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# **Foreword**

## In the Name of Allah, the All-Beneficent, the All-merciful

It is a big mistake to claim that one can understand the beliefs, sciences, and literature of the *Imamiyyah Shi`ah* through the writings of their rivals, no matter how skilled and proficient these rivals may be and how honestly they transfer and comment on texts uninfluenced by fruitless fanaticism.

I say so with absolute accuracy after I have spent a considerable time investigating the doctrines of the Twelver(1) Shi`ah in particular and the Shi`ah in general. After such a time-consuming study in the books of Sunni historians and critics, I could not reach anything focal. Nevertheless, my sincere desire to study these doctrines and comprehend their most important principles was totally dampened, and increased my detachment from the truth. This is because investigating from the books of the rivals of the Shi`ah—the sect adopted by about half of Muslims all over the world—has been totally futile.

My great inclination to seek the truth made me turn my scientific study to the other side, since wisdom must be the object of a believer. I therefore began to investigate the sect of the Twelve Imams from the books of its embracers and to get to know the doctrines of these people from the reference books of their masters and adept scholars and researchers. It is natural that the master scholars of a sect know more about their beliefs than their rivals, no matter how eloquent and persuasive these rivals may be.

In addition, scientific honesty, which is the foremost foundation of modern scientific methodology—the method that I have chosen for myself and made my constitution in all my research and writings whenever I attempt to discover material and spiritual facts—requires complete verification while quoting texts and investigating them carefully. Hence, it is unsuitable for a skilled scientific researcher to rely upon an unfounded basis while investigating the texts appertaining to Shi`ism.

This fact provoked me to study the Shi`ah and Shi`ism from the books of the Shi`ah themselves and to get to know their doctrines from what they had written and said about themselves without addition or omission, to avoid the confusion which other historians and critics had fallen into while judging the Shi`ah and Shi`ism. As a rule, a researcher who investigates a set of facts from other than their primary sources and original habitats has definitely taken a misleading path and a futile course. Such a researcher has nothing to do with true knowledge.

Such has been the effort of `Allamah Dr. Ahmad Amin when he discussed Shi`ism in his books. As he attempted to demonstrate some aspects of Shi`ism, he wrongfully engaged himself in many Shi`ite doctrines. For example, he claimed that Shi`ism stemmed from Judaism, and except for a few of them, the Shi`ah claim that they will not be subjected to Hellfire, and Shi`ism follows `Abdullah ibn Saba', etc. Such claims and others have been proven false and the Shi`ah are totally innocent of such forgeries, since Shi`ite master scholars have refuted them by methods of criticism and contestation. The best discussion in this respect has been presented by `Allamah Muhammad Husayn Al-Kashif al-Ghita' in his book of 'Asl al-Shi`ah wa-Usuluha (The Origin and Fundaments of Shi`ism)'.

During my investigations about the resources, fundaments, and original habitats of Shi`ism, I was pleased to meet an old friend and a noble Iraqi publisher, namely Sayyid Murtadha al–Kashmiri, carrying some masterpieces of Shi`ite reference books, which he published in Cairo. One of the books that this publisher gifted to me was the aforementioned book of 'Asl al–Shi`ah wa–Usuluha', and the book of 'Abdullah ibn Saba' and some parts of 'Wasa'il al–Shi`ah', as well as other books, which are considered reference books of Shi`ite doctrines and jurisprudence.

Today, Sayyid al-Kashmiri has given me a new book written by Mr. Muhammad Ridha al-Muzaffar, the dean of the College of Jurisprudence in the holy city of al-Najaf, which he has written on the doctrines of the *Imamiyyah Shi`ah*. Sayyid al-Kashmiri, having confirmed his intention to print and publish this magnificent book, asked me to write down an introduction and to reveal my plain opinion about the book.

