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Section Three: On the Secret of the Niyyah [Intention]

Discussed in Five Chapters

Chapter 1: The Truth Of The Niyyah In Worship

Know that the *niyyah* [intention] is to decide or to determine to do something. It is the soul's decision on performing some acts after conceiving it and then acknowledging its advantage and judging its necessity. It is a psychological and conscientious condition, which appears after the said procedures. It is, then, expressed as a decision, a determination, a want, a will, an objective and the like. It appears in all voluntary actions, as there can be no voluntary act without undergoing the said process, and it is there in the entire action, in reality, not allegorically.

It does not need, however, that the details should be in the mind from the very beginning or even during the process, nor should one necessarily imagine the objective and the decision in detail. It sometimes happens that man does the act according to a decision, and yet he is completely unaware of the detailed picture of the act and the decision, while the fact is there, and it takes place in the outside, motivated by that fact. This is quite consciously obvious in the voluntary acts.

In sum, this decision and determination, which is the *niyyah* in the terminology of the *faqḥs* (may Allah be pleased with them), is, inevitably in every act, such that if one wanted to do a voluntary act without it, it would not be possible.

Nevertheless, the whisperings of the wicked Satan and the sportings of fancy overrule reason and disguise the necessities in the eyes of the helpless man, and man, instead of spending his precious life in improving and purifying his deeds, and in freeing them from internal evils, and instead of spending it in acquiring monotheistic knowledge, godliness and being in quest of Allah, the vile Satan whispers in his ears and induces him to spend only half of his life in quest of a necessary and obligatory matter.

Satan's snares and artifices are too many one may be induced by him to give up the act altogether, while the other whom he despairs of inducing to drop the act, induces him to commit other follies, such as self-conceitedness and hypocrisy. If Satan could not succeed in this, he would try to falsify one's worship by way of causing him to pretend holiness: by slighting the worships of the people in his eyes, and by causing him to regard the people indifferent [heedless].

Then he induces him to spend all his life on matters such as the *niyyah*, which is inseparable from the act, or the *takbīr* or the recitation, which are common and ordinary acts. At any rate, Satan would not leave man alone before nullifying his worship by one way or another.

Satanic whisperings come through diverse ways, which we cannot discuss for the time being, nor scrutinize them all. But the whispering in the *niyyah*, from among them, may be the most ridiculous and the strangest, because if someone tried, with all his powers, to do a voluntary act in all his life, without a *niyyah* [an intention], it would be impossible for him to do it.

Nevertheless, you may find some wretched, sick and feeble-minded person who spends a considerable time at every *Salat* just to have a firm intention. Such a person is more like the one who thinks a long time whether he is to decide to go shopping or to go for a lunch. This helpless man, to whom the *Salat* should be his ascension to His proximity, and the key to his happiness, and, by applying its cordial disciplines and realizing the secrets of this divine grace he should perfect his essence [*dhāt*] and secure his growth [*nash'ah*] of life, he, on the contrary, neglects all these matters, or, much worse, besides regarding them unnecessary, he takes them all to be false, and uses his dear and valuable capital to serve Satan and to obey his slinking whispers, placing the God-given reason [*'aql*], which is the light of guidance, under the rule of *iblis*.

'Abdullāh ibn Sinān says: "I mentioned before Imām as-Sādiq (*'a*) [a case concerning] a man who was afflicted with frequently performing the *Wudu'* and the *Salat*, and described him to be a man of reason. The Imām said: "What reason has he in obeying Satan?" I asked him: "How is it that he is obeying Satan?" He said: "If you ask him wherefrom his hesitation comes to him, he will tell you it is of the work of Satan."¹

In short, man should uproot this by whatever means of austerity and strife, for it deprives him of all happiness and good. It may be that forty years of a man's worship are not correctly performed even in the outer appearance or according to the juristic formal details, let alone the internal religious disciplines.

More ridiculous is that some such fastidious persons think that the worships of all people are invalid and take them to be negligent in respect of religion, whereas their religious authorities whose instructions they follow are also among the ordinary people. If he is a learned man, let him refer to the Prophet's tradition to see that the Messenger of Allah (*s*) and the Imāms of guidance (*'a*) were also like the ordinary people in these matters.

From among all the people only this group of fastidious persons, act contrary to the Messenger of Allah

(s), the infallible Imams ('a), the jurists of religion and the scholars of the 'ummah, regarding the acts of worship of all of them worthless, believing their own to be done according to precaution and that they take good care of religion. Take, for example, the case of the *Wudu'*. The narratives about the *Wudu'* of the Messenger of Allah (s) are many and successively transmitted. It seems that the Messenger of Allah (s) used a single handful [of water] to wash his face, another for his right hand and a third for his left hand.²

The Imam *faqih*s are unanimous on definitely regarding this *Wudu'* to be the correct one. The Book of Allah, too, apparently confirms it. As to the second washing, or the second handful, it is objected by some, while there is no harm in the second handful, or the second washing, although its recommendation is questionable. But the third washing is undoubtedly an innovation and renders the *Wudu'* invalid, according to both the narration and the *fatwa*.

Now, look at the acts of this helpless fastidious person who is not satisfied with twenty handfuls [of water], each one of which is enough to fully wash the hand and to consider it a "complete wash". In this case his *Wudu'* is undoubtedly invalid. But this wretched, feeble-minded person, who performs this act in obedience to Satan's orders and whispers, thinks that what he does is correct and according to precaution; then, by contrast, he takes the acts of all others to be incorrect and invalid.

