

Chapter 18: Faith as the Essence of Invitation of the Prophets (Part 3)

In this session, we will talk about the “jurisdiction of faith.” We have said that the essence of the invitation of all prophets (‘a) is faith. Now, this question is posed: Faith in what? The importance of this question becomes clearer when we pay attention to the deviant perspectives on the interpretation of religious concepts that emerged in the recent decades. The youths may not remember that during the movement of Imam Khomeini (r), those who were under the name of Islam but with Marxist, atheistic and eclectic tendencies used to embark on interpreting the verses of the Qur’an and explaining religious concepts.

The remnants of these individuals still exist and as in the past, they use labels as such *mujahid* [struggler], *inqilabi* [revolutionary] and *islami* [Islamic]. For example, when they talked about faith which is repeatedly emphasized in the Qur’an, they said, “It signifies that man should have faith in an objective in life and although in the Qur’an it is said, ‘*faith in Allah*’ or ‘*faith in the Last Day*,’ these are only manifestations of faith, but they do not indicate that faith cannot belong to other than them. What is important is to have an ‘objective’ and to have faith in it.” Everybody used to interpret in this way all that have been mentioned in the Qur’an and narrations about the importance of faith and the condemnation of unbelief and polytheism. They also used to reply in this manner, “Yes, they are all manifestations of faith, and what is important is the essence of faith, and as to what belongs to faith is not important.”

Maybe I have mentioned again that at the time a book with the title “Tawhid” [Monotheism] was published and incidentally, its author was a so-called turbaned man and pseudo-cleric advocate of the *Fada’iyan-e Khalq*. In the said book, he claimed that what are meant by *Allah* and *faith in Allah* are not an external being and faith in an external reality. Instead, they mean morally ideal. *Allah* means morally ideal; we have to imagine in our minds the ideal *good* which is the totality of all that is good. This hypothetical and imaginary being is called *Allah*.

The meaning of ‘*There is no god but Allah*’ is nothing but this. It means the negation of all that are other

than the morally ideal. Also, *faith in Allah* means faith in all goodness. Of course, other related subjects can be found in the said book. There were similar books by other authors at the time, and even books with the title *Tafsir-e Qur'an* [Exegesis of the Qur'an] contained similar subjects. During those days, unfortunately, these words on account of their novelty and the prevalence of the Marxist tendencies had found buyers from many of our pure-hearted youth and led to their intellectual deviation.

Fortunately, after the victory of the Revolution, especially through the efforts and enlightenments of the late Martyr Mutahhari who also offered his life along this way, gradually these deviations have been uprooted from the society's public opinion, particularly through the statements of the late Imam (r) for the people behind Hujjatiyyah Society, our youth would no longer be deceived by this kind of intellectual deviations and they kept away from those people. Yet, unfortunately, we witness that the same mental tunes are played anew and in the nooks and corners, especially in the universities and academic centers, the same melodies, sometimes with new color and menu, can be heard. Again, so to speak, new readings and interpretations of religion and the Qur'an emerge while new concepts in this context are advanced. There is the danger that the same atheistic inclinations would again gain currency in a new form.

If you can remember, during those days, they used to interpret *tawhid* [monotheism] to mean *the Marxist classless society*. They used to say, "*Tawhid* means homogenization and unification of the society and the same thing which Marx says." They also put its name in their books and writings "The New Class Society," and they meant the same Marxist classless society. Regrettably, there were those who believed in them "Yes, *tawhid* of the Qur'an, the Prophet and 'Ali is the same thing mentioned by Marx, the atheist and denier of God!"

Nowadays, the same games and tricks, though with new forms and expressions and under the rubric of "new readings of religion" are advanced. The foundation of the notion "new readings of religion" is the denial of religion in order to deceive the people and considering that after all our society has been engrossed with "religion" for hundreds of years, they resort to pretexts and demagogues, and mention terms from Islam and religion in their speeches. In my opinion, there are solid pieces of evidence that they have no faith in any of the truths of religion.

