

INNATE GNOSIS OF GOD

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**In the Name of Allah,
the Beneficent, the Merciful**

Prologue

As can be inferred from the title of the book, the current writing will cover a special type of knowing the Almighty God, called “**innate gnosis**”. Although, innate gnosis is not the only way of knowing God, yet it enjoys special importance in the teachings of the divine prophets and according to one authentic source, it is the only path to true gnosis of God.

Notwithstanding that the Noble Quran and traditions from *Ahl al-bayt* (A.S.) have laid great stress on matters concerning belief and *ma'arif* (gnostic knowledge), it is unfortunate that we have but little acquaintance with them. *Ma'refat fitri* (innate gnosis) is among this very *Ma'aref* (gnostic knowledge). Undoubtedly, much has been spoken on “**Fitrat**” (innate disposition) and *Ma'refat fitri* but what is commonly inferred from them is quite different from that which has come down in the Quran and sunnah.¹

In this short endeavor, our purpose is only to divulge the meaning of *Fitrat* and *Ma'refat fitri* and their manifest characteristics by relying on authentic religious

1. In this regard, we shall review the different views in this book.

sources. Besides, we intend to set forth the general sketch for divine theology and the stages and fundamentals of *Ma'refat* (gnosis) of God and divine faith. Among the questions and other matters which this book seeks to give reply are the following:

Does God's existence require proof or is recognition of God an obvious and manifest affair?

How is the *Ma'refat* (gnosis) of God achieved and what role does *Aql* (intellect) plays in this matter?

Is debate and disputation on religious beliefs a desirable act or not and what are the conditions of a religious debate? What role does free-will and moral play in the gnosis of God and divine faith?

What is faith and what are its preliminaries?

It's necessary to remind that prior to this book, a few topics about knowing God was published by the writer.¹ In that, the divine theology was compared with the theology of Greek philosophers and the difference between these two schools was explained. With the publication of this, we received various recommendations. We received repeated requests to set forth the Islamic discussion separately, free from the Greek philosophical matters. Moreover, recommendations were also given to use this as a textbook in a few educational sections.

The extent this present book has succeeded in fulfilling these requirements and recommendations is to be judged by the respected readers, scholars and researchers. The author expects to gain further by the recommendations and criticisms of these dear readers and seek their services in explaining the Islamic *Ma'aref* (gnostic knowledge).

At the end, it's necessary to thank all those who have had a hand in the compilation and publication of this book particularly, my teachers like the respected jurisprudent and commentator, Hazrat Ayatollah Mirza Muhammad Baqir Malaki Miyanji. Similarly, I express my thanks to the learned editor and honorable publisher.

Reza Berenjkar
1, Ramadhan 1415

1. At the outset, in the form of an article named as "*Greece and religion*" and later in the form of a book titled "*Fundamentals of knowing God in Greek philosophy and divine religions*".

Preface

In the preface, two points will be discussed in brief: Firstly, we shall review the topics of this book and then discuss the importance of gnostic knowledge (*Ma'refat*) of God followed by the virtues and effects of such knowledge.

1. A general review of the topics:

In the first section of this book, we shall discuss rational theology and proof of Creator through observance of the global phenomenon and the harmony among different parts of the universe as well as through spiritual journey and man's recourse to his own 'self'. The outcome of this stage would prove on the one hand, the existence of the Creator and on the other hand, His non-resemblance with the creatures. Eventually, man's amazement at the divine holy Essence and the need for gnostic knowledge of God is proved. Considering that this type of recognition is not the main topic of this book and is offered only as a means for initiating the discussion on innate disposition, it has therefore been discussed in brief.

In the second section, we shall discuss innate gnosis of God. At the outset, we shall explain, before anything else, the initial halting place where man acquired this gnosis from God and thereafter describe (in the topic on divine names and attributes) the specifics of innate disposition and its effects. Finally, we shall conclude the discussion by dividing theology into three forms: "Affirmative", "Negative" and "Innate".

The second part of this section is earmarked to the ways of recalling innate gnosis. Moreover, useful debate, dialect and disputation and their place in theology will be discussed.

The topic of the third part concerns man's submission before God which finally leads to faith. In the first chapter, the affairs which pave the way for man's submission or non-submission before God will be discussed. In this regard, matters such as will (الاراده), incitements (الدواعى) and ethics (الاخلاق) will be presented. The second chapter is assigned to the outcome of man's submission, i.e., faith, and its characteristics.

At the end of the book, we shall explain in brief, the manner of utilizing the holy verses and hadith on innate theology as well as the rightfulness of innate disposition.

Let it not remain unsaid that our objective is only to explain the views of the Quran and the Sunnah (and not the human reflections¹) on theology. However, we shall discuss the various views only with respect to the meaning of innate disposition.

Moreover, effort will be made to set forth the original sources and references of traditions so that the readers can have direct access to them.

1. To a certain extent, this matter has been discussed in the book: "Fundamentals of knowing God in Greek philosophy and divine religions".

2. The virtue of gnosis of God and its effects

As mentioned in the prologue, this book aims to explain the innate gnosis of God. As such, it is appropriate to review the importance of gnosis of God and its virtues and effects from the viewpoint of Quran and hadith.

The gnosis of God is the fountainhead of all values and plays a fundamental role in the various dimensions of man's life. The glorious Quran draws the boundary among the human-beings on the basis of faith and good deeds and refers to every kind of human values based on this very matter. From the viewpoint of the Quran, only those who have faith in God and perform virtuous deeds are subject to God's Mercy, Forgiveness and Reward¹ and shall enter the Paradise.² In the eyes of God, they are the best of men; they enjoy the most pure life and experience the most benevolent end. Moreover, they are the very ones who attain the ruler ship, guidance, divine light and salvation³ and ascend to exalted positions.⁴

On the other hand, we are aware that gnosis of God is the source and foundation of faith and virtuous deeds. The presence of numerous verses of Quran and the reader's acquaintance with them restricts us to set forth their references only. However, we shall mention a gist of the *Ahl ul-bayt's* sayings regarding the special virtues of gnosis of God.

- The gnosis of God is the first step in traversing the path of religion, piety and devotion.

أَوَّلُ الدِّينِ مَعْرِفَتُهُ.

“The foremost in religion is the knowledge (gnosis) of God”⁵

أَوَّلُ الدِّيَانَةِ بِهِ مَعْرِفَتُهُ.

“The beginning of the acceptance of religion (din) is the knowledge (gnosis) of God”.⁶

أَوَّلُ عِبَادَةِ اللَّهِ مَعْرِفَتُهُ.

“The first (step) towards worship of God is His knowledge (gnosis)”.⁷

- The gnosis of God is the loftiest of all gnosis and sciences and the highest and most virtuous of all obligations.

مَعْرِفَةُ اللَّهِ سُبْحَانَهُ أَعْلَى الْمَعَارِفِ.

1. Concerning the aforesaid specialities, refer to Jasiyah/30, Haj/50, Ankabut/7, Fatir/7, Al-Imran/57, Rum/45, Kahf/30, Inshiqaq/25, Teen/6, Saba/37 and Qasas/80.

2. Refer to Maryam/60, Baqarah/25 and 82, Nisa/57 and 122, Ibrahim/23, Kahf/107, Haj/14, 23 and 56, Ankabut/58, Rum/15, Luqman/8, Sajdah/19, Shuara/22 and Buruj/11.

3. Refer to Bayyinah/7, Ra'd/29, Nur/55, Yunus/9, Baqarah/257, Talaq/11 and Qasas/67.

4. Refer to Mujadalah/11 and Taha/75.

5. Nahjul-Balagha; Sermon No 1.

6. Kafi 1/140; Tradition 6.

7. Tauhid-Saduq; page 34; tradition 2; Uyoon Akhbar al-Ridha 1/149 and Ershad Shaikh Mufid, page 119.

“The gnosis of God, Glory be to Him, is the loftiest of all the gnosis”.¹

إِنَّ أَفْضَلَ الْفَرَائِضِ وَ أَوْجَبَهَا عَلَى الْإِنْسَانِ مَعْرِفَةُ الرَّبِّ وَ الْإِقْرَارُ لَهُ بِالْعِبُودِيَّةِ.

“Verily, the most virtuous of all obligations and the most obligatory among all obligations for man is the knowledge of God and acknowledgment of His servitude”.²

جَاءَ رَجُلٌ إِلَى رَسُولِ اللَّهِ (ص) قَالَ: مَا رَأْسُ الْعِلْمِ؟ قَالَ: مَعْرِفَةُ اللَّهِ حَقَّ مَعْرِفَتِهِ.

A person approached the Messenger of Allah (S.A.W.A.) and said: ‘Which is the highest knowledge? Hazrat replied: Knowledge (gnosis) of God in the manner He deserves to be known.’³

About the importance of Knowing God, Imam Sadiq (A.S.) says:

“If the people conceive the excellence of the gnosis of God, they will never fix their eyes on the worldly pleasures and bounties that is enjoyed by their enemies; and the things of this world would turn less showy in their eyes. Instead, they will benefit from the gnosis of God and enjoy it like the enjoyment of the dwellers in Paradise. Verily, the gnosis of God is man’s companion in every fear; his colleague in every loneliness; light in every darkness; strength in every weakness and cure and good health in every kind of sickness”.⁴

The above mentioned matter is only a gist of the virtues of divine gnosis. Here, it is also appropriate to point out the effects of gnosis of God.

- Among the effects of divine gnosis is man’s submission and satisfaction before the Divine decree.

أَحَقُّ خَلْقِ اللَّهِ أَنْ يُسَلِّمَ لِمَا قَضَى اللَّهُ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ مَنْ عَرَفَ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ.

“The most worthy of God’s creatures in terms of submission before His decree is the one who possesses knowledge about Him, the Almighty, the Great”.⁵

إِنَّ أَعْلَمَ النَّاسِ بِاللَّهِ أَرْضَاهُمْ بِقَضَاءِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ.

“Men having the highest knowledge of God are those who are the most satisfied ones about His decree”.⁶

-Hope in God on the one hand and fear of God on the other hand are the other effects of Knowing God.

يَا رَبِّ، حَقٌّ لِمَنْ عَرَفَكَ أَنْ لَا يَقْطَعَ رَجَاءَهُ مِنْكَ.

“O God, the one who has recognized Thee deserves not to sever hope in Thee”.¹

مَنْ عَرَفَ اللَّهَ خَافَ اللَّهَ.

1. Ghurar al-Hikam: 9864.

2. Kefayah al-Athar; page 258.

3. Bihar al-Anwar 3/14; tradition 36 and page 249; tradition 4.

4. Kafi 8/247; tradition 347.

5. Kafi 2/62; tradition 9.

6. Kafi 2/60; tradition 2.

“The one who recognizes Allah shall fear Him”.²

- Among other effects of Knowing God is being needless of others and (instead) relying on God for fulfillment of need.

مَنْ سَكَنَ قَلْبَهُ الْعِلْمُ بِاللهِ سَكَنَهُ الْغِنَى عَنْ خَلْقِ الله.

“The one in whose heart resides the gnosis of God shall find himself needless of others”.³

أَعْلَمُ النَّاسِ بِاللهِ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَهُ مَسْأَلَةٌ.

“Those possessing the highest knowledge of God shall beseech God for most of their needs”.⁴

- Finally, the one who recognizes God shall strive for his final abode.

عَجِبْتُ لِمَنْ عَرَفَ رَبَّهُ كَيْفَ لَا يَسْعَى لِدارِ الْبَقَاءِ.

“I am amazed at the one who recognizes his Lord but does not strive for his final abode”.⁵

1. Sawab al-A`mal; page 163; tradition 1.

2. Kafi 2/68; Tradition 4.

3. Ghurar al-Hikam: 8896

4. Ghurar al-Hikam: 3260

5. Ghurar al-Hikam: 6265

FIRST SECTION:

**PROOF OF CREATOR
AND
NEED FOR INNATE GNOSIS**

First Stage:**Proving the Creator by traversing the horizons¹**

By observing and contemplating the beings in this world, man realizes that the world has not been created without a Creator. This primary assertion is approved by contemplation and reflection over the order and harmony prevailing among various parts of the universe. Moreover, the greatness and splendor of the Creator of the universe is also proved.

Acknowledgment of the Creator of universe is appropriate to something which we name as “*Aql*” (reason).²

1. The discussion related to this subject is a rational discussion and the traditions do not hold an obligatory aspect. Rather, it reveals that the holy Infallibles (A.S.) too employed this method in their rationalization.

1. Tauhid-Saduq; page40

بِالْعُقُولِ يُعْتَقَدُ التَّصَدِيقُ بِاللَّهِ.

“Reason substantiates the existence of Creator since the creatures are living”¹
 فَلَمْ يَكُنْ بُدٌّ مِنْ إِثْبَاتِ الصَّانِعِ لَوْجُودِ الْمَصْنُوعِينَ.

In this manner, the existence of a phenomenon proves that a Creator exists for it. Is it not that when you deeply ponder over a tall construction, you perceive that there exists a builder for it even though you may not see its builder!?²

وَجُودُ الْأَفَاعِيلِ دَلَّتْ عَلَى أَنَّ صَانِعاً صَنَعَهَا أَلَا تَرَى أَنَّكَ إِذَا نَظَرْتَ إِلَى بِنَاءٍ مُشَيَّدٍ مَبْنِيٍّ،
 عَلِمْتَ أَنَّ لَهُ بَانِيًّا وَ إِنْ كُنْتَ لَمْ تَرَ الْبَانِيَّ وَ لَمْ تُشَاهِدْهُ؟!!

At this very juncture, man becomes perplexed since, on the one hand, he cannot deny the existence of the Creator while on the other hand, he cannot see Him nor recognize nor describe His Essence. By contemplating the phenomenon, man recognizes the Creator (by means of his intellect) only to the extent that it leads him to confess His existence and not that he becomes conversant with His depiction.³

In this connection, Amir-ul-Muminin (A.S.) says:

God has not informed (human) wit about the limits of His qualities. Nevertheless, He has not prevented it (i.e., wit) from securing essential knowledge of Him. So He is such that all signs of existence stand witness for Him.⁴

لَمْ يُطَلِّعِ الْعُقُولَ عَلَى تَحْدِيدِ صِفَتِهِ وَ لَمْ يَحْجُبْهَا عَنْ وَاجِبِ مَعْرِفَتِهِ. فَهُوَ الَّذِي تَشْهَدُ لَهُ أَعْلَامُ
 الْوُجُودِ.

This matter becomes more so serious and sensitive in the next step. When our reflection and contemplation in the phenomenon (for the sake of obviating our perplexity and recognizing the Essence of the Creator) increases, we shall perceive that: The Creator should not resemble the created being. If the created being is creatable, the Creator cannot be creatable. Moreover, if the created being is helpless and imperfect, the Creator cannot be so. In general, the Creator cannot resemble the creature in any quality. Otherwise, the Creator too would be called a creature as he possesses the quality of a creature.

Therefore, in this stage, all the qualities of a creature which are well known to man are negated from the Creator and qualitative differences i.e. differences of essence in all qualities between the Creator and creature are proved.

فَكُلُّ مَا فِي الْخَلْقِ لَا يُوجَدُ فِي خَالِقِهِ وَ كُلُّ مَا يُمَكِّنُ فِيهِ يَمْتَنِعُ مِنْ صَانِعِهِ.

“Thus, whatever is found in the creature cannot be found in the Creator. (Rather), whatever can be possibly found in a creature is impossible to be found so in the case of its Creator.”⁵

مُبَانِنٌ لِجَمِيعِ مَا أَحْدَثَتْ فِي الصِّفَاتِ.

2. Kafi 1/84

3. Kafi 1/81

4. Bihar al-Anwar 3/147 (Tauhid-Mufazzal)

5. Nahjul-Balagha; Sermon 49

6. Tauhid-Saduj; page 40

“God’s attributes are disparate from all creatable beings”.¹

وَهُوَ خِلَافُ مَا يُعْقَلُ
إِنَّمَا يُعْقَلُ مَا كَانَ بِصِفَةِ الْمَخْلُوقِ وَ لَيْسَ اللَّهُ كَذَلِكَ.

The second hadith explains the reason for the first hadith. The purport of the above two hadiths is as follows:

“He is totally different from whatever is conceived² (because) only that can be conceived which has the attribute of a created being and God is not like that”³

As can be seen, the consequence of greater reflection and contemplation too leads to the proof of a Creator on the one hand and the negation of resemblance between the Creator and creatures on the other hand.⁴ The conclusion derived from these two consequences too is nothing but bewilderment and amazement with respect to the Creator of the universe. And this outcome is the extreme end of rational excursion in theology which in traditions of Ahl al-bayt is referred to as “manifestation of God by means of intellect”:

بِهَا تَجَلَّى صَانِعُهَا لِلْعُقُولِ.

“Through the creatures, the Creator manifests Himself in the intellect”.⁵

ظَهَرَ فِي الْعُقُولِ بِمَا يُرَى فِي خَلْقِهِ مِنْ عِلْمَاتِ التَّدْبِيرِ.

“He is manifest in the mind through His signs and through His wisdom in His creations”.⁶

Second Stage:

Proving the Creator by traversing the self

In this stage too, the final outcome is God’s manifestation in the mind; and the condition for traversing such a route is the elimination of worldly attachments and return to the self. By attachments, we do not mean the physical and bodily attachments only but mainly the mental and heart-related attachments. Although, it is difficult to achieve this task in perfect form nevertheless, to the extent it is achieved, the excursion of the self continues and its effects becomes apparent for the wayfarer.

After deliverance from carnal desires and retreat of human thoughts and reflections, man can return to his “self” and perceive by conscience, his life and

1. Tauhid-Saduq; page 69

2. Kafi 1/82; tradition 1

3. Kafi 1/108; tradition 1

4. In the traditions of the Infallibles (A.S.), these two matters are referred to under the title: “Expulsion from two limitations” i.e., the limitation of nullification and resemblance. Nullification refers to disproving God and resemblance refers to the act of resembling God with the creatures.

5. Nahjul-Balagha; Sermon 186, page 273

6. Kafi 1/141; tradition 7 and Nahjul-Balagha; Sermon 182

soul and the helpless nature of his very existence. By enjoying such spiritual state, man will find himself in a state of change, transmutation and affiliation and will perceive by heart that he is subsisting and being supported by someone. At the same time, (just as mentioned in the first stage) he fails to recognize the One who causes change in him because, the Holy Essence is concealed from the human thoughts and faculties just as He is concealed from the human eye.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ إِحْتَجَبَ عَنِ الْعُقُولِ كَمَا احْتَجَبَ عَنِ الْأَبْصَارِ.

“God is concealed from the intellect in the same way as He is concealed from the eyes”.¹

لَا تُحِيطُ بِهِ الْأَبْصَارُ وَالْقُلُوبُ.

“Visions and hearts cannot attain Him”²

مُحَرَّمٌ عَلَى الْقُلُوبِ أَنْ تُمَثِّلَهُ، وَ عَلَى الْأَوْهَامِ أَنْ تَحُدَّهُ، وَ عَلَى الضَّمَائِرِ أَنْ تُكَوِّثَهُ. جَلَّ وَ عَزَّ عَنِ أَدَاتِ خَلْقِهِ وَ سِمَاتِ بَرِيَّتِهِ وَ تَعَالَى عَنِ ذَلِكَ عُلُوًّا كَبِيرًا.

“It has been made unlawful for hearts to find any semblance for Him, unlawful for the imagination to fix any limit for Him and unlawful for the consciousness to create Him (as existent in imagination). Great and Exalted is He above any compensation by the created, and above the signs of His creation. He is far, far above this, far too far above”.³

As such, in the second stage too, (i.e. excursion of the self) it is proved that there exists a Creator and that knowledge of His Essence is unattainable. It is here that man becomes perplexed and wishes that the One who causes change in him introduces Himself.

The traversing of the self differs from the traversing of the horizons in that man perceives by conscience, the helplessness and mendicancy of his own existence with utmost intensity. For this reason, he confesses and acknowledges His Creator, the self-subsisting and the Administrator with greater surety and certainty.

As can be observed, the ultimate end of rational traversing in theology is proof of God and His Uniqueness and the state of bewilderment by the task of recognizing Him. In this mystical journey, knowledge of God’s Entity and Essence cannot be achieved. However, the excursion (of knowing God) does not end at this stop. Rather, the gnosis of God in its real sense (i.e. through heart and innate disposition) begins from here.

