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S. I. Education Society

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127/133 Rowan Road, London SW16 5HU.

Tel: 020-8241 0222, Fax: 020-8241 2214.



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Chartered Accountant
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Tel: 020 8643 7788

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The Amazing Quran

By Gary Miller

In conjunction with the excuses that non-Muslims advance in futile attempts to justify unexplainable verses in the Qur'an, there is another attack often rendered which seems to be a combination of the theories that Muhammad (SAWA) was crazy and a liar. Basically, these people propose that Muhammad (SAWA) was insane, and as a result of his delusion; he lied to and misled people.

There is a name for this in psychology. It is referred to as myth-o-mania. It means simply that one tells lies and then believes them. This is what the non-Muslims say Muhammad (SAWA) suffered from. But the only problem with this proposal is that one suffering from myth-o-mania absolutely cannot deal with facts, and yet the whole Qur'an is based entirely upon facts. Everything contained in it can be researched and established as true.

Since facts are such a problem for a myth-o-maniac, when a psychologist tries to treat one suffering from that condition, he continually confronts him with facts. For example, if one is mentally ill and claims, "I am the king of England," a psychologist does not say to him "No you aren't. You are crazy!" He just does not do that. Rather, he confronts him with facts and says, "O.K., you say you are the king of England. So tell me where the queen is today. And where is your prime minister? And where are your guards?"

Now, when the man has trouble trying to deal with these questions, he tries to make excuses, saying Uh... the queen... she has gone to her mother's. Uh... the prime minister... well he died." And eventually he is cured because he cannot deal with the facts. If the psychologist continues confronting him with enough facts, finally he faces the

reality and says, "I guess I am not the king of England." The Qur'an approaches everyone who reads it in very much the same way a psychologist treats his myth-o-mania patient. There is a verse in the Qur'an which states:

"O mankind, there has come to you an admonition [i.e., the Qur'an] from your Lord and a healing for what is in the hearts - and guidance and mercy for the believers."

At first glance, this statement appears vague, but the meaning of this verse is clear when one views it in light of the aforementioned example. Basically, one is healed of his delusions by reading the Qur'an. In essence, it is therapy. It literally cures deluded people by confronting them with facts.

A prevalent attitude throughout the Qur'an is one which says, "O mankind, you say such and such about this; but what about such and such? How can you say this when

you know that?" And so forth. It forces one to consider what is relevant and what matters while simultaneously heating one of the delusions that the facts presented to mankind by Allah can easily be explained away with flimsy theories and excuses. It is this very sort of thing – confronting people with facts - that had captured the attention of many non-Muslims.

In fact, there exists a very interesting reference concerning this subject in the New Catholic Encyclopaedia. In an article under the subject of the Qur'an, the Catholic Church states, "Over the centuries, many theories have been offered as to the origin of the Qur'an... Today no sensible man accepts any of these theories."!!

Now here is the age-old Catholic Church, which has been around for so many centuries, denying these futile attempts to explain away the Qur'an. Indeed, the Qur'an is a problem for the Catholic

Church. It states that it is revelation, so they study it. Certainly, they would love to find proof that it is not, but they cannot. They cannot find a viable explanation.

But at least they are honest in their research and do not accept the first unsubstantiated interpretation which comes along. The Church states that in fourteen centuries it has not yet been presented a sensible explanation. At least it admits that the Qur'an is not an easy subject to dismiss.

Certainly, other people are much less honest. They quickly say, "Oh, the Qur'an came from here. The Qur'an came from there." And they do not even examine the credibility of what they are stating most of the time. Of course, such a statement by the Catholic Church leaves the everyday Christian in some difficulty. It just may be that he has his own ideas as to the origin of the Qur'an, but as a

single member of the Church, he cannot really act upon his own theory. Such an action would be contrary to the obedience, allegiance and loyalty which the Church demands. By virtue of his membership, he must accept what the Catholic Church declares without question and establish its teachings as part of his everyday routine.

So, in essence, if the Catholic Church as a whole is saying, "Do not listen to these unconfirmed reports about the Qur'an," then what can be said about the Islamic point of view?

Even non-Muslims are admitting that there is something to the Qur'an - something that has to be acknowledged - then why are people so stubborn and defensive and hostile when Muslims advance the very same theory? This is certainly something for those with mind to contemplate - something to

ponder for those of understanding!

