

remained with the Holy Prophet from the beginning until his death. The Holy Prophet breathed his last on my chest. It was I who washed his body with the help of the angels, performed his funeral prayers, and buried him. So there was no one nearer, or a more rightful successor, to him than I."

Towards the end of his sermon he refers to his opponents in these words: "I swear by Allah, the One, that I am on the right path and that my opponents are on the wrong path."

But you claim that 'Ali considered his opponents on the right path. I wish you could seriously look into the verse of the Holy Qur'an, which says: "They desire to put out the light of Allah with their mouths, and Allah will not permit aught but the perfection of His light, though the unbelievers are averse." (9:32)

Tenth Session, Saturday night, 3rd Sha'ban 1345 A.H.

Assessment of 'Umar's knowledge of Islamic law

Nawab: This morning my son, Abdu'l-Aziz, who is a student at the Islamiyya College, reported to us that his teacher told the class that Caliph 'Umar Ibn Khattab was the greatest jurist of his time in Medina. He had complete knowledge of the Qur'anic verses and their meanings. He was superior to all other prominent jurists, like 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud, Abdullah Ibn Abbas, Akrama, and Zaid Ibn Thabit.

Even 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, whose understanding of fiqh (jurisprudence) was extensive, when he was faced with a difficult problem, consulted 'Umar concerning the rights of Muslims. The caliph always solved the difficult problems of 'Ali. All of us acknowledged this fact because our ulama' say that Caliph 'Umar held a unique position in learning and knowledge. I ask you to explain this point so that all of us, including my son, may understand the facts.

Well-Wisher: It is strange that the teacher said those things. Even your ulama' have never claimed that. If some fanatical people, like Ibn Hazm Zahiri, said that, they were bitterly opposed by your ulama'. Moreover, this attribute was not claimed by Caliph 'Umar himself. None of your ulama' has recorded this fact in any of their books.

The traditionists or historians who have written anything of the life of Caliph 'Umar Ibn Khattab have remarked upon his cunning nature, his hard-heartedness, and political contrivances, but they have not dwelt upon his learning.

'Umar's knowledge of Islamic law was weak

In fact, the books of both sects are replete with instances which clearly show that 'Umar was not well versed in problems of learning and jurisprudence. Whenever he was faced with such issues he used to consult with Amiru'l-Mu'minin 'Ali, Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud, and other jurists of Medina.

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid mentions the name of Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud in particular, among the jurists of Medina, and says that 'Umar insisted that Abdullah should always remain with him so that

whenever an occasion arose, he could be consulted on matters of jurisprudence.

Sheikh: (In anger) Where is it written that 'Umar was ignorant of religious problems and the knowledge of jurisprudence?

Well-Wisher: I did not say that Caliph 'Umar was completely ignorant. I said that he was not well versed in problems of jurisprudence and learning. I can prove what I say.

Sheikh: How would you prove that Caliph 'Umar had weak knowledge in matters relating to jurisprudence and religious ordinances?

Well-Wisher: There are many hadith in your authentic books. Apart from this, there is 'Umar's own admission, which he made on several occasions.

A woman silences 'Umar on a point of law

Jalalu'd-din Suyuti in his Tafsir al-Durru'l-Mansur, vol. II, p.133; Ibn Kathir in his Commentary, vol.I, p.468; Jarullah Zamakhshari in his Tafsir al-Kashshaf, vol.I, p.357; Fazil Nishapuri in his Tafsir-Gharibu'l Qur'an, vol.I, in connection with the sura Nisa (The Women) of the Holy Qur'an; Qartabi in his Tafsir, vol.V, p.99; Ibn Maja' Qazwini in his Sunan, vol.I; Asadi in Hashiyya al-Sunan, vol.I, p.583; Baihaqi in his Sunan, vol.VII, p.233; Qastalani in his Irshadu's-Sari-Sharh al-Sahih Bukhari, vol.VIII, p.57;

Muttaqi Hindi in his Kanzu'l-'Ummal, vol.VIII, p. 298; Hakim Nishapuri in his Mustadrak, vol.II, p.177; Abu Bakr Baglani in his Tamhid, p.199; Ajluni in his Kashfu'l-Khufa', vol.I, p.270; Qazi Shukani in Futuhu'l-Qadir, vol.I,P.407; Dhahabi in his Takhlis al-Mustadrak; Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, vol.I, p.61 and vol.VII, p.96; Hamidi in his Jam' al-Bainu's-Sahihain; Faqih Wasiti Ibn Maghazili Shafi'i in his Manaqib; Ibn Athir in his Nihaya, and others have authentically narrated with slight difference in wording that one day Caliph 'Umar during the course of his sermon to the people, said:

"If any one marries and fixes a mehr (dowry) for more than 400 dirhams for his wife, I will inflict the prescribed punishment on him and will deposit the excess amount in the Baitu'l-Mal (Public Treasury)."

A woman from the audience called out: "'Umar! Is what you say more acceptable or Allah's ordinance? Does not Allah Almighty say:

***'And if you wish to have (one) wife in place of another and you have given one of them a heap of gold, then take not from it anything.'* (4:20)**

Having heard this verse and the retort of the woman, 'Umar said: "You have better knowledge of fiqh and problems than 'Umar, all of you, including even the women observing purdah sitting in their homes."

Then 'Umar again mounted the pulpit and said: "Although I have forbidden you to give more than 400 dirhams as dowry to your wives, I now permit you to give as much as you like beyond the appointed limit. There is no harm in it."

This hadith shows that Caliph 'Umar was not well versed in the Qur'an and jurisprudence. Otherwise, he would not have said something so obviously incorrect that he could be silenced by an informed woman.

Sheikh: No, it is not so. The fact is that the Caliph wanted to force people to decrease the amount of dowry in compliance with the sunna. Although Islam allows us to give a large amount, it is better if we refrain from it so that the poor may not have to suffer. It is for this reason that he said that the amount of mehr should not exceed the amount fixed for the wives of the Holy Prophet.

Confiscation of any portion of mehr is unlawful

Well-Wisher: This is such a lame excuse that even 'Umar had no idea of it. Otherwise he would not have admitted his own fault and would not have said: "You are better jurists than 'Umar, all of you, including the housewives." Otherwise he also would have said what you are saying.

Besides this, everybody knows that an unlawful act cannot be condoned as a means to accomplish a desirable and lawful result. Obviously the property of the woman, which she has owned, according to the Qur'anic injunction, could not lawfully be snatched away from her and deposited in the Baitu'l-Mal!

Apart from all these considerations, it is unlawful to inflict corporal punishment on a person who has not committed a sin. At least I have not seen any such decision made according to any penal code. Let me know if you can cite such an example. If there is no such ordinance in the penal laws, you will have to admit that the claim of the teacher was false.

'Umar denying the Prophet's death proves that he was ignorant of several verses of the Holy Qur'an

Unfortunately, 'Umar had developed the habit of losing his temper, and in order to frighten others he said: "I will punish you!"

Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in his Musnad; Hamidi in his Jam' al-Bainu's-Sahihain; Tabari in his Ta'rikh, and other ulama' have reported that when the Holy Prophet died, 'Umar went to Abu Bakr and told him that he feared that it was possible Muhammad had not died.

Perhaps he had only pretended to be dead so that he might recognize his friends and foes, or perhaps he had disappeared, like Moses and would come again and punish those, who were disloyal and disobedient to him.

'Umar continued to say: "So if anyone says that the Holy Prophet is dead, I will punish him." When Abu Bakr heard this, he was also uncertain about it, and the people also were confused and differences arose among them. When 'Ali learned of it, he appeared before the crowd of people and said:

"People! Why are you making such a foolish commotion? Have you forgotten the Holy verse, in which Allah said to the Holy Prophet: 'Verily you shall die and so also the people of your community'? (39:30)

So according to this verse the Holy Prophet has left this world." This argument of 'Ali convinced the people and they believed that the Holy Prophet had really died. Then 'Umar said: "It was as if I had never heard this verse."

Ibn Athir in his Kamil and Nihaya; Zamakhshari in Asasu'l-Balagha; Shahrastani in Milal

wa'n-Nihal, (Muqaddama IV), and many others of your ulama' have written that 'Umar was shouting: "The Holy Prophet has not died," when Abu Bakr reached him and said:

"Does Allah Almighty not say: 'Verily you shall die and so also the people of your community.' Also He says: 'If then he dies or is killed, will you turn back upon your heels?'" (3:144)

'Umar then became silent and said: "It was as though I had never heard this verse. Now I believe that the Holy Prophet is dead."

'Umar's order to stone five people and 'Ali's intervention

Hamidi reports in his Jam' al-Bainu's-Sahihain that during the caliphate of 'Umar, five people were arrested on the charge of fornication and brought before 'Umar. It was proved that the five men had committed fornication with a certain woman. 'Umar at once ordered them to be stoned to death. At that time 'Ali entered the mosque and having heard what 'Umar had ordered said to him: "Here your order is contrary to Allah's ordinance."

'Umar said: "'Ali! Fornication has been proved. Death by stoning is the prescribed punishment for this sin."

'Ali said: "In the matter of fornication, there are different orders in different cases. Accordingly, in the present cases different orders should be passed."

'Umar asked him to detail what the orders of Allah and His Holy Prophet were in those cases, for 'Umar had heard the Holy Prophet say on a number of occasions: "'Ali is the most learned man and the best judge."

'Ali ordered the five men to be brought to him. He ordered the first man to be beheaded. He ordered the second man to be stoned to death. He ordered the third man be given 100 lashes. The fourth man was given 50 lashes. The fifth man was given 25 lashes.

'Umar, surprised and puzzled, said: "Abu'l-Hasan, how did you decide these cases in five different ways?"

The Holy Imam said: "The first man was an infidel under the protection of Islam. He committed fornication with a Muslim woman. Since he lost the protection of Islam he was liable to be killed. The second man had a wife, so he was stoned to death. The third man was unmarried; hence, he was ordered to be given 100 lashes. The fourth man was a slave who deserves a sentence half that of a free man, that is, 50 lashes. And the fifth man was an imbecile, so he was given a mild punishment, that is, 25 lashes."

Then 'Umar said: "If 'Ali had not been there, 'Umar would have been ruined O Abu'l-Hasan! I hope I am not alive when you are not among us."

'Umar's ordering a pregnant woman to be stoned to death and 'Ali's intervention

Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in his Kifayatu't-Talib Fi Manaqib al-Amiru'l-Mu'minin 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib; Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in his Musnad; Bukhari in his Sahih; Hamidi in Jam'

al-Bainu's-Sahihain; Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, chapter IV, p.75, from Khawarizmi's Manaqib; Imam Fakhru'd-din Razi in Arba'in, p.466; Muhibu'd-din Tabari in Riyazu'n-Nazara, vol.II, p.196; Khatib Khawarizmi in Manaqib, p.48; Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i in Matalibu's-Su'ul, p.113; and Imamu'l-Haram in Dhakha'iru'l-Uqba, p.80, quote the following report.

A pregnant woman was brought before 'Umar Ibn Khattab. On being questioned, she admitted that she was guilty of illicit sexual intercourse, and so the Caliph ordered her to be stoned. Then 'Ali said: "Your order is applicable to this woman, but you have no authority over her child."

'Umar acquitted the woman and said: "Women are incapable of giving birth to a man like 'Ali: If 'Ali had not been there, 'Umar would have been ruined." He continued, saying: "May Allah not let me live so long as to face a difficult problem which 'Ali is not present to solve."

'Umar ordering an insane woman to be stoned and 'Ali's intervention

Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in his Musnad; Imamu'l-Haram Ahmad Ibn Abdullah Shafi'i in Dhakha'iru'l-Mawadda, chapter II, p.75, from Hasan Basri; Ibn Hajar in Fathu'l-Bari, vol.XII, P.101; Abu Dawud in Sunan, vol. II, p.227; Munadi in Faizu'l-Qadir, vol. IV, p. 257; Hakim Nishapuri in Mustadrak, vol.II, p.59;

Qastalani in Irshadu's-Sari, vol.X, p. 9; Baihaqi in Sunan, vol.VIII, p. 164; Muhibu'd-din Tabari in Riyazu'n-Nazara, v.II, p.196; Khatib Khawarizmi in his Munaqab, p.48; Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i in Matalibu's-Su'ul; Imamu'l-Haram in Dhakha'iru'l-Uqba, p.80; Ibn Maja in his Sunan, v.II, p.227; Bukhari in his Sahih, chapter la yarjumu'l-majnun wa'l-majnuna and most of your other ulama' have reported the following incident:

One day an insane woman was brought before Caliph 'Umar Ibn Khattab. She had committed fornication and admitted her fault. 'Umar ordered her to be stoned. Amiru'l-Mu'minin was there. He said to 'Umar: "What are you doing?"

I have heard the Holy Prophet saying that three kinds of people are free from the hold of law: a sleeping man until he wakes; a lunatic until he recovers himself and regains consciousness; and the child until he comes of age." Hearing this, 'Umar acquitted the woman.

Ibnu's-Saman in his Kitabu'l-Muwafiqah has recorded many such cases. There are some accounts which record about 100 erroneous and fallacious findings of 'Umar.

'Ali's knowledge and merit

Nuru'd-din Ibn Sabbagh Malaki in his Fusulu'l-Muhimma, chapter 3, p. 17, writing about 'Ali said: "This chapter contains matter relating to the knowledge of 'Ali. One of those aspects is the knowledge of fiqh (jurisprudence) on which is based the lawful and unlawful acts of man.

'Ali understood the intricacies of law. Its complex problems were easy for him, and he fully understood their interpretations. It was for this reason that the Holy Prophet said that 'Ali was the most worthy man of the community to interpret questions of law."

Imam Abu Muhammad Husain Ibn Mas'ud Baghawi in his Masabih reports from Anas that when the Holy Prophet appointed each one of the Companions to a particular position, he appointed 'Ali to the rank of judge and said: "'Ali is the best judge among all of you (companions and community)."

Surely when you compare the words of this ignorant college teacher with the hadith of your own eminent scholars, you will confirm that his assertion is baseless. This teacher is claiming more than his leader did. 'Umar himself always expressed his inferiority to 'Ali.

Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in his Musnad, Imamu'l-Haram Ahmad Makki Shafi'i in Dhakha'iru'l-Uqba, Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, chapter 56, and Muhibu'd-din Tabari in his Riyazu'n-Nazara, vol.II, p.195, quote Mu'awiya as saying:

"Whenever 'Umar Ibn Khattab faced a difficult problem, he sought the assistance of 'Ali." Abu'l-Hajjaj Balawi in his Alif-Ba, vol.I, p.222, writes that when Mu'awiya heard the news of 'Ali's martyrdom, he said: "With the death of 'Ali, jurisprudence and knowledge have collapsed."

He also quotes Sa'id Ibn Musayyab as saying that Mu'awiya said: "'Umar always sought shelter from difficulties for which 'Ali was not there to help him."

Abu Abdullah Muhammad Ibn 'Ali al-Hakim al-Tirmidhi in his commentary on Risalat al-Fathu'l-Mubin writes: "The companions of the Holy Prophet consulted 'Ali in matters relating to ordinances of the Holy Qur'an and accepted his verdicts.

'Umar Ibn Khattab has said on various occasions: "If 'Ali had not been there, 'Umar would have been ruined." The Holy Prophet of Allah also said: "The most highly learned man among my community is 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib."

What is recorded in hadith and historical accounts proves that 'Umar was so devoid of common knowledge and knowledge of jurisprudence that he was mistaken even regarding ordinary problems. Companions who were his contemporaries warned him about this weakness.

Sheikh: You are very unkind to impute such things to 'Umar. Is it possible for the caliph to be mistaken in religious matters?

Well-Wisher: This unkindness is not from my side. Your own ulama' have revealed the truth about it.

Sheikh: If you can, please let us know these things with proper sources so that truth may be clearly revealed.

Well-Wisher: There are many such instances. About 100 of them are in your books, but I will submit one of them by way of example.

['Umar's ignorance concerning tayammum \(substitute for ablution\)](#)

Muslim Ibn Hajjaj in his Sahih, chapter Tayammum; Hamidi in Jam' al-Bainu's-Sahihain, Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in Musnad, vol.IV, p.265,319; Baihaqi in Sunan, vol.I, p.209; Abi Dawud in Sunan , vol.I, p.53; Ibn Maja in Sunan, vol.I, p.200; Imam Nisa'i in his Sunan, vol.I,

pp. 59-61, and others of your eminent ulama' have in different ways and words, reported that during the caliphate of 'Umar a man came to him and said: "It is necessary for me to perform ghusl (the bath of ritual purification) but no water is available. What should I do in this circumstance?"

'Umar said: "Unless you can obtain water and perform ghusl, you should not offer prayers."

At that time Ammar al-Yasir, a companion of the Holy Prophet was present. He said: "'Umar! Have you forgotten that on one of the journeys you and I happened to be in need of performing ghusl? Since water was not available you did not offer prayers, but I thought the method of tayammum in place of ghusl was that dust should be rubbed on my whole body. So I rubbed dust on my body and offered prayers.

When we went to the Holy Prophet, he said, smiling: 'For tayammum this much is sufficient that the palms of both hands be tapped on the ground simultaneously and the palms be rubbed on the forehead; then the back of the right hand be rubbed with the left palm and then the back of the left hand be rubbed with the right palm.' Now why are you telling the man not to offer prayers?"

When 'Umar could make no reply he said: "Ammar, fear Allah."

Then Ammar said: "Do you permit me to narrate this hadith?" 'Umar said: "I leave it to you to do what you like."

In light of this reliable hadith which your own ulama' have narrated, you will surely acknowledge that the teacher's claim was utterly false. Could a man well versed in jurisprudence and who had frequently been in the company of the Holy Prophet and had heard from the Prophet how 'tayammum' should be performed when water was not available tell a Muslim that if he does not find water he should abstain from offering his prayers? This is particularly strange since the Holy Qur'an tells us that in such a case we should perform 'tayammum.'

The practice of tayammum among the Muslims is so commonly known that even an illiterate Muslim knows that, under certain conditions it takes the place of ritual ablution and the ritual bath. Now what should we say about a companion of the Holy Prophet and caliph? Shouldn't he be knowledgeable about this matter?

I do not claim in this case that Caliph 'Umar deliberately changed Allah's ordinances. But this much is certainly possible: he was weak in his ability to retain information and it was difficult for him to remember ordinances.

And this was the reason, as your ulama' have written; he used to say to an accomplished jurist Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud: "You should always remain with me so that whenever somebody asks me a question, you may answer him."

Now, gentlemen! You should decide what a difference there is between a man whose knowledge is so meager that he is unable to understand simple problems and one who immediately understands difficult problems.

Sheikh: Who else can that man be except the Holy Prophet?

