

[Home](#) > [Peshawar Nights](#) > [Third Session, Saturday night, 25th of Rajab, 1345 A.H.](#) > The position of infallible Imams

Third Session, Saturday night, 25th of Rajab, 1345 A.H.

Hafiz: Based on your talk last night, I conclude that the Shi'as are divided into a number of factions. Will you kindly let us know which of them you accept so that we may restrict our discussion to that faction.

Shi'as not divided into factions

I didn't say that the Shi'as are divided into factions. Shi'as are devoted to Allah and followers of the Prophet and his descendants. Of course some factions have assumed the name of 'Shi'as' to mislead people.

They took advantage of the name of the Shi'as, preached false beliefs, and spread confusion. Uninformed people have included their names among the Shi'as. There are four such factions, two of which have survived: the 'Zaidiyya', the 'Kaysaniyya', the 'Qaddahiyya', and the 'Ghullat'.

The 'Zaidiyyas'

The 'Zaidiyyas' follow Zaid Ibn 'Ali Ibn Husain. They consider Imam Zainu'l-Abidin's son, Zaid, to be his successor. At present these people are found in large numbers in Yemen and its surroundings. They believe that of the descendants of 'Ali and Fatima, he is "The Imam who is learned, pious, and brave.

He draws the sword and rises against the enemy." During the time of the oppressive Umayyad Caliph, Hisham ibn Abdu'l-Malik, Hazrat Zaid rose against those in authority and courted martyrdom and was therefore acknowledged as Imam by the 'Zaidiyyas'.

The fact is that Zaid possessed a far higher position than that which the 'Zaidiyyin' claim for him. He was a great Sayyid of the Hashimite dynasty, and was known for his piety, wisdom, prayers, and bravery. He passed many sleepless nights in prayer and fasted frequently.

The Prophet prophesied his martyrdom, as narrated by Imam Husain: "The Holy Prophet put his sacred hand on my back, and said: 'O Husain, it will not be long until a man will be born among your descendants.

He will be called Zaid; he will be killed as a martyr. On the day of resurrection, he and his companions will enter heaven, setting their feet on the necks of the people."

But, Zaid himself never claimed to be an 'Imam'. It is sheer slander for people to say that he did. In fact, he recognized Muhammad Baqir as the 'Imam', and pledged his full obedience to him.

It was only after Muhammad Baqir's demise that unknowing people adopted the doctrine that "he is not the Imam who remains sitting at home and hides himself from the people; the Imam is one who is a descendant of Hazrat Fatima, an 'Alim, and who draws the sword and rises against the enemy and invites people to his side." The 'Zaidiyyas' are divided into five factions: 1) Mughairiyya; 2) Jarudiyya; 3) Zakariyya; 4) Khashbiyya; and 5) Khaliqiyya.

The Kaysaniyyas and their belief

The second faction is the 'Kaysaniyyas'. These are the companions of Kaysan, a slave of 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib, who had freed him. These people believe that after Imam Hasan and Imam Husain, Muhammad Hanafiyya, the next eldest son of Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali, was the 'Imam'. But, Muhammad Hanafiyya himself never claimed this. He was called the sincerest of devotees. He was known for his knowledge, piety, devotion, and obedience to divine commandments.

Some ignorant men produced evidence of what they called his opposition to Imam Zainu'l-Abidin. They claimed that Muhammad Hanafiyya claimed to be the 'Imam'.

The fact was otherwise. He never claimed to be the 'Imam'. He wanted to show his ignorant followers the rank, and position of the fourth Imam Zainu'l-Abidin. The result was that, in the same Holy mosque when Hajarul-Aswad (The Black Holy Stone) affirmed the 'Imamate' of Imam Zainu'l-Abidin, Abu Khalid Kabuli, chief of the followers of Muhammad Hanafiyya, along with all other followers, acknowledged Imam Zainu'l-Abidin as the 'Imam'.

But, a group of cunning people misled the simple, and ignorant people by saying that Muhammad Ibn Hanafiyya had only shown modesty, that in the face of the Umayyads it was most desirable for Muhammad Hanafiyya to do as he did.

After the death of Muhammad Hanafiyya, these people said that he was not dead, that he had hidden himself in a cave of Mount Rizwi, and that he would reappear in the future to fill the world with justice and peace. This group contained four sub-factions: 1) Mukhtariyya; 2) Karbiyya; 3) Ishaqiyya and 4) Harabiyya. But, none of them exists today.

The ‘Qaddahiyyas’ and their belief

The third faction, ‘Qaddahiyya’, calls itself ‘Shi’as’, but it is a group of infidels. This sect originated in Egypt by Ma'mun Ibn Salim (or, Disan) known as Qada and Issa Chahar Lakhtan (Jesus of Four Parts). They took it upon themselves to interpret the Holy Qur'an and the records of history according to their own wishes.

They hold that there are two codes of religion: one secret and the other manifest. The secret code was given by Allah to the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet gave it to ‘Ali, and he gave it to his descendants, and to the pure Shi’as. They believe that those who know the secret code are exempt from prayers and the worship of Allah.

They have founded their religion on seven pillars. They believe in seven Prophets, and in seven ‘Imams’, the seventh Imam being in occultation. They are awaiting his appearance. They are divided into two factions:

1) The ‘Nasiriyya’ were the companions of Nasir Khusru Alawi, who through his poems, speeches, and books attracted a large number of people to infidelity. They were spread over Tabaristan in large numbers.

2) The ‘Sabahiyya’ (known in the West as the Assassins). They were the companions of Hasan Sabba, a native of Egypt who came to Iran, and caused the tragic events of ‘Alamut’, which resulted in the slaughter of large numbers of people. These facts are preserved in the records of history.

The ‘Ghullat’ and their belief

The fourth faction is that of the ‘Ghalis’, which is the most debased of all sects. They are incorrectly known as Shi’as. In fact they are all unbelievers. They are divided into seven factions: 1) Saba'iyya; 2) Mansuriyya; 3) Gharabiyya; 4) Bazighiyya; 5) Yaqubiyya; 6) Isma'iliyya; and 7) Azdariyya.

Not only we ‘Shi’as’ Ithna Asharis (who believe in the twelve Imams), but all Muslims of the world reject their faith.

Shi’as Imamiyya Ithna Ashari, and their belief

This is the real ‘Shi’as’ group, which believes in the twelve Imams after the Holy Prophet. The other factions have nothing in common with our group; they have only assumed the name ‘Shi’as’.

Belief in Allah and the Prophets

The ‘Shi’as’ Imamiyya group believes in the Ever-Existing Almighty Allah. He is One, in the sense of the

absolute oneness of His essential existence. He is One, with none comparable to Him. He is the Creator of everything in existence. There is no match, or, equal to Him in any respect. The Holy prophets and messengers were sent to tell the people about Allah, how to worship Him, and how to know Him.

All of the prophets preached and guided the people according to the tenets set forth by the five major prophets: Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and last of all, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, whose religion shall last until the Day of Judgement.

Belief in chastisement, reward, hell, Paradise, and day of judgement

Allah Almighty has fixed recompense for our deeds, to be given to us in Paradise, or, Hell. The day fixed for the recompense of our deeds is called the Day of Judgement. When the world's life ends, Allah Almighty will re-animate the beings of the world from the beginning to the end. He will let them gather in the 'Mashar', the place of the gathering of the souls. After a just reckoning, everyone will be given reward, or, punishment according to his deeds.

These things have been foretold in all divine books: the Torah, Bible, and the Holy Qur'an. For us, the most authentic source of guidance is the Holy Qur'an, which has reached us from the time of the Holy Prophet without any change.

We act upon the injunctions contained in the Holy Qur'an, and we hope to be recompensed by Allah. We believe in all those obligatory commandments which are contained in the Holy Qur'an, like Namaz' (prayers), Ruza (fasting), 'Zakat' and 'Khums' (yearly religious taxes), Hajj (Pilgrimage to the Ka'ba), and Jihad (Holy war).

Belief in the articles of practice

Similarly, we believe in the Articles of Practice of the faith, including the obligatory and optional practices and all other injunctions that have reached us through the Holy Prophet. We are determined to abide by them, and to perform them to the best of our capacity. And we refrain from all sins, large, or, small, like drinking, gambling, fornication, sodomy, usury, murder, tyranny, which have been forbidden in the Holy Qur'an, and 'hadith'.

Belief in Imams

We Shi'as also believe that, just as there is a messenger from Allah who conveys to us orders and injunctions, and who is elected and introduced to us by Allah, there is also a successor, caliph or protector of religion, who is appointed by Allah, and is introduced to us through the Prophet of Allah. Accordingly, all prophets of Allah introduced their successors to their 'umma' (followers).

The last of the Holy prophets, who was the most perfect and most exalted of all prophets of Allah, left for his followers guides to help the people avoid confusion. According to the established 'hadith', he introduced to the people his twelve successors, the first: 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib. The last Imam, the Mahdi, who is present in the world, but is in occultation, will appear at an unknown time in the future, when he will fill the seething world with justice, and peace.

The 'Shi'as' Imamiyyas also believe that these twelve Imams have been ordained by Allah and have been introduced to us through the last Holy Prophet. The last of the Holy Imams has vanished from sight (by divine command), just as other Imams disappeared, during the time of previous prophets, as stated in many books written by your 'ulama'.

This sacred being has been preserved by Allah Almighty so that he may one day fill the world with justice. In short, the 'Shi'as' believe in all that is contained in the Holy Qur'an, and in authentic 'hadith'. I am grateful to Allah that I have adopted these beliefs, not merely in blind imitation of my parents, but through logical reasoning and study.

Hafiz: Respected sir, I am indeed obliged to you for having explained the 'Shi'as' beliefs, but there are 'hadith' and supplications in your books which run counter to your statements, and establish the heresy of the Shi'as.

Well-Wisher: Please be specific.

Objection on 'hadith' of 'ma'rifa' (tradition of knowledge of Allah)

Hafiz: In 'Tafsir al-Safi', written by one of your high-ranking 'ulama', Faiz Kashi, there is a 'hadith' that one day Imam Husain, the Martyr of Karbala, addressing his companions said: "O people, Allah Almighty has not created his servants but to know Him. When they knew Him, they worshipped Him, when they worshipped Him, they became adverse to worship of any other thing." One of the Companions said:

"May the lives of my father, and mother be sacrificed to you! O son of the Holy Prophet! What is the real meaning of knowing Allah?" The Holy Imam replied, "For every man to know Allah means to know the Imam of his time, who must be obeyed."

Well-Wisher: First, we must examine the chain of narrators of the 'hadith' in order to establish whether it is authentic. Even if it is correct with regard to the chain of narrators, yet the verses of the Holy Qur'an, and the unquestionable 'hadith' of the Holy Prophet in regard to the Oneness of Allah cannot be misconstrued because of the assertion of one man.