Here the noble *hadith* proves true in respect of calling this man insane. The one who thinks correct an act, which is contrary to the act of the Messenger of Allah (s), and regards an act, which is in conformity with the Prophet's to be incorrect, is either a renegade or an insane. But as this desperate person is not a renegade, he must be insane, obedient to Satan and disobedient to the Beneficent [*ar-rahman*].

There is no remedy for this acute disease except through contemplation and reflection on the aforementioned matters; making a comparison between his act and that of the pious, the scholars and the *faqih*s (may Allah be pleased with them). If he sees that his act differs from theirs, he is to push Satan's nose into the dust and to completely ignore that evil creature. Then, after that if Satan tries and whispers in his ears several times: "Your act is invalid," let him reply: "If the acts of all the *faqih*s of the *ummah* are invalid, mine is invalid, too."

It is hoped that after some time spent contradicting Satan, taking refuge in Allah, the Exalted, with invocations and imploring, from his evils, this disease will be cured and Satan's greedy eye will be lifted from him. The same instructions are also recommended in the noble *Hadiths* to remedy excessive doubt, which is also of the satanic inspirations.

In the noble *al-Kafi*, on the authority of Imam al-Baqir ('a), it is stated that he has said: "When doubts in the *Salat* become too frequent, do not give heed to them, and regard the *Salat* to be correct. It is hoped that this state would leave you, as it is not caused but by Satan."³

In another narrative, Imam al-Baqir ('a), or Imam as-Sadiq ('a), is quoted to have said: "Do not make it Satan's habit to frequent you by breaking your *Salat*, as this will stir his greed against you. Satan is evil

and gets accustomed to what he is habituated to.”

Zurārah says that the Imām added: “That malignant wants to be obeyed. So, if he is disobeyed he will not come back to you.”⁴

This is an important cure for all cases of Satan's intrusions and of the jestings of devilish fancies. In some *Hadiths* invocations are also recommended. You may, in this respect, refer to *Wasīl ash-Shāh*, *Mustadrak al-Wasīl* at the end of the book *al-Khalal*.

Chapter 2: Sincerity

One of the important disciplines of the *niyyah*, which is of the important parts of all worships and of the general and comprehensive instructions, is “sincerity”. Its nature is purging the act of worship from the impurity of doing it for other than Allah, and clearing the heart from discerning anything other than Allah, the Exalted, in all formal, intellectual, external, and internal acts.

It achieves its perfection by absolutely neglecting the other [than Allah], and decisively pounding upon I-ness, selfishness, the other and the otherness. Allah, the Exalted, says:

“Surely Allah's is the pure religion.”⁵

So, if the religion was mixed with any selfish and satanic desires, it would not be pure; and that which is not pure is not acceptable to Allah, and that which has a blemish of otherness and selfishness is outside the limits of Allah's religion.

Allah, the Exalted, says:

“And they were not enjoined except that they should worship Allah, making the religion His sincerely.”⁶

And He also says:

“...And whoever desires the tillage of this world, We give him thereof, but in the Hereafter he will have no portion.”⁷

It has been narrated that the Messenger of Allah (s) said: “Every person gets according to his intention. So, the one whose intention is to migrate to Allah and His Messenger, his migration will be to Allah and His Messenger; and the one whose intention of migration is to attain to this world [to get something of it] or to marry a woman, his migration is to what he has intended.”⁸

Allah, the Exalted, says:

“And whoever leaves his house migrating to Allah and His Messenger, and then death overtakes him, his reward is, indeed, with Allah.”⁹

Maybe this noble *ḥijrah* covers all degrees of sincerity: One is the formal migration of the body. If this migration was not purely for the sake of Allah and His Messenger, but was for the sake of personal desires, then it would not be a migration to Allah and His Messenger. This is the formal juristic degree of sincerity.

Another one is the spiritual migration, and internal journey, which starts from the dark house of the self, with its goal being Allah and His Messenger. It, after all, returns to Allah Himself, because the Messenger, as a messenger, has no independence of his own; rather, he is an *ḥijrah*, a mirror and a representative. So, to migrate to him means migrating to Allah: “The love of Allah's close friends is loving Allah.”

So, the gist of the meaning of the noble *ḥijrah*, based on this possibility, is that the one who leaves the house of the self, and gets out of the mansion of selfishness, on a spiritual migration and a gnostic cordial journey to Allah, disregarding his self, dignity and prestige, his reward will be with Allah.

But if the *sulūk* to Allah demands, in his *sulūk* to Allah, a personal desire, such as attaining stations, or even attaining Allah's proximity for himself, this *sulūk* will not be to Allah. Actually, the *sulūk* has not even got out of his self; that is, his journey is inside his own house, roaming from side to side and from corner to corner.

