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Chapter 1: Ideology And Creed

The Holy Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) have taken a special interest in ideology and faith, because these two matters represent the basis of any human society. When the ideology and faith of any community is strong, clear, compatible and comprehensive, the community will be powerful and capable of facing the difficulties, problems, and various conditions that stem from the natural progress of history.

The Holy Qur'an has paid the greatest attention to this aspect and has prioritized the issue of creed and thought over all other issues, to implant it firmly in the Muslim community.

The following features are visible in the Ahl al-Bayt's procedure of building a virtuous community inside Muslim society through ideology and faith:

The Holy Qur'an and Sunnah; the Sources of Faith

The Holy Imams ('a) strictly abided by the ideas that can easily be inferred from the Holy Qur'an and the authentic Sunnah; therefore, they cited texts from the Holy Qur'an and Prophetic traditions as accurate proofs of the ideas they discussed. In addition, they always presented beliefs that were compatible with human nature. This fact is visible in their verbal demonstration of these beliefs and also in their style of providing arguments and discussing other ideas. 1

The Holy Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), realizing that conjecture is not sufficient, paid special attention to reason in understanding faith, in realizing facts and creating conviction and confidence in the doctrinal notions. Nevertheless, they never failed to confirm the point that the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah carried the accurate faith that can be certified by sound human intellect.

Integration between Faith and Sect

The Ahl al-Bayt ('a) have integrated doctrinal and sectarian fundaments of faith and the nature of the universe, life, the seen and unseen worlds on the one hand and the branches that ramify from these doctrines on the other. In other words, they have considered the necessity of perfect alliance between

theory and application, faith and behavior, fundamental and secondary issues. The sect of the Imamiyyah Shi'ah rests upon the belief that the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) play a role fundamental to faith with regard to the universal view of Islam. Imamate enjoys a divine nature similar to the nature of Messengership and its responsibilities, with the exception of receiving divine revelation. An Imam, just like a Messenger, is chosen by Almighty Allah to complete a mission.

In fact, human behavior depends upon understanding such doctrines. On proving this fact, we will clearly note that there is correlation between the belief in *wilayah* (divinely commissioned leadership of the Holy Imams) and the integration of faith and deeds.

In this respect, Shaykh al-Kulayni has reported Imam al-Baqir and Imam al-Sadiq ('a) as saying:

Faith is to profess and act, and Islam is to profess without acts.2

Imam al-Ridha ('a) is also reported as saying:

Whoever loves a person who is disobedient to us is himself disobedient to us, whoever loves one that is obedient to us is actually obedient to us, whoever assists a wrongdoer is actually a wrongdoer, and whoever hinders a wrongdoer is actually just. Verily, there is no proximity between Almighty Allah and any person. Loyalty to us cannot be attained except by means of obedience. 3

In the book of *'Uyun Akhbar al-Ridha*, it is recorded that Ibrahim ibn Muhammad al-Hamdani reported Imam al-Ridha ('a) as saying:

Whoever hinders a decent person is actually a wrongdoer. No one can attain loyalty to Allah except by means of obedience to Him. The Holy Messenger of Allah—may Allah bless him and his Household—once said to the sons of 'Abd al-Muttalib, "Bring me your deeds, not your ancestries or

lineages." Almighty Allah says,

"When the trumpet is blown, there shall be no ties of relationship between them on that day, nor shall they ask of each other. Then, as for him whose good deeds are preponderant, these are the successful, and as for him whose good deeds are light, these are they who shall have lost their souls, abiding in hell. (23:101–103)"4

The Shi'ah depend upon the Holy Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) in both the principle and secondary affairs of religion. They believe that they possess:

- a) Perfect knowledge among finite human beings; (Almighty Allah alone has perfect knowledge)
- b) Infallibility from sinning or misinterpretation; and,
- c) Right of leadership to issue instructions (to be followed) and prohibitions (to be avoided).