After God is manifested in the intellects, those with sound mind desirous of acquiring the real gnosis will discover that the Almighty God has manifested in their hearts and has answered their call of conscience. They will realize that they

1. Tohaful-Uqool; page 176

2. Nahjul-Balagha; Sermon 85

3. Kafi 1/117; tradition 7

are being quenched by the sweet and refreshing gnosis at heart (and not mental and subjective gnosis).

It is at this point that man perceives God, Glory be to Him and while becoming humble, meek and impressed, he talks to Him and whispers to Him the secrets hidden in his heart. Hence the reason for *the Imam's* repetitive plea before God for acquiring His gnosis:

إِلَهِي هَبْ لِي كَمَالَ الْإِنْقِطَاعِ إِلَيْكَ. وَ أَنْزِرْ أَبْصَارَ قُلُوبِنَا بِضِيَاءِ نَظَرِهَا إِلَيْكَ حَتَّى تَخْرُقَ أَبْصَارُ الْقُلُوبِ حُجُبَ النُّورِ فَتَصِلَ إِلَى مَعْدِنِ الْعِظَمَةِ وَ تَصِيرَ أَرْوَاحُنَا مُعَلَّقَةً بِعِزِّ قُدْسِكَ... إِلَهِي أَلْحِقْنِي بِنُورِ عِزِّكَ الْبَاهِجِ فَأَكُونَ لَكَ عَارِفًا وَ عَنْ سِوَاكَ مُنْحَرَفًا.

“O Allah, destine for me the extreme recognition of Thee; and illuminate our heart-related vision with such light by which we can see Thee until the heart-related vision tears apart the curtains of light and reaches the great mine and our spirits get suspended to Thy Holy Power.....O Allah, unite me with Thy Glorious Light in all its splendor so that I turn Gnostic towards Thee and I turn away from all others”.¹

إِلَهِي تَرَدَّدِي فِي الْآثَارِ يُوجِبُ بَعْدَ الْمَزَارِ فَاجْمَعْنِي عَلَيْكَ بِخِدْمَةِ ثَوَصِلْنِي إِلَيْكَ.... فَأَهْدِنِي بِثُورِكَ إِلَيْكَ.

“O Allah, my preoccupation in the phenomenon causes my separation from Thee. So engage me in such affairs which cause me to gain proximity to Thee.....So guide me towards Thee by means of Thy own Light”.²

إِلَهِي أَسْأَلُكَ مَسْأَلَةَ مَنْ يَعْرِفُكَ كُنْهَ مَعْرِفَتِكَ..... فَأَسْأَلُكَ..... أَنْ تُعَرِّفَنِي نَفْسَكَ.....

“O Allah, I implore Thee, the imploring of one who recognizes Thee by the depth of gnosis (and true recognition)..... I ask Thee.....to make me know Thee.....”³

The holy verse: "إِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ" which has come down in Sura Hamd and which every muslim is supposed to recite at least ten times a day in his daily prayers is interpreted by Imam Ridha (A.S.) to imply an earnest request for increase in one's gnosis with respect to God as well as His Magnificence and Divinity.

إِسْتِزَادَةٌ فِي الْمَعْرِفَةِ بِرَبِّهِ وَ بَعْظَمَتِهِ وَ كِبْرِيَاؤِهِ.

“The holy verse implies an earnest request for greater gnosis of God, His Magnificence and Divinity”.⁴

In the words of Quran and the traditions of the Infallibles (A.S.), such recognition of God is known as “innate gnosis” or “manifestation in the hearts”. It is God's introduction (by Himself) in the preceding worlds where its effects

1. Mujajaat-Sha'baniyah; Eqbal al-A'mal, page 687

2. Second part of Dua Arafah; Eqbal al-A'mal, page 348

3. Bihar al-Anwar 94/96

4. Elal al-Sharaye; page 260 / tradition 9 and Uyoon Akhbar al-Ridha (A.S.) 2/107. At the end of hadith, Fazl-ibn-Shazan says: I heard this expression from Imam Ridha (A.S.) from time to time.

remain hidden in the substance of man's life and through divine grace; man becomes aware of it in this very world.

The main aim of this book is to expound this very innate and heart-related gnosis and explain the conditions by which one can attain it. Also, we wish to clarify its place in theology and religion in general. For this reason, a detailed explanation of this matter at this juncture is dispensed with.

SECOND SECTION:**GNOSIS (MA'REFAT) OF
ALLAH AND ITS STAGES**

By referring to the Islamic sciences and teachings in diverse fields and by examining the practical ways of the Prophets especially in theology and their call to monotheism and worship of God, we come to this conclusion that the ways of the Prophets and divine religions vis-a-vis gnosis of God holds special grounds and enjoys a unique method which fundamentally differs from the methods prevalent in the human schools of thoughts.

If we wish to set forth briefly the stages of divine theology we should say:

After passing the three stages: “introduction” (التعريف), “reminding” (التذكّر) and “submission (التسليم), man achieves the divine guidance and faith.

"التعريف" (*ta'reef*) means ‘to make known’ or ‘to introduce’; and what is meant is this that God has introduced His Self to all the human beings. The word “*Fitrat*” (الفطرت) is sometimes used to explain this very matter.

"التذكّر" (*tazakkur*) means ‘to remind’. Considering that man is heedless of the innate gnosis, the Exalted God reminds him of this gnosis via various means and thus finalizes the argument for him. In fact, the most vital duty of the Prophets has been to remind and notify the people about the innate gnosis.

Verily, God finalizes His argument through other means too just as we come across instances in the Quran and traditions wherein proof of the Creator as well

as rational reasoning is set forth. In such instances, the purpose is either to lay the groundwork for the addressee to remember the innate gnosis or to present good argumentation and debate or yet, to answer the doubts of the deviated and obstinate ones. Aside from such cases, it is the customary manner of the Prophets to make evident the divine monotheism and remind (the people) about innate gnosis.

"التسليم" (*taslim*) means that whenever man remembers the divine gnosis, he falls into submission and brings faith accompanied by special divine assistance.

FIRST STAGE:

INNATE GNOSIS OR "MA'REFAT FITRI" (INTRODUCTION OF GOD)

Basically, in the monotheistic religions, God's recognition has been presented not as one unknown and dubious matter that requires disclosure and proof. From the viewpoint of divine sources, the secret of this matter lies hidden more than anything else, in the gnosis of God which has been deposited in man's heart and life; a gnosis which is God's creation and which is referred as "Fitrat" (الْفِطْرَة) in the verses and traditions.

This gifted gnosis and lustrous guidance is reckoned to be the foundation of divine religions. Like the pillar of the tent (of religion), this divine gift bears the entire sciences, the practical commandments and ethics so much so that in its absence, man would have failed to perceive the true divine gnosis.

بِكَ عَرَفْتَنِي وَأَنْتَ دَلَلْتَنِي عَلَيْكَ وَدَعَوْتَنِي إِلَيْكَ. وَلَوْ لَا أَنْتَ لَمْ أَدْرِمَا أَنْتَ.

"I recognized Thee by Thy Self and Thou guided and led me towards Thee and called me towards Thee. And if it were not for Thee, I wouldn't have known Thee".¹

Rather, without this introduction, one would have failed to attain the gnosis of messenger ship (*Resalah*) and mastership (*Vilayah*) too.

اللَّهُمَّ عَرِّفْنِي نَفْسَكَ فَإِنَّكَ إِنْ لَمْ تُعَرِّفْنِي نَفْسَكَ لَمْ أَعْرِفْ رَسُولَكَ.

'O God, introduce thyself to me for if Thou do not make thyself known to me I will not be able to recognize Thy messenger'.²

This innate gnosis is so basic and fundamental that even if some other acts of worship (like prayers) are named as pillars of religion, it is because such worship causes man to return to his 'self' and reminds him of his innate gnosis. In fact, Namaz (prayers) is nothing but remembrance of God and ascension of a believer.

1. Mafatih al-Jinan; Supplication of Abu Hamza S'omali.

2. Bihar al-Anwar; 95/326 / tradition 2.

The discussion on "التعريف" (introduction) which has come down in the Quran and traditions can be explained in two main chapters. The first chapter discusses the place where innate gnosis was gifted to man as well as the time when man became the trustee of this divine gift. The second chapter concerns the outcome and consequence of divine introduction (of God) and the reality and specifications of this gnosis.

Chapter One:

PLACE OF INTRODUCTION (تعريف)

What is obvious from the Islamic proofs and evidences is this that before man's soul could find its entry into this world and get it attached to the physical body, it had traversed (another) world or rather worlds and witnessed certain events and scenes and sustained in every stage the gnosis and the realities. All these play a fundamental role in man's worldly life as well as the life hereafter.

In some of these stops, the human-beings possessed the soul only like the world of the spirits ("عالم الارواح") while in other places, man's soul possessed a special form and body as in the world of pre-existence ("عالم الدرّ").

In these very worlds, at a very lustrous and holy place, all the human-beings were bestowed with the divine grace and after receiving the gnosis (of God) and free-will, they were thus questioned:

"Am I not your Lord" ("أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ") to which all replied: "Yes" ("بلى").

Although with man's entry into this physical world, the specifications of this innate gnosis sink into oblivion nevertheless, the origin and effect of this innate gnosis always accompanies man:

فَنَبَّئْتِ الْمَعْرِفَةَ وَ نَسُوا الْمَوْقِفَ وَ سَيِّدَكَرُونَهُ.

"So, the gnosis (of God) was set in the human-beings and the place of derivation of this gnosis was forgotten by them; and soon they shall remember it".¹

This firm and enduring gnosis, like a firm pillar, is so fixed in man's existence that the very structure of "Din - e - hanif" (the upright religion) is based on it; a perpetual and fortified religion which owes its firmness more than anything else to the irresistible "Fitrat" (innate disposition).

In this regard, we shall now set forth a few verses and traditions:

وَ إِذْ أَخَذَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَنِي آدَمَ مِنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ وَ أَشْهَدَهُمْ عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بلى شَهِدْنَا أَنْ تَقُولُوا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ إِنَّا كُنَّا عَنْ هَذَا غَافِلِينَ * أَوْ تَقُولُوا إِنَّمَا أَشْرَكَ آبَاؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ وَ كُنَّا ذُرِّيَّةً مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ أَفَتُهْلِكُنَا بِمَا فَعَلَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ.

1. Bihar al-Anwar; 5/237.

“And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their backs, their descendants, and made them bear witness against their own souls: Am I not your Lord? They said: Yes! We bear witness. Lest you should say on the day of resurrection: Surely we were heedless of this.

Or you should say: Only our fathers associated others (with Allah) before, and we were an offspring after them: Wilt Thou then destroy us for what the vain doers did?”¹

The holy verse speaks about one of the stages of man’s existence wherein God made the children of Adam bear witness to His Divinity; and this confession was taken lest the unbelievers and polytheists should say on the day of resurrection: Surely, we were heedless of God or say: Our fathers were polytheists and so, we too followed their footsteps.

This verse proves that the Exalted God has made Himself known to all the human-beings in such manner that all have testified to His Divinity. This recognition and confession is the actual argument for all the human-beings and is so clear and solid that irreligious family and social environment cannot erase it fully. For this reason, God can argue with the polytheists and unbelievers on the day of resurrection and reject their aforesaid two excuses.

Numerous traditions have come down in explanation of this verse. These traditions stress that all the human-beings have witnessed the Exalted God by examination in the preceding worlds in such manner that no doubt and skepticism existed in them about His Existence and if it were not for this gnosis, nobody would have been able to recognize his Lord in this world.

The important and noteworthy point in these traditions is that with regard to the numerous worlds, inference is drawn from this very verse. This shows that the divine covenant was taken in the numerous worlds. Some of the traditions specify that the covenant was taken in the world of spirits (عالم الارواح) while some traditions specify that this took place in the world of pre-existence (عالم الدّر) i.e. the stage where man’s soul and body were together.

Another noteworthy point in these traditions is this that following the event of the divine covenant, the human beings have forgotten the stations. However, the original gnosis of God has remained firm in their hearts. In some other traditions it has come down that God caused the (event of) examination to be forgotten but set firm the original confession in man’s heart.

From these traditions it becomes obvious that the specifications of the stations and the place of divine introduction have been consigned to oblivion. Similarly, the exact form of this gifted gnosis which is well known as "المعاینه" (examination) is not present with man in this world. Rather, only the original recognition of God is present with man. In the subsequent discussions, this as

1. A’raf (7) / 172 & 173.

well as the ways of remembering the innate gnosis will be discussed. Now, we shall set forth a few traditions wherein is found the above-mentioned points:

Zarareh says: I inquired from Imam Baqir (A.S.) about the verse of covenant.

He said:

أَخْرَجَ مِنْ ظَهْرِ آدَمَ ذُرِّيَّتَهُ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ. فَخَرَجُوا كَالدَّرِّ فَعَرَفَهُمْ وَ أَرَاهُمْ نَفْسَهُ. وَ لَوْ لَا ذَلِكَ، لَمْ يَعْرِفْ أَحَدٌ رَبَّهُ.....

“Allah shall bring forth from the children of Adam, from their backs, their descendants till the Day of Judgment. They existed in the form of small particles. Thereafter, He manifested and introduced Himself to them. If this event had not occurred nobody would have succeeded in recognizing his Lord.”¹

Zarareh says: I inquired from Imam Sadiq (A.S.) about the verse of covenant.

He said:

تَبَيَّنَتِ الْمَعْرِفَةُ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ وَ نَسُوا الْمَوْقِفَ. وَ سَيِّدُكُرُونَهُ يَوْمًا. وَ لَوْ لَا ذَلِكَ لَمْ يَذَرِ أَحَدٌ مَنْ خَالِقُهُ وَ لَا مَنْ رَازِقُهُ.

“The recognition of Allah remained firm in the hearts and they forgot the place of the covenant. A day shall come when they shall remember it. If it were not for this event, none would have succeeded in recognizing his Creator and Sustainer.”²

About the verse of covenant, Imam Sadiq (A.S.) said:

كَانَ ذَلِكَ مُعَايِنَةَ اللَّهِ. فَأَنْسَاهُمْ الْمُعَايِنَةَ وَ أَثَبَتَ الْإِقْرَارَ فِي صُدُورِهِمْ. وَ لَوْ لَا ذَلِكَ مَا عَرَفَ أَحَدٌ خَالِقَهُ وَ لَا رَازِقَهُ. وَ هُوَ قَوْلُ اللَّهِ: "وَ لَئِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَهُمْ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ"

“ This was المعايينه (examination) of Allah. Then, Allah made them forget the examination and made firm in their hearts their confession. And if it was not for this, none would have been able to recognize his Creator and Sustainer. And the proof of this matter is the verse: “And if you ask them who has created you, they shall reply: Allah”³

Numerous verses and traditions have come down concerning the preceding worlds and the events that have occurred in them. These traditions can be found mainly in discussions related to beliefs and even ethics and jurisprudence such as monotheism, prophet hood, imamate, resurrection, hajj, invocation, soul and spirit, creation etc. One hardly comes across a discussion related to belief wherein this matter has not been discussed in some way or the other. In this connection, we have set forth fourteen verses and about two hundred traditions in another book titled: “*Fundamentals of knowing God in Greek philosophy and divine religions*” and have discussed at length a few of them. Here, suffice it is to mention the following three quotations:

1. The late Agha Buzurg Tehrani narrates that the grand jurisprudent and historian Allama Amini the author of Al-Ghadir has written a 150 page treatise

1. Kafi 2/13

2. Al-Mahasin 1/376; tradition 826

3. Ibid; page 438, tradition 1015.

on the exegesis of the verse of covenant and therein, has set forth 19 verses and 130 hadith proving the existence of the world of pre-existence (عالم الذرّ). Interestingly, after reviewing the chain of transmitters of these traditions, he declares forty of such traditions to be terminologically sound, i.e., traditions whose transmitters are all just and belong to the Imamiah sect.¹

2. The renowned philosopher Sadr al-Mut'allehin Shirazi who interprets the world of spirits (عالم الارواح) on the basis of his special type of philosophical thinking has reckoned the existence of the world of spirits to be among the necessities of the Shiite faith. Moreover, he states there are countless traditions in this regard. His exact words are as follows:

لِلنَّفْسِ الْأَدْمِيَّةِ كَيْنُونَةٌ سَابِقَةٌ عَلَى الْبَدَنِ مِنْ غَيْرِ لَزُومِ التَّنَاسُخِ. وَ الرَّوَايَاتُ فِي هَذَا الْبَابِ مِنْ طَرِيقِ أَصْحَابِنَا لَا تُحْصَى كَثْرَةً؛ حَتَّى أَنْ كَيْنُونَةَ الْأَرْوَاحِ قَبْلَ الْأَجْسَادِ كَأَنَّهَا كَانَتْ مِنْ ضَرُورِيَّاتِ مَذْهَبِ الْإِمَامِيَّةِ رِضْوَانُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِمْ.

“Man’s soul preceded his physical body and to believe this one need not believe in transmigration. In this regard, traditions from the Shia sources are countless. Similarly, precedence of souls over bodies is amongst the necessary beliefs of the Shiite creed; may Allah be satisfied with them”.²

3. Martyr Beheshti, after setting forth the topic about innate disposition, interprets the verse of covenant and draws the following conclusion:

“These verses refer to the conversation between God and the human-beings wherein the human-beings have testified and confessed to the divinity of God; and that He is the regulator of the affairs. This testification prevents man from pleading any excuse before God on the day of resurrection (excuse of being heedless or being influenced by their fathers).”

Thereafter, he discusses about the place of covenant and after reviewing the views of Hassan Basri and the Muttazilites who deny the world of pre-existence, he accepts the world of pre-existence and says: ‘Concerning this verse, it can be said that it refers to one stage of man’s existence where man has confessed to God’s divinity.....’³

1. Al-Zariyyah 4/323

2. Al-Arshiyah; page 23, Chapter 2, section 8.

3. Sayed Mohammad Husaini Beheshti; “God from the viewpoint of Quran”; page 47-53.

Chapter Two:**THE OUTCOME OF INTRODUCTION ("تعريف")****(The characteristics of *Fitrat*)**

In this chapter, we shall talk about the original characteristics of *Fitrat* (innate disposition):

1. *Fitrat* (innate disposition) is a way of gnosis and recognition of God and not belief or inclination or potential

As mentioned in the discussion on the verse of covenant, the outcome of introduction (التعريف) is the lofty gnosis and recognition of God. Hereunder, we shall set forth a few more verses and hadiths concerning this matter:

فَأَقِمْ وَجْهَكَ لِلدِّينِ حَنِيفًا فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا لَا تَبْدِيلَ لِخَلْقِ اللَّهِ ذَلِكَ الدِّينُ الْقَيِّمُ وَ لَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ.

“Then set your face upright for religion in the right state-the nature made by Allah in which He has made men; there is no altering of Allah’s creation; that is the right religion, but most people do not know”¹

The holy verse calls man towards *Din-e-hanif* (religion in the right state)² and propounds this to be the *Fitrat* (innate disposition) made by God in which He has made men. Thereafter, it emphasizes that this *Fitrat* is unalterable and it is the right and steadfast religion.

In the traditions which have come under verse 31 of Sura Hajj: حُنْفَاءَ لِلَّهِ غَيْرَ مُشْرِكِينَ بِهِ the Imams have interpreted حنيف as *Fitrat*:

عَنْ زُرَّارَةَ قَالَ: سَأَلْتُ أَبَا جَعْفَرٍ (ع) عَنْ قَوْلِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَ جَلَّ: " حُنْفَاءَ لِلَّهِ غَيْرَ مُشْرِكِينَ بِهِ " وَ قُلْتُ: مَا الْحَنِيفِيَّةُ؟ قَالَ: هِيَ الْفِطْرَةُ.

(Ma’ani al-Akhbar; page 350, tradition 1)

مَا الْحَنِيفِيَّةُ؟ قَالَ: هِيَ الْفِطْرَةُ الَّتِي فَطَرَ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا. فَطَرَ اللَّهُ الْخَلْقَ عَلَى مَعْرِفَتِهِ.

