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Chapter 4: On Common Prophethood

Discourse 1: The Necessity for the Existence of the Prophets

So as to prove that there is Common Prophethood the wise men say, "On the one hand, man has numerous needs such as the necessity for having a wife and children, and food and clothing, etc. On the other hand, man cannot live alone. Rather, he has to live in the society and each person must accept to do some job. One must do business and the other bake bread. Another must be a tailor, and eventually every person must do something, so that people can continue to live their lives.

Everybody must gather together so that man fulfills his need to have a social life. It is not possible for them to spread themselves all over the wildernesses and the jungles. This gathering of mankind is described as civilization, and where everyone comes together is called a city. And for this very reason they say, 'Man is social by nature.' This means that man's nature needs a social life."

Man possesses lust and anger. And because of his lust capacity, everyone wants to attract benefits to himself and fend off harmful things. When people gather together in one place and have decided to live together on the one hand, and on the other hand, they have the two powers of lust and anger – they need laws to moderate these two powers. This is so that they do not engage in acts of oppression, attacking and not observing the laws and invading each other's personal territory. However, if making and passing laws is in the hands of man himself, firstly each group will make laws to benefit itself and harm others. Secondly, he cannot pass laws which are perfectly just.

Thus, since man's laws are never fair, it is necessary that the laws for man's life be designed by God the Exalted – who is the Creator and Possessor of mankind. And the law must be declared to man's society by the means of one of the Divine Prophets. This law is exactly what we call religion. It is that religion which makes man aware of God.

Explanation of the Religion

Therefore, religion is a law which includes a chain of obligatory acts, precepts, laws and commandments which have been made by God the Exalted and announced (to mankind) by one person. In summary, the subject is that man has numerous needs and by the means of those very needs, he needs a society. This social man wants law and this law must be just and divine, so that all the classes of the society benefit from it without oppression. Of course, this important event will not take place without the existence of religion.

So far, man's need for God's law has been proven, however, who must preach this divine law and God's religion. It must be stated in answer to this question, "The only one who can intercede between God and the people, and achieve the highest rank which is called Prophethood is a Prophet. The Prophet is the one worthy to achieve this high rank and become the interceder between God the Exalted and the people, so that he may hand over the divine religion to the people without anything lost or added. Prophethood is the revelation from God to the Prophets.

The Difference between a Prophet, a Messenger and a Prophet who Guides the People of His Time and Those after His Time

If it is the case that a Prophet is also given the mission to guide others, in addition to being a Prophet, he is also a Messenger. And if he was given a mission to invite all of the people of his time and after his time (to the religion), he is called Ulul–Azm. And if he had the position of being the Seal of the Prophets, and his religion continued up until the Resurrection, he is the Seal or Last of the Prophets. 1 Thus, the position of being the Seal of the Prophets which is that of His Holiness the Prophet Muhammad (S) is higher than the rest of those ranks.

The Necessity for the Existence of the Prophets as Expressed by Imam as-Sadiq

There are numerous narrations which prove the existence of the Prophethood, including a narration from Imam as–Sadiq (a.s.) as follows, "Once one of the deniers of the Prophethood, and an opposer of Islam asked the Imam (a.s.), 'What is your reason to prove the existence of the Prophets?' The Imam (a.s.) replied, 'When it is proven that we have a Creator and Maker who is Wise and His Work is based upon wisdom, we may understand that God the Exalted is Wise, and would never leave man in a state of being uninformed. God cannot be seen or touched by anyone. He does not converse with anyone.2 It is also proven that God the Wise must have Divine Ambassadors to guide the people to what benefits them, and to warn them about what harms them. These Ambassadors teach mankind what to do to have an Eternal Life and make man understand that he should not abandon those duties or he shall be in hardship forever and be destroyed.

Thus it has been proven that God the Exalted has some Divine Ambassadors who are the Prophets being learned and wise men. They are in the highest rank of knowledge. The difference between them

and others is that they have been trained in knowledge by the Lord of the world. God the Exalted educated them to train and teach other people.

The Creation and the features of the Prophets are similar to mankind in having eyes, ears and other parts of the body. They walk, eat and in general are the same as other people in these affairs. However, they cannot be compared to other people from the aspect of knowledge and a spiritual state. Thus it has been proven that outstanding individuals are appointed to the post of the Prophethood to guide mankind so that the Divine Decrees and Prohibitions are related to the people."3

The Attributes of the Prophets (Innocence, Knowledge, Power and Patience)

Of course, these divine individuals are not similar to mankind in terms of wisdom, attributes and morality. This means they are the Manifestation of God's Names and Attributes. In particular, the Prophets must have four attributes, so as to achieve being the Manifestation of the Holy Essence of God as follows:

- 1– The Prophets must be the Manifestation of God's Holiness. For this very reason, they must be Immaculate, so that in action, in thought and in speech they are free from all mistakes and sins. The reason why the Prophets must be Immaculate is that they may be trusted by the society and the people. This is so that they do not take anything away from or add onto the revealed matters, and commit no sins.
- 2– They must be the Manifestation of God's Wisdom and Knowledge, so that they may receive the religious precepts and decrees from God the Exalted, and then relate them to the people. The reason why the Prophets have the position of Knowledge is that they know all the good and bad things. This is so that they may have a firm footing on which to enjoin the people to do good and admonish them from doing the evil.
- 3– The Prophets must be the Manifestation of God's Power. This means that they can do things which other people cannot, and which are miracles to prove their Prophethood.
- 4– The Prophets must be the Manifestation of God's Patience and Mercy. This is so that they may be patient when oppressed as a result of the Manifestation of God the Exalted's Mercy.

The Necessity for the Existence of the Divine Proofs (The Prophets and The Imams) on the Earth up until the Ressurection Day

After Imam as–Sadiq (a.s.) stated these remarks about the necessity of the Prophets' Missions and their necessary attributes, then he (a.s.) mentioned the following significant point, "This Divine Proof4 must remain up until the Resurrection. And this Caliph of the Truth from God the Exalted must exist in every era in order to give the people an Ultimatum. No period of time must remain without a Divine Guide and Proof. It is also stated in the Holy Quran,

"... I will create a vicegerent on earth..." The Holy Quran: Al-Bagara 2:30.

God's aim in creating mankind is that the Divine Caliph always exists on the Earth. Just as He states,

"I have only created Genies and men, that they may serve Me." The Holy Quran: Az-Zariyat 51:56.

One of the requirements for these Divine words of God the Glorified is that in every era there must exist a perfect person so that God the Exalted is worshipped as it is should be done. If it is not so, meaning that if God's Caliph, the perfect person and the men of truth do not exist on the Earth, then what the angels stated will come true. As we read in the Holy Quran,

"... They stated: "Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood? - whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy Holy (name)?"..." The Holy Quran: Al-Baqara 2:30.

Of course, the issue of the Earth not being left free of a Proof is found in the words of the Commander of the Faithful Ali (a.s.) to Kumayl ibn Ziyad Nakhayee – may God be pleased with him – as follows, "This Earth is never free of a Proof. However, that Divine Proof appears at one time and the people see him. And at other times, he is absent and concealed from the people's sight."5

There are also a lot of narrations about this issue concerning that if the Earth is left without a Proof, it will take in all its inhabitants. 6 And in some other narrations it is stated that the Earth will engulf its inhabitants with waves, just as the sea covers its inhabitants with waves. 7

And in another tradition it is stated that God's Prophet (S) stated, "The stars are the security for the people of the Heavens. When the stars fall down, the people of the Heavens will also fall down. My Household is also the security for the people of the Earth, and when no one from my Household exists on the Earth, all the people of the Earth will also perish." Therefore, there is an absolute need for a Divine Proof in this world since the firmness of the Earth and sky is due to the existence of the Divine Proof as we read, "Due to the blessing of the Divine Proof, the daily bread is given to the people. By the means of his existence, the Heavens and the Earth are firmly maintained." 9

Therefore, today the firmness of the sky and Earth is due to the mediation of the Immaculate Imam of the Time (May God the Sublime expedite his noble appearance): Even though that Imam – May our souls be sacrificed for him – is apparently not amongst the people, so that they may make use of his existence. However, his very existence is a blessing for the people from God.

From amongst the words of Mr. Nasir ud–Din Toosy we read, "The very existence of the Imam of the Time – May God the Sublime expedite his noble appearance – is a blessing from God and his involvement in worldly affairs is another blessing. We ourselves are the ones who put off the involvement of His Holiness (a.s.) in worldly affairs, and are deprived of the blessing of his presence." 10

This means that the people do not yet deserve to benefit from the appearance of His Holiness - the

Riser (a.s.) 11, and the filling up of the Earth with justice by him (a.s.) after it has been filled up with oppression. Thus, the loss is ours, not that if Imam al-Mahdi's (a.s.).

- 1. Kafi, 1/176.
- 2. Except for the Prophet Moses (a.s.), and the Prophet Muhammad (S) during his Ascension.
- 3. Kafi, 1/68.
- 4. Referring to the Prophets and their Trustees.
- 5. Nahjul Balaghah, Words of Wisdom 147.
- 6. Bihar ul-Anwar, 60/213.
- 7. Kafi, 1/179.
- 8. Bihar ul-Anwar, 27/309.
- 9. Tajrid ul-E'ateqad
- 10. Ibid.
- 11. Imam al-Mahdi's (a.s.)

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