As soon as I skimmed over the book, I was impressed by the author's fine compilation and presentation of the *Imamiyyah* doctrines as well as his lucid performance in the exposition of his ideas. The instant you taste the flavour of the author's fine presentation of these doctrines through the well–ordered outline of the book and its well–sorted chapters, you will enjoy the splendor of its statements and the elegance of its style. Furthermore, the book generally combines complete utilization, with brevity and concentration on the points that the author intends to convey to the readers, which is the objective of researchers in the books of the Shi`ah. Such being the case, this book is a comprehensive reference that touches on all extremes of the subject matter in a highly concentrated and brief form.

Through my current writing, I do not mean to praise or honor the author but to treat the truth fairly and reveal it before the readers of this magnificent yet small book, since, in my conception, it contains the primary scientific principles which researchers aim at when they depict the facts and attempt to put them where they must be. In view of that, this book will acquaint the readers with some outstanding viewpoints which the author has presented, then filled it with proofs and points of evidence and embroidered it with arguments and instances from the Holy Qur'an, the Holy Prophet's traditions, or the sayings of the Twelve Imams, (may Allah's pleasure be upon them).

Undoubtedly, these outstanding views, which I shall provide the readers, will definitely strike the sight of the well-informed readers in the same way as they have caught my eyes, and will attract them as they have attracted me even if the readers will not peruse my introduction to the book. The objectives of researchers and readers are usually the same, because the truth is invariably the same as long as those who communicate with it and build their conceptions on it judge with their intellects and brains, not their hearts and personal whims, and, as long as they act fairly and leave no place for fanaticism in their minds.

One of these questions that attracts a reader is the question of ijtihad in the view of the Imamiyyah Shi`ah. The view inherited from Sunni authorities about ijtihad is that the door of absolute ijtihad was closed after the four master scholars of jurisprudence; namely, Abu–Hanifah, Malik ibn Anas, al–Shafi`i, and Ibn Hanbal. However, the attempts of ijtihad that took place after these four imams at the hands of certain jurisprudents were no more than partial or inner ijtihad that fell under a certain sect or school of Islamic law [madhhab].

Such secondary *ijtihad* in Sunnism scarcely continued until the fifth century of Hijrah. The *ijtihad* of al-Ghazzali in the fifth century, Abu-Tahir al-Salafi in the sixth century, Izz al-Din ibn `Abd al-Salam and Ibn Daqiq al-`«d in the seventh century, Taqi al-Din al-Sabaki and Ibn Taymiyah, the heretic,(2) in the eighth century, and that of `Allamah Jalal al-Din `Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi-Bakr al-Suyuti in the ninth century, were no more than verdicts issued, that had nothing to do with *ijtihad*, according to modern scientific methodology. More light has been thrown on this kind of *ijtihad* in my book of '*Tarikh al-Tashri*' al-Islami fi Misr (History of Islamic Legislation in Egypt)'.

As regarding the scholars of the *Imamiyyah Shi`ah*, they have authorized themselves to act upon and practice *ijtihad* in all of its aforementioned forms and insist on practicing it resolutely and never closed its door in the face of their scholars throughout the past centuries up to the present day. Furthermore, they make it obligatory upon the Shi`ah to obey the verdicts of a living *mujtahid* directly after the demise of the past *mujtahid* as long as this living one had derived his *ijtihad*—in its origins and branches—from the past *mujtahids*, and initially inherited it from the Imams (`a).

This view and practice of ijtihad in Shi`ism is not the main point that has attracted my attention and won my heart; rather, what is new is that ijtihad in this manner complies with the developments in life, making Islamic legislation active, vivacious, developing and keeping pace with the laws of time and space. They are devoid of stagnancy that sows dissension between religion and life and between doctrine and scientific progress; the stagnancy that encompasses most of the sects that object to Shi`ism.

In my conception, the big numbers of *Imamiyyah* Shi`ite writings and the steady increase in the library of Shi`ism are attributable to the wide opening of the door of *ijtihad* in Shi`ism.

