

Modern Man and the Lenient Religion

There is no doubt that the goals of the divine religions are firstly to make man know his Creator and keep him away from idolatry and all kinds of polytheism and deviation. Secondly, it is to manage his life socially, economically and politically. These goals can be summarized into two things: faith and action. We mean true faith and good deeds, because not every faith or every deed can be accepted by Allah the Almighty. Man may believe in doctrines that contradict Islam and what Allah has revealed to His Prophet (S). Or he may reject a belief inherited from ancestors – that even if it is right, it can be changed and replaced.

Allah the Almighty says:

And when it is said to them: Believe in what Allah has revealed, they say: We believe in that which was revealed to us, and they deny what is besides that, while it is the truth verifying that which they have. (Qur'an, 2:91)

Man may do many things that he thinks are for the welfare of humanity, whereas they cause harms and damages. Allah the Almighty says:

And when it is said to them: Do not make mischief in the land, they say: We are but peacemakers. Surely, they themselves are the mischief makers, but they do not perceive. (Qur'an, 2: 11–12)

Man may do great deeds that are very useful to mankind, but if he does not intend the contentment of Allah, he is just seeking fame and prominence, and so his deeds are: *...like the mirage in a desert, which a thirsty man thinks to be water; until when he comes to it, he finds it to be nought.*

Allah says:

And We will proceed to what they have done of deeds, so We shall render them as scattered motes. (Qur'an, 25:23)

Religion is the landmark, by which man is guided and exalted. Wherever man is living, religion is found

there too since the beginning of humanity. Excavations and scientific studies have proven that primitive man did not know many things until after several ages, but he did know about temples since the beginning of his time. Thus, we can certainly say that civilization is the extract of the divine religions. Since it is so, then Islam that has been revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (S) is the most advanced civilization, and humanity cannot overlook or precede it.

This century has recorded a very strange change in the modern man who suffers different woes because of atheism, disbelief, absence of spiritual values and mental emptiness that come out of being non-religious. Today, man is searching for his identity and lost personality and trying to come back little by little into the laps of a lenient religion. Allah says:

Then set your face upright for religion in the right state; the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no altering of Allah's creation; that is the right religion, but most people do not know. (Qur'an, 30:30)

Today, we see a great Islamic awakening in all settings, whether learned or otherwise. We see that the change has influenced all people of different races and nationalities.

In the atheist milieu that used to adopt the theory of human rights and absolute freedom, we see that they have begun retreating and changing their theories. They prevent man from drinking alcohol while driving his car, in spite of the Christians' claim that their religion permits them to drink alcohol and that Jesus Christ (S) himself made wine for them. They have passed such a law after the increase in accidents on the streets because of drinking. Statistics shows that twenty thousand people are killed every year in France only because of such accidents.

If we review the laws that have been enacted by the most advanced civilizations in the most developed countries and compare them to the laws of Islam, we shall see as great difference between the two as there is distance between the earth and the sky.

With one look at the epistle¹ of Imam Ali (as) to Malik al-Ashtar when he appointed him as the governor (Wali) of Egypt, we shall clearly see the precedence of Muslims in all fields. Imam Ali (as) said in his epistle to Malik:

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. This is what the servant of Allah, Ali Ameerul Mu'minin, orders Malik ibn al-Harith al-Ashtar in his covenant to him as he appoints him the Wali over Egypt – (ordering him) to collect its revenues, fight its enemies, manage its people's affairs and to improve the country. He is ordered to fear Allah, obey Him and to follow what Allah has ordered in His book of obligations and norms which state that no one will be prosperous other than by following and no one will be wretched other than by denying and missing.

And, he is asked to support Allah (by supporting the right) with his heart, hand and tongue because Allah has promised to support whoever supports Him and glorify whoever glorifies Him. He is ordered to

control his soul's fancies and to subdue his soul if it wants to err because the soul often incites towards evil except those whom Allah has mercy upon.