Well-Wisher: Obviously, after the Holy Prophet no one among the Companions had such knowledge except the Holy Prophet's "gate of knowledge", 'Ali, about whom the Holy

Prophet himself said: "'Ali is the most learned of all of you."

All knowledge was clearly visible to 'Ali

Abu'l-Mu'ayyid Mu'affaq Ibn Ahmad Khawarizmi says in his Manaqib that one day 'Umar said to 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib with some surprise: "How is it that if any question is asked of you, you give its answer without the least hesitation?"

The Holy Imam opened his hand before him and said: "How many fingers do you see?"

'Umar immediately said: "Five."

'Ali said: "Why did you not ponder over it?"

'Umar said: "There was no need to ponder since all five fingers were before my eyes."

Then 'Ali said: "Similarly, all the problems and issues of knowledge are clearly visible to me. I give their answers without pondering."

Now, gentlemen! Is it not due to prejudice that the teacher speaks such nonsense and misleads the uninformed youth? Does it seem likely that the man, who possessed the deepest knowledge of all sciences and was the "gate of knowledge" of the Holy Prophet, would consult with 'Umar in order to solve his difficulties?

Mu'awiya defending the position of 'Ali

A hadith has just struck me. I put it before you as a further proof of my point. Ibn Hajar Makki, a scholar known for his intolerance writes in his Sawa'iq al-Muhriqa, ch. II, Maqсад V, p. 110, under verse 14, that Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal has reported and also Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani in Mawaddatu'l-Qurba and Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha have recorded that a man asked Mu'awiya a question.

Mu'awiya said: "Ask 'Ali about it since he is the most learned man." The Arab said: "I prefer your answer to 'Ali's answer."

Mu'awiya said: "You have uttered a very bad thing: you have rejected the man whom the Holy Prophet himself trained and to whom he said: 'You have the same relation to me as Aaron had to Moses, except that there shall be no prophet after me. Moreover, whenever 'Umar was entangled in some difficult matter, he asked 'Ali about it and sought his opinion.'"

This brings to mind the saying: "Virtue is that to which even the enemy bears witness."

'Umar's admission of his ignorance concerning difficult problems and his declaration that if 'Ali had not helped him, his difficulties would not have been solved

In order to further support 'Ali's superiority to 'Umar, we quote what your prominent ulama' have said. Nuru'd-din Ibn Sabbagh Maliki in Fusulu'l-Muhimma; Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i

in Matalibu's-Su'ul; Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in Musnad; Khatib Khawarizmi in Manaqib; Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, and many others have written that on seventy occasions 'Umar said "If 'Ali had not been there 'Umar would have been ruined."

Nuru'd-din Maliki in his Fusulu'l-Muhimma reports that once a man was brought to 'Umar. He was asked before the assembly of people: "How did you begin your morning?" He said: "I got up in the morning in this condition: I loved temptation and was averse to the right truth. I testified to the truth of the Jews and the Christians, believed in what I had not seen and in what had not yet been created."

'Umar ordered that 'Ali be brought to him. When the matter was put before Amiru'l-Mu'minin, he said,

"What the man has said is right. He says he loves temptation. He means by this wealth and children. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an: 'And you know that your wealth and your children are a temptation.' (8:28)

By aversion to the right he means death. The Qur'an says,

'And the stupor of death will come in truth.'(50:19)

By testifying to the truth of the Jews and Christians, he means what Allah says:

'The Jews said that the Christians were not on the right path and the Christians said that the Jews were not on the right path.' (2:113)

That is, both the sects belie each other. So the Arab says that he agrees with them both, or that he rejects both of them.

He says that he believes in what he has not seen, meaning that he believes in Allah Almighty.

When he says that he believes in what has not yet been created, that is, not present, he refers to the Day of Judgement, which has not yet come into existence."

Then 'Umar said: "I seek Allah's shelter from the difficult situation in which 'Ali is not there to help me."

This anecdote has been narrated in a more elaborate and different form, by others like Muhammad Ibn Ganji Shafi'i in Kifayatu't-Talib, ch.57, from Hudhaifa Ibn Al-Yaman, who quoted it from Caliph 'Umar.

A number of similar incidents during the caliphate of Abu Bakr and 'Umar were incapable of giving a correct answer. It was 'Ali who gave the reply. Particularly when the Jewish, Christian, and natural scientists scholars came and discussed difficult problems, it was only 'Ali who solved them.

According to your own ulama', like Bukhari and Muslim, each in his Sahih; Nishapuri in his Tafsir; Ibn Maghazili Faqih Shafi'i in Manaqib; Muhammad Ibn Talha in Matalibu's-Su'ul, ch.4, pp. 13 and 18; Hafiz Ibn Hajar Asqalani (d.852 A.H.) in Tahdhibu't-Tahdhib (printed in Hyderabad Daccan), p.338; Qazi Fazlullah Ruzbahan Shirazi in Ibtalu'l-Batil;

Muhibu'd-din Tabari in Riyazu'n-Nazara, vol.II, p.39; Ibn Kathir in his Ta'rikh, vol. VII, p.369;

Ibn Qutayba Dinawari (d.276 A.H.) in Ta'wil al-Mukhtalafu'l-Hadith (printed in Egypt), pp.201-202; Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i (d. 658 A.H.) in Kifayatu't-Talib, ch. 57; Jalalu'd-din Suyuti in Ta'rikhu'l-Khulafa, p.66; Sayyid Mu'min Shablanji in Nuru'l-Absar, p.73; Nuru'd-din 'Ali Ibn Abdullah Samhudi (d.911 A.H.) in Jawahiru'l-Iqdain;

Al-Hajj Ahmad Afindi in Hidayatu'l-Murtab, pp.146 and 153; Muhammad Ibn 'Ali As-Sabban in Ishafu'r-Raghibin, p.52; Yusuf Sibt Ibn Jauzi in Tadhkira Khawasu'l-Ummal, ch.6, p.37; Ibn Abi'l-Hadid (d.655 A.H.) in Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, vol.I; Mulla 'Ali Qushachi in Sharh al-Tajrid, p.407;

Akhtabu'l-Khutaba Khawarizmi in Manaqib, pp.48 and 60; even the intolerant Ibn Hajar Makki (d.973 A.H.) in Sawa'iq Muhriqa, p.78; Ibn Hajar Asqalani in Isaba, vol.II, p. 509 and Allama Ibn Qayyim Jauzia in Turuqu'l-Hikmiyya, pp.47 and 53 have recorded numerous cases showing that 'Umar referred intricate and complex problems, particularly the difficult problems of the King of Rome, to Amiru'l-Mu'minin.

'Umar time and again referred cases to 'Ali for solution, and when he heard the decision, he repeatedly said: "I seek Allah's protection from that difficult situation in which 'Ali is not there to help me." Sometimes he said: "If 'Ali had not been there, 'Umar would have been ruined."

Ibn Maghazili Shafi'i in his Manaqib and Hamidi in his Jam' al-Bainu's-Sahihain write that the caliphs took counsel with 'Ali in all matters and that he was the central figure who decided difficult religious and worldly questions. The caliphs carefully listened to his remarks and instructions and acted upon them.

'Ali was most suitable for the office of caliphate

Knowledge is the best criterion for preference. The Holy Qur'an clearly states:

"Is he then who guides to the truth more worthy to be followed, or he who himself does not go aright unless he is guided? What then is the matter with you; how do you judge?" (10:35)

That is, one who possesses the best qualities of guidance must be the supreme leader of the people, not the one who is ignorant of the way of guidance and himself seeks guidance from others.

This verse is the most valid proof that a superior man cannot be made subordinate to the inferior one. The question of the caliphate, imamate, and the succession to the Holy Prophet come under the same principle. This is borne out by another verse which says:

"Say: Are those who know and those who do not know alike?" (39:9)

By all standards 'Ali was the fittest man for the caliphate

Sheikh: We certainly agree that 'Ali possessed all the outstanding qualities you have mentioned. No one except the fanatical Kharijis has ever denied this fact. But this much also is acknowledged: Sayyid 'Ali himself voluntarily and gladly accepted the caliphate of the (first three) caliphs and admitted their superiority and their right to precede him. So

what is the use of our worrying, after 1300 years, about their decision and fighting among ourselves as to why the community elected Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and Uthman?

So what is the harm if we are at peace and friendly with one another and admit what history has recorded and what your own ulama' have also generally accepted: after the Holy Prophet, Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and Uthman successively occupied the caliphate?

We should live together as brothers and jointly acknowledge 'Ali's superiority in knowledge and actions and his special relationship with the Holy Prophet. In the same way that our four schools of law are united, the Shi'as too should cooperate with us.

We never deny the excellence of 'Ali's knowledge and character, but you should admit that in regard to the questions of age, political astuteness, patience and calm, in the face of the enemy Abu Bakr was definitely superior to 'Ali.

It was for this reason that, through the unanimous verdict of the community, he occupied the seat of the caliphate. 'Ali was young at that time and had not the capacity to shoulder the responsibilities of the caliphate. Even 25 years later, when he assumed the caliphate, many disturbances took place only because he was not an able politician.

'Ali's "allegiance" to caliphs was forced

Well-Wisher: First, you have said that Amiru'l-Mu'minin voluntarily offered allegiance to the three caliphs. A story comes to mind which is appropriate for this discussion. In the old days the highways of Iran were hazardous, and pilgrims to the Holy shrines faced hardships during their journeys. A certain caravan fell into the clutches of robbers, who stole the people's property. When they were dividing the booty among themselves, the shroud of a pilgrim fell into the hands of an old robber.

He said: "Gentlemen pilgrims! Whose shroud is this?" A pilgrim said: "It is mine." The robber said: "I have no shroud with me, so please give it to me so that it may be lawful to me." The pilgrim said: "All my property is yours, but return this shroud to me, since I am at the last stage of my life and have taken great pains for the preparation of this dress for me for the Hereafter. This is my cherished wealth."

The robber emphatically insisted on his demand, but the pilgrim repeated the same thing, that he would not give up that right of his to anyone. The robber, drawing his sword, began to strike the pilgrim about his head and face and said that he would go on hitting him until he surrendered the shroud to him and said: "It is lawful."

The poor old pilgrim was so beaten that he began shouting: "Sir! Lawful! Lawful! Lawful! More lawful than one's mother's milk!"

I hope you will forgive me. But I wanted to draw your attention to what I wish to explain. Perhaps you have forgotten what I have proved on previous nights. I cited authentic historical records, which Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, Jauhari, Tabari, Baladhuri, Ibn Qutayba, Mas'udi, and others of your ulama' have verified, that they threatened to burn down 'Ali's House, he was dragged to the mosque and was ordered with a sword at his throat: "Swear allegiance, otherwise you will be beheaded."

Is this an example of voluntary allegiance?

[There should be no "blind faith" in religion](#)

Second, I have said earlier that we should not have "blind faith" in the fundamentals of religion. You say that since history tells us that the four caliphs became rulers, we should follow our elders and have faith in them. But common sense and hadith tell us that faith in principle should be based on reason.

I repeat again that your and our historians have written that after the death of the Holy Prophet, the community was divided into two sects. One sect said that Abu Bakr should be followed and the other sect believed that 'Ali should be followed. The Holy Prophet said: "To obey 'Ali is to obey me; and to disobey 'Ali is to disobey me."

Therefore obedience to 'Ali was, according to the order of the Holy Prophet, compulsory. So it was the duty of every individual of our two sects to listen to the arguments of the two sides and to choose the right course.

[Faith should be based on reason and honest inquiry](#)

My faith in Allah is based on wisdom. I have studied books of various sects and religions. I accept the fact that Muhammad was the last Prophet based on reasoning and not on blindly following my elders.

Similarly, I have deeply studied hundreds of books of both the sects, particularly those of the Sunni sect in which there are clear arguments to prove the Imamate and Caliphate of Amiru'l-Mu'minin. You people cast only a cursory glance at the verses and hadith in praise of 'Ali and then make ridiculous interpretations of them.

Third, you say that we should accept the historical order of the caliphs: Abu Bakr, 'Umar, Uthman, and Hazrat 'Ali. But this is absurd. Man's superiority to animals is due to his knowledge and wisdom. So we cannot blindly follow our elders.

According to your own prominent ulama', 'Ali's superiority in knowledge has been fully established. Therefore, the right of his priority as caliph must also be acknowledged. Since he was the "Gate of Knowledge" of the Holy Prophet, deviation from his is deviation from guidance.

We admit that after the death of the Holy Prophet, Abu Bakr was caliph for two years and three months, followed by 'Umar for ten years, and Uthman for twelve years. But these facts do not eliminate the proper place of reason and hadith. History cannot deprive the "Gate of Knowledge" of the Holy Prophet of his right.

Firdaus Dailami, Abu Nu'aim Ispahani, Muhammad Ibn Ishaq Muttalabi, author of the book Maghazi, Hakim, Hamwaini, Khatib Khawarizmi and Ibn Maghazili report either from Ibn Abbas, or Sa'id Khadiri, or Ibn Mas'ud, all of whom quote the Holy Prophet as saying: "They shall be questioned about the wilaya (vicegerency) of 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib."

[Prophet's order to obey 'Ali](#)

"And whatever the Apostle gives you, accept it, and from whatever he forbids you, keep back." (59:7)

Therefore, we must obey the command of the Holy Prophet.

When we look to the instructions of the Holy Prophet we find (as is recorded in your reliable books) that among the whole of his community the Holy Prophet has called only 'Ali his gate of knowledge and has ordered us to obey him. In fact, he said that obedience to 'Ali was the same as obedience to him.

Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in his Musnad, Imamu'l-Haram in Dhakha'iru'l-'Uquba; Khawarizmi in Manaqib; Sulayman Hanafi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda; Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in Kifayatu't-Talib and other ulama' have reported that the Holy Prophet of Allah said: "Ansars! Shall I show you the person to whom you should adhere and who will never lead you astray?" The people said: "Yes, let us know him." The Holy Prophet said: "He is 'Ali. Be his friend, respect him, and follow him. Verily, he is with the Qur'an and the Qur'an is with him. Surely he will lead you to the right path and will not let you be ruined. Whatever I have told you, has been told to me by Gabriel."

Also, as recorded by your ulama', the Holy Prophet said to Ammar al-Yasir: "If all of mankind is on one side and 'Ali on the other, you should adopt the way of 'Ali and leave the others."

Also, on different occasions and in different places, the Holy Prophet repeatedly said: "He who obeys 'Ali, really obeys me. He who obeys me, really obeys Allah."

No hadith exists designating other caliphs as the "Guides of the Community" or "Gates of Knowledge"

There is not a single hadith in your books in which the Holy Prophet says: "After me the guide to the right path or 'my gate of knowledge 'or' my successor and caliph is Abu Bakr, 'Umar, or Uthman." Can you cite such a hadith which is not fabricated by the Bakari or Amawi groups?

But you ask us to give the fourth place to the Holy Prophet's "Gate of knowledge," the Holy Prophet's "successor and caliph," to quote the Holy Prophet's own words, and follow those about whom there are no instructions whatsoever. If we follow your advice, shall we not be disobeying Allah and His Holy Prophet?

Sunni ulama' do not want cooperation with us

Fourth, you say that like the four schools of law (Hanafis, Malikis, Hanbalis and Shafi'is), we should also be united with you. But you people call the Shi'as Rafizis, polytheists, and infidels. Obviously, polytheists and believers cannot be united.

We are, however fully prepared to cooperate with our Sunni brothers. Of course the condition is that you and we should be equally free to advocate our religious beliefs.

Just as followers of the four schools of law are free in their actions, the followers of the progeny of the Holy Prophet should also be free in their actions. We see that among your four schools of law there are such serious differences that some of them call the others infidels and sinners.

Yet you consider them Muslims and allow them freedom of actions. But, calling the poor

Shi'as polytheists and infidels, you turn them out of the Muslim fold and deprive them of their freedom to practice their religion. How can we hope for unity and cooperation?

Prostration on dust by Shi'as objected to by others without reason

Take the example of our prostration on dust. What a fuss you make about the dust and turba, a small block of clay of the Holy land of Karbala, on which we put our forehead while prostrating! You insist that it is an idol and call us idol worshipers, though we prostrate on the dust with permission of Allah and His Holy Prophet.

The Qur'anic verses enjoin us to perform prostration, and prostration means to put the forehead on the ground. Of course there is a difference of opinion between you and us as to the things on which we prostrate.

Sheikh: Then why do you not perform the prostration as all other Muslims do so that there may be no difference and this misunderstanding may disappear.

Well-Wisher: First, please let us know why you Shafi'is differ so much with the Malikis and Hanbalis, regarding both the articles of practice and the fundamentals of your belief. Sometimes they go so far as to call each other "sinner" and "infidel." It would be better if all of them sat together and develop a common belief, so that there may be no difference.

Sheikh: There is a difference of opinion among the jurists, but whoever among us follows any of the jurists - Imam Shafi'i, Imam A'zam, Imam Malik, or Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal - will be rewarded by Allah.

Differences among the four schools are ignored but Shi'as are not tolerated

Well-Wisher: For Allah's sake be fair. You have no reason to follow the four jurists except that some of them were learned men. You blindly follow them. You are led by the nose, and still you claim that your actions will be rewarded even though there are differences in fundamentals as well as in articles of practice among them.

We follow the orders of the family of the Holy Prophet, who were, according to the Prophet himself and to your own eminent ulama', most learned and you say we are infidels. You should admit that these hostilities are not due to differences in views. Their cause is that we love the family of the Prophet, and our opponents nurse a grudge against them.

So far as the differences in fundamentals and articles of practice are concerned there are many - among your four schools. Most of the verdicts of your Imams and jurists are contrary to the clear injunctions contained in the Holy Qur'an. But you never utter a word against those who pronounce such verdicts and those who act upon them. Yet when the Shi'as prostrate on pure dust, according to the ordinance of the Holy Qur'an, you call them infidels!

Verdicts by Sunni scholars in contradiction to Qur'anic

[injunctions](#)

Sheikh: Where have the Sunni scholars of jurisprudence and the four imams given verdicts in contradiction to the Holy Qur'an?

Well-Wisher: They have often given orders in contradiction to ordinances of the Holy Qur'an and against the unanimous view of the community. Your own ulama' have written a number of books on the differences among the four schools of law.

I advise you to read the illustrious book Masa'ilu'l-Khalif fi'l-fiqh by Sheikhu't-Ta'ifa Abu Ja'far Muhammad Ibn Hasan Ibn 'Ali Tusi, who has recorded all the differences of the jurists of Islam from the chapter Tahira (Cleanliness) to the chapter on Diyat (reprisals).

I will point out one of many examples of legal injunctions passed in contradiction to the Holy Qur'an.

Sheikh: Yes, give us an example of this.

