

Home > The Last Luminary and Ways to Delve Into the Light > Responsibility 13: Knowing the Scholars of the Faith

Responsibility 13: Knowing the Scholars of the Faith

Another responsibility is to know the narrators of traditions, scholars of the religion and those who are well acquainted with the traditions of the Ahlul Bayt (as), especially those who (in addition to knowing these sciences), act according to what they know.

These are none other the people who make up the glorious chain of great Jurisprudents and respected scholars (who are worthy of being followed).

The second section of this responsibility is to obey the rulings of such scholars and this is one of the most important responsibilities of a servant of Allah during the occultation. Rather, even in the period of the Imam's advent, this will also be one of the most important duties.

During the occultation, it is obligatory to have faith in and testify to such scholars and it is also mandatory upon the people to perform taqlid (to follow) one of the Mujtahidin from amongst them.

It goes without saying that a detailed discussion regarding taqlid cannot be covered in this book. However in brief we can state that during the period of occultation, a true believer has one of three choices, He himself becomes a Mujtahid; he acts according to precaution (Ihtiyat) in the performance of all his actions or becomes a 'muqallid' which means that he follows a person who is at the highest level of Ijtihad.

If one does not fit into the first two categories, then one must perform taqlid of a Marja' who fulfills all of the requirements to be followed¹ in all areas of the Furu' ad-Din (the practical Islamic regulations).

Just as the narrators of traditions and the scholars of the religion have been ordered to guide the people in their religious injunctions and issues related to the next life, so too the people have been commanded to take guidance from such scholars of the faith.

Through relying upon our intelligence and the Islamic proofs, we can deduce that not only is it

permissible to refer to the people of knowledge when an issue comes up, rather it is the only way to achieve success and reach our goals!

The Qur`an clearly tells us:

﴿ فَاسْئَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴾

“Ask the people of the remembrance (those who have knowledge on a particular issue) if you do not know.” (16:43)

In regards to issues of the next life and this transient world and how to achieve success in both, the only path of salvation lies in referring to the people of knowledge and those who are permitted to express their opinion the scholars of the faith who act according to their knowledge.

At the head of all responsibilities which we have, it is this one which makes the duty of a true believer clear in regards to the representative (of Allah).

It is through following this commandment that a person’s actions, in relation to the life of this transient world and the next, are given a stable footing; it is under the shadow of obeying the commandments of the Marja’ through the act of taqlid that obedience to the Imam is realized it is also through this act that happiness in this transient life and the next world are guaranteed.

In reality, following the commandments of the Imam can never materialize except under the shadow of obedience to a Marja’ who fulfills all of the requirements to be followed² and this status can be referred to as Wilayatul Faqih or the Guardianship of the Jurisprudent.

The only way that one can obey Imam al–Mahdi (ajtf) is by obedience to his general representative, as it is this person who is at the forefront of the narrators of the tradition, scholars and callers towards the faith.

The principle of Wilayatul Faqih is the foremost foundation of Islam and the person who wishes to possess true faith during the period of occultation must believe in and accept this.

Even if the term Wali al–Faqih is thought of as being coined in our current era, we see that it simply means to follow the Marja’ who fulfills all of the requirements (of being followed) as it is he who is responsible for leading the Islamic society.

He is the one who is permitted to lead the Muslim community as they have accepted his leadership and authority (Wilayah). Therefore, once he is entrusted with this authority, his obedience is at the pinnacle of all obligatory acts.

Without doubt, it is obligatory to obey all of those who narrate the traditions and are considered as true scholars of the faith, however if from amongst these, there are Mara'ja who fulfill the requirements, and amongst this select group there is an individual who is recognized as the Wali al-Faqih, then he is the first one who must be followed since he possesses the guardianship over the entire Muslim nation.

As we know, following Imam al-Hujjah (ajtf) can only be done under the shadow of following the orders of the Wali al-Faqih who has taken on the responsibility of guardianship of the entire community. Therefore, to disobey his orders is tantamount to disobeying the commandments of Imam al-Hujjah (ajtf).

قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى لِعِيسَى ۙ عَظَّمَ الْعُلَمَاءَ وَ اعْرِفْ فَضْلَهُمْ فَإِنِّي فَضَّلْتُهُمْ عَلَى
جَمِيعِ خَلْقِي إِلَّا النَّبِيِّينَ وَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ كَفَضَلُ الشَّمْسِ عَلَى الْكَوَاكِبِ وَ كَفَضَلُ
الْآخِرَةِ عَلَى الدُّنْيَا وَ كَفَضَلِي عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ

Allah, the Most High, said to 'Isa: "Hold the scholars in great esteem and recognize their greatness since surely I have granted them greatness above all My creations, with the exception of those who have been sent as Prophets and Messengers just like the sun enjoys greatness over the other stars, and the next life enjoys greatness over the transient world, and like My greatness over all other things."³

In a letter which Imam al-Hujjah (ajtf) wrote to Ishaq b. Ya'qub, he stated:

وَ أَمَّا الْحَوَادِثُ الْوَاقِعَةُ فَارْجِعُوا فِيهَا إِلَى رِوَاةِ حَدِيثِنَا فَإِنَّهُمْ حُجَّتِي عَلَيْكُمْ وَ أَنَا
حُجَّةُ اللَّهِ (عَلَيْهِمْ)

"As for (guidance in) the events which transpire, refer to those who narrate our traditions, since they are my proof over all of you and I am the proof of Allah (over them)."⁴

In a tradition from Imam Hasan b. 'Ali al-'Askari, he said:

فَأَمَّا مَنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْفُقَهَاءِ صَائِنًا لِنَفْسِهِ حَافِظًا لِدِينِهِ مُخَالَفًا عَلَى هَوَاهُ مُطِيعًا
لِأَمْرِ مَوْلَاهُ فَلِلْعَوَامِّ أَنْ يُقْلِدُوهُ وَ ذَلِكَ لَا يَكُونُ إِلَّا بَعْضَ فُقَهَاءِ الشَّيْعَةِ لَا كُلَّهُمْ

"As for the one who is from amongst the Fuqaha (scholars) and who protects his soul safe guards his faith goes against the passions of his lowly desires obeys the commands of his master (Allah) it is

required that the common people should follow him. However these characteristics are present only in some of the Fuqaha of the Shi'a not all of them.”⁵

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1. Refer to the Tawdhiul Masa'il of any Marja' Taqlid, section on Taqlid, issue 1
 2. A Mujtahid who fulfills all of the requirements [Jami'ul Shara'it] in order to be followed must possess the following qualities: male, mature (Baligh), Shi'a Ithna-Asheri, of legitimate birth, alive and Just ('Adil), one who protects his own soul (from sins), one who protects and safeguards his religion, one who goes against the desires of his lower soul and follows the commands of Allah, the Most High. (Risalah Tawdhiul Masa'il, section on Taqlid, issue 2)
 3. Biharul Anwar, vol. 2, pg. 25, sec. 8, no. 91; Muniyat al-Murid, pg. 121, sec. on the Greatness of Knowledge
 4. Wasa'il ash-Shi'a, vol. 18, pg. 101, section 11, no. 9; Biharul Anwar, vol. 2, pg. 90, sec. 14, no. 13
 5. Wasa'il ash-Shi'a, vol. 27, pg. 131, sec. 10, no. 33401; Biharul Anwar, vol. 2, pg. 88, sec. 14, no. 12; al-Ihtijaj (Tabrisi), vol. 2, pg. 283

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