Imam Muhammad al-Baqir ('a) is reported to have said:

Verily, the knowledge that was brought down to the earth with Adam has not been taken back. Knowledge is transmitted among generations through inheritance. 'Ali ('a) was the most knowledgeable of this nation. Whenever a knowledgeable individual of us (i.e. the Ahl al-Bayt ('a)) passes away, another knowledgeable one—from his household holding the same knowledge as he, or any other amount that Allah decides for him—will succeed him.5

Dhurays al-Kannasi is reported to have said that he once visited Imam al-Sadiq ('a) and found Abu-Basir there. The Imam ('a) said:

Verily, (Prophet) David ('a) inherited the knowledge of the prophets. (Prophet) Solomon ('a) then inherited David's. Most surely, (Prophet) Muhammad (S) inherited Solomon's and we inherited Muhammad's. We also possess the Scriptures of (Prophet) Abraham ('a) and (Prophet) Moses ('a).

Abu-Basir commented, "This is real knowledge."

The Imam ('a) answered:

يَا أَبَا مُحَمَّدٍ! لَيْسَ هَذَا هُوَ الْعِلْمَ؛ إِنَّمَا الْعِلْمُ مَا يَحْدُثُ بِاللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ يَوْماً بِيَوْمٍ وَسَاعَةً بِسَاعَةٍ

Abu-Muhammad, this is not knowledge. True knowledge is to know what happens during the night and day, each day and every moment.

Hence, to turn towards the Holy Imams ('a) in order to obtain knowledge is not similar to turning to narrators or well-versed scholars whose tasks are restricted to transmitting traditions and issuing verdicts (*fatwa*). People resort to scholars to learn certain religious laws by means of transmission of traditions and issuing of verdicts. Such individuals are not divinely designated leaders of the nation and they cannot enact any religious law in question that is not present in the Islamic code of religious law; rather, they only issue verdicts according to their knowledge of traditions and fundamentals of the set laws of Islam.

Authentic traditions relegate the knowledge of the laws of Islam to well–qualified scholars under certain conditions. Besides, the referential religious authorities (*marji'*) rely upon intuition and are exposed to mistake and lack of awareness in understanding certain texts, retaining others, or inferring rules from others, unlike the well–guided Holy Imams of the Ahl al–Bayt ('a) who hold divinely commissioned leadership over people and enjoy decisive knowledge.

Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Maythami has reported that he heard Imam al-Sadiq ('a) stating:

Allah, the Almighty and Majestic, has verily disciplined His Messenger (S) so highly that He made him as exact as He wanted him to be. He then delegated the affairs to him, saying, "Take what the Messenger assigns to you and deny yourselves that which he withholds from you." Whatever has been granted to the Messenger of Allah (S) by Him has been granted to us.6

For that reason, the individuals of the virtuous community did not suffer from schism or ambivalence between the commands issued by the political rulers of the Muslim community and the verdicts that were issued by specialist scholars of Muslim jurisprudence. In fact, these scholars used to issue verdicts either out of their private understandings of the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah or their references to presumptive matters like the rules of analogy (*qiyas*), equitable preference (*istihsan*), and acceptable advantages (*al-Masalih al-Mursalah*).

They would adopt unfounded rules whenever they failed to come upon the religious text that revealed the accurate law of an issue. At other times, they issued verdicts that were in violation of religious texts, especially when they depended upon their personal views (*ijtihad*), because in their conception these religious texts were remote from equitable preference and the achievement of acceptable social

advantages that they estimated through personal understanding of social conditions.

It happened sometimes that such jurisprudents (i.e. issuers of verdicts) came under threat of prosecution by the ruling authorities because of such contradictions. For instance, Abu–Hanifah (the founder of the Hanafiyyah school of law) was arrested and imprisoned by al–Mansur, the 'Abbasid ruler, because he issued a verdict supporting two sons of 'Abdullah al–Mahdh. Another example is Ahmad ibn Hanbal (the founder of the Hanbaliyyah school of law) who exposed himself to maltreatment by the ruling authorities because of his attitude towards the issue of the creation of the Qur'an and his disagreement with al–Ma'mun, the 'Abbasid ruler, on this issue.

