighty treats the believer with tribulations in the same way as a man treats his family with gifts after an absence (upon a journey), and He restrains him from the world in the same way as the physician prescribes restraints for the sick man."[1]

The same thing is said in another *hadith*, and one should not imagine that God's love and the great care of His Sacred Essence for some people is –God be our refuge– extravagant and pointless. Rather, with every step that a faithful servant of God takes towards Him, God's grace turns towards him and the Almighty moves closer to him. The similitude of the degrees of faith and the availability of the means of Divine succor is that of a man moving with a lamp in darkness; with every step that he takes forward, some more of the path in front of him is illuminated, which allows him to take another step forward. With every step that a man takes forward on the path of the Hereafter, that path appears clearer to him and God's grace upon him

[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. ii, p. 255, *hadith* no. 17.

increases, preparing the means of attention towards the world of Divine proximity and of antipathy towards the world of separation and distance.

The pre-eternal grace of God Almighty upon the prophets and the *awliya* is on account of His pre-eternal knowledge of their obedience during their terms of duty. For instance, if you have two children about whom you have prior knowledge in their childhood that one of them will bring you satisfaction while the other will grow up to cause you displeasure and resentment, your love for the obedient child would be greater from the very beginning.

## GOD'S REMEMBRANCE

Another point relating to the severity of the tribulations of the elect among God's servants is that they are made to remember God on account of these adversities and tribulations and to pray and lament in front of His Sacred Essence. This makes them accustomed to remember Him and keep their thoughts busy with Him. It is natural for human beings to seek and learn upon what they think is a source of support in times of adversity. In times of comfort and welfare they forget and neglect it. And since the elect know no source of support other than God, their attention turns towards Him, they putting their sole reliance in His sacred station, and God Almighty, also, with the love that He has for them, prepares the means of that undivided attention and reliance. However, this, as well as the foregoing point, is not true of the prophets and the perfect *awliya*, for their station is too high in sanctity and their heart too firm in faith for them to develop attachment for worldly things on account of such things (as comfort and welfare) or for them to waver in their sole reliance upon God. This may be so because the prophets and the perfect *awliya* have, through their inward light and spiritual experience, ascertained that God Almighty has no regard for this world and its adornments and that everything therein is base and lowly in the eyes of His Sacred Essence, and for this reason they have preferred poverty to wealth, tribulation to comfort and ease, and adversity to that which is unlike it. Several noble traditions also support this view.

It is mentioned in the *hadith* that Gabriel brought the key of the earth's treasures to the Seal of the Prophets (*s*) and said to him (*s*) that should he (*s*) accept it, nothing would diminish from his (*s*) Hereafterly stations. But the Prophet (*s*) did not accept it for the sake of humility before God Almighty and chose poverty.

In the noble *al-Kafi*, al-Kulayni, with a chain of transmitters reaching up to Imam al-Sadiq (a), reports the Imam (a) as having said:

**إنَّ الكَافِرَ لَيَهُونُ عَلَى اللهِ حَتَّى لَوْ سَأَلَهُ الدُّنْيَا بِمَا فِيهَا أَعْطَاهُ ذَلِكَ.**

> Indeed God has so little regard for the unbeliever that should he ask of Him the world and that which is in it, He would give that to him.[1]

And this is due to the worthlessness of the world in the eyes of the Almighty. It is mentioned in the *hadith* that from the time that the Almighty created the corporeal world, He did not look at it with favor.

Another point related to the severity of the believer's tribulations that has been mentioned in traditions is that there are certain stations for the believers which they cannot attain without undergoing suffering, pain and affliction. It is possible that these afflictions are the corporeal forms of the degrees of renunciation of the world and devotion to God, and it is also possible that these sufferings have celestial forms (*suwar-e malakuti*) which cannot be realized without their occurrence in the corporeal world and afflictions therein. Imam al-Sadiq (a), in a noble tradition of *al-Kafi* with a continuous chain of transmission going up to him, states:

**قَالَ: إنَّهُ لَيَكُونُ لِلْعَبْدِ مَنْزِلَةٌ عِنْدَ اللهِ فَمَا يَنَالُهَا إلا بِإِحْدَى خِصْلَتَيْنِ؛ إمَّا بِذَهَابِ مَالِهِ أوْ بِبَلِيَّةٍ فِي جَسَدِهِ.**

> Verily, the servant has certain stations near God that cannot be realized without one of these two attributes: either the loss of his wealth or affliction in his body.[2]

In a tradition relating to the martyrdom of the Doyen of the Martyrs (Imam al-Husayn) (a) it is mentioned that he (a) saw the Prophet (*s*) in a dream. The Prophet (*s*) said to that *mazlum*, "There is a station for you in the Paradise which you cannot attain except through martyrdom." The celestial form of martyrdom cannot be attained without its occurrence in the corporeal realm, as has been demonstrated in the higher sciences. It is mentioned in *mutawatir* traditions that for every action there is a corresponding form in the other world, and al-Imam al-Sadiq (a) is reported to have said in *al-Kafi* that:

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[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. ii, p.255, *hadith* no.17.

[2] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. ii, p.255.

إنَّ عَظِيمَ الأَجْرِ لَمَعَ عَظِيمِ البَلاءِ. وَمَا أَحَبَّ اللهُ قَوْماً إلا ابْتَلاهُمْ.

> The greatness of man's reward goes with the greatness of suffering, and God did not love a people but that He subjected them to suffering.[1]

There are many traditions containing this theme.

## THE PROPHETS' SUFFERING

The great *muhaddith* al-Majlisi (*m*) says:

> These traditions relating to the tribulations of the prophets, which have been narrated both through *Sunni* and Shii chains of transmission (*turuq*), clearly indicate that the prophets and the *awliya* differ from others in respect of ailments and bodily afflictions. Rather, they have a greater right than others to suffer on account of their great reward which is responsible for the loftiness of their stations. And this suffering is not only not contrary to their station, but also it even causes the confirmation of their affair. Should they not undergo afflictions, despite the manifestation of miracles and extraordinary things at their hands, people might say such things about them as the Christians did about their prophet. This explanation is also mentioned in traditions.

The subtle researcher and the great, sacred philosopher al-Tusi, may God fill his grave with aroma, states in *al-Tajrid*: "Of the things that the prophets should be free from is that which is regarded as abhorrent." And the *Allamah* of the *ulama* of Islam (al-Allamah al-Hilli) (*r*) adds in *Sharh al-Tajrid* that the prophets should be free from such abhorrent diseases as absence of urinary control, leprosy and leukoderma, for their abhorrent character is contrary to the aim of prophecy.

This writer says: The station of prophethood is subject to spiritual levels and excellences and has no relation to corporeality. Hence physical diseases and defects do no harm to the spiritual station of the prophets and affliction with abhorrent diseases diminishes nothing from the sublimity and greatness

[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. ii, p.255.

of their station, although they may not contribute in a way of confirmation to their (already established) excellences and degrees of sublimity. But that which these two researchers have said is also not devoid of validity. This is because the common people cannot make a distinction between the two stations (of spirituality and corporeality) and imagine that physical defectiveness is related or caused by spiritual defectiveness. Hence they consider some defects as being contrary to the high and great station of the prophets. Hence Divine grace dictates that the prophets who are messengers and bringers of Divine *Shariah* should not be afflicted with such diseases as are considered disgusting and abominable by the people. Therefore, the absence of this kind of affliction is not because it is harmful to the station of prophethood, but for the sake of maximizing the effectiveness of the prophetic mission of communicating the Divine teachings (*tabligh*). Hence there is nothing wrong if some prophets without a *Shariah*, great *awliya* and the faithful are afflicted with this kind of afflictions, as in the case of Hadrat Ayyub (Job) and Habib al-Najjar. There are many traditions concerning the affliction of Hadrat Ayyub (a), of which are the following two:

رُوِيَ فِي تَفْسِيرِ عَلِيِّ بْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَنْ أَبِي بَصِيرٍ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ فِي حَدِيثٍ طَوِيلٍ، قَالَ: فَسَلَّطَهُ عَلَى بَدَنِهِ مَا خَلا عَقْلَهُ وَعَيْنَهُ فَنَفَخَ فِيهِ إِبْلِيسُ فَصَارَ قَرْحَةً وَاحِدَةً مِنْ قَرْنِهِ إِلَى قَدَمِهِ. فَبَقِيَ فِي ذَلِكَ دَهْراً طَوِيلاً يَحْمِدُ اللهَ وَيَشْكُرُهُ حَتَّى وَقَعَ فِي بَدَنِهِ الدُّودُ. وَكَانَتْ تَخْرُجُ مِنْ بَدَنِهِ فَيَرُدُّهَا وَيَقُولُ لَهَا ارْجِعِي إِلَى مَوْضِعِكِ الَّذِي خَلَقَكِ اللهُ مِنْهُ. وَنَتُنَ حَتَّى أَخْرَجَهُ أَهْلُ القَرْيَةِ مِنَ القَرْيَةِ وَأَلْقَوْهُ فِي المَزْبَلَةِ خَارِجَ القَرْيَةِ.

Ali ibn Ibrahim in a long tradition narrates on the authority of Abu Basir that Imam al-Sadiq (a) said, "Then his whole body, excepting his, intellect and his eyes, was subjected to the disease. Then *Iblis* blew upon it and it became a single wound extending from his head to feet. He (Job) remained for a period in that condition, praising and thanking God, until it became infested with worms. Whenever a worm fell off from his body, he would put it back, saying to it, "Return to your place, from where God created you." And it began to stench until his townsfolk expelled him from his town and his food came from the

garbage thrown outside the town."

فِي الكَافِي بِإسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أبِي بَصِيرٍ، عَنْ أبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: قُلْتُ لَهُ: ﴿فَإذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ. إنَّهُ لَيْسَ لَهُ سُلْطَانٌ عَلَى الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ.﴾ فَقَالَ: يَا أَبَا مُحَمَّدٍ؛ يُسَلَّطُ وَاللهِ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِ عَلَى بَدَنِهِ وَلا يُسَلَّطُ عَلَى دِينِهِ. قَدْ سُلِّطَ عَلَى أَيُّوبَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ فَشَوَّهَ خَلْقَهُ وَلَمْ يُسَلَّطْ عَلَى دِينِهِ وَقَدْ يُسَلَّطُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَى أَبْدَانِهِمْ وَلا يُسَلَّطُ عَلَى دِينِهِمْ.

In *al-Kafi*, al-Kulayni reports from Abu Basir that he asked Imam al-Sadiq (a) about the verse, "When thou recitest the Quran, seek refuge in God from the accursed Satan, he has no authority over those who believe and trust in their Lord; (his authority is over those who take him for their guardian and ascribe associates to God) (16:98-100)." The Imam said, "O Abu Muhammad, by God, He gives authority to him (Satan) over the believer's body but not over his faith (*din*). He gave him (Satan) authority over Ayyub and Satan disfigured him physically, but He did not give authority to him over his faith. And He does give him authority over the faithful's bodies but not over their faith."

بِإسْنَادِهِ عَنْ نَاجِيَةٍ قَالَ: قُلْتُ لأَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: إنَّ الْمُغِيرَةَ يَقُولُ: إنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ لا يُبْتَلَى بِالْجُذَامِ وَلا بِالبَرَصِ وَلا بِكَذَا وَلا بِكَذَا؟ فَقَالَ: إنْ كَانَ لَغَافِلاً عَنْ صَاحِبِ يَاسِينَ. إنَّهُ كَانَ مُكَنَّعاً. ثُمَّ رَدَّ أَصَابِعَهُ فَقَالَ: كَأَنِّي أَنْظُرُ إلَى تَكْنِيعِهِ أَتَاهُمْ فَأَنْذَرَهُمْ، ثُمَّ عَادَ إلَيْهِمْ مِنَ الغَدِ فَقَتَلُوهُ. ثُمَّ قَالَ: إنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ يُبْتَلَى بِكُلِّ بَلِيَّةٍ وَيَمُوتُ بِكُلِّ مِيتَةٍ إلا أَنَّهُ لا يُقْتُلُ نَفْسَهُ.

Najiyah says, "I said to Abu Jafar (a) that al-Mughirah says that a believer is never afflicted with leprosy, leukoderma and such other ailments (is that true?) The Imam replied, 'Didn't he know that the *Sahib Ya Sin* (Habib al-Najjar, the man mentioned in *surat Ya Sin*) was

> mutilated (*mukanna*)?' He (a) closed his fingers and said, 'It is as if I see him go to his people in his mutilated state (*takannu*) to warn them and come back the next day, when they killed him.' Then he added, 'Verily, the believer suffers all kinds of afflictions and dies in all manners of dying except suicide.' "[1]

*Sahib Ya Sin* is Habib al-Najjar and *takannu* (the word is with *nun* in most of the manuscripts), according to al-Majlisi, means shortening and mutilation. He adds that it was probably leprosy which had resulted in the shortening of his fingers. However, this, as well as many other *ahadith*, indicate that the believers and prophets are sometimes afflicted with abominable diseases on account of some higher expediency, although there are some other traditions which negate the disfigurement of Hadrat Ayyub's body and its petrifaction, and not much benefit lies in discussing them further with a view to affecting a reconciliation. On the whole, these kind of diseases do no harm to the condition of believers and do not diminish anything from the station of the prophets (a) rather, they lead to the elevation of their station, and God Almighty knows best the truth.

## THE WORLD IS NOT A PLACE OF REWARD OR PUNISHMENT

Let it be known to you that this world, due to its defective, feeble and weak nature, is neither the abode of the reward of God Almighty nor the place of His chastisement and punishment. This is so because the abode of Divine munificence is a realm whose bounties are pure, unadulterated with torment, and its comforts are not mixed with pain and grief. Such bounties are not possible in this world, which is an abode where contradictories throng together and each of whose bounties is mixed with numerous kinds of pains, hardships and torments. Rather, as the philosophers have said, pleasure in this world lies in avoiding pain. It may be said that even its pleasures cause pain and every one of its pleasures is followed by pain and hardship. Rather, the very material of this world lacks the capacity to accept absolute goodness and unadulterated bounty. In the same way, its pains and hardships, torments and punishments are also mixed; each of its pains and hardships carries within itself some goodness and bounty, and none of its afflictions and adversities is unmixed. The very material of this world lacks the capacity to

[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. ii, p.255.

accept pure, absolute punishment, whereas the abode of Divine chastisement is a place where punishment is pure and absolute; its pains and afflictions are not like those of this world, which while they afflict one member of the body are absent from the other members. While the healthy members are in comfort and ease, the afflicted member suffers pain and agony. The noble tradition partly refers to what we have stated here when it says:

وَذَلِكَ أنَّ اللهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لَمْ يَجْعَلِ الدُّنْيَا ثَوَاباً لِمُؤْمِنٍ وَلا عُقُوبَةً لِكَافِرٍ.

> That is, the reason that the believer is afflicted in this world with tribulation is that God Almighty has made it neither the place of His reward for the believer nor the place of chastisement for the infidel.

This world is the abode of duty and the farm of the Hereafter. It is a place of trade and earning whereas the Hereafter is the abode of reward and punishment, of bounty and damnation.

Those who expect that God Almighty would immediately get hold of one who commits some sin or indecency in this world or perpetrates some injustice or aggression against someone, and cut his hand off and expunge him from the realm of existence, are unaware that their expectation is contrary to this world's order and opposed to God's wont and *sunnah*. Here is the place of trial and the zone of the separation of the wretched from the felicitous and the sinful from the obedient. Here is the realm of the manifestation of deeds, not the abode of the emergence of the results of personal deeds and qualities. If occasionally God Almighty does take hold of an oppressor, it may be said that it is due to the Almighty's mercy for that oppressor (for it stops him from sinning further). For, when God Almighty leaves the sinful and the tyrants to themselves, His wrath takes the form of *istidraj*, the gradual seizing.

Hence, God Almighty declares:

﴿سَنَسْتَدْرِجُهُمْ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ. وَأُمْلِي لَهُمْ إِنَّ كَيْدِي مَتِينٌ.﴾

> (*And those who cry lies to Our signs*), *We will draw them on little by little whence they know not*; *and I respite them – assuredly My guile is firm*. (7:182-183)

And He also says:

﴿وَلَا يَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّمَا نُمْلِي لَهُمْ خَيْرٌ لِأَنْفُسِهِمْ إِنَّمَا نُمْلِي لَهُمْ

لِيَزْدَادُوا إِثْمًا وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُهِينٌ﴾

*And let not the unbelievers suppose that the respite We grant them is better for them*; *We grant them respite only that they may increase in sin*; *and there awaits them a humiliating chastisement*. (3:178)

In *Majma al-bayan*, this tradition is cited from Imam al-Sadiq (a):

إِذَا أَحْدَثَ العَبْدُ ذَنْباً جُدِّدَ لَهُ نِعْمَةٌ فَيَدَعُ الإِسْتِغْفَارَ فَهُوَ الإِسْتِدْرَاجُ.

The Imam (a) said, "When a person commits a sin and the bounty (that he had received) is renewed for him, he leaves off asking for forgiveness (*istighfar*), and this is *al-istidraj* (as mentioned in verse 7:182)."

At the end of the noble tradition, the Imam (a) says:

وَمَنْ سَخُفَ دِينُهُ وَضَعُفَ عَمَلُهُ قَلَّ بَلاؤُهُ.

And one whose faith is feeble and his intellect is weak, his tribulation is also slight.

This shows that tribulations are both bodily and spiritual, for the persons of weak intellects and feeble sensibility are secure from spiritual tribulations and intellectual suffering in proportion to their intellectual weakness and the feebleness of their sensibility. On the contrary, those with more complete intellects and acuter sensibility have to undergo spiritual tribulations more intensely in proportion to the perfectness and acuteness of their intellect and sensibility. Perhaps it was for this reason that the Holy Messenger (*s*) said:

مَا أُوذِيَ نَبِيٌّ مِثْلَ مَا أُوذِيتُ.

No prophet was tormented to the extent that I was.

This complaint of the Prophet (*s*) refers to this point, for whoever perceives the greatness and glory of the Lord to a greater extent and knows the sacred station of God Almighty more than others, he suffers more and is tormented to a greater extent by the sins of the creatures and their offences against the Lord's sanctity. Also, one who has a greater love and compassion for the creatures of God is tormented to a greater extent by their crooked and wretched condition and ways. And, of course, the Seal of the Prophets (*s*) was more perfect in all these stations and higher than all of the prophets and

the *awliya* in respect of his degree of excellence and perfection. Hence his torment and suffering was greater than that of any one of them. There is also another explanation of the Holy Messenger's statement, whose mention is not appropriate for this place.

وَاللهُ العَالِمُ وَلَهُ الحَمْدُ.

And God knows best and to Him belongs all the praise.

16

# Sixteenth *Hadith*: PATIENCE (*SABR*)

مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَعْقُوبَ الكُلَيْنِي رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ عَنْ عِدَّةٍ مِنْ أَصْحَابِنَا، عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ خَالِدٍ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ النُّعْمَانِ، عَنْ عَبْدِاللهِ بْنِ مَسْكَانَ، عَنْ أَبِي بَصِيرٍ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ يَقُولُ: إنَّ الحُرَّ حُرٌّ عَلَى جَمِيعِ أَحْوَالِهِ. إنْ نَابَتْهُ نَائِبَةٌ صَبَرَ لَهَا وَإنْ تَدَاكَّتْ عَلَيْهِ المَصَائِبُ لَمْ تَكْسِرْهُ وَإنْ أُسِرَ وَقُهِرَ وَاسْتُبْدِلَ بِاليُسْرِ عُسْراً كَمَا كَانَ يُوسُفُ الصِّدِّيقُ الأَمِينُ صَلَوَاتُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ لَمْ يَضُرُّ حُرِّيَّتَهُ أَنْ اسْتُعْبِدَ وَقُهِرَ وَأُسِرَ وَلَمْ تَضُرُّهُ ظُلْمَةُ الجُبِّ وَوَحْشَتُهُ وَمَا نَالَهُ أَنْ مَنَّ اللهُ عَلَيْهِ فَجَعَلَ الجَبَّارَ العَاتِيَ لَهُ عَبْداً بَعْدَ إذْ كَانَ [لَهُ] مَالِكاً. فَأَرْسَلَهُ وَرَحِمَ بِهِ أُمَّةً وَكَذَلِكَ الصَّبْرُ يُعَقِّبُ خَيْراً.فَاصْبِرُوا وَوَطِّنُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ عَلى الصَّبْرِ تُؤْجَرُوا.

Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulayni (*r*) from a group of his teachers, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid, from his father, from Ali ibn al-Numan, from Abd-Allah ibn Maskan, from Abu Basir, who says, "I heard Abu Abd-Allah (a) say, 'A free human being is free in all circumstances. Should a misfortune befall him he bears it with patience (*Sabr*). If calamities strike him, they don't shatter him. If taken captive and subdued; he turns hardship into ease, as was the case of Joseph, the truthful and trustworthy (a). His freedom saved him from harm, although he was enslaved, subdued, and imprisoned. The darkness of the pit, the dread and whatever befell him did

him no harm, until God favored him and made the insolent tyrant, who had been his master, his slave. Then God made him His apostle and through him was merciful to a people. In this way patience is followed by good. So be patient and reconcile yourself to patience in order to be rewarded."[1]

## EXPOSITION

*Naibah* is the singular of *nawaib*, which means 'events' and 'accidents' and according to *al-Sihah* means misfortune (*musibah*). *Dakka* is synonymous with *daqqa*, which means 'to be conjoined to pound', 'crush', 'grind', and 'to knock'. *Al-Sihah* says: **دَكَكْتُ الشَّيْءَ أَدُكُّهُ دَكّاً إِذَا ضَرَبْتُهُ وَكَسَرْتُهُ** It also remarks, **تَدَاكَّتْ عَلَيْهِ: أَيْ تَدَاقَّتْ حَتَّى سَوَّيْتُهُ بِالأَرْضِ**.

This world also gives the sense of swarming, crowding and pressing together (*ijtima* and *izdiham*), as mentioned in *al-Nihayah*. In a *hadith*, Amir al-Muminin (a) is reported to have said:[2] **ثُمَّ تَدَاكَكْتُمْ عَلَيَّ تَدَاكُكَ الإِبِلِ الهِيمِ عَلَى حِيَاضِهَا** means, **إِزْدَحَمْتُمْ**.

According to *al-Nihayah*, *dakka* also means *kasara* (to break). In the present noble tradition, the former meaning is more appropriate in view of the phrase **لَمْ تَكْسِرْهُ** following it, although the second meaning also fits here. The preposition **و** in **وإِنْ أسِرَ** signifies *wasliyyah* and is **وَقُهِرَ وَاسْتُبْدِلَ** conjoined to it. Al-Majlisi (*m*) states that it is **وَاسْتُبْدِلَ بِاليُسْرِ عُسْراً** in some manuscripts, and is accordingly conjoined to **لَمْ تَكْسِرْهُ** , thus making it the result of *sabr*. The phrase **أَنْ اسْتُعْبِدَ** is the passive participle and **لَمْ يَضْرُرْ** is the active subject of the verbal sentence. In *Mirat al-'Uqul* it is **اسْتُعْبِدَ** , and appears as **اسْتُعْبَدَ** in *Wasail al-Shi'ah*. It seems that it is a calligraphers error in the manuscript of the Mirat , although its meaning is not totally invalid. However, that which is in *Wasail* is more in agreement with the totality and content of the noble tradition. **وَمَا نَالَهُ ظُلْمَةُ الجُبِّ** is conjoined to **أَنْ مَنَّ اللهُ** , implying that Joseph was not harmed by that which he suffered at his brothers hands, nor by grief and adversity. As to the phrase, **أَنْ مَنَّ اللهُ** , it appears that it involves the ellipsis of **إلى** (until) and relates to **لَمْ تَضْرُرْ** in two possible yet conflicting ways. Al-Majlisi (*m*) has mentioned several possible meanings of it whose description is not devoid of prolixity. The meaning of the master of Joseph (a) becoming

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al- iman wal-kufr*, *bab al-Sabr*, 128, *hadith* no. 6.

[2] Ibn al-athir, *al-Nihayah*, ii, 128.

his slave is that he became subservient and obedient to him (a).

## DESIRE, THE SOURCE OF ALL BONDAGE

Let it be known to you that in a man subjugated to the domination of lust and carnal desire, his servitude, servility and indignity increase in proportion to the intensity of their domination; for servitude means complete submission and obedience. The man obedient to lusts and subjugated to the carnal self is their obedient slave. He submissively obeys whatever they command and is a humble and obedient servant and slave in front of them. This obedience reaches a limit when he prefers obedience to them to obedience to the Creator of the heavens and the earth. He prefers their service to the service of the real King of kings. In that state, honor, dignity and freedom depart from his heart on which then settle the dusts of indignity, destitution and servitude. He becomes humble before worldly people and his heart bows down in prostration before them and before the possessors of worldly power and glory. In order to achieve the objects of his carnal desires and to satisfy the craving of his belly and underneath, he submits to all kinds of disgrace and indignities. As long as he remains in the bondage of lust and the carnal self, he does not abstain from violating the demands of honor, freedom and chivalry. He readily submits to the obedience of anyone, and is willing to accept favor from any insignificant person, as soon as he sees the probability of attaining his objective through his means, even if that person is the meanest and basest of all creation and even if the probability involved is something imaginary. And it is said that mere fancy is the proof of the greedy.

The servants of lust and mundane ambition have put on the shackles of slavery to carnal desire. They are ready to be slaves of anyone whom they know or imagine to be of worldly benefit to them. If verbally they declare themselves to be chaste and honorable, such lip service to honor is mere deception, for their words and deeds contradict such a declaration. This servility and captivity is a thing which always causes man to undergo suffering, pain, dishonor and distress. Hence a man with a sense of honor and dignity should seriously strive to cleanse himself of this abomination by all means and deliver himself from this bondage. Such purification and emancipation can only be attained through a fundamental treatment, which takes place through curative knowledge and action.

As to curative action, it consists of religious exercises and opposition to

the carnal self. Over a period of time these free the soul from excessive love of the world and the pursuit of carnal lust and desire, until it becomes accustomed to virtues and moral excellences. As to curative knowledge, it lies in making oneself understand and causing this to enter into his heart that other creatures are as weak, needy, dependent and impoverished as himself. He should tell his heart, "Since all other creatures are, like me, dependent, in matters big and small, on Him Who is absolutely Able and Powerful, they are not capable of fulfilling anyone's needs. They are too insignificant to deserve the soul's attention or the heart's humbleness. The same Powerful Being that has bestowed honor, dignity and riches upon them is capable of bestowing these on anybody. In fact, it is a matter of shame that man should submit so much to dishonor and indignity for the sake of his belly and his lusts as to accept the favor of an insignificant, impoverished, powerless and lowly creature devoid of wisdom and vision. If at all you should seek anyone's favor, then seek the favor of the Absolutely Self-Sufficient, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, for if you pay attention to His sacred Essence and make your heart humble in His presence, that will liberate you from both the worlds and emancipate you from the servitude of creatures, as it has been said: [1]

العُبُودِيَّةُ جَوْهَرَةٌ كُنْهُهَا الرُّبُوبِيَّةُ.

That is, the inner, invaluable essence of servitude to God is freedom and lordship. Thus servitude to God, attention to the unique focus of all being, and subjugation of all powers and dominations to the Sovereignty of God create such a state in the devotee's heart that he comes to wield power and kingdom over all the worlds. His spirit rises to such heights of sublimity that he does not pay obeisance to anyone except the Sacred Divine Essence, and even if, accidentally, he should be under the domination and power of anyone, that does not shake his heart, which preserves its independence and freedom, as in the case of Joseph (a) and Luqman (a) whose apparent subservience and servitude did not harm their free and freedom-seeking character. And there may be many a powerful despot and king, who having no trace of inner freedom, dignity and honor in their character, are base servants and obedient slaves of lust and carnal desire and who obsequiously ingratiate themselves to creatures.

[1] *Misbah al-Shariah, bab* 100.

Imam Ali ibn al-Husayn (a) is reported to have said in the course of a discourse:

**إِنِّي لَآنَفُ أَنْ أَطْلُبَ الدُّنْيَا مِنْ خَالِقِهَا، فَكَيْفَ مِنْ مَخْلُوقٍ مِثْلِي.**

> I am ashamed to ask anything of worldly things from their Creator, so how can I seek them from creatures like myself?[1]

My dear, if you are not ashamed of seeking the world, at least don't ask for it of weak creatures like yourself. Do understand that creatures have no power to do anyone any worldly good. I admit that you might have succeeded in attracting someone's attention through a thousand indignity and cajolery, but his will has no effect in the kingdom of God and no one has any role in the dominion of the King of kings. Hence do not degrade yourself so much by flattering insignificant creatures for the sake of a passing world and for passing and paltry desires. Don't forget your Lord and preserve your freedom. Remove the shackles of servitude and captivity and never forget Him under any circumstance, for, as stated in the noble tradition:

**إِنَّ الحُرَّ حُرٌّ عَلَى جَمِيعِ أَحْوَالِهِ.**

> The freeman is free in all circumstances.

Let it be known to you that contentment comes from the heart and the absence of neediness is a spiritual state, unrelated to external matters that lie outside the human self. I have myself seen certain persons amongst rich and wealthy classes who say thins which no honorable poor man would say and whose statements are shameful. The hearts of those wretches were covered by the dusts of dishonor and destitution. The Jews, who, in proportion to their number, are the richest and wealthiest of all people on the earth, have faces that manifest debasement, poverty, indigence, beggarliness, hunger and wretchedness. They spend all their lives in hardship, indignity, destitution and squalor. This is nothing but their inner poverty and spiritual abasement.

I have seen amongst pious and dervish-like persons some individuals whose hearts are so magnanimously free of want and need that they look at the entire world with indifference and consider none except the Sacred Essence of God Almighty as deserving of making a request. You too study

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[1] *Ilal al-Sharai*, i, 165; *Wasail al-Shiah*, x, 29.

carefully the conditions of worldly and ambitious people and you will find that their lack of self-respect and their degradation in flattering others is greater than that of others and their obsequiousness in front of people is greater. Those (pseudo mystic masters) who are in pursuit of disciples and claim to guide others, suffer indignities and put up with degrading flattery and ingratiation for some day's satisfaction of their carnal lusts. The heart of the seeker of disciples and adherents is humbler in front of the disciple than that of the latter in front of him. This is because of the difference in the character of their respect for one another. While the disciple's humbleness and affection is of a spiritual and godly character, the master's affection has a mundane and satanic character:

These that have been mentioned are the worldly forms of these evils and indignities. But were the curtains to rise, the real spiritual forms of these servitudes, bondages and chains of carnal lusts and desires will reveal themselves. Perhaps the seventy-cubit chain, of which God Almighty has informed us, a chain with which we shall be shackled and bound in that world, is the Hereafterly form of this very servitude and subjugation to the domination of Passion and Anger. And God Almighty declares:

﴿وَوَجَدُوا مَا عَمِلُوا حَاضِرًا.﴾

*And they shall find all they wrought present*. (18:49)

And He also says:

﴿لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ.﴾

*God charges no soul save to its capacity*; *standing to its account is what it has earned, and against its account what it has merited*.(2:286)

That is, that which we obtain in the other world is a form of our own deeds.

Therefore, break away the lengthy chains of lust and desire. Remove the locks that bar the heart's entrance and set yourself free from bondage. Live like a free human being in this world so that you may be free in the other world; otherwise, you will encounter there the intolerable Hereafterly form of this bondage. The hearts of the saints of God, despite their absolute and total freedom from bondage, were so much dreadful of the final outcome and so much full of lamentations that it amazes all minds. I am aware that the matters mentioned in these pages are of a common and repetitive character.

However, there is nothing wrong in such repetition, for constant reminding of the self and repetition of the truth is a desirable thing. This is why repetition has been considered desirable in prayers, supplications, worship and rituals. The main purpose is to accustom the self by means of repetitive exercises.

My dear, don't be deluded; understand that as long as man remains in the bondage of the carnal self and its desires and as long as the lengthy chains of Passion and Anger are around his neck, he cannot attain to any of the spiritual stations; the inward authority of the soul and the domination of its higher will shall not manifest itself. Also, the station of spiritual independence and dignity, which is one of the highest of spiritual stations, shall not be realized. Rather, this bondage and slavery restrains man from revolting against the authority of the carnal self. And when the authority of the carnal self and Satan becomes consolidated in the inward realm and all the faculties of the self become their obedient slaves, becoming submissive and humble in front of them, they do not remain satisfied with mere sins. Little by little, they draw man from minor to major sins and from there to weakening of beliefs, from there to darkening of the intellect, from there to the constricted path of denial and contestation (of the truth), and from there to the hostility and enmity of the prophets and the *awliya*. Throughout these stages, the self, which is their slave and under their domination, cannot disobey them. At last this obedience and captivity becomes so severe that it may take man to the most dangerous point.

Hence, the intelligent man with sympathy for himself must try by all means to liberate himself from this slavery, and as long as there is opportunity and his powers are intact and his life, health and youth are there and his faculties have not been totally subjugated (by Satan and the carnal self), he must rise to undertake this task. For some time he must exercise vigilance over himself, study his own inner states, reflect about the conditions of those who have passed away and faced an evil fate, and make his heart understand the passing character of worldly life. He must awaken his heart and inform it of the truth narrated from the Holy Prophet (*s*) who said:

الدُّنْيَا مَزْرَعَةُ الآخِرَةِ.

The world is the farm of the Hereafter.[1]

[1] *Ihya al-ulum*, iv, 14.

That is, if we do not sow the seeds of righteous deeds in the few days of our life here, the opportunity will be lost for ever. When we reach the threshold of the other world and death seizes us, deeds come to an end., hopes are extinguished. If, God forbid, we continue to remain in the slavery of lusts and the captivity of various carnal desires until the Angel of Death arrives, it is possible that Satan may achieve his ultimate objective of wresting away our faith. He may treat us in such a fashion and metamorphose our hearts to such an extent that we may depart from the world as enemies of God and His prophets and *awliya*. If that happens, God knows what calamities, what darkness and what terrors await us.

So, O base self! O negligent heart! Awake from thy sleep and arise to confront this enemy who for years has subdued you and made a captive of you, who drags you whenever he wants and commands you to perform every ugly and destructive deed! Arise and break these bonds! Sever these chains! Seek thy freedom and throw away this disgrace and indignity. Wear the girdle of servitude to God, the Almighty and the Glorious, that you may be free from every kind of servitude and slavery, that you may attain to the absolute kingdom of God in both the worlds.

My dear, although this world –being the believer's prison– is not the abode of Divine award and the place of the manifestation of God's kingdom, but should you come out from the captivity of the carnal self and submit to the servitude of God, make your heart a true monotheist and clear the dusts of plurality from the mirror of the spirit, and turn your heart's attention to the focal point of Absolute Perfection, you will witness its effects in this world itself and your heart will attain such an expanse that it will become the realm of the manifestation of God's total sovereignty, thus becoming greater than all the worlds. Hence He has said:

لا تَسَعُنِي أَرْضِي وَلا سَمَائِي، بَلْ يَسَعُنِي قَلْبُ عَبْدِيَ الْمُؤْمِنُ.

> Neither [the vastness of] My earth, nor [that of] My heaven can contain Me. Indeed it is the heart of the man of faith which can contain Me.[1]

Such richness and contentment will then pervade your heart that all the outward and inward realms will become worthless in your eyes and your will, will become so mighty that it shall not attach itself to the corporeal and

[1] *Ghawali al-laali*, iv, 7.

the celestial realms; rather it will not even consider them worthy of itself.

**طيران مرغ ديدي توزپاي بند شهوت**

**بدرآي تا ببيني طيران آدميت**

*You have watched the bird's flight*;
*But should you remove the shackles of lust,*
*You will witness the flight of man*.

## *SABR*, THE OUTCOME OF FREEDOM FROM LUST

One of the great results and precious fruits of this freedom and emancipation from servitude to the carnal self is patience in calamities and misfortunes. Now it remains for us to explain briefly the meaning of *sabr*, the kinds of its fruits and its relation to freedom.

As defined by the researcher of the righteous sect, the explorer of the subtleties of the confirmed creed, the perfect in knowledge and deed, Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (*q*)[1] *sabr* means restraining the self from agitation when confronted with undesirables. And the famous, confirmed *arif* (Khwajah Abd-Allah al-ansari), says in *Manazil al-sairin*:

**صبر،نگاهداري نفس است از شكايت بر جزع مستور.**

> *Sabr* means restraining the self from complaint about hidden anguish.

And let it be known to you that *sabr* has been considered as one of the stations of those in the middle group (*mutawassitun*), for as long as the self regards misfortunes and calamities as detestable and feels inward anguish on their account, its *marifah* is deficient. Thus the station of *rida* in regard to Divine destiny and satisfaction at the turning up of misfortunes represents a higher station, although we consider this also to be one of the stations pertaining to the *mutawassitun*. So also *sabr* in regard to abstinence from sins and in regard to fulfillment of duties (*taat*) is also related to deficient knowledge of the secrets of *ibadat* and the Hereafterly forms of sin and obedience. For if one were to understand the reality of *ibadah* and to believe in the purgatorial forms of worships and sins, *sabr* in regard to these has no meaning for him. Rather, the contrary becomes true here, and if a joy or

[1] For maintaining readability, (*q*) which is an acronym for "*quddasa sirruh*" is used throughout the book to denote "May God sanctify his/their soul(s)." It is used for the deceased *ulama*, *urafa*, and *awliya*.

comfort causes him to neglect worship or commit a sin, they (such joys and comforts) become detestable for him and his inward anguish becomes greater than that of those who bear misfortunes and calamities patiently.

The righteous servant and the knower of the duties of servitude, the possessor of noble stations and miraculous characteristics, Ali ibn ʻTawus (*q*) is narrated to celebrate the first day of his becoming *mukallaf*. He gave feasts and festivated in commemoration of that day, for God, the Blessed and the Supreme, had blessed him with the permission to perform duties on that day. Can anyone say that that sublime spirit exercised *sabr* in regard to worship and duties considering them as inwardly unwelcome? What a difference between us and those obedient servants of God! We think that God Almighty has burdened us with duties; we consider them troublesome and view them as a botheration. If one of us attempts to offer his prayer at the outset of its time, he says that it is better to be done with it and the sooner one relieves oneself the better! All our misfortunes are due to ignorance and foolishness and on account of the lack or absence of faith.

In any case, *sabr* is concealed anguish. And that which has been said about the great prophets and the Righteous Imams –who have been characterized with *sabr*– that could mean forbearance in regard to physical sufferings, which are painful as a matter of human nature; or it could mean *sabr* in regard to separation from the Beloved, which is one of the great stations of the lovers –and to this we shall return later. Otherwise, *sabr* in regard to obedience or misfortune or sin is not only inapplicable in regard to them but also in regard to their followers (*Shiʻah*).

The famous *arif* Abd al-Razzaq al-Kashani, in *Sharh Manazil al-sairin*, says:

> The intent of the Shaykh, when he says that *Sabr* means abstinence from complaint, is complaining to creatures. Otherwise, complaining to God Almighty and beseeching Him for relief is not opposed to *Sabr*. Hadrat Ayyub complained to God and said:

﴿أَنِّي مَسَّنِيَ الشَّيْطَانُ بِنُصْبٍ وَعَذَابٍ.﴾

*Behold, Satan has visited me with weariness and chastisement*. (38:41)

And God yet praises him, saying:

﴿إِنَّا وَجَدْنَاهُ صَابِرًا نِعْمَ الْعَبْدُ إِنَّهُ أَوَّابٌ.﴾

*Surely We found him. a steadfast man. How excellent a servant he was! He was penitent.* (38:44)

And Hadrat Yaqub (Jacob) said:

﴿إِنَّمَا أَشْكُو بَثِّي وَحُزْنِي إِلَى اللَّهِ.﴾

*I make complaint of my anguish and my sorrow unto God,* (12:86)

Although he was one of the forbearing. Rather, to quit complaining to God is a manifestation of the hardening (of the heart) and a sign of grudgefulness.

The accounts of the lives of the great prophets and the Infallible Imams – upon all of whom be God's benedictions- reveal that although their stations were over and above the stations of *sabr*, *rida* and *taslim* (surrender), they never stopped supplicating lamenting and confessing their impotence before the Worshipped One. They expressed their needs to God Almighty and this is not contrary to their spiritual stations. Rather, remembering God, cherishing the intimacy of solitude with the Beloved, and expression of servitude and humility in front of His absolute perfection and greatness is the ultimate end of the hopes of the mystics (*arifun*) and the final destination of the journey of the wayfarers (*salikun*).

## RESULTS OF *SABR*

You should know that *sabr* produces many results, among which is the soul's training and discipline. If a human being bears patiently with misfortunes and calamities for some time, if he seriously endures the hardships entailed by worship and rites and the bitterness arising from the renunciation of carnal pleasures, and if he does all this for the sake of obedience to his Lord and Provider, his soul gradually becomes accustomed to these things. Then it becomes disciplined and docile and relinquishes its earlier recalcitrance. To bear with hardships and difficulties becomes an easy thing for it. There develops within it an enduring luminous faculty through which he can rise over the station of *sabr* to reach other higher spiritual stations. *Sabr* in regard to sins is the source of the self's *taqwa*. *Sabr* in regard to obedience (*taat*) is the source of intimacy with God. And *sabr* in misfortunes is the source of rids or contentment with Divine destiny and

decrees. These are the stations of the faithful (*ahl al-iman*) or rather those of the gnostics (*ahl al-irfan*). In the noble traditions of the Infallible *Ahl al-Bayt* we find forceful emphasis on *sabr*. The following is a tradition of Imam al-Sadiq (a) from the noble *al-Kafi*, in which the Imam says:

**الصَّبْرُ مِنَ الإيمَانِ بِمَنْزِلَةِ الرَّأسِ مِنَ الجَسَدِ، فَإذَا ذَهَبَ الرَّأسُ ذَهَبَ الجَسَدُ، كَذَلِكَ إذَا ذَهَبَ الصَّبْرُ ذَهَبَ الإيمَانُ.**

> Verily, *Sabr* is to faith what the head is to the body. The body perishes without the head, and so also when *Sabr* goes faith also disappears?[1]

In another tradition whose *isnad* reaches Imam al-Sajjad (a), he is reported to have stated:

**الصَّبْرُ مِنَ الإيمَانِ بِمَنْزِلَةِ الرَّأْسِ مِنَ الجَسَدِ، وَلا إيمَانَ لِمَنْ لا صَبْرَ لَهُ.**

> Verily, *Sabr* is to faith what the head is to the body: one who has no *Sabr* has no faith.[2]

There are many traditions relating to this topic and we will mention some of them later in relevance with the context.

*Sabr* is the key to the gates of felicity and the main means of deliverance from mortal perils. *Sabr* makes man bear calamities with ease and face difficulties with composure. It strengthens the will and the power of resolution. It brings independence to the dominion of the soul. Anguish and anxiety on the other hand, aside from their shameful character, are symptoms of the soul's weakness. They deprive one's being of its stability, weaken the determination, and enfeeble the intellect. The informed researcher Khwajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (*q*) states:

**وَهُوَ – أيْ الصَّبْرَ– يَمْنَعُ البَاطِنَ عَنِ الإضْطِرَابِ وَاللِّسَانَ عَنِ الشِّكَايَةِ وَالأعْضَاءَ عَنِ الحَرَكَاتِ غَيْرِ المُعْتَادَةِ.**

> *Sabr* restrains the inner being from anguish, the tongue from complaint and the bodily members from untoward movements.

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[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, ii, *bab al-Sabr*, 128, *hadith* no. 2.

[2] *Usul al-Kafi*, *hadith* no. 3.

On the contrary, the inward being of the impatient person is full of anxiety and alarm. His heart is full of tremors and shaky, and this is itself the greatest calamity that can befall a human being and deprive him of peace. But *Sabr* diminishes misfortune and makes the heart overcome hardship and assists the will to overpower calamities. In the same way, the impatient person complains of his troubles to everyone, and this, aside from causing disrepute among people who look down upon him as a weakling of instable character, makes him lose his standing in the court of the Holy Lord and in front of His angels. What faith in God and what surrender to the Holy Lord has the servant who cannot bear an adversity that visits him from his Beloved, the Absolute, after having received thousands upon thousands of His bounties and while being immersed in the sea of His favor, and opens his mouth in front of people to complain as soon as an adversity strikes him? So it is right if it is said that one who has no *sabr* has no faith.

If you have faith in your Lord and believe all the affairs to lie in His mighty hands, if you believe none else to have any say in the matters, of course you will not complain of the hardships of life and the adversities that strike you before God Almighty. Rather you will accept them willingly and thank Him gratefully for His bounties. Hence that inner agitation, those plaintive utterances, those unbecoming bodily movements –all these bear testimony to our lack of faith. As long as we find ourselves amid favors, we are grateful, with a gratefulness that is formal and lacking inner substance, a gratefulness that is offered in greed of further favors. However, when a tragedy occurs or a pain or disease strikes us, we take our complaints against the Blessed and the Almighty Lord in front of the creatures. With a plaintive tongue and a tone brimming with taunts and cynicism, we complain about Him to all and sundry. Gradually those complaints, anxieties and misgivings sow the seeds of hostility towards God and His decrees inside the self. Slowly they sprout and grow, making the once passing feeling into an enduring trait. Thereupon, God forbid, the form of one's inward being assumes the form of enmity towards God and His ordainments. When that happens, things go out of one's control and one is no longer able to check his thoughts and feelings. His inward and outward being becomes colored with the hostility towards God Almighty, and he departs from this world to face eternal wretchedness and gloom, with a spirit infused with the enmity and hatred of the Lord of Bounties. I seek refuge in God from the evil of a disastrous end and from a provisional faith (*iman mustawda*). Hence it has been truly said that when *sabr* goes faith also departs.

And so, my dear, the matter is of great importance and the road is full of perils. Muster all the strength at your command and be patient and forbearing throughout the ups and downs of life. With manly courage stand against adversities and calamities. Make your self understand that agitation and anguish, aside from involving a great shame by themselves, are futile in confrontation with sufferings and calamities. No purpose is served by complaining about the irresistible decrees and inevitable ordainments of God in front of weak and powerless creatures, as pointed out by the following noble tradition from *al-Kafi*:

**مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَعْقُوبَ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ سُمَاعَةَ بْنِ مَهْرَانَ، عَنْ أَبِي الحَسَنِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: قَالَ لِي: مَا حَبَسَكَ عَنِ الحَجِّ؟ قَالَ: قُلْتُ: جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ، وَقَعَ عَلَيَّ دَيْنٌ كَثِيرٌ وَذَهَبَ مَالِي، وَدَيْنِي الَّذِي قَدْ لَزِمَنِي هُوَ أَعْظَمُ مِنْ ذَهَابِ مَالِي. فَلَوْلا أَنَّ رَجُلاً مِنْ أَصْحَابِنَا أَخْرَجَنِي مَا قَدَرْتُ أَنْ أَخْرُجَ. فَقَالَ لِي: إِنْ تَصْبِرْ تُغْتَبَطْ وَإِنْ لا تَصْبِرْ يُنْفِذِ اللهُ مَقَادِيرَهُ رَاضِياً كُنْتَ أَمْ كَارِهاً.**

> Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulayni reports with his chain of transmitters from Sumaah ibn Mahran from Imam al-Kazim (a) that the Imam said to him, "What stopped you from going for *hajj*?" Samaah says that he replied, "May I be your ransom, a big debt has fallen upon me and I have lost my property. However, the debt that lies upon me weighed more heavily upon me than the loss of property. Had it not been for one of our companions, I could not have come out of it." The Imam said, "If you are patient, you will be the object of envy, and if you don't God will enforce His decrees regardless of your pleasure or displeasure."[1]

Thus we know that anxiety and anguish are not only futile, they are capable of inflicting terrible injuries and are followed by fatal consequences destructive to faith. On the other hand, *sabr*, forbearance and restraint bring fair, plentiful rewards and have sublime and beautiful forms in the world of *Barzakh*. This is stated at the end of the noble tradition expounded by us:

[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, *hadith* no. 10.

**وَكَذَلِكَ الصَّبْرُ يُعَقِّبُ خَيْراً.فَاصْبِرُوا وَوَطِّنُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ عَلى الصَّبْرِ تُؤْجَرُوا.**

Thus the ultimate result of *qabr* is good in this world –as known from the example of Hadrat Yusuf (a)– and it is the cause of reward in the Hereafter. In another noble tradition of *al-Kafi*, whose *sanad* goes up to Abu Hamzah al-Thumali (*m*), Imam al-Sadiq (a) is reported to have said:

**قَالَ: قَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: مَنِ ابْتُلِيَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ بِبَلاءٍ فَصَبَرَ عَلَيْهِ كَانَ لَهُ مِثْلُ أَجْرِ أَلْفِ شَهِيدٍ.**

> Abu Hamzah says: Abu Abd-Allah said: "Whoever of the believers that bears patiently with a tribulation that befalls him, has the reward of a thousand martyrs."[1]

There are many traditions relating to this subject and we will mention some of them in the following section. However, as to that which was said above that *sabr* has a beautiful purgatorial form, this is mentioned –apart from the demonstrative proofs confirming it– in the following tradition of the noble *al-Kafi* from Imam al-Sadiq (a):

**قَالَ: إِذَا دَخَلَ الْمُؤْمِنُ فِي قَبْرِهِ، كَانَتِ الصَّلاةُ عَنْ يَمِينِهِ وَالزَّكَاةُ عَنْ يَسَارِهِ وَالبِرُّ مُظِلٌّ عَلَيْهِ. وَيَتَنَحَّى الصَّبْرُ نَاحِيَةً، فَإِذَا دَخَلَ عَلَيْهِ المَلَكَانِ اللَّذَانِ يَلِيَانِ مَسَاءَلَتَهُ قَالَ الصَّبْرُ لِلصَّلاةِ وَالزَّكَاة وَالبِرِّ: دُونَكُمْ صَاحِبَكُمْ، فَإِنْ عَجِزْتُمْ عَنْهُ فَأَنَا دُونَهُ.**

> The Imam (a) said, "When the believer enters his grave, *Salat* is on his right hand, *zakat* on his left, virtue faces him, with *Sabr* taking him under its shelter. When the two angels in charge of questioning enter upon him, *Sabr* says to *Salat*, *zakat* and virtue: Take care of your companion, and if you fail to assist him I will take care of him myself."[2]

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[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, *hadith* no. 17.

[2] *Usul al-Kafi*, *hadith* no. 8.

## THE DEGREES AND LEVELS OF *SABR*

Let it be known to you that, as indicated by the noble traditions, there are various degrees and levels of *Sabr*, and its reward and merit vary in accordance with its degree and level. This is revealed by the following tradition of the noble *al-Kafi* narrated by the Master of the God-fearing, Amir al-Muminin Ali (a) from the Holy Prophet (*s*):

قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: الصَّبْرُ ثَلاثَةٌ: صَبْرٌ عِنْدَ المُصِيبَةِ وَصَبْرٌ عَلَى الطَّاعَةِ وَصَبْرٌ عَنِ المَعْصِيَةِ. فَمَنْ صَبَرَ عَلَى المُصِيبَةِ حَتَّى يَرُدَّهَا بِحُسْنِ عَزَائِهَا كَتَبَ اللهُ لَهُ ثَلاثَمِائَةِ دَرَجَةٍ: مَا بَيْنَ الدَّرَجَةِ إِلَى الدَّرَجَةِ كَمَا بَيْنَ السَّمَاءِ إِلَى الأَرْضِ. وَمَنْ صَبَرَ عَلَى الطَّاعَةِ كَتَبَ اللهُ لَهُ سِتَّمِائَةِ دَرَجَةٍ مَا بَيْنَ الدَّرَجَةِ إِلَى الدَّرَجَةِ كَمَا بَيْنَ تُخُومِ الأَرْضِ إِلَى العَرْشِ. وَمَنْ صَبَرَ عَنِ المَعْصِيَةِ كَتَبَ اللهُ لَهُ تِسْعَمِائَةِ دَرَجَةٍ مَا بَيْنَ الدَّرَجَةِ إِلَى الدَّرَجَةِ كَمَا بَيْنَ تُخُومِ الأَرْضِ إِلَى مُنْتَهَى العَرْشِ.

> Ali (a) said: The Messenger of Allah said: "*Sabr* is of three kinds: *Sabr* at the time of affliction, *Sabr* in regard to obedience, and *Sabr* in regard to disobedience. One who bears patiently with affliction, resisting it with a fair consolation, God writes for him three hundred degrees (of sublimity), the elevation of one degree over another being like the distance between earth and heavens. And one who is patient in regard to obedience, God writes for him six hundred degrees (of sublimity), the elevation of one degree over another being like the distance between the earth's depths and the Throne (*al-'arsh*). And one who is patient in regard to disobedience, God writes for him nine hundred degrees (of sublimity), the elevation of one degree over another being like the distance between the earth's depths and the furthest frontiers of the Throne."[1]

This noble tradition reveals that *sabr* in regard to disobedience is superior to the other levels of *sabr*, for it not only possesses greater number of degrees

[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, *hadith* no. 15.

but also the range between its degrees is greater than those of the other kinds. It also shows that the extent of Paradise is much greater than what can come into our imagination, for our vision is limited and confined. That which has been said as a description of Paradise that:

﴿وَجَنَّةٍ عَرْضُهَا كَعَرْضِ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ.﴾

*And a Garden the breadth whereof is as the breadth of heaven and earth.* (57:21)

(The Verse) perhaps refers to the Paradise of deeds. That which has been referred to here in this noble tradition is the Paradise of character and the criterion in the Paradise of character is the strength and perfection of will. Hence its extent should not be confined within any limits. Some have stated that that which has been meant here is height. That is, it is possibly equal in breadth (to the Paradise of deeds) and different in height. But this appears to be remote, for evidently 'breadth' here refers to extent not to breadth as opposed to length, for 'breadth' in reference to heaven and earth also has no meaning when taken in the ordinary sense of something opposed to length, although they do have 'breadth' in the sense of a 'second dimension' in the terminology of natural philosophers. The Book of God, however, does not speak in accordance with any specific terminology.

The noble *al-Kafi* records the following tradition of the Prophet (*s*) with a chain of narration reaching Imam al-Sadiq (a):

**قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: سَيَأْتِي عَلَى النَّاسِ زَمَانٌ لا يُنَالُ الْمُلْكُ فِيهِ إلا بِالقَتْلِ وَالتَّجَبُّرِ، وَلا الغِنَى إلا بِالغَصْبِ وَالبُخْلِ، وَلا المَحَبَّةِ إلا بِاسْتِخْرَاجِ الدِّينِ وَاتِّبَاعِ الهَوَى. فَمَنْ أَدْرَكَ ذَلِكَ الزَّمَانَ فَصَبَرَ عَلَى الفَقْرِ وَهُوَ يَقْدِرُ عَلَى الغِنَى وَصَبَرَ عَلَى البُغْضَةِ وَهُوَ يَقْدِرُ عَلَى المَحَبَّةِ وَصَبَرَ عَلَى الذُّلِّ وَهُوَ يَقْدِرُ عَلَى العِزِّ آتَاهُ اللهُ ثَوَابَ خَمْسِينَ صِدِّيقاً مِمَّنْ صَدَّقَ بِي.**

The Imam (a) said: The Messenger of Allah (*S*) said, "A time will come upon the people wherein political authority will not be attainable without bloodshed and tyranny, nor wealth without usurpation and stinginess, nor affection without discarding religion and pursuing lust and desire. Whoever lives in such times and bears

> patiently with poverty despite possessing the capacity to become rich (illegitimately), and bears up with hostility despite being capable of acquiring favor and affection, and bears with humiliation despite possessing the capacity to acquire honor, God will give him the reward of fifty truthful ones, of those who confirmed me."[1]

Something close to this has been said in another tradition from Amir al-Muminin (a) and there are many traditions relating to this theme. The few which have been quoted here are sufficient for our purpose.

## THE *URAFA'*S DEGREES OF *SABR*:

Let it be known to you that that which has been said hitherto relates to the condition of ordinary people and the *mutawassitun*. We stated at the beginning of this exposition that *Sabr* has been considered as something pertaining to the stations of the *mutawassitun*. But *Sabr* hays other levels which belong to the wayfarers of the path of perfection and the *awliya*. One of such levels of *sabr* is *sabr fi Allah* (*Sabr* in God), and it means steadfastness (*thabat*) in spiritual endeavor (*mujahadah*) and abstinence from objects of love and attraction. Rather it means the renunciation of selfhood in the path of the Beloved. This stage belongs to the wayfarers (*ahl al-suluk*). Another level is that of *sabr maa Allah* (*sabr* with God). It belongs to those blessed with the Presence and the Beatific vision, which comes at the time of exit from the garment of manhood, and freedom from the curtains of deeds and attributes, and irradiation upon the heart of the lights of the Names and Attributes, and entry into the state of intimacy and awe and safeguarding of the self against changing from color to color and absence from the station of intimacy and vision.

Another level is that of *sabr 'an Allah* (*sabr* from God) which pertains to the stations of lovers of God and piners for Him, of those blessed with epiphany (*ahl al-shuhud wa'l-'ayan*) at the time of returning to their own world, the world of plurality and sobriety (after intoxication with God). This is the hardest and the most difficult of the stations, and to it has referred the Master of the Wayfarers, the Commander of the Faithful, and the Leader of the Perfect (i.e. Ali ibn Abi Talib [*'a*]) in the noble Du'a Kumayl:

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[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, *hadith* no. 12.

**فَهَبْنِي، يَا إِلَهِي وَسَيِّدِي وَمَوْلايَ، صَبَرْتُ عَلَى عَذَابِكَ، فَكَيْفَ أَصْبِرُ عَلَـــى فِرَاقِكَ.**

O my God, my Master and my Lord! Even if I were able to endure Thy chastisement, how shall I bear Thy separation?

The following is narrated about al-Shibli:

**وَرُوِيَ أنَّ شَابّاً مِنَ الْمُحِبِّينَ سَأَلَ الشِّبْلِيَّ عَنِ الصَّبْرِ فَقَالَ: أَيُّ الصَّبْرِ أَشَدُّ؟ فَقَالَ: الصَّبْرُ لله. فَقَالَ: لا. فَقَالَ: الصَّبْرُ بالله. فَقَالَ: لا. فَقَالَ: الصَّبْرُ عَلَى الله. فَقَالَ: لا. فَقَالَ: الصَّبْرُ فِي الله. فَقَالَ: لا. فَقَالَ: الصَّبْرُ مَعَ الله. فَقَالَ: لا. فَقَالَ: وَيْحَكَ فَأَيٌّ؟ فَقَالَ: الصَّبْرُ عَنِ الله. فَشَهِقَ الشِّبْلِيُّ وَخَرَّ مَغْشِيّاً عَلَيْهِ.**

It is narrated that a youth from among the Lovers questioned al-Shibli about *sabr*. "Which kind of *Sabr* is the hardest?" He asked. "The *Sabr* for God," replied al-Shibli. "No," said the youth. "The *Sabr* by God," answered al-Shibli. "No," said the youth. "The *Sabr* over God," said al-Shibli. "No," said the youth again. "The *Sabr* in God," said al-Shibli. "No," came the answer. "The *Sabr* with God?" said al-Shibii, and the youth said "No," again. "Woe to you, which one is it?" said al-Shibli, exasperated. "The *Sabr* from God," came the answer. Al-Shibli gave a cry and swooned.[1]

Another level is that of *sabr bi Allah*, which is for those blessed with stability and steadfastness, which is attained after the state of sobriety and endurance with God (*baqa bi Allah*) and after moulding oneself in accordance with Divine norms (*takhalluq bi akhlaq Allah*). It is something attained by none except the perfect, and since we have nothing to partake of those stations, to elaborate further about these matters is not appropriate for these pages.

[1] *Sharh Manazil al-sairin, bab al-Sabr*, 88. no.28.

And Praise is God's at the beginning and the end, and may God's benedictions be upon Muhammad and, his immaculate Progeny.

17

# Seventeenth *Hadith*: REPENTANCE (*TAWBAH*)

بِالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلى الإِمَامِ الأَقْدَمِ حُجَّةِ الفِرْقَةِ وَرَئِيسِ الأُمَّةِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ الكُلَيْنِيِّ رَحِمَهُ اللهُ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَحْيَى، عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عِيسَى، عَنِ الحَسَنِ بْنِ مَحْبُوب، عَنْ مُعَاوِيَةَ بْنِ وَهَب قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ يَقُولُ: إِذَا تَابَ العَبْدُ تَوْبَةً نَصُوحاً أَحَبَّهُ اللهُ فَسَتَرَ عَلَيْهِ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ. فَقُلْتُ: وَكَيْفَ يَسْتُرُ عَلَيْهِ؟ قَالَ: يُنْسِي مَلَكَيْهِ مَا كَتَبَا عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الذُّنُوبِ وَيُوحِي إِلى جَوَارِحِهِ: إِكْتُمِي عَلَيْهِ ذُنُوبَهُ وَيُوحِي إِلى بِقَاعِ الأَرْضِ اكْتُمِي مَا كَانَ يَعْمَلُ عَلَيْكِ مِنَ الذُّنُوبِ. فَيَلْقَى اللهَ حِينَ يَلْقَاهُ وَلَيْسَ شَيْءٌ يَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِ بِشَيْءٍ مِنَ الذُّنُوبِ.

With a continuous chain of transmission reaching the pioneering leader, a proof of the sect and a chief of the *ummah*, Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulayni (*r*) from Muhammad ibn Yahya, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn ‘Isa, from, al-Hasan ibn Mahbub, from Mu‘awiyah ibn Wahab, who said, “I heard Abu Abd-Allah (a) say: ‘When a servant turns to God with sincere repentance (*tawbatan naSuhan*), God loves him and covers him (i.e. his sins) in the world and the Hereafter.’ I said, ‘And how does He cover him?’ The Imam (a) replied, “He makes the two angels (assigned to write his deeds) forget that which they have written of his sins. Then He inspires his bodily members (saying), “Do conceal his sins,” and He inspires

the earth's places (saying), "Conceal the sins that he used to commit over you." Then he meets God, at the time that he meets Him, in such a manner that there is nothing to give witness against him regarding any sin."[1]

## EXPOSITION

Know that *tawbah* (repentance) is one of the important as well as difficult stages, which signifies the return from (physical) nature (*tabi'ah*) to the soul's spirituality after that the light of (primordial) human nature (*fitrah*) and the spirit has been blinded by the darkness of carnal nature through sins and disobedience. To explain, the soul in its initial natural state (*fitrah*) is devoid of any kind of excellence, beauty, light or delight, in the same way as it is free from their opposites. It is like a blank tablet absolutely without any inscription. Neither it possesses any spiritual merits nor any vices. But there has been planted in it the sparks of capacity and capability to attain any kind of station. Its nature (*fitrah*) is straight and its essence carries intrinsic luminosity. But commission of sins causes obscurity within the heart and this obfuscation increases with the number of sins until it becomes totally darkened. The light of intrinsic nature is extinguished and changed into abiding wretchedness. But between these two states, before the onset of total darkness over the heart's tablet, if it awakes from its slumber of negligence, this state of awakening is followed by that of repentance. The benefit arising from this state –with the conditions to be mentioned, God willing, in the following pages– becomes complete and the soul returns from the darkness and obscurity of carnal nature to the light of original nature and its essential spirituality. In other words, it becomes again like a tablet devoid of virtues and vices, as mentioned in the famous *hadith*:

**التَّائِبُ مِنَ الذَّنْبِ كَمَنْ لا ذَنْبَ لَهُ.**

One who repents from sin is like one who has not sinned.[2]

This shows that *tawbah* in reality is a return from the domain of physical nature (*tabi'ah*) and its laws to the domain of spirituality and primordial nature (*fitrah*). Similarly, the reality of *inabah* is return from *fitrah* and spirituality to God and setting out and migrating from the soul's habitat to its

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab al-Tawbah*, *hadith* no. 1.
[2] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, *hadith* no. 10.

ultimate destination. Hence the station of *tawbah* is prior to that of *inabah* and an elaboration of this point is not proper for these pages.

## *TAWBAH* AND POSTPONEMENT

An important point whose awareness is necessary for the wayfarer of the path of guidance and salvation is that success in a complete and sound repentance, meeting all its conditions (to be mentioned), is a difficult thing and rarely attainable. The indulgence in sin, especially the major and mortal ones, causes man to become totally forgetful of *tawbah*. If the tree of sinfulness growing in the orchard of the human heart reaches maturity and fruition, its roots becoming strong, the results are calamitous, one of which is to turn away man totally from repentance. Even if once in a while it comes to his mind, he keeps on postponing it from day to day and from one month to another, telling himself, "I will make a sound repentance at the end of my life and in old age," forgetting that this is a Divine stratagem:

﴿وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الْمَاكِرِينَ.﴾

*And God is the best of devisers*. (3:54)

Don't imagine that man can perform *tawbah* after the strengthening of the roots of sinfulness or meet its conditions. Therefore, the springtime for *tawbah* is the time of-youth when the sins are fewer, the inner darkness of the heart incomplete, the conditions of *tawbah* easier, and their fulfillment less difficult.

Moreover, man's greed is greater in old age and so also are his love of wealth, ambition and his hopes. This is proved by experience and borne out by the Prophet's noble tradition. Even if it be admitted that man can succeed in performing *tawbah* in old age, there is no certainty of reaching old age and-of not meeting one's death in youth in the condition of habitual disobedience. The relative fewness of old people is also an indication of the fact that death is closer to the young. In a city of fifty thousand we do not see more than fifty octogenarians.

Therefore, my dear, beware of Satan's guiles and abstain from playing tricks with your Lord by telling yourself: "I will lead a life of lust for some fifty years or more, and will make amends for the past by asking His pardon." This is wishful thinking.

If you have heard or read in a tradition that God Almighty has favored

this *ummah* and accepts the repentance of its members until before the appearance of death or its signs, that is true. But alas, that is the time when the opportunity of *tawbah* is taken away from man. Do you think that *tawbah* is a mere verbal exercise? No, such is not the case; the performance of *tawbah* requires effort and hardship. The return, as well as the determination to return, requires practical effort as well as the exercise of knowledge. Otherwise it rarely happens for a man, either to think of *tawbah* or to succeed in performing it, or to fulfill the conditions of its validity and acceptance, or the conditions of its perfection. And it often happens that death grants no respite for the thought of *tawbah* to occur, or for *tawbah* to materialize, as one is transferred from this habitat with the burden of weighty sins and their endless darkness. Then, only God knows what misfortunes and calamities befall him.

Even if it be assumed that one is ultimately destined to salvation and felicity in the Hereafter, the atonement of sins is not an easy task in that world. It entails terrible squeezes, hardships and burnings before one becomes worthy of the intercession (of the intercessors) and the mercy of the Most Merciful.

So, my dear, make up your mind as soon as possible and make firm your resolution and will. Repent from your sins so long as you are young and alive in this world. Don't let this God-given opportunity to slip away. Don't pay attention to satanic enticements and the tricks of the carnal self.

## AN IMPORTANT POINT

Here it is also necessary to pay attention to another important point. The person who repents cannot completely recover that inward spiritual purity and that intellectual illumination (of those who abstain from sin) even after *tawbah*. Because a sheet of paper does not regain its former whiteness after being blackened and then cleaned with an eraser. It is difficult for a broken pot when repaired to recover its former condition. Great is the difference between a lifelong faithful and sincere friend and the friend who apologizes after betraying one.

Moreover, few are they who can correctly fulfill the duties of repentance.

Hence man should try as much as possible not to enter sin and disobedience, for the correction of the soul after its corruption is a difficult task. And if, God forbid, should such an adversity occur, one should try to take a curative step as soon as possible, for a slight damage is sooner and

better repaired.

My dear, do not pass by this stage nonchalantly and indifferently! Meditate and reflect over your condition and your ultimate end. Turn to the Book of God, the traditions of the Seal of Prophets and the Imams of guidance –upon all of whom be God's salutations– to the utterances of the *ulama* of the *ummah* as well as to the dictates of your own intellect and conscience. Do open this door, which is the key to all other openings, and enter this house which, for us, is the main abode of humanity. Consider it important and attend to it with care. Implore God, the Exalted and the Blessed, to grant you success in finding your cherished goal. Seek help from the spiritual station of the Noble Messenger and the Imams of guidance – upon all of whom be peace – and seek refuge in the *Wali al-amr,* the Age's honor and its Leader (the Twelfth Imam), may God hasten his appearance. Of course, that holy personage does assist the weak and the destitute and answer the call of the helpless.

## THE ESSENTIALS OF *TAWBAH*

Let it be known to you that there are certain essentials and requirements of a thorough repentance without whose materialization an authentic repentance is not attained. We shall mention the main ones of these, which are essential.

One of them, which is the most essential, is regret and remorse for one's past sins and faults. Another is resolving not to make a return to their commission ever. These two, in fact, constitute the essential reality of *tawbah* and comprise its essential constituents. The main thing in this respect is the attainment of this state and the realization of this reality, which should take place in such a manner that man recognizes the effect of sins on the soul and its consequences in the world of *Barzakh* and the Day of Resurrection, both by means of rational reflection as well as from tradition. For it is a demonstrable truth for the *urafa*, which has also been mentioned in the traditions of the Household of Inerrancy (a) that sins have reified forms in *Barzakh* and at the time of Resurrection which correspond with those sins. They are endowed with a life and will of their own in that world and torment men awaringly and willfully. In the same way, the fire of Hell also burns men awaringly and willfully. That is because that realm is the realm of total life.

Hence in that world we shall encounter forms which are the result of our

evil or good deeds. This matter has been often mentioned, expressly or implicitly, in the Holy Quran and the noble traditions. It is also in accordance with the creed of the emanationist philosophers and the experience and discoveries of the mystics and *urafa*. Similarly, every sin has an effect upon the soul that has been called *al-nuqtat al-sawda* (a black spot) in traditions. It is an obfuscation which appears in the heart and the soul and grows gradually. Ultimately, it may grow to completion and lead man to disbelief, apostasy and everlasting wretchedness, as explained earlier.

Hence the intelligent man when he becomes aware of this fact and pays as much heed to the statements of the prophets and *awliya* as to the advice of a physician and doctor, he would certainly abstain from sin and distance himself from it. And if, God forbid, he commits any he would turn away loathfully in penitence and his heart would be filled with remorse. The result that this remorse produces is something great and its effects are very beneficial. The determination to quit disobedience and sin is a consequence of this remorse.

If these two essential conditions are realized, the task of the wayfarer of the Hereafter becomes easier. God's graceful succor becomes his lot, and, in accordance with the explicit meaning of the holy verse:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ التَّوَّابِينَ وَيُحِبُّ الْمُتَطَهِّرِينَ.﴾

*Verily God loves the repentant, and He loves the sanctified*. (2:222)

as well as the present noble tradition, he becomes the beloved of God if he is sincere in his repentance.

And man should strive in the sincerity of his repentance with practical and meditative exercises and contemplative effort, realizing that being beloved of God is something priceless, beyond all worth. Only God knows what spiritual resplendence and what flares of perfection make up the Hereafterly form of that love, and only God, the Sublime and the Blessed, knows how He shall treat His beloved ones.

O man! How sinful and foolish thou art not to know the worth of the bounties of thy Provider (*wali al-ni'am*). After having spent years in disobedience and after prolonged disloyalty to such a Lord, Who has provided all the means of your comfort and ease –without that being, *naudhu bi Allah*, of any imaginable benefit to Him– having violated His sanctities

and taken shamelessness and recalcitrance to their extreme, now that you are remorseful, penitent and repentant, God Almighty has taken you for His loved one. What abundance of mercy and what plentitude of bounty is it!

O God! We are incapable of thanking You for Your bounties. Our tongues and those of all other beings are unable to praise You and extol You. All that we can do is to bow our heads in shame and to ask Your pardon for our shamelessness. What are we to deserve Your mercy? Yet Your mercy is more abundant and Your bounties are more inclusive than can be described. Indeed,

أَنْتَ كَمَا أَثْنَيْتَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ.

You are as You have praised Yourself.[1]

And man should endeavor to intensify the form of contrition and remorse in the heart so that God willing, it enters the burning chamber. That is, through meditation about the terrible consequences of sin, remorse becomes stronger in his heart, thereby voluntarily kindling the holy fire, the fire of which the Quran says:

﴿نَارُ اللَّهِ الْمُوقَدَةُ. الَّتِي تَطَّلِعُ عَلَى الْأَفْئِدَةِ.﴾

*The fire of God kindled, roaring over the hearts covered down upon them, in columns outstretched.*(104:6)

In his heart, burning the heart in the fire of remorse to incinerate all its sins and to burn away all its rust and corrosion. He should know that were he not to kindle himself this fire in this world and were he not to open upon himself the door of this hell –which itself is the main gateway of Paradise– he would inevitably pass from this world into the other to face the terribly cauterizing fire prepared for him there. Thereupon the doors of Hell shall be opened and the doors of Paradise closed to him.

O God! Give us a breast lit with the fire of remorse. Set our hearts aflame with the worldly fire and set it afire by throwing into it the sparks of remorse. Remove the corrosion of our hearts and take us from this world in a state of freedom from the consequences of sins. Verily Thou art the Lord of bounties and are powerful over everything.

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[1] *Safinat al-Bihar*, ii, 180.

## THE CONDITIONS OF *TAWBAH*

That which was mentioned in the section above were the essential requirements of *tawbah*. There are certain conditions for its acceptance, as well as for its perfection, that we shall mention below.

The main conditions for the acceptance of *tawbah* are two. So also there are two main conditions for its perfection. In this section we shall mention the noble utterance of Hadrat *Mawla al-Mawali*, Ali ibn Abi Talib (a), for, in fact, it is the essence of wisdom, being of the order of 'speech of kings and king of speech':

رُوِيَ فِي نَهْجِ البَلاغَةِ أنَّ قائلاً قَالَ بِحَضْرَتِهِ: أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللهَ. فَقَالَ لَهُ: ثَكَلَتْكَ أُمُّكَ أَتَدْرِي مَا الإسْتِغْفَارُ؟ الإسْتِغْفَارُ دَرَجَةُ العِلِّيِّينَ. وَهُوَ اسْمٌ وَاقِعٌ عَلَى سِتَّةِ مَعَانٍ: أَوَّلُهَا النَّدَمُ عَلَى مَا مَضَى. وَالثَّانِي العَزْمُ عَلَى تَرْكِ العَوْدِ إلَيْهِ أَبَداً. والثَّالِثُ أَنْ تُؤَدِّيَ إلَى المَخْلُوقِينَ حُقُوقَهُمْ حَتَّى تَلْقَى اللهَ أَمْلَسَ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ تَبِعَةٌ. وَالرَّابِعُ أنْ تَعْمَدَ إلَى كُلِّ فَرِيضَةٍ عَلَيْكَ ضَيَّعْتَهَا فَتُؤَدِّيَ حَقَّهَا. والخَامِسُ أَنْ تَعْمَدَ إلَى اللَّحْمِ الَّذِي نَبَتَ عَلَى السُّحْتِ فَتُذِيبُهُ بِالأحْزَانِ حَتَّى تُلْصِقَ الجِلْدَ بِالعَظْمِ وَيَنْشَأَ بَيْنَهُمَا لَحْمٌ جَدِيدٌ. وَالسَّادِسُ أَنْ تُذِيقَ الجِسْمَ أَلَمَ الطَّاعَةِ كَمَا أَذَقْتَهُ حَلاوَةَ المَعْصِيَةِ فَعِنْدَ ذَلِكَ تَقُولُ أَسْتَغْفِرُ اللهَ.

It is narrated by al-Sayyid al-Radi (*r*) in the *Nahj al-balaghah* that some said *Astaghfiru'llah* (I seek God's forgiveness) before Ali (a). Ali said to him. "May thy mother mourn for thee! Do you know what is *istighfar*? Verily *istighfar* is a degree of the *illiyyun* and it is a word that means six things. First is remorse over the past. Second, the resolution not to return to it ever. Third, to return to the creatures their rights (usurped in the past) so that you meet God Almighty in such a state of purity that no one has a claim against you. Fourth, that you fulfill every duty that was neglected by you, in order to satisfy your obligation in respect of it. Fifth, that you attend to the flesh of your body that had grown on unlawful nourishment so that it melts away as a result of grief and mourning and the skin adheres to the bones, after which

> new flesh grows there between. Sixth, that you make your body taste the pain of obedience in the same way as it tasted earlier the pleasure of sinfulness. When you have done these things then say *Astaghfiru'llah!"*[1]

This noble tradition mentions firstly two essential requirements of penitence, which are remorse and the resolution not to relapse into sin. Then it mentions the two important condition for its acceptance, which are returning the rights of creatures and then of the Creator. *Tawbah* is not accepted from anyone on the mere verbal declaration, 'I repent.' The penitent man is one who returns everything illegitimately taken from others. If anyone has a claim against him, he should satisfy it if possible, or acquire his propitiation. He should discharge whatever divine obligations and duties that have remained unfulfilled, and if all of them cannot possibly be fulfilled he should try to make amends to the extent that he can. He should know that everyone of these is a claim with a claimant that would demand it of him in the other life in the hardest of conditions, and he would be unable to satisfy it without taking up the burden of others' sins and exchanging his good deeds for the satisfaction of those claims. At that time, he will be helpless and destitute and have no way out for his relief.

My dear, let not Satan and the carnal self take hold of you and make the matter appear an insurmountable difficulty in your eyes and thus finish you off by making you refrain from *tawbah*. Do know that it is better to act in this regard even if to a small extent. If the unoffered prayers, fasts and atonements are many, if God's unfulfilled duties are numerous and the people's usurped rights are innumerable, if your sins are abundant and your vices are plenty, do not despair of God's grace and' do not lose hope in His mercy. God Almighty will facilitate your passage if you act to the extent of your capacity and He will show you the path of salvation. You should know that to despair of the mercy of God is the biggest of sins and I don't think that any other sin has a more evil effect upon the soul. A person that despairs of divine mercy, his heart is so full of gloom and he becomes so unbridled that nothing can correct him. Beware, lest you despair of God's mercy and consider sins and their consequences as insurmountable. God's mercy is greater than everything and encompasses all things, and God's justice is not bound by conditions. What were you, to begin with? In the void of

[1] *Nahj al-balaghah*, ed. Subhi al-Salih, Beirut 1387 H.(1967), p.549, *Hikam*, no. 417.

nothingness, when there was no question of capacity or worthiness, God, the Supreme and the Glorious, endowed you with the bounty of being and the excellences of existence without any request or prayer or any worthiness or capacity on your part. Then He provided you with His unlimited bounties and His unending favors, subjecting all the creatures to you. Even now your condition is not worse than absolute nothingness and pure non-being. Moreover, God has promised mercy and forgiveness. Take a step forward towards His Holy threshold and He will Himself assist you by all means. If you cannot make amends for the return of His rights, He will overlook your failure. If you cannot satisfy the rights of others, He will compensate for it. And you have already heard the story of the young grave-opener during the times of the Messenger of Allah (*s*).

My dear, the path of God is easy and simple. All that it requires is some attentiveness. Postponement, delay, neglect and allowing the sins to pile up day after day is what makes the matter difficult. But resolute action and decision to set aright the affairs of the soul makes the path shorter and the task easier. Make an experiment by taking some action. If you achieve results, the truth of this matter will be proved to you. Otherwise the path of perversion is open and the hands of your sinfulness are long.

The other two things mentioned by Amir al-Muminin (a) are the conditions for a perfect *tawbah* and a thorough penitence. Not that *tawbah* is not realized or accepted without them, rather it does not become perfect in their absence.

Let it be known to you that everyone of the stations (*manazil*) of the wayfarers has stages (*maratib*)which differ in accordance with the state of their hearts. If the penitent person wants to attain to its perfect degree, after having attended to the omissions –i.e. after having made good for the neglect of the duties– he should now attend to the accretions also. That is, he must now take up the spiritual accretion acquired during the days of sinfulness. That takes place by completely wiping out the physical and spiritual effects produced in the realm of the self so that the soul recovers its former refinement and its primordial, natural spirituality by a process of thorough purification. As you already know, every sin and pleasure produces an effect upon the soul in the same way as the body too derives nourishment from some of them. Hence the penitent person should with manly courage and determination exterminate all those effects and their traces through physical and spiritual austerities, as taught by *Mawla* Ali (a).

Thus through physical austerities and abstinence from pleasures and dietary luxuries, through obligatory or supererogatory fasting, he should remove the flesh that accumulated in his body through sin or during his sinful days. By means of spiritual exercises, worship and ritual devotions he must attend to the accretions of carnal nature. This is because the forms of physical pleasures still linger in the soul, and as these forms are present there the carnal self is inclined toward them and the heart is infatuated with them and it is feared that, God forbid, the self would rebel again and snatch away its reins.

Hence it is necessary for the wayfarers of the Hereafterly path and the penitent from sins to make the soul taste the pain of austerities and worship. If a night was spent in sin and licentiousness, that must be compensated with a night's watch devoted to the worship of God. If a day was spent in corporeal pleasures, that must be compensated with fasts and appropriate devotional rites. This is necessary so that the soul may be completely purged of the effects and traces of the attachments arising from the love of the world. If this is done, *tawbah*, of course, becomes perfect and the soul's primordial brilliance returns to it. Throughout the course of such exercises he must contemplate and meditate upon, the consequences of sin, the severity of God Almighty's might, the precision of the Balance of deeds, and the intensity of the chastisement of *Barzakh* and Resurrection. He must understand and make his self and heart understand that all these things are consequences and forms of one's vicious deeds, of opposition to the King of kings. It is hoped that after this knowledge and reflection the soul will loath sins and detest them with a complete and total hatred, thus attaining the intended result of *tawbah*, which now becomes perfect and complete.

Those two stages thus are what make the station of *tawbah* perfect and complete. Of course, when man at first wishes to enter the station of *tawbah*, he must not think that he is required to reach the last of stages, so that the path appears to him to be full of difficulty and hardship and he decides to leave off once for all. To whatever extent the wayfarer of the path of Hereafter is able to traverse this path, it is good and desirable to that extent. After that, when he sets out on the path, God Almighty makes the journey easy for him. Hence the difficulty of the journey must not stop one from setting out towards his destination. For the goal is very great and important, and once one understands the greatness of the goal the hardships of the path become easy and bearable. Tell me, what goal is higher than eternal salvation, joy and bless? What peril is greater than eternal wretchedness and

damnation? By shunning *tawbah* or postponing it and delaying it one may subject oneself to eternal wretchedness, unending punishment and everlasting damnation, and by performing it one may obtain absolute felicity and become the beloved of God. Hence if the goal is so great, why should one be scared of a few days' hardship?

You should know that whatever action one can take, even if little, is beneficial. Compare the matters of the Hereafter with worldly affairs, wherein the worldly wise, if they are incapable of attaining their highest objective, do not desist from reaching a lower goal. If an objective cannot be obtained in its totality, that does not prevent them from attaining it partially. You too, if you are incapable of attaining this objective to its perfect degree, should not give up the principal goal itself. Try to achieve it to the extent that is possible for you.

## THE RESULT OF *ISTIGHFAR*

Of the things in respect of which it is necessary for the penitent person to act is taking refuge in the forgiveness of God Almighty and attainment of the state of *istighfar*. Openly and secretly, mournfully and pleadingly, in solitude, with lamentation, tears and wails of woe, he should implore the forgiveness of His Sacred Essence to cover his sins and wipe out their consequences. Of course, the forgivefulness and the veiling grace of that Sacred Essence implies the covering of defects and forgiveness of the sins' consequences. And since the spiritual forms of deeds are like a man's offspring, or something even more closely linked to him, and since the reality of *tawbah* and the form of *istighfar* is tantamount to disowning and cursing (*lian*), God Almighty, since He is the All-forgiving and the Veiler, dissociates those offsprings of the penitent from him on account of his *lian* and separates them from him.

Thereupon He obscures that sin from the sight to all those beings that have come to know about his sin, including the angels and the notaries of offences, the time and the place of its commission, as well his own bodily members and organs, and makes them forget it, as pointed out in the noble tradition which says:

يُنْسِي مَلَكَيْهِ مَا كَتَبَا عَلَيْهِ مِنَ الذُّنُوبِ.

> He makes His two angels forget that which they have recorded of his sins.

And possibly God Almighty's 'inspiring' the bodily members and organs, as well as the earth's locations, to conceal the sins, as mentioned in the noble tradition, is the same as the erasing of the sins from their memory. It is also possible that it means a command to abstain from giving testimony. Or perhaps that which is meant is the obliteration of the effects of sins from bodily members, whose presence amounts to their existential witness, so that if one did not perform *tawbah* every one of his organs, either with the tongue of speech or condition, would bear testimony to his deeds.

As it is, God's station of forgivefulness and His veiling grace have required that now that we are in this world our organs and members abstain from giving testimony about our deeds and time and space conceal our actions. In the same way, if we leave this world with genuine *tawbah* and sincere *istighfar*, they will conceal our deeds, or our deeds will be totally obscured for them. And perhaps the second explanation is more in order in view of the God Almighty's magnanimity, so that the penitent human being is not ashamed in front of anyone. And God knows best.

## ON THE INTERPRETATION OF *TAWBAH NASUH*

You should know that there is difference of opinion regarding the interpretation of the term *tawbah nasuh* and a brief mention of it is suitable here. Here we will confine ourselves to translating the words of the greater researcher al-Shaykh al-Bahai (*q*).

The informed traditionist al-Majlisi (*m*) quotes al-Shaykh al-Bahai as having said that the exegetes have given several meanings of *tawbatan nasuh*. According to one of them, it means a *tawbah* that 'advise' the people, that is invites them to simulate him on account of the good effect produced in its performer, or that it 'counsels' its performer to root out sins and to never return to their commission.

Another interpretation is that *tawbah nasuh* is a *tawbah* which is done purely (*khalis*) for God's sake, in the same way as pure honey free from wax is called *asal nasuh*. And sincerity means that the remorse should be on account of the ugliness of sins or because they are contrary to God's good pleasure, not for the fear of hellfire.

The honorable researcher al-Tusi has ruled in the *Tajrid* that a remorse felt for sins on account of the fear of hellfire is not *tawbah* at all.

According to another interpretation, *nasuh* is related to *nasabah*, which

means tailoring, because *tawbah* sews together the body of faith torn by sin, or because it joins the penitent person to God's *awliya* and His lovers in the same way as separate pieces of cloth are joined together by tailoring.

According to yet another interpretation, *nasuh*' here is an attribute of the penitent and is linked to *tawbah* in a metaphorical manner. That is, *tawbah nasuh* is a *tawbah* whose performer counsels and advises himself to perform it as perfectly and completely as it is worthy of being performed until the effects of sins are totally purged from the heart, which is attained by making the soul melt with regret and grief and by clearing the darkness of vices by the light of virtues.

## ALL BEINGS ARE ENDOWED WITH LIFE AND KNOWLEDGE

Let it be known to you that there are certain realities, mysteries and subtleties for *tawbah*, and there is a specific *tawbah* particular to his own station for every one of the wayfarers of the path towards God. And since we do not partake of those stations, an elaboration of their details is not proper for these pages. Therefore it is better to conclude this discourse with the mention of a point inferable from the noble tradition, which is also in accordance with the literal meanings of the verses of the Noble Quran and a large number of traditions scattered through various chapters. That point is that every one of the existents is possessed of knowledge, life and consciousness. Rather, all the existents possess the *marifah* (gnosis) of the station of God, the Glorious and the Sublime. The inspiration imparted to bodily organs and members and the earth's locations regarding the concealment (of sins) and their obedience to divine commands, the *tasbih* of all existents referred to expressly in the Glorious Quran and with the mention of which things the noble traditions are replete – all these are proof of their knowledge, cognition and life. Rather, they constitute the proof of a special relation between the Creator and the creation, of which none has any knowledge except the Sacred Essence of God Almighty and those who it pleases Him should know.

And this is itself one of the teachings that the Noble Quran and the traditions of the inerrant Imams have imparted to mankind, which is also in agreement with the views of the emanationist philosophers and the mystics, as well as the experience of the mystics. In the sublime science of metaphysics it has been proved that existence is identical with divine Excellences, Names and Attributes and at whatever level they manifest themselves and are reflected in a mirror, the manifestation is accompanied

with all the aspects and excellences, including life, cognition and the rest of the seven main Attributes. And every one of the phases of manifestation of the reality of being and every level in the descendence of the light of the perfect beauty of the Deity has a special relation with the One, through which it has the secret gnosis of the Lord, as stated in the noble verse.

﴿مَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ آخِذٌ بِنَاصِيَتِهَا إِنَّ رَبِّي عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ﴾

*There is no creature that crawls, but He takes it by the forelock...* (11:56)

It is said that *huwa* (He) refers to the mystery of Divine Ipseity, and 'the taking by the forelock' is the same mysterious, secret primordial existential relation the way to whose cognition is closed to all existents.

18

# Eighteenth *Hadith*: REMEMBRANCE OF GOD

بِالسَنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلَى فَخْرِ الطَّائِفَةِ وَذُخْرِهَا مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ رِضْوَانُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ، عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَحْيَى، عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عِيسَى، عَنِ ابْنِ مَحْبُوبٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِاللهِ بْنِ سِنَانٍ، عَنْ أَبِي حَمْزَةَ الثَّمَالِيِّ، عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: مَكْتُوبٌ فِي التَّوْرَاةِ الَّتِي لَمْ تُغَيَّرْ أَنَّ مُوسَى عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ سَأَلَ رَبَّهُ فَقَالَ: يَا رَبِّ أَقَرِيبٌ أَنْتَ مِنِّي فَأُنَاجِيكَ أَمْ بَعِيدٌ فَأُنَادِيكَ؟ فَأَوْحَى اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ إِلَيْهِ: يَا مُوسَى أَنَا جَلِيسُ مَنْ ذَكَرَنِي. فَقَالَ مُوسَى: فَمَنْ فِي سِتْرِكَ يَوْمَ لا سِتْرَ إِلا سِتْرُكَ؟ فَقَالَ: الَّذِينَ يَذْكُرُونَنِي فَأَذْكُرُهُمْ وَيَتَحَابُّونَ فِيَّ فَأُحِبُّهُمْ. فَأُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَرَدْتُ أَنْ أُصِيبَ أَهْلَ الأَرْضِ بِسُوءٍ ذَكَرْتُهُمْ فَدَفَعْتُ عَنْهُمْ بِهِمْ.

Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulayni (*r*) from Muhammad ibn Yahya, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Isa, from Ibn Mahbub, from Abd-Allah ibn Sinan, from Abu Hamzah al-Thumali, from Abu Jafar (a) that he said, "It is written in the Torah that has not been altered that Moses (a) asked his Lord (saying): 'O Lord! (Tell me) art Thou near me, so that I should pray to Thee in whispers, or art Thou far, that I should cry out. to Thee?' Thereat God Almighty revealed to him: 'O Moses! I am the companion of one who remembers me.' Moses said: 'Who are those that shall be in Thy refuge on the day when there shall be no refuge except Thy refuge?' He replied: 'Those who remember Me, whom I do remember; those who love one

another for My sake, whom I love. They are those whom I remember whenever I wish to strike the earth's people with affliction, and consequently spare them on their account."[1]

## EXPOSITION

It is shown by this noble tradition that the Torah current amongst the Jews is a corrupted and an altered one. The knowledge of the true Torah was with the *Ahl al-Bayt* (a). From the contents of the current Torah and Gospels it appears that they do not meet the standard of even the speech commonly acceptable of a human being (to say nothing of the criterion of Divine speech); rather, the delusions of some followers of carnal lust and desire have been incorporated in them.

The researcher and traditionist al-Majlisi (*m*) says, "It appears that the intention of Hadrat Musa by this question was to inquire about the etiquette of prayer, while he knew that God is nearer to one than his jugular vein, with an encompassing nearness based on knowledge, power and causal efficiency. He meant to say, 'Do You like to be prayed to in whispers, like one speaks to someone near, or should I call You like one who calls out to someone far away?' In other words, 'When 'I look at You, I find You nearer than anything that is near, and when I look at myself I find myself .at a far distance. Thus, I don't know whether I should take into consideration Your situation in my prayer or my own condition:' And it is possible that this question was made on behalf of someone else, like the question related to the possibility of Beatific vision" (mentioned in the Quran, 7:148).

It is possible that Moses intended to express his feeling of loss and wonder in respect of the manner of praying. He meant to say, "O Lord! You are too immaculate and above everything for nearness and farness to be attributable to You, that I may address You as one who is near or one who is far. Hence I am at a loss in this matter, for I do not consider any manner of prayer to be suitable for Your glorious station. So permit me to pray, and show me its manner. Teach me that which is appropriate for Your sacred station." The answer came from the Source of Glory and Majesty that, "I, as the Sustainer, am present in all the manifold levels and realms of existence.

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[1] Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al-dua*, *bab ma yajib min dhikr Allah fi kulli majlis*, *hadith* no. 4.

All the worlds constitute My presence. Yet, I am the companion of those who remember Me and am by the side of those who call Me."

Of course, proximity and distance cannot be attributed to that Sacred Essence. It possesses the encompassment of sustenance (*ihatah-ye qayyumi* i.e. the encompassment that God Almighty possesses over all being as its sustainer) and existential all-inclusiveness (*shumul-e wujudi*) over all the domains of being and all the streams of reality. However, that which is mentioned in the noble verses of the Glorious Book of God regarding the attribution of nearness and proximity to God Almighty, such as the verses,

﴿وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ أُجِيبُ دَعْوَةَ الدَّاعِي إِذَا دَعَانِي.﴾

*And when My servants question thee concerning Me, (tell them that) I am near to answer the call of the caller, when he calls to Me.* (2:186)

﴿وَنَعْلَمُ مَا تُوَسْوِسُ بِهِ نَفْسُهُ وَنَحْنُ أَقْرَبُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ حَبْلِ الْوَرِيدِ.﴾

*And We know what his soul whispers within him, and We are nearer to him than the jugular vein.* (50:16)

and others like them, constitute a kind of metaphor and allegory. Otherwise, His sacred being is above proximity and distance, physical or immaterial; for these qualities entail limitation (*tahdid*) and likeness (*tashbih*, i.e. to creatures) and God Almighty is beyond them. Rather, the presence of all existents in the court of His sanctity is a relational presence, and the encompassment of that Sacred Essence over the particles of the universe and the chains of existents is the encompassment of sustenance, which is something other than sensible or spiritual presence and is different from outward and inward encompassment.

From this noble tradition, and some other traditions as well, the preference for concealed remembrance (*dhikr-e khafi*) and the desirability of remembrance within the heart and secretly can be inferred. This is also indicated by the noble verse:

﴿وَاذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ تَضَرُّعًا وَخِيفَةً وَدُونَ الْجَهْرِ مِنْ الْقَوْلِ بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ.﴾

*Remember thy Lord in thy soul, humbly and fearfully, not loud of voice, at morn and eventide.* (7:205)

In a noble tradition it is stated that the reward (*thawab*) of this remembrance, on account of its greatness, is known to none except God Almighty. In some circumstances and states the preference may lie with overt remembrance, like the remembrance done in front of the negligent for the sake of reminding them. Hence it is mentioned in a noble tradition of *al-Kafi* that one who recalls God Almighty amongst the negligent is like one who fights against the *muharibun* (i.e. those who have taken up arms against God and Islam). The following tradition is mentioned in the *Uddat al-dai* of Ibn Fahd:

قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: مَنْ ذَكَرَ اللهَ فِي السُّوقِ مُخْلِصاً عِنْدَ غَفْلَةِ النَّاسِ وَشُغْلِهِمْ بِمَا هُمْ فِيهِ كَتَبَ اللهُ لَهُ أَلْفَ حَسَنَةٍ وَيَغْفِرُ اللهُ لَهُ يَوْمَ القِيَامَةِ مَغْفِرَةً لَمْ تَخْطُرْ عَلَى قَلْبِ بَشَرٍ.

The narrator says that the Prophet (*S*) said, "One who recalls God in the marketplace, with sincerity, in the midst of the people's obliviousness and their engagement in its affairs, God writes for him a thousand merits and forgives him on the Day of Resurrection with a forgiveness that has not occurred to any human heart."[1]

Similarly, it is *mustahabb* to make the *dhikr* aloud in the *adhan*, in sermons, and other things.

It is stated in this noble tradition that the remembrance of God and mutual love and friendship for His sake have certain characteristics. One of them, which is more important than the others, is that the remembrance' of God by the servant results in God's remembering him, and this matter is also mentioned in other traditions. This remembrance stands in opposition to the neglect (*nisyan*) mentioned by God Almighty in relation to one who forgets God's *ayat* (signs, verses):

﴿قَالَ رَبِّ لِمَ حَشَرْتَنِي أَعْمَى وَقَدْ كُنتُ بَصِيرًا. قَالَ كَذَلِكَ أَتَتْكَ آيَاتُنَا فَنَسِيتَهَا وَكَذَلِكَ الْيَوْمَ تُنسَى.﴾

*He shall say, 'O my Lord, why hast Thou raised me blind, and I was wont to see?' God shall say, 'Even so it is. Our ayat came unto thee, and thou didst forget them*; *and so*

[1] Ahmad ibn Fahd, *Uddat al-dai*, 242.

*today thou art forgotten.'* (20:126)

In the same way as the forgetting of the *ayat* and inward blindness to the manifestations of Divine glory and beauty result in blindness in the other world, so do the remembrance of the *ayat*, the Names, and the Attributes and the remembrance of God, His beauty and majesty strengthen the inward vision and remove the obscuring screens in proportion to the strength of the *dhikr* and its luminosity. When the remembrance of the *ayat* becomes a faculty (*malakah*), the inner vision becomes so strong that it begins to see Divine beauty in the *ayat*. The remembrance of the Names and the Attributes results in the vision of God in the manifestations of the Names and the Attributes (*tajalliyat-e asmaiyyah wa sifatiyyah*). The remembrance of the Essence without the veils of the *ayat*, Names and Attributes removes all the veils and affords the unobstructed vision of the Beloved. And this is one of the interpretations of 'the triple victories' (*futuhat-e thalathah*) which make up the highest delight of the *urafa* and *awliya*: *fath-e qarib* (the nearer victory), *fath-e mubin* (the manifest victory), and *fath-e mutlaq* (the absolute victory), which is *fath al-futuh*, the ultimate victory.

In the same way as the threefold remembrance removes the threefold veils, mutual love for the sake of God also leads to God's love, and the result of this love is also the removal of veils, as pointed out by the illustrious *urafa*.

Obviously, this love (God's love) has also various degrees, for the love for the sake of God has also many levels in respect of sincerity and vitiation. Complete sincerity is that which is free even from the flaw of the plurality of the Names and Attributes (*kathrat-e asmai wa sifati*), and it results in complete love. The absolute lover will not be deprived of communion in the code of love, and there will remain no obstruction between the lover and the Beloved. With this exposition, we may establish a relation between the two questions of Moses (a). For after hearing God Almighty declare that He is the companion (*jalis*) of one who remembers Him, and after hearing from the Beloved Himself the promise which he coveted in his heart, of the union with the Beauty, he wanted to discover the identity of those who shall achieve the union, so that he may fulfill his duty in all its aspects. Hence he asked:

فَمَنْ فِي سِتْرِكَ يَوْمَ لا سِتْرَ إلا سِتْرَكَ؟

> Who are they that shall be in Thy refuge on the day when there shall be no refuge except Thy refuge?

That is, who are they who, in Thy refuge, have attained emancipation from all attachments and freedom from obstructive barriers, attaining communion with Thy supreme beauty? He is told: 'They are the two groups: those who are in My remembrance, and those who love one another mutually, who are also in My remembrance in respect of the complete manifestation of My beauty, that is man. They are in My refuge, being My companions and I in theirs.' This shows that these two groups possess one great quality, which results in another great characteristic. Because God Almighty remembers them and makes them His beloved ones, the result is that they obtain His refuge on the day when there is no refuge, their companion being God in the place of absolute seclusion. The other characteristic is that God Almighty spares His creatures of chastisement for the sake of their nobility. That is, as long as they are in the midst of the creatures, He does not send chastisement and calamities upon them for the sake of them.

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN *TAFAKKUR* AND *TADHAKKUR*

Let it be known to you that *tadhakkur* (remembrance) is the result of *tafakkur* (contemplation). Hence the station of *tafakkur* has been considered to precede that of *tadhakkur*. Khwajah Abd-Allah al-ansari says:

**اَلتَّذَكُّرُ فَوْقَ التَّفَكُّرِ. فَإِنَّ التَّفَكُّرَ طَلَبٌ وَالتَّذَكُّرَ وُجُودٌ.**

> *Tadhakkur* stands above *tafakkur*, for verily *tafakkur* is the search (of the Beloved) and *tadhakkur* is the attainment (of the Beloved).

As long as man is on the path of search, he is separate from the searched object. With the finding of the searched beloved, he is relieved of the labor of search. The strength and the perfection of *tadhakkur* is dependent on the strength and perfection of *tafakkur*. The *tafakkur* whose result is complete *tadhakkur* of the Worshipped One does not compare with other actions in regard to merit. Accordingly, in the noble traditions, an hour of *tafakkur* is considered to be better than the *ibadah* (worship) of a year, or even that of sixty or seventy years. It is obvious that the ultimate goal and fruit of the *ibadat* is the attainment of the knowledge and remembrance of God, and this is better attainable through valid contemplation. Perhaps, an hour's contemplation may open to the wayfarer the door to mystic knowledge, which may not be opened even by seventy years of *ibadah*, or it may make a

human being so mindful of the Beloved that not even the austerities of several years can be able to achieve such a result.

And my dear, let it be known to you, the remembrance of the Beloved and keeping the heart engaged in the memory of the Adored One have many results for all the classes of people. As to the perfect ones, the *awliya* and the *urafa*, it is the ultimate goal of their hopes, under whose shadow they receive communion with the Beloved's splendor –may it do them much good! As to the ordinary people and the *mutawassitun*, it is the noblest of the formative agents of morality and conduct, in outward as well as inward life.

If man remains in the remembrance of God Almighty in all conditions and states, and sees himself as present in the court of that Sacred Essence, he would of course refrain from the matters which are contrary to His good pleasure, and check the self from rebelliousness. All the calamities and afflictions brought about by the carnal self and the accursed Satan are due to forgetting God and His chastisement. The forgetting of God increases the darkness of the heart and allows the carnal self and Satan to dominate the human being, thus multiplying his afflictions day by day. The remembrance of God gives polish and burnish to the heart and makes it a reflector of the Beloved's beauty. It purifies the soul and liberates the self of the human being from bondages. The love of the world, which is the source of all error and the fountainhead of all sin, is purged from the heart. All the anxieties and concerns are replaced by the sole concern of purifying the dwelling of the heart for the sake of the entry of the Dweller.

Therefore, my dear, whatever pains and hardships that you bear in the path of the *dhikr* and remembrance of the Beloved are little. Accustom your heart to the remembrance of the Beloved, so that, God willing, the heart itself takes on the form of *dhikr*, so that the immaculate pronouncement *la ilaha ill'Allah* becomes the ultimate form and the furthest limit of perfection of the self. There is no better provision for the wayfarer in his journey toward God, no better reformer for the defects of the soul, and no better guide to the Divine teachings.

Hence, if you are a seeker of the formal and spiritual excellences, if you are a wayfarer of the Hereafter's path, a traveler and emigrant towards Allah, habituate the heart to the Beloved's *dhikr* and knead it with the remembrance of God.

## THE COMPLETE *DHIKR*

Although the remembrance of God and the *dhikr* of that Sacred Essence is a quality of the heart, and if the heart is immersed in *dhikr* all the benefits that accrue from it are obtained by the heart, it is better that the remembrance in the heart be followed by oral *dhikr*. The most perfect and meritorious of the degrees of *dhikr* is that it should be present in all levels of a man's existence, that its domain should extend to the outward and the inward, the manifest and the concealed realms of his being.

Thereat God, the Supreme and the Glorious, becomes manifest in the core of his being. The inward form of the heart and the soul take the form of the Beloved's remembrance, and the actions of the heart and the body take on the form of remembrance. The seven realms of corporeal being, as well as the inward domains, are conquered by the Divine *dhikr* and made subject to the remembrance of the Absolute Beauty. Rather, if the inward form of the heart assumes the reality of *dhikr*, and the realm of the heart is conquered by it, its sovereignty extends to all the other domains. The movements and pauses of the eyes, the tongue, the hands and the feet, and the actions of all other members and faculties, are accompanied with the remembrance of God, making no move against their duties. Thereupon, their movements and pauses begin and end with the *dhikr* of God:

﴿بِاسْمِ اللَّهِ مُجْرَاهَا وَمُرْسَاهَا.﴾

*In the Name of Allah shall be its course and its berthing.*
(11:41)

Its influence penetrates into all the realms, which are moulded as a result in accordance with the reality of the Names and the Attributes. Rather, they assume the form of the Greatest of the Names of Allah (*ism Allah al-azam*), becoming its manifestation (*mazhar*). And this is the ultimate limit of human perfection and the ultimate goal of the hopes of the elect of Allah (*ahl Allah*). To the same degree that there is an inadequacy in this regard and a shortcoming in the influence of *dhikr*, to the same extent does the degree of human excellence falls short of perfection, for the inadequacies of the inward and the outward interpenetrate each other. This is because the various spheres of human existence are interrelated and subject to mutual influence. It is from here that it is known that oral remembrance (*dhikr-e nutqi wa zabani*), which is the lowest level of *dhikr*, is also beneficial. For it means, firstly, that the tongue carries out its obligation, although its movement is

only formal, devoid of spirit. Secondly, there is the possibility that persistence in this *dhikr*, with due regard to its conditions, may become a means of opening the tongue of the heart too.

Our Shaykh, the perfect *arif* Shahabadi –may my soul be his ransom– would say: "The *dhakir* (one who performs *dhikr*), during *dhikr*, must be like one teaching words to a little child that has not yet learnt to speak. He repeats the word until the child's tongue is opened and the latter utters the word. After that the child has articulated it, the teacher follows the child and his fatigue caused by repetition is removed, as if he has received an encouraging assistance from the child. In the same way, one who engages in *dhikr* must teach *dhikr* to his heart, which has not learnt to articulate. The point that is concealed in the repetition of the *adhkar* is that thereby the tongue of the heart is opened, and its sign is that thereafter the tongue follows the heart and the hardship and strain of repetition is removed. First, it is the tongue which is *dhakir* and following it the heart also becomes *dhakir* with the tongue's aid and instruction. After that the heart's tongue has learnt to articulate, the tongue follows it and becomes *dhakir* with the aid of the heart or God's concealed assistance."

And it should be known that the outward and formal actions don't have the capacity of life in the world of the *ghayb* or *malakut* except when they received assistance from the inward realm of the spirit and the heart's core, which bestows on them a spiritual life (*hayat-e malakuti*). That spiritual breath, which is the form of the sincerity of intention and sincere intention, is like the inward soul, following which the body too is resurrected in the realm of *malakut* and permitted entry into the Divine court. Therefore, it is stated in the noble traditions that the acceptability of (physical) deeds is in accordance with the measure of the heart's receptivity and responsiveness (*iqbal-e qalb*). In spite of it oral *dhikr* is desirable, and it ultimately leads man to reach the Truth. Accordingly, in the traditions and reports, oral *dhikr* has been greatly extolled and there are few topics regarding which there is as much a great number of traditions as the topic of *dhikr*. It has also been greatly extolled in the noble verses of the Glorious Book, although most of them pertain to inward *dhikr* (*dhikr-e qalbi*), or the *dhikr* possessing soul. The remembrance of God is lovable on whatever level that it takes place. At this stage we conclude this discourse by mentioning some noble traditions at the end for the sake of *tabarruk* and *tayammun*.

## SOME TRADITIONS CONCERNING *DHIKR*

الكَافِي بِسَنَدٍ صَحِيحٍ عَنِ الفُضَيْلِ بْنِ يَسَارٍ قَالَ: قَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: مَا مِنْ مَجْلِسٍ يَجْتَمِعُ فِيهِ أَبْرَارٌ وَفُجَّارٌ فَيَقُومُونَ عَلَى غَيْرِ ذِكْرِ اللهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ إلا كَانَ حَسْرَةً عَلَيْهِمْ يَوْمَ القِيَامَةِ.