The second view that arouses the attention of the intellectuals and induces them to follow up the unique features of this sect and delve into its issues are the discussions on the goodness and evilness of things: whether a good thing is good in essence, or by reason of its nature, or, just because Almighty Allah decided it was good. Similarly, they discuss whether an evil thing is evil in its essence, or by virtue of its nature, or just because Almighty Allah has declared it to be thus.

When you read these discussions and follow up what the author has stated about the doctrines of the *Imamiyyah Shi`ah* in this respect, you will notice that they adopt the first opinion about both good and evil. In view of the Shi`ah in general and the *Imamiyyah Shi`ah* in particular, good and evil are subjective and substantial in things and they have not held such characteristics due to Almighty Allah's enjoining or forbidding things. Indeed, this course engages the attentions of many researchers and brings about astonishment after long hours of pondering over and contemplating the question.

As for us, we do not find any astonishment or confusion in the matter, because the *Imamiyyah Shi`ah*, in most of the religious laws, used to act upon the course of reason in the same amount as their acting upon the course of narration (i.e. traditions reported from the ancestors). Hence, their opinion about good and evil of things is the same as the opinion of the master scholars of the Mu`tazilah.

There is one question that I should answer here: Did the Shi`ah act upon the Mu`tazilah or the opposite? The majority of researchers believe that the Shi`ah acted upon the Mu`tazilah in their adoption of the course of reason (i.e. rationalism). However, I can assert that it was the Mu`tazilah who acted upon the Shi`ah, since Shi`ism, as a belief, existed earlier than Mu`tazilism as a belief. Mu`tazilism was born and brought up in the laps of Shi`ism and the heads of Shi`ism existed before the master scholars of Mu`tazilism. I can confirm this as long as we agree on submitting to historical facts and as long as we do not doubt the fact that the advanced party of the Shi`ah began to appear since the age of the Orthodox Caliphs and, indisputably, expanded during the caliphate of Imam `Ali—(Allah may honor his face). No sooner had the Imam been assassinated wrongfully to move to the Abode of the Hereafter than the Shi`ah formed a party opposing all the religious and political parties that appeared in Islam.

Shi`ism is not as it is defined by the dotard, pro-Sufyan researchers who introduce it as a purely traditional sect based on religious mores that are full of myths, illusions, and Israeli-made fables, or having derived its principles from `Abdullah ibn Saba' or the like imaginary personalities of history. Shi`ism—in the view of our modern scientific methodology—is exactly contrary to the claims of its rivals. It is indeed the first Muslim sect that cared very much for both traditions and reason-based principles and could find itself a far-reaching, comprehensive path from among the other Muslim sects. Had it not been that Shi`ism is distinctively characterized by coordination between reason-based principles and traditions, we could not have found such an up-to-date spirit in fields of ijtihad and time and space developments in jurisprudence that are not contradictory to the immortal laws of Islam.

Let me now render a third viewpoint that you might believe to be contrary to the rational methodology to which I have referred in the previous paragraph:

The Shi`ah tend to visit the shrines of the Saints and Imams from the Holy Prophet's Household (the Ahl al–Bayt) and they perform acts of worship (to Almighty Allah) near these shrines, such as offering the obligatory prayers and holding sessions of (religious) knowledge and ceremonies of commemorating the Twelve Imams. According to some modern Muslim rationalists and experimentalists, such acts are meaningless superstitions. Moreover, some Muslim sects consider such acts to be a kind of atheism and

apostasy, especially the followers of Ahmad ibn `Abd al-Halim ibn Taymiyah and the followers of his student, Muhammad ibn `Abd al-Wahhab al-Najdi, the founder of the Wahhabiyyah sect, as well as other contemporaries which I disdain mentioning.

