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Foreword

We hear talk of acquaintance with Islam in our century more than in any other. On one side there are the Western Orientalists whose fame and renown have spread the world over and whose writings and researches are published in various languages.1

On the other side are their Eastern students who are the bearers of Western Knowledge in the east; and the Professors of Orientalism in Universities in Islamic countries. Last of all we have those who are semi-educated in courses on the Islamic Sciences, whose influence in religious communities far exceeds that of the other groups.

We are convinced that the first group is deprived of a correct and precise understanding of Islam, because of lack of veracity, occasional partial or spiteful behaviour, and lack of conversance in Islamic Language and Culture.2

As for the second group, even though it is possible that they don't lack veracity, a lack of scientific expertise and submission to their western professors deprives them of seeing the eternal manifestation of the truth. The third groups deprivation requires no reason because a lack of sufficient research or learning is in itself reason for not being clear sighted in Islamic matters. Thus, only the well–informed scholar and religious authority, expert in all of the Islamic Sciences, also possessing complete scientific independence is the man for this arena.

Considering these conditions, we see how limited the number and range of those clear-sighted in Islamic learning will be. Only a few will be included in the narrow gulf of this superior distinction. Certainly if out of personal interest or religious fervour one intends to propagandize Islam, they must acquire enough preliminary information, to be able to arrive at the correct origins of pure, researched Islamic thought, and speak on that basis and write on that foundation, there existing no other way at all.

There is no doubt that in an Islamic discussion the most important thing is the veracity of that being said, all other matters considered after that as being of secondary importance. The eloquence of speech, the writings literary style, the subject being epic, an interesting presentation and so on, are all necessary but

not fundamental.

The primary element, impossible to be ignored is the integrity and authenticity of the subject propounded. This feature may in no way be forgotten. It must not be upset by the approval of listener and reader, or the way of thought ruling a period or age. The speaker and writers responsibility in this matter is very heavy because the God of Islam will never accept any type of change or reduction in his religion no matter how small or insignificant, and He will not forgive its agent. This humble writer believes that this remark contains no room for doubt or hesitation.

Now, let us see where integrity and authenticity in an Islamic discussion comes from, and in whose trap this high flying bird becomes captive. Sometimes an argument may be found which is one hundred percent anti–Islamic i.e. based on one or many traditions, or someone will claim support for a remark out of the realm of veracity in Islam by citing verses from the Quran. This matter is quite possible and has occured frequently.

As such, speaking only in the name of Islam does not suffice as a condition. Relying just on one isolated tradition does not insure the integrity of ones inquiry or its being Islamic. Actually, study with complete critical accuracy of the collection of religious texts is necessary, itself requiring a series of preliminary studies.

We will go over these conditions: A well-informed scholar, by concentrating on the collection of sources and religious writings, and with study, discussion and investigation into all Islamic texts attempts to learn of Islam. Of course this is all necessary and without them Islam may in no way be understood, but these conditions are not enough for a complete understanding of Islam. That which sees the caravan of learning to the end of the line and the destination of truth is the scholars lack of personal viewpoint, his avoidance of advance judgements and his lack of relation or inclination to a present or past school of thought.

According to these premises, an expert on Islam will truly be such when first of all he becomes familiar with and gains mastery of all religious documents and sources such as the Quran, Traditions, Commentaries, History, the Sirah, and Rijal. Second of all with an unprejudiced mind, a free heart and independent thought he should possess knowledge of schools of thought other than religious, in order to go after the truth without a pre-determined opinion or choice, or in other words, advance judgement.4

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Islam is based upon a multitude of teachings which have been gathered in the Holy Quran and Sunnah. Since we are separated by many long centuries from the time of the revelation of the Holy Quran, the issuance of Traditions, and the writings containing the Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (S). 5 We are undoubtedly in need of scientific mediation to understand them.

This is so we will be able to close this one thousand four hundred year gap and understand the

Prophets' or Imams' words just as their Arab contemporaries. What we wish to bring to attention here is that the first step for a study of the Islamic sciences in all of their aspects is an experts knowledge of Arabic language, vocabulary and literature.

This is while essential, to expert knowledge of the Arabic language, is the study and knowledge of the elements of Arabic words, their phrasing and their abundant metaphorical, symbolical and figurative meanings. Arabic grammar and literature must also be researched to the point of technical expertise so the person may understand Islamic writings as their Arab contemporary world.

