

Discourse One: The Spirituality of the Shi'ism

The method of apprehending truth

One of the extraordinary distinctions and beauties of the divine religion of Islam is that its teachings have been propounded so as to be wholly assimilable by all human societies. Of course, to understand this concept and its invaluable results, deep contemplation is necessary.

Many who are wallowing in worldly thoughts and have withdrawn completely from spiritual life consider this, as well as other statements that evoke spiritual issues and praise spiritual life, a poetic notion lacking any real value.

They are people with limited knowledge who, upon hearing materialist scholars say, "Religion is a relic from the Age of Legends", have neglected to look closely at Islam's call and the veracious teachings of this impeccable religion.

Needless to say, one should not expect a better and more profound opinion or a more clear and logical outlook from such people and there is no need for their acceptance or endorsement because if our view is righteous and justified it does not rely on the judgment of others nor require their approval. Hence, it is better that we leave them be: "Let them die in their vainglorious agony!"

Islam makes assimilation of its teachings easier in every respect through use of:

Instruction and guidance of the superior (those with expertise)

Logical exposition and reasoning

Conscience and observation

Clearly, these are the only ways for a human to understand and apprehend any type of truth. By way of illustration, sick persons may obtain prescriptions from a competent and sanctioned doctor, deduce the remedy through their own medical knowledge, or realize it by observing the positive effects of a

treatment in similar patients.

In the same manner, students of foreign languages may learn the meaning of words from an adept teacher, infer it through grammar and conditions of the sentence, or learn it by observing its use by native speakers of the foreign language.

Therefore, whenever we wish to fathom something as a “rational human”, we must apprehend it through one or more of these methods. If possible we learn facts by personal observation. In the event that this is not viable, we deduce through our God-given reasoning.

Finally, if we cannot learn by either observation or reasoning, we must refer to someone else who has grasped the knowledge through observation or reasoning (albeit through one or more intermediaries) and follow their view. Naturally, we must first verify that person’s competence through observation or deduction if we ourselves cannot fathom the issue itself by such means.

This is the collection of methods a person uses with the orientation of the system of creation. Islam accredits all three ways, and the Noble Qur’an, which is the divine book of Islam, explicitly bases the call of God on the principles governing the world.

It enjoins and leads us to a series of ideological and practical teachings necessitated by the relationship of humanity with the world and the universal order in general. The human civilization will sooner or later realize the necessity of believing in and effectuating these teachings.

﴿ فَأَقِّمْ 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 toward the pure religion; it is in accord with the nature [fitrah] of God upon which He has formed the nature of humankind. There is no alteration in the creation of God. This is the enduring (and true) religion, however most humans do not know.”¹

Based on this, Islam enjoins us to adhere to knowledge and science and has prohibited following irrational and unscientific paths. It warns of speech and actions that are not in line with reason and necessitate following doubt, conjecture, carnal lusts, desires, feelings, and longings.

﴿...وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ﴾

“And follow not that of which you have no knowledge...”²

﴿...إِنَّ الظَّنَّ لَا يُغْنِي مِنَ الْحَقِّ شَيْئًا...﴾

“...surely conjecture will not avail aught against the truth...”³

﴿...وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَىٰ فَيُضِلَّكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ...﴾

“And do not follow desire, for it shall lead you astray from the path of Allah...”⁴

Method of the guidance of the superior [tarḡq-e irshḡd-e mawlawḡ]

In the Divine Book, God, the Almighty, directly addresses His servants and speaks with us. He portrays His divinity and pure qualities. He describes the principles of the universal system, which He has created and manages, and the genesis and termination of the cosmos, which He directs. Also, He explains the decrees and instructions that must be carried out in the human world which are founded upon the universal system.

This method of expression seen in religious literature, i.e. the Holy Qur’an and narrations of the Prophet (S) and the infallible members of his Household, is an aspect of “the guidance of a superior” [irshḡd-e mawlawḡ]. It shows that humans, who are infinitesimal before God, must submit before the divine presence of the Creator and obey His “canonical” [tashrḡḡ] laws just as they by their natures obey His “genetic” [takwḡnḡ] (i.e. natural, hence inviolable) laws.

No doubt, this method of expression is acceptable to true advocates of Islam and disciples of the school of the Qur’an, that is, those who have comprehended the righteousness of Islam and the divinity of the Qur’an through knowledge and conviction. For, on the one hand, the Divine—who has created all laws, reasons, and even the structure of causality—is not restricted by His own creation. He is above these causes, and not limited by them.

When we ask a person, “Why did you do that?” or “Why did you say that?” we are asking for the cause. What we mean is: what external cause gave you the right to do or say that?

Logically, this question or objection is only justifiable regarding a person who is bound by external causes and whose rights derive from external activities, effects, and rules. However, concerning a being that has created the concept of necessity and effect of external causes, this question or objection is completely irrelevant.

If what He commands is of the genetic order, His command is precisely the external existence of the phenomenon.⁵ If it is of the canonical order, it is an external virtue or evil that has been given the form of an instruction or prohibition,⁶ and this is, of course, according to reason.

On the other hand, with regard to the fact that Islam is a natural [fitrḡ] religion (meaning that it is in line

with human nature not that it is mundane or secular) and that its intellectual and practical substance derives from the universal system of creation, Islam asks only that which conforms to the human make-up.

The existential constitution of humanity is equipped with abilities and mechanisms which yearn for the religious call and, obviously, this does not require comprehensive rationalization.

By way of illustration, a human, who is constitutionally equipped with the faculty of nutrition from head to toe, does not require reasoning to accept the statement of one who prescribes them food. In the same manner, a person who is equipped with a reproductive system and does not suffer from dispositional or mental deviations will never deny the tradition of marriage and will not need an extensive rationale to accept this institution.

It is self-evident, therefore, that genetic equipment makes its needs palpable and acceptable to its host (on the condition that the host does not deviate from the genetic or natural course on account of malady).

This method, pronounced in the statements of the Qur'an—i.e. guidance of the superior—is one of the three methods that were previously indicated. This concise encroachment upon this method was beyond the objectives of this text. In fact, our chief aim is to demonstrate the authority Islam bestows upon the other two methods: “the rational method” [tarḡq-e istidlāl] and “the empirical method” [tarḡq-e mushāhidah wa 'ayn]. Among these, major consideration is credited to the empirical method or transcendent life of Islam, which is otherwise called “Islamic eschatology”.

The rational method

We cannot doubt that discourse and curiosity regarding the causes of incidents and rationalization of doubtful or suspect theories is an intrinsic and natural human characteristic.

Humans understand phenomena using all available faculties. They necessarily accept and cannot disregard them. They comprehend that knowing and understanding something that has causes and means depends upon knowing those causes and means. Thus, when they intend to understand something, first they discuss and enquire into its causes.

Humans are realists due to their God-given fitrah and do not depart from the fortress of thought for as long as they are alive and healthy. Whatever they comprehend is due to thought, something for which they never asked. They eternally desire independence from thought and do not regard it to be objective. They are forever seeking external truth and independent of thought.

Consider a man who peers at himself through a mirror. Even though he knows the mirror creates disruption in his appearance—such as inversion, magnification, reduction, etc.—he is concerned with his own face not the illusory image that is portrayed in the mirror.

In any event, humans are naturally realists. Even when those who deviate from this belief through discourse or other factors and become sophists or skeptics summarize the essence of their beliefs and say “we doubt everything”, “we doubt everything external to ourselves”, or “there is nothing but our thoughts”, it is evident that these statements are presented as scientific and definite information in a realist perspective.

In addition, in their daily lives they treat their thoughts realistically like everyone else. When they encounter an external advantage, they hurry to achieve it and when they come across disadvantage, they try to avoid it and never treat their thoughts as unreal. As a result, in practice, they confirm that they are realists.

Additionally, even when advocates of “pragmatism”, who have negated the value of realism in thought and only give credence to realism in practice, define the essence of their thought: “thought only has practical value”, they put forth this statement as something with real value.

It is evident that they want us to believe that in reality thoughts only have practical value and this itself is a practical truth. If their intent is only the practical value of this thought, then they are a type of skeptic. If so, like true skeptics they would also give credence to thought in words and deeds (as previously stated). Therefore, humankind cannot escape from realism.

Obviously, we must not go too far and conclude that any thought, even one deriving from human senses, completely corresponds with reality and that reality is exactly what we perceive externally without human cognitive processing.

What we mean is that the distance between self and the external world is not completely obstructed and, in short, the human mind can access external reality. (Further elucidation of this matter will come at its proper place.)

These two issues, meaning “human realism” and “human rational intellect”, which derive from human nature and genesis, have drawn the attention of Islam—which is based upon the system of creation. As a result, even though Islam has conveyed its teachings through divine revelation (guidance of the superior), it has also traversed the path of free reasoning and in this way encourages and emphatically recommends following Islam.

For example, among the (over six thousand six hundred) verses of the Holy Qur’an, many verses may be found that express the theoretical and practical teachings of Islam in a ratiocinative manner. These verses present their objectives with sufficient reasons to the realist instinct and rational intellect of humanity.

None of these verses demand that their ideas be accepted without dispute and the Qur’an does not reason about them as a pastime; rather, the Qur’an requests: “Freely refer to your sound judgment. If you confirm these assertions through the reasons and evidence provided (and you will surely confirm

them) accept and submit to Islam. (This is the philosophical and free rationality outlook.)”

As a further example, amid the holy Qur’anic verses, there are many that rebuke ignorance and rigidity of mind, praise knowledge and understanding, and instruct humans to think, contemplate, plan, weigh, debate, and inquire into every nook and cranny of the world of creation.