[In absence of water ghusl and wuzu' one should perform tayammum](#)

You gentlemen are aware that ceremonial washing is an essential ritual of Islam. Depending on circumstances, one washes the entire body (ghusl) or part of it (wuzu').

"When you rise up to prayer, wash your faces and hands as far as the elbows." (5:6)

Accordingly, we should perform the ablution with pure water. When we do not have water, we should perform tayammum, according to the verse:

"And (if) you find not water then betake yourself to (pure) earth and wipe your faces and your hands." (4:43)

We should perform tayammum with pure earth. In the first case water for ablution is necessary. In the second case, water is not available, or if there is some other extenuating circumstance then, whether we are on a journey or at home, we should perform tayammum, wiping the hands and face with pure dust, in place of wuzu'. On this point all jurists of Islam are unanimous, whether they are Shi'as Ithna Asharis, Malikis, Shafi'is or Hanbalis.

[Abu Hanifa's verdict that if water is not available we can perform ghusl and wuzu' with Nabiz \(syrup of date\)](#)

But your greatest Imam, Abu Hanifa (most of whose verdicts are based on speculation) insists that while we are on a journey and if we cannot find water, we should perform ghusl and wuzu' with nabiz (date syrup). But everybody knows that nabiz is the juice of dates and it is not lawful to perform ablution with adulterated water.

The Holy Qur'an ordains that it is necessary for us to perform the ablution for ritual prayer

with pure water. If water is not available, we should perform tayammum. Imam A'zam Abu Hanifa says that we may perform ghusl or wuzu' using nabiz. This is a clear violation of the Qur'anic ordinance. On the other hand, Bukhari in his Sahih has written "It is not lawful to perform ablution with nabiz or an intoxicant."

Hafiz: I follow the Shafi'i school of law and fully agree with you on this point. If there is no water, we should perform tayammum, and it is not permissible to perform ablution with nabiz. This verdict has been ascribed to Imam Abu Hanifa on the basis of its general popularity.

Well-Wisher: Knowing the real fact you make this excuse. This verdict of Abu Hanifa has been consecutively narrated. I quote Fakhru'd-din Razi, who says in his commentary Mafatihul-Ghaib, vol.III, p.553, regarding the verse of tayammum, problem V, Shafi'i says that "Wuzu' using Nabiz (date juice) is not lawful, and Abu Hanifa says that it is lawful while one is on a journey." Also Ibn Rushd has recorded this verdict of Abu Hanifa in his book Hidayatu'l-Mujtahid.

Sheikh: How can you say that this verdict is contrary to the ordinance of the Qur'an? Some Hadith clearly prove it from the action of the Holy Prophet.

Well-Wisher: Can you cite any hadith supporting your point?

Sheikh: In a hadith which Abu Zaid, slave of Amr Ibn Harith, reports from Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud, the Holy Prophet said to him, on the night of the jinns (Lailatu'j-Jinn - the night when the Prophet took the oath of allegiance from the jinns-tr.): "Do you have some water?" He (Abu Zaid) said: "No, there is only a little nabiz." The Holy Prophet said: "The date is clean, and water is also clean." Saying this he performed the ablution.

There is another hadith which Abbas Ibn Walid Ibn Sabihu'l-Halal Damishqi reported from Marwan Ibn Muhammad Tahiri Damishqi who reported it from Abdullah Ibn Lahi'a, who reported it from Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud, who said:

"The Holy Prophet said to me on Lailatu'j-Jinn: "Do you have water with you?" I said: "No, but there is nabiz in the pail." Then the Holy Prophet said: "The date is clean, and the water is clean. Pour it on me." So I poured it on him, and he performed the ablution with it."

Obviously, the action of the Holy Prophet is an example for us to follow. No doctrine or argument is superior to his actions. It is for that reason that our Imam al-A'zam has approved its lawfulness.

Well-Wisher: Perhaps it would have been better, if you had remained silent. Now our Sunni brothers will know that their leaders were mistaken. They passed verdicts only on the basis of speculation.

First of all, let us examine who the narrators of this hadith were.

First, Abu Zaid, slave of Amr Ibn Harith, is not a known figure, and according to the traditionists, he is a rejected man as reported by Tirmidhi and others. Dhahabi in his Mizanu'l-I'tidal says: "This man is not known to us and this hadith, which is narrated from Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud, is not correct." Hakim says: "No other hadith is narrated by this unknown man."

Bukhari also designated him as an unreliable narrator of hadith. For this reason

distinguished ulama', like Qastalani and Sheikh Zakariyya Ansari, wrote in their commentaries on Sahih Bukhari that "wuzu' (ritual ablution) is not lawful with nabiz or intoxicants." They point out that the hadith referred to above is weak.

The second hadith is also unacceptable. First, no scholar, except Ibn Maja, narrated it in this way.

Second, prominent ulama' have not included it in their sunan because the chain of its reporters is faulty.

Dhahabi in his Mizanu'l-I'tiqad has quoted a number of statements showing that Abbas Ibn Walid is not reliable. Hence, critics and commentators have rejected him altogether. As for Marwan Ibn Muhammad Tahiri, he belonged to the misguided group of Marhaba. Ibn Hazm and Dhahabi have proved that he was an unreliable narrator of hadith.

Similarly, Abdullah Ibn Lahi'a has also been discredited by distinguished ulama' and commentators.

Therefore, when the chain of narrators of a hadith is of such a dubious nature that your own ulama' reject it, the hadith loses its value.

Third, on the basis of a hadith, which your ulama' have narrated from Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud, there was no one with the Holy Prophet on Lailatu'j-Jinn. Abu Dawud in his Sunan, chapter on Wuzu' and Tirmidhi in his Sahih, report from Al-Qama that Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud was asked: "Who among you was with the Holy Prophet on Lailatu'j-Jinn?" He said: "No one from among us was with him."

Fourth, Lailatu'j-Jinn occurred in Mecca prior to the Hijra (migration), while all the commentators say that the verse of tayammum was revealed in Medina. So this ordinance certainly annuls the previous order. It was for this reason that your great jurists, like Imam Shafi'i, Imam Malik, and others have declared it unlawful.

It is strange that the Sheikh puts forward a weak hadith as authoritative in the face of the Holy Qur'an and tries to prove Abu Hanifa's pronouncement correct.

Washing of the feet in wuzu' is against the Qur'anic ordinance

Apart from the accepted rules of wuzu' mentioned in the above verse, after washing the face and hands, a part of the head and the feet up to the ankles are to be wiped. The Holy verse clearly says: "And wipe a part of your heads and a part of your feet up to the ankles." But all your scholars of jurisprudence insist that the feet be washed, contradicting the clear ordinance of the Qur'an. There is a difference between washing and wiping.

Sheikh: There are a number of hadith which indicate that the feet are to be washed.

Well-Wisher: First, only hadith which conform with Qur'anic ordinances are acceptable.

Obviously, the revoking of an explicit Qur'anic verse by a lone report can never be lawful. The Holy verse clearly enjoins the wiping, not washing, of the feet. If you think a little more carefully you will find that the whole verse leads to the same point. It begins with the order "Wash your face and your hands."

The conjunction "and" denotes that after washing the face, we should also wash the hands. Similarly, in the second order: "and wipe a part of your head and a part of your feet", the wiping of the head and of the feet are joined by the conjunction "and." This clearly shows that after wiping of the head the feet must also be wiped. It goes without saying that washing cannot be substituted by wiping.

So just as the washing of the face and hands is necessary, the wiping of the head and feet is also necessary. It is inadmissible that one be wiped and the other washed. Otherwise, the conjunction and would be meaningless.

Moreover, apart from these clear meanings, Islamic law does not contain harsh and austere orders. Washing the feet is more difficult than wiping them. The religious order is intended to make the performance of wuzu' easy, as the tone of the verse also suggests.

Imam Fakhru'd-din Razi, an eminent Sunni commentator, makes a detailed argument concerning the compulsory nature of wiping the feet in wuzu'. You would benefit from studying it.

Wiping over the socks against the explicit ordinance of the Holy Qur'an

Even more strange than washing the feet is the wiping over stockings. There are differences among the Sunni jurists whether it may be done while on a journey or at home.

This order is contrary to the Qur'anic injunction which stipulates that we are to wipe the feet and not the socks. This order is also opposed to the former order of washing the feet. If wiping the feet is not lawful, why have they made wiping over the socks lawful?

Sheikh: There are many hadith which show that the Prophet wiped the socks. Accordingly, the jurists considered it as proof of the lawfulness of this act.

Well-Wisher: I have repeatedly submitted that, according to the order of the Prophet a hadith alleged to have been reported from him which does not conform to the Holy Qur'an is to be rejected. The forgers and political jugglers have fabricated many hadith. Accordingly, your own prominent ulama' have rejected such hadith.

Besides the fact that these hadith are incompatible with the clear ordinance of the Holy Qur'an, they are also mutually contradictory. Your own great ulama' have accepted this fact. For instance, the great sage, Ibn Rushd Andalusi, in his *Badayatu'l-Mujtahid wa Nihayatu'l-Muqtasid*, vol. I, pp.15 and 16, says about this difference:

"The reason that they differ is that the reports about them are opposed to each other." In another place he says: "The reason that they differ is that the reports about them are inconsistent."

Hence, to base an argument on reports and hadith which are mutually contradictory and also clearly opposed to Qur'anic injunctions is quite absurd. You know that among the hadith which are contradictory to each other, only those which are compatible with the Holy Qur'an are acceptable. If any hadith is opposed to the Holy Qur'an it is to be rejected outright.

The wiping over the turban is against the Quranic ordinance

The verse clearly states "And wipes part of your heads" (after the washing of the face and the hands). On the basis of this Qur'anic injunction, the Shi'as jurists, following their Imams, insist that the head itself is to be wiped in performing 'wuzu'. The Shafi'i, Maliki, and Hanafi jurists concur.

But Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal, Ishaq, Thawri, and Quza'i have said that wiping over the turban is lawful. This has been reported by Imam Fakhru'd-din Razi in his Tafsir al-Kabir. Every sensible person knows that wiping the turban and wiping the head are quite different.

Shi'as alone blamed for such differences

There are other serious differences among your jurists and among the four schools of law. Although most of them are clearly inconsistent with Qur'anic injunctions, you do not find fault with one another. Every one of them is free to maintain his point of view.

You do not call Abu Hanifa and the Hanafis polytheists, when they allow wuzu to be performed with nabiz (fermented date liquor), nor do you condemn self-contradictory interpretation of laws which violate Qur'anic ordinances. But you object to Shi'as, who follow the progeny of the Holy Prophet. In fact, you call the followers of the exalted family, Rafizis and infidels! You have repeatedly said on previous nights that the practices of the Shi'as prove that they are polytheists.

You asked why we do not offer prayers like Muslims. We offer the same prayers that you and all other Muslims do: two units (rak'ats) of fajr (the morning prayer), four rak'ats of zuhr (the noon prayer), four rak'ats of asr (the afternoon prayer), three rak'ats of maghrib (the sunset prayer), and four rak'ats of 'isha (the evening prayer).

As for the differences in the articles of practice, they are present in abundance in all the sects of Islam. For example, there is a clear difference between Abu'l-Hasan Ash'ari and Wasil Ibn Ata in the fundamentals and articles of practice. Also your four imams (Abu Hanifa, Malik, Shafi'i, and Ahmad Hanbal) and other great jurists like Hasan, Dawud, Kathir, Abu Sur, Quza'i, Sufyan Thawri, Hasan Basri and Qasim Ibn Salam, etc. have differences among them.

In the same way, the orders of the Holy Imams of the Ahlul Bayt differ from the statements of your jurists. If the legal interpretations of the jurists and their different opinions can be criticized, why should the same criticism not be made against the different sects of Sunnis?

According to Sunni ulama' prostration on dry excrement and dung is lawful

Many Sunni ulama' accept legal interpretations which contradict the explicit ordinance of the Holy Qur'an, and yet they offer lame interpretations to clear ordinances. Other jurists give an opposite opinion. Still, you do not regard their interpretation or practice as infidelity.

But in regard to our performance of sajda (prostration), you raise loud objections, saying

that the Shi'as are idol worshipers, while you ignore the pronouncement of your own ulama' that prostration on dry excrement is lawful.

Prostration on floor coverings instead of the ground is against Qur'anic injunction

The legal decisions of the Shi'as jurists, following the Holy Imams, are clearly in accordance with the ordinances of the Holy Qur'an. For instance, your jurists consider wool, cotton, silk, and other floor coverings the same as earth. But it is obvious that these coverings are not the earth.

But the Shi'as, in obedience to their Imams of the Ahlul Bayt of the Holy Prophet say: "Prostration is not lawful on any thing except the earth or those things which grow from the earth and are not used for eating or wearing."

For this you assail them and call them polytheists. On the other hand, you do not call prostration on dry excrement polytheism. It is quite evident that prostrating on the earth (as ordained by Allah) and prostrating on floor coverings are quite different things.

Sheikh: You people perform the sajda (prostration) on pieces of earth from Karbala. You keep the small blocks of earth from that land. They are like idols, and you consider prostration on them compulsory. Of course, this performance is against the principles and practices of Muslims.

Well-Wisher: It has become your second nature to follow your elders blindly, though it does not befit a just man like you to say that the pure dust of Karbala is like an idol.

Respected friend! Criticism of any belief must be based on proof. If you would consult the Shi'as books of theology, you would find the answer to your criticism, and you would not mislead our Sunni brothers with false objections.

Shi'as do not consider prostration on dust of Karbala compulsory

If you can show us in any of our commentaries a single hadith or pronouncement that indicates prostration on the dust of Karbala is compulsory, we shall accept all your statements as correct. In fact, in all our books of religious practices, there are clear instructions that, according to the Qur'anic ordinance, prostration must be performed on pure earth.

This includes dust, stone, sand and grass, provided that it is not a mineral. Moreover, prostration may be performed on those things which grow from the earth, provided that they are not used for food or worn.

Sheikh: Then why do you regularly keep small blocks of dust from Karbala with you and perform prostration on them at the time of the ritual prayer?

Shi'as keep sajdagahs (tablets of earth) for

prostration during prayers

Well-Wisher: Prostration on clean earth is compulsory. The ritual prayer is generally offered in houses furnished with carpets. Even if the carpets are removed, the earth under them generally contains lime and other substances on which prostration is not permitted.

Therefore, we keep a piece of earth with us so that we may prostrate on it. (Many Shi'as Mujtahids consider chalk, plaster, lime and mined stones such as agate to be permissible, in the absence of the preferable substances, but nevertheless they exclude actual ores and refined minerals. tr.)

Sheikh: What we notice is that all the Shi'as have tablets of the soil of Karbala and consider performance of sajda compulsory on it.

Why we prostrate on the soil of Karbala

Well-Wisher: It is true that we perform the sajda on the dust of Karbala, but we do not consider it compulsory. In accordance with the instructions given in our books of jurisprudence, we consider sajda compulsory on clean earth. However, according to the Ahlul Bayt, prostration on the pure earth of Husain's burial place (Karbala) is preferable.

It is a pity that some people maliciously insist that the Shi'as worship Husain. They support their view by pointing out that Shi'as perform their prostrations on soil taken from Karbala. In fact we never worship Husain, 'Ali, or Muhammad.

We worship only Allah, and it is in accordance with Allah's order that we perform sajda only on pure earth. Our prostration is not for Husain. But according to the instructions of the infallible Imams of the progeny of the Holy Prophet, prostration on the clean soil of Karbala leads to greater recompense for us, but it is not compulsory.

Sheikh: How can you claim that the earth of Karbala is possessed of special properties so that it deserves preference to other soil?

Characteristics of soil of Karbala

Well-Wisher: First, it is a fact that different places have different properties. Every piece of earth has special properties which only expert geologists know. Nonspecialists don't understand these things.

Second, the special characteristics of the soil of Karbala were known before the time of the Holy Imams. It was an object of special attention during the time of the Holy Prophet also, as had been recorded in authentic books of your own ulama'.

In Khasa'isu'l-Kubra, by Jalalu'd-din Suyuti, a number of hadith of Ummu'l-Mu'minin Ummi Salma, Ummu'l-Mu'minin A'ysha, Ummu'l-Fazl, Ibn Abbas, and Anas Ibn Malik, etc. about the soil of Karbala have been narrated by your prominent ulama' and reliable reporters, like Abu Nu'aim Ispahani, Baihaqi, and Hakim.

A report says: I saw Husain sitting in the lap of his grandfather, the Holy Prophet, who had a red block of soil in his hand. The Holy Prophet was kissing the dust and weeping. I asked him what that soil was.

The Holy Prophet said: "Gabriel has informed me that my son, this Husain, will be murdered in Iraq. He has brought this earth for me from that land. I am weeping for the suffering that will befall my Husain."

Then the Holy Prophet handed the dust to Umm Salma and said to her: "When you see this soil turn into blood, you will know that my Husain has been slaughtered."

Umm Salma kept the soil in a bottle and kept watch over it until she saw on the Day of Ashura, 61 A.H. that it turned to blood. Then she knew that Husain ibn 'Ali had been martyred.

It is recorded by your prominent ulama' and by Shi'as jurists that the Prophet and the Imams paid special attention to the pure soil of Karbala. After the martyrdom of Imam Husain, Imam Sayyidu's-Sajidin Zainu'l-Abidin 'Ali Ibn Husain picked some up, declared it to be sacred dust, and kept it in a bag. The Holy Imam used to perform his prostrations on it and made a tasbih out of it, and recited Allah's praises on it.

After him all the succeeding Imams considered that soil sacred and made tasbihs out of it and a small block to prostrate on. They persuaded the Shi'as to perform prostrations on them, with the understanding that it was not compulsory, but with a view to achieving greater recompense. The Holy Imams insisted that prostration before Allah must be on clean earth only and that it was preferable if it was performed on that earth of Karbala.

The great scholar, Abu Ja'far Muhammad Ibn Hasan Tusi, reports in his Misbahu'l-Mutahajjid that Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq kept a little soil from Imam Husain's tomb in a yellow cloth which he opened at the time of prayers and performed his prostrations on it.

Shi'as for a long time have kept this earth with them. Then, fearing it might be desecrated, they kneaded it into small tablets or pieces, which are now called mohr. We consider it sacred and during prayers we prostrate on it not as a compulsory act but in view of its special nature. Otherwise, when we have no pure soil with us, we prostrate on clean earth, or clean rock. In this way our compulsory act is performed.

We are astonished at the behavior of your ulama', who do not find fault with the legal pronouncements of the four schools of Sunni law. That is, if Imam A'zam says that in the absence of water ablution should be performed with nabiz, the Shafi'is, Malikis and Hanbalis do not object to it. If Imam Ahmad Hanbal believes in the visibility of Allah or considers it lawful to wipe water over the turban in the ritual ablution, the ulama' of the other sects do not criticize him.