Therefore, if the journey is within the limits of the self [*nafs*] for the sake of attaining self-perfections, it will not be a journey to Allah, it is, in fact a journey from self to self. Nevertheless, the *sulūk* in his journey to Allah, will, inevitably, experience this kind of travel. No one, except the perfect *walī*s [friends of Allah] (*'a*) can commence his divine journey without a journey within himself, as that exclusively belongs to the perfect ones (*'a*). Perhaps the noble *ḥijrah*:

“Peace it is till the break of the dawn,”¹⁰

is a hint at this safety from the Satanic and selfish conducts during all the stages of the journey in the dark nights of nature, which is the night of *Qadr* in respect of the perfect ones, till the dawn of the Resurrection Day, which means, to the perfect ones, seeing the Beauty of the One. But the others would not be safe in all the stages of the journey. As a matter of fact, no *sulūk* would be free from Satan's intrusions in the early stages.

So, it has become clear that this degree of sincerity whose first stage in the journey to Allah is safety, till its last, which is the attainment of real death, or rather till after the second real life, which is the “sobriety [*sahw*] after the self-effacement [*mahw*]” would not happen to the people of *sulūk* and the common people of gnosticism and of austerity. The sign of this kind of sincerity is that Satan's temptation will have no way into those possessing it, and Satan's covetous eye will turn in complete despair away from them, as is said by Satan in the Qur'an:

“By Your Might I will tempt them all, except your sincere servants from among them.”¹¹

Here, sincerity is ascribed to the servant himself, not to his act, which is a state loftier than sincerity in act. Perhaps the well-known noble *hadīth* of the Prophet (s) who said: “The one who keeps being sincere to Allah for forty mornings, fountains of wisdom will flow from his heart to his tongue,”¹² refers to all the degrees of sincerity, i.e. sincerity of act, of attribute and of essence, and probably it appears in sincerity of essence, for which the other degrees of sincerity are requisites.

To explain this noble *hadīth*, and to state what is meant by “fountains of wisdom”, the way they flow from the heart to the tongue, the effect of sincerity in this flowing and the significance of “forty mornings”, are out of the scope of this thesis, as they need a separate book. The thesis titled *Tuhfat 'ul-Mulūk fī's-Sayri was-Sulūk*, ascribed to the knower of Allah, the late Bahr al-'Ulūm, is mostly concerned with the explanation of this noble *hadīth*. It is a nice thesis, though somewhat arguable. For this reason some say that it was not written by the said great personality, which is quite possible.

Chapter 3: A Brief Account On Some Stages Of Sincerity To Fit Within These Papers

One of these stages is to purge the act, whether cordial or formal, from the blemish of acquiring the creatures' pleasure and attracting their hearts for the sake of a praise, and advantage or anything else. And the counterfeit of it is the act performed hypocritically, which is a juristic hypocrisy and is the meanest of all degrees of hypocrisies, and such a hypocrite is the lowest and meanest of all hypocrites.

The second stage is to purge the act from wanting the fulfillment of mundane objectives and transient desires, although these acts may be fulfilled in order to attain Allah's grace, such as performing night *salāts* [*nafilah*] for improving one's sustenance, or performing the *salāt* of the first day of the month, for example, in order to be safe from the plights of the month, or giving out alms to ward off diseases, and other worldly objectives.

Some jurisprudents (may Allah's mercy be upon them) regard this degree of sincerity to be necessary for the correctness of the acts of worship, in case the objective of performing the act is to attain it. But this is contrary to investigation according to the juristic rules. Yet, this *salāt* has no value, whatsoever, in the eyes of the people of knowledge, and it is like all other lawful gains, or maybe even lower.

The third stage is to purge the act from trying to attain corporeal paradises, houris, luxurious abodes and the likes of the corporeal pleasures. Its counterfeit is the worship of the traders, as is described in the noble *hadīths*. This, too, is, to the people of Allah, similar to other gains, though the wage of the acts of this trader is more and higher, in case he carries them out and rids them from the formal viles.

The fourth stage is to purify the act from being afraid of the threatened bodily punishment and torture. The counterfeit of this is the worship of the slaves, as is mentioned in the narratives.¹³

To the people of the heart, this kind of worship is also of no value and far from being a service to Allah,

while, to the people of knowledge, it makes no difference if a man performs an act out of fearing the penalties and punishments of this world or the tortures of the Hereafter, or for the purpose of possessing worldly women, or for obtaining the paradisiac women, none of them will be for Allah, and they [only] show the intention [reason=*d*] for the performance of an act, which, according to juristic rules, takes the act out of formal invalidity. But in the market of the people of knowledge this stuff is of no value.

The fifth stage is to purge the act from trying to attain intellectual happiness and everlasting spiritual pleasures, and to join the cherubim, the group of the sacred intellects and the favorite angels. Its counterfeit is acting for this purpose. Although this stage is great and an important goal, and the wise men and researchers attach great importance to this stage of happiness and regard it very valuable, yet, in the ways of the people of Allah, this stage has also its shortcomings in *su'lik*, and its *s'lik* is also regarded as a trader or a worker, though his trade and business are different, in many ways, from those of others.

As regards this stage, I mean the sixth one; it is to purge the act from being afraid of not attaining those pleasures and of being deprived of this happiness. Its counterfeit is to act for this stage out of fear. Although this is a lofty stage and is beyond the desire of one like the writer, yet, to the people of Allah, this is also the worship of the slaves, for it has causes.

The seventh stage is to purge it from attaining the delights of the Divine Beauty and enjoying the pleasures of the lights of limitless glories, which are the Paradise of Meeting [the Lord]. This stage, I mean the stage of Meeting Allah, is one of the most important goals of the people of knowledge and those of heart, and the hands of the hopes of the common people are too short to reach it. Only a few of the people of knowledge are favored with the happiness of this honor.