Why don't you examine the 'hadith' and sayings of our Holy Imams, and the religious dialogues between our religious heads and the atheists, which already prove the unity of Allah? Why don't you consult the chief books and commentaries of the Shi'as, such as 'Tawhid al-Mufazzal', 'Tawhid al-Saduq', Biharu'l-Anwar (Book of Tawhid) of Allama Majlisi and other books written by 'Shi'as' 'ulama', which are full of

continuous ‘hadith’ (on Tawhid) by our Holy Imams?

Why don't you consult ‘An-Naktu'l-l'tiqadiyya’, by Sheikh Mufid (d. 413 A.H.), one of the ‘Shi’as’ ‘ulama’, and also his book ‘Awa'ilu'l-Maqalat fi'l-Mazahib wa'l-Mukhtarra’ or ‘Ihtijaj’ by our famous Alim, Abu Mansur Ahmad Ibn ‘Ali Ibn Abu Talib Tabrasi. If you had, you would know how our Holy Imam ar-Ridha’ proved the unity of Allah.

It is not fair to pick out some dubious report simply to malign the Shi’as. Your own books contain absurdities and whimsical ideas. In fact, ridiculous ‘hadith’ exist in your most authentic books like the ‘Siha al-Sitta’, (i.e., the Six Books of Accepted Traditions).

Hafiz: In fact, your words are ridiculous since you find fault with books whose greatness and authenticity are unquestionable, particularly the ‘Sahih Bukhari’, and ‘Sahih Muslim’. Our ‘ulama’ agree that all the ‘hadith’ contained in them are true. If someone rejects these two books, he rejects the real ‘Sunni’ sect.

After the Holy Qur'an, ‘Sunni’s rely upon the authenticity of these two books. Perhaps you have seen Ibn Hajar Makki's point in the beginning of his ‘Sawa'iqe Muhriqa’, chapter of "The Affairs" (affairs of the caliphate of Abu Bakr) as recorded by Bukhari and Muslim in their ‘Sahihain, which are the most authentic and reliable books after the Holy Qur'an, according to the unanimity of the followers (i.e., the ‘umma’, or community).

He says that since the whole community is unanimous in accepting the ‘hadith’ of these books, whatever the community holds with one accord is unquestionable. On the basis of this agreement, all the ‘hadith’ contained in these books are undoubtedly acceptable. Hence, no one can have the courage to assert that these books contain absurdities, or, ridiculous matter.

Absurd reports in ‘sahihain’ (the two collections) of ‘Bukhari’ and ‘Muslim’

Well-Wisher: First, that these books are acceptable to the whole community is open to objection. Your claim with reference to Ibn Hajar is, itself, absurd since 100 million Muslims do not accept his point. Hence, the unanimity of the community in the matter is just like the unanimity claimed by your people in the matter of the caliphate. Secondly, what I say is based on valid reasons.

If you study those books with an unprejudiced mind, you will be astonished. Many of your great ‘ulama’, such as Dar Qutni, Ibn Hazam, Allama Abu'l-Fazl Ja'far Ibn Tha'labi in ‘Kitabu'l-Imta' fi Ahkamu's-Sama’, Sheikh Abdu'l-Qadir Ibn Muhammad Qarshi in ‘Jawahiru'l-Mazay'a fi Tabaqatu'l-Hanafiyya’, and others, including all the ‘Hanafi’ ‘ulama’, have criticized the ‘Sahihain’ and have acknowledged that they contain a number of weak and unconfirmed ‘hadith’. The objective of ‘Bukhari’ and ‘Muslim’ was to collect ‘hadith’; not to consider their authenticity.

Some of your research scholars, like Kamalu'd-Din Ja'far Ibn Sa'lih have taken great pains in pointing out the defects, and faults of the 'hadith' and have set forth valid grounds in support of their findings.

Hafiz: I would welcome it if you would put forward the arguments so that the audience may know the truth.

Well-Wisher: I will cite only a few examples.

References about visibility of Allah

If you wish to study misleading 'hadith' regarding the incarnation of Allah, which contend that He, as a physical being, can be seen in this world, or, will be seen in the Hereafter, (as believed by a faction of the 'Sunni's, i.e., the 'Hanbalites' and 'Asharites'), you may refer to your own books, particularly 'Sahih Bukhari' (Vol. I, in the Chapter "Fazla's-Sujud Min Kitabu'l-Adhan", page 100; Vol. IV, p.92 of 'Sahih Muslim', "Babu's-Sira Min Kitabu'r-Riqaq", and 'Sahih Muslim' (Vol. I, in the Chapter "Isbatu'l-Ruyatu'l-Mu'minin Rabbahum Fi'l-Akhira," page 86); and 'Musnad' of Imam Hanbal, Volume II, page 275.

You will find sufficient information of this type in those books. For example, Abu Huraira says: "The clamor and violent rage of Hell will intensify, it will not calm down until Allah puts His leg in it. Then Hell will say, 'Stop, stop!

It is enough for me; it is enough for me.'" Abu Huraira also narrates that a group of people asked the Holy Prophet, "Shall we see our Creator on the Day of Judgement?" He replied, "Of course. At mid-day when the sky is free of clouds, does the Sun hurt you, if you look at it?"

They said: "No!" Again he said: "During the nights when you see the full moon when the sky is clear, does it hurt you?" They said: "No!" He continued: "So when you see Allah Almighty on the Day of Judgement, you will not be hurt, just as you are not hurt by seeing these (the sun and the moon).

When the Day of Judgement comes, it will be announced by Allah that every community should follow "its god". So, everyone who has worshiped idols, or, anything other than Allah, The One, shall be thrust into Hell fire.

So, shall every one of the good and bad persons be thrown into it except those who worshipped Allah (S.W.T.), the Absolute One. They shall lie in Hellfire. At that time Allah will appear in a particular form before the people, so that they can see Him. Then Allah will tell them that He is their Allah. The believers will then say, 'We take refuge in Your Godhead. We are not among those who have worshiped anything except Allah the Absolute.'

Allah will say in reply, 'Have you any sign between you and Allah so that you may see Him and identify Him?' They will say, 'Yes.' Then Allah will show them His bare leg. Thereupon the believers will raise their heads upwards and will see Him in the same condition as they saw Him for the first time. Then

Allah will say that He is their Creator. All of them will acknowledge that He is their Allah."

Now, it is for you to judge whether this kind of statement is tantamount to infidelity, or, not, that Allah would physically appear before the people, and would uncover His leg! And, the strongest point in support of my argument is that Muslim Ibn Hajjaj begins a Chapter in his 'Sahih' about the proof of the visibility of Almighty Allah, and has quoted the fabricated reports from Abu Huraira, Zaid Ibn Aslam, Suwaid Ibn Sa'id, and others.

And, some of the leading 'ulama' of your own sect like Dhahabi in 'Mizanu'l-I'tidal' and Suyuti in his 'Kitabu'l-Lu'ualia'l-Masnu'a fi hadithu'l-Muzu'a', and Sibti Ibn Jauzi in 'Al-Muzu'a', have proved on reasonable grounds that these narrations are fabricated.

Holy Qur'an rejects doctrine of visibility of Allah

Even if there had been no proof against the above assertions, the verse of the Holy Qur'an explicitly rejects the doctrine of the visibility of Allah. Allah says:

"Vision comprehends Him not, and He comprehends (all) vision." (6: 103)

Again, when the Prophet Moses was compelled by the Israelites to go to his place of prayer, and beseech Allah to "show Himself to him," the Holy Qur'an records the event as follows:

"He (Moses) said: 'My Lord! Show me (Thyself), so that I may look upon Thee.' He said: 'You cannot (bear to) see me...' " (7: 143)

Sayyid Abdu'l-Hayy (Imam of the Jama'at Ahlul Sunna): it not a fact that 'Ali said: "I do not worship a god whom I do not see?"

When 'Ali says such a thing, it means that Allah can be seen.

Arguments and 'hadith' about the invisibility of Allah

Well-Wisher: Respected friend, you have taken one sentence out of context. I will recite the whole text to you. This 'hadith' has been recorded by the great Sheikh Muhammad Ibn Yaqub Kulaini in his Usul Kafi, Volume on Tawhid, as well as Sheikh Saduq in his Book on Tawhid, Chapter "Ibtal Aqida Ruyatullah."

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq is quoted as saying a Jewish scholar asked the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali, whether he had seen Allah at the time of prayers. The Imam replied: "He cannot be seen by these physical eyes. It is the heart which sees Him through the light of the realities of conviction."

It follows from 'Ali's reply that what he means by seeing Allah is not seeing Him with the eyes, but through the light of sincere faith. There are many other proofs based on reason, and recorded facts to

substantiate our point of view.

Moreover, apart from 'Shi'as' scholars, your own 'ulama', like Qazi Baidhawi and Jarullah Zamakhshari, have proved in their commentaries that it is impossible to see Allah. One who believes in the visibility of Allah, in this world, or, in the Hereafter, believes that He is a physical being. To believe this is infidelity.

Further references to absurdities in two collections of traditions

You consider that your six traditional books, particularly those of 'Bukhari' and 'Muslim', are like revealed books. I wish that you could look at them objectively, and not exceed limits in your praise for them.

Bukhari, in the Chapter "Kitab al-Ghusl," and Muslim in Part II of his 'Sahih' (in the Chapter on Virtues of the Prophet Moses), and Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in his 'Musnad', Part II, page 315, and others of your 'ulama' have quoted Abu Huraira as saying: "Among the Bani Isra'il it was customary to bathe together without clothes, so that they glanced at the genitals of one another.

They did not consider it objectionable. Only the Prophet Moses went into the water alone, so that no one could see his private parts. The Bani Isra'il used to say that the Prophet Moses had defective genitals, so he avoided bathing with them. One day the Prophet Moses went to the river to bathe.

He took off his clothes, put them over a stone, and went into the water. The stone fled with his clothes. Moses ran after the stone, naked, shouting: 'My clothes! O stone, my clothes.' The Bani Israel saw the naked Moses and said: 'By Allah! Moses has no defect in his genitals. The stone then stopped and Moses retrieved his clothes.

Then, Moses beat the stone so severely that six or seven times the stone shrieked in pain." Do you actually believe such a thing is possible for the Holy Prophet Moses, or that a stone, an inanimate object, could take away his clothes? Surely it would be impossible for a Prophet to run naked before the people.

I will relate another 'hadith' recorded in the 'Sahih', which is even more ridiculous. Bukhari quotes Abu Huraira in his 'Sahih' (Volume I, page 158 and Volume II, page 163) and again in the Chapter "Death of the Prophet Moses", and Muslim also quotes the same authority (Abu Huraira) in his 'Sahih', Volume II, page 309 in the Chapter "On The Merits of Moses" as saying: "The Angel of Death came to the Prophet Moses and asked him to accept the invitation of his Creator.