The majority of Sunnis believe as their Imamite Shi`ite brethren that neither those Saints and Imams nor anyone else on this globe can provide you with any help nor ever do any harm to you except that which Almighty Allah has decided for you. In plain words, these Saints and Imams have no influence, use, or harm upon somebody but with the permission of Almighty Allah. On the strength of this fact, the visiting of the tombs of these elite people is only aimed at following their examples, patterning after their morals and wonderful feats, and learning lessons from their life accounts. Such acts are allowable in the view of the two sects—Sunnism and Shi`ism.

A fourth viewpoint that has obliged me to express my appreciation and admiration while I am reading this book is the author's competence in explaining the doctrines of the *Imamiyyah Shi`ah* in such appropriate diction that reveals the Shi`ah's being influenced by the rationalistic methodology. As I have previously mentioned, the reason behind such influence is the Shi`ah's deep penetration into rational sciences as much as transferring the traditions of their Imams. This can in fact serve as another decisive indication of the substantive relationship between Shi`ism and Mu`tazilism and between the master scholars of Shi`ism and those of Mu`tazilism.

A reference to my book entitled 'al–Sahib ibn `Abbad' can obviously make one notice that master scholars of Shi`ism were the same as those of Mu`tazilism and vice versa except a few exceptions. Such relationships attained the climax of mutual understanding between the two sects in the middle of the fourth century of Hijrah in the personality of al–Sahib ibn `Abbad who held the leadership of both Mu`tazilism and Shi`ism in the second half of the aforementioned century during which the Islamic civilization reached its peak.

When the author of this book confers the 'Unity of Attributes' upon the Essence of Almighty Allah, he reminds us of the doctrine of the Mu`tazilah who believe in the unity of Attributes. Owing to this doctrine, they have called themselves 'Ahl al-Tawhid (People of Monotheism)'. Hence, both the Shi`ah and the Mu`tazilah believe that the Attributes of Almighty Allah are His very Essence. In plain words, they both share the same belief that Almighty Allah is Essentially All-seeing, All-hearing, and so on. They thus do not set any difference between Almighty Allah's Essence and His Attributes—a topic that in most cases confuses intellects and plunges minds into polytheism (ishrak). Undoubtedly, such belief is the result of the most wonderful pondering over the meaning of monotheism.

Shi`ism and Mu`tazilism both agree on the meaning of Divine Justice, as it being incumbent upon Almighty Allah to do only the good and always avoid the evil. Both the Shi`ah and the Mu`tazilah have set such a principle as one of their beliefs only for purpose of guarding themselves against attributing wrong to Almighty Allah—Allah forbid!

The *Imamiyyah Shi`ah* interpret the following holy verse of the Holy Qur'an, which the Sunnis set as evidence on their belief, with a suitable meaning:

### "He cannot be guestioned concerning what He does and they shall be guestioned. 21:23"

The Shi`ah do not approve the following poetic verse of Ahmad al-Dardir, one of the master scholars of Sunnism and Sufism in 12 AH, when he says:

One who claims that a good deed is incumbent upon the Lord has in fact done badly.

Nonetheless, I completely excuse them because they, believing in such, have good intentions, which is to avoid attributing wrong to Almighty Allah, even if such wrong is not wrong in reality.

In truth, the Mu`tazilah and the Shi`ah stand together on one side while the Sunnis and Sufis stand on the other, even though each party has its own way of extolling the Perfection of Almighty Allah. In other words, the Mu`tazilah and the Shi`ah have adopted the defense of Divine Justice while the Sunnis and Sufis have adopted to defend Divine Freedom, which says that Almighty Allah has the freedom to do anything—a freedom that is not restricted to anything and is not overpowered by anything. As evidence on such 'Freedom', Sunnis and Sufis quote the following holy verse:

# "He cannot be questioned concerning what He does and they shall be questioned. 21:23"

In view of the modern scientific methodology, each of these two opposing parties has its own notion to embrace.