Similarly, they do not condemn other unique pronouncements like that of joining in wedlock with young boys while on a journey, prostration on dung or any polluted object, or copulation with mothers using a cloth wrapper.

But when we say that the progeny of the Holy Prophet have said that prostrating on the earth of Karbala is praiseworthy, you say that Shi'as are polytheists.

Old age is no criterion for the caliphate

Now I will reply to your point. Talking about advanced age and consensus, you said that because of his age, Abu Bakr was entitled to preference. Even after ten nights, during which I have disproven your argument regarding "consensus" and preference based on age,

you raise the issues again as if nothing has been said. Nevertheless, I will not leave you unanswered.

'Ali appointed for conveyance of verses of sura bara'a (the immunity) of the holy Qur'an

You have argued that Abu Bakr deserved priority because of his age and political astuteness. But how is it that some people decided that for a great cause it was necessary for a man to be old and politically astute, but Allah and His Prophet did not understand this. For conveying the first forty verses of Bara'a to the people, the Holy Prophet deposed Abu Bakr and sent the young 'Ali in his place.

Nawab: Respected Sir! Please don't leave this point vague. Let us know for what purpose Abu Bakr was deposed and 'Ali appointed in his place. When I asked these people (pointing to his ulama') about it, they gave only a vague answer, saying that it was an unimportant matter. Please explain this matter.

Well-Wisher: The Muslim community, including the ulama' and historians of both sects (Shi'as and Sunnis), acknowledge the fact that when the initial verses of the Sura of Bara'a (The Immunity) were revealed in condemnation of the idol worshipers, the Holy Prophet called Abu Bakr and gave him the verses, ordering him to take them to Mecca and to recite them to the people of Mecca during the hajj.

Abu Bakr had gone only a short distance when Gabriel appeared and said: "Prophet of Allah! Allah sends His compliments to you and says that the matter of the Holy Qur'an should be conveyed either by the Holy Prophet himself or by one who is of him."

Accordingly, the Holy Prophet called 'Ali and said to him: "Overtake Abu Bakr and take the verses of Bara'a from him and read them to the idol worshipers of Mecca."

'Ali set out immediately. He met Abu Bakr at Dhu'l-Halifa and conveyed the message of the Holy Prophet. He took the verses from Abu Bakr and, reaching Mecca, read them to the assembly of the people.

Nawab: Has this affair been recorded in our authentic books?

Well-Wisher: I have just told you that the whole community is unanimous on this point. I will give you some references at present so that when you think over the matter, you may know that it was a very significant affair.

The following eminent writers have reported this matter in their books and generally testified to its veracity:

Bukhari in Sahih, parts IV and V; Abdi in Jam' al-Bainu's-Sihahi's-Sitta, part II; Baihaqi in Sunan, pp.9 and 224; Tirmidhi in Jam'i, vol.II, p.135; Abu Dawud in Sunan; Khawarizmi in Manaqib; Shukani in Tafsir, vol.II, p.319; Ibn Maghazili in Faqih al-Shafi'i in his Faza'il; Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i in Matalibu's-Su'ul, p.17; Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, ch.18; Muhibu'd-din Tabari in Riyazu'n-Nazara, p.147 and Dhakha'iru'l-Uquba, p.69; Sibti Ibn Jauzi in Tadhkira Khawasu'l-Umma, p.22, Imam Abdu'r-Rahman Nisa'i (one of the Imams of Siha) in Khasa'isu'l-Alawi, p.14 (has reported six hadith relating to this point); Ibn Kathir in Ta'rikh al-Kabir, vol.V, p.38 and vol.VII, p.357;

Ibn Hajar Asqalani in Isanaba, vol.II, p.509; Jalalu'd-din Suyuti in Durru'l-Mansur, vol.III, p.208 (in commentary on the first verse of Bara'a); Tabari in Jam'u'l-Bayan, vol.X, p.41, (in commentary on Bara'a); Imam Tha'labi in Tafsir al-Kashfu'l-bayan; Ibn Kathir in Tafsir, vol.II, p.333; Alusi in Ruha'l-Ma'ani, v. III, p.268; the fanatic, Ibn Hajar Makki in Sawa'iq, p.19; Haithami in Majma'u'z-Zawa'id, v.VII, p.29;

Muhammad Ibn Ganji Shafi'i in Kifayatu't-Talib, p.125, ch.62 (reporting from Abi Bakr and Hafiz Abi Nu'aim and from Musnad of Hafiz Damishqi as reported by Abi Nu'aim in different ways); Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in Musnad, v.I, pp.3 and 151, v.III, p.283, and v.IV, pp.164-165; Hakim in Mustadrak, v.II, Kitab Maghazi, p.51 and in v.II of the same book, p.331; Mulla 'Ali Muttaqi in Kanzu'l-'Ummal, v.I, pp.246 to 249 and Faza'il-i-'Ali v.VI, p.154.

Reason for 'Ali's appointment

Sayyid Abdu'l-Hayy: Why didn't the Holy Prophet, whose actions were from Allah, entrust this mission to 'Ali in the beginning?

Well-Wisher: Since no reason for this fact has been recorded, we do not know. But my impression is that this change was intended to show the superiority of 'Ali. At any rate, it certainly disproves the claim that age or political experiences were reasons for excluding 'Ali from the caliphate.

If 'Ali had been appointed to this post in the beginning, it would have appeared an ordinary matter, and would not have been possible for us to prove to you 'Ali's superiority. If Abu Bakr's age and political ability proved his superiority, he should not have been recalled from such a mission. But the fact is that to convey the message of prophethood is the work of the Prophet or his caliph.

Accompanying report of Abu Bakr

Sayyid: According to some reports, Abu Huraira says that 'Ali had been ordered to go to Mecca along with Abu Bakr to teach the people the rituals of Hajj. 'Ali was to read the verses of Bara'a to the people. Conveying the message of prophethood in this way indicated that they were of equal rank.

Well-Wisher: First, this is a forged report of the followers of Abu Bakr. Others have not narrated it. Second, the whole community agreed that Abu Bakr was called back and replaced by 'Ali. This fact has been consecutively reported in the authentic books of both sects.

Obviously, the consensus of the whole community is that we should rely on the frequently reported and authentic hadith. If there is a single report at variance with authentic hadith, we should reject it.

This view is held by all men of principles and by the traditionists. 'Ali's appointment, Abu Bakr's return in a sad and desperate state, the Holy Prophet's consoling him and satisfying him that it was Allah's will - all these are generally acknowledged facts.

Another proof that age is no criterion for the

caliphate

There is another proof that the right of priority has no relation to age. The right of preference is achieved through wisdom and piety. Whoever excels in knowledge and piety shall deserve preference. The Holy Prophet said: "All men are dead, but the men of learning are alive."

Accordingly, the Holy Prophet gave 'Ali first place among the Companions and said: "'Ali is the gate of knowledge." Evidently the Holy Prophet's gate of knowledge must supersede others.

Of course the other companions of the Holy Prophet who remained obedient to him were all virtuous people. We never deny the virtuous position of the companions, but their merits can bear no comparison to the merits of the Holy Prophet's gate of knowledge.

Holy Prophet sent 'Ali to Yemen

Your prominent ulama' have written in detail about 'Ali being sent to Yemen to guide its people. Imam Abdu'r-Rahman Nisa'i has recorded six hadith concerning this point, in his Khasa'isu'l-Alawi.

Also Abu'l-Qasim Husain Ibn Muhammad Raghayb Ispahani, in his Mahadhiratu'l-Udaba, v.II, p.212 and others, have reported that when the Holy Prophet commissioned 'Ali to go to Yemen, 'Ali pleaded that he was young and felt some reluctance in being placed over old men of the tribe. The Holy Prophet replied: "Certainly Allah will guide your heart and give strength to your tongue."

If age was a requirement for preferment, why then did the Holy Prophet in the presence of older distinguished companions, like Abu Bakr, send Hazrat 'Ali to Yemen to guide the people there?

After the Holy Prophet 'Ali was the guide of the community

Addressing the Holy Prophet Muhammad, Allah says in the Holy Qur'an: "You are only a warner and (there is) a guide for every people." (13:7)

Imam Tha'labi, in his Tafsir al-Kashfu'l-Bayan; Muhammad Ibn Jarir Tabari in his Tafsir; Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i, in Kifayatu't-Talib, ch.62, from Ta'rikh al-Ibn Asakir; Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda end of ch. 26 from Tha'labi, Hamwaini, Hakim, Abu'l-Qasim Haskani, Ibn Sabbagh Maliki, Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamdani and the Manaqib of Khawarizmi, reporting on the authority of Ibn Abbas, Amiru'l-Mu'minin and Abu Buraid Aslami in different words, have narrated eleven hadith whose main point is that, when the above verse was revealed, the Holy Prophet, putting his hand on his own chest, said: "I am the warner." Then, putting his hand on 'Ali's chest, he said: "After me you are the guide of the community. Those who receive guidance from you will be the guided ones."

Conspiracies of enemies

You also said that even after 25 years, when he was caliph, it was due to his lack of experience in politics that disturbances and bloodshed resulted. I'm not sure what you mean by politics. If politics means deceitfulness, conspiring, and intermingling right and wrong (as the people in all ages have done in order to secure power), I would acknowledge that 'Ali was far removed from such politics. To me politics means justice and the exercise of rightful authority.

'Ali hated corrupt politics

'Ali who was an embodiment of justice, kept aloof from corrupt politics. As I said earlier, when Amiru'l-Mu'minin assumed the apparent caliphate, he immediately deposed all former officials and servants.

Abdullah Ibn Abbas (his cousin) and others said: "It would be better if you would postpone this order for a few days, so that the officials and governors of the regions accept your caliphate. Then you might dismiss them."

The Holy Imam said: "You have given me counsel regarding the politics of this matter. But you do not understand that if I am swayed by what is called 'politics' and allow oppressive rulers to remain at their posts, even though it would be for a short time, I would be answerable to Allah for that period. At the time of questioning, I would be accountable for that. This cannot be expected of 'Ali."

In order to restore justice 'Ali immediately ordered the dismissal of the oppressive rulers. This measure led to the opposition of Mu'awiya, Talha, Zubair, and others who staged a revolt and caused great tumult and bloodshed in the country.

Respected gentlemen! You misunderstand the issue. Since you have not inquired into the matter, you are misled by propagandists who claim that the rebellion during 'Ali's caliphate was due to his lack of knowledge of politics. No. There were other factors at work.

Rebellion during Amiru'l-mu'minin's caliphate was due to enmity against him

First, for 25 years people had been encouraged to oppose 'Ali. It was therefore difficult for them to accept his vicegerency and caliphate or to acknowledge his exalted rank. An example of this opposition occurred on the first day of the caliphate. A nobleman entered the gate of the mosque and, seeing the Imam on the pulpit, shouted: "May that eye be blinded which sees 'Ali on the pulpit instead of Caliph 'Umar!"

Second, it was not possible for worldly men to accept 'Ali's justice, particularly since their self-indulgence had been given a free rein during the caliphate of Uthman. Hence, they rose against him, so that somebody who could satisfy their desires might assume power. Their wishes were fulfilled during the caliphate of Mu'awiya.

Accordingly, Talha and Zubair at first swore allegiance to 'Ali, but when their demands for authority were not satisfied, they broke their allegiance and openly opposed him in the Battle of the Camel.

A'ysha was largely responsible for the revolt against 'Ali

Third, history tells us who the real instigator was of the disturbances from the beginning of the caliphate. Was it any other than Ummu'l-Mu'minin A'ysha? Was it not A'ysha who, according to the statements of both Sunni and Shi'as traditionists, mounted on a camel (against the express ordinance of Allah and His Holy Prophet that she should stay in her house) reached Basra and provoked a large battle?

You claim that internecine battles were due to 'Ali's lack of political insight. This is a highly misleading statement. If A'ysha had not revolted against him, no one would have had the courage to oppose 'Ali, after the Holy Prophet had clearly declared: "To fight against 'Ali is to fight against me." A'ysha incited the people to fight against 'Ali.

'Ali's battles of Jamal, Siffin, and Nahrwan were like the battles of the Holy Prophet against the infidels

'Ali's battles against the enemies and hypocrites at Basra, Siffin, and Nahrwan were like the battles of the Holy Prophet against the infidels.

Sheikh: How were the battles against the Muslims like the battles against the infidels?

Well-Wisher: Your illustrious ulama', like Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in his Musnad; Sibte Ibn Jauzi in Tadhkira; Sulayman Balkhi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda; Imam Abdu'r-Rahman Nisa'i in Khasa'isu'l-Alawi; Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i in Matalibu's-Su'ul; Muhammad Ibn Talha Ganji Shafi'i in Kifayatu't-Talib, ch. 37, and Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, v.I, p.67, have reported that the Holy Prophet prophesied 'Ali's battles against the "Nakisin", "Qasitin", and "Mariqin", among whom the "Nakisin" meant Talha, Zubair and their companions; "Qasitin" meant Mu'awiya and his followers; and "Mariqin" meant the Kharijis (Secessionists) of Nahrwan.

All of them were rebels whose slaughter was permissible and the Holy Prophet ordered the same punishment for them when he foretold the fighting of those battles.

Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in his Kifayatu't-Talib, ch.37, has reported a hadith from Sa'id Ibn Jabir, who reported it from Ibn Abbas that the Prophet said to Umm Salma: "This is 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib. His flesh is my flesh, his blood is my blood, and he is to me what Aaron was to Moses except that there will be no prophet after me.

Umm Salma, this 'Ali is the chief of the believers, the chief of the Muslims, the repository of my knowledge, my successor, and the gate of knowledge. He is my brother in this world and in the hereafter; he is with me in the most exalted place; he will fight against the 'Nakisin,' 'Qasitin,' and 'Mariqin.'"

After citing this hadith Muhammad Ibn Yusuf says that this hadith proves that the Holy Prophet had informed 'Ali about the battles against those three groups and that he had ordered 'Ali to fight against the three groups.

Makhnaf Ibn Salim is reported to have said that when Abu Ayyub Ansari (who was a distinguished companion of the Holy Prophet) was going with an army to fight in the battle, he said: "Abu Ayyub! How strange of you!

You are the same man who fought against the polytheists on the side of the Holy Prophet, but now you are bent upon fighting against Muslims!" Then Abu Ayyub said: "The Holy Prophet ordered me to fight against the three groups: they are the Nakisin, the Qasitin, and the Mariqin."

Imam Abu Abdu'r-Rahman Nisa'i in Khasa'isu'l-Alawi, Hadith 155, reporting from Abu Sa'id Khadiri and Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in his Yanabi, p.59, (ch.II) from Jam'u'l-Fawa'id says that Abu Sa'id said: "We were sitting with the companions, waiting for the Holy Prophet. When the Holy Prophet came towards us, we saw that his shoe buckle was broken. He tossed his shoe to 'Ali, who began mending it.

Then the Holy Prophet said: 'Verily, there is one among you who shall fight in defense of the proper interpretation of the Holy Qur'an as I have fought (against the infidels).'

Then Abu Bakr said: 'I am that man?'

The Holy Prophet said, 'No!'

Then 'Umar said: 'Is it I?'

The Holy Prophet said: 'No! It is the man who is mending my shoes.' "

This hadith shows that 'Ali's battles were fought for the proper interpretation of the Holy Qur'an. It follows, therefore, that the civil disruptions of 'Ali's caliphate were not due to political weakness of Amiru'l-Mu'minin but were due to the enmity of the opponents.

After the holy prophet, 'Ali was the greatest statesman

You gentlemen might find it enlightening to study the instructions 'Ali sent to his governors and military and civil officers. For instance, the orders and instructions which he sent to Malik Ashtar and Muhammad Ibn Abu Bakr for the governance of Egypt, to Uthman Ibn Hunaif and Abdullah Ibn Abbas of Basra, and to Qutham Ibn Abbas for the administration of Mecca are models of excellent public administration as well as social justice. These documents are part of the Nahju'l-Balagha.

'Ali possessed knowledge of the unseen world

This fact has been acknowledged by both followers of 'Ali and enemies. The Holy Imam was Imamu'l-Muttaqin (chief of the pious). He had complete knowledge of the meaning of the Holy Qur'an. Moreover, he possessed knowledge of the unseen world.

Sheikh: I have not followed your vague sentence that 'Ali possessed knowledge of the unseen world. Kindly explain it.

Well-Wisher: There is nothing vague in it. To be aware of the unseen means to know the secrets of the universe, which were known through divine favor by all the prophets and their vicegerents? Each was given as much knowledge of the unseen as Allah considered necessary for them to deliver his message. After the Holy Prophet, Amiru'l-Mu'minin was endowed with such knowledge.

Sheikh: I never expected that you would uphold the views of the fanatic Shi'as. This praise

is so excessive that even the praised one would not accept it. To have knowledge of the unseen is an attribute peculiar to Allah alone, none of His creatures can have any concern with it.

Well-Wisher: Believing that the great prophets, their vicegerents, and other exalted servants of Allah possessed knowledge of the unseen has nothing to do with fanaticism. Rather, it was one of their merits, which showed their submission to Allah. We have clear proof of this fact from hadith and the Holy Qur'an.

Is knowledge of the unseen restricted to Allah?

Sheikh: The Holy Qur'an contradicts your statement.

Well-Wisher: Can you recite those verses which contradict my statement?

Sheikh: There are many verses in the Holy Qur'an, which support my view. For instance, the Holy Qur'an says:

"And with Him are the keys of the unseen treasures - none knows them but He; and He knows what is in the land and the sea; and there falls not a leaf but He knows it, nor a grain in the darkness of the earth, nor anything green nor dry but (it is all) in a clear book." (6:59)

This is the most convincing evidence that no one except Allah has knowledge of the unseen. If somebody believes in any one else having knowledge of the unseen, he has made one of His creatures an associate in the attributes of Allah.

You claim that 'Ali was aware of the unseen. This means that apart from your making him an associate in the attributes of Allah, you have made his rank higher than that of the Holy Prophet. The Holy Prophet repeatedly said: "I am a man like you. Allah alone knows the unseen." The Holy Prophet clearly expressed his lack of knowledge of the unseen.

Have you read the verse of the Holy Qur'an, which says:

"Say: I am only a mortal like you; it is revealed to me that your God is one God." (18:110)

That is, the only difference between you and me is that revelation from Allah comes to me.

At another place Allah says:

"Say: I do not control any benefit or harm for my own soul except as Allah please; and had I known the unseen I would have had much of good and no evil would have touched me; I am nothing but a warner and the giver of good news to a people who believe." (7:188)

And again:

"And I say not to you that with me are the treasures of Allah and I know not the unseen." (11:31)

Allah says again:

"Say: No one in the heavens or in the earth know the unseen but Allah: And they know not when they shall be raised." (2:65)

The Holy Prophet himself admitted that he did not know the unseen and that its knowledge was peculiar to Allah. How can you claim that 'Ali had such knowledge?