Upon hearing this, Moses gave him such a slap in his face that he lost one of his eyes. So, he went back to Allah and complained that he had sent him to a man who did not want to die and who had knocked out one of his eyes. Allah cured his eye and ordered him to go again to Moses and to tell him that if he wanted longer life, he should lay his hand on the back of a bull. He would live for as many years as the number of hairs that would be covered by his hand."

Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in his 'Musnad', Volume II, page 315, and Muhammad Ibn Jarir Tabari in his History, Volume I, under the heading "Death of the Prophet Moses," gave the same account from Abu

Huraira with the addition that up to the time of Moses, the Angel of Death used to physically separate the soul from the body. But, after Moses gave him a slap in the face, he came unseen.

Now, it is for you to judge what sort of nonsense this is which is included in the two collections of traditions, which you call the most correct of all books after the Holy Qur'an. The reports I have cited certainly insult the honor of the prophets of Allah. As for Abu Huraira, I am not surprised at his narrations.

Your own 'ulama' admit that in order to fill his belly from the dainty dishes provided by Mu'awiya, he fabricated reports. Because of his fabrications, Caliph 'Umar had him lashed. It is surprising that sensible people believe in such ridiculous stories.

Now, let's return to our discussion regarding the 'hadith' you quoted. Obviously, a just man who sees a lone narration (narrated by only one person) would compare it with other authentic 'hadith'. He would correct it, or, reject it outright, rather than use it as a basis for attacking his brothers of another sect and calling them infidels.

Since the 'Tafsir al-Safi' is not here with us, we cannot say anything about the authenticity of this 'hadith'. Even if it is true, we should rely on the principle that if we know the effect, we can know the cause.

That is, if we know the Imam as Imam, we certainly know the identity of Allah, in the same way that if one knows the prime minister, he knows the King. It is in reference to this principle that the chapter "Tawhid" and other verses of the Holy Qur'an were revealed.

Moreover, there are many 'hadith' about the unity of Allah narrated by Imam Husain himself and other Imams. To know our Imam is a great form of worship of Allah. The same meaning has been given in 'Ziarat al-Jami'a', which has come down to us from our Holy Imam.

We may also interpret it in another way, as scholars have done in similar matters. Every performer of an action may be understood by the nature of his action. Since the Prophet and his descendants attained the highest level of human possibility, no others are as meritorious or virtuous as they. Since they are the most evident means of knowing Allah, anyone who knows them, knows Allah.

As they have themselves said: "It is through us that Allah can be known, and it is through us that Allah can be served." We believe that the Prophet's family taught us knowledge about Allah and the proper way to worship Him. Those who have not followed them have lost the way.

Hadith al-Thaqalain

To stress the same point, the Prophet said in a 'hadith' acknowledged by both sects, "O my people! I leave behind me for you two great objects (of authority): The book of Allah and my 'Ahlul Bayt'. Should

you remain attached to these two, never, never shall you be misled after me (for verily these two shall never, never be separated from each other until they meet me at the 'Fountain of Kauthar')."

Hafiz: We do not rely on this tradition, which you try to revise. There are many innovations in your books and examples of polytheism, like seeking fulfillment of our desires from the Imams rather than from Allah. What is polytheism? Polytheism means to turn to any other person or, thing rather than to Allah for the satisfaction of our needs. It has been observed that Shi'as never invoke Allah. They invoke the Imams. It is nothing, but polytheism.

Well-Wisher: I am afraid you distort facts. Perhaps I may be allowed to tell you what polytheism is according to the great 'ulama' of Islam and according to the verses of the Holy Qur'an.

Polytheism and its kinds

Polytheism is of two kinds: open polytheism and hidden polytheism. Open polytheism means to associate someone, or, something with Allah's All-Perfect Self, or, with His attributes. Making partners with Allah means associating something with His Oneness, and acknowledging this association with the tongue, like the 'Sanamiyyas' (idol-worshippers), or, the 'Zoroastrians', who believe in two principles: light and darkness. Christians also do this.

They believe in the trinity, and divide divinity into three parts: father, son, and Holy spirit. They believe in separate characteristics for each, and unless the three are united, the Divine self is not complete. The Holy Qur'an rejects this belief, and Allah Almighty declares His Oneness in these words:

"Certainly they disbelieve who say: 'Surely Allah is the third (person) of three;' there is no god but the one Allah...." (5:73)

Associating things with divine attributes means believing that His attributes, like His knowledge, or, might, are separate from, or, in addition to, His All-Perfect Self. The 'Ashari's of Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali Ibn Isma'il Ashari Basari, are reported by your own leading 'ulama', like 'Ali Ibn Ahmad in his book Al-Kashf and Minhajul-Adilla fi Aqa'idil-Milla (The Open Just Revelation of the Beliefs of Nations), page 57, to believe that the attributes of Allah are in addition to His All-Perfect Self, and are eternal.

So, anyone who believes that any quality, or, attribute of His is in any way an addition to His All-Perfect Self is a polytheist. Every attribute of His is essential to Him. Polytheism in one's actions means to associate someone with His Ever-Independent Will. The Jews believe that Allah created creatures, and then kept Himself aloof from His creatures.

In condemnation of these people, the following verse was revealed:

"And the Jews say: 'The hand of Allah is tied!' Their hands shall be shackled and they shall be cursed for what they say. Nay, both His hands are spread out; He expends as He pleases...."

(5:64)

The 'Galli's or 'Ghullat' (extremists) form another group of polytheists. They are also called 'Mufawwiza'. They believe that Allah has delegated His powers, or, entrusted all affairs to the Holy Imams. According to them, the Imams are the creators, and they also give us sustenance. Obviously, those who consider someone a partner in divine authority are polytheist.

Polytheism in prayer

Polytheism in prayer means deliberately turning one's attention during prayers toward a created being rather than toward Allah. If one intends to pray to a created being, he is a polytheist. The Holy Qur'an forbids it in these words.

"...whoever hopes to meet his Lord, he should do good deeds, and not join anyone in the service of his Lord." (18:110)

This verse shows that the fundamental article of faith is that man should do whatever is good, and should not associate anyone with Allah in offering obedience, and worship to Him. In other words, he who offers prayers, or, performs the Hajj, or, does any good act merely to show to the public his righteousness, he is a polytheist.

He has associated others with Allah in the matter of performing his deeds. The vain display of good deeds is minor polytheism, which negates our good actions. It has been reported that the Holy Prophet said: "Abstain from minor Polytheism." People asked him, "O, Prophet of Allah, what is minor polytheism?"

He replied, "Al-riya wa's-sama" (i.e., to show people, or, to let them hear of your worship of Allah). Also, the Holy Prophet said: "The worst thing which I fear for you is your hidden polytheism; so, rise above it since among my followers polytheism is more secret than the creeping of the ant on a hard stone in the dark night."

Again he said: "One who offers the ritual prayer in an ostentatious way, is a polytheist. One who keeps the fast, or, gives alms, or, performs the Hajj, or, frees a slave to show to the public his righteousness, or, to earn a good name is a polytheist." And, since this last line refers to matters of the heart, it has been included in hidden polytheism.

Hafiz: We note of your own statement that if someone makes an offering to any created being, he is a polytheist. So, the Shi'as are also polytheists since they make offerings to the Holy Imams, and their sons.

Concerning offerings or pledges

Well-Wisher: If we wish to determine the faith of a community, we should not rely on the uninformed people of that community. We should study their reliable books. If you wish to study 'Shi'as'ism', don't start with 'Shi'as' beggars on roads, crying "O 'Ali, O Imam ar-Ridha", and on that ground declare that Shi'as are polytheists. Similarly, if ignorant people make pledges, or, offerings in the name of the Imams, or, their sons, you should not slander all of 'Shi'as'ism'.

If you study 'Shi'as' books of jurisprudence, you will find that there is not a single trace of polytheism, or, absurdity. The insistence on the Oneness of Allah is manifest everywhere. The most famous books, Sharhe lum'a and Shara'i, are widely available, and you may study them.

In the Chapter "Offerings," the legal pronouncements of 'Shi'as' jurists are cited, both in the two works cited above and in many other publications. Since 'nazr' is a kind of prayer, it is essential that there should be an intention that it be for the sake of seeking nearness to Allah.

There are two conditions for a valid 'nazr': intention of the heart, and utterance, or, expression in prescribed words in whatever language it may be. Regarding the first condition, the intention of the heart must be for the sake of Allah.

The second condition completes the first condition; the person who makes the offering (nazr) must say in words that it is for Allah. For instance, if he pledges to keep a fast, or to give up drinking, he must make the intention using the prescribed words, which contain the word "Lillah" (for the sake of Allah), without which the offering is invalid.

Offerings in the name of Allah

If we make an offering not in the name of Allah, but, for someone else, whether he be dead, or, alive, or, if we include him with the name of Allah, even if he is an Imam or his son, the offering is not valid. If this is done deliberately and knowingly then it is evident polytheism, as is clear from the verse,

"...and not join anyone in the service of his Lord." (18:110)

'Shi'as' jurists agree that to make an offering in the name of any person, including Prophets or Imams, is wrong.

If it is done intentionally, it is polytheism. An offering must be made in the name of Allah, although we are authorized to do it whenever we like. For instance, if someone in the name of Allah takes a goat to a particular house or place of worship or to the tomb of an Imam or son of an Imam, and sacrifices it, there is no harm in it.

Also, if he pledges and gives money, or, clothes in the name of Allah to a certain 'Sayyid', a descendant

of the Prophet, or gives alms to an orphan or beggar, there is no harm in it.

Of course, if he pledges to make an offering simply for the sake of the Prophet or an Imam, a son of an Imam, or for some other person, it is forbidden. If done intentionally, it is polytheism. It is the duty of every prophet or religious authority to admonish people as the Holy Qur'an says,

"Say: Obey Allah and obey the Apostle; but if you turn back, then on him rests that which is imposed on him and on you rests that which is imposed on you...." (24:54)

It is people's duty to hear what the Prophet of Allah says and to act upon it. If, however, someone does not care to follow divine precepts, and does not act on them, it does not harm the faith or the principles in which the faith is founded.

Hidden Polytheism: Making a Display of Prayers

The second kind of polytheism is hidden polytheism, such as making a display of our prayers, or, other forms of obedience to Allah. The difference between this polytheism and polytheism in prayers is that in the case of polytheism in prayers we associate some other thing, or, being with Allah.

If someone directs his attention towards anything other than Allah, in the ritual prayer, or if by the suggestion of shaitan, he has a picture of a false deity in his mind, or if his guide is the center of his attention, then he is a polytheist.

Nothing except Allah, should be the object of attention in our worship. The Prophet said that if someone does a good deed and makes someone else a partner with Allah in it, then his whole deed is for the partner.

Allah hates that action as well as its doer. It has also been reported that the Holy Prophet said that if someone offers the ritual prayer, observes a fast, or performs the Pilgrimage and has the idea that by his doing so the people will praise him, "then verily, he has made a partner with Allah in his action."

