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## **Foreword**

Body and soul are the two components of human beings; one is the husk and the outer shell while the other is the kernel and an inner spirit. Both dimensions need nourishment as well as protection. Almighty God says,

"[I swear] by the soul and Him who shaped it [perfectly], and then inspired it [the innate ability to understand] what is right and wrong for it! Indeed successful is he who purifies it and indeed failure is he who corrupts it." (91:7–10)

Each human being has the potential of soaring to the level higher than that of the angels and that top place in the pyramid of God's creation can only be reached by developing one's spiritual dimension.

Isl®m guides humans on both planes of their being: the ritual as well as the spiritual. The Prophet Muhammad instructed the people on simple matters of hygiene, such as cleanliness, wud® and ghusl, as well as on loftier matters of spiritual ascension; he urged his followers to be physically strong to defend themselves in battle–fields and also charted for them the heavenly path of spiritual wayfaring.

After the death of the Prophet, regrettably the majority of Muslims were unable to combine the ritual and the spiritual dimensions in their religious life. They experimented with their faith in different ways: from the absolute freewill theory of Mu'tazilah to the disguised predetermination [kasb or iktis b, lit."acquisition"] of Ash'are, from literalism or "fundamentalism" of the Hanebilah to the esoteric explanations of the extremists, from indiscriminate adherence to had to by the Melikis to the personal opinions [qiyyes] of Abe Hanefah. Eventually, the Sunne Muslims settled with the Ash'are theology and the jurisprudence of their Four Imems. However, the lack of spirituality in this strand of Islem gave rise to Sefism among the Sunnis.

All along there was a minority which maintained, preserved, and spread the wholeness of Isl®mic teachings, and that was the Sh®ah strand of Isl®m headed by the Im®ms from the family of the Prophet, the *Ahlul Bayt*. Sh®ism emerged as the natural product of Isl®m which combined within itself its ritual as well as the spiritual dimensions.

It is a path whose theology, jurisprudence, and spirituality flow from the same spring, the *Ahlul Bayt*. And, therefore, you will observe that the She'ah very rarely felt the need to form distinct spiritual fraternities like the Sefis among the Sunnis. You will indeed find 'urafe' [scholars who specialize in gnosis] among the She'ah but not murshiden [spiritual masters] as found among the Sefis.

A She's Muslim refers for all his religious guidance—from theology to jurisprudence, from ritual or spiritual—to the *Ahlul Bayt*. Even if he just follows the rituals with understanding and comprehension, he will be led to the spiritual path. For example, a simple recitation of the Du's' Kumayl, taught by Imsm 'Als, elevates a She's from the basic level of worshiping God out of fear [khawf] to the level of worshiping God out of love [hubb]. And so there is no wonder when we see that almost all the Sefs fraternities trace their chain of masters back to one or the other Imsm of *Ahlul Bayt*.

In this background, it was indeed a pleasure to read and review the English translation of Professor Luis Alberto Vittor's *Sh®ite Isl®m: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy* translated by Dr. John Andrew Morrow. The book has excellently captured the exoteric as well as the esoteric dimensions of Im®mate. I am sure that readers will come to realize that while Sunnism is more a legalistic aspect of Isl®m and S®fism is more a spiritual, mystical dimension, Sh®ism is the true legacy of the complete Isl®m of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny).

May Almighty All®h bless the writer as well as the translator and commentator for their worthwhile contribution towards the understanding of Sh®ah Isl®m.

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Hujjat al-Islem Sayyid Muhammad Rizve
Resident 'alim
Jaffari Islemic Center
Toronto, Canada

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