And the people of love and attraction are of the perfect ones among the people of Allah and His chosen ones. Yet, this perfection is not the most perfect degree of the people of Allah. It is one of their many common states. What we read in some invocations, such as the *Sha'b'niyyah* supplication, that Imām 'Alī ('a) and his pure progeny demand the said state, or allude to their being in that state, does not mean that their states are limited to this one, since the eighth stage, which is on the same level as this one, and which is purging the act from the fear of separation, is also not of the perfect states of the perfect ones. Imām 'Alī's saying: "How could I forbear separating from You?"¹⁴ is just a reference to a brim-full common state of him and of one like him.

Generally speaking, purging the act from these two stages is also a must to the people of Allah, for to act with them will be endued with causes and not free from selfish wants. It is, thus, perfect sincerity. Next, there are other stages that are out of the limits of sincerity, and fall under the criterion of monotheism, abstraction and guardianship, all of which do not fit here.

Chapter 4: Refuting A Group Of Ignorants

Now as you have got acquainted with the stages of sincerity and states of the acts of worship to some extent, get ready to acquire them, since to have knowledge without putting it to practice is worthless, and knowledge is a stronger evidence against the claimant and he is more exposed to argument. Alas! It is regretted that we are completely deprived of the divine knowledge, the spiritual states of the people of Allah and the lofty positions of the men of heart.

A group of us completely deny all the states and regard their people to be erroneous, and their acts *b^ḥtil* [false] and worthless. They even take those who mention them with admiration, or invite to their states, to be forgers and their invitation to be a paradox. There is no hope in drawing the attention of such groups to their own faults and shortcomings, and in waking them up:

“Surely you cannot guide everyone whom you love;”¹⁵

“... You cannot make those in the graves hear.”¹⁶

Yes, those who, like the helpless writer, know nothing at all, and whose hearts are not living up to the life of knowledge and divine love, are but dead ones, for whom the bodily covers are their rotten graves. This dust of the body and dark narrowness of the skeleton have shut them off from all the worlds of light and light upon light:

“... And he for whom Allah has not assigned light, for him there is no light.”¹⁷

Much as you try to recite of *had^ḥths* and of the Qur'an to these groups concerning divine affection and love and concerning longing for meeting [Him], and exclusively being attached to Him, they still try to interpret, justify and explain them according to their own opinions. All those *y^ḥahs* about meeting Allah and divine love they interpret to be a meeting with the trees of Paradise and the beautiful women.

I wonder what these groups would do with the texts of the *Shab^ḥniyyah* Supplication, which says: “O Allah! Grant me to be completely devoted to you, and lighten the eyes of our hearts with the light of looking at You until the eyes of the hearts penetrate the barriers of light to reach the Source of Greatness, and our souls hang to the Might of Your Sanctity. O Allah! Make me one of those whom You called and he responded, and when You looked at him, he was stunned because of Your Majesty.”¹⁸

So, what do “barriers of light” mean? Does “looking at Allah” mean looking at the palaces of Paradise? Does “the Source of Greatness” mean heavenly palaces? Does “the hanging of the souls to the Might of Sanctity” mean hanging to the skirts of the houris for sensual desires? This “being stunned because of His Majesty”, does it mean being spellbound at the beauties of the women of Paradise?

Those ecstasies and faintings which used to befall the Messenger of Allah (s) during his ascending *sal^ḥt*, and those lights of grandeur, and the things loftier than them, which he used to discern, in that

meeting in which the Archangel Gabriel (‘a) was not admitted and he dared not to advance even for an inch farther, were those ecstasies for one of the very good women? Or did he discern lights like those of the sun and the moon or much brighter? That sound heart, which was referred to by the infallible [ma’sūm] (‘a) in explaining the verse:

“Except him who comes to Allah with a sound heart,”¹⁹

By saying: “A sound heart is the one which meets Allah while there is nothing in it save Him,”²⁰ does it mean that “there is nothing in it save Allah” denotes “nothing save the generosity of Allah,” which is to mean an allusion to “nothing save [say] pearls and apricots”?

Woe to me for letting the rein of the pen be loose and engage in ecstatic phrases. But, by the life of the beloved, no particular aim was intended by those words, except that there might be, for my brothers in faith, especially the learned, a sort of warning, so that they might not, at least, deny the states of the people of Allah, for such a denial would be the origin of every wretchedness and misfortune.

We did not intend to say who *Ahlullāh* [the people of Allah] are. Actually, our intention was that their states should not be denied. As to who the owners of those states are, Allah alone knows them, since it is a matter of which no one is informed: “The one who got an information did not come back.”²¹

There is another group who do not deny the states of the people of knowledge and are not against the people of Allah. But their indulgence in worldly matters, trying to obtain them, and their taking to the transient pleasures, have prevented them from acquiring knowledge, practice, intellectual intuition [*dhawq*] and ecstasy [*hāl*].

They are like those sick people who do know they are sick, but their stomach would not let them be cautious and accept taking bitter medicine, while the former group are like the patients who would never believe in the existence of such patients and such a disease in actuality, and despite the fact that they themselves are afflicted with this disease, they deny its existence.