Your belief is an attempt to assert 'Ali's superiority to the Holy Prophet. Doesn't the Holy Qur'an say:

"Nor is Allah going to make you acquainted with the unseen...." (3:179)

On what principle do you believe that anyone but Allah has knowledge of the unseen?

Well-Wisher: The preface to your statement is correct. But the conclusion you have drawn is faulty. You have said that the Knower of the unseen is Allah; that the keys of the unseen are with Allah Almighty; and that according to the last verse of the Sura al-Kahf (The Cave), the last of the Prophets, all other prophets, the vicegerents, and the Holy Imams were similar to other human beings.

In their physical structure they were created like all others. All these things are true, and the Shi'as sect accepts them all. Also, the verses you have recited are perfectly true in their proper context.

But the words "the Holy Prophet" from the sura Hud refer to the Prophet Noah. Verse 50 of the sura of al-An'am (The Cattle) refers to our exalted Prophet. When the infidels asked him why there were no signs of his having treasures of God or Knowledge of the unseen, this was revealed:

"Say I do not say to you 'I have with me the treasures of Allah, nor do I know the unseen, nor do I say to you that I am an angel; I do not follow aught save what is revealed to me.'" (6:50)

This verse was in response to the ignorant assumption that the Prophet's actions could be influenced by worldly considerations. As for the knowledge of the unseen, we believe that the prophets and their vicegerents possessed it. I do not associate them with Allah's attributes.

But this gift is part of wahi and ilham (revelation and inspiration from Allah) which removed the curtains of ignorance from their sight and disclosed realities to them. I shall explain this in detail.

Knowledge is of two kinds - dhati (self-existent) and arzi (acquired)

We Shi'as of the Imamiyya sect believe that knowledge is of two kinds: Dhati and Arzi.

Dhati, or self-existent knowledge, is peculiar to Allah. We can acknowledge it but cannot comprehend its reality. In whatever way we might try to explain it, self-existent knowledge is beyond the comprehension of human beings.

Arzi, or acquired knowledge, is that which is not intrinsically present in man, whether he is a prophet or not. He is benefited by it later. This knowledge too is of two kinds: tahsili and

ladunni.

Tahsili is the knowledge acquired through study and experience. If a student pursues the normal course of education, for instance, he goes to school and learns from his teacher. If Allah wills, he will acquire knowledge according to his labor and the time that he spends in learning.

Ladunni refers to that knowledge which man receives directly from Allah. He does not learn it through letters and words but receives it directly from the All-Beneficent. Allah says in the Holy Qur'an:

"And whom we had taught knowledge from ourselves." (18:65)

Shi'as do not claim that knowledge of the unseen was self-existent in the Holy Prophet or the Imams or that they understood the unseen as Allah Almighty does. What we say is that Allah is not confined or limited. He can give knowledge and power to anyone He likes. Sometimes He gives knowledge to man by means of a teacher and sometimes directly from Himself. This directly-bestowed knowledge is called the knowledge of the unseen.

Sheikh: Your first statement is correct, but the divine will does not allow such unnatural things as granting a man the knowledge of the unseen directly, that is, without the agency of a teacher.

Well-Wisher: No, you and your friends are mistaken. In fact, you often unknowingly contradict most of your own eminent scholars. Allah bestowed upon all His prophets and their successors knowledge of the unseen. Whatever was required for them to perform their mission?

Sheikh: In the face of these verses of the Holy Qur'an, which explicitly reject the idea of man's knowledge of the unseen, what evidence do you have to support your point?

Well-Wisher: We are not opposed to the verses of the Holy Qur'an. Every verse of the Holy Qur'an was revealed for some particular purpose, which was, according to the circumstances, sometimes negative and sometimes positive.

That is why it is said that among the verses of the Holy Qur'an one verse strengthens another. Because the unbelievers often demanded miracles from the Holy Prophet, the negative verses cited above were revealed. In order to prove the real objective, positive verses were also revealed so that the position might be clear.

Qur'anic evidence that prophets possessed knowledge of the unseen

Sheikh: This is very strange. You say that there are positive evidences in the Holy Qur'an that the prophets possessed knowledge of the unseen. Kindly recite these verses.

Well-Wisher: Do not feel astonished. You know them.

Allah Almighty says:

"The Knower of the unseen! So He does not reveal His secrets to any except to him whom He chooses as an apostle; for surely he makes a guard to march

before him and after him, so that He may know that they have truly delivered the message of their Lord, and He encompasses what is with them, and He records the number of all things." (72:26-28)

This verse shows that the exalted messengers of Allah who are endowed with the knowledge of the unseen are an exception.

Second, the verse of the sura of the Family of Imran, part of which you recited, proves my point. The whole verse reads as follows:

"Nor is Allah going to acquaint you with the unseen, but Allah chooses of His apostles whom He pleases; therefore believe in Allah and His apostles; and if you believe and guard (against evil), then you shall have a great reward." (3:179)

Both these verses clearly show that the messengers of Allah were given knowledge of the unseen. If no one except Allah possessed knowledge of the unseen, the clause "chooses of His apostles whom He pleases" would be meaningless.

Allah says in the sura of Hud:

"These are announcements relating to the unseen which We reveal to you; you did not know them - (neither) you nor your people - before this; therefore be patient; surely the end is for those who guard (against evil)." (11:49)

In the sura of The Counsel He says:

"And thus did We reveal to you an inspired book by Our command. You did not know what the Book was, nor (what) the faith (was), but We made it a light, guiding thereby whom We please of Our servants." (42:52)

If knowledge of the unseen did not exist in the world, how did the prophets disclose unknown things and tell people about their (the People's) private lives? Is it not in the Holy Qur'an what Jesus said to the Bani Israel?

"And I will declare to you what you eat and what you store up in your houses."(3:49)

If I cite all the verses of the Holy Qur'an, which support this fact, it would take a long time. This much seems sufficient.

Sheikh: Such statements encourage the soothsayers, diviners, palmists, astrologers, and other cheats who deceive the people and fill their own pockets with money.

Claims for knowledge of the unseen through other means are false

Well-Wisher: Belief in truth does not lead to bad results. It is people's ignorance which victimizes them. If Muslims followed the possessor of knowledge, according to the instructions of the Holy Prophet, in particular, if they had not forsaken the gate of knowledge from the very beginning, they would not have fallen victim to wicked people.

The Holy Qur'an clearly says "***Whomsoever He chooseth from the Prophets.***" The word

"prophet" clearly indicates that there are chosen servants of Allah who receive knowledge of the unseen directly from Him, without having to learn it through the usual means.

If any man who is not a prophet or Imam claims that he can predict the unseen through astrology, palmistry, or casting lots to tell fortunes, he is a liar. The true Muslims, who follow the Holy Qur'an never believe in such people, nor do they fall prey to their deceit because they know that they should not follow any but the Holy Qur'an and the bearers and commentators of the Holy Qur'an that is, the Holy Prophet Muhammad and his progeny, who are analogous to the Qur'an.

In short, if anyone except the Holy Prophet and his pure successors claims that he has knowledge of the unseen and says that he can foretell future events he is decidedly an imposter, whatever way he may adopt.

Vicegerents of prophets also had knowledge of the unseen

Sheikh: Since the prophets received divine revelations, they had, according to your statement, knowledge of the unseen. But was 'Ali also a prophet? Or was he associated in the affairs of prophethood through which he knew the unseen?

Well-Wisher: First, why are you misleading us by using the words "according to your statement"? Instead of it why do you not use the words "according to the statement of Allah"? I am not saying anything of my own accord. I cite the ordinance of the Holy Qur'an, and on the basis of the statements of the interpreter of the Holy Qur'an, the Holy Prophet, I am disclosing its real meaning.

I have submitted to you, on the basis of the evidences of the Qur'anic verses, that the prophets and messengers of Allah were exalted men and had the knowledge of the unseen. Your own eminent ulama' have admitted this fact and have been inclined to report the instances of the Holy Prophet possessing knowledge of the unseen.

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid Mu'tazali in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, v.I, p.67 (printed Egypt), reports a hadith from the Holy Prophet that he said to 'Ali: "After me, you will fight against the Nakisin, the Qasitin and the Mariqin." He says that this is one of the proofs of the prophethood of the Holy Prophet because it clearly predicts the unknown future. The predicted events occurred approximately 30 years later, exactly as they had been foretold.

Second, the Shi'as do not claim that Amiru'l-Mu'minin or the Holy Imams were prophets. We believe that Muhammad was the last prophet of Allah. No one was associated with him in the prophethood.

We believe that if anyone had a belief contrary to this, he is an unbeliever. Of course we believe in the divinely commissioned imamate of 'Ali and regard eleven of his descendants as our Holy Imams and the rightful successors and caliphs of the Holy Prophet. We believe that Allah Almighty had endowed them with knowledge of the unseen through the Holy Prophet.

We believe that ordinary people's perception is veiled so that they can see only visible things. The same was true for the prophets and vicegerents except that, according to the time and circumstance, Allah, the All-Knowing, removed the veil and disclosed necessary

information to them from the unseen world. And when knowledge of the unseen was not necessary, the veil separated them too from the other world.

Hence, the Holy Prophet once said: "If I knew the unseen, indeed, I would have had much of good." That is, intrinsically, he possessed no knowledge of the unseen. He knew it only when, with Allah's blessings, the veil was lifted.

Sheikh: How and where did the Holy Prophet give people information about the unseen?

Well-Wisher: In the light of the verse of the Holy Qur'an, to which I have already referred, do you consider Muhammad the seal of the prophets, the Murtaza (the chosen one), and the true Prophet of Allah?

Sheikh: It is a strange question. Obviously the Holy Prophet was the Murtaza and the last of the prophets.

Well-Wisher: Then according to the Holy verse:

"The knower of the unseen! So He does not reveal His secrets to any except to him whom He chooses as an apostle," (72:26)

the Holy Prophet possessed knowledge of the unseen. This verse clearly says that Allah gives His knowledge of the unseen to His chosen prophet.

Sheikh: Assuming that the Holy Prophet possessed knowledge of the unseen, how does this relate to your claim that 'Ali possessed this knowledge also?

Well-Wisher: Again, if you people would objectively examine the authentic hadith and Sunna of the Holy Prophet, you would soon understand the facts relating to this and many other issues.

Sheikh: If our wisdom is limited, you have, by the grace of Allah, a broad mind and an eloquent tongue. Kindly relate the hadith which proves that 'Ali possessed knowledge of the unseen. If knowledge of the unseen is necessary for the successors of the Holy Prophets, there should be no exception to this condition.

All the successors, particularly the great caliphs, should have possessed knowledge of the unseen, though we see that none of the caliphs ever claimed to possess it. Rather, like the Holy Prophet, they expressed their inability to know it. Why then do you make 'Ali an exception?

Well-Wisher: First, I have already told you that the Holy Prophet did not possess the inherent power of knowing the unseen. When he said: "If I knew the unseen, indeed I would have had much good," he meant that knowledge of the unseen was not inherent in him, as it was in Allah. When Allah removed the veil from the Holy Prophet, he came to know the hidden realities.

Holy Imams were true caliphs and had the knowledge of unseen

Second, you say that if 'Ali possessed knowledge of the unseen, the other caliphs should have possessed it as well. We agree with you. We also say that the caliphs of the Prophet

should possess knowledge of both apparent and unseen things.

In fact the caliphs' capacities and characteristics should resemble exactly those of the Holy Prophet in all matters, except the role of prophethood itself, and messengership, as well as the special conditions of prophethood, which include the capacity to receive direct revelation (wali). Of course, you call those people caliphs of the Holy Prophet who were merely appointed as such by a few men, though the Holy Prophet had cursed them, e.g., Mu'awiya.

But we say that the caliphs and successors of the Holy Prophet are those who had been ordained as caliphs by the Holy Prophet himself, just as past prophets had ordained their own successors. So the caliphs and successors ordained by the Holy Prophet by the command of Allah perfectly represented his qualities, and for that reason they possessed knowledge of the unseen.

Those true caliphs were twelve persons whose names are recorded in your own hadith. They are the family of the Holy Prophet and include 'Ali and his eleven descendants. And the fact that the other people were not ordained caliphs is indicated by your own statement, which is confirmed by your great ulama', that they frequently expressed their ignorance of even ordinary things, not to mention knowledge of the unseen.

Gate of knowledge

Third, you ask what hadith proves that Amiru'l-Mu'minin, 'Ali possessed knowledge of the unseen. In fact, there are many hadith which support this fact. One is called the "Hadith of Medina." It is nearly consecutively narrated by both the sects (Shi'as and Sunnis) that the Holy Prophet said on many occasions concerning 'Ali that he was the "Gate of his knowledge." These were his words: "I am the city of knowledge and 'Ali is its gate. So whoever wishes to seek knowledge must come to the gate."

Sheikh: This hadith is not authentic according to our ulama'. Even if there is such a hadith, it must be a lone report one of the weak hadith.

Well-Wisher: It is a pity that you call this strong hadith a solitary report, or one of the weak hadith. Your prominent ulama' have confirmed it. You should consult Jam'u'l-Jawami'y by Suyuti; Tahdhibu'l-Ansar by Muhammad Ibn Jarir Tabari; Tadhkiratu'l-Abrar by Sayyid Muhammad Bukhari; Mustadrak by Hakim Nishapuri; Naqdu's-Sahili by Firuzabadi; Kanzu'l-'Ummal by 'Ali Muttaqi Hindi, Kifayatu't-Talib by Ganji Shafi'i; and Tadhkiratu'l-Muzu'a by Jamalud-din Hindi. They write:

"If somebody rejects this hadith, he is certainly mistaken." Also in Rauzatu'l-Nadiya by Amir Muhammad Yamani, Bahru'l-Asanid by Hafiz Abu Muhammad Samarqandi, and Matalibu's-Su'ul by Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i, they have generally confirmed the veracity of this hadith.

This hadith has been narrated in different ways and from various sources. Most of the companions and followers have narrated it, including 'Ali, Abu Muhammad Hasan Ibn 'Ali, the eldest grandson of the Prophet, Abdullah Ibn Abbas, Jabir Ibn Abdullah Ansari, Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud, Hudhaifa Ibn al-Yaman, Abdullah Ibn 'Umar, Anas Ibn Malik, and Amr Ibn As.

Among the tabi'in (second generation after the Companions) the following have reported this hadith: Imam Zainu'l-Abidin, Imam Muhammad Baqir, Asbagh Ibn Nabuta, Jarir Azzabi,

Harith Ibn Abdullah Hamdani Kufi, Sa'd Ibn Ta'rifu'l-Hanzali Kufi, Sa'id Ibn Jabir Asadi Kufi, Salma Ibn Kuhail Hazarmi Kufi, Sulayman Ibn Mihran A'mash Kufi, Asim Ibn Hamza Saluli Kufi, Abdullah Ibn Uthman Ibn Khisam al-Qari al-Makki, Abdu'r-Rahman Ibn Uthman, Abdullah Ibn Asila al-Muradi, Abu Abdullah Sanabahi, and Mujahid Ibn Jabir Abu'l Hajjaj al-Makhzumi al-Makki.

Besides the Shi'as ulama', who unanimously uphold this hadith, many of your own eminent traditionists and historians have reported it. I have seen about 200 references from your ulama' who have reported this Holy hadith. I will point out some of those illustrious ulama' and their books.

Sunni ulama' who have narrated the hadith of "city of knowledge"

- (1) Third-century commentator and historian Muhammad Ibn Jarir Tabari (d. 310 A.H.): Tahdhibu'l-Athar.
- (2) Hakim Nishapuri (d. 405 A.H.): Mustadrak, v.III, pp. 126,128,226.
- (3) Abu 'Isa Muhammad Ibn Tirmidhi (d. 289 A.H.): Sahih
- (4) Jalalu'd-din Suyuti (d. 911 A.H.): Jam'u'l-Jawami'y and Jam'u's-Saghir, v.I, p. 374.
- (5) Abu'l-Qasim Sulayman Ibn Ahmad Tabrani (d. 491 A.H.): Kabir and Ausat.
- (6) Hafiz Abu Muhammad Hasan Samarqandi (d. 491 A.H.): Bahru'l-Asanid.
- (7) Hafiz Abu Nu'aim Ahmad Ibn Abdullah Ispahani (d.410 A.H.): Ma'rifatu'l-Sahaba.
- (8) Hafiz Abu Amr Yusuf Ibn Abdullah Ibn Abdu'l-Bar Qartabi (d. 463 A.H.): Isti'ab, v.II, p. 461.
- (9) Abu'l-Hasan Faqih Shafi'i 'Ali Ibn Muhammad Ibn Tayyib al-Jalabi Ibn Maghazili (d. 483 A.H.): Manaqib.
- (10) Abu Shuja' Shirwaih Hamadani Dailami (d. 509 A.H.): Firdausu'l-Akhbar.
- (11) Abu'l-Mu'ayyid Khatib Khawarizmi (d. 568 A.H.): Manaqib, p.49 and Maqtalu'l-Husain, v.I, p.43.
- (12) Abu'l-Qasim Ibn Asakir 'Ali Ibn Hasan Damishqi (d. 572 A.H.): Ta'rikh al-Kabir.
- (13) Abu'l-Hujjaj Yusuf Ibn Muhammad Andalusi (d.605 A.H.): Alif-Bas, v.I, p. 222.
- (14) Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali Ibn Muhammad Ibn Athir Jazari (d. 630 A.H.): Asadu'l-Ghaiba, v. IV, p.22.
- (15) Muhibu'd-din Ahmad Ibn Abdullah Tabari Shafi'i (d. 694 A.H.): Riyazu'l-Nuzra, v.I, p.129 and hakha'iru'l-Uquba, p.77.
- (16) Shamsu'D-Din Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Dhahabi Shafi'i (died 748 A.H.): Tadhkiratu'l-Huffaz, vol.IV, p.28.