(Al-Mahasin 1/375; tradition 824)

1. Rum (30)/30

2. The term “hanif” in the verse, literally describes ‘din’ (religion) or the addressee in the holy verse. Lexically, it should be said: “Hanif” (حنيف) which is derived from “Hanaf (حنف) means inclination and tendency towards some side. And someone whose leg is crooked and walks in a special manner is called as “Ahnaf” (أحنف). “Hanif” (حنيف) has also been interpreted to mean the straight path and someone who has a tendency towards the religion in the right state or has a dislike towards the crooked religion. A muslim is called a “Hanif” because he is inclined to the straight religion. In this regard, refer to Mu’jam Muqaiyes al-Lugha 2/110; Al-Sihah 4/1347; Mesbah al-Munir; page 154 and A’sas al-Balagha; page 97.

In the traditions, “Hanafiyah” (الحنيفيه) has been interpreted as *Fitrat* (innate disposition), *Ma’refat* (gnosis) and *Islam* (submission). Under the verse of *Fitrat*, one tradition declares religion to mean *Salat* (prayers) and *hanif* to mean “inattention to the left and right”. According to other traditions, religion means *qibla* (direction of prayer) and *hanif* means sincerity in worship and aloofness from polytheism. Refer to Al-Burhan 3/262.

In the second tradition as well as few other traditions¹ *hanif* ("حنيف") has been interpreted as *Fitrat* and *Fitrat* has been described as the gnosis of God. In the books on hadith, numerous traditions have come down below the verse on *Fitrat*. Shaikh Hurr Aameli the author of *Wasael al-Shia* has convened in his other book "Esbah al-huda" a chapter title: *إِنَّ الْمَعْرِفَةَ الْإِجْمَالِيَّةَ ضَرُورِيَّةٌ مَوْهَبِيَّةٌ* and narrated fifty-six traditions in this chapter. Thereafter, he adds: Considering that these traditions hold wide scale transmission we shall set forth only a few of them.²

عَنْ زُرَّارَةَ قَالَتْ: قُلْتُ لِأَبِي جَعْفَرٍ (ع): أَصْلَحَكَ اللَّهُ قَوْلُ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ فِي كِتَابِهِ: "فِطْرَةَ اللَّهِ الَّتِي فَطَرَ النَّاسَ عَلَيْهَا"؟ قَالَ: فَطَرَهُمْ عَلَى التَّوْحِيدِ عِنْدَ الْمِيثَاقِ عَلَى مَعْرِفَتِهِ أَنَّهُ رَبُّهُمْ. قُلْتُ: وَخَاطَبُوهُ؟ قَالَ: فَطَّاطَأَ رَأْسَهُ ثُمَّ قَالَ: لَوْ لَا ذَلِكَ، لَمْ يَعْلَمُوا مَنْ رَبُّهُمْ وَلَا مَنْ رَازِقُهُمْ.

(Tauhid-Saduq; page 330, tradition 8 and refer to Al-Mahasin 1/375; tradition 824 & 825)

About the verse of *Fitrat*, Imam Baqir (A.S.) said: At the time when Allah took the covenant from man concerning His Divinity, He made man based on monotheism. Narrator asked Imam (A.S.): Did Allah address men? Imam (A.S.) lowered his blessed head and then said: If it was not for this address, the human-beings would not have recognized their Lord and Sustainer.

From the above hadith, it becomes obvious that the word "*Fitrat*" implies this very monotheistic *Fitrat* which was acquired at the time of covenant. Moreover, this covenant took place in the form of conversation and if it was not for this gnosis (Ma'refat), nobody would have succeeded in recognizing his Lord and Sustainer.

About the verse of *Fitrat*, Imam Sadiq (A.S.) said:

فَطَرَهُمْ جَمِيعاً عَلَى التَّوْحِيدِ.

"Allah has made the human-beings based on monotheism".³

As can be seen from the above traditions, in some instances *Fitrat* has been interpreted as the gnosis of God while in other cases as monotheism. About this, it must be said that gnosis of God and monotheism are one and the same and God has uniquely introduced (defined) Himself to the people.

In the preceding tradition of Zarareh too, it has come down that:

فَطَرَهُمْ عَلَى التَّوْحِيدِ عِنْدَ الْمِيثَاقِ عَلَى مَعْرِفَتِهِ أَنَّهُ رَبُّهُمْ.

"At the time when Allah took covenant from the people concerning His gnosis, He made them on the basis of monotheism."

This matter is one of the differences between innate gnosis and philosophical recognition because; most of the logical reasonings about God's existence only

1. Kafi 2/12; tradition 4.

2. Esbah al-huda 1/43-53

3. Kafi 2/12, tradition 3. Also, refer to Kafi 2/13, tradition 5; Tauhid-Saduq, page 329; tradition 5 & 6 and Al-Mahasin 1/375, tradition 823.

prove the existence of God whereas for proving monotheism, other proofs and reasonings are necessary.

It is worthy to mention that in the Sunni traditions too, *Fitrat* has been interpreted as “gnosis of God”, “*Din* (religion) of God” and “Islam”.¹

The verses of Quran too explicitly mention that there exists no doubt and uncertainty about God’s existence and if the people were asked who is the Creator of the heavens and the earth, they shall reply: God

قَالَتْ رُسُلُهُمْ أَفِي اللَّهِ شَكٌّ فَاطِرِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ.

“Their Apostles said: Is there doubt about Allah, the Maker of the heavens and the earth?”²

وَلَئِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ.

"And if you should ask them who created them, they would certainly say: Allah".³

The honourable Prophet (S.A.W.A.) said:

كُلُّ مَوْلُودٍ يُوَلَّدُ عَلَى الْفِطْرَةِ يَعْنِي عَلَى الْمَعْرِفَةِ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ خَالِقُهُ فَذَلِكَ قَوْلُهُ: " وَ لَئِنْ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ"

“Every born child is born on the basis of his *Fitrat* and by *Fitrat* is meant his gnosis that Allah is his Creator. And the verse: “ If you should ask them who created them, they would certainly say: Allah” gives hint of this very matter.

As can be observed, the verses and traditions reveal that, that *Fitrat* which is the fundamental of all divine religions is the gnosis and monotheism of God and this gnosis is the outcome of God’s introduction (التعريف).

Thus, *Fitrat* is not belief in God. This is because considering that the present world is a stop for trial and examination and considering that man on the one hand possesses carnal desires and on the other hand possesses will-power and authority, **we cannot say that all the human-beings necessarily believe in God**. This is in spite that man bears a lofty Ma’refat (gnosis) from God where the reminding and propagation of the evangelists may alert him or even encourage him to have faith.

Therefore, there no more remains for this question that why some people in this world deny the existence of God. This is because *Fitrat* is Ma’refat (gnosis) and the authority of confession and denial has been entrusted to man where reward and punishment springs from this very authority. Aside from the fact that this very *Fitrat* remains concealed by means of other factors, the reality is hidden before man. This point will be elaborated in the topic concerning “Submission and faith”.

Another point which we can conclude from the above discussion is this that *Fitrat* is not “inclination” to God. In spite of this, inasmuch as man perceives the Merciful, Compassionate, Munificent, Gracious and Graceful God with his

1. Al-Durrul Manthur 6/492-494.

2. Ibrahim (14) / 10

3. Zukhruf (43) / 87. Also refer to Luqman (31) / 25; Zumar (39) / 38; Ankabut (39) / 63.

divine *Fitrat*, he becomes inclined towards God and loves Him. Thus, inclination (to God) comes after *Fitrat*. As such, the one who witnesses his God in the light of *Fitrat*, submits himself before Him only and none others. Basically, true love can be found in the true lover and everything other than Him is carnal desire and egotism although they may be expressed in beautiful words. The one who reckons figurative expression to be the castle of truth is far from truth:

أَيُّكُونُ لِغَيْرِكَ مِنَ الظُّهُورِ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ.....

Verily, the one who possesses carnal desires, arrogance, vanity, obstinacy and darkness does not have any inclination towards God. Thus, this question of why some human-beings have no tendency towards God is irrelevant. This matter will be elaborated in the stage of “submission”.

Another conclusion which we can derive from the above discussion is this that *Fitrat* is not “potentiality for knowing God”. Basically, the power or potentiality for knowing God will be given to man only when he is unaware of his Lord where in this case, he will be given this power so as to make him recognize his God. Therefore, considering that the Ma’refat (gnosis) of God is present in man (although in simple and concealed form) at its highest level, the question of potentiality does not arise at all since the outcome of this potentiality would be the achievement of something which is already acquired.

However, if it means that man possesses the ability to remember the original innate gnosis through the reminding of the reminders and divine grace or is capable of preparing the ground through spiritual endeavors and sincere worship for knowing God or is able to argue and dispute by means of extrovertive and psychical signs in proving God, this matter is correct and indeed man possesses such powers. However, these have no relation with *Fitrat* which is the fundamental of religion and should not be utilized for explaining and justifying *Fitrat*.

2. Innate Ma’refat (gnosis) is God’s creation and not man’s action:

In numerous verses of the Quran, God Exalted be He, has introduced guidance as one of His exclusive acts where nobody has any share in it.

These verses declare that the real guidance is from God only:

إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا لِلْهُدَىٰ.

“Surely Ours is it to show the way”.¹

إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ وَ لَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ.

“Surely you cannot guide whom you love, but Allah guides whom He pleases”.²

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَاهُمْ وَ لَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ.

“To make them walk in the right way is not incumbent on you, but Allah guides aright whom He pleases”.¹

1. Lail (92) / 12

2. Qasas (28) / 56

إِنَّ هُدَى اللَّهِ هُوَ الْهُدَى.

“Surely the guidance of Allah, that is the (true) guidance”.²

إِنَّ الْهُدَى هُدَى اللَّهِ.

“Surely the (true) guidance is the guidance of Allah”.³

In the old and new testaments too, such meanings concerning the gnosis of God can be found. As a specimen, we narrate here a short expression:

“God has introduced (defined) His Self”.⁴

In numerous invocations and traditions too, the gnosis of God has explicitly been introduced as God’s deed and act where none have any role in it.

In these traditions it has come down that God, Exalted be He, has not kept at man’s disposal any means for acquiring the Ma’refat (gnosis) and man in no way is responsible for acquiring the gnosis of God. Rather, God has made it incumbent upon Himself to introduce (define) Himself and it is for man to submit before Him and obey His commands. On the Day of Judgment too, God shall argue with the people on the basis of this very gifted Ma’refat (gnosis).

These matters have come down in the traditions which we narrate as follows:

قُلْتُ لِأَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (ع): الْمَعْرِفَةُ مِنْ صُنْعِ مَنْ هِيَ؟ قَالَ: مِنْ صُنْعِ اللَّهِ. لَيْسَ لِلْعِبَادِ فِيهَا صُنْعٌ.

Narrator says: I asked Imam Sadiq (A.S.): Ma’refat (gnosis) is whose creation? Imam (A.S.) said: It is among the things made by Allah and people have no share in it.⁵

Imam Sadiq (A.S.) said:

لَيْسَ لِلَّهِ عَلَى خَلْقِهِ أَنْ يَعْرِفُوا. وَاللَّخْلُقُ عَلَى اللَّهِ أَنْ يُعْرِفَهُمْ. وَإِلَّهِ عَلَى الْخَلْقِ إِذَا عَرَفَهُمْ أَنْ يَقْبَلُوا.

"It is not the right of Allah on His creatures that they should Know Him. Rather, it is the right of His creatures on Allah to make known Himself. But once Allah makes known Himself to His creatures then it is His right over His creatures that they should accept Him".⁶

قُلْتُ لِأَبِي الْحَسَنِ الرَّضَا (ع): لِلنَّاسِ فِي الْمَعْرِفَةِ صُنْعٌ؟ قَالَ: لَا.

Imam Ridha (A.S.) was asked: ‘Do people have any role in the gnosis of God?’

Imam (A.S.) replied: ‘No’.⁷

Imam Sadiq (A.S.) said:

لَمْ يُكَلِّفِ اللَّهُ الْعِبَادَ الْمَعْرِفَةَ وَ لَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَهُمْ إِلَيْهَا سَبِيلًا.

“Allah has not made the human-beings responsible vis-a-vis His gnosis and has also not kept at their disposal any means for acquiring His gnosis”.⁸

سُئِلَ أَمِيرُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (ع): بِمَا عَرَفْتِ رَبَّكَ؟ قَالَ: بِمَا عَرَفْتِي نَفْسَهُ.

1. Baqarah (2) / 272

2. Anam (6) / 71 and Baqarah (2) / 120

3. Al-Imran (3) / 73.

4. Old Testament; Psalms, chapter 9 / page 16

5. Kafi 1/163

6. Kafi 1/164

7. Bihar al-Anwar 5/221

1. Al-Mahasin 1/315; tradition 624.

Amir-ul-Muminin (A.S.) was asked: How did you recognize your Lord? He replied: By that through which He made Himself recognized by me.¹

إِنَّ أَمْرَ اللَّهِ كُلَّهُ عَجِيبٌ إِلَّا أَنَّهُ قَدْ احْتَجَّ عَلَيْكُمْ بِمَا قَدْ عَرَفْتُمْ مِنْ نَفْسِهِ.

Narrator says: I heard Imam Sadiq (A.S.) saying: “Every affair of Allah is strange except that he has finalized the argument upon you through His introduction”²

قُلْتُ لِأَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (ع): أَصْلَحَكَ اللَّهُ هَلْ جُعِلَ فِي النَّاسِ أَدَاةٌ يَنَالُونَ بِهَا الْمَعْرِفَةَ؟ قَالَ: فَقَالَ: لَا. قُلْتُ: فَهَلْ كُفُّوا الْمَعْرِفَةَ؟ قَالَ: لَا. عَلَى اللَّهِ الْبَيَانُ.

Narrator says: I inquired from Imam Sadiq (A.S.): Is there any means with the people by which they can acquire the Ma’refat (gnosis)? The Imam (A.S.) replied: ‘No’. I inquired further: Have they been made responsible for acquiring this gnosis? Imam (A.S.) replied: ‘No, not so. Rather, it is for Allah to apprise first.’³

Amir-ul-Muminin (A.S.) said:

اعرفوا الله بالله و الرَسُولَ بِالرَّسَالَةِ وَ أَوْلَى الْأَمْرِ بِالْأَمْرِ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَالْعَدْلِ وَ الْإِحْسَانِ.

“Recognize Allah through Allah Himself and the Messenger of Allah through his messenger ship (i.e., through the message delivered by him), and recognize those who have been vested with divine authority through their righteous commands, their justice and their good deeds”.⁴

يَا مَنْ دَلَّ عَلَى ذَاتِهِ بِذَاتِهِ.

“O the One who manifests Himself by means of Himself”.⁵

3. Innate Ma’refat (gnosis) is an explicit and clear gnosis; not an ambiguous recognition

As mentioned in the first chapter, God, Exalted be He, gifted His real recognition to all the human-beings in the world of pre-existence where He took confession from them regarding His Divinity. While introducing Himself, God, Exalted be He, did so in a very holy and lustrous sphere.

.....أَرَاهُمْ نَفْسَهُ (Kafi 2/13)

And all the human-beings witnessed Him by the divine eyes such that there remained no doubt and uncertainty whatsoever. The intensity and lucidity of this gnosis was of such magnitude that it is recalled in the traditions by such names as “observation”⁶ (المعاينه) and “vision”⁷ (الرؤية). Verily, this observation

2. Kafi 1/86. Also refer to page 162; tradition 1 and page 164; tradition 4.

3. 2. Same reference.

4. Same reference; page 163

5. Kafi 1/85.

6. Dua-e-Saba; Mafatih al-Jinan.

1. Al-Mahasin 1/376

2. Tauhid-Saduq; page 117

does not mean looking by the physical eyes nor does it mean the incarnation of God.

In this world too, God causes the human-beings to remember this innate gnosis via various channels. However, the degree of remembrance varies from person to person and usually; the Ma'refat (gnosis) is not manifested in its exact original form. Rather, it is partly manifested where in this case too, it is the Act of God. At the time of remembrance and manifestation, it is the All-Generous God who converts this innate gnosis from its "simple" (البساطه) level to the "compound gnosis" (المعرفه التركيبية).

It is worthy of mention that although man and man's authority have no role in the original compound gnosis and that the manifestation of innate gnosis is God's Act, nevertheless man's authority has some sort of an effect in this matter. This is because if man, after remembrance, (which is the moment of finalization of argument) submits himself before God and turns devout, God too shall gift him with a much higher divine gnosis so much so that He may even for a few moments, manifest in his heart the exact observation and vision of the preceding worlds. This indeed is the loftiest level of divine and pure gnosis. Thus, man's will and authority is not effective over the original gnosis and its remembrance. Rather, God bestows man with different levels of Ma'refat (gnosis) depending upon his authority and selection of path.

This matter reveals the role which will-power, worship and ethics can play in gnosis. Thus if "معرفة الله" (gnosis of God) is attributed to man and is placed in the domain of man's voluntary actions, it is because of this very reason. This matter will be pursued in the topic on "Submission".

4. Before getting reminded, innate Ma'refat (gnosis) is 'simple' (البسيط) and not 'compound' (المركب)

By "البسيط" is meant that man is unaware and neglectful of the innate gnosis.

When we say that the innate gnosis has turned "المركب" (compound) it means that man has become heedful of the innate gnosis.

As a result of man's involvement in the day to day affairs, man oftenly tends to neglect God and this is divine wisdom. Basically, the world is a place of deceit where people tend to become heedless of God and if it was not so, the world could not have become the means of trial and examination and the worship of God could not have held such significance which could drive people in earning the position of "Khalifa'tullah" (representative of God) and gaining proximity to God. In spite of this, consequent to the reminding of the Prophets and divine evangelists, the human-beings become aware of the divine Ma'refat (gnosis) and the argument is finalized for them. Thereafter, they either submit themselves before God and choose the path of devotion or follow their carnal desires and select the path of disobedience.

5. The focal point of innate gnosis is the heart, not mind

As mentioned before, the innate gnosis is God's creation and man's intellect and conception have no role in this gnosis. In other words, God, without any intermediary (man's conception and mental activity) has introduced Himself to man's mind and soul and this matter is remembered in the traditions as "gnosis and heart-related vision". A few traditions in this regard were stated in chapter one and hence we shall avoid repeating them here. Instead, we set forth below some other traditions with respect to this matter:

...فَقَالَ: يَا أَمِيرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ هَلْ رَأَيْتَ رَبَّكَ حِينَ عَبْدَتَهُ؟ قَالَ: قَالَ: وَيَلَّكَ، مَا كُنْتُ أَعْبُدُ رَبًّا لَمْ أَرَهُ، قَالَ: وَكَيْفَ رَأَيْتَهُ؟ قَالَ: وَيَلَّكَ لَا تُدْرِكُهُ الْعَيْونُ فِي مُشَاهَدَةِ الْأَبْصَارِ وَ لَكِنْ رَأَتْهُ الْقُلُوبُ بِحَقَائِقِ الْإِيمَانِ.

Amir-ul-Muminin (A.S.) was asked: Do you see your Lord while worshipping Him? The Imam said: 'Woe unto you, I am not the one to worship a Lord whom I do not see'. He was asked: 'How do you see Him?' Amir-ul-Muminin (A.S.) said: 'Woe unto you, eyes perceives Him not with the faculty of sight, but hearts see Him through the realities of faith'.¹

فَقَالَ لَهُ: يَا أَبَا جَعْفَرٍ، أَيُّ شَيْءٍ تَعْبُدُ؟ قَالَ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى. قَالَ: رَأَيْتَهُ؟ قَالَ: بَلْ لَمْ تَرَهُ الْعَيْونُ بِمُشَاهَدَةِ الْأَبْصَارِ وَ لَكِنْ رَأَتْهُ الْقُلُوبُ بِحَقَائِقِ الْإِيمَانِ...

Imam Baqir (A.S.) was asked: Whom do you worship? He replied: Allah, Exalted be He. They asked: Have you ever seen Him? Imam (A.S.) replied: 'No eyes see Him with the faculty of sight but the hearts see Him through the realities of faith'.²

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (ع) قَالَ: قُلْتُ لَهُ: أَخْبِرْنِي عَنِ اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ هَلْ يَرَاهُ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ؟ قَالَ: نَعَمْ وَ قَدْ رَأَوْهُ قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ. فَقُلْتُ: مَتَى؟ قَالَ: حِينَ قَالَ لَهُمْ: "أَلَسْتُ بِرَبِّكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَى". ثُمَّ سَكَتَ سَاعَةً ثُمَّ قَالَ: وَ إِنَّ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لَيَرَوْنَهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا قَبْلَ يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ. أَلَسْتُ تَرَاهُ فِي وَفْتِكَ هَذَا؟! وَ لَيْسَتْ الرُّؤْيَةُ بِالْقَلْبِ كَالرُّؤْيَةِ بِالْعَيْنِ.....