Another group took to acquiring knowledge and engaged in learning theories, but as regards the truths of knowledge and the states of the people of Allah, they satisfied themselves with terms and vocabularies, and with the gaudiness of phrases and expressions. They tied themselves and other wretched ones in the chains of words and terms, and out of all “states,” they satisfied themselves with mere talk.

Among them there are a few who do know themselves, but, in order to preside over some other unfortunate persons, they use these meaningless terms as a means of winning a living, and, with their deceitful expressions and attractive talks, they capture the pure hearts of the servants of Allah. These are the human Satans whose harm is no less than that of the accursed *Iblīs* himself against the servants of Allah.

These unfortunate ones do not know that the hearts of the servants of Allah are the abode of Allah, and

no one has the right to occupy them. They are usurpers of Allah's abode and destroyers of the real *ka'bah*. They carve out idols and place them in the hearts of the servants of Allah, which are the *ka'bah*, or rather *al-Bayt al-Ma'mur* [Allah's Populous House]. They are the sick people who pretend to be physicians, and involve the servants of Allah in diverse deadly diseases.

The members of this group are distinguished for being more interested in guiding the wealthy people and the notable personalities than in guiding the poor and the indigent, and their followers are more of the well-off and notable people. Even they themselves appear in the apparel of the wealthy people. They play on such deceptive talks that while they are polluted with a thousand kinds of mundane impurities, they can show themselves as purifiers and of the people of Allah. The wretched fools and their followers close their eyes against all their tangible faults, and flatter themselves with empty terms and utterances.

Now as we have reached this stage of our speech, it is worthwhile to relate one or two *hadiths* narrated in this respect, although it would be out of the content of our discourse. However, getting the blessings of the *hadiths* of *Ahl al-Bayt (a)* is a good thing:

Shaykh as-Sad^q (may Allah have mercy upon him) in his book *Al-Khisf*, quoting Ab^u 'Abdullah [as-S^{adiq}] (a), says: "There are among the scholars those who like to compile their knowledge, and do not like to be quoted. These are at the first step of the Fire. Other scholars are proud when they admonish, but they disdain being admonished. These are at the second step of Fire. Some scholars prefer to put their knowledge at the disposal of the noble and the wealthy, excluding the poor from it. These are at the third step of the Fire.

Other scholars behave like the tyrants and the monarchs in their knowledge, and if they were redressed or neglected in some of their affairs, they would become angry. These are at the fourth step of the Fire. Some scholars look for the *hadiths* of the Jews and the Christians in order to support their own knowledge and increase their own *hadiths*.

These are at the fifth step of the Fire. Other scholars appoint themselves to give out religious decrees, telling the people: "Ask me," whereas they may not be right even in a single letter, and Allah does not like the pretentious. These are at the sixth step of the Fire. There are among the scholars those who take knowledge to be a sense of honor and intellect. These are at the seventh step of the Fire."²²

Al-Kulaynⁱ (may Allah have mercy upon him), in his comprehensive [book] *al-K^{uf}*, quoting Im^{am} al-B^{aqir} (a), says: "The one who seeks knowledge in order to vie with the scholars, or to argue with the fool, or to attract the people to himself, let him have his seat in the Fire Presidency does not befit except its deserver."²³

Also quoting Im^{am} as-S^{adiq} (a) he says: "Whenever you see a scholar loving this world accuse him of being against your religion, as the lover of a thing seeks to get what he loves." And he said: "Allah, the Exalted, revealed to David (a): 'Do not place between Me and yourself a scholar who is infatuated with this world, as he would prevent you from the way of My love, for those are the robbers of My loving

servants. The least I would do to them is to extract the sweetness of supplication to Me from their hearts.”²⁴

Those from among this group, who are not impostors or fraudulent, and are themselves *sāliks* on the road to the Hereafter, striving to acquire knowledge and high states, it sometimes happens that they are fooled by Satan, the highway robber, and get conceited, thinking that the states and knowledge [*maʿrif*] are really nothing but the very scholarly terms and expressions which they themselves or others, have coined.

They spend the prime of their years and the best of their lives, in multiplying those terms and composing books and papers, such as a group of versed *mufassirs* (exegetes of the Qur'an) who think that the advantage of the Qur'an is confined to recording a collection of different ways of its recitation, the meanings of its vocabularies and conjugation of its verbs, its verbal and moral beauties, aspects of its miraculous inimitability, its conventional meaning, and its different impressions on different persons, but they are completely ignorant of the Qur'an's message, its spiritual dimensions and divine knowledge [*maʿrif*].

They are more like a sick man who has gone to a physician and received his prescription, and thinks that he will be treated by way of recording and preserving the recipe and by the mode of its ingredients. This disease will kill such people, for knowing the recipe and going to the doctor come to no avail at all.

O dear! All sciences are practical. Even the science of *tawhīd* (monotheism) also consists of cordial and formal acts. *Tawhīd*, grammatically, denotes turning plurality into singleness a spiritual and cordial act. Unless you recognize the real and the true cause in the multiplicity of acts, unless you have a truth-finding eye to discern Allah in nature, unless you regard the natural and non-natural multiplicities as perished [*fanā*] in Allah and His acts, and unless the authority of Allah's Unity of Acts has not spread its banner in your heart, you will be far away from purity, sincerity, clearness and purification, as well as from *tawhīd*.