> In *al-Kafi*, it is reported with a *Sahih* chain of transmission from al-Fudayl ibn Yasar that Imam Jafar al-Sadiq (a) said, "There is no gathering in which the virtuous and the sinful come together and thereafter stand up to leave without mentioning God Almighty except that it would be a cause of regret to them on the Day of Resurrection."[1]

It is obvious that when man discovers the great results of the *dhikr* of God on the Day of Resurrection and finds himself deprived of them, he will realize the irreparable loss of the bounties and delights incurred by him. As a result he will be seized with regret and remorse. Hence, as long as there is opportunity, a human being must take advantage of his gatherings and assemblies, letting them not remain empty of God's remembrance.

الكَافِي بِسَنَدٍ مَوْثُوقٍ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: مَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَكْتَالَ بِالمِكْيَالِ الأَوْفَى فَلْيَقُلْ إِذَا أَرَادَ أَنْ يَقُومَ مِنْ مَجْلِسِهِ: ﴿سُبْحَانَ رَبِّكَ رَبِّ الْعِزَّةِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ. وَسَلَامٌ عَلَى الْمُرْسَلِينَ. وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ.﴾

> In *al-Kafi*, it is reported with a *muwaththaq* chain of transmission from Imam al-Baqir (a) that he said, "Whoever desires to receive the full measure (of God's blessing) should say while standing up after a gathering: 'Free is thy Lord, the Lord of Glory, from what they describe. And peace be upon the Messengers; and praise belongs to God, the Lord of all being.'[2]

And it is narrated from Imam al-Sadiq that Amir al-Muminin (a) said:

> Whoever wants to receive the full measure of recompense

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[1] *Al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al-dua, bab ma yajib min dhikr Allah fi kulli majlis, hadith* no. 1.

[2] *Al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al-dua, bab ma yajib min dhikr Allah fi kulli majlis, hadith* no. 3.

on the Day of Resurrection should read these noble verses following every *Salat*.[1]

Also it is reported in a *mursal* tradition from Imam al-Sadiq (a) that recitation of these verses at the time of the end of a gathering is an atonement for sins.[2]

الكَافِي بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنِ ابْنِ فَضَالٍ رَفَعَهُ قَالَ: قَالَ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لِعِيسَى عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: يَا عِيسَى اذْكُرْنِي فِي نَفْسِكَ أَذْكُرْكَ فِي نَفْسِي، وَاذْكُرْنِي فِي مَلَإِ[كَ] أَذْكُرْكَ فِي مَلَإٍ خَيْرٍ مِنْ مَلَإِ الآدَمِيِّينِ. يَا عِيسَى أَلِنْ لِي قَلْبَكَ وَأَكْثِرْ ذِكْرِي فِي الخَلَوَاتِ وَاعْلَمْ أَنَّ سُرُورِي أَنْ تُبَصْبِصَ إِلَيَّ وَكُنْ فِي ذَلِكَ حَيّاً وَلا تَكُنْ مَيِّتاً.

*Al-Kafi*, in a *marfu hadith*, narrates with its chain of transmission from Ibn Fadal, from one of the Imams (a) that he said, "God Almighty said to Jesus (a), 'O Jesus, remember Me in thy self, so that I may remember thee within My self. Mention Me in thy assembly so that I may mention thee in an assembly better than the assembly of men. O Jesus, soften thy heart for Me and remember Me much in thy solitude. Know that My delight lies in thy doing *tabasbus* toward Me. And be alive in that and don't be dead.'[3]

*Tabasbus* means the dog's wagging of its tail, out of fear or hope, and this alludes to the intensity of eagerness and humility. By 'life' in remembrance is meant the presence and attention of the heart.

الكَافِي بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: إِنَّ اللهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ يَقُولُ: مَنْ شُغِلَ بِذِكْرِي عَنْ مَسْأَلَتِي أَعْطَيْتُهُ أَفْضَلَ مَا أُعْطِي مَنْ سَأَلَنِي.

Imam al-Sadiq (a) said: Verily God Almighty has said, "One who is kept by My remembrance from asking

[1] *Jami al-ahadith, kitab al-salat, hadith* no. 3487.

[2] *Wasail al-Shiah,* xv, *hadith* no. 28901.

[3] *Al-Kafi,* ii, *kitab al-dua, bab dhikr Allah fi al-sirr, hadith* no. 3.

something of Me, I bestow upon him the best of what I have bestowed upon any petitioner that has asked anything of Me."[1]

عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ فَهْدٍ فِي عُدَّةِ الدَّاعِي عَنْ رَسُولِ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ قَالَ: إِعْلَمُوا أَنَّ خَيْرَ أَعْمَالِكُمُ عِنْدَ مَلِيكِكُمْ وَأَزْكَاهَا وَأَرْفَعَهَا فِي دَرَجَاتِكُمْ وَخَيْرَ مَا طَلَعَتْ عَلَيْهِ الشَّمْسُ ذِكْرُ اللهِ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى. فَإِنَّهُ أَخْبَرَ عَنْ نَفْسِهِ فَقَالَ: أَنَا جَلِيسُ مَنْ ذَكَرَنِي.

Ahmad ibn Fahd narrates in *Uddat al-dai* from the Messenger of Allah (*S*) that he said, "The best of your acts near God and the purest and sublimest of them in degree and the best thing upon which the sun has shone is the remembrance of God Almighty. Verily He has informed you, saying, 'I am the companion of him who remembers Me.'"[2]

The traditions concerning the excellence of *dhikr*, its manner, etiquette and conditions are so many that to mention them is beyond the capacity of these pages.

وَالحَمْدُ للهِ أَوَّلاً وَآخِراً وَظَاهِراً وَبَاطِناً.

And praise is God's at the beginning and the end, inwardly and outwardly.

[1] *Ibid*., *bab al-ishtighal bi dhikr Allah*, *hadith* no. l.
[2] *Uddat al-dai*, 238.

19

# Nineteenth *Hadith*: BACKBITING (*GHIBAH*)

بِسَنَدي الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلى ثِقَةِ الإِسْلامِ وَالْمُسْلِمِينَ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ رِضْوَانُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ، عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنِ النَّوْفَلِي، عَنِ السُّكُونِيِّ، عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: الغَيْبَةُ أَسْرَعُ فِي دِينِ الرَّجُلِ الْمُسْلِمِ مِنَ الأَكْلَةِ فِي جَوْفِهِ. قَالَ: وَقَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: الجُلُوسُ فِي المَسْجِدِ انْتِظَارَ الصَّلاةِ عِبَادَةٌ مَا لَمْ يُحْدِثْ. قِيلَ: يَا رَسُولَ اللهِ وِمَا يُحْدِثُ؟ قَالَ: الاغْتِيَابُ.

With my *isnad* going back to Thiqat al-Islam wa'l-Muslimin Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulayni (*r*) from Ali ibn Ibrahim, from his father, from al-Nawfali, from al-Sukuni, from Abu Abd-Allah (a) that he said: The Messenger of Allah (*S*) said, "The havoc wrought by *ghibah* (backbiting) on the believer's faith is swifter than the one wrought by the disease of *aklah* in the side of his body." The Imam (a) said: The Messenger of Allah (*S*) said, "To sit in the mosque waiting for the (time of) prayer is worship, so long as one does not commit a misdeed." He (*S*) was asked, "O Messenger of Allah, what misdeed?" He replied, "Backbiting."[1]

## EXPOSITION

[1] Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab al-ghibah wal-buht, hadith* no. 1.

*Ghibah* is the *masdar* (verbal noun) of *ghaba* and also that of *ightiyab*, as mentioned in the dictionaries. Al-Jawhari says:

**واغْتَابَهُ اغْتِيَاباً، إذَا وَقَعَ فِيهِ، وَالاسْمُ الغِيبَةُ، وَهُوَ أنْ يَتَكَلَّمَ خَلْفَ إنْسَانٍ مَسْتُورٍ بِما يُغِمُّهُ لَوْ سَمِعَهُ. فإنْ كَانَ صِدْقاً سُمِّيَ غِيبَةً وإنْ كانَ كَذِباً سُمِّيَ بُهْتاناً.**

(It is said) "*ightabahu ightiyaban*" when one falls into it (i.e. backbiting). The noun is *al-ghibah*, and it means saying such things about an absent person as well distress him if he hears them. If it is true it is called *ghibah* and if false, *buhtan* (slander).

The researcher and traditionist al-Majlisi (*m*) states that this meaning is a literal one. But, apparently, the author of *al-Sihah* has given the technical (*istilahi*) meaning, not the literal one, because this is not the literal meaning of *ghaba*, *ightaba* and other related derivatives. Rather, their meaning is of a more general character. The lexicographers occasionally give the technical or *Shari* meanings in their works. The author of *al-Qamus* is quoted to have taken *ghaba* to signify *aba*. According to *al-Misbah al-munir:*

**إغْتَابَهُ إذَا ذَكَرَهُ بِمَا يَكْرَهُهُ مِنَ العُيُوبِ، وَهُوَ حَقٌّ.**

*Ightabahu* means making a mention of someone's actual defects that he would find detestable (to be mentioned).

In the view of this author, none of the above-mentioned quotations give the literal meaning; rather, certain conditions inherent in each of them have led to the mix-up with the technical sense. In any case, there is not much benefit in discussing the literal meaning, for the main purpose here is relevance to the *Shariah* and religious duty, and seemingly there are certain conditions implicit in the special meaning which lie outside the literal significance of the term (*ghibah* or *ightiyab*). Later on we will have occasion to discuss this special sense.

Al-Majlisi says:

**وَالأكْلَةُ كَفَرْحَة، دَاءٌ في العُضوِ يأتَكِلُ منهُ، كما في القاموسِ وغيرِهِ. وقَد يُقرأُ بمدِّ الهَمزَةِ على وزن فاعِلَة، أي العِلَّة التي تأكُلُ اللَّحمَ، والأوَّل أوفق**

باللغةِ.

> *Aklah* corresponds (in vowelization) to *farHah*. It is an affliction of a bodily member that consumes it, as mentioned in *al-Qamus* and other dictionaries. It has also been read with a *madd* on the *hamzah*, corresponding in vowelization to *failah*, which means a disease that consumes the flesh, and the first one is more in accordance with classical usage.

In any case, that which is meant is that in the same way as this disease on afflicting a bodily organ –especially the subtle ones, such as pertain to the inner self– consumes it rapidly and destroys it, so does *ghibah*, rather more rapidly, consume a human being's faith and destroy it.

In the phrase '*ma lam yuhdith*', '*yuhdith*' belongs to the verbal form *ifal* and its concealed pronoun (*damir mustatir*) relates to the *jalis*, (i.e. the one sitting) implicit in the *julus* mentioned in the tradition. *Ightiyab* here is in the accusative form (*mansub*) and is the *maful* (object) of the verb implicit in the questioner's speech. In some manuscripts, it is **ما الحَدَثُ** instead of **وما يَحْدُثُ** in which case *ightiyab* will be in the indicative case due to its being the predicate (*khabar*).

## THE DEFINITION OF *GHIBAH*

Let it be known to you that the *fuqaha* (*r*) have offered many definitions of *ghibah*, whose discussion and close scrutiny is not possible here except with brevity. The blessed martyr and researcher, the Shaykh (Zayn al-Din Ali , known as al-Shahid al-Thani) in his *Kashf al-ribah an ahkam al-ghibah* says:

> "There are two definitions for it. The first one, which is famous among the *fuqaha*, is:
>
> هُوَ ذِكْرُ الإِنْسَانِ حَالَ غَيْبِهِ بِمَا يَكْرَهُ نِسْبَتَهُ إِلَيْهِ مِمَّا يُعَدُّ نُقْصَاناً فِي العُرْفِ بِقَصْدِ الإِنْتِقَاصِ والذَّمِّ.
>
> It is the mention of a person in his absence, ascribing to him something whose ascription he rinds detestable and which is generally considered as harmful (to one's reputation), with the intention of impairing (his

reputation) and disparaging him."

The second one is:

**التَّنْبِيهُ عَلى مَا يَكْرَهُ نِسْبَتَهُ إِلَيْهِ.**

Informing about something whose ascription to one is regarded as detestable by him.

The second definition is more general than the first one, if *dhikr* (in the first definition) be taken to mean oral mention, as it is generally understood to mean, for *tanbih* has a wider meaning and includes speech, writing, narration and other forms of communication. But if *dhikr* were taken to mean something wider than oral speech, as it does literally signify, the two definitions become similar. The traditions also suggest these two definitions, such as the one recorded in al-Shaykh al-Tusi's *amali* (*Majalis*) and narrated on the authority of Abu Basir:

**فِي وَصِيَّةِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ لأَبِي ذَرٍّ رِضْوَانُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ وَفِيهِ: قُلْتُ يَا رَسُولَ اللهِ، مَا الغِيبَةُ؟ قَالَ: ذِكْرُكَ أَخَاكَ بِمَا يَكْرَهُ. قُلْتُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللهِ، فَإِنْ كَانَ فِيهِ الَّذِي يُذْكَرُ بِهِ؟ قَالَ: إِعْلَمْ أَنَّكَ إِذَا ذَكَرْتَهُ بِمَا هُوَ فِيهِ فَقَدِ اغْتَبْتَهُ، وَإِذَا ذَكَرْتَهُ بِمَا لَيْسَ فِيهِ فَقَدْ بَهَتَّهُ.**

In (the tradition about) the counsel that the Messenger of Allah (*S*) gave to Abu Dharr (*r*), Abu Dharr is narrated to have said: I said: "O Messenger of Allah, what is *ghibah*?" He replied: "(It is) to mention of your brother that which he detests." I said: "O Messenger of Allah, what if that which is mentioned of him should actually be in him?" He replied: "Know that when you mention that which is in him, you have committed his *ghibah*, and when you mention that which is not in him, then you have slandered him."[1]

In a famous tradition of the Prophet (*s*) it is reported:

**هَلْ تَدْرُونَ مَا الغِيبَةُ؟ فَقَالوا: اللهُ وَرَسُولُهُ أَعْلَمُ. فَقَالَ: ذِكْرُكَ أَخَاكَ بِمَا**

[1] Al-Hurr al-Amili, *Wasail al-Shiah*, viii, *hadith* no. 16312.

يَكْرَهُ.

> (The Prophet (*S*) asked his companions:) "Do you know what is *ghibah*?" They said: "God and His Messenger know best." He (*S*) said: "It is to mention about your brother that which he detests."[1]

These traditions correspond to the first definition if we take the generally understood meaning of *dhikr* and to the second one if a meaning wider than oral speech is ascribed to it. No mention was made in the traditions of absence, for it was implicit in the meaning of *ghibah* and so was not necessary. It is evident that 'brother' here means a brother in-faith not a brother by kinship. '*Ma yakrahu*' signifies the mention of things which are ordinarily regarded as damaging. As to the intention to harm and disparage, although it is not mentioned either in the noble tradition narrated by Abu Dharr or the famous prophetic tradition, it can be understood from the context. Rather, the opening of Abu Dharr's narration indicates it, and there was no need of an explicit mention. The narration opens in this manner:

الغِيبَةُ أشَدُّ مِنَ الزِّنَا. قُلْتُ: وَلِمَ ذَاكَ يَا رَسُولَ اللهِ؟ قَالَ: لأنَّ الرَّجُلَ يَزْنِي فَيَتُوبُ إلى اللهِ فَيَتُوبُ اللهُ عَلَيْهِ، وَالغِيبَةُ لا تُغْفَرُ حَتَّى يَغْفِرَهَا صَاحِبُهَا... وَأَكْلُ لَحْمِهِ مِنْ مَعَاصِي اللهِ.

> (The Prophet [*s*] said:) "*Ghibah* is a graver sin than adultery." I said, "How is that, O Messenger of Allah?" "That is because a man commits adultery and repents to God and God accepts his repentance. But *ghibah* is not forgiven (by God) until it is forgiven by its victim." Then he (*S*) said, "The eating of his flesh is a sin vis-a-vis God."[2]

These two sentences reveal that the intention to injure is implicit, otherwise if someone is mentioned with kindness and compassion, it is not an offence against him so as to require his forgiveness, nor it amounts to eating his flesh.

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[1] Al-Fayd al-Kashani, *al-Mahajjat al-bayda*, v, 266.

[2] *Wasail al-Shiah*, viii, *hadith* no. 18312.

The general character of *ghibah* is also understandable from the following narration of Aishah:

دَخَلَتْ عَلَيْنا امْرَأَةٌ، فَلَمَّا خَرَجَتْ أَوْمَأْتُ بِيَدِي أَنَّهَا قَصِيرَةٌ. فَقَالَ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: لَقَدِ اغْتَبْتِهَا.

> (Aishah says:) A woman came to visit us, and when she turned to go away I made a gesture by my hand to indicate that she is short of height. Thereupon, he (*S*) said, "You have committed her *ghibah*."[1]

It may be said that the import of the traditions concerning *ghibah*, as understood in accordance with usage, does not limit it to linguistic expression. Rather, it extends the prohibition to apply to any such kind of communication. That is, the specific mention of linguistic expression is due to its being the more common form in which, *ghibah* is committed, not because it is limited to it.

Another thing is that the general import of many traditions indicates that it is *haram* to reveal the secrets of the faithful (*muminun*). That is, it is forbidden to divulge and uncover their concealed defects, whether of a bodily, moral or behavioral nature, regardless of whether the person to whom they pertain is willing or not, and irrespective of whether a malicious intent is involved or not. However, an overall examination of the traditions shows that malicious intent underlies the prohibition, except when the act per se should be such that its mention and its publicity are proscribed by the *Shariah* –such as sins against God, which not even the sinner may proclaim and whose admission amounts to publication of indecency– and this does not relate to the prohibition (*hurmah*) on *ghibah*. It is not improbable that the revelation of the secrets of the faithful even in case of their willingness should be *haram*, even when there is no malicious motive involved. In any case, further elaboration in this aspect is outside the scope of our discussion.

You should know that there is consensus about the *hurmah* of *ghibah*. Rather, it is one of the essentials of *fiqh*, being a major and mortal sin. Discussion of its *fiqhi* aspect and the exceptions that relate to it is outside the scope of these pages. That which is necessary here is to inform about the viciousness of this fatal vice and its consequences, so that, God willing, by

[1] Al-Naraqi, *Jami al-saadat*, ii, 294.

reflecting upon them we may abstain from it, and if, God forbid, we commit it, we may desist immediately from it and repent, purify ourselves of its abomination, and not permit ourselves to remain in this filth and the affliction of this faith-consuming mortal sin while departing from this world. This is because this major mortal sin has an ugly, deformed form in the spiritual world hidden behind the veils of the corporeal. In addition to its evil, it is the cause of disgrace in front of the Sublime Company (*al-mala al-ala*) and in the presence of the apostles, prophets and the archangels. Its spiritual form is the same as what God, the Blessed and the Exalted, has indicated in His noble book and which has been pointed out explicitly and implicitly in the noble traditions. Allah, the Glorious and the Exalted, says:

﴿وَلَا يَغْتَبْ بَعْضُكُمْ بَعْضًا أَيُحِبُّ أَحَدُكُمْ أَنْ يَأْكُلَ لَحْمَ أَخِيهِ مَيْتًا فَكَرِهْتُمُوهُ.﴾

*Neither backbite one another*; *would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? You would abominate it*. (49:12)

We are neglectful of the fact that our deeds return to us in the other world as objectified entities, with forms appropriate to their character. We do not know that this act (i.e. *ghibah*) has the form of cadaver eating. It will return to its perpetrator in the hell in its other-worldly (*malakut*) form, for he, like a ferocious dog, has torn other people's honor to shreds and devoured their (moral) flesh.

وَفِي رِوَايَةٍ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللهِ لَمَّا رَجَمَ الرَّجُلَ فِي الزِّنَا قَالَ رَجُلٌ لِصَاحِبِهِ: هَذَا أُقْعِصَ كَمَا يُقْعَصُ الكَلْبُ. فَمَرَّ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ مَعَهُمَا بِجِيفَةٍ فَقَالَ: إِنْهَشَا مِنْهَا. فَقَالا: يَا رَسُولَ اللهِ، نَنْهَشُ جِيفَةً؟ فَقَالَ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: مَا أَصَبْتُمَا مِنْ أَخِيكُمَا أَنْتَنُ مِنْ هَذِهِ.

In a tradition, it is narrated that once the Messenger of Allah (*S*) stoned a man for commission of adultery. One of the persons present remarked to his companion, "This one was finished where he stood, like a dog." Thereafter, the Prophet, accompanied by the two men, passed by a carcass and he (*S*) said to them, "Now take a bite of it, you two," They said, "O Messenger of Allah, should we

take a bite of a carcass?!" The Prophet replied, "That which you have taken of your brother was more putrid than this."[1]

Yes, the Noble Messenger (s) with the light of his powerful insight saw the greater putridness of their action, greater than that of a decomposed carcass, and the more abominable and repulsive character of its form. It is mentioned in another tradition that the perpetrator of *ghibah* would devour his own flesh on the Day of Resurrection. In a tradition of *al-Wasail*, cited from the *Majalis* (*amali*) of al-Saduq (*r*), Amir al-Muminin (a) is reported to have said the following in the course of his advice to Nawf al-Bakali:

قَلْتُ: زِدْنِي. قَالَ: إجْتَنِبِ الغِيبَةَ فَإِنَّهَا إدَامُ كِلابِ النَّارِ. ثُمَّ قَالَ: يَا نَوْفُ، كَذَبَ مَنْ زَعَمَ أَنَّهُ وُلِدَ مِنْ حَلالٍ وَهُوَ يَأكُلُ لُحُومَ النَّاسِ بِالغِيبَةِ.

Nawf al-Bakali says: I said: Tell me something more. He (a) said, "Abstain from *ghibah*, for it is the food of the dogs of hellfire." Then he added, "O Nawf, untrue is the one who claims to be of legitimate birth and yet devours the flesh of people through backbiting."[2]

There is no contradiction between these noble traditions, and all these things are possible. It is possible that the backbiter shall eat the flesh of carcasses, devour his own flesh, have the form of a carcass-eating dog, and, simultaneously, be a carcass that is devoured by the hounds of hell. There, the forms are subject to the efficient dimensions and a being may possess several outward forms –something the proof of which has been given in its appropriate place.

وَعَنْ عِقَابِ الأَعْمَالِ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ فِي حَدِيثٍ: مَنْ مَشِي فِي غِيبَةِ أخِيهِ وَكَشْفِ عَوْرَتِهِ كَانَتْ أوَّلُ خُطْوَةٍ خَطَاهَا وَضَعَهَا فِي جَهَنَّمَ وَكَشَفَ اللهُ عَوْرَتَهُ عَلَى رُؤُوسِ الخَلائِقِ.

(Al-Saduq) in *Iqab al-amal*, narrates with his *isnad* from the Messenger of Allah (*S*) that he said in a tradition, "One who walks on the path of the *ghibah* of his brother

[1] *Al-Mahajjat al-bayda*, v, 263.
[2] *Wasail al-Shiah*, viii, *hadith* no. 16319.

and the divulging of his defects, the first step that he takes will be into hell and God shall divulge his defects in front of all the creatures."[1]

Such is his state on the Day of Resurrection and in hell and that is how God, the Exalted, shall disgrace him amongst the creatures and in the presence of the inhabitants of the celestial realms. In *al-Wasail*, with a chain of transmission reaching Imam al-Sadiq (a) the Prophet (*s*) is reported to have said:

وَقَالَ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: مَنِ اغْتَابَ امْرَءاً مُسْلِماَ بَطُلَ صَوْمُهُ وَنَقَضَ وُضُوءَهُ وَجَاءَ يَوْمَ القِيَامَةِ تَفُوحُ مِنْهُ رَائِحَةٌ أَنْتَنُ مِنَ الجِيفَةِ يَتَأَذَّى بِهِ أَهْلُ المَوْقِفِ، فَإِنْ مَاتَ قَبْلَ أنْ يَتُوبَ مَاتَ مُسْتَحِلّاً لِمَا حَرَّمَ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ.

The Noble Messenger (*S*) said, "whoever backbites a Muslim spoils his fasts and breaks his *wudu* and shall come on the Day of Resurrection with his mouth stanching more putridly than a carcass and it shall irk those who are with him in his station (*mawqif*). If he dies before repenting, his death is like that of one who dies while considering the things prohibited by God, the Exalted and the Glorious, as permissible."[2]

This is his state before his entry into hell, so that he is disgraced in front of the people of his *mawqif* and is reckoned among the *kuffar*, for the *mustahill* (one who considers *haram* as *halal*) of God's *muharramat* (that which has been forbidden by God) is a *kafir*. The backbiter (*mughtab*) is, in effect, like him according to this noble tradition. Another tradition has been narrated from the Messenger of God (*s*) regarding the state of such a one in the *Barzakh*:

عَنْ أَنَسٍ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ: مَرَرْتُ لَيْلَةَ أُسْرِيَ بِي عَلَى قَوْمٍ يَخْمِشُونَ وُجُوهَهُمْ بِأظَافِيرِهِمْ، فَقُلْتُ: يَا جِبْرَائِيلُ، مَنْ هَؤُلاءِ؟ قَالَ: هَؤُلاءِ الَّذِينَ يَغْتَابُونَ النَّاسَ وَيَقَعُونَ فِي أعْرَاضِهِمْ.

[1] Al-Shaykh al-Saduq, *Iqab al-amal*, 340.
[2] *Wasail al-Shiah*, viii, *hadith* no. 16316.

> Anas ibn Malik says: The Messenger of Allah (*S*) said: On the night of my celestial journey (*miraj*) I passed by a people scratching their faces with their finger nails. I said, "O Gabriel, who are these?" He replied, "These are those who perpetrated the people's *ghibah* and slandered their reputation."[1]

This shows that the backbiter suffers disgrace and infamy in the *Barzakh* and faces humiliation in front of the people of his *mawqif*. He will dwell in disgrace and dishonor in the hell too. Rather, some of its degrees will bring him disrepute in this world also, as is mentioned in the following noble tradition of *al-Kafi*:

> عَنْ إِسْحَاقِ بْنِ عَمَّارٍ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ يَقُولُ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: يَا مَعْشَرَ مَنْ أَسْلَمَ بِلِسَانِهِ وَلَمْ يُخْلِصِ الإِيمَانَ إِلَى قَلْبِهِ! لا تَذُمُّوا الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَلا تَتَّبِعُوا عَوْرَاتِهِمْ فَإِنَّهُ مَنْ تَتَبَّعَ عَوْرَاتِهِمْ تَتَبَّعَ اللهُ عَوْرَتَهُ، وَمَنْ تَتَبَّعَ اللهُ تَعَالَى عَوْرَتَهُ يَفْضَحْهُ وَلَوْ فِي بَيْتِهِ.
>
> Ishaq ibn Ammar reports on the authority of Imam al-Sadiq (a) that the Messenger of Allah (*S*) said, "O you who have embraced Islam with their tongues but faith has not entered whose hearts, don't disparage Muslims and don't be after their defects. Verily, God will be after the defects of him who is after their defects, and one who has God after his defects will be humiliated even in his own house."[2]

God, the Blessed and the Exalted, is *ghayur* (i.e. sensitive about His honor) and the exposing of the secrets and defects of the faithful is tantamount to violation of His honor. If a man surpasses all limits in his shamelessness and violates Divine sanctities, God, the Honorable, exposes his secrets, which He had concealed before out of His concealing grace. Such a man is then disgraced in this world before the people and in that world in front of the angels, the prophets and the *awliya* (a). In a noble tradition of *al-Kafi* whose *isnad* goes back to Imam al-Baqir (a) it is stated:

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[1] *Al-Mahajjat al-bayda*; v, 261.

[2] *Al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab man talaba atharat al-muminin, hadith* no. 2.

لَمَّا أُسْرِيَ بِالنَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ قَالَ: يَا رَبِّ، مَا حَالُ الْمُؤْمِنِ عَنْدَكَ؟ قَالَ: يَا مُحَمَّدُ، مَنْ أَهَانَ لِي وَلِيّاً فَقَدْ بَارَزَنِي بِالْمُحَارَبَةِ، وَأَنَا أَسْرَعُ شَيْءٍ إِلَى نُصْرَةِ أَوْلِيَائِي.

Imam al-Baqir (a) said: During his celestial journey, the Prophet (*S*) said to God, "My Lord, what is the status of the *mumin* before Thee?" He replied, "O Muhammad, whoever insults a friend of mine, has declared open war against Me, and I am the quickest of all in rallying to the aid of My friends."[1]

There are many traditions in this regard. In a tradition whose *isnad* goes back to Imam al-Sadiq (a), al-Shaykh al-Saduq reports the Imam as having said:

وَمَنِ اغْتَابَهُ بِمَا هُوَ فِيهِ فَهُوَ خَارِجٌ مِنْ وَلَايَةِ اللهِ تَعَالى دَاخِلٌ فِي وَلَايَةِ الشَّيْطَانِ.

Whoever perpetrates the *ghibah* of such a person (i.e. of one who conceals his defects and is just in outward conduct, though he should be a sinner in his own eyes) will go out of the *wilayah* of Allah, the Most Exalted, and enter the *wilayah* of Satan.[2]

It is obvious that one who leaves the *wilayah* of God will enter the *wilayah* of Satan and will not be characterized with faith and salvation. As mentioned in the tradition of Ishaq ibn Ammar, the Islam of the backbiter is merely oral, not having entered his heart. It is also obvious that one who has faith in God and believes in the Day of Judgment and in encounter with the forms of deeds and the reality of sins, such a person will not commit such a major mortal sin which brings disgrace in the apparent and the hidden worlds, in the life of this world as well as in the *barzakh* and the Hereafter, leads to the evil affliction of hell, and expels him from the *wilayah* of God and makes him enter the *wilayah* of Satan. If we perpetrate such a major sin, then we must know that it arises from a polluted source, that the reality of

[1] *Al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab man adha al-Muslimin*, *hadith* no. 8.

[2] Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar*, lxxv, *bab al-ghibah*, *hadith* no. 12, from al-Saduqs *al-amali*.

faith has not entered our hearts. Should faith enter the heart, things will undergo a reform and its effects will percolate to all the hidden and the manifest, the outward and the inward realms of one's being.

Hence, we must cure the ills of the hearts and the inner self. The traditions reveal that in the same manner as the weakness of faith and lack of its sincerity results in moral and behavioral vices, so do these vices in their turn lead to further deterioration or rather destruction of faith. This is in accordance with rational proofs, as demonstrated in its proper place.

And let it be known to you that this sin is graver and of greater evil consequences than other sins from another aspect. It lies in this that in addition to violating the right of God (*haqq Allah*) it violates the rights of people (*haqq al-nas*), and God does not forgive the backbiter unless the victim is propitiated by him. This theme is mentioned in the noble *hadith* through several chains of transmission.

عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ الحَسَنِ فِي المَجَالِسِ وَالأخْبَارِ بِإسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أبِي ذَرٍّ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ فِي وَصِيَّةٍ لَهُ قَالَ: الغِيبَةُ أشَدُّ مِنَ الزِّنَا. قُلْتُ: وَلِمَ ذَاكَ يَا رَسُولَ اللهِ؟ قَالَ: لأنَّ الرَّجُلَ يَزْنِي فَيَتُوبُ إلى اللهِ فَيَتُوبُ اللهُ عَلَيْهِ، وَالغِيبَةُ لا تُغْفَرُ حَتَّى يَغْفِرَهَا صَاحِبُهَا... وَأَكْلُ لَحْمِهِ مِنْ مَعَاصِي اللهِ.

> It is narrated in *al-Majalis wa'l-akhbar* with *isnad* on the authority of Muhammad ibn al-Hasan from Abu Dharr from the Prophet (*S*) that, in a counsel that he (*S*) gave to him, he (*S*) said, "O Abu Dharr, beware of backbiting, for backbiting is graver than adultery." (Abu Dharr says) I said: "Why is that so, O Messenger of Allah?" He replied: "That is because when a man commits adultery and then repents to God, God accepts his repentance. But backbiting is not forgiven until forgiven by its victim."[1]

In the traditions narrated in *Ilal al-sharai*, *al-Khisal*, *Majma al-bayan* and *Kitab al-ikhwan* the same or a similar point has been made. If, God forbid, one were to depart from the world with people's rights on his neck, his task would be very difficult. As to the rights of God, one has to deal therein with the Noblest and the Most Merciful, Whose sacred being is free from hatred,

[1] *Wasail al-Shiah*, viii, *hadith* no. 18312.

enmity, vengefulness, and the urge to satisfy the thirst for revenge. But if one had to deal with creatures, it is quite possible that one will get entangled with someone with such traits, who will not easily forgive anyone or will not be placated at all.

Hence it is necessary for man to be careful of himself and pay due attention to these matters, for the danger of it is very great and the matter is of supreme difficulty. The traditions concerning the serious nature of *ghibah* are more than can be quoted here and we shall confine ourselves to a few of them.

رُوِيَ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ أَنَّهُ خَطَبَ يَوْماً فَذَكَرَ الرِّبَا وَعَظَّمَ شَأْنَهُ فَقَالَ: إِنَّ الدِّرْهَمَ يُصِيبُهُ الرَّجُلُ مِنَ الرِّبَا أَعْظَمُ عِنْدَ اللهِ فِي الخَطِيئَةِ مِنْ سِتٍّ وَثَلاثِينَ زِنْيَةً يُزْنِيهَا الرَّجُلُ. وَإِنَّ أَرْبَى الرِّبَا عِرْضُ الرَّجُلِ المُسْلِمِ.

In a sermon, the Prophet (*S*) spoke about usury and its great evil. Then he said, "Verily, a single dirham earned by a man through usury is greater (in sinfulness) than thirty-six counts of adultery. And verily, more heinous than usury is (violating) the honor of a Muslim.[1]

رُوِيَ عَنْ النَّبِيِّ، صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ، أَنَّهُ قَالَ: مَا النَّارُ فِي اليَبْسِ بِأَسْرَعَ مِنَ الغِيبَةِ فِي حَسَنَاتِ العَبْدِ.

The Prophet (*S*) said, "No fire is faster in consuming dry wood than *ghibah* consuming a devotee's virtues."[2]

وَعَنْ النَّبِيِّ، صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: يُؤْتَى بِأَحَدٍ يَوْمَ القِيَامَةِ فَيُوقَفُ بَيْنَ يَدَيِ الرَّبِّ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَيُدْفَعُ إِلَيْهِ كِتَابُهُ فَلا يَرَى حَسَنَاتِهِ فِيهِ فَيَقُولُ: إِلَهِي لَيْسَ هَذَا كِتَابِي، لا أَرَى فِيهِ حَسَنَاتِي! فَيُقَالُ لَهُ: إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لا يَضِلُّ وَلا يَنْسَى، ذَهَبَ عَمَلُكَ بِاغْتِيَابِ النَّاسِ. ثُمَّ يُؤْتَى بِآخَرَ وَيُدْفَعُ إِلَيْهِ كِتَابُهُ فَيَرَى فِيهِ طَاعَاتٍ كَثِيرَةً فَيَقُولُ: إِلَهِي مَا هَذَا كِتَابِي، فَإِنِّي مَا عَمِلْتُ هَذِهِ الطَّاعَاتِ! فَيُقَالُ لَهُ:

[1] *Al-Mahajjat al-bayda*, v, 263.
[2] *Al-Mahajjat al-bayda*, 264.

إنَّ فُلاناً اغْتَابَكَ فَدُفِعَ حَسَنَاتُهُ إلَيْكَ.

The Prophet (*S*) said: A person shall be made to halt in front of the Glorious and Exalted Lord on the Day of Resurrection and handed over his book. On not seeing his good deeds therein he shall say, "My God, this is not my book, for I don't see my virtues in it." He shall be told, "Verily, your Lord neither errs nor forgets. Your deeds are gone for your backbiting of the people." Then another person shall be brought and handed over his book. He will see in it many deeds of obedience (*taat*) and he will say, "My God, this is not my book, for I have not performed these deeds of obedience." He shall be told, "So and so committed your *ghibah* and so his good deeds have been awarded to you."[1]

وَعَنْ النَّبِيِّ، صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: أَدَنَى الكُفْرِ أنْ يَسْمَعَ الرَّجُلُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ كَلِمَةً يَحْفَظُهَا عَلَيْهِ يُرِيدُ أنْ يَفْضَحَهُ بِهَا. أُولَئِكَ لا خَلاقَ لَهُمْ.

The Prophet (*S*) said, "A lower degree of *kufr* is for a man to hear something from his brother and to commit it to his memory intending thereby to cause him humiliation. Such persons shall have no share (in the Hereafter.)"[2]

The traditions cited here relate specifically to the subject at hand. But in case the backbiter were guilty of other sins and vices besides –such as the insult, humiliation, contempt and disparaging of a believer (*mumin*), the revelation and counting of his failings, and his defamation, each of which is an independent cause of one's destruction– the traditions condemning each of them are overwhelming and shattering. We abstain from citing them here for brevity's sake.

## THE SOCIAL HARMS OF *GHIBAH*

This greatly heinous vice and highly fatal sin, which is a destroyer of faith and morality, of the outward and the inward, which brings man disgrace and

[1] *Jami al-akhbar*, 171, with some difference of wording.

[2] A similar tradition in *al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab man talaba atharat al-muminin*.

ignominy in the world and the Hereafter as alluded to in the preceding section, has also social evils and in this respect its ugliness and evil are greater than those of many other sins.

One of the great objectives of the teachings of the great prophets (a) apart from being an independent goal in itself and a means for forwarding great goals, as well as being completely essential for the formation of a perfect society (*al-madinat al-fadilah*) is unity of belief and creed and solidarity in regard to all important matters, and resistance to the unjust aggressions of oppressors, which cause the corruption of humanity and ruin the foundations of wholesome society. This great objective, on which the reform of individual and society depends, cannot be achieved except in the shadow of unity, solidarity, mutual love and brotherhood amongst the individuals of society and the sincerity of their hearts and their inner and outward purity, so that the human race and its members come to constitute a single person and personality with individuals as its parts and members. All their efforts and endeavors have revolved around this ogle great divine objective and this momentous rational goal, wherein lies the good of individual and society. Should such love and brotherhood be born in a race or tribe, it would dominate all other tribes and nations that do not possess this quality. The truth of this matter comes to light if we study history, especially that of the battles and great victories of Islam. At the advent of this divine faith, since there was a measure of this unity and solidarity amongst Muslims and their efforts were accompanied by sincerity of intention, they could achieve great victories in a short period. In a brief span of time they overwhelmed the great empires of that age, namely Iran and Rome. Smaller in number, they could defeat heavily armed armies with an endless number of soldiers. The Prophet of Islam established the covenant of brotherhood amongst early Muslims and the relationship of brotherhood came to prevail between all Muslims on the basis of the Quranic text:

﴿إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ.﴾

*Indeed, the believers are brethren*. (49: 10)

The following traditions are recorded in the noble *al-Kafi*:

عَنِ العَقَرْقُوفِيِّ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ يَقُولُ لأَصْحَابِهِ: إتَّقُوا اللهَ وَكُونُوا إخْوَةً بَرَرَةً مُتَحَابِّينَ فِي اللهِ، مُتَوَاصِلِينَ، مُتَرَاحِمِينَ. تَزَاوَرُوا وَتَلاقوا

وَتَذَاكَرُوا أَمْرَنَا وَأَحْيُوهُ.

Al-Aqarqufi says: I heard Abu Abd-Allah (a) say to his companions, "Fear God and be righteous brethren, loving one another for the sake of God, mutually interlinked and merciful into one another. Visit one another, meet one another, remind one another about our affair (i.e. Imamate), and keep it alive."[1]

وَعَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: يَحِقُّ عَلَى الْمُسْلِمِينَ الإِجْتِهَادُ فِي التَّوَاصُلِ وَالتَّعَاوُنِ عَلَى التَّعَاطُفِ وَالْمُؤَاسَاةُ لأَهْلِ الحَاجَةِ وَتَعَاطُفُ بَعْضِهِمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ حَتَّى تَكُونُوا كَمَا أَمَرَكُمُ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: ﴿رُحَمَاءُ بَيْنَهُمْ.﴾

Abu Abd-Allah (a) said: It a the duty of all Muslims to strive in respect of mutual relations, cooperation, kindness and charity to the needy and mutual affection amongst themselves, until you become as God, the Almighty and the Glorious, has commanded you to be (saying): *They are merciful unto one another*.[2]

وَعَنْهُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: تَوَاصَلُوا وَتَبَارُّوا وَتَرَاحَمُوا وَكُونُوا إِخْوَةً بَرَرَةً كَمَا أَمَرَكُمُ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ.

Imam al-Sadiq (a) also said, "Cultivate mutual relations, be kind and merciful to one another and be such true brethren as God, the Almighty and the Glorious, has commanded you to be."[3]

It is evident that that which strengthens this mutual love and brotherhood is desirable, and that which severs this tie of mutual connection and brotherhood and creates disunity is regarded as detestable by the Lawgiver and is opposite to His great objectives. It is quite clear that if this great fatal sin were to become prevalent in a society, would cause enmity, envy, hatred and hostility amongst its people and the roots of corruption will spread

[1] *Al-Kafi, kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab al-Tarahhum wal-taattuf, hadith* no. 1.
[2] *Al-Kafi, kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab al-Tarahhum wal-taattuf, hadith* no. 4.
[3] *Al-Kafi, kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab al-Tarahhum wal-taattuf, hadith* no. 3.

through it. Then the tree of hypocrisy and two-facedness will take roots in it, which shall grow and shatter the unity and solidarity of society, weakening the foundations of piety, which in turn will increase its corruption and repulsive character.

Hence, it is obligatory upon every pious and honorable Muslim, in order to safeguard his own person against corruption, to protect his coreligionists from hypocrisy, to preserve the Islamic society, to safeguard its unity, and to strengthen the bonds of brotherhood, to protect himself from this vice and forbid others from this repulsive act. And if, God forbid, he has been guilty of this ugly act, he must repent and, in case it is possible and there is no chance of vicious consequences, seek the propitiation of the victim and his forgiveness; otherwise, he must implore God's mercy for him. He must get rid of this vice and water the roots of sincerity, unity and solidarity in his heart, so as to be amongst one of the sound members of society and one of the vital spokes of the wheel of Islam. And God is the guide of all towards the path of righteousness.

## THE CURE OF THIS MALADY

You should know that the remedy of this great vice, like that of other vices, is possible by means of beneficial knowledge and action. As to the knowledge, it lies in this that man should reflect over the benefits resulting from this deed and compare them with its evil consequences and ugly fruits. He must weigh them in the balance of reason and seek a Judgment therefrom. Of course, man is no enemy of himself. All his sins arise from ignorance, unawareness, and negligence of their basic nature and consequences.

As to the imagined benefit of this vice, it amounts to a few minutes of satisfaction of one's carnal desire arising from the mention of people's defects and divulging of their secrets, or an hour spent in convivial company amid pleasantries and sly gossip inspired by bestial or satanic nature and aimed to satisfy the thirst of vengeful hearts.

As to its ugly effects, some of them were mentioned in the earlier sections. Now listen to some more of them, place them in the balance of Judgment and draw lesson from it, for, of course, this comparison and reflection shall yield fair results. As to the effects of *ghibah* in this world, one of these is that it lowers a man in the people's estimation and deprives him of their confidence. The people by nature are endowed with a love of perfection, virtue, and goodness and a hatred of defectiveness, baseness, and

ugliness. Accordingly, they make a distinction between persons who avoid divulging hidden defects and refrain from tearing the veils that guard their honor and safeguard their secrets and others who are not such. Even the backbiter himself, by virtue of his reason and innate moral nature, considers one who avoids such vices as superior to himself. Moreover, should he trespass the bounds in perpetration of this vice and tear the veils that guard people's honor, God will disgrace him in this world itself, as mentioned in the narration of Ishaq ibn 'Ammar cited earlier. And man must fear a humiliation brought about by God Almighty, for it will be irreparable. I take refuge in God from the wrath of the Forbearing Lord.

Moreover, it is very possible that the slandering of the reputation of believers and the divulging of their concealed defects' will result in a wretched hereafter for man. For when this act becomes a part of man's conduct it leaves certain effects on the soul, one of which is production of enmity and hatred towards the victim, which increase little by little. At the time of death, when some realities become revealed to man and he observes certain supersensible realms, the veils of *malakut* having been lifted, this hatred and enmity may cause him on beholding the station of his victims and the honor and blessings granted them by God Almighty, to hate God Almighty. For it is natural for man to regard his enemy's friend as his own enemy and to hate one who loves one he hates. Thus, he will leave this world with enmity of God and His angels and depart to everlasting ignominy and wretchedness.

My dear, be friendly to the servants of God who enjoy His mercy and bounty and who have been adorned with the robes of Islam and *iman*, and cultivate a heart-felt affection for them. Beware lest you feel enmity towards the beloved of God, for God Almighty is the enemy of the enemies of His beloved one and He will throw you out of the gardens of His mercy. The elect of God are hidden amongst His servants and who knows if this enmity on your part and your violation of the honor of this man of faith (*mumin*) and your divulging of his defects will not be considered an offence against Divine honor?

The *muminun* are the *awliya* (friends) of God. Their friendship is the friendship of God; their enmity is the enmity of God. Beware of the wrath of God and the enmity of the intercessors on the Day of Judgment:

**وَيْلٌ لِمَنْ شُفَعَاؤُهُ خُصَمَاؤُهُ.**

> Woe to him whose intercessors [i.e. those who were supposed to intercede in his favor] are his enemies.

Meditate for a while about the fruits of this sin in this world and the Hereafter. Reflect for a while about the fearsome, frightful forms that will beset you in the grave, in the *Barzakh*, and on the Day of Resurrection. Refer to the authentic works of Shii scholars (*r*) and the traditions narrated from the Immaculate Imams (a); for what they have to say in this regard is truly overwhelming. Then compare and weigh a quarter of an hour's pleasantries, idle gossip and satisfaction of the imaginative lust with thousands upon thousands of years of adversity (that, too, when you are amongst those who deserve salvation and depart from this world in a state of faith) or eternal damnation in hell and everlasting painful chastisement (and we seek refuge in God from it).

Furthermore, even if you have enmity with a person whose *ghibah* you commit, that enmity requires that you should not commit his *ghibah* if you have faith in the *ahadith*; for it is stated in the *hadith* that the good deeds of the backbiter are transferred to the book of deeds of the victim of his *ghibah* and his sins are transferred to the book of the backbiter. Therefore, your enmity of him boils down to an enmity of yourself. Hence, you should know that you cannot fight with God. God has power to make that person endearing and respectable in the eyes of people by the very means of your *ghibah* of him and humiliate you in their eyes through the same means. He can deal with you in the same manner in the presence of the archangels. He can fill your book of deeds with vices and humiliate you. He can fill the book of deeds of your victim with fair deeds and grant him favor and honor.

Hence, understand well the extent of the power of the Omnipotent with Whom you are at war and beware of His enmity!

As to the action, it lies in this that one should for a period muster all one's power and rid his soul of this sin at all cost. He must bring his tongue under control and be fully watchful of himself, and make a covenant with himself to abstain from this sin for a certain time, being vigilant and watchful over himself and calling himself to account. God willing, it is hoped that after some time he will find himself reformed and free of its traces. Gradually the task will become easy for him and after some time he will feel that he has a natural disposition to dislike and detest it. Thereat, he will come to possess spiritual peace and delight in achieving freedom from this vice.

## THE PRIORITY OF ABSTINENCE FROM PERMISSIBLE *GHIBAH*

Let it be known to you that the *ulama* and *fuqaha* (*r*) have excepted certain cases from the prohibition of *ghibah*, which, according to the statements of some of them, number more than ten. Here, we do not intend to enumerate them, for this is not a place for legal discussions. That which is essential to be mentioned here is that man should never consider himself secure from the ruses of his carnal self. He should conduct himself with total carefulness and caution and should not be after fabricating excuses in order to plunge into pleasantries and faultfinding by taking resort in one of the permissible exceptions.

The ruses of the self are most subtle. It may seduce man by fooling him through the *Shariah* and lead him into mortal perils. For instance, it is permissible to do the *ghibah* of one who does not conceal his violations of Divine commands (*mutajahir bi'l-fisq*), or rather it is even obligatory in some cases when it can help in restraining him and is considered one of the stages of *al-amr bi'l-maruf wa al-nahy an almunkar*. But one must examine whether his own personal motive by this *ghibah* is a godly and *shari* one, or if it is prompted by a satanic and selfish motive. If the motive is a godly one, his act would be reckoned among *ibadat*. Rather, the *ghibah* of the *mutajahir* and the sinner with the motive of his reform is one of the most evident cases of expression of kindness and munificence toward him, although he himself may not understand it to be so. But if it is tainted with evil and carnal desire, then one must turn to the purification of his intent and refrain from meddling with people's honor without wholesome intention and purpose. Moreover, to habituate the self to cases of permissible *ghibah* is also harmful for it, for the self is inclined toward mischief and indecency. It is possible that the absence of restraint in the permissible cases gradually leads it to another stage belonging to the prohibited cases. This is similar to entry into *shubahat* (cases where doubt exists as to an act's permissibility), which is permissible but not desirable for its proximity to that which has been prohibited (*muharramat*). For it is possible that man may be led into *muharramat* through entry into them. Man must restrain his self as far as possible from these matters and refrain from everything when there is a possibility of its becoming unruly.

True, one must certainly act in cases where *ghibah* is obligatory, as in the aforementioned case and some other cases pointed out by the *ulama*; but one must also purge one's intention of the desire of the carnal self and the

promptings of Satan. However, in cases of permissibility, it is better and preferable to abstain from it. Man must not commit everything that is permissible, especially in such matters as these where the seductions of the self and Satan are very effective.

It is narrated that Jesus (a) in the company of his disciples once passed by the carcass of a dog. The disciples said, "How badly does this carcass smell!" Jesus (a) declared, "What white teeth it has!" Of course, a teacher of the human species must possess such a purified self. He did not like that one of God Almighty's creations should be mentioned in a disparaging fashion. They saw its defect, and that Hadrat pointed out to them one of its excellences. I have heard that it is narrated in *hadith* that Jesus (a) said, "Don't be like a fly that sits upon filth. Don't be such that you notice only the defects of people."

It is narrated that the Noble Messenger (*S*) said:

طُوبَى لِمَنْ شَغَلَهُ عَيْبُهُ عَنْ عُيُوبِ النَّاسِ.

> Blessed is the man who has been detained by his own defects from noticing the defects of other people.[1]

It would be good if one were as inquisitive about one's own defects as he is about the defects of people. How ugly it is of a man with thousands of defects to neglect his own and attend to those of others adding them to the heap of his own defects! Should man explore his own states, conduct and acts and devote himself to their correction, his affairs would be reformed. But should he regard himself as free of defect that is the height of his ignorance. For no defect is worse than this that man should be unaware and negligent of his own defects yet be attentive to the defects of others, while he himself is a mass of defects and shortcomings.

## ON THE PROHIBITION ON LISTENING TO *GHIBAH*

In the same manner as *ghibah* is prohibited, so also listening to it, being its companion, is .also prohibited; rather, as some traditions show, the listener is like the backbiter in all the evil respects, even in regard to his act being a major sin and the obligation to propitiate the victim.

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[1] *Sharh Shihab al-akhbar*, 306; *al-Mahajjat al-bayda*, v, 264.

عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: المُسْتَمِعُ أَحَدُ المُغْتَابِينَ.

The Prophet (*S*) said, "The listener is one of the two backbiters."

وَعَنْ عَلِيٍّ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: السَّامِعُ أَحَدُ المُغْتَابِينَ.

Ali (a) said, "The listener is one of the two who engage in backbiting."[1]

Hence, one who listens to *ghibah* is also a backbiter. *Sami* here means *mustami*. Therefore, as many traditions indicate, it is obligatory to refute *ghibah*.

عَنِ الصَّدُوقِ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنِ الصَّادِقِ، عَنْ آبَائِهِ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلامُ – فِي حَدِيثِ المَنَاهِي – أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ نَهَى عَنِ الغِيبَةِ والإِسْتِمَاعِ إِلَيْهَا، إِلَى أَنْ قَالَ: وَمَنْ تَطَوَّلَ عَلَى أَخِيهِ فِي غِيبَةٍ سَمِعَهَا فِيهِ فِي مَجْلِسٍ فَرَدَّهَا عَنْهُ رَدَّ اللهُ عَنْهُ أَلْفَ بَابٍ مِنَ الشَّرِّ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ، فَإِنْ هُوَ لَمْ يَرُدَّهَا وَهُوَ قَادِرٌ عَلَى رَدِّهَا كَانَ عَلَيْهِ كَوِزْرِ مَنِ اغْتَابَهُ سَبْعِينَ مَرَّةً.

In a tradition reported by al-Saduq with his *isnad* from Imam al-Sadiq (a), the Noble Messenger (*S*) is once said to have forbidden *ghibah* and listening to it as well. Then he (*S*) said, "Lo, whoever does a favor to his brother by refuting his *ghibah* on hearing it in a gathering, God shall save him from a thousand kinds of evils in this world and the Hereafter. And if he doesn't do so in spite of his ability to refute it on him shall be the burden of one who commits his *ghibah* seventy times."[2]

وَعَنِ الصَّدُوقِ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ جَعْفَرِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ، عَنْ آبَائِهِ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلامُ – فِي وَصِيَّةِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ لِعَلِيٍّ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ –: يَا عَلِيُّ، مَنِ اغْتِيبَ عِنْدَهُ أَخُوهُ المُسْلِمُ فَاسْتَطَاعَ نَصْرَهُ فَلَمْ يَنْصُرْهُ خَذَلَهُ اللهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا

[1] In *Ghurar al-Hikam*, ii, 12.

[2] *Wasail al-Shiah*, viii, *hadith* no. 16316.

وَالآخِرَةِ.

In a tradition reported by al-Saduq with his *isnad* from Imam al-Sadiq (a), the Prophet (*S*) is reported to have said to Amir al-Muminin (a) in the course of a counsel that he gave him: "O Ali ! When someone hears the *ghibah* of his Muslim brother and it is committed in his presence, yet he does not rally to his assistance despite being capable of doing so, God shall humiliate him in the world and the Hereafter.[1]

وَعَنْ عِقَابِ الأَعْمَالِ بِسَنَدِهِ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: مَنْ رَدَّ عَنْ أَخِيهِ غِيبَةً سَمِعَهَا فِي مَجْلِسٍ رَدَّ اللهُ عَنْهُ أَلْفَ بَابٍ مِنَ الشَّرِّ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ، فَإِنْ لَمْ يَرُدَّ عَنْهُ وَأَعْجَبَهُ كَانَ عَلَيْهِ كَوِزْرِ مَنِ اغْتَابَ.

In *Iqab al-amal*, al-Saduq reports with his *isnad* from the Prophet (*S*) that he said, "Whoever refutes the *ghibah* of his brother that he hears in a gathering, God shall turn away from him a thousand kinds of evils in this world and the next. But if he fails to refute it and is even pleased thereat, his burden of sin is like that of the backbiter.[2]

The *Allamah* of the latter-day *ulama*, the great researcher and embodiment of the merits of knowledge and deed, al-Shaykh al-ansari (*r*) says:

It appears that by 'refutation' (*radd*) here is meant something other than forbidding *ghibah*, and it implies defending and offering assistance to the absent person with something related to the *ghibah*. For instance, if the defect mentioned is one related to worldly affairs, he may say in his defense, "A defect is one which God Almighty has reckoned as such, such as sin, and the biggest of sins is that which you yourself are committing by doing *ghibah* of your brother by ascribing to him something which God has not considered a defect of his." And if it is

[1] *Wasail al-Shiah*, viii, *hadith* no. 16336.
[2] *Wasail al-Shiah*, viii, *hadith* no. 16340.

> one related to religion, he may explain it in such a way as not to be counted a sin on his part. And if it cannot be explained away, he must defend it by saying, for instance, "A believer is at times guilty of sin, and it is fitting that we pray to God to forgive him rather than expose his faults. Perhaps your exposing of his fault is a bigger sin before God Almighty than his."

At times the listener, besides abstaining from absolving the absent person from the *ghibah*, induces the backbiter to commit *ghibah*, or he may encourage the backbiter by going along willingly with him by such oft-repeated interjections as "Strange!" Or if he is one of the pious ones, by uttering some sacred formula such as '*Astaghfiru'llah*' or something else, acts which are in fact the Devil's artifices. It is probable that the noble tradition which mentions the burden of the listener as being seventy times that of the backbiter refers to such persons as these. And we take refuge in God from it!

## AL-SHAHID AL-THANI'S DISCOURSE

The honorable *shaykh*, the precious researcher and the blessed martyr al-Shahid al-Thani (*r*) has a discourse in this regard and with this noble discourse, we conclude this section. He says:

> Of the filthiest kind of *ghibah* is that which is committed by some hypocritical persons in the garb of men of knowledge and understanding, for they carry out their (evil) intentions in the garb of righteousness and piety. They commit *ghibah* and yet pretend to abstain from it. Due to their ignorance and neglect, they don't know that they are guilty of two indecencies at once: *riya* and *ghibah*. Similar to it is the case of the person who when somebody is mentioned before him says, "*Al-hamdu li'llah*, that we are not afflicted with the love of office," or "...that we are not afflicted with the love of the world" or that "we do not possess such and such a quality." Or, for instance, he will say, "*Naudhu bi'llah*, from lack of shame," or "from incapability," or he will say, "May God safeguard us" from such and such an act.
>
> Sometimes the praise of God is by itself *ghibah* if the

fault of someone is understandable from it. However, it is a *ghibah* expressed in a pious and self-righteous form. This kind of person wanted to mention the fault of someone through an utterance that all at once carries *ghibah*, *riya* and the claim to be free from defect, although he has these defects which are greater than the one he ascribes to another.

One of the ways of *ghibah* is that at times he (the backbiter) will praise the person whose *ghibah* he wishes to commit. For instance, he will say, "So and so enjoys elevated spiritual states. He does not fall short in his worships, but due to lack of endurance, which afflicts us all, he has become somewhat lethargic in his ritual duties." In this wary he himself pretends to be blameworthy while he intends to find fault with the other person. In fact, his purpose is to extol himself by simulating to be one of the pious through his apparent self-criticism. This man has involved himself in three indecencies: *ghibah*, *riya*, and self-righteousness. He imagines himself to be one of the righteous and one who refrains from *ghibah*. This is how Satan plays games with the ignorant and the unaware who are outwardly involved in the pursuit of knowledge and righteous action without having attained firmness on the path. Hence, Satan pursues them and brings their good deeds to nothing and laughs at them.

And to this category belongs the one who, when someone's *ghibah* is done in a gathering and some of those present have not heard, says "*Subhan Allah*, what an amazing thing" in order to call their attention to the *ghibah*. This person makes the remembrance (*dhikr*) of God a means to realize his corrupt vain purpose. Nevertheless, he imagines having done a service to God Almighty by this *dhikr*, and this is nothing but ignorance and vanity.

Also to this category belongs the one who says that such and such a thing happened to so and so, or rather, such

and such a thing happened to "our friend" or "our companion" and then adds, "May God forgive him and us." This person makes a pretence of sympathy and friendliness and perpetrates *ghibah* under the cover of prayer. But God knows the wickedness of his heart and the viciousness of his intention. He does not know that God is more wrathful toward him than the ignorant man who commits *ghibah* openly.

Among the concealed kinds of *ghibah* is listening to it with amazement, for such a person expresses his amazement in order to make the backbiter more lively in his descriptions and his amazement encourages the latter in his act of *ghibah*. For instance, he will say, "This really makes me amazed!" or "I didn't know that!" or "I didn't know he would do such a thing!" These expressions are meant to affirm the backbiter's statements and to encourage him subtly to add something more, whereas to affirm *ghibah* is also *ghibah*; or rather to listen to it or even to keep silent on hearing it is also *ghibah*.

At times, other vices are also added to *ghibah*, adding to its perversity, ugliness and punishment, like the backbiting person who expresses friendship and intimacy in front of the victim of his *ghibah* and praises and extols him. This is a kind of hypocrisy (*nifaq*) double-facedness and double-tonguedness that have been condemned in unambiguous terms in the traditions:

**فِي الكَافِي الشَّرِيفِ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: مَنْ لَقِيَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ بِوَجْهَيْنِ وَلِسَانَيْنِ جَاءَ يَوْمَ القِيَامَةِ وَلَهُ لِسَانَانِ مِنْ نَارٍ.**

In the noble *al-Kafi*, *al-Kulayni* reports with his *isnad* from Imam al-Sadiq (a) that he said, "Whoever encounters Muslims with two faces and two tongues, he will come on the Day of Resurrection with two tongues of fire."[1]

[1] *Al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab dhil-lisanayn*, *hadith* no. 1.

Such is the form of this ugly act and the result of such a hypocrisy in the Hereafter. I seek refuge in God Almighty from the evil of the tongue and the carnal self. And all praise is God's, at the beginning and the end.

20

# Twentieth *Hadith*: PURE INTENTION (*IKHLAS*)

بِالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلَى الشَّيْخِ الثِقَةِ الجَلِيلِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ، عَنْ أَبِيهِ، عَنِ القَاسِمِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ، عَنِ المِنْقَرِيِّ، عَنْ سُفْيَانَ بْنِ عُيَيْنَةَ، عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ فِي قَوْلِ اللهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: ﴿لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلاً.﴾ قَالَ: لَيْسَ يَعْنِي أَكْثَرُ عَمَلاً وَلَكِنْ أَصْوَبُكُمْ عَمَلاً. وَإِنَّمَا الإِصَابَةُ خِشْيَةُ اللهِ وَالنِّيَّةُ الصَّادِقَةُ وَالحَسَنَةُ. ثُمَّ قَالَ: الإِبْقَاءُ عَلَى العَمَلِ حَتَّى يَخْلُصَ أَشَدَّ مِنَ العَمَلِ. وَالعَمَلُ الخَالِصُ: الَّذِي لا تُرِيدُ أَنْ يَحْمَدَكَ عَلَيْهِ أَحَدٌ إلا اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ. وَالنِّيَّةُ أَفْضَلُ مِنَ العَمَلِ. أَلا وَإِنَّ النِّيَّةَ هِيَ العَمَلُ. – ثُمَّ تَلا قَوْلَهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ – ﴿قُلْ كُلٌّ يَعْمَلُ عَلَى شَاكِلَتِهِ.﴾ يَعْنِي عَلَى نِيَّتِهِ.

With my *isnad* reaching back to the venerable and trustworthy *shaykh* Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulayni (*q*) from Ali ibn Ibrahim, from his father, from al-Qasim ibn Muhammad, from al-Minqari, from Sufyan ibn Uyaynah, from Abu Abd-Allah (a), who, explaining the utterance of God Almighty: *That He might try you (to see) which of you is fairest in works*. (67:2), said, "It does not mean one of you whose deeds are more numerous but one who is more rightful in his conduct, and this rightness is nothing but the fear of God and sincerity of intention (*niyyah*) and fear." Then he (a) added, "To persevere in an action until it becomes sincere is more difficult than (performing) the action itself, and sincerity of action lies in this that you

should not desire anyone to praise you for it except God Almighty, and intention supersedes action. Lo, verily, intention is action itself." Then he recited the Quranic verse, "Say, everyone acts in accordance with his character –*shakilatihi*– (17:84), adding, "That *shakilah* means *niyyah*."[1]

## EXPOSITION

*Bala* (mentioned in verse 67:2) means 'test' and 'examination' as pointed out by *al-Sihah*:

بَلَوتُهُ بَلْواً: جَرَّبتُهُ واختَبَرتُه، وبَلاه اللهُ بلاءً وأبْلاهُ إبْلاءً حسناً وابْتَلاهُ أي اختَبَرَهُ.

'*Balawtuhu balwan*' means 'I tested him', 'I examined him', and '*balahu Allah balaan*', or '*ablahu iblaan hasanan*' or *ibtalahu* means 'He (God) tested him.'

'*Ayyukum*' is the second object (*maful duwwum*) for *li yabluwakum*, with the sense of knowing being implicit in it, according to al-Majlisi. But this does not seem to fit, because the interrogative pronoun *ayy* makes the verb conditional on action (*amal*). That which is correct is that **أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلاً** is a nominal sentence (*jumleh-ye mubtada wa khabar*) and is the object of the verb *balw*a. If *ayy* is taken to be relative pronoun (*mawsulah*), there is a sense for the statement of al-Majlisi (*m*). But its interrogative character is more evident.

*Sawab* is the opposite of *khata* (error), as mentioned by al-Jawhari. The second '*khashyah*' (fear) does not appear in some manuscripts, as mentioned by al-Majlisi, and should it be there, there are several probable interpretations for it, the more evident of which is that the *waw* here is in the sense of *maa* (with). And this phrase is narrated in the *Asrar al-salat* of al-Shahid al-Thani (*m*) **وَالنِّيَّةُ الصَّادِقَةُ وَالحَسَنَةُ** ('sincere and fair intention'; instead of **وَالنِّيَّةُ الصَّادِقَةُ وَالخِشْيَةُ**).

*Ibqa ala al-amal* means observance of action and exercising care over it, as pointed out by al-Jawhari, who says:

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[1] Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al- iman wal-kufr, bab al-ikhlaS, hadith* no.4.

أبقَيتُ على فُلانٍ إذا أرْعَيتُ علَيهِ ورَحِمْتُه.

*Shakilah* has (also) the sense of *tariqah* (way), *shakl* (shape), and *nahiyah* (region), as mentioned in *al-Qamus* and *al-Sihah*. *Al-Qamus* states:

الشّاكِلةُ: الشَّكلُ والنّاحِيةُ والنِّيَّة والطَّريقَةُ.

We will, God willing, explain that which needs explanation in this noble *hadith* in course of a few sections.

## THE MEANING OF 'TEST' IN RELATION TO GOD

The clause, "That He might try you..." (quoted in the tradition) refers to the utterance of God Almighty:

﴿تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ الْمُلْكُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ. الَّذِي خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا.﴾

*Blessed is He in Whose hand is the Kingdom and Who is powerful over everything, Who created death and life, that He might try you which of you is fairest in works.* (67: 1-2)

The *muhaqqiq* al-Majlisi (*q*) says, "This noble verse (which refers to the 'creation' of death) indicates that death is something which has being, and means either death as something that happens to life or essential non-existence."

The meaning of the noble verse indicates a sense in which creation relates to it (death) as a substance; it does not indicate a sense in which the relation is accidental, as pointed out by the *muhaqqiqun*. And the possible sense of death as essential non-existence does not apply here, for ascription of being to something essentially non-existent involves a contradiction, with the further observation that to ascribe the sense of essential non-existence to death does not appear in itself to be something correct.

However, that which is correct is that 'death' means transference from the apparent corporeal realm (*nashah-ye zahereh-ye mulkiyyeh*) to the hidden higher realm (*nashah-ye batinah-ye malakutiyyeh*). Or 'death' means the second life in *malakut* (the realm higher to that of physical nature) following the first life in the realm of *mulk* (physical nature). Both of these senses involve being, or rather refer to a mode of being more complete than that of

*mulk*. This is because life in the world or physical nature is adulterated with lifeless physical materials and their life is an ephemeral accident, as opposed to the substantial (i.e. inherent in substance) life of the realm of *malakut* where the souls obtain independence (from all elements of lifelessness that characterize the physical world). That realm is the realm of life, life being its essential quality, and the non-corporeal bodies of *Barzakh* (*abdan-e mithaliye barzakhi*) have their existential dependence on the souls, as has been demonstrated in the place proper to it.

Moreover, the life of *malakut* –which is expressed by 'death' (*al-mawt*, in the verse) in order not to weigh heavily on the ears of the listeners– does relate to creation and is under the power of the Sacred Essence.

The meaning of 'trial' and 'test' and the character of their ascription to God, the Exalted and the Glorious, was mentioned during the earlier exposition of some traditions. It was explained that ignorance (implicit in the meaning of 'trial' and 'test') cannot be ascribed to the Sacred Essence, and there is no need of interpretations and studied explanations in this regard. Here we shall briefly explain this issue.

At the beginning of their creation, the human souls are nothing but pure potentialities and are devoid of every kind of actuality inclining either toward felicity or wretchedness. It is only after their coming into the ambit of physical, substantial motion and voluntary actuality that the potentialities and capacities change into actualities and distinctions. Hence the difference between the felicitous and the wretched, the fat and the lean, comes into existence in corporeal life (*hayat-e mulki*), and the purpose of the creation of life is the distinction and examination of the souls. Thus the relation of trial and creation becomes clear. As to the creation of death, it has also a role in these distinctions, or rather it is the last link in the causative process (of the emergence of distinctions in the realm of actuality). For the criterion in the realm of actuality is the ultimate forms with which man makes the migration (from *mulk* to *malakut*); also, the criterion in the distinctions is the otherworldly *malakuti* forms that are acquired through the substantial and voluntary movements of the corporeal world. This also makes clear the relation of testing and trial to creation of death and life, without involving any ignorance (on the part of God). An exposition of this issue elaborate enough to dispel all the doubts surrounding it depends on a discussion of God's essential knowledge prior to creation (*ilm-e dhati qabl al-ijad*) and His actual knowledge accompanying creation (*ilm-e fili maa al-ijad*), which is

outside the scope of this exposition. And the Divine utterance, "(that He might see) which one of you is fairest in action," as well as the trial relating to the more righteous of deeds, relate to the above-mentioned matter, and hence the noble tradition. This is because the relative fairness of deeds has been interpreted as their relative rightness, which in turn is made to depend on fear and sincerity of intention. These are the inward forms of the soul, which make up the real distinctive features of the souls or are the manifestations of the hidden distinctions among the essences. And because of the fact that outward action affects the heart and the inward self, these distinctions are also brought about by deeds. Hence, the testing of deeds is also the testing of the essences. And if the noble verse were interpreted in accordance with its apparent sense and in independence of the exposition of the Imam (a), even then the testing will have the above-mentioned sense, because the life in the present world and the creation of life and death by itself results in the distinctions that characterize good and evil acts. As to the creation of life, its significance is clear, and as to death, its significance in this relation also becomes clear when we know the ephemeral nature of worldly life and the necessity of transition from this transitory life which is, of course, accompanied with distinctions arising from distinctions of deeds.

## FEAR, SINCERE INTENTION AND RIGHTNESS OF ACTION

You should know that in this noble tradition the rightness and goodness of action is made to depend on two sublime bases, which also constitute the criteria of their perfection and wholeness. One of these is the fear and awe of God Almighty and the other is the sincerity of intention and purity of purpose. Now we have to explain the relation between these two principles and the perfection of action and its rightness and rectitude.

The fear and awe of God Almighty leads to the *taqwa* and piety of the souls and these result in greater effectiveness of deeds. To elaborate, as mentioned in the course of the exposition of earlier traditions, every act, good or evil, has an effect upon the soul. Now if the act is of the category of acts of devotion and worship, its effect is that of making the physical faculties subservient to the intellectual faculties, making the *malakuti* aspect of the self-dominant over its *mulki* aspect. As a result of it, physical nature is made subject to spirituality, until the soul reaches the stage of spiritual emotion and attains its essential goal. Every act that increases this effect and discharges this service in a better way is more rightful and more effective in attaining the essential goal. Also, everything that has a role in this

effectiveness has also a role in the rightness of action. Largely, this is also the criterion of relative merit in acts and the famous following tradition also refers to this point:

أَفْضَلُ الأَعْمَالِ أَحْمَزُهَا.

The best of deeds are those which are the most difficult.[1]

These preliminaries show that *taqwa* purifies the souls from contaminations and obfuscations, and, obviously, if the tablet of the soul is free of the coverings of sins and clear of the obfuscations caused by them, the good actions are more effective- upon it and more conducive to the realization of the goal, thus better fulfilling the great secret purpose of devotional rites, which is the taming of corporeal nature, subjugation of *mulk* to *malakut*, and strengthening of the soul's active will power (*iradah-ye failah-ye nafs*). Hence, the fear of God, which has a thorough influence on the soul's *taqwa*, is one of the major agents of spiritual reform with an effective role in the rectitude of action and its beauty and perfection. This is because *taqwa*, besides being one of the reforming agents of the soul, also affects the influence of inward and outward human actions and is the cause of their acceptability, as declared by God Almighty:

﴿إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنْ الْمُتَّقِينَ.﴾

*Verily God accepts only from the God-fearing*. (5:27)

The second major factor in the rightness and perfection of actions which, in fact, is tantamount to their efficient force (in the same way as the awe and *taqwa* acquired from them is equivalent to the condition of their effectiveness and which, in fact, purify the receptor and remove the impediments). It is sincere intention and pure purpose on which depend the perfection and defectiveness of *ibadat* (worships) and their validity and invalidity.

As much as the *ibadat* are free from association with non-God and from adulteration of intention, to the same extent they are sincere and perfect. And nothing is as important in *ibadat* as intention and its purity, for the relationship of intention to *ibadah* is like that of the soul to the body and the spirit to the corporeal frame. In the same way as their physical form originates in the physical aspect of the self and its body, intention and their

[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. iv, p. 9.

spirit originate from the self's inward aspect and the heart. No worship is acceptable to God Almighty without sincere intention and unless it is free from the outward *mulki riya* (a kind of *riya* which the *fuqaha* (*r*) have mentioned) and *shirk*, which invalidate and nullify the outward parts (of an *ibadah*). And unless it is free from inward *shirk*, in whose presence although an *ibadah* may be correct from the exoteric aspect of the *Shariah* and *fiqhi* ordinances, it is not valid and acceptable to God Almighty from the esoteric aspect and from the viewpoint of the reality and secrets of worship. Hence there is no necessary relation between the (legal) validity of *ibadah* and its acceptability, a point which has often been mentioned in the traditions.

An exhaustive definition of *shirk* in *ibadah* that encompasses all its levels is the inclusion of the good pleasure and satisfaction of anyone other than God, whether it is one's own self or someone else.' If it is for someone else's satisfaction and for other people, it is outward *shirk* and *fiqhi riya*. If it is for one's own satisfaction (*rida*), it is hidden and inward *shirk*; this also invalidates the *ibadah* in view of the *urafa* and makes it unacceptable to God. Examples of it are offering the nightly prayer for increase in one's livelihood, giving *sadaqah* for safety from afflictions, or giving *zakat* for increase in one's wealth; that is, when one does these things for God Almighty in order to seek these things from His grace. Although those *ibadat* are valid, and one who performs them is considered to have performed his duty and fulfilled the requirements of the *Shariah*, they do not amount to the worship of God Almighty, nor are they characterized with sincerity of intention and purity of purpose. Rather, this kind of *ibadat* are aimed to achieve mundane purposes and to seek the objects of carnal, mundane desires. Hence, the acts of such a person are not rightful.

Similarly, if *ibadah* is for the sake of the fear of hell and yearning for paradise, it is not sincerely for God and is devoid of sincere intention. Rather, it may be said that such acts of worship are purely for the sake of Satan and the carnal self. The good pleasure of God does not enter the intentions of a person performing such a kind of *ibadah* in order to be considered even *shirk*. Rather he has worshipped solely the great idol, the mother of all idols, the idol of one's carnal desire. However, God Almighty has accepted this kind of *ibadah* from us out of His expansive mercy and on account of our weakness, by allowing a degree of leniency; that is, He has bestowed upon it certain effects and attached certain favors to it so that if man should fulfill the outward conditions of its acceptance, and perform it with the presence of the heart, all those effects will follow and all the related promises of reward

shall be carried out.

Such is the condition of the *ibadat* of the slaves and mercenaries. But as to the *ibadah* of free men (*ahrar*), performed for the love of God Almighty and to seek the attention given by that Sacred Essence to Its worshippers, the motive of fear of hell and yearning for paradise being absent in it, it is the first station of the *awliya* and *ahrar*. There are other stations and degrees for them, which escape description and lie outside the scope of this discourse. As long as the soul's attention is fixed on worship, worshipper, and the worshipped one, worship is not sincere. The heart must be vacated of every other thing and there should be nothing in it except God in order for worship to be sincere, as mentioned in a noble tradition of *al-Kafi*

قَالَ: سَأَلْتُهُ عَنْ قَوْلِ اللهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: ﴿إلا مَنْ أَتَى اللهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ﴾ قَالَ: القَلْبُ السَّلِيمُ الَّذِي يَلْقَى رَبَّهُ وَلَيْسَ فِيهِ أَحَدٌ سِوَاهُ. وَكُلُّ قَلْبٍ فِيهِ شِرْكٌ أَوْ شَكٌّ فَهُوَ سَاقِطٌ. وَإِنَّمَا أَرَادُوا الزُّهْدَ فِي الدُّنْيَا لِتَفْرَغَ قُلُوبُهُمْ لِلآخِرَةِ.

> Sufyan ibn Uyaynah (the narrator of the earlier tradition) says, "I asked Imam al-Sadiq (a) about the utterance of God, the Exalted and the Glorious, in regard to the Day of Resurrection, 'The day when neither wealth nor sons shall profit except he who comes with a pure heart (26: 88-89).' The Imam (a) replied, 'A pure heart is one that meets its Lord in a state in which there is none in it except Him.' Then he (a) added: 'Every heart in which there is *shirk* or doubt shall fail. Indeed, He has meant by it (the purity of heart) nothing except *zuhd* in regard to the world so that their hearts may be made ready for the Hereafter.'[1]

Of course, the heart which is occupied with non-God and contaminated with doubt and *shirk* –whether of the manifest (*jali*) or the concealed (*khafi*) kind– has no credibility in the sacred presence of the Lord. To the concealed kind of *shirk* pertains reliance on means and dependence on anything other than God.

It is even mentioned in tradition that changing the position of one's ring

[1] Al-Kulayni, *op. cit.*, *hadith* no. 5.

in order to remind one of something is also concealed *shirk*.[1] To allow other-than-God to enter the heart is considered concealed *shirk*, and sincerity of intention (*ikhlas-e niyyat*) is expulsion of other-than God from His sacred abode (i.e. the heart). Similarly, there are various degrees of doubt (*shakk*), some of which should be reckoned as manifest and some as concealed, which are caused by the weakness of conviction and feebleness of faith. Similarly, hesitation in matters is also on account of doubt. Of the stages of concealed doubt is changeability and absence of stability in *tawhid*. Therefore, true *tawhid* means the dropping of relations, limits and pluralities, even the pluralities relating to the Names and Attributes, and fixation in it is purity from doubt. The purity of heart means absolute freedom from *shirk* and doubt.

In the tradition, the phrase "He has meant by it nothing except *zuhd*..." is a reference to the fact that the ultimate goal of *zuhd* is that the heart should gradually become detached from the world and loathful toward it, with its attention turned to the real goal and the true object of all yearning. From the beginning part of the tradition it appears that the meaning of 'Hereafter' is the ultimate limit of the circle of existence and the ultimate destination. This is what 'Hereafter' means in its absolute sense. Accordingly, the world constitutes the complete circle of manifestation, and *zuhd* in regard to it necessarily entails purifying the heart of other-than-God. Hence even one who has other-than-God in his heart and is attached to others –whether they be corporeal, *mulki* matters, or spiritual ones relating to hereafterly forms, excellences and degrees, and everything other than God– is a man of the world, not *zahid* in regard to it, being deprived from the true Hereafter and the paradise of Divine communion, which is the highest of the levels of paradise, although he may possess other degrees of spiritual excellences and attain to the sublime levels of paradise in the same way as the people of the world differ in regard to possession of worldly wealth and status but whose stations are far remote from those of the men of God.

## THE DEFINITION OF *IKHLAS*

You should know that various definitions have been suggested for *ikhlas*, to some of which that are prevalent among the people of the mystic path we

[1] The tradition appears in *Wasail al-Shiah*, in the chapter on the *ahkam* of dressing (*ahkam al-malabis*).

shall briefly refer here. The honorable *arif* and the wise wayfarer, Khwajah Abd-Allah al-ansari, *quddasa sirruh*, says:

**الإخْلاصُ تَصْفِيَةُ العَمَلِ مِنْ كُلِّ شَوْبٍ.**

*IkhlaS* means purging action of all impurities.

And the impurity mentioned here is a general one, including both that which arises from the desire to please oneself and other creatures. It is narrated from the great Shaykh Bahai that the people of the heart have offered various definitions for it:

**قِيلَ: تَنْزِيهُ العَمَلِ أنْ يكونَ لِغَيرِ اللهِ فيهِ نَصيبٌ.**

It has been said, "(*IkhlaS* means) keeping action free from other-than-God having a role in it."

This definition is close to the former one.

**وقيلَ: أنْ لا يُريدَ عاملُهُ عليهِ عِوَضاً في الدَّارَينِ.**

And it has been said, "(*IkhlaS* means) that the performer of an action should not desire any reward for it in the world and the Hereafter."

And it has been narrated from the author of *Gharaib al-bayan* that the *mukhlisun* are those who worship God in such a way that they don't see themselves in service nor do they take notice of the world or .its people, nor transcend the bounds of servitude in their vision of Lordship. Hence when the devotee foregoes all gains and stakes in everything from the earth to the Throne (*arsh*), he comes to traverse the path of *Din*, which is the path of service and devotion on which the soul does not take any notice of the events on account of its vision of the beauty of the Lord. This is the *Din* that God Almighty has chosen for Himself and cleared it from the taint of association with other-than-God, and He has said:

**﴿أَلَا لِلَّهِ الدِّينُ الْخَالِصُ.﴾**

*Lo, to God belongs sincere allegiance – al-din al-khaliS.*
(39:3)

And 'sincere religion' is the light of pre-eternity (*qidam*) that appears after the disappearance of contingency (*huduth*) in the wilderness of resplendent glory and monism. It is as if God Almighty has invited His

servants by indicating and signaling to them that they should purify their souls from others and make them turn exclusively towards Him. And it has been narrated from al-Shaykh al-Muhaqqiq Muhyi al-Din al-Arabi that he said:

أَلا لله الدّينُ الخالِصُ عَن شَوْبِ الغَيريَّةِ وَالأَنانيَّةِ، لأنَّكَ لِفَنائِكَ فيهِ بالكُلِّيَّةِ فَلا ذاتَ لَكَ وَلا صِفَةَ وَلا فِعلَ وَلا دينَ وَإلا لَما خَلُصَ الدّينُ بِالحَقيقةِ فَلا يَكونُ لله.

> 'Lo, to God belongs sincere allegiance,' free from the taints of otherness and egoism. And that your extinction in Him should be total, the Essence; the Attributes, the Acts and the *din* should cease to be relevant for you. Lo, until the allegiance is not purified by Reality, it will not belong to God.

Until the traces of servitude (*ubudiyyah*), otherness (*ghayriyyah*) and egoism (*ananiyyah*) remain and as long as there is a worshipper and the worshipped one, worship, sincerity, and *din*, there remain the taints of otherness and egoism, and this is regarded as *shirk* by the *urafa*. The worship of the sincere ones is the imprint of the manifestations (*tajalliyat*) of the Beloved and nothing passes through their hearts except the Essence of the One God. And although the horizons of possibility (*imkan*) and necessity (*wujub*) have been joined for them and they have attained proximity to the Essence (*tadalli-ye dhati*) and absolute nearness to the Real (*dunuww-e mutlaq-e haqiqi*) and the traces of otherness have been completely wiped out, they still perform the duties of servantship. And their servitude is not through reflection and thought, but through manifestation –a point indicated by the prayer of the Messenger of Allah (*s*) on the night of his heavenly ascent (*miraj*).

## *IKHLAS* IS SUBSEQUENT TO ACTION

You should know that that which is said in the noble tradition, that

الإبْقَاءُ عَلى العَمَلِ حَتَّى يَخْلُصَ أَشَدُّ مِنَ العَمَلِ.

> To persevere in an action until it becomes sincere is more difficult than the action itself,

is meant to encourage man to exercise care and diligence in that which he does, both at the time of its performance and after it. For it sometimes happens that man carries out an action faultlessly and without any shortcoming and performs it without *riya* or *ujb*; but after the action he becomes afflicted with *riya* through mentioning it, as pointed out in the following noble *hadith* of al-Kari:

عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ أَنَّهُ قَالَ: الإِبْقَاءُ عَلَى العَمَلِ أَشَدُّ مِنَ العَمَلِ. قَالَ: وَمَا الإِبْقَاءُ عَلَى العَمَلِ؟ قَالَ: يَصِلُ الرَّجُلُ بِصِلَةٍ وَيُنْفِقُ نَفَقَةً لله وَحْدَهُ لا شَرِيكَ لَهُ فَتُكْتَبُ لَهُ سِرّاً ثُمَّ يَذْكُرُهَا فَتُمْحَى فَتُكْتَبُ لَهُ عَلانِيَةً، ثُمَّ يَذْكُرُهَا فَتُمْحَى وَتُكْتَبُ لَهُ رِياءً.

> Imam al-Baqir (a) said, "Perseverance in an action is more difficult than the act itself." He was asked, "What is meant by perseverance in action?" He replied, "A man does some kindness to a relative or expends something for the sake of God, Who is One and has no partner. Thereupon the reward of a good deed performed secretly is written for him. Later, he mentions it to someone, and that which was written earlier is wiped out, and instead the reward of a good deed performed openly is written for him. Later, when he makes a mention of it again, the vice of *riya* is written for him (instead of the reward written earlier)."[1]

Man is never secure from the evil of Satan and his self until the end of his life. He must not imagine that once he has performed an act solely for the sake of God, without desire for the good pleasure of creatures having played any role in it, the purity of his act shall remain secure from the evil of the vicious self. Should he fail to exercise care and vigilance, the self may prompt him to make a mention of it or, as sometimes happens, to express it in the way of a subtle hint. For instance, wishing to impress people about his nightly prayers, the subtle machinations of the self may prompt him to pass a hint by speaking about the good or bad weather conditions at daybreak or about supplications or the call for prayer, thus making his acts invalid and

[1] Al-Kulayni *al-Kafi*, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab al-riya*, *hadith* no. 16.

unworthy. Man must keep a watch over himself, like a kind physician or nurse, and not let the rebellious self get out of control; for a moment of neglect may give it the opportunity to break its reins and lead man into ignominy and perdition. Hence, in all conditions he must take refuge in God Almighty from the evil of Satan and the carnal self:

﴿إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي.﴾

*Surely the self of man incites to evil –except in as much as my Lord had mercy*. (12:53)

And it should be known to you that purification of intention from all levels of *shirk*, *riya* and other things, constant vigilance over it, and its perseverance in purity make up a greatly difficult as well as an important task. Rather, some degrees of it are not attainable by anyone except the sincere *awliya* of Allah. This is because intention is the efficient motive of action and is subject to other goals. These goals are in turn subject to the spiritual traits that make up man's inward essence and spiritual character. If someone possesses the love of office and position and this love becomes part of his spiritual makeup and character, the end of his desires is to reach that goal and the actions that originate from him are subject to that goal; his motive being the same sought-after object of his spirit, the actions that originate from him are directed to reaching the goal sought. As long as this love remains in his heart, his acts cannot be sincere, and one whose spiritual character and make-up are characterized by self-love and egoism his ultimate goal and end is attainment of selfish satisfactions, which are also the motive of his acts, regardless of whether his acts are directed to mundane goals or such otherworldly ends as the houris, palaces, gardens and bounties of the next life. Rather, as long as egoism, self-seeking and egotism are there, even if he takes a step for the acquisition of mystic knowledge and spiritual excellences, these are sought for selfish ends, self-seeking, not God-seeking, being their aim. And it is obvious that self-seeking and God-seeking cannot go together. Rather, if God is sought for the sake of the self, the ultimate end and goal is the self and the ego.

Thus it is evident that the absolute purification of intention from *shirk* is a great task that cannot be achieved by every one, and the defectiveness and excellence of deeds is subject to the defectiveness and perfection of intentions, for intention is the efficient and *malakuti* form of action, as hinted above. The noble tradition also refers to this point where it says:

وَالنِّيَّةُ أَفْضَلُ مِنَ العَمَلِ. ألا وَإنَّ النِّيَّةَ هِيَ العَمَلُ.

> And intention is superior to action, or, rather, intention is the complete reality of act itself.

And there is no exaggeration involved in this, as some have suggested; rather, it is based on fact, for intention is the complete form of action and its essence itself, the wholesomeness and corruption, the excellence and defectiveness of acts depending upon it. Accordingly, a single act may, on account of the intention that underlies it, at times imply respect and at times insult. Sometimes it may be perfect and sometimes defective. Sometimes it may belong to the highest level of spiritual sublimity, possessing a beautiful, blessed form. Sometimes it may belong to the lower spiritual realm and possess a frightful and odious form.

The apparent form of the *salat* of Ali ibn Abi Talib (a) does not differ outwardly in regard to its elements and conditions from that of a certain hypocrite; but whereas for the former it is a means of spiritual ascent toward God (*miraj ila Allah*) and has the highest spiritual form, for the latter it is a means of descent to hell and its spiritual form is incomparably black due to the intensity of darkness.

Because of a few loaves of bread of barley given away by the House of Inerrancy, i.e. The Prophet's *Ahl al-Bayt* (a), for the sake of God, God Almighty sent down several verses in their praise. An ignorant person may be led to think that two or three days of hunger and giving away one's food to the poor is a matter of importance, whereas such kind of acts may be performed by anybody and are of not much consequence. Their significance lies in the purity of their (i.e. the *Ahl al-Bayt*'s) purpose and the sincerity of their intention. It is the power and elegance of the spirit of their action, coming forth from their pure hearts that gives their action so much significance.

The outward appearance of the Noble Prophet (*s*) was not much different from that of other people. Hence, often when he (*s*) was sitting with a group of people and some strangers from among the Arab Bedouins came to meet him (*s*), they would ask, "Which one of you is the Messenger?" That which distinguished the Messenger (*s*) from others is the power and elegance of the spirit of that Master, not his blessed body or his noble frame. In the rational sciences, it is demonstrated that a thing's thingness depends on its form, not on its matter. Rather, a definition based on species is exhaustive, and it is

defective when based on genus and species, because intermingling with that which is strange and foreign to a thing is inimical to its reality, definition, and wholeness, and matter and genus are foreign and strange to its reality, which lies in its form, actuality, and species. Hence, the total reality of acts is that of their forms and their *malakuti* dimension, represented by intention.

This discussion shows that that which Imam al-Sadiq (a) says in this noble tradition is, firstly, in view of the form of action and its matter. What he says is that their formal aspect supersedes their material aspect and that, therefore, intention supersedes action, in the same way as spirit is superior to body. And this does not necessitate the validity of an act devoid of intention and the possibility of a body devoid of spirit. Rather, it is the association of intention with action and the attachment of spirit to body that makes action and body what they are. These two are compounds of intention and action, body and spirit and the formal, *malakuti* aspect of each is superior to its material, *mulki* aspect. And this is the meaning of the famous tradition:

نِيَّةُ الْمَرْءِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ عَمَلِهِ.

The intention of the man of faith is better than his act.[1]

Secondly, that which the Imam (a) says is in view of the dissolution of action in intention, of the *mulk* in the *malakut*, and manifestation (*mazhar*) in the manifest (*zahir*). Hence he (a) states:

ألا وَإِنَّ النِّيَّةَ هِيَ العَمَلُ.

Lo, verily intention is act itself.

Apart from intention, there is nothing that is involved and the totality of act is merged in intention; action has no independent reality of its own. Thereafter, he (a) cites the utterance of God Almighty as witness:

﴿قُلْ كُلٌّ يَعْمَلُ عَلَى شَاكِلَتِهِ.﴾

*Say: 'Everyone acts according to his character'*
(*shakilatihi*) (17:84)

Acts are subservient to the soul's character (*shakilah*) and although the soul's character is constituted by its inward form and the traits (*malakat*) inherent in it, intentions constitute its outward character.

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[1] Al-Kulayni *al-Kafi*, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab al-niyyah*, *hadith* no.2.

It may be said that spiritual traits constitute the soul's primary character and intentions, to which actions are subservient, makeup its secondary character. Hence, the statement of the Imam (a) that *shakilah* is *niyyah*.

This shows that the way to the purification of action from all kinds of *shirk*, *riya*, etc., is only through the reform of the soul and its *malakat*, for it is the fountainhead of all the reforms and the source of all the excellences and degrees of perfection. Hence if man expels the love of the world from his heart by means of austerities and exercises based on knowledge and action, the world will cease to be his ultimate goal and his acts will be purged of the biggest *shirk*, which is the desire to attract the attention of the world's people and to attain respect in their eyes. When that happens, he will be the same in solitude and company, inwardly and outwardly. To the extent that he succeeds in purging his heart of self-love, through spiritual austerities, the love of God shall enter it to the same extent and it shall also be purified of latent *shirk*. And as long as self-love remains in the heart and man remains in the oppressive habitat of the self, he is not a wayfarer toward God (*musafir ila Allah*); rather, he is one of those who cling to the earth (*mukhalladun ila al-ard*). The first step in the journey toward God is abandonment of self-love and crushing the head of egoism under one's foot. And there are some who say that one of the meanings of the noble verse:

﴿وَمَنْ يَخْرُجْ مِنْ بَيْتِهِ مُهَاجِرًا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ يُدْرِكْهُ الْمَوْتُ...﴾

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

is that if someone leaves the habitat of the self to migrate to God and sets out on a spiritual journey, and thereafter he encounters complete annihilation (*fana-e tamm*), his reward lies with God, the Exalted. And it is obvious that such a wayfarer deserves no reward except the vision (*mushahadah*) of that Sacred Essence and entry into His court. These words express their sentiments:

**در ضميرما نمي گنجد به غير دوست كس**

**هر دو عالم را به دشمن ده كه ما را دوست بس**

*None except the Beloved has a place in our heart;*
*Give both the worlds to the enemy, for the Beloved suffices us.*

21

# Twenty-First *Hadith*: THANKFULNESS (*SHUKR*)

بِالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلى حُجَّةِ الفِرْقَةِ وَإِمَامِهِمْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ، كَرَّمَ اللهُ وَجْهَهُ، عَنْ حُمَيْدِ بْنِ زِيَادٍ، عَنِ الحَسَنِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ سُمَاعَةَ، عَنْ وُهَيْبِ بْنِ حَفْصٍ، عَنْ أَبِي بَصِيرٍ، عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: كَانَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ عِنْدَ عَائِشَةَ لَيْلَتَهَا، فَقَالَتْ: يَا رَسُولَ اللهِ لِمَ تُتْعِبُ نَفْسَكَ وَقَدْ غَفَرَ اللهُ لَكَ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ؟ فَقَالَ: يَا عَائِشَةُ، أَلا أَكُونُ عَبْداً شَكُوراً؟ قَالَ: وَكَانَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ يَقُومُ عَلَى أَطْرَافِ أَصَابِعِ رِجْلَيْهِ. فَأَنْزَلَ اللهُ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى: ﴿طه * مَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ القُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَى.﴾

Through my continuous *sanad* going back to the proof of the sect and its leader, Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulayni (*q*) from Humayd ibn Ziyad, from al-Hasan ibn Muhammad ibn Sumaah, from Wuhayb ibn HafS, from Abu BaSir, from Abu Jafar (a) that he said: One night that the Messenger of Allah (*S*) was with Aishah, she said to him, "O Messenger of Allah, why do you exhaust yourself when God has forgiven you your former and latter sins?" The Prophet (*S*) replied, "O Aishah, shouldn't I be a grateful servant?" The Imam (a) added: The Messenger of Allah (*S*) used to stand on the toes of his feet (in prayer in the night) and so God, the Glorious and the Exalted, sent down the verse: "*Taha. We have not sent down the Quran*

*upon thee to cause thee hardship* (20:1)."[1]

## EXPOSITION

The words **قَدْ غَفَرَ اللهُ** (God has forgiven thee) refer to the following utterance of God Almighty in *surat al-Fath*:

﴿إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُبِينًا. لِيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا.﴾

*Surely, We have given thee a manifest victory that God may forgive thee thy former and thy latter sins…*(48:1-2)

The *ulama* (*r*) have suggested various explanations for this noble verse so as to reconcile it with the Noble Prophet's infallibility (*ismah*). Here we will cite some of those explanations mentioned by the *marhum Allamah* Majlisi (*m*). Thereafter we will briefly mention that which the *urafa* have said in this regard in accordance with the teachings of the mystic path.

*Marhum* Majlisi says: The *Shiah* have offered various views regarding the explanation (*tawil*) of this verse. According to one of these, the 'sins' (*dhunub*; singular *dhanb*) mentioned there mean the sins of the *ummah* which are forgiven by the Prophet's intercession. These sins of the *ummah* have been attributed to him because of the connection that exists between him and it. This possibility is supported by the following narration of Mufaddal ibn Umar from Imam al-Sadiq (a):

قَالَ: سَأَلَهُ رَجُلٌ عَنْ هَذِهِ الآيَةِ فَقَالَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: وَاللهِ مَا كَانَ لَهُ ذَنْبٌ وَلَكِنَّ اللهَ سُبْحَانَهُ ضَمِنَ لَهُ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ ذُنُوبَ شِيعَتِهِ عَلَى مَا تَقَدَّمَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ.

> Mufaddal says: A man asked the Imam concerning this verse. He replied, "By Allah, he (i.e. the Prophet) had no sin of his own. However, Allah, *subhanahu*, has insured that He would forgive the sins, whatever they have committed, of those who followed Ali (*shiat Ali* )."

[1] *Al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr bab al-shukr*, *hadith* no. 2.

وَرَوَى عُمَرُ بْنُ يَزِيدَ عَنْهُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: مَا كَانَ لَهُ ذَنْبٌ وَلا هَمَّ بِذَنْبٍ وَلَكِنَّ اللهَ حَمَّلَهُ ذُنُوبَ شِيعَتِهِ ثُمَّ غَفَرَهَا لَهُ.

> Umar ibn Yazid narrates that Imam al-Sadiq (a) said, "He had not committed any sin, not even intended to commit any. However, God made him bear the burden of the sins of his followers and then forgave them on his account."[1]

This author says: This explanation has a significant basis in the teaching of the *urafa* and it would not be without benefit to mention it briefly. You should know that it has been proved, in the place proper to such a proof, that the unchanging essence (*ayn-e thabit*) of the Perfect Man (*insan-e kamil*) is the manifestation (*mazhar*; *pl. mazahir*) of the Greatest of Divine Names (*ism Allah al-azam*), which is the prototype (*imam*) of all prototypal names. The essences (*ayan*) of all other existents subsist in the shadow of the essence of the Perfect Man on the level of knowledge and the world of essences, and exist therein on the level of being and the world of realization (*alam-e tahaqquq*).

Hence, the essences contained in the entire realm of existence are the manifestation of the essence of the Perfect Man, and all the existents are manifestations of his beauty and glory in the world of manifestation. Accordingly, every shortcoming that occurs in the world of exteriorization and every sin that appears in the *mazahir* (manifestations), whether on the level of creation (*takwin*) or on the level of volitional action (*tashri*), is attributable to the *zahir* (i.e. that which is manifested through the *mazahir*) in accordance with the necessary relation between *zahir* and *mazhar*. This attribution is not metaphorical, but literal and factual. It is the reality of this relation, which is pointed out in the following verses:

﴿وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَفْسِكَ.﴾

*Whatever evil visits thee is of thy self.* (4:79)

﴿قُلْ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ.﴾

*Say: Everything is from God.* (4:78)

And reference to this matter occurs a lot in the Noble Prophet's traditions:

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[1] *Bihar al-anwar*, xvii, 76.

نَحْنُ السَّابِقُونَ الآخِرُونَ.

We are the foremost and the last ones.[1]

آدَمُ وَمَنْ تَحْتَهُ تَحْتَ لِوَائِي يَوْمَ القِيَامَةِ.

Adam and whoever that came after him shall stand under my standard on the Day of Resurrection.[2]

أَوَّلُ مَا خَلَقَ اللهُ نُورِي.

The first thing that God created was my light.[3]

سَبَّحْنَا فَسَبَّحَتِ المَلائِكَةُ وَقَدَّسْنَا فَقَدَّسَتِ المَلائِكَةُ.

(Before Adam was created) we glorified (God) and following us the angels glorified (Him We extolled (His) sanctity and following us the angels called Him Holy.[4]

لَوْلانَا مَا عُرِفَ اللهُ.

Had we not existed, God would not have been known.[5]

لَوْلاكَ لَمَا خَلَقْتُ الأَفْلاكَ.

(God said to the Prophet) Had you not been, I would not have created the heavens.[6]

نَحْنُ وَجْهُ اللهِ.

We are the face of God.[7]

It is stated in a tradition that "the Messenger of Allah (*s*) (in relation to the community of the faithful) has the position of the tree's trunk; the Imams of Guidance (a) are its branches; their followers (*Shiah*) are like the leaves of

[1] *Bihar al-anwar*, xxiv, 1-9.
[2] *Bihar al-anwar*, xvi, 402.
[3] *Bihar al-anwar*, xv, 377.
[4] Al-Saduq, *Uyun akhbar al-Rida*, i, 263.
[5] *Bihar al-anwar*, xxvi, 247.
[6] *Ilm al-yaqin*, i, 381.
[7] Al-Saduq, *Kitab al-Tawhid*, 150.

the tree."[1]

Hence, the beauty of the sacred tree of *wilayah* is manifested through the *mazahir*. Should one of the *mazahir* suffer a shortcoming that will affect the sacred tree.

Hence, the sins of all the existents are the sins of the Absolute Master (*al-wali al-mutlaq*), and God Almighty, with His encompassing mercy and all-inclusive forgiveness, has showered His grace upon the Noble Prophet (*s*), declaring, 'The sins of the former people and the sins of those to come will be covered by My encompassing mercy and the entire realm of being shall attain its ultimate felicity through your *shafaah* (intercession), and:

وَآخِرُ مَنْ يَشْفَعُ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ.

> The last to intercede is the most merciful of the merciful ones (i.e. God).

According to this teaching, the noble verse at hand fulfills the promise given in another verse, which says:

﴿وَلَسَوْفَ يُعْطِيكَ رَبُّكَ فَتَرْضَى.﴾

> *And thy Lord shall soon give thee, and thou shalt be satisfied.* (93:5)

And it has been said of this verse that it is:

أَرْجَى آيَةٍ فِي القُرْآنِ.

> The most hope-giving of verses in the Quran.[2]

Hence according to this teaching 'the former sins' may possibly mean the sins of the earlier *ummah*s (*umam*) for all the *ummah*s are part of the *ummah* of this sacred essence (the Prophet) and all the calls (*dawah*s) of the prophets represent invitation to the ultimate *Shariah*, being the *mazahir* of *al-Wali al-Mutlaq*, and 'Adam and whoever that came after him' are the leaves of the tree of *wilayah*.

The second explanation is the one given by al-Sayyid al-Murtada (*r*). He says that *dhanb* is a *masdar* (verbal noun) and it may permissibly be referred

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[1] Al-Mufid, *al-Amali*, *majlis* no. 28, p. 245.

[2] al-Tabrisi, *Majma al-bayan*, x, 505.

or adjoined to the *fail* or *maful*. Here it has been related (in the construct phrase *dhanbika*) to the *maful*. Hence, the verse 48:2 means, "The former sins of theirs against thee in preventing thee from entering Makkah and al-Masjid al-Haram." The meaning of *maghfirah* or *ghufran* (which also means 'covering') here, according to this explanation, is the abolishment and removal of the persecution that he (the Prophet [*s*]) faced at the hands of his enemies. The verse then means: "On the occasion of the victory and through it God would end and cover the humiliation inflicted upon you, and with the conquest of Makkah you would soon enter the city triumphantly." Accordingly, *ghufran* has been made the recompense for *jihad* and the benefit of victory.

The Sayyid (*m*) says: If *maghfirah* here is taken to mean the forgiving of sins, a reasonable meaning cannot be derived from the verse, for forgiveness of sins has no relation whatsoever with victory, nor can it be considered to be the object and benefit of victory. As to the phrase **مَا تَقَدَّمَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ**, there is nothing objectionable in taking it to mean "whatever of the atrocities that have been afflicted on you and your people in the past."

Thirdly, the verse is explained to mean, "If you have committed a sin in the past or in case you commit any hereafter, I shall indeed forgive you." This is a conditional proposition (of the type 'If A then B ) and it is not necessary that its two sides should be factually true.

Fourthly, by 'sin' here is meant omission of *mustahabbat* (supererogatory duties), for the Prophet (*s*) never defaulted in performing the *wajibat* (obligatory duties). And it is possible that due to his elevated and exalted station, that which is not considered to be sin for others may be considered sin in relation to him.

The fifth explanation is that this verse is intended to glorify the Prophet (*s*) and is equivalent to a eulogy, as when one says:

**غَفَرَ اللهُ لَكَ.**

Sixthly, al-Majlisi says:

**وَقَدْ رَوَى الصَّدُوقُ فِي العُيُونِ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ الجَهْمِ قَالَ: حَضَرْتُ مَجْلِسَ المَأْمُونِ وَعِنْدَهُ الرِّضَا عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ فَقَالَ لَهُ المَأْمُونُ: يَا بْنَ رَسُولِ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ أَلَيْسَ مِنْ قَوْلِكَ أنَّ الأَنْبِيَاءَ مَعْصُومُونَ؟ قَالَ:**

بَلَى. قَالَ: فَمَا مَعْنَى قَوْلِ اللهِ، ﴿ لِيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ.﴾ قَالَ لِلرِّضَا عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: لَمْ يَكُنْ أَحَدٌ عِنْدَ مُشْرِكِي مَكَّةَ أَعْظَمَ ذَنْباً مِنْ رَسُولِ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ لأَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللهِ ثَلاثَمِائَةٍ وَسِتِّينَ صَنَماً. فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ بِالدَّعْوَةِ إِلَى كَلِمَةِ الإِخْلاصِ كَبُرَ ذَلِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَعَظُمَ. قَالُوا ﴿أَجَعَلَ الْآلِهَةَ إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ عُجَابٌ. وَانطَلَقَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْهُمْ أَنْ امْشُوا وَاصْبِرُوا عَلَى آلِهَتِكُمْ إِنَّ هَذَا لَشَيْءٌ يُرَادُ. مَا سَمِعْنَا بِهَذَا فِي الْمِلَّةِ الْآخِرَةِ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا اخْتِلَاقٌ.﴾ فَلَمَّا فَتَحَ اللهُ تَعَالَى عَلَى نَبِيِّهِ مَكَّةَ قَالَ لَهُ يَا مُحَمَّدُ: ﴿إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُبِينًا. لِيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ وَيُتِمَّ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكَ وَيَهْدِيَكَ صِرَاطًا مُسْتَقِيمًا.﴾ عِنْدَ مُشْرِكِي أَهْلِ مَكَّةَ، بِدُعَائِكَ إِلَى تَوْحِيدِ اللهِ فِيمَا تَقَدَّمَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ لأَنَّ مُشْرِكِي مَكَّةَ أَسْلَمَ بَعْضُهُمْ وَخَرَجَ بَعْضُهُمْ عَنْ مَكَّةَ، وَمَنْ بَقِيَ مِنْهُمْ لَمْ يَقْدِرْ عَلَى إِنْكَارِ التَّوْحِيدِ عَلَيْهِ، إِذَا دَعَا النَّاسَ إِلَيْهِ فَصَارَ ذَنْبُهُ عِنْدَهُمْ فِي ذَلِكَ، مَغْفُوراً بِظُهُورِهِ عَلَيْهِمْ. فَقَالَ الْمَأْمُونُ: لِلهِ دَرُّكَ يَا أَبَا الْحَسَنِ.