Imam Sadiq (A.S.) was asked: Will the believers see God on the Day of Judgment? Imam said: Yes, they have seen Him even before the approach of the Day of Judgment. He was asked: When? Imam replied: When they were addressed 'Am I not your Lord? They replied yes'. Thereafter, Imam kept silence for a few moments and then said: Verily, the believers see Allah in this world i.e., before the Day of Judgment. Aren't you seeing Allah at this very moment.....seeing by heart is not the same as seeing by the faculty of sight.³

6. Innate gnosis is the only true gnosis and the basis of divine faith

1. Kafi 1/98, tradition 6; Nahjul-Balagha: Sermon 179, page 258

2. Kafi 1/97, tradition 5; Tauhid-Saduq, page 108

1. Tauhid-Saduq; page 117

In the traditions mentioned below the verse of covenant and Fitrat, the point worthy of notice is this that if there had been no such innate gnosis, nobody would have recognized his Lord, Creator and Sustainer.

(لَوْ لَا ذَلِكَ لَمْ يَعْرِفْ أَحَدٌ رَبَّهُ. لَوْ لَا ذَلِكَ لَمْ يَدْرُ أَحَدٌ مَنْ خَالِفُهُ وَلَا مَنْ رَازِفُهُ)

From such interpretations it becomes obvious that Fitrat is the basis and foundation of divine theology and without it the real gnosis of God would become something impossible.

Basically, the real gnosis of a thing is the recognition of the essence of that thing and the mental recognitions cannot, in the mould of general imaginations, be construed as real gnosis¹

In some traditions too, the heart-related gnosis has been reckoned to be the basis of faith:

الْإِيمَانُ مَعْرِفَةٌ بِالْقَلْبِ وَإِقْرَارٌ بِاللِّسَانِ وَعَمَلٌ بِالنَّارِكَانَ.

“Belief means recognition with the heart, acknowledgment with the tongue and action with the limbs”.²

المَعْرِفَةُ أَصْلٌ فَرَعُهُ الْإِيمَانُ.

Gnosis is a root and faith is its branch.

(Bihar al-Anwar 3/14)

أَفْضَلُكُمْ أَفْضَلُكُمْ مَعْرِفَةً.

I bless you, I bless you with gnosis.

(Bihar al-Anwar 3/14)

Chapter Three:

2. Abu Halal Askari says: The difference between *Ma'refat* (gnosis) and *Ilm* (knowledge) is this that *Ma'refat* in its strict sense is (derived) from *Ilm* and it means knowledge about the essence of a thing in such manner that it is distinct from other things. (Al Furuq al-Laghviyah/62). According to this explanation, *Ilm* comprises general recognition as well as personal recognition. But, *Ma'refat* applies to personal (specific) recognition only.

Faiyumi reckons *Ma'refat* to be sensory recognition perhaps in the sense that sensory recognition is personal recognition and not general recognition where the essence of a thing is perceived and not its general conception (Al Mesbah al-Munir).

Fars-ibn-Zakariyyah says: "عرف" (*A'rafa*) in reality has had two meanings: The first, "Two things coming in succession" and the second "quiescence, calm and soberness". Words such as "المعرفة" (*Ma'refat*) and "العرفان" (*Irfan*) are derived from "عرف" (*A'rafa*) used in the second sense (Mu'jam Maqayes al-Lugha). Thus, in the reliable Arab lexicon, "المعرفة" (*Ma'refat*) and "عرفان" (*Irfan*) has never been interpreted as every kind of knowledge and recognition. Rather, it has been applied in cases of specific recognition accompanied by spiritual quiescence. Perhaps it is for this reason that the word "عرف" and "عَرَفَ" are used to mean 'patience' and 'fragrant' respectively (Asas al-Balagha/Zamakhshari and Sihah-Jauhari).

It is obvious that spiritual quiescence in connection with a thing is achieved (atleast at higher levels) when knowledge is acquired about the essence of that particular thing; and general conception about a thing does not bring the real quiescence in man.

3. Nahjul-Balagha: Sermon 2271; page 508

THE DOCTRINE OF "التوصيف" (Description) AND "التعبير" (Explication) WITH RESPECT TO THE DIVINE NAMES AND ATTRIBUTES

Before entering the main discussion, it should be reminded that in the divine writings, mental description of God has been forbidden. Moreover, description of the divine Essence and conception of the divine attributes too has been negated and any kind of mental visage of God has been forbidden.¹

اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ مِنْ أَنْ يُوصَفَ.

“Allah is greater than what can be described (about Him)”².

لَا يَقْدِرُ الْعِبَادُ عَلَى صِفَتِهِ.

“The human-beings are incapable of describing Allah”³.

سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى عَنِ الصِّفَاتِ.

“Allah is sublime and free from (all) descriptions”⁴.

فَلَا تُدْرِكُ الْعُقُولُ وَ أَوْهَامُهَا وَ لَا الْفِكْرُ وَ خَطَرَائِهَا وَ لَا الْأَلْبَابُ وَ أَدْهَانُهَا صِفَتَهُ.

“Intellect and its conceptions; reflection and all that passes through one’s mind; wisdom and its reasonings cannot perceive the attributes of Allah”⁵.

مُحَرَّمٌ... عَلَى غَوَائِصِ سَابِحَاتِ النَّظَرِ تَصْوِيرُهُ... مُمْتَنِعٌ... عَنِ الْأَدْهَانِ أَنْ تُمَثِّلَهُ... قَدْ ضَلَّتِ الْعُقُولُ فِي أَمْوَاجِ تَيَّارِ إِدْرَاكِهِ.

“Depiction of Allah is forbidden for the “*Ghavvas*” (divers) i.e., (those who deeply reflect and deliberate over the notion of God).....it is impossible to fancy Him in the minds.....the intellects, in pursuit of perceiving Him have erred”⁶.

In this connection, numerous traditions have come down in the books of hadith which for example, we request our respected readers to refer to “Tauhid-Saduq”.

In justification of the above matter, attention should be focused on the following two rudiments:

a) The Creator and the creature bear no resemblance to each other and from the view-point of essence and attribute, they are distinct and discordant. If the Creator possesses the characteristics of a creature, he too would be called a creature and not a Creator:

لَيْسَ كَمِثْلِهِ شَيْءٌ.

“Nothing resembles Him”⁷.

بَانَ مِنَ الْخَلْقِ فَلَا شَيْءَ كَمِثْلِهِ.

1. Regarding the traditions which shall soon follow, one should bear in mind that the word "صفة" is actually an infinitive and literally it means “to describe” even though in several instances, it is used as an infinitive. Refer to Lisan al-Arab, Al-Mesbah al-Munir and Asas al-Balagha.

2. Ma’ni al-Akhbar: page 11, tradition 1&2.

3. Tauhid-Saduq; page 115

4. Tauhid-Saduq; page 79

5. Tauhid-Saduq; page 45

6. Uyoon Akhbar al-Ridha (A.S.) 1/121

1. Shura (42)/11

“Allah is distinct from the creatures; so nothing resembles Him”.¹

مُبَايِنٌ لِجَمِيعِ مَا أُحْدِثَ فِي الصِّفَاتِ.

“Allah is distinct from all the non-eternal beings in attributes”.²

إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى خَلُوٌّ مِنْ خَلْقِهِ وَخَلْقُهُ خَلُوٌّ مِنْهُ.

“Verily, Allah is free from all (that particular attributes) of His creature and His creatures are devoid (of His special attributes)”.³

فَكُلُّ مَا فِي الْخَلْقِ لَا يُوجَدُ فِي خَالِقِهِ وَكُلُّ مَا يُمَكِّنُ فِيهِ يَمْتَنِعُ مِنْ صَانِعِهِ.

“Whatever is found in the creature cannot be found in the Creator. And whatever possibly can be found in the creature cannot be found so in the Creator”.⁴

b) Man’s recognition and the scope of his understanding are confined with respect to those beings which have some sort of a resemblance with him. Two beings, completely distinct from each other, cannot have real gnosis and personal recognition of one another except if one is the Creator of the other where in such a case the Creator has knowledge and acquaintance of His creature or else He cannot be called a Creator. But, a creature perceives his Creator only through the signs of his Creator which he sees in himself and other creatures without having the real gnosis about Him.

We conclude from the above two rudiments that it’s impossible for a creature to acquire true gnosis of his Creator by means of conceptual tools.⁵ Thus, it’s also impossible for the creature to draw a mental depiction of the Creator.

Another reason that can be set forth regarding the impossibility of depiction is this that any depiction which does not absolve God from two constrictions: *ta’til* (i.e., to negate the attribute of ‘existent’ or any of His positive attributes) and *tashbih* or anthropomorphism (the similarity between Him and His creatures in His ‘existent’ or any of His other positive attributes) will amount to some sort of resemblance between the Creator and creature. This is because man’s confirmative conceptions falls within the limits of a creature. On the other hand, if the Creator is like a creature, he can no longer be called the Creator because the Creator is distinct from the creature in essence and attributes. For this very reason, the verses and traditions come down with respect to God’s attributes have negated any kind of resemblance with the creatures even in case of referring to God as a ‘thing’.

سُئِلَ أَبُو جَعْفَرٍ (ع): أَيَجُوزُ أَنْ يُقَالَ: إِنَّ اللَّهَ شَيْءٌ؟ قَالَ: نَعَمْ يُخْرِجُهُ مِنَ الْحَدِيثِ: حَدُّ التَّعْطِيلِ وَحَدُّ التَّشْبِيهِ.

2. Tauhid-Saduq; page 32

3. Tauhid-Saduq; page 69

4. Tauhid-Saduq; page 105 & 106

5. Tauhid-Saduq; page 40; Also refer to pages 36, 37, 41, 42, 58, 73 & 248.

6. For this reason, the Infallible have, in their supplications, repeatedly pleaded with God for introducing (describing) Himself to them:

أَسْأَلُكَ مَسْأَلَةَ مَنْ يَعْرِفُكَ كُنْهَ مَعْرِفَتِكَ... فَأَسْأَلُكَ... أَنْ تُعَرِّفَنِي نَفْسَكَ

(Bihar al-Anwar 94/96)

Imam (A.S.) was asked: ‘Is it proper to refer to Allah as a thing?’ Imam replied: ‘Yes, in the sense that this will absolve Him from two constrictions: *ta’til and tashbih*.’¹

Notwithstanding the above reasonings, the following two cases are applicable to man:

1. *Confession and belief in God’s existence as a result of one’s attention to other creatures which is a rational and general recognition (as explained in the preceding discussions).* In this type of recognition, the intellect does not establish a direct gnostical link with the entity of God. Rather, it acquires, through the creatures (which are the signs of the Creator), a general recognition confined to absolving God from *ta’til* and *tashbih* i.e., proving (God) without *tashbih*. In the final analysis, this type of recognition amounts to absolving (God) from *ta’til* (negation) and *tashbih* (anthropomorphism) and this cannot be called depiction. This is because in depiction, the Holy Essence is depicted through rational conceptions and considering that God does not possess an attribute above His essence, any depiction of attribute will amount to depiction of essence. Conversely, in this type of recognition, merely a confession is made of the existence of a Creator and nothing is set forth about His essence.

2. *Introduction (recognition) of God through Himself or innate gnosis.* Although, this introduction (recognition) is a personal gnosis (عَرَفَهُمْ نَفْسَهُ) yet it is God’s creation and not man’s work.

Overlooking the above two instances, man is indeed helpless in recognizing his God in the true sense. In this connection, whatsoever is conceived and imagined will fall in the category of "التوصيف" (depiction) while God is free from all such depictions.

In the doctrine of "التوصيف" (depiction), the Divine Essence is introduced (recognized) through intellectual conceptions and imaginations and gnosis of God comes later than His depiction. In other words, just as in the school of “rationalism”,² God’s existence, prior to rational reasoning, is considered to be unknown and negative, here too, God before depiction is considered to be “*Ghayeb*” (concealed) Thus, for recognizing Him, one has to resort to intellectual depiction. The more the conceptions and imaginations about God and His attributes, the better the recognition of God and the one who depicts Him more will enjoy a better and higher level of divine mysticism.

Question: What role do the Divine Names and Attributes based on innate gnosis play in theology and introduction (recognition) of God?

Utilization of the Names and Attributes based on “innate theology”, refers to the Holy Essence of God which has been seen before in the light of innate gnosis

1. Kafi 1/85

2. This school applicable to Aristotle’s school has been analysed at length in author’s previous book: “Fundamentals of Knowing God in Greek philosophy and divine religions.” The manner in which this school has been utilized in the Greek philosophical theology has also been explained.

and the innate gnosis justifies such utilization. In other words, the Names and Attributes altogether are the means of remembering God and is "التعبير" (explication) of the holy divine essence.

In the doctrine of "التعبير" (explication), the Names and Attributes comes later than innate gnosis of God and the divine holy essence, prior to "التعبير" (explication) is "Shahed" (evident), not "Ghayeb" (concealed).

In a famous sermon delivered by Imam Ridha (A.S.) in the presence of Ma'mun after the former's migration to Tus, Imam (A.S.) explains the basis of monotheistic gnosis. This sermon is very similar to the first sermon in Nahjul-Balagha and begins as follows:

أَوَّلُ عِبَادَةِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى مَعْرِفَتُهُ، وَ أَوَّلُ مَعْرِفَتِهِ تَوْحِيدُهُ، وَ نِظَامُ تَوْحِيدِ اللَّهِ تَعَالَى نَفْيُ الصِّفَاتِ عَنْهُ.....

" The foremost in religion is His Ma'refat (gnosis), the perfection of His Ma'refat is to believe in His Oneness and the perfection of believing in His Oneness is to avoid describing Him....." (Uyoon Akhbar al-Ridha 1/150-151)

Thereafter, he says:

فَأَسْمَاؤُهُ تَعْبِيرٌ.

In another tradition, the aforesaid difference concerning "التوصيف" (depiction) and "التعبير" (explication) has been explained:

..... وَ مَنْ زَعَمَ أَنَّهُ يَعْبُدُ الْمَعْنَى بِالصِّفَةِ لَا بِالِادْرَاكِ، فَقَدْ أَحَالَ عَلَى غَائِبٍ..... قِيلَ لَهُ: فَكَيْفَ سَبِيلُ التَّوْحِيدِ؟ قَالَ: بَابُ الْبَحْثِ مُمَكِّنٌ وَ طَلَبُ الْمَخْرَجِ مَوْجُودٌ، إِنَّ مَعْرِفَةَ عَيْنِ الشَّاهِدِ قَبْلَ صِفَتِهِ وَ مَعْرِفَةَ صِفَةِ الْغَائِبِ قَبْلَ عَيْنِهِ.....

"The one, who asserts that he worships the meaning of the names with God's description (mentally), has indeed invited a hidden (unknown) God. They asked: So what is the way of monotheism? He said: The way is open and there lies a solution. Verily, a visible and existing entity is recognized first and then his attributes (but), in the case of a hidden one, his attribute is recognized before his essence"¹.

وَ الْأَسْمَاءُ وَ الصِّفَاتُ مَخْلُوقَاتٌ وَ الْمَعْنَى يُهَا هُوَ اللَّهُ.

"(His) Names and Attributes are something created and the meaning (of these Names and Attributes) is the same as Allah"².

..... وَ مَنْ عَبَدَ الْمَعْنَى دُونَ الْأِسْمِ فَذَلِكَ التَّوْحِيدُ.... اللَّهُ مَعْنَى يُدَلُّ عَلَيْهِ بِهَذِهِ الْأَسْمَاءِ وَ كُلِّهَا غَيْرُهُ. يَا هِشَامَ، الْخُبْرُ إِسْمٌ لِلْمَأْكُولِ وَ الْمَاءُ إِسْمٌ لِلْمَشْرُوبِ.....

"Whoever has worshipped the meaning (of the word Allah) apart from the name, he, in reality, has worshipped the One God..... 'Allah' is the One Reality to which all His names point. And all these names are other than Allah Himself.

1. Tuhful-Uqool; page 326

2. Bihar al-Anwar 1/114; tradition 2

‘O Hisham, bread is the name of something to be eaten. Water is the name of something to be drunk.....’¹

Thus, the meaning of the divine names and attributes which is the same as Allah is different from their customary meaning applicable in the case of creatures:

فَمَعَانِي الْخَلْقِ عَنْهُ مَنفِيَّةٌ.

"The meanings appropriate for the human-beings are not applicable to God."²

وَ إِنَّمَا سُمِّيَ اللَّهُ عَالِمًا لِأَنَّهُ لَا يَجْهَلُ شَيْئًا. فَقَدْ جَمَعَ الْخَالِقُ وَالْمَخْلُوقُ إِسْمَ الْعِلْمِ وَ اخْتَلَفَ الْمَعْنَى.... فَقَدْ جَمَعْنَا الْإِسْمَ بِالسَّمِيْعِ وَ اخْتَلَفَ الْمَعْنَى. وَ هَكَذَا الْبَصِيْر.

“God is named as ‘The Knower’ because He is not ignorant of anything. So verily, the name ‘Knowledge’ is common for both the Creator and the creature but the meaning differs in the case of both.....Thus, the name ‘Hearer’ is common for both but the meaning differs. The same is true for the name ‘Seer’.”³

سَمِيْعٌ لَا يَمِثُّ سَمْعَ السَّامِعِيْنَ.

“He is ‘The Hearer’ but not like other hearers”.⁴

مُبَانِيْنٌ لِجَمِيْعٍ مَا أُحْدِثَ فِي الصِّفَاتِ.

“He is distinct from all creatable beings in attributes”.⁵

Chapter Four:

CONFIRMATIVE (الاثباتي), NEGATIVE (السلبي) AND INNATE (الفطري) THEOLOGY

1. Kafi 1/114; tradition 2.

2. Tauhid-Saduq; page 79

3. Uyoon Akhbar al-Ridha 1/147

4. Tauhid-Saduq; page 65

5. Tauhid-Saduq; page 69

On the basis of the above matters, one can divide theology as follows:

1. Confirmative theology (conceptual)
2. Negative theology (transcendence)
3. Innate theology (at heart)

1. Confirmative theology (conceptual)

This type of theology (also called human theology) was analyzed for the first time in Greece and Aristotle succeeded in discovering and compiling its logic. In this type, the only source and basis of recognition relied upon is the intellect and mental faculties. On the other hand, the intellect is capable of perceiving the mental conceptions and universal ideas only.

In this school, recognition and judgment about anything takes place by means of conceptual tools and the proof and recognition of God too is no exception to this rule. Thus, in order to recognize God and His attributes, we have, first of all to focus our attention on the conceptions and mental ideas and then set these conceptions as a means for His recognition. In this manner, God and His attributes are put to imagination. In the subsequent stages too, these very perceptions and mental ideas are proved and confirmed by means of philosophical reasons.

The motive behind this type is a series of general notions concerning God. The reason we name this mental disposition as conceptual and positive theology is because in this method, the general conceptions acquired through subjective journey are applied to God and proved with respect to Him.¹

2. Negative theology (transcendence)

In this method, all the conceptions attributed to God in the first method are done away with for this reason that God, Exalted be He, is pure and free from every description. The restricted human intellect is unable to perceive His Holy status and the human conceptions lack the power of gaining access to the sanctuary of His Essence and Attributes. Thus, His Holy Essence is transcendental and free from such conceptions.

This method was explained,² in a very clear manner, by “Plato” (Plotinism) towards the end of the Greek culture. Later, in the middle century, “Dionysius” reviewed and analyzed this method.

All the conceptions and attributes that were attributed to God by the preceding philosophers particularly, Aristotle were negated by Plato.

Plotinism believes that God is Absolutely Sublime. He is One (Unique); He is distinct from every thought and existence; words cannot describe and comprehend Him; intellect cannot know Him. Whatever is said about Him is

1. About the manner of application of this method in theology, refer to

1. The author of the book “Philosophy of dialectical theology” believes that “Albinus” was the first who explained this matter.

beyond His essence. Neither **essence** nor **existence** nor **life** (as we perceive) can be thought for the One (the Unique). Of course, it does not mean that He is lower than these things but rather He is above all things.”¹

It should not remain unsaid that some of the Muslim theologians too set forth the matter of theology and recognition of divine attributes in its negative form. They believe that man possesses only negative gnosis with respect to God and His attributes such that they even interpret God’s positive attributes as His negative attributes.