It has also been reported from Imam Ja'far Sadiq that if someone performs an action for fear of Allah, or for the recompense in the hereafter, and includes in it the pleasure of a human being, then the doer of that action is a polytheist.

Polytheism regarding causation

One kind of polytheism is that which relates to causation since most people base their hopes, and fears on secondary causes. This is also polytheism, but it is pardonable. Polytheism means to think that power lies intrinsically in secondary causes.

For instance, the sun nourishes many things in the world, but if one considers this power to be inherent

in the sun, then this is polytheism. However, if we believe that the power of the sun is given to it by Allah, and that the sun is only a secondary means of His munificence, then this is never polytheism.

It is rather a form of worship since to pay attention to the signs of Allah is a prelude to attending to Allah. A reference has been made in the verses of the Holy Qur'an to the fact that we should ponder the signs of Allah since this leads the attention toward Allah. In the same way, reliance on secondary causes (a tradesman's attention to trade, or a farmer's attention to his farm) make one a polytheist if he thereby diverts his attention from Allah.

Based on the above explanation of polytheism, which of the examples cited do you consider to be applicable to Shi'as? In what way, from the point of view of prayer, faith, or the Shi'as traditions that you have seen, can they be charged with polytheism?

Hafiz: I admit that all you have said is correct, but if you would just take the trouble to think for a moment, you will agree that to rely on the imams is polytheism. Since we should not seek any human means of approach to Allah, we should invoke Allah directly for help.

Why prophets sought help from people

Well-Wisher: It is strange that you ignore what I have been saying here all along. Is it polytheism to make requests of other people for the fulfillment of our desires? If this were true, the whole of humanity is polytheistic. If to seek help from others is polytheism, why did the Prophet seek help from people? You should study the verses of the Holy Qur'an so that you may know what is true and correct.

The following verses are worth attention:

"He said: 'O chiefs which of you can bring to me her throne before they come to me in submission?' One audacious among the Jinn said: 'I will bring it to you before you rise up from your place; and most surely I am strong (and) trusty for it.' One who had the knowledge of the Book said: 'I will bring it to you in the twinkling of an eye.' Then when he saw it settled beside him, he said: 'This is of the grace of my Lord....'" (27:38-40)

The bringing of the throne of Bilqis (Queen of Sheba) to Solomon was impossible for every creature. Admittedly, it was unusual, and the Prophet Solomon, despite his knowing that it required divine power, did not ask Almighty Allah to bring the throne, but asked mere creatures to help him.

This fact shows that seeking others' help is not polytheism. Allah, the first cause, is the Creator of the causes of this world. Polytheism is a matter of the heart. If a man asks for someone's help and does not consider him Allah, or His partner, it is not forbidden.

This situation is common everywhere. People go to the houses of others, and ask them for help without taking the name of Allah. If I go to a physician, and ask him to cure me, am I a polytheist? Again, if a

man is drowning, and he cries for help, is he a polytheist? So, please be fair, and do not misconstrue facts. The whole Shi'as community believes that if anyone considers the descendants of the Prophet as being Allah or partners in His Self, he is surely a polytheist.

You might have heard Shi'as in trouble crying, "O 'Ali, help me!" "O Husain, help me!" This does not mean that they are saying "O Allah 'Ali, help me!" "O Allah Husain, help me!" But the fact is that since the world is a house of secondary causes, we consider them the means of deliverance from troubles. We seek the help of Allah through them.

Hafiz: Instead of invoking Allah directly, why do you invoke the means?

Well-Wisher: Our permanent attention regarding our desires, distresses, and anguish is fixed upon Allah, the Absolute. But the Holy Qur'an says that we should reach Almighty Allah, through some means of approach.

"O you who believe! Do your duty to Allah and seek the means of approach to Him." (5:35)

The Holy Ahlul Muhammad (descendants of the prophet) are means of divine bounty

We Shi'as do not regard the descendants of the Prophet as the solution to all our problems. We regard them as the most pious of the servants of Allah and as a means of divine bounty. We attach ourselves to that exalted family according to the injunction of the Prophet.

Hafiz: Why do you say that the words "means of approach" in the above verse refer to the descendants of the Holy Prophet?

Well-Wisher: In many hadith, the Prophet recommended to us that in our troubles we invoke his descendants as a means of approach to Allah. Many of your 'ulama', like Hafiz Abu Nu'aim Isfahani, in his 'Nuzulu'l-Qur'an fi 'Ali' (Revelations in the Qur'an about 'Ali), Hafiz Abu Bakr Shirazi in his 'Ma Nazala mina'l-Qur'an fi 'Ali' and Imam Ahmad Tha'labi in his 'Tafsir' (Commentary) say that 'wasilat' (means of approach) in the above verse means the descendants of the Prophet.

This reference has been apparent from many 'hadith' of the Prophet. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid Mu'tazali, one of your respected 'ulama', says in his Sharhe Nahju'l-Balagha, Volume IV, page 79, that Bibi Fatima Zahra referred to the meaning of this verse in the presence of the 'Muhajirs' and 'Ansars', while delivering her address in connection with the usurpation of her estate of Fadak, in these words:

"I praise Allah for Whose Dignity and Light the residents of the skies and the earth seek means of approach towards Him. Among His creation we are the means of approach."

'Hadith al-Thaqalain' (hadith of two great things)

Among the many accepted arguments about the lawfulness of our following the descendants of the Prophet is the 'Hadith Thaqalain', whose authenticity has been acknowledged by both the sects. The Prophet said: "If you keep yourselves attached to these two, never, never will you go astray after me."

Hafiz: I think you are mistaken when you say that this hadith is authentic, and that it has been accepted by all since it is unknown by our great ulama'. To prove this I may say that the greatest narrator of hadith of our sect, Muhammad Ibn Isma'il Bukhari, does not record it in his 'Sahih', which is the most authentic book after the Holy Qur'an.

Well-Wisher: I am not mistaken about it. The authenticity of this Holy hadith has been acknowledged by your own ulama'. Even Ibn Hajar Makki, for all his intolerance and prejudice, accepts it as true.

You should consult Sawai'q Muhriqa (Part II Chapter II, pages 89–90, under verse 4) in which, after quoting the statements of Tirmidhi, Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Tibrani, and Muslim, he says: "Know that the hadith concerning attachment to the Thaqalain (the Holy descendants of the Prophet and the Holy Qur'an) has been narrated in many ways. The narrators of this hadith number more than twenty companions of the Prophet."

Then he says that there is some difference in the manner in which this tradition has been narrated. Some say that it was narrated when the Prophet was on his last Hajj at Arafat; some say it was related in Medina, when the Holy Prophet was on his death bed, and his room was full of his companions; others say that it was narrated at Ghadir al-Khum; and some say it was narrated after his return from Ta'if. After saying all this, he (Hajar Makki) himself comments that there is no significant difference in the hadith itself.

As for all the different occasions, it is probable that the Prophet recounted this tradition time and again in order to emphasize the greatness of the Holy Qur'an, and his Holy descendants. You said that since Bukhari has not recorded this hadith in his 'Sahih', its authenticity is questionable.

But this hadith, although not recorded by Bukhari, has been generally quoted by the major ulama' of your sect, including Muslim Ibn Hujjaj and other authors of the six collections of Traditions, who have exhaustively dealt with it in their books and do not rely solely on the collection of Bukhari.

If you acknowledge the justice of all your own ulama', all of whom were recognized by the Sunnis of the past, you should accept as true the hadith, which for some reason has not been recorded by Bukhari.

Hafiz: There was no motive behind that. Bukhari was very cautious in the matter of recording reports. He was a careful scholar, and if he found the hadith, from the point of view of its text or source, to be harmful or unacceptable to common sense, he did not record it.

Well-Wisher: As the proverb goes: "Love for something makes a man blind and deaf." The respected Sunnis are mistaken here. You are too enthusiastic in your love for Imam Bukhari. You say that he was a very minute scrutinizer of facts and that the reports of his Sahih are reliable and deserve the rank of revelation. But the fact is otherwise. The chain of reports mentioned by Bukhari consists of persons who are often condemned as liars.

Hafiz: Your assertion is false. You denigrate Bukhari's learning and ability, which is an insult to the whole Sunni Sect.

Well-Wisher: If criticism based on knowledge is an insult, then many of your own most distinguished ulama' are men who have insulted the high position of learning and erudition.

I would advise you to study for yourself the books written by great authors and ulama' of your sect who have made comments on Bukhari's Sahih, e.g., Al-Lu'Al'il-Masnu'a fi hadith'il-Muzu'a by Suyuti, 'Mizanu'l-Ibtidal', and 'Talkhisu'l-Mustadrak' of Dhahabi; 'Tadhkiratu'l-Muzu'a' by Ibn Jauzi; 'The History of Baghdad', compiled by Abu Bakr Ahmad Ibn 'Ali Khatib Baghdadi, and other books of "Rijal" (namely, treatises on the character of narrators of Traditions) by many of your great ulama'. If you read these books, you will not dare say that I have insulted Imam Bukhari.

Bukhari and Muslim have recorded many traditions reported by fabricators

What I have said is this: the two books, 'Sahih' Muslim and 'Sahih' Bukhari, contain hadith narrated by liars. If you study 'Sahih' Muslim and 'Sahih' Bukhari in the light of the books of 'Rijal', you will find that they have recorded many hadith reported from men who were great liars, e.g., Abu Huraira, the notorious liar, Ikrima Khariji, Sulayman Ibn Amr, and others of the same category. Bukhari was not so cautious in recording hadith as you think.

He did not record the Hadith al-Thaqalain, which others have done, but he had no hesitation in recording ludicrous and insulting stories about the Prophet Moses slapping the face of the Angel of Death, the Prophet Moses' running away naked after a stone, and Allah's visibility.

Consider another ridiculous, and insulting story recorded by Bukhari in his 'Sahih', Volume II, Chapter "'Al-Lahr Bi'l-Harb," page 120, and by Muslim in his 'Sahih' Volume I, quoting Abu Huraira as saying that on the Eid (a holiday) some Sudanese nomads gathered in the Mosque of the Prophet.

They entertained spectators with their sport and performances. The Prophet asked A'ysha if she would like to witness the performances. She said she would. The Prophet let her mount on his back in such a way that she had her head over his shoulders and her face on the head of the Prophet. In order to amuse A'ysha, the Holy Prophet was asking the entertainers to stage a better dance. At last A'ysha became tired, and the Holy Prophet let her get down on the ground!

Judge for yourself whether such a story is not insulting. If Bukhari was so cautious about recording facts, was it fair on his part to record such foolish stories in his 'Sahih'. But even now you characterize these books as the most authentic ones after the Holy Qur'an.

Of course Bukhari took special care to omit the matter of the Imamate and the Vicegerency of 'Ali, as well as the matter of the Ahlul Bayt. Probably he feared such information might some day be used as a weapon against the opponents of the Ahlul Bayt.