We know that during different stages of its development every language is modified under the influence of various agents or factors. One very beautiful well-formed word will become obscene in the course of time. A word will lose its original meaning and will take on a meaning exactly the opposite of the original. Sometimes the scope of a words meaning will be restricted, or it will be enlarged etc......

It is therefore necessary for us to become so knowledgeable of Arabic words, language and grammar that we obtain a complete grasp of these evolutionary stages, and the ability to traverse time and place is also bestowed upon us. Thus, the first instrument necessary for our continue towards understanding Islam, is expert, technical knowledge of Arabic language and etymology.6

Since, between the time of the Holy Prophets and the Holy Imams and our time, there exists a multitude of narrators and book writers; an expert on Islam must be fluent in his knowledge of the Prophet and Holy Imams companions and the numerous narrators and writers of Islamic writings.

This is so he will be able to confirm the veracity or falsity of narratives pertaining to history, traditions or the sirah, biographies of the Holy Prophet (S), his knowledge must be to the extent that he will be able to separate reports, such as Israelites (false traditions) which have infiltrated Islamic writings, 7 from other than those, and/or recognize infiltrations by foreign cultures in Islamic records. This will enable them to present untouched writings for the inference of Islamic truths.8

Here it also becomes clear that for this to be possible, knowledge of the sources of foreign thoughts, beliefs and philosophies is also necessary. Until a person does not accurately and deeply understand these sources he will not be able to achieve awareness as to how they infiltrated the school of thought he is researching.

These sciences are known as the second preliminary for understanding Islam and without them it is impossible to come to know of Islam as an expert. Passing these two sets of preliminary learnings we come to the primary texts, texts which are studied by the expert after the preliminary learnings have been grasped from which the main courses of Islamic thoughts, its finer points and branches may be comprehended.

These texts may be divided into several groups:

1) The first and primary Islamic texts

The Holy Quran and the traditions written with regard to it, with regard to interpretation, its inner meaning and the whys and hows of each revelation must be studied carefully as the first and most important Islamic text by the Islamic scholar.

If we realize that in one traditional commentary such as «Al-Borhan» there exists close to twelve thousand traditions, we will see the expance of this matter.9

2) Texts of creed

On the grounds of creed and argumentation of theological matters we possess a valuable treasure, of which the likes cannot be found in any other religion or nations' reserves or heritage. It is also obligatory for the Islamic scholar to study them all. In one volume of Al-Usul-ul-Kafi alone there are one thousand four hundred and thirty seven traditions listed on this subject, being only a minute portion of our information on this subject.

3) Morality and Ethics

The existing writings and texts on Islamic morality and human thought are quite extensive and without a critical review of them an opinion or judgement regarding Islam may not be given.

4) Scientific Instructions

Texts containing practical instructions or plans for mans life according to Islamic thought constitute our most valuable writings. These types of records and texts will be the primary part used for research by the Islamic scholar requiring the most strenous, comprehensive research work. The book Vasael al–Shia ela–Tashil Masael al–Sharia alone contains 35,850 traditions which speak on the environs of Islamic law and its practical matters.

Traditions on the same subject but which do not appear in Vasael al-Shia are gathered in the book Mostadrak al-Vasael. The numbers of traditions found in this book do not vary much from the number listed in the first book.

5) Prayers

The stockpile we possess on this subject which have been narrated from the Holy Prophet (S) and the infallible Imams (a.s.) are excellent example of sublime Islamic teachings. Studying prayer texts clarifies for us the most superior levels of Islamic teachings on the subjects of the creator, the here–after, creation, anthropology, ethics and individual and social responsibilities. The Islamic scholar will in no

6) History and the Biographies of the Holy Prophet (S)

The part of Islamic history which pertains to the essence of religion is the period in which the leaders and guides of Islam lived. Thus, the historical periods an Islamic scholar must concentrate on are: the age of ignorance which preceeds the rise of Islam, the life of the Holy Prophet (S) in Mecca and Medina and after that the period in which the Holy Imams (a.s.) lived up untill the end of the minor occultation. The political, economic, moral and intellectual conditions of these periods require minute research so the reasons for the social and individual behaviour of these leaders may be discovered.

As such, with a comparison of these findings with the situations during the age of the leader and his reactions to them, he will arrive at Islamic lines to thought and actions under various conditions. It is necessary to say here that the biographies of the Holy Prophet (S) and the Imams (a.s.) are an undiscovered treasure for the inference of Islamic social and individual plans, and shows their insight on vital matters of international law, world and local politics and social leadership.