The Jurisdiction of Faith in the Qur'anic Verses

As such, considering the past and the movements, we can observe in the recent years that there is reason why we have to pursue the issue meticulously and with the special academic scrupulousness so as to see in what we must have faith and what the jurisdiction of faith is when we say that faith is the essence of the invitation of the prophets (a). The best and most logical way in doing so is to refer to the Qur'an to see which thing the Qur'an, which has invited us to have faith, has asked us to have faith in. Many Qur'anic verses make mention of "the jurisdiction of faith" and here we shall cite two or three examples only.

One of the expressions common in the Qur'an and repeated many times is *faith in Allah and the Last Day*:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَقُولُ آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَمَا هُمْ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ

And among the people are those who say, 'We have faith in Allah and the Last Day,' but they have no faith. (2:8)

Nowadays, there are also those who say: “*We have faith in Allah and the Last Day*” but they are telling a lie as *they have no faith*. Regarding this “Last Day”, prior to the Revolution there were those who used to say: “The *Last Day* means the Day of Revolution” the revolution of the workers and the hard-working against the capitalists and the affluent. Some of them are unfortunately turbaned men, still living and heading some of these groups and splinter groups. And maybe the tape record of their lesson of *tafsir* still exists in which they used to interpret *Last Day* as the day of revolution. Regarding *sa'ah* [the Hour] which is among the names of the Day of Resurrection in the Qur'an, they said that it is the time that must remain secret so that the Revolution would not be exposed! And there are similar tittle-tattles which are now unfortunately gaining currency as in the past.

Another jurisdiction of faith which is repeated in the Qur'an as correlative is *faith in Allah and the Day of Resurrection*.”

Other verses, such as the following one, have mentioned in more detail the jurisdiction of faith:

لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ

Piety is not to turn your faces to the east or the west; rather, piety is [personified by] those who have faith in Allah and the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets. (2:177)

In this verse, faith in the angels, the heavenly scriptures and the prophets of God are added.

In other verses, faith in the angels is particularly emphasized:

﴿ آمَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴾ ۴ كُلُّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْ رُسُلِهِ وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا ۴ غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ

The Apostle has faith in what has been sent down to him from his Lord, and all the faithful. Each [of them] has faith in Allah, His angels, His scriptures and His apostles. [They declare,] 'We make no distinction between any of His apostles'. (2:285)

Here, it is worthy to ask about the specific reason why we have to have faith in the angels and *what has been sent down*.

Another verse states:

قُولُوا آمَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَالْأَسْبَاطِ وَمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ وَعِيسَىٰ وَمَا أُوتِيَ النَّبِيُّونَ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْهُمْ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ

فَإِنْ آمَنُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا آمَنْتُمْ بِهِ فَقَدِ اهْتَدَوْا ۗ وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا هُمْ فِي شِقَاقٍ ۚ فَسَيَكْفِيكَهُمُ اللَّهُ ۗ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

Say, ‘We have faith in Allah, and that which has been sent down to us, and that which was sent down to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus were given, and that which the prophets were given from their Lord; we make no distinction between any of them, and to Him do we submit.’ So if they believe in the like of what you believe in, then they are certainly guided. (2: 136–137)

This verse means: if you say the truth and have real faith in God, then real and true faith is to have faith in all that have been sent down by God, not only in a particular prophet and what has been sent down to him. If your faith is like this, it shall be accepted “So if they believe in the like of what you believe in, then they are certainly guided.” But if you want to believe in some and deny others, this faith is unacceptable to God:

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ آمَنُوا بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا نُؤْمِنُ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْنَا وَنُكْفِرُ بِمَا وَرَاءَهُ وَهُوَ الْحَقُّ مُصَدِّقًا لِمَا مَعَهُمْ ۗ قُلْ فَلِمَ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنْبِيَاءَ اللَّهِ مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

And when they are told, ‘Believe in what was sent down,’ they say, ‘We believe in what was sent down to us,’ and they disbelieve what is besides it, though it is the truth confirming what is with them. (2:91)

Another verse states that those who want to make a distinction among the apostles of God by believing in some and rejecting others are the true unbelievers:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَكْفُرُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يُفَرِّقُوا بَيْنَ اللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَيَقُولُونَ نُؤْمِنُ بِبَعْضٍ وَنُكْفِرُ بِبَعْضٍ وَيُرِيدُونَ أَنْ يَتَّخِذُوا بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ سَبِيلًا ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ حَقًّا ۗ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلْكَافِرِينَ عَذَابًا مُهِينًا