- (17) Badru'd-Din Muhammad Zarkashi Misri (died 749 A.H.): Faizu'l-Qadir, vol.III, p.47.
- (18) Hafiz 'Ali Ibn Abi Bakr Haithami (died 807 A.H.): Majma'u'z-Zawa'id, Vol.IX, p.114.
- (19) Kamalu'd-Din Muhammad Ibn Musa Damiri (died 808 A.H.): Hayatu'l-Haiwan, vol. I, p.55.
- (20) Shamsu'd-Din Muhammad Ibn Muhammad Jazari (died 833 A.H.): Asnu'l-Matalib, p.14.
- (21) Shahabu'd-Din Ibn Hajar Ahmad Ibn 'Ali Asqalani (died 852 A.H.): Tahdhibu'l-Tahdhib, vol.vii, p.337.
- (22) Badru'd-Din Mahmud Ibn Ahmad Aini Hanafi (died 855 A.H.): Umdatul-Qari, vol vii, p.631.
- (23) 'Ali Ibn Hisamu'd-Din Muttaqi Hindi (died 975 A.H.): Kanzu'l-Ummal, vol. vi, p.156.
- (24) Abu'r-Ra'uf Al-Munawi Shafi'i (died 1031 A.H.): Faizu'l-Qadir, Sharh al-Jami'u'l-Saghir, vol. iv, p.46.
- (25) Hafiz 'Ali Ibn Ahmad Azizi Shafi'i (died 1070): Siraju'l-Munir Jam'u's-Saghir, vol. III, p.63.
- (26) Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Shami (died 942 A.H.): Subulu'l-Huda wa'l-Rishad fi Asma'i Khairu'l-Ibad.
- (27) Muhammad Ibn Yaqub Firuzabadi (died 817 A.H.): Naqdu's-Sahih.
- (28) Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (died 241 A.H.): Mujaladab al-Munaqab, Musnad.
- (29) Abu Salim Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i (died 652 A.H.): Matalibu-s-Su'ul, p.22.
- (30) Sheikhu'l-Islam Ibrahim Ibn Muhammad Hamwaini (died 722 A.H.): Fara'idu's-Simtain.
- (31) Shahabu'd-Din Dowlat Abadi (died 849 A.H.): Hidayatu's-Su'ada.
- (32) Allama Samhudi Sayyid Nuru'd-Din Shafi'i (died 911 A.H.): Jawahiru'l-Iqdain.
- (33) Qazi Fazl Ibn Ruzbahan Shirazi: Ibta'lu'l-Batil.
- (34) Nuru'd-Din Ibn Sabbagh Maliki (died 855 A.H.): Fusulu'l-Muhimma, p.18.
- (35) Shahabu'd-Din Ibn Hajar Makki (a bitter enemy and fanatic, died 974 A.H.): Sawa'iq al-Muhriqa.
- (36) Jamalu'd-Din Ata'ullah Muhadith al-Shirazi (died 1000 A.H.): Arba'in.
- (37) 'Ali Qari Harawi (died 1014 A.H.): Mirqat Sharh al-Mishkat.
- (38) Muhammad Ibn 'Ali as-Subban (died 1205 A.H.): Is'afu'l-Raghibin, p.156.
- (39) Qazi Muhammad Ibn Sukani (died 1250 A.H.): Fawa'idu'l-Majmu'a fi'l-AHadithi'-Muzu'a.
- (40) Shahabu'd-din Sayyid Mahmud Alusi Baghdadi (died 1270 A.H.): Tafsir al-Ruhu'l-Ma'ani.

(41) Imam Al-Ghazali: 'Ihya'u'l-Ulum.

(42) Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani Faqih al-Shafi'i: Mawaddatu'l-Qurba.

(43) Abu Muhammad Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Asimi: Zainu'l-Fata (Commentary on Sura 'Hal Ata').

(44) Shamsu'd-Din Muhammad Ibn abdu'r-Rahman Sakhawi (died 902 A.H.): Maqasidu'l-Hasana.

(45) Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi (died 1293 A.H.): Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, Ch. xiv.

(46) Yusuf Sibt Ibn Jauzi: Tadhkirat al-Khawasu'l-Umma.

(47) Sadru'd-Din Sayyid Husain Fuzi Harawi: Nuzahatu'l-Arwah.

(48) Kamalu'd-Din Husain Meibudi: Sharh al-Diwan.

(49) Haiz Abu Bakr Ahmad Ibn 'Ali Khatib Baghdadi (died 463 A.H.): Ta'rikh, vol. II, p.377, vol. iv, p. 348, and vol. vii, p.173.

(50) Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i (died 658 A.H.): Kifayatu't-Talib, end of ch. 58. After quoting three authentic hadith from the Holy Prophet, he says: "In short, the highly learned Companions, the next generation after them, and the progeny of the Prophet have all acknowledged the virtues, vast knowledge, and judgment of 'Ali.

To be sure, Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and Uthman and other learned Companions used to consult with him regarding matters of religion and followed his advice in administrative affairs. They admitted that he was unexcelled in knowledge and wisdom.

And this hadith does not over estimate him since his rank before Allah, the Holy Prophet, and the believers is much higher than that., Imam Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Al-Siddiqi Maghribi in confirmation of this Holy hadith has written a book, Fathu'l-Mulku'l-'Ali bi Sihat al-Hadith al-Bab al-Madinatu'l-Ilm, (printed by the Ilamiyyah Press, Egypt, 1354 A.H.). If you are not satisfied even now, I can give you more references.

To narrate 'Ali's merits is worship

Sayyid Adi'l -Akhtar: (A scholar, literary man, and leader of the Sunnis) I have often seen in hadith that the Holy Prophet has said that to relate 'Ali's virtues is worship. The great scholar, Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamadani Shafi'i, writes in his Mawaddatu'l-Qurba that the Holy Prophet said that the angels look with special attention upon the gathering in which the virtues and merits of 'Ali are narrated.

They invoke Allah's blessings for those people. Moreover, to narrate the Holy Prophet's hadith is in itself worship. So I request that you relate more detailed hadith so that this gathering may be the center of more perfect worship.

Hadith "I am the house of wisdom"

Well-Wisher: There is a hadith which has probably been consecutively narrated. The traditionists of both sects have narrated it. Among your ulama' who have reported it are

Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (Manaqib, Musnad, Hakim (Mustadrak, Mulla 'Ali Muttaqi (Kanzu'l-Ummal, part VI, p.401, Hafiz Abu Nu'aim Isfahani (Hilyatu'l-Auliya, v.I, p.64, Muhammad Ibn Sabban Misri (Is'afu'r-Raghibin, Ibn Maghazili Faqih Shafi'i (Manaqib),

Jalalu'd-Din Suyuti (Jam'u-s-Saghir, Jam'u'l-Jawami'y and La'aliu'l-Masnu'a, Abu 'Isa Tirmidhi (Sahih, v.II, p.214, Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i (Matalibu's-Su'ul, Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi (Yanabiu'l-Mawadda), Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i (Kifayatu't-Talib, Sibt Ibn Jauzi (Tadhkirat al-Khawasu'l-Umma), Ibn Hajar Makki (Sawa'iq Muhriqa, ch.9, Fasl 2, p.75, Muhibu'd-Din Tabari (Riyazu'n-Nuzra), Sheikhu'l-Islam Hamwaini (Fara'idu's-Simtain), Ibn Sabbagh Maliki (Fusulu'l-Muhimma), Ibn Abi'l-Hadid Mu'tazali (Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha), and a host of others.

They confirm the authenticity of this hadith and have quoted the Holy Prophet as saying: "I am the house of wisdom and 'Ali is its gate; so if somebody is desirous of gaining knowledge, he should come to the gate."

Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i has devoted Chapter 21 to this hadith. After giving its sources and references, he gives his own comment on it. He says this hadith is highly exalted. That is, Allah Almighty, Who is the source of wisdom and knowledge of all things, and Who taught the enjoining of good and the prevention of evil acts to the Holy Prophet, who also bestowed these gifts upon 'Ali.

Hence, the Holy Prophet said: "'Ali is the door of my wisdom. That is, if you wish to benefit by my wisdom, you should turn to 'Ali, so that realities may be revealed to you."

Ibn Maghazili Shafi'i in Manaqib, Ibn Asakir in his Ta'rikh (writing from his own Sheikhs), Khatib Khawarizmi in his Manaqib, Sheikhu'l-Islam Hamwaini in Fara'id, Dailami in Firdaus, Muhammad Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in Kifayatu't-Talib, ch.58, Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, ch.XIV, and others of your prominent ulama' have reported from Ibn Abbas and Jabir Ibn Abdullah Ansari that the Holy Prophet, holding 'Ali by the hand, said:

"This is 'Ali - the master and chief of the virtuous and the slayer of the unbelievers. He who helps him is the supported one, and he who deserts him shall himself be deserted." Then the Holy Prophet raising his voice, said: "I am the city of knowledge, and 'Ali is its gate. So if somebody wishes to obtain knowledge, he should come to the gate."

Also, Shafi'i reports that the Holy Prophet said: "I am the city of knowledge, and 'Ali is its gate. Nobody enters the house except through the gate."

The author of Manaqib al-Fakhira reports from Ibn Abbas that the Holy Prophet said: "I am the city of knowledge, and 'Ali is its gate. So he who wants to gain knowledge of religion should come to the gate." Then he said: "I am the city of knowledge and you, 'Ali, are its gate. He lies who thinks that he can reach me through other means than through you."

Ibn 'Abi'l-Hadid in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim Ibn Sa'da'd-din Muhammad Hamwaini in Fara'idu's-Simtain from Ibn Abbas, the great Khatib Khawarizmi in Manaqib from Amr Ibn As, Imamu'l-Haram Ahmad Ibn Abdullah Shafi'i in Dhakha'iru'l-Uquba, Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in Musnad, Mir Sayyid 'Ali Hamdani in Mawaddatu'l-Qurba.

And even the great fanatic, Ibn Hajar in Sawa'iq al-Muhriqa, ch.IX, Fasl 11, p.75, Hadith 9 from Bazaz out of the forty hadith that he has recorded concerning the merits of 'Ali, Tabrani in his Ausat from Jabir Ibn Abdullah Ansari, Ibn Adi from Abdullah Ibn 'Umar Hakim

and Tirmidhi from 'Ali have reported that the Holy Prophet of Allah said: "I am the city of knowledge, and 'Ali is its gate. So anyone who seeks knowledge should come through the gate."

Then they say about the same hadith: The ignorant people have hesitated to accept this hadith and some of them have said that this is a forged hadith. But when Hakim (the author of Mustadrak), whose statement you regard as authoritative, heard these things he said: "Verily, this is a true hadith."

Elucidation of the hadith of "Gate of Knowledge"

The author of Abaqatu'l-Anwar, Allama Sayyid Hamid Husain Dihlawi Sahib, has compiled two volumes showing the sources and veracity of this hadith. Each of these volumes is as large as any volume of the Sahih of Bukhari.

I do not recall how many sources he has cited from eminent Sunni ulama' to prove that the narrators of this hadith form an unbroken sequence of transmission, but this much I remember: When I was reading it, I prayed for that distinguished man, who was so erudite and who had taken so much care in compiling the book. The book proves that 'Ali had a unique position among the companions of the Holy Prophet.

Now for Allah's sake, be fair. Was it proper to close the door of knowledge which the Holy Prophet had opened for the community? Were the people justified in opening the door to a man of their own choice, who had no relations with 'Ali's level of knowledge?

Sheikh: We have sufficiently discussed the fact that this hadith is generally accepted by our ulama'. No doubt, some of the reporters have said that it is a weak, lone hadith, while others have pronounced it to have been consecutively narrated. But what has this to do with the "knowledge of the unseen" which 'Ali is supposed to have possessed?

'Ali had knowledge of the unseen

Well-Wisher: Haven't you admitted earlier that the last of the prophets was the best man of all created beings? And doesn't the Qur'an say that Allah reveals his secrets to none "Save to that one of the Prophets whom He chooses?" Allah removed the veil from him, and bestowed upon him the knowledge of the unseen. So, apart from other kinds of knowledge he possessed, he possessed knowledge of the unseen.

When the Holy Prophet said, "I am the city of knowledge and 'Ali is its gate", all of the knowledge of the city could be obtained through the "gate of knowledge." Such knowledge included the knowledge of the unseen.

'Ali knew outer and concealed meanings of the Holy Qur'an

Among others, Hafiz Abu Nu'aim Ispahani in Hilyatu'l-Auliya, v.I, p.65, Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in Kifayatu't-Talib, ch.74, and Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, ch 14, p.74, from Faslu'l-Khitab quote Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud, the writer of Wahi as saying: "Verily, the Qur'an was revealed on seven letters, each letter of which has an apparent and a hidden meaning. Verily, 'Ali understands both the apparent and the hidden meaning of the Qur'an."

[Holy Prophet opened 1,000 chapters of knowledge in 'Ali's heart](#)

Your great ulama' have acknowledged in their authentic books that 'Ali possessed knowledge of the unseen. After the Holy Prophet he was murtaza (the chosen one) among the whole Community.

Abu Hamid Ghazali, in his Bayan al-Ilmu'l-Ladunni, has reported 'Ali as saying: "The Holy Prophet put his tongue in my mouth. From the saliva of the Holy Prophet, 1,000 chapters of knowledge were revealed to me, and from each chapter another 1,000 chapters were revealed to me."

Your illustrious leader, Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi, in his Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, ch.XIV, p.77 reports from Asbagh Ibn Nabuta, who quoted Amiru'l-Mu'minin as saying: "Verily, the Holy Prophet taught me 1,000 chapters of knowledge, each chapter of which opened another 1,000 chapters, making one million. Thus I know what has already happened and what is to happen up to the Day of Judgement."

In the same chapter he reports from Ibn Maghazili on the latter's own authority from Abu's-Sabba, who reported from Ibn Abbas, who quoted the Holy Prophet as saying: "On the night of the mi'raj (ascension), when I was in the presence of Allah, He talked with me in confidence. Whatever I learned, I taught to 'Ali. He is the gate of my knowledge."

The great writer, Mu'affaq Ibn Ahmad Khawarizmi, narrated the same from the Holy Prophet in this way: "Gabriel brought me a carpet from Paradise. I sat on it until I was brought near my Lord.

Then He talked with me and told me secret things. Whatever I learned was communicated by me to 'Ali. He is the gate of my knowledge." Then the Holy Prophet called 'Ali and said, "'Ali! To be in accord with you is to be in accord with me; to oppose you is to oppose me. You are the knowledge that links me and my Community."

Hafiz Abu Nu'aim Ispahani in Hilyatu'l-Auliya, Mulla 'Ali Muttaqi in Kanzu'l-Ummal, v.VI, p.392, and Abu Ya'la report from Ibn Lahi'a, who reported from Hayy Ibn Abd Maghafiri, who reported from Abdu'r-Rahman, who reported from Abdullah Ibn 'Umar, who reported that the Holy Prophet while on his deathbed said: "Bring my brother to me."

When Abu Bakr came to him, the Holy Prophet turned his face from him. Again he said, "Bring my brother to me." Then Uthman came, and the Holy Prophet turned his face from him also. Some others report that after Abu Bakr, 'Umar came and then Uthman.

After that, however, 'Ali was called in. The Holy Prophet covered him with his blanket and rested his head upon him.

When 'Ali came out, people asked him: "'Ali! What did the Holy Prophet tell you?"

The Imam said, "The Holy prophet has taught me 1,000 chapters of knowledge and each of those chapters consists of 1,000 chapters."

Hafiz Abu Nu'aim Ahmad Ibn Abdullah Ispahani (d.430 A.H.) in his Hilyatu'l-Auliya, v.I, p.65, writing about 'Ali's merits, Muhammad Jazari in Asnu'l-Matalib, p.14, and Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in Kifayatu't-Talib, ch. 48, have reported with reliable sources from

Ahmad Ibn Imran Ibn Salma Ibn Abdullah that he said:

"We were in the company of the Holy Prophet when he asked about 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib. The Holy Prophet said: "Wisdom was divided into ten parts, of which nine were given to 'Ali and one was given to all of humanity."

Also Mu'afiq Ibn Ahmad Khawarizmi in *Manaqib*, Mullah 'Ali Muttaqi in *Kanzu'l-Ummal*, v. VI, pp. 156 and 401 from many prominent scholars, Ibn Maghazili Faqih Shafi'i in *Faza'il* and Sulayman Balkhi in *Yanabiu'l-Mawadda* with the same authorities from the writer of *Wahi*, Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud, Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i in *Matalibu's-Su'ul*, p. 14, and many others report from Hulays Ibn 'alqama that when the Prophet was asked about 'Ali he said:

"Wisdom has been divided into ten parts, of which nine were given to 'Ali, and all of humanity received one part. Of that one part 'Ali's share was also the greatest."

Also in *Yanabiu'l-Mawadda*, ch.14, it is reported from *Sharh al-Risala Fathu'l-Mubin* of Abu Abdullah Muhammad Ibn 'Ali al-Hakim Tirmidhi that Abdullah Ibn Abbas related the following hadith: "Knowledge has ten parts. Nine parts are exclusively for 'Ali, and the remaining tenth part is for all of mankind. Of that one part, too, 'Ali was granted the greatest share."

Also Muttaqi Hindi in *Kanzu'l-Ummal*, v.VI, p.153, Khatib Khawarizmi in *Manaqib*, p. 49 and *Maqtalu'l-Husain*, v.I, p.43, Dailami in *Firdausu'l-Akhbar*, and Sulayman Balkhi in *Yanabiu'l-Mawadda*, ch.III, report the Holy Prophet as saying: "After me among my whole Community the most learned and the wisest person is 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib."

Entrusting the Prophet's knowledge to 'Ali

We do not say that 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib and his eleven descendants, the Imams, received knowledge directly from Allah through wahi (revelation) as the Holy Prophet did. But we do believe that the last of the Prophets of Allah was the center of Allah's blessing. Whatever benefit is granted to creation comes from Allah Almighty through the Holy Prophet.

So all knowledge, including the important events of past and future ages, was made known to them during the life of the Holy Prophet. Some knowledge was entrusted to them by the Holy Prophet when he was about to leave this world.

Your own ulama' have cited a hadith from Ummu'l-Mu'minin A'ysha regarding this point. At the end of it she said: "The Holy Prophet called 'Ali and embraced him and covered his head with a mantle. I put my head forward and tried hard to listen to them, but I could not understand anything. When 'Ali raised his head, his forehead was covered with perspiration. The people said to him, 'Ali! What did the Holy Prophet tell you during this long time?'"

Then 'Ali said: 'Verily, the Holy Prophet taught me 1,000 chapters of knowledge, each of which opened 1,000 other chapters.'"

During the early days of his Prophethood (as I have mentioned during previous nights), the Holy Prophet gave a feast to forty of his near relatives at the house of Abu Talib. After he announced his prophethood, 'Ali was the first to proclaim his belief. The Holy Prophet held him in his arms and put his saliva into his mouth.

'Ali later said of this event, "Immediately after this, fountains of water sprang up in my chest." Your own eminent ulama' have reported that while delivering a sermon, the Imam pointed to the same meaning. He said, "Ask me about what you do not understand before I die. My chest is the repository of unlimited knowledge."

Then pointing to his stomach he said, "This is the storehouse of knowledge; this is the saliva of the Holy Prophet; this is what the Holy Prophet has fed me like grain."

Throughout his adult life the Holy Prophet imparted knowledge and blessings to 'Ali in different ways. Whatever knowledge Allah granted the Prophet, the Prophet placed in 'Ali's chest.