Recently, the leading intellectual in the Catholic Church - a man by the name of Hans - studied the Qur'an and gave his opinion of what he had read. This man has been around for some time, and he is highly respected in the Catholic Church and after careful scrutiny, he reported his findings, concluding, "God has spoken to man through the man, Muhammad." Again this is a conclusion arrived at by a non-Muslim source - the very leading intellectual of the Catholic Church himself!

I do not think that the Pope agrees with him, but nonetheless, the opinion of such a noted, reputable public figure must carry some weight in defence of the Muslim position. He must be applauded for facing the reality that the Qur'an is not something which can be easily pushed aside and that, in fact

God is the source of these words.

As is evident from the aforementioned information, all of the possibilities have been exhausted, so the chance of finding another possibility of dismissing the Qur'an is nonexistent. For if the book is not a revelation, then it is deception; and if it is a deception, one must ask, "What is its origin."

And where does it deceive us?" Indeed, the true answers to these questions shed light on the Qur'an's authenticity and silence the bitter unsubstantiated claims of the unbelievers. Certainly, if people are going to insist that the Qur'an is a deception, then they must bring forth evidence to support such a claim. The burden of proof is on them, not us! One is never supposed to advance a theory without sufficient corroborating facts; so I say to them, "Show me one deception! Show me

where the Qur'an deceives me!
Show me; otherwise, don't say
that it is a deception!"

An interesting characteristic of the Qur'an is how it deals with surprising phenomena which relate not only to the past but to modern times as well. In essence, the Qur'an is not an old problem. It is still a problem even today - a problem to the non-Muslims that is. For everyday, every week, every year brings more and more evidence that the

Qur'an is a force to be contended with - that its authenticity is no longer to be challenged! For example, one verse in the Qur'an reads;

"Do not the unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together, and then We clove them asunder, and made from water every living thing? Will they not then believe?"

Ironically, this very information is exactly what they awarded the 1973 Noble

Prize for to a couple of unbelievers.

The Qur'an reveals the origin of the universe - how it began from one piece - and mankind continues to verify this revelation, even up to now.

Additionally, the fact that all life originated from water would not have been an easy thing to convince people of fourteen centuries ago. Indeed, if 1400 years ago you had stood in the desert and told someone, "All of this, you see (pointing to yourself), is made up of mostly water," no one would have believed you.

Proof of that was not available until the invention of the microscope. They had to wait to find out that cytoplasm, the basic substance of the cell, is made-up of 80% water. Nonetheless, the evidence did come, and once again the Qur'an stood the test of time. In reference to the falsification tests mentioned earlier, it is interesting to note that they, too, relate to both the past and

the present. Some of them were used as illustrations of Allah's omnipotence and knowledge, while others continue to stand as challenges to the present day.

An example of the former is the statement made in the Qur'an about Abu Lahab. It clearly illustrates that Allah, the Knower of the Unseen,

knew that Abu Lahab would never change his ways and accept Islam. Thus Allah dictated that he would be condemned to the Hellfire forever. Such a chapter was both an illustration of Allah's divine wisdom and a warning to those who were like Abu Lahab.

(...To Be Continued)

Medical Science and Islam

Dr. Meyerhof writes in "The Legacy of Islam" (p. 132): "Muslim doctors laughed at the Crusaders' medical attendants for their clumsy and elementary efforts. The Europeans had not the advantage of the books of Avicenna, Jaber, Hassan bin Haytham, Rhazes. However they finally had them translated into Latin. These translations exist still, without the translators' names. In the 16th century the books of Averroes (Ibn Rushd) and Avicenna (Ibn Sina) were put out in Latin translation in Italy and used as the basis of instruction in the Italian and French universities."

On page 116 of the same work he writes that after Rhazes' death the works of Avicenna (AD 980-1037) were taken up. His influence on thought and philosophy and general science was profound, and his medical works (based on the works of Galen which he had found in the Samarqand

library in Arabic translation) had a sensational outreach. Other scientists followed—Abu'l-Qais of Andalusia; Ibn-Zahr of Andalusia; Abbas the Irani; Ali ibn-Rezvan of Egypt; Ibn Butlan of Baghdad; Abu Mansur Muwaffaq of Herat; Ibn Wafeed of Spain; Masooya of Baghdad; Ali ibn-Esau of Baghdad; Ammar of Mosul; Ibn-Rushd (Averroes) of Andalusia; whose works translated to Latin were used in European universities.