O Malik, know that I have sent you to a country that had experienced just and unjust rulers before you. The people will think of your deeds as you thought of the deeds of the Walis who preceded you, and they will talk about you as you talked about the Walis that ruled before you. The virtuous men will be known by what is said about them by the people (by the favor of Allah). Let the loveliest provision to your self be the benevolent doing. Control your fancy and prevent yourself from what is not legal to you because controlling one's self is the very fairness to it in what it likes or dislikes.

Fill your heart with mercy, love and kindness towards your people and do not be with them like a beast, waiting for an opportunity to eat them because people are of two kinds – either a brother to you in religion or an equal to you in humanity. They fall into mistakes and may be incited by the slips. They may commit sins on purpose or unknowingly. So you are to forgive them as you like Allah to forgive you.

You rule over them and the responsible guardian rules over you and Allah is the Ruler upon the one, who appointed you. Allah tries you by managing your people's affairs, so do not be in a war against Allah (by trespassing His Sharia and by wronging His people) because you are unable to put up with His wrath and you cannot do without his forgiveness and mercy. Do not regret when you forgive someone and do not boast when you punish someone. Do not be angry about something that you may find an excuse for it. Do not say: 'I am the superior. I order and I must be obeyed' for it corrupts the heart, destroys the religion, and approaches to the others (the opponents).

If your high position gives a sense of splendor or pride, you are to think of the supreme power of Allah over you and His ability to act upon you what you can never put up with. This will lessen your vanity, prevent your sharpness and restore what is missed by your reason for you.

Beware not to compare yourself with Allah in His greatness or to imitate Him in His supreme power, because Allah degrades every arrogant and demeans every haughty one.

Be fair before Allah and do not prefer yourself, your relatives or your close companions to people. If you do not follow this advice, you will wrong; and whoever wrongs the people, Allah will be his opponent and when Allah becomes the opponent of someone, He refutes his excuses and that he will be in a state of war against Allah until he dies or he repents.

Nothing leads to change the blessings of Allah and to hasten His wrath more than to persist in oppression, because Allah hears the prayer of the oppressed and He always waylays the oppressors.

Let the loveliest thing to yourself be that which is moderate in rightness, more general in justice and widely accepted by people. Know that the discontent of the public removes the content of the upper class and that the discontent of the upper class will be excused by the content of the public.

No one is more dependent upon the Wali during ease, less helpful during distress, more reluctant of justice, more insistent on gifts, less grateful when gifted, less indulgent when prevented and less patient during misfortunes than the upper class. Whereas the pillar of the religion and entire nation of Muslims – always ready to stand up against the enemy – are the public of the ummah. So let your inclination be with them and let your attention be to them.

Let him who looks for defects of other people, be the furthest one from you and the most odious to you, because people have defects and the Wali is the first one, who has to cover them. Do not try to disclose what is hidden of those defects, but you have to purify what is apparent to you and Allah decides upon what is unknown for you. Cover the defects (of people) as much as you possibly can and Allah will cover of your defects just as how you like to cover your people's defects.

Remove every grudge from the people's hearts by behaving fairly with them and keep away from all that may cause enmity. Overlook whatever is not clear to you and do not hasten to believe any slanderer, because a slanderer is deceitful even if he imitates the sincere people.

Let neither a miser participate in your consultation because he makes you be away from virtue and frightens you of poverty if you want to spend, nor a coward because he disheartens you, nor a greedy one because he graces greed for you with wrongfulness. Miserliness, cowardliness and greed are different instincts but they participate in one common thing, which is distrusting in Allah.

The worst of your viziers are they, who were viziers of the wicked rulers before you and who participated in their sins. So do not let them be of your retinue, because they were supporters of sinners and brothers of the unjust. You will find better than them, who have the same experience but without sins and guilt and who haven't helped the unjust in their injustice, nor the sinners in their sins. They will be less burdensome on you, more helpful for you, more kind-hearted to you and less intimate with other than you (the opponents).