Those who disbelieve in Allah and His apostles and seek to separate Allah from His apostles, and say, ‘We believe in some and disbelieve in some’ and seek to take a way in between it is they who

are truly faithless. (4: 150–151)

In short, it is clear that the Qur'an which calls on us to have faith is not referring to faith in any other thing than Allah, the Last Day, the apostles of God, the heavenly scriptures, and the angels. Among them, it is clear that faith in the apostles and the heavenly books are intertwined; that is, once we have faith in and confirm the apostles of God, we will affirm and have faith in the subjects and books which they claim to have been from God. But the question that still remains is this: What is special about faith in the angels? The answer will be made clear by considering the preliminary remarks below.

The Relationship between “Belief in the Angels” and the Discussion on “Prophetic Experience”

One of the points of skepticisms raised nowadays is that the prophets are humans, and human understandings and knowledge have the probability of error and mistake, and that technically, they are prone to commit error. No person on account of being a human is safe from understanding a subject wrongly, or although he understood it correctly, he might make a mistake when expressing and narrating it to others. For this reason, considering that all prophets are human beings, neither their understanding nor transmission of what they understood can be trusted, because there is the possibility of error and mistake in both cases, not to mention the fact that historical and time distance between us and the prophets increase extremely the possibility of error in transmitting the subjects from them to us or the intentional distortions in their subjects.

Even assuming that we disregard this issue, the speech or word is with the prophets and since they are humans, they have no immunity from error and mistake both in understanding and transmission of the subjects. In addition, the divine revelation is actually a demonstrative knowledge in which concepts and words have no role rather, it is the perception of a thing which a person finds within himself; therefore, understanding the divine revelation and connection with it is only at the time that the Prophet perceives and experiences such a state within himself.

In such a state, there is no word and concept, but once he wants to express to us his personal experience and feeling, it is only an account and report of that demonstrative knowledge which the prophet or apostle expresses and pours out in the form of words and concepts. So, what the prophet expresses to us is not revelation at all; rather, his account of the revelation and prophetic experience of the revelation, in essence, has no concept and word, and it is a kind of demonstrative knowledge. Hence, these verses of the Qur'an are the words of the Prophet and not God's Word. They are an interpretation of the revelation and not the revelation itself. In interpreting the revelation, the Prophet would naturally act based on current literature as well as knowledge and learning of his time, society and environment. Similarly, the literary style and taste as well as his understanding of the sciences of his time would affect this interpretation. Therefore, the Qur'an cannot be trusted at all, and the probability of mistake and error exists therein!

The outcome of such a frame of mind is clear. No matter how we strive to prove a matter for religion and attribute it to religion, it will be of no use, because our firmest source and document is the Qur'an, and the status of the Qur'an became such that it was grouped along with human knowledge of theoreticians and exegetes, while its credibility and prestige are questioned.

This skepticism which nowadays has posed itself as *scientific* and been presented as such, had been advanced before in this manner: We cannot see that God and the angels really send down the words the Prophet is uttering. From where is it obvious that these are not insinuations of the jinn and devils?

During the time of the Prophet (S), they used to raise the same skepticism, and it is narrated in the Qur'an from the words of the unbelievers and polytheists, saying:

وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّمَا يُعَلِّمُهُ بَشَرٌ ۖ لِّسَانُ الَّذِي يُلْحِدُونَ إِلَيْهِ أَعْجَمِيٌّ وَهَذَا لِسَانٌ عَرَبِيٌّ مُبِينٌ

We certainly know that they say, 'It is only a human that instructs him'. (16:103)

The Qur'an strongly rejects these attributions, saying:

وَمَا تَنْزَلَتْ بِهِ الشَّيَاطِينُ

It has not been brought down by the devils. (26:210)

It also says:

وَمَا هُوَ بِقَوْلِ شَيْطَانٍ رَجِيمٍ

And it is not the speech of an outcast Satan. (81:25)