All of the hypocrisy of acts and most of the cordial hypocrisies are caused by the incompleteness of the unity of acts. The one who regards the weak and unfortunate people to be effective in this world, and occupying the domain of Allah, how can he regard himself in no need of attracting their hearts, and purge and purify his act from Satan's polytheism? You will have to make the spring clean so that clear water may come out of it, as otherwise, from a muddy spring you may not expect to get clear water.

If you regard the hearts of Allah's servants to be at the disposal of Allah, and make your heart taste the meaning of: “O You Who change the hearts,” and let your heart hear it, you, with all your weakness and helplessness, will not try to capture the hearts. If you make your heart understand the truth of

“...In His Hand is the dominion of everything,”²⁵

“His is the (whole) dominion,”²⁶

And

“In His Hand is the dominion,”²⁷

You will need not attract any hearts, nor think that you are in need of the weak hearts and the weak people, and you will attain a state of cordial satisfaction. You felt yourself being in need of something, and took the people to be undoers of knotty problems, and thus you thought you needed to attract the hearts of the people, thinking that by pretending holiness, you would have at your disposal the hearts of the people.

Hence, you needed to be a hypocrite. Had you taken Allah to be the solver of all difficulties, and that you do not have the universe at your disposal, you would not have needed those acts of polytheism.

O you, the polytheist who claim to be a monotheist! O you, an *iblis* [a devil] appearing in the shape of a human being! You have inherited this legacy from the accursed Satan, who, thinking himself effective, calls out:

“I will lead them astray”²⁸.

That wretched, miserable being is wrapped in veils of polytheism and self-conceit. Those who believe themselves and the world to be independent and not under management, neither controlled nor owned, have inherited that from *iblis*' mischief. So, wake up from [your] deep sleep and convey to your heart the noble *ayahs* of the Divine Book, the Lord's Luminous Page.

These great *ayahs* have been sent down for me and you to wake up, yet, we confine all our shares to reciting it in formal artistic intonation, disregarding its informative knowledge, until Satan overcomes and rules us such that we become under his control.

For the time being, we end the discourse here, leaving it for a later time. We shall, *insha' Allah*, talk about the disciplines of recitation, opening the way for ourselves and for the servants of Allah to be benefited by the Glorious Qur'an, with Allah's permission and His good help. *Was-salam* [And that is an end to the matter].

Chapter 5: Some Other Stages Of Sincerity

Now as the string of the speech has reached this point, I have but to state some other stages of sincerity befitting this state.

One of the stages of sincerity is to purge the act from thinking of deserving a reward. The counterfeit of it is the act blemished with demanding the expected reward. This is not free from a degree of admiring the act, and the *slik* is to rid himself of it. The assumption of deserving reward is caused by the deficiency in one's knowledge of his condition and of the right of Allah, the Exalted.

This is also a fruit of the satanic evil tree stemming from being proud of oneself, one's act, I-ness and selfishness. How hopeless man is! As long as he is wrapped in the veils of being proud of his acts, believing them to be of his own, and regarding himself the manager of the affairs, he will not be cured from this disease, and will not be able to purge his act and purify his intention.

Therefore, the *sālik* is to strive to inform his heart, through cordial austerity and mental and gnostic conduct, that all acts are of Allah's blessings and gifts which He carries out by the hand of His servant. Should the Unity of Acts get fixed in the heart of the *sālik*, he would not regard his acts as to be of himself, therefore he would not demand any reward, and, actually, he would regard the reward to be a favor and the blessings to be new beginnings.

This divine delicacy is frequently stated in the words of the pure Imāms ('a), especially in *as-Sahāfah as-Sajjadiyyah* (a book of invocations and supplications by Imām 'Alī ibn-Husayn as-Sajjīd), a divine and luminous book, which has descended from the gnostic heaven of the knower of Allah, the luminous intellect, Sayyid as-Sajjīdīn [the Master of the Prostrating Worshippers], for the sake of salvation of the servants of Allah from the prison of nature, demonstrating the discipline of servitude and of being at the service of the Lord. In the thirty-second invocation he says: "...so praise be to you for your beginning with great favors, and for Your inspiring gratitude for [Your] benevolence."²⁹

He also says on another occasion: "...since all your benevolence is favor and every one of your blessings is a new beginning."³⁰

In *Misbāh ash-Sharā'ah* it is said: "The least limit of sincerity is the servant's doing all his best, then he should not attach to his act [of worship] any value with Allah, by which he would impose on his Lord [to give him] a reward for his act."³¹

Another stage of sincerity is to purge the act from demanding much and being pleased with it and depending on it. This is also one of the important tasks of the *sālik*, lest he should be retained back from joining the caravan of the travelers to Allah, confining himself to the dark dungeon of nature. This is a situation stemming from the vile satanic tree, and from the selfishness inherited from the legacy of Satan who has said:

"You created me of fire and created him of clay."³²

This is but man's ignorance of his own state [*maqām*] and of the state [*maqām*] of Allah, the Glorified.

If this wretched "possible (existent)" could only recognize his own state of deficiency, incapability, weakness and helplessness, and realize Allah's state of greatness, grandeur and perfection, he would never boast of his act and of performing an act. Wretched! His act [of worship], which would be worth only a few pence for a whole year, should it prove to be complete and correct, he would ask, for only two of its *rak'ats*, unlimited expectations. It is this expectation and much demanding that originates many immoralities and other acts of mischief, which cannot be mentioned here for fear of becoming lengthy.