Al-Saduq in *Uyun akhbar al-Rida* has reported with his *isnad* from Ali ibn Muhammad ibn al-Jahm that he said: I was present in al-Mamun's gathering when al-Rida (a) was also with him. There al-Mamun said to him, "O son of the Messenger of Allah, don't you claim that the prophets are secure from error (*masumun*)?" He replied, "Yes." Al-Mamun said, "Then what is the meaning of the utterance of God:

﴿لِيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ.﴾

(*Surely, We have given thee a manifest victory*) *that God may forgive thee thy former and thy latter sins*. (48:1-2)

Al-Rida (a) replied, "The polytheists of Makkah did not consider anyone a greater sinner than the Messenger of

> Allah (*S*) because they worshipped instead of Allah three hundred and sixty idols. When the Prophet (*S*) came to them with the call to pure monotheism (*ikhlaS*), it appeared to them as a monstrosity, and they declared: What, has he made the gods One God? This is indeed an odd thing… Go! Be steadfast to your gods; this is a thing to be desired. We have not heard of this in the last religion, this is surely an invention. (38:5-7)
>
> When God Almighty opened Makkah to His Prophet (*S*) He said to him, 'O Muhammad! Surely, We have opened for thee a manifest opening, that God may forgive thee what the polytheists of Makkah regarded as thy former and latter 'sins' on account of thy call to the Unity of God.' Some of the polytheists of Makkah had embraced Islam and some had left Makkah, and those who remained there had no, power to repudiate the Prophet's call to *tawhid*. In this way that which was the Prophet's sin in their eyes came to be condoned by means of his domination over them." Thereat al-Mamun said, "You are wonderful, O Abu al-Hasan!"[1]

This writer says: This was the sixth explanation of the blessed verse that occurs in the noble *hadith*. According to it the meaning of 'sin' here is that which appeared to the polytheists as sin in conformity with their corrupt claims.

## A MYSTICAL INTERPRETATION

You should know that there is an interpretation of the noble verse based on the teachings of the gnostics and the people of the path of the heart. In order to describe it, it is necessary to mention what they call the 'Threefold Openings' (or the 'threefold victories', *futuhat-e thalathah*). *Fath* in their teaching means the opening of the doors of gnosis and gnostic experience or. the wayfarer by God after that these doors have remained closed and locked upon him. So long as man remains in the dark abode of the self and tied to its attachments, all the doors of gnosis and gnostic experience remain locked upon him. But as soon as he comes out of this gloomy habitat by means of

[1] *Bihar al-anwar*, xvii, 73-76, cf. *Uyun akhbar al-Rida*, i, 202, *bab* 15.

the force of austerities and the lights of guidance, and leaves behind the stages of the self, the door of the heart is opened upon him and gnostic truths manifest themselves in his heart, and he attains to the 'station of the heart' (*maqam-e qalb*). This stage is called *fath-e qarib* (the nearer opening), for the first of the openings is the nearest of them. It is this *fath* that is referred to in this utterance of God Almighty:

﴿نَصْرٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَفَتْحٌ قَرِيبٌ.﴾

*...help from God and a nigh opening*. (61:13)

Of course, it is with God's help and assistance and with the guiding light and magnetism of that Sacred Essence that this and other openings take place.

However, as long as the wayfarer remains in the realm of the heart (*alam-e qalb*) and is subject to the rituals and duties of the heart, the door of the Attributes and Names remains closed and locked upon him. When, thereafter, the irradiations of the Names and Attributes lead to the dissolution of the *alam-e qalb* and when those irradiations bring the heart's attributes and excellences to extinction, that which occurs is the *fath-e mubin* (the manifest opening). Thereat the door of the Names and Attributes is opened upon the wayfarer, the earlier rituals of the self (*nafs*) and the latter ones of the heart (*qalb*) becoming effaced and covered (*maghfur*) by the covering grace (*ghaffariyyat wa sattariyyat*) of the Names. Hence, they say that to this refers the utterance of God, the Exalted:

﴿إِنَّا فَتَحْنَا لَكَ فَتْحًا مُبِينًا. لِيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ.﴾

*Surely, We have given thee a manifest victory that God may forgive thee thy former and thy latter sins*. (48:1-2)

That is, We have opened for thee the manifest opening to the realm of the Names and Attributes, so that thy sins, relating to the earlier station of the self and the latter station of the heart, are covered by the covering grace of the Divine Names. And this is the opening of the door of *wilayah*. As long as the wayfarer is behind the curtain of the pluralities of the Names (*katharat-e asmai*) and the particularities of the Attributes (*taayyunat-e sifati*), the doors to the irradiations of the Essence are locked upon him. But when he receives the irradiations of the Essence of the One, all the rituals relating to the realms of *khalq* and *amr* become extinct, submerging the devotee in essential synthesis, and the *fath-e mutlaq* (the absolute opening) is attained.

Thereupon, the absolute sin (*dhanb-e mutlaq*) is enveloped (*maghfur*) and the essential sin (*dhanb-e dhati*), which is the source of all sins, is covered by the irradiations of the One.

وُجُودُكَ ذَنْبٌ لا يُقَاسُ بِهِ ذَنْبٌ.

> Your existence is a sin to which no (other) sin is comparable.

And, they say, it is to this *fath* that the following utterance of God, the Exalted, alludes:

﴿إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ.﴾

*When comes the help of God and the opening*. (110:1)

Hence, it is with *fath-e qarib* that the doors to the heart's gnosis are opened and the sins relating to the (carnal) self (*dhunub-e nafsiyyah*) become forgiven. With *fath-e mubin* the doors of *wilayah* and Divine irradiations are opened and the remaining traces of the earlier sins of the self and the latter sins of the heart are forgiven. And with *fath-e mutlaq* the door is opened to the irradiations of the Divine Essence and the absolute essential sin is forgiven.

It should be known that *fath-e qarib* and *fath-e mubin* are something, which the *awliya*, *prophets*, and *urafa* share with others; but *fath-e mutlaq* is a station that is exclusively and ultimately theirs, and should anyone succeed in attaining it, it is only through the mediation of those elevated spirits.

This discourse reveals that there are various levels of sin and sinfulness. Some of them are considered virtues for the virtuous but are sins for the immaculate. It is reported that the Noble Messenger (*s*) stated:

لَيُرَانُ – لَيُغَانُ– عَلَى قَلْبِي، وَإِنِّي لأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللهَ فِي كُلِّ يَوْمٍ سَبْعِينَ مَرَّةً.

> In order that my heart should not gather rust, I seek the forgiveness of God seventy times a day.[1]

This rusting may be attention to plurality, although it may be on the level of passing, stray thoughts. And it is mentioned in the *hadith* that the

[1] *Sahih Muslim*, *kitab al-dhikr*, 41; al-Shaykh al-Bahai, *al-arbain*, in the exposition of *hadith* no. 22, with the words, "a hundred times" (*miata marrah*).

Messenger of God (*s*) would not leave any gathering without seeking God's forgiveness twenty-five times.[1]

These traditions show that *istighfar* is not solely limited to such sins as are contrary to*ismah* (inerrancy), and *dhanb* and *maghfirah* here (in the context of the prophets and *awliya*) do not have their ordinarily understood signification. Therefore, this noble verse is not contradictory to the Prophet's elevated spiritual station; rather, it affirms and confirms it. This is because seeking forgiveness for the sins related necessarily to the various stages of spiritual development are a necessary aspect of spiritual wayfaring and ascent to the heights of human perfection, since every being that exists in this world is the offspring of this corporeal and physical realm and possesses all its accompanying *mulki*, animal and human functions, some of these potentially and some of these in actuality.

Hence, should anyone want to make the journey from this realm to the other realm and from there to the realm of Divine proximity, he should pass through all the intermediary phases and stages. And whenever he attains to a higher stage, he is forgiven the sins of the preceding stage, until he attains to the ultimate station where all his sins are forgiven under the irradiations of the Essence of the One. Thereat, the existential sin (*dhanb-e wujudi*), which is the source and fountainhead of all sins and sinfulness, is covered and effaced under the shadow of the Majesty of the One. This is the highest point in the ascent of a being towards perfection. It is here that the station of 'death' and complete annihilation is achieved. And therefore when the noble verse: **(إِذَا جَاءَ نَصْرُ اللَّهِ وَالْفَتْحُ)** was revealed, the Noble Messenger (*s*) said, "This *surah* is the news of my death." And God knows best.[2]

## THE REALITY OF *SHUKR*

You should know that thankfulness means appreciation of the *nimah* (favor, blessing, bounty) provided by the Provider (*Munim*) and the appearance of the effects of this appreciation in the heart, on the tongue, and in bodily acts and movements. As to the heart, the effects there are of such nature as humility, awe, love and the like. As to the tongue, the effects there appear as praise and glorification. As to the bodily members, the effects consist of obedience, the use of the bodily members for the good pleasure of

[1] *Safinat al-Bihar*, ii, 322.

[2] *Tafsir Nur al-Thaqalayn*, v, 689.

the *Munim*, and the like. According to al-Raghib:

**الشُّكْرُ تَصَوُّرُ النِّعْمَةِ وَإِظْهَارُهَا.**

> Thankfulness (*shukr*) is the contemplation of the *nimah* and its expression.[1]

It has been said that *shukr* is the (partial) inverse of *kashr*, meaning *kashf* (uncovering, discovery), and its antonym is *kufr*, which means forgetfulness and concealing of *nimah*. '*Dabbah shakir*'(grateful animal) is one, which expresses the appreciation of its master and provider by its fatness and robustness. It has also been said that its origin is *aynun shakra*, *shakra* here meaning *mumtaliah* (full). Accordingly, *shukr* means being full of the mention of the *Munim* (Provider). *Shukr* is of three kinds: the *shukr* of the heart, which is the contemplation of *nimah*; the *shukr* of the tongue, which is praise of the *Munim*; and the *shukr* of all other bodily members, which is heedful observance of the *nimah* as it deserves to be observed (i.e. recognized, and used for the purpose proper to it).

The confirmed gnostic Khwajah Abd-Allah Ansari says, "*Shukr* is a name for the knowledge (*marifah*) or *nimah*, for it is the means of knowing the *Munim*." The learned interpreter of his work says:

> The contemplation of *nimah* as belonging to the *Munim* and the knowledge that it is from Him is *shukr* itself. It has been narrated that Hadrat Dawud (David) (a) said, "O Lord! How can I thank Thee, for my thankfulness is another bounty (*nimah*) of Thee that itself requires thanksgiving!" God revealed to him: "O Dawud, when you have known that every *nimah* that you enjoy is from Me, you have thanked Me."

This author says: That which these scholars have said is based on some lack of precision, for *shukr* is not the heart's knowledge per se or expression of it by the means of the tongue or bodily acts. Rather, it is a psychical state (*halat-e nafsaniyyah*) which itself results from the knowledge of the *Munim*. The acts of the heart and the body are the fruits of this state. What some scholars have said is close to this, although their statements too are not totally free of loose thinking. They have said:

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[1] Al-Raghib al-Esfahani, *al-Mufradat fi ghirab al-Quran*, p. 265.

It should be known that *shukr* is compensating for *nimah* through word, deed and intention. It rests on three supports:

Firstly, the knowledge (*marifah*) of the *Munim* and the attributes befitting Him, as well as the knowledge of *nimah* as *nimah* per se. This knowledge does not become perfect unless one understands that all the apparent and hidden bounties are from God Almighty and that it is His Sacred Essence that is the real provider. All the means and intermediaries, whatever they are, are subject to His law and command.

Secondly, it is a state which is the result of this knowledge, which consists of humility, awe, and delight for the bounty as a gift that indicates the *Munim's* care and attention for you. Its sign is that you should not be delighted by the world except for something that causes nearness to God.

Thirdly, it is action that results from this state; for when this state appears in the heart it produces an impulse for action aimed to achieve nearness to God. That action is related to the heart, tongue and other members. As to the heart, its action consists of the veneration, praise, and glorification of the Provider, the contemplation of His creation, His acts, the effects of His grace, and His beneficence towards all His creatures. As to the tongue, its action consists of the expression of that beneficence through praising, glorifying and extolling God and declaring Divine unity, as well as through, discharging the duty of *al-amr bi'l-maruf wa al-nahy an'l-munkar* and other duties. As to the bodily members, their thanksgiving action lies in using the outward and inward bounties in obedience, worship and in preventing sin against God and violation of His commands. Thus the eye should be used for studying His creation, reading His scripture, and teaching the traditional sciences of the prophets and the

*awsiya* (a). Similarly, for the other bodily members.[1]

## IGNORANCE AND INGRATITUDE

You should know that *shukr* for the inward and outward bounties of God Almighty is one of the obligatory duties of servantship and creaturehood, which everyone must attempt to fulfill to the extent of his capacity, although no creature can adequately fulfill its obligation of thanking God Almighty. The ultimate limit of thankfulness is the knowledge of the incapacity to satisfy it fully, in the same way as the ultimate limit of servantship is the realization of the incapacity of fulfilling its demands – and hence the Noble Messenger (*s*) confessed to his incapacity, although none of the existents has attempted to discharge the duties of servantship and gratitude to the extent of that holy master -because the perfection or inadequacy of gratitude is subject to the gnosis of the *Mumin* and the knowledge of His bounties. (Since this gnosis and knowledge are never complete), no one can satisfy the rights of gratitude.

The servant becomes fully thankful (*shakur*) when he knows the relation of creation to the Creator, and has gnosis of the entire spread of Divine beneficence, from its beginning to end, of the interrelations of the bounties with each other as well as of the beginning and end of the stream of existence in its true reality. And this gnosis is not attainable for anyone except the elect of the *awliya*, the noblest and best of whom is the sacred essence of the Seal of Prophethood (*s*). All others are devoid of some or rather most of those stations. Rather, as long as the reality of Divine efficacy does not make an imprint on the devotee's heart and as long as he does not attain conviction that

لا مُؤَثِّرَ فِي الوُجُودِ إِلا اللهُ.

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

the darkness and obfuscations of *shirk* and doubt (*shakk*) remain in his heart and he cannot thank God as he should. One whose gaze is fixed on causes and means and one who considers the efficacy of existents to be independent, does not relate the bounties to the Lord of bounty, and here lie the roots of ingratitude to God Almighty. Such a one has carved out idols, each of which

[1] This is a summary of al-Ghazalis discourse from al-Fayd al-Kashanis *al-Mahajjat al-bayda*, vii, 144-149.

he considers to be efficient. At times, he relates actions to his own efficacy and even considers himself as having control over events and affairs. At times, he considers the natural aspects of the world of existence as being efficient, and at times he relates the bounties to their apparent dispensers while considering God to be bereft of any efficacy, believing God's hands to be fettered, whereas:

﴿غُلَّتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَلُعِنُوا بِمَا قَالُوا﴾

*Fettered are their hands, and they are cursed for what they have said.* (5:64)

God's dispensing hands are free, and the entire realm of being in reality belongs to Him, and no other has any role in it. Rather, the entire universe is the manifestation of His power and bounteousness and His beneficence envelopes everything. All bounties are from Him and no one has any bounty of his own that he may be its provider. Rather, the realm of existence owes its being to Him, and others have no (independent) being so that anything may be attributed to be them. However, the eyes are blind, the ears are deaf and the hearts have curtains drawn upon them.

**ديده مي خواهم سبب سوراخ كن.**

I want a vision that may pierce the (curtain of) causes.

How long shall these dead hearts of ours remain ungrateful toward God's bounties, and relate them to the world, its circumstances and persons? These attachments and attentions amount to ingratitude towards the bounteousness of the Sacred Essence and to its concealing grace. This shows that fulfillment of the demands of gratitude is not everyone's job, and that Sacred Divine Essence, the Glorious and the Exalted, has declared: That is, there are few servants **(وَقَلِيلٌ مِنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّكُورُ)** who have adequate gnosis of God's bounties or know them as they deserve to be known. And therefore, there are few servants who stand up to fulfill the duties of gratitude.

## THE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF *SHUKR*

And it should be known that even as the levels of knowledge of the servants of God are different, so also are their levels of thankfulness. The levels of gratitude are also different because *shukr* is the praise of the Provider for His bounties. Thus, the outward kinds of bounties require one kind of gratitude and the inward bounties a gratitude of another kind. If the

bounty is of the category of knowledge and gnosis, its *shukr* is of one kind, and if it is of the category of the irradiation of Divine Names it is of another kind, and if of the category of the irradiation of the Divine Essence, it is of yet another kind. And since all the categories and levels of bounties are enjoyed only by a few of His servants, the effort to fulfill the duties of gratitude at all levels is only possible for a few. Those being the sincere (*khullas*) *awliya*, who, in their being, encompass the entire range and levels of being (*jami-e jami-e hadarat*), being the limit of all limits (*barzakh-e barazikh*), and encompasses all the exoteric and esoteric levels. Accordingly, their thanksgiving (*shukr*) is accomplished through all the apparent, inward, and the inmost tongues.

Although *shukr* has been said to be one of the stations pertaining to the common people because of its proximity to the claim to the requital of the Provider –and this is considered to be irreverence– however, such a proximity exists only for ethers than the *awliya*, especially the perfect (*kummal*) among them, who encompass the full range of being and possess the station of unity and plurality. Therefore, the adept gnostic Khwajah Abd-Allah Ansari, who, although he states that *shukr* is one of the stations of the common people, adds:

**وَالدَّرجةُ الثالثةُ أنْ لا يشْهدَ العبدُ إلا المُنعِمَ فإذا شهِدَ المُنعمَ عُبُودَةً اسْتعظَمَ منهُ النِّعمَةَ، وإذا شَهِدهُ حُبّاً اسْتَحْلى منهُ الشَّدّةَ، وإذا شهِدهُ تفْريداً لم يَشهَدْ منهُ نِعمَةً ولا شِدَّةً.**

That is, the third degree of *shukr* lies there where the servant does not see anything except the beauty of the *Munim*, being immersed in His beauty. That consists of three stations. First, he observes Him as the humble slave contemplates his master. In this state, unaware of himself in His presence, he is fully immersed in reverence, not setting any worth upon himself. When in this state of humility, if he is bestowed any bounty, he values it greatly, considering himself as insignificant and unworthy of it. Second, his observation is that of a lover observing his beloved. In this state he is immersed in the beauty of the Beloved and whatever he receives from Him, cherishing it, though it be affliction and hardship. Third, he observes Him without the limitations of the Names, or rather has the epiphany of the Essence itself. In this state, he forgets himself and others and sees nothing but the Divine Essence, and is conscious neither of any bounty nor adversity.

This shows that the first stage in all the stations of the wayfarers is the one tread by the common people, and the ultimate stages in all the stations pertain exclusively to the sincere (*khullas*) or rather to the perfect (*kummal*) (of the *awliya*).

## THE STATION OF *SHUKR* IN *HADITH*

We shall complete this section with the mention of some traditions relating to *shukr*.

الكَافي بِإسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أبي عَبْدِالله عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ الله صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: الطَّاعِمُ الشَّاكِرُ لَهُ مِنَ الأجْرِ كَأَجْرِ الصَّائِمِ المُحْتَسِبِ. وَالمُعَافَى الشَّاكِرُ لَهُ مِنَ الأجْرِ كَأَجْرِ المُبْتَلى الصَّابِرِ. وَالمُعْطَى الشَّاكِرُ لَهُ مِنَ الأجْرِ كَأَجْرِ المَحْرومِ القَانِعِ.

In *al-Kafi*, al-Kulayni narrates with his *isnad* from Abu Abd-Allah (a) that he said: The Messenger of Allah (*S*) said, "One who takes food with gratitude has a reward like the one who fasts exercising vigilance over himself. The healthy person grateful for his health has a reward like the one who bears his (bodily) afflictions patiently. And one who gives gratefully has a reward similar to the one who bears his deprivation with continence."[1]

وَبِإسْنَادِهِ عَنْ عُبَيْدِ الله بنِ الوَلِيدِ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أبَا عَبْدِالله عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ يَقُولُ: ثَلاثٌ لا يَضُرُّ مَعَهُنَّ شَيْءٌ: الدُّعَاءُ عِنْدَ الكَرْبِ وَالإسْتِغْفَارُ عِنْدَ الذَّنْبِ وَالشُّكْرُ عِنْدَ النِّعْمَةِ.

Al-Kulayni reports with his *isnad* from Ubayd Allah ibn al-Walid that he said: I heard Abu Abd-Allah (a) say, "There are three things in whose presence nothing can harm one: prayer in affliction, seeking God's forgiveness for one's sins, and thanksgiving for God's favors."[2]

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[1] *Al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab al-shukr*, *hadith* no. l.

[2] *Al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab al-shukr*, *hadith* no. 7.

وَبِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي بَصِيرٍ قَالَ: قَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ مِنكُمْ لَيَشْرَبُ الشُّرْبَةَ مِنَ المَاءِ فَيُوجِبُ اللهُ لَهُ بِهَا الجَنَّةَ. ثُمَّ قَالَ: إِنَّهُ لَيَأْخُذُ الإِنَاءَ فَيَضَعُهُ عَلَى فِيهِ فَيُسَمِّي ثُمَّ يَشْرَبُ فَيُنَحِّيهِ وَهُوَ يَشْتَهِيهِ فَيَحْمَدُ اللهَ، ثُمَّ يَعُودُ فَيَشْرَبُ، ثُمَّ يُنَحِّيهِ فَيَحْمَدُ اللهَ، ثُمَّ يَعُودُ فَيَشْرَبُ، ثُمَّ يُنَحِّيهِ فَيَحْمَدُ اللهَ، فَيُوجِبُ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ بِهَا لَهُ الجَنَّةَ.

Al-Kulayni reports with his *isnad* from Abu Basir that Abu Abd-Allah (a) said, "Verily one of you drinks water and God assigns paradise to him on that account." Then he (a) added, "Verily, one who takes the vessel (containing water), brings it to his mouth, then takes God's Name, then drinks from it, then draws it away while desiring it, then praises God, then drinks from it again, then takes it away while he desires it, praises God, then drinks from it again, then sets it aside and praises God, God, Almighty and Glorious, makes the paradise obligatory for him."[1]

Praise of God is the purveyor of gratitude, and, as has been stated in many traditions, one who says *Al-hamdu li'llah*' (All praise is God's) has offered his thanks to God. Al-Kulayni, in the noble *al-Kafi*, narrates this tradition through his *isnad* from Umar ibn Yazid:

قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ يَقُولُ: شُكْرُ كُلِّ نِعْمَةٍ وَإِنْ عَظُمَتْ أَنْ تَحْمَدَ اللهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَلَيْهَا.

Umar ibn Yazid says: I heard Abu Abd-Allah (a) say, "The (adequate mode of) thanksgiving for all favors, however great they may be, is that you praise God, the Almighty and the Glorious, on their account."[2]

وَبِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: شُكْرُ النِّعْمَةِ اجْتِنَابُ المَحَارِمِ

[1] *Al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab al-shukr*, *hadith* no. 16.
[2] *Al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab al-shukr*, *hadith* no. 11.

وَتَمَامُ الشُّكْرِ قَوْلُ الرَّجُلِ: الحَمْدُ للهِ رَبِّ العَالَمِينَ.

Al-Kulayni reports with his *isnad* from Abu Abd-Allah (a) that he said, "Gratitude for God's gifts lies in abstaining from what He has made unlawful. One's thanksgiving is complete when one says: Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds."[1]

وَبِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ حَمَّادِ بْنِ عُثْمَانَ قَالَ: خَرَجَ أَبُو عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ مِنَ المَسْجِدِ، وَقَدْ ضَاعَتْ دَابَّتُهُ فَقَالَ: لَئِنْ رَدَّهَا اللهُ عَلَيَّ لأَشْكُرَنَّ اللهَ حَقَّ شُكْرِهِ. قَالَ: فَمَا لَبِثَ أَنْ أُتِيَ بِهَا، فَقَالَ: الحَمْدُ للهِ. فَقَالَ لَهُ قَائِلٌ: جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ، أَلَيْسَ قُلْتَ: لأَشْكُرَنَّ اللهَ حَقَّ شُكْرِهِ؟ فَقَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: أَلَمْ تَسْمَعْنِي قُلْتُ: الحَمْدُ للهِ؟

Al-Kulayni reports with his *isnad* from Hammad ibn Uthman that he said: Imam al-Sadiq (a) once came out of the mosque to find his mount missing. Thereupon the Imam (a) said, "Should God return it to me, I will thank Him as He deserves to be thanked." It was not long before the animal was brought to him. Thereat, the Imam (a) said, "*Al-hamdu li'llah*." Someone said to him, "May I be made your ransom, didn't you say that you will thank God as He deserves to be thanked?" Imam al-Sadiq (a) said to him, "Didn't you hear me say: *Al-hamdu li'llah?*'"[2]

This tradition shows that the praise of God is the best of the ways of oral thanksgiving. Among the effects of thanksgiving is increase in *nimah*, as mentioned unambiguously in the Noble Scripture:

﴿لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ.﴾

*If you are thankful, surely I will increase you*. (19:7)

And the noble *al-Kafi* has recorded this *mustanad* tradition of Imam al-

[1] *Al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab al-shukr, hadith* no. 10.
[2] *Al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab al-shukr, hadith* no. 18.

Sadiq (a) in this regard:

قَالَ: مَنْ أُعْطِيَ الشُّكْرُ أُعْطِيَ الزِّيَادَةُ. يَقُولُ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: ﴿لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ.﴾

> Imam al-Sadiq (a) said: One who has been given thankfulness has been also given increase (in *nimah*) *Allah*, Almighty and Glorious, says: "If you are thankful, surely I will increase you."[1]

## CONCLUSION

You should know that Aishah had imagined that the motive behind worship was confined to the fear of punishment or the effacement of sins. She had imagined that the worship of the Noble Prophet (*s*) was like the worship of other people. Therefore, she had wondered as to why the Prophet (*s*) took so much pains. This thought was as much due to her ignorance of the station of worship and servantship as due to the ignorance of the station of prophethood and messengership. She did not know that the worship of slaves and hirelings was foreign to the sacred station of that master. The majesty of the Lord and gratitude for His unlimited bounties had made comfort and ease foreign to his holy being. Rather, the worship of the sincere *awliya* is the stage of the boundless irradiations of the Beloved, as pointed out in the prayer of the heavenly ascent. The holy *awliya* (a) while being absorbed in the beauty and glory of the Beloved and effaced in His attributes and Essence, are never negligent of any of the stages of servantship. Their bodily movements are subject to their spiritual stirrings, suffused with love, which are subject to the quality of the manifestation of the Beloved's beauty. However, to satisfy someone like Aishah it is not possible to give any but a perfunctory explanation. Hence, the Prophet (*s*) confined himself to mentioning one of the lower stations so as to make her understand that the worship of that master was not aimed at such base purposes. And all praise is God's.

رَوَى عَلِيُّ بْنُ إبْرَاهِيمَ فِي تَفْسِيرِهِ بِإسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ وَأَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلامُ قَالا: كَانَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ إذَا صَلَّى قَامَ عَلَى أَصَابِعِ

[1] *Al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab al-shukr*, *hadith* no. 8.

رِجْلَيْهِ حَتَّى تَوَرَّمَتْ، فَأَنْزَلَ اللهُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى: ﴿طه – بِلُغَةِ طَيٍّ: يَا مُحَمَّدُ – مَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ القُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَى. إلا تَذْكِرَةً لِمَنْ يَخْشَى.﴾

Ali ibn Ibrahim, in his *tafsir*, reports with his *isnad* from Abu Jafar (a) and Abu Abd-Allah (a) that they said: The Messenger of Allah (*S*) used to pray while standing on his toes, until his feet became swollen. Thereupon Allah, Blessed and Exalted, sent down the verse: "*Taha*," –it meant: O Muhammad!– *We have not sent down the Quran upon thee to put thee to hardship*. (20:1-2)"[1]

وَعَنِ الصَّدُوقِ فِي مَعَانِي الأَخْبَارِ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ سُفْيَانَ الثَّوْرِيِّ عَنِ الصَّادِقِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ فِي حَدِيثٍ طَوِيلٍ قَالَ فِيهِ: وَأَمَّا **(طه)** فَإِسْمٌ مِنْ أَسْمَاءِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ، وَمَعْنَاهُ: يَا طَالِبَ الحَقِّ الهَادِي إِلَيْهِ.

Al-Saduq in *Maani al-akhbar* reports with his *isnad* from Sufyan al-Thawri from Imam al-Sadiq (a) that he said in the course of a long tradition: "As to *Taha*, it is one of the names of the Prophet (*S*) and it means: O seeker of the Truth (*talib al-Haqq*) and the Guide towards it (*al-hadi ilayh*)." [2]

And it has been narrated from Ibn Abbas and others that *Taha* means 'O Man'. It has been narrated from some *Sunni* scholars (*ammah*) that *Ta* refers to the purity (*taharah*) of the Holy Prophet's heart and *ha* refers to its receiving guidance (*hidayah*) towards God. And it has been said that *Ta* means the delight (*tarab*) felt by the inhabitants of paradise and *ha* signifies the disgrace and degradation (*hawn*) felt by the inmates of hell. Al-Tabrisi (*m*) says, "It has been narrated from al-Hasan that he would read (*Ta ha*) as *Tah* (**طه**) with *fathah* on the *ta* and *sukun* on the *ha*. Should this reading of his be correct, then it must originally have been ta, with the hamzah having changed to ha. Then the meaning of the verse becomes:

طَأِ الأَرْضَ بِرِجْلَيْكَ جَمِيعاً.

[1] *Tafsir al-Qummi*, ii, 58.
[2] *Maani al-akhbar*, 22.

Take the earth under both of thy feet.[1]

There is a severe disagreement about the significance of the isolated letters (*al-huruf al-muqattaah*) at the beginning of the Quranic *surah*s. That which seems more likely is that they are of the kind of secrets exchanged between lovers, of whose significance others do not partake. The conjectures advanced by some exegetes in this regard are mostly without any source. The tradition narrated by Sufyan al-Thawri also indicates their being secret symbols, and it is not very improbable that they relate to matters, which lie beyond human comprehension. Through them God Almighty has addressed His elect, and there is nothing that is *mutashabih* (in the Quran) but that they know its interpretation.[2] *Shaqa* and *shaqawah* (whose derivative *tashqa* occurs in 20:1) are antonyms of *saadah* (felicity) and mean hardship and trouble. This is what al-Jawhari states:

**الشَّقاءُ والشَّقاوَةُ نَقيضُ السَّعَادَة.**

Al-Tabrisi narrates this tradition in his *al-Ihtijaj:*

**رَوَى الطَّبْرِسِيُّ فِي الاحْتِجَاجِ عَنْ مُوسَى بْنِ جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ عَنْ آبَائِهِ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلامُ قَالَ: قَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: وَلَقَدْ قَامَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ عَشْرَ سِنِينَ عَلَى أَطْرَافِ أَصَابِعِهِ حَتَّى تَوَرَّمَتْ قَدَمَاهُ وَاصْفَرَّ وَجْهُهُ يَقُومُ اللَّيْلَ أَجْمَعَ حَتَّى عُوِيبَ عَلَى ذَلِكَ، فَقَالَ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: ﴿طه. مَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَى.﴾**

> Imam Musa ibn Jafar (a) narrates from his ancestors (a) that Amir al-Muminin (a) said: For ten years the Messenger of Allah (*S*) stood on his toes (in his prayers) until his feet became swollen and his face turned yellowish. He would stand all the night until he was reproached in this regard. God Almighty said to him, "*Taha, We have not sent down the Quran upon you to cause you hardship*." That is, We have sent it down upon you that you may be felicitous and happy thereby.

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[1] al-Tabrisi, *Majma al-bayan*; earlier to this command the Prophet (*s*) used to pray while standing on one foot.

[2] This refers to verse 28:56.

And it has been narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (a) that the Prophet (*s*) would lift one of his blessed feet during worship in order to make it harder upon himself. 'Thereat God Almighty sent down this noble verse. Some exegetes have opined that this noble verse is intended as an answer to the polytheists who said that the Prophet had fallen into hardship by abandoning their faith.

The perfect *arif* Shahabadi (*d*) used to say:

> After some time that that blessed being (i.e. the Prophet) invited the people to his creed and it did not prove to be as effective as he wished, that master thought that perhaps there was something lacking in his call. Thereafter he devoted himself to austerities for a period of ten years, until his blessed feet became swollen. Then the noble verse came down: Don't subject yourself to hardship. You are pure, and a true guide. The defect is not in you but in the people, and that:

﴿إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ﴾

*Thou guidest not whom thou likest, but God guides whom He wills*. (28:56)

In any case that which we infer from the noble verse is that the Prophet (*s*) used to devote himself to austerities and hardships, and this is what we understand on the whole from the sayings of the exegetes, although they differ regarding the exact character of those austerities. This should be an example and a lesson for the *ummah*, especially for the learned who wish to call people to God. That blessed being, with his purity of heart and perfectness would subject himself to such austerities and pains until he was asked to relax by the noble verse sent down by the Sacred Divine Essence. And we, with all the enormous burden of our sins and offences, are never mindful of our hereafter, resurrection, and return, as if we have been guaranteed immunity from punishment and security from hellfire! The reason of it is nothing but that the love of world has stuffed its cotton into our ears and we no longer listen to the words of the Prophets and the *awliya*.

22

# Twenty-Second *Hadith*: THE AVERSION FOR DEATH

**بالسَّنَدِ المُتَّصِلِ إلَى رُكْنِ الإسْلامِ وَثِقَتِهِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ الكُلَيْنِي عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَحْيَى، عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ، عَنْ بَعْضِ أَصْحَابِهِ، عَنِ الحَسَنِ بْنِ عَلِيِّ بْنِ أَبِي عُثْمَانَ، عَنْ وَاصِلٍ، عَنْ عَبْدِاللهِ بْنِ سِنَانٍ، عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: جَاءَ رَجُلٌ إلَى أَبِي ذَرٍّ فَقَالَ: يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ، مَا لَنَا نَكْرَهُ المَوْتَ؟ فَقَالَ: لأَنَّكُمْ عَمَّرْتُمُ الدُّنْيَا وَأَخْرَبْتُمُ الآخِرَةَ فَتَكْرَهُونَ أنْ تُنْقَلُوا مِنْ عُمْرانٍ إلى خَرابٍ. فَقِالَ لَهُ: فَكَيْفَ تَرَى قُدُومَنَا عَلَى اللهِ؟ فَقَالَ: أَمَّا المُحْسِنُ مِنْكُمْ فَكَالغَائِبِ يَقْدِمُ عَلَى أَهْلِهِ، وَأَمَّا المُسِيءُ مِنْكُمْ فَكَالآبِقِ يُرَدُّ عَلَى مَوْلاهُ. قَالَ: فَكَيْفَ تَرَى حَالَنَا عِنْدَ اللهِ؟ قَالَ: إعْرِضُوا أَعْمَالَكُمْ عَلَى الكِتَابِ: إنَّ اللهَ يَقُولُ: ﴿إِنَّ الْأَبْرَارَ لَفِي نَعِيمٍ. وَإِنَّ الْفُجَّارَ لَفِي جَحِيمٍ﴾ قَالَ: فَقَالَ الرَّجُلُ: فَأَيْنَ رَحْمَةُ اللهِ؟ قَالَ: ﴿رَحْمَةَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ مِنْ الْمُحْسِنِينَ﴾**

**قَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: وَكَتَبَ رَجُلٌ إلَى أَبِي ذَرٍّ، رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ: يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ، أَطْرِفْنِي بِشَيْءٍ مِنَ العِلْمِ. فَكَتَبَ إلَيْهِ: العِلْمُ كَثِيرٌ، وَلَكِنْ إنْ قَدِرْتَ أنْ لا تُسِيءَ إلَى مَنْ تُحِبُّهُ فَافْعَلْ. قَالَ: فَقَالَ لَهُ الرَّجُلُ: وَهَلْ رَأَيْتَ أَحَداً يُسِيءُ إلَى مَنْ يُحِبُّهُ؟ فَقَالَ لَهُ: نَعَمْ، نَفْسُكَ أَحَبُّ الأَنْفُسِ إلَيْكَ، فَإذَا أَنْتَ عَصَيْتَ اللهَ فَقَدْ أَسَأْتَ إلَيْهَا.**

With my continuous *sanad* reaching up to the pillar of

Islam and its reliable authority, Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulayni, from Muhammad ibn Yahya, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad, from some of his teachers, from al-Hasan ibn Ali ibn Abi Uthman, from Wasil, from Abd-Allah ibn Sinan, from Abu Abd-Allah (a) that he said: A man came to Abu Dharr and said to him, "O Abu Dharr, what is wrong with us that we abhor death?" Abu Dharr replied, "That is because you have built and cultivated your world and ruined your Hereafter. So, you hate to be moved from prosperity towards desolation." He was asked, "How do you see our entry into God's presence?" Abu Dharr replied, "As to the good-doer amongst you, he is like someone returning to his family after a (long) absence. As to the evil-doer amongst you, he is like an absconding slave being returned to his master." He was asked, "How do you see our situation before God?" Abu Dharr replied, "Evaluate your deeds in view of the Quranic criterion. Verily God says: *Surely, the pious shall be in bliss and the profane shall be in a fiery furnace* (82:12-3). The Imam (a) added: Thereat, the man said, "Then, where is the mercy of God?" Abu Dharr replied, "The mercy of God is near to the good-doers."

Abu Abd-Allah (a) continued: A man wrote to Abu Dharr (*r*), "O Abu Dharr, teach me something new of knowledge." Abu Dharr wrote to him, "Knowledge is vast. However, if you can abstain from wronging someone that you love, do so." The man asked him, "Have you seen anyone wrong someone that he loves?" Abu Dharr replied, "Yes, your own self is the dearest of all things to you. And when you disobey God you have wronged it."[1]

## EXPOSITION

One should know that people differ in their fear and abhorrence of death and the reasons that underlie their abhorrence. That which Hadrat Abu Dharr

[1] *Al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr bab muhasabat al-amal*, *hadith* no. 20.

(*r*) has described, relates to the state of the middle ones (*mutawassitun*) and we will briefly describe here the condition of the deficient (*naqisun*) as well as that of the perfect (*kamilun*).

It should be known that the fear and abhorrence of ours, the deficient (*naqisun*), for death is on account of a cause that was referred to in the course of exposition of some of the foregoing traditions. It lies in this that man, in accordance with his original and God-given nature, loves life and survival and hates death and extinction. This love is related to absolute survival and immortal, everlasting life, a survival free from extinction and a life that knows no end. Some of our honored predecessors used to prove the necessity of Resurrection on the basis of this human nature, and a description of their arguments here is outside the aims of our present discourse. Now, since this love and that hate lie in human nature, man comes to love that which he reckons to be the enduring realm of life and hates that which he regards as being contrary to it. Since we have no faith in the realm of the Hereafter and our hearts have no conviction in immortal life and eternal survival, we are attached to this world and abhor death in accordance with that nature.

We have mentioned earlier that rational Judgment and perception is different from the faith and conviction of the heart. In accordance with our rational apperception, or Judgment based on traditional belief (*taqlid*), we affirm that death –which is a transition from the dark, lowly sphere of corporeal (*mulki*) existence to the radiant world of immortal life and the everlasting higher sphere of incorporeal (*malakuti*) existence– is a reality. However, our hearts do not partake of this knowledge and are oblivious of it. Rather, our hearts cling to earthly nature and the corporeal realm and consider life to be exclusively confined to the lower corporeal mode of animal life. They do not believe in the life and immortality of the other world, which is the world of Hereafter and the realm of (pure) life. Hence, we put total reliance in this world and regard the other world with fear, repulsion, and resentment. All the misfortunes of ours are on account of this lack of faith and conviction. Had we even a tenth of what faith we have in this world's life and living, its existence and survival, in the world of the Hereafter and its eternal, everlasting life, our hearts would have been more attached to it and we would have devoted some effort to building it. But, alas, the springs of our faith are dry and the edifice of our faith rests on water. Inevitably, we fear death, extinction, and end. The exclusive and definite remedy for this malady is cultivation of faith in the heart through beneficial reflection and remembrance as well as sound knowledge and works.

However, as to the fear and abhorrence of the *mutawassitun* –that is, those who have inadequate faith in Hereafter– that is because the attention of their hearts is turned to the cultivation of the world and they are neglectful of cultivating the Hereafter. Therefore, they are not inclined to move from a well-built and prosperous place to one, which is a desolation, as pointed out by Hadrat Abu Dharr (*r*). This attitude is also on account of inadequate faith and conviction. Otherwise, with a complete faith it is not possible that one should confine his efforts to the base mundane affairs to the neglect of the Hereafter. On the whole, these fears, anxieties, and hatreds arise from unwholesomeness of deeds, waywardness and opposition to one's Master (*Mawla*). Otherwise, had our evaluation been a correct one and had we critically examined ourselves we would not have been fearful of God's reckoning. For there, the reckoning is just and the judge is a just one. Hence, our fear of the reckoning is due to our own inequity and our self-deceptive and fraudulent evaluation of our own selves. In the noble *al-Kafi*, the following *musnad* tradition of Hadrat Musa ibn Jafar (a) is recorded:

قَالَ: لَيْسَ مِنّا مَنْ لَمْ يُحَاسِبْ فِيْ كُلِّ يَوْمٍ نَفْسَهُ، فَإِنْ عَمِلَ حَسَناً اسْتَزَادَ اللهَ مِنْهُ وَحَمِدَ اللهَ عَلَيْهِ، وَإِنْ عَمِلَ شَيْئاً اسْتَغْفَرَ اللهَ مِنْهُ وَتَابَ إِلَيْهِ.

> The Imam (a) said, "One who does not examine and evaluate himself every day is not one of us (i.e. he is not a follower of the Prophet and the Ahl al-Bayt). (A person who examines himself every day), if he does a good deed, he beseeches God to increase him (in virtues and if he has perpetrated a vice, he seeks God's forgiveness for it and is penitent before Him."[1]

Hence, if you have been taking account of yourself, you shall have no fear of the time of reckoning, for the perils and tribulations of that world are subject to the works performed in this. For instance, had you walked in this world on the straight path of prophethood and the straight path of *wilayah* without deviating or swerving from the path of the *wilayah* of Ali ibn Abi Talib (*m*) there will be no fear on you when passing over the *Sirat*.[2] For the reality of the *Sirat* is the inward form of the *wilayah*, as it has been

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[1] *Al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab muhasabat al-amal*, *hadith* no. 2.

[2] *Tafsir al-burhan*, i. 46.

mentioned in *ahadith* that Amir al-Muminin (a) is the *Sirat*.[1] In another tradition, the Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt* are reported to have stated, "We are the *Sirat*." In the blessed *al-Ziyarat al-jamiah*, it is stated:

أَنْتُمُ السَّبِيلُ الأَعْظَمُ وَالصِّرَاطُ الأَقْوَمُ.

> You (the *Ahl al-Bayt*) are the greatest path (*sabil*) and the firmest way (*Sirat*).[2]

Whoever moves on this path steadily without stumbling, his feet will not stagger on that *Sirat* too, and he will pass over it in a moment as short as the stroke of lightning. Similarly, should his morals and habits be equitable and radiant, he will be immune from the darkness and horrors of the grave, of the *Barzakh* and the Resurrection, and there will be no fear upon him in those realms. Hence, here, we are ourselves responsible for the malady, and its remedy is in our own hands, as pointed out by Hadrat Amir al-Muminin in verses ascribed to him:

دَوَاؤُكَ فِيكَ وَمَا تَشْعُرُ وَدَاؤُكَ مِنْكَ وَمَا تُبْصِرُ

> *The remedy lies in you and you perceive not.*
> *The malady arises from you and you discern not.*[3]

And the noble *al-Kafi* records the following *musnad* tradition of al Imam al-Sadiq (a):

قَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ لِرَجُلٍ: إِنَّكَ قَدْ جُعِلْتَ طَبِيبَ نَفْسِكَ وَبُيِّنَ لَكَ الدَّاءُ وَعُرِّفْتَ آيَةَ الصِّحَّةِ وَدُلِلْتَ عَلَى الدَّوَاءِ، فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ قِيَامُكَ عَلَى نَفْسِكَ.

> The Imam (a) said to a man, "Verily, you have been made your own doctor. The malady has been described to you, the sign of health has also been made known to you, the medicine has been shown to you. Hence look how you attend your own soul."[4]

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[1] *Tafsir al-burhan*, 51.

[2] *Man la yahduruh al-faqih*, ii, 613; *Mafatih al-jinan, al-Ziyarat al-jamiah al-kabirah*.

[3] The *Diwan* ascribed to Amir al-Muminin, 57.

[4] *Al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab muhasabat al-amal*, *hadith* no. 6.

You are afflicted with corrupt beliefs, morals, and behavior. The signs of health are contained in the prescriptions of the prophets and the illuminations of (primordial) nature and the intellect. The remedy for the soul's sickness lies in taking steps for its removal. This is the condition of the *mutawassitun*. However, as to the condition of the perfect and those of convinced faith, they have no abhorrence of death, although they may regard it with fear and anxiety on account of their awe of the Majesty of God, the Exalted, and the dignity of that Sacred Essence. And hence, the Messenger of Allah (*s*) used to say;

فَأَيْنَ هَوْلُ الْمُطَّلَعِ؟

So where is the terror of him who knows?

And Hadrat Amir al-Muminin (a) had a terrific fear and horror on the night of the nineteenth of Ramadan (the night of his assassination), although he used to say:

وَاللهِ، لابْنُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ آنَسُ بِالمَوْتِ مِنَ الطِّفْلِ بِثَدْيِ أُمِّهِ.

By God, the son of Abu Talib is more intimate with death than an infant with its mother's bosom.[1]

Their fear is on account of other matters and is not like the fear of those like us who are in the chains of desires and hopes and are enamored to the transitory world. The hearts of the *awliya*, too, greatly differ from one another. Their difference cannot be encompassed by any description or writing, and we will refer briefly to some of their points of difference. The hearts of the *awliya* differ in their capacity to receive the irradiations (*tajalliyat*) of the Divine Names. The hearts of some of them are characterized with love and yearning and God Almighty is manifested in them through the Names of Beauty (*Jamal*). Such an irradiation brings an awe suffused with yearning, and the fear in their terror is on account of the manifestation of Divine Majesty and its vision. The lover's heart palpitates with fear and anxiety as the time of meeting the beloved approaches, but this anxiety and terror is different from the ordinary kinds of fear.

The hearts of some of them are characterized with trepidation and grief and God Almighty is manifested in them through the Names of Majesty and

[1] *Nahj al-balaghah*, *Khutab*, no. 5.

Glory. Such a *tajalli* creates an intense yearning suffused with dread and a wonder and an awe suffused with grief. And it is related in *hadith* that once Hadrat Yahya –John– (a) noticed Hadrat Isa –Jesus– (a) laughing. Angrily, he said to the latter, "It appears as if you are immune of God's chastisement!" Hadrat Isa retorted, "It appears as if you have despaired of God's mercy and beneficence!" God Almighty revealed to them that, "Whoever of you has a better opinion of Me is the dearer to Me."

Since God manifested Himself in the heart of Hadrat Yahya (a) through the Names of Majesty, he always dwelt in dread and awe and showed his displeasure to Hadrat Isa (a), who gave him a reply in accordance with the *tajalliyat* of Divine Mercy and Compassion.

## THE REALITY OF HEAVEN AND HELL

The literal meaning of the *hadith* where it says: **عَمَّرْتُمُ الدُّنْيَا وَأَخْرَبْتُمُ الآخِرَةَ** (you have built the world and ruined the Hereafter) is that the abodes of the Hereafter and paradise are places already built and flourishing that are turned into ruins by our works. But it is obvious that the intent is parallelism of expression. Since the term *tamir* (building) was used in relation to the world, the parallel term *takhrib* (destruction) was used in relation to the Hereafter. Although the realms of hell and paradise are creations (of God), the building agency of paradise and the material of hell is subject to the deeds of their inhabitants.[1] And this interpretation is in accordance with demonstrative proof as well as mystic intuition (*kashf*). Hence, some of the researchers among the mystics have said:

> Let it be known to you –may God preserve you and us from error– that hell (*Jahannam*) is one of God's great creations, and it is God's prison in the Hereafter. It is called '*Jahannam*' because of the remoteness of its pit. Hence, a well with a deep pit is called *bir jahannam*. It contains heat and bitter cold. Its coldness reaches the extreme degree of cold and its heat the extreme degree of hotness. A distance of seven hundred and fifty years' journey separates its uppermost and lowermost parts. The people disagree as to whether it is a creation or not, and similarly they disagree concerning paradise. However, in

[1] Al-Saduq, *al-amali*, *majlis* no. 69, p. 405.

> our opinion and that of our companions and the mystics, they are and are not creations. When we say that they are creations, it is like saying of a man building a house and who has built only its boundary walls that "he has built a house." However, on entering one sees nothing but an area and space surrounded by a wall. It is only afterwards that its inner quarters shall be built with rooms, compartments, storerooms, and water tanks in accordance with the needs of those who shall come to live therein.

And it is mentioned in *hadith* that when the Messenger of Allah (*s*) went on his noble ascent (*miraj*), he saw certain angels in paradise who would, for some time, engage in constructing buildings and for some time stopped their work. The Prophet (*s*) asked Gabriel (a), "What is the reason behind this?" Gabriel (a) replied, 'The material for this building is made up of the remembrance of the individuals of the *ummah*. Whenever they engage in remembrance, the material becomes available for building and the angels too resume their building work. But when they cease in their remembrance, these angels too stop their work."[1] The physical form of heaven and hell is made up of the forms of the good and evil works and deeds of the Children of Adam, which return to them in that world. This has also been referred to in the noble verses of the Quran, as in the following utterance of God Almighty:

﴿وَوَجَدُوا مَا عَمِلُوا حَاضِرًا.﴾

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

And:

إِنَّمَا هِيَ أَعْمَالُكُمْ تُرَدُّ إِلَيْكُمْ.

> Indeed, these are your own works that are being returned to you.[2]

It is possible that the worlds of heaven and hell are two independent realms and abodes towards which the Children of Adam journey through substantial motions (*hrakat-e jawhari*) and voluntary spiritual (*malakuti*) movements derived from their behavior and character, where they receive

[1] *Bihar al-anwar*, xviii, 292.
[2] Al-Majlisi, *Ilm al-yaqin*, ii, 884.

their share of the Hereafter in the shape of the forms of their works.

The heaven is the higher *malakuti* realm, being an independent sphere by itself towards which the felicitous spirits are directed, and the hell is the nether *malakuti* realm towards which the spirits of the wretched make their journey. But that which each of them encounters in its own sphere are the fair and blessed or painful and dreadful forms of their own deeds. This description reconciles the literal meanings of the Book and the traditions – which are apparently contradictory– and is also in agreement with philosophical proofs as well as the teaching of the *urafa*.

It is obvious that this saying of Hadrat Abu Dharr (*r*) consists of a comprehensive and firm command which every human being must observe with due care. Thereafter Hadrat Abu Dharr says that one should examine his deeds in the light of the Book of God. And God says: Mankind consist of two groups: the pious, who are in bliss, and the wayward, who are in hell. The man (who questioned Abu Dharr) made an attempt to cling to Divine mercy when he said, "If that is so, then where is the mercy of God Almighty?" Abu Dharr replied: God's mercy is not extravagant; it is near to the good-doers.

You should know that the accursed Satan and the vicious self that incites man to evil deceive the human being in many ways and drive him towards eternal damnation. The last arrow in their quiver is to deceive man through hope in Divine mercy and to keep man from (virtuous) action by the means of this deception, for this kind of reliance on Divine mercy is one of Satanic snares and deceits. The evidence of it is that we never put any trust in the mercy of God, the Exalted, in our mundane affairs, and we consider natural and apparent means as being independent and effective, to the extent of believing that there is no efficient agency in the world except the apparent causes. However, in matters relating to the Hereafter we imagine ourselves to be reliant on Divine mercy while we neglect the commands of God and His Messenger (a) as if God had given us no power to act and had not shown us the paths of (spiritual) health and sickness.

In the matters of the world we follow the creed of *tafwid* (the belief that God has delegated complete freedom to man), while in relation to the matters of the Hereafter we follow the creed of *jabr* (fatalism), forgetting that both of them are wrong, void and contrary to the teachings of the prophets (a) and the abiding path of the Imams of guidance and the *awliya* near to God, whose faith was greater than all others and all of whom had convinced faith in Divine mercy. Notwithstanding it, they did not neglect their duties and did

not leave off effort and endeavor for a single moment.

Brother! Study the book of their works! Read the supplications of Sayyid al-Sajidin Zayn al-Abidin (a). Look carefully and see how he approaches God in the station of servantship (*ubudiyyah*). See how he attends to the duties of slavehood. Despite it all, when he studies the book of works of the Master of the Pious, Amir al-Muminin (a) he expresses his regret and his incapability! Does it mean that, *naudhu bi'llah*, we should question their veracity and say that they did not, like us, possess faith and conviction in Divine mercy? Or should we doubt our own veracity and understand once for all that all that we say are no more than snares of Satan and deceits of the carnal self, which scheme to deviate us from the straight path? We take refuge in God, the Exalted, from their malice!

And so, my dear, knowledge is extensive, as remarked by Hadrat Abu Dharr to that man, but the beneficial piece of knowledge for the likes of us is to abstain from doing ourselves this extent of wrong. We must understand that the commands of the prophets and the *awliya* (a) contain certain truths which are concealed from us. They, who know what kind of forms and consequences these corrupt words and evil acts of ours possess and what kind of blessed *malakuti* forms the noble morals and good deeds have, have described all the maladies and their remedies. You –should you have any love for yourself– should not pass by these prescriptions. Decide to cure your afflictions and diseases. Should we move in this condition of ours from this world to the next, God knows what afflictions, calamities and pains await us! And all praise is God’s at the beginning and the end.

23

# Twenty-Third *Hadith*:
# THE SEEKERS OF KNOWLEDGE

بِالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلَى حُجَّةِ الفِرْقَةِ وَثِقَتِهَا مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ الكُلَيْنِيِّ رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ رَفَعَهُ إِلَى أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: طَلَبَةُ العِلْمِ ثَلاثَةٌ فَاعْرِفُهُمْ بِأَعْيَانِهِمْ وَصِفَاتِهِمْ: صِنْفٌ يَطْلُبُهُ لِلْجَهْلِ وَالمِرَاءِ، وَصِنْفٌ يَطْلُبُهُ لِلاسْتِطَالَةِ وَالخَتْلِ، وَصِنْفٌ يَطْلُبُهُ لِلْفِقْهِ وَالعَقْلِ. فَصَاحِبُ الجَهْلِ وَالمِرَاءِ مُوذٍ مُمَارٍ مُتَعَرِّضٌ لِلْمَقَالِ فِي أَنْدِيَةِ الرِّجَالِ بِتَذَاكُرِ العِلْمِ وَصِفَةِ الحِلْمِ، قَدْ تَسَرْبَلَ بِالخُشُوعِ وَتَخَلَّى مِنَ الوَرَعِ فَدَقَّ اللهُ مِنْ هَذَا خَيْشُومَهُ وَقَطَعَ مِنْهُ حَيْزُومَهُ. وَصَاحِبُ الإِسْتِطَالَةِ وَالخَتْلِ ذو خِبٍّ وَمَلَقٍ وَيَسْتَطِيلُ عَلَى مِثْلِهِ مِنْ أَشْبَاهِهِ وَيَتَواضَعُ لِلأَغْنِيَاءِ مِنْ دُونِهِ، فَهُوَ لِحَلْوَائِهِمْ هَاضِمٌ وَلِدِينِهِ حَاطِمٌ، فَأَعْمَى اللهُ عَلَى هَذَا خَبَرَهُ وَقَطَعَ مِنْ آثَارِ العُلَمَاءِ أَثَرَهُ. وَصَاحِبُ الفِقْهِ وَالعَقْلِ ذو كَآبَةٍ وَحُزْنٍ وَسَهَرٍ؛ قَدْ تَحَنَّكَ فِي بُرْنُسِهِ وَقَامَ اللَّيْلَ فِي حِنْدِسِهِ يَعْمَلُ وَيَخْشَى وَجِلاً دَاعِياً مُشْفِقاً مُقْبِلاً عَلَى شَأْنِهِ عَارِفاً بِأَهْلِ زَمَانِهِ مُسْتَوْحِشاً مِنْ أَوْثَقِ إِخْوَانِهِ، فَشَدَّ اللهُ مِنْ هَذَا أَرْكَانَهُ وَأَعْطَاهُ يَوْمَ القِيَامَةِ أَمَانَهُ. وحدَّثَني به محمد بن محمود أبو عبدالله القزويني عن عِدَّة من أصحابنا منهم جعفر بن محمد الصيقل بقزوين عن أحمد بن عيسى العلوي عن عباد بن صهيب البصري عن أبي عبدالله عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ.

With my chain of transmission reaching up to the proof of the sect and its authority, Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-

Kulayni (*r*) from Ali ibn Ibrahim, who reports in a *marfu* (i.e. without mentioning intermediary authorities) tradition from Abu Abd-Allah (a) that he said, "The seekers of (sacred) knowledge are of three kinds, so recognize them by their specific qualities and characteristics. One kind of them seeks it for the sake of ignorance and dispute. Another kind seeks it for the sake of domination and deceit. Yet another kind seeks it for the sake of (improving) understanding and intellect.

The one who seeks it for ignorance and dispute's sake is injurious and quarrelsome. He contests opinions in the gatherings of men, speaking of knowledge and describing forbearance. He puts on the garb of humility, though he is devoid of piety. As a result, God crushes his nose and severs his waist.

The one who seeks knowledge for domination and deception is an imposter and a sycophant. He is domineering with those who are his likes but is humble in front of the rich, whose sweetmeats he ingests while he demolishes his own faith. As a result, God blinds his vision and wipes out his traces from the legacy of the learned.

As to him who seeks knowledge for the sake of understanding and intellection, he is grief-stricken and awake at nights. Having tied his cap with the loose end of his turban, he stands up in the dark of nights. He acts and is in trepidation. A caller overawed, engaged in his work, and acquainted with the people of his times, he is apprehensive of his most trusted brother. As a result of it God strengthens his supports and grants him amnesty on the Day of Resurrection."

Al-Kulayni (*m*) says: This tradition was also narrated to me by Muhammad ibn Mahmud Abu Abd-Allah al-Qazvini from several of our companions, among them Jafar ibn Muhammad al-Sayqal at Qazvin, from Ahmad ibn Isa al-Alawi, from Abbad ibn Suhayb al-Basri, from

Abu Abd-Allah (a).[1]

## EXPOSITION

**بأَعْيَانِهِمْ** is for stress on the pronoun of **فاعْرِفُهُمْ** so what is meant is: "Know them *themselves*, so that they become determined and specified and are not mistaken with others." Similarly, it is said **رَأَيْتُهُ بعَيْنِهِ** I saw him himself and:

**كُلُّ شَيءٍ فيهِ حَلالٌ وحَرامٌ فهُوَ لكَ حَلالٌ حتَّى تَعرِفَ الحَرامَ بِعَينِهِ.**

> Everything that contains *halal* and *haram* is *halal* for you so far as you know that which is *haram* itself.

The authoritative traditionist al-Majlisi (*r*) has mentioned various possible meaning here (i.e. of **بأَعْيَانِهِمْ**) which are extremely far-fetched and do not include this evident and apparent possibility. He says:

**بأَعْيَانِهِمْ** means 'their kinds and the understanding of their categories' or 'such of their actions are visible and observable…' Also it has been said, The meaning of **بأَعْيَانِهِمْ** means, 'their kinds and the understanding of their categories.' Also, it has been said, 'The meaning of **بأَعْيَانِهِمْ** is their look, appearance and postures, such as their putting on the garb of humility.'

Then he suggests other and as remote possibilities. **وَصِفَاتِهِمْ** means 'their characteristics', that is, those conditions which are subject to the personal traits and purposes of these three categories, such as injuriousness, disputatiousness and so on. Hence, these characteristics depict their condition by which they are specifically recognized.

*Jahl* (ignorance) is the opposite of *ilm* (knowledge), and here it probably means concealing the truth or pretending not to know it or absence of its acceptance. Later on, we will discuss it in further detail. Al-Majlisi says in this regard:

**الجَهل: السَّفاهَةُ وتَركُ الحِلمِ. وقيلَ: ضِدّ العِلمِ.**

> *Jahl* means foolishness and imprudence. It is also said to be the opposite of reason.

*Mira* means *jidal* (controversy) in doctrine and theology (*kalam*) and is derived from the same verbal root as *jadal* (dialectic) which is one of the

[1] *Al-Kafi, kitab Fadl al-ilm, bab al-nawadir, hadith* 5.

Five Topics (*al-sinaat al-khams*) in logic. Al-Jawhari, in *al-Sihah*, says:

يُقالُ: مارَيتُ الرجُلَ أُمارِيهِ مِراءً إذا جَادَلْتَهُ.

Although here *kalam* means speech in general but the intended meaning is apparently that which has been mentioned. There is another possible meaning involved here which we shall mention in one of the following sections.

*Istitalah* means seeking loftiness and eminence. *Khatl*, with *fathah* on *kha* and *sukun* on *ta*, means deception and imposture. Al-Jawhari says:

خَتَلَهُ وخَاتَلَه أيْ خَدَعَهُ. والتَّخَاتُل التَّخَادُع.

As to the word *mumar*, we will explain later on why one who indulges in *mira* is defined as *mumar*, (which being a verbal tautology does not seem to be a valid definition) and the one who indulges in *istitalah* and *khatl* as one who seeks to dominate his likes and one who resorts to *khibb*, for *khibb* (like *khatl*) also means deception.

As to the phrase **مُتَعَرّضٌ لِمَقال** it means expressing opinions. A lexicographer gives the following instance of usage:

يُقالُ: عَرضتُ له الشَّيءَ؛ إذا أظْهَرتُه لهُ. وَعَرَضَ له أمرُ كذا ويعرِضُ: أي ظَهَرَ.

*Andiyah* is plural of *nadi*, meaning a circle or club where people assemble for meeting and discussion. From it is derived *dar al-nadwah*, which was a place in Makkah, which was built for assembly and consultation. *Nadiyy*, *nadwah*, *muntada*, and *mutanada* have the same meaning, as pointed out by al-Jawhari.

The phrase *bi tadhakur al-ilm* refers to *maqal* or is its appositional substantive (*badal*), and to it is conjuncted *wa sifat al-hilm*. What is meant is that 'they hold scholarly discourses in order to be reckoned among the learned, and they describe and extol forbearance to be counted among the forbearing, whereas they are neither among the learned nor the forbearing. His learning is a kind of ignorance that resembles knowledge and his forbearance is devoid of the excellent qualities of forbearance.' Later on we will have occasion to discuss this sort.

*Tasarbala* pertains to the derivative formation *tafalul*, meaning putting on a *sirbal* –a garment. According to the lexicographer:

يُقالُ: سَرِبَلَتُهُ فَتَسرِبَلَ. أيْ أَلبَستُهُ السِّربَالَ.

*Tasarbala bi'l-khushu* means, 'he has put on the garment of humility,' appearing to be associated with it in the way a garment adheres to and is associated with the body, though he is devoid of it, since the garment he has put on is a borrowed one.

*Wara* with a *fathah* on *ra*, means complete abstinence from that which is *haram* or suspect.

The sentence *fa-daqqa'llah* and those resembling it in the following two sentences, may either imply a curse or may be taken to be indicative of their condition in the world or the hereafter, or in both. *Daqq* means knocking, or is a noun denoting sound.

The words *min hadha* mean 'as a result of this quality.' *Khayshum* is the upper part of the nose and that which is connoted by 'crushing the nose' is disgracing and humiliating. That is, God Almighty disgraces and humiliates them on account of those characteristics, and we will have occasion to discuss it further later on.

*Hayzum*, with a *fathah* on *ha* and *dammah* on *za*, means 'the place where the waist band is tied', or 'the middle of the breast', or 'a circumscribing bone like the one encircling the neck.' The first meaning, which suits the idea of severance, fits here.

*Khibb* means deception, wickedness, and imposture. As al-Jawhari says, رَجُل خِبٌّ means a deceitful man. *Malaq* means flattery and sycophancy, and implies what al-Jawhari says in *al-Sihah* يُعطي بلِسانِه ما لَيسَ في قلْبه i.e. one who expresses with his tongue that which is not in his heart. This interpretation is rather general, for *malaq* or *tamalluq* means an expression of love and attachment mixed with a show of humility while these are not in one's heart.

As to لحَلوائِهم al-Majlisi points out that there is *nun* (instead of *hamzah*) in some manuscripts. In that case, it means a middleman's tip or a soothsayer's fee paid him as a bribe, and it means the presents of money made by the rich to the impostor in return for his services, which he performs at the cost of his faith.

*Al-hatm* means breaking, and al-Majlisi says that breaking (of faith) here implies corruption and decadence (*fasad*). *Khubrahu* here is probably with a *dammah* on *kha* and *sukun* on *ba*, in which case it means the capacity to

cognize and discern. Though it is also probable that the word is *khabarahu*, with *fathah* on *kha* and *ba*, in view of its consistency with the verb. The first meaning is more fitting, though the second one is not without relevance.

*Al-Kabah* means one's bad and shattered condition as a result of intense grief and sadness.

*Tahannaka fi burnusihi* means 'he put the *taht al-hanak* in his *burnus*. *Burnus* is a tall cap, which the devout used to wear during the early Islamic era, as mentioned by al-Jawhari in *Sihah al-lughah*. Al-Majlisi says, 'This phrase suggests that *tahannuk* is *mustahabb* in *salat*. Such an inference is questionable, because given the kind of dress that was worn by the devout it suggests only the *istihbab* of *tahannuk* in general, not particularly during *salat*. Yes, had *burnus* been part of a dress- specified for *salat* such an inference would have been correct.

*Hindis* means an intensely dark night, as pointed out by al-Jawhari. *Hindis* here is substitute for night (*layl*) and that which is probably implied here is the dark of the night.

In *fa-shadda'llah arkanahu*, *shadd* means providing strength and power: **شَدَّ عَضُدَه: أي قوَّاهُ**. *Rukn* means something on which a thing stands and by which it is sustained. Al-Jawhari says, **رُكنُ الشَّيء جانِبُه الأقْوى** i.e. the *rukn* of a thing is its strongest side.

Now, with our trust in God, we shall explain that which is essential and fitting in the course of a few sections.

## SECTION 1

You should know that the premises of a syllogism in relation to its conclusion, or the arguments and theoretical proofs in any discipline in relation to the proved result and inferred conclusion, have the position of preparatory preliminaries. They are neither totally independent of the conclusions nor totally unrelated to them. In this regard both the followers of predestination (*jabr*) as well as the adherents of freedom (*tafwid*) have gone astray and departed from the path of moderation, each of them adopting an approach consistent with their doctrine. One of them (i.e. those who believe in *tafwid*) says that the preliminaries are independent and if the door of the World of the Hidden (*alam al-ghayb*) were to close and the emanations of the world of *malakut* to be shut off, man can derive conclusions unaided from the preliminaries themselves. The other (i.e. the believers in *jabr*) claims that

the preliminaries are totally unrelated to the conclusions and the Divine tradition has been established to inspire the human mind with the conclusions. The preliminaries are only superficially connected to the conclusions and are absolutely unconnected in reality. Both of the views of these groups, like their basic doctrines, are false in the view of those who are acquainted with the true teaching and real knowledge. The truth, in conformity with the view of those who know it, is that the preliminaries have a preparatory relation with the conclusions and they prepare the soul for receiving knowledge through inspiration from its higher hidden sources (*mabadi-ye Aliyah-ye ghaybiyyah*). Here we don't intend to expound or refute these doctrines of these two groups, for that lies beyond the scope of our aim, and the purpose of mentioning them is only subsidiary to the exposition of another issue, which is as follows.

Having known that the knowledge and teachings are inspired by the invisible spheres and that inspiration is subject to the soul's connection (with these spheres), you should know that, as pointed out by the *hadith*:

**لَيسَ العِلمُ بكَثرَةِ التَّعليمِ، بلْ هو نورٌ يقذِفُهُ بِقَلبِ منْ يَشَاءُ.**

> Knowledge is not extensive learning. Rather, it is a light that God casts in the heart of whomever He wills.[1]

Every soul that establishes a connection with the higher realm of *malakut* and the angelic sphere, receives such inspirations as are angelic in character and the knowledge that is cast into it is true knowledge from the angelic realm. Also, every soul that establishes a connection with the lower *malakuti* realm, the realm of the *jinn*, Satan, and evil spirits, receives inspirations that are satanic in character of the order of compound ignorance and obscuring veils. This is why the *urafa* and the people of true knowledge consider spiritual purification, the purgation of intentions and motives and the rectification of one's goals to be the first step in the path of acquisition of sciences, especially the Divine teachings and the sciences of the *Shariah*. Accordingly, they give the relevant advice and warnings to the students, for the link with the higher sources is strengthened through the purification of the soul. And that which the holy Lord, Exalted and Glorious, says in the noble verse:

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[1] *Bihar al-anwar*, i, 225.

﴿وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَيُعَلِّمُكُمْ اللَّهُ.﴾

*And fear God, and God shall teach you*. (2:282)

linking the Divine teaching to *taqwa* (God-fearing) is for this reason that *taqwa* purifies the soul and connects it to the invisible sacred realm. This is followed by Divine teaching and the *Rahmani* inspirations, for there is no niggardliness in the higher realms, which are bounteous by necessity, in the same way as the Necessary-Being-by-Essence is Necessary in all aspects.

However, if the soul engages in acquiring the sciences due to attention to selfish motives, for better food and drink and for egoistic reasons, its goal becomes non-divine and the inspirations it receives are satanic in character. This is one of the foolproof criteria, which I think has not been mentioned by the *urafa*, for differentiating between *Rahmani* and *shaytani* inspirations and most of the times one is aware of this fact. The inspirations received by the impious soul full of impurities and obfuscations belong to the category of compound ignorance (i.e. to be ignorant and be ignorant of one's ignorance), which is the incurable malady of the souls and the main impediment on their path. That is because the criterion in knowledge is not acquaintance with general concepts and scientific terms. Rather, the criterion is the removal of veils from the soul's eye and opening of the door of the knowledge of God. The real knowledge is the guiding spiritual lamp that shows the straight path of nearness to God and to the abode of His bliss.

Everything other than this is vanity, though in the world of *mulk* and prior to the removal of the veils of carnal nature those conversant with it should be reckoned as scholars, gnostics and jurisprudents by those used to learned controversies and disputes. But once the blinds are removed from the eyes of the heart, once the curtains of the world of *malakut* are raised and once one wakes up from the heavy slumber of *mulk* and corporeal nature that (which once appeared to be knowledge and learning) will be found to be the darkest of veils. It will be found that all those branches of formal learning were all in all thick spiritual curtains each of them separated from the other by vast distances and we were ignorant of this fact.

النَّاسُ نِيامٌ، فإذا مَاتُوا انْتَبَهُوا.

The people are asleep and they wake up on death.[1]

[1] Ibn Maytham al-Bahrani, *Sharh-e sad kalameh-ye qisar*, 54.

It is then that the real nature of our learned preoccupations is revealed to us. But that which is shameful and scandalous is that even after fifty years, or more or less, of learning and study we remain mistaken about ourselves, at times imagining that our studies are for the sake of God. We remain unaware of the ruses of Satan and the self, for self-love is a thick veil that conceals our defects from ourselves. Hence the chaste *awliya* and the noble Imams (a) have mentioned certain signs and marks of identification so that we may know and evaluate ourselves by their means without entertaining a baseless good opinion about ourselves. Later on in this exposition, we will refer to the signs and marks mentioned in this noble tradition.

We came to know that in a primarily classification the seekers of knowledge fall into two groups: those who have a divine aim and those who have a mundane one. It may be said that the ultimate goal of the latter group is ignorance (*jahl*), for the seeming knowledge that they acquire is compound ignorance in reality and a spiritual veil. The two groups mentioned by Imam al-Sadiq (a) in the tradition that we are expounding both belong to this class, for the seekers of domination as well as the impostors dwell in ignorance and misguidance. Hence, it may be said that the ignorance mentioned by the Imam as a sign of the first group is something different from the ordinary meaning of ignorance. Rather, it either means muddling up issues and keeping people ignorant or it means the ignorance of one who pretends to be ignorant of the truth or is not ready to accept it. Both of these characteristics are also present in the group afflicted with *mira* and *jidal*. They deny facts and well-established truths and adhere to ignorance for the sake of promoting their own opinions and marketing their spurious and little in demand merchandise.

Although in one classification the seekers of knowledge do not constitute more than two groups- that is, on the basis of a preliminary classification based on an affirmation or negation of the divine goal of knowledge –a further classification will show them to be more than three groups. As to their division into three groups by the Imam, it may be said that he wished to mention two major groups consisting of most of the victims of ignorance and misguidance. Thus in another tradition, we find that he considers the seekers of knowledge as constituting two groups:

الكَافِي بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: مَنْ أَرَادَ الحَدِيثَ لِمَنْفَعَةِ الدُّنْيَا لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ فِي الآخِرَةِ نَصِيبٌ، وَمَنْ أَرَادَ بِهِ خَيْرَ الآخِرَةِ أَعْطَاهُ اللهُ خَيْرَ

الدُّنْيَا وَالآخِرَةِ.

In *al-Kafi*, al-Kulayni reports with his *isnad* from Abu Abd-Allah (a) that he said, "He who seeks (to learn) *hadith* for worldly benefit has no share in the Hereafter, and he who seeks it for a benefit in the Hereafter, God grants him benefit both in the world and the Hereafter."[1]

## SECTION II

We have mentioned the evils of *mira* and *jidal* earlier in the exposition of one of the holy traditions. However, it is also proper here that we mention some relevant traditions and describe a little of their evil effects. In the noble *al-Kafi*, al-Kulayni reports with his *isnad* the following tradition on the authority of Imam al-Sadiq (a):

قَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: إِيَّاكُمْ وَالمِرَاءَ وَالخُصُومَةَ فَإِنَّهُمَا يُمْرِضَانِ القُلُوبَ عَلَى الإِخْوَانِ وَيَنْبُتُ عَلَيْهِمَا النِّفَاقُ.

Amir al-Muminin (a) said, "Beware of dispute and controversy, for they infect with enmity the hearts of brethren. They are the roots of hypocrisy (*nifaq*), out of which hypocrisy grows."[2]

There are other traditions in *al-Kafi* narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (a):

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: إِيَّاكُمْ وَالخُصُومَةَ فَإِنَّهَا تُشْغِلُ القَلْبَ وَتُورِثُ النِّفَاقَ وَتُكْسِبُ الضَّغَائِنَ.

Abu Abd-Allah (a) said, "Beware of controversy, because it discomfits the heart, gives rise to hypocrisy, and creates ill will within the heart."[3]

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: قَالَ جِبْرَئِيلُ لِلنَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: إِيَّاكَ وَمُلاحَاةَ الرِّجَالِ.

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[1] *Al-Kafi*, i, *kitab Fadl al-ilm, bab al-mustakil bi ilmih, hadith* 2.

[2] *Al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab al-mira wal-khusumah, hadith* 1.

[3] *Al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab al-mira wal-khusumah, hadith* 8.

> Abu Abd-Allah (a) said: Gabriel said to the Prophet (*S*): "Beware of getting entangled in dispute and acrimonious debate with people."[1]

Now let us take up the explanation of the fact that dispute and acrimony in talk sicken the heart, create ill feeling between friends, and make hypocrisy grow within the heart. It was mentioned earlier that outward actions leave certain effects on the inner self and the heart that are in accordance with their character. Here we must say that vicious actions have a more immediate and stronger impact on the heart. That is so because man is the offspring of the world of nature and the faculties of lust (*shahwah*), anger (*ghaḍab*) and diabolism (*shaytanah*) accompany him and are active in him, as has been mentioned in a tradition:

إنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ يَجْرِي مَجْرَى الدَّمِ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ.

> Satan circulates in mankind like the blood in veins.[2]

Hence, the heart is directly confronted with corrupting elements and matters acclimatized to physical nature. Even a slight external assistance, either from one of the bodily organs or in the shape of an immoral and vicious companion, produces a strong effect on the heart. Therefore, there are warnings in the noble traditions against keeping company with such persons:

الكَافِي: عَنْ أبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: قَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: لا يَنْبَغِي لِلْمَرْءِ الْمُسْلِمِ أنْ يُوَاخِيَ الفَاجِرَ فَإنَّهُ يُزَيِّنُ لَهُ فِعْلَهُ وَيُحِبُّ أنْ يَكُونَ مِثْلَهُ وَلا يُعِينُهُ عَلَى أَمْرِ دُنْيَاهُ وَلا أَمْرِ مَعَادِهِ، وَمَدْخَلُهُ إلَيْهِ وَمَخْرَجُهُ مِنْ عِنْدِهِ شَيْنٌ عَلَيْهِ.

> *Al-Kafi* reports on the authority of Imam al-Sadiq (a) from Amir al-Muminin (a) that he said, "It does not behoove a Muslim to be on fraternal terms with an immoral person, for he makes his own acts appear fair to one and likes one to become like himself. He is of no assistance to one either in the matters of the world or the Hereafter and it is a matter of disgrace for one to have

[1] *Al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab al-mira wal-khusumah*, *hadith* 6.
[2] *Sunan al-Darimi*, ii, 320.

social intercourse with such a person."[1]

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: لا يَنْبَغِي لِلْمَرْءِ الْمُسْلِمِ أنْ يُوَاخِيَ الفَاجِرَ وَلا الأَحْمَقَ وَلا الكَذَّابَ.

Imam al-Sadiq (a) said, "It is not proper for a Muslim to fraternize with an immoral person, a fool, or a liar."[2]

An important point behind the prohibition on keeping company with sinful persons, or on presence in a gathering where God is sinned against, or on befriending and mixing with the enemies of God, is the influence of their morals, states and acts on a person. More important from the viewpoint of such influence are one's own acts and their effect upon the heart, so that the perpetration of vicious acts even for a brief period produces a strong influence on the heart, freedom and relief from which is not possible or attainable even after many long years. This indicates that should one indulge in dispute and hostile debate, not much time would pass before a terrible darkness and obfuscation appears in the heart, the outward verbal hostility soon leading to an inward hostility that is itself the greatest cause of hypocrisy, two-facedness and duplicity. Hence the evils of hypocrisy may be recognized through a recognition of the evils of *mira* and *jidal*. Earlier, in the course of exposition of one of the traditions, we have described the evils of hypocrisy and two-facedness and there is no need to repeat that here.

Imam al-Sadiq (a) mentions certain signs and symptoms of the victims of ignorance and disputatiousness, one of which is causing harm to the people and being a vicious presence, which by itself is a vice and evil that is sufficient as an independent cause of one's destruction. It is mentioned in a noble tradition of *al-Kafi:*

مَنْ آذَى لِي وَلِيّاً فَقَدْ بَارَزَنِي بِالْمُحَارَبَةِ.

(God Almighty says) Whoever torments a friend of Mine has challenged Me to battle.[3]

The causing of harm and tormenting of the faithful has here been equated to declaration of war against God and hostility against His Sacred Being. The

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[1] *Al-Kafi, kitab al-ishrah, bab man tukrahu mujalasatuh, hadith* 2.

[2] *Al-Kafi, kitab al-ishrah, bab man tukrahu mujalasatuh, hadith* 3.

[3] *Al-Kafi, kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab man adha al-Muslimin, hadith* 8.

traditions relating to this topic are too many to be included in this brief exposition.

Another of the signs of this group has been mentioned to be *mira*, contesting of opinions and engagement in learned debates for the sake of domination and proving one's merit. As to making *mira* the consequence of *mira* in the tradition, it is possible that the first *mira* is an inner quality and a vicious trait of the heart and the *mira* that has been mentioned as its consequence is its outward manifestation and symptom.

Another of the symptoms of this group is its pretence of being forbearing while it is devoid of this quality. This is itself hypocrisy and two-facedness and involves *riya* and *shirk*. Similarly, the pretence of humility (*khushu*) while being devoid of piety (*wara*) is also another clear manifestation of *shirk*, *riya*, hypocrisy and two-facedness.

This shows that this characteristic is possessed of great vices each of which is fatal and destructive. It is necessary that we undertake any kind of effort and hardship to deliver ourselves from this shameful, faith-killing and destructive malady of the heart and purge it of its darkness and filth, purifying it and burnishing it with the sincerity of intention and inner truthfulness. In this regard there is a point here which is enough to shatter one when one reflects upon it for a while. It is that which Imam al-Sadiq (a) mentions after describing the signs of this group. The Imam (a) says:

**فَدَقَّ اللهُ مِنْ هَذَا خَيْشُومَهُ وَقَطَعَ مِنْهُ حَيْزُومَهُ.**

> As a result, God crushes his nose and severs his waist (it may also be translated to mean: Hence, may God crush his nose and sever his waist.)

This is either a *dua* (prayer or curse) or an indicative sentence (*ikhbar*). Whatever it should be, it is bound to take place. For should it be an indicative sentence, the reporter is a truthful speaker of attested veracity (*Sadiq-e musaddaq*). Should it be a *dua*, it is the *dua* of a *Masum* and a *wali* of Allah and is certain to be granted. Hence it is indicative of the certain humiliation and disgrace to befall such a man, and perhaps in both the worlds: in this world in front of those whose respect he wished to earn through ostentation and pretence of merit and which produce an opposite result by bringing him disgrace, reducing his worth, and earning him the contempt of those whom he sought to dominate and impress; and in the next world were he shall be humiliated and brought to shame in the presence of the archangels, prophets, apostles, the infallible *awliya* and God's righteous servants.

So, woe to us: the victims of *mira* and *jidal*, of carnal desires and hostilities! How great is our affliction at the hands of this vicious, heartless self which would not leave us alone unless it has brought us damnation in all the stages of life and existence, and yet we never bother to reform it! Our ears are closed with the stoppers of neglect! We refuse to awake from the heavy sleep of nature! O God, Thou art the reformer of Thy servants and the Master of their hearts. The being of all the existents lies in Thy power and the hearts of Thy creatures lie under the total influence of Thy will. We are not our own masters and have no power over our own benefit or harm, life or death. Do illuminate our dark hearts with the light of Thy grace and correct our vices with Thy magnanimity and mercy and help these powerless and weak creatures of Thine!

## SECTION III

We said concerning the mention of *mira* in the first part of the noble *hadith* that *mira* has an inner spiritual being as well as is an outward phenomenon that is the product, sign and symptom of the first kind of *mira*. Similarly, we may say concerning the second part of the description given by the Imam (a) that *istitalah* and *khatl* have an inner existence as a spiritual habit and quality, as well as an outward manifestation, which is the result of that habit. Similarly, in most of the activities of the heart there are various levels: the level of enduring trait (*malakah*), the level of state (*hal*), and the level of outward behavior, which is the product of the inner trait. Thus those who have in them the trait of *istitalah*, the urge for domination and ambition, as well as that for deception and imposture, they also carry its outward signs and symptoms, some of which have been mentioned in the tradition by Imam al-Sadiq (a). One of them is deceit and imposture which make one present himself as pious and righteous while he is not such inwardly. This group of people are wolves in the garb of sheep and devils in the form of men. They are the worst of God's creatures and their harm to the people's faith is more than that of armies of opponents.

Another of the characteristics of this group is that they behave with humility and in a sycophantic manner with those who are the object of their greed. They spread their nets of imposture, sycophancy, and false humility to trap poor, weak people, to benefit from the sweetmeats of their love, admiration, and worldly respect. For this purpose, they exploit their own religion, sell their faith, and make use of the mundane benefits that are available. This is the group of people about whom a tradition says that when

some people in paradise see them they will say, "How is it that we came to paradise as a result of your teaching while you yourselves have been confined to hell?" They will answer, "We did not act according to what we spoke."[1]

Another of their signs is that they behave haughtily with their likes who do not attract their greed and whom they consider as impediments in the way of their own advancement. They treat them with vanity and try as far as they can to humiliate them through words and deeds, for they are afraid that anyone of them can cause him trouble, which can lead to a slump in their credibility.

One should know that it is a most difficult thing to remain pious when one is in the formal dress of learning, *zuhd*, and *taqwa* and to preserve the purity of one's heart in the clerical profession. That is why if someone from this class should act according to his duties and go through its phases with sincerity, correct himself, and after reforming himself engage in reforming others, and protect the orphans in the descent of the Messenger (*s*), such a man is reckoned among the Outstrippers and the Near Ones (*muqarrabun wa sabiqun*). Such a thing has been said of four disciples of Imam al-Baqir (a) by Imam al-Sadiq (a). The following tradition is reported in *al-Wasail* from *rijal al-Kashshi* with an *isnad* reaching up to Abu Ubaydah al-Hadhdha:

قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِاللهِ، عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ، يَقُولُ: زُرَارَةُ وَمُحَمَّدُ بْنُ مُسْلِمٍ وَأَبُو بَصِيرٍ وبُرَيْدٌ مِنَ الَّذِينَ قَالَ اللهُ تَعَالَى فِيهِمْ: ﴿وَالسَّابِقُونَ السَّابِقُونَ. أُوْلَئِكَ الْمُقَرَّبُونَ.﴾

> Abu Ubaydah says: I heard Abu Abd-Allah (a) say: Zurarah, Muhammad ibn Muslim, Abu Basir, and Burayd (ibn Muawiyah) are amongst those concerning whom God, the Exalted, said: "*The Outstrippers, the Outstrippers -they are the Near Ones*."[2]

There are many traditions relating to this topic and the excellences of the learned (*ahl al-ilm*) are more than can be expressed. It suffices to cite the following tradition of the Noble Prophet (*s*) about them:

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[1] *Wasail al-Shiah*, xi, 420.

[2] *Wasail al-Shiah*, xviii, 105.

مَنْ جَاءَهُ الْمَوْتُ وَهُوَ يَطْلُبُ الْعِلْمَ لِيُحْيِيَ بِهِ الإِسْلاَمَ كَانَ بَيْنَهُ وَبَيْنَ الأَنْبِيَاءِ دَرَجَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ فِي الْجَنَّةِ.

> When death comes to one who is seeking knowledge to revive thereby Islam, there will be only one degree between him and the prophets in Paradise.[1]

Later on, *insha* Allah, there will be occasion to describe their excellence. However, if, God forbid, should the seeker of knowledge depart from the path of sincerity and take the road of unrighteousness, he will be reckoned among the worst of God's creatures about whom there are strong and strange (condemning) expressions in the traditions. The first thing that the learned in religious sciences and the seekers of this perilous road must take into consideration is self-reform during the period of studies, counting it as far as possible to be the foremost of their duties, for this is harder and more obligatory than all the duties and obligations dictated by *Shariah* and reason.

O seekers of knowledge and spiritual excellences and teachings! Rise from your sleep and know that you have lesser room for excuse before God, and God Almighty shall call you to a tougher account. The level of your knowledge and works is very different from that of other people.

Your path (*Sirat*) is sharper and narrower and there will be a great scrutiny of the record of your life. Woe to the student and seeker of knowledge in whose heart learning creates darkness and obscurity! And we see in ourselves that if we have learnt some inadequate concepts and some futile terms, it has kept us from treading the divine path. Satan and the self have dominated our being and turned us away from the path of humanity and guidance. These absurd and senseless concepts became our biggest hindrance and there is no remedy except to seek refuge in the Sacred Being of God Almighty.

O God, we confess to our shortcomings and plead guilty to our sins! We did not take even a single step in the path of Thy good-pleasure nor did we perform a single act of worship and obedience with sincerity. Yet treat us with Thine all-inclusive mercy and Thine unbounded grace. In the same way as Thou concealed our inadequacies in this world, do cover them with Thy forgiveness and covering grace in the other world, where we need it more!

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[1] *Sunan al-Darimi*, i, 100.

Here, too, it is essential to remember the point that we mentioned while expounding the earlier part of the noble tradition. That point concerns this utterance of the Imam (a):

فَأَعْمَى اللهُ عَلَى هَذَا خَبَرَهُ وَقَطَعَ مِنْ آثَارِ الْعُلَمَاءِ أَثَرَهُ.

> As a result, God blinds his vision and wipes out his traces from the record of the learned.

That which is denoted by this statement, whether it be *dua* or *ikhbar*, is certain to happen. One must be very fearful of this inner blindness of vision which is the main source of all kinds of darkness and wretchedness. The blindness of the heart is the source of all misfortunes. Similarly, to be purged from the effects of the learned and to be deprived of their merits and gifts, apart from this deprivation itself, will be followed by an unimaginable humiliation and disgrace in the presence of God's elect on the Day of Resurrection.

## SECTION IV

As to the men of understanding and intellect –that is those for whom the goal of seeking knowledge is to become learned in *din* and to know its truths– there are certain signs of which the main ones have been mentioned in the tradition. One of them is that knowledge creates grief, pain, and dejection. To be sure, this grief and dejection is not for the sake of the base and transitory worldly matters, but from the fear of the Return and the terror of falling short in the performance of duties and service. This grief and dejection, besides illumining the heart, gives. it a purity and burnish. It becomes the original impulse for self-reform and commitment to the duties of servitude and creaturehood. The light of knowledge takes away quiet from the heart of the devotee introducing him to God and the abode of His bounties. He derives great pleasure from praying to God Almighty and spends his nights in wakefulness and in performing the duties of devotion. Hence, the Imam (a) says:

قَدْ تَحَنَّكَ فِي بُرْنُسِهِ وَقَامَ اللَّيْلَ فِي حِنْدِسِهِ.

The first sentence apparently indicates engagement in worship. Another sign of this divine man of knowledge is that though fully attentive to the duties of servitude he is still in a state of trepidation. The light of knowledge reveals this to him that however much he may attend to his duties his efforts

are still inadequate and wanting, that he cannot entirely fulfill the requirements of gratitude and true worship. This realization fills his heart with terror and it is about such people that God has said:

﴿إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ.﴾

*Even so only those of His servants fear God who have knowledge*. (35:28)

The light of knowledge brings trepidation and grief, and though such a person is cognizant of his commitment to self-reform, the fear of the Return does not let him rest. He beseeches God to reform him and is afraid of becoming preoccupied with other-than-God. He shuns the people, fearing lest they should keep him from the path of God and the journey towards the world of the Hereafter, by making the world and its pleasures appear alluring to him. Thereupon God confirms such a person and strengthens the supports that sustain his being, and grants him amnesty on the Day of Resurrection.

فَيَا لَيْتَنَا كُنَّا مَعَكُمْ فَنَفُوزَ فَوْزاً عَظِيماً.

> Oh, would that we had been with them, then should we have achieved a great success!

And all praise is ultimately God's, at the beginning and the end, and may God's benedictions be upon Muhammad and the Pure Ones of his progeny.

24

# Twenty Fourth *Hadith*:
# THE CLASSIFICATION OF SCIENCES

بِالسَنَدِ المُتَّصِلِ إلَى أَفْضَلِ المُحَدِّثِينَ وَأَقْدَمِهِمْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ رِضْوَانُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ الحَسَنِ وَعَلِيِّ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنْ سَهْلِ بْنِ زِيَادٍ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عِيسَى عَنْ عُبَيْدِاللهِ بْنِ عَبْدِاللهِ الدَّهْقَانِ عَنْ دُرُسْتَ الوَاسِطِيِّ عَنْ إبْرَاهِيمَ بْنِ عَبْدِالحَمِيدِ عَنْ أبِي الحَسَنِ مُوسَى عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: دَخَلَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ المَسْجِدَ فَإذَا جَمَاعَةٌ قَدْ أَطَافُوا بِرَجُلٍ فَقَالَ: مَا هَذَا؟ فَقِيلَ: عَلَّامَةٌ. فَقَالَ: وَمَا العَلّامَةُ؟ فَقَالوا لَهُ: أَعْلَمُ النَّاسِ بِأَنْسَابِ العَرَبِ وَوَقَائِعِهَا وَأَيَّامِ الجَاهِلِيَّةِ وَالأَشْعَارِ العَرَبِيَّةِ. فَقَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: ذَاكَ عِلْمٌ لا يَضُرُّ مَنْ جَهِلَهُ وَلا يَنْفَعُ مَنْ عَلِمَهُ. ثُمَّ قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: إنَّمَا العِلْمُ ثَلاثَةٌ: آيَةٌ مُحْكَمَةٌ أَوْ فَرِيضَةٌ عَادِلَةٌ أَوْ سُنَّةٌ قَائِمَةٌ، وَمَا خَلاهُنَّ فَهُوَ فَضْلٌ.

With my chain of transmission reaching up to the best and the earliest of traditionists, Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulayni (*r*) from Muhammad ibn al-Hasan and Ali ibn Muhammad, from Sahl ibn Ziyad, from Muhammad ibn Isa, from Ubayd Allah ibn Abd-Allah al-Dihqan, from Durust al-Wasiti, from Ibrahim ibn Abd al-Hamid, from Abu al-Hasan Musa (a) that he said: The Messenger of Allah (*S*) once entered the mosque where there were a group of people surrounding a man. "Who is that?" inquired the Prophet (*S*). He was told, "He is an *Allamah*,

(i.e. a very learned man).” “What is an *Allamah*?” asked the Prophet (*S*). They told him, “He is the most learned of men regarding Arab genealogies, past episodes, the days of the Jahiliyyah and Arabic poetry.” The Prophet (*S*) said, “That is a knowledge whose ignorance does not harm one nor is its possession of any benefit to one.” Then the Prophet (*S*) declared, “Verily, knowledge consists of these three: the firm sign, the just duty and the established *sunnah*. All else is superfluous.”[1]

## EXPOSITION

There is مَنْ هَذَا (Who is he?) instead of مَا هَذَا (Who is that? [the word for word translation is: ‘What is this?’]) in some manuscripts. مَا هَذَا might have been said to express contempt. *Allamah* is a derivative (*sighah*) that expresses extremeness (*mubalaghah*) and its *ha’* is for the sake of (further) exaggeration. It means ‘very very knowledgeable’.

You should know that in logic the word مَنْ (who) is used for questioning concerning a person and the word ما (what) for questioning concerning a given reality or for explaining an abstract noun. Since they told the Noble Messenger (*s*) that this man is an *Allamah*, that master questioned them concerning the meaning of *Allamah* in relation to the character and content of the knowledge that they attributed to him. Hence, he put the question with the word ما. Epithets are at times made a means for questioning concerning essence, for instance, where the meaning of an attribute is known but not the person to whom the attribute relates. In that case, the question is put by using the word مَنْ and it becomes مَنِ العَلَّامَةُ. But if the person be known and the attribute be unknown, or when the purpose be only to know the attribute, the question is put with the word ما and the question then relates to finding out the attribute, not the person attributed with it, nor the attribute and the person attributed with it as well. In this noble tradition, since it was remarked that this man is an *Allamah*, the Prophet’s purpose behind the question was to find out the meaning of the attribute that they ascribed to the man. Hence, he asked, ‘What is an *Allamah*?’ and not, Who is an *Allamah*?’ or ‘Why and for what reason is this man an *Allamah*?’

The explanation given above is clearer than what the authority

[1] Al-Kulayni, *al-Kafi*, i, *kitab Fadl al-ilm, bab sifat al-ilm wa fadluh, hadith* no. 1.

(*muhaqqiq*) among the philosophers and the philosopher among the authorities, Sadr al-Mutaallihin (*q*) says in his exposition of this noble tradition, which we shall refrain from citing due to fear of prolixity and for its being outside the scope of our discussion.

## SECTION I

We have mentioned earlier that man, to put it briefly, is confronted with three worlds, stations and phases of life: first, the world of the Hereafter, which is the hidden world (*alam-e ghayb*) of spirituality and the intellect; second, the phase of *Barzakh*, which is the world of *khayal* lying between the other two worlds; third, the phase of this world, the domain of *mulk* (corporeality) and the world of appearance (*alam-e shahadat*). Each of these phases has its own special perfection and training and requires action appropriate to it. The prophets (a) have been encharged to instruct the people concerning those actions. Hence all beneficial sciences are divisible into these three *ulum* (sciences): the *ilm* (science) that relates to the excellences (*kamalat*) of the intellect and spiritual duties, the science that relates to the acts of the heart and its duties, and the science that relates to bodily acts and the duties of the self's outward life.

As to the sciences that play a strengthening and educative role in the sphere of the spirit and immaterial intellect, they consist of the knowledge of the sacred Essence of God and that of His attributes of Beauty and Majesty, as well as the knowledge of the immaterial hidden spheres, including the angels of all kinds, from those of the higher levels of the higher *jabarut* and higher *malakut* to the lower levels of the lower *malakut* and the earthly angels and the armies of God, Glorious and Exalted, in addition to the knowledge of the prophets and the *awliya* and their stations and degrees, the knowledge of the revealed scriptures, the character of the descent of revelation (*wahy*), angels and the Spirit, as well as the knowledge of the world of the Hereafter and the character of the Return of the creatures to the world of *ghayb*, the reality of the world of *Barzakh* and Resurrection with their details, and, in a word, the knowledge of the origin (*mabda*) of existence, its reality and degrees, with its expansion (*bast*) and contraction (*qabd*), and its manifestation (*zuhur*) and return (*ruju*). The bearers of this knowledge, after the prophets and the *awliya* (a) are the philosophers and the masters among the *hukama*, the *urafa* and the mystics.

The sciences that deal with the discipline and education of the heart and its esoteric actions consist of the knowledge of moral dispositions that lead to

salvation (*munjiyat*) or perdition (*muhlikat*). That is the knowledge of moral virtues, such as forbearance (*sabr*), gratefulness (*shukr*), shame (*haya*), humility (*tawadu*), resignation (*rida*), courage (*shujaah*), generosity (*sakhawah*), piety (*wara*) God-fearing (*taqwa*) and other moral excellences and the knowledge of the ways and means of acquiring them and their related causes and conditions, as well as the knowledge of moral vices, such as envy (*hasad*), pride (*kibr*), enmity (*hiqd*), deceptiveness (*ghishsh*), the love of position, the love of the world and the self, etc., and the knowledge of their causes and the ways of obtaining freedom from them. The bearers of this knowledge, too, after the prophets and their designated successors (*awliya*) (a) are the experts in the science of ethics and the learned in the spiritual disciplines and mystic teachings.

The science that deals with the education of the exoteric being and its disciplining consists of the science of *fiqh*, its preliminaries, and the science of etiquette (*adab*), social intercourse (*muasharat*), management of home (*tadbir-e manzel*), and politics or civic administration (*siyasat-e mudun*). The bearers of this knowledge are the learned in the exoteric (*ulama-e zahir*) the *fuqaha* (legists) and the *muhaddithun* (traditionists), after the prophets and the *awsiya* (a).

You should know that each of these threefold human spheres mentioned are interrelated in such a manner that the influence of each of them-whether it is positive or negative –percolates to the others. For instance, if one takes upon himself the performance of the duties of worship and exoteric rites as one should perform them in accordance with the prescriptions of the prophets that will produce effects in his spirit and his heart, improving his moral character and perfecting his beliefs and convictions. Similarly, if one should engage in his moral improvement and the beautification of his inward being (*batin*), that will produce a positive effect in the other two spheres. So also the development of one's faith and the strengthening of beliefs is effective in the other two stations. This is on account of the very intimate connection between these different stations. In fact (they are so closely related that) the word 'connection' also fails to express it fully. Hence one must say that they are a single reality with (different) manifestations and aspects.

Thus, development and perfection in each of the three stations is interlinked. Hence, no one should imagine that he can acquire a perfect faith and a refined moral character without performing exoteric works and bodily worship, or that when his moral character (*khulq*) is defective and unrefined

his conduct can be complete and whole and his faith perfect, or that without faith in his heart his exoteric acts can be complete and his moral excellences can be perfect.

When one's bodily (exoteric) actions are defective and not in conformity with the prescriptions of the prophets, that gives rise to obfuscations within the heart and obscurities in the soul, which obstruct the light of faith and conviction. Similarly, if one has base moral dispositions in the heart, they obstruct the light of faith from entering it.

Hence, it is essential for the wayfarer of Hereafter and the straight path of humanity to pay an acute care and attention to each of these three aspects and to reform and exercise himself in their regard and not to neglect any of the theoretical and practical excellences. He should not imagine that sole refinement of moral character or sole strengthening of beliefs or sole conformity to the exoteric aspect is sufficient for him, as believed by some experts of each of these three disciplines. For instance, the Shaykh-e Ishraq, at the beginning of his work *Hikmat al-ishraq*, divides the perfect into these three categories: those who are perfect in knowledge and action, those who are perfect in action, and those who are perfect in knowledge. This suggests as if perfection of knowledge can coexist with inadequacy of action or vice versa. Moreover, he considers those who are perfect in knowledge to be the felicitous sincere linked with the world of *ghayb* and immateriality, treading the path of the highest heavens (*illiyyun*) and associating with the archangels. There are some scholars of morals and esoteric science who consider the attainment of moral moderation and the refinement of the heart and esoteric acts as the source of all excellences and attach no worth to intellectual truths and exoteric rules. On the contrary, they even consider them as thorns on the wayfarer's path. There are some scholars of the esoteric aspect who consider the intellectual and the esoteric sciences and mystic teachings as perfidy and infidelity and are hostile to their scholars and students.

Each of these three groups, who hold these false beliefs, are withheld from each of the three spiritual stages and all the three spheres of genuine human existence. They have not rightly reflected concerning the sciences of the prophets and the *awliya* and hence there has always been antagonism between them. Hence, each of them attacks the others considering them as pursuing falsehood, although it is incorrect to separate the stages. In a sense, each one of them is right in repudiating the others, not because their learning or action is wholly invalid, but because the limits set by them for the various

human levels and their confining of human knowledge and excellences exclusively to their own discipline is contrary to fact.

The Noble Messenger (*s*) has in this noble tradition divided the sciences into these three parts, and there is no doubt that these threefold sciences pertain to these threefold planes. This claim is testified to by the divine scriptures, the traditions of the prophets and the Infallible Imams (a) for their teachings are classifiable into these three classes. One of them consists of the knowledge of God, angels, scriptures, the Messengers and the Last Day, and the heavenly scriptures-especially the all-inclusive divine scripture, the Lord's Holy Quran-are all full of it. Rather, it may be said that that which the Book of God teaches more than anything else is this class of knowledge. It consists of the call to God as the origin and end (*mabda wa maad*) of all creation through valid rational arguments and with perfect clarification, as pointed out by the authorities. In fact, the other two aspects occupy a somewhat lesser position in the Book of God in comparison to this aspect, and the *ahadith* of the Imams (a), too, are full of it and beyond enumeration, as will become clear by a reference to reliable books which are accepted by all the Imams (*r*) such as the noble *al-Kafi* and al-Saduq's *Kitab al-Tawhid*.

Similarly, the attention given to spiritual refinement and moral reform and moderation in the Book of God and the traditions narrated from the *Ahl al-Bayt* (a) is beyond what one would expect. However, these books and these chapters have remained in oblivion, without receiving the due attention and credence by us, unfortunate ones in the bondage of futile hopes and expectations! The day will come when God Almighty will question us and establish His accusation against us on the basis of their evidence and the Immaculate Imams (a) –may God be our refuge– will dissociate themselves from us due to our abandoning their traditions and sciences. I seek refuge in God, the Exalted, from wretchedness of the ultimate outcome and an evil end.

As to the traditions relating to *fiqh* and exoteric rites, it need not be said that all our books are full of them. Thus, we come to know that the sciences of the *Shariah* are confined to these three kinds in accordance with the needs of man and the threefold human aspects. None of the scholars of any one of these sciences has a right to find fault with the others. It is not right to repudiate a science if one is ignorant of one of these sciences and to be irreverent towards one who is learned in it. In the same way as a sound intellect considers the affirmation of something that one does not know as an

ethical vice, so also is the denial of something one has no conception of; rather the latter attitude is worse and more vicious.

If God, Blessed and Exalted, should ask, for instance, "You did not know the meaning of the unity of being (*wahdat al-wujud*) in accordance with the doctrine of the *hukama* and neither did you receive instruction concerning it from those adept in it, nor did you study that science and its preliminaries. Then why did you blindly accuse them of unbelief and insult them?" What answer shall one have to give in God's sacred presence except bending down one's head in shame? Of course, a pretext such as "I thought it to be so" will not be acceptable. Every discipline has certain essentials and preliminaries, without whose knowledge it is not possible to understand its conclusions. This is especially true of such a subtle issue as this whose actual reality and meaning is not well understood even after a lifetime of effort, and here you are who want to apprehend with your inadequate intellect after reading, for instance, a book or two or some verses out of *al-Rumi*'s *Mathnawi* something the philosophers and the *hukama* have been discussing for several thousand years and dissecting its issues. Obviously, you will not make anything out of it:

رَحِمَ اللهُ امْرَءاً عَرَفَ قَدْرَهُ وَلَمْ يَتَعَدَّ طَوْرَهُ.

> May God have mercy upon the man who knows his own worth and does not transgress his limits.[1]

Similarly, if a pseudo-philosopher or mystic were to be asked, 'On what religious basis did you call the *fuqaha* superficial and extroversive, finding fault with them or, rather, with a branch of religious sciences brought by the prophets (a) from the Lord of all lords for the perfection of human souls, denying its worth and insulting them? On what rational and *shari* grounds did you consider affront towards a group of scholars and legists as permissible?" What answer will he offer in the presence of God, Blessed and Exalted, except bowing his head in shame and discredit? In any case let us leave this irksome part to pass on to the rest of the discourse.

## SECTION II

[1] Al-Amili, *Ghurar al-Hikam, bab al-ra*.

Having known that the threefold sciences referred to by the Noble Messenger (*s*) are the same as the three mentioned above, the question remains as to how each of these expressions corresponds with each of these sciences. Although this matter is not of much importance –for that which is important in this regard is the understanding of the principles of these sciences themselves and the effort to learn them but it is essential for the exposition of the noble tradition.

The eminent *ulama* (*r*) who have undertaken the exposition of this noble tradition have differed among themselves, and to preoccupy ourselves with the differences of their opinions and their examination will needlessly prolong our discussion. Hence, I will confine myself in this regard to what appears to me, with all my inadequacy, to be correct, citing such supporting evidence as has not been mentioned (by anyone). Thereafter I will mention an important point mentioned by our revered *shaykh*, the perfect *arif*, Shahabadi, may his shadow over our heads endure forever.

You should know that the expression 'firm sign' (*ayatun muhkamah*) implies the rational sciences and the true doctrines and divine teachings. 'Just duty' (*faridatun adilah*) implies the science of ethics and self-purification. 'Established *sunnah* (*sunnatun qaimah*) refers to the science of the exoteric aspect and the bodily conduct (i.e. involving some kind of physical activity). The reason for this correlation is that the word '*ayah*' means 'sign' and is appropriate for the rational and doctrinal sciences, for they deal with the signs of the Divine Essence, Names, Attributes and other matters, and there is no precedent of the use of the word *ayah* for other sciences. For example, in the Book of God, in many cases, after offering proofs for the sacred existence of the Creator or the Names and Attributes of His sacred Essence, or for the existence of Resurrection and its characteristics, or the world of *Ghayb* and *Barzakh*, such a statement as this follows as a reminder: "This is a sign" or "These are signs for those who think" or "These are signs for those who have intellects". *ayah* is a word whose use in relation to these sciences and teachings is quite common. But should the sentence "This is a sign" be mentioned following the mention of a legal or ritual issue or after an ethical principle, that would obviously not be devoid of impropriety. Hence, we learn that *ayah*, sign and mark is something that is appropriate for and special to the (intellectual and spiritual) sciences related to doctrine (*ulum-e maarif*). Similarly, the characterization of *ayah* as *muhkam* (firm, unambiguous, precise) is also in conformity with these sciences, for these sciences are subject to intellectual criteria and based on firm rational proofs (*burhan-e*

*muhkam* ). However, the other sciences, in accordance with their character, do not possess firm and steady rational proofs.

The reason for considering the expression *faridatun adilah* (just duty) as referring to the science of ethics is the characterization of duty as *adilah* (lit. just, moderate, balanced). That is because virtue (*khulq-e hasan*), as established in that science, consists of keeping distance from either of the two extremes of excess and neglect (*ifrat* and *tafrit*) and each of the two extremes of excess and neglect is blameworthy, and justice (*adalah*), which signifies the golden mean and the point of moderation between them, is praiseworthy. For example, courage (*shujaah*), which is one of the principal virtues and a moral excellence, is represented by the middle point and moderate position between the extremes of rashness (*tahawwur*, which is absence of fear in situations where fear is proper) and timidity (*jubn*), which amounts to being afraid in situations where fear is improper. So, also, wisdom (*hikmah*), which is also a principal moral virtue, consists of the middle point between the vice of cunning (*jurbuzah*), which is the use of the thinking faculty in matters it is improper to use it, and the vice of stupidity, which is suspension of the thinking faculty in matters where it should be used. Similarly, continence (*iffah*) and generosity (*sakhawah*) are virtues represented by the middle position between the vices of covetousness (*sharah*) and apathy (*khumud*) and between prodigality (*israf*) and stinginess (*bukhl*) respectively.