Europe knew nothing of the cholera bacterium when Islam entered Spain, and the people there regarded the disease as a punishment sent from heaven to exact the penalty of sins: but Muslim physicians had already proved that even the bubonic plague was a contagious disease and nothing else.

Dr. Meyerhof writes of Avicenna's book "The Canon" that it is a masterpiece of medical science which proved

its worth by being printed in a series of 16 editions in the closing years of the 15th century AD, 15 Latin and one Arabic. In the 16th century more than a score of further editions were published, because of its value as a scientific work. Its use continued throughout the 17th and 18th centuries, so that it became the most widely known of all medical treatises. It is still consulted in medical schools.

Will Durant writes that Mohammad ibn Zachariah Razi (Rhazes) was one of Islam's most progressive physicians, author of 200 treatises and books well worth studying today: in particular his:

1. "Smallpox and Measles" (published in Latin and other European tongues in 40 editions between 1497 and 1866), and:

2. "The Great Encyclopedia" 20 volumes mostly unobtainable nowadays: five

volumes were devoted to optics; translated into Latin AD 1279; printed in five editions in 1542 alone; known as the most authoritative work on the eye and its ailments and treatment for centuries; one of the nine basic works on which Paris University composed its medical course in 1394 AD.

Surgery made similar progress in the hands of Islamic practitioners, who even used anaesthetics, though these are assumed to be of modern origin. They employed a henbane base to act as an anaesthetic.

Among Rhazes' innovations was the use of cold water to treat persistent fever, of dry-cupping for apoplexy, of mercury ointment and animal gut for wound sutures, and many others.

Further information on Islamic medicine can be sought from the many books on the subject. The diagnosis of tuberculosis from the fingernails, the cure of jaundice, the use of cold

water to prevent haemorrhage, the crushing of stones in bladder and kidney to facilitate their removal, and surgery for hernia are among advances too numerous to mention in detail. The greatest of Islamic surgeons was Abu'l Qasem of Andalusia, affectionately called Abu'l-Qays, and sometimes Abu'l-Qasees, who lived in the 11th century AD, and invented very many surgical instruments and was the author of books to describe them and their uses—books translated and printed in innumerable editions in Latin and used all over Europe, the last such edition being in 1816.

Pharmacology

Gustave ie Bon writes: "Besides the use of cold water to treat typhoid cases—a treatment later abandoned, though Europe is taking this Muslim invention up again in modern times after a lapse of centuries. Muslims invented the art of mixing chemical medicaments in pills and

solutions, many of which are in use to this day, though some of them are claimed as wholly new inventions of our present century by chemists unaware of their distinguished history. Islam had dispensaries which filled prescriptions for patients gratis, and in parts of countries where no hospitals were reachable, physicians paid regular visits with all the tools of their trade to look after public health."

Georgi Zeidan writes: "Modern European pharmacologists who have studied the history of their profession find that Muslim doctors launched many of the modern beneficial specifics centuries ago, made a science of pharmacology and compound cures, and set up the first pharmacies on the modern model. So that Baghdad alone had 60 chemists' shops dispensing prescriptions regularly at the charges of the Caliph. Evidence of these facts can be seen in the names given in Europe to quite a number of

medicines and herbs which betray their Arabic, Indian or Persian origin." Such are "alcohol, alkali, alkaner, apricot, arsenic," to quote some 'a's alone.

Hospitals

Georgi Zeidan continues: "Within two centuries of the death of the Prophet, Mecca, Medina and the other great Muslim cities all had hospitals, while the Abbasid governors and their ministers competed each for his own region to have the best such institution for the care of the sick. Baghdad alone had four important hospitals.

By three centuries after the Hejra the governor Adhud-ud-Dowleh Deylami had founded the Adhudi Hospital with 24 specialists, each master of his own particular field, a hospital which soon earned the reputation of excelling all hospitals throughout Islam, though in the course of time it too was surpassed.

"The order and arrangement of Islamic hospitals was such that no distinctions of race, religion or occupation were recognised, but cure was administered with meticulous care to any patient. Separate wards were allotted for patients of specific diseases. These were teaching hospitals where the students learned theory and observed practice. In addition, there were travelling hospitals which carried doctors and their gear by camel or mule to every district. Sultan Mahmoud the Seljuk travelled with a hospital which required 40 camels for its transport."