Many authentic hadith regarding Ahlul Bayt scrupulously avoided

So when we compare the 'Sahih' Bukhari with other 'Siha, we come to the conclusion that on this topic, the Ahlul Bayt, a hadith, however authentic, and fully supported by writers in the light of the Holy Qur'an it may be, Bukhari has purposely failed to record it.

For instance, there are many verses of the Holy Qur'an, revelations which have a direct bearing on the hadith ('Hadith al-Wilaya' on the Day of Ghadir; 'Hadith al-Inzar al-Yaumu'd-Dar'; 'Hadithu'l-Muwakhat'; 'Hadith al-Safina'; 'Hadith al-Babu'l-Hitta', etc.) which concern the respect for, and vicegerency of, the descendants of the Holy Prophet.

These have been avoided scrupulously by Bukhari. And on the other hand, those so-called "ahadith" which humiliate the prophets, particularly our Prophet, and his chaste descendants, are recorded in his book without the least consideration that they have been reported by liars.

Sources of hadith al-Thaqalain

As for the 'hadith of Thaqalain' (two weighty things), which Bukhari has not included in his collection, the other authentic books of your sect have related it. In fact, even the great traditionist, Muslim, who is regarded as being equal to Bukhari, has also related it. The other scholars who have related this tradition are the following: Muslim ibn Hajjaj in his 'Sahih', Volume VII, page 122; Abu Dawud in his 'Sahih'; Tirmidhi in his 'Sunan', Part 2, page 307; Nisa'i in his 'Khasa'is', page 30;

Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in his Musnad, Volume III, page 14-17, Volume IV, page 26 and 59, and Volume V, page 182 and 189, Hakim in Mustadrak, Volume III, page 109 and 148; Hafiz Abu Nu'aim Isfahani in his Hilyatu'l-Auliya, Volume I, page 355; Sibti Ibn Jauzi in his 'Tadhkira', page 182; Ibn Athir Jazari in his 'Usudu'l-Ghaiba', Volume II, page 12 and Volume III, page 147; Hamidi in Jama' Baina's-Sahihain; Razin in his 'Jama' Baina's-Siha al-Sitta'; Tibrani in his 'Ta'rikh al-Kabir'; Dhahabi in his 'Talkhis al-Mustadrak';

Ibn Abd Rabbih in his 'Iqdu'l-Farid'; Muhammad ibn Talha Shafi'i in his 'Matalibu's-Su'ul'; Khatib Khawarizmi in 'Manaqib'; Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in 'Yanabiu'l-Mawadda', Chapter page 18, 25, 29, 30,

31, 32, 32, 34, 95, 115, 126, 199 and 230, with slight narrations in words; Sir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani in the second 'Mawadda' of his 'Mawaddatu'l-Qurba'; Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in 'Sharh Nahju'l-Balagha'; Shablanji in Nuru'l-Absar, page 99; Nuru'd-Din ibn Sabbagh Maliki in 'Fusulu'l Muhimma', page 25;

Hamwaini in 'Fara'idu's-Simtain'; Imam Tha'labi in Tafsir 'Kashfu'l-Bayan'; Sam'ani and Ibn Maghazili Shafi'i in 'Manaqib'; Muhammad ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in 'Kifayatu'l-Talib', Chapter I, in the account of the authenticity of the sermon of 'Ghadir Khum' and also in Chapter 62, page 130; Muhammad ibn Sa'ad Katib in 'Tabaqa', Volume 4, page 8; Fakhru'd-Din Razi in Tafsir Kabir, Volume 3, under the verse of Etesam, page 18; Ibn Kathir Damishqi in 'Tafsir', Volume 4, under the verse of 'Mawadda', page 113, Ibn Hajar Makki in 'Sawa'iq al-Muhriqa'; pages 75, 87, 90, 99 and 136 with variations of words.

There are several other scholars of your sect whose names I cannot relate in this meeting because of the lack of time. Many of your scholars have related this important hadith from the Holy Prophet so commonly and with unbroken continuity of narration from one to the other that it has attained the status of a regularly narrated hadith. According to this hadith, the Prophet said the following: "I leave among you two weighty things: the Book of Allah and my progeny.

If you keep yourselves attached to these two, never, never will you go astray. These two will never be separated from each other until they meet me at the Fountain of Kauthar."

Based on this genuine hadith, we hold that we should seek adherence to the Holy Qur'an, and the Ahlul Bayt of Muhammad.

Sheikh: This hadith of the Prophet has been related by Salih Ibn Musa Ibn Abdullah Ibn Ishaq, through his accredited chain of narrators saying that Abu Huraira reported it in this way: "I leave behind me two great things: The Book of Allah (the Holy Qur'an) and my sunna (tradition)...."

Well-Wisher: You again quote the hadith from the same wicked person who has been rejected by critics of the Shi'as (like Dhahabi, Yahya, Imam Nisa'i, Bukhari and Ibn Adi, etc.). Aren't you satisfied with the reliable references that I have made from your own great ulama' regarding this hadith? You quote an unacceptable version of the hadith even though both Shi'as and Sunnis have accepted that the Holy Prophet used the words "the Book of Allah and my progeny," and not "my sunna."

In fact, "Book" (Qur'an) and "sunna" (tradition) both require interpretation. Traditions, therefore, cannot explain the Holy Qur'an. So the progeny of the Prophet, who are the equals of the Holy Qur'an, are the real interpreters of the Qur'an, as well as the traditions (sunna) of the Prophet.

Hadith al-Safina

Another reason we seek attachment to the descendants of the Prophet is the authentic 'Hadith al-Safina', which has been narrated by all of your great ulama', almost without exception, and with unbroken continuity.

More than a hundred of your own scholars have related this hadith: Muslim ibn Hajjaj in 'Sahih', Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in 'Musnad', Hafiz Abu Nu'aim in 'Hilyatu'l-Auliya'; Ibn Abdi'l-Birr in 'Isti'ab'; Abu Bakr Khatib Baghdadi in 'Ta'rikh al-Baghdad'; Muhammad ibn Talha Shafi'i in 'Matalibu's-Su'uli'; Ibn Athir in 'Nihaya'; Sibti Ibn Jauzi in 'Tadhkira'; Ibn Sabbagh al-Makki in 'Fusulu'l-Muhimma'; Allama Nuru'd-Din Samhudi in 'Ta'rikhu'l-Medina'; Sayyid Mu'min Shablanji in 'Nuru'l-Absar';

Imam Fakhru'd-Din Razi in 'Tafsir al-Mafatihul-Ghaib'; Jalalu'd-din Suyuti in 'Durru'l-Mansur'; Imam Tha'labi in 'Tafsir al-Kashfu'l-Bayan'; Tabrani in 'Ausat'; Hakim in 'Mustadrak', Volume 3, page 151; Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in 'Yanabiu'l-Mawadda', Chapter 4; Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani in 'Mawaddatu'l-Qurba', Mawadda 2; Ibn Hajar Makki in 'Sawa'iqu'l-Muhriqa' under verse 8; Tabari in his 'Tafsir' as well as his History; Muhammad ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in 'Kifayatu't-Talib', Chapter 100, page 233.

Many other great scholars of your sect have related that the Holy Prophet said: "The likeness of my Ahlul Bayt is that of the Ark of Noah. He who gets into it is saved; he who turns away from it will be drowned and lost."

Imam Muhammad Ibn Idris Shafi'i has referred to the authenticity of this hadith in his couplets which Allama Fazil Ajib recorded in his 'Zakhiratu'l-Ma'al'. Imam Shafi'i, who is recognized as one of the distinguished religious scholars of the Sunni sect, admits that our attachment to the purified family of the Prophet is the means of our deliverance because, of the seventy sects of Islam, the sect which follows the descendants of the Prophet is the only one to secure deliverance.

Seeking means to approach Allah not polytheism

You said that seeking means to reach Allah is polytheism. If this were true, why did Caliph 'Umar Ibn Khattab seek Allah's help through the descendants of the Prophet?

Hafiz: Caliph 'Umar never did so.

Well-Wisher: In times of need 'Umar sought the help of the descendants of the Prophet, invoked Allah through them, and his wishes were fulfilled. I refer to only two such occasions. Ibn Hajar Makki writes in his 'Sawa'iq al-Muhriqa', after verse 14 (from The History of Damascus) that in the 17th year of the Hijra people prayed for rain but to no effect.

Caliph 'Umar said that he would pray for rain the next day through the means of approach to Allah. Next morning he went to Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet and said: "Come out so that we may invoke Allah through you for rain."

Abbas asked 'Umar to sit for some time so that the means of approach to Allah could be provided. The Bani Hashim (Ahlul Bayt) were then informed. Abbas then came out with 'Ali, Imam Hasan, and Imam Husain. Other Bani Hashim were behind them. Abbas asked 'Umar that no one else be added to their group. Then they went to the place of prayers where Abbas raised his hands for prayers, and said: "O

Allah, you created us, and you know about our actions.

O Allah, as you were kind to us in the beginning, so be kind to us in the end." Jabir says that their prayers had not ended when clouds appeared, and it began to rain. Before they could reach their homes, they were drenched.

Bukhari also reports that once during the time of famine 'Umar Ibn Khattab invoked Allah through Abbas Ibn Abdu'l-Muttalib and said: "We betake ourselves to our Prophet's uncle with you; so Allah, send down rain." Then it began to rain. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid Mu'tazali in his Sharh Nahfu'l-Balagha (Egyptian edition), page 256, writes that Caliph 'Umar went along with Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet, to invoke Allah for rain.

In his prayers for rain, Caliph 'Umar said: "O Allah, we betake ourselves to your Prophet's uncle and of his ancestors and of their remaining respectable men. So guard the position of your Prophet through his uncle. We were guided toward You through the Prophet so that we may seek their help and do repentance."

If to seek out the descendants of the Prophet and to call upon them for our needs in the way of Allah is polytheism, then Caliph 'Umar was the first polytheist. The Ahlul al-Muhammad, from the time of the Prophet to this day, have been the means of approach in our prayers and invocations of Allah. We regard them only as very pious people and the nearest ones to Allah.

Therefore, we consider them a means of our approach to Allah. And the best proof for this is our books of invocation prescribed by our infallible Imams. We accept the instructions of our Imams.

I have two books with me: 'Zadu'l-Ma'ad' by Allama Majlisi and 'Hidayatu'z-Za'irin' by Sheikh Abbas Qummi, which I present to you for your consideration. (Both Hafiz and the Sheikh studied the books.)

They read the 'Du'a al-Tawassul' (invocation of seeking nearness), and they found that the Prophet's family was part of the invocation. Everywhere they were mentioned as means of approach to Allah. At that time Mulla Abdu'l-Hayy read the whole of 'Du'a al-Tawassul', prescribed by the purified Imams and quoted by Muhammad Ibn Babawayh al-Qummi.

Du'a al-Tawassul

This is an invocation of Allah. Just as 'Ali has been addressed here, all of the Imams have been addressed in the same manner. The influence of the family of the Prophet is sought to approach Allah. They are addressed in this manner: "O our master and guide! We seek your help to reach Allah. O most respected in the eyes of Allah Almighty: recommend us to Him." The whole family of the Prophet has been addressed in a like manner.