Thus, the attachment of the adjective *adilah* to *faridah* indicates that the expression *faridatun adilah* corresponds to the science of ethics (*akhlaq*). Moreover, the term *faridah* by itself affirms such a connotation, for since *faridah* here-which has been put here in opposition to *sunnah*, signifying the third part of knowledge-is something which can be known by the means of the intellect, as is the actual case in the science of ethics (*ilm al-akhlaq*), contrary to *sunnah* which refers to matters where the criterion is pure obedience (*taabbud*) and which the intellect is incapable of apprehending. And that is why we have said that the expression *sunnatun qaimah* refers to the science, which deals with the acts of obedience and the rites of the *Shariah*, which have been called '*sunnah*' here. Their general nature is such that the intellect is incapable of apprehending their rationale and the *sunnah* is the only means of proving and apprehending them. So, also, the use of the adjective *qaimah* in characterizing *sunnah* here is also congenial to the obligations (*wajibat*) of the *Shariah*, for it is common, as well as correct, to speak of the *iqamah* (establishment) of *wajibat* and the *iqamah* of *salat*,

*zakat* and so on. This word (i.e. *iqamah*) is not used in the other two sciences and its usage therein would be incorrect. This is all that can be said in regard to correlation on the basis of congenialities.

وَالعِلْمُ عِنْدَ اللهِ.

And all knowledge is with God.

## SECTION III

Now we shall mention the point that we promised to discuss. It is this that in the noble tradition the science of doctrines and *maarif* has been referred to as *ayah* and *ayah* means sign, symbol, and mark. The point that relates to this term is that if the doctrinal sciences and doctrinal truths are studied for their own sake and if all the related concepts, terms, high-sounding expressions, and embellished juxtapositions of terms be learned for the sake of showing off to feeble minds and for the sake of obtaining worldly status, then they cannot be called *ayat muhkamat*; rather they must be named obscuring veils and hollow fantasies. That is because if one's purpose in learning the sciences should not be to reach God, the Exalted, and to realize the Names and Attributes and to mould one's self in accordance with the Divine character (*takhalluq be akhlaq Allah*), each of such acquisitions of his is a dungeon of hell and a black veil that darkens his heart and blinds his insight, making him one of those to whom this noble verse applies:

﴿وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَنْ ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَى.﴾

*But whosoever turns away from My remembrance, his shall be a life of narrowness, and on the Resurrection Day We shall raise him blind.* (20:124)

Then he will find himself blind in that world and will complain to God saying, "O my Lord, why hast thou raised me blind, while I was blessed with sight in that world?" The answer will come: "You were blind in that world too, for you did not see Our signs and you neglected them." The criterion for sight in the world of the Hereafter is the vision and insight of the heart; the body as well as its faculties there are totally subject to the heart and the intellect (*lubb*). (The body being an image of the soul in that world), the conformity of an image to its object shall be complete and the image of something deaf, blind and dumb is such.

Hence, one should not imagine that those who are well-versed in

concepts, terms and expressions and have books and writings by heart are those who have the knowledge of God, the angels and the Last Day! If their learning is a sign and mark, why has it not produced its luminous effect in their own hearts? Why has it even increased the darkness of their heart and the corruption of their morals and conduct? The Noble Quran has mentioned the criterion for identifying the genuine *ulama* when it says:

﴿إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ.﴾

*Even so only those of His servants fear God who have knowledge*. (35:28)

The fear of God is the specific characteristic of the *ulama* (the learned) and every one who does not possess the fear of God, the Exalted, is outside the ranks of the *ulama*. Now let us consider ourselves. Is there any trace of that fear in us? If there is, why does it not show any effect in our outward personality?

In the noble *al-Kafi*, al-Kulayni reports with his *isnad* the following tradition on the authority of Abu Basir:

قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ (أَوْ أَبَا جَعْفَرٍ) يَقُولُ: كَانَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ يَقُولُ: يَا طَالِبَ العِلْمِ، إنَّ العِلْمَ ذُو فَضَائِلَ كَثِيرَةٍ: فَرَأْسُهُ التَّوَاضُعُ، وَعَيْنُهُ البَرَاءَةُ مِنَ الحَسَدِ، وَأُذُنُهُ الفَهْمُ، وَلِسَانُهُ الصِّدْقُ، وَحِفْظُهُ الفَحْصُ، وَقَلْبُهُ حُسْنُ النِّيَّةِ، وَعَقْلُهُ مَعْرِفَةُ الأَشْيَاءِ وَالأُمُورِ، وَيَدُهُ الرَّحْمَةُ، وَرِجْلُهُ زِيَارَةُ العُلَمَاءِ، وَهِمَّتُهُ السَّلامَةُ، وَحِكْمَتُهُ الوَرَعُ، وَمُسْتَقَرُّهُ النَّجَاةُ، وَقَائِدُهُ العَافِيَةُ، وَمَرْكَبُهُ الوَفَاءُ، وَسِلاحُهُ لِينُ الكَلِمَةِ، وَسَيْفُهُ الرِّضَا، وَقَوْسُهُ المُدَارَاةُ، وَجَيْشُهُ مُحَاوَرَةُ العُلَمَاءِ، وَمَالُهُ الأَدَبُ، وَذَخِيرَتُهُ اجْتِنَابُ الذُّنُوبِ، وَزَادُهُ المَعْرُوفُ، وَمَاؤُهُ المُوَادَعَةُ، وَدَلِيلُهُ الهُدَى، وَرَفِيقُهُ مَحَبَّةُ الأَخْيَارِ.

(Abu Basir) says: I heard Abu Abd-Allah (a) –Abu Jafar, according to another manuscript– say: Amir al-Muminin (a) used to say: "O seeker of knowledge, knowledge has many merits. (If you imagine it to be a human being then) its head is humility, its eye is freedom from envy, its ear is understanding, its tongue is truthfulness, its memory is research, its heart is good intention, its intellect is the

> knowledge (*marifah*) of things and matters, its hand is compassion, its foot is visiting the learned, its resolution is integrity, its wisdom is piety, its abode is salvation, its helmsman is well-being, its mount is faithfulness, its weapon is softness of speech, its sword is satisfaction (*rida*), its bow is tolerance, its army is discussion with the learned, its wealth are refined manners, its stock is abstinence from sins, its provision for journey is virtue, its drinking water is gentleness, its guide is Divine guidance, and its companion is the love of the elect."[1]

These are the signs of the *ulama* and the effects of *ilm* mentioned by Amir al-Muminin (a). Hence, if one is learned in the traditional sciences but is devoid of these things, he must know that he has not partaken of knowledge. Rather he is one of the ignorant and lost ones and in the other world his concepts and his wares of learning, each of which embodies compound ignorance, will become darkening blinders for him and his regret on the Day of Resurrection shall be the greatest of regrets.

Hence the criterion in knowledge is that it should be sign, symbol and mark (of the Divine), and there should be no ego or egoism in it. Egoism gets dissolved and obliterated in knowledge, instead of it itself becoming a cause for vanity, narcissism, ostentation and arrogance. The noble tradition further characterizes the *ayah* as *muhkamah*, because true knowledge with its light and luminosity creates conviction in the heart and wipes away doubt and uncertainty. It may happen that a man spends all his life in the study of the preliminaries and proofs and commits to mind several proofs and numerous arguments in support of each of the divine doctrines and overwhelms his associates in debates and controversies, without that knowledge producing any effect in his heart. Such a man not only does not achieve conviction, even his learning multiplies his doubts, uncertainties, and ambiguities. Hence, the mere collection of concepts and abundance of terms has no benefit. Rather it makes the heart preoccupied with non-God and the learned man forgetful and negligent of God's Sacred Being.

My dear, the remedy –or rather the complete remedy– is that if one wants his learning to be divine he should purify his intention and purpose with all the seriousness and effort that he can muster while entering upon the study of

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[1] Al-Kulayni, op. cit., *bab al-nawadir*", *hadith* no. 3.

any branch of knowledge. The capital of salvation and the fountainhead of all grace lies in the purification of intent and the sincerity of purpose:

**مَنْ أَخْلَصَ لله أَرْبَعِينَ صَبَاحاً جَرَتْ يَنَابِيعُ الحِكْمَةِ مِنْ قَلْبِهِ عَلَى لِسَانِهِ.**

> Whoever who devotes himself in sincerity to God for forty days, the springs of wisdom flow out from his heart to his tongue.[1]

Such are the effects and benefits of forty day's sincerity (*ikhlas*)! But here we are with forty years or more spent in the effort at collecting terms and concepts related to every discipline. You consider yourself to be an *Allamah* in the sciences and count yourself among the army of God, yet you do not find any trace of wisdom in your own heart nor a drop of it on your tongue. You should know that your learning and labor have not been with a sincerity of intention. Rather, you have labored for the sake of Satan and selfish desire. Now that you see that these sciences have not produced any spiritual quality or state in you, make an effort to cultivate sincerity of intention and purify your heart from obscurities and vices. If you see any result, go on. And even though the mere motive of experimenting is inimical to sincerity, it is possible that the effort may open a window and the incoming light may guide you.

In any case, my dear, you stand in need of the true divine doctrines and the veritable sciences as well as good morals and righteous works. At whatever level you may stand, endeavor to increase your sincerity and purge the egoistic fancies and satanic insinuations from the heart. Of course, that will produce results for you and you will find the way to the reality, and the path of guidance will open for you. May God, Blessed and Exalted, succor you. God knows, if we should depart from this world with this false and futile learning, these degenerate fancies and depraved morals of ours to the next world, what tribulations and calamities will await us and what narrow passages and what dungeons of hell we shall have to encounter and what darkness, what terrors and flames this learning and morals of ours shall prepare for us!

## SECTION IV

The authority amongst philosopher, Sadr al-Hukama al-Mutaallihin (Head of the philosophers and theosophists, viz. Mulla Sadra) –may God sanctify

[1] See Allamah Bahr al-ulums *Risalah fi al-sayr wal-suluk*, 22-23, footnote.

his soul and reward him abundantly– in *Sharh Usul al-Kafi* gives a long quotation from Shaykh Ghazali in which the latter has classified the sciences into 'worldly' and 'Hereafterly' ones, putting the science of *fiqh* amongst the 'worldly' sciences and dividing the sciences of Hereafter into the sciences of *mukashafah* (mystic intuition and apprehension) and *muamalah* (social intercourse, conduct, transactions; in Ghastly, the science of moral purification and spiritual cultivation).

He considers the science of *muamalah* as the knowledge of the states of the heart and the science of *mukashafah* as a light that is attained in the heart after it is purified from blameworthy characteristics. Through that light realities are discovered, to the extent that true knowledge of the Divine Being, Names and Attributes as well as Acts and the wisdom underlying them is acquired and other truths are known. Now since this authority (i.e. Mulla Sadra) accepted this classification, he says in the exegesis of the *hadith* under exposition that, "Apparently this classification and limitation made by the Noble Messenger (*s*) pertains to the sciences of *muamalat*. For it is these sciences that most of the people derive benefit from. But the sciences of *mukashafah* are attained by a small number of people and they are rarer than the philosopher's stone (*kibrit-e ahmar*), as is also indicated by the *ahadith* of *Kitab al-iman wa'l-kufr* that will come hereafter. This was a condensed translation of his statements.

This writer says: There is an ambiguity in Shaykh Ghazali's statements, and if they be presumed to be admissible then there remains another thing objectionable in the statements of the Akhund, i.e. Mulla Sadra (*m*). As to the objection pertaining to his statement –on the basis of assumption of validity of Ghazali's statements– it lies in this that Ghastly has considered the science of *muamalat* as pertaining to the states of the heart; that is, those qualities which result in redemption, such as patience, gratitude, fear, hope and so on, as well as those which lead to perdition, such as malice, envy, deceptiveness, imposture and so on. Accordingly, the threefold sciences mentioned by the Messenger of God (*s*) cannot all pertain to the sciences of *muamalat*; rather only one of them, i.e. *faridatun adilah*, as explained in detail earlier, corresponds to them. However, there are two objectionable things in Shaykh Ghazali's statements. Firstly, he has considered *ilm al-fiqh* as belonging to worldly sciences and the *fuqaha* as worldly scholars, whereas it is one of the most valuable sciences of the Hereafter. And this ambiguity arises from self-love and the love of the discipline one of whose experts he imagines himself to be, i.e. the science of ethics, in the commonly used sense. Accordingly, he

has repudiated the other disciplines, including the rational sciences (such as philosophy). Secondly, he conceives *mukashafat* as forming a part of the *ulum* and includes them in his classification of them. This is contrary to fact, for that which is right is to consider as *ilm* that which is subject to inquiry, thought and proof and wherein ratiocination has a role. The *mukashafat* and *mushahadat* are at times the result of the study of the sciences of doctrines (*ulum-e haqiqiyyah*) and at times the consequence of spiritual acts (*amal-e qalbiyyah*). To be brief, *mushahadat*, *mukashafat* and realization of the realities of the Names and the Attributes should not be included in the classification of science. These and the *ulum* are separate things, and this is quite plain.

## SECTION V

You should know that many of the sciences, from a certain aspect, fall under one of the categories mentioned by the Noble Messenger (*s*). For instance, the sciences of medicine, anatomy, astronomy, astrology and the like, when looked upon as Divine signs and symbols, and the science of history and the like, when looked upon as a means for drawing lesson, are included in *ayatun muhkamah*, for by their means the knowledge of God or the knowledge of Resurrection is attained or confirmed. At times, the learning of the sciences falls under *faridatun adilah* and at times under *sunnatun qaimah*. But if their pursuit should be for their own sake or for other purposes and if they should lead us to neglect the *ulum* of the Hereafter, they become blameworthy by accident (*madhmum bi'l-arad*) on account of this neglect. Otherwise, (in themselves) they are neither beneficial nor harmful, as pointed out by the Noble Messenger (*s*). Thus, all the sciences are divisible into three kinds: first, those sciences, which are beneficial to man in view of the other stages of existence, success wherein is the ultimate purpose of creation. This is the category, which the ultimate Prophet has considered as *ilm*, dividing it into three parts. The second kind consists of those which are harmful for man and lead him to neglect his essential duties. This kind consists of the blameworthy sciences –such as magic, jugglery, alchemy and the like– and one must refrain from their pursuit. Thirdly, there are those which are neither harmful nor beneficial, like those which one pursues in his hours of leisure for amusement's sake, such as mathematics, geometry, astronomy and the like. It would be much better if one could relate the pursuit of these sciences to the threefold *ulum* (mentioned by the Prophet), otherwise it is better to refrain from, them as far as is possible. That is because when a sensible person knows that he cannot acquire all the

sciences and achieve all the excellences due to shortness of life, scarcity of time and abundance of obstacles and accidents, he would reflect about the sciences and devote himself to the acquisition of. those which are more beneficial for him. Of course, amongst the sciences that which is better than all the rest is that which is beneficial for man's eternal and everlasting life and that is the science which the prophets (a) have commanded and encouraged man to seek. That science consists of the threefold *ulum*, as mentioned. And all praise belongs to Allah, the Exalted.

25

# Twenty-Fifth *Hadith*: SATANIC INSINUATION

بِسَنَدِي الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلَى شَيْخِ الْمُحَدِّثِينَ وَأَفْضَلِهِمْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ رِضْوَانُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَحْيَى عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنِ ابْنِ مَحْبُوبٍ عَنْ عَبْدِاللهِ بْنِ سِنَانٍ قَالَ: ذَكَرْتُ لِأَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ رَجُلاً مُبْتَلىً بِالوُضُوءِ وَالصَّلاةِ وَقُلْتُ: هُوَ رَجُلٌ عَاقِلٌ. فَقَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: وَأَيُّ عَقْلٍ لَهُ وَهُوَ يُطِيعُ الشَّيْطَانَ؟ فَقُلْتُ لَهُ: وَكَيْفَ يُطِيعُ الشَّيْطَانَ؟ فَقَالَ: سَلْهُ، هَذَا الَّذِي يَأْتِيهِ مِنْ أَيِّ شَيْءٍ هُوَ؟ فَإِنَّهُ يَقُولُ لَكَ مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ.

Through my continuous chain of transmitters reaching up to the *shaykh* of the traditionists and the best of them, Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulayni (*m*) who reports from Muhammad ibn Yahya, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad, from Ibn Mahbub, from Abd-Allah ibn Sinan, who said: I mentioned to Abu Abd-Allah (a) a man who was troubled by *waswas* in his *wudu*, and *Salat*, adding that he is a man of intelligence. Thereupon Abu Abd-Allah (a) said, "What kind of intelligence has he when he obeys Satan?" I said, "How does he obey Satan?" The Imam replied, "Ask him regarding its cause and he will tell you that it is a work of Satan."[1]

## EXPOSITION

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, i, *kitab al-aql wal-jahl*, *hadith* no. 10.

You should know that *waswasah* (or *waswas*, pl. *wasawis*; means satanic insinuations, obsessions and suggestions), doubt, lapse of faith, *shirk* and the like pertain to satanic insinuation and devilish promptings, which Satan puts into the hearts of people. So also, certainty, conviction, tranquility, steadiness, and sincerity of the heart and the like are caused by divine inspiration (*ifadat-e Rahmaniyyah*) and angelic suggestions (*ilqaat-e malakiyyah*). To explain this with brevity, the human heart is a subtle reality that is interjacent to the realms of *mulk* and *malakut*, the realms of the world (*dunya*) and the Hereafter. One of its aspects faces the realm of *mulk* and the (mundane) world, and it is with this aspect that it pursues the corporeal aspect of life. The other aspect faces the realm of Hereafter, *malakut* and *ghayb*, and with that it pursues its spiritual (*malakuti*) life.

Hence, the heart is like a two-faced mirror. One of its sides is turned toward the world of *ghayb*, and in it the *ghaybi* forms are reflected. The other side faces the world of *shahadah*, and in it the *mulki* and worldly (mundane) forms are reflected. The mundane forms find their reflection in the outward senses and some of the inner cognitive faculties such as *khayal* and *wahm* (imagination). The hereafterly forms find their reflection in the inward intellect and the inner core (*sirr*) of the heart. Should the worldly aspect of the heart preponderate and its attention be wholly absorbed by the pursuit of the mundane, becoming its sole concern, the hidden side of *khayal* becomes attuned to the realm of lower *malakut* (*malakut-e sufla*) which is the dark reflected image of the world of *mulk* and corporeal nature (in the realm of *malakut*) –the realm of the *jinn*, devils and evil spirits. The suggestions induced in it due to this attunement (with the realm of lower *malakut*) are satanic insinuations, which are the source of baseless thoughts and unwholesome imaginings. The soul develops an eagerness for these unfounded fancies due to its absorption with the mundane, and its will and faculty of decision-making, also, become subject to them. As a result, all one's spiritual and bodily conduct becomes satanic in character, as is the case with *waswas*, doubt, uncertainty, unfounded thoughts, and hallucinations. As the will in its bodily activity becomes attuned to them, bodily actions too assume the character of the inward forms; for one's acts are the image of one's will, which in turn is the image of one's thoughts, which are a reflection of the heart's orientation. Hence, when the heart be oriented toward the satanic realm, the suggestions it receives are of a satanic character, involving compound ignorance. As a result, *waswas*, doubt, *shirk* and ambiguities emerge from the inner core of one's being and pervade to the

domain of the body.

In accordance with the same analogy, if the heart be oriented toward the pursuit of the Hereafter and the higher truths, its attention is directed towards the world of *ghayb* and it acquires an attunement with the higher *malakut*, the realm of the angels and blessed and pure spirits, which is a luminous image of the world of nature. The knowledge imparted to it, then, is of a divine and angelic character, as constituted by true doctrine, and its thoughts are induced by divine inspiration, being free from the contamination of doubt and *shirk*. As a result, a state of stability and bliss is created within the soul. Its desires and inclinations fall into conformity with that knowledge, and its will into conformity with those inclinations, and, as a result, its inward and outward, spiritual and bodily conduct takes shape in accordance with the criteria of reason and wisdom. There are certain stages and stations associated with these satanic, angelic, and divine suggestions whose description is not suitable here. Some of the noble traditions, like the following one reported in *Majma al-bayan* from al-Ayyashi, bear out the validity of what has been said:

> رَوَى العَيَّاشِيُّ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبَانَ بْنِ تَغْلُبَ عَنْ جَعْفَرِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: مَا مِنْ مُؤْمِنٍ إِلا وَلِقَلْبِهِ فِي صَدْرِهِ أُذُنَانِ: أُذُنٌ يَنْفَثُ فِيهَا المَلَكُ وَأُذُنٌ يَنْفَثُ فِيهَا الوِسْوَاسُ الخَنَّاسُ، فَيُؤَيِّدُ اللهُ المُؤْمِنَ بِالمَلِكِ. وَهُوَ قَوْلُهُ سُبْحَانَهُ: ﴿وَأَيَّدَهُمْ بِرُوحٍ مِنْهُ.﴾
>
> Al-Ayyashi reports with his chain of transmission from Aban ibn Taghlib from Jafar ibn Muhammad (*S*) that he said: The Messenger of Allah (*S*) said, "There is no believer whose heart does not have two ears: an angel whispers into one of them and into the other the Slinking Whisperer (*al-waswas al-khannas*). God confirms the believer with the means of the angel and that is what is meant by this statement of His, *subhanahu*: And He confirms them with a spirit from Him (58:22)."[1]

This is another tradition from *Majma al-bahrayn:*

[1] al-Tabrisi, *Majma al-bayan*, x, 571.

أَنَّهُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ وَاضِعٌ خَطْمَهُ عَلَى قَلْبِ ابْنِ آدَمَ، لَهُ خُرْطُومٌ مِثْلَ خُرْطُومِ الخِنْزِيرِ، يُوَسْوِسُ لابْنِ آدَمَ أَنْ أَقْبِلْ عَلَى الدُّنْيَا وَمَا لا يُحِلُّ اللهُ. فَإِذَا ذَكَرَ اللهَ سُبْحَانَهُ خنَسَ.

> He (i.e. the Prophet) said, "Satan lays his snout, which is like the snout of a pig, on the heart of the son of Adam, and instigates him to turn towards the world (*dunya*) and that which God has not made lawful. But when he remembers God, Satan slinks away."[1]

There are other traditions of this kind.

## 2. A Simpler Explanation of the Character of *Waswas*

Having known through the teachings of the *urafa* that *waswas* is the work of Satan, as mentioned in the noble tradition being expounded here and other traditions of the kind, we are compelled to explain this matter in a way that is closer to the minds of ordinary people and more appropriate for them. Although the above description is in accordance with the rational and philosophical criteria as well as in conformity with the mystical experience of the *urafa*, 'the people of the heart', as it is based on certain principles whose discussion lies outside the scope of these pages, we shall abstain from pursuing it any further. That *wasawis* and acts resulting from them are a handiwork of Satan, insinuated by that accursed creature, and that there is therein no religious or pious motive involved-although the person afflicted may mistakenly believe that he possesses it-is borne out by their being contrary to the laws of the *Shariah* and the traditions of the pure and infallible Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt*.

For instance, it has been mentioned in *mutawatir* traditions of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (a) that the *wudu* of the Messenger of God (*s*) consisted of single washings (of the face and the forearms). It is an established fact in *fiqh* that it is sufficient to wash the face, the right, and the left hand each with a single *ghurfah* (handful) of water. There is however disagreement among the legists concerning the permissibility of using a second *ghurfah*. It may even be

[1] *Majma al-bahrayn*, under *kh.n.s.*, p. 305.

inferred from the statements of the author of *al-Wasail* that he believed in its impermissibility or at least doubted its permissibility. Although some have held a contrary opinion, the permissibility of two washings is not open to doubt. There is a heavy preponderance of legal opinion in its favor and many traditions indicate its *istihbab*. However, it is not improbable that a single washing that thoroughly wets the parts washed is preferable. But there is no doubt that three washings-that is, washing the parts each time in such a way that the parts are thoroughly moistened with water is *haram* and a *bidah* that invalidates the *wudu* when the moisture remaining from it is used for *mash*. It is mentioned in the traditions of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (a)that a third washing in *wudu* is *bidah* and that every *bidah* is in Fire.

In this case, the ignorant man afflicted with *waswas* washes the parts ten times during *wudu*, every time drawing water over the whole part washed most meticulously, or rather he first wets the whole part so well that water spreads thoroughly and a valid washing is achieved, and then repeats this action again and again. On what criterion is his action based? To which tradition and to what *fatwa* of a jurist does it conform? Such a wretch may offer invalid *Salat* with such a *wudu* for twenty years and consider himself to have appeared to be most pious and pure in the eyes of the people. While Satan goes on playing with him, and his carnal self goes on deceiving him, he finds fault with others and considers himself to be in the right.

Should something that is opposed to *mutawatir* explicit dicta (*nass*) and consensus of the *ulama* be considered as perfect personal purity and piety or a work of Satan? If it is something that is inspired by utmost God-fearing and caution in religion, why is it that most of those obsessed by *waswas* and given to ignorant sanctimony do not exercise caution in matters where caution is necessary or preferable? Have you seen any *waswasi* who has *waswas* in dubious matters of a financial character? Has anyone ever come across someone affected with *waswas* who pays *khums* five times instead of once, or goes to *Hajj* several times instead of once? Or one who refrains from food of a doubtful character? Why is it that the rule of *asalat al-hilliyyah*[1] applies in such cases whereas the rule of *asalat al-taharah*[2] does not hold

[1] *Asalat al-hilliyyah* means the rule that every thing is permissible unless there is evidence of its being forbidden.

[2] *Asalat al-taharah* means the rule that when a doubt occurs concerning the ritual purity of something, which was known for certain to be pure before the occurrence of the doubt, the doubt is of no consequence and is to be ignored.

good even in a matter related to *taharah* itself? That, although in regard to things that are lawful there is greater reason to exercise abstinence in a doubtful matter as indicated by some noble traditions, like the *hadith al-Tathlith*[1] whereas the case is quite the opposite in matters of *taharah*.

One of the Infallible Imams (a) used to sprinkle water with his blessed hand on his blessed thighs at the time of answering the call of nature so that any trace of splashing that might occur would not be visible. Yet this poor fellow, who considers himself a follower of this Infallible Imam and follows him in the precepts of his religion, does not abstain from anything in matters involving wealth and its consumption. He eats his food (without any qualms about its lawfulness) by relying on the principle of *asalat al-taharah* and having eaten cleanses his mouth and hands. While eating, his justification is *asalat al-taharah*, but after eating, he declares that everything is ritually unclean (*najis*). Should he, in his fancy; count himself among the learned, he would say that I want to offer *salat* with real *taharah*, whereas the advantage of *salat* with real *taharah* is something that remains unknown and the *fuqaha* (*r*) do not know of it. Such a person should be asked, if you are so keen about real *taharah*, then why aren't you as keen about real *hilliyyah* (lawfulness)? Even if, supposedly, he were keen to achieve real *taharah*, what purpose is served by his washing ten times with *kurr* or *jari* water? (Although to obtain *taharah* it is sufficient to wash once with *jari* water and once with *kurr* water

[1] *Hadith al-Tathlith* refers to the following *hadith* recorded in *Wasail al-Shiah*, xviii, 114: Al-Kulayni (in *al-Kafi*, i, 67, *hadith* no. 10) narrates from Muhammad ibn Yahya, from Muhammad ibn al-Husayn, from Muhammad ibn Isa, from Safwan ibn Yahya, from Dawud ibn al-Husayn, from Umar ibn Hanzalah that al-Imam al-Sadiq (*a*) said (in a long *hadith*): "Matters fall into three categories: those whose rightness (or lawfulness) is evident and hence they are followed; those whose wrongness (or unlawfulness) is evident and hence are to be avoided; and those which are doubtful, regarding whose knowledge reference should be made to God and His Messenger. The Messenger of Allah (*s*) said: There is that which is evidently lawful (*halal bayyin*) and that which is evidently unlawful (*haram bayyin*), and between these there are things which are doubtful and suspect (*shubahat*). One who abstains from doubtful things is saved from falling into unlawful things, and one who takes recourse in doubtful things falls in unlawful things and perishes without knowing it." At the end of the *hadith* the Imam remarks: "Abstaining from doubtful things is better than plunging into that which ruinous." The same tradition has been narrated by al-Saduq in *Man la yahduruh al-faqih* iii, 5, *hadith* no. 2 with his *isnad* from Dawud ibn al-Husayn, and by al-Shaykh al-Tusi in al-*Tahdhib*, vi, 301, *hadith* no. 52. It is called "*hadith al-Tathlith*" because of the mention therein of the "three matters" (*umur thalathah*).

when the contamination is due to urine and certain other impurities. Even when it is due to urine, it is sufficient, in accordance with the *mashhur* opinion, to wash once with *kurr* water, and washing twice is considered sufficient by consensus.) These several washings are inspired by none other than the deceptive Satan and the tricky self, which make an inconsequential matter appear as an asset to the sanctimonious.

Worse and more shameful than this is the *waswasah* of some in regard to *niyyah* and *takbirat al-ihram*, for therein they commit several *muharramat* while they consider themselves to be among the pious and this act as bringing them some kind of merit. *Niyyah* (intention) in something without which man cannot perform any of his voluntary acts and it is something, which necessarily accompanies all volt vary actions. Man cannot carry out any of his ritual or non-ritual acts without it. Notwithstanding it, in proportion to their devilishness and the degree of Satan's domination over them, they waste an entire hour and sometimes several hours in order to obtain what is an inescapable necessity, which in the end remains unachieved! Should this matter be regarded as a result of Satanic insinuation and the work of the accursed *Iblis* who has put his reins on this wretch and concealed an obvious necessity from him, involving him in many *muharramat* such as breaking the *salat*, neglecting it, and allowing its time to elapse, or as something that is inspired by inner purity, sanctity and God-fearing?

Another kind of *waswas* has to do with the refusal to join the congregation prayer led by someone who is *adil* in accordance with *nass* and *fatwa* due to the righteousness of his outward conduct and his dutifulness in regard to the *Shariah*, whereas only God knows his inner character, regarding which it is neither necessary nor permissible to investigate. Notwithstanding it, since the person afflicted with *waswas* has his reins controlled by Satan, he draws himself away from the *jamaat* of Muslims and prays individually in a corner of the mosque. He offers such justifications as, 'I have qualms' and 'It does not satisfy me' and so on, while he himself has no qualms about leading others in prayer, despite the fact that the job of imamate is more difficult and is more open to qualms. However, he does not have any doubts or qualms here because that is in agreement with his self-seeking motives.

Of the forms of *waswas* that is more prevalent is the one that relates to *qiraah* in prayer, wherein due to repetitive and excessive effort in gutturalization the sounds of letters often violates the rules of correct

recitation or the shape of the word is totally changed. For instance, the word, *dallin* is pronounced by some in such a way that the *dad* sounds like *qaf*. The guttural *ha'* of *rahman*, *rahim* and other words is turned around in the throat in such a manner that a strange sound is produced and the letters of a word are so separated from one another that the very form, and root of the word is totally altered and distorted out of its original shape. Ultimately, all the spiritual aspects and divine secrets of *salat*, which is the spiritual ascension (*miraj*) of the faithful, the agent of nearness (to God) for the pious, and the pillar of the faith, are neglected, with all attention given to the 'niceties' of recitation. And yet despite it all, the pronunciation of words is so corrupted that the recitation fails to meet the literal dicta of the *Shariah*. In view of this, should this (perverse obsession with *qiraah*) be considered as satanic *waswas* or as a divine inspiration on the part of the sanctimonious person afflicted with *waswas*? Despite all these traditions relating to the presence of attention and attentiveness of the heart during worship, all that this poor fellow has understood concerning the theory and practice of the presence of heart is either to be obsessed with *waswas* concerning *niyyah* or and to twist to extend inordinately the long vowel (*madd*) of **ولا الضَّالِّينَ** his mouth, eyes and other facial features while vocalizing words.

Is it not a misfortune that one should remain for years negligent concerning the presence of heart and the remedy of his disturbed mind, without ever thinking of taking a step in this regard, without regarding it as one of the significant aspects of worship and without learning the way of acquiring it from those learned in the matters of the heart? Is it not a calamity that by the side of this neglect he should be obsessed with this kind of absurdities, and consider as being essential to piety and inner purity what are a 'work of the accursed Slinkier' according to the express texts of the Noble Scripture and a 'handiwork of Satan' according to the express traditions of the Truthful Ones (a) and acting upon which makes one's works invalid according to the verdicts of the *fuqaha*?

At times *waswasah* is originated or heightened in one because other ignorant persons like himself consider it as one of his virtues. For instance, they extol his piety, religiosity and sacred character by remarking that 'This person is so religious and pious that he is given to *waswas*, although *waswas* has not only no relation to religiosity but is contrary to it and is due to ignorance and absence of understanding. But since they do not tell him the truth and do not regard him with repulsion and disapprobation, but on the

contrary praise and extol him, he pursues this vicious conduct to its extreme, making himself a plaything in the hands of Satan and his task force and banishing himself from the sacred company of those near to God.

And therefore, my dear, now that it is known through reason and tradition that these are satanic *wasawis* and that these obsessions are a handiwork of *Iblis* that invalidate our works and turn our hearts away from God, the Exalted, beware of them, for this *waswas* may not remain confined to your acts and may affect your belief and creed and thus expel you from the religion of God. By making you uncertain in your faith in God and Resurrection, it may lead you into everlasting wretchedness. Since Satan cannot mislead the like of you into immoral and profane conduct, he approaches you by the way of worship and rites. First, he makes your works and deeds, which should be a means of attaining divine nearness and of ascending into the proximity of God, the Exalted, to go waste and become invalid, and turns them into a means of remoteness from the proximity of the Sacred Lord, the All-Glorious, and of nearness to *Iblis* and his troops. Ultimately, it is feared, he may make a plaything of your beliefs. Hence, take steps for its remedy by all means and through any kind of exercise that may be necessary.

## 3. THE REMEDY FOR *WASWAS*

You should know that this malady of the heart, which like other diseases of the heart can lead man to everlasting perdition and endless wretchedness, can be cured very easily and simply by the means of beneficial knowledge and action. But first, one must know himself to be sick, for only then can he take a step to cure his illness. But the difficulty is that Satan has so driven home his arguments that he does not consider himself to be sick. Rather, he considers others to be wayward and negligent of their religion.

As to the theory of remedy, it lies in contemplating about these matters as mentioned. It is good for a human being that his acts and deeds be based on reflection and thought. He should think about an action that he wishes to perform for the pleasure of God, the Exalted, as to from where and from whom he has derived its details. It is known that the common people learn them from the *fuqaha* and their *maraji taqlid* (authorities on Law), who derive the manner of performing an act from the Book and the *Sunnah* by the means of *ijtihad*. Now when we refer to the works of the *fuqaha*, we find that they repudiate the conduct of one obsessed with *waswas* and consider some

of his acts as invalid. When we refer to the noble traditions and the Book of God, we see that his conduct is ascribed to Satan and the perpetrator is considered to be devoid of intelligence. Hence, when the case is such, an intelligent person should reflect and think for a while if Satan has not taken control of his mind. Then he must commit himself to setting aside this kind of conduct and correct it, for therein lies God's good pleasure.

Whenever someone finds a trace of this obsession in himself, he should turn to other ordinary people or question the *ulama* and *fuqaha* about his own conduct to see whether he is suffering from *waswas* or not. That is because most of the time the one suffering from *waswas* is unaware of his own condition and considers himself as quite balanced and others as negligent. But if he should do some reflection he would find that this belief too is a satanic suggestion, for when he sees that the practice of the *ulama* and the great scholars in whose knowledge and practice he has faith, or rather that of the legal authorities (*maraji taqlid*) from whom all Muslims derive the issues of *halal* and *haram*, is contrary to his own practice, he cannot say that the entire class of *ulama*, the leaders of the faith and its adherents are not committed to the religion of God and it is only the *waswasi* person who is committed to piety.

After that, he has come to know in theory that he is ill, it is necessary to take remedial action. The main point that relates to action is that he should not pay attention to the satanic *waswasah* and the whims that it insinuates. For instance, if he is suffering from *waswas* in the matter of *wudu*, he should make use of a single handful of water despite Satan's protestation. His Satan may say that this act is not valid. To this he should reply by saying that 'If my act is not valid, then the practice of the Messenger of God (*s*) and the Pure Imams (a), as well as that of all the *fuqaha* was invalid too. The Messenger of God (*s*) and the Imams (a) performed *wudu* for nearly three hundred years and the manner in which they performed it was like this according to *mutawatir* traditions. So if their *wudu* was invalid, let mine also be such." If you are *muqallid* of a *mujtahid*, you may tell Satan: "I am acting in accordance with the ruling of a *mujtahid*. If my *wudu* is invalid, God shall not consider me responsible, and He has no incriminating grounds (*hujjah*) against me." Should the accursed one cast doubt concerning the ruling of the *mujtahid*, saying that he did not give such a ruling, fetch his book, which is accessible, open it and show it to him. If you ignore his insinuations several times and act contrary to his suggestions, he would take his hands off you in desperation, and it is hoped that you will obtain a definite cure of your

illness, as mentioned in some noble traditions:

وَفِي الْكَافِي بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ زُرَارَةَ وَأَبِي بَصِيرٍ قَالا: قُلْنَا لَهُ (البَاقِرُ أَوِ الصَّادِقُ عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلامُ): الرَّجُلُ يَشُكُّ كَثِيراً فِي صَلاتِهِ حَتَّى لا يَدْرِي كَمْ صَلَّى وَلا مَا بَقِيَ عَلَيْهِ؟ قَالَ: يُعِيدُ. قُلْنَا لَهُ: فَإِنَّهُ يُكْثِرُ عَلَيْهِ ذَلِكَ كُلَّمَا عَادَ شَكَّ؟ قَالَ: يَمْضِي فِي شَكِّهِ. ثُمَّ قَالَ: لا تُعَوِّدُوا الخَبِيثَ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ بِنَقْضِ الصَّلاةِ فَتُطْمِعُوهُ، فَإِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ خَبِيثٌ يَعْتَادُ لِمَا عُوِّدَ. فَلْيَمْضِ أَحَدُكُمْ فِي الوَهْمِ وَلا يُكْثِرَنَّ نَقْضَ الصَّلاةِ، فَإِنَّهُ إِذَا فَعَلَ ذَلِكَ مَرَّاتٍ لَمْ يَعُدْ إِلَيْهِ الشَّكُّ. قَالَ زُرَارَةُ: ثُمَّ قَالَ: إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ الخَبِيثُ أَنْ يُطَاعَ فَإِذَا عُصِيَ لَمْ يَعُدْ إِلَى أَحَدِكُمْ.

In *al-Kafi*, (al-Kulayni reports) with his *isnad* from Zurarah and Abu Basir that they said: We asked him (i.e. Imam al-Baqir or Imam al-Sadiq [a]) about a man who had frequent doubts in his *Salat*, to the extent that he wouldn't know how much he has offered and how much remain to be offered. He said, "He should repeat (the *Salat*)." We said to him, "That happens to him a lot and wherever he repeats his doubt also recurs." The Imam said, "(In that case) he should ignore his doubt." Then, he added, "Don't let the Evil One get accustomed to haunting you by tempting him by breaking the *Salat*. For Satan is wicked and gets accustomed to that which he is allowed to get used to. So when one of you does not pay attention to his doubt and does not break his *Salat* frequently, and this is done a number of times, the doubt will not recur to him." Zurarah says: Then the Imam added, "The Evil One wants to be obeyed, and when he is disobeyed he will not return to any of you."[1]

وَبِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: إِذَا كَثُرَ عَلَيْكَ السَّهْوُ فَامْضِ فِي صَلاتِكَ، فَإِنَّهُ يُوشَكُ أَنْ يَدَعَكَ. إِنَّمَا هُوَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ.

(Al-Kulayni) reports with his *isnad* from Abu Jafar (a)

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Furu al-Kafi*, iii, 358.

that he said, "When *sahw* (i.e. forgetfulness, absent-mindedness, lapse of attention) occurs often to you during *Salat*, disregard it, for that will make Satan leave you. Indeed *sahw* is due to Satan."[1]

Certainly, when you oppose his insinuations and do not pay attention to them, Satan will give up his hopes and the state of steadiness and certitude will return to your soul. But while you oppose him you must tearfully beseech God, the Exalted, and seek the refuge of His Sacred Essence from the evil of the Accursed One and from the evil of the carnal self. Of course, He shall help you. In the following tradition of *al-Kafi* too, we have been commanded to seek God's help against the evil of Satan:

وَبِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: أَتَى رَجُلٌ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ فَقَالَ: يَا رَسُولَ اللهِ، أَشْكُو إِلَيْكَ مَا أَلْقَى مِنَ الوَسْوَسَةِ فِي صَلاتِي حَتَّى لا أَدْرِي مَا صَلَّيْتُ مِنْ زِيَادَةٍ أَوْ نُقْصَانٍ. فَقَالَ: إِذَا دَخَلْتَ فِي صَلاتِكَ فَاطْعَنْ فَخِذَكَ الأَيْسَرَ بِإِصْبَعِكَ اليُمْنَى المُسَبِّحَةِ ثُمَّ قُلْ: [بِسْمِ اللهِ وَبِاللهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ عَلَى اللهِ، أَعُوذُ بِاللهِ السَّمِيعِ العَلِيمِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ.] فَإِنَّكَ تَنْحَرُهُ وَتَطْرُدُهُ.

Imam al-Sadiq (a) said: A man came to the Messenger of Allah (*S*) and said, "O Messenger of Allah, I complain to you concerning the *waswasah* that so troubles me during *Salat* that I don't know how much of my prayer I have offered." The Prophet said to him, "When you enter your *Salat*, strike your left thigh with the forefinger of your right hand, then say: In the Name of God and by God, I put my trust in God, I seek refuge in God, the All-hearing, the All-knowing from Satan, the Stoned One. You will exorcize him and drive him away."[2]

And all praise is God's, firstly and lastly, outwardly and inwardly, and may benedictions and peace be upon Muhammad and the Pure Ones of his progeny.

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[1] Al-Kulayni, *Furu al-Kafi*, iii, 359.
[2] Al-Kulayni, *Furu al-Kafi*, iii, 358.

26

# Twenty Sixth *Hadith*:
# THE PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE

بِالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلَى ثِقَةِ الإِسْلامِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ الكُلَيْنِي عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ الحَسَنِ وَعَلِيِّ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنْ سَهْلِ بْنِ زِيَادٍ وَمُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَحْيَى عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ جَمِيعاً عَنْ جَعْفَرِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ الأَشْعَرِيِّ عَنْ عَبْدِاللهِ بْنِ مَيْمُونٍ القَدَّاحِ وَعَلِيِّ بْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ حَمَّادِ بْنِ عِيسَى عَنِ القَدَّاحِ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللّهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللّهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: مَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقاً يَطْلُبُ فِيهِ عِلْماً سَلَكَ بِهِ طَرِيقاً إِلَى الجَنَّةِ. وَإِنَّ المَلائِكَةَ لَتَضَعُ أَجْنِحَتَهَا لِطَالِبِ العِلْمِ رَضاً بِهِ. وَإِنَّهُ يَسْتَغْفِرُ لِطَالِبِ العِلْمِ مَنْ فِي السَّماءِ وَمَنْ فِي الأَرْضِ حَتّى الحُوتِ فِي البَحْرِ. وَفَضْلُ العَالِمِ عَلَى العَابِدِ كَفَضْلِ القَمَرِ عَلَى سَائِرِ النُّجُومِ لَيْلَةَ البَدْرِ. وَإِنَّ العُلَمَاءَ وَرَثَةُ الأَنْبِيَاءِ. إِنَّ الأَنْبِيَاءَ لَمْ يُوَرِّثُوا دِينَاراً وَلا دِرْهَماً، وَلَكِنْ وَرِثُوا العِلْمَ. فَمَنْ أَخَذَ مِنْهُ أَخَذَ بِحَظٍّ وَافِرٍ.

With my chain of transmitters reaching up to the Thiqat al-Islam Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulayni, from Muhammad ibn al-Hasan and Ali ibn Muhammad, from Sahl ibn Ziyad and Muhammad ibn Yahya, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad, from Jafar ibn Muhammad al-ashari, from Abd-Allah ibn Maymun al-Qaddah; and from Ali ibn Ibrahim, from his father, from Hammad ibn Isa, from al-Qaddah, from Abu Abd-Allah (a) that he said: The Messenger of Allah (*S*) said, "One who proceeds on a path in the pursuit of knowledge, God makes him proceed

> therewith on a path to the Garden (Paradise). And, verily, the angels spread their wings for the seekers of knowledge out of delight. Verily, every creature of the heaven and the earth asks forgiveness for the seeker of knowledge, even the fish in the sea. The merit of the *Alim* (the learned) over the *abid* (the devout) is like the merit of the moon over the stars on a full-moon night. The learned are the heirs of the prophets, for the prophets did not leave behind a legacy of wealth but that of knowledge. So whoever partakes of it derives a plenteous benefit."[1]

## EXPOSITION

Know that the words of the noble tradition do not need an explanation. However, in the course of a few sections we shall expound the qualities ascribed by the Noble Messenger (*s*) to the learned and the seekers of knowledge. And in Allah is my trust and reliance.

## THE PATH OF KNOWLEDGE AND THE WAY TO PARADISE

At the outset, it should be known that the sciences are absolutely divisible into two kinds. One of these is the worldly sciences, whose ultimate purpose is to achieve worldly aims. The other is the sciences of the Hereafter, whose ultimate purpose is attainment of *malakuti* stations and degrees and reaching the otherworldly stations. Earlier it was pointed out that the distinction between these two kinds of sciences depends for the most part on the distinction between intentions and purposes (behind their pursuit), although they in themselves are divisible into the two kinds. From the viewpoint of appropriateness, the effects described in the noble tradition in relation to the pursuit of knowledge and the learned evidently correspond to the second type of knowledge, the knowledge of the Hereafter.

It was also mentioned earlier that all the sciences of the Hereafter are included in three categories. They either pertain to the knowledge of God and doctrines (*maarif*), or to spiritual instruction and wayfaring towards God, or to the laws and precepts of servitude. Now we say that the development (*tamir*) of life in the Hereafter depends on these three aspects, and hence

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[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, i, *kitab Fadl al-ilm, bab Thawab al-alim wal-mutaallim, hadith* 1.

there are three kinds of paradise: the Garden of Essence, which is the ultimate goal of the knowledge of Allah and the divine doctrinal truths; the Garden of attributes, which is the goal of self-purification and the disciplining of the soul; and thirdly, the Garden of acts, which is the (other-worldly) form of the observance of the duties of servitude as well as its result. Moreover, these gardens are not in a developed state (at the beginning).

Hence, the ground of the Garden of acts is a plain land, like the ground of the soul at the beginning. Their development is subject to the cultivation and flourishing of the soul. Therefore, should the soul in its Hidden aspect be not developed by the means of the divine teachings and the Hidden attractions of the Essence (*jadhabat-e ghaybiyyah-ye dhatiyyah*), man shall not attain to the Garden of the Essence and the Paradise of Tryst (*jannat-e liqa*). Should the inner self be unrefined and the soul be unadorned, should the will and determination be not strengthened and the heart not receive the radiance of the Names and the Attributes, man will not attain to the Garden of the Names and the Attributes, which is the middle paradise. Should one fail to observe the duties of servitude, and his acts, works, movements and pauses be not in accordance with the precepts of the divine Law, one will not attain to the Garden of Acts, concerning which this has been said:

﴿وَفِيهَا مَا تَشْتَهِيهِ الْأَنفُسُ وَتَلَذُّ الْأَعْيُنُ.﴾

*Therein being whatever the souls desire, and the eyes delight in.* (43:71)

On the basis of these preliminaries, which are in accordance with philosophical proofs, the experience of the gnostics, and the traditions of the prophets and the *awliya* (a) in addition to being inferable from the Noble divine Scripture, the sciences-whatever their level, whether they pertain to the *maarif* or something else are a path for reaching the Garden appropriate to each of them, and the wayfarer of each of the paths of knowledge is a traveler on one of the paths of Paradise. We have said earlier that knowledge is absolutely the way to action, even the knowledge of the *maarif*; which, however, involves the actions of the heart and inward gravitations, the result and inward forms of which are the Garden of the Essence and the Paradise of Tryst. Hence, the pursuit of the path of knowledge is the pursuit of the way leading to the path of Paradise, and the way to a path is also part of the path.

### AN IMPORTANT POINT

That journey on the path of knowledge has been ascribed to the creature and the movement towards the Garden to the Sacred Divine Essence (in the phrase سَلَكَ بِهِ طَرِيقاً إِلَى الجَنَّةِ) is for the reason that on the level of multiplicity the acquisitive aspect of the creature has been given predominance, whereas on the level of return to unity the Divine aspect has been made to prevail. From another viewpoint, it may be said that the wayfaring towards the Garden is also ascribable to the creature:

﴿وَوَجَدُوا مَا عَمِلُوا حَاضِرًا.﴾

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

﴿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)

The authority amongst the philosophers and the pride of the righteous sect, Sadr al-Mutaallihin (*r*) has made statements in this regard indicating that the perception of favorable and repulsive things is by itself heaven and hell, and the knowledge' pertains to things favorable to the soul and 'ignorance' to those which are incompatible with it. This contradicts his own view as expressed in his philosophical works, where he has refuted the belief of Shaykh Ghazali, as is narrated from him, that holds paradise and hell to be the pleasures and pains felt by the soul and denies their objective existence. This belief, besides being contrary to the proofs of the philosophers, is against the traditions of the prophets and the celestial scriptures, as well as the teachings of all the religions, and that great philosopher has himself refuted it and shown its invalidity. But that honored personage has himself made similar statements in this relation, although he basically rejects Ghazali's belief. In any case, these statements do not appear to be appropriate in my humble opinion, though any further elaboration of this matter is not appropriate for these pages.

## THE ANGELS' SPREADING THEIR WINGS FOR THE SEEKERS OF KNOWLEDGE

Know chat the angels are of various kinds and species, and no one has the knowledge of them, who are God's hosts, except the sacred Essence of Him Who knows best the Hidden:

﴿وَمَا يَعْلَمُ جُنُودَ رَبِّكَ إِلَّا هُوَ.﴾

*And none knows the hosts of thy Lord but He*. (74:31)

One of their kinds consists of those angels who are totally absorbed in the love of God (*muhayyamin-e majdhubin*), who have no awareness of the world of being; they know not whether God has created the world or not, and are immersed in Divine Beauty and Glory and are absorbed in the Majesty of His sacred Essence. It is said that the blessed letter *nun* in the noble verse:

﴿ن وَالْقَلَمِ وَمَا يَسْطُرُونَ.﴾

*Nun; By the Pen, and what they inscribe*. (68:1)

is a reference to them.

Another group of them is the archangels and the inhabitants of the higher *jabarut*, their being many species of them, each of which has its own specific work and administrative role in the worlds. Another group is the angels of the spheres of the higher *malakut* and the Upper Gardens (*jannat-e Aliyah*) and of them there are varied and different kinds. Another group consists of the angels of the spheres of *barzakh* (the interworld) and *mithal* (the world of analogies). Another group consists of the angels charged with the affairs of the spheres of nature and *mulk*, each of whom is encharged with a particular affair and managing function. This group of angels that administers the world of *mulk* is different from the angels existing in the worlds of *barzakh* and *mithal*, as has been established in its proper place and as can also be inferred from traditions.

One should know that wings, feathers, and other like members are not common to all the kinds of angels. Rather, from the angels absorbed in Divine love to the inhabitants of the higher *malakut*, all of them are free and devoid of such members and extended parts. They are free from all forms of matter, its properties, essentials, and all that is necessarily associated with it. As to the angels of the worlds of *mithal* and the *malakuti* beings of *barzakh*, it is possible for them to possess parts, members, wings, feathers and the like. Since they pertain to the spheres of *barzakhi* quantities and the *mithali* analogies, each of them is characterized by a particular quantity, members, and organs specific to itself. The verses:

﴿وَالصَّافَّاتِ صَفًّا.﴾

*By the rangers ranging*. (37:1)

﴿الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ جَاعِلِ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا أُولِي أَجْنِحَةٍ مَثْنَى وَثُلَاثَ وَرُبَاعَ﴾

*Praise belongs to God, Originator of the heavens and earth, who appointed the angels to be messengers having wings two, three and four*. (35:1)

refer to this kind of angels. But as to the archangels (*malaikeh-ye muqarrabin*) and the inhabitants of the higher *jabarut*, they can embody themselves in any world in accordance with its form and appearance, due to their encompassing ontic and sustentative character (*ihatah-ye wujudiyyah-ye qaymumiyyah*). Hence Gabriel, the Trustworthy, who is one of the Near Ones to God and the bearer of the divine revelation and amongst the highest of the beings inhabiting the *jabarut*, incarnated himself continuously for the sacred essence of the Noble Messenger (*s*) in the world of limited *mithal*, twice in the world of absolute *mithal* and occasionally in the world of *mulk*. Sometimes he would even appear in the form of Dihyah al-Kalbi, who was the foster brother of the Noble Messenger (*s*) and was the most handsome of men.

One must know that the assumption of *mulki* form by the angels is not something at the level of the *mulki* beings, which can be seen by anyone with a sound visual sense. Rather, even then, their *malakuti* aspect prevails over their *mulki* aspect, and that is why people could not see them with their corporeal eyes even after their assumption of *mulki* form. Rather, only some of the Companions could see Gabriel when he appeared in the form of Dihyah al-Kalbi, and then only with God's approval and the leave of the Seal of the Prophets (*s*).

Hence all the angels of God are benignly disposed towards those of the spiritual progeny of Adam, the elect of God, (a) to whom the angels prostrated and whose command was obeyed throughout the realms of being- who seek knowledge and gnosis and, having turned toward God and the truth, tread the path of God's good pleasure, and they (i.e. the angels) are charged with helping and training them. And when this *mulki* being becomes *malakuti*, and when this terrestrial creature becomes a celestial one, he walks on the wings of the angels; and should the eyes of his *malakuti* and *mithali* vision open, he would see himself standing on the wings of angels and walking on his path with their assistance. This was concerning those who travel from mink co *malakut*, though they are still on the way.

As to those who are *mulki* and have not entered the *malakut*, it is possible that the inhabitants of the *malakut* may come to their help and, out of humility for them, spread their wings under their feet out of their delight on account of their conduct, as is indicated by this noble *hadith* from *Ghawali al-laali*:

عَنِ المِقْدَادِ رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّهُ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ يَقُولُ: إن المَلائِكَةَ لَتَضَعُ أَجْنِحَتَهَا لِطَالِبِ العِلْمِ حَتَّى يَطَأَ عَلَيْهَا رَضاً بِهِ.

> It is narrated from Miqdad (*r*) that he said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (*S*) say, "Verily, the angels spread out their wings for the seeker of knowledge out of their delight for him, so that he walks over them."[1]

From this, we come to know that one who takes the first step towards God and His good pleasure, stands over the shoulders of the angels and sits on their wings and this celestial carpet remains until the ultimate stages of acquisition of knowledge and learning. The levels, however, differ, and the angels who are the helpers of this wayfarer change, until he reaches a stage where he puts his feet on the middle of the heads of archangels, and then traverses certain worlds and ascends through certain levels where the way is closed to the archangels and where Gabriel, the one entrusted with delivering Divine revelations, confesses his inability and declares:

لَوْ دَنَوْتُ أَنْمُلَةً لَاحْتَرَقْتُ.

> Should I approach to the extent of an inch I will be burnt down.[2]

The above description not only does not conflict with philosophical proofs but is in conformity with them and does not stand in need of any interpretation (*tawil*), as has been offered by the sublime philosopher, Sadr al-Mutaallihin, although he himself affirms (the existence of) the angels of the world of *mithal* and their incarnation in *mulk* and *malakut* in his philosophical books and scientific works, with expositions that are unparalleled and exclusive to that honored personage.

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[1] Ibn Abi Jumhur, *Ghawali al-laali*, i, 106.

[2] Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar*, xviii, 382.

## THE INHABITANTS OF THE HEAVEN AND EARTH ASKING FORGIVENESS FOR THE SEEKER OF KNOWLEDGE

Know that it is established in its proper place that the reality of being is in to the Excellences, Names, and Attributes of God. Pure existence is pure excellence, and hence God, the Glorious, being pure existence, is the totality of all excellence and all the Names and Attributes of Beauty (*Jamal*) and Glory (*Jalal*). And it is mentioned in *hadith* that:

عِلْمٌ كُلُّهُ قُدْرَةٌ كُلُّهُ.

Knowledge in its entirety is power in its entirety.

And it has been demonstrated that the mirrored reality of existence is the same as the totality of excellences, from which none of the excellences can possibly be separated. However, the manifestation of those excellences is in accordance with the extent of the vastness or narrowness of a being and the burnish or obscurity of the mirror. In this respect, the entire realm of being comprises the signs of the Essence, and beings are mirrors that reflect the Names and the Attributes. This matter is in conformity with philosophical proofs, or rather there are few issues of *hikmah* that equal it in respect of the strength and firmness of its proof. It is also in accordance with the experience of the mystics and the apprehensions of the gnostics, in addition to being in conformity with the noble verses of the Sacred Book and the traditions of the pure and infallible *Ahl al-Bayt* (a). Hence, in several places in the divine Scripture all the existents are mentioned as being engaged in the glorification of God:

﴿يُسَبِّحُ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ.﴾

*All that is in the heavens and the earth magnifies God*. (62:1)

﴿تُسَبِّحُ لَهُ السَّمَاوَاتُ السَّبْعُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا يُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِهِ وَلَكِنْ لَا تَفْقَهُونَ تَسْبِيحَهُمْ.﴾

*The seven heavens and the earth, and whosoever in them extol Him; nothing is, that does not proclaim His praise, but you do not understand their extolling*. (17:44)

It is quite clear that extolling the perfection (*tasbih*) and sanctity (*taqdis*) of God, the Exalted, and praising Him requires the knowledge and gnosis of

His sacred station and His Attributes of Beauty and Glory, and these cannot occur where then is no trace of knowledge and gnosis. This sublime fact has been so explicitly mentioned in the noble traditions that there is no room for any interpretation (*tawil wa tawjih*). However, those who dwell in nescience, from among traditional philosophers and dialecticians, from whom the divine truths are veiled, have tried to offer stale interpretations of the words of God which in addition to being contrary to their literal meanings (*zawahir*) as well as unambiguous verses, in some cases –such as in the story of the ant's speech in the *surat al-Naml*– are opposed to many explicit statements narrated from the Infallible Imams (a) besides being against firm metaphysical proofs. However, to engage in the description of that proof and its preliminaries is not fit for these pages.

Hence, the existents' extolling of God is on the basis of their consciousness. It is mentioned in a *hadith* that the Noble Messenger (*s*) said:

> Before my ministry, there was a time when I used to look after the sheep and camels as a shepherd (and there has been no prophet who has not tended the sheep). As I watched them, I noticed that all of a sudden they would get alarmed and take to flight without there being anything around that might agitate them. I used to wonder about its reason until Gabriel came to me. On my asking him about it, he said, "The unbeliever (after death) is dealt such a blow that everything that God has created, except mankind and the *jinn*, get terrified on hearing it."[1]

The *urafa* say that man is the most isolated of beings from *malakut* as long as he is preoccupied with *mulk* and it cares, and since this preoccupation of his is stronger than that of all other beings, his separation and nescience, as well as his deprivation from attaining to *malakut*, is greater than that of all others.

Furthermore, all beings have a *malakuti* aspect by means of which they possess life, consciousness, and all other functions of life. The verse:

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[1] This refers to the following *hadith* of *Furu al-Kafi*, iii, 233:

عَنِ البَاقِرِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: قَالَ النَّبِيُّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: إِنِّي كُنْتُ أَنْظُرُ إِلَى الإِبِلِ وَالغَنَمِ وَأَنَا أَرْعَاهَا – وَلَيْسَ مِنْ نَبِيٍّ إلا وَقَدْ رَعَى الغَنَمَ – وَكُنْتُ أَنْظُرُ إِلَيْهَا – قَبْلَ النُّبوَّةِ – وَهِيَ مُتَمَكِّنَةٌ فِي المَكِينَةِ مَا حَوْلَهَا شَيْءٌ حَتَّى تَذْعَرَ فَتَطِيرَ، فَأَقُولُ: مَا هَذَا؟ وَأَعْجَبُ، حَتَّى حَدَّثَنِي جِبْرَئِيلُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ أنَّ الكَافِرَ يُضْرَبُ ضَرْبَةً مَا خَلَقَ اللهُ شَيْئاً إلا سَمِعَهَا وَيَذْعُرُ لَهَا إلا الثَّقَلَيْنِ.

﴿وَكَذَلِكَ نُرِي إِبْرَاهِيمَ مَلَكُوتَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلِيَكُونَ مِنْ الْمُوقِنِينَ﴾

*Thus We showed Abraham the malakut of the heavens and the earth, so that he might be o f those having sure faith.*
(6: 75)

also bears testimony to the fact that consciousness and life pervade all existents. Now that it is known that all existents possess knowledge and consciousness and that all of them have a *malakuti* aspect, since man does not stand with them on the same plane and is in addition veiled from *malakut*, there is no wonder if they should ask forgiveness for the human being pursuing the path of knowledge and moving towards God, Who is the Source of existence and the Provider of the realm of being, and implore His sacred Merciful Essence with their clear *malakuti* voices –which are audible to open *malakuti* ears– to immerse this total offspring of *mulk* and this pride of the children of nature in the ocean of His forgiveness and to cover all his shortcomings.

It is also possible that as all other existents know that it is not possible for them to attain to the courtyard of the Sacred Essence and to dive into the ocean of perfection except through the mediation of the sacred essence of the Perfect Man –who has the gnosis of God and knowledge of the divine teachings and unites knowledge and action within himself, as has been established in its proper place– for this reason they beseech of God, the Exalted, man's perfection, which is attained through immersion in the ocean of God's forgiveness, so that they, too, through his means, may attain to the excellences appropriate for them. And God knows best.

## THE *ALIM*'S SUPERIORITY OVER THE *ABID*

Know that the reality of knowledge and of faith-whose strength is also based on knowledge-is light. This issue, besides being in accordance with philosophical proof and mystic experience, is also in conformity with unambiguous texts and traditions of the pure and infallible *Ahl al-Bayt* (a). That is because the characteristic of 'light', which consists of its being manifest in itself and its ability to make manifest other than itself, is also true of knowledge. Rather, its being true of the reality of knowledge is factual, whereas its ascription to sensible lights is more akin to figurative usage. That is because sensible light does not even possess self-manifestation in the real sense; it possesses quiddity and is one of the instances of that concept. However, the reality of knowledge is by essence existence itself; though in

conception it is contrary to it, it corresponds and is associated with it in the context of objective reality. The reality of existence is identical with 'light' and identical with consciousness:

﴿اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ.﴾

*God is the Light of the heavens and the earth*. (24:35)

Hence, knowledge is same as light and in the noble verses faith (*iman*) and knowledge have been referred to as 'light'.

﴿وَمَنْ لَمْ يَجْعَلْ اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُ مِنْ نُورٍ.﴾

*And to whomsoever God assigns no light, no light has he*. (24:40)

In the noble Light Verse, 'light' has been interpreted as 'knowledge' according to the exegesis of the Infallible *Ahl al-Bayt* (a):

عَنِ الفُضَيْلِ بْنِ يَسَارٍ قَالَ: قُلْتُ لأبِي عَبْدِاللهِ الصَّادِقِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: ﴿اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ.﴾ قَالَ: كَذَلِكَ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ. قَالَ: قُلْتُ: ﴿مَثَلُ نُورِهِ﴾ قَالَ: مُحَمَّدٌ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ. قُلْتُ: ﴿كَمِشْكَاةٍ﴾ قَالَ: صَدْرُ مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ. قَالَ: قُلْتُ: ﴿فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ﴾ قَالَ: فِيهِ نُورُ العِلْمِ – يَعْنِي النُّبُوَّةَ. قُلْتُ: ﴿المِصْبَاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ﴾ قَالَ: عِلْمُ رَسُولِ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ صَدَرَ إِلَى قَلْبِ عَلِيٍّ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ... الحديث.

Al-Fudayl ibn Yasar says: I asked Abu Abd-Allah al-Sadiq (a) concerning the meaning of '*Allah is the Light of the Heavens and the earth*.' He replied, "Such is Allah, the All-mighty and Glorious." I asked him (about the meaning of the phrase) '*the likeness of His Light*.' He said, "(It means) Muhammad (*S*)." I asked him, "(What is meant by) '*as a niche*'?" He said, "The breast of Muhammad (*S*)." I asked him, "(What is meant by) '*wherein is a lamp*'?" He said, "(It means) in it is the light of knowledge that is prophethood." I asked him, "(What is meant by) *The lamp is in a glass*?" He said, "(It

means) the knowledge of the Messenger of Allah (*S*) emanated towards the heart of Ali ' (a)…"[1]

وَعَنِ البَاقِرِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ... أَنَّهُ يَقُولُ: أنَا هَادِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ؛ مَثَلُ العِلْمِ الَّذِي أُعْطِيتُهُ وَهُوُ نُورِي الَّذِي يُهْتَدَى بِهِ مَثَلُ المِشْكَاةِ فِيهَا المِصْبَاحُ. فَالمِشْكَاةُ قَلْبُ مُحَمَّدٍ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ، وَالمِصْبَاحُ نُورُهُ الَّذِي فِيهِ العِلْمُ.

It is narrated from Imam al-Baqir (a) that he said, "I am the guide of the heavens and the earth. The likeness of the knowledge that I have been given –which is the light wherewith they are guided– is as a niche, wherein is a lamp. 'The niche' is the heart of Muhammad (*S*) and 'the lamp' is the knowledge: that is, its light that is in it."[2]

وَفِي رِوَايَةٍ: فَالمُؤْمِنُ يَنْقَلِبُ فِي خَمْسَةٍ مِنَ النُّورِ: مَدْخَلُهُ نُورٌ وَمَخْرَجُهُ نُورٌ وَعِلْمُهُ نُورٌ وَكَلامُهُ نُورٌ وَمَصِيرُهُ إِلَى الجَنَّةِ يَوْمَ القِيَامَةِ نُورٌ.

In a tradition, it is stated, "The man of faith moves in five lights: his entry is light; his exit is light; his knowledge is light; his speech is light; and his passage towards Paradise on the Day of Resurrection is light."[3]

And this is mentioned in a famous *hadith*:

العِلْمُ نُورٌ يَقْذِفُهُ اللهُ فِي قَلْبِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ.

Knowledge is a light that God casts into the heart of anyone that He wishes.[4]

There are various degrees of this light according to the different levels of the faith and knowledge of persons. It should be known that this real light that is in those who possess faith and knowledge, as it pertains to the lights of

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[1] Al-Shaykh al-Saduq, *Kitab al-Tawhid*, 157.

[2] *Tafsir nur al-thaqalayn*, iii, 605.

[3] Al-Bahrani, *Tafsir al-burhan*, iii, 135.

[4] Authors Note: This is part of a long *hadith* that appears in the gloss on the *Munyat al-murid* of the blessed Shahid (al-Shahid al-Thani) which has been published together with the *Ruwad al-jinan.* (See also *Bihar al-anwar*, i, 225, where it appears with a slight difference in wording.)

the world of the Hereafter, manifests itself in that world in the form of sensible radiance that varies with the soul's activity, and it is this light that shall illuminate the *Sirat*. Hence, the light of a group is like the light of the sun, that of another like that of the moon, and so on until it is just sufficient to illuminate the ground around one's feet.

Though, as we have known, knowledge is 'light' and 'manifestation', in their real sense and without any trace of metaphorical expression, we –poor folk– are veiled from the real sun of knowledge by the dark curtain of carnal nature and dwell in the gloomy night of the realm of *mulk*. We are veiled from the daily intensifying light of wisdom and insight and imagine that these are parables based on allegory and metaphor and on surmise and reification. Yes, as long as we remain stupefied by the slumber of life and intoxicated by carnal nature, we cannot differentiate reality from allegory, and reality appears to be an allegory to our eyes, for, in fact, in the world of metaphors reality takes the form of allegory.

النَّاسُ نَيامٌ، فإذا مَاتُوا انْتَبَهُوا.

The people are asleep and they wake up on death.[1]

When our eyes are opened, we shall see that in the same way as the light of the sun and the moon is luminous and illuminating, so is the light of the man of knowledge. In this world he illuminates the gloomy hearts and brings to life the dead of nescience and ignorance by the light of his knowledge, and in that world, too, his light is encompassing; and by the means of that encircling radiance, he intercedes in favor of chose who derive light from the niche of his knowledge and are attached to the courtyard of his sanctity.

It should be known that *ibadah*, too, cannot take place without knowledge, and hence the *abid* too has a light that is particularly his. Rather, the essence of faith in God and worship of Him are light, with the difference that the *abid*'s light is confined to himself; it illuminates the path beneath his feet, but does not give light to others. Therefore, their likeness is that of stars on a full-moon night wherein their brilliance is dimmed due to the light of the moon. They shine for themselves and their light does not benefit others. Hence the similitude of the *abid* in comparison with the *Alim* is that of a star, though not that of a star on a moonless night wherein it is a source of illumination to some extent, but of a star on a full-moon night when it just

[1] Ibn Maytham al-Bahrani, *Sharh-e sad kalameh-ye qisar*, 54.

shines without illuminating other things.

Sadr al-Mutaallihin (*q*) says, "That which is meant by *Alim* in this noble *hadith* is other than the divine man of knowledge (*Alim-e rabbani*) whose knowledge is immediate (*ladunni*), obtained through Divine gift, like the sciences of the prophets and the *awliya* (a) as is shown by the metaphor of moon; for otherwise the metaphor of sun would have been more appropriate, because its light is by Divine beneficence, without there being any intermediary belonging to the recipient's species or genus." Here ends his statement –may God elevate his station.

## THE *ULAMA* BEING THE HEIRS OF THE PROPHETS

This inheritance is spiritual, for the descent of the *ulama* from the prophets is of a *malakuti* nature. In the same way as the human being is an offspring of *mulk* by virtue of his *mulki* life, he undergoes a *malakuti* birth under the rearing care of the prophets and after obtaining the station of the heart. As the source of the former birth is the physical father, the source of the latter birth is the prophets (a). Hence, they are the spiritual ancestors; their inheritance is spiritual and inward and the birth is a second, *malakuti* birth. After the prophets, the function of instruction and rearing lies with the *ulama*, who are the real heirs of the prophets. The prophets (a) by virtue of this spiritual station, were not owners of wealth or concerned with the world of *mulk* and its corporeal affairs. Their inheritance, in virtue of this station, was nothing except knowledge and divine teachings, though by virtue of their corporeal birth and terrestrial life they possessed all the statuses associated with a human being:

﴿قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ.﴾

*Say: I am only a man the like of you*. (18:110)

By virtue of this human status, their heirs were not the learned but their own physical offsprings, and hence their legacy in respect of this bodily station can be material wealth.

This noble *hadith* clearly implies or rather categorically states the fact of spiritual inheritance as explained. And that which the Noble Messenger (*s*) meant by the words ascribed to that master, that:

نَحْنُ مَعَاشِرَ الأَنْبِيَاءِ لا نُوَرِّثُ.

We, prophets, do not leave any inheritance,[1]

if we assume the authenticity of their ascription to him-is that the legacy of the prophets by virtue of their prophetic function and spiritual inheritance is not wealth and treasure; rather, it is knowledge, as is quite evident. *Wa al-salam.*

[1] *Musnad Ahmad,* ii, 463.

27

# Twenty-Seventh *Hadith*: PRAYER AND CONCENTRATION

بِالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ 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 أنْ أَسُدَّ فَاقَتَكَ وَأَمْلَأَ 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 Yaqub 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 *tafaul*, 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 *malaa* (filled) as follows:

مَلأَ الإنَاءَ 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, **وَأَمْلأَ قَلْبَكَ خَوْفاً مِنِّي** apparently it (i.e. the verb **أملأ** ) represents the first person in the imperfect tense 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

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al-iman wa al-kufr, bab al-ibadah, hadith* no. 1.

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 Yaqub (al-Kulayni) reports with his *isnad*

from Abu Jafar (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*)."[1]

وَبِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي بَصِيرٍ قَالَ: 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."[2]

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

[1] *Furu al-Kafi*, iii, 269.
[2] *Furu al-Kafi*, iii, 270.

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 an 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 **وَالخَيرُ عادَةٌ** – 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 Jafar 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.[1]

**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

[1] *Furu al-Kafi*, iii, 363.

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."[1]

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."[2]

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.

[1] Al-Hurr al-Amili, *Wasail al-Shiah*, iv, 688.
[2] Al-Hurr al-Amili, *Wasail al-Shiah*, iv, 687.

Muhammad ibn Ali ibn al-Husayn, the *saduq* of the community, reports with his *isnad* from Abd-Allah ibn Abi Yafur 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."[1]

وَبِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ فِي حَدِيثٍ أَنَّهُ قَالَ: إِنِّي لأُحِبُّ الرَّجُلَ الْمُؤْمِنَ 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 الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِلَيْهِ بِالْمَحَبَّةِ 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. "[2]

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 (*marifah*) 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

[1] Al-Hurr al-Amili, *Wasail al-Shiah*, iv, 685.
[2] Al-Hurr al-Amili, *Wasail al-Shiah*, iv, 686.

Commander of the Faithful (a) and his noble descendants say in the supplications known as the *Munajat-e Shabaniyyah:*

اِلَهِي هَبْ لِي كَمَالَ الانْقِطَاعِ إلَيْكَ وَأَنِرْ أَبْصَارَ قُلُوبنَا بِضِيَاءِ نَظَرِهَا إلَيْكَ حَتَّى تَخْرِقَ أَبْصَارُ القُلُوبِ حُجُبَ النُّورِ فَتَصِلَ إلَى 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.[1]

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-amal,* al-Shaykh al-Saduq reports with his chain of transmitters from someone who heard Imam

[1] *Mafatih al-jinan,* "*al-Munajat al-Shabaniyyah*."

> al-Sadiq (a) that he used to say: "One who offers two *rakah*s 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."[1]

## 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.

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[1] *Mafatih al-jinan*, iv, 688.

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-amal* 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-Kafi*

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."[1]

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

[1] *Usul al-Kafi, kitab al-Tawhid, bab al-iradah, annaha min sifat al-fil, hadith* no. 4.

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 (*saq*) 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-e 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-e sifati*) in proportion to his permanent prototype (*ayn-e thabit*), becoming annihilated in one of the Divine Names. Many wayfarers of the mystic path remain in the state of annihilation in Names (*fana-e 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.[1]

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*

[1] *Ahadith qudsi*. Source untraced.

*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-sail*, 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 الإلَهِيَّةِ.

It has been narrated that our master, Jafar ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq (a) was once reciting the Quran 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 Quran 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."[1]

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.[2]

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 إنِّي 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

[1] *Falah al-sail*, 107.

[2] See Foruzanfar, *Ahadith-e Mathnawi*. 39.

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."[1]

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 Quranic 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 اللهُ، 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

[1] *Wasail al-Shiah*, iii, 90, with a slight difference of wording.

> 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."[1]

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 of 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*

[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr bab idkhal al-surur ala al-muminin, hadith* no. 8.

*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 **لِيُرَوا جَزَاءَ أَعْمالِهم** i.e. to see the reward of their works), not considering the pronoun in **يَرَهُ** to refer to works, have missed the point."[1] Here ends the translation of his statements, may God elevate his noble station.

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.

[1] Al-Shaykh al-Bahai, *al-Arbain*, p. 202, see the commentary on the thirty third *hadith*.

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 *faraid* 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-sharai*, (al-Shaykh al-Saduq) reports with his *isnad* from Abu Jafar (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."[1]

**وَرَوَى الشَّيْخُ قُدِّسَ سِرُّهُ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي بَصِيرٍ قَالَ: قَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: يُرْفَعُ لِلرَّجُلِ مِنَ الصَّلاةِ رُبُعُهَا أَوْ ثُمْنُهَا 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

[1] *Wasail al-Shiah*, ii, 54.

> one-eighth rises to heaven in accordance with the extent of his lapses therein (بِقَدَرِ مَا سَهَا).[1] However, God the Exalted, compensates for it through the means of the supererogatory prayers."[2]

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 *Shariah* 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 الْمُفِيدِ،

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[1] Authors note: As to the words of the Imam **بقدر ما سها** 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 سها** refer to the ratio, not to the amount that ascends. It is probable that by **سهو** here is meant tranquillity and softness of the heart, as remarked by al-Jawhari.

[2] *Wasail al-Shiah*, iii, 54.

رِضْوَانُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ، فِي الإِرْشَادِ: عَنْ سَعِيدِ بْنِ كُلْثُومٍ قَالَ: كُنْتُ عِنْدَ الصَّادِقِ جَعْفَرِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلامُ فَذَكَرَ أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ 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. إِذَا فَضَلَ شَيْءٌ عَنْ يَدِهِ مِنْ كُمِّهِ دَعَا بِالجَلَمِ 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 وَوَرُمَتْ 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-Numan al-Mufid (*r*) reports in *al-Irshad* from Said ibn Kulthum that Imam Jafar 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 Jafar, 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 his feet and ankles were swollen as a result of standing in prayer."

Abu Jafar (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)!"[1]

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 *rakah*s of *Salat* in every day and night. The wind would sway him like an ear of corn."[2]

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

[1] Al-Shaykh al-Mufid, *al-Irshad*, 255-256.
[2] Al-Shaykh al-Mufid, *al-Irshad*, 256.

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 houris and palaces is 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 is 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, and 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-Kafi*:

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 Jafar (a) that in a *hadith-e 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…"[1]

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 اللهُ.

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:

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[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr bab man adha al-muslimin, hadith* no. 8.

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.

28

# Twenty-Eighth *Hadith*: MEETING GOD

بِالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلَى ثِقَةِ الإِسْلامِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ الكُلَيْنِي رَحِمَهُ اللهُ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَحْيَى عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ خَالِدٍ وَالحُسَيْنِ بْنِ سَعِيدٍ جَمِيعاً عَنِ القَاسِمِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنْ عَبْدِالصَّمَدِ بْنِ بَشِيرٍ عَنْ بَعْضِ أَصْحَابِهِ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: قُلْتُ: أَصْلَحَكَ اللهُ، مَنْ أَحَبَّ لِقَاءَ اللهِ أَحَبَّ اللهُ لِقَاءَهُ وَمَنْ أَبْغَضَ لِقَاءَ اللهِ أَبْغَضَ اللهُ لِقَاءَهُ؟ قَالَ: نَعَمْ. قُلْتُ: فَوَاللهِ إِنَّا لَنَكْرَهُ المَوْتَ. فَقَالَ: لَيْسَ ذَلِكَ حَيْثُ تَذْهَبُ، إِنَّمَا ذَلِكَ عِنْدَ المُعَايَنَةِ إِذَا رَأَى مَا يُحِبُّ فَلَيْسَ شَيْءٌ أَحَبَّ إِلَيْهِ مَنْ أَنْ يَتَقَدَّمَ عَلَى اللهِ، وَاللهُ تَعَالَى يُحِبُّ لِقَاءَهُ وَهُوَ يُحِبُّ لِقَاءَ اللهِ حِينَئِذٍ. وَإِذَا رَأَى مَا يَكْرَهُ فَلَيْسَ شَيْءٌ أَبْغَضَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ لِقَاءِ اللهِ، وَاللهُ يَبْغُضُ لِقَاءَهُ.

With my chain of transmission reaching up to the Thiqat al-Islam Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulayni (*m*) from Muhammad ibn Yahya, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad, from Muhammad ibn Khalid and al-Husayn ibn Said, and both of them from al-Qasim ibn Muhammad, from Abd al-Samad ibn Bashir, from someone from among his companions, who reports from Abu Abd-Allah (a) stating: I said to him (i.e., Imam al-Sadiq), "*Aslahaka'llah!* (May God set you right) (Is it true that) if anyone loves meeting God (*liqa Allah*), God too loves to meet him, and if someone should dislike the meeting with God, God too dislikes to meet him?" "Yes," replied the Imam. I said,

> "Indeed, by God, we detest death." The Imam said, "It is not as you imagine. That refers to the time of confrontation with death. At that moment when he sees (as lying in store for him) what he loves, there is nothing dearer to him than to go forth towards God. Coil, the Exalted, loves to meet him and he, too, loves to meet God. But if he sees (as lying in store for him) what he detests, nothing is more abominable to him than meeting God, and God too loathes to meet him."[1]

## EXPOSITION

*Aslahaka'llah* is a prayer of blessing, and in a benediction it is not necessary that the addressee be devoid of the blessing wished for him. Rather, such benedictive expressions are quite customary, even if what is invoked be already there. Hence, to pray for Imam al-Sadiq (a) wishing his welfare and betterment is not something contrary to common custom. Thus it is also correct to say 'May God forgive you*'* (*ghafara'llahu lak*) and 'May God pardon you' (*afa'llahu ank*) in regard to those sacred personages. Some (exegetes) have interpreted the noble verse:

﴿لِيَغْفِرَ لَكَ اللَّهُ مَا تَقَدَّمَ مِنْ ذَنْبِكَ وَمَا تَأَخَّرَ﴾

*...that God may forgive thee thy former and thy latter sins.* (48:2)

in the same sense, stating that it is like saying to someone 'May God forgive you', and it is not necessary in such benedictive expressions to take into consideration that the addressee already possesses the blessing invoked in the prayer. Although such an interpretation seems farfetched in relation to this noble verse –and we have already discussed it under one of the earlier traditions[2]– it is basically right that mostly the actual possession of that which is invoked in such precative expressions is not taken into consideration.

**لقاء** (with *fathah* on *lam*, or *kasrah*) is the verbal noun (*masdar*) of **لقي** (vowelized like **رضي**); so also are **لقاءة، لقاية، لقياً، لقياناً، لقيانة** all with *kasrah* of *lam*) and **لقياً، لقى، لقياناً، لقيانة** (all with *dammah* on *lam*) are its verbal

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Furu al-Kafi*, iii, 134.

[2] See the exposition of the twenty-first *hadith*.

nouns and signify sight and vision. Later on in this exposition we will explain the meaning of *liqa Allah*, to an extent that is appropriate for these pages.

**أبغض** pertains to the nominal form **إفعال** . And **بَغُضَ** like(**كَرُمَ، نَصَرَ، فَرِحَ**)is its trilateral root. (The lexicographers explain) **بغض بغاضة فهو بغيض** *bughd* (hate) is the antonym of *hubb* (love) and **بغضة** and **بغضاء** signify its stronger degrees. Briefly, love and hate are qualities of the soul (*sifat-e nafsaniyyah*) and are opposite to each other. Their reality, as revealed by self-examination, is evident, like all other directly experienced and psychic qualities, whose essential reality is more evident than what any description of their meaning (i.e. of the words that stand for them) can divulge. However, an explanation of the signification of the ascription of 'love' and 'hate' to God's Sacred Essence will be given later on, *insha Allah*.

As to the narrator's statement, "Indeed, we detest death," he said that because he imagined death to involve *liqa Allah*, or because he thought that death was *liqa Allah* itself. So he imagined revulsion for death to be aversion for *liqa Allah*, and hence his question. The Imam answered him that the general dislike of death is not a criterion; rather, the criterion is the actual moment of death when one observes the signs of the *malakut* and the other realms.

As to the words of the Imam (a): **لَيْسَ ذٰلِكَ حَيْثُ تَذْهَبُ** this sentence does not have an exact equivalent expression in Persian. The import of this expression here may be conveyed by such Persian expressions as **وگمان كردم گمانم رفت** or **ذهنم رفت** and so on, and the Arabic expression also implies a 'going' (*dhahab*) of the imagination (*wahm*). Arabic is replete with such expressions. Rather the common usage of '*dhahab*' and expressions derived from it implies a *dhahab* of *wahm*, *aqidah* (belief) and the like, and the word '*madhhab*' (going, trend, opinion, religion, creed, ideology, school of law or thought) denotes a similar meaning, which is based on metaphor, for it is derived from external and outward *dhahab*.

As to the statement of the Imam (a) **عند المعاينة** *muayanah* is a verbal noun pertaining to the form **مفاعلة** (The lexicographers explain its meaning as follows:)

**عايَنتُ الشَّيءَ عَياناً إذا رَأيتُهُ.**

The time of death is called *muayanah* (viewing, examination, observation), because the dying person views the signs of the other world

clearly. His hidden spiritual eye opens and a little of the reality of the *malakut* is revealed to him. Then he sees glimpses of his own attainments, works and (spiritual) condition. We shall explain in the course of a few sections that which needs exposition in the sacred tradition, putting our reliance in God.

## *LIQA ALLAH* AND ITS CHARACTER

Know that the number of verses and traditions which refer to *liqa Allah*, either explicitly or implicitly, is quite large and their full details cannot be contained in this brief exposition. However, we shall briefly refer to some of them, and anyone seeking further details should refer to the *Risalah-ye liqa Allah* of the *marhum* gnostic of God, al-Haj Mirza Jawad Tabrizi (*q*) wherein traditions concerning this theme have been gathered to a certain extent.

Know that some *ulama* and exegetes have totally blocked the path of *liqa Allah* and denied (die possibility of) direct experience of the revelations (*tajalliyat*) of the Divine Names and Essence. Imagining that they were affirming the transcendence of the Sacred Essence as lying beyond all anthropomorphic and physical qualities, they have interpreted all the verses and traditions mentioning *liqa Allah* as the encounter with the Last Day and Judgment, its reward and punishment. Although such an interpretation of the general import of *liqa* is not very far-fetched in relation to certain verses and traditions, it is certainly an implausible and far-fetched interpretation in relation to some reliable supplications and traditions mentioned in trustworthy books as well as in relation to some well-accepted (*mashhur*) traditions which have been relied upon by great *ulama*.

One should know that the intent of those who have kept open the path of *liqa Allah* and the beatific vision (*mushahadah*) of Divine Glory and Beauty, is not that it is permissible to fathom the mystery of the Divine Essence or that it is possible to encompass in direct knowledge (*ilm huduri*) and in immediate spiritual experience the Essence, which encompasses absolutely everything.

Rather, the impossibility of fathoming the Divine mystery through universal knowledge (*ilm-e kulli*) and by the means of rational thought and the impossibility of encompassing It in mystic experience (*irfan-e shuhudi*) and by the means of esoteric insight is an established matter, to which all people of the intellect (i.e. philosophers) as well as those of mystic knowledge and experience (*arbab-e maarif wa qulub*) are unanimous in

agreeing. However, those who claim the possibility of such a station state: Following the attainment of a complete and consummate state of God-fearing (*taqwa*), a total turning away of the heart from all the worlds and repudiation of both the realms of life (i.e. the pleasures of the world as well as that of the Hereafter), after trampling the heads of egoism and egocentrism under one's feet, and following complete attention and total absorption in God and the Names and Attributes of that Sacred Essence, after immersion in the love and passion for the Sacred Essence, and following austerities of the heart, a purity and burnish is attained by the wayfarer's heart, which receives the revelations of the Names and the Attributes. Thereupon the thick veils that lie between the devotee and the Names and the Attributes are removed and he becomes annihilated in the Names and the Attributes, becoming "attached to the Mightiness of Sanctity and Glory" and attaining complete nearness (*tadalli*) to the Essence. In this state, there is no veil between the consecrated soul of the wayfarer and the Truth except the Names and the Attributes.

For some of the wayfarers of the Path, the luminous veil of the Names and the Attributes may also be removed, whereupon they attain to the Hidden *tajalliyat* of the Essence, beholding themselves attached and close to the Sacred Essence, and, in this vision, they perceive the sustaining encompassment of the Truth (*ihatah-ye qayyumi-ye haqq*) and their own essential annihilation (*fana-e dhati*). Then, he clearly views his own being, as well as that of all other existents, as a shadow of the Divine Being. al-in accordance with metaphysical proof-there is no veil between God and the First Creature, which is non-material and free from all forms of matter and attachments (rather, according to metaphysical proofs there is no veil for non-material beings in general), so is die heart that in its expansive and encompassing character has been elevated to the plane of non-material beings. Rather, it walks on the heads of those beings and there is no veil for it, as mentioned in this sacred tradition reported in *al-Kafi* and *al-Tawhid:*

**إنَّ رُوحَ المُؤمِنِ لأَشَدُّ اتِّصالاً بِروحِ اللهِ مِن اتِّصالِ الشَّمسِ بشُعاعِها.**

> Verily, the spirit of the possessor of faith is more firmly attached to the Spirit of Allah than the sun's ray is attached to it.[1]

In the *Munajat Shabaniyyah*, which are accepted as authentic by the

[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, ii, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab ukhuwwat al-muminin, hadith* no. 4.

*ulama* and whose very contents bear witness to the authenticity of their origin in those sacred personages, i.e. the Imam of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (a), this is how they supplicate:

اِلَهِي هَبْ لِي كَمَالَ الانْقِطَاعِ إلَيْكَ وَأَنِرْ أَبْصَارَ قُلُوبِنَا بِضِيَاءِ نَظَرِهَا إلَيْكَ حَتَّى تَخْرِقَ أَبْصَارُ القُلُوبِ حُجُبَ النُّورِ فَتَصِلَ إلَى مَعْدِنِ العَظَمَةِ وَتَصِيرَ أَرْوَاحُنَا مُعَلَّقَةً بِعِزِّ قُدْسِكَ. إلَهِي وَاجْعَلْنِي مِمَّنْ نَادَيْتَهُ فَأَجَابَكَ وَلاحَظْتَهُ فَصُعِقَ بِجَلالِكَ فَنَاجَيْتَهُ سِرّاً وَعَمِلَ لَكَ جَهْراً.

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. My God, make me one of those whom Thou callest and who respond to Thee, whom Thou regardest and who swoon with awe before Thy Glory, and to whom Thou whisperest secretly and who act for Thy sake openly.[1]

And while recounting the heavenly ascension (*miraj*) of the Noble Messenger (*s*) God declares in the Noble Divine Scripture:

﴿ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلَّى. فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَى.﴾

*Then drew near and suspended hung, two bows' length away or nearer*. (53:8-9)

This direct experience of extinction (*fana*) is not contrary to the impossibility of fathoming and encompassing (the Divine Essence), nor does it conflict with the verses and traditions that assert Divine transcendence. Rather, it supports and conforms them.

Now see if there is any need to take resort in such far-fetched and insipid interpretations. Can one interpret this statement of Amir al-Muminin (a) when he says:

فَهَبْنِي، يَا إلَهِي وَسَيِّدِي وَمَوْلايَ، صَبَرْتُ عَلَى عَذَابِكَ، فَكَيْفَ أَصْبِرُ عَلَى

[1] *Mafatih al-jinan, "al-Munajat al-Shabaniyyah".*

فِرَاقِكَ.

> O my God, my Master and my Lord! Even if I were able to endure Thy chastisement, how shall I bear Thy separation?[1]

and those lamentations and wailings of the *awliya* as being for the sake of houris and palaces? Shall we explain the laments of separation of those who used to declare that "we don't worship God for the fear of hell, nor for the desire of paradise, but we worship him as free men should purely because God is worthy of worship" as being on account of separation from paradise and its foods, drinks and pleasures? Alas! What a preposterous thing to say, and what a most unseemly interpretation! Is it possible to say that the revelations of Divine Beauty on the Night of the Ascent, in the meeting wherein no other creature was present and of whose secrets even Gabriel, the one entrusted with the Revelation, was kept out, were represented by Paradise and its raised-up mansions? That these constituted 'the lights of Divine Majesty and Glory' and the disclosure of God's favors? Were the *tajalliyat* experienced by the prophets (a) as mentioned in reliable supplications, bounties of the order of foods, drinks, gardens and castles?

Alas! We, wretches entrapped in the dark veils of corporeal nature and entangled in the chains of petty hopes and expectations, understand nothing except food, drink, sex and the like. And should we come across a man of vision and someone with a heart who attempts to lift the curtain from these veils, we consider it an error and affront. As long as we remain imprisoned in the dark pit of the world of *mulk*, we would not be able to apprehend anything of the gnostic teachings (*maarif*) and the experiences of those adept in them. So, my dear, don't compare the *awliya* to yourself and don't imagine the hearts of the prophets and those of the people of the *maarif* to be like these dismal hearts of ours. Our hearts are covered with the dusts of attachment to the world and its mundane lusts. The impurity resulting from immersion in lusts does not allow them to become the mirror of Divine revelations wherein the beauty of the Beloved is reflected. Of course, with this egoism, this self-seeking and narcissism of ours, we shouldn't be able to make out anything of the *tajalliyat* of God, the Most Exalted, and His Beauty and Glory. Given this state of ours, we should be such ones as refute the

[1] *Mafatih al-jinan,"Dua Kumayl".*

words of the *awliya* and the people of *marifah*, and even if we should refrain outwardly from denouncing them as false, we would still consider them false in our hearts. And should there be no way for negating their truth-as when one is convinced of the truth of the statements of the Messenger and the Infallible Imams (a) –we would open the door of *tawil* and interpretation and, in a word, block the door to the knowledge (*marifah*) of God. Thus, we interpret this (saying of Ali ):

مَا رَأَيْتُ شَيْئاً إلاّ وَرَأَيْتُ اللهَ مَعَهُ وَقَبْلَهُ وَفِيهِ.

I did not see a thing without beholding God with it, before it, and in it,

as implying the vision of the effects (of God's omnipotence). We explain these words of Ali (a):

لَمْ أَعْبُدْ رَبّاً لَمْ أَرَهُ.

I did not worship a Lord that I did not see,[1]

as implying the knowledge of universals, similar in nature to our own knowledge. We interpret the verses mentioning *liqa Allah* as signifying the encounter with the Day of Judgment, and take the tradition of the Prophet (s):

لِي مَعَ اللهِ حَالَةٌ.

I have a state with God,

as signifying a tender feeling of the heart, and the words of the supplication:

وَارْزُقْنِي النَّظَرَ إلَى وَجْهِكَ الكَرِيمِ.

And bestow upon me the vision of Thy Noble Face,

and all the lamentations of the *awliya* and their wails of separation as arising from the pain of separation from the houris of paradise and its fowl! And the reason behind all these interpretations is that we are not champions of this field; we understand nothing except bestial and bodily pleasures, and our nescience prompts us to repudiate all the *maarif*. This denial is the worst of all calamities, which locks upon us the door to all the higher teachings, keeps us from seeking, and make us remain satisfied at the level of bestial and

[1] Al-shaykh al-Saduq, *Kitab al-Tawhid*, 305.

beastly existence, depriving us of entry into the hidden realms and obstructing us from Divine lights. It keeps us, wretched ones that we are, totally deprived from experiencing the *tajalliyat* –even from faith in the reality of these spiritual states, a faith which by itself constitutes a degree of spiritual merit and which might have taken us somewhere.

We even evade the (theoretical) knowledge, which might have served as the seed of (mystic) experience, and completely close our eyes and ears, stuffing the cotton of neglect into our ears lest a word of truth should enter them. If we hear any of the truths from the mouth of a passionate *arif* or a heart-broken wayfarer, or a theosopher (*Hakim-e mutaallih*), immediately we make him the target of all kinds of curses and insults, calling him an apostate and a profligate, refraining not from any kind of slander and backbiting in regard to him, because our ears cannot bear to hear his words and self-love prevents us from realizing our own inadequacies. Alas, we bequeath a book as *waqf*, binding its user with the condition that he should curse, hundred times a day, the *marhum* Mulla Mohsen Fayd (Kashani)! We call Sadr al-Mutaallihin (Mulla Sadra), who is the foremost of the adherents of *tawhid*, a heretic (*zindiq*) and do not stop at any insult in regard to him. There is no trace of any inclination towards Sufism in all of his books. Rather, he has written a book entitled *Kasr asnam al-Jahiliyyah fi al-radd ala al-Sufiyyah* ("Demolition of the idols of the *Jahiliyyah*, on the refutation of the Sufis"); yet we call him "a Sufi through and through." We leave those who are of a known character and have been cursed by the tongues of God and His Messenger (*s*) and call down curses upon those who loudly proclaim their faith in God, in the Messenger and the Imams of guidance (a). I know that these curses and insults do not harm their station in the least, or, rather, perhaps, increase their fair reward with God and cause the elevation of their degrees. But these things are injurious for ourselves and may result in depriving us of Divine assistance and bring about our failure.

Our *shaykh*, an accomplished *arif* that he was (i.e. Shahabadi), may my soul be his ransom, used to say: "Never call down curses (*lan*) on anybody, though he be a *kafir* concerning whom you do not know how he made the transit from this world to the next, and unless an infallible *wali* informs you concerning his condition after death. For it is possible that he may have attained faith before the time of death. Hence let your curse be of a general character."

Here is one who has such a sacred spirit that he would not permit anyone

who has died an apparent unbeliever to be insulted, for the probability that he might have acquired faith at the time of death, and there are the like of us! And only to God do I take my complaint (**وإلى الله المشتكى**) that the preacher of a certain city, though a man of learning and merit, used to say in the presence of scholars and the learned that so and so "used to read the Quran despite being a metaphysician." It is like saying, "So and so believed in God and Resurrection despite being a prophet"! I, too, do not put much of a store by mere knowledge, and a learning that does not bring faith with it is the greatest of veils. However, one has to approach a veil in order to tear it into shreds.

The sciences are seeds of (spiritual) experience. Although it is possible, at times, that one may attain to higher spiritual stations without encountering the veils of learned jargon and the sciences, but such a thing is unusual, contrary to the wont of natural law and happens only rarely. Hence, the way to God-seeking is that one should at the outset devote his time to the remembrance of God and acquire the knowledge of God and the Names and Attributes of that Sacred Essence, the usual way from the adept (*mashayikh*) of that science. Then, by the means of theoretical and practical exercises and austerities, he should open his heart to the *maarif*, and this will undoubtedly yield results. If he is not one of those familiar with the learned jargon, he can obtain results through the remembrance of the Beloved and by preoccupying his heart and mind with that Sacred Essence. Of certain, this preoccupation of the heart and inward attention will become the means of his guidance, and God, the Exalted, will assist him. The concealing curtains will rise from before his eyes and he will somewhat retreat, from those vulgar forms of skepticism. And, perhaps, he may find his way to the *maarif* with the special grace of God Almighty. Indeed, He is the Lord of bounties (**وإلى الله المشتكى**).

## DEATH: THE MOMENT OF TRUTH

This sacred tradition indicates that at the time of confronting death some of his stations and conditions become revealed to man. This matter is in conformity with a kind of metaphysical proof and in agreement with the experience of mystics as well as with traditions and other reports. As long as man is preoccupied with the cultivation of this mundane realm and the face of his heart is turned towards this habitat and the intoxicant of carnal nature has made him unconscious and the opiates of lust and power stupefy him, he remains totally in the dark concerning the (*malakuti*) forms of his conduct and morals and blind to their effects in the *malakut* of the heart. But when the

reelings of death and its pressures seize him, he attains a measure of detachment from this world. And if he is a man of faith and of conviction whose heart has been turned towards these realms, at the last moments his heart naturally turns towards that world and the spiritual inductors and the angels of God assigned over it (i.e. the heart) also induct him towards that world. After this induction and that detachment, a part of the world of *barzakh* is revealed to him and a window to the world of the Hidden is opened upon him. Then his own state and station is disclosed to him to some extent, as is narrated from Amir al-Muminin (a) that he said:

> حَرَامٌ عَلى نَفسٍ أنْ تخرُجَ مِن الدّنيَا حتَّى تعْلَمَ أنَّه مِن أهْلِ الجَنَّة هَيَ أمْ مِن أهْلِ النّارِ.
>
> It is prohibited that any soul should leave this world without, knowing whether it belongs to the people of paradise or the people of hell?[1]

In this context, there is a sacred tradition which we will mention in its entirety despite its length because it contains good news for the adherents of the *wilayah* of the Master of the Masters (*Mawla al-Mawali*, i.e. Ali ibn Abi Talib) and those holding on to the skirts of the magnanimity of the Infallible *Ahl al-Bayt* (a). This *hadith* has been narrated by the venerable Fayd Kashani in his book *Ilm al-yaqin*:

> قَالَ: وَفِي كِتَابِ الحُسَيْنِ بْنِ سَعِيدٍ الأَهْوَازِيِّ عَنْ عَبَّادِ بْنِ مَرْوَانَ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ يَقُولُ: مِنْكُمْ وَاللهِ يُقْبَلُ وَلَكُمْ وَاللهِ يُغْفَرُ. إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ بَيْنَ أَحَدِكُمْ وَبَيْنَ أنْ يَغْتَبِطَ وَيَرَى السُّرُورَ وَقُرَّةَ العَيْنِ إلاّ أنْ تَبْلُغَ نَفْسُهُ هَا هُنَا – وَأَوْمَأَ بِيَدِهِ إِلَى حَلْقِهِ – ثُمَّ قَالَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: إِنَّهُ إِذَا كَانَ ذَلِكَ وَاحْتَضَرَ حَضَرَهُ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَعَلِيٌّ وَالأَئِمَّةُ وَجِبْرَئِيلُ وَمِيكَائِيلُ وَمَلَكُ المَوْتِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ. فَيَدْنُو مِنْهُ جِبْرَئِيلُ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ فَيَقُولُ لِرَسُولِ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: إنَّ هَذَا كَانَ يُحِبُّكُمْ أَهْلَ البَيْتِ فَأَحِبَّهُ. فَيَقُولُ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: يَا جِبْرَئِيلُ، إنَّ هَذَا كَانَ يُحِبُّ اللهَ

[1] Fayd al-Kashani, *Ilm al-yaqin*, ii, 853.

وَرَسُولَهُ وَأَهْلَ بَيْتِهِ فَأَحِبَّهُ. فَيَقُولُ جبْرَئِيلُ: يَا مَلَكَ المَوْتِ، إنَّ هَذَا كَانَ يُحِبُّ اللهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَآلَ رَسُولِهِ فَأَحِبَّهُ وَارْفِقْ بِهِ. فَيَدْنُو مِنْهُ مَلَكُ المَوْتِ فَيَقُولُ لَهُ: يَا عَبْدَ اللهِ، أَخَذْتَ فِكَاكَ رَقَبَتِكَ؟ أَخَذْتَ أَمَانَ بَرَائَتِكَ؟ تَمَسَّكْتَ بِالعِصْمَةِ الكُبْرَى فِي الحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيا؟ قَالَ: فَيُوَفِّقُهُ (فَيَرْفَعُهُ) اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ فَيَقُولُ: نَعَمْ. فَيَقُولُ (لَهُ): وَمَا ذَاكَ؟ فَيَقُولُ: وَلايَةُ عَلِيِّ بْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ. فَيَقُولُ: صَدَقْتَ! أَمَّا الَّذِي كُنْتَ تَحْذَرُهُ فَقَدْ آمَنَكَ اللهُ مِنْهُ، وَأَمَّا الَّذِي كُنْتَ تَرجُو فَقَدْ أَدْرَكْتَهُ. أَبْشِرْ بِالسَّلَفِ الصَّالِحِ مُرَافَقَةَ رَسُولِ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَعَلِيٍّ وَالأَئِمَّةَ مِنْ وُلْدِهِ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلامُ. ثُمَّ يَسلُّ نَفْسَهُ سَلاًّ رَفِيقاً، ثُمَّ يَنْزِلُ بِكَفَنِهِ مِنَ الجَنَّةِ وَحَنُوطِهِ حَنُوطٍ كَالمِسْكِ الأَذْفَرِ، فَيُكَفَّنُ بِذَلِكَ الكَفَنِ وَيُحَنَّطُ بِذَلِكَ الحَنُوطِ، ثُمَّ يُكْسَى حُلَّةً صَفْرَاءَ مِنْ حُلَلِ الجَنَّةِ. فَإِذَا وُضِعَ فِي قَبْرِهِ فَتَحَ اللهُ لَهُ بَاباً مِنْ أَبْوَابِ الجَنَّةِ يَدْخُلُ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ رَوْحِهَا وَرَيْحَانِهَا. ثُمَّ يُقَالُ لَهُ: نَمْ نَوْمَةَ العَرُوسِ عَلَى فِرَاشِهَا، أَبْشِرْ بِرَوْحٍ وَرَيْحَانٍ وَجَنَّةِ نَعِيمٍ وَرَبٍّ غَيْرِ غَضْبَانَ.

وَإِذَا حَضَرَ الكَافِرَ الوَفَاةُ حَضَرَهُ رَسُولِ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَعَلِيٌّ وَالأَئِمَّةُ وَجبْرَئِيلُ وَمِيكَائِيلُ وَمَلَكُ المَوْتِ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلامُ. فَيَدْنُو مِنْهُ جبْرَئِيلُ فَيَقُولُ: يَا رَسُولَ اللهِ، إنَّ هَذَا كَانَ مُبْغِضاً لَكُمْ أَهْلَ البَيْتِ فَأَبْغِضْهُ. فَيَقُولُ رَسُولِ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: يَا جبْرَئِيلُ، إنَّ هَذَا كَانَ يُبْغِضُ اللهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَأَهْلَ بَيْتِ رَسُولِهِ فَأَبْغِضْهُ. وَيَقُولُ جبْرَئِيلُ: يَا مَلَكَ المَوْتِ، إنَّ هَذَا كَانَ يُبْغِضُ اللهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَأَهْلَ بَيْتِ رَسُولِهِ فَأَبْغِضْهُ وَاعْنُفْ عَلَيْهِ. فَيَدْنُو مِنْهُ مَلَكُ المَوْتِ فَيَقُولُ: يَا عَبْدَ اللهِ، أَخَذْتَ فِكَاكَ رَقَبَتِكَ؟ أَخَذْتَ أَمَانَ بَرَائَتِكَ؟ تَمَسَّكْتَ بِالعِصْمَةِ الكُبْرَى فِي الحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيا؟ فَيَقُولُ: لا. فَيَقُولُ: أَبْشِرْ يَا عَدُوَّ اللهِ بِسَخَطِ اللهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَعَذَابِهِ وَالنَّارِ. أَمَّا الَّذِي كُنْتُ تَرْجُو فَقَدْ فَاتَكَ، وَأَمَّا الَّذِي كُنْتَ تَحْذَرُ فَقَدْ نَزَلَ بِكَ. ثُمَّ يَسلُّ نَفْسَهُ سَلّاً عَنِيفاً، ثُمَّ يُوكِلُ بِرُوحِهِ ثَلاثَمِائَةِ شَيْطَانٍ يَبْزُقُونَ فِي وَجْهِهِ، وَيَتَأَذَّى بِرِيحِهِ. فَإِذَا وُضِعَ فِي قَبْرِهِ

فُتِحَ لَهُ بَابٌ مِنْ أَبْوَابِ النَّارِ فَيَدْخُلُ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ قَيْحِ رِيحِهَا وَلَهَبِهَا.

It is narrated in the book of al-Husayn ibn Said al-Ahwazi, from Abbad ibn Marwan that he said: I heard Abu Abd-Allah (a) say, "By God, your works will be accepted and your sins will be forgiven. There is nothing that intervenes between anyone of you and his becoming the object of envy and his seeing the delight and experiencing the comfort of your eyes except the moment when your soul reaches this point." And saying this, he pointed with his hand to his throat. Then he (a) said, "And when that moment arrives, at the time of death, the Messenger of Allah (*S*) Ali, the Imams, Gabriel, Michael and the Angel of Death (a) become present before him. Then Gabriel[1] (a) approaches him and says to the Messenger of Allah (*S*), 'This one used to love you, *Ahl al-Bayt*, so hold him dear.' Whereupon the Messenger of Allah (*S*) says, 'O Gabriel, indeed this one used to love God, His Messenger and his Household, and I (too) hold him dear.' Then Gabriel says (to the Angel of Death): 'O Angel of Death, this one used to love Allah, His Messenger and the Household of the Messenger, so hold him dear and be gentle to him.'