Jafr al-Jami'a and its nature

One of the sources of the divine blessings which 'Ali received from the Holy Prophet came through the Jafr al-Jami'a, a book which contained secrets of the universe. Your own distinguished ulama' acknowledge that this book and special knowledge are among the blessings peculiar to 'Ali and the Holy Imams.

Hujjatu'l-Islam Abu Hamid Ghazali writes that "there is a book from the lord and chief of the pious, 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib. Its name is Jafr al-Jam'u'd-Dunya wa'l-Akhira. It contains all the sciences, realities, obscurities, matters of the unseen, the essence of things and their effects, the essence of names and letters, which no one knows except 'Ali and his eleven descendants. The fact is that they have inherited this from their fathers."

Similarly, Sulayman Balkhi in his Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, p.403, gives a detailed commentary about it from Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i's Durru'l-Munazzam. He says that Jafr al-Jami'a, contains keys to knowledge, is comprised of 1,700 pages, and exclusively belongs to Imam 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib.

Also it is reported in Ta'rikh al-Nigaristan from Sharh al-Mawaqif that Jafr and Jami'a are two books which exclusively belong to 'Ali. They tell, through the knowledge of letters, all the events until the end of the world. His descendants, too, prophesy on the basis of those books.

Nawab: Kindly give us more information about the Book of Jafr.

Well-Wisher: In the tenth year of the Hijra, when the Holy Prophet returned from his last Hajj, Gabriel came to him and informed him of his death. Then the Holy Prophet raised his hands and said, "O, Lord! You have promised me and you never go back on your word."

The reply from Allah came: "Take 'Ali with you and, sitting in the Uhud Mountains with your back to the Qibla, call to the wild animals. They will respond to your call. Among them will be a red goat, with large horns. Order 'Ali to slaughter it and to remove its hide and turn it inside out. It will be found to be tanned.

Then Gabriel will come with pen and ink, which will be different from the ink of the world. Tell 'Ali to write what Gabriel dictates. That writing and the hide will remain exactly in the same condition and will never decay. It will always remain safe. Whenever it will be opened, it will be found fresh.

The Holy Prophet went to the Uhud hills and complied with the divine instructions. Gabriel

came and placed the pen and ink before the Holy Prophet, who ordered 'Ali to prepare himself to write.

Gabriel narrated all important world affairs to the Holy Prophet and he instructed 'Ali to record them on the hide. He wrote even on the skin of the hands and feet.

He wrote down everything that had happened or was to happen up to the Day of Judgement. He wrote down the names of his unborn children and their descendants and the names of their friends and enemies. He also recorded whatever was to happen to each one of them until the Day of Judgement.

Then the Prophet gave that book and the knowledge of Jafr to 'Ali and made it part of the legacy of the Imamate. Each of the Imams in turn handed it down to his successor.

This is the same book about which Abu Hamid Ghazali says: "Jafr al-Jami'a is a book which belongs exclusively to 'Ali and his eleven descendants. It contains everything."

Nawab: How is it possible that all the affairs of the world are to be recorded on the hide of a goat?

Well-Wisher: First, the hadith suggests that it was not an ordinary goat. It was a huge goat which had been created for this purpose.

Second, what was written was not the writing in common books. It was written in secret letters and signs.

I have already told you that the author of Ta'rikh al-Nigaristan has reported from Sharh al-Mawaqif that Jafr and Jami'a contains alphabetical letters through which information is revealed.

Then the Holy Prophet of Allah handed over the key of this secret to 'Ali who, by order of the Holy Prophet, handed it down to his successors, the Holy Imams.

Only he who possesses that key can read the secrets from that book. Otherwise, one is unable to know anything of the unseen. Suppose a king gives a secret code to his minister, or administrators, whom he sends to the provinces.

If the key to understanding the code remain with the king or the ministers, then nobody could make out what that writing meant. In the same way, no one except 'Ali and his eleven descendants could understand the book Jafr al-Jami'a.

One day Amiru'l Mu'minin gave that book to his son Muhammad Hanifiyya in the presence of all his other sons, but he could not understand anything in it although he was a highly learned and intelligent man.

Most of the orders that the infallible Imams gave, or the information that they disclosed, were from this same book. These Holy men understood the secrets of all things and could tell what sufferings were to befall them, their descendants and their Shi'as, from the same book. This fact has been recorded in detail in books of hadith.

Imam ar-Ridha' prophesied his death

The details of the covenant between Caliph Mamun ar-Rashid Abbasi and Imam ar-Ridha'

are recorded in Sharh al-Mawaqif. After correspondence for six months with and intimidation by Mamun, Imam ar-Ridha' was forced to accept being heir of the Caliph. A covenant was written and Mamun signed it, stipulating that, after Mamun's death, the caliphate would be transferred to Imam ar-Ridha'.

When the document was put before Imam ar-Ridha' he wrote the following remark about it: " I, 'Ali Ibn Musa Ibn Ja'far, do hereby declare that the servant of the believers (Mamun ar-Rashid), (May he stand firm to Truth and may Allah guide him to the Right Path), has recognized our right, which others did not do; so he joined those relations which had been detached; he provided peace and satisfaction to those persons who had been stricken with terror, rather, he reanimated them when they had almost been reduced to destruction; he made them prosperous and contented when they were leading miserable lives, so that he might achieve Allah's Blessings and verily Allah will soon give him a good recompense to those, who offer thanks to Him and He does not nullify the reward of the upright. Verily, he has made me his heir and has entrusted me with a great emirate provided that I live after him."

At the end of it, the Holy Imam wrote: "But Jafr wa Jami'a says otherwise, (that is, I shall not survive him) and I myself do not know how you and I will be treated. It is only Allah, who commands, whose command is quite true, and Who is the best judge."

Sa'd Ibn Mas'ud Ibn 'Umar Taftazani in his book Sharh al-Maqasidu't-Talibin fi-ilm al-Ussulu'-din, referring to the Holy Imam's handwritten words "Jafr wa Jami'a" in the covenant, comments in detail that the Imams meant that according to Jafr and Jami'a, Mamun would not keep his promise and the world saw what happened.

That dearly beloved descendant of the Holy Prophet was martyred through poisoning. Thus, the truth and veracity of the Holy Imam's knowledge was proved, and it was known to every one that this exalted family was aware of all known and unknown things.

Gabriel brought a sealed book for wasi (successor) of the Holy Prophet

One of the divine gifts received by 'Ali through the Holy Prophet was a sealed book brought by Gabriel. The great scholar and historian, Allama Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali Ibn al-Husain Mas'ud, who is respected by both sects, writes in his Isbatu'l-Wasiyya: "Gabriel and the trusted angels brought from Allah Almighty a sealed book to the Holy Prophet and said to him: 'All those present there with you except your wasi (successor) should leave so that I may give you the Kitab al-Wasiyya (the book of the last testament).'

Then the Holy Prophet ordered all those present there to leave except Amiru'l-Mu'minin, Fatima, Hasan, and Husain. Gabriel said: 'O Prophet! Allah sends His salaam to you and says that this is the document in which He has made you a promise and has made His angels witnesses to it and that He Himself is witness to it.'

Then the Holy Prophet began to tremble and said: 'Salaam (salutation) is He, and salutation is from Him, and salutation returns to Him.'

Taking the book from Gabriel he read it and gave it to 'Ali. The Holy Prophet said: 'This is a promise and trust from my Lord to me. Verily, I have performed my duty and have delivered Allah's message.'

Amiru'l-Mu'minin said: 'May my mother and father sacrifice their lives for you! I also bear witness to the truth of this message. My ears, eyes, flesh, and blood bear testimony to it.'

The Holy Prophet said to 'Ali: 'Here is my will from the side of Allah. Accept it and be a guarantor for it before Allah. It is for me to fulfill my duty.' 'Ali said: 'I shall be a guarantor for it, and it is for Allah to help me.'

In this book Amiru'l-Mu'minin has been asked to fulfill the following promises:

'To be friendly with Allah's friends; to be hostile to Allah's enemies. To have patience with oppression; to patiently endure and pacify anger when his rights are usurped, when he is abused, and when he is unjustly attacked.'

The Amiru'l-Mu'minin said: 'I accept it, and I am content with it. If indignity is shown to me, if hadith are rejected, if the ordinances of the Holy Qur'an are set at naught, if the Ka'ba is razed to the ground, and if my beard is colored with the blood of my head, even then I will endure and be patient.'

After that Gabriel, Michael, and the other close angels were declared witnesses of Amiru'l-Mu'minin. Similarly, Hasan, Husain, and Fatima were also entrusted with the same responsibility.

The problems and conditions that they had to face were told to each in detail. After that the testament was sealed with a raw gold stamp and given to 'Ali. The testament contains hadith of Allah Almighty, the hadith of the Holy Prophet, the opposition of those who oppose and change divine ordinances and all the events and calamities that occurred after the Holy Prophet.

And this is what Allah says: **'And everything have We secured in a Manifest Imam (Guide, i.e. 'Ali).' (36:12)'**

In short, the Holy Prophet transmitted his knowledge to 'Ali and 'Ali's descendants, the infallible Imams. Had it been otherwise the Holy Prophet would not have called 'Ali the "gate of knowledge" and would not have said: "If you want to take advantage of my knowledge, go to 'Ali's door."

If the Holy Imam had not possessed all of the Holy Prophet's knowledge, he would not have declared before all friends and enemies: "Ask me whatever you like before I die and leave you."

No one else except 'Ali ever claimed this merit for himself. When others who claimed to possess knowledge were questioned about known and unknown facts, they were put to shame.

Hafiz Ibn Abdu'l-Barr Maghribi Andalusí in his *Isti'ab fi Ma'rifati'l-Ashab* said, "Whoever uttered the words 'Ask me before I die and leave you' was a liar, except 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib." Abdu'l-Abbas Ahmad Ibn Khallikan Shafi'i in his *Wafaya* and Katib al-Baghdadi in his *Ta'rikh*, v. 13, p.163, report that one day Maqatil Ibn Sulayman, who was one of the distinguished ulama', renowned for his ability to answer difficult questions quickly, declared before a public gathering: "Ask me about anything below the firmament."

A man put this question to him: "When did the Prophet Adam perform Hajj? Who cut his hair when he finished it?" Maqatil was perplexed and remained silent.

Another man said to him: "Does the ant absorb food through the stomach or through another channel? If it is through the stomach, where are its stomach and intestines?"

Maqatil was again dumbfounded. He said: "Allah has put this question into your heart, so that my pride in my knowledge might be put to shame."

Only one who is perfectly competent to answer all questions can make such a claim. In the whole Community no one except 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib possessed such rank.

Since he was the "gate of knowledge" of the Holy Prophet, he had full knowledge of all known and unknown matters just as the Holy Prophet did. Therefore, he was able to say, 'ask me' and gave prompt and satisfactory answers to all questions. Among the Companions, too, there was not a single person except 'Ali, who made such a claim.

Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in Musnad, Muwaffaq Ibn Ahmad Khawarizmi in Manaqib, the great Khwaja Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, Baghawi in Mu'jim, Muhibu'd-din Tabari in Riyazu'n-Nuzra, v. II, p.198, and Ibn Hajar in Sawa'iq, p.76 have quoted Sa'id Ibn Musayya as saying that no one of the Companions, except 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, ever said: "Ask me whatever you like."

'Ali's announcement of saluni (ask me) and the reports of the Sunnis

A large number of your prominent ulama', like Ibn Kathir in his Tafsir, v.IV, Ibn Abdu'l-Barr in Isti'ab, Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, Muhyi'd-din Khawarizmi in Manaqib, Imam Ahmad in Musnad, Hamwaini in Fara'id, Ibn Talha in Durru'l-Manzum, Mir Sayyid 'Ali Shafi'i in Mawaddatu'l-Qurba, Hafiz Abu Nu'aim Ispahani in Hilyatu'l-Auliya, Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i in Matalibu's-Su'ul, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, and several other eminent Sunni scholars have reported with slight variation of wording from Amir Ibn Wathila, Ibn Abbas, Abi Sa'id al-Buhturi, Anas Ibn Malik, and Abdullah Ibn Mas'ud that Amiru'l Mu'minin announced from the pulpit: "O people! Ask me anything you like, before I die. Verily, my heart is the storehouse of all knowledge. Ask me, because I have the knowledge of all that has passed and all that is to come."

Abi Dawud in his Sunan, p.356, Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in his Musnad, v.I, p.278, Bukhari in his Sahih, v.I, p.46 and v.X, p.241, have reported authoritatively that 'Ali said: "You may ask me about whatever you like; I understand the nature of any matter which you might ask about."

'Ali's claim that he could judge cases according to the Torah as well as the gospels

Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi, in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, ch.XIV, p.74 reports from Mu'affaq Ibn Ahmad Khawarizmi and Sheikhu'l-Islam Hamwaini reports from Abu Sa'id Buhturi that he (Abu Sa'id) said: "I saw 'Ali on the pulpit while he was putting on the Holy Prophet's mantle, sword and the turban. He uncovered his chest and said: 'Ask me anything you like, before I die, because my breast contains great wisdom.

This is my stomach which is a storehouse of knowledge. This is the saliva of the Holy Prophet; this is what the Holy Prophet has fed me as grain. I swear by Allah that if a carpet

is spread and I sit on it, verily, I will instruct the follower of the Torah, according to the Torah.

I will instruct the followers of the Gospels according to the Gospels, until both the Torah and the Gospels are made to speak and bear witness to the following: 'Ali has spoken the truth and the verdict that he has given is according to what has been revealed in us. When you recite the Book you don't understand this much.'"

'Ali's knowledge about verses of the Holy Qur'an

Sheikhu'l-Islam Hamwaini in his Fara'id and Mu'ayyidu'd-din Khawarizmi in his Manaqib report that the Holy Imam spoke these words from the pulpit: "Ask me about what you do not understand before I die.

I swear by Allah who split the grain and created man that if you ask me about any verse of the Holy Book of Allah, I will tell you about it - when it was revealed, during the day or at night, at a halting place or on the way, on the plain or in the hills, about whom it was revealed, a believer or against a hypocrite, what Allah meant by it, and whether the verse is general or particular."

Thereupon Ibn Kawwa, the Khariji, stood up and said: Let me know what Allah means by saying, "Those who acknowledged belief and performed good actions are the best of men."

The Holy Imam said: "The verse refers to us and our followers, whose faces, hands and feet will be glittering on the Day of Judgement. They will be recognized by their foreheads."

Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in Musnad and Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, ch.XIV, p.74, report from Ibn Abbas that 'Ali spoke these words from the pulpit: "Ask me about what you do not understand before I die. There is no verse about which I do not know more than anyone else does. I know how and when it was revealed. Ask me about any disturbances, for there is no disturbance about which I do not know who caused it and who was killed in it."

Ibn Sa'd in Tabaqa, Abu Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Yusuf Ganji Shafi'i in Kifayatu't-Talib, ch.52, and Hafiz Abu Nu'aim Ispahani in Hilyatu'l-Auliya, v.I, p.68, report with authentic references that Amiru'l-Mu'minin said: "By my Lord, no verse was revealed, but I know definitely about whom it was revealed, and where it was revealed. Verily, Allah has bestowed upon me a wise heart and an eloquent tongue."

In the same books it is reported that Amiru'l-Mu'minin said: "Ask me about the Book of Allah. There is not a single verse about which I do not know whether it was revealed in the hills or on the plains."

'Ali's knowledge about people who guide or misguide

Khawarizmi reports in his Manaqib from A'mash, who reported that Ubaya Ibn Raba'i said: "'Ali frequently used to say: 'Ask me about what you do not understand before I die. I swear by my Lord that there is not a green field, or a desert land, or a group of people who misguide a hundred men or guide a hundred men, but I know them. I know better than anyone else those who lead the people or incite them to evil until the Day of Judgement.'"

Jalalu'd-din Suyuti in Ta'rikhu'l-Khulafa, p.124, Badru'd-din Hanafi in Umdatul-Qari,

Muhibu'd-din Tabari in Riyazu'n-Nuzra, v.II, p.198, Suyuti in Tafsir al-Itqan, v.II, p.319, and Ibn Hajar Asqalani in Fathu'l-Bari, v.VIII, p.485 and also in Tahdhibu't-Tahdhib, v.VII, p.338, report that 'Ali said:

"Ask me anything you like, and I swear by Allah that I will tell you of all things that will happen up to the Day of Judgement. If you ask me about the Book of Allah, I swear by my Lord that there is not a single verse which I do not understand well. I know if a verse was revealed during the night or in the day, on the plains or in the hills."

Can anybody, except one who has knowledge of the unseen make such claims before both friends and foes?

Prophecy that Sinan ibn Anas was the murderer of Imam Husain

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid Mu'tazali has recorded the same reports in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, v.I, p.208 from Ibn Hilal Saqafi's Gharat. He says that a man stood up and said: "Let me know about the hair of my head and beard."

The Holy Imam said: "My friend, the Holy Prophet has informed me that there is an angel in the root of each hair of your head who curses you. There is a devil in the root of each of the hairs of your beard who misleads you. There is a calf in your house that will kill the son of the Holy Prophet."

This man was Anas Nakh'iy, whose son, Sinan was a small child at the time of 'Ali's prophecy. In 61 A.H. Sinan reached Karbala and was one of the murderers of Imam Husain.

Some reporters say that the man who had asked the question was Sa'd Ibn Abi Waqas and that his son ("calf") was the accursed 'Umar Ibn Sa'd, who was the chief of Yazid's army, a central figure in the tragedy of Karbala. It is also possible that both of them had asked the question in two different meetings.

These reports, however, show that the Holy Imam drew attention to the fact that he was aware of the unseen.

Foretelling the standard bearing of Habib ibn Ammar

Your eminent ulama', like Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in Musnad and Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, v.I, p.208 have reported that during the days of his apparent caliphate, Amiru'l-Mu'minin was sitting in the Kufa mosque with his companions when a man said that Khalid Ibn Uwaita had died in Wadiyu'l-Qurba. The Holy Imam said: "He is not dead, nor will he die, until he becomes the leader of the misguided army. His standard bearer will be Habib Ibn Ammar."

A young man stood up from the assembly and said: "I am Habib Ibn Ammar and am one of your true and sincere friends."

'Ali said, "I have never told a lie and never will. I am, as it were, seeing Khalid, the chief of the misguided army, and you are his standard bearer. You people will enter the mosque there (pointing to the Babu'l-Fil), and the flag of the standard will be torn by the gate of the mosque."

Years passed. During the caliphate of the wicked Yazid, Ubaidullah Ibn Ziyad became the

governor of Kufa and sent formidable forces to fight Imam Husain. One day many of those who had heard Amiru'l-Mu'minin's prophecy about them concerning Khalid and Habib Ibn Ammar were sitting in the mosque when the noise of the soldiers and their slogans was heard.