Attached to the above is the author's opinion about the question of Predestination and Divine Decree (al-qadha' wal-qadar), whether man is or is not free to choose or, as is termed by the *Imamiyyah Shi`ah*, whether man is compelled to do what he does or has the power to manage his life.

Although this issue is strongly related to the philosophy of Divine Justice, which is almost the same between the Shi`ah and the Mu`tazilah, it is noticeable that the *Imamiyyah Shi`ah*, specifically at this point, pursue another path, which is between the two extremes. They neither believe in absolute fatalism (*jabriyyah*) in which fatalists, also called *al–Jahmiyyah*, believe, nor in absolute indeterminism (*mufawwidhah*) in which a group of the Mu`tazilah, specifically called *al–Qadariyyah*, believe.

The *Imamiyyah Shi`ah* do not agree with the fatalists because to believe that all events are predetermined by Almighty Allah negates man's freewill and freedom to choose originally and makes

man like a toy in the hands of fate or like a feather in the wind. If so, then Almighty Allah's calling man to account for evil things that man has done will be exorbitant injustice because man has had no choice or will to stop doing such evil things and had no power to stop falling into sin. Hence, the *Imamiyyah Shi`ah* reject such fatality, because it cancels out the attribute of justice that Almighty Allah enjoys. In plain words, to punish man for doing things that he had no power to stop is like tying one's hands and throwing him in a sea and then ordering him not to get wet!

The *Imamiyyah Shi`ah* also disagree with those who believe in absolute power to do things and absolute freedom of choice, because such belief involves that man's deeds and words are absolutely independent from Almighty Allah's will and power. Such belief of the Indeterminists involves that man can create his own deeds without intervention of Almighty Allah's power. Some critics of doctrines have cited traditions censuring those who carry such beliefs. For instance, the Imam (`a) is reported to have said, "The *qadariyyah* (Indeterminists) are the Magians of this nation (of Islam)."

In view of that, we can conclude that the fault of the *jabriyyah* (Fatalists) is that they have canceled the justice of Almighty Allah since their belief involves that He calls man to account for things that He has installed in him without giving him freedom to choose. The fault of the Indeterminists is that they have canceled out Almighty Allah's power over His creatures. Hence, both the parties are extremely far away from truth.

As the *Imamiyyah Shi`ah* take up the opinion of Imam Ja`far al–Sadiq (may Allah be pleased with him) who says, "There is neither (absolute) fatalism nor indeterminism; rather, it is an in–between matter," this means that the *Imamiyyah Shi`ah* agree totally with their Sunni brethren whose master scholars adopt the very same view and state that there is an optional part in man; so, man is neither absolutely compelled to do his deeds nor is he the creator of his own deeds. The most eminent scholar who has adopted this view was Abu'l–Hasan al–Ash`ari.

Moreover, Fakhr al-Din al-Razi has attempted to "philosophize" the harmonization between fatalism and indeterminism; therefore, he is reported to have said, "Man is compelled intrinsically but enjoys freedom of choice extrinsically." In fact, this saying is too precise to be ignored by the well-versed scholars and those having full acquaintance with the details of Muslim doctrines.

Let us end this introduction with a fifth viewpoint: the *Imamiyyah Shi`ah* believe in bada' which explicitly means to do something and then cancel it. They have attributed such bada' (changeability) to Almighty Allah and believed in it so firmly that they are reported as saying, "The best ever worship is to believe that Almighty Allah may change an earlier determination."

Many thinkers have accused the Shi`ah of idiocy and feeble-mindedness as they attribute changeability of decisions to Almighty Allah. Changing (or canceling out) an earlier determination is one of the features of creatures—since to decide something and then cancel it may indicate incidental thinking, or reaching at the right decision after practicing a wrong one, or having knowledge after ignorance (and all these are

impossible for Almighty Allah).