The vast spread a researcher must inevitable refer to for perception into the matters of this section consist of: General Islamic histories, 11 the Holy Prophets' biography with its innumerable sources, 12 the history of Islamic learning, 13 heresiography and the metamorphosis of religions and thoughts in Islamic society, 14 the numerous widespread traditions related to the lives of the Holy Imams (a.s.), 15 the lives of the companions of the Prophet and Imams and the history of the official caliphate with all of its highs and lows. 16

This arrangement shows but a small picture of an enormous vista and we believe and here repeat that only a very few will ever reach the elated distinction of Islamic expert in its comprehensive, vast sense. These are the persons who have researched and gained expertise in each of these subjects.

Of course, there are numerous experts on various Islamic teachings; law, jurisprudence, speculative theology, history, the traditions and exegesis etc. However, if these persons are not possessed of all of the aforementioned teachings they are not Islamic experts and may not and should not speak on the whole of Islam.

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The series of lectures of which you now have the first volume in hand, were delivered by Allamah Sayyed Morteza Askary in a class for a group of religious scholars in a period of more than two years. The subject for these lectures being a discussion of the principle matters concerning veracious Islam which until this time had not been studied or researched as such; 17 «"An Introduction to the Role of the Holy Imams (a.s.) in the Revival of Religion"»

We all know that the principle subject of disagreement propounded among the Shi ite and Sunni schools

of thought 18 is the subject of «Leadership and Rule». This point, being of course one of the major points of difference, has been under inquiry and consideration for many long years. This is while Shi'ite scholars, based on their sense of responsibility, have been very precise on the many opinions and researches regarding this point. 19

However, the great deal of attention (paid) to this matter has sometimes kept persons from many other fundamental matters, and slowly we have come to the point where most of us think that this is the only difference between these two schools of thought. As such, if someone should create difficulty saying that this dispute pertains only to the first centuries of Islamic history, its time passed having nothing to do with our day and age, and as such should be forgotten to strive towards complete unity between the two schools, we are thus disarmed and will remain without a reply.

However, while strictly restraining ourselves from unscientific and hate-inspiring attacks and believing only in discussion on the scientific and deductive level, and having seen these as sufficient throughout our lifetime, we believe that the differences between the two schools, are fundamental differences in all of Islam's aspects: from the matters pertaining to God and His attributes and continuing on the level of beliefs pertaining to the Prophethood, Imamate and Resurrection.

From this point on, and based on the very beliefs mentioned above it penetrates all aspects of practical and legal matters to the point that the question becomes that of true veracious Islam as opposed to an altered Islam. In the event that the reader is successful, and is able to carefully study all of these lectures, he will be able to fundamentally recognize the two principal Islamic school of thought Shi'ite and Sunni. He will also arrive at the depth and hidden aspects of the occurances in the first part of Islamic history.

Here it must be reminded that this sort of subject matter since it is related to many sides and aspects of Islam and Shi'ite belief, brings up for discussion and study many of Islam's structural, practical and ethical matters and as such is a sort of "Islamology" in itself with all of its importance and necessity in our time. In addition, because it looks at Islam in an analogistic study it puts forth a new aspect and dimension of Islam that has been very seldom brought to light in the past.

Since Allamah Askary's 20 lectures contain all of the characteristics of a lecture, were re-written after being extracted from cassette-tape and after the sources and documentation were researched, being checked by the speaker and once again re-written, it was ready for publication. Repetitions that occured during the original delivery of the lectures were to an extent eliminated, but not always because of their frequent aid in the better understanding of the subject-matter.

The only benefit for the writer of these lines was the hope that as a result of-it even just one person would be able to take one step closer to Islam in its pure form, and/or the veil of ignorance and bigotry be torn away. His hope is also that the Compassionate Lord by His All-Encompassing Greatness keep all new generations from spiritual and external errors, and look upon this insignificant writing favourably.