So you depend on such people in your retinue and then let the most preferable one to you be the one who is most truthful in saying the bitter truth to you and the least helpful when you do what Allah hates for His guardians to do whether it agrees with your fancy or not. Stick to the pious and truthful people and inure them not to praise you or make you feel proud about something that you have not done, because much praise leads to vanity and arrogance.

Do not consider the benevolent and evildoers as equal, for you will discourage the benevolent to do benevolence and encourage the evildoers to commit more offenses. You have to reward every one according to his doing. Know that nothing makes the ruler think much of his people better than to be kind to them and to lessen their burden and not force them to do what they are not able to do.

Let you do that which causes mutual trust between you and your people, because their confidence will keep you away from many troubles. As long as you do good to them, they will confide in you and as long as you do evil to them, they will distrust you.

Do not break a good tradition followed by the leaders of this ummah, upon which the ummah agreed unanimously and that which was a cause of the people's virtuousness. Do not create a tradition which will oppose some of those previous traditions, so that the merit will be for those who enacted those traditions and the sin will be upon you because you oppose them.

Always discuss with the ulama and wise men to affirm what improves the affairs of your state and to revive what had rectified the people before you.

Remember that people are composed of different classes. The progress of one is dependent on the progress of the other and none can afford to be independent of the other. From among them, there are the soldiers of Allah (the army), clerks and civil officers, judiciary, revenue collectors and public relations officers, the people of land taxes and jizya² of Muslims and Zimmis,³ merchants and craftsmen, and the lower class of the needy and the indigent. Allah has prescribed for each his share (rights), and determined His penalties (on violations) in His Book or the Sunnah of His Prophet, may Allah have blessing on him and his progeny – a covenant from Him that is observed near us.

The soldiers, by the will of Allah, are like a fortress to the people, dignity to rulers, glory of religion, and means of peace and safety. Without them, the state cannot stand. And, they cannot stand without the support of the revenue that Allah gives by His grace, by which they become strong to fight their enemy and rely on it to satisfy their needs.

Then, these two kinds – the military and the civil population – cannot stand without the third category of judiciary, workers and clerks, who run the transactions and dealings among people and those who are entrusted with the private and general affairs. And all these cannot do without the tradesmen, the merchants and the craftsmen, who run the market and offer their services to the others who may not be able to do by themselves. Then, there is the lower class of the poor and the needy, who deserve to be helped and assisted. Allah has given an appropriate opportunity of living to all.

The rights of all of these classes are to be under the charge of the Wali and nothing will acquit the Wali of his charge except by carrying out his charge fairly with full care after praying to Allah to support him. And he (the Wali) has to accustom himself to keeping to the truth and being patient with it whether it is light or heavy to him.

So appoint (in important posts) from your soldiers those, who in your opinion, are most faithful to Allah and His Apostle, most loyal to your imam, most honest, and most patient of them, who restrain themselves at anger and calmly accept (others') excuses, are kind to the weak and strict to the strong, who will not be incited by the violent provocation and who will not falter at any task.

Keep to those of good reputation, integrity and glorious past and those of courage, bravery, magnanimity and generosity. This is because they are the bases of liberality and branches of benevolence. Care for them as parents care for their children and do not exaggerate what you have done to them. Do not let any little kindness to them make you think that it might be worthless. For, any kindness towards them will

lead them to confide in you and to offer you their sincere advice.

Do not give up caring for their little affairs, relying on their big ones, because the little of your favor has a place that they benefit from, and the big (of your favor) has a position that they cannot do without.

Let your commander in chief be the one, who helps his men and gives them from his wealth what suffices them and suffices the families they left behind so that their concern will be the only concern in their jihad against the enemy. Your being kind to them will turn their hearts towards you.

The best delight of the Wali's eye is spreading of justice in the country and the expression of the people's cordiality. They do not express their goodwill except when their hearts are content. They will not be sincere unless they are willing to safeguard their Walis and are content with their rule and are hopeful of their goals. Therefore, try to achieve their hopes and keep on praising them and mentioning their good deeds, because praising the good deeds inspires the brave and encourages those who lag inshallah.

