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Home > Imamate and The Imams > Author's Preface

## **Author's Preface**

Imamate is not a dated ineffective issue so that it would be said, "It is not related to our time; discussing it is only a waste of time and increases old religious differences. It does not make any difference if Imam Ali (a.s.) is the Prophet's successor or the fourth Caliph after him. Such issues have no influence on our current lives."

It can be said in reply that the importance of Imamate, as a vital Islamic issue, will be proved later on in this book. It has a leading role now and in all eras, in all aspects of life. It also brings about a kind of responsibility for every Muslim. That is why various traditions cite recognition of the Imam in every age as a major Islamic duty and a sign of the belief. This duty is so important that ignoring it is regarded as going astray.

The Messenger of Allah (S) stated, "Anyone who dies without having an Imam has died as a pagan." 1

He also said, "Anyone who dies while he has not recognized his Imam has died a pagan death."2

Ibn Abi Ya'fur said that he asked Imam Sadiq (a.s.) about this tradition of the Prophet (S), "Does it mean death as an infidel?" Imam Sadiq (a.s.) replied, "It means dying in deviation." He asked Imam (a.s.) again, "Therefore, has someone who dies while he has no Imam died as a pagan?" Imam Sadiq (a.s.) answered, "Sure he did.3"

Fuzayl Ibn Yasar has narrated from Imam Sadiq (a.s.) that the Messenger of Allah (S) stated, "Anyone who dies without having an Imam has died a pagan death." Fuzayl asked Imam Sadiq (a.s.), "Has the Messenger of Allah (S) stated this?" Imam (a.s.) answered, "Yes, by Allah." The narrator asked again, "So if someone dies while he has no Imam, has he died a pagan death?" Imam Sadiq (a.s.) stated, "Surely he did."4

Various other traditions have also been narrated with the same theme. Such traditions reveal that recognition of the Imam is one of major Islamic obligations. Two important questions come to mind in this regard. The first one is that what is meant by recognition of the Imam? Does it mean knowing the identifications of the Imam or a deeper recognition?

The second question is that what is the advantage of recognizing the Imam? Why is it so emphasized in traditions of Prophet of Islam (a.s.) and his Household, the infallible Imams (a.s.)? This question arises especially since the Imamate age has apparently terminated; no one is supposed to be Imam today, so that we have no duty to search for and find the true Imam. In these conditions, isn't it better to leave the Imamate issue and the controversy about it and attend to more important Islamic issues?

In answer to the first question it can be said that as will be proved later in the present book, Imamate and leadership are high positions in Islam, which cannot be occupied by regular people. Only qualified persons, with the following characteristics, can reach the Imamate position:

- 1. The Imam should know all the Divine sciences, teachings, and verdicts that are revealed to Prophet Muhammad (S) by Allah. In other words, the Imam is and should be the inheritor of the Prophet's knowledge.
- 2. The Imam should be away from mistakes and forgetfulness (be infallible) in gaining, recording, maintaining, and publishing religious sciences and teachings.
- 3. The Imam should also be away from committing sins and transgressing religious rules. He should follow religious rules and verdicts so that the people follow his Islamic speech, behavior, and morality.

Therefore, the recognition of Imam, mentioned in the traditions, is not merely being familiar with his identification; rather it is recognition of his brilliant scientific, practical, ethical, and virtuous personality.

The answer to the first question clears the answer to the second question too. In other words, if we consider the Imam as the source of all religious sciences, teachings, and verdicts, every Muslim should refer to the Imam —as an original reliable source— for learning his religious duties. As a result, research for recognizing the true Imam —for acquiring religious sciences— is a major duty of every Muslim, who thinks of his salvation in this world and the Hereafter. It is clear that such an important duty does not belong to a certain age and is necessary in all times.

In fact, Muslims in all eras should attempt to recognize the infallible Imam of their age –introduced by Prophet Muhammad (S) along with the Holy Quran as two reliable scientific sources– and benefit from his virtuous speech and behavior. Moreover, since only an infallible Imam is introduced from Allah to rule the Islamic Ummah (nation), as the Prophet's true successor, people in all ages should discover the true Imam and ruler and help establish the Islamic government.

The Government Issue does not belong to a certain time and place either. In fact, the need for legitimate Islamic government has always been a preliminary need of the Islamic Ummah.

The present book is written for the youth about the same topics in four chapters:

The first chapter is about definition of Imamate and privileges of the Imams. The second chapter is about Prophet Muhammad (S)'s Household, as mentioned in the Holy Quran and the traditions. The third

chapter discusses the Imamate reasons. Finally, chapter four introduces the infallible Imams (a.s.), specific reasons for Imamate of each of them, virtues, ethical values, knowledge, worship, and moral journey of these selected servants toward the Exalted Allah. This is the most important part of the book, so that we may follow the pattern of the infallible Imams (a.s.).

I hope the Islamic Ummah, especially the youth, attend to spiritual lives of the infallible Imams (a.s.), learn lessons for life, and set them as their leaders everywhere and every time. In fact, this is the true way of being a real Shiah.

## **Ibrahim Amini**

11/22/1387 (2/12/2008)

- 1. Musnad Ahmad, Vol 4, p. 96.
- 2. Biharul Anwar, Vol 23, p. 67.
- 3. Al-Kafi, Vol 1, p. 376.
- 4. Al-Kafi, Vol 1, p. 376.

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