In any case, since such skepticisms and insinuations have existed from the beginning and God has foreseen that later on, during the period of modernity and postmodernism, some people will advance these claims that the Qur'an is not God's Word but the word of the Prophet or even his imagination, thoughts and personal feelings, He has emphasized on *faith in the angels*. God stresses that His angels reveal these subjects to the Prophet (S), and are not insinuations of the devils and their own opinions:

وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ۚ إِن هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ

He does not speak out of [his own] desire: it is just a revelation that is revealed [to him]. (53:3-4)

What kind of creature are the angels? We do not know the angels and although the prophets and saints

of God have talked about them and they are mentioned repetitively in the Qur'an, the truth behind the existence of the angels is not clear for us. We know of only some attributes of the angels. The distinctive characteristic of the angels in opposition to the jinn and any other force such as human imaginations is that they do not err or commit mistakes:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا وَقُودُهَا النَّاسُ وَالْحِجَارَةُ عَلَيْهَا مَلَائِكَةٌ غِلَاظٌ شِدَادٌ لَا يَعْصُونَ اللَّهَ مَا أَمَرَهُمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ

...who do not disobey whatever Allah has commanded them, and carry out what they are commanded. (66:6)

So, you should have faith in the angels; that is, you should have faith in the creature which brings down the divine revelation and in whose action there is no error or mistake:

إِنَّهُ لَقَوْلُ رَسُولٍ كَرِيمٍ ذِي قُوَّةٍ عِنْدَ ذِي الْعَرْشِ مَكِينٍ مُطَاعٍ ثَمَّ أَمِينٍ

It is indeed the speech of a noble apostle, powerful and eminent with the Lord of the Throne, one who is heard and trustworthy as well. (81: 19-21)

These verses were revealed in Mecca during the early part of the Prophetic mission. From the beginning, it is emphasized that this Qur'an being revealed to you is not your speech, but that of an angel: "It is indeed the speech of a noble apostle" and that angel is "powerful and eminent." In Surah an-Najm, it says thus: "Taught him by One of great powers. (53:5)"

What is the purpose behind the emphasis on this attribute (powerfulness) of the angels? This is because the Qur'an wants to convey that this angel that receives the revelation from God is powerful and he can overcome all the devils and forces trying to distort the revelation. By mentioning this attribute (among tens of others), it is intended to express that the angels are so powerful that they can convey the divine revelation to the Prophet (S) just as they receive it "powerful and eminent with the Lord of the Throne," and for this reason, God has appointed him to be the carrier of revelation.

"One who is heard and trustworthy as well" means that the said angel is obeyed. Many verses are brought down by Jibril (Archangel Gabriel) along with other angels, and here it says that he is a commander whose command is obeyed. In addition to his being heard, he is trustworthy. It thus says elsewhere:

نَزَلَ بِهِ الرُّوحُ الْأَمِينُ عَلَى قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ

[It (Qur'an) was] brought down by the Trustworthy Spirit, upon your heart, so that you may be

one of the warners. (26: 193–194)

It is again an emphasis that “The revelation is brought down to you without any error, mistake, addition, or lacking. Perhaps the most explicit of verses in this context are the last verses of *Surah Jinn*:

عَالِمُ الْغَيْبِ فَلَا يُظْهِرُ عَلَىٰ غَيْبِهِ أَحَدًا إِلَّا مَنِ ارْتَضَىٰ مِنْ رَسُولٍ فَإِنَّهُ يَسْلُكُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَمِنْ خَلْفِهِ رَصَدًا لِيَعْلَمَ أَن قَدِ
أَبْلَغُوا رِسَالَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَأَحَاطَ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ وَأَحْصَىٰ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عَدَدًا

Knower of the Unseen, He does not disclose His Unseen to anyone, except to an apostle He approves of. Then He dispatches a sentinel before and behind him so that He may ascertain that they have communicated the messages of their Lord, and He comprehends all that is with them, and He keeps count of all things. (72:26–28)

Firstly, it says that God, the Knower of the Unseen, does not inform anyone of His Unseen. It is not because He is stingy but because not everybody is inherently worthy and deserving to receive revelation:

اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ حَيْثُ يَجْعَلُ رِسَالَتَهُ

Allah knows best where to place His Apostleship! (6: 124)

وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَجْتَبِي مِنْ رُسُلِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ

But Allah chooses from His apostles whomever He wishes. (3: 179)

After designating the Prophet (S), He sends down His revelation to him in this manner: “*Then He dispatches a sentinel before and behind him.*” Since our concern is the perceptible, sending down of the revelation is embodied in such a way that it is as if it wants to be transferred from a location in the Sublime Throne to a lower location on earth. This distance actually is the existential distance of the Station of Lordship to the blessed heart of the Prophet (S), and not really a spatial distance. In any case, in its perceptible similitude, it is such that along this distance from the Divine Station to the heart of the Prophet (S), this revelation is well guarded at the front and rear, and with a perfect entourage it reaches its destination safely.