These verses are so profuse and clear that quoting them does not seem necessary. However, there are some practical precepts that rise from the superior knowledge of God, such as the following statement:

﴿ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ... ﴾

“...That is better for you, if you know.”⁷

These verses combined with other verses that enjoin intellection and thought indicate that every Muslim must understand the good and evil which give rise to religious precepts, even if they cannot understand their details and characteristics.

Many hadīths regarding this issue may be found in the traditions of the Prophet (S) and statements of the noble members of his Household [ahl al-bayt] (‘a).

Advantages of the rational method in Islam

The advantages of this approach in the lofty teachings of Islam are as follows:

When placed on the path of thought and free logical reasoning, the teachings of Islam are assimilable for humans, who instinctively tend toward philosophical contemplation and rational thought.

Apart from divine revelation, the rational method is another support that keeps Islamic teachings alive for all people and all time and the objectives of this pure religion will always be more consistent and novel through the eyes of logic.

By opening this path, even after discontinuation of revelation and termination of prophethood, religious teachings will never be vague or abstract and will never be put aside as relics of a bygone age.

In order to better understand the important effects of this enlightening Islamic method, we must inquire deeper into Islamic teachings and especially inspect the two issues of “divinity” and “Islamic eschatology” in more detail.

Using both methods (revelation and reasoning), Islam asserts that the Lord of the Cosmos has absolute knowledge, power, and life. It also asserts that all phenomena, in all aspects of their being, existentially

rely on His existence—like a shadow that follows an indicator—and are “absolute need” before His “absolute needlessness”.

Logically, this infinite being is unique and the existence of more than one such being is inconceivable.⁸ Because in their limited existence all phenomena, whether tangible or not, and also the world as a whole depend on His infinite and unlimited existence.

He exists and is evident in all aspects of every object’s existence. Therefore, if some creature is cut off from Him, it will lose its existence and dissipate into nihility and nothingness like a shadow that detaches from its object.

In order to keep the uninformed from simply misunderstanding these truths and thinking of the Divinity’s true sovereignty [qayyamiyyat-e haqqiqiyye ulahiyyah] in the world as a type of “incarnation” [hulūl], existential “mingling” [ikhtilāt], or “incorporation” [imtizāj], the Infallibles (‘a) have broached this subject by negating “anthropomorphism” [tashbīh] and making use of negative theology.

They maintain that God has life but not like ours; He has knowledge but different than ours; He has power but unlike the power we have; etc.

It can be said that the reason that “Allāh-u Akbar”⁹ is like a slogan in Islam is to protect this truth from misinterpretation and prevent it from being understood in terms of immanence or union [ittihād] and in this way divest divinity of its infinitude in the minds of people. Even if the intellectual form of divinity in our minds manifests as good and righteousness, the pure essence of God is even greater than this finite and limited concept.

In accordance with this principle, the Holy Qur’an clearly states: The Divine is Infinite and All-encompassing and shall never be limited or contained.

﴿ أَلَا إِنَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّحِيطٌ ... ﴾

“Know that surely He encompasses all things absolutely.”¹⁰

In this same manner, absolute authority and sovereignty are particular to the Divine and He has no partner in the creation and management of the cosmos or in the emanation of command.

﴿...ذَلِكُمْ اللَّهُ رَبُّكُمْ خَالِقُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ لَّا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ﴾

“This is Allah, your Lord, Creator of all things; there is no god save Him...”¹¹

Even though the general law of causality links the existence of objects to each other and makes causes necessary for effects—and Islamic teachings verify this—Islamic teachings refute the absolute

independence of causes. Strictly speaking, God has created causes and effects, the relationship between them, and the superiority of cause over effect and He reigns supreme over them.

The wheels of existence are in continuous rotation. Through the relationship and union among objects, a stable system has been created. God has created this system using the correlations He has made dominant between objects and He guides all things toward the specific purpose of their creation by means of these associations.

Furthermore, human social life cannot be maintained without a set of rules and regulations. However, according to Islam only the commands of God, the Honorable, the Glorious, must be obeyed. This is because absolute proprietorship is His and no one has the right to expropriate command of His creations except by His leave. Therefore, any command that He issues and issued commands that He validates must be carried out and all other commands are rejected.

Prophets: the epitome of divine manifestation

As we previously stated, because the Absolute Existence completely encompasses the world of contingents, His relationship with creation cannot be explained in terms of incarnation [hulūq], unity [ittihād], or dissociation [infisāl]; rather, the most proximate and suitable term is “manifestation” [tajallī or zuhūr].

This term has also been utilized in the Qur’an and repeatedly in the speech of the Infallibles, specifically the first leader of the Shī‘ahs.

Regarding God, the Infinite, who existentially encompasses the world of creation, we cannot say that He has become incarnated [hulūq] into a worldly object; that He has been limited and contained in the framework of existence; or that He has transformed his necessary essence into the essence of a contingent being [mumkin] and has become like one of His creations!

Also, we cannot say that this Unlimited and All-encompassing Essence has taken a place in a corner of the world in rank with His creations and rules the domain of creation like a king.

Instead, as an explanation of the relationship of the Divine with this world we may declare: the Boundless Existence of the Truth, who absolutely encompasses everything, is perpetually manifest in all things and places and shows Himself without soiling His divinity with corporeality [mūddah], temporality [zamān], or locus [makān].

All beings, with their explicit essential differences, are like mirrors that show His pure existence to the extent of each of their capacities. It is evident that any limitation that occurs derives from the mirror [mir’at] not the manifestation [mar’at] and any defect that appears derives from the form [mazhar] not the image [zahir].

Clearly, this does not entail incarnation, unity, or dissociation all of which necessitate limit and corporeality. Beings are neither one with God nor are they distinct from Him. If the theory of incarnation and unity were correct, there would be no difference between God and creation—in fact, there would be no God.

Additionally, if the theory of dissociation were correct, a limited aspect would exist between God and creation and due to this instance a limitedness in God, and as a result He would lose the divine status. (We shall return to this discussion later on).

Any person who disregards the thoughts and deeds of Muslims—especially the first Muslims—and only refers to the Book of God and the sayings of the Prophet (S) and members of his Household [ahl al-bayt] (‘a) would inevitably understand that according to Islam, God does not retain incarnation or association as part of His essence or essential aspects in regard with the world of creation and humanity in particular.

The Qur’an and hadīth expressly assert: even the holy prophets (‘a), the most prominent of which were Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad (S), had no rank besides being servants of God.

Their human characteristics are similar to other humans. Ultimately, any power that arises or knowledge that manifests in the framework of prophethood is divine power and divine knowledge and any commandment that issues from this institution is a commandment from God. The only purposes of this institution are mediation and publicization of messages, and prophets have no part in formulating the laws they propound.

The only discernible difference between prophets and other humans is that they possess the eminence of perfect servitude. That is to say, regarding their spiritual lives, prophets and Imāms have attained utter perfection and all other humans fall short of this state.

Emergence of incarnation [hulūl] in the Church

Even though Islam has greatly endeavored in the promotion of the monotheistic [tawhīd] view of God, His infiniteness, and His encompassment of existence and has accorded no existential independence or legislative or hegemonic rights to the realm of humanity, from the time the Church gained power and became known as the haven of the Christian world, it founded its teachings on incarnation (in the same sense we have used previously).

There is no doubt that this doctrine restricted the Divine, in its entirety, into the limited material existence of the honorable Jesus Christ (‘a).

According to this doctrine, the Divine, whether or not it can separate from humans, has the “capacity” to take on the identity of material man and equip itself with human characteristics. In fact, many parts of the contemporary Torah confirm this belief, as is evident in the account of the creation of Adam (‘a) and the

narratives regarding Noah, Abraham, Lot, Jacob ('a) and others.

This view, i.e. incarnation of divinity in a corporeal human, entails negation of metaphysics. Thus, because in religion the issue of divinity is fundamental and is the fountainhead of all ideological and practical tenets, this view has toppled all other religious issues based upon spirituality and has caused all spiritual issues to be explained in terms of materiality.

This belief spread in the Christian world and became established. Of course, the previous advocates of this belief had a close precedent with idolatry. The issue of triumvirate divinity—which is a type of idolatry—was one of their most deeply rooted religious beliefs and the spiritual and lifestyle effects of this belief could not be so easily forgotten.

At that time, idolatry reigned supreme over a great number of the earth's inhabitants. Belief in Trinity [tathlath], incarnation, and all their derivative beliefs—the best testimony of which are the histories of creeds and religions—were of the primary characteristics of this idolatry.

In fact, the belief in Trinity entered Christianity from idolatry after minor adaptations in form. Indeed, it can be stated that the only discord between idolatrous creeds and the Church is the issue of prophethood.

Certainly, we do not intend to start a religious debate with advocates of the Church. In pursuit of our aim we merely intend to evoke various historic truths regarding Islam and Christianity.

In short, the incarnation tenet of the Church, the close relationship of Christians with idolatry and triumvirate divinity, the Torah's summative verification of personification, and the contact of Christianity and idolatry at the time all gathered together and laid the foundation of a completely anti-spiritual materialist view in the structure of the Christian World.

From that time, a panorama of a dark and evil materialistic thought was imprinted upon the Christian World.

The Church did not content itself with the degree of incarnation which it allowed for Jesus Christ. It applied this same incarnation to itself, put itself in Christ's place, and introduced itself as a sovereign that must be obeyed without question.