Keep every one's right and do not ascribe someone's excellence to another. Do not belittle one's great deed. Do not let someone's nobility lead you to glorify his slight deed, and do not let the meanness of someone lead you to belittle his great deed.

Turn to Allah and to His Prophet for guidance whenever you face a hardship and feel uncertain about what you have to do. Allah has said to some people, whom He wished to guide:

O you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority from among you; then if you quarrel about anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger. (Qur'an, 4:59)

Referring to Allah means to obey His Book, and referring to the Prophet means to follow his Sunnah – which calls for unity and warns of division.

Choose, for judging among people, the best of them – one who is not obsessed by distresses, does not become importunate before the opponents, does not keep on making mistakes, does not miss reason, does not hesitate to follow the truth when he finds it, does not think of greed, does not satisfy with the least perception without looking for the farthest, the most pondering on the unclear matters, the most dependent upon evidences, the least bored in inspecting the opponents, the most determined when the truth appears, who is not affected by praise, who is not incited by any temptation, and these are very few.

Observe his (the judge) judgments always and be openhanded to him to satisfy his needs so that he shall not be in need of people. Give him a position in your court so high that none can even dream of coveting it and so high that neither backbiting nor intrigue can touch him. Think of this so much, for this religion was captive under the control of the evildoers, doing with it according to their fancies and using it as a means to obtain the vain pleasures of this worldly life.

Then, think about your officials, and employ them after trying. Do not appoint them as a favor or

autocratically, because these ways compound injustice and treason. Seek after the experienced and coy men of the benevolent families having precedence in Islam because they are more honest, less greedy, noble, and more prudent.

Then supply them with sufficient living, for it helps them to purify themselves and prevents them from seizing what is there under their control. It will be evidence against them if they break your order or betray the trust. Then, check their jobs and send truthful and sincere inspectors to watch them. Watching them secretly leads them to be honest and loyal in doing their jobs and to be kind to people. And beware of assistants. If one of them betrays the trust, you will be informed of that by your spies. This will be enough witness to let you punish, disgrace, defame, and girt him with the shame of the guilt according to what he commits.

Take much care of the revenue, so as to prosper the producers because their prosperity leads to the prosperity of the others. There is no prosperity without them, because all people are dependent upon them. Let yourself think of reclaiming the lands more than to think of getting the revenue. Whoever seeks after revenue without reforming shall ruin the country and destroys people. His rule shall not last long.

If the farmers complain of deficiency or lack of water (in rivers or rains) or that their farms are damaged by floods, you have to aid them with what may lessen their sufferings. Do not be vexed about what you give them to relieve their distress, because they will, in return, recompense in prospering your country and strengthen your rule besides getting their goodwill and being delighted by spreading justice among them. They will join their power to yours and will confide in you after receiving your favors and being fair to them.

One day if something happens, you may charge them with a heavy burden and you find that they undertake it willingly. Prosperity bears whatever you burden it with, but the destruction of the land comes out of the indigence of its people, and the indigence of people comes out of the eagerness of the Walis to heap up monies for themselves and of their distrust about remaining in their positions and that they have not learned from the previous examples.

Then think about your clerks. Trust your affairs to the best of them. Trust your special books, in which you put your plans and secrets, to the one who is honest, who does not pride upon his position so that he may dare to stand against you in front of people when there is a disagreement between you and him, who does not ignore to inform you of the correspondences of your officials in the different countries or to reply to the received books correctly instead of you, who does not weaken a contract he concludes for you and is not unable to cancel an ineffective contract, who is not ignorant of his ability in dealing with the affairs because he who ignores his own ability, is more ignorant of the others' abilities.

Let your choosing them not be according to physiognomy and confidence, because people feign before the Walis so that they may think well of them. In fact though, there is nothing of truth and fidelity behind

that. You have to try them with what they did to the just Walis, who ruled before, you and then choose the best in serving the public and the most loyal among them. This will show your sincerity to Allah and to him, who has entrusted you with the position you hold.