Dr. Gustave ie Bon writes; "Muslim hospitals went in for preventive medicine and the preservation of health as much as if not more than for the cure of the already diseased. They were well-aired and had plenty of running water. Muhammad bin Zachariah Razi (Rhazes) was ordered by the Sultan to seek out the healthiest place in the Baghdad neighbourhood

for the construction of a new hospital. He visited every section of the town and its environs, and hung up a piece of meat which he left while he looked into infectious diseases in the neighbourhood and studied climatic conditions, particularly the state of the water. He balanced all these various experimental tests and finally found them all to indicate that the place where the portion of meat was the last to putrefy and develop infectious bacteria was the spot on which to build. These hospitals had large common wards and also private wards for individuals. Pupils were

trained in diagnosis and brought observation and experience to the perfecting of their studies. There were also special mental hospitals, and pharmacies which dispensed prescriptions gratis."

Marc Kapp writes: "Cairo had a huge hospital with playing fountains and flower-decked gardens and 40 large courtyards. Every unfortunate patient was kindly received, and after his cure sent home with five gold coins. On the other hand, Cordova, besides its 600 mosques and 900 public hammams (bathrooms), had 50 hospitals."

Imam Ali's (a.s.) Knowledge

However successful any attempt to describe Imam Ali's world of knowledge might be, it would certainly fall short of being able to define his great mental capacity, and of encircling the dimensions of the prowess displayed by him in the field of human ideas. It is suffice to note that every school of thought that appeared among Muslims, has alleged that it belonged to Imam Ali's (a.s.) thought.

This is even if it was not true, as to assume a sort of connection with his thought would be to grant it an air of credibility and legitimacy. The Ash'aris alleged affinity to him; the Mu'tazila said that they belonged to him; the school of opinion in jurisprudence pretended to follow him; the Sufis assumed that their forerunner was Amir al-Mu'minin Imam Ali (a.s.), etc.

To this may be added the followers of his teachings who

adhered to Ahlul-Bait (a.s.) (the Prophet's progeny) and who come next to the Glorious Qur'an. To both all Muslims should cling and must follow their preaching, according to the religious instructions announced by the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), who said:

"Verily, I am leaving among you al-Thaqalain (the two precious weighty things) : The Book of Allah and my "Itrah", my descendants. As long as you cling to them you would never go astray. They never separate until they come to me at the Pool".

So, it is of great significance to note that all the schools of thought and jurisprudence allege affinity to Imam Ali (a.s.) and assume to have drunk from the ocean of his knowledge. It points to his prominent position in the world of Islamic thinking - a position to which no one after the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) could attain during the

entire Islamic history. Thus, all the schools of thought and jurisprudence in Islamic history consider Imam Ali (a.s.) as the father of their ideologies and thought.

This is the case even with the founders of such intellectual, cultural, and scientific schools as the grammarians, the experts at reciting the Qur'an, the interpreters of the Qur'an, the narrators of the traditions, the jurists and many others. Their allegiance was not void of some truth, as, actually, they are an explicit evidence of the fact that Imam Ali (a.s.) left no phase of true knowledge unwanted, setting it right, founding its bases, and defining its features, and then leaving its door open for the lovers of knowledge to enter its wider fields.

This great intellectual power presented by Imam Ali (a.s.) to humanity was a natural product of the special education he had received from the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.). The social apostolic

training took care of all sides of the personality of Imam Ali (a.s.), in order to prepare him intellectually and psychologically to occupy the position of leading the Islamic ummah after the departure of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.). The perfected cultural development of the personality of Imam Ali (a.s.), enabled him to take charge after the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) and he started informing the people about the great level of knowledge to which he had reached.

The Messenger (s.a.w.) said:

"I am the city of knowledge, and Ali is its gate. Whoever wants knowledge let him approach it through its gate".

"Ali is the door to my knowledge, who explains to my people what I had been sent with".

Ibn Mas'ud said : "I was in the presence of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) when he was

asked about Ali's knowledge. He replied:

"Wisdom is divided into ten parts. Ali is given nine of them, and the rest of the people (are given) the last part. Still Ali knows more of this part, too".'

There are uncountable noble narrative all of which speak of the great position of Imam Ali (a.s.) in the realm of knowledge, openly calling upon the nation to acquire knowledge about Divine Legislation through him, since he was the guide, after the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), and the straight path leading to Allah, the Most High.

Many of Imam Ali's (a.s.) contemporaries realised the high level of knowledge to which he had attained, and his great position in the procession of eternal Islam, many of which have already been referred to.

Ata' bin Abi Rabah says: 'When the Messenger of Allah

(s.a.w.) was asked if he knew anybody more learned than Ali, except the Messenger himself, he said : 'No, by Allah, I know of none'."