In addition, with rites such as Holy Communion or Lord's Supper [‘ish’ rabbun] they incarnate the flesh and body of Christ (divinity) within everyone!

With the unchallengeable power the Church attained, it limited the gospels, controlled beliefs and thoughts, and banned free debate in religious teachings. The tribunal of belief scrutiny ruled the possessions and lives of people with singular tyranny and the blood of millions was spilt due to the inviolable and obligatory dictates of the church.

The Church sanctified the kings and tyrants of the day, accepted the repentance of and issued absolution for any sinner it wished, and forever deprived whoever it wanted of the benefaction of spiritual bliss and beatific heaven.

In his greatly spiritual utterances, Jesus Christ ('a) affirmed that his pure faith followed the pure faith of the great prophets ('a), that it shall always live, and that it shall never fade from the world. And the Church, which juxtaposed that spiritual Christian faith with an incarnational and material regime, drunk with pride from its increasing power, thought that it would retain this power for as long as the world existed.

However, it neglected the matter that immediately after taking on material features any method or regime, even religious ones, shall necessarily enter the worldly cycle and become limited by natural laws. Thus, like other material phenomena, it shall have a limited lifespan and go through the various stages of childhood, youth and old age, and inevitably one day die.

That which is permanent in the world and shall not pass is spirituality unadulterated by materiality and beyond the jurisdiction of nature. It has no death and shall always, to a greater or lesser extent, accompany humanity.

In any event, after a few centuries—which is nothing compared with the entirety of history—of tyrannical rule, control of thoughts, and suppression of contrary opinions and objectionable understandings, it could not in the end resist the conscientious reason of the people. Thus, it was defeated and lost its almost boundless power.

A comprehensive record of these events can be found in the history of Christianity's penetration into the great Roman Empire and the historic timeline of the influence of the Church until its downfall.

The Church lost its horrific power and imprinted memories upon the minds of the people of the West that: religion is an ambiguous material regime that rules in the interests of the powerful and is prejudicial to the weak! Religion is a set of incomprehensible beliefs that cannot be explained with any type of logic!

Religion is a series of imitative thoughts that no one has the right to debate or inquire about! Religion is tyranny of a type that the conscience cannot accept but to which the tongue must succumb! And finally, religion is a natural tradition that has embodied a stage in humanity's history after which it will give way to a better and more complete natural tradition!

Naturally, the effect of this development was that some of the Church's adherents turned their backs upon it and others who remained faithful turned the earlier "unconditional obedience" into "empty sanctification and respect" and the Church became a formality.

The power the people attained by overthrowing the Church and the privation from the benefits of life caused by several centuries of suppression by the Church induced the people to take up a way of life

exactly opposite to the path of spirituality.

Thus, for the crime of being a method of exploitation of the Church, wherever they came across spirituality they would turn aside from it and lose themselves in the maelstrom of materiality.

Additionally, the people were not acquainted with true spiritual thought due to the incarnational materialist training of the Church that had become established in the depths of the people's minds throughout the centuries.

Hence, spirituality, which the people had inherited as traditions, was gradually forgotten. In addition, the pastime of materialist scholars who coined advancement as being parallel to industrial advancement and the occupation of various governments in world conquest and domination by means of the weapon of antireligious propaganda made an effective contribution against religious beliefs and spiritual thought.

Naturally, in such an environment where popular thought defines existence as nothing but materiality and material laws, religion becomes defined as a social phenomenon that emerges in uncivilized and semi-advanced societies.

Additionally, it could be defined as an intellectual phenomenon that occupies a fragment of human history. Also, according to material evolution, everything will progress into something better and more complete. Therefore, the age of religion shall give rise to a better and more complete age.

Responsibility for this unfortunate situation

A person who meticulously considers these historical developments—from the advent of Christianity until present day—or contemplates and analyzes the current situation of the Western World—which is regarded as the cradle of modern civilization—and retrogressively dissects the proximate and distant causes of these historical developments, will have no doubt that the main blame for humanity's moral degradation, abandonment of human spirituality and establishment of completely material life in the place of spiritual life falls upon the Church and its teachings.

The Noble Qur'an explicitly holds religious authorities responsible for the religious disorder and the discord and chaos in human life.

﴿... وَمَا اخْتَلَفَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جَاءَهُمُ الْعِلْمُ بَغْيًا بَيْنَهُمْ ...﴾

“And those who were given the Book were not at variance save after knowledge had come to them, being envious of one another...”¹²

Moreover, it declares that the issue of Trinity and the statement “Christ is the son of God” [al-Masḥ ibn Allḥ] is a fabrication of the Church, which has incorporated a type of idolatry into the heavenly

teachings of Jesus Christ ('a) and has turned it into a tenet of the Christian call.

﴿...وَقَالَتُ النَّصَارَى الْمَسِيحُ ابْنُ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ قَوْلُهُمْ بِأَفْوَاهِهِمْ يُضَاهَوْنَ قَوْلَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ...﴾

“And the Christians say, ‘The Messiah (Christ) is the son of Allah’. That is the utterance of their mouths imitating the utterances of those who disbelieved before...”¹³

Following this they embodied divinity into the Church and introduced the word of the clergy as unconditionally binding in order to attain their material desires.

﴿اتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسِيحَ ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا إِلَهًا وَاحِدًا لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ﴿سُبْحَانَهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ﴾

“They have taken their rabbis and their monks as lords apart from Allah and Messiah son of Mary; whereas they were not commanded save to serve one God. There is no god but He; He is pure of what they associate (with Him).”¹⁴

﴿...إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِنَ الْأَحْبَارِ وَالرُّهْبَانِ لَيَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ...﴾

“Surely many of the rabbis and monks consume the wealth of the people unrighteously and debar (them) from the way of Allah...”¹⁵

Furthermore, God, the Exalted, commands His Holy Prophet (S) to encourage followers of other divine books to cooperate with Muslims in two aims: first, that they attribute divinity exclusively to the One God and worship no god but Him.

Second, that they ascribe mastery and lordship solely to God and refrain from choosing one from among themselves, who is generally a peer and has no preference in humanity, as an unconditional sovereign in order to reconcile their livelihoods with the system of creation—the same system that has created all humans with intelligence, freewill, and desire for beatitude and has stamped no person’s forehead with the mark “unduly dear”.

﴿قُلْ يَا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ تَعَالَوْا إِلَى كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ وَلَا نُشْرِكَ بِهِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَتَّخِذَ بَعْضُنَا بَعْضًا قُلُوبًا...﴾

“Say, O People of the Book! Come to a word common among us and among you: That we serve none save Allah and that we associate nothing else with Him and that some of us take not others as lords besides God...”¹⁶

Islam's recommendation to its followers

In its campaign against incarnation [hulūq] and unity [ittihād], which the Church—and before them the Jews and idolaters—had advocated, Islam has made deep and emphatic recommendations to its followers.

In many verses, the Qur'an urges Muslims to be firm in their monotheistic belief [tawhīd], be sincere in their servitude [‘ubūdiyyah], follow the Book [kitāb] and Tradition [sunnah] unanimously and wholeheartedly, solve all intellectual disputes through the Book and Tradition, and refrain from egotistical advice, exploitation, and judgment using religious tenets. These matters have been discussed in “Tafsīr al-Māzīn” under the following verses:

﴿...وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا﴾

“And hold you fast, all together, to the cord of Allah and divide not...”¹⁷

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ كَآفَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ﴾

“O you who believe, enter absolute peace and submission (to Allah) and follow not the footsteps of Satan; surely he is an obvious foe to you.”¹⁸

﴿كُلُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ ...﴾

“Eat of what Allah has provided for you and follow not the footsteps of Satan; surely he is an obvious foe to you.”¹⁹

The Holy Qur'an advises Muslims to limit their spiritual commingling to the Islamic society, which is the society of piety and theism, and to shun spiritual commingling and superior-subordinate relationships with non-Islamic societies including polytheists, idolaters, and followers of divine books such as Christians, Jews, and Magi.

﴿لَا يَتَّخِذِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الْكَافِرِينَ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ فَلَيْسَ مِنَ اللَّهِ فِي شَيْءٍ إِلَّا أَنْ تَتَّقُوا مِنْهُمْ تُقَاةً﴾
﴿وَيُحَذِّرُكُمُ اللَّهُ نَفْسَهُ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ﴾

“Let not the believers take unbelievers for friends or superiors rather than believers and whosoever does that has no connection with Allah in anything, unless to dissimulate before them for fear. Allah cautions you to beware of (disobeying) Him and unto Allah is the return.”²⁰

The Holy Qur'an has implicitly and explicitly mentioned in several places the consequences of such spiritual commingling and superior-subordinate relationships. For example, it says: until now (at the close of the Prophet's (S) life) you Muslims have been in danger due to the covetousness of non-Muslim nations.

Every moment you were in peril of downfall, but today the unbelievers have despaired from shattering your organized religious society. So fear outsiders no longer and be at peace for they shall never be able to seize this blessing from you and obliterate your religious establishment, which is the Islamic approach.