Appoint for each of your affairs the one who is not defeated before great difficulties, nor is he lost among the many problems when facing him. If you ignore any defect available in your clerks, you will be responsible for it.

Take much care of merchants and the craftsmen, the residents and the ones travelling through the countries. And, take much care of laborers because they are the source of the welfare and the means for bringing devices and utensils from one place to another, on the land and in the sea, from plains and mountains where people cannot reach.

They (merchants and craftsmen) are peaceful people, who do not cause troubles or calamities. Care for their affairs in your country and about it. And know nevertheless that many of them are cruel in dealing, with stinginess, monopolizing of the utilities and controlling of the deals. This is a disadvantage for the public and a defect for the Walis.

Prevent monopoly, because the Messenger of Allah (S), peace be on him and his progeny, had prohibited it. Let dealing be lenient and fair, and with fair prices for the two parties; the seller and the buyer. If someone monopolizes something after being forbidden, then you have to punish him severely but without exceeding the limits of justice.

For the sake of Allah, take much care of the lower class – the poor, the needy, the destitute and the handicapped, who have no way to earn their living. Among this class, there are the beggars and those who are in serious need but do not beg. Obey Allah with what He may have entrusted you of their rights. Assign for them something from the treasury and something from the yields of the Muslims' booty lands in each country. The far and the near of them have equal right and you are responsible for the right of every one of them. Do not be careless about them because you shall not be forgiven when wasting the slight thing for the sake of achieving the great thing. Do not be ignorant about their affairs and do not be proud before them.

Seek for those, whose news does not reach you because people scorn and hate to look at them. Order some of benevolent and humble people to seek for the destitute and to inform you of their affairs and then you are to do to them what Allah may forgive you for when you meet Him, because this class of people is in need of fairness more than any others. Anyhow, you have to give everyone his right.

Attend to the orphans and the old people, who are helpless and do not demean themselves by begging people. This is too heavy for the Walis and the whole righteousness is heavy, but Allah may make it easy for those who hope for the good end by being patient and believing in what Allah has promised them of.

Assign some of your time to the plaintiffs. You sit humbly with them in a public meeting and keep your guards and soldiers away from them, so that they may talk frankly without any fear. I had heard the Messenger of Allah (S) (S) saying more than a time: "A nation will not be sanctified if the right of the weak is not taken back from the powerful without threatening or frightening." Tolerate their severity and ineloquence. Do not show them intolerance and disdain, so that Allah spreads upon you his mercy and rewards you for your obedience to Him. If you give, give willingly and if you deny, deny kindly and with apology.

There are certain things that you have to do yourself. You have to answer your governors when your clerks are not able to. You have to answer the people's wants as soon as they reach you, since your assistants may delay them.

Achieve every day's duty in time, because each day has its own duties. Choose for yourself the best time to be with Allah. Know that the greatest of your doings, although that they all are to be for the sake of Allah, are those that you do with good will and those you do for the sake of your people.

Let the best thing with which you worship Allah sincerely, be the offering of obligations, which are for Allah alone. Tire your body for your Lord during your day and night. Approach to Allah sincerely with all what you do for the sake of Him without any shortage or hypocrisy whatever you become tired.

When you lead the people in offering the prayer, try neither to lengthen it nor to lose anything of it, because among people there are some who are ill, and some who have things to do. Once, I asked the Messenger of Allah (S) (S), when he had ordered me to go to Yemen, about how to lead people in offering the prayer and he said, "Offer it like the prayer of the weakest of them and be kind to the believers."

Do not hide too long from your people, because the hiding of Walis from people is a kind of distress and ignorance of their affairs. Hiding from people prevents them from knowing why they are kept away and so the great thing will be insignificant for them and the insignificant thing will be great, the good things will be bad and the bad will be good and the truth will be confused with falsehood.