The noble *hadīths* frequently refer to this subject, as is in the noble *al-Kāfī*, quoting Imām Mūsā ibn Ja'far ('a) to have said to some of his sons: “My son, you are to be diligent, never to clear yourself from falling short of fully worshipping and obeying Allah, the Most High, for He can never be worshipped as He deserves.”³³

In another *hadīth*, he ('a) said: “Any act you do for Allah, take yourself as falling short of it, since all the people, in their acts, between themselves and Allah, are derelict [*muqassir*], except the one whom Allah, the Exalted, protects against that.”³⁴

He ('a) is also quoted to have said: “Do not consider plenty the plenty good deeds.”³⁵

The complete *Sahīfah*, describing the angels, says: “Those who, looking at Hell breathe out to the people of disobedience, say “Glory to you, O Allah, we have not worshipped you as you deserve to be worshipped.”³⁶

O you helpless! When the Messenger of Allah (s), who was the most knowledgeable among Allah's creatures, and whose act [of worship] was the most luminous and the greatest of all others', admitted his shortcoming and inability, and who says: “We have not known You as You ought to be, and we have not worshipped You as You deserve it,”³⁷ and when the infallible Imāms ('a), in the Presence of His Sanctity, display their shortcomings and deficiencies, what can a tiny gnat do?³⁸

Yes, their status and knowledge urged them to admit the incapability of “the possible existent” and the Greatness and Glory of the “Necessary Existent”, Allah, the Exalted, whereas we, the helpless, because of ignorance and diverse veils, arrogantly show off our ostentation and pride in our acts. Glory be to Allah! How right Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī ('a) was when he said: “Man's self-admiration is one of the enviers of his intellect.”³⁹

Is it not irrational that Satan should make obscure for us a necessary matter, and we should not try to intellectually reason it? We ourselves, know, of necessity, that our acts [of worship] and the acts of mankind as a whole, as well as the acts of the angels of Allah, and the spiritual people, cannot be compared with the acts of the Messenger of Allah (s) and the Imāms of guidance ('a), as ours can have no value whatsoever, and cannot be of any regard at all.

Yet, those great ones confess their shortcomings and do not conceal their incapability of performing the worship due to Allah, the Exalted, according to so many successive *hadīths*. These two necessary cases make us to conclude that we should not be pleased with any of our acts. Or even if we spend as long as the life of the world in worshipping and in acts of obedience, we should still be ashamed, abashed and disgraced.

Nevertheless, Satan has so deeply established himself in our hearts, and so strongly has his control over our minds and senses, that the states [*ahwā'*] of our hearts have been changed to the contrary, let alone our failure in deriving the necessary conclusions from those preliminaries.

The great man ('Alī ibn Abī Tālib), whose strike on the Day of the Trench was more merited than the worship of all *jinn* and *ins* (mankind), according to the confirmation of the Messenger of Allah (s)⁴⁰ and 'Alī ibn al-Husayn, with all his worships and austerities, though known to be the greatest worshipper of all Allah's creatures, shows his inability to attain his state of worshipping⁴¹ declares his shortcoming in this respect more than we do.

The Messenger of Allah (s) at whose threshold 'Alī al-Murtad and all, other than Allah, are servants and live on the crumbings of his blessed table of knowledge and are the students of his teachings after receiving the cloak of honor of the Final Prophethood, the complete circulation of perfection and the last brick of knowledge and *tawhīd*, continued, for ten years, to stand on his feet in Hir cave, performing his worshippings in obedience to Allah, until his feet swelled such that Allah revealed:

“Tā-Hī, We have not sent down the Qur'an upon you that you should be distressed,”⁴²

i.e.: “O “pure” and “guide”! We did not reveal the Qur'an to you to cause you difficulty. You are pure and you guide the people, and if they disobey you, it is because of their own shortcoming and misfortune, not because of any shortcoming in your conduct or guidance.” Nevertheless, he still announces his inability and falling short.

Sayyid ibn Tawūs (may his soul be sanctified) quotes from 'Alī ibn al-Husayn (a) a *hadīth* which we shall relate to honor our thesis and, although it is a bit lengthy, since it is an explanation of the position of that master, yet the smelling sense of the souls will be scented by it and the palate of the hearts will take a delight in it.

He (may his soul be sanctified), quoting az-Zahrī, in *Fath al-Abwāb*, says: “I, together with 'Alī ibn al-Husayn (a), called upon 'Abdul Malik ibn Marwan. 'Abdul Malik, regarding it as magnificent to see the mark of prostration between the two eyes of 'Alī ibn al-Husayn (a), said: “O Abī Muhammad, perseverance is obvious on your face, and Allah has already been beneficent to you, as you are a part of the Messenger of Allah (s), a close relative with a firm relation to him, and you have a great favor upon your family and your contemporaries.

You have been given such merits, knowledge, godliness and piety that have been given to no one like you or before you, except your past ancestors.” He continued praising and extolling him. 'Alī ibn al-Husayn (a) said: “All that which you have described is of Allah's favor, support and grace. But how is [my] thanking Him on what He has favored [me], O Amīr al-Mu'minīn? The Messenger of Allah (s) used to stand in his *salāt* on his feet till they got swollen, and he remained thirsty during his fasting such that his mouth would dry up.