Verily, this negative theology is among the certainties of religion come down in the traditions of the Ahl al-bayt (in the topic concerning Names and Attributes).² However, it should be noted that this is only a part of the reality. By relying on this aspect only and by neglecting all that has come down in the Book and traditions on innate gnosis of God one can never attain the truth.

3. Innate theology (at heart)

This matter is one of the special features of divine religion and among the scholastic miracles of the school of revelation and messenger ship. Not even a trace of this wonderful way and this lofty reality can be found in any of the human schools. In this method, God has bestowed His Grace and granted His gnosis along with His attributes to all mankind. Besides, He has set various ways for making the people remember this divine Ma’refat (gnosis). Thus, the human-beings possess a non-conceptual gnosis about God and His Attributes at heart. Through worship, God is recognized and His gnosis remembered and increased.

One of the basic differences between this theology and the aforesaid confirmative theology is this that in the latter, mental faculties and conceptions are considered to be the basis and standard for recognizing God. The more an individual’s abstract and wresting powers, the better his recognition about God. However, in the case of the former, inasmuch as the essence of gnosis and its remembrance and intensification are from God’s side, the more an individual gains the satisfaction of God and the greater he strives on the path of worship and sincerity, the greater would be his share of gnosis and knowledge about God, His Names and Attributes.

This innate gnosis is a positive and heart-related reality which cannot be grasped through words and expressions. On the other hand, man’s intellect has failed to find a way in understanding this reality and concept. For this reason, the only way for elucidating the innate gnosis via the rational tongue is negation of the Divine names and attributes. In this manner, the negative theology plays a fundamental role as far as rational explanation of innate gnosis and its

2. Fredrick Kapalstin; History of philosophy 1/645

3. For example: Tauhid-Saduq; page 185-223 chapter concerning Divine Names and pages 65, 70, 76, 98, 99.....

difference with the mental conceptions is concerned. It is set forth to strengthen further the innate theology. Thus, glorification and transcendence (of God) finds a special place in the total divine gnosis.¹

By this, the mystery behind the explanation of negation by the Infallibles (A.S.) with respect to the Divine Names and Attributes becomes obvious.

The traditions supporting this matter are numerous and from the viewpoint of explanation are diverse.² A few of these traditions have cast aside the curtain from this lofty meaning under the title "Absolution from two constrictions"³ (حدّ التّعطيل و حدّ التشبيه).

"حدّ التّعطيل و حدّ التشبيه" [The constriction of ta'til: i.e. Negating God's existence and His positive Attributes and the constriction of tash'bih: i.e. the similarity between Him and his creatures in His 'existence' or any of His other positive Attributes] is a universal concept which should be absolved from God, Exalted be He. In fact, if we wish to explain the innate (at heart) gnosis through words and expressions, we cannot come upon any expression as audible as the expression "الخروج من الحدّين" (Absolving God from two constrictions). The real point and the key to the problem of uniting the negative theology and the innate theology lies hidden in the following sensitive point:

From the viewpoint of monotheistic gnosis, the matter of "Absolving God from two constrictions (الخروج من الحدّين) and negative gnosis has been presented only at intellectual level and as a theoretical recognition. This is pursuant to the Prophets great emphasis on referring to innate disposition and conscience as an affirmative and real gnosis.

When man refers to the innate disposition, he conscientiously perceives the real God (not an unknown and dubious God and not an imaginable and conceptual God) and calls Him by His good Names.....He talks to Him and whispers to Him the secrets and the pains prevailing in his heart.....He perceives a God Who is nearer to him than his jagular vein and more familiar to Him than he is to himself.....He perceives a God Who is Compassionate and a friend⁴; an associate and a companion; Merciful and generous.....and not that he **imagines** these attributes but rather, perceives by heart, that He is his Healer and Beloved One.

When a servant conscientiously perceives his Deity by the real Ma'refat (even if it is at the lowest level), he does not possess any imagination and affirmation in mind about his Deity. Thus when he discovers his self and realizes that there exists no image in his mind about his Lord he turns perplexed and befuddled

1. In explanation of thechapter, it has come down that:

و في الحقيقة المعقول لنا من صفاته ليس إلا السلوب و الإضافات. و أما كنه ذاته و صفاته فمحبوبٌ عن نظر العقول ولا يعلم ما هو إلا هو
Miqdad-ibn-Abdullah-Saiyyuri; Al-Nifah Yaum al-Hashar, page 18

2. Tauhid-Saduq; page 65-99 and page 185-223

3. Kafi 1/82, 84 and 85; Tauhid-Saduq page 81, 101, 102, 104 and 107

4. Dua-Mashlul; Mafati al-Jinan.

and perceives that He is similar to nothing and that He cannot be conceived by any notion, imagination and analogy.....So he goes in the state of prostration; praises (God) and absolves Him from *tashbih* or anthropomorphism (the similarity between Him and His creatures in His existence or any of His other positive attributes).

The human mind allures: If its not imagination or conception then what is it!? The innate disposition i.e., *Fitrat* intercedes and reveals that He exists (although not mentioning in what way) and that He is more apparent than all other apparent things (مَتَى غَيْبَتْ.....مَتَى بَعُدَتْ)¹. Then, the innate disposition warns the mind (intellect): If the *eye* of conception is narrow (blind), you have no right to deny. By following the conscience, the mind too confirms His existence.(Absolving God from *ta'til* i.e., negating God's existence and His positive attributes).

With this explanation, it becomes obvious that those who figure the negative gnosis in the above sense to be the same "*ta'til*" are far from truth. Verily, those who concentrate their mind on the negative aspect only and pay no regard to the lofty innate gnosis belong to this category.

From the viewpoint of the Book and the Sunnah, 'Absolution from two constrictions' (الخروج من الحدين) and negative gnosis is a way by which the mind (intellect), by declaring its helplessness vis-a-vis the lofty realities, opens the path for the heart-related (sacred) journey and prepares the *Fitrat* in embracing the divine grace:

"العلمُ نورٌ يَفْقَهُهُ اللهُ في قلبِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ"

Note: In the traditions of the Ahl al-bayt (A.S.), apart from the negative attributes, the attributes of action too have been confirmed and emphasized. Considering that this matter cannot be fully explained in this book and requires various other discussions too, suffice it to mention a few points only.

The explanation of attributes of action i.e. restituting God's perfect attributes to His actions and that God is the Creator of such perfections is endowed with a special quality. This is due to this very creation (of perfections). Regarding the importance of such depiction, suffice it to set forth the statement of Amir-ul-Mominin (A.S.) where in his famous sermon (a part of which was narrated before), he says:

أَلَّذِي سَأَلْتِ الْأَنْبِيَاءَ عَنْهُ فَلَمْ تَصِفْهُ بَحْدٍ وَلَا يَبْعُضُ بَلْ وَصَفْتَهُ بِفِعَالِهِ.

"When the Prophets were questioned about God they would not describe Him in terms of any limit, scope, extent or in terms of constituents. Rather, they described Him in terms of His actions."²

In the famous hadith of *Ehlilajah* when Imam Sadiq (A.S.) was asked to describe God's Power, he replied: "Allah is called Powerful because He has created magnificent and powerful things like the earth, the mountains, the

2. Second section of Dua-A'rafa from Imam Husain (A.S.); Mafatih al-Jinan and Eqbal al-A'mal, page 348

1. Kafi 1/141

seas.....Thereafter, he said: The great, magnificent and delicate attributes too are of the same type.”¹

According to whatever was explained, we can conclude as follows:

From the viewpoint of the Islamic verses and traditions, the divine names and attributes possess three fundamental aspects: expression, negation and action. Each of these three aspects possesses special foundations and effects a few of which has been explained in this book.

SECOND STAGE:

WAYS OF REMEMBERING AND RECALLING THE INNATE GNOSIS

On the basis of what was explained in the first stage (introduction), the human-beings possess a clear and lofty gnosis about God, Exalted be He. Moreover, they have derived this gnosis from His holy Essence. But, considering that man, by stepping into this world, tends to neglect the innate gnosis and consigns this to oblivion, God appoints the Prophets to remind him this very innate gnosis. As such, the argument is finalized and the path of guidance and perfection is kept open before him.

Regarding the Prophet’s duties, Amir-ul-Muminin (A.S.) in sermon 1 of Nahjul-Balagha says:

"فَبَعَثَ فِيهِمْ رَسُولَهُ وَوَاتَرَ إِلَيْهِمْ أَنْبِيَاءَهُ لِيَسْتَأْذِنُوا لَهُمْ مِيثَاقَ فِطْرَتِهِ وَ يُذَكِّرُوهُمْ مَنْسِيَّ نِعْمَتِهِ"

“Then Allah sent His Messengers and series of His Prophets towards them (mankind) to get them to fulfill the pledges of His innate disposition and to recall to them His forgotten bounties”.

The renowned historian Masoudi too has narrated in the beginning of his book “Muruj al-Zahab”, a very lofty and meaningful sermon from Hazrat Ali (A.S.). In this sermon, aside from the Prophet’s virtues, it has come down that the Prophet used to awaken the people about their pledge in the world of pre-existence (عالم الدرّ).

"فَضَّلَ مُحَمَّدًا (ص) فِي ظَاهِرِ الْفَتَرَاتِ فَدَعَا النَّاسَ ظَاهِرًا وَ بَاطِنًا وَ نَذَّبَهُمْ سِرًّا وَ إِعْلَانًا وَ اسْتَدْعَى النَّبِيَّ عَلَى الْعَهْدِ الَّذِي قَدَّمَهُ إِلَى الدَّرِّ قَبْلَ النَّسْلِ"

Moreover, numerous verses of the Quran reckon the Prophets role, the heavenly books and the creative signs to be nothing but “reminders”² and just as mentioned in the lexicons, “reminding” means to recall the rational and forgotten affair.³

2. Bihar al-Anwar 3/193-195. Also, refer to Tauhid-Saduq, page 163 & 252; Kafi 1/112 & 119.

1. For instance, refer to Ghasiyah (88)/21; Taha (20)/2 & 3; Forqan (25)/62.

2. Mu’jam Maqayes al-Lugha 2/358; Sihah 2/665 and Al-Misbah al-Munir, page 209.

The divine holy Essence reminds man of His gnosis through numerous and diverse ways, the most important amongst them being “severance”, “signs” and “worship”. We shall explain each of these in length in the coming chapters.

Chapter One:**Severance**

Severance and disconnection from the material attachments takes place in various ways. Sometimes, it is achieved without man's authority and sometimes through man's authority, endeavors and struggle. Depending upon the degree of this achievement, the level of granted gnosis varies from person to person.

Material attachment is the most vital factor in making man neglect the innate gnosis and with its elimination, the obstacles and material curtains are cast aside from the 'Fitrat' (innate disposition) and the light of innate gnosis begins to glow. This radiation is the same gifted gnosis which has been explained in the Quran as "أتيناهم" (Nahl/53&54).

One instance where one experiences severance without authority (and described in numerous places of the Quran and traditions) is the state of helplessness and despair which befalls one during moments of severe hardships and calamities. Under such circumstances too, God's introducer and the real reminder is God, Himself. However, whenever the Infallibles (A.S.) came across the true seekers of guidance and gnosis, they would remind them about these very situations and manifestation of gnosis (of God) in their hearts. This was so that the people would recollect the gnosis which they had received during such moments.

As a proof and evidence, the outcome of such type of reminding is general guidance.

General and Special Guidance

The first degree of "general guidance" (الهداية العامه) is the stage wherein the gnosis of God is granted to all the common human-beings and in pursuant of this, man is unable to deny it by heart.

If man disbelieves and turns his back to the reality acquired by him in this stage, he will stray (away) from the path of perfection. Besides, he might even become deprived from recollecting this very primary gnosis.

But, if man submits himself before the Compassionate God, innate gnosis will glow in his heart to the same extent of his submission and diligence. In such a case, the gnosis of God shall intensify and glow more than before.

This intensification of gnosis which possesses countless stages is called as "special guidance" (الهداية الخاصه) as it does not accrue to the common mass. Rather, it is peculiar to the believers.

The believer's endeavors and diligence for overcoming the worldly attachments, their attention towards God and His worship can be named as "voluntary severance". The result: Intense remembrance of divine and innate gnosis leading to higher level of special guidance.

Here, the role of ethics and its importance becomes clear. Moreover, the close relation between ethics/real mysticism and the most fundamental matter of belief in the school of revelation becomes obvious. As such, ethics, (not as a set of directions but as a path which acquaints man with the real gnosis and the basic guidance), smoothes the way for ascension to the peak of servitude and perfection.

We shall come back to this subject while discussing the topic: “submission” although its detailed explanation falls outside the scope of this book.

Chapter Two:**Signs**

One of the ways through which Allah, Exalted be He, introduces Himself is through His creatures and the affairs pertaining to them where in the terminology of the Quran, they are reminisced as signs, tokens and reminders.¹

From the viewpoint of divine gnosis, the creatures are signs of God's existence and His attributes since contemplation and deliberation in them leads to the remembrance of innate gnosis of God.

In explanation of this discussion, it is worthy to mention the following few points:

First Point: As mentioned before, in numerous verses of the Quran, God declares guidance as His exclusive act. Moreover, in the traditions too, the gnosis of God has been remembered as God's deed where none have any share in it.

By paying attention to this matter, it should be said that God has not only created the creatures but has rather originated them as signs of His existence and attributes. Thus, the existence of the creatures and their status of being signs are both from God's side and God introduces Himself and His attributes through His creation. As such, in a few verses, God introduces Himself as the One who exhibits the signs:

سَنُرِيهِمْ آيَاتِنَا فِي الْآفَاقِ وَ فِي أَنفُسِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ يَتَّبِعِنَ لَهُمْ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ .

“We will soon show them Our signs in the Universe and in their own souls, until it will become quite clear to them that it is the truth”.²

In another place, after describing the wonders of creation, He says:

و يُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ فَأَيَّ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ تُنكِرُونَ .

“And He shows you His signs: which then of Allah's signs will you deny?”³

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ الْفُلُوكَ تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِنِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ لِيُرِيَكُمْ مِنْ آيَاتِهِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ .

“Do you not see that the ships run on in the sea by Allah's favour, that He may show you of His signs? Most surely there are signs in this for every patient endurer, grateful one”.⁴

Basically, in the divine logic, man does not discover God by means of his own imagination and conception. Rather God manifests Himself either directly or

1. Baqarah/164, Yunus/6, Ra'd/3 & 4, Nahl/11,12,13,16 & 65-79, Bani-Israil/66, Taha/54, Anbiya/32, Shuara/8, Rum/20-26 & 46, Luqman/31, Sajdah/53, Mu'min/13 & 81, Furqan/62, Zariyat/49 & 55, Waqiah/73, Yunus/3, Ghashiyah/17-21 and A'la/1-10.

2. Ha-Mim (41) / 53.

3. Mu'min (40) / 81.

4. Luqman (31) / 31.

through the ontological signs and man only perceives this manifestation and remembers God. Thereafter, he expresses this very manifestation in words and on occasions, utilizes it in debates and argumentation.

On this basis, the gnosis of God that is acquired via the spiritual journey in the horizons and the 'self' is also the gift of God¹ and not the outcome of man. Thus, man is helpless in expressing the essence of such gnosis. He only confesses that he has perceived the Wise, the Powerful, the Compassionate and the Merciful God outside the two constrictions (ta'til and tash'bih) and without any resemblance to creatures (in essence and attributes).

Second Point: Regarding reflection on the creatures, the most important point is this that God is remembered through deliberation, meditation and reasoning. This is the fundamental point of difference between this method and the first method of reminding i.e., 'severance'.

To elaborate further, in the first method (severance), the innate gnosis incarnates in man's heart without any deliberation and sometimes, man pays attention to God and His attributes, involuntarily. But, in the second method, remembrance (of God) takes place only after reflection and deliberation in the creatures and their order.

Third Point: Contemplation of the creatures and ontological signs is a means not only for remembering God but also a tool that can be used in debates and arguments against the opponents and obstinate people. Similarly, this method can be employed by those who face difficulties and obstacles on the path of guidance or wish to seek reasonings and rational explanation about God.

In other words, due to differences in capabilities and alertness among individuals, the genetic signs and their rationalization have diverse effects and consequences. If an addressee aspires to guidance and seeks the truth, he can remember the innate gnosis of God through deliberation and meditation on the ontological signs. Contemplation of creatures will lead him to the gnosis of God and will obviate the obstacles lying on this path. If the addressee seeks rational proofs for God's existence, he will, through inferential proof of the creatures and the order prevailing in them, confess His existence. Besides, if he possesses rational obstacles on the way of guidance, he can overcome it by such rationalization.

However, if the addressee happens to be an obstinate person who pursues some other aim, he can be made to surrender before the truth and silenced through

1. لَيْسَ الْعِلْمُ بِالتَّعَلُّمِ إِنَّمَا هُوَ نُورٌ يَقَعُ فِي قَلْبِ مَنْ يُرِيدُ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى أَنْ يَهْدِيَهُ فَإِنْ أَرَدْتَ الْعِلْمَ فَاطْلُبْ أَوَّلًا فِي نَفْسِكَ حَقِيقَةَ العبودية.....(بحار الانوار ٢٢٥١)

"معرفة الله" (gnosis of God) is among the clear evidences of this hadith just as the first and preferred guidance is true of gnosis of God. Another noteworthy point in this hadith is that submission is given priority over knowledge and guidance. This matter will be discussed in the third stage.

such argumentation. Verily, rationalization through the signs is offered as argumentation in the case of the last three individuals. Here, it is necessary to give explanation on debate and argumentation.

ARGUMENTATION IN DIVINE THEOLOGY AND THE ROLE OF (DIVINE) SIGNS IN ARGUMENTATION

Adduction of argument for the purpose of proving some desired thing is called Argumentation. By argument is meant proof and evidence.¹

It has come down in “*Mu’jam Maqaiyes al-Lugha*” as follows:

The true meaning of *Haj* (حج) is ‘to resolve’ and the reason why proof is called as argument (الْحجَّة) is because the desired truth is resolved by means of proof.

Thereafter, he interprets argumentation as ‘gaining predominance’ through proof.²

Thus, argumentation is the very literal rationalization i.e., the absolute adduction of proof for proving a claim which finally leads to the victory of one party and the submission of the addressee.

Inasmuch as the parties to the argumentation are diverse, the nature of argumentation, too, differs. In a general classification, we can say: The addressee is either devoid of mental, spiritual and ethical obstacles where discussion in this case takes place as ‘special argumentation’ (الاحتجاج الخاص) or the addressee possesses one of the aforesaid obstacles where in such a case, we name this as “disputation” (الجدال). Disputation itself is of two types.

A- Special Argumentation (الاحتجاج الخاص)

In this argumentation, the addressee lacks full preparedness for remembering and finding the path of true innate gnosis. On the other hand, he personally seeks rational proof about God. In this case, the Creator of the phenomenon’s (i.e., God) is rationalized through the phenomenon’s. As a matter of fact, God has made the genetic signs a proof of His own existence where, someone describes them in the form of rational proof and the addressee admits to God’s existence by pondering in these signs.

This argumentation possesses certain characteristics as follows:

1. For those desirous of seeking the truth, contemplation and reflection in the genetic signs is a bridge carrying them to the true gnosis. Argumentation and rationalization by means of the genetic signs takes effect for the purpose of eliminating the mental obstacles and preparing an individual in acquiring a loftier gnosis.

1. Al-Mesbah al Munir, page 661; Al-Sihah 1/304 and Lisan al-Arab 3/54.

2. Mu’jam Maqaiyes al-Lugha 2/3; Lisan al-Arab 3/54.

In the famous hadith-*Ehlilajah*¹ (اهليلجه), it has come down that Mufazzal in a letter to Imam Sadiq (A.S.) informs the latter that a group of people deny God and in this connection, they engage in debates and discussions. Thereafter, he requests Imam to present him some matter through which he could argue and refute them.

