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Responsibility 6: Inviting People to the Imam

The next responsibility which rests upon the shoulders of the believers is to invite others to have a better knowledge of the Imam and to help them advance in their conviction. In addition, the believers must also be ready to guide one another to the highest pinnacles of ma'rifah of the Imam.

There are many proofs which stress the importance of this responsibility, such as 'Amr bil Ma'ruf (enjoining others to what is right) and the benefits which are given to guiding people to the path of truth.

We are told that each person must invite others to the path of the Imam in accordance with their level of awareness and understanding of the Imam. One must educate others on the characteristics of the Imam, his moral fiber and other issues related to him, and in actuality, this is a responsibility which we all share towards this noble personality and it is through this act that we bring ourselves closer to the Imam.

A person who is active in this sort of invitation must not only possess the theoretical knowledge of the Imam (and of Islam), rather he must also manifest this knowledge through his actions.

As we know, it is through both the theoretical knowledge and our practical actions that we are able to educate and guide the people towards the Imam so that they too may be able to take him as their own personal example and guide to follow in life.

Without a doubt, inviting others to the path of guidance through one's practical actions has a greater effect than merely possessing theoretical knowledge.

From another point of view, we see that a person who is engaged in inviting others to the way of the Imam must also employ good exhortation and advice, and through a combination of these methods, should guide others towards the Imam.

If needed, the path of warning (of the punishment of Allah) can also be used so that the hearts of the people are awakened to the truths around them and so that their spiritual souls are kept enlivened.

A person inviting to the Imam must also be able to make use of the reliable proofs (traditions) and with

the various proofs and logical arguments available, should be able to convince others of the existence of the Imam and acquaint them with their true leader.

One of the Infallibles has said:

وَإِنَّ الْعَالِمَ الَّذِي يُعَلِّمُ النَّاسَ مَعَالِمَ دِينِهِمْ وَيدَعُوهُمْ إِلَى إِمَامِهِمْ أَفْضَلُ مِنْ سَبْعِينَ أَلْفَ عَابِدٍ

“Surely the scholar who instructs the people in matters of their religion and invites them to their Imam is better than seventy thousand worshippers.”¹

In another tradition, this one from Imam ‘Ali b. Muhammad al-Hadi (as) it is stated that:

لَوْ لَا مَنْ يَبْقَى بَعْدَ غَيْبَةِ قَائِمِنَا مِنَ الْعُلَمَاءِ الدَّاعِينَ إِلَيْهِ وَ الدَّالِّينَ عَلَيْهِ وَ الدَّابِّينَ عَنْ دِينِهِ بِحُجَجِ اللَّهِ وَ الْمُنْقِذِينَ لِضُعَفَاءِ عِبَادِ اللَّهِ مِنْ شِبَاكِ إِبْلِيسَ وَ مَرَدَّتِهِ وَ مِنْ فِخَاخِ النُّوَاصِبِ لَمَا بَقِيَ أَحَدٌ إِلَّا ارْتَدَّ عَنْ دِينِ اللَّهِ وَ لَكِنَّهُمْ الَّذِينَ يُمَسِكُونَ أَرْزَمَةَ قُلُوبِ ضُعَفَاءِ الشَّيْعَةِ كَمَا يُمَسِكُ صَاحِبُ السَّفِينَةِ سُكَّانَهَا. أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْأَفْضَلُونَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ

“If after the occultation of your Qa'im (ajtf) there were not to remain a person from amongst the scholars who invite towards him (the Imam) guide others to him defend his religion by the proofs of Allah, rescue the downtrodden servants of Allah from the snares of Iblis and his hoards, and the traps of the enemies (of the Ahlul Bayt), then there would not remain a single person (on Earth) except that he would have left the religion of Allah.

However, these scholars take it upon themselves to be the protectors of the hearts of our downtrodden Shi'a just as the captain of a boat takes control of the lives and safety of those on his ship. Thus, these (scholars – the ‘Ulama) are the best people in the sight of Allah, the Noble and Great.”²

¹. Mikyal al-Makarim, vol. 2, pg. 274

². Biharul Anwar, vol. 2, pg. 6, sec. 8, no. 12

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