Rasada means lurking place; that is, through the way, they are totally lurking and on guard to ensure that the divine revelation and message is free of even the least harm and distortion. The reason behind it

is clear “so that He may ascertain that they have communicated the messages of their Lord.” That is to have perfect and absolute assurance that the divine message is faithfully delivered to the people without any addition or subtraction. It says: “We also have the account of the number of words of this message and We are watchful so that even a letter is not added or subtracted from it “and He comprehends all that is with them, and He keeps count of all things.” If it is not so and there is the probability of error and distortion in the transmission of the divine message, the objective of the apostleship and the apostolic mission, which is guidance, will not be achieved.

Thus, the description of the Qur’an of the manner of sending down the revelation is that it is revealed through the powerful carriers that have the power to repel any force aiming to distort the revelation. These carriers are trustworthy, venerable messengers and honored servants (21:26) who act by the command of God the Exalted. Also, at the moment of revelation, complete protection of it is undertaken and with a special entourage it is sent down from the Sacred Station of Lordship to the blessed heart of the Prophet (S). All this is meant to have complete assurance that the divine message and revelation is received and conveyed correctly without any addition or mutilation “so that He may ascertain that they have communicated the messages of their Lord.” [1](#)

Now, compare these clear and firm verses with the statements of these so-called intellectuals and national religious figures about the Qur’an and revelation that the Prophet is a human and every human being is prone to commit error; thus, from where is it known that he understood it correctly and then expressed it correctly? These blind-hearted have never read the Qur’an; they feign ignorance or attribute lies to it.

Of course, they may say that these very verses you quoted have the same probability of error. If that argument is advanced, in short, the reply to it is that in addition to the textual proof, we have also rational proof for the point that the divine revelation should be immune from any form of error and mistake while being conveyed to the people. That rational proof is based on the wisdom of God the Exalted that if the purpose of the All-wise God is to guide the people and through the apostolic mission of the prophets (‘a) and the sending down of the heavenly scriptures, He wants the people to receive guidance, then there must be some measures undertaken to ensure that the message of guidance will reach the people without the least distortion, exaggeration and mutilation.

Belief in all the Prophets as a Requisite of True Faith

In conclusion, the jurisdiction of faith in a nutshell is God, the Resurrection, the angels, the heavenly books, and all the prophets. We must have faith in all of them and all of the prophets, and not take any one of them as exception “We make no distinction between any of them.” If we say, “We accept one while denying the other,” this is tantamount to the denial of them all “It is they who are truly faithless.”

This question may come to the mind: Why is denial of a prophet tantamount to denial of all the prophets and true faithlessness? One who accepts, for example, ‘Isa (‘a) or Musa (‘a), he accepts one prophet at

least. So, how can we say that he denies all the prophets? In reply, we have to say that we ask those who accept one of the prophets, 'Isa or Musa ('a) for example: Is this faith of yours based on the fact that 'Isa or Musa belongs to your community and tribe, or because of the fact that he is a prophet of God?

If they say, "It is because he is a relative and next of kin of ours," it is clear that this is worship of kinship and tribalism, and is not worship of God. In short, it is not faith but true faithlessness. The other option is for them to say, "Our faith is anchored in the fact that 'Isa (or Musa) is a prophet of God, and what matters to us is God and His command, and not 'Isa, Musa or kinship. In this case, we say that if the main criterion is the command of God, let us assume that God initially sends prophet A and gives him commandments, and then sends prophet B and abrogates some of the previous commandments sent through prophet A, and issues new commandments. Here, faith in God requires what? If a person has true faith in God, will he obey the commandments of prophet A or prophet B?