Umar bin Al-Khattab says: "Knowledge is six parts, five-sixths of which is with Ali, and one-sixth is with other people, yet he shared this one-sixth with us, knowing even more of it than we do".

In so many instances the Caliph used to refer to him in difficult judicial, governmental and administrative cases, asking for his help. Umar bin Al-Khattab used to repeat : "May Allah spare me not for a difficult problem without having Abul Hasan (to solve it)". Or he would say: "I take refuge in Allah against a difficult problem without Ali (solving it)".

A'ishah used to say : "Ali is the most learned man about the Prophet's Traditions". There are many other narratives to the same effect.

Amir Al-Mu'minin Imam Ali (a.s.) himself referred on many occasions to his vast and general knowledge. He told his companions that his chest enclosed a great knowledge which he acquired from the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.), and that had he known trustworthy 'carriers' who would spread it, he would have deposited some of it with them.

Once, pointing to his bosom, he told Kumail bin Ziyad:

"Here is a heap of knowledge which the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) taught me. If I had found bearers who could take good care of it and tell it as they hear it from me, I would have entrusted them with some of it".

On another occasion he disclosed the enormity, the dimensions and the scope of his knowledge. Ibn Nabata, in this respect, says: "When the people gave their pledge of allegiance to Imam Ali (a.s.)

as Caliph, he came to the mosque with the turban of the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) on his head, wearing the Messenger's cloak. He ascended the pulpit, praised Allah, preached to the people, warned them and then sat firmly in his seat, knitting his fingers below his navel, and said:

'O people, ask me before you lose me. Ask me, for I have the knowledge of the First and the Last ones. By Allah, if I were to rule, I would judge the people of Torah according to their Torah, the people of the Gospel according to their Gospel, the people of the Psalms (of David) according to their Psalms, and the people of the Furqan (Qur'an) according to their Furqan, so that when each Scripture is finished, it would declare: O Lord! Ali has judged according to Your judgement. By Allah, I am more versed in the Qur'an and its interpretation than anyone who claims to know it..."

He then repeated: 'Ask me before losing me. By the One who split the seed and created the soul, if you ask me about the (Qur'an) verse by verse, I will tell you when it was revealed and about what it was revealed, and I will tell you the abrogating verse and the abrogated, the particular from the general, the indisputable from the allegorical; the Meccan from the Medinan.

'By Allah, there is no group (of people) that goes astray or is guided (to deliverance) without me knowing its leader, driver and shouter'."

He also said: **"Ask me! As, by Allah, you may ask no question without receiving my answer to it. Ask me about the Book of Allah, as, by Allah, there is no verse (of the Qur'an) but I know whether it was revealed at night or at daytime, in a valley or on top of a mountain"**.

Even if Imam Ali (a.s.) did not

participate in the intellectual fields with his vast knowledge as he did, his repeated calls on diverse occasions to ask him are proof enough to confirm his superior qualities in respect of different branches of knowledge and learning.

Even if the Messenger of Allah (s.a.w.) did not disclose Imam Ali's (a.s.) high position in the world of knowledge, his own insistence on inviting the people to learn from him, is but an irrefutable sign of his boundless knowledge. His full confidence in his own knowledge stood behind his repeated, unprecedented call to his knowledge—a call the like of which has never been ascribed by history to any individual, as such a man would certainly refrain from offering such an invitation, for fear of a disgraceful situation arising from failing to answer all the questions.

A good number of thinkers have realized the great significance of such an

invitation as put forth by Imam Ali (a.s.): "**Question me!**"

Sa'id bin al-Musayab says: "Nobody could say: 'Ask me.' except Ali bin Abi Talib".

Ibn Shabrama is reputed to have said: "No one has the

right to say from the pulpit: 'Ask me' except Ali bin Abi Talib".

This call, so strongly repeated, bears evidence within its fold of Imam Ali's general knowledge, providing man with richness, goodness, guidance and righteousness.