Shi'as do not malign Sunnis

When these invocations were being read, some Sunni gentleman exclaimed with wonder and sorrow at what a great misunderstanding people had created. Well-Wisher asked: "Is there any trace of polytheism in these invocations? Is not Allah's Holy name present everywhere? How many of your ignorant and intolerant people have murdered poor Shi'as believing that they had killed an infidel? The responsibility of these affairs lies squarely on ulama' like yourselves.

Have you ever heard that a single Shi'as has ever murdered a Sunni? The fact is that the Shi'as ulama' do not spread poison. They do not create enmity between Shi'as and Sunnis, and they regard murder as a great sin. In matters of difference of faith between them, they clarify positions through discussions based on knowledge, and logic, and let it be known through their talk that the Sunnis are their brothers. "

Sunni ulama' call Shi'as infidels

On the other hand, the deeds of the fanatical Sunni ulama' are noteworthy. The followers of Abu Hanifa, Malik Ibn Anas, Muhammad Ibn Idris, and Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, who have significant differences, call the followers of 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib and Imam Ja'far Ibn Muhammad polytheists and infidels.

A great many learned and pious Shi'as were martyred on verdicts given by Sunni ulama'. Conversely, there is no such example of cruelty on the part of Shi'as ulama'. Your ulama' often utter curses on Shi'as, but you will not find anywhere curses on the Sunnis in the books written by Shi'as ulama'.

Hafiz: You are not fair. You are stirring up hatred for nothing. Give a single example of a learned Shi'as murdered on the verdict of our ulama'? Who from our ulama' has uttered curses on the Shi'as?

Well-Wisher: If I were to go into the details of the deeds of your ulama' or your common people, one meeting would not be long enough. I will refer only to a few examples regarding their deeds so that you may know that I am not stirring up hatred, but revealing facts.

If you study the books of your fanatical ulama', you will find sections where they have cursed Shi'as. For instance, consult the books of Tafsir of Imam Fakhru'd-Din Razi. Whenever he had the occasion, e.g., concerning the verses of 'Wilaya, he repeatedly writes "Curse be on the Rafizis, curse be on the Rafizis!" But our ulama' have never written such things against our Sunni brothers.

An example of the cruel treatment of your ulama' regarding Shi'as men of learning is the verdict of two great Qazis of Syria (Burhanu'd-Din Maliki and Ibad Ibn Jama'at Shafi'i) against one of the great Shi'as jurists, Abu Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Jamalu'd-Din Makki Amili. That great jurist was known in his time for his piety and knowledge of jurisprudence.

An example of his scholarship is his book, 'Lum'a', which he wrote in seven days without having with him any book on jurisprudence except 'Mukhtasar Nafi'. Moreover, the ulama' of the four schools of law

(Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali), were among his pupils.

Because of the oppression by the Sunnis, this gentleman often practiced 'Taqiyya' (dissimulation in the face of danger), and did not openly declare his Shi'as'ism. The great Qazi of Syria, Ibad Ibn Jama'at, who nursed a grudge against him, spoke ill of him to the ruler of Syria (Baidmar), and accused him of being a 'Rafizi', and 'Shi'as'.

This learned scholar was arrested. After suffering imprisonment and torture for a year, on the verdict of those two qazis (Ibnu'l-Jama'at and Burhanu'd-Din) he was murdered, and his body hanged on the gallows. Since they declared that a 'Rafizi', and a polytheist was on the gallows, the common people stoned the body. Afterward, the body was burned, and the ashes scattered.

Among the ulama' and the pride of Shi'as jurists in Syria in the 10th century Hijri, was Sheikh Zainu'd-Din Ibn Nuru'd-Din 'Ali Ibn Ahmad Amili. He was well known among both friends and foes for his learning and integrity. A prolific author, he kept aloof from the world and wrote 200 books on various subjects. Although he led a secluded life, the Sunni ulama' developed animosity towards him, jealous of his popularity among the people.

The chief among his opponents was Qazi Sa'ida, who wrote to King Sultan Salim the following complaint: "Verily, there lives in the territory of Syria a man who is an innovator, one who does not belong to any one of the four schools of law."

Sultan Salim ordered that this jurist be presented to the court at Istanbul. He was arrested in Masjidu'l-Haram and was kept prisoner in Mecca for forty days. On the sea journey to Istanbul, he was beheaded and his body was thrown into the sea. Only his head was sent to the king.

Respected people! I beseech you in the Name of Allah to say whether you have ever heard of such behavior on the part of the Shi'as ulama' towards a Sunni because he did not follow the Shi'as school of law. What argument can you advance to prove that if a man deviates from any of the four schools of law, he is an infidel and his murder is obligatory?

Is it reasonable to follow schools of law which came into being centuries after the Prophet, while those who follow the law which has existed since the time of the Holy Prophet are ordered be murdered?

Shi'as and the four Sunni schools of law

For Allah's sake please say whether the four Imams – Abu Hanifa, Malik, Shafi'i, and Ahmad Ibn Hanbal – were alive during the lifetime of the Prophet. Did they obtain the fundamentals of the faith from the Prophet directly?

Hafiz: No one ever claimed this to be so.

Well-Wisher: Was not the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali a constant associate of the Prophet, and was he not declared to be the gate of the City of Knowledge?

Hafiz: He certainly was one of the dignified companions of the Prophet, and in some respects he was superior to them all.

Well-Wisher: Are we not justified, therefore, in holding that to follow 'Ali is obligatory? The Prophet himself said that obeying 'Ali was obeying him and that 'Ali was the gate of the City of Knowledge? The Prophet also said that whoever wanted to gain knowledge should go to 'Ali's door.

Also, according to the 'Hadith al-Thaqalain' and the 'Hadith al-Safina', which are recognized by both Sunnis and Shi'as, deviation from the path shown by the descendants of the Prophet will lead to our ruin. Dis-obedience to, or antagonism against, the family of the Prophet, is tantamount to disobedience to the Prophet himself.

In spite of all this, the Shi'as ulama' have never shown such intolerance towards even the common Sunnis, not to speak of their ulama'. We have always exhorted the Shi'as that the Sunnis are our brothers in Islam, and we that should remain united.

On the other hand, the Sunni ulama' have often incited their people, saying that Shi'as are innovators, Rafizis, Ghalis, or Jews. They say that, since the Shi'as do not follow one of four Sunni jurists (Abu Hanifa, Malik, Shafi'i, or Ahmad Ibn Hanbal), they are infidels. The fact is that those who follow the Prophet's progeny are rightly guided.

Murders of Shi'as in Iran and Afghanistan

The Turks, the Khawarizmis, the Uzbeks, and Afghans looted and murdered innocent Shi'as. Muhammad Amin Khan Uzbek, known as Khan Khawa, and Abdullah Khan Uzbek mercilessly murdered and looted Shi'as and admitted doing so.

The Sunni ulama' proclaimed that the Shi'as were infidels and that their lives could be taken according to religious law. The Amirs of Afghanistan acted in like manner. In 1267 A.H. on Ashura (the 10th of Muharram), the Sunnis attacked the Imambara in Qandahar, where the Shi'as were mourning the murder of the grandson of the Prophet.

They brutally murdered many Shi'as, including children, and plundered their property. For years the Shi'as led miserable lives and were prohibited from observing their religious rites. On the day of Ashura, a few of them would go into underground halls and secretly mourn Husain's martyrdom and the others who were slaughtered on the plains of Karbala. It was King Amanullah Khan who removed the ban on Shi'as and treated them kindly.

Martyrdom of Shahid al-thalis

In the cemetery of Akbarabad (Agra), India, there lies one of the most pious and learned jurists of the Shi'as, Qazi Sayyid Nurullah Shustari. He was savagely murdered at the age of 70 in 1019 A.H. by King Jahangir, following a verdict from the Sunni ulama' that he was a Rafizi.

Hafiz: You are attacking us without any reason. I am myself greatly shocked to hear the excessively harsh behavior of ignorant people, but the practices of the Shi'as, too, were responsible for such events.

Well-Wisher: May I know what the Shi'as did which warranted murder?

Hafiz: Every day thousands of people stand before the tombs of the dead and invoke them for assistance. Isn't this practice an example of worshipping the dead? Why do the ulama' not object when millions of them put their faces on the ground prostrate in worship of the dead? I wonder at how you still call these things monotheism.

As the discussion with Mawlana Hafiz continued, the Hanafi Jurist, Agha Sheikh Abdu-s-Salam, was studying 'Hidayatu'l-Za'irin'. He said with great emphasis, "Look here! (pointing to the book). Your 'ulama' say that when the pilgrims have finished their ziarat (pious visit) in the mausoleums of the Imams, they should offer two units of 'Namaz al-Ziarat'. Perhaps they do not intend it for the name of Allah; otherwise, what does 'Namaz al-Ziarat' mean?

Is it not polytheism to offer the ritual prayer for the Imam? Pilgrims who stand with their faces towards the tomb, and offer prayers are the best proof of their polytheism. This is your authentic book. Can you defend your position?

Well-Wisher: You are indulging in childish talk! Have you ever been on such a pilgrimage, and seen the pilgrims firsthand?

Sheikh: No.

Well-Wisher: So, how can you say that the pilgrims offer prayers with their faces towards the tomb, and that this prayer of 'Ziarat' is a sign of polytheism?

Sheikh: This book says that they should offer Namaz al-Ziarat for the Imam.

Well-Wisher: Let me have a look at it. Let me read the instructions concerning 'Ziarat', until we reach the subject of prayer, which is the point of your objection. Whenever you find any trace of polytheism, please point it out. And, if you find signs of monotheism from top to bottom, do not feel sorry for that, but say that you were under a misunderstanding. The book is here before you.

Instructions about ziarat

The instructions are as follows: "When the pilgrim reaches the ditch of Kufa, he stands there and recites the following: 'Allah is Most Great, Allah is Most Great, the Possessor of Greatness, Sublimity, and Eminence. Allah is Most Great, the Possessor of Greatness, Holiness, Glory and Grace. Allah is Most Great above that which I fear. Allah is Most Great. He is my Support; on Him do I rely and in Him lays my hope, and towards Him I turn.'

When the pilgrim reaches the Gate of Najaf, he should recite: 'Praise be to Allah, who guided us to this. We would not have been guided if Allah had not guided us.'

When he reaches the Gate of the Sacred Courtyard, he should recite, after praising Allah: 'I bear witness that there is no god except Allah, the One. He has no partner. I also bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and His Prophet. He brought us truth from Allah. I also bear witness that 'Ali is a servant of Allah and brother of the Prophet of Allah. Allah is Most Great, Allah is Most Great, Allah is Most Great.

There is no god except Allah, and Allah is Most Great. All praise is due to Allah for His guidance and His support to respond to what He has revealed on the way to Him.'