Then the Angel of Death (a) says (to the dying person), 'O creature of God, have you secured your release and your security and amnesty? Did you hold on to the great handhold in the life of the world, whereupon, with God's succor, he declares, "Yes.' 'What is it?' the Angel of Death asks him. '(It is) the *wilayah* of Ali ibn Abi Talib (a),' he replies. The Angel says, 'You have told the truth. God has granted you security from what you were frightened of and you have attained what you used to

[1] This sentence of the tradition is narrated in the following form in its version of *Furu al-Kafi*, iii, p. 131: "Then Ali (*a*) approaches him and says: O Messenger of Allah, this one used to love us, *Ahl al-Bayt*, so hold him dear, and the Messenger of Allah (*s*) says: O Gabriel…" Later in this narration, which is more reliable and precise, it is Ali who says to the Prophet, "O Messenger of Allah, this one used to hate us, *Ahl al-Bayt*, so hold him in resentment." (Trans.)

hope for. Receive the good news of the companionship of the righteous predecessors and of the Messenger of Allah (*S*) and the Imams of his progeny (a).'

Then he gently withdraws his soul and brings down his shroud from paradise, and his balm (*hunut*) is that of fragrant musk. Then he wraps him in that shroud and embalms him with that *hunut* and clothes him in a yellow dress from among the garments of paradise. Then, when he is laid in his grave, a door from among the doors of paradise is opened for him and its freshness and fragrance enters upon him. Then he is told, 'Sleep, like the sleep of a bride on her bed. Receive the glad news of the freshness and fragrance of the Garden of bounties and of an unwrathful Lord.'

(Imam al-Sadiq (a) continued) And when an unbeliever encounters the moment of death, the Messenger of Allah (*S*) Ali , the Imams, Gabriel, Michael and the Angel of Death (a) become present before him. Then Gabriel approaches him and says, 'O Messenger of Allah, verily this one used to detest you, *Ahl al-Bayt*, so hold him in resentment.' Thereupon the Messenger of Allah (*S*) says, 'O Gabriel, indeed this one used to hate God, His Messenger and the Messenger's Household, so you too be resentful towards him.' Thereat Gabriel declares, 'O Angel of Death, indeed this one used to hate God, His Messenger, and the Household of His Messenger (a) so you too be resentful of him and be harsh towards him.'

Then the Angel of Death approaches the dying person and says, 'O creature of God, did you secure your release and your security and amnesty? Did you hold on to the great handhold in the life of the world?' He answers, 'No.' Whereupon the Angel of Death tells him, 'O enemy of God! Receive the tiding of God's wrath and of His punishment and fire. You have lost what you hoped for and that which you used to be afraid of has descended upon you.' Then the Angel draws his soul violently and hands it over to three hundred devils who throw their

> spittle on his face and he is tormented with its stench. And when he is laid in his grave, a door from among the doors of hell is opened for him and its blaze and flames enter upon him."[1]

It should be known that the *barzakh* of everyone is representative of his condition on the Day of Resurrection and that the world of *barzakh* is an intermediate world between this world and the world of Resurrection, where there is a window opening towards paradise or hell, as mentioned in this noble tradition. The famous prophetic tradition:

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**القَبْرُ إمَّا رَوْضَةٌ مِنْ رِيَاضِ الجِنَانِ أَوْ حُفْرَةٌ مِنْ حُفَرِ النِّيرَانِ.**

> The grave is either a garden from among the gardens of paradise or a pit from among the pits of the Fire,[2]

refers to the same matter. Hence, at the time of death and confrontation with it, man observes the effects and forms of his works and hears the news of paradise or hell from the Angel of Death. And when these things become revealed to him, he also observes the effects produced by his works and deeds in his heart, such as luminosity and expansiveness and openness of the breast, or their opposites such as darkness and constriction of the breast and its narrowness. Then, when confronted with *barzakh*, the heart becomes prepared to experience the subtle breezes of Divine Grace and Beauty in it. Therein emerge the signs of the *tajalliyat* of Divine Grace and Beauty if he is a man of faith and felicity. Then the desire for *liqa Allah* emerges in his heart and the fire of yearning for the Beloved's Beauty is lit in it, if he had partaken of virtuous conduct, love and Divine passion, and none except God knows what delights and beneficences lie in this *tajalli* and desire.

If he had been one of the faithful and the righteous, he will be bestowed of the beneficence of God, the Exalted, in proportion to his faith and good

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[1] *Ilm al-yaqin*, ii, pp. 854, 856.

[2] *Sunan al-Tirmidhi*, iv, 640, *kitab sifat al-Qiyamah*; *al-Jamiah al-saghir*, i, 63.

works and he will get an immediate glimpse of it at the time of death. ‘Thereupon, the eagerness for death and encounter with Divine beneficence arise in him and he leaves this world with delight and ecstasy and in relief and freshness. The corporeal eyes and the earthly organs of taste do not have the strength to bear the pleasures of this ecstasy and delight.

But if he should be one of the wretched, an infidel, an unbeliever or a hypocrite, and perpetrator of ugly and evil deeds, he will, in accordance with the measure of his evil share and misconduct in the world, discover the effects of Divine Wrath and Might and see the abode of die wretched. Such terror and convulsions will seize him that nothing will be more hateful for him than the revelations of Divine Glory and Might. As a result of this hate and hostility, he will experience such an affliction, anguish, darkness and pain that none except God’s Sacred Essence can know the extent of its intensity. This is for persons who have in this world repudiated the truth and been hypocrites and enemies of God and His *awliya*. A representative part of the hell becomes revealed also to the sinners and those guilty of major sins in proportion to the evil character of their misconduct, and in this state there is nothing more loathsome for them than to leave this world. And so they are transferred from it violently and harshly, with hardship and pain, and such a regret grips their hearts that it knows no measure.

This description shows that at the time of death man beholds that which had been in him and of which he was unaware. At that time the tips of the concealed part of his being become visible to him. The life of the world was a concealing curtain that hid our defects and was a veil for the people of the *maarif*. Now that this curtain has been lifted and this veil has been removed, man observes a representative part of that which lay in him and that which he himself had prepared. In the other realms, man will not face any punishment or chastisement except on account of that which he earns in this world. He will have a direct vision of the (*malakuti*) forms of the righteous works and virtuous conduct that he had performed and the right convictions that he had held in this world, together with the gifts that God will bestow upon him out of His own favor and munificence. Under the noble verse:

﴿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)

the following statement (of Ibn Masud) is quoted in *Tafsir al-Safi* from

*Majma al-bayan:*[1]

هِيَ أَحْكَمُ آيَةٍ فِي القُرْآنِ، وَكَانَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ يُسَمِّيهَا الجَامِعَةَ.

> It is the 'firmest' of the verses of the Quran, and the Messenger of Allah (*S*) used to call it "*al-jamiah*."

Hence we should know that if we cultivate the love of God, the Exalted, and His *awliya* in this world and put on the collar of obedience to that Sacred Essence around our necks and receive the burnish of Divine light in our hearts, at the time of death this inward reality will be revealed to us in its beautiful (*malakuti*) form. Contrarily, if our hearts take on a mundane aspect and turn away from God, the seed of the enmity of God and the *awliya* may come to be gradually sown in them. Then, at the sight of death, this enmity will reveal its intensity and divulge its terrible and strange qualities, as you have seen.

Hence one of the most important things for man is to take care to cultivate a Divine state in the heart and orient its face toward God, His *awliya*, and the abode of His favor. This can be attained by contemplating the bounties and favors of the Sacred Essence and devoting oneself to His obedience and worship. But one should not rely upon oneself and one's works. At all times, especially in moments of solitude, one must tearfully and humbly implore God to put His love in his heart and to illuminate his heart with the light of His knowledge and love, purging it of the love of the world and of everything other than Him. Of course, this prayer is a substanceless and verbal exercise in the beginning, for it is very difficult to desire the removal of the world's love from one's heart when it is full of intense love for it. But after a period of contemplation, perseverance, and making the heart understand the fair results of the love of God and the evil results of the love of the world, it is hoped that it will be realized, God willing.

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF 'LOVE' AND 'HATE' WHEN ASCRIBED TO GOD

Know that love, hate and the like, which in the language of the Quran and noble traditions have been ascribed to God-exalted is His Glory-are not to be

[1] al-Tabrisi, *Majma al-bayan* (Qumm 1403), v, 527.

taken in their ordinary sense. For such qualities signify psychic affections (*infial-e nafsani*), and God, the Exalted, is above and free of them. Since an elaborate discussion of this issue is outside the scope of this brief exposition, we will confine ourselves to a passing reference.

It should be known that there are in man qualities and states which on descent from the Hidden and non-material realms and on reaching the realm of corporeal nature-which is the realm of differentiation (*farq*), or rather that of differentiation within differentiation (*farq al-farq*) assume a form which is different from that of the Hidden immaterial forms in its effects and properties. Thus, the Platonists consider all material existents to be manifestations of Hidden spirits and to be reflections of celestial realities and analogies of the Platonic Ideas. They hold that the essential archetypes of the accidents and qualities, which have a non-substantial existence in this world, exist by themselves in that world (as independent substances). On this basis, we may say that the archetypes of these qualities and states, which in the corporeal world are accompanied with an affective and variable character, have an ideal form free of all inadequacies in the Hidden immaterial realms, especially in the world of Divine Names and the station of Unity. The meanings of the terms when referred to the immaterial realm, or the Divine plane, is different from those in this world. For instance, should the *tajalliyat* of Beneficence (*Rahmaniyyah*), Mercy (*Rahimiyyah*), which are also called *tajalliyat* of Beauty (*Jamal*), Gentleness (*Lutf*), Love (*Hubb*) and Intimacy (*Uns*), be manifested in this world, they would take the form of love, mercy and gentleness that are accompanied by affection (*infial*), and this is due to the extremely narrow character of this world. It is mentioned in a *hadith* that out of hundred portions of Divine Mercy (*Rahmah*) only one portion has been sent down in this world that comprises all the manifestations of compassion that find actualization in this world, such as the compassion between children and parents and the like. Similarly, the *tajalliyat* of Divine Compulsion (*Qahriyyah*) and Mastership (*Malikiyyah*), which belong to the *tajalliyat* of Glory (*Jalal*), are manifested in this world in the form of hatred (*bughd*) and rage (*ghaḍab*).

To sum up, the inward aspect of love, hatred, and anger is Divine Compassion and Omnipotence and the *tajalliyat* of Beauty and Glory, which exist by themselves and in which change, affection, and multiplicity do not find any way. Thus the loves and antipathies that exist in this world are manifestations of Divine Compassion and Omnipotence, and since a manifestation (*mazhar*) depends on that which it manifests (*zahir*) and since

the *zahir* is revealed in the *mazhar*, it is not improper to apply the same terms to the two of them. On this basis, the hatred of God, the Exalted, towards a creature is manifestation of Omnipotence and Vengeance, and His love manifestation of Compassion and Munificence. And God is the All-knowing.

29

# Twenty-Ninth *Hadith*:
# THE PROPHET'S COUNSEL TO Ali

بالسَنَدِ المُتَّصِلِ إلَى أَفْضَلِ المُحَدِّثِينَ وَأَقْدَمِهِمْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ رِضْوَانُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ، عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَحْيَى، عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عِيسَى، عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ النُّعْمَانِ، عَنْ مُعَاوِيَةَ بْنِ عَمَّارٍ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ يَقُولُ: كَانَ فِي وَصِيَّةِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ لِعَلِيٍّ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ أنْ قَالَ: يَا عَلِيُّ، أُوصِيكَ فِي نَفْسِكَ بِخِصَالٍ فَاحْفَظْهَا عَنِّي. ثُمَّ قَالَ: اللَّهُمَّ أَعِنْهُ، أَمَّا الأُولَى فَالصِّدْقُ، وَلا تَخْرُجَنَّ مِنْ فِيكَ كِذْبَةٌ أَبَداً. وَالثَّانِيَةُ الوَرَعُ، وَلا تَجْتَرِئْ عَلَى خِيَانَةٍ أَبَداً. وَالثَّالِثَةُ الخَوْفُ مِنَ اللهِ عَزَّ ذِكْرُهُ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ. وَالرَّابِعَةُ كَثْرَةُ البُكَاءِ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ اللهِ يُبْنَى لَكَ بِكُلِّ دَمْعَةٍ أَلْفُ بَيْتٍ فِي الجَنَّةِ. وَالخَامِسَةُ بَذْلُكَ مَالَكَ وَدَمَكَ دُونَ دِينِكَ. وَالسَّادِسَةُ الأَخْذُ بِسُنَّتِي فِي صَلاتِي وَصَوْمِي وَصَدَقَتِي. أَمَّا الصَّلاةُ فَالخَمْسُونَ رَكْعَةً، وَأَمَّا الصِّيَامُ فَثَلاثَةُ أَيَّامٍ فِي الشَّهْرِ؛ الخَمِيسُ فِي أَوَّلِهِ وَالأَرْبِعَاءُ فِي وَسَطِهِ وَالخَمِيسُ فِي آخِرِهِ، وَأَمَّا الصَّدَقَةُ فَجُهْدُكَ حَتَّى تَقُولَ: قَدْ أَسْرَفْتُ، وَلَمْ تُسْرِفْ. وَعَلَيْكَ بِصَلاةِ اللَّيْلِ، وَعَلَيْكَ بِصَلاةِ اللَّيْلِ، وَعَلَيْكَ بِصَلاةِ اللَّيْلِ، وَعَلَيْكَ بِصَلاةِ الزَّوَالِ، وَعَلَيْكَ بِصَلاةِ الزَّوَالِ، وَعَلَيْكَ بِصَلاةِ الزَّوَالِ. وَعَلَيْكَ بِتِلاوَةِ القُرْآنِ عَلَى كُلِّ حَالٍ، وَعَلَيْكَ بِرَفْعِ يَدَيْكَ فِي صَلاتِكَ وَتَقْلِيبِهِمَا. وَعَلَيْكَ بِالسِّوَاكِ عِنْدَ كُلِّ وُضُوءٍ. وَعَلَيْكَ بِمَحَاسِنِ الأَخْلاقِ فَارْكَبْهَا، وَمَسَاوِئَ الأَخْلاقِ فَاجْتَنِبْهَا. فَإِنْ

لَمْ تَفْعَلْ فَلا تَلُومَنَّ إلاّ نَفْسَكَ.

With my continuous chain of transmission reaching up to the best of the traditionists and the foremost of them, Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulayni (*r*) from Muhammad ibn Yahya, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Isa, from Ali ibn al-Numan, from Muawiyah ibn Ammar, who says, "I heard Abu Abd-Allah (a) say: In a counsel that the Prophet (*S*) gave to Ali (a), he said, "O Ali , I exhort you concerning certain characteristics (*khisal*) which you must preserve in yourself (as a trust) from me." Then he prayed, "O God, help him." (Then he continued) "As to the first of them, it is truthfulness: never should a falsehood come out of your mouth. The second is piety (*wara*), and never venture upon a treachery. The third is to fear God –sublime is His remembrance– as if you see Him. The fourth is to weep a lot out of the fear of God, the Exalted, and a thousand mansions shall be built for you in the Garden for every tear. The fifth is to offer your property and your blood for the sake of your religion. The sixth is to follow my *sunnah* in respect of my *Salat*, my fasting, and my charity (*sadaqah*). As to the *Salat*, it consists of fifty *rakahs*. As to the fasts, they are to be kept on three days in a month: on the first Thursday, on the Wednesday at its middle, and on the last Thursday. As to the charity, that consists of the utmost that you can give, so much so that you say to yourself, 'I have been immoderate,' whereas you will not have been immoderate. "Commit yourself to the nightly prayer (*Salat al-layl*)! Commit yourself to the nightly prayer! Commit yourself to the nightly prayer! Stick to the (supererogatory) noon prayer! Stick to the noon prayer! Stick to the noon prayer! Accustom yourself to reciting the Quran at all times. Make it your practice to raise your hands during prayer and to turn them. Take care to brush your teeth every time that you perform *wudu*." Commit yourself to ethical virtues, practice them, and refrain from moral vices, and if you don't, don't blame anyone except

yourself."[1]

*Khisal* is the plural of *khaslah*, meaning *khuy* (i.e. trait, characteristic, disposition) as mentioned in the *Surah*. Accordingly, its usage to denote the generality of dispositions as well as acts, as in this noble tradition and other places, is a figurative one. Or, perhaps, *khaslah* has a wider meaning than trait, in which case this kind of usage will be a literal one.

As to the word *al-wara* (with *fathah* on the *ra'*), which occurs in the narration of the Imam (a) that and *riah* are verbal nouns of *waria* and *yariu* (with *kasrah* on *ra'* in both the cases) meaning God-fearing (*taqwa*) or intensity of God-fearing and piety. Probably it is derived from **ورعته توريعاً** meaning **كففته** [I restrained it], for *wara* is, in reality, restraining of the soul and making it refrain from transgressing the limits of the *Shariah* and reason. Or, it might have been derived from *warraa* in the sense of *radda* (meaning dissuasion). Thus, it is said **وَرَّعتُ الإبلَ عن الماءِ** i.e. 'I turned back (*radadtuhu*) the camel from water. That is because, in *wara*, one dissuades the soul from what it covets and seeks to indulge in.

As to his words (a) **لا تجترئ** it pertains to the verbal form **إفتعال** and means temerity, daring, and boldness of action in matters. *Al-Sihah*, quoting Abu Zayd, states **الجرأة مثال. الجرأة: الشجاعة**. Also, it is mentioned in *al-Sihah* that: **الجرئ: المقدام**.

As to the word **فَجُهدُكَ** in the statement of the Imam (a) **الجهد** with *dammah* or *fathah* on the *jim*, it means strength and hardship (**الطاقة والمشقة**). It is said **جهد دابته وأجهدها** when one makes one's mount run with all its power. *Jahd* is also used in the sense of effort and exertion and this meaning seems [more] more appropriate for this tradition.

As to his statement (a): **عَلَيكَ بصَلاةِ اللَّيلِ**, here **عليك** is an *ism al-fil* (verbal noun) which is used in the sense of a transitive verb or as its substitute. **عليكم** means **ألزموا أنفسكم**(i.e. 'Look after your own souls')[2] Accordingly this *ba'* (in **بصلاة** ) is for the sake of stress and emphasis and not for making the verb transitive. In the *Majma al-bahrayn* it is stated that if the *ba'* is transitive it gives the sense of **استمسك** (i.e. stick to). This kind of expression does not exist in Persian, and in Arabic it is used for intensive emphasis upon a certain matter. Probably, a close Persian expression for it would be **بچسب به فلان كار**. However, its translation as something like **بر تو باد به فلان** does not

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Rawdat al-Kafi*, p. 79, *hadith* no. 33.

[2] Al-Quran, *Surat al-Maidah*: 105.

accord with common usage. God willing, we will expound the relevant themes of the tradition in the course of a preface and several sections.

## PREFACE

In this noble tradition, there are several aspects which reveal that these exhortations made by the Noble Messenger (*s*) to the Commander of the Faithful, Ali ibn Abi Talib (a), were very important in his blessed eyes. One of them is that these were addressed to the Commander of the Faithful (a) though that master stood above any possibility of negligence in regard to the laws of the *Shariah* and Divine commandments. However, since the matter was itself of supreme significance in the blessed eyes of the Noble Messenger of Allah (*s*) he did not refrain from exhorting him, and it is quite usual to find him exhorting someone concerning a matter that he considers as important and is concerned about, though he may know that that person will carry it out without fail.

As to the possibility that this counsel given to that holy personage was really aimed at others, being of the kind referred to in the proverb **إياكِ أعني واسمعي يا جارةُ** (i.e. 'I tell you in order that the neighbor may hear'), such a possibility is remote. That is because the very context of the tradition bears witness that it was addressed to him and aimed independently at that holy personage, as indicated by the words **في نفسك** (in yourself) and the order to cherish and safeguard them, as a yell of the invocation for Divine assistance. These kind of exhortations were customary amongst the *Ahl al-Bayt* and it was usual for the Infallible Imams (a) to make them to one another. The very context of every one of these exhortations clearly shows that they were addressed by those holy personages to one another. Hence, in one of these counsels the Commander of the Faithful (a) says to Imam al-Hasan and Imam al-Husayn (a): "This is my counsel to the two of you and the other members of my household, as well as anyone whom this letter of mine should reach…"[1] It is clear that the Hasanayn (a) were included in this counsel and these exhortations reveal the supreme importance of the matter and the intensity of the love that those holy personages had for one another. In fine, the very fact that the Commander of the Faithful (a) should be the addressee of these exhortations reveals the great importance of the matter.

Another point is that although it was addressed to Hadrat Amir (i.e. Imam

[1] *Nahj al-balaghah*, ed. Fayd al-Islam, *kutub*, no. 47.

Ali), who would never have done anything against the Messenger's exhortations or treated them with laxity or negligence, the Prophet considered it essential to stress the matter with such a great force.

Another point is that after saying "I exhort you," he added, "you must safeguard them as a trust from me" in order to bring to his attention the importance of these exhortations. Thereafter, on account of his desire that Hadrat Amir should fulfill these important duties, he supplicated saying, "O God, help him." In addition, there are other scattered points of stress in a number of the sentences, as indicated by the *nun* of emphasis (as in **لا يخرجن**), the use of repetition, and so on, which need not be mentioned. All this shows the importance of these matters. Of course, it is obvious that the Prophet's sacred personage had no imaginable self-interest in any of these matters and his sole concern was to benefit his addressee. And although Hadrat Amir (a), was the one to whom these exhortations were originally addressed, but since these duties are of a universal nature, we should do our utmost so that the exhortations of the Messenger of God (*s*) do not go unheeded. We should know that the greatness of the love that the Noble Messenger (*s*) had for Hadrat Amir (a) requires that there be a very great benefit in these matters and that they be so much important that he should have mentioned them in this manner. And God knows best.

## THE EVILS OF LYING

One of the exhortations of the Noble Messenger (*s*) enjoins truthfulness and requires abstention from falsehood. The fact that it is mentioned foremost amongst his exhortations shows that its importance was greater in his venerable opinion than all the other things. We shall mention the evils of lying before the benefits and virtues of truthfulness. Hence, know that this vice is one about whose ugly and vicious character there is agreement between reason and revelation. In itself, it is one of the major sins and indecencies, as indicated by many traditions. Moreover, at times it leads to other vices whose ugliness and viciousness is no lesser than this fatal sin. Sometimes it happens that due to the discovery of a single lie a man so loses his credibility in the eyes of the people that its loss cannot be compensated for until the end of his life. God forbid that one should ever become known for being a liar, for, perhaps, there is nothing that can do a greater injury to one's repute. In addition to this, the religious harms and otherworldly punishments associated with it are also numerous. Here we will confine ourselves to mentioning some of the noble traditions relating to this topic and

refrain from undue elaboration, for the matter is of a clear and well-known character.

رُوِيَ فِي الوَسَائِلِ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: إِنَّ اللهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ جَعَلَ لِلشَّرِّ أَقْفالاً وَجَعَلَ مَفَاتِيحَ تِلْكَ الأَقْفَالِ الشَّرَابَ. وَالكَذِبُ شَرٌّ مِنَ الشَّرَابِ.

> In *al-Wasail*, it is narrated from Muhammad ibn Yaqub, who reports with his *isnad* from Abu Jafar (Imam al-Baqir) (a) that he said, "Verily, God, Almighty and Glorious, has assigned certain locks for evil and made wine the key to these locks. Yet falsehood is more evil than wine."[1]

Now reflect a little on this sacred tradition, whose source is the Learned One of the Prophet's Household (*Alim al Muhammad*) and which is recorded in a book which serves as a source book for all the *ulama* of the *ummah* (*r*) and which is accepted by all of them, and see if there remains any room for any excuse. Can a lax attitude in regard to lying have any cause other than weakness of faith in the traditions of the infallible *Ahl al-Bayt* (a)? We do not know the Hidden forms of our deeds and are unaware of the spiritual links between the realms of *mulk* and *malakut*. As a result, we regard this kind of traditions as far-fetched and consider those like them as overstatements. This is itself an erroneous approach arising from nescience and feeble faith. If, supposedly, we consider this noble tradition as a hyperbole, shouldn't there be some grounds for the exaggeration to be proper to the occasion? Can it be said of anything that it is worse than wine? Isn't it that the evil of that thing should be so great that one may hyperbolize it by stating that it is worse than wine?

وَبِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: الكَذِبُ هُوَ خَرَابُ الإِيمَانِ.

> Hadrat Baqir al-Ulum, i.e. Imam al-Baqir (a), said, "Lying is the ruin of faith."[2]

Truly, such traditions as this make one's heart tremble and give one cold

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[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. ii, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab al-kidhb, hadith* no. 3.
[2] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. ii, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab al-kidhb, hadith* no. 4.

feet. I think lying is one of those behavioral vices, which are so prevalent that their ugliness has totally disappeared. We only become aware [of its evil character] at a time when we wake up to find our faith, which is the most vital asset of the life of the Hereafter, forfeited as a result of this fatal sin without our knowing it.

It has been narrated from the Eighth Imam (a) that he said, "The Seal of the Prophets was asked if a believer could possibly be cowardly and timid. 'Yes,' he replied. Then they asked him if he could be stingy. 'Yes,' he said. 'Can ale be a liar?' they asked him. 'No!' came the Prophet's reply."

It has been narrated from the Truthful of the Sect (Saduq al-Taifah, i.e. al-Shaykh al-Saduq) that he said, "Amongst the sayings of the Messenger of God is the statement:

أَرْبَى الرِّبَا الكَذِبُ.

> Lying exceeds usury [in its evil].[1]

Such is the matter, whereas the severity of the banality of usury has been so much emphasized as to make one amazed.

Of the things that one should note is that telling an untruth even in jest and for humor's sake has been considered lying and regarded with severity. The *ulama* have also prohibited it in their *fatwa*s. Thus, the author of *al-Wasail* (*m*) has given the following title to a chapter [in his compilation] –a title that accords with his *fatwa*:

> "Chapter on the prohibition of lying, in small and big matters, in serious talk and in jest, to the exclusion of what has been excepted."

In the noble *al-Kafi*, it is reported through a chain of transmission reaching up to Imam al-Baqir (a) that the said, " Ali ibn al-Husayn (a) used to tell his sons: 'Refrain from falsehood in your speech, whether it is a small or big matter, whether it is said in serious talk or in jest. That is because lying in trivial matters produces the temerity to lie in big matters. Don't you know that the Messenger of Allah (*s*) said, 'There is a servant of God who so perseveres in truthfulness that God writes his name amongst the truthful ones, and there is a servant who makes lying his wont until God, the Exalted,

[1] Al-Hurr al-Amili, *Wasail al-Shiah*, vol. viii, p. 574.

styles him a liar?"[1]

Again *al-Kafi* reports with its *isnad* reaching up to the venerated Asbagh ibn Nubatah that he said:

قَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: لا يَجِدُ عَبْدٌ طَعْمَ الإِيمَانِ حَتَّى يَتْرُكَ الكَذِبَ هَزْلَهُ وَجِدَّهُ.

The Commander of the Faithful (a) said, "One does not taste the flavor of faith until he refrains from lying, in serious speech and in jest."[2]

In a counsel given by the Noble Messenger (s) to Hadrat Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, the Prophet is reported to have said:

يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ، وَيْلٌ لِلَّذِي يُحَدِّثُ فَيَكْذِبُ لِيُضْحِكَ بِهِ القَوْمَ! وَيْلٌ لَهُ! وَيْلٌ لَهُ!

O Abu Dharr, woe to the man who tells lies in order to make other people laugh. Woe to him! Woe to him!

Now, with all these traditions and severe warnings of the Messenger of God and the Imams of guidance (a), it needs great audacity and wretchedness for one to perpetrate this enormity and commit this serious vice.

In the same way as lying has been considered as one of the most serious vices, truthfulness of speech has been commended as one of the most significant of virtues. It has been highly praised in the traditions of the *Ahl al-Bayt*, and here we will confine ourselves to mentioning some of them:

مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَعْقُوبَ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: كُونُوا دُعَاةً لِلنَّاسِ بِالخَيْرِ بِغَيْرِ أَلْسِنَتِكُمْ لِيَرَوا مِنْكُمُ الإِجْتِهَادَ وَالصِّدْقَ وَالوَرَعَ.

Muhammad ibn Yaqub reports with his *isnad* from Abu Abd-Allah (a) that he said, "Call people to righteousness through means other than your tongues, that they may observe diligence, truthfulness and piety in you.'[3]

The venerated Saduq reports with his *isnad* from the Messenger of God

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[1] *Usul al-Kafi, kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab al-kidhb, hadith* no. 2.

[2] *Usul al-Kafi, kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab al-kidhb, hadith* no. 11.

[3] None given.

(*s*) that he said, "The nearest of you to me on the Day of Resurrection and the worthiest to my intercession will be the one who is the most truthful amongst you, the most reliable amongst you in regard to his trusts, the most genial of you in disposition, and the closest amongst you to the common people."

## THE MEANING OF *WARA* AND ITS LEVELS

*Wara* has been reckoned as one of the stages of the wayfarer's journey. In accordance with the definition of it given by the well-known gnostic, the venerable Khwajah Abd-Allah Ansari, it is:

هُوَ تَوْقٌ مُسْتَقْصىً عَلَى حَذَرٍ أَوْ تَحَرُّجٍ عَلَى تَعْظِيمٍ.

It means that *wara* is the utmost restraint and the ultimate self-vigilance accompanied with the fear of stumbling; or it means subjecting the soul to a rigorous discipline for the sake of God's glorification. And this includes all its levels, because there are many degrees of *wara*. Thus the *wara* of the common people consists of abstaining from major sins, whereas the *wara* of the elect (*khassah*) consists of refraining from suspect things for the fear of falling into what is unlawful (*muharramat*), as indicated by the noble *hadith al-Tathlith*.[1] The *wara* of the *zahid* (ascetic) consists of abstaining from lawful things for the sake of avoiding the burden (of answerability) that they entail. The *wara* of the wayfarers of the path of gnosis is abstaining from beholding the world for the sake of attaining to the stations (*maqamat*). The *wara* of those captivated by the Divine Being (*majdhubun*) is to relinquish the stations for reaching the Threshold of Allah and witnessing His Beauty. The *wara* of the *awliya* is to refrain from paying attention to ends (*ghayat*). Each of these has an elaborate description, engaging wherein is not beneficial for our state. However, that which we should know in this connection is that the exercising of *wara* or piety in relation to what Allah has made unlawful (*haram*) is the root of all spiritual excellences and Hereafterly stations, and none can attain any station whatsoever except by abstaining from the *muharramat*. A heart that does not possess this *wara* becomes so covered with rust and obfuscations that there ceases to be any hope of its deliverance. The purity of the souls and their burnish comes through *wara*. This is the most important of the stages for the common people, and reaching it is one of the most essential goals of the wayfarer of the path of the Hereafter. Its

[1] See the exposition of the twenty-fifth *hadith* on *waswas*, note no. 6.

excellence, as described in the traditions of the infallible *Ahl al-Bayt* (a) is more than what can be mentioned in these pages. We will confine ourselves to mentioning some of these traditions, and anyone seeking further details should refer to the compilations of *hadith*.

الكَافِي بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: أُوصِيكَ بِتَقْوَى اللهِ وَالوَرَعِ وَالإِجْتِهَادِ، وَاعْلَمْ إِنَّهُ لا يَنْفَعُ اجْتِهَادٌ لا وَرَعَ فِيهِ.

> In *al-Kafi* of, al-Kulayni reports with his *isnad* from Abu Abd-Allah (a) that he said, "I exhort you concerning God-fearing, *wara*, and diligence in worship, and know that a diligence that is devoid of *wara* is of no benefit."[1]

There are still other traditions containing this theme. They indicate that a worship that is devoid of *wara* is devoid of worth. It is obvious that the main purpose of the acts of worship is self-discipline and restraint, and its aim is the domination of *malakut* over the realm of *mulk* and physical nature, which cannot be perfectly realized without intense *wara* and piety. The souls, which are afflicted with sinfulness and disobedience to God are unreceptive to the spiritual forms. Any effort to impress these forms on the tablet of the soul is futile unless the tablet's surface is first cleared from the obfuscations of rust. Thus worship, which is the form of the perfection of the soul, remains futile without purifying the soul from the rust of sinfulness. Without the soul's burnish, it remains an empty form devoid of meaning, and a body without spirit.

بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ يَزِيدَ بْنِ خَلِيفَةَ قَالَ: وَعَظَنَا أَبُو عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ فَأَمرَ وَزَهَّدَ ثُمَّ قَالَ: عَلَيْكُمْ بِالوَرَعِ فَإِنَّهُ لا يُنَالُ مَا عِنْدَ اللهِ إِلاّ بِالوَرَعِ.

> Yazid ibn Khalifah says: Abu Abd-Allah (a) sermoned us, exhorting and directing us to adopt *zuhd*. Then he said, "Commit yourselves to *wara*, for, verily, that which is with God cannot be attained by anything except *wara*."[2]

Thus, in accordance with this sacred tradition a man who is devoid of *wara* is deprived from the bounties that God, the Exalted, has promised His

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[1] *Usu al-Kafi kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab al-wara, hadith* no. 11.

[2] *Usu al-Kafi kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab al-wara, hadith* no. 3.

servants, and this is the height of wretchedness and failure.

The following tradition is reported with *isnad* from Imam al-Baqir (a):

> The Imam said, "Our *wilayah* cannot be attained except with works (of righteousness) and piety."

In another tradition, Imam al-Sadiq (a) says:

> "One who lives in a city of a hundred thousand wherein there are other people more pious than him, such a one is not one of our followers (*Shiah*)."[1]

The same assertion is made in a tradition recorded in the noble *al-Kafi*.[2]

It should be known that, in accordance with the noble traditions, the criterion of perfection in *wara* is abstention from that which has been forbidden by God, and anyone who refrains from what God has made unlawful is considered the most pious of men. So do not let Satan make this matter appear as greatly difficult in your eyes, and make you despairing and despondent. For it is the habit of that accursed one to lead man into everlasting wretchedness by the way of despair. For instance, in this regard he will tell you: "How is it possible to be the most pious person in a city of hundred thousand people or more?" This is one of the tricks of that damned creature and the insinuations of the carnal ego. The answer to this is that, in accordance with the traditions, everyone who refrains from what God has decreed as unlawful stands in the ranks of the most pious of men referred to in these traditions. Refraining from the Divine *muharramat* is not a very difficult task. Rather, with a measure of spiritual training and practical effort one can avoid all the *muharramat*. Of course, if one desires to be one of the felicitous and one of those who attain salvation, and if one aspires for the protection of the *wilayah* of the *Ahl al-Bayt* and the mercy of God, the Exalted, without possessing at least this much of forbearance in regard to sin, that cannot be. Certainly, a measure of resistance, forbearance, and austerity is essential.

## THE EVILS OF TREACHERY AND THE MEANING OF TRUSTWORTHINESS

[1] *Wasail al-Shiah*, vol. xi, p. 196

[2] *Wasail al-Shiah*, vol. xi, p. 194.

There is a point here that needs some elucidation, which is that the Noble Messenger (*s*) refers to the avoidance of betrayal of trust as a matter subsidiary to his exhortation regarding *wara*. That, despite the fact that *wara* relates to the generality of *muharramat* or, as said, is something still more inclusive. Hence 'treachery' here must either be taken in a wider sense corresponding to *wara*, than the customary sense of it, in which case it would include the generality of sins and perpetration of anything that is an obstacle in the Godward wayfaring and which amounts to a betrayal of trust. That is because the Divine duties are Divine trusts, as pointed out in this noble verse:

﴿إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالْجِبَالِ فَأَبَيْنَ أَنْ يَحْمِلْنَهَا وَأَشْفَقْنَ مِنْهَا وَحَمَلَهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّهُ كَانَ ظَلُومًا جَهُولًا.﴾

*We offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to carry it and were afraid of it; and man carried it. Surely, he is unjust, ignorant.*
(33:72)

Some exegetes have interpreted [the 'Trust' in this verse] as the Divine duties. Rather, all the bodily members, organs, and faculties are God's trusts and their use in a manner contrary to God's good pleasure is a betrayal of trust. Similarly, turning the heart's attention to anything other than God is a treachery:

**اين جان عاريت كه به حافظ سپرد دوست**

**روزي رخش ببينم وتسليم وي كنم**

*This soul that the Friend had lent to Hafiz as a trust,*
*I'll restore to Him one day when I see His face.*

Or, what is meant by 'treachery' here is its usual sense, and that it has been singled out here for mention due to its great importance, as if the totality of *wara* lay in refraining from betrayal of trust. If one were to make a study of the traditions of the Infallible Ones (a) concerning the delivery of trust and abstention from treachery, one would understand how important this matter is in the view of the Holy Lawgiver. Moreover, its innate viciousness is not hidden from any sensible person. The perfidious person is to be reckoned as standing outside the fold of humanity and counted among

the vilest of devils. It is obvious that if someone becomes notorious among the people for his treacherous and villainous character, his life will be greatly miserable in this world itself.

Mankind can lead a prosperous life in this world only through mutual help and cooperation. It is not feasible for anyone to lead an isolated existence, which is possible only if he leaves the society of men to join the fold of wild beasts. The great wheel of social life revolves on the axis of mutual confidence amongst the people. If, God forbid, mutual confidence were to depart from the life of mankind, it would not be possible for them to lead a satisfactory life. The great pillar of mutual confidence rests on trustworthiness and abstention from treachery. Hence, the treacherous person does not enjoy the confidence of others and is an outcast from civil life and the membership of human society. His membership is not accepted in the walks of civic existence and such a person, obviously, lives a life of hardship and misery. In order that the benefit of this section be complete, we shall cite some traditions of the infallible *Ahl al-Bayt* concerning this theme, and these suffice wakeful hearts and open eyes.

مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَعْقُوبَ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: لا تَنْظُرُوا إِلَى طُولِ رُكُوعِ الرَّجُلِ وَسُجُودِهِ فَإِنَّ ذَلِكَ شَيْءٌ اعْتَادَهُ وَلَوْ تَرَكَهُ اسْتَوْحَشَ لِذَلِكَ. وَلَكِنِ انْظُرُوا إِلَى صِدْقِ حَدِيثِهِ وَأَدَاءِ أَمَانَتِهِ.

Muhammad ibn Yaqub (al-Kulayni) narrates with his *isnad* from Abu Abd-Allah (a) that he said, "Don't look at the protracted kneelings and prostrations of a man, for that is something which he does out of habit and would be upset if he were to neglect them. But look at the truthfulness of his speech and his fulfillment of trusts."[1]

وَبِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي كَهْمَسَ قَالَ: قُلْتُ لأَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: عَبْدُاللهِ بْنُ أَبِي يَعْفُورَ يُقْرِئُكَ السَّلامَ. قَالَ: عَلَيْكَ وَعَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ، إِذَا أَتَيْتَ عَبْدَاللهِ فَأَقْرِئْهُ السَّلامَ وَقُلْ لَهُ: إِنَّ جَعْفَرَ بْنَ مُحَمَّدٍ يَقُولُ لَكَ انْظُرْ مَا بَلَغَ بِهِ عَلِيٌّ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ فَالْزَمْهُ فَإِنَّ عَلِيّاً عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ إِنَّمَا بَلَغَ مَا بَلَغَ

[1] *Usul al-Kafi, kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab al-sidq wa ada al-amanah, hadith* no. 12.

بِهِ عِنْدَ رَسُولِ اللهِ بِصِدْقِ الحَدِيثِ وَأَدَاءِ الأَمَانَةِ.

(Al-Kulayni reports) with his *isnad* from Abu Kahmas that he said: I said to Abu Abd-Allah (a): "Abd Allah ibn Abi Yafur conveys his *salam* to you." The Imam replied: "May peace be upon you and upon him. When you see Abd-Allah convey my greetings and tell him that Jafar ibn Muhammad says to you: Consider what made Ali attain the standing that he attained with the Messenger of God (*S*) and stick to it, for, verily, Ali (a) attained the standing that he attained with the Messenger of Allah through truthfulness of speech and fulfillment of trust."[1]

And you, my dear, reflect upon this sacred tradition and behold how sublime is the station of truthfulness and trustworthiness, which brought Ali ibn Abi Talib (a) to that lofty station of his! This tradition shows that the Messenger of God loved these two characteristics more than anything else, and amongst the attributes of perfection of *Mawla* Ali (a) were these two which had brought him so close to the Prophet and raised him to that distinguished station.

Also Imam al-Sadiq (a) recommends these two, from among all kinds of deeds and characteristics, to Ibn Abi Yafur, who was a dedicated and self-effacing follower of the Imam, and sends him a message asking him to cling to them, because they were very important in his blessed eyes.

وَبِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: قَالَ أَبُو ذَرٍّ رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ: سَمِعْتُ رَسُولَ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ يَقُولُ: حَافَّتَا الصِّرَاطِ يَوْمَ القِيَامَةِ الرَّحِمُ وَأَدَاءُ الأَمَانَةِ. فَإِذَا مَرَّ الوَصُولُ لِلرَّحِمِ المُؤَدِّي لِلأَمَانَةِ نَفَذَ إِلَى الجَنَّةِ. وَإِذَا مَرَّ الخَائِنُ لِلأَمَانَةِ القَطُوعُ لِلرَّحِمِ لَمْ يَنْفَعْهُ مَعَهُمَا عَمَلٌ وَتَكَفَّأَ بِهِ الصِّرَاطُ فِي النَّارِ.

(Al-Kulayni reports) with his *isnad* from Abu Jafar (a) that he said: Abu Dharr (*r*) said: I heard the Messenger of Allah (*S*) say: "On the Day of Resurrection the Womb and the Trust shall stand on the two sides of the *Sirat*. When one who has fulfilled the duties of kinship and discharged

[1] *Usul al-Kafi, kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab al-sidq wa ada al-amanah, hadith* no. 5.

> his trusts passes over (the *Sirat*), he will cross over to paradise. But when the betrayer of trust or the violator of the rights of kinship passes over it, no work of his will benefit him by the side of these (vices), and the *Sirat* will turn him over into hell."[1]

This indicates that the [otherworldly] forms of the Womb and the Trust shall stand on the two sides of the *Sirat* in that world and they will assist one who has fulfilled the duties of blood relationship and discharged his trusts. No work will benefit him if he has violated these two, and they will cast him into hell.

**وَبِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: قَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: أَدُّوا الأَمَانَةَ وَلَوْ إِلَى قَاتِلِ وُلْدِ الأَنْبِيَاءِ.**

> (Al-Kulayni reports) with his *isnad* from Abu Abd-Allah (a) that he said: Amir al-Muminin (a) said, "Discharge your trusts, even if they pertain to a murderer of the offspring of the Prophets."[2]

**وَبِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ فِي وَصِيَّةٍ لَهُ: إِعْلَمْ أَنَّ ضَارِبَ عَلِيٍّ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ بِالسَّيْفِ وَقَاتِلَهُ لَوِ ائْتَمَنَنِي وَاسْتَنْصَحَنِي وَاسْتَشَارَنِي ثُمَّ قَبِلْتُ ذَلِكَ مِنْهُ لأَدَّيْتُ إِلَيْهِ الأَمَانَةَ.**

> (Al-Kulayni reports) with his *isnad* from Abu Abd-Allah (a) that he said in one of his exhortations, "Know that even if the assassin of Ali (a) who struck him with the sword, were to entrust me with something and were he to seek my advice and counsel, and were I to accept his request, I would not betray his trust."[3]

**مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ عَلِيِّ بْنِ الْحُسَيْنِ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي حَمْزَةَ الثُّمَالِيِّ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ سَيِّدَ الْعَابِدِينَ عَلِيَّ بْنَ الْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ عَلِيِّ بْنِ أَبِي طَالِبٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ يَقُولُ لِشِيعَتِهِ:**

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[1] *Usul al-Kafi, kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab silat al-rahim, hadith* no. 11.

[2] Al-Kulayni, *Furu al-Kafi*, vol. v, p. 133.

[3] Al-Kulayni, *Furu al-Kafi*, vol. v, p. 133.

عَلَيْكُمْ بِأَدَاءِ الأَمَانَةِ، فَوَالَّذِي بَعَثَ مُحَمَّداً صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ بِالحَقِّ نَبِيّاً لَوْ أنَّ قَاتِلَ أَبِي الحُسَيْنِ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلامُ ائْتَمَنَنِي عَلَى السَّيْفِ الَّذِي قَتَلَهُ بِهِ لأَدَّيْتُهُ إِلَيْهِ.

Muhammad ibn Ali ibn al-Husayn reports with his *isnad* from Abu Hamzah al-Thumali that he said: I heard the Master of the Devout, Ali ibn al-Husayn ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib (a) say to his followers (*shiah*), "Commit yourself to trustworthiness; for, by Him Who sent Muhammad (*S*) with the Truth as a Prophet, even if the killer of my father, al-Husayn ibn Ali (a) were to entrust me with the sword with which he had killed him, I would not betray his trust."[1]

وبِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنِ الصَّادِقِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ عَنْ آبَائِهِ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلامُ عَنِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ فِي حَدِيثِ المَنَاهِي أَنَّهُ نَهَى عَنِ الخِيَانَةِ وَقَالَ: مَنْ خَانَ أَمَانَةً فِي الدُّنْيَا وَلَمْ يَرُدَّهَا إِلَى أَهْلِهَا ثُمَّ أَدْرَكَهُ المَوْتُ مَاتَ عَلَى غَيْرِ مِلَّتِي وَيَلْقَى اللهَ وَهُوَ عَلَيْهِ غَضْبَانَ. وَمَنِ اشْتَرَى خِيَانَةً وَهُوَ يَعْلَمُ فَهُوَ كَالَّذِي خَانَهَا.

(Al-Saduq reports) with his *isnad* from Imam al-Sadiq (a) that he narrated from his ancestors from the Prophet (*S*) that, in a tradition concerning certain proscribed acts, he forbade the betrayal of trust and said, "Whoever betrays a trust in the life of the world, not delivering it to those to whom it belongs, and then dies, such a person doesn't die upon my creed and he shall meet God in a state wherein He will be wrathful with him. And whoever knowingly purchases the despoils of treachery is like the traitor."[2]

There are other traditions of this kind, and it is obvious what consequences will result from the wrath of God's Sacred Being upon a servant. Of course, the venerable intercessors, too, will not intercede on

[1] *Wasail al-Shiah*, vol. xiii, p. 225, cited from al-Saduq, *al-Majalis*, *majlis*, no. 43.

[2] *Wasail al-Shiah*, vol. xiii, p. 225, cited from al-Saduq, *al-Majalis*, *majlis*, no. 43., cited from al-Saduq, *Man la yahduruhu al-faqih* vol. ii, p.198.

behalf of someone who is the object of God's wrath, especially since the betrayer of trust is out of the pale of the creed of the Messenger of Allah (*s*). It is stated in a (prophetic) tradition that:

> Whoever commits a breach of trust in regard to a believer does not belong to me."[1]

It is mentioned in another tradition that such a man "is outside the faith of Islam and he will be cast into the abyss of hell for ever and ever."[2] I seek refuge in God from the evil of this vice.

It is obvious that the breach of a believer's trust includes dishonesty of a financial nature as well as other breaches of trust that are of a more serious nature. Hence, one should be very vigilant of the carnal self, which may make one turn a blind eye to certain matters and make their vicious character appear as something trivial and simple, though they be the cause of everlasting wretchedness and perpetual ignominy. This is the state of those who commit treachery against God's creatures, and from this, we come to know the state of treachery in relation to the trust of God, the Exalted.

## CONCERNING SOME DIVINE TRUSTS

It should be known that God, the Blessed and the Exalted, has bestowed upon us all our outward and inward faculties and bodily members and organs. He has spread out the table of bounties and beneficence throughout the inner and outer realms of our being, subjecting all of them to our power. He delivered them to us as trusts in a form wherein all of them were pure, immaculate, and free from formal and spiritual impurities. Everything that He sent down for us from the world of the Hidden, was pure and free from any kind of contamination. Therefore, if while meeting that Sacred Being we return these trusts to Him in the condition of purity from the contaminations of the corporeal sphere and the impurities of the mundane world and *mulk*, we shall be reckoned as trustworthy; otherwise we shall be held guilty of betrayal of trust and cast outside the pale of genuine Islam and the creed of the Noble Messenger (*s*).

It is mentioned in a famous *hadith* that:

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[1] *Wasail al-Shiah*, vol. xiii, p. 225, cited from al-Saduq, *al-Majalis*, *majlis*, no. 43, p. 226.

[2] *Wasail al-Shiah*, vol. xiii, p. 225, cited from al-Saduq, *al-Majalis*, *majlis*, no. 43.

قَلْبُ الْمُؤْمِنِ عَرْشُ الرَّحْمَنِ.

The heart of the believer is the throne of the All-Beneficent.

And it is said in a well-known *hadith-e qudsi*

لا تَسَعُنِي أَرْضِي وَلا سَمَائِي، بَلْ يَسَعُنِي قَلْبُ عَبْدِيَ الْمُؤْمِنُ.

Neither [the vastness of] My earth, nor [that of] My heaven can contain Me. Indeed it is the heart of the man of faith which can contain Me.[1]

The believer's heart is the throne and seat of Godhead and the abode of that Sacred Being. That Sacred Being is the owner of the heart. Riveting the heart's attention on other than God, the Exalted, is a breach of His trust. The love of anything other than that of the Holy Being and His elect, loving whom is the same as loving Him, is considered a treachery in the creed of gnosis. The *wilayah* of the Household of Purity and Infallibility and the friendship of the Family of the Messenger (a) and the gnosis of their holy station is a Divine trust. Accordingly, in many noble traditions the word 'Trust' (in verse 33:72) has been interpreted as the *wilayah* of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (a). In the same way as the usurpation of the authority and office of that personage is a treason, so also the failure to follow that sacred personage is one of the degrees of treachery. And it is mentioned in the sacred traditions that "A *Shiah* is one who follows [the *Ahl al-Bayt*] in a complete manner. Otherwise, the mere claim of being a *Shiah* will not be considered as *tashayyu* (Shiihood)."

Many of our fancies belong to the category of fake longings. At the mere feeling of love for Hadrat Amir (a) in our hearts, we become proud of this love and imagine that this love will survive even if we don't continue to follow him. But what surety is there that this attachment will survive if we fail to take care of it and if we neglect the attendant qualities of this love'' It is possible that during the pangs of death, which are experienced by all except the Faithful (*muminun*) and the Sincere (*mukhlasun*), one may forget Ali ibn Abi Talib (a) as a result of the panic and terror of the last agony. It is mentioned in a tradition that a group of sinners facing punishment in hell will forget the name of the Noble Messenger (*s*). When their term of punishment

[1] *Ithaf al-sadat al-muttaqin*, vol. vii, p. 234.

draws to its close and they are purged of and purified from the filth of sin, the blessed name of the Prophet shall come to their memory, or they will be reminded of it. Thereupon, they will raise the cry of '*Wa Muhammada!*' O Muhammad! (*s*). Thereat, they will receive mercy and release. We imagine that the encounter with death and the last agony is something similar to the experiences of this world. My dear! A short attack of fever is sufficient to make you forget everything that you know. Think what will happen when those calamities, agonies, terrors, and panics hold you in their grip! If one loves and fulfills the requisites of that love, remembering the beloved and following him, of course, such a love of the absolute friend and the absolute beloved of God shall enjoy Divine favor. But if one makes merely a claim unaccompanied by action, or, rather, accompanied by defiance, it is possible that before he departs from this world its diversions, vicissitudes, and shifting scenes may lead one to forsake the love of that Master, or, *naudhubi'llah*, turn one into his enemy. We have seen persons who claimed to befriend God and the Messenger (*s*) but who, after moving about in degenerate company and adopting evil conduct, became hostile to the Prophet and his Family (a). And even if, supposedly, one were to depart from this world with that love, though he will ultimately attain salvation and felicity in accordance with certain noble traditions and sacred verses, yet he will still have to suffer the afflictions of *Barzakh* and the terrors of death and resurrection in accordance with this tradition: "We shall intercede in your favor on the Day of Resurrection. But it is up to yourselves to do something for the life of *Barzakh*."[1] I seek God's refuge from the punishment and pressures of the grave and the hardships and tortures of *Barzakh*, which have no resemblance to anything in this world. That door of hell which opens into the grave, should it be opened upon this world, it will destroy all its creatures. God be our refuge from such horrors.

## THE FEAR OF GOD ALMIGHTY

Know that the fear of God, the Exalted, is one of the stages that is hardly equaled by any other in respect of the common people. Aside from the fact that this fear is itself one of spiritual excellences, it is the source of many virtues of the spirit and one of the important reforming agents of the soul. Rather, it may be reckoned as the mainspring of all reform and the healing source of all spiritual ailments. A human being with faith in God and a

[1] *Wasail al-Shiah*, vol. iv, p. 688.

wayfarer and emigrant towards Allah should give utmost importance to this stage and pay great attention to everything that increases it in the heart and strengthens its roots, such as the remembrance of chastisement and punishment, recalling the severity of the perilous passes of death, and, after death, those of *Barzakh* and resurrection, the terrors of the *Sirat*, the Balance, the scrutinies of the Reckoning, and the various punishments of hell, as well, as the remembrance of the Might, Glory, Irresistibility, and Sovereignty of God and the remembrance of the gradualness of deviation (*istidraj*), the Divine stratagems, the possible evil of one's ultimate end and the like. Since we have in these pages described all these stages to some extent, we shall confine ourselves here to citing some traditions concerning the merits of the fear of God:

مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ يَعْقُوبَ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنِ إِسْحَاقَ بْنِ عَمَّارٍ قَالَ: قَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِاللهِ الصَّادِقِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: «خَفِ اللّهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ، وَإِنْ كُنْتَ لا تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ، وَإِنْ كُنْتَ تَرَى أَنَّهُ لا يَرَاكَ فَقَدْ كَفَرْتَ، وَإِنْ كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُ يَرَاكَ ثُمَّ بَرَزْتَ لَهُ بِالْمَعْصِيَةِ، فَقَدْ جَعَلْتَهُ مِنْ أَهْوَنِ النَّاظِرِينَ إِلَيْكَ.»

> Muhammad ibn Yaqub reports with his *isnad* from Ishaq ibn Ammar that he said: Abu Abd-Allah (a) said, "O Ishaq, fear God as if you see Him. For if you don't see Him, indeed He sees you. And if you imagine that He does not see you, you have disbelieved. And if you know that indeed He sees you and yet go forth to disobey Him, then you have made Him the least of onlookers who behold you."[1]

Know that if someone should understand the character of the manifestation of the Divine in *mulk* and *malakut* and the revelation of that Sacred Essence in the heavens and the earths, either through unmediated (*huduri*) experience, or epiphany, or through real faith, and should he apprehend the relation of God to creation and the relation of creation to God as it really is, and should he have the knowledge of the character of the manifestation of the Divine Will in determinate things and their dissolution (*fana*) in it, as it really is, he would know that God, the Exalted, is present in

[1] *Usul al-Kafi, kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab al-khawf wal-raja, hadith* no. 2.

all places and realms, and he would observe Him with unmediated knowledge (*ilm huduri*) in all existents, as stated by Imam al-Sadiq (a):

مَا رَأَيْتُ شَيْئاً إلاّ وَرَأَيْتُ اللهَ مَعَهُ أَوْ فِيهِ.

I don't see a thing without seeing God with it or in it.

In the intimacy of the *nawafil* (supererogatory prayers) the true meaning of:

كُنْتُ سَمْعَهُ وَبَصَرَهُ وَيَدَهُ.

I will be his hearing, his sight and his hand,

and other than that will become disclosed to him. Then, he will see, in accordance with his own station, the Divine Presence in all the levels of being, knowledgewise or faithwise or through direct experience and epiphany. Of course, at this stage, the wayfarer-whatever his rank-would observe the etiquette of the Divine Presence and refrain from the defiance of that Sacred Essence. That is because the observance of presence and its etiquette is something innate in human beings, and no matter how shameless a person might be, absence and presence [of someone] are not the same for him, especially when the presence is that of the All-mighty and the All-perfect Provider, which is independently impressed in the presence-observing nature of everyone.

## THE DISPARITY OF PEOPLE IN OBSERVING THE DIVINE PRESENCE

It should be known that every believer, wayfarer, gnostic, and *wali* observes the etiquette of the Divine Presence in a manner that is special to him. Hence, the faithful and the God-fearing consider observance of the presence to lie in abstaining from unlawful things and in observing the precepts. The *majdhubun* consider it to lie in refraining from attending to other-than-God and in directing one's perfect and complete attention to God. The *awliya* and the Perfect consider it to lie in the negation of otherness, as well as the negation of the ego. In fine, one of the sublime stations of the gnostics and the people of the heart is the experience of Divine Presence and its observance. Hence, with the apprehension of the character of God's active knowledge and the dissolution of all things in His Sacred Essence and the presence of all beings before Him, and with the understanding that the realm

of being is present before the Lord, each of them, whatever his station, observes the requisites of presence. Also, this is an innate characteristic of the human nature.

The Noble Messenger (*s*) has referred to the first station in the spiritual counsel that he gave to Hadrat Amir (a) and which we are now engaged in expounding. The same station is referred to in the noble tradition narrated by Ishaq ibn Ammar, wherein the Imam (a) says:

**وَالثَّالِثَةُ الخَوْفُ مِنَ اللهِ عَزَّ ذِكْرُهُ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ.**

And the third thing is to fear God –sublime is His remembrance– as if you see Him.

And where he says:

**خَفِ اللهَ كَأَنَّكَ تَرَاهُ.**

Fear God as if you see Him.

Imam al-Sadiq (a) refers to the second station where he says:

**وَإِنْ كُنْتَ لا تَرَاهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَرَاكَ.**

For if you don't see Him, verily He sees you.

Imam al-Sadiq (a) refers to the natural proclivity to observe presence in his statement:

**وَإِنْ كُنْتَ تَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُ يَرَاكَ...**

And if you know that He indeed sees you…

Further, there are various levels of the fear in accordance with the different levels of the faithful, the wayfarers, and the people of austerities and gnosis, and one of its higher levels is the fear of the Greatness of God and the manifestations of Divine Might and Glory. It is possible not to reckon this station as a level of 'fear', as stated by the famous *arif* in *Manazil al-sairin:*

**وَلَيْسَ فِي مَقَامِ أَهْلِ الخُصُوصِ وَحْشَةٌ إلاّ هَيْبَةَ الإجْلالِ.**

That is, there exists no fear for the people of the heart and the mysteries of *wilayah* except the awe of Divine Majesty, Magnificence, Greatness, and

Glory.

## THE VIRTUES OF LAMENTATION

There are many virtues in weeping and lamenting for the fear of God. As mentioned in this noble *hadith*, God shall build a thousand mansions in paradise for every tear that is shed in fear of Him. The venerable Shaykh Saduq (*r*) narrates with his unbroken chain of transmission from Imam al-Sadiq (a) from his forefathers, from the Noblest Messenger (*s*) that he said in a tradition relating to certain things that one should refrain from: "One whose eyes weep from the fear of God shall be bestowed for every tear that he sheds a palace ornamented with jewels and pearls every paradise the like of which no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard, and no heart has ever imagined."

عَنْ ثَوَابِ الأَعْمَالِ: بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: لَيْسَ شَيْءٌ إِلاّ وَلَهُ شَيْءٌ يَعْدِلُهُ إِلاّ اللهُ، فَإِنَّهُ لا يَعْدِلُهُ شَيْءٌ، وَلا إِلَهَ إِلاّ اللهُ لا يَعْدِلُهُ شَيْءٌ، وَدَمْعَةٌ مِنْ خَوْفِ اللهِ فَإِنَّهُ لَيْسَ لَهَا مِثْقَالٌ، فَإِنْ سَالَتْ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ لَمْ يَرْهَقْهُ قَتَرٌ وَلا ذِلَّةٌ بَعْدَهَا أَبَداً.

> In the *Thawab al-amal* (al-Shaykh al-Saduq reports) with his *isnad* from Abu Jafar (a) that he said: The Messenger of Allah (*S*) said, "Except God, there is nothing that doesn't have an equal, for, verily, nothing equals Him. And there is nothing, which equals [the statement], "There is no god except God." And [the worth of] a tear shed in fear of God cannot be weighed by anything, for the face on which it flows shall never ever be covered with abasement and humiliation thereafter."

In *al-Kafi*, it is narrated from Imam al-Sadiq (a) that "Everything has a weight and measure except tears, for a tear is sufficient to extinguish seas of fire." And he said, "If there is a single person who weeps [out of fear of God] in a community (*ummah*), all of its members receive Divine mercy." There is a large number of traditions containing this theme.[1]

## DOUBTS REGARDING DISPROPORTIONATE AWARD

[1] For the traditions cited in this section, see *Wasail al-Shiah*, vol. xi, pp. 175-179.

That which is essential to point out here is that some feeble souls lacking conviction question the possibility of such great rewards for trivial matters. They are ignorant of the fact that if something appears small to us in this world that does not prove that its Hidden and *malakuti* form be trivial and insignificant as well. For it is often the case that a minute creature has an inward and *malakuti* being that is extremely great and magnificent. Thus the holy frame and physical form of the last and the noblest of Messengers, the honored and the venerable Prophet (*s*) was one of the small existents of this world, whereas his holy spirit encompassed the realms of *mulk* and *malakut* and was the mediating means for the creation of the heavens and the earths. Therefore, to judge the inward and *malakuti* form of something as trivial and small, presumes the knowledge of the world of *malakut* and the inward reality of things. Hence the like of us have no right to make such a Judgment. Rather, we should open our ears to the pronouncements of those who have the knowledge of the world of Hereafter, that is, the prophets and the *awliya* (a).

Another point is that the basis of that world rests on the expansive bounteousness and the infinite mercy of God, Glorious and Exalted. There is no limit or bound to the munificence of God, the Exalted, and it is the height of ignorance and nescience to doubt the generosity of the Absolutely Generous and the infinite mercy of the All-merciful. All these bounties that He has bestowed upon His creatures, which minds cannot encompass, or, rather, even the comprehension of whose general features confounds the intellects, have been awarded without asking and without any background of deservedness. So why should it appear incredible if He, out of His sheer generosity and without any prior deservedness, gives a manifold reward to His servants? A world whose very basis has been decreed in accordance with [the principle of] the influence of the human will, and regarding which He has said:

﴿وَفِيهَا مَا تَشْتَهِيهِ الْأَنفُسُ وَتَلَذُّ الْأَعْيُنُ.﴾

*Therein being whatever the souls desire, and the eyes delight in*. (43:71)

is it possible to regard it as far-fetched and improbable, although that which the human soul desires is without limit and boundless? God, Blessed and Exalted, has so determined that world and has so fashioned the human will that anything that it wills would come into existence by the sheer act of

the will.

My dear! The number of the noble traditions and narrations relating to this kind of rewards is not one or two so that there should remain any room for denial. Rather, their number exceeds the limit of *tawatur*. All the reliable and trustworthy works of *hadith* are replete with this kind of traditions. They are such as if we have heard them directly from the Infallible Ones themselves (a). Their character is not such as to allow one to take resort in interpretation (*tawil*). Therefore, to deny the truth of this matter without any grounds –a matter that is in accordance with *mutawatir* texts and is not contrary to any discursive proof, or rather agrees with a certain kind of proof– such a denial springs from weakness of faith and extreme ignorance. Man should submit to the statements of the prophets and the *awliya* (a). Nothing is better for human perfection than submission to the *awliya* of God, especially in matters which human reason cannot fathom and there is no way to whose understanding except the way of revelation and prophethood. Should man try to butt in his inadequate intellect and his fancies and presumptions on matters of the Hidden and the Hereafter and those relating to worship and religious law, that would ultimately lead him, little by little and in gradual stages, to deny even the self-evident necessities of the faith. Even if, supposedly, you should doubt the authenticity of the traditions and their chains of transmission –though there is no room for such a doubt– you cannot question the authority of the Noble Scripture of God, the Glorious and the Celestial Quran. The likes of such rewards are also mentioned there, as in the following statements of God, the Exalted:

﴿لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ.﴾

*The Night of al-Qadr is better than a thousand months.* (97:3)

﴿مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلَ فِي كُلِّ سُنْبُلَةٍ مِائَةُ حَبَّةٍ وَاللَّهُ يُضَاعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ.﴾

*The likeness of those who expend their wealth in the way of God is as the likeness of a grain of corn that sprouts seven ears, in every ear a hundred grains. So God multiplies unto whom He will, God is All-embracing, All-Knowing.* (2:261)

My conjecture is that one of the factors responsible for the tendency to regard such rewards as far-fetched and unlikely and to deny their truth is the exaggerated sense of the worth of our works and pride in them. For instance, if someone fasts on a day and spends a whole night in prayer and later on hears that such acts have a very great reward, he does not regard such a thing as unlikely, although such a thing is far-fetched if one were to go by (the proportionality of) wages and work. But since he considers this act of his as something big and takes pride in it, he affirms the otherworldly reward of that act.

My dear! This entire duration of our lives, which is some fifty or sixty years. Even if, supposedly, we carry out therein all our religious duties and leave the world with a sound faith, with righteous deeds, and a valid repentance, what measure of reward, do you think, do this measure of works and this faith of ours deserve? Yet, in accordance with the Book and the *Sunnah* and the consensus of all religious creeds, such a person receives Divine mercy and goes to paradise, a paradise where he will enjoy everlasting gifts and comfort and dwell in eternal mercy, bliss and fragrance. Is there any room for denying the truth of this? And if one were to go by the idea of compensation for work –that is, if we make the invalid assumption that our works deserve compensation-it could not be so disproportionate, quality– as well as quantity-wise, to be beyond the comprehension of human reason. This shows that the matter is based on another foundation and revolves around some other axis. If we understand this, there no longer remains any ground for denying this truth or considering it unlikely and far-fetched.

## RAISING THE HANDS IN PRAYER AND TURNING THEM

Apparently, the statement of the noble tradition, "Make it your practice to raise your hands during prayer and to turn them," refers to lifting them at the time of *takbirat* [i.e. pronouncing "*Allahu akbar*"] By 'turning' them (*taqli*) is probably meant the turning of the palms in the direction of the *qiblah*. Raising the hands at the time of saying the *takbirat* is one of the *mustahabbat*. Or, perhaps, that which is meant in the *hadith* is the raising of hands at the time of *qunut*, and that which is meant by turning them is turning the palms upwards towards the sky, in accordance with the *fatwa* of the *fuqaha* (*r*) who have considered it *mustahabb*, although they disagree concerning its basis in the sources (*dalil*), even though no other basis is needed after the definite practice of the devout who know no other manner of

saying the *qunut*, and the mere raising of hands in whatever manner is not sufficient. In any case, that which is more evident (*azhar*) is that that which is meant in this sacred tradition is the first probability mentioned.

One should know that the predominant (*mashhur*) opinion amongst the *fuqaha* (*r*) is that it is *mustahabb* to raise one's hands while saying the *takbirat* and some of them have held it to be obligatory on the basis of the apparent import (*zahir*) of certain prescriptions and traditions that have been narrated in regard to the interpretation of the sacred verse,

﴿فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَانْحَرْ﴾

that the word *nahr* in the command of God, the Exalted, means the raising of the hands at the time of *takbirat*.[1] But there are many indications in the traditions, which imply its *istihbab*, such as the reasons that are mentioned therein, especially in the tradition narrated by al-Fadl ibn Shadhan from Imam al-Rida (a). In addition to this, the *Sahih* tradition of Ali ibn Jafar[2] is explicit (*nass*) on its not being obligatory, and the apparent import (*zahir*) of these traditions, without taking into account the indications to the contrary, is that it is obligatory. The way to reconcile them is by considering them to imply *istihbab* by overruling the *zahir* in the favor of the *nass*. And that *riwayah*, although it exempts others than the *imam* from raising the hands- and one may claim that apparently it applies to both the *imam* and the *mamumun* and that it is silent about the prayer offered singly by an individual (*furada*) it does not preclude the possibility that the raising of hands be obligatory for all, and the *imam*'s raising them exempts the *mamumun* from it, in the same way as the *qiraah* of the *imam* exempts others from doing their own *qiraah*. On the basis of this probability, which is the more evident of the probable meanings of the tradition, the objection of some later authorities, which requires taking of the general in a particular sense, is also avoided. However, the absence of any opinion to this effect and the predominant opinion among early and latter day legists, as well as the inner and external indications leave no room for a debate, and even this much of detail was outside the scope of these pages. In any case, the raising of hands is supererogatory and it is not appropriate for one to omit it as far as possible, especially in a case such as this wherein there are some amongst the *ulama*

[1] *Tafsir Nur al-Thaqalayn*, vol. v, pp. 683-684, the exegesis of *Surat al-Kawthar*, *hadith* 17-19.

[2] *Wasail al-Shiah*, vol. iv, p. 726, *kitab al-salat*, *bab* 9.

who hold it to be obligatory. Accordingly, it is also required by caution in religious matters that one should not omit it.

## THE SECRET BEHIND THE RAISING OF THE HANDS

In any case, the raising of the hands during prayer at the time of every *takbirah* gives elegance to it, and this is the manner of the prayer of Gabriel (a) and the angels of the seven heavens, as reported in a narration by Asbagh ibn Nubatah from Amir al-Muminin,[1] (a). According to a certain citation from the *Ilal* and the *Uyun akhbar al-Rida* (a), Imam al-Rida (a) has said, "The reason for raising the hands at *takbirah* is that it carries a kind of absorption (*inqita*), sincere dedication (*takhlis*), and humility (*tadarru*). Hence God, the Exalted, likes His servant to be totally attentive towards Him at the time of remembering Him and to be humble and sincere. And it is for the reason that one's attention be focused by the raising of the hands, thereby becoming alert in one's intent, with a receptive heart,"[2] This statement accords with that which some gnostics say, that the 'other' [than God] is rejected behind one's back by means of the raising of the hands and the thorns in the path of access to Him are removed, cutting one off from everything else and making one pure and sincere, without a trace of attention towards another, which is *shirk* in the creed of love, whereat one proceeds to the real spiritual ascent (*miraj*) and commences the voyage towards Allah. This voyage and ascent are not possible without the rejection of the 'other' and 'otherness' and without freedom from the ego and egoism. Hence, with the sevenfold opening *takbirat*, all the seven curtains (*hujub*) of *mulk* and *malakut* are removed.

Thus the prayer of the *awliya* is such that they remove a curtain with every *takbirah*, abandoning the realms associated with these veils, leaving behind the inmates of these habitats, whereafter another curtain is removed for them and their hearts receive yet another conditioned epiphany (*tajalli taqyidi*). But that does not become an obstacle in their way and it does not engage their attention or preoccupy their hearts. They remove it with yet another *takbirah*, as if from the inner core of their hearts there arises the song:

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[1] *Majma al-bayan*, the exegesis of *Surat al-Kawthar*.

[2] *Wasail al-Shiah*, vol. iv, p. 727, *kitab al-salat, abwab takbirat al-ihram, bab* 9, *hadith* 11.

اللهُ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ أَنْ يَتَجَلَّى تَجَلِّياً تَقْيِيدِيّاً.

> Allah is greater than that He should manifest Himself with a conditioned manifestation (*tajalli*),

as declared by the mentor and *shaykh* of the *awliya* and the *mukhlasun*, the dedicated friend of the All-Beneficent [the *Khalil al-Rahman*, i.e. the Prophet Abraham (a)] during that journey of gnosis, epiphany and conditioned *tajalliyat*. Thus the wayfarer towards Allah, the traveler of the path of love, and the dedicated traveler of the road of communion removes one veil after another until he reaches the last *takbirah* with which he removes the seventh veil and rejects every 'other' and 'otherness,' declaring,

﴿وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِي لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ.﴾

*I have turned my face to Him who originated the heavens and the earth*. (6:79)

with Abraham, the *Khalil*. Thereafter, the door is opened for him and he experiences the majesties of Divine Glory. Thereat he seeks refuge with God and enters in the Name of God, the Exalted. To this refers the noble tradition of Muhammad ibn Ali ibn al-Husayn (*r*) who reports with his *isnad* from Abu al-Hasan (a):

بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي الحَسَنِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ أَنَّهُ رَوَى لِذَلِكَ عِلَّةً أُخْرَى وَهِيَ: أَنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ لَمَّا أُسْرِيَ بِهِ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ قَطَعَ سَبْعَ حُجُبٍ فَكَبَّرَ عِنْدَ كُلِّ حِجَابٍ تَكْبِيرَةً فَأَوْصَلَهُ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ بِذَلِكَ إِلَى مُنْتَهَى الكَرَامَةِ.

> (al-Shaykh al-Saduq reports) with his *isnad* from Abu al-Hasan (a) that he has narrated another reason for it and that is that when the Prophet (*S*) was carried on his celestial journey, he pierced seven veils (*hijab*), pronouncing the *takbirah* at every *hijab*, whereby Allah, Almighty and Glorious, enabled him to attain to the ultimate nobility (*muntaha al-karamah*).[1]

In another *hadith* nearly the same thing has been narrated from Imam

[1] *Wasail al-Shiah*, vol. iv, p. 727, *kitab al-salat, abwab takbirat al-ihram, bab* 7, *hadith* 5.

Musa ibn Jafar[1] (a) except that it is mentioned there that the Messenger of God (*s*) pronounced the *takbirat* after the removal of every *hijab*. This is more in agreement from the viewpoint of gnostic teaching and the mystic way, for a *hijab* and curtain is removed at every raising of the hands, and a *takbirah* is pronounced on the manifestation of each of the lights of nobility. And since that is a conditioned light from among the *hijab*s of light, it is removed with the raising of the two hands and cast away until the *tajalli* becomes absolute and the ultimate nobility (*muntaha al-karamah*), which is the ultimate goal of the *awliya*, is attained. Hence, the earlier tradition can be interpreted in the light of the second one.

Whatever the case may be, we are unable to understand these things, to say nothing of epiphany (*shuhud*) and communion (*wusul*). But what is worse and more unfortunate for us is that we also deny all spiritual stations and degrees and consider the celestial ascensions (*miraj*) of the *awliya* and the prayers of the pure ones like those of our own, regarding their perfection as similar, though of a superior degree, to our own performances. The limit of our imagination, beyond which we are unable to apprehend anything, is to imagine that their *Salat* is good in its *qiraah* and other points of etiquette and free from *shirk*, ostentation, and love of fame, or that their worship was not for the sake of the fear of hell or on account of the craving for paradise. These, of course, are one of their ordinary stations, and their *Salat*, this spiritual ascension, has other stations that lie beyond our imagination.

## A WARNING CONCERNING ONE OF THE SATANIC RUSES

A warning is essential at this point and that is that the worst obstacle in the path of perfection and attainment of spiritual stations, which is also one of the major masterpieces of Satan, the highwayman, is the negation of the Hidden spiritual stations and degrees. This negation and denial is the root cause of all kinds of misguidance and ignorance and the cause of spiritual stagnation and torpor. It kills the spirit of eagerness, which is the heavenly steed (*buraq*) for ascending to spiritual excellences. It extinguishes the fires of love, which represents the angelic wings for undertaking the heavenward spiritual journey towards perfection, stopping man from making his spiritual

[1] *Wasail al-Shiah*, vol. iv, p. 727, *kitab al-salat, abwab takbirat al-ihram, bab* 7, pp. 722-723, *hadith* 7.

quest. On the contrary, if one has sincere faith in spiritual stations and the lofty ascents of gnosis, perchance this might help in rekindling the innate fire of love buried under the dust and ashes of carnal desires and illuminate the torch of yearning in the depths of the heart, thus gradually prompting one to seek and to undertake the labors of the quest so that one becomes worthy of Divine guidance and the assistance of that Sacred Essence. And all praise belongs to God.

## THE MERIT OF BRUSHING THE TEETH

It should be known that brushing the teeth, which has been enjoined by the Noblest Messenger (*s*) in this noble tradition, is absolutely one of the recommended etiquettes of the *Shariah* and has been stressed for certain particular occasions, such as before *wudu* and prayer, at the time of reciting the Quran, at daybreak, and on waking up from sleep. It has been highly recommended and greatly emphasized in the sacred traditions, and many a fruitful quality and profitable result is ascribed to it. Here, in these pages, we shall cite some of them for the sake of *tabarruk*:

الكَافِي بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: فِي السِّوَاكِ اثْنَتَا عَشْرَةَ خِصْلَةً: هُوَ مِنَ السُّنَّةِ وَمُطَهِّرَةٌ لِلْفَمِ وَمَجْلاةٌ لِلْبَصَرِ وَيُرْضِي الرَّبَّ وَيُذْهِبُ البَلْغَمَ وَيَزِيدُ فِي الحِفْظِ وَيُبَيِّضُ الأَسْنَانَ وَيُضَاعِفُ الحَسَنَاتِ وَيُذْهِبُ بِالحَفْرِ وَيَشُدُّ اللِّثَةَ وَيُشَهِّي الطَّعَامَ وَيَفْرَحُ بِهِ المَلائِكَةَ.

In *al-Kafi* (al-Kulayni reports) with his *isnad* from Abu Abd-Allah (a) that he said, "There are twelve qualities associated with the brushing of teeth: it is part of the Prophet's *sunnah* (it is mentioned in many traditions) that brushing the teeth is one of the *sunnah* of the prophets.[1] it purifies the mouth, strengthens eyesight, is pleasing to the Lord, takes away the phlegm, sharpens the memory, whitens the teeth, doubles the merit of good acts, stops tooth decay, strengthens the gums, increases appetite and is delightful to the angels."[2]

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[1] *Al-Khisal*, vol. ii, p. 449, *bab* 10, *hadith* 51.

[2] *Furu al-Kafi*, vol. vi, pp. 495-496, *kitab al-*zayy *wal-tajammul*, *bab al-siwak*, *hadith* 6.

Nearly the same thing is mentioned in another tradition. The tooth decay mentioned in this noble tradition consists of cavities and pustules formed at the root of the teeth, which produce a white and bad-smelling pus and burst at the time of chewing the food. This pus gets mixed with the food and causes many ailments such as indigestion, etc. Present-day physicians call it pyorrhea and consider it a serious condition whose remedy may require even pulling out of the teeth. Hence, aside from the inward Hidden aspects, the most significant of which is the good pleasure of God, it is good for one to make it a regular practice for the sake of physical health and cleanliness and to perform this perpetual *sunnah* of the prophets. It is mentioned in a tradition that the Noblest Messenger (*s*) said, "So much did Gabriel recommend the brushing of teeth to me that I became concerned for my teeth…"[1] And he said, "If it were not for the fear of hardship I would have made the brushing of the teeth obligatory on my *ummah* before every *wudu* and every *Salat*."[2] The Noblest Messenger (*s*) used to keep the *miswak* [the stick used for brushing the teeth] and the water for *wudu* at the head of his bed at night and he would cover up the vessel containing water. On waking from his sweet sleep he would brush his teeth, perform *wudu*, and then offer four *rakah*s of prayer and go to sleep again. Again he would wake up, brush his teeth, perform *wudu* and offer prayer. After mentioning this practice of the Prophet in a *hadith*, Imam al-Sadiq (a) declares, "You have a good example to emulate in the Messenger of God (*s*)."[3] It is stated in *hadith* that two *rakah*s of prayer performed after brushing the teeth is superior to seventy *rakah*s performed without it. It is stated that if one forgets to brush his teeth before *wudu*, it is *mustahabb* to do so after it and to rinse the mouth thrice with water.[4] The number of traditions on this topic is quite large and anyone who wants to study them should refer to the works of our companions.[5]

## MORAL VIRTUES AND VICES

Although we have discussed a number of times –in detail and in several

[1] *Furu al-Kafi*, vol. vi, p. 496, *hadith* 8.

[2] *Wasail al-Shiah*, vol. i, p. 355, *kitab al-taharah, abwab al-siwak, bab* 5, *hadith* 3.

[3] *Wasail al-Shiah*, vol. i, p. 355, *kitab al-taharah, abwab al-siwak*, p. 356, *bab* 6, *hadith* 1.

[4] *Bihar al-anwar*, vol. 73, pp. 132-133, *kitab al-adab wal-sunan, bab al-siwak wal-haththh alayh, hadith* 32-34.

[5] *Wasail al-Shiah*, vol. i, pp. 353, 355-356, *kitab al-taharah, bab* 3, 5-6.

relevant places in these pages, to an extent that appeared appropriate and within easy reach– the soul's moral dispositions and the method of acquiring ethical virtues and avoiding vices, here we will give a concise and comprehensive explanation.

It should be known that 'disposition' (*khulq*) is a state of the soul that inclines it to action without the need of thought or reflection. For instance, someone who has the disposition of generosity is induced by it to give and expend generously without any preliminary thoughts and without reflecting on the preponderants on each side. He acts as if it were one of his natural acts, like seeing and hearing. In the same way, a soul that is chaste, for which the attribute of chastity has become a disposition, preserves itself with such ease as if that were part of its natural behavior. Until the soul does not attain to this station through self-discipline, reflection, and repeated action, it cannot attain a disposition and the spiritual perfection associated with it. Otherwise, the danger always remains, if the trait is one of moral perfections, that it be eroded and overwhelmed by vicious dispositions. However, if it were to become like one of the natural activities and should one's faculties and organs be brought under control and were the rule and sovereignty of God to manifest itself within the soul, its decline would be difficult, and such a thing happens only rarely.

The ethicians have stated that this state and disposition of the soul is at times innate in human beings. Whether good or evil, felicitous or wretched, it is based on the original nature and related to temperament. As is well known, some persons are disposed towards goodness from infancy and some are inclined towards evil. Some are enraged at the smallest annoyance or are alarmed by a trivial matter, or panic at the slightest cause. Others are quite the opposite. At other times these psychic dispositions are acquired through habit, social intercourse, thought and reflection. Sometimes they are first acquired by means of thought and reflection until they become habitual. In this regard there is a difference of opinion amongst them, to discuss which and to engage with whose details would take us beyond the scope of these pages and divert us from our main aim. We shall mention here only that which is appropriate and beneficial in this regard.

It should be known that when it is said that a disposition is natural or innate it does not mean that it is essential (*dhati*) and unchangeable. Rather, all habits (*malikat*) and psychic dispositions are capable of change. As long as the soul remains in this world of change and transition, it is subject to time

and renewal; and as long as it is associated with matter (*hayula*) and potentiality (*quwwah*), the human being can change all its dispositions and transform them into their opposites. This claim is affirmed, besides metaphysical proof (*burhan*), by experience, as well as by the summons of the prophets and the true religions to noble dispositions and their restraining people from the opposite qualities.

It should be known that the experts of ethics have divided all virtues of the soul under four heads, which are: wisdom (*hikmah*), chastity (*iffah*), courage (*shajaah*), and justice (*adalah*). Wisdom is regarded as the virtue of the rational discerning soul (*nafs-e natiqah-ye mumayyizah*); courage as a virtue of the irascible soul (*nafs-e ghaḍabiyyah*); chastity as a virtue of the appetitive soul (*nafs-e shahawiyyah*), and justice as a state of moderation of these threefold virtues. All other virtues are considered derived from these four. However, the definition and details of each one of them lie outside the scope of these pages and are not that useful for the likes of us. That which must be known is that in accordance with this tradition narrated from the Noblest Messenger (*s*):

بُعِثْتُ لِأُتَمِّمَ مَكَارِمِ الأَخْلاقِ.

I have been sent to perfect noble dispositions,[1]

the purpose and result of the summons of the Seal of the Prophets (*s*) is the perfection of morality. In the noble traditions, both those that are brief and those which are elaborate, moral excellences have been given more importance than anything else after doctrinal teachings (*maarif*). Hereafter, we will cite some of them, God willing. Their importance is greater than what we are capable of explaining adequately, but that which we know for certain is that the asset of the everlasting life of the hereafter and the capital asset of the life of that abode is the acquisition of noble dispositions and the possession of moral excellences. The paradise which is given to man for the sake of moral excellence, is the paradise of Attributes, incomparable to the physical paradise of Act, wherein the greatest and the fairest of physical bounties and delights are present. Similarly, the darkness and the terrors that seize man due to evil deeds are more terrible than any torture.

As long as man is in this world, he can liberate himself from this darkness and attain those lights. Yes, he can do that, but not with this half-heartedness,

[1] *Majma al-bayan*, exegesis of verse 4 of *Surat al-Qalam*.

slackness, torpor, feebleness, and negligence of ours, who, as we see ourselves, retain every ugly disposition and undesirable trait with which we have grown up since our childhood days or have acquired in improper company and friendship. Rather, we keep on adding to this burden every day, as if we didn't believe that there is another world and another phase of lasting existence:

وای اگر از پس امروز بود فردایی

Woe, if there be a tomorrow after this![1]

As if the summons of the prophets and the *awliya* (a) have nothing to do with us. Who knows, where these dispositions and conduct of us will take us and in what form we shall be resurrected? We would wake up at a time when we could do nothing and regret and shame would be our lot, and we shall have none to reproach except ourselves. The prophets (a) have shown the path of felicity and the learned and the wise have expounded their statements for us and described the method of curing inner diseases, translating these teachings into every language and disseminating them in various forms. But these things did not enter our ears, and we closed our eyes, ears, and our hearts to them. Therefore, all blame rests on our own shoulders, as stated by the Messenger of God (*s*) in the present tradition in whose exposition we are engaged. So replete with exhortation for acquisition of moral virtues and abstention from vices are the traditions and reports that its extent is incalculable, yet we neglect even to refer to their books.

And you, my dear! If you are used to traditions and narrations, refer to the sacred works of tradition, especially the noble *al-Kafi*. If you are used to scientific discourse and the jargon of scholars, refer to such ethical texts as the *Taharat al-araq*,[2] and the books of *marhum* al-Fayd al-Kashani, al-Majlisi and the two Naraqis.[3] And if you do not consider yourself to be in need of acquiring [the knowledge of ethical principles] or do not consider the acquisition of noble dispositions and abstention from vicious dispositions as

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[1] Adapted from the following couplet of Hafiz:

گر مسلمانی از این است که حافظ دارد آه اگر از پی امروز بود فردایی

[2] By Miskawayh, ethical philosopher and historian of the 5th/11th century.

[3] Among these works are *Mahajjat al-bayda*, *al-Kalimat al-maknunah*, and *Hayat-e javid* by al-Fayd al-Kashani, *Haqq al-yaqin* by al-Allamah al-Majlisi, *Jami al-saadat* by Mulla Mahdi al-Naraqi and *Miraj al-saadah* by Mulla Ahmad al-Naraqi.

essential, then find a remedy for your ignorance which is the mother of all diseases.

We conclude this topic with the mention of some noble traditions related to this theme for *tabarruk*'s sake:

الفَقِيهُ: بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: إِنَّ اللهَ خَصَّ رَسُولَهُ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ بِمَكَارِمِ الأَخْلاقِ فَامْتَحِنُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ، فَإِنْ كَانَتْ فِيكُمْ فَاحْمِدُوا اللهَ وَارْغَبُوا إِلَيْهِ فِي الزِّيَادَةِ مِنْهَا؛ فَذَكَرَهَا عَشْرَةً: اليَقِينُ وَالقَنَاعَةُ وَالصَّبْرُ وَالشُّكْرُ وَالحِلْمُ وَحُسْنُ الخَلْقِ وَالسَّخَاءِ وَالغِيرَةُ وَالشَّجَاعَةُ وَالمُرُوءَةُ.

In *Man La yahduruh al-faqih*, (al-Shaykh al-Saduq reports) with his *isnad* from Abu Abd-Allah (a) that he said, "Verily, God favored His Messenger (*S*) with noble dispositions. So test yourselves and if you find them in yourselves, thank God and turn to Him that He may increase you therein." Then he mentioned ten of them: conviction (*yaqin*), contentment (*qinaah*), patience (*Sabr*), gratitude (*shukr*), mildness (*hilm*), geniality (*husn al-khulq*), generosity (*sakha*), sense of honor (*ghayrah*), courage (*shajaah*), magnanimity (*muraah*).[1]

This tradition has been transmitted through several chains (*turuq*), except that *rida* (satisfaction), instead of *hilm*,[2] occurs in the citation from the *Maani al-akhbar*. In *al-Wafi*, this tradition has been cited with a slightly different wording from *al-Kafi*.[3]

عَنِ المَجَالِسِ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنِ الصَّادِقِ جَعْفَرِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلامُ أَنَّهُ قَالَ: عَلَيْكُمْ بِمَكَارِمِ الأَخْلاقِ فَإِنَّ اللهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ يُحِبُّهُمَا وَإِيَّاكُمْ وَمَذَامَّ الأَفْعَالِ فَإِنَّ اللهَ يَبْغُضُهَا إِلَى أَنْ قَالَ: وَعَلَيْكُمْ بِحُسْنِ الخُلُقِ فَإِنَّهُ يَبْلُغُ بِصَاحِبِهِ دَرَجَةَ الصَّائِمِ القَائِمِ... الحديث.

In *al-Majalis* (al-Shaykh al-Saduq reports) with his *isnad*

[1] *Al-Khisal*, vol. ii, p. 431, *bab* 10, *hadith* 12.

[2] *Maani al-akhbar*, p. 191, *bab fi makarim al-akhlaq*, *hadith* 3.

[3] *Al-Wafi*, vol. iv, p. 264, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab jawami al-makarim*, *hadith* 2.

from Jafar ibn Muhammad (a) that he said, "Acquire moral virtues, for, verily, God loves them, and beware of blameworthy conduct for God hates it. Accustom yourselves to fairness of disposition, for it raises one who possesses it to the rank of those who fast (perpetually) and stand in prayer (through the night, constantly)."[1]

**الكَافِي بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: إِنَّ أَكْمَلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَيْمَاناً أَحْسَنُهُمْ أَخْلاقاً.**

In *al-Kafi* (al-Kulayni reports) with his *isnad* from Abu Jafar (a) that he said, "Among believers the most perfect in faith is the one who is the most fairly disposed amongst them."[2]

**وَبِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ الحُسَيْنِ عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلامُ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: مَا يُوضَعُ فِي مِيزَانِ امْرِئٍ يَوْمَ القِيَامَةِ أَفْضَلُ مِنْ حُسْنِ الخُلُقِ.**

(Al-Kulayni reports) with his *isnad* from Ali ibn al-Husayn (a) that he said: The Messenger of Allah (*S*) said, "There will be nothing superior to fairness of disposition in the balance of a person's works on the Day of Resurrection."[3]

Also, the Prophet (*s*) has said:

(Of all qualities) that which will take most of my *ummah* to paradise is God-fearing (*taqwa*) and a fair disposition.[4]

And Imam al-Sadiq (a) said:

Verily, virtuousness and fairness of disposition make homes flourish and extend the spans of lives.[5]

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[1] Al-Shaykh al-Saduq, *al-Amali*, *majlis* 57; *Wasail al-Shiah*, vol. xi, p. 156, *kitab al-jihad*, *abwab jihad al-nafs*, *bab* 6, *hadith* 8.

[2] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. ii, p. 99, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab husn al-khulq*, *hadith* 1.

[3] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. ii, p. 99, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab husn al-khulq*, *hadith* 2.

[4] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. ii, p. 99, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab husn al-khulq*, *hadith* 6.

[5] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. ii, p. 99, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab husn al-khulq*, *hadith* 8.

He also said:

> Verily, God, the Exalted and the Blessed, rewards a servant for his fair disposition in a measure equal to what He grants to someone who fights day and night in the way of God.[1]

There are many traditions on this subject. In the same way as good nature and fairness of disposition lead to the perfection of faith, add to the weight of one's deeds in the Balance, and take one into paradise, so also ill-naturedness, on the contrary, corrupts one's faith and subjects one to Divine chastisement, as pointed out in the sacred traditions:

الكَافِي بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: إِنَّ سُوءَ الخُلُقِ لَيُفْسِدُ الإِيمَانَ كَمَا يُفْسِدُ الخَلُّ العَسَلَ.

> In *al-Kafi* (al-Kulayni reports) with his *isnad* from Abu Abd-Allah (a) that he said, "Verily, ill-naturedness destroys one's faith in the same way as vinegar destroys honey (on being mixed with it)."[2]

It is mentioned in another tradition that ill-naturedness destroys one's works in the way vinegar destroys honey.[3] It is narrated from the Messenger of God (*s*) that God does not accept the repentance of an ill-natured person. When asked about its reason, he replied, "That is because as soon as he repents for a sin, he falls into a sin worse than the earlier one."[4] It is stated in a tradition that one who becomes ill-natured subjects himself thereby to Divine chastisement.[5] It is evident that ill-nature continually torments one who possesses it and is the cause of hardship, darkness, and adversity in the next phases of life, as mentioned in some of the traditions cited. And all praise is God's, at every beginning and end.

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[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. ii, p. 99, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab husn al-khulq, hadith* 12.
[2] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. ii, p. 99, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab husn al-khulq, hadith* 3.
[3] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. ii, p. 99, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab husn al-khulq, hadith* 1.
[4] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. ii, p. 99, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab husn al-khulq, hadith* 2.
[5] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. ii, p. 99, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab husn al-khulq, hadith* 4.

30

# Thirtieth *Hadith*:
# THE INDESCRIBABILITY OF GOD, THE PROPHET, AND THE IMAMS

بِالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلَى الشَّيْخِ الجَلِيلِ أَفْضَلِ الْمُحَدِّثِينَ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ الْكُلَيْنِيِّ عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ حَمَّادٍ عَنْ رِبْعِيٍّ عَنْ زُرَارَةَ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُهُ يَقُولُ: إِنَّ اللهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لا يُوصَفُ وَكَيْفَ يُوصَفُ وَقَالَ فِي كِتَابِهِ: ﴿وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ.﴾ فَلا يُوصَفُ بِقَدَرٍ إِلاّ كَانَ أَعْظَمَ مِنْ ذَلِكَ. وَإِنَّ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ لا يُوصَفُ وَكَيْفَ يُوصَفُ عَبْدٌ احْتَجَبَ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ بِسَبْعٍ وَجَعَلَ طَاعَتَهُ فِي الأَرْضِ كَطَاعَتِهِ [فِي السَّمَاءِ] فَقَالَ: ﴿وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا.﴾ وَمَنْ أَطَاعَ هَذَا فَقَدْ أَطَاعَنِي وَمَنْ عَصَاهُ فَقَدْ عَصَانِي، وَفَوَّضَ إِلَيْهِ. وَإِنَّا لا نُوصَفُ وَكَيْفَ يُوصَفُ قَوْمٌ رَفَعَ اللهُ عَنْهُمُ الرِّجْسَ، وَهُوَ الشَّكُّ. وَالْمُؤْمِنُ لا يُوصَفُ وَإِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَ لَيَلْقَى أَخَاهُ فَيُصَافِحُهُ فَلا يَزَالُ اللهُ يَنْظُرُ إِلَيْهِمَا وَالذُّنُوبُ تَتَحَاتُّ عَنْ وُجُوهِهِمَا كَمَا يَتَحَاتُّ الوَرَقُ عَنِ الشَّجَرِ.

With my continuous chain of transmission reaching the august *shaykh*, the best of the traditionists, Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulayni, from Ali ibn Ibrahim, from his father, from Hammad, from Ribi, from Zurarah, from Abu Jafar (a), [Zurarah] says: I heard him say, “Verily, God, the Almighty and the Glorious, cannot be described, and how could He be described when He declares in His

Book. '*And they measure not God with His true measure.*'[1] Hence, He cannot be described by any measure, and if described He would transcend it. And, verily, the Prophet (*S*) cannot be described, and how could be described a servant whom God, the Almighty and the Glorious, has concealed with seven veils and made obedience to him in the earth like obedience to him in the heavens, declaring, '*And whatsoever the Messenger giveth you, take it. And whatsoever be forbiddeth, abstain from it.*'[2] And [He has declared] 'Whoever obeys him assuredly obeys Me, and whoever disobeys him disobeys Me.'[3] Hence, He has delegated authority to him. And we (Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt*) cannot be described, and how could a people be described whom God has kept free from impurity, which is doubt. And neither can the believer be described. And indeed, when the believer takes his brother with the hand on meeting him, God looks at them and sins are shed from their faces in the way leaves fall from a tree."[4]

## EXPOSITION

To take up the explication of the phrase **وما قدروا** (*and they measure not [God]*), al-Jawhari says in this regard: "*qadr* means 'measure'. And **قدر** both with *fathah* on the *dal* (i.e. *qadar*) and *sukun* on it (i.e. *qadr*) has the same meaning. It is a verbal noun (*masdar*). God, the Exalted, says: which means **وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ** which means **مَا عَظَّمُوا اللهَ حَقَّ تَعظِيمِه** ('they do not venerate God in the way He aught to be venerated')." In the opinion of this writer *qadr* apparently means 'measure,' and has been used figuratively to indicate the incapacity to describe and venerate adequately. Description (*tawsif*) itself is a kind of measurement of the object described in the apparel of characterization, and this –as shall be pointed out later, God willing– is neither possible nor permissible for anyone else to do in relation to that

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[1] The Quran, 6:91; 22:74; 39:68.

[2] The Quran, 59:7.

[3] This is a reference to verse 4:80 of the Quran: "*Whoso obeyeth the Messenger, obeyeth God.*"

[4] Al-Majlisi, *Mirat al-uqul*, vol. ix, p. 71, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr bab al-musafahah, hadith* 16.

Sacred Being.

As to the phrase **فلا يوصف بقدر** there is **بِقُدْرَةٍ**, with a *ta'*, in the version of *marhum* al-Majlisi (*m*) and he has considered it to signify comparison. Also, he is of the opinion that the singling out of Power (*qudrah*) from among the Attributes is due to its being closer to understanding. Then, affirming the possibility of error in the manuscript, he says, "Possibly, it may be read with *fathah* (i.e. *qadar*), as in some other traditions." The version of *al-Wafi* accords with his guess[1] and perhaps it may be **قَدَرِهِ** with *ha'*, in some manuscripts. But it is probable, or rather certain, that **بِقُدْرَةٍ** with *ta'*, is an error in the manuscript, for it is neither eloquent from the viewpoint of meaning nor proper on the basis of wording, for a masculine pronoun is referred to it, and to explain it away will be contrary to the rule. The context offered little room for a maneuver and hence this explanation of *marhum* al-Majlisi, even though there is no reason for asserting that while it is possible to conceive the attribute of Power it is impossible to conceive other Attributes, thus distinguishing it from other Attributes. Accordingly this explanation did carry much weight in his own blessed opinion.

As to the word **تَتَّحاتُّ** as Jawhari says in the *Sihah*: **الحتّ: حكّ الورق من الغصن** i.e. *hatt* means the falling of leaves from the branch of a tree. He further says: **تَحاتَّ الشَّيءُ: تَناثَرَ** which (i.e. *tanathur*) also gives the meaning of falling and scattering. Now we shall explain the relevant points of the noble tradition in a number of sections.

## THE INDESCRIBABILITY OF GOD

It should be known that the indescribability of God, the Exalted, mentioned in this tradition refers to the characteristics of God given by some victims of ignorance and disputation from among the theologians (*mutakallimun*) and others, whose statements implied finitude (*tahdid*) and anthropomorphism (*tashbih*) or rather the very denial of the Divine Attributes (*tatil*). That such is the case is indicated by this phrase in the noble tradition, **وَمَا قَدَرُوا اللهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ**. Some traditions of the noble *al-Kafi*, in the chapter concerning prohibition on characterization (*nahy an al-tawsif*), also affirm this:

**بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ عَبْدِالرَّحِيمِ بْنِ عَيْتَكَ القَصِيرِ قَالَ: كَتَبْتُ عَلَى يَدَيْ عَبْدِالمَلِكَ بْنِ**

[1] Al-Fayd al-Kashani, *al-Wafi*, vol. v, p. 613.

أَعْيُنَ إِلَى أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: أَنَّ قَوْماً بِالعِرَاقِ يَصِفُونَ اللهَ بِالصُّورَةِ وَبِالتَّخْطِيطِ، فَإِنْ رَأَيْت – جَعَلَنِيَ اللهُ فِدَاكَ – أَنْ تَكْتُبَ إِلَيَّ بِالمَذْهَبِ الصَّحِيحِ مِنَ التَّوْحِيدِ؟ فَكَتَبَ إِلَيَّ: سَأَلْتَ، رَحِمَكَ اللهُ، عَنِ التَّوْحِيدِ وَمَا ذَهَبَ إِلَيْهِ مَنْ قِبَلَكَ فَتَعَالَى اللهُ الَّذِي لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ البَصِيرُ، تَعَالَى عَمَّا يَصِفُهُ الوَاصِفُونَ المُشَبِّهُونَ اللهَ بِخَلْقِهِ المُفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللهِ، فَاعْلَمْ، رَحِمَكَ اللهُ، أَنَّ المَذْهَبَ الصَّحِيحَ فِي التَّوْحِيدِ مَا نَزَلَ بِهِ القُرْآنُ مِنْ صِفَاتِ اللهِ جَلَّ وَعَزَّ فَانْفِ عَنِ اللهِ تَعَالَى البُطْلانَ وَالتَّشْبِيهَ. فَلا نَفْيَ وَلا تَشْبِيهَ. هُوَ اللهُ الثَّابِتُ المَوْجودُ، تَعَالَى اللهُ عَمَّا يَصِفُهُ الوَاصِفُونُ، وَلا تَعْدُوا القُرْآنَ فَتَضِلُّوا بَعْدَ البَيَانِ.

In *al-Kafi* (*al-Kulayni* reports) with his *isnad* from Abd al-Rahim ibn Aytak al-Qasir that he said: I wrote a letter to Abu Abd-Allah (a) which I sent through Abd al-Malik ibn Ayun, informing him that there are some people in Iraq who characterize God with form and features (*takhtit*). I wrote: May God make me your ransom, if you consider it fit, write to me the correct doctrine of Divine Unity. He wrote back to me, "May God be merciful to you, you have questioned me concerning *tawhid* and the belief held by a group of people over there. Exalted is God, and there is nothing like Him, and He is the All-hearing and the All-seeing. He is above the descriptions of the anthropomorphists (*mushabbihah*) who liken God to His creation and ascribe falsehoods to Him. May God have mercy upon you, know that the right doctrine of *tawhid* is that which has been revealed in the Quran concerning the Attributes of God, the Almighty and the Glorious. Negate *tatil* (the negation of Attributes) as well as *tashbih* in relation to God, the Exalted. Hence neither the Attributes are to be negated, nor God is to be likened to anything. He is God, the Self-Subsisting (*al-Thabit*) and the Existent (*al-Mawjud*), exalted is He above what the describers attribute to Him. Go not beyond the Quran,

> or you will go astray after the clear exposition [of the truth]."[1]

If one reflects properly on the contents of this noble tradition and its earlier and latter parts one comes to know that the prohibition concerning the characterization of God does not mean, as stated by some eminent traditionists,[2] that one should refrain absolutely from reflecting on the Attributes or describing the Attributes of God, because this tradition, like some others,[3] directs one to negate *tatil* and *tashbih* –something which is not possible without reflection on the Attributes and a complete knowledge of them. That which the Imam wants to say is that one should not attribute to God, the Exalted, anything that is not worthy of His sacred Essence, such as the attribution of form, features, and other characteristics of the creatures, which entail imperfection and contingency (*imkan*), and God is above these.

However, as to describing God, the Exalted, by attributes that suit Him, it has a sound discursive basis in the transcendental sciences (*ulum-e Aliyah*). Hence, it is something desirable, and the Book of God, the *Sunnah* of the Messenger (*s*) and the traditions of the *Ahl al-Bayt* are replete with it. The Imam himself has made a brief reference in this noble tradition to that right discursive approach, though any elaboration of it is outside the scope of our discussion.

As to the statement of Imam al-Sadiq (a) that one should not go beyond the Divine Scripture in one's descriptions of God, it is a prescription for those who are ignorant of the criterion concerning [metaphysical speculation about] the Attributes. It does not mean that it is impermissible to ascribe an attribute that is not mentioned in the Book of God. Accordingly that master, despite prescribing this for his addressee, mentions two Attributes and Names of God, "Self-subsisting" (*al-Thabit*) and "Existent" (*al-Mawjud*), which as such do not occur in the Divine Scripture.

True, if someone with an undeveloped intellect, full of conjectures and imaginings and unilluminated with the light of gnosis (*marifah*) and hidden Divine assistance, were to describe God with some attribute, he would inevitably fall either into the error of *tatil* and negation [of the Attributes] or

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[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. i, p. 100, *kitab al-Tawhid, bab al-nahy an al-sifah bi ghayr ma wasafa bihi nafsahu taala, hadith* 1.

[2] See al-Majlisi, *Mirat al-uqul*, vol. i, p. 346, *kitab al-Tawhid, bab nahy an al-tawsif, hadith* 1.

[3] Al-Shaykh al-Saduq, *Kitab al-Tawhid*, p. 31 ff., *bab* 2, in particular *hadith* 37.

into the perdition of *tashbih*. Hence it is essential for persons like us whose hearts are covered with thick veils of ignorance and self-love and perverse habits and dispositions to refrain from reaching out toward the world of the Hidden and abstain from carving out deities for ourselves, for whatever we may conceive in our imagination would be no more than our own creation.

However, it should not remain unsaid that when we say that such persons should not extend their hand towards the world of the Hidden we do not mean to recommend that they continue to remain in ignorance and egoism, nor, *naudhu bi'llah*, we call them to blaspheme His names, [regarding which it has been said:

﴿وَذَرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِدُونَ فِي أَسْمَائِهِ.﴾

*And leave those who blaspheme His Names*. (7:180)

Nor do we stop them from learning the transcendental teachings (*maarif*) which are the apple of the eye of the *awliya* of God and the basis and foundation of religion. Rather, this is itself a call for the removal of these dark curtains, and a warning that as long as man remains a victim of self-attention and the love of the world, a captive of mundane ambition, love of wealth and the self, and, like this author, a prisoner within the walls of nescience, error, egoism and narcissism, which are the thickest of all darkening veils, he would remain deprived from knowing the true teachings (*maarif*) and attaining to his real goal. If, God forbid, there were no hidden succor from God, the Exalted, and His perfect *awliya*, one would not know where his matter would ultimately end and to what destination his movement and journey would lead him.

اللَّهُمَّ إِلَيْكَ الْمُشْتَكَى وَأَنْتَ الْمُسْتَعَانُ.

My God, I address my complaint to Thee and seek Thy help![1]

We, wanderers of the realm of ignorance, lost in the wilderness of error, and self-seeking and self-centered amusements, who came into the dark world of *mulk* and nature and, like bats, did not open the eye of real vision to behold the fair reflection of Thy Beauty in the mirror of things, big and small, nor the manifestations of Thy Light throughout the levels of the

[1] Al-Shaykh al-Tusi, *Misbah al-mutahajjid*, "*Dua Kumayl*," p. 587.

heavens and the earths! Blind of eyes and insensate of heart, we have passed our days and spent a lifetime in ignorance and self forgetfulness. Should Thy unbounded grace and Thy infinite and effulgent mercy assist us not by lighting a spark within the heart and infusing a passion within the soul, we would languish forever in this perplexity of ours and get nowhere! But **مَا هَكَذَا الظَّنُّ بِكَ** (such is not what we expect of Thee)!! Thy favors preceded any worthiness [on our behalf] and Thy mercy is [ever] unearned. O God, out of Thy kindness succor us and guide us to the lights of Thy Beauty and Majesty and illuminate our hearts with the radiance of Thy Names and Attributes!

## IMPOSSIBILITY OF KNOWING THE REALITY OF THE NAMES AND THE ATTRIBUTES

It should be noted that the knowledge of the reality of the Divine Attributes and their encompassment as well as their nature is something whose summits lie beyond the reach of metaphysical proof (*burhan*) and whose kernel is beyond access to the yearning of the gnostics. That which has been said from the viewpoint of metaphysical proof in the speculative thought of scholars of formal metaphysics or in the discussions of the adept in the terminology of gnosis concerning the Names and the Attributes is correct and well-reasoned in accordance with their approach. However, learning (*ilm*) itself is a thick veil, and as long as it is not pierced with the succor of the All-Glorious and in the shadow of perfect piety, intense mortification, complete dedication and sincere supplications to the Lord, the lights of Divine Beauty and Glory do not appear in the wayfarer's heart, and the heart of the emigrant towards Allah does not succeed in attaining to the witness of the Unseen (*mushahadah-ye ghaybiyyah*) and the manifest presence (*hudur-e ayani*) of the manifestation of the Names and the Attributes, to say nothing of the manifestations of the Essence. These statements should not deter one from research and study, which are themselves reminders of the Truth, for it happens only rarely that the sacred plant of *marifah* grows and reaches fruition in the heart without the seed of the true sciences and their customary conditions. Hence one should not abstain at the outset from the pursuit of the sciences with due observance of all its prerequisites and auxiliaries, for it has been said:

**العُلُومُ بَذْرُ المُشَاهَداتِ.**

The sciences are the seed of (gnostic) disclosures.[1]

And should the sciences fail to produce for one a complete result in this world on account of certain obstacles, they would inevitably bring the desired fruits in the other worlds. But the main thing is the observance of their prerequisites and conditions, some of which were discussed in the exposition of certain foregoing traditions.