General Beliefs

By Ayatullah Jafar Sobhani

History tells us that the enemies of the Prophet tried in many ways to thwart his divine mission—from accusing him of being mad, to being possessed by a demon, to attempting to kill him in his bed. But God's protective grace ensured that these evil schemes of the idolaters came to naught. The last hope for these enemies was that with the death of the Prophet, the religion he brought would come to an end also (as he had no male offspring to succeed him):

Or say they: a poet, for whom we await the accident of time" (Sura al-Tur, [Lil:go](#))

This was the thought that dominated many of the idolaters and hypocrites. However, with the designation of such a worthy successor, who had proven throughout his life so pure in faith and constant in devotion to Islam, the hopes of the enemies were

transformed into despair. By this act, the continuity of the religious community was secured, its foundations set firm, and the blessing of Islam, with the designation of such leadership, was brought to completion. It is for this reason that, after the appointment of Ali as successor to the Prophet, the verse relating to the 'perfecting of religion' was revealed on the day of Ghadir:

This day are those who disbelieve in despair of [ever harming] your religion; so fear them not, fear Me. This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour unto you, and have chosen for you Islam as religion. (Sura al-Ma'ida, [V:3](#))⁹⁴

Apart from the authentic hadiths cited—which go to prove that the issue of succession to the Prophet was a matter to be determined by

God, rather than being left to the will of the community—various historical accounts also indicate that the Prophet, even when he was still in Mecca, not having yet established the Medinan state, regarded the issue of succession as one which pertained to God's decree. For instance, the chief of the tribe of Banu Amir came to the Prophet at the season of Hajj and asked him: 'If we pay allegiance to you, and you conquer your enemies, will we benefit from any share in the leadership [of your community]?' In reply, the Prophet said: 'That is for God to decide; He will entrust leadership to whomever He will.'

It is evident that if the issue of leadership were to be determined by the choice of the people, the Prophet would have had to say: 'This question pertains to the *umma*,' or that it is up to the "folk who loose and bind to decide"; but the words of the Prophet in this connection are

akin to those of God as regards the Message of Islam itself:

... *God knoweth best with whom to place His Message.*
(Sura al-An'am, 6:124)

The idea that the *umma* had no method for determining the successor to the Prophet was held by some of the companions. Instead of the designation of God and His Prophet, they followed the designation given by the previous caliph, each caliph receiving his appointment at the hands of his predecessor, except in the case of the first caliph. The idea that the designation by Abu Bakr of Umar was not so much a definite order as a form of advice runs contrary to the historical evidence. For while the first caliph was still alive, the said designation was opposed by various companions, such as Zubayr; it is clear that if it were a question merely of advice, there would be no reason for the companions to oppose it at

this stage. Turning from this appointment of Umar by Abu Bakr to the third caliph, Uthman, we see that he was appointed by a council of six persons who were all appointed in turn by the second caliph; this was also, therefore, a form of designation, as it involved restricting the ability to consult public opinion.

In principle, the idea of consulting public opinion or the notion of election of the caliph by the *umma*, was entirely absent from the minds of the companions; and whatever has been claimed to the contrary comes from later interpretations by others. For it is clear that the companions believed that the caliph was to be appointed by his predecessor. For instance, when the second caliph was injured, A'isha, a wife of the Prophet, sent him a message through his son, Abd Allah b. Umar, saying: 'Give my greetings to your father and tell him not to leave the

Prophet's *umma* without a shepherd.'

Even though there was a crowd of people at his father's bed, Ibn Umar asked his father to appoint a successor, saying: 'People are talking about you, thinking that you are not going to appoint a successor. If a shepherd, entrusted with the responsibility of looking after your sheep and camels were to leave them alone in the desert, without assigning anyone the duty of taking care of them, would you not reproach him? Taking care of human beings is more important than taking care of sheep and camels.'

At the beginning of our discussion of the Imamate, we pointed out that the Imam and caliph of the Prophet, from the point of view of the Muslims, is one who is charged with the responsibilities of the Prophet—save that of establishing the religion. We shall mention below the most important of these responsibilities in order to

highlight the rank and significance of the Imamate.

1. Explaining the meanings of the Holy Qur'an and resolving its complexities was one of the responsibilities of the Prophet. As the Qur'an says:

... And We have revealed unto thee the Remembrance that thou mayst explain to mankind that which hath been revealed for them. (Sura al-Nahl, 16:44)

2. Explaining the rulings of the Shari'a was another of the Prophet's responsibilities, which he discharged partly through reference to Qur'anic verses and partly by his own actions, the Sunna. Such explanation was given gradually, in harmony with the unfolding of daily events; the nature of this responsibility was such that it needed to be continued, for the number of hadiths of the Prophet regarding legal rulings does not exceed five hundred and this quantity of juristic traditions is insufficient for [a

comprehensive system of] jurisprudence.