In reply, Imam (A.S.) at first sets forth innate gnosis and the divine pledge as the audible proof for all and then trains Mufazzal in rationalizing through the genetic signs:

وَنَحْنُ نَحْمَدُ اللَّهَ عَلَى النَّعَمِ السَّابِغَةِ وَالْحُجَجِ الْبَالِغَةِ وَالْبَلَاءِ الْمَحْمُودِ عِنْدَ الْخَاصَّةِ وَالْعَامَّةِ. فَكَانَ مِنْ نِعَمِهِ الْعِظَامِ وَالْآيَةِ الْجِسَامِ الَّتِي أَنْعَمَ بِهَا تَقْرِيرُهُ قُلُوبَهُمْ بِرُبُوبِيَّتِهِ وَ أَخَذَهُ مِيثَاقَهُمْ بِمَعْرِفَتِهِ.....

“We praise God for His bounties; His audible proofs; His praiseworthy trial and tribulations enjoyed by all---the elite and the common people. Then, amongst His lofty bounties is this that He has set His Divinity in the hearts and taken a covenant from the people concerning His Ma’refat (gnosis)”²

2. Argumentation through the signs is easy to grasp and a little deliberation in them can lead to the acknowledgment of the Creator. In other words, the innate and sound intellect discovers impromptu the Cause through the effect and the Creator through the creatures. Of course, the more the deliberation on the effect and creature, the more evident will be the proof of existence of God. This point is evident in all the verses and traditions related to this discussion. Basically, the use of words like “*Ayat*”³ (signs) in the Quran with respect to the creatures and their emphasis that they (i.e., the signs) are clear and manifest denotes this very matter.

This point has also come down in an explicit manner in numerous and renowned traditions:

هَلْ يَكُونُ بِنَاءٌ مِنْ غَيْرِ بَانٍ أَوْ جُنَايَةٌ مِنْ غَيْرِ جَانٍ!؟

“Is there a construction without a constructor or a crime without a criminal?”⁴
الْبَعْرَةُ تَدُلُّ عَلَى الْبَعِيرِ. وَالرَّوْتَةُ تَدُلُّ عَلَى الْحَمِيرِ. وَ آثَارُ الْقَدَمِ تَدُلُّ عَلَى الْمَسِيرِ فَهَيْكَلُ عُلُويٌّ بِهَذِهِ اللَّطَافَةِ وَ مَرَكَزٌ سُقْلِيٌّ بِهَذِهِ الْكثَافَةِ كَيْفَ لَا يَدُلُّانِ عَلَى الطَّيْفِ الْخَبِيرِ!؟

“A dropping proves a camel’s existence; excrement proves the existence of an ass. A footprint reveals the passer-by. So, how come that the creation above (the heavens) with all its delicacy and tenderness and the center below (the land) with all its compactness and viscosity does not reveal the existence of an All-Aware and All-Subtle God?”⁵

1. Concerning the importance and authenticity of Hadith-Tauhid Mufazzal and Hadith-Ahlilajjah, refer to Bihar al-Anwar 3/55 (Explanation and footnote by Allama Majlisi)

2. Bihar al-Anwar 3/152.

3. For example, see Baqarah (2)/164; Al-Imran (3)/190; Jasiyah (45)/3-6 and Yunus (10)/6 & 101.

4. Nahjul-Balagha, Sermon 185; page 271.

5. Jameh al-Akhbar; page 35.

3. This kind of argumentation does not require any elementary and complicated sciences and is free from the philosophical rules and preliminaries. In other words, it has not taken shape on the basis of any particular philosophical school and so, anybody could easily grasp and perceive it.

4. In this type of reasoning, one cannot deliberate about the essence of God. Rather, pondering in the creatures is the basis of acknowledging and confessing the Creator. Thus, in the traditions, contemplation of the divine essence has been forbidden and reproached while contemplation of the creatures has been praised and encouraged. Below, we shall mention two such traditions:

قال أبو عبد الله (ع): إِيَّاكُمْ وَالتَّفَكُّرَ فِي اللَّهِ.

“Beware of pondering about Allah.”¹

A tradition has come down from Imam Sadiq (A.S.) as such:

إِذَا انْتَهَى الْكَلَامُ إِلَى اللَّهِ فَأَمْسِكُوا وَتَكَلَّمُوا فِيْمَا دُونَ الْعَرْشِ وَ لَا تَكَلَّمُوا فِيْمَا فَوْقَ الْعَرْشِ.

“Whenever your discussion climaxes with (the entity of) Allah, end your talks at once. Talk about what is below the Throne (Arsh) not what is above it.”²

Argumentation should occur without leading to anthropomorphism, depiction and description of the divine essence and His attributes except within the bond of “*Absolving God from two constrictions*” (الخروج من الحدين). This matter was explained in the first stage of the topic concerning “*rational recognition*”.

5. Considering that this kind of argumentation is easy to perceive, if someone fails to confess to God through this method, it is either due to non-deliberation on his part about the proof or because of his involvement in sins. In continuation of the passages from *Hadith-Ehlilajah* which was narrated in the preceding pages, it has come down as such:

وَلَعَمْرِي مَا أَتَى الْجُهَّالُ مِنْ قِبَلِ رَبِّهِمْ وَ أَنْتَهُمْ لَيَرَوْنَ الدَّلَالَاتِ الْوَاضِحَاتِ وَ الْعَلَامَاتِ الْبَيِّنَاتِ فِي خَلْقِهِمْ وَ مَا يُعَايِنُونَ مِنْ مَلَكُوتِ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَ الْأَرْضِ وَ الصَّنْعِ الْعَجِيبِ الْمُتَقِنِ الدَّالِّ عَلَى الصَّنَاعِ، وَ لَكِنَّهُمْ قَوْمٌ فَتَحُوا عَلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ أَبْوَابَ الْمَعَاصِي وَ سَهَّلُوا لَهَا سَبِيلَ الشَّهَوَاتِ، فَغَلَبَتِ الْأَهْوَاءُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ.

“I swear by my life that the ignorant have not gained this ignorance from their Lord. This is because they witness the clear proofs and decisive signs (of God’s Power) in their own creation; in the kingdom of the heaven and earth and in the astonishing creatures which proves the Creator’s existence. But they are those who have kept open the doors of sin and made easy for themselves the path of passion. So, their carnal desires have overcome their hearts.”³

عَنْ أَمِيرِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (ع): وَ لَوْ فَكَّرُوا فِي عَظِيمِ الْقُدْرَةِ وَ جَسِيمِ النُّعْمَةِ لَرَجَعُوا إِلَى الطَّرِيقِ وَ خَافُوا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيقِ وَ لَكِنَّ الْقُلُوبَ عَلِيلَةً وَ الْأَبْصَارَ مَدْحُولَةً.....(الاحتجاج ١-٤٨١)

This matter will be elaborated in the discussion on “*Obstacles to guidance and submission*”.

2. Amali-Saduq; page 340.

3. Bihar al-Anwar 3/259.

4. Bihar al-Anwar 3/152.

B- Disputation (الجدال)

جدال on the measure of فعال is of one the infinitives from the mode of مفاعله and it means argument and dispute between two parties where normally, one is on the side of the truth and the other on falsehood.

Thus, the addressee is not speechless and does not merely seek to learn. As such, the one who disputes with a believer possesses such ideas that prevent him from accepting guidance. These mental hindrances are either in the form of refutations vis-a-vis the divine beliefs or in the form of fancies that hinder him from accepting the realities.

In the first case, the rightful disputer should reply to his opponent's refutations. In fact, he should create a dent in his refutations and finally exhibit the true matter which is devoid of any blot.

In the second case, he should create a dent in the false reflections of the addressee and render them null and void. In both the instances, the obstacles lying on the path of guidance are done away with.

In the entire disputations which the Infallibles (A.S.) have had with their opponents, one comes across rationalization through the genetic signs and the order prevailing in them. Thus, in few of these debates, aside from the fact that the addressee's points were refuted, the addressees were also reminded about God through these very ontological signs.

The above matter is true to the one who wishes to seek the truth. However, if he is obstinate and refuses to accept the truth (even after argument has been finalized) and continues the discussion for enfeebling the divine faith of the muslims, then, in such a case, dispute with him occurs only for the purpose of defending and manifesting the divine faith and the addressee himself is not of any concern.

Ibne Abi al-Auja says: "He (i.e., Imam Sadiq) counted for me so many signs vis-a-vis God's Power that I felt God would manifest at this very moment before us."¹ Although, a few of his companions brought faith and turned muslims, he was reluctant to submit himself before God as, according to Imam Sadiq (A.S.), he was blind (by heart). This expression has also come down in the Quran² and other heavenly books.³

Good disputation and its conditions

1. Kafi 1/76

2. Baqarah 18 & 171; A'raf 64; Naml 66 & 81; Rum 53; Fusselat 17 and Muhammad 23.

3. When Hazrat Isa (A.S.) debated with the obstinate Roman soldiers in Jerusalem, they said: 'Show us your God so that we turn into jews. Then, the Prophet of that time replied: If you had eyes to see, I would show Him to you. But, since you are blind, I cannot show Him to you.' (Gospel; chapter 152, page 310)

In numerous verses and traditions, disputation on divine beliefs has been forbidden and reproached. On the other hand, in few other verses and traditions, disputation has been considered lawful and in certain cases, even enjoined. There were a few debaters who earned the praise of the Infallibles (A.S.).

Contemplation in all these verses and traditions reveal that the circumstances under which disputation is enjoined and forbidden are different. Disputations are of various types; some being blameworthy while some are acceptable and even obligatory.

According to Verse 124, Sura (chapter) Nahl, disputation is of two types: Good disputation and bad disputation. Good disputation has certain conditions which will be discussed in brief as follows:

First condition

Before disputation, a debater has acquired the true matter and gnosis. He seeks to prove and manifest that matter and disprove the refutations through disputation and discussion. Thus, in the traditions, that disputation is praised which is based on the Quranic sciences and knowledge of the Infallibles (A.S.); and is not used as a means for discovering the mental obscurities.

Basically, disputation in the divine religions is a way for defending the truth and not a means for discovering the divine gnosis. Thus, disputation is not a haven for divine gnosis. Rather, reliance on disputation is a means of going astray.

ما ضلَّ قَوْمٌ إِلَّا أَوْ تَفْوَالِجَدَلٍ.

“No nation went astray except when it relied on disputation” (and considered it a means for discovering the realities) ¹

Kulaini narrates in his honourable book “*Kafi*” as such:

Once a Syrian who reckoned himself to be a theologian approached Imam Sadiq (A.S.) for a debate. Imam inquired: Are your words from the Prophet (S.A.W.A.) or from yourself? He said: From both. Imam (A.S.) rebuked him and hinted that a speaker’s words should be derived from the Prophet. Then, he addressed Yunus-ibn-Ya’qub one of the attendants in the gathering as such: If your debate was good, you could have debated with this man. Yunus said: You have told us to refrain from debates in religious matters. Imam (A.S.) replied: Woe betides any speaker who forsakes our sayings and uses his own personal sayings.....²

This hadith and the subsequent one shows that in the pre-discussion stage on any subject-matter, the speaker should know before hand, the knowledge and beliefs of the Infallibles (A.S.) vis-a-vis that subject-matter. Besides, he should engage in disputation on the basis of their sayings and with the objective of manifesting their truthfulness.

قالَ أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (ع) لِبَعْضِ أَصْحَابِنَا: حَاجُّوا النَّاسَ بِكَلَامِي فَإِنْ حَجُّوْكُمْ فَأَنَا الْمَحْجُوجُ.

1. Bihar al-Anwar 2/138.

2. Kafi 1/171.

Imam Sadiq (A.S.) addressed a few of his companions as such: Engage in argumentation with the people on the basis of my sayings because, in case you lose it is me who has lost (i.e., I stand surety for your action) ¹

قال أَبُو عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (ع) لِبُطَيْنَةِ مَنْ أَصْحَابِهِ: بَيِّنُوا لِلنَّاسِ الْهُدَى الَّذِي أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ.....
 “.....the path of guidance on which you traverse; manifest it for the people”²

قال أَبُو الْحَسَنِ مُوسَى بْنُ جَعْفَرٍ (ع) لِمُحَمَّدِ بْنِ حَكِيمٍ: كَلِّمِ النَّاسَ وَبَيِّنْ لَهُمُ الْحَقَّ الَّذِي أَنْتَ عَلَيْهِ....

The last two traditions reveal that the purpose of speech and disputation is manifestation and not the discovery of guidance and truth.

Imam Sadiq (A.S.) said: “Forsake those who debate with you but lack the knowledge concerning the topic of debate”³

Second condition

Aside from the fact that a disputer’s basic principle and objective should be based on divine gnosis, his method, in proving the truth and contravening falsehood, should also be through the divine way. Whatever he claims, should be proved by utilizing correct points.

The above condition along with its logic has come down at length in a tradition. The last part of his hadith also substantiates the first condition.⁴

One question that may arise here is this: If only true matters are to be adapted in the method of disputation then why Prophet Ibrahim (A.S.) in his disputation, while referring to the stars, moon and sun said: *هَذَا رَبِّي* (this is my Lord).

This question was raised by Ma’mun before Imam Riza (A.S.) to which the latter replied:

“Prophet Ibrahim’s statement is in the form of denial and inquiry and not a confession or a declaration”⁵. In other words, Prophet Ibrahim (A.S.) explained at first the atheist’s sayings and then contravened them. While expressing their views, he did not accept their words. Rather, it was like asking them: ‘Is this my Lord?’ And this interrogative remark was in the form of negatory inquiry and not a declaration of his personal belief.

1. Tashih al-E’teqad-be-Sawab al-Enteqad; page 56.

2. Same source.

3. Bihar al-Anwar 2/129, tradition 12 and page 139, tradition 59. Knowledge of Quran is one of the conditions of disputation.

4. Same source; page 125:

.....ذكر عند الصادق (ع) الجدل في الدين و أن رسول الله (ص) و الانمة المعصومين (ع) قد نهوا عنه فقال الصادق (ع): لم يئنه عنه مطلقاً لکنه نهى عن الجدل بغير التي هي أحسن... و هل يؤتى بالبرهان الا في الجدل بالتي هي أحسن؟ قيل يا ابن رسول الله فما الجدل بالتي هي أحسن و التي ليست بأحسن؟ قال أما الجدل بغير التي هي أحسن أن تجادل مُبْطِلاً فيورد عليك باطلاً فلا تردّه بحجة قد نصبها الله تعالى و لكن تجحد قوله او تجحد حقاً يريد ذلك المبطل أن يعين به باطله فتجحد ذلك الحق مخافة أن يكون له عليك فيه حجة لأنك لا تدرى كيف المخلص منه فذلك حرام على شيعتنا أن يصيروا فتنة على ضعفاء إخوانهم و على المبطلين.....

(In continuation of this hadith, Imam also explains one of the disputation from the viewpoint of the holy Quran vis-a-vis resurrection and then says):

فهذا الجدل بالتي هي أحسن لأن فيها قطع عذر الكافرين و إزالة شبههم.....

1. Tauhid-Saduq; page 74

Third condition

The one entering disputation should possess the ability and power to debate. He should be acquainted and rather thoroughly conversant in the style of starting and ending the discussion. For this reason, in most case, the Infallibles (A.S.) have forbidden disputation and allowed only a few individuals to enter debates and disputation with the opponents. In certain instances, they have trained these individuals with the method of a good debate and then tested them and pointed out to them their weak points. This matter has come down in the tradition of Yunus-ibn-Ya'qub which was explained in the first condition. In this regard, one can come across other traditions too.¹

Fourth condition

Before anything else, disputation should be useful. Secondly, the time, place and condition of the disputer and addressee should be conducive to a good debate.²

Fifth condition

There should exist a need for disputation. In numerous traditions, dispute and hostility in religious matters has been forbidden. Abandonment of dispute is declared to be one of the signs of piety and perfection of belief. Besides, a rightful disputer too has been forbidden from dispute and numerous rewards are enumerated for those who forsake it.³ Likewise, in these traditions, doubt, discord, sedition and mischief are recognized to be the outcome of dispute. Taking into account the numerous traditions on dispute and debate and the limited scope of this treatise, we shall restrain ourselves by mentioning the references only.⁴

From the verses, traditions and historical evidence, we realize that disputation has not been propounded in the divine religions as a primary principle. From the viewpoint of history too, disputation made its debut in the Islamic gatherings only when alien thoughts and false reflections began to penetrate the divine beliefs of the Muslims. The reason for such an affair too becomes clear in the preceding discussions.

2. Bihar al-Anwar 2/136

3. Same source; page 130

4. Basically, in the Book and sunnah on Ma'ref, inasmuch as there exists scope for acquiring the lofty Ma'ref, we come across such terminologies as remembrance, reminiscence, conversation etc instead of concepts like lesson, discourse, dispute and debate. This shows the special style adopted by the Prophet in forwarding the desired truth. (Refer to Bihar al-Anwar 1/198-206; chapter concerning discourse on knowledge; hadith 6, 8, 11, 17, 18, 21, 26, 36, 37 and Kafi 2/186-188; chapter concerning

1. Bihar al-Anwar 2/124; chapter 17. Sixty-one traditions have come down in this regard. Amongst them: traditions 3-14, 16, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 27, 30, 31, 32, 47-56, 58, 59 and 61.

Chapter Three:**Worship**

Here, worship (العبادة) is used in the general sense which includes obedience to God and acting upon the divine laws; remembrance of God; invocation and imploring forgiveness; meditation and devotion and in general, all the phases connected to obedience to God.

In reply to the question: ‘What is worship?’ Imam Sadiq (A.S.) said:

حُسْنُ النِّيَّةِ بِالطَّاعَةِ مِنَ الْوُجُوهِ الَّتِي يُطَاعُ اللهُ مِنْهَا....

“Good (and correct) intention by following God through the ways that leads to obedience to God.”¹

Concerning the importance of worship, suffice it is to say that it has been propounded as the goal of creation:

مَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

“And I have not created the jinn and the men except that they should serve Me”.²

The fundamental role of worship will be known only when the meaning of worship and its various dimensions and diverse effects are clarified.

That which will be pointed out in this regard will be the reminding aspect of worship.

After acquiring the general guidance, man is now prepared to acquire, through the afore-mentioned ways, the special guidance and the journey to God, i.e., wider remembrance vis-a-vis the innate gnosis and wider attention to the lofty levels of gifted gnosis which was bestowed to man in the worlds of pre-existence.

Now, the question is how and by what means can this remembrance and intensification of innate gnosis take effect? Can it be achieved through greater imagination about God? Or is it possible through various asceticism, seclusion and withdrawal from society?

In this regard, the divine religions have set forth remembrance (of God) through worship and emphasized that worship is the only means for gaining proximity to God and the only channel for gaining access to the lofty divine gnosis and guidance.

وَإِنْ تُطِيعُوهُ تَهْتَدُوا.

In the verses and traditions, worship (العبادة) is remembered under such names as “remembrance”,³ “the right path”,⁴ “light emitting from heart”,⁵ “the lovers

1. Kafi 2/83

2. Zariat (51) / 56

3. Taha/14; Jummah/9; Maeda/91; Ala/14 & 15.

4. Ale-Imran/51; Zukhruf/64; Yasin/61

5. Ghurur al-Hikam: 6103

delight”,¹ *“the way of the prophets”*,² *“the path of attaining God”*,³ and *“confession of God’s divinity”*.⁴

Amongst the consequences of worship, we come across such names as *“guidance”*,⁵ *“faith and the light of gnosis”*,⁶ *“abundance in religion and remembrance of God”*,⁷ *“fear of God and feeling of needlessness”*,⁸ *“salvation”*,⁹ *“seeking nearness to God”*,¹⁰ and *“satisfaction of God”*.¹¹

And the devotees on the path of devotion and remembrance are called by such titles as *“the people of God”*¹² and *“God’s companions”*.¹³

In this manner, worship is the path illuminating the heart and a means for deriving the divine gnosis of God and His remembrance. In general, it is the way of acquiring the special guidance and recognizing God at the highest level. Similarly, ‘*Salat*’ (prayers) and other divine worships are the only way for gaining proximity to God. Compare this matter with this view: *“With the discovery of the self and opposition with the apparent state of religious laws, the divine duty ceases because, there is no duty for the enchanted ones.”*¹⁴ The difference between these two reveals the difference between the divine way and the human way of gaining proximity to God.