## KNOWLEDGE OF THE SPIRITUAL REALITY OF THE PROPHETS AND THE *AWLIYA* IS UNATTAINABLE THROUGH RATIONAL THOUGHT

It should be known that the knowledge of the spirituality and the station of perfection of the major prophetic figures and the infallible *awliya* (a) in general, and those of the Seal of the Prophets (*s*) in particular, is not attainable by means of thought or journey through the '*horizons and the souls*' (*afaq wa anfus*; 41:53). That, because those venerable personages belong to the Divine lights of the Unseen and are the complete manifestation and the manifest signs of Divine glory and beauty, having reached, in the spiritual journey towards God, the ultimate extremity of self-annihilation (*fana-e dhati*) and the ultimacy of ascent, to the point of '*two bows length or nearer*' (*qaba qawsayn aw adna*; 53:9), though the latter station belongs [specifically] to the Seal of the Prophets and other wayfarers in their ascension are followers of his sacred being. Here we do not intend to describe the nature of the journey of that sacred personage and the difference between his spiritual ascent (*miraj*) and the ascents of other prophets and *awliya* (a). For the sake of the present discourse we shall confine ourselves to mentioning one tradition pertaining to their luminosity, for the perception of their luminosity also requires an inner light and a divine gravitation:

الْكَافِي بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ جَابِرٍ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: سَأَلْتُهُ عَنْ عِلْمِ العَالِمِ فَقَالَ لِي: يَا جَابِرُ، إنَّ فِي الأَنْبِيَاءِ وَالأَوْصِيَاءِ خَمْسَةَ أَرْوَاحٍ: رُوحَ القُدُسِ وَرُوحَ الإِيمَانِ وَرُوحَ الحَيَاةِ وَرُوحَ القُوَّةِ وَرُوحَ الشَّهْوَةِ. فَبِرُوحِ القُدُسِ يَا جَابِرُ عَرَفُوا مَا تَحْتَ العَرْشِ إِلَى مَا تَحْتَ الثَّرَى. ثُمَّ قَالَ: يَا جَابِرُ

[1] Sadr al-Mutaallihin, *al-Asfar al-arbaah*, vol ix, p. 123; see also his *Tafsir al-Quran*, the exegesis of 87:17.

إِنَّ هَذِهِ الأَرْبَعَةِ أَرْوَاحٌ يُصِيبُهَا الحِدْثَانُ إلاّ رُوحَ القُدُسِ فَإِنَّهَا لا تَلْهُو وَلا تَلْعَبُ.

[In *al-Kafi* (al-Kulayni reports) with his *isnad* from Jabir, from Abu Jafar (a). Jabir says: I asked him concerning the knowledge of the Knowing One (*al-Alim*, i.e. an Imam.) He replied saying, "O Jabir, verily, there are five spirits in the prophets and the *awsiya* the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Faith, the Spirit of Life, the Spirit of Power, and the Spirit of Appetite. By the means of the Holy Spirit, O Jabir, they know everything from the Throne to underneath the earth." Then he added, "O Jabir, all the four spirits are subject to vicissitudes, but not the Holy Spirit, which does not engage in diversion or play."[1]

وَبِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي بَصِيرٍ قَالَ: سَأَلْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ عَنْ قَوْلِ اللهِ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى: ﴿وَكَذَلِكَ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ رُوحًا مِنْ أَمْرِنَا مَا كُنْتَ تَدْرِي مَا الْكِتَابُ وَلَا الْإِيمَانُ.﴾ قَالَ: خَلْقٌ مِنْ خَلْقِ اللهِ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى أَعْظَمُ مِنْ جِبْرَئِيلَ وَمِيكَائِيلَ، كَانَ مَعَ رَسُولِ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ يُخْبِرُهُ وَيُسَدِّدُهُ. وَهُوَ مَعَ الأَئِمَّةِ مِنْ بَعْدِهِ صَلَوَاتُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِمْ.

In *al-Kafi*, al-Kulayni reports with his *isnad* from Abu Basir that he said: I asked Abu Abd-Allah (a) concerning the statement of God, the Blessed and the Exalted, "*And thus have We inspired in thee (O Muhammad) a Spirit of Our Command. Thou knewest not what the Scripture was, nor what the Faith* (42:52)." He replied, "(The Spirit mentioned in the verse) is one of the creatures of God, the Blessed and the Exalted, greater than Gabriel and Michael, that was with the Messenger of God (*S*) and which used to inform and guide him, and after him it is

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. i, p. 272, *kitab al-hujjah*, *bab fihi dhikr al-arwah al-lati fi al-Aimmah*, *hadith* 2.

with the Imams (a)."[1]

From the first tradition one comes to know that the prophets and the *awsiya* (a) possess a sublime spiritual station which is called the Holy Spirit (*ruh al-qudus*; lit. 'the Spirit of Holiness'). By the means of that station they encompass all the particles of the universe epistemically and ontologically (*ihatah-ye ilmi-ye qayyumi*). In that spirit, there is no negligence, sleep, error, forgetfulness and other vicissitudes associated with contingency or any of the changes and deficiencies pertaining to the realm of *mulk*. Rather, it belongs to the world of the immaterial Unseen and the greater *Jabarut*. From the second tradition, one comes to know that that spirit is perfectly non-material and greater than Gabriel and Michael, who are the greatest inhabitants of the station of proximity of the *Jabarut*.

Yes, the *awliya*, whose natural form (*tinah*) has been fashioned by God, the Exalted, with the mighty hands of His own Beauty and Majesty, and manifested Himself, in the first manifestation of the Essence (*tajalli-ye dhati-ye awwali*), with all the Names, Attributes and the all-inclusive station of Unity (*maqam-e ahadiyyat-e jam*) in their perfect mirror, and initiated them into the reality of the Names and the Attributes in the Unseen privacy (*khalwatgah-e ghayb*) of the Divine Ipseity-the majesty of their glory and beauty is beyond the reach of the aspirations of the gnostics, and the summit of their perfection is beyond access to the gnostic endeavors of the people of the heart. And it is mentioned in a tradition of the Prophet (*s*):

عَلِيٌّ مَمْسُوسٌ فِي ذَاتِ اللهِ.

Ali is immersed in the Essence of God, the Exalted.[2]

In former days, this author, like a bat describing the world-illuminating sun, has described a modicum of the station of prophethood and *wilayah* in a separate treatise named *Misbah al-hidayah*.[3]

## THE WAITING OF 'THE SEVEN *HIJAB*S' MENTIONED IN RELATION TO THE PROPHET

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. i, p. 273, *kitab al-hujjah, bab al-ruh al-lati yusaddidu Allah biha al-Aimmah, hadith* 1.

[2] Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar*, vol. xxxix, p. 313, "*Tarikh* Amir al-Muminin," *bab* 88, *hadith* 5.

[3] *Misbah al-hidayah ila al-khilafah wal-wilayah*, written in 1349 H.

Several probable meanings have been suggested for these words of the noble tradition: **كَيْفَ يُوصَفُ عَبْدٌ احْتَجَبَ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ بِسَبْعٍ** and here we shall mention some of them.

First is the one suggested by the perfect gnostic and traditionist, the *marhum* Fayd (*m*). It is narrated in a tradition that there are seventy thousand veils of light and darkness for God, the Exalted; were He to remove them, the lights of Divine Beauty will burn down everything that His sight falls upon. Accordingly, it is probable that **كَيْفَ يُوصَفُ عَبْدٌ احْتَجَبَ اللهُ بِسَبْعٍ** means that [for the Prophet, most of] all those veils have been removed so that out of the seventy-thousand only seven remain.[1] According to this interpretation, the phrase involves an ellipsis and means **احتجب الله عنه بسبع** with God, the Glorious, as the active subject [of the verb **احتجب** ].

Although this interpretation is perhaps more appropriate than the other probable meanings, it is not indisputable. From the viewpoint of wording, a more appropriate expression for the description to convey such a sense would be: **ما احتجب الله عنه إلا بسبع** or **ما احتجب عن الله إلا بسبع** . As in accordance with this interpretation, the perfection of the Messenger and the impermissibility of describing him relates not to the presence of the seven veils but to the absence of the other veils, it would have been more appropriate to mention them. Moreover, from the viewpoint of meaning, since, apparently, these veils of light and darkness that belong to God, the Exalted, pertain to creation and not to the Names and the Attributes, it entails that there is a creature nearer [to the Divine Essence] than the sacred light of the Noble Messenger (*s*) whereas it has been established that his being is the nearest veil and the first creature and there are not even any veils of Names and Attributes for that master, as has been proved in its own proper place, and the sevenfold stations and mysteries of that master are also not a veil for himself.

A second interpretation is the one proffered by the erudite traditionist, the *marhum* Majlisi, may God elevate his station in the realm of sanctity, which he also narrates from some others. According to this interpretation, this sentence is mentioned in the way of introduction and intended to describe the Prophet through later sentences.[2] That is, it means to say: ‘How could be

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[1] Al-Fayd al-Kashani, *al-Wafi*, vol. v, p. 614, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab al-musafahah, hadith* 16.

[2] Al-Majlisi, *Mirat al-uqul*, vol. ix, p. 71, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab al-musafahah, hadith* 16.

described a servant, for whom God, Who is concealed from the creatures with seven veils, has made obedience in the earth like obedience to him in the heaven –like a king who is situated beyond seven curtains for his subjects, who cannot have access to him except through the mediation of a vizier appointed for them, and who sends a decree declaring that his command is mine.' And that which is meant by the sevenfold veils are the seven heavens from beyond which the revelations of God reach us through the Messenger. He has also mentioned another possible interpretation close to this one wherein the sevenfold veils are identified as the luminous veils of the Names.[1] Although this interpretation, like the former, is not contestable from the viewpoint of meaning, it is inadequate or rather more farfetched from the viewpoint of wording and description.

There is another probable interpretation of it which is much sounder and convincing and more appropriate to the occasion. However, the correctness of this interpretation depends on one of two things: either that **احتجب** has been used in a transitive sense in the sense of **حَجَبَ** or that it be permissible to make it transitive with a *ba'*; and in both the cases there be an ellipsis involving the object (*maful*). Assuming the propriety of one of these two matters mentioned, this is what is meant in accordance with this interpretation: 'How could a creature be described whom God, the Exalted, has concealed with seven veils, and for whose beauty and spirituality, which are on a par with the Divine will (*mashiyyah*), He has assigned seven veils extending from the plane of corporeal nature to the plane of the absolute mashiyyah, or from the plane of the corporeal realm of *mulk* of that master to the Unseen station (*maqam-e ghayb*) of his ipseity (*huwiyyah*). I could not find any instance in the lexicon and usage for the transitive meaning of although some scholars state that there is no impediment to making it transitive with a *ba'*.

وَالعِلْمُ عِنْدَ اللهِ، وَلَعَلَّ اللهَ يُحْدِثُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ أَمْراً.

> And all knowledge is with God, and perchance He may make something to come about hereafter.

## THE DELEGATION (*TAFWID*) OF THE AFFAIR TO THE

[1] Al-Majlisi, *Mirat al-uqul*, vol. ix, p. 71, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab al-musafahah, hadith* 16.

## MESSENGER OF GOD (*S*), AS INDICATED BY THIS AND MANY OTHER TRADITIONS

It should be known that the term *tafwid* is used in a special sense in discussions on *jabr* and *tafwid* (predestination and total human freedom).

According to this sense of *tafwid*, it means that God, the Exalted, has *naudhu bi'llah*, dissociated Himself in some respect from making any kind of dispositions in the world, right from the remotest extremity of creation pertaining to the Unseen immaterial spheres to the other end of the realm of creation and [corporeal] existence and delegated its administration to a being which is either a perfectly and completely spiritual and immaterial being possessing will and freedom of action, or a physical existent devoid of will and consciousness, which has a complete freedom of independent action therein.

*Tafwid* in this sense of delegation of Divine functions to someone, either in the matter of creation (*takwin*) or that of legislation (*tashri*) or on the plane of administration of the affairs of the creatures and their instruction (*tadib*), is impossible, and it implies the affirmation of deficiency and contingency in relation to the Necessary Being and negation of contingency and need in relation to contingent being.

Opposed to it is *jabr*, which means negation of causal efficiency in relation to the various planes of existence and an outright negation of the entire system of causes and effects. This notion is also absolutely false and contrary to firm metaphysical proofs. This is not restricted to the acts of legally responsible persons (*mukallafun*) as is generally known. Rather, the negation of *jabr* and *tafwid* in this sense is the operating *sunnah* of God in all the planes of being and in all the spheres of the Seen and the Unseen. However, the proof of this matter lies outside the scope of these pages.

The traditions negating *jabr* and *tafwid* are to be taken to apply to these meanings of the terms. [The term *tafwid*] has some other meaning in those traditions which do affirm *tafwid* [such as the following tradition of *al-Kafi* from Imam al-Baqir concerning the legislation of certain laws by the Prophet himself], or those which mention the delegation of all the affairs of the creatures [to the prophet], like the [second] tradition of *al-Kafi* given below.

In the first noble tradition of *al-Kafi* it is narrated with *isnad* from Imam al-Baqir (a) that he said, "The Messenger of God (*s*) prescribed the damages (*diyah*) for loss of an eye and life, and he forbade *nabidh* and every

intoxicant." Someone asked him, "Was that without anything being revealed to him?" The Imam replied, "Yes. That was in order [that God may] know those who obey the Messenger of God (*s*) and those who disobeyed him."[1]

In other such instances, the Prophet (*s*) added a number of *rakah*s to the daily prayers[2] and made fasting during the month of Shaban and on three days of every month *mustahabb*.[3]

The second tradition is as follows:

بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ زُرَارَةَ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أَبَا جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ وَأَبَا عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ يَقُولانِ: إِنَّ اللهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ فَوَّضَ إِلَى نَبِيِّهِ أَمْرَ خَلْقِهِ لِيَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ طَاعَتُهُمْ. ثُمَّ تَلا: ﴿وَمَا آتَاكُمُ الرَّسُولُ فَخُذُوهُ وَمَا نَهَاكُمْ عَنْهُ فَانْتَهُوا.﴾

(Al-Kulayni reports) with his *isnad* from Zurarah that he said: I heard Abu Jafar and Abu Abd-Allah (a) say, "Verily, God, the Almighty and the Glorious, has delegated the affair of His creatures to His Prophet, to see how they obey him." Then he recited this verse: *Take whatever the Messenger brings you and refrain from whatever he forbids you*."[4]

Eminent scholars have mentioned certain probable meanings and interpretations. One of them is that which the erudite traditionist al-Majlisi (*m*), relates from Thiqat al-Islam al-Kulayni and most of the traditionists and which he himself favors. The gist of it is that God, the Exalted, after that He made the Messenger so perfect that he would not opt for anything that is not in conformity with what is true and correct and nothing would enter his

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[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, *kitab al-hujjah*, *bab al-Tafwid ila Rasulillah* (s) *wa ila al-Aimmah fi amr al-din*, *hadith* 7**:**

عَنْ زُرَارَةَ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: وَضَعَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ دِيَةَ العَيْنِ وَدِيَةَ النَّفْسِ وَحَرَّمَ النَّبِيذَ وَكُلَّ مُسْكِرٍ. فَقَالَ لَهُ رَجُلٌ: وَضَعَ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ مِنْ غَيْرِ أَنْ يَكُونَ جَاءَ فِيهِ شَيْءٌ؟ قَالَ: نَعَمْ، لِيُعْلَمَ مَنْ يُطِيعُ الرَّسُولَ مِمَّن يَعْصِيهِ.

[2] *Wasail al-Shiah*, vol iii, *kitab al-salat*, *abwab adad al-farid*, *bab* 13, *hadith* 12, 14.

[3] *Wasail al-Shiah*, vol vii, p. 361, *abwab al-sawm al-mandub*, *bab* 28, *hadith* 5**:**

وَسَنَّ رَسُولُ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ صَوْمَ شَعْبَانَ وَثَلاثَةِ أَيَّامٍ فِي كُلِّ شَهْرٍ مِثْلَيِ الفَرِيضَةِ، فَأَجَازَ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لَهُ ذَلِكَ.

[4] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. i, p. 266, *kitab al-hujjah*, *bab al-Tafwid ila Rasulillah wa al-Aimmah fi amr al-din*, *hadith* 3.

blessed mind which is opposed to God's will, delegated to him the determination of some matters, such as adding to the number of *rakah*s in obligatory prayers, the determination of supererogatory matters relating to prayer and fasting and so on. This delegation (*tafwid*) was to make manifest the dignity and majesty of the station of that Master near God, the Glorious. However, his determinations and choices are not without inspiration and revelation, and after that Master prescribed something, the matter was affirmed by revelation?[1] *Marhum* Majlisi, may God elevate his station, also mentions other matters similar to this one, such as the matter of teaching, instructing, and administering the creatures, which has been delegated to him, or that of proclaiming and expositing of the *ahkam*, or refraining from that, in accordance with the exigencies of time –such as while observing *taqiyyah*– which have been delegated to him and the other *Masumun*?[2] However, in any of the two interpretations offered by these revered scholars the scope of *tafwid* has not been explained as a rational principle consistent with established principles. Moreover, the distinction between this *tafwid* and the *tafwid* which is impossible remains unexplained. Rather, that which is implied by their statements –especially those of *marhum* Majlisi (*m*)– is that it would be [affirmation of impermissible] *tafwid* to believe that someone other than God, the Exalted, can create, cause death, provide sustenance and give life, that one who holds such a belief is an unbeliever (*kafir*) and no rational person would doubt its being tantamount to apostasy. Moreover, they have considered the matter of miracles (*mujazat*) and miraculous feats (*karamat*) as being totally a result of answered prayer, wherein God is the agent of the occurrences. However, the *tafwid* of the teaching and instruction of creatures and the bestowal and withholding of *anfal* and *khums* and the laying down of certain laws is considered correct and proper. This topic is one of those which have rarely been clarified and hardly ever brought under a correct criterion. Mostly what they have done is to take an aspect of the matter and discuss it. This author, too, with his inadequate capacity and ineptitude and the poverty of his equipment and means cannot enter this perplexing valley by starting from the preliminaries. However, he is compelled to make a brief allusion in the way of a metaphysical conclusion, for the disclosure of truth is unavoidable.

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[1] *Mirat al-uqul*, vol iii, p. 144, *kitab al-hujjah, bab al-Tafwid ila Rasulillah* (*s*), *hadith* 1.
[2] *Mirat al-uqul*, vol iii, p. 144, *kitab al-hujjah, bab al-Tafwid ila Rasulillah* (*s*), *hadith* 1.

## BRIEF ALLUSION TO THE MEANING OF *TAFWID*

It should be known that there is no difference whatsoever between big and small matters in regard to the impossible *tafwid*, in the sense of total suspension of Divine Activity (*maghluliyyat-e yaddu'llah*) and independence of the efficiency of any creature's will and power. In the same way as the giving of life, the causing of death, creation, annihilation, and the transformation of one element into another cannot be delegated to any being, so also the delegation of the movement of a piece of straw to any creature is impossible, though it be an archangel, an apostle, or any other being from the non-material intellects and inhabitants of the highest *jabarut* to the realm of primal matter. All the particles of the universe are subject to the perfect Divine will and have no independence whatsoever of their own in any respect. All of them are needy and poor in their being, as well as in their ontic perfections, movements and pauses, power and will, and all their functions. Rather, they are sheer poverty and absolute need. Similarly, there is no distinction between major and insignificant matters in respect of God's sustaining power over being and the negation of independence of creatures and the manifestation and influence of the Divine will and its all-pervasiveness. In the same way as such weak creatures as we have the power to carry out feeble actions, such as our [bodily] movements and pauses and all the other activities, the elect of God and the non-material angels are capable of performing such great acts as giving life, causing death, providing sustenance, creation, and annihilation. The Angel of Death is encharged with taking life and his taking of life is not something like the fulfillment of prayer, and Israfil is encharged with the giving of life, which is not of the nature of a prayer answered, and these actions do not fall under invalid *tafwid*. In the same way, if a perfect *wali* and a potent pure soul –such as the spirits of the prophets and the *awliya* are– were to have the power to annihilate and create, to cause death and give life, a power given to them by God, the Exalted, it would not be an instance of impossible *tafwid* and should not be considered invalid. The delegation of the affair of the creatures to a perfect spirit whose intention is annihilated in the Divine intent and whose will is an image of the Divine will, and which does not will anything except what God wills and makes no move except that which is in accordance with the best system (*nizam-e aslah*), whether in creation and bringing into being or in legislation and instruction, that is not only not impossible but quite proper. In fact, this is not *tafwid*, as pointed out in the tradition narrated by Ibn Sinan to be cited in the next section.

In fine, *tafwid* in the first sense is not permissible in any matter and is contradictory to firm metaphysical proof. In its second sense, it is permissible in all matters. Rather, the system of the universe is not realized without the order of causes and effects:

أَبَى اللهُ أَنْ يُجْرِيَ الأُمُورَ إلاّ بِأَسْبَابِهَا.

> God does not make things happen except through their means and causes.[1]

It should be known that that which has been said here briefly is rational and in accordance with sound metaphysical proof and mystic teaching as well as in conformity with tradition. And God is the guide.

## THE STATION OF THE IMAMS (A)

Know that the pure and infallible *Ahl al-Bayt* (a) have certain lofty spiritual stations on the spiritual journey towards Allah whose epistemic apprehension is beyond human capacity and above the intellects of the people of reason and the intuitions (*shuhud*) of the gnostics. As is apparent from the noble traditions, they share the spiritual station of the Noble Messenger (*s*) and their immaculate lights were engaged in the glorification and praise of the Sacred Essence before the creation of the worlds.

الْكَافِي بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ سِنَانٍ قَالَ: كُنْتُ عِنْدَ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ الثَّانِي عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ فَأَجْرَيْتُ اخْتِلافَ الشِّيعَةِ. فَقَالَ: يَا مُحَمَّدُ، إِنَّ اللهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى لَمْ يَزَلْ مُتَفَرِّداً بِوَحْدَانِيَّتِهِ، ثُمَّ خَلَقَ مُحَمَّداً وَعَلِيّاً وَفَاطِمَةَ، فَمَكَثُوا أَلْفَ دَهْرٍ، ثُمَّ خَلَقَ جَمِيعَ الأَشْيَاءِ فَأَشْهَدَهُمْ خَلْقَهَا وَأَجْرَى طَاعَتَهُمْ عَلَيْهَا وَفَوَّضَ أُمُورَهَا إِلَيْهِمْ. فَهُمْ يُحِلُّونَ مَا يَشَاؤُونَ وَيُحَرِّمُونَ مَا يَشَاؤُونَ. وَلَنْ يَشَاؤُوا إلاّ أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللهُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى. ثُمَّ قَالَ: يَا مُحَمَّدُ، هَذِهِ الدِّيَانَةُ الَّتِي مَنْ تَقَدَّمَهَا مَرَقَ وَمَنْ تَخَلَّفَ عَنْهَا مُحِقَ وَمَنْ لَزِمَهَا لَحِقَ. خُذْهَا إِلَيْكَ يَا مُحَمَّدُ.

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[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. i, p. 183, *kitab al-hujjah*, *bab marifat Imam wal-radd ilayh*:
أَبَى اللهُ أَنْ يُجْرِيَ الأَشْيَاءَ إلاّ بِالأَسْبَابِ.

See also al-Saffar, *Basair al-darajat*, p. 26, *juz* 1, *bab* 4, *hadith* 2.

In *al-Kafi* [al-Kulayni reports] with his *isnad* from Muhammad ibn Sinan that he said: I was with Abu Jafar, the Second (a) when I mentioned before him the disagreement amongst the *Shiah*. Thereat he said, "O Muhammad, verily God, the Blessed and the Exalted, is ever unique in His Unity. Then He created Muhammad, Ali and Fatima. They remained for a thousand eons, then, He created all the things and made them witness their creation and decreed them to obey them, delegating their affairs (i.e. of the creatures) to them. Hence they permit whatever they will and forbid whatever they will and they will not anything except what God, the Exalted, wills.' Then he said, 'O Muhammad, whoever goes beyond this creed transgresses the bounds of right doctrine and whoever lags behind perishes, and whoever adheres to it attains to the truth. So hold on to it, O Muhammad!"[1]

**وَبِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنِ الْمُفَضَّلِ قَالَ: قُلْتُ لأَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: كَيْفَ كُنْتُمْ حَيْثُ كُنْتُمْ فِي الأَظِلَّةِ؟ فَقَالَ: يَا مُفَضَّلُ، كُنَّا عِنْدَ رَبِّنَا، لَيْسَ عِنْدَهُ أَحَدٌ غَيْرُنَا، فِي ظِلَّةٍ خَضْرَاءَ نُسَبِّحُهُ وَنُقَدِّسُهُ وَنُهَلِّلُهُ وَنُمَجِّدُهُ، وَمَا مِنْ مَلَكٍ مُقَرَّبٍ ولا ذِي رُوحٍ غَيْرُنَا حَتَّى بَدا لَهُ فِي خَلْقِ الأَشْيَاءِ. فَخَلَقَ مَا شَاءَ كَيْفَ شَاءَ مِنَ الْمَلائِكَةِ وَغَيْرِهِمْ. ثُمَّ أَنْهَى عِلْمَ ذَلِكَ إِلَيْنَا.**

In *al-Kafi*, al-Kulayni reports with his *isnad* from al-Mufaddal that he said: I said to Abu Abd-Allah (a), "How was your state when you were in the Shadows?" He replied, "O Mufaddal, we were with our Lord and there was none else except us in the Green Shadow: we glorified Him, called Him Holy and One and extolled Him. Besides us, there was neither any archangel nor any spirit, until when it appeared to God to originate the creation. Thereupon, He created whatever He will and howsoever He will of the angels and the other creatures.

[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. i, p. 441, *kitab al-hujjah*, *bab mawlid al-Nabi* (*s*) *wa wafatuh*, *hadith* 5.

Then He gave the knowledge of that to us."[1]

The traditions relating to the nature (*tinah*) of their bodies and the creation of their spirits and hearts, and those which speak of their having been given [the knowledge of] the Greatest Name (*ism-e azam*) and the sciences – bestowed upon them from the Unseen divine stores– of the prophets and the angels and what is above that and that which does not enter into the imagination of you and me, and that which is mentioned of their other excellences in the various chapters of reliable works of our associates, especially in the *Usul al-Kafi*, are such as to confound the intellect. No one can apprehend their mysteries and realities except their own sacred beings. In this noble tradition in whose exposition we are presently engaged, there is a reference to one of their excellences, which is the Verse of the Purification (*al-ayat al-tathir*; 33:33), which, in accordance with *mutawatir* traditions narrated through *Sunni* and Shii chains of transmission, was revealed concerning the Infallible *Ahl al-Bayt*. Those who are meant by "*ahl al-bayt*" in the noble verse, as affirmed by the consensus of the *Shiah* and abundant or *mutawatir* traditions narrated through non-Shii (*ammah*) chains of transmission, are the Household of infallibility (*ismah*) and purity (*taharah*). This is a point whose elaboration would be explanation of what is evident.

## REALITY OF *ISMAH*

In this, as well as other noble traditions, *rijs* [in verse 33:33] has been interpreted as doubt (*shakk*), and in some traditions, it is interpreted as freedom from all defects. A study of the exposition of some of the earlier traditions shows that the negation of doubt implies the negation of all inward and outward defects and, in fact, implies infallibility (*ismah*). That is because infallibility is not something contrary to free will, as in the case of matters relating to nature and instinct. Rather it is a spiritual state and a light acquired by means of the perfect light of certainty (*yaqin*) and total tranquility (*itminan*). The errors and sins that are committed by human beings are due to inadequate conviction and faith. The degrees of conviction and faith are so various as to be beyond description. The perfect certainty of the prophets and their complete tranquility, acquired through unmediated knowledge (*mushahadah-ye huduriyyah*), makes them immune to error. The conviction of Ali ibn Abi Talib (a) had brought him to the station that he declared:

[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. i, p. 441, *kitab al-hujjah, bab mawlid al-Nabi* (*s*) *wa wafatuh, hadith* 7.

"Even if I were to be given the whole world in order to unjustly deprive an ant of a grain, I would not do it."[1]

In any case, by God's pre-eternal design, they have been cleansed of *shirk* and doubt, purified from the impurities and defilements of the world of physical nature (*alam-e tabiat*) and the darkness of attachment to other than God, the Exalted, freed from the obfuscations of the ego and the thick sheaths of egoism and attention to other [than of God], becoming sacred divine lights and complete signs of the Lord, Who has made them purely and sheerly His own. Hence their stations are such as cannot be properly described and explained and, like the phoenix of the *ghayb* of Divine Ipseity, the peaks of their glory are beyond the reach of [gnostic] aspirations:

**عنقا شکار کس نشود دام بازگیر**

*Take thy net away for none can ever catch the phoenix*.[2]

## THE INDESCRIBABILITY OF FAITH

It should be known that *'iman* (faith) is also one of the spiritual perfections whose radiant reality can rarely be known by anyone. Even the faithful, so long as they remain in the world and in the darkness of nature, are unaware of the radiance of their faith and the dignity they have before God.

As long as man remains in this world, he becomes so accustomed to its conditions and habits that when he hears anything about the nobilities and bounties of the other world and its punishments and disappointments, he immediately compares them to a similar form in the realm of *mulk*. For instance, he compares the nobilities promised by God, the Exalted, to the faithful and the bounties He has prepared for them, and whose news has been conveyed by the prophets (a) to the gifts and honors received by men from princes and suzerains or something better and higher. He assumes the bounties of that world to be like those of this world, though somewhat more refined and superior. Such a comparison is altogether invalid. The bounties of that world, its delights, and fragrance cannot be truly imagined by us, and anything like them does not enter our minds. We cannot conceive how a

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[1] *Nahj al-balaghah*, *Khutbah* 215:

وَاللهِ لَوْ أُعْطِيتُ الأَقَالِيمَ السَّبْعَةَ بِمَا تَحْتَ أَفْلاَكِهَا عَلَى أَنْ أَعْصِيَ اللهَ فِي أَنْمُلَةٍ أَسْلُبُهَا جُلْبَ شَعِيرَةٍ مَا فَعَلْتُهُ.

[2] Hafiz:

**عنقا شکار کس نشود دام بازگیر کانجا همیشه باد به دست است دام را**

drink of the water of Paradise can possess all the imaginable and possible pleasures, each of which is distinct from the other, for the quality of any delight [of that world] has no similarity to the pleasures of this world.

In this noble tradition, there is a mention of one of the nobilities of the faithful which, in view of the people of gnosis and the people of the heart, are incomparable to anything and cannot be measured by any measure, and that is the statement of the tradition where it says, "Indeed, when the believer takes his brother with the hand on meeting him, God looks at them and sins are shed from their faces in the manner leaves fall from a tree." The same theme recurs in many other traditions, such as the following one:

الكَافِي بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَيْنِ إِذَا الْتَقَيَا فَتَصَافَحَا أَقْبَلَ اللهُ تَعَالَى عَلَيْهِمَا بِوَجْهِهِ وَتَسَاقَطَتْ عَنْهُمَا الذُّنُوبُ كَمَا يَتَسَاقَطُ الوَرَقُ مِنَ الشَّجَرِ.

> In *al-Kafi*, al-Kulayni reports with his *isnad* from Abu Jafar (a) that he said, "When the faithful meet and take one another by the hand, God, the Exalted, turns to them with His face, and their sins fall from them in the manner leaves fall from a tree."[1]

God only knows what inner luminosity and nobility is associated with this look of God, the Exalted, and this attention of His with His noble face, and what veils are removed from between the faithful servant and the lights of the Beauty of the Sacred Essence and what succor it provides to the faithful. However, one should know the reality and actual secret behind these nobilities and one should not be heedless of it. The heart's attention should be turned so that the act attains its perfect luminosity and a divine breath is blown into the act's body. That reality and secret truth lies in strengthening the bond of love and cordiality and renewal of the covenant of love and brotherhood for the sake of God. A great significance is attached to this point in the noble traditions and is also hinted at in traditions relating to this topic:

الكَافِي بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَيْنِ إِذَا الْتَقَيَا وَتَصَافَحَا أَدْخَلَ اللهُ يَدَهُ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمَا فَصَافَحَ أَشَدَّهُمَا حُبّاً لِصَاحِبِهِ.

[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. ii, p. 180, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab al-musafahah*, *hadith* 4.

> In *al-Kafi* [al-Kulayni reports] with his *isnad* from Abu Jafar (a) that he said, "When the faithful meet and take one another by the hand, God places His hand between their hands and shakes hand with the one who has greater love for his companion."[1]

It is stated in another tradition that when the faithful meet and shake hands, God, the Exalted, sends His mercy down upon them; nine-tenths of it belong to the one who has greater love for his companion, and if they should be equal [in love], the mercy envelopes them.[2] There are many traditions on this topic and that which have been cited will suffice.

And all praise is God's, at the beginning and the end.

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[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. i, p. 441, *kitab al-hujjah*, *bab mawlid al-Nabi* (s) *wa wafatuh*, p. 179, *hadith* 2.

[2] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. i, p. 441, *kitab al-hujjah*, *bab mawlid al-Nabi* (s) *wa wafatuh*, p. 181, *hadith* 14:

أَوَمَا عَلِمْتَ أَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنَيْنِ إِذَا الْتَقَيَا فَتَصَافَحَا أَنْزَلَ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ الرَّحْمَةَ عَلَيْهِمَا؟ فَكَانَتْ تِسْعَةً وَتِسْعِينَ لأَشَدِّهِمَا حُبّاً لِصَاحِبِهِ. فَإِذَا تَوَافَقَا غَمَرَتْهُمَا الرَّحْمَةُ.

31

# Thirty-First *Hadith*:
# THE KINDS OF HEARTS

بِسَنَدي الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلى ثِقَةِ الإِسْلامِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ الْكُلَيْنِي عَنْ عِدَّةٍ مِنْ أَصْحَابِنَا عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ خَالِدٍ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ هَارُونَ بْنِ الجَهْمِ عَنِ الْمُفَضَّلِ عَنْ سَعْدٍ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: إِنَّ الْقُلُوبَ أَرْبَعَةٌ: قَلْبٌ فِيهِ نِفَاقٌ وَإِيمَانٌ، وَقَلْبٌ مَنْكُوسٌ، وَقَلْبٌ مَطْبُوعٌ، وَقَلْبٌ أَزْهَرُ أَجْرَدُ. فَقُلْتُ: مَا الأَزْهَرُ؟ قَالَ: فِيهِ كَهَيْئَةِ السِّرَاجِ. فَأَمَّا الْمَطْبُوعُ فَقَلْبُ الْمُنَافِقِ، وَأَمَّا الأَزْهَرُ فَقَلْبُ الْمُؤْمِنِ إِنْ أَعْطَاهُ شَكَرَ وَإِنِ ابْتَلاهُ صَبَرَ. وَأَمَّا الْمَنْكُوسُ فَقَلْبُ الْمُشْرِكِ. ثُمَّ قَرَأَ هَذِهِ الآيَةَ: ﴿أَفَمَنْ يَمْشِي مُكِبًّا عَلَى وَجْهِهِ أَهْدَى أَمَّنْ يَمْشِي سَوِيًّا عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ﴾ فَأَمَّا الْقَلْبُ الَّذِي فِيهِ إِيمَانٌ وَنِفَاقٌ فَهُمْ قَوْمٌ كَانُوا بِالطَّائِفِ فَإِنْ أَدْرَكَ أَحَدَهُمْ أَجَلُهُ عَلَى نِفَاقِهِ هَلَكَ، وَإِنْ أَدْرَكَهُ عَلَى إِيمَانِهِ نَجَا.

With my continuous chain of transmission reaching up to the Thiqat al-Islam Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulayni (*r*) from a group of our companions, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid, from his father, from Harun ibn al-Jahm, from al-Mufaddal, from Sad, from Abu Jafar (a) that he said, “Verily, the hearts are [of] four (kinds) the heart that has [both] faith and hypocrisy in it, the heart that is inverted and upside down, the heart that has been sealed and is darkened, the heart that is clear and luminous (*al-azhar*).” [Sad], the narrator, says, “I asked

him, "What is meant by *al-azhar*'?" He replied, "it is a heart that has the likeness of a lamp. As to the heart that has been sealed, it is the heart of a hypocrite. The heart that is luminous is that of the believer, who is thankful when God gives him and is patient when subjected to tribulation. As to the heart that is inverted, it is the heart of the polytheist." Then he recited this verse: *What, is he who walks prone upon his face better guided* or *he who walks upright on a straight path?* (*67:22*) [Then he added]; "As to the heart wherein is faith and hypocrisy, they were a people who lived in Taif; so if one of them should die in the state of hypocrisy, he would perish, and should he die in the state of faith he would attain salvation."[1]

## EXPOSITION

*Mankus* means 'inverted' (*maqlub*). [The lexicographers] explain:

نَكَستُ الشَّيءَ أنْكُسهُ نَكساً: قَلَبتُه عَلى رأسِهِ.

(i.e. 'I inverted something' or 'I put it means upside down'). According to *al-Sihah*, **الولد المنكوس** means a baby whose feet (at birth) come out before its head (**الذي يخرج رجلاه قبل رأسه**). Closely associated is the meaning of **مكباً على وجهه** in the noble verse cited by the Imam, for *ikbab* means falling on one's face, and therein is a figurative indication of the fact that the hearts of the polytheists (*mushrikun*) are inverted and their course of spiritual movement is other than the Straight Path, as will be elaborated later on, God willing.

*Matbu* means 'sealed' (*makhtum*), and *tab* with *sukun* (of the *ba'*), means 'sealing' (*khatm*), and with its *harakah* (i.e. *taba*) means impurity (*danas*, *wasakh*). If it be taken in the sense of 'sealed,' it would figuratively mean that the word of truth and Divine truths do not enter such a heart and it does not accept them-not that God, the Exalted, deprives it of His special grace, although this sense is also true. However the aforementioned sense is more appropriate.

'*Azhar*' means 'white' (*abyad*) and 'luminous' (*mustanir*), as mentioned

[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. ii, p. 422, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab fi zulmah qalb al-munafiq, hadith* 2.

in *al-Nihayah*.[1] According to *al-Sihah* '*azhar*' means 'bright' (*nayyir*), and the moon is called *azhar*. Ibn al-Sikkit says: *al-azharan* means the sun and the moon. *Azhar* [when spoken of a man] means a white man, of a bright face, and such a woman is Zahra. To sum up, *azhar* means luminous and white; hence the sun and moon are called *azharan*; a white and luminous man is called *azhar* and a white and luminous woman is Zahra.

*Ajrad* is someone who has no hair on his body, and according to *al-Sihah*, *al-jurd* means a treeless (open) space. And this figuratively implies the absence of attachment to the world, or freedom from impurity and defilement. We shall expound that which needs explication in this noble tradition in the course of a preface and a few sections.

## REFORMING THE HEART

It should be known that the term 'heart' has various meanings in the terminology of the *Shariah*, and that of philosophy and *irfan*. To discuss that and the related terminological differences, as well as the ranks and degrees of the hearts, is outside the scope of this discourse and is not very beneficial for us. Therefore, it would be better to take the matter in its unexplicated simplicity, as is done in the noble tradition, and discuss that which is important and essential for us.

It should be known that the endeavor to reform the 'heart,' on whose wholesomeness and corruption depends one's felicity and wretchedness, is more essential than an inquiry into its meanings and delving into the technical jargon.[2] In fact, it often happens that intense attention to terms and preoccupation with words and that which relates to them make one totally oblivious of the heart and its reform. [As a result] one may acquire complete mastery in expounding the meaning and essence of the heart and the terminology of the metaphysicians (*hukama*) and the mystics (*urafa*) while one's heart, *naudhu bi'llah*, is one that is either inverted or sealed, like someone who knows well the beneficial and harmful properties of medicines

[1] *Al-Nihayah*, vol. ii, p. 321, under *z.h.r*.

[2] *Authors Note*: It should be known that that which is meant here is not that the science of ethics and the things which lead to the salvation and damnation of the soul are not necessary. Rather, what is meant it that that science is to considered as a mere preliminary to action, not as something of independent worth is whose pursuit and in collecting whose technical jargon one should spend a lifetime and be kept from ones real goal.

and is able to describe them with expertise without himself refraining from poisonous medicines or making use of the beneficial ones. Such a person perishes despite all his knowledge of pharmacology, which is unable to rescue him.

We said earlier[1] that all the sciences are absolutely practical and even the transcendental sciences have a practical aspect in them. Here that which we have to say is that the science of the states of the heart and that which relates to their health and sickness, reform and corruption, is something which is purely a preliminary step to action and the way of its reform and remedy. Its mere knowledge and understanding is not considered a human perfection. Hence one's main attention and goal should be the reform and refinement of the heart so that one may attain to ultimate spiritual felicity and to the higher transcendent stations. And even if one were well adept in the sciences, the subtleties and the realities, during the course of his journey through '*the horizons and the souls*', his main concern should be the discovery of his own spiritual states, so that if it were ruinous he should try to remedy it, and if oriented towards salvation, try to make it complete and perfect.

## THE BASIS FOR THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE HEARTS

One should know that this classification of the hearts made in this noble tradition is one that is non-detailed and general. Every heart has a different rank and degree, whether it is from the viewpoint of *shirk* and hypocrisy or that of faith and perfection. Apparently, this classification of the hearts is subsequent to acquisition and spiritual conduct, not one based on the nature and constitution of different souls, so as to conflict with traditions concerning *fitrah*, which state that all people are born with the nature of *tawhid* and that *shirk* and hypocrisy are accidental [and not innate in human nature]. However, even if it were on the basis of nature, that would be correct in accordance with one explanation which removes the contradiction and does not lead to predestination, which is something impossible. Nevertheless, that which is closer to metaphysical proof and more conducive to education is the first probability. And we said earlier[2] that as long as man remains in this world, which is the source of the tree of primal matter with its substantial, formal, and accidental changes and transformations, he can deliver himself

[1] See under the exposition of Twenty-sixth *Hadith*.
[2] See Seventeenth *Hadith*.

from all levels of deficiency, wretchedness, *shirk*, and hypocrisy and attain to the higher levels of perfection and spiritual felicity. And this is not contrary to the famous *hadith* that states:

الشَّقِيُّ شَقِيٌّ فِي بَطْنِ أُمِّهِ.

The wretched one is wretched in his mother's womb.[1]

for the meaning of the tradition is not that felicity and wretchedness are innate and incapable of change. Rather, this tradition accords with metaphysical proof, which has been set forth in clarity in its proper place, that wretchedness is derived from deficiency and non-being, and that felicity derives from being and its perfection. That which belongs to the immaculate tree of being is the sacred Divine Being in accordance with the ranks of causes and means-which is the way of the best of the latter generations and the most perfect of the early ones, the *Nasir* of the *millah* and *din*, i.e. Khwajah Nasir al-Din al-Tusi (*q*) or on the basis of manifesting and being manifested (*zahiriyyah* and *mazhariyyah*), unity and multiplicity –which is the way of the greatest of philosophers, Hadrat Sadr al-Mutaallihin. And that which derives from deficiency and non-being pertains to the vicious tree of quiddity, which is not the object of creation because of its being below creation (*jal*).

It may be said that the when the noble tradition says that felicity and wretchedness accompany one in the 'mother's womb' that which is meant is the world of corporeal nature (*alam-e tabiat*) which is the absolute mother, the womb and the cradle wherein nature nurtures its offsprings. That is, the expression 'mother's womb' is not to be taken in its ordinary sense, because felicity, being perfection and actuality, cannot belong to the primal souls (*nufus-e hayuliyyah*) except potentially. Since the literal import is that the felicitous are felicitous in act in the mother's womb, the contrary of the literal meaning has to be adopted. And since that which has been said is in accordance with metaphysical proofs, the noble tradition has to be interpreted solely in this sense or something equivalent to it. In any case any elaboration of this matter and discussion of its proof is outside the scope of this discourse, though at times the pen rebels and runs contrary to the set aim.

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[1] *Bihar al-anwar*, vol. v, p. 153, *kitab al-adl wal-maad, bab al-saadah wa al-shaqawah, hadith* 1, with a slight difference in wording.

## THE REASON WHY THE KINDS OF HEARTS ARE CONFINED TO THE FOUR

Some [scholars] have said that the reason for confining the kinds of hearts to four is that the hearts either possess faith or they don't. In the first case, the faith possessed pertains to all that the Messenger has brought or only to a part of that. The first is the heart of the believer (*mumin*) and the second is a heart wherein faith and hypocrisy are both present. In the second case, there is either an outward confession of faith or there isn't. The first is the heart of the hypocrite and the second that of a polytheist (*mushrik*).

This interpretation does not accord with the noble tradition, which implies that at times there is real faith in all that the Prophet (s) has brought and at times there is hypocrisy. Hence, if one were forced to interpret, it would be better to say that the heart either has faith in all that the Prophet (s) has brought or it doesn't. In the second case, there is either a pretence of faith or there isn't. In the first case, the faith is either stable and established in it or [it is unstable], believing at one time and disbelieving at other times, making a pretense of belief in the state of disbelief also. The concluding part of the tradition shows that the repentance of those who apostatize after belief, to revert to unbelief and hypocrisy, is accepted, even if it should occur repeatedly.

In another tradition of the noble *al-Kafi*, Imam Baqir (a) divides the hearts into three kinds: (1) the inverted heart (*qalb-e mankus*), wherein there is no good; that is an unbeliever's heart; (2) the heart wherein there is a black spot, in which there is a conflict between good and evil, each of which seek to overcome the other; (3) the 'open heart' (*qalb-e maftuh*) wherein are lamps whose lights will not go out until the Day of Resurrection; that is the heart of the believer.[1] This [division] does not conflict with the noble tradition [under exposition], for the first category mentioned in the above tradition includes the two kinds mentioned by the *hadith*, that is, the hearts of the polytheist and the hypocrite. That is because the hearts of all those three groups (i.e. unbelievers, polytheists and hypocrites) are inverted, and no inconsistency would be involved if inversion be [considered] the salient characteristic of the hearts of an unbeliever and polytheist and being seated the salient characteristic of the hypocrite's heart, and accordingly each of them is ascribed to either of them in the tradition.

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[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. ii, p. 423, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab zulmah qalb al-munafiq, hadith* 3.

## THE STATES OF THE HEARTS

We shall begin with the believer's heart so that the state of the other hearts be known in contrast. It should be known that in the transcendental sciences and the true teachings it has been clearly established that the reality of 'being' is the reality of 'light.' These two terms signify one simple reality without being attributable to any separate multiple aspects. It is also known that that which pertains to perfection and completion derives from being itself. This is one of the noble principles, and to anyone who has the honor to apprehend it the door to the higher teaching is opened. Our feeble spirits are unable to apprehend the reality of that Being without a help from the Hidden and a success predestined from eternity. It is also known that faith in God belongs to the category of knowledge and is one of the absolute perfections. Hence, being a perfection, it belongs to being itself and the reality of light and manifestation. And that which is other than faith and all that relates to it, is outside the category of the perfections of the human spirit, belonging to the darkness of non-being and quiddity.

## THE LUMINOSITY OF THE BELIEVER'S HEART

Hence it is known that the 'believer's heart is luminous. It is narrated in the noble *al-Kafi* from Imam al-Sadiq (a) that he said, "You see some people who are so perfect in eloquence that they don't err in [the use of a single letter like] *lam* or *waw*, while their hearts are darker than a gloomy night, and there are some people who cannot express what is in their hearts, yet their heart is radiant like a lamp."[1] Further, the believer's heart is on the Straight Path and his spiritual movement is on the middle path of humanity. That is because, firstly, he has not deserted his primal divine nature, fashioned in forty days by God, the Exalted, with the hands of His Beauty and Glory. Thus, he walks on the path of the nature of *tawhid*, oriented towards absolute perfection and consummate beauty. Inevitably, this spiritual movement from the plane of innate nature to the ultimate point of absolute perfection is without any crookedness, being as it is the path of spiritual rectitude and the middle inner way. However, all other hearts deviate from nature and the straight path. It is narrated of the Noblest Messenger (*s*) that he drew a

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[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, vol. ii, p. 422, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab zulmah qalb al-munafiq, hadith* 1:

عَنْ عَمْرٍو عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: قَالَ لَنَا ذَاتَ يَوْمٍ: يَجِدُ الرَّجُلَ لا يُخْطِئُ بِلامٍ وَلا وَاوٍ، خَطِيباً مُصْقِعاً، لَقَلْبُهُ أَشَدُّ ظُلْمَةً مِنَ اللَّيْلِ الْمُظْلِمِ. وَتَجِدُ الرَّجُلَ لا يَسْتَطِيعُ يُعَبِّرُ عَمَّا فِي قَلْبِهِ وَلِسَانِهِ، وَقَلْبُهُ يَزْهَرُ كَمَا يَزْهَرُ الْمِصْبَاحُ.

straight line on the ground drawing other lines on its either side. Then he said, "This one, the straight and middlemost line, is my path."[1]

## EXPLANATION OF THE BELIEVER'S BEING ON THE STRAIGHT PATH

Secondly, the believer is the follower of the Perfect Man, and since the Perfect Man is the manifestation of all the Names and the Attributes and subject to the Lordship of the Truth, the Exalted, by virtue of the All inclusive Name (*ism-e jami*), his being is not monopolized by anyone of the Names. Like his Lord, he is an all-inclusive being and in him, the manifestation of any of the Names is not overshadowed by that of any other Name. He possesses the station of middleness (*maqam-e wasatiyyat*) and the major mediation (*barzakhiyyat-e kubra*). Hence, his movement is along the straight and middlemost path of the All-inclusive Name.

All other beings are dominated by one of the encompassing or non-encompassing Names of which they are manifestations. Their origin and return is from and to that Name. The Name opposite to it is latent in it and plays no active role in it except from the aspect of the unity of all the Names-something whose explanation is not appropriate here. Hence God, the Exalted, at the station of the All-inclusive Name and the Lord of Man (*rabb al-insan*), is on the Straight Path, as He says:

﴿إِنَّ رَبِّي عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ.﴾

*Verily my Lord is on the Straight Path*. (11:56)

That means the station of middleness and all-inclusiveness (*jamiiyyat*) without the predominance of an Attribute over another and without the manifestation of one Name rather than that of another. A being subject to the Lordship of that Sacred Being at this station is also on the Straight Path, without any station or aspect overshadowing another station or aspect. Hence [the believer] in the course of his real upward ascension [i.e. prayer] and the ultimate point of proximity [to the Divine], after making an admission of servitude, after referring every worship and service by every worshipper to that Sacred Essence and ascribing all help in all stations of expansiveness and straits (*qabd wa bast*) exclusively to that Sacred Being, by declaring:

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[1] Sadr al-Mutaallihin, *Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim*, vol. iv, p. 52, exegesis of 2:256 (*ayat al-Kursi*); See also al-Majlisi, *Ilm al-yaqin*, vol. ii, p. 967.

﴿إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ.﴾

*Thee only we worship and Thee only we ask for help*. (1:5)

says:

﴿اهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ.﴾

*Guide us to the Straight Path*. (1:6)

This is the same path as that of the Lord of the Perfect Man, the former from the [active] aspect of manifesting (*zahirriyyat*) and Lordship (*rububiyyat*) and the latter from the [passive] aspect of being manifested (*mazhariyyat*) and creaturehood (*marbubiyyat*). None of the other existents and beings in movement towards Allah are on the Straight Path, but are deviant, inclining either towards (Divine) Grace and Beauty or towards Might and Glory. The faithful (*muminin*), since they are followers of the Perfect Man and walk in his footsteps, they journey by the light of his guidance and the lamp of his knowledge (*marifah*) in submission to the sacred being of the Perfect Man. They don't take any step by themselves and do not allow their intellect to meddle with the character of the spiritual journey towards Allah. For this reason, their path is also straight, and in the company of the Perfect Man their fulfillment (*wusul*) is subordinate to the fulfillment of the Perfect Man, provided that they protect their clear hearts from the workings of the devils, the ego, and egoism, and submit themselves totally in the journey to the Perfect Man and the station of ultimate prophecy.

## SOME STRATAGEMS OF SATAN

One of the evil workings of Satan is to make man turn the face of his heart away from the Straight Path and towards some coquettish person (*shukh*) or guru (*shaykh*). One of the great masterpieces of Satan, who whispers into the hearts of men, is that he, with gay and nonchalant discourse and deceptive manipulations, makes some spiritual gurus (*shuyukh*) enamored to some coquette, justifying this major sin, or an act of spiritual polytheism, on the pretext that if the heart were to have a singular attachment one can succeed faster in curtailing worldly attachments. At [other] times he turns some mindless coquette towards some demonic guru, one who seduces people or is rather a satanic highwayman. The pretext offered for this act of explicit polytheism (*shirk-e jali*) is that the guru is a Perfect Man and that only through the Perfect Man, one can attain to the realm of absolute

transcendence, which is not manifested except in the mirror of the guru. At the end of their lives, the two of them –that one with the memory of his favorite's cheek and this one with the inverted face of his guru– join the world of demons and Satans, and neither the former gets rid of his bestial attachment nor the latter reaches the goal through this blind alley.

It should be known that since the believer's journey is on a Straight Path and his heart is upright, his orientation is towards Allah and his way is the middle path. As a result, in that world too his path is clear and straight, his posture upright, and his appearance and character, his inward and outward, have a human form and shape. One can understand the character of the heart of the polytheists in contrast to this. As his heart deviates from the Divine nature, and strays from the central point of perfection and the hub of light and beauty, departing from submission to the absolute Guide and Guardian (*Wali*) and preoccupied with its own ego and egoism, the world and its ornaments, consequently in the other worlds also it is not resurrected with the straight human character and form but in the form of an animal with a head turned about. That is so because, in that world, form and shape are subject to the character of the heart and the outward reflects the inward and the shell is the image of the kernel. The matter of that realm is not averse to accepting the inward *malakuti* forms as in this world, and this thesis has been established in its proper place. Hence the hearts which are averse to the Truth and Reality and deviate from straight nature, oriented and directed as they are towards the world, their image too, like themselves, deviates from straightness, being inverted, facing the world and physical nature (*tabiat*), which is *the lowest of the low*. Perhaps, in that world some would walk on their faces with their feet upwards, some on their bellies, and some on their hands and feet, like animals, the way they in fact walked in this world:

﴿أَفَمَنْ يَمْشِي مُكِبًّا عَلَى وَجْهِهِ أَهْدَى أَمَّنْ يَمْشِي سَوِيًّا عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ.﴾

*Is he who goes inverted on his face more rightly guided or he who walks upright on a straight path?* (67:22)

It is possible that this metaphor in the metaphoric world becomes a reality in the realm of reality and manifestation of spirituality. In some noble traditions relating to the exegesis of this noble verse, the 'Straight Path' is interpreted as referring to Hadrat Amir al-Muminin and the Infallible Imams (a):

عَنِ الكَافِي بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي الحسن الماضي عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: قُلْتُ: ﴿أَفَمَنْ يَمْشِي مُكِبًّا عَلَى وَجْهِهِ أَهْدَى أَمَّنْ يَمْشِي سَوِيًّا عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ﴾ قَالَ: إِنَّ اللهَ ضَرَبَ مَثَلاً مَنْ حَادَ عَنْ وِلايَةِ عَلِيٍّ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ كَمَنْ يَمْشِي عَلَى وَجْهِهِ لا يَهْتَدِي لأَمْرِهِ. وَجَعَلَ مَنْ تَبِعَهُ سَوِيّاً عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ. وَالصِّرَاطُ الْمُسْتَقِيمُ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ.

In *al-Kafi*, al-Kulayni reports with his *isnad* from Abu al-Hasan al-Madi (Imam Musa al-Kazim) that Muhammad bin al-Fudayl says: When asked concerning the meaning of the verse, "*Is he who goes inverted on his face more rightly guided or he who walks upright on a straight path?*" the Imam replied, "Verily, God has struck a similitude [in this verse]: one who deviates from the *wilayah* of Ali (a) is like one who walks on his face and is not guided, and He has made one who follows him as one who walks upright on a straight path, and 'the Straight Path' is Amir al-Muminin (a)."[1]

In another tradition, the 'Straight Path' is explained as meaning Ali (a) and the rest of the Imams (a).[2]

Also, it is narrated in the noble *al-Kafi* from Fudayl that he said, "I entered the Holy Mosque (of Makkah) with Imam al-Baqir (a) and he was leaning upon me. Then he threw his blessed glance upon the people as we stood at the Door of Bani Shaybah. Then he said, 'O Fudayl, they used to circumambulate in this manner [even] during the days of the *Jahiliyyah*! They neither recognized any truth nor followed any creed. O Fudayl, look at them, they walk inverted on their faces! May God damn them, they are a disfigured creation walking on their faces." Then he recited the noble verse,

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[1] *Al-Kafi*, vol. i, p. 432, *kitab al-hujjah*, *bab fihi nukat wa nutaf min al-Tanzil fi al-Wilayah*, *hadith* 91.

[2] *Bihar al-anwar*, vol. xxiv, p. 15, *kitab Imamah*, *bab* 24, *hadith* 17:

عَنْ حَمْرَانَ قَالَ سَمِعْتُ أَبَا جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ يَقُولُ (عَنْ) قَوْلِ اللهِ تَعَالَى: ﴿وَأَنَّ هَذَا صِرَاطِي مُسْتَقِيمًا فَاتَّبِعُوهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا السُّبُلَ فَتَفَرَّقَ بِكُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ.﴾ قَالَ: عَلِيُّ بْنُ أَبِي طَالِبٍ وَالأَئِمَّةُ مِنْ وُلْدِ فَاطِمَةَ هُمْ صِرَاطُ اللهِ. فَمَنْ أَبَاهُمْ سَلَكَ السُّبُلَ.

"*Is he who goes inverted on his face more rightly guided or he who walks upright on a straight path*." Then he added, "By God, that means Ali (a) and his *awsiya* (a)."[1]

In the foregoing, we have explained how the journey and the movement of the Perfect Man are on the Straight Path. However, the exposition of the matter that the Perfect Man is the Straight Path itself is beyond our purpose in this discourse.

## THE HYPOCRITE'S HEART AND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN IT AND THE BELIEVER'S HEART

The states of the heart of the believer and the polytheist-and even that of the unbeliever-became known from the exposition in the foregoing section. A comparison also discloses the state of the hypocrite's heart. That is because the believer's heart has nor departed from its original innocent and clear nature and it naturally accepts any truths relating to faith and the true teaching. The harmony and compatibility between the nourishment-which consists of the truths and the teachings –and the nourished one-which is the heart in its state of original nature –is preserved. Hence in another tradition of the noble *al-Kafi*, the believer's heart has been said to be 'open' (*maftuh*), and although this 'opening' may refer to one of the 'threefold openings' (*futuhat-e thalathah*),[2] this meaning is also appropriate.

However, as the hypocrite's heart has obscurities and darkness formed in it contrary to the human nature, such as ignorant prejudices (*taassubha-ye jahiliyyat*), blameworthy moral traits, vanity, ambition, and other qualities contrary to the [primal] nature, it is closed and sealed. It is not at all receptive to the word of truth and its tablet is like a page of paper that is totally blackened, on which nothing can be inscribed. Its pretense of religiosity, arising from its satanic character, is a means to secure worldly benefit and advancement in mundane matters.

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[1] *Rawdat al-Kafi*, p. 288, *hadith* 434:

عَنِ الْفُضَيْلِ قَالَ: دَخَلْتُ مَعَ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ الْمَسْجِدَ الْحَرَامَ وَمُتَّكِئٌ عَلَيَّ فَنَظَرَ إِلَى النَّاسِ وَنَحْنُ عَلَى بَابِ بَنِي شَيْبَةَ فَقَالَ: يَا فُضَيْلُ، هَكَذَا كَانَ يَطُوفُونَ فِي الْجَاهِلِيَّةِ! لا يَعْرِفُونَ حَقّاً وَلا يَدِينُونَ دِيناً! يَا فُضَيْلُ، انْظُرْ إِلَيْهِمْ مُكِبِّينَ عَلَى وُجُوهِهِمْ، لَعَنَهُمُ اللهُ مِنْ خَلْقٍ مَسْخُورٍ بِهِمْ مُكِبِّينَ عَلَى وُجُوهِهِمْ. ثُمَّ تَلا هَذِهِ الآيَةَ: ﴿أَفَمَنْ يَمْشِي مُكِبًّا عَلَى وَجْهِهِ أَهْدَى أَمَّنْ يَمْشِي سَوِيًّا عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ﴾ يَعْنِي وَاللهِ عَلِيّاً عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ وَالأَوْصِيَاءَ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلامُ.

[2] These are: *al-fath al-qarib*, *al-fath al-mubin*, and *al-fath al-mutlaq*.

It should be known that the hearts of the polytheist and the hypocrite are both inverted and sealed, as is clear and evident. But the attribution of one of these qualities to each of them in particular is for the reason that, as the hearts of the polytheists are turned in worship towards other than That which is Absolute Perfection, they have two properties and characteristics: one is sincere humility [in front of the object of worship] and another is the deficiency and obfuscation created by this humility, which is diverted towards imperfect beings and creatures. Hence, their hearts are inverted and this is their predominant characteristic. As to the hypocrite, he is either a polytheist in reality –and in this respect he shares equally with the polytheists the quality of inversion of the heart– besides possessing an additional quality [i.e. hypocrisy], or he is an unbeliever in reality and possesses no religiosity. Although his heart too is inverted, it has another quality, which is predominant. That additional quality is his outward pretense of following the truth. He enters the congregation of the followers of the Truth and hears all the truthful preaching that is heard by the believers. Yet, while the believer absorbs them due to his inner purity and open heart, the hypocrite fails to receive them due to the darkness and obscurities of his heart, which is closed and sealed.

The reason for singling out for mention from among the attributes of the believer the two characteristics, of gratitude on being favored with gifts and patience in trials is the salient character of these two among the believer's qualities. These are two of the major virtues from which other virtues branch out, and we have alluded to this in the exposition of some of the earlier traditions.[1] Further, the tradition refers to two of the Divine Attributes, of Glory and Beauty, or Might and Grace, each of which is manifested in the condition of tribulation and the condition of being well provided. And although tribulation belongs to the Attributes of Grace, but since it manifests through Might, it is reckoned as belonging to it, as mentioned in the discussions on Divine Names and Attributes. The believer always observes the duties of servitude between the two manifestations.

## NEGLECT OF THE TRUTH RESULTS IN THE INVERSION OF THE HEART

From the foregoing discussion it is known that the souls, though they

[1] See Fifteenth, Sixteenth, and Twenty-first *Hadith*.

should have belief in God and Resurrection, become inverted if they are totally absorbed by attention towards the world and preoccupied with mundane advancements while being neglectful of God. The criterion in respect of the inversion of the heart is the neglect of God and attention to the world and its cultivation. Such belief is either not faith, as mentioned in the exposition of some of the earlier traditions,[1] or is an insignificant and inadequate faith that is not inconsistent with the inversion of the heart. In fact, one who makes a pretense of belief in transcendence and Resurrection but has no trepidation arising from such a belief and whom this belief does not lead to act with his bodily members, such a one is to be considered as belonging to the hypocrites, not as one of the believers. Possibly this sort of apparent believers, like the people of Taif, who in the noble tradition are mentioned as being typical of those who are believers at one time and hypocrites at another time, may altogether lose this hollow faith which has no sovereignty in the realm of their physical, bodily existence (*mulk*). They might leave this world in a state of complete hypocrisy to be resurrected amongst the hypocrites. This is one of the crucial matters to which our weak spirits must attach great importance, taking care that the effects of faith become established in our manifest and hidden, inner, and outer, being. In the same way as we claim to possess faith in the heart, we should make our outward being also subject to its authority, so that the roots of faith become established in our hearts, not to be destroyed by any kind of obstacle or hindrance, transformation and change, so that this Divine trust of a celestial and pure heart, fashioned with its Divine nature, is returned to the Sacred Being unaffected and unsoiled by the workings of Satan and hands of treachery. And to Allah belongs all praise, at every beginning and end.

[1] See Ninth, Twentieth and Twenty-sixth *Hadith*.

32

# Thirty-Second *Hadith*: CONVICTION IN FAITH

بالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إلَى مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ الكُلَيْنِي عَنِ الحُسَيْنِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنِ الْمُعَلَّى بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنِ الحَسَنِ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ الوَشَّاءِ عَن عَبْدِاللهِ بْنِ سِنَانٍ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: مِنْ صِحَّةِ يَقِينِ المَرْءِ الْمُسْلِمِ أنْ لا يُرْضِيَ النَّاسَ بِسَخَطِ اللهِ وَلا يَلُومَهُمْ عَلَى مَا لَمْ يُؤْتِهِ اللهُ. فَإنَّ الرِّزْقَ لا يَسُوقُهُ حِرْصُ حَرِيصٍ وَلا يَرُدُّهُ كَرَاهِيَةُ كَارِهٍ. وَلَوْ أنَّ أَحَدَكُمْ فَرَّ مِنْ رِزْقِهِ كَمَا يَفِرُّ مِنَ المَوْتِ لأَدْرَكَهُ رِزْقُهُ كَمَا يُدْرِكُهُ المَوْتُ. ثُمَّ قَالَ: إنَّ اللهَ بِعَدْلِهِ وَقِسْطِهِ جَعَلَ الرَّوْحَ وَالرَّاحَةَ فِي اليَقِينِ وَالرِّضَا، وَجَعَلَ الهَمَّ وَالحُزْنَ فِي الشَّكِّ وَالسَّخَطِ.

With my continuous chain of transmission reaching up to Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulayni, from al-Husayn ibn Muhammad, from al-Mualla ibn Muhammad, from al-Hasan ibn Ali al-Washsha, from Abd-Allah ibn Sinan, from Abu Abd-Allah (a) that he said, "Among the things pertaining to the soundness of a Muslim's certitude [in faith] is that he would not please people while displeasing God, nor blame them for something that God has not given him. For, verily, [God's] *rizq* (provision, sustenance) is not brought about by anybody's greed, nor is it withheld by anyone's disapproval, and were anyone of you to flee from his *rizq* like he flees death, his *rizq* would overtake him in the way he is overtaken by death." Then he added, "Indeed God, with His justice and fairness, has put joy and comfort in certainty (*yaqin*) and

satisfaction (*al-rida*) and He has put sorrow and grief in doubt and dissatisfaction.[1]

## EXPOSITION

Al-Jawhari says, *sakhat* (vowelized like *faras*) and *sukht* (vowelized like *qufl*) are the opposite of satisfaction (*rida*). Hence, *sakhita* means '*ghadiba*' (i.e. 'he became angry' or 'indignant') and such a one is *sakhit* (angry). *Al-qist*, with *kasrah* of the *qaf*, means justice (*adl*); hence its mention along with *adl* is for the sake of elucidation.

*Al-rawh* and *al-rahah* are synonymous, meaning comfort, as mentioned by al-Jawhari. Hence their mention alongside is for the sake of elucidation. Or that *rawh* means the peace of the heart and *rahah* signifies the ease of the body, as stated by Majlisi.[2]

As to *al-hamm* and *al-huzn*, al-Jawhari considers them as synonymous, on which basis their mention by side of one another would be elucidatory. And Majlisi says that *hamm* probably means the agitation felt by the soul at the time of experiencing (doubt and dissatisfaction), and *huzn* is the sorrow and anxiety felt after its passing away.[3]

## SECTION

As to the statement **وَلا يَلُومَهُمْ عَلَى مَا لَمْ يُؤْتِهِ اللهُ** it has been considered to have two probable interpretations. First, that he would not blame the people and complain for their refraining from giving him something, as it is a matter subject to Divine power and providence, and God, the Exalted, has not decreed that gift as part of his provision, and one who is a man of conviction knows that it is a an act of Divine providence and so he would not blame anyone. This interpretation has been suggested by the *muhaqqiq*, *Fayd*[4] (*m*) and the learned traditionist, Majlisi, has also affirmed it.[5]

The honorable Fayd (*m*) has also suggested another interpretation, which is that one would not blame them for something God, the Exalted, has not given them, for God, the Exalted, has gifted the people differently and no one

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[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, ii, p. 57, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab Fadl al-yaqin, hadith* 2.

[2] Al-Majlisi, *Mirat al-uqul*, vii, 359, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab Fadl al-yaqin, hadith* 2.

[3] Al-Majlisi, *Mirat al-uqul*, vii, 359, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab Fadl al-yaqin, hadith* 2.

[4] Al-Fayd al-Kashani, *al-Wafi*, iv, 269.

[5] *Mirat al-uqul*, vii, 356, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab Fadl al-yaqin, hadith* 2.

should be blamed for it [i.e. for not possessing something]. And this is like the tradition, which states that "Had the people known how God has created men, no one would blame another."[1] The honorable traditionist Majlisi (*m*) has said, "The improbability of this interpretation is not hidden, especially on consideration of the following explanatory phrase:

فَإِنَّ الرِّزْقَ لا يَسُوقُهُ...

...for, verily, [God's] provision is not facilitated by...[2]

In the opinion of this author, the second interpretation is more appropriate than the first one, especially in view of the aforementioned explanatory phrase. That is because one may blame people in the state of need and straitened livelihood only if their livelihood (*rizq*) is under their own control and one's effort and endeavor are the [efficient] means of its increase. Then one may say [to another], "[Look] I have tried and made effort, whereas you have not done so, and therefore you are afflicted with straitened livelihood." However, the people of certainty know that livelihood is not obtained by one's greed and effort, and so they do not blame others.

## RECONCILING TRADITIONS CONCERNING LIVELIHOOD BEING APPORTIONED AND TRADITIONS EXHORTING EFFORT

It should be known that the like of these noble traditions whose literal import is that the *rizq* is apportioned and predetermined –something which is also indicated by the noble verses of the Quran– do not contradict the traditions which command one to seek livelihood and exhort one to make effort in one's occupation and trade, and even consider the lack of effort as reprehensible and blameworthy. Thus, they consider one who fails to make an effort to seek livelihood as one whose prayers are not answered and whom God does not provide with livelihood. There are many traditions on this topic and it will suffice here to cite one *hadith*:

عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ الحَسَنِ شَيْخِ الطَّائِفَةِ قُدِّسَ سِرُّهُ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ عَبْدِالعَزِيزِ قَالَ: قَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِاللهِ الصَّادِقِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: مَا فَعَلَ عُمَرُ بْنُ مُسْلِمٍ؟ قُلْتُ:

[1] *Al-Wafi*, iv, 270.

[2] *Mirat al-uqul*, vii, 357, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab Fadl al-yaqin*, *hadith* 2.

جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ، أَقْبَلَ عَلَى العِبَادَةِ وَتَرَكَ التِّجَارَةَ. فَقَالَ: وَيْحَهُ! أَمَا عَلِمَ أَنَّ تَارِكَ الطَّلَبِ لا يُسْتَجَابُ لَهُ؟ إِنَّ قَوْماً مِنْ أَصْحَابِ رَسُولِ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ لَمَّا نَزَلَتْ: ﴿وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ﴾ أَغْلَقُوا الأَبْوَابَ وَأَقْبَلُوا عَلَى العِبَادَةِ وَقَالُوا: قَدْ كُفِينَا. فَبَلَغَ ذَلِكَ النَّبِيَّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ فَأَرْسَلَ إِلَيْهِمْ فَقَالَ: مَا حَمَلَكُمْ عَلَى مَا صَنَعْتُمْ؟ فَقَالُوا: يَا رَسُولَ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ، تُكُفِّلَ لَنَا بِأَرْزَاقِنَا فَأَقْبَلْنَا عَلَى العِبَادَةِ. فَقَالَ: إِنَّهُ مَنْ فَعَلَ ذَلِكَ لَمْ يُسْتَجَبْ لَهُ. عَلَيْكُمْ بِالطَّلَبِ.

From Muhammad ibn al-Hasan, the Shaykh at-Taifah al-Tusi (*q*) who narrates with his *isnad* from Ali ibn Abd al-Aziz that he said, "Abu Abd-Allah (a) asked me, 'What is Umar ibn Muslim doing?' I said, 'May I be made your ransom, he has devoted himself to worship and he has abandoned his trade.' He said, 'Woe to him! Doesn't he know that the prayer of one who abandons the search (of livelihood) is not accepted? Indeed a group of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah (*S*) locked their doors and turned to worship when this verse was revealed, "*And whosoever fears God, He will appoint for him a way out, and He will provide for him whence he never reckoned* (65:3)." When the Prophet (*S*) came to hear about it, he summoned them and asked them, "What prompted you to do what you have done." They said, "O Messenger of Allah, God has guaranteed our livelihood and so we have turned to worship." He said to them: "The prayer of one who does that would not be accepted. You ought to seek livelihood."'"[1]

The reason for the absence of contradiction between the traditions is that livelihood, and all matters for that, are subject to God's power even after one's effort. Our effort is not an independent agent in the acquisition of livelihood. Rather, to make effort is a duty of the creatures, and the

[1] Al-Hurr al-Amili, *Wasail al-Shiah*, xii, 15, *kitab al-Tijarah, abwab muqaddamat al-Tijarah, hadith* 7.

ordainment of the affairs and all apparent and non-apparent means, most of which are beyond the control of the creatures, is by the determination of the Exalted Creator. Hence a human being of sound conviction and informed of the courses of matters –while he does not refrain from effort and performs his duties as prescribed by reason and revealed law, and not closing the door of effort with false excuses– still considers everything as being derived from the sacred Divine Being and does not consider anything as having any efficiency on the plane of being and its perfections. The seeker, the seeking, and the sought derive from Him. That which this noble tradition says, that the man of sound conviction does not blame anyone for the lack of increase in the people's livelihood, means that if they make the usual amount of effort they are not to be blamed. Moreover, to blame those who do not make the effort is preferable in order to induce them to effort–a point which is asserted in the noble traditions.

In fine, this theme is one of the ramifications of *jabr* and *tafwid* (predestination and free will) and one who has studied that issue can discover the underlying fact of the matter, whose elaboration is beyond the scope of our discussion.

## THE SIGNS OR SOUNDNESS OR CONVICTION

In this noble tradition, two things are considered the signs of the soundness of one's conviction. First, that one should not seek the pleasure of the people at the cost of God's displeasure and wrath. Second, one should not blame people for what God has not given them. These two are the fruits of perfect conviction, and their opposite qualities are due to the weakness of conviction and an ailing faith. In these pages, whenever appropriate, we have explained faith, and conviction, and their fruits. Here, too, we shall briefly mention these two qualities in their state of soundness and health as well as their opposite condition.

One should know that a man seeks the pleasure and satisfaction of people and tries to win their hearts and to be in their good graces because he considers them to be effective in matters that are of his interest. For example, one who loves money and wealth feels humble before the rich; he flatters them and is obsequious in front of them. Those who seek position and outward honor, flatter the subordinates and obsequiously seek to win their hearts somehow or another. The same thing goes on in a circle. The subordinates flatter men of position and the seekers of position flatter the

mean subordinates, except those who, on the either side of the matter, have trained themselves through spiritual discipline and seek the pleasure of God. The world and its adornments do not shake them, and they seek the pleasure of God in leading, and seek God and truth in following.

## THE TWOFOLD CLASSES OF THE PEOPLE

The people of the world are briefly divisible into two classes. They are either those whom certitude has brought to the point that they see all the outward means and apparent agents as being subject to the perfect and eternal will of the Necessary Being. They see and seek nothing except God, and they believe that he is the sole Master and Agent in the world and the Hereafter. Finding a certitude unmarred by deficiency, doubt, and hesitation, they have true faith in one of the noble verses of the Quran, which says:

﴿قُلْ اللَّهُمَّ مَالِكَ الْمُلْكِ تُؤْتِي الْمُلْكَ مَنْ تَشَاءُ وَتَنْزِعُ الْمُلْكَ مِمَّنْ تَشَاءُ.﴾

*Say: O God, Master of all sovereignty, Thou givest sovereignty to whom Thou wilt, and seizest sovereignty from whom Thou wilt…* (3:26)

They consider God, the Exalted, the Master of the kingdom of being and all gifts to be from that Sacred Being. They consider all the ebbs and flows of being and all the existential perfections to be derived from the Sacred Being in accordance with the [best] order [of existence] and the [universal] good. Of course, the doors of gnosis are opened for such persons and their hearts become divine. They do not attach any worth to the pleasure and displeasure of the people and seek nothing except God's good pleasure. Their eager eyes do not seek anything except God and in their hearts and with their entire being they murmur the melody, "My God, when You grant us, who can intercept Your favor? And should You deprive us [of anything], who can restore it to us?" Hence, they close their eyes to the people, their favors and their world, opening the eyes of their need on God, glorious is His Majesty. Such persons would never exchange the displeasure of God, the Exalted, with the pleasure of the entire order of beings, as stated by the Commander of Faithful (a). While they attach no significance to anything except God, the Exalted, and consider all existents to be in need of Allah, nevertheless, they view all with the eyes of wonder, mercy and compassion, and do not blame anyone for any matter except in order to reform and educate him. Hence such were the prophets (a) who viewed everything as belonging to God and as

manifestations of His Beauty and Glory. They did not view God's creatures except with love and compassion, not blaming anyone in their hearts for any inadequacy and weakness, though they did blame them outwardly for the sake of the general good and the reform of the human family. This was among the fruits of the immaculate tree of certitude and faith and their understanding of the Divine laws.

However, as to the second group, they are those who are oblivious of God, and if perchance they attend, it is an inadequate attention and an incomplete faith. As a result, since attention to multiplicity and the outward causes and means has made them neglectful of the Cause of all causes, they seek the pleasure of the creatures. At times, they are such that they seek to acquire the goodwill of the weakest of creatures while preparing the means of God's displeasure and wrath. Thus they are led to accommodate to the sinners, or neglect the duty of *amr bi'l-maruf* and *nahy an al-munkar* when conditions call for its performance, or they give decrees (*fatwa*) permitting what is unlawful, or are guilty of false testimony, or backbite and slander the faithful to please worldly people and men of outward status and position. All such conduct is due to the weakness of faith, or rather it constitutes a degree of idol worship (*shirk*). Such a view makes man prone to many fatal traits, including those mentioned in this noble tradition. Such a person has a bad opinion of God's servants and he treats them with enmity and hostility, blaming them and vilifying them in matters, and so on.

## THE VIEWS OF THE *MUTAZILAH* AND THE *ASHAIRAH* AND THE CORRECT POSITION

Majlisi, the traditionist (*m*) in *Mirat al-uqul*, has a discussion under this noble tradition concerning whether the *rizq* apportioned by God, the Exalted, is confined to what is lawful and whether it includes the unlawful also. He has cited the conflicting opinions of the Asharites and the Mutazilites on this issue and the recourse taken by the two sides to traditions and narrated texts. He considers the Imami position to be in accord with the view of the Mutazilites that the apportioned sustenance (*rizq-e maqsum*) does not include the unlawful and is limited to the lawful. He also cites the arguments of the *Mutazilah* that take recourse to the literal meaning of some verses and traditions and are based on the literal meaning of '*rizq*' –as is the practice of

the Asharites and the Mutazilites.[1] He has approved of the arguments of the *Mutazilah* and, apparently, finds their statements to be in accord with the dominant opinion of the Imamiyyah. However, it should be noted of that this issue is one of the corollaries of the problem of *jabr* and *tafwid*, and the Imami position in this regard neither conforms to that of the *Ashairah* nor to that of the *Mutazilah*. Rather, the *Mutazili* position is more worthless and degenerate than that of the Asharites, and if some Imami theologians (*r*) have inclined towards it, that has been due to the neglect of the truth of the matter. As referred to earlier, the issue of *jabr* and *tafwid* has remained much vague in the discussions of most of the scholars of the two sects, and the controversy has not been resolved on the basis of right criteria. Hence, the relation of this issue to the problem of *jabr* and *tafwid* has gone mostly unnoticed, although it is one of its major ramifications.

Briefly, the Asharite belief that the lawful and the unlawful form part of the apportioned sustenance implies *jabr*, and the Mutazilite belief that the unlawful does not form part of the apportioned sustenance implies *tafwid*. Both of them (*jabr* and *tafwid*) are invalid and their falsity has been made evident in its appropriate place. We, in accordance with established and demonstrable principles, consider the lawful and the unlawful as apportioned by God, in the same way as we consider sins to be by Divine determination (*taqdir*) and decree (*qada*), though it does not lead to *jabr* and invalidity. These pages are not appropriate for setting forth the proof and I have set a condition with myself not to discuss technical matters, myself being ignorant of their core reality.[2] Accordingly, we shall confine ourselves to this passing reference, and God is the Guide.

*Marhum* Majlisi has opened another discussion under this noble tradition, as to whether it is absolutely obligatory upon God, the Exalted, to provide the sustenance of His creatures or only in the case of effort on their part.[3] This is

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[1] Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, *al-Tafsir al-kabir*, ii, 30.

[2] *Authors Note*: However, as the hand is subject to His power, we have briefly offered a study of this problem in the exposition of the thirty-ninth tradition. [As stated by Imam Ali, may peace be upon him]:

عَرَفتُ اللهَ بفَتحِ العَزائِمِ ونَقضِ الهِمَم.

> I knew God [i.e. His omnipotence] through the annulment of decisions and the breaking up of resolves.

[3] *Mirat al-uqul*, vii, 358, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab Fadl al-yaqin*, *hadith* 2.

a topic which is more appropriate to the principles of the theologians and one must proceed in these discussions, in general, with another approach based on metaphysical criteria and definite principles. What is preferable is to abstain right away from this kind of discussions, which are not entirely fruitful, and we have pointed out earlier that the apportioning of sustenances in accordance with Divine ordainment does not contradict with the making of effort and endeavor in seeking it.

## SECTION

This section pertains to the explanation of the statement that God, the Exalted, has placed joy and comfort in certitude and satisfaction and sorrow and grief in doubt and displeasure and that this is in accordance with Divine justice. On should know that the joy and comfort (*rawh* and *rahah*) mentioned in this noble tradition, and so also the grief and sorrow mentioned therein, as they are mentioned in relation to the determination and apportionment of sustenances, pertain to worldly affairs and the search and acquisition of livelihood, though in accordance with a certain interpretation their relation to affairs of the Hereafter is also correct. Here, we intend to expound this [part of the] noble tradition. One should know that a human being possessing convinced faith in God and His ordainments and reliant on the firm pillar of the Absolutely Omnipotent, Who determines all the matters in accordance with what is best for the creatures (*masalih*) and possesses absolute and perfect mercy and is absolutely All-compassionate and All-munificent, will of course find all difficulties become easy for him by virtue of such a conviction and to him all hardships become easy to bear. His effort in search of livelihood is very different from the quest of the worldly people and those who are afflicted with doubt and *shirk*. Those who rely on the apparent causes and means are continuously shaky and anxious in their pursuits. And if they face any adversity they find it very unpleasant, for they do not consider them to be accompanied with hidden benefits. Also, one who considers his felicity to lie in the attainment of the world is afflicted with pain and misery in its pursuit, losing comfort and happiness. All his attention and care is spent in that pursuit. Thus, we see that worldly people are perpetually in a state of anguish and they do not possess the peace of mind or of the body. Similarly, if the world and its ornaments are taken away from them, they become subject to endless sorrow and grief. Should an affliction visit them, they lose all forbearance and strength and they have no fortitude in the face of events. The reason for it is nothing except their doubt and

shaky belief in Divine ordainment and its justice, and its fruits are such matters as these. We have offered an explanation earlier in this regard and so it will be inappropriate to repeat it.

As to the explanation of the dependence of these effects on certitude and satisfaction, and of those effects on doubt and anger, of their being such by Divine ordainment, and that this ordainment is just, that depends on the explanation of the sway of the efficiency (*failiyyah*) of God, the Exalted, throughout the planes of being, without its leading to *jabr*, which is invalid as well as impossible. It also depends on the causative explanation of the perfection of the order of being, and both of these theses lie outside the scope of these pages. And all praise refers to God, at every beginning and end.

33

# Thirty-Third *Hadith*: *WILAYAH* AND WORKS

بِالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلَى الشَّيْخِ الأَقْدَمِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ الْكُلَيْنِيِّ رِضْوَانُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنِ الْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ سَعِيدٍ عَمَّنْ ذَكَرَهُ عَنْ عُبَيْدِ بْنِ زُرَارَةَ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ مَارِدٍ قَالَ: قُلتُ لأبي عبدِالله عليهِ السلامُ: حَديثٌ رُوِيَ لنا أنّك قُلتَ "إذا عَرفْتَ فَاعمَلْ ما شِئتَ؟" فقالَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: قدْ قُلتُ ذلكَ. قلتُ: وإنْ زَنوا أو سَرقوا أو شربوا الخَمرَ؟ فقالَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ لي: إنا للهِ وإنا إليهِ راجعونَ! واللهِ ما أنصَفونا أَنْ نكُونَ أخَذنَا بالعَملِ ووُضِعَ عنهُم. إنَمَا قلتُ إذا عرِفتَ فاعملْ ما شِئتَ من قَليلِ الخَيرِ وكثيرِه فإنّه يُقبلُ مِنكَ.

With my chain of authorities reaching up to the pioneering *shaykh*, Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulayni (*r*) from Ahmad ibn Muhammad, from al-Husayn ibn Said, from someone who narrated it from Ubayd ibn Zurarah, from Muhammad ibn Marid that he said: I said to Abu Abd-Allah (a): A *hadith* has been narrated to us from you that you said, "When you have acquired the *marifah*, i.e. of the rights of the Imam's (a), then do whatever you want." He replied, "I have indeed said that." I said to him, "Even if one were to commit adultery and theft and drink wine?" He said, "*Inna li'llahi wa inna ilayhi rajiun*! By God, they (i.e. those who have interpreted our statements in such a manner) have not been just to us. (Is it fair for them to believe that) they would get away with whatever they do whereas we ourselves will be

answerable for our acts? What I said was that when you have acquired *marifah* perform any works you want, whether its good be great or small, for they will be accepted of you."[1]

### EXPOSITION

[In the sentence *hadithun ruwiyah*.. .'], *hadith* is *mubtada* and *ruwiyah* is its *khabar*. *Annaka*, with *fathah* (on the *alif*) is the *khabar* of an elliptic *mubtada* (**أي هو أنك**). In the statement **إذا عرفتَ** the *marifah* (knowledge) meant in this tradition is the *marifah* of the Imam (a). In the expression **قلتُ، قالَ قلتُ**... may be either in the first or the third person. In **وإن زنَوا** , the **إنْ** is *wasliyyah*, and the phrase means, 'if they acquire *marifah*, they may do whatever they want, even if it is a major sin.'

The phrase **إنا للهِ وإنا إلَيه راجعونَ** is an expression of *istirja'* and is said at the time of a severe and great calamity, and since this slander or misunderstanding was a great calamity, the Hadrat uttered it in order to dissociate and absolve himself totally from it.

The phrase **أنْ تكونَ** means **في أن تكونَ** , that is, 'they have not been fair to us in [believing] that they would be quit of all accountability for their actions due to their belief in us (i.e. our imamate) while we ourselves would be accountable and answerable (for our acts): The Imam then clarifies what he had meant, that [belief in] *wilayah* is a prerequisite for the acceptability of works [before God], as will be discussed hereafter, God the Exalted willing.

## EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE OF CONTRADICTION BETWEEN TRADITIONS THAT EXHORT ONE TO PERFORM

### IBADAH AND ABSTINENCE FROM SINS AND OTHER TRADITIONS WHICH APPARENTLY CONFLICT WITH THEM

It should be known that if one were to refer to traditions that have been narrated concerning the states of the Noblest Messenger (*s*) and the Imams (a) of guidance, and study the character of their devotion (*ubudiyyah*), their painstaking diligence, their lamentations and entreaties, their humility and

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, ii, 464, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab anna al-iman la yadurru maahu sayyiah, hadith* 5.

sense of indigence, their fear and sorrow before the sacred station of the Lord of Majesty, and if one were to study the character of their intimate supplications before the Fulfiller of Needs –traditions whose number far exceeds what is required to establish *tawatur*– and similarly, if one were to refer to the counsels given by the Noble Messenger (s) to the Commander of the Faithful (a) and also the counsels given by the Imams to one another, as well as to the elect of the *Shiah* and their sincere followers, the greatly eloquent and emphatic exhortations that they would make warning them against disobedience to God, the Exalted –a theme with which the books of tradition and chapters relating to doctrinal and legal duties are replete– he would be convinced that certain other traditions whose apparent and literal import contradicts with these traditions are not to be taken literally. Therefore, if possible, they must be interpreted in a way that they do not conflict with those explicit and definitive traditions, which constitute the essentials of the faith, or they must be reconciled. Otherwise, they must be referred back to their authors. In these pages, we cannot possibly reconcile all the relevant traditions or mention even a hundredth part of them and explain them. However, it is unavoidable that we mention some of these narrations so that the truth is disclosed.

الكَافِي بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: شِيعَتُنَا (هُمُ) الشَّاحِبُونَ الذَّابِلُونَ النَّاحِلُونَ الَّذِينَ إِذَا جَنَّهُمُ اللَّيْلُ اسْتَقْبَلُوهُ بِحُزْنٍ.

> Al-Kulayni reports in *al-Kafi* with his *isnad* from Abu Abd-Allah –Imam al-Sadiq (a), that he said, "Our *Shiah* (followers) are those whose hearts are informed with sorrow and grief and who are lean as a result of intense sorrow and worship. They are those who at the fall of the darkness of the night turn to it with sadness."[1]

There are many narrations on this topic describing the characteristics of the *Shiah*.

وَعَنْهُ عَنِ الْمُفَضَّلِ قَالَ: قَالَ أَبُو عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: إِيَّاكَ وَالسَّفِلَةَ، فَإِنَّمَا شِيعَةُ جَعْفَرٍ مَنْ عَفَّ بَطْنَهُ وَفَرْجَهُ وَاشْتَدَّ جِهَادُهُ وَعَمِلَ لِخَالِقِهِ وَرَجَا ثَوَابَهُ

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, ii, 233, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab al-mumin wa alamatuh, hadith* 7.

وَخَافَ عِقَابَهُ. فَإِذَا رَأَيْتَ أُولَئِكَ، فَأُولَئِكَ شِيعَةُ جَعْفَرٍ.

From him, from al-Mufaddal, who narrates from Abu Abd-Allah –Jafar ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq (a), that he said, "Beware of these base people who claim to be Shiis. Verily, the *Shiah* of Ali (a) is none except one who is chaste in his manner of earning his livelihood and sexual conduct. It is one whose diligence is intense, who works for his Creator, hoping for His reward and fearing His punishment. When you see such people know that they are the followers (*Shiah*) of Jafar."[1]

وَعَنِ الأَمَالِي لِلْحَسَنِ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ الطُّوسِيِّ شَيْخِ الطَّائِفَةِ رَحِمَهُ اللهُ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنِ الرِّضَا عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَن جَدِّهِ عَنِ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ أَنَّهُ قَالَ لِخَيْثَمَةَ: أَبْلِغْ شِيعَتَنَا أَنَّا لا نُغْنِي مِنَ اللهِ شَيْئاً. وَأَبْلِغْ شِيعَتَنَا أَنَّهُ لا يُنَالُ مَا عِنْدَ اللهِ إلاّ بِالعَمَلِ وَأَبْلِغ شِيعَتَنَا أَنَّ أَعْظَمَ النَّاسِ حَسْرَةً يَوْمَ القِيَامَةِ مَنْ وَصَفَ عَدْلاً ثُمَّ خَالَفَهُ إِلَى غَيْرِهِ. وَأَبْلِغْ شِيعَتَنَا أَنَّهُمْ إِذَا قَامُوا بِمَا أُمِرُوا أَنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ.

Al-Hasan ibn Muhammad al-Tusi, the Shaykh al-Taifah (*m*) narrates with his chain of authorities from Imam al-Rida (a) from his father, from his grandfather from Abu Jafar –Imam al-Baqir (a) that he said to Khaythamah, "Convey this message to our followers (*Shiah*) that we do not avail them against God that is, do not neglect works for reliance upon us. Tell them that that which is with God cannot be attained except with works. Tell them that, of all people, the greatest regret on the Day of Resurrection will be of those who speak about some aspect of justice but violate it in practice to do something else. Tell our followers that if they observe what they have been asked to, they will be triumphant on the Day of

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, ii, 233, *hadith* 9.

Resurrection."[1]

الكَافِي بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: لا تَذْهَبْ بِكُمُ المَذَاهِبَ. فَوَاللهِ، مَا شِيعَتُنَا إلاّ مَنْ أَطَاعَ اللهَ.

In *al-Kafi*, al-Kulayni narrates with his chain of authorities, from Abu Jafar (a) that he said, "Do not be carried away by false doctrines. By God, Our follower (*Shiah*) is none except one who obeys God."[2]

This means, "Do not invent [doctrinal] excuses to justify disobedience to God and do not adopt any false notion that 'We are *Shiah* and our attachment to the *Ahl al-Bayt* is the means of our salvation.' By God Our *Shiah* is none except him who obeys God, the Exalted."

وَبِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ جَابِرٍ عن أبي جعفر عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: «يَا جَابِرُ، أَيَكْتَفِي مَنِ انْتَحَلَ التَّشَيُّعَ أنْ يَقُولَ بِحُبِّنَا أَهْلَ البَيْتِ؟! فَوَاللّهِ مَا شِيعَتُنَا إلاّ مَنِ اتَّقَى اللّهَ وَأَطَاعَهُ. إلَى أنْ قَالَ: فَاتَقُوا اللّهَ وَاعْمَلُوا لِمَا عِنْدَ اللّهِ. لَيْسَ بَيْنَ اللّهِ وَبَيْنَ أَحَدٍ قَرَابَةٌ. أَحَبُّ العِبَادِ إلَى اللّهِ تَعَالَى وَأَكرَمُهُمْ عَلَيْهِ أَتْقَاهُمْ وَأَعْلَمُهُمْ بِطَاعَتِهِ. يَا جَابِرُ، وَاللّهِ مَا يُتَقَرَّبُ إلَى اللّهِ إلّا بِالطَّاعَةِ. مَا مَعَنَا بَرَاءَةٌ مِنَ النَّارِ، وَلا عَلَى اللّه لِأَحَدٍ مِنْ حُجَّةٍ، مَنْ كَانَ للّهِ مُطِيعاً فَهُوَ لَنَا وَلِيٌّ، وَمَنْ كَانَ للّهِ عَاصِياً فَهُوَ لَنَا عَدُوٌّ، وَمَا تُنَالُ وَلايَتُنَا إلّا بِالعَمَلِ وَالوَرَعِ.»

In *al-Kafi*, al-Kulayni reports with his chain of authorities from Jabir, form Abu Jafar (a) that he –Jabir– said: He said to me, "O Jabir, is it sufficient for one who follows Shiism to claim that he loves us, the *Ahl al-Bayt*? By God, our follower (*Shiah*) is none except him who is wary of God and obeys him… So fear God and work for the sake of that which is with God. There is no kinship between God and anyone. The most preferred and honored of creatures before God, the Exalted, are those

[1] *Al-Amali*, p. 380, *juz* 13.

[2] *Usul al-Kafi*, ii, 73, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab al-taah wal-taqwa*, *hadith* 1.

who are most Godwary amongst them and are most obedient to His commands in their conduct.

O Jabir, by God, one cannot attain nearness to God except through obedience. We do not possess any guarantees of *baraah* (acquittal) from hellfire and none has an argument against God. Whoever is obedient to God is our friend (*wali*) and whoever is disobedient to God is our enemy, Our *wilayah* cannot be attained except through works and piety."[1]

Also, in the noble *al-Kafi* it is reported with a chain of authorities from Imam al-Baqir, Baqir al-Ulum, (a) that he said:

عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: يَا مَعْشَرَ الشِّيعَةِ شِيعَةِ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ، كُونُوا النَّمْرَقَةَ الوُسْطَى يَرْجِعُ إِلَيْكُمُ الغَالِي وَيَلْحَقُ بِكُمُ التَّالِي. فَقَالَ لَهُ رَجُلٌ مِنَ الأَنْصَارِ، يُقَالُ لَهُ سَعْدٌ: جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ، مَا الغَالِي؟ قَالَ: قَوْمٌ يَقُولُونَ فِينَا مَا لا نَقُولُهُ فِي أَنْفُسِنَا، فَلَيْسَ أُولَئِكَ مِنَّا وَلَسْنَا مِنْهُمْ. قَالَ: فَمَا التَّالِي؟ قَالَ: المُرْتَادُ يُرِيدُ الخَيْرَ، يُبَلِّغُهُ الخَيْرَ يُوجَرُ عَلَيْهِ. ثُمَّ أَقْبَلَ عَلَيْنَا فَقَالَ: وَاللهِ مَا مَعَنَا مِنَ اللهِ بَرَاءَةٌ وَلا بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَ اللهِ قَرَابَةٌ وَلا لَنَا عَلَى اللهِ حُجَّةٌ وَلا نَتَقَرَّبُ إِلَى اللهِ إِلاَّ بِالطَّاعَةِ. فَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ مُطِيعاً للهِ تَنْفَعُهُ وَلايَتُنَا، وَمَنْ كَانَ مِنْكُمْ عَاصِياً للهِ لَمْ تَنْفَعْهُ وَلايَتُنَا. وَيْحَكُمْ لا تَغْتَرُّوا، وَيْحَكُمْ لا تَغْتَرُّوا.

"O community of the followers of the Household of Muhammad (*S*)! You should be those who represent the golden mean, to whom the extremists (*ghali*) must return and to whom those who lag behind (*tali*) must catch up."

A man named Sad belonging to the Ansar said to him, "May I be your ransom, what is an extremist (*ghali*)?" The Imam replied, "They are a group who say things about us that we do not claim for ourselves. Therefore, they do not belong to us and we do not belong to them."

[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, ii, 74, *hadith* 3.

> Then he asked, "What is a *tali*?" The *imam* replied, "It is one who seeks guidance but does not know its way, though he wants to work and attain goodness." Then the Imam, turning to his followers (Shiis) said, "By God, we do not have any warrant (*baraah*) to save you from God's (wrath and punishment) and there is no kinship between God and us. We do not have any arguments before God and we do not attain nearness to Him except through obedience and compliance (to His commands). Anyone of you who obeys God will be benefited by our *wilayah* and friendship, but our *wilayah* will be of no avail to anyone among you who is disobedient to God. Woe to you, should you be conceited. Woe to you, should you be conceited."[1]

It is also narrated in the noble *al-Kafi* that Imam al-Baqir (a) said,

> "The Messenger of Allah (*S*) once stood on the rock of Safa and addressing his kinsman said, "O descendents of Hashim! O children of Abd al-Muttalib! I am the Apostle of Allah sent to you, and I have loving concern for you. Verily, my works belong to me and the works of each of you belong to him. Do not say that 'Muhammad is our kinsman and soon we will be let in wherever he enters.' No, by God, O sons of Abd al-Muttalib! My friends, from amongst you and the others, are none except the pious. Let it be known to you that I will not recognize you on the Day of Resurrection [as one of my *ummah*] when you come carrying the world [i.e. the works done by you for the love of the world] on your backs while other people come to the bearing the Hereafter [i.e. the works done by them in faith and for the life of the Hereafter]."[2]

And it is also mentioned in the foregoing narration of Jabir that Imam al-Baqir (a) said:

> O Jabir, do not let false doctrines and opinions deceive you into imagining that the love of Ali (a) is sufficient for

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[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, ii, 75, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab al-taah wal-taqwa*, *hadith* 6.

[2] *Rawdat al-Kafi*, viii, 182, *hadith* 205.

> you. Can it be sufficient for a man to declare, "I befriend Ali (a) and am an adherent of his *wilayah*," without being diligent and without working much (good) works? Truly, were he to say that I love the Messenger of Allah (and the Messenger of Allah was better than Ali) while neglecting to follow him in his conduct (*sirah*) and failing to act in accordance with his *sunnah*, his love would not be of any avail to him.[1]

There is a famous episode that once Tawus (a companion of the Fourth Imam) heard someone crying, lamenting, and pleading. The cries continued until they ceased and it appeared as if the one who was lamenting had fallen unconscious. On approaching, he saw that it was Imam Ali ibn al-Husayn (a). He took the Imam's head into his arms, and said to him: "You are the son of the Messenger of Allah and the beloved of Fatima Zahra. After all the paradise belongs to you!" He said these words in order to console the Imam. That master replied, "God has created paradise for one who worships Him and obeys him, even if it were an Ethiopian slave, and He has created the hell for those who disobey him even if it were a Qurayshite" (or the chief of the Quraysh)![2]

These were some of the sacred traditions, clear and explicit, suggesting the falsity and wrongness of these false hopes of ours, as sinners and lovers of the world –hopes which derive from satanic longings and are contrary to reason and revelation (*naql*).

Add to these the noble Quranic verses, such as these statements of God, the Exalted:

﴿كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ رَهِينَةٌ.﴾

*Every sold is pledged for what it has earned*. (74:38)

And such statements of God, the Exalted, as:

﴿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)

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[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, ii, 74, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab al-taah wal-taqwa*, *hadith* 3.

[2] *Bihar al-anwar*, vol. 46, pp. 81-82, "*Tarikh* Ali ibn al-Husayn (*a*)," *bab* 5, *hadith* 75.

And such other statements as:

﴿لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ.﴾

*For it* (*the soul*) *is what it has earned and against it is what it has merited*. (2:286)

And there are other noble verses besides, present on every page of the Divine Scripture, and to explain them away or to meddle with their meaning is contrary to (logical) necessity.

As against these, there are other traditions which are also recorded in authentic books but which are, as a rule, capable of reconciliation [with the above mentioned traditions]. And even if a reconciliation should appear to be unsatisfactory and were they not susceptible to reinterpretation (*tawil*), it is neither in accordance with sound reason or the interest (*darurah*) of Muslims to go against all these authentic (*Sahih*), explicit, and *mutawatir* traditions which are confirmed by the literal meanings of the Quran and the unambiguous texts of the *Furqan*. Among these traditions is that which has been narrated by the Thiqat al-Islam al-Kulayni with his chain of authorities from Yusuf ibn Thabit ibn Abi Said from Abu Abd-Allah (a) that he said:

الإيمَانُ لا يَضُرُّ مَعَهُ عَمَلٌ وَكَذَلِكَ الكُفْرُ لا يَنْفَعُ مَعَهُ عَمَلٌ.

> Nothing can harm one by the side of faith, and nothing can benefit one by the side of unbelief. (*kufr*)[1]

There are several other traditions bearing this theme,[2] The honored traditionist Majlisi (*m*) has interpreted this group of traditions with the suggestion that the 'harm' [in the above tradition] means 'entry into hellfire' or 'remaining in hell for ever.'[3]

This interpretation –that what is meant by 'harm' is entry into hell– does not preclude (that it might be accompanied with) other torments in *Barzakh* (Purgatory) and in the halts of the Day of Resurrection.

This writer thinks that these traditions may be interpreted as implying that

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[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, ii, 464, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab anna al-iman la yadurru maahu sayyiah, hadith* 4.

[2] *Usul al-Kafi, hadith* 3, 5-6.

[3] Al-Majlisi, *Mirat al-uqul*, xi, 396, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab anna al-iman la yadurru maahu sayyiah, hadith* 2.

faith illumines the heart in such a manner that if supposedly an error or sin is committed by man it is compensated, by the means of the light and faculty of faith, with repentance and penitent return to God, and the person possessing faith in God and the Hereafter does not leave his works unattended until the Day of Reckoning. On this basis, these traditions, in fact, exhort one to hold on to faith and to remain in the state of faith, like a similar tradition narrated in the noble *al-Kafi* from Imam al-Sadiq (a) that Moses (a) said to Khidr (a) "I have been honored by your company. Give me some counsel." Khidr said to him, "Hold on to that with which nothing would harm you and without which nothing will be of any benefit to you."[1]

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: قَالَ مُوسَى لِلْخَضِرِ عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلامُ: قَدْ تَحَرَّمْتُ بِصُحْبَتِكَ فَأَوْصِنِي. قَالَ لَهُ: إلْزَمْ مَا لا يَضُرُّكَ مَعَهُ شَيْءٌ كَمَا لا يَنْفَعُكَ مَعَ غَيْرِهِ شَيْءٌ.

And among these is this tradition:

بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ الرَّيَّانِ بْنِ الصَّلْتِ رَفَعَهُ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: كَانَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ كَثِيراً مَا يَقُولُ فِي خِطْبَتِهِ: يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، دِينَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ! فَإِنَّ السَّيِّئَةَ فِيهِ خَيْرٌ مِنَ الحَسَنَةِ فِي غَيْرِهِ, وَالسَّيِّئَةُ فِيهِ تُغْفَرُ وَالحَسَنَةُ فِي غَيْرِهِ لا تُقْبَلُ.

> Al-Kulayni reports with his chain of authorities from Muhammad ibn al-Rayyan ibn al-Salt, who narrates in a *marfu* tradition from Abu Abd-Allah (a) that he said: The Commander of the Faithful (a) often used to say in his sermons, "O people! Take care of your creed (*din*)! Take care of your creed! For a vice committed in it is better than a virtue performed outside it. The vice committed in it is forgiven, and the virtue performed without it is not accepted."[2]

This noble tradition and others like it, whose aim is to exhort people to

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[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, ii, 464, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab anna al-iman la yadurru maahu sayyiah, hadith* 2.

[2] *Usul al-Kafi*, ii, 464, *hadith* 6.

follow the right religion, imply that the vices of the faithful and the followers of the true religion are ultimately pardoned, as God says:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا.﴾

*Verily, God would pardon all sins*. (39: 53)

It is on this basis that it may be said that their vices are better than the virtues of others, which are never accepted (by God). Perhaps, acts of virtue which lack the conditions of acceptance, such as faith (*iman*) and *wilayah*, possess a greater darkness. In brief, this tradition does not imply that the faithful are quit of their vices.

One of them is the famous tradition which is said to be welt-known (*mashhur*) amongst both the groups (i.e. the *Shiah* and the *Sunni*):

حُبُّ عَلِيٍّ حَسَنَةٌ لا تَضُرُّ مَعَهَا سَيِّئَةٌ وَبُغْضُهُ سَيِّئَةٌ لا تَنْفَعُ مَعَهَا حَسَنَةٌ.

> The love of Ali is a virtue by whose side no sin is harmful, and his enmity is a vice with which no virtue is of any benefit.[1]

This noble tradition is similar to the *hadith* mentioned earlier concerning faith (*iman*). Its meaning is either in accordance with the probability suggested by *marhum* Majlisi, that the meaning of 'harm' is eternal confinement in hell or entry into it. That is, the love of that master is the essence of faith, its perfection and completion, which results in one's being rescued from hell with the means of the intercession of the Intercessors. This interpretation, as pointed our earlier, does not preclude one's having to undergo the various torments of the Purgatory (*Barzakh*), as stated in a *hadith* where [the Imam] has said, "We shall intercede for you on the Day of Resurrection, but the care of your life in the Purgatory is up to yourselves."[2] Or it means what we have mentioned, that the love of that master results in the emergence of a luminosity and faculty [of faith] in the heart that prompt one to refrain from sins. And should one become afflicted with sin on occasion, he would remedy it through repentance and penitence, not allowing the matter to get out of hand and not permitting the carnal self to break loose its reins.

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[1] *Al-Manaqib*, iii, 197.

[2] *Al-Manaqib*, *hadith* 4, footnote no. 33.