When the pilgrim reaches the gate of the mausoleum, he should recite: 'I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, the One. He has no partner with Him....' until the end.

When, after having asked permission of Allah, the Prophet, and the Imams, the pilgrim reaches the inside of the mausoleum, he recites various Ziarats which contain salutations to the Holy Prophet and the Commander of the Faithful. After Ziarat, he offers six rak'ats of ritual prayer and, two rak'ats for the Commander of the Faithful, and two rak'ats each for the Prophets Adam and Noah, who are buried in the same precincts."

'Namaz al-ziarat' and invocations after the prayer

Is the performance of the ritual prayer as an offering for the souls of parents and other believers not enjoined upon us? Are these injunctions polytheism? It is for humanity's sake also that when a man goes to see a friend he gives him some present.

There is a Chapter in the books of both sects in which the Prophet enjoins us to offer presents to the believers. So when a pilgrim reaches the tomb of his beloved master and knows that the thing which he loved most was the prayer, he offers two rak'ats of prayer in his approach to Allah and offers the prayer as a present to the Holy soul of the master. Is this polytheism? After having read the principles underlying the prayer, read also the invocation after the prayer, so that all your doubts may be removed.

Invocation after namaz

The practice of the invocation is that after completion of the prayer at the head of the tomb of the buried Imam, with our faces towards the Ka'ba (not towards the tomb), we recite the following invocation: "O Allah! I have made a present of this prayer to my leader and master, your Prophet and the brother of your Prophet, the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali Ibn Abu Talib. O Allah, send your blessings on Muhammad and his progeny. Accept these two rak'ats of prayer from me, and recompense me, as you would recompense the doers of good deeds.

O Allah! I offered this prayer for Your sake and bowed down before You, and prostrated in obeisance to You. You are One Who has no partner. It is not permissible to offer prayer or to bow down or prostrate before any but You. You are Allah, the Great, and there is no god except You."

Respected gentlemen! For Allah's sake, be fair. From the time a pilgrim sets his foot on the soil of Najaf, until after he offers his 'Namaz al-Ziarat', he is busy remembering Allah.

Sheikh: It is strange that do you not see here written: "Kiss the doorstep and enter the haram (interior) of the mausoleum." We have heard that when the pilgrims reach the doors of the mausoleum of their Imams, they prostrate in obeisance. Is this prostration not for 'Ali? Is it not polytheism when we prostrate before someone other than Allah?

Well-Wisher: If I were you, I would not say a word. I would keep quiet until the last meeting of this debate, and listen to the logic of my responses. But I will tell you briefly once more that kissing the threshold or the floor of the mausoleums of the Imams is not polytheism.

You have misinterpreted the word "kissing", and consider it equivalent to prostration. When you read the book in our presence, and make such radical changes, I wonder how you will slander us when you are alone addressing the uninformed masses.

The instructions contained in this book and in all other books regarding invocations and places of Ziarat are that the pilgrim, by way of showing respect, should kiss the threshold, not prostrate. How can you consider kissing, and prostration the same thing? And, where have you seen, either in the Holy Qur'an or in any hadith, that kissing the threshold of the mausoleums of a prophet or an Imam is prohibited?

So if you have no reasonable reply to this question, you should not waste our time. And, as you say, you have "heard" that the pilgrims prostrate in obeisance. You have not actually seen this. The Qur'an says:

"O you who believe! If an evil-doer comes to you with a report, look carefully into it, lest you harm a people in ignorance, then are sorry for what you have done." (49:6)

According to this injunction of the Holy Qur'an, we should not rely on the statement of a wicked person. We should make strenuous efforts to know the truth, even undertake journeys if necessary in order to

ascertain the truth of a report firsthand. When I was in Baghdad, I went to the tombs of Abu Hanifa and Sheikh Abdul-Qadir Jilani and saw what the people did. It was more serious than what you described regarding Shi'as practices, but I never talked about it.

When I reached the tomb of Abu Hanifa at Mu'azza'm, I found a group of Sunnis repeatedly kissing the floor, instead of the threshold, and rolling on the ground. But since they did not appear to be malicious and because I had no grounds for condemning them, I never mentioned the incident to anyone. I understood that they were doing so out of love, not as worship.

Respected sir! Certainly no pious Shi'as ever prostrated for anyone but Allah. If, however, we fall down on the ground in a manner similar to prostration and rub our foreheads on it (without intention of worship), this is insignificant. To bow down before a respected person without considering him Allah or to fall down on the ground and rub one's face on it, is not polytheism. It is the result of intense love.

Sheikh: How is that when we fall down on the ground and put our forehead on it that this action would not amount to prostration?

Well-Wisher: Prostration depends on intention, and intention is a matter of the heart. Only Allah knows our heart's intentions. For example, we may see people lying down on the ground in the manner of ritual prostration. It is true that prostration to anyone but Allah is not proper, even though it be without any intention. However, since we are not aware of their heart's intention, we cannot call it ritual prostration.

Prostration of the brothers of Joseph before him

Therefore, prostration in a manner similar to the ritual prostration (but without its intention), to show reverence to someone is not polytheism. For example, the Prophet Joseph's brothers prostrated before him. At that time, two Prophets, Jacob and Joseph, were present, but they did not forbid them to do so.

Allah says in the Chapter of Joseph in the Holy Qur'an.

"And he raised his parents upon the throne, and they fell down in prostration before him, and he said: 'O my father, this is the significance of my vision of old; my Lord has indeed made it to be true....'" (12: 100)

Moreover, the Holy Qur'an says in several places that the Angels performed the prostration before the Prophet Adam. So if prostration is polytheism, then the brothers of the Prophet Joseph and the angels of Allah were all polytheists. Only the cursed Iblis (Satan) was a monotheist!

Invoking Imams is not worshiping the dead

Now, I want to reply to the respected Hafiz, who said that invocation before the tombs of the Holy Imams is tantamount to worshipping the dead. You ask why the Shi'as seek help at the tombs of the Imams.

Perhaps, you believe that there is no life after death and say, "What is dead is annihilated."

Allah describes in the Holy Qur'an this mistaken point of view, saying:

"There is naught but our life in this world; we die and we live and we shall not be raised again."
(23:37)

As you all know, those who believe in Allah know that there is life after death. When a man dies, his body becomes lifeless, but, unlike the animals, his soul and sense of speech remain with similar, but purer bodies, and will be blessed or chastised in the transitory state (barzakh) or purgatory.

Martyrs and those killed in the way of Allah enjoy special blessings. This has been narrated in the Holy Qur'an.

"And reckon not that those who are killed in Allah's way to be dead; nay, they are alive (and) are provided with sustenance from their Lord, rejoicing in what Allah has given them of His grace, and they rejoice for the same of those who, (being left) behind them, have not yet joined them, that they shall have no fear, nor shall they grieve." (3: 169–170)

I focus on the words,

"They are alive (and) are provided with sustenance from their Lord...." (3: 169)

They reply to us, but since our hearing is blocked by the veils of the material world, we do not hear their voices. Accordingly, in the salutation (ziarat) to Imam Husain, we say, "I bear witness that you hear what I say and that you reply." Have you read sermon No. 85 of Nahju'l-Balagha?

The progeny of the Prophet are introduced as follows: "O, people, this is a saying of the Prophet: 'He who dies from among us is not dead, and he who decays (after dying) from among us does not really decay.'" ¹ That is, in the realm of light and spirituality, the Ahlul Bayt live and remain imperishable.

Accordingly, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid Mu'tazali and Sheikh Muhammad Abduh, the famous mufti of Egypt, commenting on the above, say that the descendants of the Holy Prophet are not dead in the way others are. So, when we stand before the tombs of the Imams, we do not stand before the dead, and we do not address the dead. We stand before the living and speak to the living. Hence, we are not worshippers of the dead.

We worship Allah. Don't you believe that 'Ali, Imam Husain, and the martyrs of Badr, Hunain, Uhud, and Karbala sacrificed their lives in the way of Allah for the sake of truth? Didn't they face the tyranny of the Quraish, the Bani Umayya, Yazid, and his followers, whose aim was to obliterate the religion?

Just as the firmness of the companions of the Prophet and the sacrifices of the martyrs of Badr, Hunain, and Uhud led to the defeat of infidelity, in the same way Imam Husain's firm resolve to sacrifice his life

strengthened Islam. If the Imam had not stood firm against evil forces, the damned Yazid would have destroyed Islam and would have infused his infidelity into the Muslim community.

Sheikh: It is surprising that you call the caliph of the Muslims, Yazid Ibn Mu'awiya, an unbeliever. You should know that Mu'awiya Ibn Abu Sufyan, appointed him caliph. The second caliph, 'Umar Ibn Khattab, and the third caliph, Uthman the oppressed, appointed Mu'awiya Amir of Syria.

Because of their ability and talent, people sincerely accepted them as caliphs. So your reference to the caliphs of the Muslims as unbelievers means that you have insulted not only all the Muslims who accepted them as caliphs but you have also insulted the previous caliphs, who sanction their being caliph or Amir.

Of course they made a mistake, a pardonable mistake, which occurred during their caliphate. The Prophet's grandson, Imam Husain, was murdered, but this was forgiven. Since they repented, Allah, the Merciful, excused them. Imam Ghazali and Damiri have elaborately dealt with this point in their books and have proven the purity of Caliph Yazid.

Well-Wisher: I never expected that your fanaticism would go so far as to defend the cause of damned Yazid. You say that since their predecessors thought it fit to make them Amir or ruler, that all Muslims should have accepted them.

This statement makes no sense. We say that a caliph should be pure (absolutely free from all sin) and divinely commissioned, so that we may not have to endure oppression. You say that Ghazali and Damiri have defended the position of Yazid. But they were as fanatical as you are.

No sensible person would ever try to defend the actions of the cursed Yazid. You say that Yazid committed a "mistake" in murdering Imam Husain. But to murder the dearest son of the Prophet, along with 72 other people, including small children and old men, and to take the pious daughters of the Prophet prisoner bareheaded and barefaced, was not a mere "mistake." It was an unspeakable atrocity. Moreover, his crimes were not confined to this gruesome slaughter alone. There are many other instances of his infidelity.

The infidelity of Yazid

Among the facts proving Yazid's infidelity are his own poetic couplets. For instance, he writes:

"If drinking (wine) is prohibited in the religion of Muhammad, let it be so; I will accept Christianity."

"It is this world alone for us. There is no other world. We should not be deprived of the pleasures of this world."

These couplets appear in the collection of his poetical works, and Abu'l-Faraj Ibn Jauzi has recorded

them in his Radd Ala'l-Muta'asibu'l-Anid. Again he says:

"One who frightens us with the story of doomsday, let him do so. These are false things which deprive us of all the pleasures of sound and music."