The virtuous community did not experience the schism that took place between theologians and Muslim philosophers—who adopted certain doctrinal hypotheses and views about which they disagreed with each other to a great extent—and the verdicts that were issued by some jurisprudents who did not accede to certain hypotheses. Some Muslim communities had to refer to a jurisprudent of a certain sect who adopted certain doctrines and ideologies, such as those adopted by the Ash'ariyyah, the Mu'tazilah, and the Mufawwidhah (Indeterminists). When the latter adopted contradictory doctrines and ideologies, they disagreed with the referential religious authority.

Such doctrinal and ideological differences cannot be found among the scholars and referential authorities of the Shi'ah, the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a).

Comprehensibility of Doctrines

The Ahl al-Bayt ('a) covered a large variety of doctrinal issues with elaborate explanations, clarifications and details. They did not leave any aspect uncovered; thereby, blocking any personal opinions, impressions, and inferences to interfere in the issuance of religious laws.

Unlike the behavioral issue, which is secondary, the doctrinal issue is primarily significant. Sensitive and incisive results and consequences stem from this issue and all details of the spiritual, social, political, and futuristic structure of human life reflect upon it. In view of this, the Ahl al–Bayt ('a) did not restrict their presentations of doctrinal aspects to the principles of Muslim faith, such as Unity of Almighty Allah (*tawhid*), Prophethood (*nubuwwah*), and Final Assemblage (*ma'ad*); rather, they also discussed various aspects like the following:

- 1. Divine justice ('adl)
- 2. Imamate (imamah)
- 3. Fatalism (*jabr*) and indeterminism (*ikhtiyar*)
- 4. Predestination (qadar)

5. Disbelief (kufr) and belief (iman) and their relationship to personal
6. Infallibility or inerrancy ('ismah)
7. Decency
8. Death and life
9. Norms of history
10. Divine test
11. Loyalty (to the divinely designated leaders)
12. Love and hatred
13. Ethics
14. The advent of al-Mahdi in the last period of time
15. Details of the Final Abode, such as:
a) The period between burial and the final judgment (barzakh)
b) The resurrection (ba'th)
c) Raising to life (nushur)
d) The Divine Pond (hawdh)
e) The Discriminating Bridge (sirat)
f) Vision (ru'yah)
g) The calling to account (hisab)
h) Intercession (shafa'ah)
i) Paradise and Hellfire
j) Chastisement and comfort
k) Immortality in Hellfire or Paradise
16. Rational good and evil of things
17. Divine Revelation

acts and behavior

18. Reason

Presenting the details of all these issues, the Holy Imams ('a) demonstrated their intellectual and doctrinal aspects through consummate situations that played a vital role in strengthening the doctrinal and structural foundation of the virtuous community, ensuring the firm integration of its individuals.

This comprehensiveness is obvious when we refer to Shaykh al–Saduq's book of *al–'Aqa'id* (The Beliefs) and Shaykh al–Mufid's commentaries on this book. The contents of these two books rely in essence upon the traditions of the Ahl al–Bayt ('a) with regard to the detailed presentation of these beliefs.

Looking at the history of Imamate, the period of the Holy Imams' ('a) presence (i.e. the lifetimes of eleven of the Holy Imams ('a)) reveals a wide range of disagreements about doctrinal issues among the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a). As a result, secondary sects and groups emerged among these followers. However, the Holy Imams ('a) began to present the doctrinal issues in a comprehensive and all-inclusive manner, reducing these sects and groups to an inconsequential number by the age of the Major Occultation.

This was a great achievement considering the conditions of this age were more difficult, due to the impossibility of direct contact with a Holy Imam, than when the Holy Imams ('a) were present. This doctrinal stability was a big achievement of the Holy Imams ('a)—an achievement that could guarantee the doctrinal and ideological soundness of the virtuous community. This amply testifies to the significance of establishing this doctrinal foundation among this community.

Furthermore, the history of Islam witnessed wide–ranging doctrinal disagreements among the other Muslim groups that have continued to the present day due to their differences with the Shi'ah in following the referential authority (i.e. the Imams ('a))—who can provide necessary details—together with the Holy Qur'an. The result is that other Muslim groups do not have a referential religious authority who can resolve their differences.