Fear the unbelievers no longer but fear God. Because if you deviate from the path that God has set for you (following the Book and Tradition) and take up other paths, God will make the same trade with you that He made with the others—He took away the gift of spiritual bliss and worldly welfare, created division among them, and denied them every kind of material and spiritual supremacy and independence.²¹

﴿...الْيَوْمَ يَيْسَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ دِينِكُمْ فَلَا تَخْشَوْهُمْ وَاخْشَوْنِ...﴾

“Today, the disbelievers despaired of (harming) your religion; therefore, fear them not, fear me...”²²

Moreover, in its predictions (which must be considered divine reports), the Noble Qur'an implicitly indicates that due to relationships with non-Islamic societies, the Islamic society will successively abandon the precepts of the Qur'an using various excuses:

﴿وَقَالَ الرَّسُولُ يَا رَبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِي اتَّخَذُوا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ مَهْجُورًا﴾

“And (on the Day of Judgment) the Prophet will declare: O my Lord! Surely my people have forsaken this Qur'an.”²³

Also, due to spiritual commingling with the Christian World, Islamic methods and traditions shall be reversed. People will change religious laws and turn virtue into evil and evil into virtue. They shall deem religious tenets superstition and consider support of religion folly.

On that day, corruption will expand to the seas and deserts and trouble shall succeed plight. Perhaps through this the people will tire of the evil consequences of their unrestraint and ungodliness and return to the natural religion.

Despair of Muslims before the West

Here we will discuss repercussions of incidents at the advent of Islam (after the passing of the Prophet until circa fourth century anno hegirae (AH)) and the ensuing series of ramifications that expand and deepen with the passage of time.

Discussion about whether or not the foremost agents of these occurrences intended correction or sabotage and whether they were good or evil people are not the aims of this discourse. However, these are singular circumstances and in order to fully examine them we must perforce probe into and analyze the initial roots.

Thus, we are compelled to refer to the dawn of the Islamic era in hopes of locating our objective. Of course, persons who truly intend to learn must not and cannot obscure the truths they uncover or invert in their minds that which they have understood.

In order to elucidate this matter, we must say that today, in terms of disorder in spiritual life, moral corruption, and confusion of human mentalities we are similar to the West. Even though Professor Henry Corbin professes that Muslims have yet to sample the flavor of modernity (!), we still have some life left and the extirpating deluge has not wrought destruction upon our spirituality as it has done with the spirituality of the Western World.

Indeed, in loss of spiritual life and moral corruption our situation is very similar to the West. However, it cannot be denied that contrary to the West, we have not created this unfortunate situation ourselves; rather, it happened the day the Western civilization came after its Eastern customers—especially us Muslims—with its bewitching appearance full of décor and finery, first as honored guests and then as powerful hosts, and wriggled its way into our society.

With their effective and penetrating propaganda the West indoctrinated us to think in the following manner:

‘We do not possess the necessary human intellect and resolve; therefore, we must throw aside that intellect and resolve, being completely useless, and only consider the path that the West determines for us. We must do what they intend. We must abandon all our characteristics and become westernized in speech and action, heart and appearance!’

As a result of this inculcation, when we reviewed our sad outmoded lives, without distinguishing between harm and benefit, between poison and panacea—because we had initially lost our intellectual independence—we blindly imitated the Western lifestyle.

Hence, every case of Western corruption augmented the existing corruption in our own society and every case of goodness and correction—because we were not ready and did not have the capacity to accept—brought about corruption in our affairs and no beneficial outcome.

As it happens, from among the unfortunate conditions that exist in our Islamic society, those that are similar to the adverse circumstances in the West have come to us through imitation of the West and the undesirable states of affairs that we have are not directly related to the fact of our being Muslims and methods of previous centuries.

Nonetheless, if our foregoing background was not corrupt and mortified, we would never accept this perversion so easily. We would defend the most excellent treasure of our being—spiritual life and ethical virtues—with felicitously and never would our cogitative mind, if we had not lost it, submit to the iniquitous logic of unquestioning emulation!

In any event, in order to understand the root of our present deplorable situation and discover its primal factors, we have no choice but to look back and study past events and examine the general practice of the Islamic society. We must return to the initial centuries of the advent of Islam until we find an acceptable reason for our current situation.

In the first steps in this reminiscence, we realize that the general situation of the Muslim World has been similar for nearly twelve entire centuries (i.e. from the year 60 AH, about 100 years before the European civilization gradually penetrated into Islamic countries).

All this time we have been dwelling in monotonous spiritual torpor and moral degradation. Even though sometimes there were fluctuations in our society because of historical turns, it has been persistently corrupt and has had little similarity to the glistening radiance of the era of the Prophet (S).

Therefore, we must draw our instruments of discourse and inquisitiveness to the advent of Islam which is the era of the rule of the Companions of the Prophet (S) [sahābah] and start our search from that period.

Of course, as we have stated, in this discussion we intend to continually pursue our objective and it is not our intent to examine the character of the religious persons of the advent of Islam or to write the biography of the great sahābah. Even so, there is no choice but to mention this series of historical events in order to clarify the main discussion, which we now return to.

Inception of the deviation from the path of the Prophet (S)

By delving into the situation of Islam after the passing of the Prophet (S), we see a similar and even symmetrical situation to the Christian clergy and the powerful Church. The same signs can be seen among the sahābah just as in the first days of the appearance of the Church and the Christian clergy.

The belief of incarnation that the Church promoted regarding Jesus Christ (‘a) was not duplicated by the important men of the advent of Islam regarding Prophet Muhammad (S), except in one or two cases (the Uhud battle and the day the Prophet passed away) in which some drew their swords and shouted: “Muhammad has not died and will never die!”

Even so, because conditions were not favorable and because the Holy Qur'an had annihilated this fallacy at the roots with overt statements and had made it clear that the Noble Prophet (S) is a human like all others and is similar to others in life and death, this susurration easily died away and had no effect on the Islamic society.

A similar situation to the Church after Christ, which was referred to as incarnation of divinity in the Church—meaning absolute sovereignty and unquestionable rule—in previous pages and which gives control of both spiritual and material aspects of the people to the Church (dictatorship in its absolute form!), also manifested in the Muslim World in the first days after the Holy Prophet (S) passed away, first in the form of the caliphate and later extending to the saḥābah.

This issue emerged with a very simple, relatively understandable, logical statement. At its inception, in declaration of its general program, the Caliphate stated, “The Holy Prophet (S) was assisted by divine revelation [wahy] in decision-making and general administration; however, with the passing of the Prophet (S) divine revelation has been cut off so that we have no choice but to make necessary decisions through ijtihād²⁴.”

They also declared, “Like you, we sometimes have correct judgment and sometimes we make mistakes. If we make a mistake in something advise and correct us.” Of course, this statement seems very simple and reasonable.

At the time the people regarded its apparent and simple meaning and were naturally thankful. However, observation of subsequent events and acquaintance with a series of happenings has cast us into doubt about the meaning of this statement and this compels us to delve deeper.

Incidentally, what is the meaning of the idea, “The Holy Prophet (S) was assisted by divine revelation in his works; however, now that we do not have divine revelation we must perform ijtihād.” Also, what are the areas in which the Prophet (S) only relied upon divine revelation and did not interpolate his own judgment and those regarding which a contemporary Caliph might use his own discernment?

Do the Caliphs mean the divine precepts, which according to the explication of the Qur'an are perennially immutable and unchangeable? Or is their intent execution of these commandments, which according the specific wording of the Qur'an brooks no negligence?

﴿...وَإِنَّهُ لَكِتَابٌ عَزِيزٌ * لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ ...﴾

“And most assuredly it is a sublime book. Falsehood approaches it not from before it nor from behind it..”²⁵

﴿وَمَنْ لَمْ يَحْكَمْ بِمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ...﴾

“And whosoever judges not by that which Allah has revealed, verily they are the evildoers.”²⁶

Or are the judicial codes of the Prophet of God (S) which were issued regarding litigations intended? Clearly by explicit testimony of the Qur’an in these cases, the verdict of the Prophet of God (S) was law.

He would judge according to material evidence and the verdict was not based on divine inspiration. Perhaps the intent was the commands that the Prophet of God (S) issued in general affairs, in war and peace, after consulting with his followers? It is evident that these affairs were based upon consultation and the decision of the Prophet (S), thus they were unrelated to divine revelation.

Or was it meant that the Prophet of God (S) apprehended the Islamic jurisprudential commandments and rules directly through revelation, without thought, and that we must deduce our course of action by subjecting the Book (Qur’an) and Tradition [sunnah] to scrutiny and ijtihād?

There is no doubt that the Prophet (S) was inspired with the divine commandments through revelation and others must comprehend them through ijtihād.

However, this is not limited to the Caliph—any person in the Islamic society [ummah] capable of religious deduction [istinbāt] must grasp jurisprudential precepts themselves through ijtihād.

Furthermore, this topic is irrelevant to the responsibilities and practical agenda of the office of Caliph.

Expedience in the place of truth

Indeed, the intent of the Caliphate by this utterance was intricate.

Even so, subsequent events clarified its meaning. It soon became clear that the Caliphate meant to tell the people that it shall exercise its opinion and ijtihād everywhere and in all things even execution of divine commandments and religious precepts and that its policy is expedience [maslihat] regarding the ummah, adaptation of prevalent precepts with current interests, and ultimately, guidance of the Islamic society through leadership driven by expediency.

Thus, this declaration means, ‘These religious laws and precepts are for achieving and retaining your interests. Hence, religious precepts are subject to contemporary expedience and interests. Basically, at the time of the Prophet of God (S) discernment of current interests was committed to divine revelation.

However, after the passing of the Prophet (S) and the loss of current revelation, discernment of interests has been relegated to ijtihād and we shall distinguish good from evil through deduction and execute what is perceived as expedient!’

There is considerable evidence confirming this in the actions of the first Caliph in the short period of his incumbency.