Moreover, there is a group of traditions that are cited under the following noble verse of the *surat al-Furqan:*

﴿وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَدْعُونَ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ وَلَا يَقْتُلُونَ النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا يَزْنُونَ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ يَلْقَ أَثَامًا. يُضَاعَفْ لَهُ الْعَذَابُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَيَخْلُدْ فِيهِ مُهَانًا. إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا فَأُولَئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ حَسَنَاتٍ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا.﴾

[*The servants of the All-merciful are those…* ] *who call not upon another god with God, nor slay the soul God has forbidden except by right, neither fornicate for whosoever does that shall meet the price of sin doubled shall be the chastisement for him on the Resurrection Day, and he shall dwell therein humbled, save him who repents, and believes, and does righteous work those, God shall change their evil deeds into good deeds, for God is ever All-forgiving, All-compassionate*. (25:68-70)

There are numerous traditions that are cited (in exegeses) under this verse and we shall confine ourselves to citing only one of them, for they are quite close to one another in meaning and content:

عَنِ الشَّيْخِ فِي أَمَالِيهِ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ مُسْلِمٍ الثَّقَفِيِّ قَالَ: سَأَلْتُ أَبَا جَعْفَرٍ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عَلِيٍّ عَلَيْهِمَا السَّلامُ عَنْ قَوْلِ اللهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: ﴿ فَأُولَئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ حَسَنَاتٍ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا.﴾ فَقَالَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: يُؤْتَى بِالْمُؤْمِنِ الْمُذْنِبِ يَوْمَ القِيَامَةِ حَتَّى يُقَامَ بِمَوْقِفِ الحِسَابِ، فَيَكُونُ اللهُ تَعَالَى هُوَ الَّذِي يَتَوَلَّى حِسَابَهُ لا يُطْلِعُ عَلَى حِسَابِهِ أَحَداً مِنَ النَّاسِ. فَيُعَرِّفُهُ ذُنُوبَهُ حَتَّى إِذَا أَقَرَّ بِسَيِّئَاتِهِ قَالَ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ لِلْكَتَبَةِ: بَدِّلُوهَا حَسَنَاتٍ وَأَظْهِرُوهَا لِلنَّاسِ. فَيَقُولُ النَّاسُ حِينَئِذٍ: أَمَا كَانَ لِهَذَا الْعَبْدِ سَيِّئَةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ؟ ثُمَّ يَأْمُرُ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ بِهِ إِلَى الجَنَّةِ. فَهَذَا تَأْوِيلُ الآيَةِ. وَهِيَ فِي الْمُذْنِبِينَ مِنْ شِيعَتِنَا خَاصَّةً.

al-Shaykh al-Tusi, in his *amali,* reports with his chain of authorities from the highly regarded traditionist Muhammad ibn Muslim al-Thaqafi (*r*) that he narrated: I

> asked Abu Jafar, Muhammad ibn Ali (a) concerning the statement of God, Almighty and Glorious, "*Those, God will change their evil deeds into good deeds, and God is All-forgiving, All-compassionate*." He replied: The sinful believer will be brought on the Day of Resurrection until he is made to stand in the halt of reckoning. The God, the Exalted, Himself would take charge of his reckoning and none of mankind will come to know about his account of deeds. Then He will inform the believer of his sins that he may confesses to his sins. God, the Almighty and the Glorious, shall say to the scribes the angels who write men's deeds, "Change them into good deeds and disclose them to the people." Thereat people will say, "This servant did not perpetrate a single sin!" Then God shall order him to be escorted into paradise. This is the interpretation (*tawil*) of the verse, and that relates particularly to the sinners from amongst our followers (*Shiah*).[1]

The reason for citing the above noble verse completely and prolonging the discussion is that the topic is of a major importance and many of the sermonizers (*ahl-e menbar*) interpret such traditions in a misleading manner for the people. Their connection with the noble verse would not have been revealed without the citation of the noble verse. On this basis, I am compelled to protract the discussion, even if it should be tiresome.

If one were to study the latter part of the verse, one would know that all people are absolutely responsible for their deeds and accountable for their ugly actions, excepting those who attain faith and repent for their sins and perform righteous deeds. This is how Imam al-Baqir (a) has explained the verse, describing the character of the reckoning of such persons, which, however, is special to the followers of the *Ahl al-Bayt* and other people do not partake of it. That is because [true] faith is not realized except with the *wilayah* of Ali and his infallible and pure successors, *awsiya* (a). Rather, faith in God and the Messenger would not be accepted without *wilayah*, as will be mentioned in the next section, God willing. Hence this noble verse and the traditions relating to its interpretation must be considered as belonging to the

[1] *Al-Amali*, p. 70, *juz* 3.

primary proofs, for they imply that if a person should possess faith and should he compensate for his sins with repentance and righteous deeds, he would not be covered by this verse.

Hence, my dear, let not Satan delude you and let not carnal appetites deceive you. Of course, a lazy person afflicted with lusts and the love of the world, property, and position –such as this author– is always after finding some pretext in order to justify his laziness. He turns to anything that agrees with his appetites and affirms his carnal lusts and satanic imaginings, opening his eyes and ears to it without delving into its real meaning and without considering that which contradicts it and is opposite to it. Poor man, he imagines that he is, God forbid, permitted every unlawful act and is untouched by the pen of accountability, *naudhu bi'llah*, at the mere claim of being a *Shiah* and attached to the Household of Purity and Infallibility. Wretched man! he does not know that Satan has made him blind. There is always the danger that this hollow and futile love would also slip out of his hands at the end of his life and he would be resurrected empty-handed within the ranks of the enemies (*nawasib*) of the *Ahl al-Bayt*. The claim of love is not acceptable from someone who has no proof to substantiate it. It is not possible that I may love you and be sincerely attached to you while my conduct is contrary to all your goals and objectives. The fruit of true love is deeds that are in harmony with that love. And should it lack this fruit, one must know that it was not [real] love but only an imaginary fancy.

The Noble Messenger and his honored Household (a) spent all their lives in disseminating the law, morality and doctrines [of Islam] and their sole objective was to communicate the commands of God and to reform and refine human beings. They willingly bore hardships when they were killed, plundered, and insulted in the way of these goals and did not flinch from marching ahead. Hence their follower (*Shiah*) and lover (*muhibb*) is one who shares their objectives, moves in their footsteps, and follows their traditions. The fact that verbal confession and practical action have been considered as essential elements (*muqawwimat*) of faith in the noble traditions is a natural secret and a prevailing law of God, because the reality of faith is essentially associated with expression and action. It is intrinsic in the nature of the lover to express his love and passionate yearning (*taghazzul*) for the Beloved, and to act as required by faith and the love of God and His *awliya*. If someone does not act, he does not have faith and love. And his apparent faith and his hollow and soulless love would be wiped out by some slight accident, including the pressures [of the deathbed and the grave] and one would enter

the abode of retribution empty-handed.

## *WILAYAH* OF THE *AHL AL-BAYT*, THE CONDITION FOR ACCEPTABILITY OF WORKS

That which is implied by the latter part of the noble tradition [being expounded] –that *wilayah* and *marifah* are prerequisites for the acceptance of works– is a matter that is one of the definite, or rather necessary, doctrines of the sacred Shii religion. The traditions on this topic are too numerous to be cited in these brief expositions and their number exceeds the limits of *tawatur*. However, we shall cite some of them in these pages for *tabarruk*'s sake:

الكَافِي بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: ذَرْوَةُ الأَمْرِ وَسَنَامُهُ وَمِفْتَاحُهُ وَبَابُ الأَشْيَاءِ وَرِضَا الرَّحْمَنِ الطَّاعَةُ لِلإِمَامِ بَعْدَ مَعْرِفَتِهِ... أَمَا لَوْ أَنَّ رَجُلاً قَامَ لَيْلَهُ وَصَامَ نَهَارَهُ وَتَصَدَّقَ بِجَمِيعِ مَالِهِ وَحَجَّ جَمِيعَ دَهْرِهِ وَلَمْ يَعْرِفْ وِلايَةَ وَلِيِّ اللهِ فَيُوَالِيَهُ وَيَكُونَ جَمِيعَ أَعْمَالِهِ بِدَلالَتِهِ إِلَيْهِ، مَا كَانَ لَهُ عَلَى اللهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ حَقٌّ فِي ثَوَابِهِ وَلا كَانَ مِنْ أَهْلِ الإِيمَانِ.

Al-Kulayni in *al-Kafi* reports with his *isnad* from Abu Jafar (a) that he said: The crux of the matter, and its key, the door of things and the pleasure of the Beneficent –all lie in obedience to the Imam after having known him... Be aware that the man who spends his nights in prayer and his days in fasting and gives as all his property as charity (*sadaqah*) and performs *hajj* throughout his life without knowing the *wilayah* of the *Wali* of God and without following him, and without conducting himself, in all his actions, according to his guidance –such a person has no right to any reward from God and is not one of the faithful.[1]

وَبِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: مَنْ لَمْ يَأْتِ اللهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ يَوْمَ القِيَامَةِ بِمَا أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ لَمْ يُتَقَبَّلْ مِنْهُ حَسَنَةٌ وَلَمْ يُتَجَاوَزْ عَنْهُ سَيِّئَةٌ.

[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, ii, 19, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab daaím al-Islam*, *hadith* 5.

In *Wasail al-Shiah* it is recorded with a chain of authorities from Abu Abd-Allah (a) that he said, "Whoever does not come to God, the Almighty and the Glorious, on the Day of Resurrection with a creed that you follow, no virtue of his will be accepted nor will any sin of his be overlooked."[1]

وَبِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ – فِي حَدِيثٍ– قَالَ: وَاللهِ لَوْ أَنَّ إِبْلِيسَ سَجَدَ للهِ بَعْدَ المَعْصِيَةِ وَالتَّكَبُّرِ عُمُرَ الدُّنْيَا مَا نَفَعَهُ ذَلِكَ وَلا قَبِلَهُ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ مَا لَمْ يَسْجُدْ لآدَمَ كَمَا أَمَرَهُ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ أنْ يَسْجُدَ لَهُ. وَكَذَلِكَ هَذِهِ الأُمَّةُ العَاصِيَةُ المَفْتُونَةُ بَعْدَ تَرْكِهِمُ الإِمَامَ الَّذِي نَصَبَهُ نَبِيُّهُمْ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَهُمْ: فَلَنْ يَقْبَلَ اللهُ لَهُمْ عَمَلاً وَلَنْ يَرْفَعَ لَهُمْ حَسَنَةً حَتَّى يَأْتُوا اللهَ مِنْ حَيْثُ أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَتَوَلَّوا الإِمَامَ الَّذِي أُمِرُوا بِوِلايَتِهِ وَيَدْخُلُوا مِنَ البَابِ الَّذِي فَتَحَهُ اللهُ وَرَسُولُهُ لَهُمْ.

In *Wasail al-Shiah* it is reported, in a *hadith*, with a chain of authorities from Abu Abd-Allah (a) that he said, "By God, were *Iblis* –may God damn him– to prostrate to God for as long as the world lasts after his disobedience and pride, that would not benefit him, and God would not accept it as long as he does not prostrate to Adam as commanded by God, the Almighty and the Glorious. The same applies to this disobedient and misguided *ummah* after its abandoning the Imam appointed for them by their Prophet. Hence God will not accept any of their acts nor elevate any of their good works unless they carry out what God has commanded them and follow the Imam, to whose authority (*wilayah*) they have been commanded by God to submit, and enter through the door that God and His Messenger have opened for them…"[2]

There are many traditions bearing this theme and it may be inferred from

[1] *Wasail al-Shiah*, i, 91, *kitab al-taharah*, *abwab muqaddimat al-ibadat*, *hadith* 3.
[2] *Wasail al-Shiah*, i, 91, *kitab al-taharah*, *abwab muqaddimat al-ibadat*, p. 92, *hadith* 5.

all of them that the recognition of *wilayah* is a condition for the acceptability of works, or, rather, that it is the condition for the acceptability of faith in God and the prophethood of the honored Prophet (*s*). However, as to its being a condition for the validity of the works, as stated by some scholars, that is not certain. Rather, that which is apparent is that it is not a condition, as is suggested by many traditions, such as the tradition concerning the non-necessity of the repetition (*qada*) of his acts of worship by a convert to Shiism (*mustabsir*).

Excepting the *zakat*, which he had given during the period of his error to those who did not deserve it, he is not required to perform the *qada* of his other acts of worship and God would reward him for them.[1] It is mentioned in another tradition that "other acts such as prayer, fasts, *hajj*, and *sadaqah* would join you and follow you excepting the *zakat*, which was paid earlier to those who had no right to receive it and has to be paid to its deserving recipients."[2] And it is mentioned in some traditions that the acts [of the *ummah*] are presented to the Messenger of God (*s*) on Thursdays, and God, the Exalted, reviews them on the Day of Arafah and makes them all like dust scattered. The Imam was asked as to who are the persons whose acts are thus treated. The Imam replied that they are the acts of those who are hostile to its and hostile to our followers.[3]

And this tradition, as is clear, implies the (legal) validity and non-acceptability of the acts. In any case, the pursuit of this matter is beyond our present purpose. And all praise belongs to God, firstly and lastly.

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[1] *Wasail al-Shiah*, i, 91, *kitab al-taharah*, *abwab muqaddimat al-ibadat*, p. 97, *bab* 31, *hadith* 1.

[2] *Wasail al-Shiah*, i, 91, *kitab al-taharah*, *abwab muqaddimat al-ibadat*:

أَمَّا الصَّلاةُ وَالصَّوْمُ وَالصَّدَقَةُ فَإِنَّ اللهَ يَتْبَعُكُمَا ذَلِكَ وَيَلْحَقُ بِكُمَا. وَأَمَّا الزَّكَاةُ فَلا، لأَنَّكُمَا أَبْعَدْتُمَا حَقَّ امْرِئٍ مُسْلِمٍ وَأَعْطَيْتُمَاهُ غَيْرَهُ.

[3] *Bihar al-anwar*, xxiii, 345, *kitab Imamah*, *bab* 20, *hadith* 37.

...إِنَّ أَعْمَالَ العِبَادِ تُعْرَضُ كُلَّ خَمِيسٍ عَلَى رَسُولِ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ، فَإِذَا كَانَ يَوْمُ عَرَفَةَ هَبَطَ الرَّبُّ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى؛ وَهُوَ قَوْلُ اللهِ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى: ﴿وَقَدِمْنَا إِلَى مَا عَمِلُوا مِنْ عَمَلٍ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ هَبَاءً مَنْثُورًا.﴾ فَقُلْتُ: جُعِلْتُ فِدَاكَ؛ أَعْمَالُ مَنْ هَذِهِ؟ قَالَ: أَعْمَالُ مُبْغِضِينَا وَمُبْغِضِي شِيعَتِنَا.

34

# Thirty-Fourth *Hadith*: THE STATION OF THE FAITHFUL BEFORE GOD

بالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلَى ثِقَةِ الإِسْلامِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ الكُلَيْنِي قُدِّسَ سِرُّهُ عَنْ عِدَّةٍ مِنْ أَصْحَابِنَا عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ خَالِدٍ عَنْ إِسْمَاعِيلَ بْنِ مَهْرَانَ عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ القَمَّاطِ عَنْ أَبَانَ بْنِ تَغْلُبَ عَنْ أَبِي جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: لَمَّا أُسْرِيَ بِالنَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ قَالَ: يَا رَبِّ، مَا حَالُ الْمُؤْمِنِ عِنْدَكَ؟ قَالَ: يَا مُحَمَّدُ، مَنْ أَهَانَ لِي وَلِيّاً فَقَدْ بَارَزَنِي بِالْمُحَارَبَةِ وَأَنَا أَسْرَعُ شَيْءٍ إِلَى نُصْرَةِ أَوْلِيَائِي. وَمَا تَرَدَّدْتُ عَنْ شَيْءٍ أَنَا فَاعِلُهُ كَتَرَدُّدِي عَنْ وَفَاةِ الْمُؤْمِنِ؛ يَكْرَهُ الْمَوْتَ وَأَكْرَهُ مَسَاءَتَهُ. وَإِنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مَنْ لا يُصْلِحُهُ إِلاّ الغِنَى، وَلَوْ صَرَفْتُهُ إِلَى غَيْرِ ذَلِكَ لَهَلَكَ. وَإِنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مَنْ لا يُصْلِحُهُ إِلاّ الفَقْرُ وَلَوْ صَرَفْتُهُ إِلَى غَيْرِ ذَلِكَ لَهَلَكَ. وَمَا يَتَقَرَّبُ إِلَيَّ عَبْدٌ مِنْ عِبَادِي بِشَيْءٍ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا افْتَرَضْتُ عَلَيْهِ. وَإِنَّهُ لَيَتَقَرَّبُ إِلَيَّ بِالنَّافِلَةِ حَتَّى أُحِبُّهُ فَإِذَا أَحْبَبْتُهُ كُنْتُ إِذاً سَمْعَهُ الَّذِي يَسْمَعُ بِهِ وَبَصَرَهُ الَّذِي يُبْصِرُ بِهِ وَلِسَانَهُ الَّذِي يَنْطِقُ بِهِ وَيَدَهُ الَّتِي يَبْطِشُ بِهَا؛ إِنْ دَعَانِي أَجَبْتُهُ وَإِنْ سَأَلَنِي أَعْطَيْتُهُ.

With a chain of authorities reaching up to the Thiqat al-Islam Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulayni (*q*) from several of our companions, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid, from Ismail ibn Mihran, from Abu Said al-Qammat, from Aban ibn Taghlub, from Abu Jafar (a) that

he said, "When the Prophet (*S*) was taken on his [celestial] journey, he said to God: My Lord, what is the state of the believer before Thee? He replied: O Muhammad, indeed whoever humiliates a friend of mine declares a war against me and I am the swiftest of all in the aid of My friends. And I am not so hesitant in any thing that I do as when taking the life of the faithful person who hates death, and I hate to vex him. And indeed there are those amongst My faithful servants whom nothing can reform except wealth, and should I turn them towards something other than that they would perish. And indeed there are those amongst my faithful servants whom nothing would reform except poverty, and if I were to change their state from what it is they would perish. And there is nothing dearer among things that bring a servant of Mine near to Me than the obligations that I have assigned to him. And indeed he draws nearer to Me gradually through supererogatory acts until I love him, and when I love him, I become the hearing with which he hears, the sight wherewith he sees, the tongue wherewith he speaks, and the hand wherewith he holds, and if he calls Me, I answer him, and if he asks Me I grant him."[1]

## EXPOSITION

The verb **أسْرىَ** is in the passive sense and means being taken on a night of a journey. Al-Jawhari says:

سَريتُ سُرىً ومَسرًى وَأسرَيتُ بمعنى إذا سِرتُ ليلاً، وبالألف لغةُ أهلِ الحِجازِ.

Hence, a journey by night is called **إسراء** (*isra*). The descriptive expression 'by night,' *laylan*, used with the verb *asra* in the noble verse:

﴿سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا.﴾

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, ii, 352, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab man adha al-muslimin wa ahtaqarrahum, hadith* 8.

*Glorified is He who took His servant on a night journey.*
(17:1)

is either, as stated by Shaykh Bahai,[1] for the purpose of indicating the short period of the night journey by the means of the indefinite (*tankir*) *laylan*, because the journey between the Masjid al-Haram and the Masjid al-Aqsa takes forty nights. Or it is based on abstraction (*tajrid*) meant for the purpose of conveying the same sense. In the phrase **لَمَّا أُسْرِيَ بِالنَّبِيِّ** ('when the Prophet was taken on the nightly journey') the related explanatory phrases –'towards the station of Divine proximity for instance'– have been omitted due to their being understood.

The expression **ما حال المؤمن** means, 'what station and worth does the believer have before Thee?' In the expression **أهانه، من أهان لي ولياً** conveys the sense of despising, making light of, scorning, vilifying:

**أَهَانَهُ: أي استَخفَّ به واسْتَهانَ به. وتَهَاونَ به أي استَحقَره. يُقال: رجُلٌ فيه مَهانَة.**

Apparently the prefix '**لـ**' in (**لي**) refers to the verb, in which case it would mean making light of a believer for his faith in God and for the sake of God, the Exalted. It is also possible that it relates to *wali*; in which case, that which is meant is 'making light of in the absolute sense, for any reason whatsoever. *Wali* here means friend and intimate.

In the expression **بارز، بارزني** means to go out:

**بَرزَ الرَّجُل يبرزُ بُروزاً، أي خَرجَ.**

And here it means to commence hostility and to go to war or to declare it.

The expression **مساءته** is the verbal noun (*masdar mimi*) of **ساء**, meaning causing distress and vexation.

In regard to the statement:

**إنَّ مِنْ عِبَادِي الْمُؤْمِنِينَ مَنْ لا يُصْلِحُهُ إلاّ الغِنَى: أي ذُلٌّ وضَعفٌ.**

the authoritative Shaykh Bahai (*m*) says: The rules of grammar require that the relative pronoun (*mawsul*, i.e. **مَن**) should be the subject (*ism*) and the genitive proposition and the genitive clause (*jarr wa majrur*, i.e. **من عبادي**) its

[1] Al-Shaykh al-Bahai, *Arbain*, *hadith* 35, p. 296.

predicate (*khabar*); but it is obvious that the intent is not to say that those whom nothing but poverty can reform are some of the servants, but rather the contrary. Therefore, it is better to consider the adverbial clause as the subject and the relative pronoun as the predicate. And although this is contrary to general usage, the like of it has been considered permissible by some, as in the statement of God, the Exalted:

﴿وَمِنْ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَقُولُ آمَنَّا...﴾

(Here ends his statement.)[1] Perhaps in such cases the subject (*mubtada*) is elliptical and the genitive proposition is indicative of the elision. In such a case it would also not be contrary to the rules of grammar. And it is narrated from the author of *al-Kashshaf* [i.e. al-Zamakhshari][2] that [in such cases] the genitive pronoun and the clause in the genitive case are interpreted to be the subject. On the basis of that which has been said, there is also no need of any interpretation.

We should know that this statement, here, is meant to dispel a doubt and to answer a question that might arise in the minds of some people who do not have the understanding of the perfect divine order [of creation] and the concealed Divine providence. That [doubt and question] is that if the faithful have such a worth and station before God, the Exalted, why do they fall into poverty and destitution? And if the world does not have any worth, why do some of them become rich and wealthy. It answers by saying that the states of My servants and the conditions of their hearts are different.

There are some whom nothing except poverty would reform, and I make him poor to reform their state. And there are some whom nothing would reform except wealth and self-sufficiency, and so I make them rich. Both of these states signify the nobility, honor, and dignity that the man of faith has in the sacred presence of God, the Blessed and the Exalted.

The sentence وَمَا يَتَقَرَّبُ إِلَيَّ عَبْدٌ مِنْ عِبَادِي... (‘and there is nothing dearer among things that bring a servant of Mine nearer to Me . . . ‘) and the following sentence describe the station of nearness of the Perfect in faith.

It is as if this *hadith*, wherein the state of the faithful is described for the

[1] Al-Shaykh al-Bahai, *Arbain*, *hadith* 35, p. 296,.

[2] Al-Zamakhshari, *Tafsir al-kashshaf*, i, 167, exegesis of 2:8.

Noble Messenger (*s*), first begins by giving a brief description of the state of the faithful in general, that whoever despises them declares war against God. Then, it divides the faithful into two classes, or rather three, in accordance with the way of the gnostics.

One of them referred to is the generality of the faithful, from the phrase 'And I am not so hesitant…,' up to where He says: 'And there is nothing dearer among things…' That is because they detest death, and wealth and poverty causes their hearts to swerve. These two are not the characteristics of the Perfect (*kummal*) but refer to the ordinary among the faithful. Accordingly, the literal import of the tradition poses no problem and it does not conflict with other noble traditions which state that the Sincere amongst the faithful do not have aversion for death. Hence, there is no need for the answer cited by Shaykh Bahai from the Shaykh-e Shahid (*r*). Anyone interested in it should refer to Shaykh Bahai's *Arbain*.[1]

Secondly, the tradition describes the state of the Perfect from where it says, "There is nothing among the things that bring a servant of Mine near to Me… (وَمَا يَتَقَرَّبُ إِلَيَّ عَبْدٌ مِنْ عِبَادِي...), up to the end of the *hadith*. In the view of the gnostics, these sentences relate to two different groups. One of them consists of those who obtain the nearness relating to obligatory duties (*faraid*) and the other consists of those who obtain the nearness associated with the supererogatory acts of worship (*nawafil*),[2] and the closing part of the tradition refers to their station and the result of their nearness. Later, God willing, we will briefly refer to each of these two stations.

As to the word بطش, al-Jawhari says that *batshah* means domination and taking by force:

البَطشَةُ، السَّطوةُ والأخذُ بالعُنف، وقد بَطَشَ به يبطَشُ ويبطُشُ بطشاً.

Here, however, that which is meant is taking hold of (*akhdh*), in general, and, apparently, the general sense of 'taking hold of' is that which is meant by the word in common usage.

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[1] Al-Shaykh al-Bahai, *Arbain*, *hadith* 35.

[2] *Authors Note*: Shaykh Bahai (*r*) says: "The (term) *nawafil* refers to the non-obligatory works that are performed for Gods good pleasure. Its specific use to refer to prayers became customary later on." p. 490.

## A NOTEWORTHY POINT

The learned Shaykh Bahai (*m*) says, "The Chain of authorities of this *hadith* is *Sahih* [authentic], and it is a tradition 'well-known' (*mashhur*) among the Shiis (*khassah*) as well as the generality *Ammah*, i.e. the *Sunni*s], who have narrated it in their *Sihah* with a slight variation." Thereafter, he cites the tradition with a slight difference [of Wording] from their *Sihah*. In the gloss on the *Arbain*, he remarks, "One of 'the 'several' mentioned in the chain of authorities of the tradition is Ali ibn 'Ibrahim, and for this reason, this narration is *Sahih*. The *Ammah* have also transmitted it through a *Sahih* chain of authorities, and this is a tradition that is *mashhur* and considered authentic by the consensus (*muttafaq alayh*) of all followers of Islam."[1]

## INTERPRETATION OF THE 'HESITATION' ASCRIBED TO GOD

We have already explained matters relating to the contempt of the faithful: earlier while expounding one of the traditions,[2] and there is no need to repeat it here. Here we will explain some other expressions relating to the tradition.

It should be known that that which is mentioned in this noble tradition concerning the ascription of hesitation (*tardid*, *tarddud*) to God, the Exalted, and similar other matters that are mentioned in *Sahih* traditions, or rather even in the wise Divine scripture –such as the attribution of change of intent (*bada*) or testing (*imtihan*) to God, the Exalted– have been interpreted by the*ulama* in accordance with their own approach and creed. The august Shaykh Bahai (*r*) has given three interpretations of it in his book *Arbain*, to which we will refer briefly. First, that there is a concealed condition (*idmar*) in the statement, meaning 'if it were possible for Me to hesitate.' Second, since it is common among people to hesitate in offending those whom they respect, a hesitation which they do not show for others, it is valid to mention hesitation as a metaphorical substitute for respect. What is meant is, 'None of the creatures have such worth and respect before Me as a faithful person has.'

The third interpretation is that God, the Exalted, as mentioned in traditions, reveals the favors and the good news to the faithful servant at the

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[1] Al-Shaykh al-Bahai, *Arbain*, *hadith* 35, p. 295; cf. al-Bukhari, *al-Sahih*, vol 23, p. 22, *kitab al-ruqaq*, and Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 6, p. 256.

[2] See the exposition of the Nineteenth *hadith*.

time of death to remove his aversion towards death and to awaken in him a desire for the abode of permanence. Hence He has likened this state to the state of one who wants to subject his friend to a pain which is followed by a great benefit. Such a one hesitates as to how to inflict this pain so that the friend suffers the least. Thus he continues to appeal and allure until he obtains acceptance.[1]

## AN *IRFANI* EXPLANATION

The way of the philosophers and the gnostics in this and similar issues is a different one. We shall refrain from elaborating it due to its being remote from [ordinary] understanding and will not discuss its [metaphysical] premises. We shall mention only as much as can be educative and accords with spirituality.

It should be known that all the planes of existence, from the ultimate heights of *Malakut* and the last peaks of *Jabarut* to the lowest depths of the world of darkness and prime matter, are manifestation of Divine Beauty and Glory (*Jamal wa Jalal*) and the degrees of the manifestations of God's Lordship. No being has any independence of its own and everything is sheer dependence, relation, poverty, and attachment to the sacred being of the Absolute Real. All of them are absolutely subject to the sovereignty of God and submissive to the Divine commands. Accordingly, there are many references to this matter in the Quranic verses. God, the Exalted, has said:

﴿وَمَا رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَى.﴾

*And when thou threwest, it was not thou that threw, but God threw.* (8:17)

This affirmation and negation refers to the position of *amr bayn al-amrayn*.[2] It means that you have indeed thrown (the lance), but at the same time it was not your ego that performed the act of throwing independently. Rather, it was with the manifestation of the power of God in the mirror of thy existence and through the influence of His Power in the *Mulk* and the

[1] Al-Shaykh al-Bahai, *Arbain*, *hadith* 35, p. 3110.

[2] This phrase refers to the doctrinal position of the *Imam*s of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (*a*) in respect of the issue of *jabr* (predestination) and *tafwid*. The phrase, meaning the matter between the two matters, implies that neither *jabr* is true nor *tafwid*; the truth lies between these two extremes positions. (Tr.)

*Malakut* of thy being that the throwing occurred. Hence you are the thrower, and at the same time it is God, Glorious and Exalted, Who is the thrower. An example of it are the noble verses of the blessed *surat al-Kahf*, in the story of Moses and Khidr (a) where Hadrat Khidr explains the mystery behind his actions. In one case involving a defect [i.e. where Khidr makes a hole in the boat], he ascribes it to himself. In one case, which involved perfection, he ascribes it to God. In another case, he ascribes the act to both himself and to God. In one place he says **أردتُ** (I wished), in another place **أرادَ ربُّك** (Thy Lord wished), and in yet another place **أردْنا** (We wished), and all of these [ascriptions] were correct.[1]

Of the same kind is the statement of God, the Exalted:

﴿اللَّهُ يَتَوَفَّى الْأَنْفُسَ حِينَ مَوْتِهَا.﴾

*God takes the souls at tire time of their death*. (39:42)

Although it is the Angel of Death who is charged with, according to another Quranic verse, the taking of the souls.

﴿يُضِلُّ مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ.﴾

*He leads astray whoever He will and guides whoever He will*. (16:93)

it is God, the Exalted, who is the guide (*al-hadi*) and it is He who leads astray (*al-mudill*), although the guides are Gabriel (Jibrail) and the Noble Messenger (*s*):

﴿إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُنذِرٌ وَلِكُلِّ قَوْمٍ هَادٍ.﴾

*Thou are only a warner and a guide to every people*. (13:7)

and it is Satan who misleads.

Similarly, it is the Divine breath that sounds the trumpet of Hadrat Israfil through the blowing of Israfil.

From one viewpoint, what are Israfil, *Izrail* and Jibrail and Muhammad (*s*) as well as other prophets and the entire realm of being in comparison to the kingdom of the Absolute Sovereign and the irresistible Divine will that anything may be ascribed to them? All of them are manifestations of the

[1] 18:79-82.

Divine Power and Will:

﴿وَهُوَ الَّذِي فِي السَّمَاءِ إِلَهٌ وَفِي الْأَرْضِ إِلَهٌ.﴾

*And it is He who in heaven is God and in earth is God*.
(43:84)

From another viewpoint, that is, from the aspect of multiplicity and the order of causes and means, all the means are appropriate in their own place and the perfect order of creation is regulated through a system and hierarchy of means, causes and effects. And if the smallest of causes and means is withheld from doing its work the entire wheel of existence will come to a halt. And were it not for the relation of the temporal to the eternal, through the determined means and intermediaries, the path of Divine effusion (*fayd*) would be intercepted and the stream of Divine mercy would be cut off. If someone were to attain to this refreshing fountainhead of faith through the study of the fundamentals and the preliminaries, established in their own place, especially in the *irfani* books of the eminent [*urafa*] and the books of the Chief of Philosophers and the Best of Islamic Philosophers (*Sadr al-hukama wa'l-falasifah wa afdal al-hukama al-Islamiyyah*, i.e. Sadr al-Mutaallihin, known as Mulla Sadra), and should this teaching enter his heart, these doors would be opened for him and he would find that at the plane of gnostic discovery all these ascription are valid and there is not the slightest trace of the metaphorical in them.

Since some of the angels, charged with the souls of the faithful and the taking of their sacred souls, behold the stations that the faithful possess in the sacred presence of God, the Exalted, and, on the other hand, when they observe the aversion of the faithful [towards death], they get into a state of hesitation and indecision. It is this very state that God, the Exalted, hay attributed to Himself, in the same way that He has ascribed the taking of souls, the guidance and the misleading to Himself. In the same way as those are correct on the basis of the mystic creed, this one is also valid. However, attaining to this fountain requires a fairness of talent and a sound and subtle taste. And God is the All-knowing and He is the Guide.

This point should not remain unmentioned that since the reality of existence is the very reality of perfection and completion, that which is defective and ugly is not attributable to God, the Exalted, and is not the object of creation (*majul*), as is established in its own place. Hence the closer the effusion (*fayd*) to the horizon of perfection and the more devoid it is of

weakness and deficiency, its relation to God is more complete and its ascription to the Sacred Being truer. Conversely, the more predominant is the darkness of finitude and non-existence, and the more numerous the limits and inadequacies, the weaker is a thing's relation to God and the more remote its attribution. That is why the acts of origination and creation have been more often ascribed to God in the language of the *Shariah* and the transient *mulki* acts less often. Should an open eye and an awakened heart be able to distinguish inadequacy from perfection, the ugly from the fair, and the good from the evil, it would then understand that although the entire realm of being is the manifestation of Divine efficiency and related to God, all the Divine acts are perfect and beautiful and none of the defects and evils are attributable to His Sacred Being. That which is called 'attribution by accident' (*intisab bila arad*) in the jargon of the philosophers (*hukama*) (*r*) is a rumor at the plane of preliminary teaching and philosophy. This notion, in the present context, contains certain fallacies, and it is better to refrain from discussing them here.

Our main purpose in discussing this point was, firstly, to dispel certain false doubts that may arise in the mind of the ignorant person devoid of the knowledge of the higher teaching.

Secondly, the aim was to explain that the hesitation and conflicting motives [mentioned in the tradition], as they happen to some beings of the *Malakut*, are more validly ascribed to God, than the events that occur in this [corporeal] world.

Thirdly, the aim was that a person possessing the gnosis of the realities should again distinguish between the aspect of perfection and deficiency in this hesitation and vacillation of motives, and attribute the aspect of perfection to God and negate the aspect of deficiency in relation to Him.

## ANOTHER INTERPRETATION OF THE TRADITION OF HESITATION

There is another interpretation of the noble tradition relevant to this context, which had come to the mind of this incapable author. And that is that the servants of God are either the gnostics and the *awliya* who are engaged in the journey towards God and on the path of the people of the heart. This group of servants are absorbed in the Divine and in love with the unique Divine Beauty. The Sacred Essence of God is the *qiblah* of their attention and yearning, and apart from Him they do not behold any of the

worlds, even themselves and their own perfection.

Or they are those who are immersed in the adornments of the world and sunk in the darkness of the love of glory and wealth, and the faces of their hearts are turned towards their own ego and egohood, without paying any attention to the world of the sacred and the celestial company of intimacy and love. They are the ones who have turned away from the Names of God ( **وهم الملحدون في أسماء الله**).

And the third group are the believers who attend to the world of the sacred in accordance with the light of their faith and they abhor death in proportion to their attention to this world. God has referred to these opposing attractions towards the *Mulk* and the *Malakut*, towards the Divine and the creation, towards the Hereafter and the world, as hesitation as attraction towards two opposite sides is present in hesitation. It is as if He were saying that this *Mulki* and *Malakuti* attraction is not present in any existent the way it is present in the faithful servant. On the one hand he is averse to death due to his attention towards the realm of *Mulk*, and on the other hand the Divine gravity draws him towards Itself in order to bring him to, his perfection. Hence God, the Exalted, is averse to do him offence which is equal to his remaining in the world of *Mulk*, and he himself is averse to death. However, other people are not such, because the *awliya* do not have any *Mulki* attraction, and those immersed in the world do not possess any *Malakuti* attraction.

The meaning of attribution of these opposing attractions to God is the same as mentioned in the former interpretation. In this context the great researcher and the majestic Sayyid, Mir Damad,[1] and his honored disciple have made certain disclosures whose mention will further prolong this discourse.

## GOD'S REFORMING OF THE STATE OF THE FAITHFUL THROUGH POVERTY AND WEALTH

From that which is stated in this noble tradition, that nothing will reform some of My servants except poverty and should I deprive them of it they would perish, and similarly there are some who will be reformed by wealth

[1] Mir Damad, *al-Qabasat*, pp. 469-420; Mulla Sadra, *al-Asfar*, pp. 395 ff., *safar* 3, *mawqif* 4, *fasl* 13.

and sufficiency and will perish without it, it is known that whatever God, the Exalted, bestows upon the faithful, whether it is wealth or poverty, health or malady, safety or trepidation, and other such things, is for the reform of the state of the faithful and the purification of the state of their hearts. And this noble tradition is not contrary to the many traditions that have been narrated pertaining to the intensity of the afflictions of the faithful through maladies and pains, poverty, destitution and other tribulations. For God, the Exalted, with His expansive mercy and all-encompassing grace, is like a physician and a kind nurse Who makes everyone refrain from the world in some particular way. At times, He gives wealth to someone and at the same time involves him in other afflictions in accordance with the strength and weakness, perfection and inadequacy of his faith. Rather, He surrounds wealth and riches with afflictions in such it manner as to turn him away from the world and the love for it. The temperament of this person is such that were he to be made poor, perhaps due to his seeing felicity in wealth and property and considering the worldly people its felicitous, he would turn to the world and perish for ever in its pursuit. But when it is made accessible to him and, for the sake of restraining him from falling in love with it, it is surrounded by troubles and inner and outer distresses, he would turn away from the world. One of our great masters (*d*) used to say concerning having several wives that one imagines it to be for the sake of the world and attention towards it; but when one is afflicted with it one finds out that it is one of the great masterpieces (of legislation), which makes one leave the world and abandon it in the very course of entry into it.

Thus God, the Exalted, afflicts the faithful at times with poverty, reforming them and turning their hearts away from the world and giving them consolation. At times He afflicts them with wealth and riches, and while one imagines them to be enjoying the world's bounties and having a good time, they are really afflicted with distress, tension, visitations and tribulations. At the same time, the tradition does not conflict with the fact that the poor among the faithful have a great merit before God, the Exalted, as is known from the traditions. We have explained some of the things pertaining to this topic under one of the earlier traditions.[1]

## THE NEARNESS RELATING TO OBLIGATORY AND

[1] See the exposition of the Fifteenth *Hadith.*

## SUPEREROGATORY ACTS AND THEIR RESULT, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE APPROACH OF THE WAYFARERS

It should be known that for the wayfarer on the path of God and the emigrant from the dark house of the self to the real *kabah*, there is a spiritual journey and a gnostic wayfaring whose origin is the habitat of the self and egoism and whose stages are the planes of finitude pertaining to '*the horizons and the souls*' and the *Mulk* and the *Malakut*, which have been referred to as 'the veils of darkness and lights.'

إنَّ للهِ سَبْعينَ أَلْفَ حِجَابٍ مِنْ نُورٍ وَظُلْمَةٍ.

> Verily, for God there are a seventy thousand veils of light and darkness.[1]

These are the lights of being and the darkness of finitude, or the lights of *Malakut* and the darknesses of *Mulk*, or the darkening pollutions of carnal attachments and the pure lights of the attachment of the heart. These seventy thousand veils of light and darkness are at times summarily referred to as the seven veils, as narrated in relation to the opening *takbirat* from the Pure Imams, that they remove a veil with every *takbirah*,[2] and as is also narrated concerning the subject of prostration on the earth of the shrine of al-Husayn, may my soul be ransomed for him, that prostration on it removes the sevenfold veils.[3]

And a famous gnostic says:

هفت شهر عشق را عطار گشت

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[1] Al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar*, vol 55, p. 25, *kitab al-sama wal-alam*, *bab* 5, *hadith* 13.

[2] Al-Hurr al-Amili, *Wasail al-Shiah*, vol 4, p. 772, *kitab al-salat*, *abwab takbirat al-ihram*, *bab* 7, *hadith* 5:

هُشامُ بنُ الحَكَمِ عَنْ أبي الحَسَنِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ أنَّهُ رُوِيَ لِذَلِكَ عِلَّةٌ أُخْرَى، وَهِيَ أنَّ النَّبيَّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ لَمَّا أُسْرِيَ بِهِ إلَى السَّمَاءِ قَطَعَ سَبْعَ حُجُبٍ فَكَبَّرَ عِنْدَ كُلِّ حِجَابٍ تَكْبِيرَةً، فَأَوْصَلَهُ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ بِذَلِكَ إلَى مُنْتَهَى الكَرَامَةِ.

[3] Al-Hurr al-Amili, *Wasail al-Shiah*, vol. 3, p. 608, *kitab al-salat, abwab ma yusjad alayh*, *bab* 16, *hadith* 3:

مُحَمَّدُ بْنُ الحَسَنِ، فِي المِصْبَاحِ، بِإسْنَادِهِ عَنْ مُعَاوِيَةَ بْنِ عَمَّارٍ قَالَ: كَانَ لأبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ خَرِيطَةُ دِيبَاجٍ صَفْرَاءُ فِيهَا تُرْبَةُ أبِي عَبْدِاللهِ الحُسَيْنِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ. فَكَانَ إذَا حَضَرَتْهُ الصَّلاةُ صَبَّهُ عَلَى سَجَّادَتِهِ وَسَجَدَ عَلَيْهِ ثُمَّ قَالَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: إنَّ السُّجُودَ عَلَى تُرْبَةِ أبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ يَخْرِقُ الحُجُبَ السَّبْعَ.

ما هنوز اندر خم يك كوچه ايم

*Attar has roamed through the sevenfold cites of love,*
*While we are still in the bend of a lane*.[1]

These in the microcosmic Man have been referred to as the sevenfold subtleties (*lataif*)[2] and sometimes their number is reduced to three inclusive veils, referred to as the 'threefold realms' of 'the horizons' (*afaq*) and 'the threefold planes' of the souls (*anfus*),[3] and at times to the thousand fold stages well known among the wayfarers. At times they have been divided, in one consideration, to a hundred and, in another consideration, to ten stages. The perfect *arif* Shaykh Shahabadi (*d*) used to assign ten stations for every stage from among the stages of the wayfarers, and in this new and original division there would be in all a thousand stations. And Hadrat Ibrahim, the Friend of the Beneficent (a) has expressed his spiritual journey, as reported by God, the Exalted, [in the Quran] as consisting of threefold stages, one of which is called 'the Star,' another 'the Moon,' and the third 'the Sun.'[4]

In fine, the origin of the spiritual journey is the dark house of the self, and its stages are the planes and levels of the *horizons and the souls*. Its destination is the sacred Being of God with all the Names and the Attributes, at first, for the Perfect Man, and lastly as that wherein all the Names and the Attributes dissolve, and every name, attribute, and definition belongs to something else.

After that, the wayfaring human being overcomes his ego and egoism and leaves the house of the ego and passes through the stages and planes of finitude in his search of the real goal and his quest of the Divine, by transcending each of these and piercing through the veils of darkness and light, tearing his heart away from all beings and existences, and purging the *kabah* of the heart of its idols with his wall-like hand, and, when all the stars

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[1] Ascribed to Rumi*:* some attribute it to Abd al-Rahman Jami.

[2] Shahabadi (*r*) mentions seven subtleties (*latifah*) of the human hang as follows: *nafs* (ego), *aql* (intellect), *qalb* (heart), *ruh* (spirit), *sirr* (secret, soul), *khafi* (hidden) and *akhfa* (most hidden); see *Rashahat al-bihar, kitab al-insan wal-fitrah*, p. 177.

[3] The threefold realms are the realm of physical nature (*tabiah*), the Imaginal realm (*mithal*), and the realm of the intellect (*aql*), considered by Mulla Sadra as corresponding to the senses, imagination, and the intellect. See *Shawahid al-rububiyyah*, p. 320.

[4] 6:77-79.

and the moons and the suns set and disappear from the horizon of his heart and the orientation of his heart, undisturbed by attachment to any other, becomes single, unified, and divine, and the state of his heart [like that of Abraham, as described in this verse]:

﴿إِنِّي وَجَّهْتُ وَجْهِي لِلَّذِي فَطَرَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ.﴾

*I have turned my face towards Him who created the heavens and the earth*. (6:79)

to become annihilated in the Names, the Essence and the Acts, then, in this state, he would become lost to himself, attaining total obliteration and absolute swoon. Then the Divine takes charge of his being, and he hears with the Divine hearing, sees through the Divine vision, holds with the hand of Divine power, and speaks with the Divine tongue. He beholds through the Divine and sees nothing except God. He speaks through the Divine and says nothing but the Truth, becoming blind, deaf and dumb to the non-Divine, his eye and ear are open to nothing except the Truth. This station is not attained except through the gravity of the Divine and the spark of the fire of love, the flame of eternal love, which brings him close to the threshold of proximity to the Divine. Through that pulse of Divine attraction, which follows from [the Divine] self-love, he is helped so as not to stumble in this valley of bewilderment and so as not to fall victim to *shath* and the like, which are remnants of egoism. And in this tradition there is a reference to these two, in His words:

وَإِنَّهُ لَيَتَقَرَّبُ إِلَيَّ بِالنَّافِلَةِ حَتَّى أُحِبُّهُ.

> And he gradually draws nearer to Me through the *nawafil*, until I love him.

The drawing near of the servant is through the spark of yearning (*ishq*), and the pulse of Divine gravity from love (*hubb*):

تاكه از جانب معشوق نباشد كششي

كوشش عاشق بيچاره به جايي نرسد

*Until there is not an attraction from the Beloved's quarter,*

*The efforts of the poor lover do not get anywhere*.[1]

Hence the ultimate of nearness through the *nawafil* is total *fana*, absolute dissolution and complete obliteration, and its result is 'I become the hearing wherewith he hears…' And after this complete *fana*, total obliteration, absolute annihilation, and complete swoon (*saq*), at times the eternal grace comes to his aid, bringing him to himself and returning him to the domain of his own self, whereat he finds himself in the state of awakening (*sahw*) and the state of intimacy (*uns*) and serenity (*tumaninah*) comes upon him, whereat the glories of Beauty and Majesty dawn upon him. In this state of consciousness, to him are revealed the Attributes in the mirror of the Essence (*dhat*), and in them the fixed archetypes (*ayan-e thabitah*) and their requisites. The state of the people of the path of gnosis at this station is also like their first station, in that its fixed archetype is subject to a certain Name. Its annihilation is in the same Name as well as its survival. In the state of *sahw* also the same Name is disclosed to him and the disclosure of the fixed archetype subject to the same Name is obtained by him.

## THE SECRET OF THE VARIANCE AMONG THE PROPHETS IN RESPECT OF PROPHETHOOD

Hence for the Perfect Man (*insan-e kamil*), who is subject to the Greatest All-inclusive Name, the absolute disclosure of the fixed archetypes and their accompanying requisites is obtained from eternity to eternity. Revealed also to him are the states and potentialities of all the existents and the character of their wayfaring as well as the pattern of their fulfillment (*wusul*). The robes of the seal of prophethood and ultimate prophecy, which is the consequence of absolute disclosure, fit his fair and upright stature. Each of the other prophets, in accordance with the Name they manifest and in proportion to the capacity and vastness of its domain, obtain the disclosure of the archetype subject to that Name. The degree of the perfection and deficiency of their ministry, its degree of nobility, and its vastness and narrowness, derive therefrom and are subject to their respective Divine Names, as discussed in detail by us in the treatise *Misbah al-hidayah*.[2]

In fine, after that the state of recovery occurs following the obliteration, his being becomes divine and God, the Exalted, observes other existents in

[1] Dehkhoda, *Amthal wa hikam*, vol. 1, p- 537.

[2] *Misbah al-hidayah*, pp. 192-195.

the mirror of his beauty, or, rather, it occupies the same plane as that of the Divine Will (*mashiyyah*). For the Perfect Man, is on the same plane as the Absolute Will (*mashiyyah*) and his spirituality becomes the same as the manifestation of Divine efficiency. In such a state God, the Exalted, sees through him, hears through him, and holds by his means, and he himself is the irresistible Divine Will, the perfect intent, and knowledge-in-act (*ilm fili*). Hence God hears by him, sees by him,... and so on and so forth to the end of the *hadith*. [The same matter is referred to in the following tradition] and others like it:

عَلِيٌّ عَيْنُ اللهِ وَسَمْعُ اللهِ وَجَنْبُ اللهِ.

> Ali is the eye of God, the hearing of God, and the Divine proximity.[1]

Hence the nearness of the obligations of *sahw* is consequent to the obliteration, and its result is that which you have heard. The *sahw* consequent to obliteration is a state other than this state of negligence of ours. That plurality, consequent to absolute *fana*, is different from the plurality in which we are immersed. That is because plurality is a veil for us that hides the Divine Face, while for them it is a mirror of epiphany, [as stated by Ali :]

مَا رَأَيْتُ شَيْئاً إلاّ وَرَأَيْتُ اللهَ مَعَهُ وَفِيهِ وَقَبْلَهُ وَبَعْدَهُ.

> I did not see a thing without beholding God with it, in it, before it, and after it.[2]

The nearness of the *nawafil* may be considered as obliteration in the Names (*fana asmai*) and the nearness of *faraid*, as obliteration in the Essence. Accordingly, the result of the nearness of *faraid* becomes absolute obliteration, and its further elaboration is not appropriate to this place. Even this much was beyond the scope of these pages.

## A CITATION FROM THE MOST AUGUST SHAYKH BAHAI

The august *shaykh* and gnostic, Bahai (*r*) in commenting on this noble tradition in his *Arbain*, states: "In this regard there are certain sublime statements made by the people of the heart, containing subtle points and

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[1] Al-Shaykh al-Saduq, *Kitab al-Tawhid*, p.164, *bab* 22, *hadith* 1.

[2] *Al-Asfar*, vol. 1, pp. 117 ;*Ilm al-yaqin*, vol. i, p. 49; *Kalimat maknunah*, p. 3.

spiritual hints which fill the olfactory sense of the spirit with their aroma and quicken the decaying bones of the specters. None is guided to the their meaning and knows their reality except someone who has given lip his comforts through austerities until he comes to get a taste of them and reaches their meaning. But one who is ignorant of their secrets and deprived of the treasure of their teachings, due to his immersion in base carnal joys and being drowned in physical pleasures, is exposed to a great danger on hearing these words, and it is feared that he would fall into blasphemy and come to believe in incarnation (*hulul* and *ittihad*). And Exalted is God greatly above that:

تَعَالَى اللهُ عَمَّا يَقُولُونَ عُلُوًّا كَبِيرًا.

Here at this point we will state the matter simply and accessibly so that it is near to understanding. Hence, we may say, these words represent the extreme in nearness, describing the domination of love's Sovereign on the outward and inward being of the servant. Therefore, what is meant –and God knows best– is this: "When I love a servant, I draw him to the point of intimacy and turn him towards the world of sanctity, immersing his mind in the mysteries of *Malakut* and confining his senses to perceiving the lights of *Jabarut*. In this state his feet remain steady at the station of proximity, and love so mingles with his flesh and blood that he becomes unconscious of himself. Thereat, everything else disappears from his sight until I become like his sight and hearing," as has been said:

جُـــــنوني فِيكَ لا يخْفى ونَارِي مِنكَ لا يخْبُو

فَأنتَ السَّمعُ والأبْصارُ والأركانُ والقَلبُ

*That I'm mad of Thee, is no secret,*
*My fire, lit by Thee, won't go out,*
*Thus Thou art my hearing and my sight,*
*My body, and my heart?*[1]

Here end his words, may God elevate his station.

[1] *arbain*, *hadith* 35, p. 299.

## A CITATION FROM KHWAJAH TUSI

His Excellency, the best of the later scholars and the most perfect among the predecessors, Khwajah Nasir Tusi (*q*) says, "When the gnostic is cut off from himself and joined to God, he sees all powers as vanishing in Divine power and all sciences as drowned in Divine knowledge and all wills as vanishing in His will. Then he sees all the existents and their perfections as having originated and emanated from Him. At this time God, the Exalted, becomes his hearing and sight, power, knowledge and existence. Thereupon the character of the gnostic becomes divine."[1] Here end his words, may God increase the sublimity of his station.

The honored Majlisi has also made certain remarks on the issue. Their summary is that if man uses his faculties and energies in the way of Satan and carnal appetites, nothing remains of them except regret and shame. But if he spends them in the way of obedience to God, He transforms them into spiritual faculties. Then his hearing and sight become spiritual hearing and spiritual vision. With that hearing he hears the speech of the angels, and this sight and vision are not weakened even by death. It is with this spiritual hearing and sight that he encounters the interrogation of the grave. On the contrary, those who do not possess this sight and hearing are raised blind and deaf from the dead. It is concerning this gift that God, the Exalted, has said, "I become the hearing wherewith he hears…"[2] These words, coming as they do from him, are not without a surprise.

## CONCLUDING NOTE

The august *shaykh*, Bahai, says,[3] "This noble tradition explicitly indicates that the obligatory duties (*wajibat*) have a greater merit than the supererogatory ones (*mustahabbat*) and that there is a greater reward for their performance. And the Shaykh-e Shahid (*m*) and some other scholars have regarded certain cases as exceptions to it wherein the supererogatory (*sunnah*) is superior to that which is obligatory. One of them is foregoing one's debt altogether, which is superior to giving time to the debtor in a condition of hardship, although the first is supererogatory while the second is

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[1] *Sharh al-Isharat*, vol. 3, p. 389, *namat* 9, *fasl* 19.

[2] Al-Majlisi, *Mirat al-uqul*, vol. 10, p. 312, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab man adha al-Muslimin*, *hadith* 8.

[3] *Arbain*, *hadith* 35, p. 302.

obligatory. Another is being the first to greet someone, which is superior to answering another's greeting (*salam*). A third case is repeating a prayer offered individually with *jamaah* [which according to traditions is superior to a prayer offered individually by twenty-seven degrees, whereas the repeating is supererogatory]," and such other cases. Some have disputed each of these exceptions, whose mention is not so necessary.

It should be known that the literal import of the noble tradition is that the obligations are superior to supererogatory acts though they may not be of the same kind. For instance, the returning of *salam*, which is obligatory, is superior to a supererogatory *hajj* and the founding of a great school or the *ziyarat* of the Messenger of God, although this may appear to be somewhat improbable. Accordingly, *marhum* Majlisi (*m*) has said[1] that possibly that is restricted to acts of the same category. However, in the presence of a proof one cannot say such a thing on mere improbability. And possibly the superiority of the obligations is to be considered as being applicable to prescribed rituals, such as prayer, fasting, *hajj*, *zakat*, and the like, not to other obligations, like giving time to a debtor in straits, returning *salam*, and so on, although this possibility is also not free of doubt. And all Praise belongs to Allah, at beginning and end.

[1] *Mirat al-uqul*, vol. 10, p. 381, *kitab al-iman wal-kufr*, *bab man adha al-Muslimin*, *hadith* 7.

35

# Thirty-Fifth *Hadith*:
# GOD AND MAN, GOOD AND EVIL

**بالسنَد المُتَّصِلِ إلى عِمَادِ الإسْلامِ وَالمُسْلِمِينَ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ رضْوَانُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَحْيَى عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنْ أبِي نَصْرٍ قَالَ: قَالَ أَبُو الحَسَنِ الرِّضَا عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: قَالَ اللهُ: يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ، بِمَشِيئَتِي كُنْتَ أَنْتَ الَّذِي تَشَاءُ لِنَفْسِكَ مَا تَشَاءُ، وَبِقُوَّتِي أَدَّيْتَ فَرَائِضِي، وَبِنِعْمَتِي قَوِيتَ عَلَى مَعْصِيَتِي. جَعَلْتُكَ سَمِيعاً بَصِيراً قَوِيّاً. مَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنَ اللهِ، وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَفْسِكَ. وَذَاكَ أَنِّي أَوْلَى بِحَسَنَاتِكَ مِنْكَ، وَأَنْتَ أَوْلَى بِسَيِّئَاتِكَ مِنِّي. وَذَاكَ أَنَّنِي لا أُسْأَلُ عَمَّا أَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْأَلُونَ.**

With my continuous chain of authorities reaching up to the Pillar of Islam and Muslims, Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulayni (*r*), from Muhammad ibn Yahya, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Abi NaSr, who said, Abu al-Hasan al-Rida (a) said, God has said: "O son of Adam, it is with My will that you are such a being that you will for yourself whatever you will, and it is with My power that you carry out the duties I have prescribed for you, and it is with My bounty that you found the strength to disobey Me. I made you hearing, seeing, and strong. Whatever good visits you is from God, and whatever evil strikes you is from your own self. That, because I have a greater right to your virtues than yourself, and you are worthier of your vices than Me. And hence I am not asked concerning what I do and they are

asked. (21:23)"[1]

**EXPOSITION**

There are in this noble tradition certain sublime and important themes pertaining to the higher metaphysical science, which if mentioned with their elaborate preliminaries would take us beyond the scope of these pages and prolong this discourse inordinately. Hence, inevitably, taking a middle course, we will deal with them with brevity, mentioning, in the course of a few sections, some of these issues as established conclusions. And our trust is in God.

## TWO STATIONS OF DIVINE NAMES

It should be known that there are two stations for the Will (*mashiyyah*) of God, the Exalted –majestic is His glory– or, rather, for all the other Names and Attributes, such as Knowledge, Life, Power, and the rest of them.

One of them is the station of the Names and Attributes of the Essence. (*asma wa sifat-e dhatiyyah*). It is established by metaphysical proofs that the Sacred Essence (*dhat*) of the Necessary Being combines in Itself all the perfections and all the Names and Attributes, and that in a single mode and from an aspect that is absolutely simple. All the perfections and the Names and Attributes of Beauty and Glory derive from its simple existential mode, and that which is beyond being is deficiency, defect, and non-existence. And as His Sacred Essence is pure being and absolute existence, It is pure and absolute perfection (*kamal-e sirf wa sirf-e kamal*). [He is] the totality of knowledge, the totality of Power and the totality of Life عِلْمٌ كُلُّهُ قُدْرَةٌ كُلُّهُ حَيَاةٌ كُلُّهُ.

The other station is that of the [Names and] Attributes of the Divine Acts (*asma wa sifat-e filiyyah*), the plane of manifestation of the Names and Attributes of the Essence, which is the plane of manifestation of the Attributes of Glory and Beauty. And this is the station of *maiyyat-e qayyumiyyah* (contiguity of the Sustainer and the sustained existents), [referred to in the Quranic verse]:

﴿وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ.﴾

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, i, p. 152, *kitab al-Tawhid, bab al-mashiyyah wal-iradah, hadith* 6.

*He is with you, wherever you may be*. (57:4)

﴿مَا يَكُونُ مِنْ نَجْوَى ثَلَاثَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ رَابِعُهُمْ وَلَا خَمْسَةٍ إِلَّا هُوَ سَادِسُهُمْ وَلَا أَدْنَى مِنْ ذَلِكَ وَلَا أَكْثَرَ إِلَّا هُوَ مَعَهُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كَانُوا ثُمَّ يُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ.﴾

*Three conspire not secretly together, but He is the fourth of them, neither five men, but He is the sixth of them, neither fewer then that, neither more, but He is with them, wherever they may be*. (58:7)

And it is the plane of the Face of Allah (*wajh Allah*)*:*

﴿فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ.﴾

*Whithersoever you may turn to there is the Face of God*. (2:115)

And it is the plane of the Divine effulgence (*nuriyyat*)*:*

﴿اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ.﴾

*God is the Light of the heavens and the earth*. (24:35)

And it is the plane of the Absolute Will (*mashiyyat-e mutlaqah*):

﴿وَمَا تَشَاءُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ.﴾

*And you will not without God's willing*. (81:29)

خَلَقَ اللهُ المَشِيَّةَ بِنَفْسِهَا ثُمَّ خَلَقَ الأَشْيَاءَ بِالمَشِيَّةِ.

God created all things with His will, and He created the will by itself.[1]

And there are still other terms and descriptions for it in the language of the People of God, and both of those planes are referred to in this noble verse of the Divine Scripture:

﴿هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ.﴾

*He is the First and the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden*.

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, i, p. 110, *bab iradah annaha min sifat al-fil*, *hadith* 4.

(57:3)

The plane of the absolute, active Will has an encompassment of sustainment (*ihatah-ye qayyumiyyah*) over all the existents of the realms of *mulk* and *malakut*, and all the existents are, from one aspect, its particular modifications (*taayyunat*), and from another aspect its manifestations (*mazahir*).

It is in respect of this station of active Will (*mashiyyat-e filiyyah*) and the manifesting character (*mazhariyyat*) of the wills of the creatures and their dissolution (*fana*) in it –or, rather, the fact that the creatures themselves, with all their aspects, manifest and reflect it– that the noble tradition says: O Son of Man, it is with My Will that you are one who wills. Your being (*dhat*) and its perfections are by My will itself, and, rather, you yourself and your perfections are particular expressions (*taayyunat*) of my will:

﴿وَمَا رَمَيْتَ إِذْ رَمَيْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ رَمَى.﴾

*And when thou threwest, it was not thou that threw, but God threw.* (8:17)

And there are so numerous statements in traditions and Quranic verses in support of this matter that their mention is not essential.

The august Shaykh al-Ishraq Suhrawardi (*q*) considers God's detailed knowledge (*ilm tafsili*) of things as being the same as this plane of active knowledge, and the Muhaqqiq (Khwajah Nasir al-Din) Tusi (*q*) has followed him in this opinion. Hadrat Sadr al-Mutaallihin (*q*) considers (God's) detailed knowledge to be the same as the plane of the simple Divine Essence. To him the statements of those two figures are not absolutely satisfactory, but this author considers the opinions of each of them to imply essentially the same position, the disagreement between them being merely verbal, though an elucidation of this matter is not appropriate here.

From this explanation, it is known that every thing that comes into existence, whether they are the sacred substances of the divine realm, or the natural substances of the realm of *mulk*, or accidents, whether it is the essences, or attributes, or acts-all of them come into being with the sustainment, sway, and all-inclusiveness of the Divine Power. Hence, the meaning of the statement becomes clear:

وَبِقُوَّتِي أَدَّيْتَ فَرَائِضِي.

> It is with My Power that you carry out the obligations prescribed by Me.

Also, the station of the absolute Will is the same as that of the all-encompassing Mercy (*Rahmah*) and the all-inclusive Bounteousness. Hence He has said:

وَبِنِعْمَتِي قَوِيتَ عَلَى مَعْصِيَتِي.

> And it is with My bounty that you obtained the strength to disobey Me.

## AN ALLUSION TO THE TOPIC OF *JABR* AND *TAFWID*

There is a clear allusion in this noble tradition to the problem of *jabr* and *tafwid*, and it spells out the right creed in this regard, that of *amr bayn al-amrayn* or *manzilah bayn al-manzilatayn*, which is in accordance with the way of the gnostics and the path of the People the heart. That is because it affirms both the Divine Will (*mashiyyah*) as well as the power and role of the creatures, which are moreover considered to derive from the Divine Will. (It means to say): You exercise your will, and it is by My Will that your will has been manifested. You carry out the duties, and your power is a manifestation of My power. And it is with My bounty, which is the expansive table of My all-inclusive mercy, that your power to disobey was acquired. Hence all the acts and attributes and existents [that relate to you] are not capable of absolute negation in relation to you, in the same way as these cannot be affirmed of you absolutely. You exercise your will, and your willing is subsumed in My Will and is its manifestation and a conditioned expression (*taayyun*) of it. It is with your own power that you have the capacity to obey or disobey Me, and, at the same time, your power and strength are manifestations of My power."

Thereafter, a likely objection -that, on this basis, the defects, vices, and sins [of creatures] are to be attributed to God- is dispelled by a metaphysical and discursive, as well as a mystical and gnostic, rejoinder that since God, the Exalted, is pure perfection, goodness, beauty, and glory, everything that derives from His sacred quarter is perfection and goodness. Rather, the order of existence and the reality of being, the visible and the invisible, is concurrent with perfection, completion, and beauty. And that which is deficient, vicious, evil, and bad derives from non-existence and finitude and is associated with essence (*mahiyyah*), which is not the object of creation

(*jal*) and Divine emanation. Rather, the evils present in the realm of nature and the narrow realm of *mulk* pertain to the contradictions between the existents. And the narrowness of the world and the contradictions between them are not the object of creation. Hence, all good, perfection, and virtue derives from God, and all deficiency, evil, and sin derives from the creatures, as stated (in the Quranic verse):

﴿مَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنْ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَفْسِكَ.﴾

*Whatever of good befalleth thee* (*O man*)*, it is from Allah, and whatever evil befalleth thee it is from thyself.* (4:79)

Hence, all the felicities of the world and the Hereafter, and all the good pertaining to the realms of *mulk* and *malakut* emanate from the Mainspring of goodness, and all the evil and wretchedness of this world and the Hereafter derive from the essential deficiency and lack of the existents themselves. And that which is commonly said, that felicity and wretchedness do not derive from the Creator's creation but from the essences (*dhat*) of things, is without basis in relation to felicity (*saadat*). Because felicity is the object of Divine Creation; and emanation, and felicity does not derive from any essence or quiddity. Rather, sheer extinction and complete wretchedness derive from essence. However, it is correct [to say that] in relation to wretchedness (*shaqawah*), for it derives from essence (*mahiyyah*) and is not the object of creation (*ghayr majul*), being lower than the plane of creation. And as to the famous tradition:

السَّعِيدُ سَعِيدٌ فِي بَطْنِ أُمِّهِ وَالشَّقِيُّ شَقِيٌّ فِي بَطْنِ أُمِّهِ.

The felicitous one is felicitous in his mother's womb, and the wretched one is wretched in his mother's womb,

it has a different meaning relating to the science of the Names and the Attributes, and its mention is not relevant here.

And as following the explanation of this truth based on metaphysical proof, there remained the likelihood of a doubt that the negation of any role for the existents in relation to all that is good, and the negation of the evils in relation the eternal and necessary power of God, implies *jabr* and *tafwid*, which are contrary to established truth, in accordance with the way of gnosis and the path of metaphysical reasoning, it was met with the statement, clothed in the language of the previous metaphysical argument and one which substantiates it, that God, the Exalted, is worthier than the creatures in

regard to the attribution of virtues and that they are worthier than the Sacred Divine Essence in relation to the attribution of vices. In this affirmation, there is affirmation of worthiness of ascription in relation to each of the two sides.

As to God's being worthier than the creatures in relation to all that is good, and the principle of its attribution to the creatures, that is because the relation of good to the Source of all sources is the relation of existence (*wujud*) and intrinsic (*bi al-dhat*), because good is intrinsic to existence, being identical with the Essence in the Necessary Being and, in the contingent, through creation (*jal*) and emanation (*ifadah*). Hence the emanating principle of good derives from the Necessary Existent, the Exalted, and the contingent is the mirror for Its manifestation and Its manifester (*muzhir*), and that relation of (active) manifestation (*zahiriyyat*) and emanation is more complete than this relation of receptivity and (passive) manifestation (*mazhariyyat*). However, this case is the reverse in respect of evils and vices; but each of the two relations stands affirmed. That is because that which is emanated by God is good, and this good is accompanied with associating evils in a sub-ordinate manner. Hence they are attributable to Him accidentally (*bi al-arad*) and attributable and essential to the deficiency and inadequacy of essences (*mahiyyat*). Accordingly, these two points of view are also mentioned in the noble verses. There, where the sovereignty of Unity prevails and overshadows plurality and deficiency, He says:

﴿قُلْ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ.﴾

*Say* (*O Muhammad*)*: Everything is from God*. (4:78)

and there where the intervention of accidental plurality is taken into account and the mediating means are considered, He declares,

﴿مَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنْ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَفْسِكَ.﴾

*Whatever of good befalleth thee* (*O man*)*, it is from Allah, and whatever evil befalleth thee it is from thyself*. (4: 79)

## GOD, THE EXALTED, IS NOT ANSWERABLE CONCERNING WHAT HE DOES AND OTHER EXISTENTS ARE ANSWERABLE

It should be known that the authorities amongst the philosophers say that there is no end or purpose for the Divine act except the Sacred Essence and Its essential manifestations, and that it not possible for the Sacred Essence to

have any end for the creation of things beyond itself and Its manifestation. That is because every agent that creates something for an end beyond its essence, whatever that may be, even if it is for procuring a benefit for itself, or bestowing a reward on another than itself, or for worship, or knowledge (*marifah*), praise and glorification, needs it for its own perfection, and its existence is preferable to it over its non-existence, and this implies deficiency, inadequacy, and deriving benefit from something else. This is impossible for the absolutely perfect Divine Essence which is self-sufficient and necessary in all respects. Hence, there is no teleological ground, nor a question of wherefore, in His acts, and He is not asked concerning what He does. However, other existents have ends and purposes in their acts that lie beyond their essence. Thus the end of the acts of the lovers of Divine Beauty and those blessed with nearness (*muqarrabin*), and extinction in the Divine (*majdhubin*) is reaching the door of Allah, encounter with the Divine (*liqa Allah*), and reaching the threshold of Divine sanctity. And so do other beings have ends additional to their essences, in accordance with their perfection and deficiency, intensity and weakness. Also, That which is Absolute Perfection and necessary-in-itself, is necessary in all respects, and in the same way that His sacred essence is devoid of teleological grounds, His acts too are devoid of any teleological grounds beyond the Essence, contrary to all other existents.

Similarly, since His sacred Essence is Ultimate Beauty and Perfection, it is the *kabah* of aspiration of all existents and the ultimate end of the entire chain of being, but the *kabah* of aspiration and the ultimate end does not have an end beyond itself, as other existents are essentially deficient and every deficient thing is, by nature, the object of repulsion, in the same way that every perfect thing is the object of attraction and pursuit. Hence, the end of all movements and acts is the Sacred Essence, and for the Sacred Essence itself there is no end beyond Itself.

﴿لَا يُسْأَلُ عَمَّا يَفْعَلُ وَهُمْ يُسْأَلُونَ.﴾

*He is not asked concerning what He does, and they are asked.* (22:23)

Also, since the Sacred Essence is ultimate Beauty and Perfection, the order of existence, which is the shadow of the Beautiful Essence, is utmost perfection and the universal order is the most perfect of all conceivable orders. Hence, the question concerning teleology, end, purpose, and benefit

arises due to ignorance and deficiency. Accordingly, the accursed *Iblis* put the well-known sevenfold questions and God, the Exalted, answered all of them, concisely and in the manner of fair disputation, with a single answer. Hence, God is not to be questioned concerning His acts due to His ultimate perfection and other existents are liable to question due to their deficiency, in essence as well as actions.

Also, since God, the Exalted, is absolute wisdom, each of the acts that derive from Him possesses ultimate soundness, and so is unquestionable, contrary those of other existents.

Similarly, since every act of God, the Exalted, derives from the Reality of His Essence and the very truth and absoluteness of His Being, and other existents are not such, therefore, He is agent-by-essence, and a question concerning His ends is invalid, contrary to the case of other existents. And since His Will and Power are the same as His Sacred Essence, efficiency-by essence in that Sacred Essence is the same as efficiency by will and power, and there is no room for any objection relating to efficiency-by-nature (*failiyyat bi al-tab*). This is one of the noble topics that is established in its own place, and through it are resolved many of the doubts posed by the theologians (*mutakallimun*) concerning various topics relating to the divine sciences.

From this explanation, we come to know the causal interrelation between the sentences of this noble tradition. Thus since Divine Acts are consummate perfection and perfect order, He is not questioned concerning what He does, and others are questioned, because they are not such. This is the cause for His being worthier of virtues and the creatures' being worthier in relation to the attributability of vices. And this is the cause for the attribution of every vice to the creature and every virtue to God. This relationship can also be established by other explanations, which were not mentioned here. And to Allah belongs all Praise, at every beginning and end.

36

# Thirty-Sixth *Hadith*: THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

بِالسَّنَدِ المُتَّصِلِ إِلَى ثِقَةِ الإِسْلامِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ الكُلَيْنِي عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ خَالِدٍ الطَّيَالِسِيُّ عَنْ صَفْوَانَ بْنِ يَحْيَى عَنِ ابْنِ مَسْكَانَ عَنْ أَبِي بَصِيرٍ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ يَقُولُ: لَمْ يَزَلِ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ رَبَّنَا وَالعِلْمُ ذَاتُهُ وَلا مَعْلُومَ، وَالسَّمْعُ ذَاتُهُ وَلا مَسْمُوعَ، وَالبَصَرُ ذَاتُهُ وَلا مُبْصِرَ، وَالقُدْرَةُ ذَاتُهُ وَلا مَقْدُورَ. فَلَمَّا أَحْدَثَ الأَشْيَاءَ وَكَانَ المَعْلُومُ، وَقَعَ العِلْمُ مِنْهُ عَلَى المَعْلُومِ وَالسَّمْعُ عَلَى المَسْمُوعِ وَالبَصَرُ عَلَى المُبْصِرِ وَالقُدْرَةُ عَلَى المَقْدُورِ. قَالَ: قُلْتُ: فَلَمْ يَزَلِ اللهُ مُتَحَرِّكاً؟ قَالَ: فَقَالَ: تَعَالَى اللهُ عَنْ ذِلِكَ، إِنَّ الحَرَكَةَ صِفَةٌ مُحْدِثَةٌ بِالفِعْلِ. قَالَ: قُلْتُ: فَلَمْ يَزَلِ اللهُ مُتَكَلِّماً؟ قَالَ: فَقَالَ: إِنَّ الكَلامَ صِفَةٌ مُحْدِثَةٌ لَيْسَتْ بِأَزَلِيَّةٍ، كَانَ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ وَلا مُتَكَلِّمٌ.

With my continuous chain of authorities reaching up to the Thiqat al-Islam Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulayni, from Ali ibn Ibrahim, from Muhammad ibn Khalid al-Tayalisi, from Safwan ibn Yahya, from Ibn Maskan, from Abu Basir who said: I heard Abu Abd-Allah (a) say, "God, the Almighty and the Glorious, was our Lord even at a time when Knowledge was His Essence and there was no knowable, Hearing was His Essence and there was no audible thing, Seeing was His Essence and there was no visible thing, and Power was His essence and there was nothing subject to power. Thus when He created things and the knowable came into being, His Knowledge

pertained to the known thing, His Hearing to that which is audible, and His Sight to that which is visible, and His Power to that which is subject to power." Abu Basir says: I asked him, "Hadn't God been ever-moving?" He replied, "Exalted is God above that! Indeed movement is a quality that comes into existence (*muhdath*) by action." Abu Basir says: I asked him, "Hadn't God been ever-speaking [in pre-eternity]?" He replied, "Speech is a quality that comes into existence (*Sifatun mahdathah*) and is not eternal (*azali*). God, Almighty and Glorious, existed, and He was not speaker."[1]

## EXPOSITION

In the statement **لَمْ يَزَلِ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ رَبَّنَا, ربّنا** is apparently the predicate (*khabar*) of **زال** , and the phrase **والعلم ذاته** is the adverb of condition (*hal*) for it. However [such an assumption] does not give smooth (*salis*) meaning, nor does it achieve the purpose. Because the purpose is not to affirm the eternity of [God's] Lordship, but to affirm the pre-eternity of His Knowledge and its precedence over the knowable. It may be said the phrase **ربّنا** is in the nominative case (*marfu*) and is appositive to the noun (*ism*) of **زال** with the predicate (*khabar*) being omitted (*mahdhuf*), as indicated by the phrase **والعلم ذاته**. Assuming the ellipsis, the sentence would be like this: **لَمْ يَزَلِ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ رَبَّنَا وَالعِلْمُ ذَاتُهُ**. And it is possible that **زال** is a perfect verb (*tammah*), sufficing with the nominative case, on the basis of which it would be **زال** not **زال يزول** for the past tense of **يزال** is always defective (*naqis*), contrary to **يزول** which is always perfect.

And in the phrase **كان, وكان المعلوم** is here complete, meaning that 'when He created the things and the knowable came into existence.

In the phrase **محدثة بالفعل** it is probable that the expression **بالفعل** is opposed to **بالقوة** and maybe in the sense of verbal noun, meaning that an Attribute that is realized with creation cannot be God's Attribute. There are some noble topics that have been referred to in this *hadith*, and we shall discuss some of them to an extent appropriate to this discourse.

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[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, i,107, *kitab al-Tawhid, bab sifat al-dhat, hadith* 1.

## THE IDENTITY OF GOD'S ATTRIBUTES WITH HIS ESSENCE

It should be known that there is a reference in this noble tradition to God's Sacred Essence being identical to His true Attributes of perfection, like Knowledge, Power, Hearing and Sight. This is one of the important topics (of philosophy and *kalam*) whose elaborate treatment is, however, outside the scope of this treatise. Here we will refer to the true position in this regard in accordance with firm metaphysical proofs' of the philosophers (*hukama*) and the way of the people of gnosis (*ahl-e marifat*).

It should be known that it has been clearly established in its appropriate place that that which belongs to the categories of perfection and beauty derives from the mainspring of existence and the root of the reality of being, and that in the realm of existence there is no more than one noble principle, which is the mainspring of all perfections and the source of all goodness, and that is the Reality of Being (*haqiqat-e wujud*). And were the totality of perfections not the same as the Reality of Being, and were there some kind of duality in the context of concrete reality; of whatever form, or separation from It, that, would 'imply that there are two principles in the domain of Being, which in turn implies many inadmissible conclusions. Hence whatever that is perfection, is not such on the basis of meaning and essence, but by virtue of its actualization and realization in the context of concrete reality, and that which is real in the context of concrete reality is one principle, which is existence. Hence, all perfection derives from one principle, which is the reality of existence.

It has also been clearly established that the reality of existence is sheer simplicity in all aspects, and composition is absolutely precluded from its sacred precincts, as long as it retains its essential and original sheerness and purity of its own reality. However, when it descends from its original reality, it assumes composition in an accidental manner, at the plane of the intellect a s well as external reality, in accordance with its planes and stations (*mashahid wa manazil*). But in respect of its essence (*dhat*), it remains single, and composition is something alien to it and accidental.

Two sublime principles are inferred from these explanations: First, that which is simple in all aspects is the totality of perfections in one and a single aspect. And in the same aspect that It is existent, It is also Knowing, Powerful, Living, and Willing and all the other names and Attributes of beauty and glory are true of It. He is Knower in the [same] aspect that He is Powerful, and Powerful in the [same] aspect that He is Knower, without

there being any difference of consideration (*itibar*) even on the plane of the intellect. And as to the difference of the concepts of the Names and the words that are used to represent them, which are unconditioned (*la bi shart*) intellectual concepts, it does not correspond to a difference in concrete reality, and it has been clearly established that numerous concepts of perfection are abstracted from one thing. Rather, that which is implied by the foregoing explanation is that all the concepts of perfection are abstracted from a single aspect (*haythiyyat-e wahidah*). And if the concepts of perfection were to be abstracted from different aspects, as in the case of some contingents, this is accidental, and that is due to the descent (*tanazzul*) of the reality of existence and its accidental mingling with non-existences.

The second principle is that that which is perfect in all aspects and is absolute perfection and goodness must be simple in all aspects. And from these two, another principle is inferred, that that which is composite, in whatever manner, is not perfect in all aspects and is subject to deficiency and nonexistence as well, and that which is deficient is not absolutely simple.

Therefore, as God, the Exalted, is completely simple, and composition, which implies contingency, poverty, and dependence on another, does not affect Him absolutely, He is perfect in all aspects and possesses all the Names and Attributes, and He is the very ground of reality and the essence of being, without His existence bearing any taint of non-existence, and without His perfections bearing any taint of imperfection. Hence, He is sheer being, for were non-existence to find way into Him; the evil of composite things, which consists of the composition of existence and non-existence, would find way into Him. Thus He is the sheerness of Knowledge, the sheerness of Life, the sheerness of Power, the sheerness ‘of Sight,’ of Hearing and all other perfections. This explains the statement of Imam Sadiq (a) that

وَالعِلْمُ ذَاتُهُ وَالقُدْرَةُ وَالسَّمْعُ وَالبَصَرُ ذَاتُهُ.

> And Knowledge is His Essence, and so are Power, Hearing, and Sight His Essence.

## THE STATEMENTS OF THE PHILOSOPHERS ON THE DIVISION OF DIVINE ATTRIBUTES

It should be known that the divine philosophers have divided the Attributes of God, the Exalted, into three kinds:

First, the true Attributes (*sifat haqiqiyyah*), and these have been divided into two kinds: the absolute true Attributes (*sifat haqiqiyyah mahdah*), such as Life, Subsistence, eternity and the like, and the relational true Attributes (*sifat haqiqiyyah dhat al-idafah*), like Knowledge, Power, and Will, which involve a relation to the objects of Knowledge, Power and Will (*Malum*, *Maqdur*, and *Murad*). These two kinds of Attributes are considered by them to be the same as the Essence (*Dhat*).

Second, the absolutely relative Attributes (*sifat idafiyyah mahdah*), such as [the Attributes of] being the Originator, Provider, Merciful, Omniscient, Omnipotent, and the like.

Third, the absolutely negative Attributes (*sifat salbiyyah mahdah*), such as Unlikeness [to creatures] (*Quddusiyyah*), Oneness (*Fardiyyah*), Transcendence (*Subbuhiyyah*), and the like.

These two [latter] kinds of Attributes are considered by them to be additional to the Sacred Essence, and all the negations are considered to derive from a single negation, which is the negation of contingency (*salb-e imkan*). Similarly, all the relations are referred to a single relation, which is the relation of Creatorhood (*muwajjidiyyah*), and the source of relations is referred to the illuminative and emanative relation (*idafah-ye ishraqiyyah wa idafah-ye ifadiyyah*).[1]

This author does not consider as valid these divisions, along with the identification of the 'true Attributes' [with the Essence] and the consideration of the relative and negative Attributes as additional, as mentioned by them with their proofs, and he considers them neither in conformity with the firm metaphysical proofs nor with the correct conceptions of gnosis. That is because none of the Attributes are to be considered as being identical with the Essence-when dealing with the concepts of the Names and the Attributes from the viewpoint of conceptual multiplicity. And should we regard the Essence as being identical with the relative or the negative Attributes, that would imply that God; the Exalted, is pure relation and identical with the negative aspect.

Similarly, if He is regarded as being identical with the true Attributes, that implies that God, the Exalted, is the same as derivative conceptions (*mafahim itibariyyah*) and rational ideas (*maani aqliyyah*), and He is exalted above'

[1] *Al-Asfar al-arbaah*, vi,118, *safar* 3, *mawqif* 2, on the discussion of the *Sifat*. See also Sabzawaris gloss at this place.

that. And should we consider the realities of the Attributes and the concrete instances of the Names and the Attributes, then all the Names and the relative as well as the true Attributes are found to be the same as the Sacred Essence, and the difference between 'knowledgeability' (*Alimiyyah*) and knower (*Alim*), and 'powerfulness' (*qadiriyyah*) and powerful (*qadir*) is only that of conceptual consideration, and all the relational Attributes derive from His Essential Mercifulness (*rahimiyyah*) and Beneficence (*Rahmaniyyah*), even the Attributes of being the Provider (*raziqiyyah*) and Creator (*khaliqiyyah*), and the rest.

Also, with respect to their reducing all the negations to the negation of contingency and all the relations to a single relation, and their abstaining from reducing the true Attributes to anything, it may be remarked that should we consider the matter from a conceptual viewpoint, none of them derives from another, neither the negations, nor the relations, nor the true Attributes. But if the realities are taken into view, all the true Attributes also refer to the One Necessary Reality.

## THE IDENTITY OF THE ATTRIBUTES WITH THE SACRED ESSENCE

The true position concerning the Attributes, in the idiom of theoretical philosophy (*hikmat-e nazari*), is that the true and relative Attributes are absolutely different from a conceptual viewpoint, and none of them is the same as the Sacred Essence. From the viewpoint of reality, all of them are the same as the Sacred Essence. However, there are two planes of the Attributes: one is the plane of the Essence and Attributes of the Essence (*awsaf dhatiyyah*) from which we can abstract Knowledge and Knowledgeability, Power and Powerfulness. The other one is the station of the Attributes of Act (*awsaf filiyyah*), from which, too, one can abstract the concepts of Knowledge and, Knowledgeability, Power and Powerfulness. As to the negative Attributes, such as His Unlikeness to creation (*quddusiyyah*) and His Transcendence (*subbuhiyyat*) and the Names of *tanzih* (negation of the finite characteristics of the creatures with respect to God), they are implied by the Sacred Essence, and the Sacred Essence is an accidental instance (*misdaq bi al-arad*) in relation to them. Because God, the Exalted, is absolute perfection and the essential instance of absolute perfection. That is because He is the principle of reality and negation of deficiency is among its implications, and perfection is the accidental instance of the negation of

deficiency. The gnostics and the people of the heart consider the station of manifestation (*maqam-e tajalli*) at the plane of the most sacred emanation (*fayd-e aqdas*) as the source (*mabda*) of the Names of Essence, and the station of manifestation at the plane of the sacred emanation (*fayd-e muqaddas*) as the source of the Attributes of Act.[1] They do not consider the manifestation at the plane of the sacred emanation as 'other' [than the Essence], in the same way that they do not consider it to be the same (*ayn*) [as the Essence] either. A discussion around this topic will lead up to a discussion of the Names and the Attributes in accordance with their way, and that will take us beyond our present purpose.

And some have referred Divine Attributes to privative matters, considering 'Knowledge' as the non-existence of ignorance and 'Power' as the non-existence of inability. And among the people of *marifah*, someone whom I have seen insisting on this matter was the august gnostic *marhum* Qadi Said Qummi,[2] who, in the course of a discourse mentioned in *Sharh al-Tawhid*[3] has apparently followed his teacher, the *marhum* Mulla Rajab-Ali . Aforetime we had given a reply, based on metaphysical reasoning, to his argument, replying as well to his recourses to the literal meanings of some traditions.

## THE PRIORITY OF KNOWLEDGE TO CREATION

Among the noble issues referred to in this sacred tradition is that knowledge with its knowables precedes creation in pre-eternity, a matter which itself as well as its character –as to whether it is detailed or non-detailed– are subjects of a great controversy. There is also a controversy as to whether it is additional to the Essence (*dhat*) or the same, whether it precedes creation or accompanies it, with all the related details, which are in their books? We will confine ourselves to establishing the truth of the matter and

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[1] *Misbah al-uns*, 130-131; *Naqd al-Nusus*, *fasl* 2, p 38-39.

[2] Muhammad Said ibn Muhammad Mufid Qummi, known as Qadi Said, was an eminent Shii Scholar well versed in *hadith*, philosophy, and literature and strongly inclined towards *irfan*. A pupil of Mulla Mohsen Fayd Kashani, Mulla Abd al-Razzaq Lahiji and Mulla Rajab-Ali Tabrizi, he held the office of judgeship in Qum and so came to be known as Qadi. He died in 1103/1691-2 at Qum. Among his works are, *al-Arbaun hadith*, *Asrar al-salat*, *Hashiyah Uthululjiya*, a *hashiyah* on *al-Isharat*, *Haqiqat al-salat*, a *Sharh* of *al-Tawhid* by al-Shaykh al-Saduq (*r*), *al-Bawariq al-malakutiyyah*, and *Kelid-e behesht*.

[3] *Sharh al-Tawhid* iii, 54; MS. in Ayatullah Marashi Public Library, Qum.

refrain from criticism or refutation of other opinions.

It should be known that that which stands established with the people of metaphysical reasoning and the companions of gnosis is that which has been indicated in this noble tradition, that the knowledge of the known things precedes creation in pre-eternity (*azal*), and that it is the same as the Essence. That His Knowledge is detailed is indicated by the statement that He was the Seer when there was nothing visible, and Hearer when there was nothing audible, because sight and hearing entail the observation of visibles and audibles in a detailed manner, as is clear enough. Also, it refers to His detailed knowledge, where it says:

فَإِذَا أَحْدَثَ الأَشْيَاءَ وَكَانَ المَعْلُومُ، وَقَعَ العِلْمُ مِنْهُ عَلَى المَعْلُومِ.

> So when He brought the things into being and the known came into existence, His knowledge pertained (corresponded) to the known.

That is because His knowledge did not obtain a new subsistence after creation, but pertained to the known after its acquiring subsistence. Now we shall explain the meaning of the Knowledge pertaining to the known.

The explanation of this noble faith-related theme, on the basis of the approach of the authorities among the philosophers, is that, as known from the preceding section, God, the Exalted, is absolute existence and absolute perfection. Absolute existence, with its complete simplicity and unity, encompasses all perfections and all existents, to utmost perfection. That which is outside the realm of its existence is non-being, deficiency, and inadequacy, and, in a word nothingness (*la shayiyyah*). The relation of other planes of existence to that Sacred Essence is that of deficiency to perfection. The knowledge of absolute perfection is the knowledge of perfection in its absoluteness, without deficiency or inadequacy, and this is the very universal, simple, and detailed disclosure, as not even an iota of existence, from pre-eternity to eternity, is beyond the realm of His knowledge and there can be no trace of plurality and composition in it.[1]

According to the approach of the gnostics, God, the Exalted, encompasses all the Names and the Attributes at the plane (*Hadrat*) of *wahidiyyah* and the station of nominal inclusiveness (*jam asmai*). The fixed archetypes (*ayan*

[1] *Al-Asfar al-arbaah*, vi, 263-277, *safar* 3, *mawqif* 3, *fasl* 12.

*thabitah*) of all existents are implied in the Divine Names at the plane of inclusiveness prior to creation in pre-eternity, and the absolute manifestation of the Essence (*tajalli-ye mutlaq-e dhat*) from the plane of *ahadiyyah* and the *ghayb* of ipseity is the disclosure of all the Names and Attributes and all their implications, which are the fixed archetypes of all the existents, with a single manifestation and disclosure that is absolutely simple (*kashf-e basit-e mutlaq*). Hence with the epistemic disclosure (*kashf-e ilmi*) at the plane of the manifestation of the most sacred emanation (*fayd aqdas*) takes place the disclosure of the Essence, the Names, the Attributes and the archetypes without there being any multiplicity or compositeness.[1]

These two approaches possess utmost firmness and sublimity, but as they are extremely subtle and based on multiple principles, until these preliminaries are not learnt and as long as there is complete and consummate intimacy and thorough immersion, as well as perfect good will towards those who possess Divine gnosis (*ulama bi'llah*), one can not derive anything from philosophy and the terminology of the men of God and the people of the heart and from these discourses, which pile bewilderment on bewilderment. Accordingly, it is preferable to give a simpler explanation that is closer to the understanding of the common people. And so we say that the causality and creativity of the Necessary Being, the Exalted, is not like the causality of natural agents which combine or dissociate the existing matters, such as the carpenter who brings about changes in an existing material by arranging and separating, or like the mason who combines the existing materials. Rather, God, the Exalted, is the Divine Agent Who brings things into being, without, any prior existence, by His very will, and 'His will and knowledge' by themselves constitute the cause for the appearance and existence of things. Hence the realm of reality is within the purview of His Knowledge and they appear from the hidden realms of Divine Ipseity (*ghayb-e huwiyyat*) by His making them manifest:

﴿وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ.﴾

*And with Him are the keys of the Unseen, none knows them but He.* (6:59)

It is said that the realm of concrete existents in relation to the Sacred Essence of God, the Glorious, is like the relation of the mind to the human

[1] *Al-Asfar al-arbaah*, 280-290.

soul, which brings into being [thoughts, ideas and images] by mere willing and manifests that which lies in the hidden realms of ipseity (*ghayb-e huwiyyat*). Hence, the entire realm of reality is within His knowledge, from which they appear and to which they return:

﴿إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ.﴾

*Verily, We belong to God and to Him do we return*. (2:156)

To offer a clearer explanation, the knowledge of the complete cause of a thing implies the knowledge of that thing. For example, the astronomer's knowledge of the timings of solar and lunar eclipses is due to his knowledge of their causes. By recording the movements of the sun, moon, and the earth, he calculates the time when the earth will be positioned between the sun and the moon, or the moon between the earth and the sun. And should his records be correct his forecast will not fail by a single second. And since the entire chain of causes and effects terminates in the Sacred Essence, the Source of all sources, and since God, the Exalted, has the knowledge of His own Essence, which is the cause of all existents, being the cause He has also the knowledge of the effects.

From among the above-mentioned explanations, everyone adopts one which corresponds to his plane, and some of them are firmer and more adequate in meeting the purpose than others.

## THE MEANING OF HEARING AND SIGHT IN RELATION TO GOD

One of the topics discussed by major philosophers in relation to the Names and Attributes of God, the Glorious and the Exalted, is the affirmation of Hearing and Sight in relation to Him. The majority of the metaphysicians and theologians reduce Hearing and Sight to Knowledge, and the august Shaykh al-Ishraq has reduced Knowledge to Sight and Hearing.[1] Each of them has offered an explanation in this regard whose mention will take us beyond the requirements of brevity: We will explain the predominant view and approach with an explanation that Will clarify the truth in regard to the Names and the Attributes in general.

It should be known that most of the philosophers and major thinkers, in

[1] *Sharh Hikmat al-ishraq*, 358-366; *al-Asfar*, vi, 423, *safar* 3, *mawqif* 6.

order to disregard some 'aspects' have reduced some of the Names and Attributes to some others. As it is well known and established among them, the Will of God; the-Exalted, consists of His Knowledge of what is appropriate (*salah*) and of the perfect order, like the controversy in relation to Hearing, Sight and Knowledge and reducing each of them to the other, as mentioned: This matter is contrary to the truth and amounts to disregarding these aspects. Because, if what is meant by reducing Will to the Knowledge of what is appropriate, or by reducing Knowledge to Hearing, or Hearing to Knowledge, is that God, the Exalted, does not possess a will or that He does not possess hearing or sight and that Knowledge is considered by them to include Will, Hearing and Sight, it is an invalid position and an unseemly statement. That is because it implies that God, the Exalted, is the Source of existence without possessing a will or the power of choice. Moreover, the criterion in regard to ascription of the Attributes of perfection to God is that the attribute should be an attribute of perfection for existent *qua* existent, and that it should be an attribute of the very reality of existence and from among the perfections of the very essence of existence. And there is no doubt that will is one of the attributes of perfection of the absolute reality of being. Accordingly, the more existence descends to the lower planes, the weaker it is in respect of will, until it reaches the point where it become totally devoid of it whereat it is consider by all to lack will, like the natures, such as minerals and plants. And the more it rises towards perfection and the higher horizon, will becomes more manifest in it and stronger. Accordingly, we observe that in the chain of natural existents, when they cross the stages of prime matter, body, element, mineral, and plant, will and knowledge become manifest in them, and the higher they rise the more this noble faculty becomes perfect, so that the Perfect Man possesses such a perfect will that by his mere will he transforms one element into another and the world of nature is subject to his will. Thus we find that will is an attribute of perfection of existence *qua* existence, and this meaning is affirmed concerning God's Sacred Essence without being referred to another meaning. Similarly, Hearing and Sight are, in accordance with confirmed truth, among the perfections of the absolute existent, and the reality of hearing and sight is not one dependent on physical organs and they do not constitute modes of cognition limited to organs and instrumental means. Rather, the need for organs is for manifestation of the soul's hearing and sight in the realm of nature and the *mulk* of the body, even as it also needs the pia mater for knowledge to be manifested in the realm of physical nature. And this

deficiency pertains to the world of nature and *mulk*, not to knowledge, hearing and sight as such, which observe the realities of the world of the Unseen (*ghayb*) and hear the *malakuti* speech of the angels and the higher spirits, as in the case of Moses, the *Kalimu'llah* (God's interlocutor), who would hear the speech of God in his intimate supplications (*munajat*), and the Noble Ultimate Prophet; who spoke with the angels and would see Gabriel in his *malakuti* form when no other ear would hear what he heard nor any eye see what he saw, though they would be in the same gathering with the Messenger at the time of the descent of the revelations (*wahy*).

Moreover, hearing and sight are among modes of cognition which are additional to the principle of knowledge and are other than the reality of knowledge, and they are among the perfections of absolute existence. Hence their affirmation in relation to God, the Exalted, Who is the very reality of existence and the mainspring of the perfection of being, is necessary.

And should the purpose of those who reduce Will, Hearing, and Sight to Knowledge, or Knowledge to them, be that Knowledge and Will are posited of God in a single aspect (*haythiyyat-e wahidah*) and that Hearing, Sight, and Knowledge do not have different aspects in the Sacred Divine Essence, this is true and in accordance with metaphysical proof. However, there is no reason to limit the matter to these Attributes, for all Attributes reduce to the reality of sheer existence, and this matter is not contrary to positing different multiple Attributes for the Divine Essence, or rather it corroborates it. That is because, as has been clearly established, the nearer an existent is to unity and farther it is from the horizon of multiplicity and freer, it is more inclusive in relation to the names and attributes, so that That which is pure existence, the simple, necessary Reality, glorious is His majesty and majestic is His power, is ultimate unity and simplicity and inclusive of all perfections and possessing all Names and Attributes, and to Him literally apply all concepts of perfection, glory, and beauty, and their applicability to the Sacred Divine is worthier and prior, with all the degrees of worthiness and priority.

To sum up, the stronger and more complete is the unity (*wahdah*) [of an existent], the applicability of the concepts of perfection to it is greater, and the greater is the number of [its] names and attributes. Conversely, the closer an existent is to the horizon of multiplicity, the lesser is the applicability of the concepts of perfection to it, and this applicability also becomes weaker and closer and similar to metaphor (*majaz*). And this is because unity (*wahdah*) is concomitant (*musawiq*) with existence and is a perfection of

being qua being. The meaning of concomitance here is that although unity and existence are conceptually different, but in external reality the reality of existence is the same as the reality of unity. Wherever there is multiplicity, there is also to be found deficiency, nonbeing, evil, weakness and disability, and this is for the reason that the lower that existence descends through the planes of deficiency, multiplicity is greater than at all the other planes of existence. The station of the Lord and the Sacred Divine Being, Glorious and Exalted, which is sheer existence, is absolute unity and simplicity, and there is no way that multiplicity and compositeness should find way into Him.

We have pointed out earlier that existence is the principal reality of perfection and the mainspring of glory and beauty. Hence, sheer existence is sheer unity and sheer perfection, and, therefore, sheer unity is sheer perfection. Thus all the Names, Attributes and perfections are true of That which stands at the highest plane of unity, and the applicability of each of them to It is more justified and prior. Conversely, that which is closer to multiplicity has more of deficiency in it, and the applicability of the concepts of perfection and the names and attributes is deficient in its case and the quality of their applicability is also weak. Hence, God, the Exalted and the Glorious, possesses all the perfections and encompasses all the Names and Attributes without any of them being reducible to another. Rather, each of them is true of His Sacred Essence in the literal sense, His Hearing, Sight, Will, and Knowledge, all are in their true literal sense without implying multiplicity in the Sacred Essence in any respect whatsoever.

فَلَهُ الأَسْمَاءُ الحُسْنَى وَالأَمْثَالُ العُلْيَا وَالكِبْرِيَاءُ وَالآلاءُ.

> To Him belong all the Beautiful Names and the highest metaphors, and all majesty and bounties.

## CHARACTER OF THE RELATION OF GOD'S KNOWLEDGE TO THE KNOWABLES

One should know, as pointed out earlier, that all existents, *qua* existents, with their aspects of ontological perfection, *qua* aspects of perfection, are known and disclosed to the Sacred Essence of God, the Exalted, with His simple essential knowledge (*ilm-e basit-e dhati*) and a single pre-eternal disclosure (*kashf-e wahid-e azali*). This disclosure, with its very simplicity and complete unity, is detailed so that not an iota of the heavens of spirits nor a particle of the earths of corporeality is outside the realm of His knowledge

from pre-eternity to eternity (*azalan wa abadan*). This knowledge and disclosure is in pre-eternity and the same as the Sacred Essence, and the knowables with their conditionings and limits (*taayyunat wa hududat*), which derive from nonbeing and deficiency, find an accidental occurrence (*tahaqquq bi'l-arad*) posterior to creation and relate to Knowledge accidentally, and this accidental relation is posterior to creation. And to this reference is made in the noble tradition where it is stated:

فَلَمَّا أَحْدَثَ الأَشْيَاءَ وَكَانَ المَعْلُومُ، وَقَعَ العِلْمُ مِنْهُ عَلَى المَعْلُومِ.

> And when He brought the things into being, and the known came into being, His knowledge pertained to the known.

It is probable that this statement refers to active knowledge (*ilm-e fili*) which is obtained by manifestation (*tajalli*) through the sacred emanation (*fayd muqaddas*), and that which is meant by the 'knowables' are the knowables-by-essence (*malumat bi'l-dhat*), which are existential entities (*huwiyyat wujudiyyah*) which are existential entities (*huwiyyat wujudiyyah*) related to the sacred emanation and the light of manifestation.

Hence, in accordance with the first probability the meaning of the first statement would be as follows:

فَلَمَّا تَجَلَّى بِفَيْضِهِ الْمُقَدَّسِ وَظَهَرَ الكَوْنُ بِالعَرَضِ وَقَعَ العِلْمُ عَلَى المَعْلُومِ: أيْ ظَهَرَ الفَيْضُ فِي مِرْآةِ الْمُسْتَفِيضِ بِالعَرَضِ.

> When He manifested Himself through His sacred emanation and the accidental being appeared, the knowledge pertained to the known; that is, the emanation appeared in the mirror of the receiver-by-accident of the emanation.

In accordance with the second probability, it would mean:

فَلَمَّا تَجَلَّى بِفَيْضِهِ الْمُقَدَّسِ وَظَهَرَ وُجُودُ الكَوْنِ بِالذَّاتِ: أيْ بِلا حَيْثِيَّةٍ تَقْيِيدِيَّةٍ وَقَعَ الفَيْضُ عَلَى الْمُسْتَفِيضِ بِالذَّاتِ.

> When He manifested Himself through His sacred emanation and the existence of the existents-by-essence became manifest-that is without the limiting aspect-the

> emanation pertained to the receiver-by-essence of the emanation.

On the basis of both the interpretations, this manifestation through the sacred emanation is not subject to temporal events and changes, and the creation of God, the Exalted; is free from and above any trace of temporality and change, or, rather, from all conditioning and limitation. And since the essential Knowledge (*ilm-e dhati*) is simple in all aspects and encompasses all aspects, active Knowledge (*ilm-e fili*), which is the real sign of God and the manifestation of the essential Knowledge and its mirror, is completely simple and absolutely one, encompassing the entire circle of existence without there being any conditioning, change, or composition in it. At the most it is sustained in its essence (*mutaqawwam bi al-dhat*) by the Sacred Divine Essence and is the very sheerness of dependence, and, in this respect, is annihilated (*fani*) in Divine Majesty and is the very presence before the Lord of Glory, and therefore it is considered God's knowledge, in the same way that the very creation by the rational soul of intelligible realities in the realm of the intellect and of the imaginary images in the tablet of imagination, are the active knowledge (*ilm-e fili*) of the soul and annihilated (*fani*) in its essence (*dhat*).

The metaphysicians have said that the relation of the tablet of reality to God is like the relation of the forms of knowables to the soul. Due to this encompassment, simplicity, and influence they have said that God, the Exalted, knows the particulars with His universal knowledge (*ilm-e kulli*); that is, the particularly, limitation, and being contained of the known does not cause limitation in [Divine] knowledge. Hence [Divine] knowledge is encompassing, pre-eternal (*qadim wa azali*) and unchanging, while the known is contained, limited, temporal, and changing. Those who are unfamiliar with the manner of their speech have been led to imagine that they have- negated God's knowledge of the particulars, taking (*kulliyyah*) and particularly (*juziyyah*) in the sense current in the jargon of logicians and lexicographers, ignorant of the fact that these terms have another meaning in the terminology of the people of gnosis (*marifah*) and at times speculative philosophers (*ahl-e nazar*) have followed them in this regard. Rather, this conception pertaining to the topic of the knowledge of the Necessary Being, glorious is His Name and exalted is His station, has been borrowed by the metaphysicians from the gnostics.

## THE CRITERION RELATING TO POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ATTRIBUTES

The criterion relating to the positive and negative Attributes of the Sacred Essence of the Necessary Being, glorious is His Name, is that every attribute pertaining to the attributes of perfection and excellences of beauty that applies to the Principle of the reality of being and the absolute essence of existence, without any dress of conditioning or change from one realm to another, and refers to the actual haecceity and luminous essence of being, is among the Attributes that are necessarily subsistent and necessarily realized for the Sacred Essence, exalted is Its station. That is because should it not subsist, it would imply either that the Sacred Essence is not sheer existence and absolute being, or that sheer existence is not sheer perfection and absolute beauty. Both of these are false conclusions from the viewpoint of the path of gnosis as well as the way of metaphysical reasoning, as stands established in its own place.

And no attribute and excellence is established for an existent except after its decent to one of the stages of conditioning and its assumption of one of the forms of limitations and its embracing one of the planes of deficiency with its accompanying limits of finitude and feebleness, and, in brief, that which does not pertain to the essence (*dhat*) of being and derives from limits and essences (*mahiyyat*) is from attributes whose negation is necessary and whose realization is impossible in respect of the absolutely perfect Essence. That is because in the same way as the absolutely perfect Essence and Absolute Being is the instance of sheer perfection, it is also the instance of the negation of deficiency, limits, non-existences and essences (*mahiyyat*).

And that which is well-known among the authorities, that the negative Attributes reduce, to a single negation, which is the negation of contingency, does not appear to be correct to this author. Rather, in the same way that the Sacred Essence is the essential instance (*misdaq dhati*) of all attributes of perfection, and none of them reduce to another; as clarified, above, so also it is the accidental instance of the negation of each of the deficiencies. And one cannot say that non-existences ‘and defects make’ a single aspect and that there is no distinction between, non-existences (*la mayza fi al-adam*); because if one were to consider the matter in the context of actual reality; in the same way that absolute non-existence is a single ‘aspect while representing all non-existences, so also absolute existence has a single aspect and is possessor of all perfections. Hence, from this viewpoint, which is the

consideration of *ahadiyyah* and of the Unseen of the Unseen (*ghayb al-ghuyub*), one cannot posit any attribute, neither the real positive, attributes, nor the negative Divine attribute. But from another viewpoint, which is the consideration of the station of *wahidiyyah* and the inclusion of the Names and Attributes, as there is a multiplicity of positive attributes of perfection, every attribute of perfection implies a negation of the deficiency opposed to it. And in the same aspect that the Sacred Essence is the essential instance of Knower. It is the accidental instance of 'not ignorant,' and as it is 'Powerful,' it is 'not powerless. And as it is established in the science of the Names that among the Names and the positive Attributes there is a relationship by virtue of which some of them encompass and dominate others, which are encompassed and overlooked by them by implication these concepts also apply to the negative Names and Attributes.

Now that we know the criterion of the positive and negative Attributes, we can understand that motion –which subsists through potentiality and prime matter, and temporality and renewal are in its very essence– does not apply to the Sacred Divine Essence, the Glorious and the Exalted.

And 'speech' (*takallum*) in the ordinary sense, about which the narrator poses the question, is an attribute that is time-bound and subject to renewal and so does not apply to the Essence of God, the Exalted. But this does not preclude the positing of 'essential speech' (*takallum dhati*) for God, the Exalted, on the plane of the Essence, in a sense that is free from temporality and renewal (*huduth*).

To put this noble topic briefly, the reality of speech does not depend on the vocalization of speech from certain organs. This limitation, pertaining to ordinary language and general usage, derives from habit and familiarity as well as thoughts and ideas. Otherwise there is no limitation or conditioning in the meaning [of speech] itself. 'Knowledge' comprises of sheer cognition and the manifesting of a thing to the knower and it is not confined to being cognized through some material means such as the brain, or through such non-material means as the common sense (*hiss-e mushtarak*) or the tablet of imagination, for instance. If, supposedly, one were to acquire the knowledge of something through his hand or foot, or see or hear something, it would still be knowledge; hearing, and sight. Similarly, when someone sees, hears and speaks in the world of dreams, all these concepts apply to that [that which is, heard, seen or spoken in dreams] without any trace of metaphor, although none of the specific sense organs is employed. Hence, the criterion of

cognition as such depends on the applicability of these meanings and concepts. The reality of speech is the expression of that which is in one's mind and consciousness with or without the mediation of any special organ. Even if, supposedly, it should be metaphorical in accordance with language and usage, these limitations do not exist in the concepts and meanings themselves and are applicable in accordance with reason. We do not have any philological discussion on the topic of the Names and Attributes, and the purpose here is affirmation of the meanings themselves, though language and usage should not be helpful to their affirmation.