Despite the fact that all Muslims agree upon the Holy Qur'an, it can be subjected to various interpretations; therefore, the Ahl al–Bayt ('a) laid great stress on the necessity of the existence of a referential authority capable of interpreting the Holy Qur'an in the authentic manner. The Holy Prophet (S), in the famous tradition known as *hadith al–thaqalayn* (the Two Weighty Things) and *hadith al–safinah* (the Ark of Salvation) emphasized the necessity of referring to the second "weighty thing", the Ahl al–Bayt ('a).7

Freedom of Thought and Sound Logic

The Ahl al-Bayt ('a) established the rules of true methodology in dealing with doctrinal and ideological issues by emphasizing freedom of thought and belief. These rules were founded on the following grounds:

- a) Sound logic, the use of reason, sentiment and inherent human nature.
- b) Reference only to the Holy Qur'an and the Prophetic authentic traditions to obtain sound beliefs. This does away with personal desires and individual political tendencies, personal or qualitative tastes, tempers, trends, and conjecture, by use of which errors are committed widely, such as when using analogy and equitable preference. These things are called 'opinion (ra'y)' in the words of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and the traditions of the Holy Prophet (S), who is reported to have said:

Whoever interprets the Qur'an according to his own opinion has definitely become a disbeliever. Verily, the religion of Allah cannot be comprehended through opinions.8

A number of traditions emphasize the absolute referentiality of the Holy Qur'an and authentic Prophetic traditions, such as the following:

Ayyub ibn al-Hurr has reported that he heard Imam al-Sadiq ('a) saying:

All things must be referred to the Book of Allah and to the Sunnah. Any tradition that is not compatible with the Book of Allah is fake.9

Imam al-Sadiq ('a) is also reported to have said:

Any discourse that is not supported by the Book of Allah must be false. 10

c) Opening the door to ijtihad and inference (of religious laws from their sources) within regulations and valid principles of inference by finding in the Holy Qur'an all phenomena and events encountered by humanity in an objective spirit that is receptive to all probabilities and conditions man may face.

To summarize, the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) School and the virtuous community distinctively embody:

- (1) Freedom of thought
- (2) Commitment to regulations and restrictions of inference (of religious laws from their sources) as exactly as they are defined by Islamic law (i.e. the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah)

(3) Receptiveness to emerging issues, reevaluation of their understanding, inference, examination and treatment, compatible with inherent human nature, reason and sentiment

These distinctive features also enabled this community to defend the genuine Islamic doctrine and ideology against not only other intellectual and doctrinal personal opinions within Muslim society but also intellectual and doctrinal currencies outside the Islamic frame.

- 1. Examples on such discussions can be seen in Shaykh al-Majlisi's book of Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 10, Shaykh al-Tabrisi's al-Ihtijaj, and Shaykh al-Kulayni's Usul al-Kafi, Chapter: Faith and Unbelief (kitab al-iman wal-kufr). Books on the biographies of the Holy Imams ('a) are also full of reports on their discussions of other beliefs. All such discussions prove that the Holy Imams ('a) depended upon the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah in their debates. For instance, let us refer to two examples only:
- 1. Lady Fatimah al-Zahra's Sermon: "O Muslims! Is my inheritance usurped?! O son of Abu-Quhafah, is it in the Book of Allah that you inherit your father's property, yet I do not inherit my father's? Surely, you have done a strange thing! Have you deliberately deserted the Book of Allah and turned your back on it?

Allah said, "And Solomon was David's heir. (27:16)"

He also said about Yahya ('a) (Prophet John) son of Zachariah ('a): "Oh, give me from Thy presence a successor who shall be my heir and also heir to the house of Jacob. (19:5–6)"

He also said, "And those who are akin are nearer one to another in the ordinance of Allah. (8:75)"

He also said, "Allah enjoins you concerning your children: The male shall have the equal of the portion of two females. (4:11)"

He also said, "Bequest is prescribed for you when death approaches one of you, if he leaves behind wealth for parents and near relatives. (2:180)"

You claim that I have no position and no inheritance from my father, and there is no kinship between us. Did Allah distinguish you with a verse, from which He excluded my father? Or, do you say: the people of two religions do not inherit from each other? Are my father and I not of one religion? Or, are you more aware of the Qur'an than my father and my cousin?