Obviously, if a person is really bound by the commandments of God, once God through prophet B annulled the commandments of prophet A, he will obey the second set of commandments. Or, if a prophet initially brought a commandment from God and after sometime, the same prophet brought a new decree contrary to the earlier decree from God, annulling the first commandment, it is clear that faith in God requires that the second order be executed.

This case which is technically called *abrogation* has happened to some of the decrees of our religion of Islam. One of them is the issue of the *qiblah*'s direction. Based on a divine commandment, the Holy Prophet (S) used to pray for many years toward Jerusalem. After some years, this verse was revealed: **"So turn your face toward the Holy Mosque (2:144)"** and the order was given that "From then on, you pray toward the Masjid al-Haram and the *Ka'bah*." If a person really believes in the Prophet (S), after the revelation of this verse, he will pray toward the *Ka'bah* and not toward Jerusalem. When two contradictory orders are issued by the master, one after the other, everyone can understand that the second order must be obeyed.

In our discussion, God has initially sent Musa ('a) and then 'Isa ('a), and the assumption is that we have accepted them on account of being prophets of God. For some time, we acted upon the commandments brought by Musa ('a) from God, and after Musa ('a), 'Isa ('a) brought commandments from God some of which contradicted the decrees of Musa ('a). Here, if a person has faith in Musa, he has to accept 'Isa because both of them are prophets who came from the One and Only God. The true follower of Musa is he who has faith in 'Isa, and the true follower of 'Isa is he who has faith in the Prophet of Islam, because one of the things mentioned by 'Isa is that "After me a prophet whose name is Ahmad shall come."

وَمُبَشِّرًا بِرَسُولٍ يَأْتِي مِنْ بَعْدِي اسْمُهُ أَحْمَدُ

“To give the good news of an apostle who will come after me, whose name is Ahmad. (61:6)”

As such, denial of the Prophet of Islam means denial of the saying of ‘Isa and his apostleship. If a person says, “I have faith in ‘Isa but I will not believe in the Prophet of Islam,” his faith in ‘Isa is a lie, because one of the statements of ‘Isa is the glad tidings of the advent of the Prophet of Islam and obedience to him. That is why we say that faith in some of the prophets and denial of some others is actually denial of all prophets. For the same reason, the Qur’an emphasizes, thus: *“We make no distinction between any of them.”* For this reason too, we in Islam regard not only blasphemy against the Prophet of Islam (S) but also blasphemy against any of the prophets as tantamount to disbelief and apostasy.

Other Viewpoints on the Jurisdiction of Faith

As we have mentioned, opposite to this interpretation of the jurisdiction of faith which is clearly deduced from the verses of the Qur’an, the other interpretation of faith during the period of prevalence of Marxism in Iran was that as they used to say, “What is important is the essence of faith. What is important is for a person to have faith in an ideal and objective, and strive hard to attain it. Once a person has no faith in any ideal and objective, he will not strive hard and experience passivity and decadence. The Qur’an gives emphasis on faith for the same reason that man has to struggle, move, exert efforts and make use of his talents to attain that considered ideal.”

Of course, during those days, they used to say, “That ideal in which is the paradise of man is the communist and socialist classless society.” Nowadays, they say, “That ideal is the liberal and democratic society,” and they promote to have faith in such a society and to strive to attain it faith is the fact that the source of everything is the will of the people, and other than the people no one and nothing, including God, should interfere in their destiny and determine their duties. Anyway, this is a kind of interpretation of faith which is 180 degrees the opposite of what can be understood from the Qur’an, and its falsity is more vivid than the sunlight, and it does not need further discussion.

Another group is of the opinion that the jurisdiction of faith cannot be anything except God and the prophet. Yet, faith in a particular prophet is not necessary and faith in any of them is enough. Each of the prophets is a straight path and faith in any of these straight paths is enough for the attainment of felicity.

