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Stage 2: Analytical Study of the Imamiyyah

The second step we need to take in introducing the Shi'ism to the Wahhabis is to make a detailed analysis of the beliefs in this school of thought, and explain it to the Wahhabis so that incorrect analyses and false beliefs do not engage their minds, nor cause them to accuse us of the Extremism and disbelief, attributing to us the false notions that have nothing to do with the Imamiyyah.

The facts that we plan to investigate are available in the Imamiyyah's authentic books. We do not, of course, mean to make an extensive study of the texts, for this will be done in another book. We merely say that in all their publications, the Wahhabis commonly attribute the Shi'ahs with all the extremist beliefs and opinions and then shower them with accusations that the Shi'ahs strongly refute.

A number of contemporary Sunni writers have unfortunately followed the Wahhabis' manner, whereas their researchers have realized it necessity to refer to the authentic books of a *madhhab* and make a scholarly analysis and investigation of their content before commenting on them.

The reason for the difference in the manners adopted by such persons as Ihsan Ilahi Zahir, who gives a verdict to excommunicate the Imamiyyah, and Shaykh Mahmud Shaltut, who calls the Imamiyyah one of the Islamic authentic schools of thought becomes clear to us: the former has taken the second-hand documents of the *Ghulat* as sufficient evidence, but the latter has studied and analyzed the first-hand sources.

We will now go through four important questions.

1. The reality of divinity and prophecy as viewed by the Imamiyyah

These two issues occupy a fundamental position in the Shi'ah doctrine. Anyone referring to the Imamiyyah books will clearly understand that the Shi'ahs display great interest in the issue of the Oneness of God and His Lordship and take it as belonging to a guild different from that of worship that

creatures must render to God, for Lordship [*rubūbiyyah*] is specifically Allah's Divine Essence, and all others are placed on the plane of rendering worship and being creatures.

The extraordinary significance of this issue has set the Imamiyyah up to taking a harsh stand against the Extremism and its beliefs and write myriads of books in which they have rejected the extremists' ideas and excommunicated the extremists, because the *Ghulat* have not separated the station of Lordship from that of worship, but believe in unification [*ittihad*] and incarnation [*hulūl*].

As regards Prophecy, the Imamiyyah have established their belief upon the Qur'anic texts, maintaining that the Prophet's (S) mission is the last, and his superiority over all definite. This is something the extremists do not accept. Rather, they consider others superior to the Prophet (S). The Imamiyyah are of the opinion that no other Prophet (S) has come after Muhammad (S) nor will ever come. Also, anyone who denies that Prophecy ends with Muhammad (S) is a disbeliever. This belief surely stems from the Qur'an.

2. The realities of the divine injunctions and laws in the Imamiyyah school of thought

To understand these realities, they should be sequenced as we have arranged, because until the first reality is not understood, the second one cannot be attained. The former reality concentrates on theory, the latter on practice; the first reality talks about intellectual reasoning and the second speaks about corporeal acts: belief in the first issue leads to practice in the second one.

Having first proved that there is no transcendental beloved or a creator or one who regulates the affairs except Allah, and having established the fact that law-making is exclusively His, we proceed to the second issue and say that legislation should be adduced from the Qur'an and from the revelation [*wahy*]; since the Prophet's (S) *Sunnah* originates from the revelation, it is a source of legislation

If you refer to the Shi'ah juridical books, you will see that the precepts and verdicts are all documentary: they have the Qur'an or the true *Sunnah* as their proof and support, intend the external meaning of the orders, flee from the esoteric and interpretive implications, sentence to apostasy anyone who interprets [*ta'wil*] the religious injunctions, does not feel obliged to observe the rules and washes his hands of acting according to the *shari'ah* laws. The Shi'ahs maintain that however important belief may be, it is not enough to make one needless of the religious injunctions and laws.

3. The Imamiyyah's ultimate religious end

It will not be possible to know the ultimate goal of a school of thought, unless its outlook on articles of faith and practical questions are understood. The Wahhabis, however, desire to understand the ultimate goal of the Shi'ah school of thought before dealing with the position this school has adopted concerning

faith and practice. This is impossible because the goals begin to flourish within the matrix of faith and practice. It is not possible to separate one's goals from their beliefs, but the Wahhabis work hard to fabricate false aims for the Shi'ism and launch their attacks without having deliberated on the significance of the first and second realities mentioned above.

4. The purport of some terms common among the Shi'ahs

I have often seen that the Wahhabis misinterpret certain expressions as *bada'*, dissimulation [*taqiyyah*], inerrancy [*ismah*] and *mushaf* that are commonly used in the Shi'ah culture. So long as the meanings of these words are not made clear, there will exist no feasibility of a strife-free dialogue between the Shi'ahs and the Wahhabis because of the profound diversity there is between the Shi'ahs' interpretation of the words and how the Wahhabis understand them, although these expressions are formally the same.

This may seem to be the point where the two realities of Imamate and the Twelfth Imam's (*'a*) occultation should be brought up, but to make it easier for the Wahhabis to grasp the idea we moved it to stage three because it is very hard for them to perceive them at this particular stage. Now, let us take a cursory look at the issue of knowing the Imamiyyah.

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