- 1. One of the most important orientalist writings on Islam, with all of the lies, mistakes and fictions included in it is the "Encyclopedia of Islam" and as far as we know it has been published in English, French, German, Arabic, Turkish, Persian and Urdu.
- 2. In fact most of the orientalists were the enemies of Islam and hated it, such as «Lamans» or like «Louis Masinionn were the servants of Western Imperialism. «Refer to the books by Dr. Muhammad Albahy: "Al–Fikr–ul–Isla mi–al–hadees wa Sillatuhu bil Iste maar al–Garbi", Dr. Omar Foroukh and Dr. Mustafa Khaledy: "Al–tabsheer wal Iste maar", Anvar al–Jundy: "Al–Islam fi wajhel tafreeb", Professhor Khorshid Ahmad: "Islam wa Garb", Malek ibn Naby: "Entaaj–ul–Mostashreqeen wa asarahu fil fikr al–Islami–al–hadees"
- 3. In the Islamic discussions of Orientalists we may find numerous examples to prove this point (such as "The Encyclopedia of Islam" by A. B. Lamans and so forth
- 4. This condition is that which is present in our own traditions; when they deal with interpretationit is insisted that the interpreter completely refrain from interpreting the Quran the way he believes it should be (refer to: Tafseer al–Ayashee 1/12–18 and Tafseer al–Safy 1/21)
- 5. The Holy Imams' Traditions are taken from the Holy Prophet (S) (refer to: Usul al-Kafi vol. 1 p.58, tradition 21; vol. 1 p.62, tradition 10; Basaer ad-darajaat chapter 14 and 15 part 6 p. 299–302)
- 6. In this course. it becomes necessary to know the grammar, rhethoric, figures of speech and history of this science.
- <u>7.</u> Example of these types of reports may be seen in Tafseer Tabary and Tafseer al–Durrul Mansoor in events pertaining to the beginning of creation and matters regarding Mabda (generatrix) and Ma'ad (resurrection). In future discussions we will run in to similar traditions.
- 8. As a result of the hostile plots and deeds of "Manavian", «certain intellectuals of the second century after the Hejrat» some of our historical texts such as Tabary, Ibn Asir, Ibn Kasir and Ibn Khaldoon have filled with lies meant to drive the people away from Islam. (See the Book: "One Hundred and Fifty False Companions" and "Abdullah bin Sabah vol. 1 & 2)
 9. In the commentary "Al–Mizan" close to five thousand traditions are mentioned and researched.
- 10. The most superb and firmest store of Shi'ite prayers with reference to documentation and content is "Sahifeh-e-Sajjadieh", which is the commentator of the peak of Islamic thought on this matter. Islamic scholars have written numerous epositions on this book. We may name several other creditable renowned books on this subject among them: "Al-Mesbah al-Motajed" by Shaikh Tusi and "Al-Eqbal bes-Saleh al-A'mal" by Sayyed Ibn Tawoos and "Al-Balad al-Amin wal-dar'ol Haseen" by Shaikh Kafami.
- 11. Like the history of Yaqubi, History of Ibn Khayat and Ensab al-Ashraf Belladhari, Tabary, Ibn Aseer, and Ibn Kaseer etc.
- 12. Such as: Ibn Hesham, and Ibn Sayed Ainass, and Shaikh Mofids' Al-Ershad.
- 13. Such as Oyun al-Anbia fi-tabaqat al-atbiya and Akhbar ul-Hukama and Al-fehrest and Tabaqat al-Mufsereen. Tadhkerat ul-Hefaz. Tabaqat al-Atbia and Al-Hukama etc.
- 14. Al-Melal wan-nahl Shahrestani", "Wal fasl-fil-Melal", "Al-Ahwa-e-wan-nahl", "Al-Maniyato wal-Melal men ketab al-Melal-e-wan-nahl", and Maqalat-ul-Islamiyyeen wal-farqo bain-al-feraq"
- 15. You may find a nearly complete series of these types of traditions in Majlisi's "Behar-ul-Anwar"
- 16. Such as Suyuti's "History of the Caliphs" [English translation by: Major H. S. Jarrett] and "Al-Fakhri fil-Adab al-Sultaniyeh", "Ad-dowalol Islamiyeh wama-aserol enafeh", and Morooj az-zahab" and their like
- <u>17.</u> During the Holy Imams lifetime and their immediate students lifetimes these types of discussion had numerous examples and parallels but gradually were forgotten after the time of the major occultation.
- 18. Or by a more accurate, correct interpretation, Islam of Ahlu'l Bait of Prophet (S) and Islam of the Caliphs.
- 19. Three prominent examples of these researches are: Allamah Hilli's "Al-Alfain", Mir Hamed Husseins, "Abaqat ul-Anwar", and Allamah Amini's "Al-Ghadeer".
- <u>20.</u> He in addition to possessing the lofty distinction of a virtuous religious scholar and unparalleled research and accuracy in assessments of history and traditions was the founder of Baghdad's College of Religious Jurisprudence, and was a former professor of this high ranking establishment for knowledge.

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