By studying the Qur’an, it became clear that this view is wrong. According to the Qur’an, faith in all the prophets is necessary, and faith in some and denial of some others is true faithlessness *“It is they who are truly faithless.”* The implication of the statement that any of the prophets is a straight path is that if you have faith in only one of them and set aside the rest, there is no problem and you have attained

guidance. This is while from the viewpoint of the Qur'an even if you accept all the prophets and have faith in all of them and deny only one of them, you have taken a step along the path of falsehood and the way of unbelief:

﴿ آمَنَ الرَّسُولُ بِمَا أُنزِلَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ رَبِّهِ وَالْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴾ كُلُّ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَمَلَائِكَتِهِ وَكُتُبِهِ وَرُسُلِهِ لَا نُفَرِّقُ بَيْنَ أَحَدٍ مِنْ رُسُلِهِ
﴿ وَقَالُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا ﴾ غُفْرَانَكَ رَبَّنَا وَإِلَيْكَ الْمَصِيرُ

...and all the faithful, each [of them] has faith in Allah, His angels, His scriptures and His apostles. [They declare,] 'We make no distinction between any of His apostles'. (2:285)

The Relationship between Faith and the Acceptance of the Prophets Historically

The other point which must be noted is that faith in the prophets is not faith in a historical episode. For example, faith in the Prophet of Islam (S) does not mean mere acceptance that 14.000 years ago, there emerged a person name Muhammad in the Arabian Peninsula who said, "I am the Messenger of Allah," and brought a book named Qur'an from God. Then, we believe what he brought at the time can neither be of use nor implemented at this time! This faith is "the history of the prophets" and not faith in "the prophets and the Messenger." This is like believing in a person called Hitler in Germany who was one of the most notorious criminals in history.

Paying attention to this point is important, because nowadays, there have unfortunately emerged people who present a historical interpretation of faith in the Prophet of Islam. While claiming to be Muslims and intellectuals, they say that the Prophet of Islam's call was monotheism and the acceptance of One God, and the essence of religion and that which is the kernel of religion is this one matter while the other matters are among the secondary things of religion and are changeable according to the demands of time and space. Accordingly, even the Prophet himself never claimed that the laws and orders he brought are eternal. They add that the decrees and ordinances the Prophet brought were appropriate for that time and society, and for this time, they are neither useful nor executable. So, everything must be changed.

We have earlier explained that faith is a state of the heart which must be put into practice. And if this obligation to put it into practice does not exist, and it is mere knowledge and mental confirmation, it is not faith. We pointed out that Pharaoh knew that Musa was a prophet of God and his miracles were divine signs which manifested through him. The people of Pharaoh also knew these facts:

﴿ وَجَحَدُوا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَا أَنفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَعُلُوًّا ﴾ فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ

They impugned them though they were convinced in their hearts. (27: 14)

Mere knowing is the criterion; undertaking it is necessary. For us to merely know and accept that a prophet came fourteen hundred years ago and to say that his words are of no use today is not faith. This is faithlessness, indeed. What does *kufr* mean by the way? It means this non-application into practice and for us to say, “I know that the Prophet has said these words, but I do not act upon them.” Is *kufr* other than this? Does to be a Jew or a Christian merely mean for us to know a prophet named Musa or ‘Isa and a book called Torah or Evangel? If to be a Jew or Christian is this knowledge, then all of us throughout the world are Jews and Christians! The criterion of being a Jew is that the person put into practice the sayings of Musa and whatever is mentioned in the Torah. To be a Muslim means that you regard yourself bound to put into practice what was brought by the Prophet of Islam (S). (Of course, for one to commit sins sometimes on account of the carnal desire and Satan is another story.) If a person only accepts the history of the Prophet and is not supposed to act upon the Prophet’s decrees and ordinances, this verse must be recited to him:

قَالَتِ الْأَعْرَابُ آمَنَّا ۚ قُلْ لَمْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَلَكِنْ قُولُوا أَسْلَمْنَا وَلَمَّا يَدْخُلِ الْإِيمَانُ فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ ۚ وَإِنْ تُطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ لَا يَلِتْكُمْ مِنَ أَعْمَالِكُمْ شَيْئًا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

The Bedouins say, ‘We have faith.’ Say, ‘You do not have faith yet; rather say, “We have embraced Islam,” for faith has not yet entered into your hearts’. (49: 14)

Is one who accepts the advent of the Prophet of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula fourteen hundred years ago and say that his ordinances are of no use and cannot be implemented, a Muslim?! Does such a person have faith in “what Allah has sent down,” “His books” and “His messengers,” and among the faithful believers whom are described by the Qur’an as follows: “*All the faithful. Each [of them] has faith in Allah, His angels, His scriptures and His apostles*”? This is sheer disbelief. This amount seems simple. If a person denies even one decree, and one decree only, which he is certain to have been brought by the Prophet of Islam (S), he goes outside the path of faith. If faith in the laws is because God ordained them, has God not ordained this one? If acting upon the rest is motivated by the fact that they are consistent with his like and desire, this is self-worship and sheer disbelief, and not worship of God.