He was asked: “O Messenger of Allah! Did not Allah forgive what has passed and what is to come of your sins?” He replied: “Am I not to be a thankful servant?” Praise be to Allah for what He has favored us with and for His testing us, and praise be to Him in the Hereafter and in this world. By Allah, even if my limbs were cut to pieces and my eyeballs ran down my chest just to pay tribute to Allah, the Most

Glorified, for just a tenth of one tenth of a single one of all His favors, which no reckoner can reckon, nor the praise of the praisers can pay the tribute due to a single one of them, I could not pay the due tribute to Him.

Never, by Allah, unless He grants me that nothing should keep me from praising and remembering Him all days and nights, secretly and publicly. Had I not been under obligations to my family and to other people, in particular and in general, who have rights from me, and which I cannot but fulfill to them as it is possible and as is in my capacity, I would have turned my eye to the heaven, and my heart to Allah, and then I would have never taken them back till He would take my breath He is the best of judges.” Then he (‘a) wept, and so did ‘Abdul Malik...” as the *hadīth* goes.⁴³

We forgo mentioning other stages of sincerity, which do not suit the position of these papers, lest it should be lengthy and boring.

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1. Usūl al-Kāfī, vol. 1, “Book of Reason and Ignorance,” hadīth 10, p. 13.
 2. Furū‘ ul-Kāfī, vol. 3, “Book of Purity,” ch. on the “Description of the Wudū‘, p. 24.
 3. Ibid., “Book of the Salat,” ch. on “The One who Doubts in His Salat, hadīth 8, p. 359.
 4. Ibid., hadīth 2.
 5. Sūrah az-Zumar 39:3.
 6. Sūrah al-Bayyinah 98:5
 7. Sūrah ash-Shūrā 42:20.
 8. Mustadrak al-Wasīl, sec. on “Preliminaries to the Acts of Worship,” ch. 5, hadīth 5.
 9. Sūrah an-Nisā’ 4: 100
 10. Sūrah al-Qadr 97:5.
 11. Sūrah Sād 38:82, 83.
 12. Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 67, “Book of Faith and Disbelief,” ch. on “Sincerity,” hadīth 10, p. 242, quoting ‘Uyaynu Akhbār ar-Ridā, vol. 2, p. 69, with a slight difference. The same content is stated in the latter source, hadīth 25, p. 249.
 13. See, for example, Wasīl ash-Shū‘ah, vol. 1, sec. on “The Preliminaries to the Acts of Worship,” the narratives of chapter 9, p. 45; Usūl al-Kāfī, vol. 3, “Book of Faith and Disbelief,” ch. on “Worship,” narrative 5, p. 131.
 14. Misbāh al-Mutahajjid, p. 778 (Supplication of Kumayl).
 15. Sūrah al-Qasas 28:56.
 16. Sūrah Fātir 35:22.
 17. Sūrah an-Nūr 24:40.
 18. Refer to footnote 5.
 19. Sūrah ash-Shu‘arā’ 26:89
 20. Usūl al-Kāfī, vol. 3, “Book of Faith and Disbelief,” ch. on “Sincerity,” hadīth 5, p. 26.
 21. “Those who claim to be in quest of it are uninformed,
The one who got an information did not come back.” Sa’dī
 22. Al-Khisfī, vol. 2, ch. 7, hadīth 33, p. 352.
 23. Usūl al-Kāfī, vol. 1, “Book of the Merit of Knowledge,” ch. on “The One who Gains His Living from His Knowledge,” hadīth 6, p. 59.
 24. Ibid., hadīth 4.
 25. Sūrah Yū-Sūn 36:83
 26. Sūrah Fātir 35: 13
 27. Sūrah al-Mulk 67: 1

28. Sūrah Sūd 38:82
29. As-Sahāfah as-Sajjadiyyah, invocation 32
30. Ibid., invocation 12.
31. Misbāh ash-Sharāh, ch. 76, on "Sincerity."
32. Sūrah al-A'rāf 7:12; Sūrah Sūd 38:76.
33. Usūl al-Kāfī, vol. 3, "Book of Faith and Disbelief," ch. on "Admitting Shortcomings," hadīth 1, p. 116.
34. Ibid., hadīth 4.
35. Ibid., vol. 3, "Book of Faith and Disbelief", ch. on "Slighting the Sin," hadīth 2, p. 394; also vol. 4, ch. on "Reckoning the Deeds," hadīth 17, p. 196.
36. As-Sahāfah as-Sajjadiyyah, invocation 3.
37. Mir'at 'ul-'Uqūl vol. 8, "Book of Faith and Disbelief," ch. on "Thanks-Giving," p. 146.
38. "Where a falcon drops its feathers, what can a tiny gnat do?" Amthāl and Hikam, by Dehkhudā, vol. 2, p. 579. The poet's name is not mentioned.
39. Nahj al-Balāghah, ed. by Fayd al-Islām, maxim 203, p. 1172.
40. Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 39, "Tārīkh-i Amr al-Mu'minīn," p. 2.
41. Ibid., vol. 46, "Tārīkh-i 'Alī ibn al-Husayn" ch. 5, hadīth 65, p. 75.
42. Sūrah Tā-Hā 20:1, 2.
43. Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 46, "Fath al-Abwāb," p. 57.

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