From the above discussion, the role of religious laws and commandments, as a means of special guidance and intensification of innate gnosis in religion as a whole, becomes clear. It also reveals that religion minus the divine laws and commandments is imperfect. By pursuing this discussion and explaining its diverse angles, one can unfold the firm connection between gnostic dimension of religion and practical dimension of religion and in the final analysis, come to this conclusion that the teachings of the Prophets and divine Imams is a

1. Ghurur al-Hikam: 670

2. Al-Khesal; page 621

3. Bihar al-Anwar; 84/134

4. Elal al-Sharayeh; page 114

5. Nur/54 and Al-Khesal; page 621

6. Al-Khesal; page 621

7. Elal al-Sharayeh; page 114

8. Kafi 2/83

9. Ala/14 & 15; Jummah/10

10. Dua-Kumail

11. Al-Khesal; page 621

12. Ghurur al-Hikam: 1467

13. Ghurur al-Hikam: 322

14. *“Rasa’el Qaisari risalah al-tauhid wa’l nabuwah wa’l wilayah”*, Chapter 2; section 1; page 24. While summing up the matter of the mystics, Lahiji, a researcher says: “If the absolute enchanted one is spiritually intoxicated and dying to self then, there remains no divine duty for him. If he belongs to the group of perfect ones (who were referred to as the third kind) then, although his obligation to guide others and the divine commandments and prohibitions does not cease, nevertheless, he need not observe (the rules) for perfection of the self as he has reached the extreme level of perfection.”

In explanation of the following poem, refer to commentary on Golshan Raz; page 304:

“When the mystic (*Aaref*) attains faith,
the brain turns ripe and the skin peels off”. (i.e., there remains no divine duty for him).

Similarly, in explanation of this famous statement:

refer to the preface of the fifth book of “*Mathnavi*” from Mulawi.

collection, inter-related and inter-connected to each other where, separation between their elements and disbelief in some of them would take one to a deviated path.

THIRD STAGE:**SUBMISSION AND FAITH IN DIVINE RELIGION**

After man traverses the two stages: 'introduction' (التعريف) and 'reminding' (التذكير) and perceives by all his existence, the gifted divine gnosis, he finds before himself, two alternatives: "Submission and gratitude" and "denial and infidelity":

إِنَّا هَدَيْنَاهُ السَّبِيلَ إِمَّا شَاكِرًا وَإِمَّا كَفُورًا.

"Surely We have shown him the way: he may be thankful or unthankful".¹

At this crucial juncture, the fundamental and determining role of man's authority in guidance becomes clear. It is not out of place to pursue the matter by the help of one question:

The holy Quran, on the one hand, attributes guidance to God and on the other hand, underlines the importance of man's authority in his own salvation.²

Concerning the first category, we may refer to the following verses:

إِنَّ عَلَيْنَا لَلْهُدَىٰ.

"Surely Ours is to show the way".³

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكَ هُدَاهُمْ وَلَٰكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ.

"To make them walk in the right way is not incumbent on you, but Allah guides aright whom He pleases".⁴

إِنَّ الْهُدَىٰ، هُدَىٰ اللَّهِ.

»⁵«-----»

إِنَّ هُدَىٰ اللَّهِ، هُوَ الْهُدَىٰ.

"Surely the guidance of Allah, that is the (true) guidance".⁶

The following verses are examples of the second category:

فَإِنْ أَسْلَمُوا فَقَدِ اهْتَدَوْا وَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلَاغُ.

"So if they submit then indeed they follow the right way; and if they turn back, then upon you is only the delivery of the message".¹

1. Insan (76)/3.

2. This question and absence of its proper reply is one of the causes for the appearance of two extreme views i.e., compulsion and freedom in the discourses of the Muslims. Of course, compulsion and freedom has had an ancient record among the human sciences and has always drawn man's attention towards it. Nevertheless, the twofold apparent meaning of a few Quranic verses (particularly on the matter of guidance) on the one hand and non-presentation of a comprehensive layout in this regard and absence of division between "divine guidance" and "being guided" on the other hand has not been ineffective in giving shape to the two schools: "Free-willers" and "Necessitarians".

3. Lail (92)/12

4. Baqarah (2)/272

5. Baqarah (2)/73

6. Anam (6)/71

كَلَّا إِنَّهُ تَذَكُّرَةٌ *فَمَنْ شَاءَ ذَكَرَهُ.

“Nay! It is surely an admonition. So whoever pleases may mind it”.²

How should these verses be interpreted so that while being in harmony with one another, they reveal the Quran’s standpoint in this matter? A deep contemplation over the verses will reveal that acquisition of guidance is the result of two stages: i.e., “introduction” and “submission” and that guidance comprises two inseparable parts: God’s favour and man’s submission

قُلْ إِنَّ هُدَى اللَّهِ هُوَ الْهُدَى، وَ أَمْرُنَا لِنُؤْتِلِمَ لِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ.

“Say: Surely the guidance of Allah, that is the (true) guidance, and we are commanded that we should submit to the Lord of the worlds”.³

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (ع) قَالَ: لِلْخَلْقِ عَلَى اللَّهِ أَنْ يُعَرِّقَهُمْ. وَلِلَّهِ عَلَى الْخَلْقِ إِذَا عَرَقَهُمْ أَنْ يَقْبَلُوا.

“It is for God to define (introduce) Himself to the human-beings and it is upon man to accept Him after introduction”.⁴

As such, it is upon God to introduce Himself and show man, the right and wrong path. Correspondingly, it is man’s duty to seek the truth; to acknowledge and worship God and lead the path of servitude and perfection.

فَإِنْ أَسْلَمُوا فَقَدِ اهْتَدَوْا.

“So if they submit then indeed they follow the right way”.⁵

In fact, guidance through “introduction” (of God) and following the right way through “submission” (before God) are the two pillars of the school of divine prophets and theology which together with “reminding”, complete the foundations of divine theology and the means of servitude.

We have already discussed “introduction” and “reminding” and the topic of this stage is about “submission”.

This discussion will be set forth in two chapters. The first chapter shall strive to describe the ground for confession and denial and reveal man’s reaction vis-a-vis the clear gnosis. Moreover, it will explain why and in what manner man turns his back on the divine gnosis and instead, chooses the path of obstinacy and disobedience. In the second chapter, we shall discuss the consequences of submission and the manner of acquiring faith.

1. Ale-Imran (3)/20

2. Muddassir (74)/54 & 55

3. Anam (6)/71

4. Kafi 1/164

5. Ale-Imran (3)/20

*First Chapter:***Obstacles and stimulus to submission**

There exists numerous verses and traditions concerning guidance and following the right way and various obstacles and stimulus have been enumerated for them. The holy Quran and other heavenly books reckon the mental faculties and moral vices to be the basis of infidelity and faith and have underlined the role of man's authority and free-will.

Here, we shall discuss in general, free-will and morals and then set forth obstacles to submission and faith from the viewpoint of the Quran.

1. Relation of free-will with stimulus and impelling factors

By stimulus and impelling factors is meant man's inner and outer state like mental and moral conditions; the family and environmental conditions and the social and friendly relations. Such conditions form the basis of man's actions. The expressions used in such instances are commensurate with their strong influence over man. It seems, impelling factors are more influential than stimulus because, the latter implies something which invites while the former implies something which impels. These two terms have also come down in the traditions.

أَلْحِرْصُ وَالْكِبْرُ وَالْحَسَدُ، دَوَاعٍ إِلَى التَّقَحُّمِ فِي الدُّنُوبِ.

“Greed, vanity and jealousy are stimulus (invitations) to falling into sins”.¹

أَلْبَغْيُ، سَائِقٌ إِلَى الْحَيْنِ.

“Oppression and injustice drives (impels) man towards destruction”.²

From the viewpoint of divine religions, man possesses the power and means of selection and is capable of choosing any of the paths kept open before him. In cases where man's character is endowed with goodness and evil earning for himself reward and punishment, the matter of free-will and authority play a special and influential role. Although, various internal and external factors too influences man's actions yet, man's free-will, due to its special characteristic, prevails over all other factors and plays the main and fundamental role.

The noteworthy point is this that incompatible internal stimulation and the environment opens varied paths before man and encourages and invites him to traverse those paths. They force and create an urge in him. However, these stimulations, forces and tendencies will turn into action only when man chooses, through his free-will and authority, one of the paths.

In more precise terms, stimulations, impelling forces and inclinations are the determinant factors of man's action but **not the complete cause**. In fact, the

1. Nahjul-Balagha; Wise sayings: 366

2. Commentary of Ibne Maitham Bahrani on one hundred sayings of Amir al-Muminin (A.S.); page 129

power of free-will governs the other causes and factors and man is not bound by these factors.

As such, in divine anthropology, the ability and power of free-will is reckoned to be one of the “*primary qualities of the soul*” and cannot be reduced to knowledge and inclination. For this reason, power and free-will must be taken into consideration while defining man.¹

2. Relation of free-will and morals to belief and deeds

The role of moral virtues and vices in beliefs and deeds and similarly, the underlining of authority and the sovereignty of man’s free-will over moral, faith and deeds is among the outstanding points and criterion of divine gnosis.

Submission or denial takes place at a stage when man has passed the two stages of “introduction” and “reminding” and the divine argumentation has been finalized for him. It is here that man’s role begins and man exhibits his reaction vis-a-vis the divine argumentation. The question that arises here is this: What is the reason for the disbelief of the infidels?

Answer: Although, free-will and authority is the main and fundamental cause in man’s decision-making nevertheless, other determinant factors intervene and prepare the ground for evil free-will. While they do not disavow authority, they by themselves, originate from man’s free-will.

The verses of the holy Quran reckons infidelity, polytheism, mis-guidance and non-submission (before God) to spring from such factors as pride and arrogance, injustice and envy, insolence and callousness, desire and superiority and sin and abjuration. On the one hand, such terms and concepts show that from the viewpoint of the Quran, man possesses free-will and authority in his actions and the most vital base for unfit selection is moral and spiritual vices which spring from previous evil background. On the other hand, it shows that cleanliness of the inborn disposition and purification of the soul are the conditions of divine faith and guidance. This matter recounts the firm relation between morals and belief from the viewpoint of religion and shows that morals do not merely imply admonition but are one of the corner stones for seeking the truth. From the viewpoint of Quran and sunnah, moral vices and the gloom resulting from it is reckoned to be one of the obstacles to recognition (of God) and prepares the ground for man’s evil free-will. In contrast, moral virtues prepare man’s soul and spirit for receiving the divine gnosis and guidance.

Now, we shall enumerate briefly the obstacles to submission from the viewpoint of Quran:

1. Compare the above matter with the views of the Greek philosophers (particularly, Aristotle) on definition of man and moral virtues. In this regard, refer to “Fundamentals of knowing God in Greek philosophy and divine religions”.

3. Obstacles to submission in the Quran

In general, the aforesaid obstacles in the Quran refer to two internal and external factors and each of these two comprises two sets of factors as follows:

- a) Moral vices and material attachments.
- b) Sin and iniquity
- c) Satans from jinn
- d) Satans from men.

Each of the above titles in their turn possesses diverse aspects. We shall point out a few of them supported with their related verses. At the end, we shall give references to a few others.

a) Moral vices

With regards to moral vices, it is noteworthy that these vices take place by man's free-will and they are acquired by man.

1. Carnal Desires

أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنْ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ وَخَتَّمَ عَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ عَلَىٰ بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةً فَمَنْ يَهْدِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ.

“Have you then considered him who takes his low desire for his god, and Allah has made him err having knowledge and has set a seal upon his ear and his heart and put a covering upon his eye. Who can then guide him after Allah? Will you not then be mindful?”¹

According to the above noble verse, deviation and sealing of the heart, ear and eye as well as deprivation from guidance is due to man's evil authority and his selection of carnal desires as god.

وَأَمَّا ثَمُودُ فَهَدَيْنَاهُمْ فَاسْتَحَبُّوا الْعَمَىٰ عَلَىٰ الْهُدَىٰ.

“And as to the Thamud, We showered them the right way, but they chose error above guidance”²

2. Hardened hearts

وَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ * ثُمَّ قَسَتْ قُلُوبُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً.

“And He shows you His signs so that you may understand.

Then your hearts hardened after that, so that they were like rocks, rather worse in hardness”³.

According to this noble verse, the ontological signs (الآيات التكوينية)

1. Jasiyah (45)/23. Also refer to Qasas/50; Qamar/3; Muhammad/14 and Baqarah/87

2. Ha Mim (41)/17

3. Baqarah (2)/73 & 74

[which was discussed in the second stage] together with rationalization paves the way for man's guidance. But, man's hardened heart does not allow his intellect to find its due course. In such verses and traditions their number being no less, the matter of rationalization (intellect) and heart has been jointly mooted. One should see the meaning of intellect from the viewpoint of revelation and divine writings.

In the other heavenly books too, much has been spoken about the hardened heart. Moreover, they reckon the hardened heart to be the factor responsible for man's straying from God and His religion. For example, it has come down in the Exodus from Torah as follows:

"Moses and Aaron approached Pharaoh and said: Yahova, the God of Israel says: Set free my nation so that they may celebrate for me in the desert. Pharaoh said: Who is Yahova that I should listen to him and set free the Israel? I do not know Yahova and I shall not free Israel".¹

Thereafter, Moses manifested numerous miracles before Pharaoh but each time, Pharaoh did not submit due to his hardened heart. The sentence: "*Pharaoh's heart became hard*" has been repeated more than ten times in the Exodus.²

3. *Pride and arrogance*

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُجَادِلُونَ فِي آيَاتِ اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ سُلْطَانٍ أَتَاهُمْ إِنْ فِي صُدُورِهِمْ إِلَّا كِبْرٌ.

"Surely (as for) those who dispute about the communications of Allah without any authority that has come to them, there is naught in their breasts but pride".³

So, the divine communications are good enough for guidance but a group dispute about it. And this dispute is not out of ignorance but due to pride and arrogance.

وَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَفَلَمْ تَكُنْ آيَاتِي تُنذِرُ عَلَيْهِمْ فَاستَكْبَرْتُمْ وَكُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا مُجْرِمِينَ.

"As to those who disbelieved: What! Were not My communications recited to you? But you were proud and you were a guilty people".⁴

4. *Avarice*

فَلَمَّا آتَاهُمْ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ بَخِلُوا بِهِ وَتَوَلَّوْا وَهُمْ مُعْرِضُونَ * فَأَعْقَبَهُمْ نِفَاقًا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ.

"But when He gave them out of His grace, they became niggardly of it and they turned back and they withdrew.

1. Old Testament (Torah); Exodus: Chapter 5; page 89

2. Same source; page 92-95; 97-100 and 104

3. Mu'min (40)/56

4. Jasiyah (45)/31. Also, refer to Baqarah/17; A'raf/36,40,76; Ahqaf/10 and Munafiqun/5

So He made hypocrisy to follow as a consequence into their hearts”¹.
Turning back from religion and hypocrisy are the result of avarice.

5. Seeking exaltation and superiority

About disbelief by Pharaoh and his companions of the divine communications, the holy Quran says:

وَجَدُوا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَا أَنفُسُهُمْ ظُلْمًا وَعُلُوًّا فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ.

“And they denied them unjustly and proudly while their soul had been convinced of them; consider, then how was the end of the mischief-makers”².

b) Indulgence in sins

1. Injustice

وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا الظَّالِمُونَ.

“And none deny Our communications except the unjust”³.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ.

“Surely Allah does not guide the unjust people”⁴.

It has come down in the Evangel as such:

“Thus, the reason He (God) hardened Pharaoh’s heart was because he punished our tribe and wished to do injustice to them.”⁵

2. Transgression

وَلَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ وَمَا يَكْفُرُ بِهَا إِلَّا الْفَاسِقُونَ.

“And certainly We have revealed to you clear communications and none disbelieve in them except the transgressors”⁶.

In this verse, disbelief is confined to transgression. The reason for this may be the wide concept of transgression which includes all indecent acts.

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ.

“Surely, Allah does not guide the transgressing people”⁷.

3. Evil deeds

1. Taubah (9)/76 & 77

2. Naml (27)/14

3. Ankabut (29)/49

4. An’am (6)/144. Also, refer to Taubah/109; Baqarah/86 & 258; Saff/7; Qasas/50; Ahqaf/10 and Naml/14

5. Bible of Barnabas: Chapter 166; page 332

6. Baqarah (2)/99

7. Munafiqun (63)/6. Also, refer to Baqarah/26; Saff/5 and Taubah/80

ثُمَّ كَانَ عَاقِبَةَ الَّذِينَ أَسَاءُوا السُّؤَىٰ أَن كَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ.

“Then evil was the end of those who did evil, because they rejected the communications of Allah”.¹

This warning by the Quran is very strong and intense as sin does not merely remain within its own limits. Rather, because of the reciprocal relation of deed with the human heart and soul, the evil deeds directly influences man’s heart-related position vis-a-vis religion and results in the disbelief (of God).

4. Lie

إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي مَنْ هُوَ كَاذِبٌ كَفَّارٌ.

“Surely Allah does not guide him aright who is a liar, ungrateful”.²

c) & d) Satans from jinn and men

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا شَيَاطِينَ الْإِنسِ وَالْجِنِّ.

“And thus did We make for every prophet an enemy, the Satans from among men and jinn”.³

كَمَثَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِذْ قَالَ لِلْإِنْسَانِ اكْفُرْ.

“Like the Satan when he says to man: Disbelieve”.⁴

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ارْتَدُّوا عَلَىٰ أَدْبَارِهِمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا تَبَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الْهُدَىٰ الشَّيْطَانُ سَوَّلَ لَهُمْ وَأَمْلَىٰ لَهُمْ.

“Surely (as for) those who return on their backs after that guidance has become manifest to them, the Satan has made it a light matter to them; and He gives them respite”.⁵

وَ يُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ يُضِلَّهُمْ ضَلَالًا بَعِيدًا.

“And the Satan desires to lead them astray into a remote error”.⁶

It has come down in the Evangel as follows:

“Faith never errs because its foundation is God and His Words..... But (the Satan) earnestly seeks to nullify the faith”.⁷

Numerous traditions too have come down concerning the topic under discussion. For the sake of brevity, we shall set forth only a few of them:

Imam Sadiq (A.S.) said:

أَصُولُ الْكُفْرِ ثَلَاثَةٌ: الْحِرْصُ وَالِاسْتِكْبَارُ وَالْحَسَدُ.

“The principles of disbelief are three: Greed, vanity and jealousy”.⁸

أَرْكَانُ الْكُفْرِ أَرْبَعَةٌ: الرَّغْبَةُ وَالرَّهْبَةُ وَالسَّخَطُ وَالْعُضْبُ.

1. Rum (30)/10

2. Zumar (39)/3

3. An’am (6)/112

4. Hashr (59)/16

5. Muhammad (47)/25

6. Nisa (4)/60. Similarly, refer to An’am/43 & 121; A’raf/27; Hajj/3; Naml/24 and Ankabut/38

7. Bible of Barnabas; page 211 & 212

1. Kafi 2/289; tradition 1.

“The pillars of disbelief are four: Greed in worldly provisions; fear from fading of worldly provisions; fury and anger”.¹

Hazrat Ali (A.S.) said:

بُنِيَ الْكُفْرُ عَلَى أَرْبَعِ دَعَائِمٍ: الْفِسْقُ وَالْعُلُوُّ وَالشُّكُّ وَالشُّبُهَةُ.

“Disbelief has been founded on four pillars: Ungodliness, exaggeration (extremism), doubt and uncertainty”.²

Imam Musa Kazim (A.S.) said:

إِنَّ الْحِجَابَ عَنِ الْخَلْقِ لِكثْرَةِ ذُنُوبِهِمْ.

“Surely, people are aloof from God due to their manifold sins”.³

Human freedom, good and evil free-will and moral vices and virtues greatly influences man’s life. Amongst their effects is man’s submission or non-submission before God. Besides, enjoyment or deprivation from “*Ruh-e-Iman*” (spirit of faith) is the result of this submission or non-submission finally resulting in the worship or disobedience of God. The outcome of submission and worship too (as mentioned in the stage of ‘reminding’) is nothing but achievement of special guidance i.e., intensification of innate gnosis and greater recognition of the Almighty God.

Among the effects of free-will and moral capability is the manner of achieving and remembering the innate gnosis in the foremost stage of guidance (general guidance). Verily, the basis of divine gnosis has been manifested for all and the divine plea will be finalized for all men (as explained in the stage of ‘introduction’. But, an individual’s spiritual state influences the manner of manifestation of innate gnosis and its remembrance.