Accordingly, we say that the reality of speech is the expression of one's intent whether or not it occurs through sensible means, and regardless of whether it belongs to the category of sound, words, or aspiration. 'Speech' in this sense is among the attributes of perfection of existence, for [self]manifestation and expression belong to the reality of existence and subsist through the reality of existence, and the more existence ascends towards perfection and strength, its [self-]manifestation and expression become greater, until it reaches the highest horizon and the exalted station of Necessity, which is the Light of lights, and light upon light, and manifestation upon manifestation, expressing that which lies in the Unseen (*ghayb*) of the station of *wahidiyyah* (Unity, i.e. at the plane of the sacred emanation), through the unconditioned sacred emanation (*fayd-e muqaddas-e itlaqi*) and the existential word 'Be!, and expressing, through the most sacred emanation and the essential *ahadi* manifestation, the absolute *ghayb* and the stationless station of *ahadiyyah* (Unity, i.e. at the plane of the most sacred emanation). And in this *ahadi* manifestation, the speaker is the *ahadi* Sacred Essence, and the speech is the most sacred emanation and the manifestation of Essence (*tajalli dhati*), and the listener the Names and the Attributes. By that very manifestation, the conditioned expressions (*taayyunat*) of the Names and the Attributes comply and obtain occurrence in Knowledge (*tahaqquq-e ilmi*). In the *wahidi* manifestation, through the sacred emanation (*fayd muqaddas*), the speaker is the *wahidi* Sacred Essence, inclusive of all the Names and the Attributes, and speech is the manifestation itself, and the listener and the compliant one on the [plane of] realization are the cognitive archetypes (*ayan ilmiyyah*) implied in the Names and the Attributes, which obtain concrete realization by the command 'Be!'

**فَإِذَا قَالَ لِكُلِّ عَيْنٍ أَرَادَ إِيجَادَهَا: كُنْ، فَيُطِيعُ الأَمْرَ الإِلَهِيَّ، فَيَكُونُ وَيَتَحَقَّقُ.**

So when He says 'Be! To every archetypes that He wills

to create, it complies with the Divine command, and it is and actualized.

And there are many traditions, which we have not mentioned, that may be cited as evidence on this topic. And all Praise belongs to God firstly and lastly.

37

# Thirty-Seventh *Hadith*: THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

بِالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلى مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ عَنْ عَلِيِّ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَمَّنْ ذَكَرَهُ عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ عِيسَى عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ حَمْرَانَ عَنِ الفَضْلِ بْنِ السَّكَنِ عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: قَالَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: إِعْرِفُوا اللهَ بِاللهِ وَالرَّسُولَ بِالرِّسَالَةِ وَأُولِي الأَمْرِ بِالأَمْرِ بِالمَعْرُوفِ وَالعَدْلِ وَالإِحْسَانِ.

With a continuous chain of authorities reaching up to Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulayni, from Ali ibn Muhammad, from someone who reported it, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Isa, from Muhammad ibn Hamran, from al-Fadl ibn al-Sakan, from Abu Abd-Allah (a) who said: The Commander of the Faithful (a) said, "Know God through God, the Messenger through the Messengership, and the *wali al-amr* by his commanding to what is right (*amr bi'l-maruf*), his justice and kindness."[1]

## EXPOSITION

There is an evident difference between the terms *irfan* and *ilm*, recognition and knowledge. It is said that *ilm* (knowledge) in its original sense specifically relates to the universals, and *marifah* (recognition, gnosis) is specific for that which relates to particulars and persons. They say that an *arif bi'llah* (a gnostic of God) is someone who knows God through direct

[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, i, 4, *kitab al-Tawhid*, *bab annahu la yuarafu illa bih*, *hadith* 1.

witnessing (*mushahadah huduriyyah*) and an *Alim bi'llah* is someone who attains the knowledge of God through philosophical proofs. Some say that *ilm* and *irfan* differ in two respects; first, in respect of the related object (of cognition), as mentioned above, and secondly, a prior state of forgetfulness is assumed in *marifah*. Hence when something becomes the object of cognition for the first time, one is said to acquire its *ilm*, and when something was known and forgotten to be known for a second time, one is said to obtain its *marifah*. And the *arif* is called *arif* because of his recollection of his existence and stages of life preceding his natural and *mulki* existence, and some of the people of the path of wayfaring claim to have remembered the world of *dharr*.[1]

They say that if the veil of physical nature, which causes forgetfulness and negligence, were to be removed from the wayfarer's eyes, he would recall the previous worlds through which he has passed. And someone from among the people of spirituality (*dhawq*) would say that the reality of the spiritual ascent (*miraj*) is the recollection of the past days. When one tries to go back into the past to recall one's earlier states, each of us, in accordance with the difference among individuals, can recollect things when he was seven, five, or three years old. It is rare to find someone who has recollections from earlier years. It is said of the Shaykh al-Rais (Ibn Sina) that he claimed to have memories from the first moments of his birth. he would say that it was possible for one to have recollections which go back to earlier times, for instance, when one has been in one's mother's womb or in one's father's loins, and remember all the developments that one has undergone in the realm of *mulk*, going back to the previous realms until the higher *malakut*, the realm of the *jabarut*, the higher *jabarut*, culminating in the recollection of his state in Divine knowledge, and this recollection is the reality of *miraj* and the ultimate height of spiritual ascent. (Here end his words).

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[1] This is referred to in the following Quranic verse:

> *And when thy Lord took from the Children of Adam, from their backs, their seed* (dhurriyyah), *and made them testify touching themselves, "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes, we testify[this], lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, As for us, we were unaware of this."* (7:172)

Although this matter may be true in itself, but interpreting the reality of *miraj* as the regressive return into the past does not fit with the exquisite teaching of gnosis and the creed of the people of the heart. Rather, the reality of spiritual ascent is the curvilinear spiritual movement with which is completed the circle of existence, culminating in the return to the reality of the *ghayb* of all that which is in the chain of *shuhud*. This takes place in the form of a curvilinear movement along all ascending arc, whereas this regressive returning movement is contrary to the Divine law (*sunnah*) active in the realm of being, especially in respect of the prophets, particularly their Seal (*s*). This kind of coursing is like the absorption in the love of the Essence of the Glorious One of one kind of angels, who are bewildered and absorbed, and totally oblivious of multiplicity, not knowing that any man or world has been created. The perfect gnostic Shaykh Shahabadi, may my soul be his ransom, would say that the spiritual state of Hadrat Adam, may peace be upon him, was such that he was oblivious of his own physical nature (*mulk*) and was totally absorbed in the world of *ghayb* and the realm of the Divine, and this movement of Adam (a) negated his humanity (*adamiyyat*). Then God, the Exalted, gave Satan power over him in order to turn him towards the tree of nature, to deflect him from the gravity of the *malakut* towards the realm of *mulk*.

As to the phrase, **والعدل والإحسان** (justice and kindness), apparently these two are in conjunction with **الأمر بالمعروفِ** (commanding to what is right) meaning: **إعرفوهم بالأَمْرِ بالمَعْرُوفِ وَالعَدْلِ وَالإِحْسَانِ**. Or it is probably a conjunct of the phrase **إعرفوا الله بالله** meaning:

**إعرفوهم بِالأَمْرِ بِالمَعْرُوفِ وَالعَدْلِ وَالإِحْسَانِ.**

## THE MEANING OF THE PHRASE 'KNOW GOD BY GOD'

It should be known that eminent scholars have given different explanations in expounding the phrase **المعروف** in the noble tradition, each in accordance with the character of his scholarship and philosophical approach. Here we will briefly mention some of their views for the sake of benefiting from the *barzakh* of the speech of the great ones.

First is that which has been stated by the Thiqat al-Islam Kulayni (*r*), which, to put it briefly, is that God, the Exalted, has created the bodies, the spirits, and the lights, and He is their sole creator, without anyone sharing their creation with Him, nor is He like any of them. Hence whoever likens

God to any of them, does not know God; but should he negate God's similarity to them he would he knowing God by God (Here end his words).[1] It is strange that Hadrat Sadr al-Mutaallihin (*q*) has imagined these words (of Kulayni) to be part of the tradition and offered elaborate interpretations of it in accordance with his own philosophical approach.[2]

Second is the statement of Shaykh Saduq (*r*) whose gist is that knowing God through God means that should we know God with our intellects, God, the Exalted, is the one who has bestowed there; and should we know Him through the prophets and God's Proof, *hujjah* (a), then God has raised them and made them His Proofs; and should we know Him through our souls, God is their creator.[3]

Third is that which has been indicated by Sadr al-Mutaallihin, according to which the way to the *marifah* of God is of two kinds. One of them is through epiphany and direct gnosis, and the second is through negation of His likeness to anything (*tanzih*) and assertion of His transcendence (*taqdis*). As the first way is not possible except for the prophets and the perfect ones, the second path has been mentioned in the tradition (here ends his statement).[4] This interpretation of his is based on his taking the statements of Shaykh Kulayni as part of the noble tradition and as the exposition of the words of Hadrat Amir al-Muminin by Hadrat Sadiq (a).

Fourth is the interpretation of the *muhaqqiq*, Fayd (*m*). The gist of it is that every being has an essence (*mahiyyah*) and an existence (*wujud*). The essences of things consist of their own particular delimitations and their essential aspect, whereas their existence consists of their Godward aspect, by virtue of which their entities subsist and their effects, potency, and efficiency become manifest. Hence if one were to take the essences of things into view and their delimitations, and try to know God through their aspect of contingency and their dependence on God, he would be knowing God by things not by God. Moreover, this knowledge and gnosis is innate and not acquired. But if one were to know God through the existential aspect of things, which is their Godward aspect, he would be knowing God

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[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, i, 85, *kitab al-Tawhid, bab annahu la yurafu illa bih*, under *hadith* 1.
[2] *Sharh Usul al-Kafi*, pp. 233-234.
[3] *Tawhid*, p. 290, *bab* 41.
[4] *Sharh Usul al-Kafi*, pp. 233-234.

by God, and it is this Godward aspect of things which is referred to in these noble verses:

﴿وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ.﴾

*He is with you where you may be*. (57:4)

﴿كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ.﴾

*Everything is fated to perish save His Face*. (28:88)

Fifth is the probability that has occurred to the mind of this author, and that will be understood after an introduction relating to the science of the Names and Attributes, which is as follows. There are several considerations for the Sacred Essence of God, Almighty and Exalted, each of which has been designated by a term.

One of them is the Essence when considered as such. In accordance with this consideration, the Divine Essence is absolutely unknowable, beyond any name or description, and beyond the reach of the aspirations of the gnostics and the yearnings of the people of the heart and the *awliya*. At times it is expressed as the 'inaccessible phoenix' (*anqa-ye mughrib*) in the idiom of the gnostics:

عنقا شکار کس نشود دام بازگیر

*Take thy net away for none can ever catch the phoenix*.[1]

and at times referred to as *ama'* or *ama*:

رُوِيَ أَنَّهُ قِيلَ لِلنَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: أَيْنَ كَانَ رَبُّكَ قَبْلَ أنْ يَخْلُقَ الخَلَقَ؟ قَالَ: فِي عَمَاءٍ.

> It has been narrated that the Prophet (*S*) was asked, "Where was your Lord before He created the creation!" He replied, "In an *ama* (cloud)."[2]

And at times, it is referred to as the 'Occult of the Occult' (*ghayb al-ghuyub*) or the Absolute Occult (*ghayb-e mutlaq*) as well as with other terms,

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[1] Hafiz:

عنقا شکار کس نشود دام بازگیر کانجا همیشه باد به دست است دام را

[2] *Awali al-laali*, i, 54; *Musnad Ahmad ibn Hanbal*, iv, 12, with a small difference of wording.

although all such terms fail to express it. In accordance with the gnostic approach and according to a kind of metaphysical proof, the terms *anqa, ama'* and other terms do not apply to this station.

Another consideration is that of the Essence at the plane of occult conditioning (*taayyun ghaybi*) and the non-existence of absolute manifestation (*adam-e zuhur-e mutlaq*), which is called the station of *ahadiyyah* (unity at the plane of unity), and it is with this station that most of those [aforementioned] terms are consistent. At this station, the Names of Essence, in accordance with the terminology of the adept in the Science of the Names, are considered, such as the Absolute Inward (*Batin-e mutlaq*), the Absolute First (*Awwal-e mutlaq*), the Most Exalted (*al-Ali*), and the Greatest (*al-Azim*), as can be inferred from the tradition of *al-Kafi* that the first Names that God assumed for Himself were *al-Ali* and *al-Azim*.[1]

Another of the considerations of the Essence is in accordance with the station of *wahidiyyah* (unity at the plane of multiplicity) and the inclusion of the Names and the Attributes. This station is referred to by such terms as 'the

[1] This is a reference to the following tradition of *Usul al-Kafi*, i, 113, *kitab al-Tawhid*, *bab huduth al-asma*, *hadith* 2:

عَنِ ابْنِ سِنَانٍ قَالَ: سَأَلْتُ أَبَا الحَسَنِ الرِّضَا عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: هَلْ كَانَ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَارِفاً بِنَفْسِهِ قَبْلَ أنْ يَخْلُقَ الخَلَقَ؟ قَالَ: نَعَمْ. قُلْتُ: يَرَاهَا وَيَسْمَعُهَا؟ قَالَ: مَا كَانَ مُحْتَاجاً إِلَى ذَلِكَ لأَنَّهُ لَمْ يَكُنْ يَسْأَلُهَا وَلا يَطْلُبُ مِنْهَا. هُوَ نَفْسُهُ وَنَفْسُهُ هُوَ. قُدْرَتُهُ نَافِذَةٌ فَلَيْسَ يَحْتَاجُ أنْ يُسَمِّيَ نَفْسَهُ، وَلَكِنَّهُ اخْتَارَ لِنَفْسِهِ أَسْمَاءً لِغَيْرِهِ يَدْعُوهُ بِهَا لأَنَّهُ إِذَا لَمْ يُدْعَ بِاسْمِهِ لَمْ يُعْرَفْ. فَأَوَّلُ مَا اخْتَارَ لِنَفْسِهِ: العَلِيَّ العَظِيمَ، لأَنَّهُ أَعْلَى الأَشْيَاءِ كُلِّهَا. فَمَعْنَاهُ: اللهُ، وَاسْمُهُ: العَلِيُّ العَظِيمُ، هُوَ أَوَّلُ أَسْمَائِهِ؛ عَلا عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ.

It is narrated on the authority of Muhammad ibn Sinan that he said, "I asked Abu al-Hasan al-Rida (*a*), Did God, Almighty and Exalted, know Himself before He created the creation? Yes, he replied. I said, Did He see it and hear it? He said, "He had no need for that, for He neither required anything of it nor sought from it. He was His Self and His Self was He. His power was all-pervasive, so He had no need to name Himself. But He chose for Himself Names for others to call Him by their means, for if He were not called by His Name He would not have been known. So the first that He chose for Himself was: The Most Exalted, the Greatest (*al-Ali al-Azim*), for He is exalted above all things. Its meaning is Allah and His name is *al-Ali al-Azim*. It is the first of His names, exalted is He above everything."

station of *wahidiyyah*, 'the all-inclusive station of *ahadiyyah* of the Names' (*ahadiyyat-e jam-e asma*) and 'the inclusive inclusiveness' (*jam al-jam*), and so on. This station, in consideration of the inclusive *ahadiyyah* (*ahadiyyat-e jam*) is called the station of the Greatest Name (*ism-e azam*) and the station of *Allah*, the All-inclusive Divine Name (*ism-e jami-e Allah*).

Another consideration is that of the Essence at the plane of the Sacred Emanation (*fayd-e muqaddas*) and the station of the manifestation of the Names and the Attributes in the mirror of the Archetypes (*ayan*), as the station of *wahidiyyah* is through manifestation of the Most Sacred Emanation (*fayd-e aqdas*). This station of manifestation of Names is also called 'the station of absolute manifestation' (*zuhur itlaqi*) and 'the station of divinity' (*maqam-e uluhiyyah*) and 'the station of *Allah*' in accordance with the considerations relating to the Names and the Attributes, as explained by this author in *Misbah al-hidayah*.[1]

It should be known that these considerations, which exist in the terminology of the gnostics and the people of the heart, are indicative of the (hierarchic) scheme of manifestation (*tajalliyat*) of the Truth as reflected in their clear hearts, and those *tajalliyat*, in accordance with the stations and ranks of the wayfaring of the *awliya* and the stages and phases of the journey of Godward wayfarers, begin at the plane of the manifestation (*zuhur*) of Names and Attributes, which, as said, is also called the station of divinity or 'the station of *Allah*', and the verse:

﴿اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ.﴾

*God is the Light of the heavens and the earth*. (24:35)

is considered by them to refer to it. And they terminate at the plane of the *ghayb* of *ahadiyyah* and end at the plane of the Names of the Essence (*asma dhatiyyah*) and the Exclusive Name (*ism mustathar*), which is the ultimate goal and end of wayfaring. And it may be said that the aforementioned plane is the one referred to in these words of God, the Exalted:

﴿فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَى.﴾

*A bow's length away or nearer*. (53:9)

Now, after this introduction, we say that as long as man seeks the Truth

[1] *Misbah al-hidayah ila al-khilafah wal-wilayah*, pp. 33-38.

and journeys towards God with the feet of thought and philosophical argumentation, his wayfaring is rational and epistemic (*aqli*, *ilmi*), and he is not one of the people of *marifah* and gnosis. Rather, his vision is obstructed by the greatest and the biggest of veils, whether he seeks the Truth through viewing the essences (*mahiyyat*) of things, which constitute the curtains of darkness, or he seeks It through their existences, which constitute the curtains of light, as indicated in the statements of *marhum* Fayd.

The first condition for the realization of wayfaring towards God is to abandon the dark abode of the self and self-seeking. In the same way as, in external and sensible journeying, as long as one remains in one's house and dwelling, one's journey is not actualized no matter however one may imagine oneself to be traveling and regard oneself as a traveler, in the *Shariah*, too, one is not considered a traveler without leaving one's home and hometown and traversing a distance from where the traces of one's town become invisible. Similarly, the gnostic journey towards God and the spiritual migration does not take place without leaving the dark house of the self and the disappearance, of its traces. So long as the walls of particularity are visible and the inviting call (*adhan*) of multiplicity can be heard, one is not a traveler, though one may imagine oneself to be in journey and claim to be wayfaring. God, the Exalted, has said:

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

*Whoever leaves his home as an emigrant towards God and His Messenger, then death overtakes him, his reward has indeed fallen on God.* (4:100)

After that the Godward wayfarer leaves his house with the feet of spiritual exercise (*riyadah*) and complete Godwariness (*taqwa*), without taking along with him the burden of attachments and particularity, and the Godward journey is realized, the first manifestation (*tajalli*) of the Exalted Truth that appears in his sacred heart is the manifestation at the plane of Divinity and the plane of manifestation (*zuhur*) of the Names and Attributes. This *tajalli* is also in a graded order, from the partial to the inclusive Names, in accordance with the strength and weakness of the wayfarer's heart and his wayfaring – whose details cannot be contained in this brief discourse– until it culminates in the detachment from all finite expressions (*taayyunat*) of the world of existence, whether pertaining to himself or others, which in the subsequent stages and phases also derive from the self. And after absolute detachment,

there occurs the *tajalli* at the station of Divinity and the station of Allah, which is the station of *ahadiyyah* of inclusion of all manifesting Names, and here the wayfarer attains to the preliminary and lower degree of [gnosis represented by the phrase] إِعْرِفُوا اللهَ بِاللهِ (Know God by God).

At the outset of the gnostic's attainment to this station and stage, he becomes annihilated (*fani*) in that *tajalli*, and if eternal grace were to embrace him, he obtains a recovery (*uns*) and the toil and forlornness of the journey is cast away. He returns to himself, and not being content with this station starts on the journey with the feet of love. In this journey, the love of the Truth is the origin and end of wayfaring, as well as the journey itself. He walks in the lights of the *tajalliyat* and hears the call of 'Come on!' (*taqaddam*),[1] until, at the station of *wahidiyyah*, the Names and Attributes shine on his heart in a graded order until there manifests the station of inclusive *ahadiyyah* and the station of the Greatest Name, which is the Name 'Allah' and at this stage the words إِعْرِفُوا اللهَ بِاللهِ are fulfilled at an exalted plane. And after this there is another station which is now beyond our present purpose.

In accordance with what has been mentioned, the station of the knowledge of the Messenger by Messengership and of [the knowledge of] the *Uli al-amr* by *amr bi'l-maruf*, *adl* and *ihsan*, has a subtle gnostic explanation which requires an elaborate discussion of the stations of Messengership (*risalah*) and sainthood (*wilayah*), though it is outside the scope of these pages, having been treated in the aforementioned treatise (*Misbah al-hidayah*).

## TRADITIONS DEALING WITH THE HIGHER TEACHINGS SHOULD NOT BE INTERPRETED IN A PLEBEIAN SENSE

It should not be imagined that these expositions of ours of the noble tradition on the basis of the approach of the gnostics are meant to confine the meaning of the tradition to them, or that they are conjectures about the realm of the occult or interpretation based on subjective opinion. 'The purpose, rather, is to dispel the notion that the meanings of traditions relating to the *maarif* (the higher teachings) are limited to common plebeian meanings. Those who are familiar with the style of speech of the Imams (a) know that the traditions relating to the *maarif* and sacred doctrine do not correspond to

[1] "*Taqaddam*," said by God to the Prophet during his cosmic journey, the *miraj*.

ordinary plebeian understanding of these teachings and that they contain the most subtle of philosophical conceptions and the most profound teachings of gnosis. Anyone who refers to the *Usul al-Kafi* or the *Tawhid* of Shaykh Saduq (*m*) will confirm this matter. And this does not preclude the point that these Imams of the gnostics and knowers of God should have made their noble statements in such a comprehensive manner that every group profits from them in accordance with its own creed and approach, and none of them has a right to confine their meanings to what they have understood from them. For instance, this noble tradition can be given a common-sense interpretation in accordance with ordinary language and literal meanings. For example the statement إِعْرِفُوا اللهَ بِاللهِ can be said to mean that one should know God through the effects of His craftsmanship and their perfect design, which are the works of the Divine. Similarly, it may be said, the Messenger is to be known through his Messengership and the consummate effects of his call. The *Uli al-amr* is to be known by the quality of his actions, such as commanding to what is right and his implementing justice. Hence each of them is to be known through his effects. This does not preclude that the tradition should have a subtler meaning which may be said to be its inward sense (*batn*), and beyond this meaning there might be another subtler layer of meaning which may be referred to as the inward of the inward (*batn-e batn*). In fine, one should not liken the speech of the *awliya* to the likes of oneself, in the same way as it is wrong and improper to compare oneself to them, and we cannot elaborate here this point which has been stated concisely here.

An amazing thing is what certain persons say by the way of objection and challenge, that the statements of the Imams of guidance (a) were made for the guidance of the people and that they should be in accordance with the understanding of the common people, and beyond that nothing that has any profound philosophical or gnostic meaning should emerge from them. This is an atrocious and a most ugly slander whose cause, in addition to some other matters, is a lack of reflection on the traditions of the Prophetic Household (a) and neglect of their close study.

Strange! If the prophets and the *awliya* do not teach the people the subtleties of *tawhid* and the higher teachings, then who is to do that? Is it the case that there are no subtleties involved in *tawhid* and the other teachings and that all people are equal in respect of their understanding of the *maarif*? Is the understanding of the Commander of the Faithful (a) is same as ours and that it consists of the ordinary plebeian notions? Or is it the case that it is different, but it is not necessary, or even desirable, to teach them to others?

Or is it that it is neither necessary nor desirable, and that the Imams (a) did not give them any importance? Did they, who did not ignore or omit even the details of the etiquette and manners of sleeping, dining, and going to the toilet, have neglected the Divine teachings, which are the ultimate aspiration of the *awliya*?

What is more amazing is that some of these same people who deny this matter resort to such hairsplitting discussions on traditions relating to *fiqh* tradition wherein common usage and understanding are definitely the criterion of meaning and interpretation-that even Reason itself is incapable of understanding them, to say nothing of commonsense, and yet they subscribe to the spontaneity of normal usage! Whoever has any doubt in this regard should refer to the discussions [mentioned in the works of *fiqh*] relating to the topic of *ala al-yad* and similar general juristic rules, especially those which pertain to transactions (*muamalat*)?[1] This was a digression from the topic and an act of defiance of the pen. And God, the Blessed and Exalted, is witness that this author has in view no purpose by this discourse other than to familiarize his brothers-in-faith with the Divine teachings.

وَأَسْتَغْفِرُ اللهَ مِنَ الزَّلَلِ وَالفَشَلِ وَالكَسَلِ. وَالحَمْدُ للهِ أَوَّلاً وَآخِراً.

I beseech God's forgiveness from lapses and from lethargy and laziness, and all praise is God's, firstly and lastly.

[1] This is a reference to a well-known *fiqhi* rule which states:

عَلَى اليَدِ مَا أَخَذَتْ حَتَّى تُؤَدِّيَهُ.

38

# Thirty-Eighth *Hadith*: THE MEANING OF GOD'S CREATION OF ADAM IN HIS IMAGE

بِالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلَى الشَّيْخِ الجَلِيلِ عِمَادِ الإِسْلامِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ الكُلَيْنِي، رِضْوَانُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ، عَنْ عِدَّةٍ مِنْ أَصْحَابِنَا عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ خَالِدٍ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ عَبْدِاللهِ بْنِ بَحْرٍ عَنْ أَبِي أَيُّوبَ الخَزَّازِ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ مُسْلِمٍ قَالَ: سَأَلْتُ أَبَا جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ عَمَّا يَرْوُونَ أَنَّ اللهَ خَلَقَ آدَمَ عَلَى صُورَتِهِ، فَقَالَ: هِيَ صُورَةٌ مُحْدَثَةٌ مَخْلُوقَةٌ. وَاصْطَفَاهَا اللهُ وَاخْتَارَهَا عَلَى سَائِرِ الصُّوَرِ الْمُخْتَلِفَةِ، فَأَضَافَهَا إِلَى نَفْسِهِ كَمَا أَضَافَ الكَعْبَةَ إِلَى نَفْسِهِ وَالرُّوحَ إِلَى نَفْسِهِ فَقَالَ: ﴿بَيْتِي﴾ ﴿وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي.﴾

With my chain of authorities reaching up to the august *shaykh*, the Pillar of Islam, Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulayni (*r*) from a group of our Companions, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid, from his father, from Abd-Allah ibn Bahr, from Abu Ayyub al-Khazzaz, from Muhammad ibn Muslim, who said**:** I asked Abu Jafar (a) concerning that which is narrated, that God created Adam (a) in His form (*Surah*, literally: form, image). He replied, "It is a form that was originated and created. He elected it and chose it over all the other different forms and attributed it to Himself, in the same way that He has attributed the *kabah* and the Spirit (*ruh*) to Himself, saying: '*My House*,' (2:125, 22:26) and '*I breathed into Him*

*of My Spirit*. (15:29, 38:72)'"[1]

## EXPOSITION

The tradition mentioned in the first part of this noble tradition was one which has been well-known all along since the times of the Imams (a) to our own times, and it has been continually cited in the books of the *Shiah* and the *Ahl al-Sunnah*. Hadrat Baqir (a) has confirmed the authenticity of its origin while explaining its meaning. However, there is a tradition reported by Shaykh Saduq in *Uyun akhbar al-Rida* with his chain of authorities from the Eighth of the Imams (a) whose meaning is as follows:

> Husayn ibn Khalid says, "I said to Hadrat Rida (a), 'O Son of the Messenger of God, the people narrate that the Messenger of God (a) said, "God created Adam in His own image." The Imam said, "God damn them! They have omitted the first part of the tradition. The Messenger of God (*S*) passed by two men who were abusing each other. The Prophet heard one of them say to his companion, 'May God disfigure your face and of everyone who looks like you!' Thereat the Messenger of God (*S*) said, 'O servant of God! Don't say that to your brother, for God, Almighty and Glorious, created Adam in his (His) image.'"[2]

On this basis, *marhum* Majlisi has ascribed the tradition of Imam Baqir (a) to *taqiyyah* (dissemblance), and he has also suggested the probability that this statement of the Imam might be based on the presumption of acceptance [of the authenticity or the apparent import of the tradition][3] Such a

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[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, i, 134, *kitab al-Tawhid*, *bab al-ruh*, *hadith* 4.

[2] Al-Shaykh al-Saduq, *Uyun akhbar al-Rida*, i, 119, *bab* 11, *hadith* 12. The text of the tradition is as follows:

عَنِ الحُسَيْنِ بْنِ خَالِدٍ قَالَ: قُلْتُ لِلرِّضَا عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: يَا بْنَ رَسُولِ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ: إنَّ النَّاسَ يَرْوُونَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ قَالَ: (إنَّ اللهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ خَلَقَ آدَمَ عَلَى صُورَتِهِ.) فَقَالَ: قَاتَلَهُمُ اللهُ! لَقَدْ حَذَفُوا أَوَّلَ الحَدِيثِ: إنَّ رَسُولَ اللهِ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ مَرَّ بِرَجُلَيْنِ يَتَسَابَّانِ، فَسَمِعَ أَحَدَهُمَا يَقُولُ لِصَاحِبِهِ: قَبَّحَ اللهُ وَجْهَكَ وَوَجْهَ مَنْ يُشْبِهُكَ. فَقَالَ صَلَّى اللهُ عَلَيْهِ وَآلِهِ لَهُ: يَا عَبْدَ اللهِ، لا تَقُلْ هَذَا لأَخِيكَ فَإنَّ اللهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ خَلَقَ آدَمَ عَلَى صُورَتِهِ.

[3] Al-Majlisi, *Mirat al-uqul*, ii, 84, *kitab al-Tawhid*, *bab al-ruh*, *hadith* 4.

probability is very remote. That which is probable is that the tradition of Hadrat Rida (a) refers to the first tradition, where the meaning of "Adam" in the last part of the tradition where it states:

إنَّ اللهَ خَلَقَ آدَمَ عَلَى صُورَتِهِ.

Verily, God created Adam in His image.

may be that of the human species and the pronoun in **على صورته** refers to God, the Exalted. And Hadrat Rida (a) considering that the narrator was incapable of understanding the meaning of the *hadith*, related the opening part of the tradition so that that person may imagine that 'Adam'- means the father of the human race, with the pronoun in **على صورته** referring to that man; so take note.

And perhaps both the traditions are genuine in their origin and import, and the Messenger of God (*s*) might have stated the noble tradition without any previous background-and that is the tradition whose explanation is given by Hadrat Baqir (a) and, on another occasion, he might have made the statement with that background and Imam Rida (a) diverted the discussion to the other *hadith* with a background due to the incapacity of the narrator in understanding its meaning. An evidence that supports this suggestion is that in some traditions there occur the word: **على صورة الرحمان** (in the image of the All-beneficent)[1] instead of **على صورته** and This is not consistent with the tradition of the *Uyun*.

Moreover, even if it is assumed that this noble tradition is not authentic (in its import), its meaning is implicit in the noble traditions, as will be explained, God willing. Now we shall turn to explaining the meanings of the words of the noble tradition.

As to the word '*Adam*,' the *Sihah* states, "Originally it is with two *hamzah*s, for it pertains to the form *afal*, and the second *hamzah* has been altered into an *alif*, and when it is to be given a vowel sound it is changed into *waw*, whereat its plural is *awadim*." The reason that Adam, the father of the human race (*Abu al-bashar*) wag given this name is perhaps because he was had a brown complexion (*asmar al-lawn*), as according to the lexicons *al-adama min al-nas* means someone who is brownish (*al-asmar*). And

[1] Sadr al-Mutaallihin, *Tafsir al-Quran al-Karim*, ii, 235; Ibn Arabi, *Futuhat al-Makkiyyah*, ed.Uthman Yahya, i, 78.

according to some traditions Adam was named so because he came from the *adim* of the earth,[1] *adim* being in the sense of 'face' and *adim-e ard* means the surface of the earth.

As to the expression *ala suratih*, *surah* in the lexicon is in the sense of picture and form, and it may be said that it has a general meaning common to different notions in which the commonality consists of the thingness of a thing and its actuality (*filiyyat*). However, everything has an actuality in respect of which it is said to possess a form (*dhu al-surah*) and that actuality is called form (*surah*). The application of the term 'form' in the terminology of the philosophers to matters that are inclusive of a thing's actuality and thingness is not contrary to its lexical meaning, and is not a technical or special term. Shaykh Abu Ali Sina, the chief of the Islamic philosophers, in the part on metaphysics of his book *al-Shifa*, says, "At times *surah* is applied to any configuration and act that is in a single or composite recipient so that its movements and accidents are called *surah*. *Surah* (form) is also applied to something by virtue of which matter is sustained in actuality; hence, the intellectual substances (*jawahir aqliyyah*) and accidents cannot be called *suwar* (forms). And *surah* is applied to something by means of which matter becomes perfect, though it should not be sustained by it in actuality, such as health and that towards which a thing moves by its own nature (*tab*). Also, *surah* is applied to the species (*naw*), genus, and differentia of a thing, or to all of them. And the universality of the universal in the particulars is also *surah*."

Reflection on all the instances of the usage of *surah* shows that in all of them the criterion is actuality and it is used univocally in all the cases of its use, to the extent that even God, the Exalted, is called *surat al-suwar* (the actuality of all actualities).

As to the word *istafaha*, *safwah* means something pure and purged from impurity (*kudurat*) and *istifa* has the sense of taking that which is clear and pure (*safi*) and is implied in its meaning. However, Jawhari and others have considered it to mean *ikhtiyar* (choosing), and so they have also considered *ikhtiyar* to mean *istifa* in the lexicons. This is, however, an explanation in terms of that which is implied, as *ikhtiyar* also means taking that which is good (*khayr*) and meritorious, and in this respect coincides with *istifa* in

[1] Al-Shaykh al-Saduq, *Ilal al-sharai*, i, 26. The text of the tradition is as follows:

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ قَالَ: إِنَّمَا سُمِّيَ آدَمُ آدَمَ لأَنَّهُ خُلِقَ مِنْ أَدِيمِ الأَرْضِ.

external reality, though it is not synonymous with it.

As to the word *al-kabah*, it is the name of the House of the God. Some have said that it has been called *kabah* due to its resemblance to a cube (*mukaab*) or due to its square shape,[1] and *mukaab* in the terminology of mathematicians is a body with six equal planes perpendicular to one another.

As to the word *al-ruh*, in the terminology of men of traditional medicine *ruh* (spirit) is described as "a subtle vapor formed in an animal's heart due to the heat of the blood." They state that "the heart has two sides. One of them is on the right, wherein blood is drawn from the lever and there it releases a vapor due to the heart's heat: Those vapors flow through the left side of the heart becoming refined there due to the actions of the heart, and from it the animal spirit is constituted." Then it flows through the blood vessels due to the expansion and contraction of the heart, in the manner mentioned in the related works. Thus, the source of this animal spirit is the heart and its channels are the blood vessels. At times the term spirit (*ruh*) is applied to the blood centered in the lever, and its channels are the jugular veins, and that is called the 'natural spirit' (*ruh-e tabii*). So also, in the terminology of the philosophers 'spirit' is often applied to the psychic spirit (*ruh-e nafsani*), which originates in the brain and its channel are the nerves, and that is a manifestation and lower form of the immaterial spirit pertaining to [the realm of Divine] command (*amr*), which is a Divine mystery (*sirr-e subhani*) and the 'spirit of God' (*ruhu'llah*), referred to in His words:

﴿وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي.﴾

*And I breathed into him* (*i.e. Adam*) *of My spirit*.[2]

Hereafter, God willing, we will explain that this spirit is the one breathed by the Divine breath and that it is that which is the chosen and elect (*mustafa wa mukhtar*) of the Real, Glorious and Exalted.

## ADAM IS THE COMPLETE MANIFESTATION OF GOD AND THE GREATEST NAME OF GOD

It should be known that the people of gnosis (*marifah*) and the companions of the heart say that for each of the Divine Names there is a

[1] al-Tabrisi, *Majma al-bayan*, exegesis of 5:97; *Qamus al-lughah*, under *k--b*, *Kabah*.
[2] 15:29, 38:72.

Form (*surah*) at the plane of *wahidiyyah*, which is subject to the *tajalli* (revelation) pertaining to the Most Sacred Effusion (*al-fayd al-aqdas*) at the plane of Divine knowledge (*Hadrat-e ilmiyyah*), by virtue of the Divine Self-love and seeking the Keys of the Hidden, which no one knows except Him.[1]

And that Form is called the preexisting essence (*ayn-e thabit*) in the terminology of the People of God (*ahl Allah*). And with this *tajalli*, by virtue of the Most Sacred Effusion are realized, first, the *taayyunat* (determinations) of the Names, and, by virtue of this very *taayyun* of the Names are realized the Forms of the Names, which are the essences (*ayan-e thabitah*). The first Name manifested with the *tajalli* of *ahadiyyah* and the Most Sacred Effusion at the epistemic plane of *wahidiyyah* (*Hadrat-e ilmiyyah-ye wahidiyyah*) and which becomes the mirror of that *tajalli*, is the Greatest All-inclusive Divine Name (*ism-e azam-e jami-e elahi*) and the station of the named of 'Allah,' which, from the aspect of the Hidden, is the very *tajalli* through the Most Sacred Effusion, and in the *tajalli* of manifestation of perfect clarity and luminosity is the same as the all-inclusive station of *wahidiyyah* from one viewpoint, and the plurality of Names from another viewpoint. The *taayyun* of the all-inclusive Name and its Form consists of the essence of the Perfect Man and the Muhammadan Reality, *haqiqat-e Muhammadiyyah* (*s*). Hence the Sacred Effusion is the manifestation of the objectifying *tajalli* of the Most Sacred Effusion, and the station of Divinity is the manifestation of the *tajalli* of the station of *wahidiyyah*, and the Greatest Spirit (*ruh-e azam*) is the manifestation of the *tajalli* of the ideal essence of the Perfect Man, and all other existents pertaining to the Names, Knowledge and objective reality are the universal and particular manifestations of these realities and subtleties, in accordance with an exquisite explanation that cannot be contained in this brief discourse and whose details we have mentioned in the treatise *Misbah al-hidayah*.[2]

From here, it is known that the Perfect Man is the manifestation of the all-inclusive Name and the mirror of *tajalli* of the Greatest Name, and to this matter there are many references in the Quran and *Sunnah*. God, Exalted, has

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[1] A reference to verse 6:59.

﴿وَعِنْدَهُ مَفَاتِحُ الْغَيْبِ لَا يَعْلَمُهَا إِلَّا هُوَ.﴾

*And with Him are the keys of the Unseen, none knows them but He.*

(6:59)

[2] Imam Khomeini, *Misbah al-hidayah ila al-khilafah wal-wilayah*, pp. 28-42, 54-56.

said:

﴿وَعَلَّمَ آدَمَ الْأَسْمَاءَ كُلَّهَا.﴾

*And He taught Adam the Names, all of them.* (2:31)

This Divine instruction took place in respect to the inmost being of Adam through his Hidden, all-inclusive fashioning with the Hands of Beauty and Majesty (*Jamal wa Jalal*) at the plane of *wahidiyyah*. Similarly, the fashioning of his form and appearance in the visible world (*alam-e shahadat*) took place through the manifestation of the Hands of Majesty and Beauty in the mirror of physical nature (*tabiat*). And God, the Exalted, has said:

﴿إِنَّا عَرَضْنَا الْأَمَانَةَ عَلَى السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ...﴾

*We offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth.* (*33:72*)

and the 'Trust' (*amanah*) in the creed of the gnostics is the absolute *wilayah*, of which no being except man is worthy. This absolute *wilayah* is the same as the station of Sacred Effusion to which reference is made in the Noble Scripture in His statement:

﴿كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ.﴾

*Everything is fated to perish save His Face.* (28:88)

And in a tradition of the noble *al-Kafi*, Imam Muhammad Baqir (a) is cited as having said:

نَحْنُ وَجْهُ اللهِ.

We are the face of God.[1]

And it is mentioned in the *Dua-e Nudbah:*

أَيْنَ وَجْهُ اللهِ الَّذِي إِلَيْهِ يَتَوَجَّهُ الأَوْلِيَاءُ؟

Where is the Face of God towards which the friends of God turn?

أَيْنَ السَّبَبُ الْمُتَّصِلُ بَيْنَ الأَرْضِ وَالسَّمَاءِ؟

Where is the link that connects the Earth's people with

[1] Al-Saduq, *Kitab al-Tawhid*, 150.

the Heaven?[1]

And in the *Ziyarat-e jamiah* they are referred to as the**والمَثَلُ الأعلى**, (the highest similitude, or metaphor). This similitude and the attribute of being the Face is the same as the image (*surah*) mentioned in this Noble tradition:

**إنَّ اللهَ خَلَقَ آدَمَ عَلَى صُورَتِهِ.**

Indeed, God created Adam in His image.[2]

That is, Adam is the highest similitude (*al-mathal al-ala*) of God, His greatest sign, and the most complete manifestation and mirror of the *tajalliyat* of the Names and the Attributes, the Face of God (*wajh Allah*), the Eye of God (*ayn Allah*), the Hand of God (*yad Allah*) and the side or proximity of God (*janb Allah*).

**هُوَ يَسْمَعُ وَيُبْصِرُ وَيَبْطِشُ بِاللهِ؛ وَاللهُ يُبْصِرُ وَيَسْمَعُ وَيَبْطِشُ بِهِ.**

He hears, sees, and holds by God, and God sees, hears and holds by him.[3]

This *wajh Allah* is the same 'Light' mentioned in the noble verse:

﴿**اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ.**﴾

*God is the Light of the heavens and the earth*. (24:35)

And Imam Baqir (a) said to Abu Khalid Kabuli in a tradition of the noble *Kafi:*

**هُمْ (أيْ الأَئِمَّةَ) وَاللهِ نُورُ اللهِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ، وَهُمْ وَاللهِ نُورُ اللهِ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالأَرْضِ.**

They (i.e. the Imams) are, by God, the Light that He has sent down (64:8; 61:8; 39:69), and they, by God, are the Light of God in the heavens and the earth (24:36).[4]

And the noble *Kafi* narrates a tradition of Imam Baqir –may my soul be

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[1] *Zad al-maad, bab* 11, p. 399; *Mafatih al-jinan,* 537.

[2] Al-Shaykh al-Saduq, *Man la yahduruh al-faqih,* ii, 370, *bab al-ziyarat al-jamiah*; *Uyun akhbar al-Rida, bab* 68, *hadith* 1.

[3] *Usul al-Kafi, kitab al-iman wal-kufr, bab man adha al-muslimin, hadith* 7.

[4] *Usul al-Kafi,* i, 194, *kitab al-hujjah, bab anna al-aimmah nur Allah, hadith* 1.

sacrificed for the dust of his feet– that while expounding the noble verse:

﴿عَمَّ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ. عَنْ النَّبَإِ الْعَظِيمِ.﴾

*Of what do they question? Of the great tiding?* (78:1-2)

he said,

هِيَ فِي أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ. كَانَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ يَقُولُ: مَا للهِ تَعَالَى آيَةٌ هِيَ أَكْبَرُ مِنِّي وَلا للهِ مِنْ نَبَإٍ أَعْظَمُ مِنِّي.

It refers to the Commander of the Faithful (Ali ). And the Commander of the Faithful (a) used to say: "There isn't a greater sign of God than me, and there isn't a greater tiding of God than me![1]

Hence, the Perfect Man, one of whose instances is Adam, the father of Men, is the greatest sign, manifestation, Name and Attribute of the Real, and he is the metaphor and sign of God, the Exalted. God, the Blessed and the Exalted, is above having a like (*mithl*) and a peer, but one should not negate the existence of a metaphor for His sacred Essence, as:

﴿وَلَهُ الْمَثَلُ الأَعْلَى.﴾

*And to Him belongs the highest metaphor* (*mathal*). (30:27)

All the particles of the realm of being are the signs and mirrors of the revelations (*tajalliyat*) of the Beauty of the Beautiful One, Almighty and Exalted, though each one of them is such only to the extent of its existential capacity. But none of them is the sign of the greatest all-inclusive Name, that is, 'Allah,' except the all-inclusive being (*kawn-e jami*) and the sacred station of the greatest mediation (*maqam-e muqaddas-e barzakhiyyat-e kubra*), glorious is his greatness with the Greatness of his Maker ( جَلَّتْ عَظَمَتُهُ بِعَظَمَةِ بَارِيهِ.).

فَاللهُ تَعَالَى خَلَقَ الإِنْسَانَ الكَامِلَ وَالآدَمَ الأَوَّلَ عَلى صُورَتِهِ الجَامِعَةِ وَجَعَلَهُ مِرْآةَ أَسْمائِهِ وَصِفَاتِهِ. قَالَ الشَّيخُ الكَبِيرُ: فَظَهرَ جَمِيعُ ما في الصُّورةِ الإِلهِيَّةِ مِن الأَسماءِ في هذِهِ النَّشأةِ الإِنسانيَّةِ، فَحازَتْ رُتبةَ الإِحاطَةِ وَالجَمعِ بِهذا

[1] *Usul al-Kafi*, i, 207, *kitab al-hujjah, bab anna al-ayat al-lati dhakaraha Allahu fi kitabih…, hadith* 3.

الوُجودِ وبهِ قَامَتِ الحُجَّةُ للهِ على المَلائكَةِ.

> Hence, God, the Exalted, created the Perfect Man and the First Man in His all-inclusive Image, and He made him the mirror of His Names and Attributes. The Great Shaykh (Muhyi al-Din ibn Arabi) has said, "Hence all that which was in the Divine Form of the Names was manifested in this human existent, and so it acquired the station of all-inclusiveness (*al-ihatah wa al-jam*) with this existence and with it was established God's argument against the angels:

From this discussion is known the reason for God's choosing and electing the all-inclusive human form from among the various forms of other entities, and the secret of God's giving precedence to Adam (a) over the angels and His giving him a dignity over all other existents and His attributing his spirit to Himself, in the Noble verse:

﴿وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي.﴾

*And I breathed into him* (*i.e. Adam*) *of My spirit*. (15:29, 38:72)

As our intent in these pages is observance of brevity, we shall refrain from explaining the reality of the Divine breath and its character in Adam, and His singling him out for it from among all the existents. And all Praise belongs to God, firstly and lastly.

وَالحَمْدُ للهِ أَوَّلاً وَآخِراً.

39

# Thirty-Ninth *Hadith*: Good and Evil

بِالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلَى رُكْنِ الإِسْلامِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ الكُلَيْنِي رِضْوَانُ اللهِ عَلَيْهِ عَنْ عِدَّةٍ مِنْ أَصْحَابِنَا عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ خَالِدٍ عَنِ ابْنِ مَحْبُوبٍ وَعَلِيِّ بْنِ الحَكَمِ عَنْ مُعَاوِيَةَ بْنِ وَهَبٍ قَالَ: سَمِعْتُ أَبَا عَبْدِاللهِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ يَقُولُ: إِنَّ مِمَّا أَوْحَى اللهُ إِلَى مُوسَى عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ وَأَنْزَلَ عَلَيْهِ فِي التَّوْرَاةِ: إِنِّي أَنَا اللهُ لا إِلَهَ إِلاّ أَنَا، خَلَقْتُ الخَلْقَ وَخَلَقْتُ الخَيْرَ وَأَجْرَيْتُهُ عَلَى يَدَيْ مَنْ أُحِبُّ. فَطُوبَى لِمَنْ أَجْرَيْتُهُ عَلَى يَدَيْهِ. وَأَنَا اللهُ لا إِلَهَ إِلاّ أَنَا خَلَقْتُ الخَلْقَ وَخَلَقْتُ الشَّرَّ وَأَجْرَيْتُهُ عَلَى يَدَيْ مَنْ أُرِيدُهُ، فَوَيْلٌ لِمَنْ أَجْرَيْتُهُ عَلَى يَدَيْهِ.

With my chain of authorities reaching up to the august *shaykh*, the Pillar of Islam, Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulayni (*r*) from several of our Companions, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khalid, from Ibn Mahbub and Ali ibn al-Hakam, from Muawiyah ibn Wahab, who said: I heard Abu Abd-Allah (a) say: "Verily, among that which God had revealed to Moses (a) and sent it down to him in the Torah was this passage: Verily I am Allah, and there is no god except I. I originated the creation, and I created everything that is good, bringing it about by the hands of those that I love. So happy is he by whose hands I cause it to happen. And I am Allah, there is no god except I. I created the creation and I created everything that is evil,

and I bring it about by the hands of those that I will, so woe to him by whose hand I cause it to happen."[1]

## EXPOSITION

As to the word *ilah*, [whose related derivatives are] *alaha* (with *fathah* on the *hamzah* and *lam*, meaning 'he worshiped') and *ilahatan*, it is in the sense of *abada*, *ibadatan*, and *ilah*, vowelized as *fial*, is in the sense of the object (*maful* [that is, the object of worship]), like *imam*, which mean someone who is followed (*man yu'tammu bih*), *ilah* is the original root of 'Allah,' and after the addition of *alif* and *lam* (i.e. *al-*, making it *al-ilah*), the *hamzah* has been deleted for the sake of ease of pronunciation, and some have opined that the *alif* and *lam* substitute for the *hamzah*. Each of these two opinions has grammatical justifications[2] whose mention is not necessary In the terminology of the Divine sages (*ahl Allah*, i.e. the *urafa*), *ilahiyyat* and *uluhiyyat* are mostly applied to the station of *tajalli* at the plane of Act and the station of the Sacred Effusion (*fayd-e muqaddas*). '*Allah*' is the Name of the Glorious One, applied mostly to the station of the Essence as encompassing all the Attributes. At other times, the usage is reversed. In this noble tradition, it is probable that it is used in its common lexical sense-meaning, 'I am the Worshipped One, and there is no object of worship except Me.' And if this should be what is meant, the limitation of worship either implies that no other being is worthy of worship [besides God], though it should be worshipped mistakenly as a result of the error of men, or that –on the basis of the belief of the people of heart and the *urafa*– worship of every manifestation is the worship of the Absolutely Perfect Being and that man is a seeker of absolute beauty in accordance with his God-given *fitrat* (innate nature):

﴿فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا.﴾

(*It is*) *the nature* (*framed*) *of Allah in which He hath created man*. (30:30)

And this remains true despite man's alienation from this *fitrah* and his

[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, i. 154, *kitab al-Tawhid*, *bab al-khayr wal-sharr*, *hadith* 1.

[2] For the first opinion see al-Majlisi, *Bihar al-anwar*, iv, 187, *abwab asmaihi taala wa haqaiqiha wa sifatiha wa maaniha*, *bab* 3. For the second one see al-Tabrisi, *Majma al-bayan* , commentary on *bismillah al-rahman al-rahim* (from the *Surat al-Hamd*).

imagining himself to be attached to finitude and things finite. Or, perhaps, the meaning intended for *ilah* is the station of Divinity itself, in accordance with the last part of the tradition wherein He attributes good and evil to Himself. On this basis, this would be a reference to Divine Unity at the plane of Act (*tawhid-e afAli*), which has been expressed on the tongue of the great sages by their saying:

**لا مُؤَثِّرَ فِي الوُجُودِ إِلا اللهُ.**

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

Further reference to this matter will be made later on, God willing. As to *al-khayr*, the authority of the traditionists, Majlisi (*m*) states in his commentary under this tradition:

> Good and evil are applied to obedience and disobedience and to their causes and motives, and applied as well to the beneficial creatures, such as grains and fruits and the edible animals, and to the harmful creatures, such as poisons, serpents and scorpions, and to blessings and scourges. The Asharites say that all of these are the works of God. The Mutazilah and the Imamiyyah contradict them in relation to the works of men and they have reinterpreted the texts which state that God, the Exalted, is the Creator of good and evil as applying to things other than the deeds of the people."

After that, he says:

> As to the philosophers, most of them say "Nothing except God has efficiency in the realm of being ( **لا مُؤَثِّرَ فِي الوُجُودِ إِلا اللهُ**.), and that the will of the creatures is the preparatory cause for God, the Exalted, to create the deeds at their hands." This is in accordance with the creed of the philosophers and the Asharites. And these traditions can also be ascribed possibly to *taqiyyah*.[1] (Here end his comments, may God elevate his station.)

## THE REALITY OF GOOD AND EVIL

[1] Al-Majlisi, *Mirat al-uqul*, ii, 171-172, *kitab al-Tawhid, bab al-khayr wal-sharr, hadith* 1.

The attributes ‘good’ and ‘evil’ are applied, in all instances, to perfection and deficiency [respectively] in the essence or attributes of things or to their existence and perfections of existence. All that is essentially good derives from the Reality of Being, and when ascribed to other thugs it is in consideration of their mode of existence. Also, that which is essentially evil (*sharr bi al-dhat*), derives from non-being (*adam-e wujud*) or from the absence of the perfection of existence. Its application to other thugs, such as harmful animals and troublesome insects, is accidental. This, on consideration of all the sides, should be considered as self-evident, though there are also strong arguments in its favor.

Let us rake up the statement [of Majlisi that the position of the Imamiyyah and the Mutazilah concerning the creation of the deeds of people being opposed to that of the Asharites, and his explaining away the verses and traditions that attribute good and evil to God. As to the said opposition to the Asharite viewpoint –who subscribe to a creed based on *jabr* (compulsion), which is contrary to reason, philosophical proofs and intuition– that is correct. But the verses and traditions do not affirm the creed of the Mutazilites, who believe in *tafwid* (delegation) and their creed is more invalid, disgraceful, and scandalous than the creed of the Asharites.

As to the Imamiyyah (*r*) they have adopted the true creed in the light of the guidance of the great Imams of the Prophet’s family and with the blessings of the Household of Revelation and infallibility (a). It is also in agreement with the noble verses and sound metaphysical proofs, in addition to being in consonance with the creed of the illustrious *urafa* and the gnosis of the people of the heart. Hence they have no need to do *tawil* of the many traditions and verses which cannot be interpreted in the sense understood by the said traditionist (*m*). In fact, the Imamiyyah and their Imams do not consider the will of God to be inoperative in any of the deeds of the creatures and they do not consider the matter of any thing as having been delegated (*mufawwad*) to the creatures.

As to his statement in the latter part of his remarks, that most philosophers believe that “Nothing except God has efficiency in the realm of being.” (**لا مُؤَثِّرَ فِي الوُجُودِ إلا اللهُ**) and that this belief is in consonance with their own creed as well as that of the Asharites, [that is partly true and partly false]. As to the statement that the words “Nothing except God has efficiency in the realm of being” constitute the creed of most of the philosophers and the people of gnosis, that is true. In fact, they say that should any philosopher fail

to affirm this matter, it means that the light of wisdom has not entered his Heart and gnosis has not touched his inner being. But it does not imply that the creature's will is a preparatory cause for the creation of God, as is clear to those who are in the know of the matter. That this statement is consonant with the creed of the Asharites is also invalid, and what is more amazing is his putting the Asharite creed in the same basket as that of the philosophers! This, despite the great distance that exists between them, and there has rarely been a genuine philosopher who has not opposed the creed of the Asharites and considered it as invalid.

As to his statement that these traditions might possibly be ascribed to *taqiyyah*, firstly there is no justifications for such an ascription, because the literal import of these traditions is in consonance with the true creed and in agreement with metaphysical proof. Secondly, these traditions are in agreement with many of the verses of the noble scripture. Therefore, there is no sense in ascribing *taqiyyah* to the verses and likewise to the traditions that are in consonance with them. Thirdly, these traditions are not contradicted by others so that one might be led by the contradiction to ascribe them to *taqiyyah*, which is one of the grounds for preferring one group of traditions to another, and they can be reconciled with those which indicate that man is the doer of good and evil. Fourthly, according to his own statements, these traditions agree with the creed of the Asharites which, apparently, was not the prevailing creed in that period, and in such a circumstance there are no grounds for ascribing them to *taqiyyah*. Fifthly, this topic and the like of it relate to issues of doctrine, which are not subject to the rules of preference applicable to contradictory traditions (in the area of *ahkam*), as is evident.

As to the word *tuba*, Jawhiri says, "*Tuba*, vowelized as *fula*, is derived from *tayyib* and its *ya* has been changed to *waw* due to the *dammah* on the previous letter (i.e. *ta'*)." According to the *Majma*, "*tuba lahum*" means 'there is good (*tayyib*) life for them.' And it has been said that *tuba* means *summum bonum* and the ultimate [object of] desire; and some have said that *tuba* is the name of a tree in Paradise. It has also been said that *tuba* also means 'paradise' in the language of the Indians. And *tuba laka* and *tubaka* are used as phrases involving genitive construction (*idafah*). It is mentioned in a tradition of the Noblest Messenger (*s*) that "*Tuba* is a tree in Paradise. Its trunk (*asl*) is in my house and its branch is the house of Ali ."[1]

[1] *Majma al-bayan*, commentary on verse 29 of the *Surah al-Rad*. The text of the tradition is as

As to the expression "*waylun*," Jawhari says, "*Wayh* is an expression of mercy and "*wayl*" expresses disapproval, and Yazidi states that they have the same meaning. *Waylun li zaydin wa wayhun li zaydin* can be pronounced with *raf* on the assumption that *wayl* and *wayh* form subjects of a nominative sentence, and also with *nasb*, on the supposition of an elliptical verb, assuming the underlying form: *Alzamahu Allahu al-wayl*. And some say that *wayl* is a valley in hell [so intensely hot] that if a mountain were cast into it would melt due to the intensity of its heat.[1] And some say that it is the name of a pit in hell.[2]

## THE RELATION OF GOOD AND EVIL TO CREATION AND THE OCCURRENCE OF EVIL IN THE DIVINE ORDAINMENTS (*QADA*)

It should be known that it has clearly been established in the higher sciences that the order of being possesses the highest degree of perfection and goodness and the ultimate degree of beauty. This is demonstrable, summarily, in accordance with one kind of argument that infers the effect from the cause as well in accordance with a detailed exposition, although the knowledge of its detail is exclusive to the Being of its Originator, hallowed be His Names, or available through revelation and Divine teaching. That which is appropriate for these pages at this stage, as mentioned earlier, is that all that which belongs to the categories of perfection, beauty and goodness does not derive except from the Reality of Existence, because there is nothing that has reality except It and, obviously that which stands in opposition to the Reality of Existence is either non-existence or essence (*mahiyyah*), which are in themselves nothing and have no value, being sheer

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follows:

وَرَوَى الحَاكِمُ أَبُو القَاسِمِ الحَسْكَانِيُّ بِإِسْنَادِهِ عَنْ مُوسَى بْنِ جَعْفَرٍ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ عَنْ أَبِيهِ عَنْ آبَائِهِ عَلَيْهِمُ السَّلامُ قَالَ: سُئِلَ رَسُولُ اللهِ عَنْ طُوبَى فَقَالَ: شَجَرَةٌ أَصْلُهَا فِي دَارِي وَفَرْعُهَا عَلَى أَهْلِ الجَنَّةِ. ثُمَّ سُئِلَ عَنْهَا مَرَّةً أُخْرَى فَقَالَ: فِي دَارِ عَلِيٍّ.

[1] See *Majma al-bahrayn* and *Lisan al-Arab*, under *w.y.h.*

[2] The *Qamus al-muhit* cites this Prophetic tradition under *w.y.l.*:

إِنَّهُ وَادٍ فِي جَهَنَّمَ يَهْوِي فِيهِ الكَافِرُ أَرْبَعِينَ خَرِيفاً قَبْلَ أَنْ يَبْلُغَ قَعْرَهُ.

(It [i.e. *Wayl*] is a valley in hell through which the infidels fall will take forty years before he reaches its bottom.)

vacuity or pure fancy, and basically they have no subsistence until they are illumined with the light of Being or are manifested through its manifestation, neither a subsistence in respect of essence (*dhat*) nor in respect of attributes and effects. Each of them (i.e. essences) come to possess manifestation, properties and effects only in the shadow of existence and only when they are touched by the hand of expansive mercy Hence all perfections are rays of the beauty of Absolute Beauty and reflections of the sacred light of the Absolutely Perfect One. Other existents are nothing in themselves, being stark poverty and absolute nothingness. Hence all perfections derive from Him and belong to Him.[1]

Also, it is established in its own place that that which emanates from that Sacred Being is the real substance of being and the sheer content of existence without its being limited by limits pertaining to non-being and essence, because non-being and essence do not derive from the Source of Being and limitation in grace (*fayd*) derives from the limitations of the receiver of grace. Anyone who understands the character of the effusion and grace as explained the people of gnosis will affirm that no kind of limitation or restriction is conceivable in the Divine effusion of grace. Hence in the same way that the Sacred Divine Essence (*dhat*) is to be considered free from deficiency, contingency; and limitation, so also His Sacred Effusion (*fayd-e muqaddas*) must be considered to be devoid and free from all limits of contingency; as well as contingent aspects that derive from essence and the limitations that derive from finitude and deficiency. Hence the effusion of His grace, which is the reflection of the Absolutely Beautiful One, is absolute and complete beauty and perfection. Hence He is Beautiful in His Essence (*dhat*), Attributes, and Acts, and nothing except that which is sheer being pertains to His making and creation.[2]

Also it is established in its own place that all the evils, catastrophes, death, disease and destructive events and troublesome creatures and other such things which are in this world of nature and this narrow pit of darkness arise from the interferences and conflicts between existents, not from the aspects pertaining to Being but on account of the deficiency of their ambiance and the narrowness of their abode. And these derive from limitations and deficiencies which are totally outside the ambit of the light of

[1] *Al-asfar al-arbaah*, ii, 292 ff.;see also *ibid*., i, the discussion on the fundamentality of existence (*asalat al-wujud*).

[2] *Al-asfar al-arbaah*, ii, 292, *fasl* 25-29.

creation and are in reality below making (*jal*). The true reality is the Light which is quit of all evil, defect and deficiency. However, these defects and evils and harmful and troublesome things, in respect of their defectiveness and harmfulness, are not essential objects of creation, but they are accidental objects of creation in accordance with the metaphysical viewpoint. Because, if the world of nature itself were not to exist and were it not to possess the existential aspects relating to creation [its defects and evils would have been nonexistent] and similarly its benefit and good would not have been realized in it, because they do not belong to the category of absolute non-existence but are relative non-existences which have an accidental existence subordinate to the dispositions [of things]. The proposition that is derived therefrom is a modified proposition (*qadiyyah madulah*) or an affirmative proposition with a negative predicate (*mujibah salibat al-mahmul*), not a negative existential proposition (*salibah muhassalah*).[1]

In conclusion, that which essentially derives from creation and the Divine making is good and excellence, and the presence of evil, harm, and other things in relation to Divine providence has the position of something that is subordinate and a by-product. To the first position refers God's statement in the noble verse:

﴿مَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ حَسَنَةٍ فَمِنْ اللَّهِ وَمَا أَصَابَكَ مِنْ سَيِّئَةٍ فَمِنْ نَفْسِكَ.﴾

*Whatever of good befalleth thee* (*O man*)*, it is from Allah, and whatever evil befalleth thee it is from thyself.* (4:79)

And the second position is referred to in the noble verse:

﴿قُلْ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ.﴾

*Say* (*O MuHammad*)*: Everything is from God.* (4:78)

And to these two considerations, there are many references in the traditions of the Infallible *Ahl al-Bayt* (a) including the sacred tradition cited here which states that good and evil both derive from God's creation.

## GOD'S CARRYING OUT GOOD AND EVIL ACTS AT THE

[1] *Al-asfar al-arbaah*, vii, 58-62, *safar* 3, *mawqif* 8, *fasl* 2.

## HANDS OF THE SERVANTS

Reflection on the points mentioned leads one to understand the character of God's carrying out good and evil acts at the hands of creatures without its leading to the dangers of compulsion (*jabr*). To investigate this matter in such a way as to make it clear and to remove the doubts requires a detailed study of various theological creeds with its multifarious preliminaries whose mention is not possible in these pages. However, a brief reference, to the extent appropriate for this discussion, is unavoidable.

It should be known that it is not possible for any existent to be independent in any of its actions, unless the agent or the cause can block all the ways to non-existence facing an effect, so that if there were a hundred conditions for an existent to come into being and the cause blocks ninety-nine ways to non-existence facing the effect and one of the conditions remains unfulfilled, it is not possible for the cause to be independent in bringing about its effect. Hence independence in causality depends on the ability of the cause to block all the possible ways to non-being facing the effect so that it may reach the frontiers of necessity and brought into existence.

It is known, on the basis of logical necessity that all beings of the contingent realms, from the beings of the highest *jabarut* and the highest *malakut* to the inmates of the world of nature and *mulk*, with all their outer and inner powers, lack such a station. For the very first non-being facing an effect is the non-being arising from the absence of the efficient cause, and there is no existent in the realm of being which can overcome the non-being facing the effect in this respect, for that would imply a transformation of that which is contingent by essence into that which is necessary by essence and the departure of the contingent from the limits of the realm of contingency and this is impossible on the basis of rational self-evidence. Hence it is known that independence in causality requires independence in existence and this is absent among contingents. This explanation reveals that the delegation of creation to any existence in any of the respects pertaining to existence is impossible. This is not limited to those who are religiously responsible for their actions (*mukallaf*) and their deeds, though such a limitation may be suggested by the usual statements of the theologians (*mutakallimun*). However the generality of the issue at debate can be understood from a variety of topics. But due to the importance of the discussion concerning the acts of the *mukallaf*s the debate is confined to this context in the discussions

of the theologians. In any case, the debates of the theologians are of no concern to us and our purpose is to seek and establish the truth, and the impossibility of *tafwid* to and, of the creatures in any matter whatsoever is obvious and known.

## THE REFUTATION OF COMPULSION (*JABR*)

The invalidity, of the creed of *jabr* becomes also known on study. It consists of the belief that none of the ontological intermediaries have a role in the creation of existents although one imagines them to possess such a role. [It means], for instance, that fire has no role in producing heat and it has been a habit of God to create heat following the creation of the form of fire without the form of fire possessing any role in producing heat. Had the habit of God been to create cold following the creation of fire it would not have had a form different from the present one in which it occurs.

In summary, [they claim that] the Sacred Essence is the direct agent of the acts of all *mukallaf*s without the intervention of any intermediate means.[1] In their own fancy they have adopted this creed for the sake of Hallowing God by negating limitations in respect to Him and so as not to consider His hands as tied. '*Tied be their hands*' (5:70) and cursed be they for this kind of hallowing, which implies deficiency and resemblance to creatures (*tashbih*) from the viewpoint of metaphysics and the creed of gnosis. As indicated in the preceding section, God, the Exalted, is absolute perfection and sheer existence, and limits and deficiency are inconceivable in His Essence and Attributes. That which derives from Divine creation and making is absolute being and the absoluteness of the Sacred Effusion, and it is not possible that a deficient and limited existent should emanate from that Sacred Essence. There is no kind of deficiency whatsoever in creation, as imagined by the theologians, and all limitations and deficiencies derive from the deficiency of the receiver of Divine effusion and the effect, and this stands proved in its own place.[2] Hence, that which relates directly to the Sacred Essence of God, the Exalted, is absolute being and sheer existence, and that is either the Sacred Effusion according to the way of the gnostics, or the First Immaterial Intellect and the First Noble Light, according to the creed of the

[1] *Kashf al-murad*, 239-240; *Fi ilm al-kalam*, ii, 62, 78, 79.

[2] *Al-Asfar al-arbaah*, ii, 127 ff., *safar* 2, *maqalah* 6, the discussion on cause and effect (*illat wa malul*), *fasl* 2, 13, 14, 25, 26, 26, 29. See also vi, 320 ff., *safar* 3, *mawqif* 4, *fasl* 3.

metaphysicians.

To explain this in other words, there is no doubt that the existents are different in their receptivity to existence. There are some existents, which receive existence directly and independently; such as substances, for example, and some existents do not receive existence without the existence of something else and without subordination to another existent, such as accidents and things possessing a weak existence. For instance, the speech of Zayd is something which in order to exist does not receive existence except in subordination [to the existence of Zayd], and accidents and attributes can have no existence without the existence of substances and the objects of which they are attributes, and they cannot exist without them. This deficiency is essential to these existents and their existential inadequacy; it is not due to deficiency in the agency and creativity of God, Exalted is His station. Hence it is known that *jabr* and negation of existential intermediaries in the realm of being are impossible.

Among firm arguments pertaining to this topic is that the essences (*mahiyyat*) are in themselves devoid of the capacity to produce or receive efficiency, and creation does nor relate to them by essence (*bi'l-dhat*), as it is the Reality of Being which is the source of efficiency by essence and the negation of efficiency in relation to it implies that a thing should not be what it is. Hence, the creation of the planes of existence devoid of efficiency and effect is absolutely impossible and implies the negation of a thing's identity with itself.

In conclusion, it is known that both *tafwid* and *jabr* are invalid and impossible on the basis of metaphysical reasoning and rational criteria. 'The creed of the middle position' (*amr bayn al-amrayn*) is one which is affirmed by the way of the people of gnosis as well as by transcendental philosophy. However, there is a great divergence of opinion among the *ulama* (*r*) concerning its meaning.

That which is the soundest of views and most secure from controversy and more in consonance with the religion of *tawhid* is the creed of the illustrious gnostics and the people of the heart. However, this creed, on every topic pertaining to the Divine teachings, stands in the category of 'simple and impossible' (*sahl wa mumtani*) whose understanding is not possible through metaphysical argument and study and is unattainable without complete piety of the heart as well as Divine succor. Accordingly, we shall leave it for those who are worthy of it, that is, the *awliya* of God, and enter this valley through

the road of the pursuers of rational thought. And that is to reject both *tafwid* – which means the independence of existents in efficiency– and *jabr* –which is the negation of their efficiency– and to affirm the middle position (*manzilah bayn al-manzilatayn*), which consists of affirming their efficiency and negating their independence and asserting that the position of the creation is like Being and the attributes of Being. In the same way that the existents exist, without being independent in their existence, and have attributes, which are posited of them without their being independent, they have actions. and effects which are posited of them and which emanate from them but they are not independent in their existence and they are agents and creative causes that are non-independent in their efficiency and creativity

And it should be known –as reflection on points mentioned in the preceding section will revealed– that good and evil are attributable both to God and the creatures and that both these attributions are correct, and it is for the same reason that it has been stated in this tradition that it is God who brings about good and evil through the hands of His servants. Nevertheless, all that is good is related to Good essentially (*bi al-dhat*) while its relation to the servants and the creatures is accidental (*bi al-arad*) The evils, on the contrary; are related to other existents essentially and their relation to God, the Exalted, is accidental. And to this matter refers the *hadith-e qudsi* which declares.

> O son of Adam! I am more worthy of your virtues than yourself and you are more worthy of your vices than Me.[1]

Reference was made to this tradition earlier and here we will refrain from repeating that which has already been mentioned.

وَالحَمْدُ للهِ أَوَّلاً وَآخِراً.

And Praise is God's, in the beginning and the end.

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[1] *Al-Jawahir al-saniyyah*, p. 279. The text of the tradition is as follows:

عِنِ الرِّضَا عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ... قَالَ اللهُ: يَا بْنَ آدَمَ، أَنَا أَوْلَى بِحَسَنَاتِكَ مِنْكَ وَأَنْتَ أَوْلَى بِسَيِّئَاتِكَ مِنِّي.

> From al-Rida (*a*)... He said, "God said: O son of Adam! I am more worthy of your virtues than yourself and you are more worthy of your vices than Me."

40

# Fortieth *Hadith*: EXEGESIS OF *SURAT AL-TAWHID* AND SOME VERSES OF *SURAT AL-HADID*

**بِالسَّنَدِ الْمُتَّصِلِ إِلَى الشَّيْخِ الأَقْدَمِ وَالرُّكْنِ الأَعْظَمِ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَعْقُوبَ الكُلَيْنِي رَضِيَ اللهُ عَنْهُ عَنْ مُحَمَّدِ بْنِ يَحْيَى عَنْ أَحْمَدَ بْنِ مُحَمَّدٍ عَنِ الْحُسَيْنِ بْنِ سَعِيدٍ عَنِ النَّضْرِ بْنِ سُوَيْدٍ عَنْ عَاصِمِ بْنِ حُمَيدٍ قَالَ: سُئِلَ عَلِيُّ بْنُ الحُسَيْنِ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ عَنِ التَّوْحِيدِ فَقَالَ: إِنَّ اللهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ عَلِمَ أَنَّهُ يَكُونُ فِي آخِرِ الزَّمَانِ أَقْوَامٌ مُتَعَمِّقُونُ، فَأَنْزَلَ اللهُ تَعَالَى: ﴿قُلْ هُوَ اللهُ أَحَدٌ.﴾ وَالآيَاتِ مِنْ سُورَةِ الحَدِيدِ إِلَى قَوْلِهِ: ﴿وَهُوَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ.﴾ فَمَنْ رَامَ وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ فَقَدْ هَلَكَ.**

With my chain of authorities reaching up to the foremost *shaykh* and the greatest pillar, Muhammad ibn Yaqub al-Kulayni (*r*) from Muhammad ibn Yahya, from Ahmad ibn Muhammad, from al-Husayn ibn Said, from al-Nadr ibn Suwayd, from ASim ibn Humayd who said: Ali ibn al-Husayn (a) was asked concerning *tawhid*. He replied, "Verily, God Almighty and Glorious, knew that in the ultimate era there would be people of profound thinking, and so God, the Exalted, sent down, *Qul huwa Allahu ahad* (*Say: He is Allah, the One…*) and the verses of *surat al-Hadid* until His words, '*…and He knows well that which is in the breasts*.' Hence someone who seeks to go

beyond that will perish."[1]

## EXPOSITION

Hadrat Sadr al-Mutaallihin (*q*) says, "Asim ibn Humayd was not a contemporary of Imam Sajjad and therefore the tradition is a *marfu* one."[2] The repetition of the word *qala* (he said) is perhaps due to a fragmentation in the *hadith*, or, perhaps, it is an error of the copyists, or the subject (*fail*) was mentioned but was omitted due to a lapse of the pen. Or the fail has been omitted, the case being one where such omission is permissible. Or the first fail is the pronoun referring to al-Nadr ibn Suwayd, and this possibility is very remote.

As to *al-tawhid*, *tawhid* pertains to the form *tafil*, and that is either due to repetition signified by the verb, in the sense of extreme emphasis on unity and simplicity, or it is in the sense of qualification of the object (*maful*) on the basis of the verb, such as in *takfir* and *tafsiq*. One of the scholars has held that the form *tafil* is not used in the sense of qualification of the object (*maful*) and that it is also wrong to impart such a sense to *takfir* and *tafsiq*, because they rather mean calling someone to *fisq* and *kufr*, and that [in the sense of qualifying the object] *ikfar* should be used instead of *takfir*. Hence, the *Qamus*, too, under the entry on *k.f.r*, does not mention *takfir* in the sense of attribution of *kufr*. This author says: Although I too have not seen in the *Qamus* that *takfir* means attribution of *kufr*, and even Jawhari, the most erudite of the lexicographers, has not mentioned this sense for *takfir* and, in consonance with the statement of the above-mentioned scholar, has considered *ikfar* to be the proper word for this sense, but the books on grammar have considered one of the meanings of the form *tafil* as qualification of the object (*maful*) with the quality implied in the verb, and they have cited *tafsiq* as an example. In any case, the meaning of *tawhid* is attribution of unity (*wahdaniyyah*).

As to the word *mutaammiqun*, *amq* and *umq* (with *fathah* or *dammah* on the *ayn*) means the bottom of a well and a pit. For the same reason mathematicians use the term *umq* (height) in the sense of the third dimension of bodies which begins at its top surface and ends at the bottom surface, in the same way that they use length as the first dimension and breadth as the

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[1] Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, i, 93, *kitab al-Tawhid*, *bab al-niyyah*, *hadith* 3.

[2] *Sharh Usul al-Kafi*, p. 246, *kitab al-Tawhid*, *bab al-niyyah*, *hadith* 3.

second. Also for the same reason a person possessing a piercing vision is called *mutaammiq* and a perspicacious vision is called *amiq* (deep) and a vision that does not have depth is called superficial (*sathi*). It is as if matters pertaining to knowledge have a depth and a bottom and the *mutaammiq* person is one who goes to their depth (*umq*) from where he draws out the truths, and someone with a superficial vision remains at the surface and fails to fathom the depth of any matter.

As to the expression *fa man rama*, *rama* and *yarumu* are in the sense of seeking, and *maram* is that which is sought.

As to the expression *waraa dhalika*, *wara* is in the sense of 'behind' (*khlaf*), and at times, it is used in the sense of 'in front of '(*quddam*). Hence it has contrary meanings and its use in the first sense is appropriate to cases such as the present one.

## A HINT CONCERNING THE EXEGESIS OF *SURAT AL-TAWHID*

It should be known that *tafsir* (exegesis) of this blessed *surah* and that of the beginning verses of *surat al-Hadid* is beyond the capacity of the likes of us, and, in fact, outside the scope of the present discourse. To be just, how could it be permissible for the likes of me to embark upon the exegesis of something which God, the Exalted, has sent down for persons of profound thinking and for the veritable *ulama*? And Hadrat Baqir al-Ulum (a) (as mentioned in *al-Tafsir al-burhan*) after divulging some of the secrets relating to the letters of the blessed word '*al-samad*,' said, "Had I found anyone who could bear the knowledge that God has bestowed upon me, I would have propagated *tawhid*, *islam*, *iman*, *din* and *sharayi* through al-*samad*."[1]

The great philosopher Sadr al-Mutaallihin says concerning the verses of *surat al-Tawhid*, "You should know that each of these six verses referred to in the *hadith* constitutes a great door to the knowledge of *tawhid* and Divinity, and comprises a well-established matter from among the principles of *samadiyyat* and *rububiyyat* (lordship). And were time to provide opportunity and assistance to a divine gnostic or sage that has acquired his knowledge from the niche of Muhammadan prophethood (*s*) and who has

[1] See *al-Burhan fi tafsir al-Quran*, vol. 4, p. 526. The Arabic text of the tradition is as follows:
ثُمَّ قَالَ عَلَيْهِ السَّلامُ: لَوْ وَجَدْتُ لِعِلْمِيَ الَّذِي آتانِيَ اللهُ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ حَمَلَةً لَنَشَرْتُ التَّوْحِيدَ وَالإِسْلامَ وَالإِيمَانَ وَالدِّينَ وَالشَّرَائِعَ مِنَ الصَّمَدِ...

derived his wisdom from the traditions of the Household of Infallibility and Purity (a) truly, it would befit him, and these verses, to fill a big volume, or several of them, with exegesis of each of them."[1] In any case, the likes of this authors are not champions of this field, but as it is not reasonable to abandon what is feasible for the infeasible, we shall briefly mention some hints out of what we have learned from our great teachers, from the books of the people of gnosis, and from the radiant niche of guidance of the Household of Infallibility, and all guidance comes from God.

## A HINT CONCERNING *BISMI'LLAH*

It should be known that in accordance with the view of the people of gnosis, the *bismi'llah* (*in the Name of Allah*) in every *surah* pertains to that *surah* itself and not to "I seek help" or anything of the kind, because *ismu'llah* (Name of Allah) is the totality of the *mashiyyah* (Divine will) at the plane of manifestation (*maqdam-e zuhuri*), the station of the Most Sacred Effusion (*fayd-e aqdas*) at the plane of revelation (*tajalli*) of *ahadiyyah*, the station of inclusiveness of Divine Names (*jam-e ahadi-ye asma*) at the plane of *wahidiyyah*, and the entire cosmos (*kawn*) at the plane of inclusive unity (*ahadiyyat-e jam*), which is the inclusive cosmic object (*kawn-e jami*) and the levels of existence in the vertical ascending and descending order and each of the objective entities (*huwiyyat-e ayniyyah*) at the horizontal plane. The meaning of '*Allah*' differs in accordance with each of these considerations, for it is the referent of those Names, and the meaning of *bismi'llah* varies in accordance with each *surah* of the Noble Quran with which the *bismi'llah* is associated in respect of text and which is manifestation of it in respect of meaning. Rather, the meaning of *bismi'llah* varies in accordance with every action that is begun with *bismi'llah* and it relates to that very action. One who has gnosis of the manifestations of Divine Names observes that all works and actions and all objects and accidents are manifested and realized by virtue of the sacred Greatest Name (*ism-e azam*) and the station of absolute will (*mashiyyat-e mutlaqah*). Hence while performing that action and bringing it into existence he recalls this matter in his heart and extends it to the plane of the natural realm and *mulk* pertaining to himself and says, "*Bismi'llah*!" That means, I eat or I drink, or I write and I do such and such a thing by the station of the absolute will of the Possessor of the station of All-encompassing beneficence (*Rahmaniyyat*),

[1] *Sharh Usul al-Kafi*, p. 248.

which is the expanse of existence, and the station of All-mercifulness (*Rahimiyyat*), which is the expanse of the station of perfection of existence, or the Possessor of the station of All-encompassing beneficence, which is the station of revelation (*tajalli*) through exoteric manifestation (*tajalli bi zuhur*) and expansion of existence (*bast-e wujud*), and the station of All-mercifulness, which is the station of revelation through esoteric manifestation (*tajalli bi batiniyyat*) and contraction of existence (*qabd-e wujud*).

Hence, from one viewpoint, the Godward wayfarer and the gnostic of God sees all actions and existents as manifestations of the absolute will and as annihilated in it. The aspect of unity predominates in this view and he considers *bismi'llah* in all the *surah*s of the Quran and in all actions and works to possess a single sense. And from another viewpoint which is turned towards the world of separation and differentiation he sees a different meaning in *bismi'llah* at the head of every *surah* and at the beginning of every action.

At this stage where we presently are, which is that of exegesis of the noble *surah* of *Tawhid*, we may take its *bismi'llah* as relating to the noble word *qul*' (Say!), in which case the meaning of *bismi'llah* in the garb of singularity (*tajrid*) and under the predominance of *tawhid* will be the station of absolute will, and in the garb of multiplicity and at the station of attention to pluralities it will be its determinations (*taayyunat*). And at the station of the togetherness of the two stations, which is the station of greatest *barzakh* (*maqam-e barzakhiyyat-e kubra*), it will mean the will at the station of unity alongside plurality and the exoteric aspect (*zuhur*) alongside the esoteric one (*butun*), and *Rahmaniyyat* and *rahimiyyat* in the second sense. And as in the noble verse *Qul huwa'llahu ahad*, in which *ahadiyyat-e ghaybiyyah* (the transcendent unity) and *uluhiyyat-e asmaiyyah* (Divinity at the, plane of the Names) merge together, that which is meant is the Name Allah in accordance with the third station, that is, the station of *barzakhiyyat*. Hence from the transcendent (*ghaybi*) station of *ahadiyyat* the address goes forth to the pious and immaculate, the *ahadi* and *ahmadi* heart of Muhammad that, "Say in accordance with this realm of the greatest *barzakh* through manifestation of the Name Allah, which is the station of absolute will and the possessor of the manifestation and determination of *Rahmaniyyat* along with *Rahimiyyat*, and expansion along with contraction."

The noble word huwa refers to the station of absolute Divine ipseity

(*huwiyyat-e mutlaqah*) as such, without its being determined by Attributes and without revelation through Names, even the Names of Essence which are considered at the plane of *ahadiyyat*. And this reference is not possible except by the possessor of that heart and station, and had he not been assigned to divulge this relation to *Haqq* he would not have ever uttered this noble word. However, it was an irresistible Divine ordainment that the Seal of Prophesy (*s*) should disclose this reference.

And as he did not remain in the embrace of absoluteness and possessed the station of *barzakhiyyat*, he said, "*Allahu ahad*." And Allah is the greatest all-inclusive Name and the absolute and ultimate Lord, and from the *barzakhi* viewpoint of multiplicity of Names manifested at the plane of *wahidiyyah*, it is the same as the transcendent and *ghaybi* revelation (*tajalli*) at the station of *ahadiyyat*. Neither the aspect of *ahadiyyat* is predominant over the aspect of *wahidiyyat* in the heart of such a wayfarer nor *wahidiyyat* over *ahadiyyat*. The occurrence of Allah before *ahad* –despite that the Names of Essence have precedence in respect of conception– is perhaps a reference to the station of revelation to the wayfarer's heart, for the revelations of Essence in the hearts of the *awliya* are first through revelation of- attributive Names (*asma sifatiyyah*) at the plane of *wahidiyyah* and later on through *ahadi* Names of Essence.

And the mention of Allah and singling it out from among the Names- despite that in accordance with the character of wayfaring and the order of revelation, the revelation first occurs, in accordance with the state of the wayfarer's heart, through the manifestations of the Name Allah, which comprises the other Names, and only then, at the conclusion of wayfaring in the attributive Names, does occur the revelation through the Name Allah – that is for one of two reasons: either it indicates that revelation through any Name is revelation through the Name Allah, in accordance with the unity of manifestations and that which they manifest, especially at the plane of Divinity, or it indicates the destination of *wahidi* wayfaring, and unless it is realized the wayfarer does not set out on *ahadi* wayfaring.

Also, on the basis of this exposition, *huwa* (He) refers to the station which transcends all reference and lies beyond the aspirations of gnostics, and beyond all names and descriptions and above revelation and manifestation. *Ahad* refers to revelation through esoteric Hidden Names (*asma-e batiniyyah-ye ghaybiyyah*) and *Allah* refers to revelation through exoteric Names, and through these three all the primary conceptions of Lordship are

obtained. The other four Names, which are included in *samadiyyat*, are, in accordance with some traditions[1] negative Names of *tanzih* (negation of similarity to creatures) which are conceived in subordination to the positive Names of Divine beauty (*asma-e thubutiyyah-ye Jamaliyyah*) as was pointed out earlier under one of the traditions.[2]

That which has been said until this point applies in case *bismi'llah* is taken to relate to the noble word *qul*, and yet it may be related to each of the parts of this noble *surah*. In accordance with each of these possibilities the exegesis of the *surah* and its *bismi'llah* will be different, and as their discussion will cause prolixity we will abstain from it.

Our *shaykh*, the perfect gnostic Shahabadi, may my soul be his ransom, would say, '*Huwa*' refers to six other Names and perfections which are mentioned in the blessed *surah* of *Tawhid* after this blessed word, because as the sacred Essence is the absolute *huwa*, which refers to sheer existence, it encompasses all the perfections of the Names (*kamalat asmaiyyah*); hence It is *Allah*. And since sheer existence with its simple reality possesses all Attributes and Names and this plurality of Names does not compromise the unity of the sacred Essence, it is *ahad*. And as sheer existence has no essence (*mahiyyah*) It is *samad*. And since sheerness is without deficiency, and is not derived from any other, and as repetition is impossible for it, it is neither begetter (*walid*) nor begotten (*mawlud*) and has no match (*kufv*)."

It should be known that in the sacred traditions there are mentioned many meanings and subtle points concerning *samad* whose discussion is beyond the scope of these pages and requires a separate treatise. Here we will mention only one point which is that if *samad* should refer to essence itself, in accordance with some considerations, the meaning of *Allah* in *Allahu's-samad* will pertain to the station of *wahidiyyat* and the station of inclusive unity of Names (*ahadiyyat-e jami asma*). And should it refer to a relative attribute, as inferred from certain traditions, it would refer to the inclusive unity of Names at the plane of revelation through the sacred effusion and its

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[1] Al-Shaykh al-Saduq, *Kitab al-Tawhid*, p. 91, *bab* 4, *hadith* 3; *al-Burhan fi tafsir al-Quran*, vol. 4, p. 525, from Imam Baqir (*a*):

فَقَالَ: ﴿اللهُ أَحَدٌ اللهُ الصَّمَدُ.﴾ ثُمَّ فَسَّرَهُ فَقَالَ: ﴿لَمْ يَلِدْ وَلَمْ يُولَدْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ كُفُواً أَحَدٌ.﴾

[2] See *Usul al-Kafi*, i, 124, *kitab al-Tawhid*, *bab tawil al-samad*, *hadith* 2, from Imam Baqir (*a*):

إنَّ الصَّمَدَ هُوَ السَّيِّدُ المَصْمُودُ إلَيْهِ، وَهُوَ مَعْنىً صَحِيحٌ مُوَافِقٌ لِقَوْلِ اللهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ: ﴿لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ.﴾

meaning would be consonant with "*Allah is the Light of the heavens*."

## A BRIEF HINT CONCERNING THE EXEGESIS OF THE NOBLE VERSES OF *SURAT AL-HADID* UNTIL THE WORDS *ALIMUN BI DHATI'S-SUDUR*

As to the first verse,[1] it implies the *tasbih* of all existents, even plants and 'inanimate' objects (*jamadat*). Its limitation to intelligent beings [as suggested by some scholars] is due to the veiled intellects of the intelligent. And should this noble verse be capable of reinterpretation (*tawil*), other noble verses cannot be interpreted in this manner, such as the statement of God, the Exalted:

(أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَسْجُدُ لَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ وَالنُّجُومُ وَالْجِبَالُ وَالشَّجَرُ وَالدَّوَابُّ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنْ النَّاس.)

*Hast thou not seen how to God bow all who are in the heavens and all who are in the earth, the sun and the moon, the stars and the mountains, the trees and the beasts, and many of mankind?* (22:18)

Also, the interpretation of the *tasbih* as something innate (*fitri*) and inbuilt (*takwini*) is an inane one, not consonant with the traditions and Quranic verses besides being contrary to firm metaphysical proof and the gnostic approach. That which is strange is that the great philosopher and scholar Sadr al-Mutaallihin (*q*) does not consider *tasbih* in these creatures to constitute speech. He considers the "speech" of some 'inanimate' objects such as the pebbles to be sounds created in them, in accordance with their states, by the holy spirit of the *wali*. He has considered the statements of some gnostics who consider all existents as possessing linguistic life (*hayat nutqi*) as being contrary to metaphysical reasoning and as implying suspension of their nature (*tatil*) and perpetuation of compulsion (*dawam-e qasr*),[2] although such

[1] The Verse is:

﴿سَبَّحَ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ.﴾

*Any that which is in the heavens and the earth does the* tasbih *of God, and He is the All-mighty, the All-wise.*(57: 1)

[2] *Sharh Usul al-Kafi*, p. 248, *kitab al-Tawhid, bab al-niyyah, hadith* 3.

a position is contrary to his own principles. However, this position, which is borne out by explicit Quranic verses and is the essence of gnosis, does not lead to any inconsistency at all, and were it not for the fear of prolixity we would have elaborated on this matter along with its necessary preliminaries. However, here we shall confine ourselves to a passing hint.

It was indicated earlier also that the reality of existence is identical with consciousness, knowledge, will, power, life and other aspects of life, so much so that if any thing were not to possess knowledge and life, it would not have existence. And anyone who apprehends, with a gnostic understanding, the meaning of the fundamentality of existence and its being univocal, will, on the basis of gnosis or knowledge, affirm the life that pervades all existents along with all the other aspects of life such as consciousness, will, speech, etc. Were one to possess the station of vision of reality, acquired through spiritual austerities, one would directly witness the chorus of the *tasbih* and *taqdis* of all existents. Now the stupor caused by nature has dimmed our sight, dulled our hearing, and all other senses, not allowing us to be aware of the realities of existence and objective entities, in the same way that there are curtains of darkness and light that separate us from God, and curtains that conceal other existents from us, and even our own souls, concealing their life, consciousness and other aspects from our sight. But the most impenetrable of all curtains is the curtain of denial arising from confined thoughts, which keep man from attaining to anything. The best thing for the likes of us, who are kept from vision by surrounding veils, is to submit to and to affirm the signs and traditions of God's *awliya* and to refrain from interpretations based on subjective opinion and from efforts to reconcile them with Judgments of feeble intellects.

If supposedly it were possible to interpret the verses pertaining to the *tasbih* of existents as something inbuilt or innate, what are we to do with the noble verse:

﴿قَالَتْ نَمْلَةٌ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّمْلُ ادْخُلُوا مَسَاكِنَكُمْ لَا يَحْطِمَنَّكُمْ سُلَيْمَانُ وَجُنُودُهُ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ.﴾

*An Ant said, "O ants, enter your dwellings, lest Solomon and his troops should trample upon you without knowing!"* (27:18)

And what are we to do with the traditions that have been narrated on

various topics from the Household of Purity and Infallibility, which are by no means amenable to such interpretations?

Accordingly, the pervasion of all things with life and *tasbih* based on consciousness and knowledge must be regarded as one of the necessary principles of higher philosophy and as one of definite principles of the teachers of religion and gnosis. However, the character of the *tasbih* of every existent and the particular *dhikr* pertaining to it, and that man is the possessor of all-inclusive *tasbih* and that other existents have *dhikr* consonant with their own mode of existence-an overall view of that is based on a scientific and gnostic criterion relating to the science of the Names, and its details pertain to the sciences deriving from direct witness of reality that are exclusive to the perfect *awliya*.

As mentioned in the previous section, the *bismi'llah* of every *surah* relates to that very *surah* and here too it relates to *sabbaha li'llah*. From it one may infer the creed of the orthodox sect concerning the problem of *jabr* and *tafwid*, for it refers, in a subtle manner, as is ultimately revealed by the mystical experience of the gnostics, to each of the two relations, that is, the relation to *ismu'llah* (Name of Allah), which is the station of the Divine will pertaining to Act (*mashiyyah filiyyah*), along with the relation to things existent in the heavens and the earth. The Divine will has been given precedence [to the reference to creation] in order to underline the sustaining role of God and to give precedence to the Godward aspect over the aspect relating to the creation. And were it not for the fear of prolixity we would have described the reality of the *tasbih* and its implication of *tahmid*, and that every *tasbih* and *tahmid* by everyone refers to God, and we would have also explained the meaning of *tasbih* and *tahmid* for *ismu'llah* and by *ismu'llah*, the reason for the special mention of the two blessed Names *al-Aziz* (Almighty) and *al-Hakim* (All-wise) and their relation to '*Allah*', the difference between the '*Allah*' mentioned in the *bismi'llah* and the '*Allah*' mentioned in the noble verse *sabbaha li'llah*, and given the explanation of 'heavens' and 'earth' and that which is in the heavens and the earth, in accordance with different viewpoints of the gnostics and the philosophers, as well as discussed the *huwa* in this blessed verse and the difference between it and the *huwa* in the noble verse *Qul huwa'llahu ahad* in accordance with the sweet approach of *irfan*. However, in these pages we have to confine ourselves to, a passing hint.

As to the second noble verse,[1] it refers to the ownership of God, the Glorious, in relation to the kingdoms of the heavens and the earth. Subordinate to this ownership (*malikiyyat*), all-inclusive sovereignty, power and control take place the giving of life and causing of death, manifestation and return, expansion and contraction. In this view, all regulations and plans are annihilated in the regulation and planning of God, which is ultimate *tawhid* on the plane of Act (*tawhid-e fili*), and therefore the giving of life and making to die-which are either one of the major manifestation of *malakuti* dispositions or refer to the totality of expansion and contraction-have been related to the ownership of the sacred Essence itself. Although the giving of life is one of the aspects of *Rahmaniyyat* and making to die one of the aspects of ownership, both of them have been related to Divine ownership, and this may be on the basis of a major gnostic principle according to which every Name includes all the Names in their *ahadi* and *ghaybi* aspect, and this point cannot be elaborated here. The beginning and the following parts of the verse may be a reference to unity in plurality and plurality in unity at the station of revelation (*tajalli*) through the sacred effusion (*fayd-e muqaddas*), as is clear for those who are familiar with these principles.

The pronoun in *lahu* (to him belong), apparently, may refer to *Allah* and it may as well refer to *Aziz* and *Hakim*, and the meaning of the noble verse will be different in each case, as reflection will show to those who are familiar with these principles.

Issues such as the explanation of the character of Divine ownership, the reason for the imperfect tense of the verbs *yuhyi* (gives life) and *yumitu* (causes to die), which indicates continuity and repetition, the referent of the pronoun *huwa*, and the different meanings that follow as a result of the different referents, explanation of whether *muhyi*, *mumit* and *qadir* are Names of Essence or those of Attributes or Acts –these issues have to be consigned to their proper occasion and place, like the explanation of the character of giving life and causing death, the reality of the trumpet of Israfil and the two soundings pertaining to bringing to life and causing death, the functions of Hadrat Israfil and Hadrat Izrail and their stations and the

[1] The Verse is:

﴿لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يُحْيِ وَيُمِيتُ وَهُوَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ.﴾

*To Him belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth; He gives life and makes to die and He is powerful over all things.*

character of their causing life and death, each of which has quite elaborate gnostic descriptions and metaphysical proofs.

As to the third noble verse, it is as follows:

﴿هُوَ الْأَوَّلُ وَالْآخِرُ وَالظَّاهِرُ وَالْبَاطِنُ وَهُوَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ.﴾

*He is the First and the Last, and the Outward and the Inward, and He is the Knower of all things.* (57:3)

One who has knowledge of the true teachings the people of *marifah* and conviction and is a wayfarer of the way of the people of the heart and wayfaring knows that the ultimate goal of the wayfaring of wayfarers and the ultimate aspiration of the gnostics is understanding of this clear noble verse. By the Life of the Beloved! there is no better statement of the reality of *tawhid* of the Essence and the Names than this verse, and it would be fitting for all the gnostics to fall to the ground and to bow down before this consummate gnosis of Muhammad (*S*) this inclusive comprehension of Ahmad, and this firm Divine sign. By the reality of gnosis and love! when the gnostic lost in Divine splendor and the lover lost in the beauty of the Beloved hears this noble verse, he is overcome by such a celestial ecstasy and a Divine delight that is inexpressible in any language and unbearable by any creature.

فَسُبْحَانَ اللهِ، مَا أَعْظَمَ شَأْنَهُ وَأَجَلَّ سُلْطَانَهُ وَأَكْرَمَ قَدْرَهُ وَأَمْنَعَ عِزَّهُ وَأَعَزَّ جَنَابَهُ.

So glory be to God, how lofty is His station, how splendid is His sovereignty, how great is His worth, how inaccessible His majesty and how lofty His threshold!

Those who find fault with the statements of the august *urafa* and the knowers of God and the *awliya* of the All-Beneficent would do well to see if any Divine gnostic and wayfarer has said anything more than that which is contained in this noble verse or if anyone has introduced any new ware into the marketplace of Divine teachings. Here is this noble Divine verse and there are the books of the *urafa* brimming with *irfan* to see and judge. Although the blessed *surat al-Hadid* and especially its first noble verses contain teachings which are beyond the reach of aspirers, but it is the belief of this author that there is a special quality in this noble verse that is absent in other verses. The priority (*awwaliyyat*) and posteriority (*akhiriyyat*) of *al-*

*Haqq* and His *zahiriyyat* and *batiniyyat* are things which are beyond speech and writing. So let us pass on and leave them for the hearts of the lovers and the *awliya*.

As for the fourth noble verse,[1] it refers to the creation of the heavens and the earth in six days and the *istiwa* (lit. sitting) on the Throne (*arsh*). The intellects are bewildered in the exegesis of this noble verse and everyone has interpreted it in accordance with his approach in the sciences and gnosis. The literalists among scholars state that that which is meant by creation in six days is that the period of creation if measured would equal six [ordinary] days. The great philosopher Sadr al-Mutaallihin (*q*) has considered them as implying the Divine days, each of which equals a thousand years, thus making the six days correspond to the period from the descent of Adam until the rise of the Muhammadan sun, which is six thousand years. He considers the beginning of the daybreak of Friday (*yawm al-jumuah*) and the day of gathering (*yawm al-jam*), as the seventh day and the beginning of the day of Resurrection and the beginning of the *istaw*a of the All-Beneficent on the Throne. He has mentioned it briefly in *Sharh Usul al-Kafi* and elaborately in his exegesis.[2] Some gnostics have interpreted the six days as stages in the journey of the light of the sun of existence in the mirror of descent and ascent.

According to the creed of gnosis, the descending levels of existence until the lowest point –which is the plane of concealment of the sun of existence by curtains of finitude and differentiation (*taayyunat*)– constitute the reality of the night of ordainment (*laylat al-qadr*) and the beginning of the day of resurrection is from the first stage of return of *mulk* to *malakut* and removal of the curtains of *taayyunat* to the ultimate levels of manifestation and return,

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[1] The Verse is:

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى عَلَى الْعَرْشِ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَلِجُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَخْرُجُ مِنْهَا وَمَا يَنْزِلُ مِنْ السَّمَاءِ وَمَا يَعْرُجُ فِيهَا وَهُوَ مَعَكُمْ أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ بَصِيرٌ.﴾

*He it is who created the heavens and the earth in six days then sat on the throne. He knows that which penetrates into the earth and that which emerges from it, and that which descends from the heaven and that which ascends into it, and He is with you wherever you may be, and God sees what you do.* (57:4)

[2] *Sharh Usul al-Kafi*, p. 249-250; Sadr al-Mutaallihin, *Tafsir al-Quran*, vol. 6, pp. 160-164, exegesis of *surat al- Hadid*.

which is the complete appearance of the greatest resurrection (*qiyamat-e kubra*). The six days in which the creation of the heavens and the earth was completed, culminating in the Throne of God, the Throne of the all-Beneficent, which is the ultimate end of Divine *istawa*, power, and dominance, are the sixfold ascending planes in the greater cosmos (*alam-e kabir*); and the Throne of God, which is the manifestation of the perfect dominance and ownership, is the plane of will and the all-beneficent sacred effusion (*fayd-e muqaddas-e Rahmani*), which is its complete manifestation after elimination of the *taayyunat* and completion of the creation of the heavens and the earths. And until the existence of the heavens and the earth endures, their creation is not finished from the viewpoint of the people of gnosis, in accordance with the words "*Everyday He is engaged in some work*" (55:29) and as implied by the absence of repetition in revelation (*tajalli*). In the Greater Man (*insan-e kabir*) and the greater cosmos the sixfold planes and their seventh subtlety (*latifah*) is the Throne of the All-Beneficent, which is the plane of the real heart, and were it not for the fear of prolixity, we would have explained thoroughly the greater plausibility of this interpretation in comparison to other interpretations, although the knowledge of the Divine scripture is with God, the Exalted, and those who are its special addressees. We speak on the basis of probabilities and plausibilities following the infeasibility of the literal sense.

At this place there is another probability which is not contrary to this mystical description, and that is in accordance with present-day astronomy which has replaced Ptolemaic astronomy apart from our solar system there are other innumerable planetary systems in accordance with the details given by books on contemporary astronomy. That which is meant by heavens and earth may be the present solar system along with its planets and their orbits and the description of its duration as six days may be in accordance with another planetary system. This probability is closer to the literal sense than others, while it does not contradict the gnostic interpretation, because it is in accordance with one of the esoteric meanings of the Quran.

The following part of the noble verse, in His words, "He knows what penetrates into the earth, (and what comes forth from it, what comes down from heaven, and what goes up unto it.)" refers to God's knowledge of the particular details of the planes of existence through the hierarchies of the Hidden and the manifest (*ghayb wa shuhud*), the ascent and the descent. And in His words, "He is with you (wherever you are; and God sees the things you do)", there is a reference to the sustaining contiguity of God (*maiyyat-e*

*qayyumiyyah-ye haqq*) and the character of God's knowledge of particulars through existential encompassment and universal sustainment. None except the elect from among the *awliya* of God can perceive the reality of this Divine sustainment.

As to the fifth noble verse,[1] it refers to the ownership of God and the return of the entire realm of existence to God and indicates that this is related to the Name *Malik* (Owner, Master), as mentioned in the phrase of the blessed *surat al-Hamd*: *the Master of the Day of Judgment* (*maliki yawmi'd-din*), and the exegesis and elaboration of each of these matters should be left to another occasion and place.

As to the sixth verse,[2] it refers to the alternation of day and night and that each of them waxes as the other vanes and vice versa. In this alternation there are many benefits whose mention is beyond the scope of our discussion and there is another gnostic interpretation for the noble verse which we shall refrain from mentioning.

## CONCLUSION

That which is stated in the closing part of the noble tradition, that "whoever seeks to go beyond that will perish," it indicates that the teachings which have been mentioned in these noble verses and the blessed *surat al-Tawhid* constitute the limits of human knowledge and the ultimate frontier of gnosis, and should someone imagine that there is anything beyond that he is in error. And as these verses impart the highest teachings to mankind, their negligence also leads to destruction and perdition and ignorance of the station of the Lord.

Of course, this noble tradition is meant to encourage and inspire profound thought on these noble verses. But every science is for its people and every

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[1] The Verse is:

﴿لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ.﴾

*To Him belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and to God return all affairs*. (57:5)

[2] The Verse is:

﴿يُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَهُوَ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ.﴾

*He makes the night enter the day and He makes the day enter the night and He knows that which is in the breasts*. (57:6)

field has its own champions. One should not imagine that one can understand the verses of *tawhid* –whether those of the blessed *surat al-Tawhid* or the present noble verses or other verses of the Quran and similarly the noble traditions, sermons, supplications and prayers of the Imams (a) all of which are replete with higher teachings-with the aid of one's ideas and on the basis of common– place literal meanings. That is an immature notion and a satanic insinuation and a trap set by that highwayman of the road of humanity to stop man from attaining to the higher teachings and to bar him from the doors of wisdom and *marifah* and to cast him into the valley of error and confusion. God is witness –and His witness is sufficient–[1] that I do not intend to promote the market of formal philosophy or formal *irfan*; rather, my purpose is that my brethren in faith, especially the learned amongst them, should pay some attention to the teachings of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (a) and those of the Quran and not neglect them, for the main purpose of the missions of the apostles and the revelation of the scriptures has been the noble goal of gnosis of God, in the shadow of which all felicities of the world and the Hereafter are realized. But alas! So long as man is in this world and besieged by all kinds of veils he cannot identify the path of his own felicity. No matter how much the prophets, the saints and the scholars may exhort him, he does not awake from the slumber of neglect and does not remove the stoppers of neglect from his ears. He awakes from the sleep of neglect when he has lost the very means of acquiring felicity and when there remains nothing for him except regret and shame.

## PRAYER AND EPILOGUE

O God, Who have illuminated the hearts of the *awliya* with the light of love and cleared the tongues of the lovers of Thy beauty from the taints of egoism, and have placed Thy majesty beyond the reach of self-seeking wretches! Awaken us from the intoxication of worldly delusion and deliver us from the heavy slumber of nature, and remove with My gesture the thick curtains and obstructing veils of egotism and self-seeking. Let us into the assembly of the holy ones of Thy threshold and into the holy company of the sincere God-seekers. Remove from us these devilish, ugly, and coarse qualities of ours and our pretensions and waywardness. Inform with sincerity and love our movements and pauses, our actions and works, our beginning and end, and our outward and inward being.

[1] A reference to 4:79.

O God! Your blessings are given without prior deservedness (Worthiness is not a condition for the Lord's gifts)[1] and Your gifts are unlimited. The door of Your mercy and favor is wide open and the table of Your boundless bounties is spread out. Give us a fervent heart and an arduous passion, a woeful heart and a tearful eye, a restless and impassioned mind and a breathless and fiery breast. Let the end of our live be in a state of sincere devotion to You and with the love of the elect of Your threshold, that is, those who represent the prologue of the book of being and the epilogue of the scrolls of the manifest and the Hidden, Muhammad and his immaculate kindred and progeny, may God's blessings be upon all of them.

And to God belongs all Praise, firstly and lastly, outwardly and inwardly.

Concluded by the mortal hand of this indigent writer on Friday afternoon of the fourth of the month of Muharram al-Haram of the year 1358 H. [1939], and in God is my reliance and trust, at every commencement and conclusion.

[1] This is a reference to the following couplet from Rumis *Mathnawi* (*daftar* 5, *bayt* 1537):
**چاره آن دل عطای مبدلیست داد اورا قابلیت شرط نیست**