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Responsibility 11: Absolute Obedience to the Imam

Another responsibility of the believers is to obey the Imam, during the time of his advent and also during his occultation. Obeying him means that we must adhere to the legislations sent by Allah.

During the period of the occultation, obeying the Imam can be achieved by following the commandments of his noble ancestors which are found in the books of narrations.

Imam ‘Ali b. Husain as-Sajjad (as) has said:

لَا كَرَمَ إِلَّا بِتَقْوَىٰ وَلَا عَمَلَ إِلَّا بِالنِّيَّةِ وَلَا عِبَادَةَ إِلَّا بِالتَّفَقُّهِ أَلَا وَإِنْ أَبْغَضَ النَّاسُ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَنْ يَفْتَدِي بِسُنَّةِ إِمَامٍ وَلَا يَفْتَدِي بِأَعْمَالِهِ

“There is no honour except by being Godwary, and there is no action except when accompanied by the (correct) intention, and there is no worship except with contemplation. Surely the most hated of people in the sight of Allah is one who follows the tradition of the Imam, however does not follow him in his actions.”^{[1](#)}

In a second tradition from one of the Imams it has been stated:

كُونُوا لَنَا زِينًا وَلَا تَكُونُوا عَلَيْنَا شَيْنًا

“Be a beautification for us (the Ahlul Bayt) and not a source of embarrassment to us.”^{[2](#)}

In a final tradition for this responsibility, we quote the words of the sixth Imam, Ja’far b. Muhammad as-Sadiq (as) who said:

إِنَّا لَا نَعُدُّ الرَّجُلَ مُؤْمِنًا حَتَّى يَكُونَ لِجَمِيعِ أَمْرِنَا مُتَّبِعًا مُرِيدًا أَلَا وَ إِنَّ مِنْ التَّبَاعِ أَمْرِنَا وَ إِرَادَتِهِ الْوَرَعَ فَتَزَيَّنُوا بِهِ
يَرْحَمَكُمُ اللَّهُ وَ كَيِّدُوا أَعْدَانَنَا بِهِ يَنْعَشْكُمْ اللَّهُ

“Indeed we do not classify a person as a true believer until he follows all of our teachings. Certainly piety is attained by following our teachings so beautify yourselves with it, may Allah have mercy upon you, and hurt our enemies with it and Allah will enliven your spirits.”³

¹. al-Kafi, vol. 8, pg. 234, sec. 8, no. 312

². Biharul Anwar, vol. 68, pg. 151, sec. 19, no. 6

³. al-Kafi, vol. 2, pg. 78, sec. al-Wara', no. 13

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