After the second Caliph assumed his office, many changes were made in religious precepts which had

no reason other than current expedience in the opinion of the Caliph. At the time of the Third Caliph, there was no longer any obscurity regarding the issue of modifying precepts in favor of current expedience.

After this period, with the start of the rule of the Umayyad dynasty and the domination of Mu‘awiyah over the Islamic society this issue is so clear that it can in no way be obscured.

This elevated the caliphate to a status equal to that of prophethood. In consequence, just as the Holy Prophet (S) was the issuer of Islamic precepts and administrator of the Islamic society, the Muslim Caliph also had the same status in issuance of precepts and administration of Muslim affairs.

One difference was that although the Holy Prophet (S) had the authority to make necessary expedient decisions in administration of the affairs of Muslims, he did not have the right to make the smallest change in divine precepts and commandments whereas the Caliphate had plenary authority and free reign in both Islamic precepts and administration of Muslim affairs, and they could make any change they thought was in the interests of the Islamic society!

At first, this was how the state of affairs progressed, i.e. the interests of Islam and Muslims were implied. However, later on, the interests of the Caliphate replaced the interests of Islam and Muslims! As a result, the Islamic policy of the Holy Prophet (S) was lost and execution of Islamic precepts and commandments became completely dependent on the discernment and judgment of the Caliph.

In reply to a protest regarding prohibition of the grater pilgrimage [hajj-e tamattu‘], temporary marriage [nikah-e mut‘ah], and other issues, the Second Caliph first said:

«انا زميل محمد»

“I am the friend and associate of Muhammad.”

And then he explained the current expedience that caused the alteration and interdiction of these precepts.

In the six-person council that was assembled by the instruction of the second Caliph to appoint the Third Caliph, after much dispute, which brought down the candidates to two from the original six (‘Alī (‘a) and ‘Uthmān), “‘Abd al-Rahmān ibn ‘Awf”, who had an extra vote in case of a tie in accordance with the decree of the Second Caliph, extended his hand towards ‘Alī (‘a) and said, “I shall pledge allegiance to you on the condition that you deal with us in the same manner as the Shaykhayn (the first two caliphs).”

‘Alī (‘a) answered, “I shall only act in the manner of the Prophet of Allah (S).” ‘Abd al-Rahmān did not accept and extended his hand toward ‘Uthmān and presented him with his pledge with the condition of following the policy of the Shaykhayn. He accepted and thus the matter of allegiance was ended and

‘Uthmān took the caliphate.

Obviously, there is no difference between the policy of the Prophet of Allah (S) and that of the Shaykhayn save that the Shaykhayn brought about changes in the execution of God’s precepts and the method of the Prophet of Allah (S) according to their understanding of current interests.

Moreover, it is obvious that these changes were not limited to the practical and administrative method of the Prophet (S); rather, it had also spread to religious precepts. The following examples have been chosen from hundreds of similar cases:

In order to resolve the problem of the apostates after the passing of the Prophet (S) the First Caliph sent Khālid ibn Walīd, a Companion [sahābah], with a group of others to war against “Mūlik ibn Nuwayrah”.

After arriving at Mūlik’s place of residence, Khālid proposed peace and became his guest. On the same day, he took Mūlik by surprise, severed his head, and slept with his wife that night! After hearing about this shameful incident the Caliph did not punish Khālid at all and after ‘Umar ibn Khattāb insisted that he be punished, the Caliph told the latter, “I cannot sheathe an unsheathed sword of Allah!”

After banning temporary marriage, the Second Caliph decreed the punishment for infraction be lapidation (stoning to death). Also, regarding the six-person council, he decreed that if they do not vote their heads should be cut off.

After Mu‘āwiyah seized the office of caliphate, due to the fact that his father Abū Sufiyān had committed adultery with Ziyād ibn ‘Ubayd’s mother, he publicly summoned Ziyād to Shām (Damascus) and ‘related’ him to his father Abū Sufiyān! Even though this is against the explicit wording of the Holy Qur’an, he officially pronounced Ziyād his brother.

Many similar incidents have been recorded in history in which the caliphs put current interests before execution of incontrovertible Islamic precepts. Bygone dialectic theologians exerted themselves to attempt to match these actions to religious precepts using incomplete justifications. However, some recent Sunnī experts concede and explicate the fact that the first caliphs [khulafā’ al-rāshidīn] sometimes put the interests of the ummah before execution of indisputable religious precepts.

Consummation of caliph immunity and autonomy, and ramifications thereof

As can be seen from our previous discussions, the caliphate had absolute authority in ‘issuance of precepts’. In modern terms, they had the jurisdiction to legislate or alter articles of the Constitution and they also had the authority to legislate and execute statutes.

A shortcoming of this independency which required amendment was the immunity of administrators and executives, i.e. the caliphate, vassals, and officials, which consisted of many of the Prophet’s

Companions [sahābah]. An obligatory irrefutable religious dictum was necessary to bring about religious immunity for officials and divest the people of the right to protest against their words and deeds. In this way, the sahābah would become completely autonomous.

This shortcoming was remedied with a narration the sahābah referred to the Holy Prophet (S). In accordance with this narration, the sahābah of the Prophet of Allah (S) were introduced as jurists [mujtahid] such that if their judgment was correct in a certain matter, they would be rewarded by God and even if their judgment was incorrect, they were rewarded and pardoned.

Again, they related another narration regarding the virtuousness of the sahābah, according to which the sahābah of the Prophet of Allah (S) are automatically forgiven and exempt from punishment and God is pleased with them and whatever they do—good or bad, servitude to or offence against God—entails no divine call to account!

This narration reinforced the previous narration (that the sahābah were mujtahids or jurists and thus rewarded regardless), presented an official authorization to the sahābah, and absolutely guaranteed the unrestrained freedom of judgment and action of the sahābah of the Prophet (S).

The direct consequence of the autonomy of the caliphate and the religious immunity of the sahābah—who were the officials of the caliphate—was that the religious and worldly affairs of the Islamic society were completely entrusted to the caliphate. The result of this situation was that the valence of religious precepts, both worship-related and conduct-related, was restricted to “intuitive deduction–social thought”.

Moreover, it introduced the practical laws and even theoretical teachings of Islam as phenomena based upon the material life of people which all people can understand.

As a consequence, the spiritual life of Islam fell from its lofty and true status to the social level and became restricted to materiality. According to the respected scholar, Professor Corbin, contrary to the soul of Islam, divinity was incarnated into the Islamic society or in the seat of caliphate and its vicinity.

As might be expected, the effulgence of Islam that had originated at the time of the Prophet (S)—from his appointment to his passing—became ancient history (consider this point carefully).

This eventuality was the fatalistic, natural, and inevitable effect of the meddling of ijtihād in divine precepts. It had nothing to do with the knowledge or ignorance of the original agents and founders and the supporters of the electoral caliphate.

In truth, it must be said that many of the people of that day and even subsequent periods did not understand the nature of this issue as they should have and they were ignorant of its evil repercussions.

As we can see, the challengers of this electoral caliphate, who in objection broke off from the majority on the first day, became widely known as Shū‘ah. They were very few at first but at the eventide of the era

of the four first caliphs, they had become a significant party.

It is also evident that the majority of Sunnī scholars do not consider ijtihād that is against the wording of the Book and Tradition permissible even though the actions of the first caliphs can never be vindicated without it.

Repercussions of the autonomy of the judgment and rulings of the caliphs

As previously discussed, the general practical method of the caliphate was execution of Islamic precepts by means of ijtihād and judgment. In other words, their policy was to preserve the interests of the Islamic society conforming to the Book [kitāb] and Tradition [sunnah] where possible and putting current interests before the Book and Tradition if not.

Furthermore, as mentioned, this changed the authentic and immaterial spirituality of Islam into a socio-materialist regime which, like all other material phenomena, must naturally retain the general aspects of material beings such as childhood, adolescence, maturity, and old age. For instance, the Second Caliph compared Islam to a camel that passes through various periods and states such as infirmity, strength, and subsequent infirmity.

This method was not the invariable method of the time of the Holy Prophet (S). It was, rather, similar to democratic rule (where democratic rule is incomplete because obviously it cannot conform to all the incontrovertible principles of democracy).

Thus, it embodies an inner turmoil that is contrary to the stability and consistency of an established social convention. Undeniably, each of the four first caliphs came into office in a different manner. The first two caliphs had relatively similar policies and the third and fourth caliphs each had unique methods of office.

Additionally, Mu‘āwiyah took the Islamic caliphate in a dissimilar manner to these four caliphs. He then made the caliphate “hereditary” and publicly turned it into “despotic rule”.

In this way, the newly-established Islamic government became like its contemporaneous empires, such as the Roman and Persian empires, first in that it put an end to the convergence of social strata, which Islam greatly struggled to establish.

As a result, social division—such as superior and subordinate, master and servant, man and woman, Arab and non-Arab, Companion [sahābah] and non-Companion, Immigrants [muhājirīn] and Helpers [ansār]—quickly caused great rifts among the people. Second in that it used all its power for world conquest and expansion of its control.

In order to incite the people to Holy War [jihād], the Second Caliph even directed that the words “Hasten

towards the best of deeds”²⁷ be dropped from adhḥn²⁸ so that people would not prefer ritual prayer [salḥt] to jihḥd.

As a result of this intemperance, all of the exalted aims of Islam in refining and perfecting the people were overshadowed. As a matter of course, it cannot be denied that one of the important dictates of Islam is jihḥd, which is the instrument of struggle against polytheism and expansion of the monotheistic [tawhḥd] maxim. Even so, it is evident that the method of Islam is not the method of Alexander or Genghis Khḥn.