Sibt Ibn Jauzi writes in his 'Tadhkira', page 148, that when the descendants of the Prophet were brought as captives to Syria, Yazid was sitting in the second story of his palace. He recited the two following couplets:

"When the camel litters carrying prisoners appeared, a crow cawed (a bad omen in Arabia). I said: O crow, whether you caw or not, I have taken vengeance on the Prophet."

"Vengeance" refers to the fact that his elders and near relatives were killed in the battles of Badr, Uhud, and Hunain. He avenged their deaths by killing the sons of the Prophet.

Another proof of his infidelity is that when he had a party to celebrate Husain's martyrdom, he recited the irreligious couplets of Abdullah Ibn Uzza Ba'ri. Sibt Ibn Jauzi, Abu Raihan, and others have written that Yazid wished for the presence of his ancestors, who were all infidels, and were killed in the battle of Badr on the order of the Prophet. Yazid said:

"I wish those of my clan who were killed at Badr, and those who had seen the people of the Khazraj clan wailing (in the battle of Uhud) on account of lancet wounds, were here.

They would have hailed me with loud cries and said: 'O Yazid, may your hands never be paralyzed' because I have killed the chiefs of his (the Prophet's) clan. I did so as revenge for Badr, which has now been completed.

The Bani Hashim only played a game with government. There has come no message from Allah, nor was anything revealed. I would not belong to the Khandaq family if I had not taken vengeance on the descendants of the Prophet. We avenged the murders of 'Ali by killing his son, a horseman and a brave lion."

Sanction by Sunni ulama' for cursing Yazid

Most of your ulama' regard Yazid as an infidel. Even Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal and many other great ulama' of your sect suggest that curses on him should be recited. Abdu'r-Rahman Abu'l-Faraj Ibn Jauzi has written a book on this subject, 'Kitabu'l-Radd Ala'l-Muta'asibu'l-Anidu'l-Mani'an La'h al-Yazid La'natullah'.

Only a few of the fanatical ulama' of your sect, like Ghazali, have shown partiality to Yazid and have fabricated ludicrous objections in defense of him. However, the majority of your ulama' have noted his irreligious, tyrannical behavior.

Muslim states that as caliph, Yazid attempted to do away with religion. Mas'udi, in his Murujul-Zuhab, Volume II, says that the character of Yazid was like that of Pharaoh, but that Pharaoh was more just to his subjects than Yazid was. Yazid's rule brought disgrace on the fair name of Islam.

His wickedness included drinking wine, murdering the Prophet's son, cursing the Prophet's successor, 'Ali, demolishing the House of Allah (Masjidul-Haram), and mass killings. He committed countless transgressions against divine law, sins which are unforgivable.

Nawab: How was Yazid responsible for mass killings?

Well-Wisher: Many historians have related this fact. Sibti Ibn Jauzi in his Tadhkira, page 63, says that some of the people of Medina went to Syria in 62 A.H. When they learned of the sinful deeds of Yazid, they returned to Medina, broke their allegiance to him, cursed him, and turned out his Governor, Uthman Ibn Abi Sufyan. Abdullah Ibn Hanzala (Ghusilul-Mala'ikat) said:

"O people, we did not revolt against Yazid until we verified that he was an irreligious man. He killed the descendants of the Prophet, illegally associates with mothers, daughters, and sisters, drinks wine, and does not offer the ritual prayer."

When this news reached Yazid, he sent a large army of Syrians under Muslim Ibn 'Uqba against the people of Medina. The slaughter of Muslims continued for three days. Yazid's forces killed 700 noblemen of the Quraish, Muhajirs, and Ansars, and 10,000 common people. I am ashamed to say how the Muslims were humiliated. I will quote only one passage of Tadhkira, page 163, by Sibti Ibn Jauzi, reported by Abu'l-Hasan Mada'an: "After the mass slaughter of the people of Medina, 1,000 unmarried women gave birth to children."

Should Yazid be cursed?

Sheikh: These accounts indicate his sins. Sins are forgivable and may be condoned, and Yazid did show repentance. Allah, who is the Forgiver of sins, forgave him. So why do you always curse him and call him wicked?

Well-Wisher: Some lawyers go on arguing a client's case until the last moment because they have received fees from them, even though they know well the merits of the case. But I fail to understand why you are so interested in defending Yazid, in the face of his murders of Allah's Apostles and his slaughter of the people of Medina.

Moreover, your assertion that he showed repentance is not proven. Don't his denials of the main principles of Islam, the Day of Resurrection, the revelation, and prophethood merit our condemnation? Hasn't Allah cursed the oppressors?

If these arguments are not sufficient for the advocates of Yazid Ibn Mu'awiya, I will, with your permission,

quote two hadith from your distinguished ulama'.

Bukhari and Muslim in the Sahih, Allama Samhudi in Ta'rikhu'l-Medina, Abu'l-Faraj Ibn Jauzi in Kitabu'r-Radd Ala'l-Muta'asibu'l-Anid, Sibti Ibn Jauzi in 'Tadhkira al-Khawasu'l-Umma', Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in 'Musnad' and others quote the Holy Prophet as saying: "If anyone frightens and oppresses the people of Medina, Allah will frighten him (i.e., on the Day of Judgement). He will be cursed by Allah, by the angels, and by all humanity. And on the Day of Judgement, Allah will not accept any of his deeds."

The Prophet also said: "Curse be on him who frightens my city (the people of Medina)." Didn't this mass slaughter frighten the people of Medina? If it did, then acknowledge along with the Prophet, the angels, and all the people that that wicked malefactor was cursed and will go on being cursed until the Day of Judgement.

The majority of your ulama' have cursed Yazid. Abdullah Ibn Muhammad Ibn Amir Shabrawi Shafi'i in 'Kitabu'l-Ittihaf be Hubbi'l-Ashraf Raji' ba La'n al-Yazid', page 20, writes that when the name of Yazid was mentioned before Mulla Sa'd Taftazani, he said: "Curse be on him, and on his companions, and helpers."

Allama Samhudi in his Jawahiru'l-Iqdain, is reported to have said: "The ulama' in general have concurred that it is permitted to curse him who murdered Imam Husain, or who ordered him to be murdered, or who sanctioned his murder, or who agreed to his murder."

Ibn Jauzi, Abu Ya'la, and Salih Ibn Ahmad, arguing from the verses of the Holy Qur'an write that, "It is proven that cursing Yazid is permissible. It is the duty of all Muslims that they should know the rights that Imam Husain has over them, and how, with the strength of his suffering oppression and tyranny, he watered the tree of Islam with his own blood and the blood of his family. Otherwise, that blessed tree might have died because of the tyranny of the Bani Umayya. It was Husain who gave Islam a new life."

I regret that, instead of recognizing the services that these Holy people rendered for Islam, you raise objections about pilgrims who visit their tombs and call them worshippers of the dead. We often read that in the central places of countries, like Paris, London, Berlin, and Washington there are tombs honoring the "unknown soldier." It is said that, suffering the tyranny of the enemy and in defense of his country, he sacrificed his life. But there was no mark on his body or clothes to indicate his family or city.

Because he gave his life in defense of his country, even though he was unknown, he is worthy of respect. When a king or any prominent personality visits such cities, he visits the grave of the unknown soldier and places wreaths of flowers on it.

An unknown soldier receives much respect, but I regret that, instead of respecting the pilgrims who visit the tombs of learned, pious Muslims, we criticize them. Some of them knew the entire Qur'an by heart. They sacrificed their lives in the defense of Islam. These people include the trustees of Allah, the Holy Prophet, and descendants of the Holy Prophet.

Desecration of Graves

Some Muslims have actually demolished such tombs and made tea on the chests placed over the graves! Such a tragedy occurred in 1216 A.H. on the Eidi'l-Ghadir, when most of the residents of Karbala go to Najaf for pilgrimage.

The 'Wahhabis of Najaf attacked Karbala and murdered the Shi'as. They demolished the tombs of those who sacrificed their lives for the sake of Islam. About 5,000 residents of Karbala, including the ulama', the elderly, women, children, were slaughtered.

The treasury of Imam Husain was looted and precious stores, gold lamps, and valuable carpets were taken. The precious chest above the tomb was burned and tea was made on it. Many people were taken away as prisoners. Woe be to such Muslims!

How regrettable it is that in all civilized countries the tombs of kings, intellectuals, and even unknown soldiers are respected, but Muslims, who are expected to show a better sense of the importance of the preservation of the tombs of those who are their pride, plunder and destroy them like savages. In Mecca and Medina the Wahabis destroyed the tombs of the martyrs of Uhud, including that of Hamza, the ancestors of the Holy Prophet, like Abdu'l-Muttalib, Abdullah, and others.

They also destroyed the tombs of the family of the Prophet, his sons, like Imam Hasan, Imam Zainu'l-Abidin, Imam Muhammad Baqir, Imam Ja'far Sadiq, Bibi Fatima, daughter of the Holy Prophet, and many others of the Bani Hashim and distinguished ulama'. Still they call themselves Muslims.

Of course they construct huge mausoleums for their own great men and kings. The fact is that the ulama' of both sects have quoted many hadith inviting us to visit the graves of the faithful, so that the tombs may be saved from destruction. The Holy Prophet himself visited the graves of the faithful and invoked Allah for their deliverance.

The descendants of the Holy Prophet are martyrs in the way of Allah, and are alive

Do you think that the exalted family of the Prophet who gave their lives in the way of religion are martyrs? If you say they are not martyrs, what is your argument? If they are martyrs, how can you call them "dead?" The Holy Qur'an states:

"They are alive (and) are provided with sustenance from their Lord." (3: 169)

So according to the Holy Qur'an and the hadith, those Holy people are alive. Hence, we are not worshippers of the dead. We do not salute the dead, we praise the living. And no Shi'as, educated or uneducated, regards them as the sole remover of his difficulties.

He regards them as pious servants of Allah and a means of approach to Allah. We place our desires before the righteous Imams so that they may invoke Allah to show kindness to us. When we say, "O 'Ali, help me," "Husain, help me," it is just like a man who wants to approach the king. He may go to the prime minister and ask him for help. He certainly does not consider the prime minister of the king as the final resort for removal of his difficulties.

His only aim is to approach the king through him since, by virtue of his position; he can easily approach the king. The Shi'as do not regard the descendants of the Prophet as partners in divine actions; they consider them as his pious servants.

The position of infallible Imams

Since they are the representatives of Almighty Allah, they submit the desires of the needy to Him. If the request is worthy, He accepts it. Otherwise, its recompense is given in the hereafter. One point should not be allowed to remain unexplained: the Shi'as regard the position of the faultless Imams as higher than that of the other martyrs of Islam.

Hafiz: This statement requires an explanation. What is the difference between your Imams and all other Imams except that they are related to the Prophet?

Well-Wisher: If you look at the position of the Imamate, you will see a clear contrast between the conception of the Imamate held by Shi'as and Sunnis.

¹. Nahju'l-Balagha, English translation, Volume 1, page 130, published by Peer Muhammad Ebrahim Trust, Karachi.

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