3. The avoidance of divisiveness. Since the Prophet was the pivot of God's truth, and he illuminated all matters, such that any kind of deviation in the beliefs of the *umma* was forestalled, no kind of sectarianism saw the light of day during his life-time.

4. Responding to all religious and theological questions was another of his responsibilities.

5. Training his followers by means of his speech and his actions.

6. Establishing justice, equity and security in the nascent Islamic society.

7. Protection of the frontiers and the lands of Islam against its enemies.

Now if the last two responsibilities can be carried out by a leader chosen by the people, it is obvious that the

previous ones require a leader of exceptional knowledge and ability, one who, in his mode of awareness and of activity, follows in the footsteps of the Prophet, one who must be appointed by means of a special grace from God. He must bear within himself intimate knowledge of the prophetic message, and he must be free from all types of error and sin in order to discharge the aforementioned obligations and thereby fill the place vacated by the Prophet. But it must be stressed that such a person, despite possessing certain prophetic sciences, is not a Prophet, nor the founder of a divine law, the rank of Imam never being equated with that of a Prophet.

In the previous articles we have pointed out that an Imam is not an ordinary leader who simply has to rule a country and protect its borders; rather, in addition to this duty, he has other weighty responsibilities, alluded to above. The fulfilment of these tasks—such as commenting on the

Qur'an, explaining religious rulings, replying to theological questions, and forestalling all forms of doctrinal deviation and legal confusion—all of this presupposes a comprehensive and inerrant knowledge; for an ordinary person trying to carry out such responsibilities would not be immune from sin and error.

Of course, *'isma* (inerrancy) is not to be identified exclusively with prophethood, for a person may be *ma'sum*, protected against sin and error, while not having the rank of a Prophet. A shining example of this is the Virgin Mary. Some arguments given for the necessity of an Imam to be *ma'sum* are mentioned below:

1. The explicit and definite desire, on the part of God, to purify and cleanse the *ahlal-bayt* of defilement, as the Qur'an says:

God's desire is but to remove impurity far from you, O people of the household (ahl al-bayt), and purify you with

an utter purification. (Sura al-Ahzab, 33:?)

This verse indicates the *'isma* of the *ahl al-bayt* in that this special divine will to purify the *ahl al-bayt* of all impurity is tantamount to their being protected against the commission of all sin. The meaning of impurity (*rijs*) in this verse might be understood as pertaining to all forms of mental, moral and spiritual impurity, for sin flows forth as a result of these impurities. Also, since this divine will is specifically related to these people and not to all members of the *umma*, it follows that God's universal desire for all people to be pure must be distinguished from this particular mode-of the expression of this will. The universal divine will for the purification of all Muslims is a religious (*tashril*) will [that is, one that operates through the religion itself], and it is possible that through disobedience certain people will not accept this [divine will that they be purified]. On

the other hand, the will to purify the *ahl al-bayt* is a creative or existentiating (*takwint*) will, and this kind of will or desire on the part of God is inseparable from the object desired—purity from all sin. It should be noted that this creative will to establish the *'isma* of the *ahl al-bayt* does not deprive them of their free will, any more than the *'isma* of the Prophets deprives them of theirs (as was discussed earlier).

2. According to the hadith *Thaqalayn*, which says I verily am leaving with you two precious things, the Book of God and my progeny, the Imams of the *ahlal-bayt* arranged alongside the Qur'an; this means that, just as the Qur'an is immune against all types of error, so are the Imams immune from all mental and volitional sin. This can be seen more clearly in the light of the rest of this hadith: (a) '... for as long as you cling to these two, you will never go astray'; (b) '... and truly they will not be parted from each

other until they join me at the Pool.' It is perfectly clear then, that to which one must hold fast for guidance, dispelling all error, and which will not be separated from the Qur'an, must definitely be protected against all type of sin.

3. The Holy Prophet likened his *ahl al-bayt* to Noah's ark: 'Truly the People of my House (*ahl baytl*) in my community (*ummatt*) is like Noah's ark:

whoever takes refuge therein is saved and whoever opposes it is drowned.")

Taking into account these reasons—which we have presented here in summarized form—the *'isma* of the *ahl al-baytis* a clear and proven reality; needless to say, the traditional grounds for upholding this principle are by no means exhausted by what we have mentioned here.

Bohloul - the companion of the 7th Imam

Bohloul was born in Kufa and his real name is Wahab bin Amr.