If Islam has given Muslims the mandate of world domination, with it, it has also given the mandate of statesmanship. It is evident in holy Qur’anic verses that the meaning of expanding the sphere of influence is vivification of the word of righteousness, development of social justice, and spiritual edification of the people; not establishment of a Kaiserist dictatorship, world exploitation, extensive slave traffic, taking of immeasurable spoils of war, and amassment of extraordinary treasures.

Accumulation of treasure became so rampant at the time of the Third Caliph that Abḥ Dharr, the truthful and cherished Companion of the Prophet (S), campaigned against amassing wealth and obtaining treasure and finally was martyred in this struggle.

When the Third Caliph wanted to resolve a problem of differing written versions of the Qur’an and establish a uniform version, he insisted that a “wḥw” [و] be taken out of the “Verse of Wealth” [ḥyat ul-kanz] such that he even threatened Abḥ ibn Ka’b the great Qur’anic scribe with his sword:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْأَحْبَارِ وَالرُّهْبَانِ لَيَأْكُلُونَ أَمْوَالَ النَّاسِ بِالْبَاطِلِ وَيَصُدُّونَ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّذِينَ
يَكْنِزُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يَنْفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ ﴿

“O you who believe! Most surely many of the rabbis and monks consume the wealth of the people unjustly and turn them from the way of Allah; and those who hoard up gold and silver and do not spend it in the way of Allah, give them tidings of a painful chastisement”²⁹

Moreover, to the very end, Muḥwiyah insisted that the Verse of Wealth proscription regarding amassing wealth was about the followers of other divine books not Muslims.

This is understandable because history bears witness that everything he and his collaborators did and every conspiracy and corruption that they were involved in was effectuated through the force of wealth and the blessing of ijtiḥd!

In any event, by stating these facts the intention was not to analyze this segment of history at the advent of Islam; rather, the discussion brought us here. Hence, we shall again return to the main aim of this article, which is discussion of “Islamic eschatology according to the Shḥ’ahs”.

The autonomy of the caliphate in issuance of precepts and the privilege of *ijtihad*—that the *sahābah* had gained in those days—had substantial effects on the manifestation of Islamic teachings and precepts.

These directly affected the three methods of “transcendent revelation”, “logical thought and reasoning”, and “guardianship and eschatology”, which we discussed at the start of this article. As would be expected, these three methods were altered to match the prevailing situation.

Alteration of teachings and precepts

It can be understood from the words of the Qur’an that the theoretical teachings and practical precepts in it have been canonized for everyone and all times and they can never be changed, because the instructional contents of the Qur’an are a series of general principles.

Furthermore, according to the explicit wording of the Glorious Qur’an, the declarations of the Holy Prophet (S) are canonically binding and his explications of precepts are statutory and are the same as revealed verses. It is a clear historic fact that every word uttered by the Holy Prophet (S) was retained by the *sahābah* and other hearers, word by word.

They would then relate these utterances to each other and publicize them. Also, the Noble Prophet (S) regarded the words of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) as having this same credibility and canonicalness and has upheld their explication and elucidation of general Islamic teachings and precepts as his own.

Hence, general Qur’anic laws and the Noble Prophet’s (S) explanations of religious canons [*shar‘ah*] (which consist of the prophetic traditions) hold the status of an immutable Constitution.

Only a temporary set of decisions that a Muslim viceroy is authorized to make in accordance with prevailing interests and necessities in the area of observing religious precepts may be altered or replaced. These precepts are temporary and subsidiary rules and are concerned with the short-term interests of the Islamic society. In the span of his lifetime, this authority was held by the Prophet (S).

After the passing of the Prophet (S), the majority of the *sahābah* and the people held this same opinion in regard with Islamic precepts. However, as we discussed, the caliphate had a different notion. The caliphate believed that the Islamic laws that must be observed in an Islamic monotheistic atmosphere are divine precepts that have been revealed in accordance with current interests and must naturally change with the variation of the interests and needs of the *ummah*.

In modern terms, we can interpret this by saying that they believed that the Islamic religion has a Constitution which is a set of divine rules and regulations that were revealed upon the Noble Prophet (S).

These rules, which are in harmony with the interests of the Islamic society, are immutable and mandatory unless the viceroy of the society perceives the interests of the society in something else. The

tasks of administrating the Islamic society and propagating Islam after the passing of the Prophet (S) were believed to fall to the ummah itself.

Keeping to the interests of Muslims, the society can appoint whoever it wants to administrate its affairs and to hold the caliphate. Naturally, any goodness or perversion that the caliph discerns is authoritative and is equivalent to the discernment of the society. Any alteration in the standing regulations of Islam by the judgment of the caliph is considered acceptable and binding.

Obviously, this ideology is only attentive to divine rules and precepts in the Holy Qur'an which it considers relatively immutable (similar to the articles of the Constitution in democratic rule).

However, rules and precepts uttered by the Holy Prophet (S), especially precepts not linked directly to the Qur'an, are considered temporary and subsidiary regulations such as the practical method of the Prophet of God (S) and the minor, temporary, and local commands he issued. Or at least, the precepts in the Prophet's (S) Tradition [sunnah] are not considered to possess the constancy and solidity of Qur'anic precepts and may easily be defined as current interests of the Prophet's (S) era!

According to a notable hadith among the Sunnis and Shu'ahs (the Hadith of Paper [hadith-e qirtas]), when the Prophet (S) asked for paper and ink at the last moments of his life to write a comprehensive directive to be followed after him, the Second Caliph declared, "Surely this man is delirious"³⁰ and later he said, "The Book of Allah suffices us"³¹.

There is no doubt that the second statement means that with the existence of the Book of Allah we do not need the directive of the Prophet (S) and this cannot be justified other than through the theory we previously stated.

Also, in one of his speeches regarding the ban of "the greater pilgrimage" [hajj-e tamattu'], the Second Caliph said, "God would make things permissible and prohibited for his Messenger. You must consider only the beginning of the Verse of the Greater Pilgrimage [ayat al-hajj-e al-tamattu'] and disregard the end of the verse and the implementation of the Prophet (S)!" (Contemplate this carefully.)

At the time of the first caliphs, great importance was placed upon memorizing and reciting the Holy Qur'an whereas relating narrations regarding the prophetic traditions and memorizing the Prophet's (S) statements regarding the details of Islamic jurisprudence were brushed aside.

Even though at the time of the Prophet (S), the sahabah expended considerable effort in memorizing and writing prophetic hadiths and jurisprudential precepts, after the Prophet (S) inscription of hadith was strictly prohibited.

This prohibition lasted until the end of the rule of the Umayyad dynasty. The First Caliph even collected a great many of the hadiths he himself had written and burned them! The Second Caliph even forbade the sahabah from relating hadith.

The only incident that attracts attention in the issue of hadith propagation is that after coming into his office and ascendancy over Islamic governance, Mu‘awiyah made a public declaration that whoever relates a narration [riwayah or hadith] regarding the virtues of the first three caliphs shall receive a reward and whoever relates a narration regarding the virtues of ‘Alī ibn Abī Tālib³² shall have no immunity whatsoever and will be held in contempt by the caliphate.

He commanded his functionaries and governors to write down the names of those who related hadith on the virtues of the Triad Caliphs and give them rewards from the public treasury [bayt al-māl]³³. Subsequently, a pandemonium of hadiths related to virtues of the Triad Caliphs was released!

A result of this policy was that relation of hadith in non-jurisprudential areas, especially hadiths that were in some way linked to the virtuosity of the Triad Caliphs and other saḥābah, developed extensively. However, no interest was expressed in regard to religious laws and Islamic jurisprudential precepts and they largely fell from grace.

Traditionist experts³⁴ [‘ulamā’ al-rijāl] and historians have recorded the names and backgrounds of approximately twelve thousand saḥābahs of the Holy Prophet (S) and have stated that this great group of people lived for close to one century after the hijrah with absolute respect from contemporary Caliphs and Muslims and that their ‘goods’, which were prophetic hadiths, had great worth in the Bazaar of Islam.

When they state that the hadiths regarding Islamic jurisprudence and religious precepts related by these esteemed individuals throughout this lengthy period is only around five hundred hadiths, which means that from every twenty-four saḥābahs only one hadith remains as memorial, a person becomes awestruck and dazed beyond description!

In addition, some of the religious issues in these hadiths are still obscure, ambiguous, or even contradictory and precepts that should have become necessary and axiomatic due to their myriad frequency have become unsolvable mysteries!

By way of illustration, we could describe the issue of the ritual ablution [wudū]. The Holy Prophet (S) prescribed wudū and made this ablution himself among the people several times a day for over twenty years.

According to the narrations and relations of the saḥābah, it is not evident whether he washed his hands from top to bottom or bottom to top; whereas, according to historic records, when the Prophet (S) made wudū people would crowd around him and attempt to take the water of his wudū as tabarruk³⁵ and would try not to let even a drop fall to the earth.

The issues of inheritance of aunts³⁶ and wrongdoing in the duties of inheritance could also be cited.

In short, as a result of this ideology, Islamic jurisprudential precepts were lost and syllogism [qiyās] and

istihsān³⁷ were substituted in the place of religious stipulations.

Proscription of logical argumentation and debate

Through their God-given nature, humans intuitively understand that culture is the key to worldly bliss and happiness. Progress in life is linked to cultural progress. Cultural progress is not possible without logical argumentation and free debate.

Even though there was a time when this issue was not as clear as it should have been due to unenlightenment and other unnatural factors, today this issue is considered axiomatic and there is no longer the least dubiety in this regard.