Of course, sometimes, it is not proved to a person that this is a decree of God and is among the decrees which has no decisive proof and in which there is still room for juristic differences. That is another story. The discussion here is that we are certain that God and the Prophet have made a decree, and in spite of it, we do not submit to it. If that is the case, this is *kufr*. It is not important whether that decree is among the decrees on obligation or prohibition; rather, it is the same for every decree. If a person is certain that the Prophet has really recommended a certain recommended prayer and notwithstanding this, he denies it and does not accept this decree to the extent of being recommended, he is definitely *kafir*.

Of course, it must be borne in mind that many of these are inner disbelief which can be reconciled with

the outward Islam and it is referred to by this passage: “*The Bedouins say, ‘We have faith.’ Say, ‘You do not have faith yet; rather say, “We have embraced Islam,” for faith has not yet entered into your hearts’.*” The outward Islam which is mentioned in this verse can be acquired through the recital of the profession of faith [*shahadatayn*], though it is ostentatious and nominal, and many of the laws of Islam are applicable to it. Such Islam brings about the ritual purification of the body and one can take a Muslim woman as wife, his daughter be married, inherit, and be buried in the cemetery of Muslims, etc. The hypocrites during the time of the Prophet were of the same type of Muslims, about whom the Qur’an says:

وَلَا يَأْتُونَ الصَّلَاةَ إِلَّا وَهُمْ كُسَالَى

And do not perform the prayer but lazily. (9:54)

Even if they pray, it is out of compulsion and social considerations:

إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ يُخَادِعُونَ اللَّهَ وَهُوَ خَادِعُهُمْ وَإِذَا قَامُوا إِلَى الصَّلَاةِ قَامُوا كُسَالَى يُرَاءُونَ النَّاسَ وَلَا يَذْكُرُونَ اللَّهَ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا
مُذَبذَبِينَ بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ لَا إِلَى هَؤُلَاءِ وَلَا إِلَى هَؤُلَاءِ ۚ وَمَنْ يُضِلِلِ اللَّهُ فَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُ سَبِيلًا

The hypocrites indeed seek to deceive Allah, but it is He who outwits them. When they stand up for prayer, they stand up lazily, showing off to the people and not remembering Allah except a little, wavering in between: neither with these nor with those. (4: 142-143)

There are also those whose prayers are politicking and out of sociopolitical considerations, and not motivated by submission of the heart in front of God. This is outward Islam the follower of which may marry a Muslim woman and whose daughter can be asked for marriage and on whom the other laws are applicable. Yet, from the perspective of the real decree, he may be worse than any unbeliever:

إِنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ فِي الدَّرَكِ الْأَسْفَلِ مِنَ النَّارِ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ لَهُمْ نَصِيرًا

Indeed the hypocrites will be in the lowest reach of the Fire. (4: 145)

At any rate, the account of outward Islam is separate from faith in God, and our present discussion is about faith and not what will make the body ritually pure and the like issues. The discussion is about the thing that will bring about man’s felicity, bliss, success and salvation from the hellfire and chastisement, and not that which is reconcilable with *the lowest reach of the Fire*. Yes, according to the explicit text of the Qur’an, there are those who pray to assume the name of Islam and the combatants of Islam, yet they are in the lowest ebb of the Fire.

1. – In Surah al-Anbiya’ 21:26–27, the Qur’an thus says in describing the angels:

بَلْ عِبَادٌ مُّكْرَمُونَ لَا يَسْبِقُونَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ وَهُمْ بِأَمْرِهِ يَعْمَلُونَ

They are [His] honored servants. They do not venture to speak ahead of Him, and they act by His command.

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