A Wali is but a human being. He does not know what is hidden of the people's affairs and the righteousness has no signs by which one can distinguish between the truth and the falsehood. You (the Wali) are but one of two. Either you are a man with a liberal character who follows righteousness. Then why do you hide from a right duty that you have to do or a deed of munificence that you are to offer? Or, you may be a man of stinginess. Then you will find that how soon people will despair of asking you for anything, in spite of the fact that most of people's wants are about complaining about injustice or asking for fairness of a conduct – neither of which cost you anything.

A Wali has a retinue and close companions. Among these there are some persons who are selfish, impudent and unfair when dealing with people. Cut off this thing by cutting off the reason that encourages them to be so. Do not donate to anyone of your retinue or relatives a donation. Let them not

expect from you to possess any property, which will harm other people of their watering or a shared act. They (the Wali's retinue or relatives) enjoy it at the expense of the others, and hence the benefit will be for them whereas, the blame will be upon you in this life and in the afterlife.

Make every one submit to the truth whoever he is whether it be from your retinue or relatives or not. Be patient and tolerant in applying that, irrespective of whatever effect it has upon your relatives and close companions. Care for its result however heavy it is to you, because the result of that will be good.

If people suspect you of doing injustice, come out to them with your evidence to refute their suspicion. Through this, you will accustom yourself to justice. Be kind to your people when showing your evidences to achieve your aim in rectifying them according to their rightness.

Do not refuse the peace your enemy invites you to if it pleases Allah, because peace will bring your soldiers comfort, make you safe from your troubles and bring security for your country. But be extremely careful of your enemy after the peace, because the enemy may approach you under the pretense of peace, in order to attack you unexpectedly. So be resolute and doubt your enemy's good will.

When you conclude an agreement with your enemy or you promise of something, you have to keep your agreement with fidelity and keep your promise with loyalty. Make yourself the safeguard of what you have promised, as none of Allah's obligations that people agree upon, in spite of their different thoughts and fancies, is better than to glorify fulfilling of promises. Polytheists, rather than the Muslims, kept to their promises among them when they saw the bad results of perfidy. So do not betray your agreement, do not break your promise and do not cheat your enemy, for no one dares to disobey Allah but the miserable ignorant.

Allah made His promise as safety that He spread between His people with His mercy and made it as a sanctum to whose power people resorted to and to whose protection they hurried. So never let thwarting, cheating or forging be with your promises. Do not conclude an agreement that you may use confused statements in order to find a way that you may cheat with it and do not depend upon a solecism as an excuse after certifying your promise.

Let no distress lead you to annul your promise unfairly, because tolerating a distress so that you expect its relief and good result is better than cheating so that you fear its bad consequence. Besides that Allah will ask you about His right of fidelity that you broke, and then He will bless neither your life nor your afterlife.

Avoid and avoid shedding of blood unjustly and without any right cause leading you to it. Nothing leads hurriedly to wrath, to evil consequence, to transience of blessings and cessation of life worse than shedding of blood unrightfully. Allah the Almighty will judge among His people, first of all, about shedding of blood on the Day of Resurrection.

Do not try to firm your rule by shedding haram (unlawful) blood, because this will weaken and enfeeble

your rule, or in fact, it will remove your rule and transfer it to others. Neither Allah nor I will forgive you for an intended killing, because it must have a penalty. If you face a wrongdoing, let your whip, sword or hand not exceed in punishment because a blow may cause a killing. Let your rule not make you proud that you did not give the guardians of the killed one their right.

Avoid self-conceit; do not confide about what you like of yourself and do not wish to be praised, because this is the best opportunity for Satan to crush the benevolence from inside the benevolent.

Do not mention the favors you do to your people. Do not exaggerate your deeds and do not promise your people and then you break your promise, because mentioning the favors done by you void benevolence, exaggeration puts out the light of rightness, and breaking the promise brings detestation of Allah and people. Has Allah said:

(It is most hateful to Allah that you should say that which you do not do). (Qur'an, 61:3)

Do not give your judgment about matters before their time and do not be indifferent when they occur. Do not insist upon dispute when matters are not clear and do not be indifferent when they become clear. Put everything in its place and every order in its place of concern.