Perhaps, a few expressions from the Quran (as mentioned below) bear witness, apart from special guidance, to general guidance and the manner of achieving the first stage of guidance.

"إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ"، "إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْفَاسِقِينَ"، "ثُمَّ قَسَتْ فُلُوبُكُمْ مِنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ فَهِيَ كَالْحِجَارَةِ أَوْ أَشَدُّ قَسْوَةً" و.....

Thus, free-will and morals play a fundamental role in recognition (of God), belief, and deeds and in short, in all aspects of man’s life.

Second Chapter:

Outcome of submission

2. Kafi 2/289; tradition 2.

3. Kafi 2/393. Similarly, refer to Nahjul-Balagha: wise sayings No 31 and Bihar al-Anwar 72/104-123; chapter concerning pillars of disbelief; hadith 1,2,16,17,19 and vol 70/53; hadith 15 & page 55 hadith 24.

4. Bihar al-Anwar 3/15

The last stage in guidance is submission before the All-Compassionate God. By taking this step, man follows the right way and achieves the divine general guidance. Perceiving the “*Ruh-e-Iman*” (spirit of faith) from the All-Compassionate God is the gift of this stage.

Like “*Ma’refat-e-fitri*” (innate gnosis), the “*Ruh-e-Iman*” (spirit of faith) too is God’s gift and favour with this difference that the basis of innate gnosis is universal whereas “spirit of faith” is confined to the believers who submit themselves before God. We shall clarify the above matter while describing the qualities of faith.

In the divine works, faith and everything related to faith has been discussed from various angles. Here, we shall at first, describe the various meanings of faith and then look into divine faith and mention some of its specialties from two angles: “*Iman-e-Mu’min*” (believer’s faith) which is the act of man and “*Ruh-e-Iman*” (spirit of faith) which is God’s creation.

1. The meanings of faith (*Iman*)

In the holy Quran and noble traditions, the word “*Iman*” (faith) has been applied in various senses. Among them, we may mention such meanings as: “*confession by tongue*”¹

“*confirmation by heart*”² “*divine obligations*”³ “*acting upon the duties and abstaining from cardinal sins*”⁴ “*fulfillment of obligatory acts and absolute abstinence from sins*”⁵ “*fulfillment of obligatory and recommendable acts and abstinence from forbidden, abominable and even ‘mubah’ (impunible) acts*”⁶.

However, the real meaning which is most emphasized is “*belief by heart together with confession by tongue and action by limbs*”. It is this very meaning used in contrast to ‘*Islam*’ (meaning apparent submission).⁷

1. For example: (نساء / ١٣٦) يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا آمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ

The first faith refers to confession and the second faith refers to confirmation by heart and the meaning of the verse is as such: ‘O those who have confessed to the truthfulness of the divine religion, acknowledge it by your heart too. Similarly, refer to Bihar al-Anwar 68/273 where other verses too have come down in this regard.

2. Same reference

3. For example: (بقره / ١٤٣) مَا كَانَ لِيُضَيِّعَ إِيْمَانَكُمْ

After alteration in the ‘*Qibla*’ (direction of prayers), the Muslims inquired from the Prophet whether their prayers in the direction of Bait al-Muqaddas is rendered null and void! In reply, the above-mentioned verse was revealed. Refer to Bihar al-Anwar 68/274 and 69/77 & 78.

⁴For example, refer to Bihar al-Anwar 68/262, last line; page 270, tradition 26; page 277 & 299, tradition 2 and Vol 69/73.

⁵For example, refer to Bihar al-Anwar 68/256, 259, 296; Vol 69/63, tradition 7 and page 73, tradition 28.

4. Refer to the traditions which have come down about qualities of believers particularly, Bihar al-Anwar 68/149, chapter concerning “Qualities of a Shiite”.

1. Refer to Bihar al-Anwar 68/225, chapter concerning “Difference between “*Iman*” and “*Islam*”. In this chapter, aside from verses of Quran, fifty-six traditions have been narrated. Also, refer to chapter 69/18, chapter concerning “Deeds are part of “*Iman*” (faith)”. Aside from verses, thirty traditions have been narrated. Most of these traditions bear witness to the afore-mentioned meaning.

This meaning has been propounded by the pure Imams (A.S.) as against two views in vogue at that time.

The *Murji'ites* reckoned apparent confession by 'people of Qibla' to be sufficient for Islam and faith while the *Kharijites* reckoned 'observance of obligatory acts and abstinence from cardinal sins' as a necessity for Islam and faith. In this regard, the inheritors of divine gnosis and true interpreters of Quran have proved, by virtue of the holy verses and Prophet's sunnah that for *Islam*, apparent confession is enough but, for bringing faith (*Iman*), this apparent confession should be supported with belief by heart and divine deeds. Thus, faith used in the above sense is synonymous with submission (at heart) and its tools i.e., verbal and practical submission.

In the Islamic sources, *Iman* (faith) in the above sense has been linked with another matter i.e., *Ruh-e-Iman* (spirit of faith) with this meaning that God bestows His favor and sets aglow a believer's heart with light, certainty, tranquility and piety in proportion to the believer's faith. He makes the believer enjoy a lustrous and spiritual reality called "*Ruh-e-Iman*".

In this part of our discussion, we shall lay stress, more than anything else, on these two matters: i.e., believer's faith and spirit of faith. One is the act of man and the other God's make. One takes shape on the basis of man's spiritual state and free-will and the other is augmented by God.

2. The specialties of "*Ruh-e-Iman*" (spirit of faith)

"*Ruh-e-Iman*" is God's creation:

قُلْتُ لِأَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ (ع): "أَوْلَيْكَ كَتَبَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْإِيمَانَ"، هَلْ لَهُمْ فِيمَا كَتَبَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ صُنْعٌ؟
قال: لا.

I inquired from Imam Sadiq (A.S.) about the verse: "These are they into whose hearts He has impressed faith"¹ as such: 'Have the believers had any role in impression of faith? Imam (A.S.) replied: 'No'.²

"*Ruh-e-Iman*" is God's favor to His believing slaves:

أَوْلَيْكَ كَتَبَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمُ الْإِيمَانَ وَ أَيْدَهُمْ بِرُوحٍ مِنْهُ.

"These are they into whose hearts He has impressed faith, and whom He has strengthened with an inspiration from Him".³

"*Ruh-e-Iman*" is peace and tranquility which God bestows upon the hearts of believers:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لِيَزْدَادُوا إِيمَانًا مَعَ إِيمَانِهِمْ.

"He it is Who sent down tranquility into the hearts of the believers that they might have more of faith added to their faith".¹

2. Mujadilah (58)/22

3. Kafi 2/15

1. Mujadilah (58)/22. Refer to Kafi 2/15, tradition 1 & 5; Bihar al-Anwar 69/190, tradition 5; 69/194 & 200 and Vol 68/274.

“*Ruh-e-Iman*” is the very divine piety, inseparable from the believers:

فَأَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ سَكِينَتَهُ عَلَى رَسُولِهِ وَعَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَأَلْزَمَهُمْ كَلِمَةَ التَّقْوَى.

“But Allah sent down His tranquility on His Messenger and the believers and fastened to them the reality of “*Taqwa*”²

In instances where a believer turns back from the foundation of faith (submission), he will be deprived of “*Ruh-e-Iman*”:

إِذَا زَنَى الرَّجُلُ أَخْرَجَ اللَّهُ مِنْهُ رُوحَ الْإِيمَانِ.

“When a person commits adultery, God takes away the “*Ruh-e-Iman*” (spirit of faith) from him”³.

Just as “*Ruh al-Qudus*” distinguishes an immaculate person from a non-immaculate person⁴ in the same manner, “*Ruh-e-Iman*” distinguishes a believer from unbeliever.⁵

3. Faith and heart

The divine faith (believer’s faith and *Ruh-e-Iman*) is a affair related to the heart. In the divine writings, a believer’s faith (*Iman*) is remembered by such expressions as “*something in heart*”⁶ “*submission at heart*”⁷ “*a tie in heart and by heart*”⁸ “*confirmation by heart*”⁹ “*whatever is established in heart*”¹⁰ “*whatever is pure in heart*”¹¹ “*faith in heart and faith by heart*”¹² “*white spot in heart*”¹³ while “*Ruh-e-Iman*” is remembered by such titles as “*something that is set in the hearts*”¹⁴ “*confirmation at heart*”¹⁵ and “*impression in hearts*”¹⁶ expressions indicate that faith is a heart-related subject and not a verbal affair or mental imagination and affirmation. Besides, if man submits himself before God with heart and soul, God too will assist his heart and soul without any intermediary (i.e., concepts and notions).

2. Fath (48)/4. Refer to Kafi 2/15, tradition 1 & 3-5.

3. Fath (48)/26. Refer to Bihar al-Anwar 69/200, tradition 21.

4. Bihar al-Anwar 69/178. Similarly, refer to page 19, tradition 4 & 5; page 198, tradition 16; Kafi 2/280 & 281.

5. Mujadilah/22, Baqarah/253; Bihar al-Anwar 69/179, tradition 3 and page 191.

6. The philosophers and materialistic psychologists have, in their study on human sciences come to this view that man is an advancing complicated animal. Of course, they cannot be considered at fault as materialistic belief fails to distinguish and depict the realities and the lofty gnosis. As a matter of fact, in such a definition, they are describing their own being. However, they too should consider us right for believing that man is a spiritual being since a believer is assisted (by God) and he proceeds towards Him. Basically, from the divine viewpoint, one cannot set a fixed definition for all the human-beings because, man is always swaying and fluctuating between the two limits: “*most deviated than an animal*” and “*most excellent than an angel*”.

7. Refer to Bihar al-Anwar 68/282

8. Refer to Bihar al-Anwar 68/265

9. Refer to Bihar al-Anwar 68/256, 291 and Vol 69/65 & 69

10. Refer to Bihar al-Anwar 68/273 and 69/68, tradition 21

11. Refer to Bihar al-Anwar 68/251

12. Refer to Bihar al-Anwar 69/72

13. Refer to Bihar al-Anwar 68/265 and 70/178 & 180, tradition 49

1. Refer to Bihar al-Anwar 69/196

2. Refer to Bihar al-Anwar 68/273 & 274

3. Refer to Bihar al-Anwar 68/273 & 274

4. Mujadilah/22; Bihar al-Anwar 69/200, tradition 22

4. Faith and deeds

After man submits himself before the Almighty God and acknowledges Him by heart, a light proportionate to this faith is augmented which necessarily results in divine conduct and worship of God.

Among the special features of the Shiite sect is the view concerning “*Iman*” (faith) and “*Islam*” (submission). As against the *Kharijites* and *Murji'ites*, the *Shias* believe that divine deeds influences faith and reckon deeds to be a condition of faith. On the other hand, they believe that worship and deeds play no role in the apparent *Islam*.

This view (i.e., the *Shiite* view) is drawn on the basis of Quran and traditions.¹

Numerous traditions lay stress that a believer does not commit sin and if ever a believer happens to indulge in sins, it implies that at the time of sin and even before that, God takes away the “*Ruh-e-Iman*” from him. And repentance is the only means by which the past radiance and purity is returned.

Belief at heart and consequently *Ruh-e-Iman* followed by a conduct commensurate with faith is the outcome of the stage of divine theology. That is to say, there exists a productive and necessary relation between faith and worship. Despite this, the matter of free-will does not give away its authority in any of the stages. The secret of this lies hidden in the rudiments of faith.

Inasmuch as after submission, man acquires *Ruh-e-Iman*, the same submission (which takes shape on the basis of free-will) gets manifested in deeds supported by divine aid.

At the time of disobedience and sin too, man gives away, by his own free-will, the basis of faith which is the same submission. Consequently, he is deprived of divine aid and commits indecent deeds.

Thus, considering that sin harms the pillar of faith, it destroys its very principle too. In this regard, numerous traditions have come down which stress that “*Ruh-e-Iman*” is withdrawn from man at the time he commits sins.²

5. Levels of faith

Submission before the Almighty God is not of the same level. This is because people submit before God at levels, proportionate to their spiritual capacity and free-will. Thus, people's faith are of various degrees and they enjoy special levels of *Ruh-e-Iman* and divine assistance. For this reason, the believers devoutness and divine conduct are diverse.

5. For example, refer to Hujarat/14, Nisa/136 and Bihar al-Anwar 68/225-309, chapter concerning “Difference between faith (*Iman*) and submission (*Islam*)”; 69/18-149 “Deeds are part of faith and verily, faith is spread all over the organs.”

1. For example, refer to Bihar al-Anwar 69/19, 178, 198 and Kafi 2/280-284.

On this basis, the traditions which define various meanings for *Iman* (faith) are not only consistent with each other but rather shows that there exists diverse levels of faith.

In this regard, it's worthy to mention that an individual's level of faith does not always remain fixed. Rather, it keeps fluctuating at different levels. The reason for this is that the principle of faith and the spirit of piety lies in man's submission based on free-will and genetic authority where, this authority remains in force after submission too. An individual can either turn his back from submitting before God or strengthen his submission and ascend to higher levels of faith:

Imam Musa Kazim (A.S.) said:

نَحْنُ نُؤَيِّدُ الرُّوحَ بِالطَّاعَةِ لِلَّهِ وَ الْعَمَلِ لَهُ .

"We approve (help) the '*Ruh-e-Imam*' through obedience to God and deeds".¹

**METHOD OF UTILIZING VERSES
AND TRADITIONS IN**

**INNATE THEOLOGY; AND THE TRUTH
OF INNATE DISPOSITION**

2. Kafi 2/268. Many verses and traditions have come down about levels of faith, its essence and causes. For example, refer to Anfal/3, Fath/5, Bara'at/124 & 125, Mujadilah/12, Ahzab/22, Baqarah/261, Ale-Imran/173, Waqaeah/8-10, Muddassir/31 and Bihar al-Anwar 69/156 chapter concerning "*Levels of faith and realities*" and Vol 69/175, chapter concerning "*Tranquility and ruh-e- iman and its abundance and shortcomings*".

In the discussions on innate gnosis, reference is made to verses and traditions just as in certain cases, rational questions and answers are set forth too. Thus, this question arises that whether the topic of innate disposition and innate gnosis is a rational or traditional (transmitted) matter and basically, what is the criterion of authenticity and rightfulness of innate gnosis?

Reply: The criterion of authenticity of innate disposition is neither intellect nor tradition (transmission) and innate gnosis is not an intellect or blind recognition. Rather, this gnosis is a conscientious recognition which is assured through God's help. At the time of such conscientious mood, man recognizes his Creator and perceives His rightfulness by heart and soul. In this manner, the heart-related *Hujjah* (plea) which is the most firm reasoning gets manifested. The Prophets, divine leaders and evangelists too, strive to create a conscientious mood in their addressees through reminding. However, the essence of conscience and manifestation of gnosis is God's creation. Thus, one shouldn't compare this kind of conscience and recognition with any of the human sciences.

Ordinarily,¹ the innate gnosis divulges through reminding of others only when the following three factors go hand in hand:

1. The person reminding is himself not heedless of that gnosis.
2. Man possesses the desired spiritual and moral state devoid of any ethical hindrances.
3. There exist no mental obstacles too.

The roles of the Prophets guarantee the first factor; creation of spiritual elevation is the ultimate goal of morals; and good debate and argumentation eliminates mental obstacles.

Thus, innate gnosis is a conscientious matter at heart which is superior to all human sciences including the rational and non-rational sciences. Its proof lies within itself and one does not require outside logical reasoning for proving its legitimacy. Of course, as said before, it is possible to prove God through rational means but what we wish to emphasize is this that innate disposition (*Fitrat*) does not require rational proofs. Rather, it uncovers the reality before man at lofty levels and it is here that the secret of believer's faith is looked into and perceived.

1. Since divine gnosis is in God's hand, its possible that an individual may recognise Him without the aforementioned conditions. For example, in situations of severe hardship, man becomes aware of God despite his own desire.

Nevertheless, man is free to accept or reject this gnosis; and freedom and authority are essential to this ability. Man is given freedom because this world is a place of divine trial and examination.

Reliance on narrative proofs too has diverse reasons. Among them, we may say that the verses and traditions are vital reminders that prepare, in the best possible manner, an individual's heart for receiving the divine gnosis. This itself is one of the aspects of the miracles of Quran.

About the Quran, Amir-ul-Mu'minin (A.S.) says:

فَتَجَلَّى لَهُمْ فِي كِتَابِهِ.

“He (i.e., the Almighty God) manifest to them (slaves) throughout His Book”.¹

In *Ziarat-Jama'e*,² we read about the Infallibles (A.S.) as such:

السَّلَامُ عَلَى مَحَالِّ مَعْرِفَةِ اللَّهِ...إِلَى اللَّهِ تَدْعُونَ وَ عَلَيْهِ تَدْعُونَ.

Another reason for relying on narration is to prove that the afore-mentioned points are all deeply rooted in Islam. It reveals the method of divine theology and the style adopted by the divine prophets in inviting people towards God. Basically, if any discussion (whether rational, traditional (narrative) and conscientious) is to be attributed to religion, it must be supported by divine texts minus the esoteric interpretations.³

Another reason for utilizing verses and traditions in this book is because a few topics like, “*the worlds of pre-existence*” lie within the limits of “*Ghaib*” (Unseen) but outside the purview of intellect and conscience. All discussions that fall within the limits of “*Ghaib*” (Unseen) are purely devotional and the criterion of their authenticity is narration.

In short, reference to narration can be classified as follows:

- a) As far as explanation is concerned, the stance and talk of every religion and school of thought must be supported by internal proofs.
- b) In the fundamental gnostic knowledge, the verses and traditions usually play the role of reminding notwithstanding whether rational reasonings can be raised here or not.
- c) In the detailed gnostic knowledge, narration takes the colour of blind obedience (devotional). Of course, it is within the limits of “*Ghaib*” (Unseen) that narration can be reckoned to be the only exclusive way (for obedience) otherwise, rational proofs too can be mooted.

There are various reasons too for setting forth rational queries and replies as well as argumentation and reasoning concerning innate disposition (*Fitrat*). One

1. Nahjul-Balagha; sermon 147, page 204

2. Uyoon Akhbar al-Ridha (A.S.) 2/273 & 274

3. With respect to the metaphorical expressions of the Quran too, one should adopt silence and refer to the clear verses for their meanings.

reason is that for every question, one should prepare, in the same language, an appropriate reply. It's possible that a matter may not be intrinsically rational but exposed to rational queries so that its impossibility is proved. Here, one should prove the possibility of that matter by rational argumentation and doing away with the mental hindrances. Most of the religious affairs are of this type and the main concern of a religious speaker and scholar is to defend the religious affairs in a rational manner.¹

Likewise, a non-rational matter can sometimes be referred to the intellect and explained in the rational language just as *Ma'refat fitri* (innate gnosis) can be described by "*negating God from two constrictions*" (ta'til and tash'bih). Verily, this intellectual report is an innate acquisition and not a rational acquisition.

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1. The task of speakers in defending the religious beliefs can be classified and explained in six stages: "*Inference*", "*Elucidation*", "*Arrangement*", "*Proof*", "*Disproving the doubts come up in religion*" and "*Disproving the anti-religious beliefs and views*".

In the first stage i.e., "*Inference*", the religious doctrine is extracted from three sources: Quran, traditions and intellect. In the stage of "*Elucidation*", the speaker strives in clarifying concepts such as "Seeing God", "Unity of God", "Intercession" and "Occultation". In the next stage, the religious discussions takes shape in such manner that is in vogue in the human sciences. In this as well as the preceding stage, the speaker, out of compulsion, reduces the divine gnostic knowledge and discusses by means of human language and system. In the fourth stage i.e., "*Proof*", those matters that can be rationally proved are proved so in a rational manner and if they are beyond reasoning and proof, their rationality and harmony with the intellect is demonstrated. This task is normally accomplished through rational "*Disproving doubts*" that have come up in religious beliefs. Similarly, the last stage too i.e., "*Disproving the anti-religious beliefs*" takes place as a base for showing the rationality of religious beliefs or proving such beliefs.

Its necessary to mention that in the fourth stage i.e., "*Proof*" the speakers faced two groups of people: The first group comprised of the non-Muslims who were confronted with mainly rational reasonings and the second group consisted of Muslims against whom narrative proofs were employed. It was by virtue of the above that "*rational theology*" and "*narrative theology*" came into existence.

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