It has become evident through both discourse and experience that if unnatural factors do not hinder them, due to their God-given natures, humans promote open debates and logical thought and advance in this manner. This is true especially in such as the Islamic society, where religion is based upon logical reasoning and the divine Book does not have even the least amount of reservation or negligence in regard with logical thought.

Even so, at the advent of Islam—particularly synchronous with the first and second caliphs when every day Islam was becoming more and more renowned and the Islamic society was progressively developing—there is no apparent trace of Islamic cultural development through discussion and inquisitiveness.

We must most regretfully confess that in this period of its history, the Islamic society manifested no substantial endeavors in this area and they did not even put into “cultural development” one hundredth of the effort that they put into “jihād”.

They placed Islamic principles, with all its subtle details and scientific truths, before the simple understanding of the commons even though various hadīths bear witness to the fact that at the time the sphere of education went no further than the level of corporality and the senses.

Among both the commons and the elite the belief reigned that the words of the Holy Qur’an, with its simple meanings understandable to the public, are sufficient for both thought and deed.

In line with this principle, all kinds of critical discussions and free inquiry in doctrine were forbidden and considered religious innovations or heresy [bid‘ah] and entailed heavy punishments. For example, a person who debated an issue with the Second Caliph was whipped by the Caliph until blood freely flowed from his body.

In another instance, the Second Caliph explained a Qur’anic verse in such a manner that it seemed to authenticate fatalism. An Arab made an objection and the Caliph verbally lashed out at him and threatened him such that it seemed he intended to kill him, until finally several of those present were

able to quell his anger only with great difficulty!

Even so, a series of argumentations regarding religious doctrine could not be avoided because:

First, as a result of Islamic conquests the Muslim society daily grew and scholars of other faiths and creeds came to Muslim gatherings and propounded various discussions regarding Islamic teachings. Thus Muslims were forced to take part in debates and offer answers.

Second, the Islamic society was entangled with a motley of hypocrites who propagated all kinds of doubts and perceived faults in Islam. Also, there were religious minorities who disagreed with the majority in many subsidiary beliefs. Hence, time and again, many scientific discussions and debates would break out.

As a matter of course, a series of discussions that later became known as “dialectic theology” [‘ilm al-kalām] were developed and circulated among the people in spite of the aversion and prohibition of officials. Finally, some individuals became experts in these debates and government officials and jurists of the time who strived with all their might to prevent dialectic discussions approved of the science of dialectic theology.

In previous discussions we talked to some extent about the method and style of dialectic theological discussions and there is no need to repeat these arguments. However, we must state the fact that even though the dialectic theology, which discusses the various theoretical teachings of Islam, is a noble science, due to the shortcomings in its original formation, it has been deprived of the true value of a rational technique and completely free argumentation for two reasons:

As perfectly evident from Qur’anic verses, principles of Islamic doctrine are a series of truths and realities that are much beyond the understanding of the unlearned. Because the Islamic society and government functionaries were heedless of or even opposed to free logical debates, they subjected simple commoner beliefs to discussion and advocated a series of mundane social thoughts as the final true doctrines of Islam.

As a result, in their minds “divinity” [ulūhiyyah] and “the metaphysical world” [‘ālam-e mawarā’ al-tabā‘ah], which are pure and flawless, manifested in the form and identity of a material world similar to our universe. In addition, they believed that our tangible world is governed by the laws of “causality” [‘illiyyah] but the transcendent realm has no fixed system and is completely uncontrolled!

Also, they held that our material world is subject to the senses and that the incorporeal world, even though it is similar to this world, is imperceptible to the senses and a time will come when all constituents of the spiritual world even ... [sic] will become tangible!

As a result of the prohibition of the practice of free debate, rationalization became a pretense or pastime and the only proof necessary for the thought being analyzed became imitation.

This is why the strongest reason and sharpest weapon among dialectics is consensus [ijmāʿ]. In flailing to authenticate unanimity first they related this narration from the Holy Prophet (S), “My ummah shall not unite in error.”³⁸ and therefore, they consider unanimity of the ummah to be sound reason.

Then, they substituted the ummah with the scholars [ʿulamāʾ] of the ummah. Later scholars of a group within the ummah such as the “Ashʿarīyah” or “Muʿtazilah” were substituted for scholars of the ummah. After that, they swapped scholars of a faction with dialectic theologians of that faction!

This ended here and as a result, obviously, the strongest reason of a dialectic theologian [mutikallim] such as Ashʿarī in proving an Ashʿarīyah belief is the unanimity of the Ashʿarīyah dialectic theologians. It was quite frequent that a claim was repudiated even though it was congruent with the Book [kitāb], Tradition [sunnah], or reason [ʿaql] because of being contrary to the consensus of scholars and dialectics of the religious faction!

In line with these affairs, we see that:

First, the opposition of adherents to one Islamic faction regarding an exclusive authorized unanimous view of a second faction is not considered problematic for Islam; according to each faction supporters of other factions are not part of the Muslim society!

Second, a person who accepts one exclusive principle of a faction must accept the rest of its exclusive principles without question, whether or not they have sufficient reason. It is clear that this method has completely annihilated the spirit of rational thought and has dried out the roots of free thought in the Islamic community. In this manner, it has given absolute reign to fanatical imitation in all beliefs!

This method went beyond dialectic theology and contaminated other Islamic sciences such as exegesis [tafsīr], jurisprudence [fiqh], methodology [usūl], etc. and even interloped and caused havoc in linguistic sciences such as morphology [sarf], grammar [nahw], semantics [maʿnā], and rhetoric [bayān].

With a look at any of these sciences we see strange classifications such as hanafiyyah, shāfiʿiyyah, etc. and kḥfiyyah, basriyyah, etc. and the like. Every faction rationalizes its unique thoughts and allegorically reinterprets the reasons of others.

Third, as a result of the method of “reliance on tribal and factional unanimity”, authoritative proofs, i.e. the Book and Tradition, lost their true value and were demoted to formalities. For this reason, we see that to prove their beliefs proponents of each faction first refer to the consensus of its supporters and then they may turn to the Book and Tradition. Also, they expressly and recklessly allegorically reinterpret the proofs of other factions from the Book and Tradition and thus invalidate them.

This style has even spread among literary scholars and every party reinterprets the reasons and proofs of the opposition, which include Arabic verse or prose, definition, collation, and other devices!

Spiritual and eschatological development

With the passage of a century, ignorant darkness spread throughout the Islamic society. However, due to the inevitable contact of Muslims with the scientific and cultural societies of the world, they realized their desperate and increasing need for philosophical and logical sciences. On account of their illogical imitation they never thought that there could be authentic and logical wisdom in the content of the Book and Tradition.

Thus, in their reckless need they sought wisdom elsewhere. At the epilogue of the “Umayyad dynasty” and the prelude of the “Abbasid dynasty” many books of logic, philosophy, mathematics, etc. were translated from Greek, Syriac, and other languages into Arabic.

Even though introduction of these sciences into the Islamic society generated great fervor and enthusiasm and contemporary caliphs completely supported these “newly arrived guests”, contrary to expectation, due to the clash of divine philosophy and various dogmatic issues in Islam that were rationalized using the dialectic method, a dispute ignited between “dialectic theologians and jurists” [mutikallimīn wa fuqahā]—who were backed by the admiration of the public—and “advocates of philosophy”.

Ultimately, “philosophy” [falsafah] was rejected or abandoned and “dialectics” [kalām] gained primacy owing to the merit that (in their opinion) its discussions were in line with religious law [shar‘].

Those with sufficient literacy regarding spiritual life and inner perfection that have grasped the true aims of this science, clearly understand that the method of “inner advancement” and “spiritual life” is based on the fact that human inner perfections and spiritual ranks are genuine truths that exist beyond the realities of nature and the material world.

In addition, they acknowledge that “the spiritual realm”, which is the abode of spiritual life, is a world much more authentic, real, and vast than “the world of corporality and the senses”.

Spiritual ranks are genuine truths and conditions of human existence. They have never been formal concepts or social conventions.

Wealth and poverty, prominence and insignificance, mastership and servitude, lords and subjects are a series of prescriptive or conventional concepts or titles that have been proscribed for various social aims and are given to persons through specific social rules.

Accordance of the title of lordship to a lord or vassalship to a vassal does not affect their external nature or change their essence. Wealth is not an essential part of a person who is wealthy and losing wealth does not diminish the human essence nor take anything away from it.

Also, the only relationship between social actions and their consequences (good or bad) is a prescriptive

one. Thus, it happens much that actions which at one time have generous rewards entail punishment at later times or might not have any results at all.

Social ranks and titles are usually prescriptive and follow social conventions. Further, the relationships among these titles and the actions arising from them and between titles and their effects in the society are all prescriptive and conventional.

However, the relationship between human actions and mental states, between these states and the inner levels of human advancement, and between these levels and the realm that incorporates these levels are all genuine and real phenomena existing outside the authority and dominion of material and nature. In short, spiritual life and eschatology (in any form) are based on the authenticity of the spiritual realm.

The view we mentioned before—the foundation of “the electoral caliphate”—caused “the Islamic tradition” to become known as merely a “social tradition”. Its cornerstones were exclusively the corporal interests, which were discernible through social-based thoughts.

It is clear that this view has no connection with spiritual advancement and eschatology and that effecting reconciliation between this view and eschatology is impossible. This is because “pure materiality” and “pure spirituality” are situated at two opposite poles. Thus, proximity to one is remoteness from the other.