Do not distinguish yourself with what people are equal in and do not ignore your duties when they become clear for people, because what you take unrightfully will be taken from you to others, and soon your affairs will be uncovered and then the rights of the wronged ones will be extracted from you.

Control your passion, intensity, power and sharpness of your tongue. Be away from all that by preventing your tongue from setting about and by delaying your power until your rage calms down, and then you have the option to decide. You will not control yourself until you worry yourself with recalling that you will meet your God in the next world.

You have to remember what preceded you of a just government, a virtuous norm, a tradition of our Prophet (S) or an obligation in the Book of Allah. Then, you have to follow what we have done according to that and to try your best to follow what I have entrusted you with in this charter. I have quitted myself from anything you may protest with later on and lest you find any excuse when you hasten after your fancy.

I pray to Allah, with His infinite mercy and great power of granting every wish, to grant me and you success to do what pleases Him and His people with the rightful conduct, and to make us worthy of people's good will and to offer beneficial achievements to the country. I pray Allah to grant us blessing and dignity and to conclude my life and yours with happiness and martyrdom. To Allah we will return. Peace be upon the Messenger of Allah (S) and Allah may bless him and his pure progeny with great peace and blessing. With salaam.[4](#)

If one studies deeply this epistle that Imam Ali (as) had written to his Wali, he shall find the highest

meanings for humanity in it – the like of which the civilization of the twentieth century has not yet reached. It includes all fields of life, such as social, economic, political and cultural besides worship, ethics, psychological education and human nature.

If I feel sorry, my sorry is for most Muslims who neglect the *Nahjul Balaghah* of Imam Ali (as) and the Gnostic treasures and scientific facts it has, and they run after the western writings and theories, thinking that they may thus reach the convoy of the false civilization which has brought woes and calamities to weak societies and peoples.

If I say to one of them that in Islam and in the Islamic personalities there are great and good examples for all humanity, he would answer that if this was true, then Muslims would not remain underdeveloped while others developed and progressed. Such people and their likes ignore a regrettable fact that Islam remained but a theory without being applied. The great Islamic personalities, who tried to apply it, were fought with, exiled and killed or they were abused and reviled from minibars. Their work and book remained unknown under the intellectual siege, different accusations and rumors.[5](#)

Western scientists in America, Germany, and England made great use of the facts of Islam, while the Muslims are still indifferent. Allah the Almighty says:

But there came after them a generation, who neglected prayers and followed lusts, so they will meet perdition (Qur'an, 19:59)

One day, someone said to me, “If you mean by ‘the Islamic personalities’ – the twelve Imams of the Ahlul Bayt – then why the Shia, as mentioned in your books, who have believed in their imamate, obeyed and followed them in the affairs of life and religion, remained underdeveloped like the rest of Muslim, and have advanced neither in a science or invention?”

I said to him, “The Shia, who had believed in the twelve imams were a minority like a white spot on a black dress. They feared for their lives – their blood was shed, their honor (women) was violated, and they were tortured severely throughout the ages. In such conditions, could the Shia, who were all the time busy with their grief and distress and were afraid of being killed at any moment, advance or develop?”

It is well known that when man becomes needy and hungry, his mind becomes busy, before everything, with assuring his living, which is the cause of his survival and continuity. Then, how it is if the means of his living and the living of his family and all who he resorts to or support him are prevented? However, if the means of good living and ease are available to man and he enjoys the pleasure of life, he becomes very ambitious and his reason and intellect go high and higher. Therefore, you see that governments regard the people of knowledge and sciences very highly, prepare for them all means of living and ease, spend great monies on them, prepare for them libraries and laboratories equipped with all modern tools. In these conditions, how would they not advance and invent?

Nevertheless the Twelver Shia, in spite of all poverty, expelling, torturing, and killing they suffered, were the first in all fields of knowledge and sciences, because they had drunk from the springs of the school of the Ahlul Bayt (as) from which the best of scientists and scholars in different fields of knowledge had graduated. Imam Ja'far bin Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) taught besides jurisprudence and *tafsir* (interpretation of the Qur'an) the applied and theoretical sciences such as mathematics, medicine, physics, chemistry, astronomy and other sciences whose importance did not appear except after the industrial revolution and in the recent centuries.