As a matter of fact, the *Imamiyyah Shi`ah* are too far above such accusations that stem from the people's misunderstanding of bada', because both the Shi`ah and the Sunni have unanimously agreed that the knowledge of Almighty Allah is Eternal and far above changeability, alteration, or thinking, which are among the features of the creatures. The Divine decisions that are exposed to changeability and alteration after determination are those written in the Guarded Tablet (al–lawh al–mahfuz), as is confirmed by Almighty Allah:

"Allah erases what He pleases and establishes (what He pleases), and with Him is the basis of the Book. (13/39)"

To shed more light on the notion of *bada'* as one of the *Imamiyyah Shi`ah* doctrines, let us give the following example:

Unhappiness has been decided for X in the beginning of his lifetime, but when X becomes forty years old, he repents before Almighty Allah; so, he is included in the list of the happy people in the Guarded Tablet. In this example, bada' stands for erasing X's name from the list of the unhappy ones and including him with the happy ones. The Eternal Knowledge of Almighty Allah includes the entire history of this issue, including the erasing and the establishment of X's name in the list of the happy ones after his repentance. To clarify, Almighty Allah has already known that X would change his behavior and become righteous at that age when Almighty Allah would lead him to repentance.

The doctrine of *bada'* in which the *Imamiyyah Shi`ah* believe is only the issue of passing judgments according to the apparent aspect of Almighty Allah's deeds towards His creatures as it is required by His Wisdom. In other words, *bada'* is the judgment that is passed on the basis of the apparent deed as is seen by us. By virtue of this definition, the wrong judgment that has been aroused by those who have found fault with the Shi`ah concerning their belief in this doctrine has in fact sprung from their false claim that the Shi`ah attribute changeability (or *bada'*) to the Eternal Knowledge of Almighty Allah, not to the records of the Guarded Tablet.

The clear-cut presentation of the reality of bada' as believed by the *Imamiyyah Shi`ah*, will enable the reader to comprehend the validity of bada' as one of the doctrines of the *Imamiyyah Shi`ah* and the profundity of their acceptance of bada'. In my opinion, it means that Almighty Allah develops His creatures according to the prerequisites of the environment and time that He creates them in. In fact, bada' explains the need for repealing (*nasikh*) and repealed (*mansukh*) verses in the Holy Qur'an. For example, the forbidding of intoxicants being revealed progressively shows that Almighty Allah wished to treat the crookedness of the human soul step by step, and then rescue it from the drastic chains of habit, and help it achieve righteousness. Had Almighty Allah declared the forbiddance of intoxicants at once, souls would certainly have suffered much hardship. This is the belief of bada' that is adopted by the *Imamiyyah Shi`ah*.

I am pleased to inform that I have decided to bring the Muslim sects closer in a single book in which I hope, by the guidance of Almighty Allah, that I will be able to clarify the extent of agreement among these sects in essence and objectives even if they seem to be different in appearance and methods.

Finally, I do congratulate the author on the success that he has achieved in combining the reason-based principles with the reported traditions while presenting the doctrines of the *Imamiyyah Shi`ah* and on the doctrinal culture that he has offered to the readers with great skill through evidence combined with presentation. This is sufficient for anyone who thinks and ponders.3

- <u>1.</u> () The Twelver Shi`ah are those Shi`ites acknowledging twelve Imam as their orthodox leaders and guides whose Imamate (i.e. leadership) has been commissioned by Almighty Allah through many Divine texts.
- 2. () A big number of Sunni master scholars have decided Ibn Taymiyah is a heretic, while Sufis have unanimously agreed on it. Many contests on various aspects of jurisprudence and doctrine used to take place between Taqi al–Din al–Sabaki and Ibn Taymiyah. Refer to my book, 'Tarikh al–Tashri` al–Islami fi Misr (History of Islamic Legislation in Egypt)'.
- <u>3.</u> Dr. Hamid Hafni Dawud: Professor of Arabic Literature in the College of Languages; Supervisor of Islamic Studies at Aligarah University, India.

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