Haroun Rashid feared for the safety of his Khalifate and kingdom from the 7th Imam Musa Kazim (A.S.); therefore, he tried to destroy the Imam. Haroun thought of a trick by which he could kill the Holy Imam. He put the blame of rebellion upon the Imam and demanded a judicial decree from the pious people of his time--which included Bohlool. Everyone gave the decree except Bohlool, who opposed the decision. He immediately went to the Imam and informed him of the circumstances, and asked for advice and guidance. Then and there the Imam told him to act insanely.

Because of the situation, Bohlool acted insanely by the Imam's order. By doing this, he was saved from Haroun's

punishment. Now, without any fear of danger, and in amusing ways, Bohlool protected himself from tyrannies. He insulted the notorious Khalifa and his courtiers just by talking. Nevertheless, people acknowledged his superior wisdom and excellence. Even today many of his stories are narrated in assemblies and teach the listeners valuable lessons.

Bohloul and the Khalifa's Food

It is said that Haroun Rashid sent some food to Bohlool. His servant brought the food to Bohlool, put it in front of him, and said, "This is the Khalifa's special food, he has sent it to you to eat."

Bohloul placed the food in front of the dog that was sitting in the ruins of the place. The servant screamed, "Why did you give the Khalifa's food

to the dog!"

Bohloul said, "Be quiet! If the dog hears that the Khalifa sent this food, it won't eat it either."

Bohloul Sits on Haroun Rashid's Throne

One day Bohlool arrived at Haroun's palace and saw that the throne was empty. There was no one to stop him, so he unhesitatingly and fearlessly went and sat in Haroun's place.

When the court slaves saw this, they immediately started whipping him and took him off the throne. Bohlool started crying. Haroun came and saw this; he asked those nearby why Bohlool was crying. A slave told him the whole story. Haroun scolded them and tried to cheer Bohlool up.

Bohloul said he wasn't crying at his condition, but at Haroun's condition. "I sat on the seat of Khalifate wrongfully for a few seconds and received such a beating

and endured such misfortune; but you have been sitting on this throne all your life! What troubles you must receive, yet you still don't fear the consequence."

Bohloul With His Friend

One day a friend of Bohlool's took some grains to grind at the mill. After grinding them, he loaded them on his donkey and started home. Near Bohlool's house, his donkey began limping and fell. He called Bohlool and said, "Give me your donkey so I can take my bundle home."

Bohloul had taken an oath that he would not give his donkey to anyone, so he said, "I don't have a donkey." But then a donkey's bray was heard.

The man said to Bohlool, "You have a donkey but you said you didn't."

Bohloul replied, "You are a strange and stupid friend. Even though we have been friends for fifty years, you

don't listen to me, but you listen to a donkey".

Bohloul and a Businessman

One day a Baghdadi businessman met Bohloul and said, "Sir Shaykh Bohloul! Give me advice as to what I should buy that would benefit me most." Bohloul replied, "Iron and cotton."

The man went away and bought a lot of iron and cotton and stocked them. After a few months, he sold them and gained a lot of profit. Again he met Bohloul and said, "O Crazy Bohloul! What should I buy that would profit me?"

This time Bohloul told him to buy onions and watermelons. The businessman went and bought his entire savings

worth of onions and watermelons. Just a few days later, they all rotted and caused a lot of harm. He immediately sought out Bohloul and said, "When I first asked you for advice, you said buy iron and cotton. I profited a lot from this, but the second time what kind of advice did you give me! All my wealth was destroyed!"

Bohloul said, "The first day you addressed me as Shaykh Bohloul, and since you addressed me as an intelligent person, I advised you according to my wisdom. The second time you called me Crazy Bohloul, so I advised you like a crazy person."

The businessman was ashamed of his behavior and understood Bohloul well.

Selected Quotes

And God made you grow of the earth as a growth (of a plant),
Then He returns you Therein, and again He will bring you forth a
new bringing (at the Resurrection).

The Holy Quran 71:17-18

How can you be happy in this life that grows
shorter with the passage of every hour?

Amir-al-Momineen Ali (a.s.)

Everything is good when it is new, except
friends who are good when they are old.

Amir-al-Momineen Ali (a.s.)

A man's speech reveals his mind;
and his deed shows his origin.

Amir-al-Momineen Ali (a.s.)

Yet verily your Lord, to those who do an evil (deed) in ignorance,
and turn (repentant) after that and make amends;
Verily your Lord is Oft-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.

The Holy Quran 16:119