Here, I mention just some of that which western scholars had acknowledged and some of the facts that orientalist have mentioned about Imam as-Sadiq (as) in their scientific meeting held in the year 1968 A.D. in Strasburg University in France when discussing the scientific and civilizational history of the Twelver Shia. More than twenty scientists from the United State of America, England, Germany, France, Belgium, Switzerland and Italy attended this meeting.[6](#)

These scientists spoke in detail about Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (S) and his disciple Jabir ibn Hayyan who had left behind one thousand and five hundred theses from the lectures of his teacher on chemistry, medicine and philosophy as mentioned by ibn an-Nadeem in his book *al-Fihrest* and by ibn Khillikan in his book *The News of Imam as-Sadiq*.

The participants in that scientific meeting all agreed upon that Jabir ibn Hayyan could apply many scientific theories and prepare chemical matters and compounds that have a great role in making bombs and explosives. They also said that he could discover the secrets of chemistry that was called "San'ah craft" which is the transmutation of poor metals into expensive ones like gold, silver, and others. In this concern, Jabir ibn Hayyan said, "My teacher Ja'far ibn Muhammad had taught a branch of knowledge that if I wanted, I could change all the earth into gold with it."[7](#)

Dr. Muhammad Yahya al-Hashimi (a today-scholar) has written a book called '*Imam as-Sadiq, the Inspirer of Chemistry*'. He says in this book, "That which increases our admiration is the claim of Jabir ibn Hayyan that this secret (the transmutation of metals and the changing of matters) has a role in all operations. And if we think deeply, in the present time, we shall see from the discovery of radioactive elements that one element of a matter changes into another and destroys the atom. This has led not only to the atomic bomb, but also to find new sources for power that had never come to man's mind before."[8](#)

In addition to all of that, the Twelver Shia were the first in all sciences, whereas the rest of Muslims were limited to jurisprudence, *tafsir*, and ethics in which the Shia had already reached the top, because of the vast knowledge they had inherited from the Ahlul Bayt (as). We, as history confirms, see that the Shia were the first of creators and first of inventors.

For more details, researchers can read the book '*The Shia and the Arts of Islam*', or the introduction of '*The Origin of Shiism and its Principles*' to be certain that the Shia had preceded all other sects in all

fields of knowledge and sciences under the guidance of their infallible Imams (as) who had penetrated all knowledge. Really, they are the true propagandists of knowledge. Imam Ali (as) said:

*...but I contain a hidden treasure of knowledge that if I reveal, you shall be confused like the confusion of ropes in a deep well.*⁹

- ¹. Nahjul Balaghah, letter no. 53 to Malik al-Ashtar.
- ². Jizya is an attribute taken from non-Muslims who live under the Islamic rule.
- ³. The free non-Muslims, who live under the Islamic rule by paying jizya (tax).
- ⁴. Nahjul Balaghah, letter no. 53 to Malik al-Ashtar.
- ⁵. Refer to the books 'What has the world lost by the decline of Muslims?' by an-Nawawi, 'The Arabian man and civilization' by Anwar ar-Rifa'i, 'The excellences of our civilization' by Dr. Mustafa as-Siba'i, and 'Islam and the Arab civilization' by Muhammad Kurd Ali, and many other books.
- ⁶. Imam as-Sadiq as Known by the Western Scientists, translated into Arabic by Dr. Nooruddeen Aal Ali.
- ⁷. For introduction to scientific contribution of Imam Sadiq (as), please visit:
<https://www.al-islam.org/articles/imam-jafar-al-sadiqs-contribution-scie...> [1]
- ⁸. Imam as-Sadiq; the Inspirer of Chemistry, by Dr. Muhammad Yahya al-Hashimi, p. 156.
- ⁹. Nahjul Balaghah, sermon 5.

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