So, here it is before you! Take it with its noseband and saddle! It shall dispute with you on the Day of Punishment; what a fair judge Allah is, the master is Muhammad (S), and the appointment is the Day of Resurrection. At the time of the Hour, the wrongdoers shall lose, and it shall not benefit you to regret then! For every Message, there is a time limit, and you shall know to whom a punishment that will confound him comes, and upon whom a lasting doom will fall." (al-Ihtijaj, 102).

2. Argument of Imam 'Ali Amir al-Mu'minin ('a) on fighting the people of al-Basrah:

Al-Asbagh ibn Nubatah reported that he was standing by Imam 'Ali ('a) on the day of the Battle of the Camel when a man stood before him and said, "O Amir al-Mu'minin, those people (against whom we will fight) declare the Unity of Allah and so do we, confess that there is no god save Allah and so do we, and perform the prayers and so do we. For what reason will we then fight them?"

The Imam ('a) answered, "We will fight them according to what Almighty Allah has revealed in His Book."

The man asked, "As for me, I do not have full knowledge with all that which Almighty Allah has revealed in His Book; so, please explain it to me."

The Imam ('a) answered, "We fight them according to what has been revealed in Chapter (Surah) al-Bagarah."

The man asked, "I do not have knowledge with all that which Almighty Allah has revealed in Surah al-Baqarah, so please explain it to me."

The Imam ('a) answered, "It is exactly the following verse (ayah): 'We have made some of these messengers excel over others; among them are they to whom Allah spoke, and some of them He exalted by (many degrees of) rank; and We gave clear miracles to Jesus son of Mary, and strengthened him with the holy spirit. And if Allah had pleased, those after them would not have fought one with another after clear arguments had come to them, but they disagreed; so there were some of them who believed and others who denied; and if Allah had pleased they would not have fought one with another, but Allah brings about what He intends. (2:253)' Verily, it is we who have believed and it is they who have denied."

The man added, "Verily, those people have denied. I swear it by the Lord of the Ka'bah."

He then attacked the enemies and fought them until he was martyred, may Allah have mercy upon him." (al-Ihtijaj, pp. 169–170).

- 2. Shaykh al-Kulayni, Al-Kafi, 2:24, H. 2.
- 3. Shaykh al-Saduq, 'Uyun Akhbar al-Ridha 1:260.
- 4. These traditions can be also found in al-Hurr al-'Amili's Wasa'il al-Shi'ah 11:446.
- 5. Shaykh al-Kulayni, al-Kafi 2:24, H. 3.
- 6. Shaykh al-Kulayni, al-Kafi 1:268, H.9.
- 7. Hadith al-thaqalayn reads:

The Holy Prophet (S) is authentically reported to have said:

Verily, I am leaving among you two precious things: the Book of Allah and my progeny, the members of my Household [Ahl al-Bayt]. If you hold fast to them, you shall never go astray. These two will never separate from each other until they meet me at the Pond.

Kanz al-'Ummal 1:185, 189.

Hadith al-safinah reads:

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

The like of my Household in this nation is the Ark of Noah; whosoever embarked upon it was saved, but whoever turned away from it was drowned.

Kanz al-'Ummal 1:186.

- <u>8.</u> See the author's book of Muhadharat fi 'Ulum al-Qur'an, Chapter: Exegesis and Interpretation of the Holy Qur'an & Chapter: Exegesis in the View of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a).
- 9. Shaykh al-Kulayni, al-Kafi 1:69, H. 3; Al-Barqi, al-Mahasin 1:347, H. 127; 'Allamah al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar 2:242, H. 37.
- 10. Al-Barqi, al-Mahasin 1:347, H. 128; 'Allamah al-Majlisi, Bihar al-Anwar 2:242, H. 38.

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