On this account, in the era of the Caliphs at the advent of Islam there is no trace of the method of spiritual evolution. Except for an assortment of religious worshipers and ascetics who were known only for their good deeds, no one demonstrated spiritual evolution in any other context. This continued until the preludes of the ‘Abbāsīd dynasty.

Activities of the Shā‘ahs for establishment of righteousness

The majority of the Muslims of the first era of Islam were as we stated. As a result of this condition, the theoretical and practical doctrines of Islam were falling into decline. In addition, the methods of understanding and advancing these truths, i.e. the free debate method and the spiritual development method, headed towards the valley of forgetfulness.

On the other hand, the Shā‘ah minority, which had risen against the majority from day one, did not have sufficient power to strike down the prevailing situation. In their view, restitution of the general circumstances of the Holy Prophet’s (S) era did not seem likely.

Thus, they were forced to desist from general and positive resistance and utilize a different approach—an approach in which they could protect the theoretical and practical teachings of Islam and keep alive the legitimate methods of advancement, which were the methods of free debate and spiritual evolution.

The Holy Prophet (S) introduced the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) as the custodians and teachers of Islamic precepts and the spiritual leaders of Muslims. In accordance with this recommendation, the Sh‘ahs embraced the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) and endeavored to learn and record religious precepts even in the face of fear and trepidation.

In his twenty-five years of seclusion and arduous five years of office as caliph, the first leader of the Sh‘ah, with his extraordinary eloquence and elocution, which both friend and foe recognized as unchallengeable and unrivaled, promoted Islamic precepts and opened the doors to excellent free logical debates.

He fostered men of God, sahbah and t‘bi‘n alike, such as Salmn, Kumayl Nakha‘, Uways Qaran, Rashd Hijr, and Maytham K‘f. It cannot be said that these people, with their special spiritual approach and treasuries of knowledge and wisdom, had no effect upon the Islamic society.

After the martyrdom [shahdah] of the first Sh‘ah leader, the dreadful and despotic Umayyad sultanate emerged. During the reign of the Umayyad dynasty Mu‘wiyah and his agents and all other Umayyad sultans battled the Sh‘ahs with all their might.

Everywhere they found a Sh‘ah, even those who were presumed to be Sh‘ah, they would wipe them out and destroy their families. Conditions for the Sh‘ahs became more grave and pressures more intense by the day.

Even so, in this period the second, third, and fourth Sh‘ah leaders brooked no neglect in vivifying and keeping alive righteousness. They operated in an environment awash in affliction and adversity under the threats of sword, scourge, and torture. Thus, day after day the truth of Sh‘ism proliferated and veridical radiance outspread.

The best testimony to this is the time immediately after this period at the close of the Umayyad dynasty leading up to the consolidation of the ‘Abbs‘d sultanate, concurrent with the fifth and sixth Sh‘ah leaders, i.e. Im‘m Muhammad al-B‘qir (‘a) and Im‘m Ja‘far al-S‘diq (‘a), when for a short period the chokehold on the Sh‘ahs weakened slightly and the Sh‘ahs gained a moderate amount of freedom.

In this interval, personages, scholars, and traditionists [muhaddithn] gathered around these two great leaders to learn Islamic sciences. These were not non-Sh‘ahs who first became Sh‘ah at the hand of the Im‘m and then endeavored in studying the sciences; rather, they were Sh‘ahs who by necessity lived in the guise of pretense and dissimulation [taqiyyah] and dropped the façade at the merest of opportunities.

This evolved spirit was not without influence in the majority of the social corpus. To a varying degree, it reflected righteousness and truth in the mirror of the people’s minds and made everyone aware of the innate human need for natural religion, free debate, and spiritual evolution.

Furthermore, with the dark times that were progressively becoming darker and the extreme oppression and unrestraint of government agents at the time of the Third Caliph and throughout the Umayyad rule, the Shā‘ah leaders made it clear to the people that religion is in no way safe in the hands of the Caliphate; that administration of religious precepts cannot be handed over to the Caliphate; that implementation of these precepts cannot depend on the ijtihād and judgment of the Caliph; and that ultimately, the power of the Caliphate works in its own interests not the interests of the people and the Islamic society!

Consequently, it was clearly established that religious precepts are immutable and eternal and that ijtihād which is against the wording of the Book and Tradition is meaningless.

Only, due to the affection the majority of the people had towards the saḥābah and the Traditions that extolled the status of the saḥābah and acknowledged their ijtihād, the people refrained from protesting against the first three caliphs and Mu‘āwiyah. Even though their incumbency was blatantly based upon the previously-mentioned view and their conduct corroborated this, the people would justify their meddling in Islamic precepts and reinterpret these tamperings to make them seem correct. On the other hand, sometimes they were fair and took part in free debates and became acquainted with Islamic spirituality.³⁹

[1.](#) Sūrat al-Rūm 30:30.

[2.](#) Sūrat al-Isrā‘ 17:36.

[3.](#) Sūrat al-Yūnus 10:36.

[4.](#) Sūrat Sād 38:26.

[5.](#) Contrary to our speech, the speech of Allah is not a set of compiled sounds that signify meaning on account of established conventions and the speech of Allah is in no way similar to the speech of creations. This is due to the fact that verbal expression is not possible without corporeal form and Allah is free of corporeality. Rather, the speech of Allah is the creation of an object, which demonstrates the perfection of the Creator. As Amr al-Mu‘minīn ‘Alī (‘a) has declared: “His speech is His deed.”

[6.](#) Instruction, prohibition, and other ordinary commands are a type of social accreditation that is normally carried out by utterance or signal. Doubtless, it absolutely necessitates the corporeality and sociality of the commander; this is impossible regarding Allah. Rather, the instruction and prohibition of Allah is creation of something that intrinsically expresses the command. For further information regarding speech [kalām] refer to “Tafsīr al-Ma‘zīn”.

[7.](#) Sūrat al-Tawbah (or Barā‘ah) 9:41.

[8.](#) This issue is easily understood from Qur’anic verses and the assertions of the first Imām of the Shā‘ah, Amr al-Mu‘minīn ‘Alī (‘a). It is also discussed to some extent in “the Shā‘ah” Journal and in the 6th volume of the “Tafsīr al-Ma‘zīn” of the Qur’an.

[9.](#) Allāh-u Akbar means ‘God is the Greatest’, meaning that nothing can supersede God or be better than Him.

[10.](#) Sūrat Fussilat 41:54.

[11.](#) Sūrat al-Mu‘min (or Ghāfir) 40:62.

[12.](#) Sūrat al-‘Imrān 3:19.

[13.](#) Sūrat al-Tawbah (or Barā‘ah) 9:30.

[14.](#) Sūrat al-Tawbah (or Barā‘ah) 9:31.

[15.](#) Sūrat al-Tawbah (or Barā‘ah) 9:34.

[16.](#) Sūrat al-‘Imrān 3:64.

[17.](#) Sūrat al-‘Imrān 3:103.

- [18.](#) Sūrat al-Baqarah 2:208.
- [19.](#) Sūrat al-An‘ām 6: 142.
- [20.](#) Sūrat al-‘Imrān 3:28. There are many such verses in the Holy Qur’an that sternly enjoin Muslims from spiritual mingling with non-Islamic societies. Refer to Mu‘jam al-Mufahris, maddah “a kh dh” [ا خ ذ].
- [21.](#) This was extracted from the following Qur’anic verse (5:3) and several others. More information may be found in the “Tafsīr al-Mizān” under this verse.
- [22.](#) Sūrat al-Mā‘idah 5:3.
- [23.](#) Sūrat al-Furqān 25:30.
- [24.](#) Ijtihād has been defined as the exertion of a jurisprudent to extract religious laws using specific methods from the Book, Tradition, reason, and consensus of religious authorities. This definition was derived from the “Dictionary of Dehkhodā”. [trans.]
- [25.](#) Sūrat Fussilat 41:41–42. Other verses also demonstrate this issue and there is so much evidence pointing to this fact that it cannot be doubted.
- [26.](#) Sūrat al-Mā‘idah 5:47. According to similar verses, those who do not judge using what Allah has revealed are also oppressive [zālim] and infidels [kāfir].
- [27.](#) Or “hayya ‘alā khayr al-‘amal” (Hasten to the best of acts.) which refers to ritual prayer. [trans.]
- [28.](#) I.e., the call to ritual prayer. [trans.]
- [29.](#) Sūrat al-Tawbah (or Barā‘ah) 9:34.
- [30.](#) إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ لِيُهْجَرَ.
- [31.](#) حسينا كتاب الله.
- [32.](#) Alī ibn Abī Tālib (‘a) was the first Imām of the Shā‘ahs and was elected the Fourth Caliph by the people. [trans.]
- [33.](#) The bayt al-māl is the treasury of the Islamic government in which all Muslims have an equal right.
- [34.](#) Traditionist experts are scholars that critically study the biography of relaters of traditions (traditionists) in order to ascertain the validity of traditions. [trans.]
- [35.](#) A sacred token that increases blessings. [trans.]
- [36.](#) I.e., sisters of one’s father and mother. [trans.]
- [37.](#) According to “Kitāb al-Ta‘rīfāt” (The Book of Definitions) of Jurjānī as cited by the “Dictionary of Dehkhodā”, istihsān means abandoning deduction and propounding something that is easier for the people to accept. [trans.]
- [38.](#) لا تجتمع أمتي على خطأ.
- [39.](#) This paper was originally published in Farsi in the seventh yearbook, “Maktab-e Islām”.

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