The people saw that Khalid Ibn Uwaita, the chief of the misguided army going to Karbala to fight against the son of the Holy Prophet, entered the mosque through the same Babu'l-Fil to stage a demonstration. Habib Ibn Ammar was carrying his standard. When Habib entered the mosque, the flag of his standard was torn by the gate of the mosque. The hypocrites were shown how deep 'Ali's knowledge was and how true his prophecies were.

Don't these signs and predictions prove that 'Ali had knowledge of the unseen?

If you carefully study the Nahju'l-Balagha, which is a compilation of 'Ali's sermons and pronouncements, you will find that there are clear prophecies about calamities and disturbances, affairs concerning the great kings, the revolts of the Zanj people, the domination of the Mongols, Genghis Khan's reign, the accounts of the oppressive caliphs, and their treatment of the Shi'as.

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid discussed these facts in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, v.I, and p.208-211. The great scholar, Balkhi Hanafi, in his Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, also discusses how 'Ali frequently displayed his deep knowledge in his sermons and predictions.

Foretelling Mu'awiya's oppression

The Holy Imam also foretold that Mu'awiya would subdue the Kufans and order them to reject him ('Ali). For instance, the Holy Imam said: "Shortly after me a man with a large throat and a fat stomach will dominate you. He will eat whatever he gets; if he does not get it, he will demand it. So you should kill him. But you will never kill him. Verily, he will soon order you to call me by ill names and to keep aloof from me.

So I permit you to abuse me because it is a verbal thing, which for me is a source of purity and for you security against the harm of this man. But since aloofness and hatred are from the heart, you should not acquire hatred for me. I was born in the nature of Islam and unity of Allah and I have taken the lead in matters of belief and Hijra (migration)."

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, and your other high-ranking ulama' confirm the fact that the man referred to above was Mu'awiya Ibn Abu Sufyan. When his domination was firm he ordered the people to abuse and revile 'Ali. This wicked practice continued for eighty years, and the Holy Imam was abused in the mosques, and in the sermons of the Jum'a prayers.

While 'Umar Ibn Abdu'l-Aziz Amawi was caliph, however, he forbade this hateful practice.

'Ali's foretelling this evil practice is another proof of his possessing knowledge of the unseen. 'Ali foretold many events which were confirmed after many years.

Foretelling of Dhu'th-Thadiyya's murder

Before the battle of Nahrwan, the Holy Imam prophesied the killing of the Kharijis and specifically of Tazmala, known as "Dhu'th-Thadiyya". He predicted also that of the Kharijis not even ten persons would survive and that of the Muslims not more than ten persons

would be killed.

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid and the great scholar, Balkhi, and others have reported that what the Imam said came true. Ibn Abi'l-Hadid, in his *Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha*, v.I, p.425 writes:

"This is one of those reports, which have been almost consecutively narrated. It is quite well known and has been reported widely. It is regarded one of the miracles of the Holy Imam."

You see, therefore, the vast difference between 'Ali and other "caliphs." If he did not possess knowledge of the unseen, how could he prophesy events which occurred years later?

For instance, he prophesied Mitham Tammar's murder at the hands of Ubaidullah Ibn Ziyad, Juwairiyya's and Rashid Hajari's murder by Ziyad, and Amr Ibn Humuq's murder at the hands of Mu'awiya's friends. He foretold the martyrdom of his son, Imam Husain to many people as well.

Prophecy about his own martyrdom and about ibn Muljim

He also predicted his own martyrdom. He said that his murderer was Abdu'r-Rahman Ibn Muljim Muradi, though that accursed man claimed to be loyal and a supporter.

Ibn Kathir writes in *Usudu'l-Ghaiba*, c.IV, p.25 and others also have reported that Ibn Muljim came to the Holy Imam, he recited some verses in praise of Amiru'l Mu'minin in the presence of the companions.

He said: "You are the true guide, free from all faults and doubts. You are generous and kind and are the son of those lion-hearted and gallant ancestors, who were so distinguished in bravery from the very beginning. O, successor of the Prophet! Allah has given you this rank and bestowed upon you that virtue and greatness present in the Holy Qur'an."

The companions were very surprised at his eloquence and ardent love. Then the Holy Imam replied in verse: "I advise you to love me open-heartedly, even though I know that you are one of my enemies."

Ibn Hajar says in his *Sawa'iq al-Muhriqa*, p.82 that the Holy Imam, replying in verse to Ibn Muljim, said: "I wish him to live, but he wants to kill me. This outward friend belongs to the Murad clan."

Abdu'r-Rahman said: "Perhaps you have heard my name and you dislike my name."

The Holy Imam said: "No, it is not so; I know without the least doubt that you are a murderer, and it will not be long before you will stain my white beard with the blood of my head."

Ibn Muljim said, "If it is so, you may have me killed." The companions also insisted that he should be killed.

But the Holy Imam said: "It can never be. My religion does not allow retaliation before the commission of the sin. I know for certain that you are my murderer, but religious orders concern manifest acts. Since you have not yet committed an unjust action, I cannot inflict

any penalty on you."

Thomas Carlyle of England writes in his series of lectures, "On Heroes," that 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib was murdered because of his justice. That is, if he had retaliated before the commission of the sin, he would have surely remained safe. This was often the case with kings of the world who immediately killed anyone - even a near relative - whom they suspected to be their enemy.

This event is another proof of the fact that no one has a knowledge of the unseen except a Prophet or Imam who is ma'sum (innocent in the sense of preserved from error). If he were merely infallible, he might, on account of his being aware of the realities, cause a disturbance.

But a Prophet or Imam, who is also infallible, even after recognizing his murderer, does not make reprisals before the actual commission of the sin. Are these examples not sufficient to prove that the Holy Imam was fully aware of future events?

'Ali's Superiority

Sheikh Sulayman Balkhi reports in the beginning of Yanabiu'l-Mawadda the verses of Amiru'l-Mu'minin which have been taken from Ibn Talha Shafi'i's Durru'l-Munazzam. The Holy Imam said:

"Verily, I have complete knowledge of all beginnings, and I am accused of hiding the knowledge of the ends. I am the discloser of all hidden and inexplicable matters. I have before me the record of all the past and the present. Truly, I have dominion over all things, great and small, and my knowledge encompasses the whole universe."

The Holy Imam also said: "I could load seventy camels with commentary on the sura of al-Fatiha (of the Holy Qur'an)."

The Holy Prophet has said: "I am the city of Knowledge and 'Ali its gate. Also Allah Almighty says that we should enter the house through the gates. So whoever wishes to seek knowledge should come through the door."

Apart from other facts, these two instances are sufficient to prove the superiority of 'Ali to others. He should have directly succeeded the Holy Prophet as the leader of the Muslims. When it is an admitted fact that 'Ali was the most learned of all, it is absurd to assume that an ignorant man had the right to supersede him.

Allah could not have willed that the superior be superseded by the inferior

Even Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his book about the first sermon says: "A man of low order was given priority over the man of the most exalted rank." This remark is an acknowledgement of the Holy Imam's superiority, but his fanaticism compels him to add, "Allah willed that the inferior supersede the superior man."

This statement is unfortunate, coming as it does from a man like Ibn Abi'l-Hadid. All sensible people would object to it. His claim contradicts Allah's justice. But surely Allah is All-Just and All-Wise. He does not give preference to an inferior man and let him supersede

a more deserving person.

Allah says in the Holy Qur'an,

"Say: Are those who know and those who do not know alike?" (39:9)

Again He says: "Is then he who guides to truth more worthy to be followed or he who himself goes not aright, unless he is guided."

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid clearly admits that 'Ali was the man who most deserved the caliphate. He says in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, v.I. p.4: "Verily, 'Ali was superior to all mankind after the Holy Prophet of Allah. Regarding the matter of the caliphate, he was the most deserving of all the Muslims."

"City of knowledge" proves 'Ali's right to be the first caliph

Moreover, the Holy Prophet's explicit statement at the conclusion of this hadith confirms 'Ali's superiority: "He who is desirous of seeking knowledge must come to the door." The "door" here is of course 'Ali.

So is this portal of guidance whom the Prophet has ordered us to seek more worthy or he whom the people have chosen? The answer is obvious. The Holy Prophet's order must be obeyed. Second, the Holy Prophet also established the criterion for priority and preference, which is the possession of the highest knowledge.

Sheikh: If, 'Ali had the right of priority because of his superior knowledge, the Holy Prophet of Allah should have specifically stated it so the Community might know that obedience to him was compulsory. But no such categorical statement is to be found.

Well-Wisher: I am greatly pained to hear such statements from you. You have an unfortunate tendency to reject anything - even the obvious truth - when it contradicts your view. My respected brother, I have been citing those statements for the last ten nights.

The audience and several local newspapers will bear testimony to this fact. But still you say that you have not seen any explicit statement of the Holy Prophet. Even your own authentic books are replete with clear declarations on this issue.

Let me ask you this: Does the Community need the Holy Prophet's knowledge and sirat (traditions and customs)?

Sheikh: It is an obvious fact. All the Companions and the Community need the guidance, knowledge, and customs of the Holy Prophet until the Day of Judgement.

Well-Wisher: May Allah bless you! If there were no other specific hadith except the Hadith of Medina, even this would have been sufficient to prove my point. The Prophet explicitly says: "I am the city of knowledge and 'Ali is its gate; he who wishes to seek knowledge should come to the door."

According to the Holy Prophet 'Ali excelled all others

in knowledge

What declaration can be more explicit than this hadith in which the Holy Prophet says that "Anyone who desires to have the benefit of my knowledge should come to the door of 'Ali because he is the gate of knowledge?"

Now dawn is approaching. For the whole night I have been ardently discussing this topic and have taken all of your time. But at this moment you have cooled my ardor. Like your predecessors, you refuse to listen, and consequently, disregarding all my cogent reasoning, you are denying the obvious truth.

What declaration can be superior to the declaration about knowledge? Would any sane person advocate rejecting a wise man in favor of an ignorant one? Of course not. Therefore, you must accept my point, which is not only my point but an accepted principle of all knowledgeable people: since 'Ali was superior in knowledge and wisdom among the entire Community, obedience to him is obligatory.

Accordingly, as I have already mentioned, your own prominent ulama', like Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (Musnad), Khawarizmi (munaqab), and even the fanatic Ibn Hajar Makki in Sawa'iq have quoted the Holy Prophet as saying: "In my Community 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib excelled all others in knowledge."

There was not a single person among the Companions who compared to 'Ali in knowledge. Ibn Maghazili Shafi'i in Munaqab, Muhammad Ibn Talha in Matalibu's-Su'ul, Hamwaini in Fara'id and Sheikh Sulayman Hanafi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, ch.XIV, report from Kalbi that the great scholar of the Community, Abdullah Ibn Abbas, said:

"The knowledge of the Holy Prophet is from Allah's knowledge; the knowledge of 'Ali is from the Holy Prophet's knowledge. My knowledge and all the Companion's knowledge, compared to 'Ali's, is like a drop of water before the seven seas."

In Nahju'l-Balagha, sermon 108, 'Ali says: "We (the infallible Imams) are the Tree of Prophethood, the secure abode of the divine message, the descending place of angels, the mines of knowledge, and the sources of wisdom."

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, v.II, p.236 commenting on this sermon, says: "This attribute was clearly possessed by the Holy Imam since the Prophet of Allah has said: 'I am the city of knowledge and 'Ali is its gate; whoever wishes to seek knowledge should come to the gate.'

Also the Holy Prophet said: 'Ali is the best judge among you.'"

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid goes on to say: "The faculty of judgement requires many kinds of knowledge: The standard of his knowledge was so high that no one could equal him. In fact no one approached him. So he was entitled to claim: 'We are the mines of knowledge and the sources of wisdom.' Hence, after the Holy Prophet no one had better right to claim these things for himself."

Ibn Abdu'l-Barr in Isti'ab, v.III, p.38, Muhammad Ibn Talha in Matalibu's-Su'ul, p.23, and Qazi Aiji in Mawaqif, p.276 have quoted the Holy Prophet as saying: "'Ali is the best judge among you all."

Suyuti in Ta'rikhu'l-Khulafa, p.115, Hafiz Abu Nu'aim in Hilyatu'l-Auliya, v.I. p.65, Muhammad Jazari in Asniu'l-Matalib, p.14, Muhammad Ibn Sa'd in Tabaqa, p.459, Ibn Kathir in Ta'rikh al-Kabir, v. VII, p. 359, and Ibn Abdu'l-Barr in Isti'ab, v.IV, p.38, quote 'Umar Ibn Khattab as saying: "'Ali is the best judge among us."

It is reported in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda that Ibn Talha, author of Durru'l-Munazzam says: "You should know that all the secrets and mysteries of the divine books are contained in the Holy Qur'an. Whatever is in the Holy Qur'an is contained in the sura al-Fatiha. Whatever is in the sura of al-Fatiha is contained in the verse 'Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim.' (In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, and the Merciful).

Whatever is in the verse, 'Bismillah ar-Rahman, ar-Rahim,' is in the Ba (B) of 'Bismillah.' Whatever is in the Ba of 'Bismillah,' is contained in the dot below the letter Ba of 'Bismillah.' 'Ali said: 'I am that dot which is below the letter Ba of Bismillah.'"

Also Sulayman Balkhi in his Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, reports Ibn Abbas as saying: "Once on a moonlit night after the Isha prayer, 'Ali, taking me by the hand led me to the graveyard of Baqi and said: 'Abdullah! Recite.' I recited the verse 'Bismillah ar-Rahman ar-Rahim.' The Holy Imam continued telling me the secrets and mysteries of the Ba of 'Bismillah' until dawn."

Both sects unanimously agree that regarding his knowledge of the unseen and his being the heir of the knowledge of the prophets, 'Ali holds a unique position among all the Companions.

Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i in Matalibu's-Su'ul, Khatib al-Khawarizmi in Manaqib, and Sulayman Balkhi Hanafi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda have recorded from Ibn Talha Halbi's Durru'l-Munazzam that 'Ali said: "Ask me about the unseen and unknown mysteries, because truly I am the heir of the knowledge of the Holy prophets and messengers of Allah."

Also Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in Musnad, Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, and Sulayman Balkhi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda report that 'Ali declared from the pulpit: "Ask me about what you do not understand before I die. Inquire of me about the paths of the skies because, verily, I know more about those paths than the paths of the earth."

'Ali made this long before the invention of the telescope. People often asked him about the heavenly bodies and he answered their questions.

Description of zones of space in agreement with the modern science of astronomy

The great scholar and traditionist, Sheikh 'Ali Ibn Ibrahim Qummi of the 3rd century A.H. in his commentary on the sura Saffat (No. 37), the eminent scholar, Sheikh Fakhru'd-Din Ibn Tarih Najafi, known for his piety, in his Kitabu'l-Lughat Ma'rafat al-Majma'u'l-Bahrain, which was compiled about 300 years ago, and Allama Mullah Muhammad Baqir Majlisi, in his Biharu'l-Anwar, v.XIV, report that 'Ali said:

"The stars in the skies are populated with cities as the earth is." Now for Allah's sake, be fair. At that time there was no conception of modern astronomy. The world accepted the Ptolemaic theory that the earth was the center of the universe. If a man disclosed something new about the stellar regions and that was proved to be true a thousand years

later, wouldn't you say that he had knowledge of the unseen?

'Ali mastered all sciences

The fact is that, after the Holy Prophet, 'Ali was the most knowledgeable man in philosophy, grammar, fiqh (jurisprudence), astronomy, astrology, jafr (divination), mathematics, poetry, rhetoric, and lexicography. In all the sciences he made significant contributions which the experts in that field have adopted as a basis for further development.

For example, he told Abu'l-Aswadu'd-Du''Ali (a writer who is generally credited with having invented the vowel marks of written Arabic) that there were three parts of speech: the noun, the verb, and the preposition.

Also, he laid down the principles of grammar and syntax of the Arabic language as well as details of pronunciation and vocabulary. By fixing correct pronunciation in writing, he protected the Qur'an from future misinterpretation.

Ibn abi'l-hadid's admission of 'Ali's superior knowledge

In the preface of Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha by Ibn Abi'l-Hadid Mu'tazali, you will find how this scholar admitted and praised the merits of 'Ali in all fields of knowledge.

He says: "What can I say about the man to whom all the merits are attributed, who is a perfect model for every nation to follow, and with whom all wish to identify themselves? He is of course the fountain head of all merits. After him, whoever achieved prominence received benefit from him, for he followed in his footsteps."

Ibn Abi'l-Hadid says that the knowledge of the four great jurists, Abu Hanifa, Imam Malik, Imam Shafi'i, and Imam Hanbal, derived from 'Ali's knowledge. He says: "Those companions who were well versed in jurisprudence learned it from 'Ali."

I do not want to take more of your time by quoting further from this great scholar. But I urge you to read his preface to his Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha. You would learn how the illustrious historian and scholar have acknowledged the merits of 'Ali. He says, "'Ali's case is strange. Throughout his life he never uttered the words: 'I do not know.' He possessed knowledge of everything."

At the end, the author says: "This fact can be counted as one of the miracles of the Holy Imam. Such knowledge is beyond the reach of human power and understanding."

Imam Husain's birth and the Angels' congratulations

People came to the Holy Prophet and congratulated him on the birth of Imam Husain. One of the men said: "O Holy Prophet! We have observed something strange in 'Ali." The Holy Prophet asked, "What did you see?" The man said: "When we came to offer congratulations, we were stopped and told that 120,000 angels had come from heaven and were with you. We were astonished as to how 'Ali could know this and how he could count them."

The Holy Prophet smiled and asked 'Ali how he could know that so many angels had come to him. The Holy Imam said: "May my father and mother sacrifice their lives for you! Each of

the angels who came to you and saluted you spoke in a different language. On calculation, I found that they had spoken in 120,000 languages, so I knew that 120,000 angels had come to you."

The Holy Prophet said: "O, Abu'l-Hasan! May Allah increase your knowledge and modesty." Then turning to the people the Holy Prophet said: "I am the city of knowledge, and 'Ali is its gate. There is no greater event and no greater sign than he is. He is the Imam of the people, the best of mankind, trustee of Allah and repository of His knowledge.

He is the 'people of Dhikr', among those referred to by the words of Allah:

***'So ask you the people of Dhikr if you know not.'*(16:43)**

I am the treasury of knowledge and 'Ali is its key. So whoever wishes to obtain the treasure must come to the key."

If you can point to a single companion or relation of the Holy Prophet who could rival 'Ali's merits, I would certainly bow my head before him. But if you cannot, then it would be your religious duty to attach yourselves to the truth without caring what the world might think. (Then he raised his hands towards the sky and prayed to Allah:) "O, Allah! Be my witness that I have clearly indicated the way to truth and have discharged my religious obligation."

Nawab sahib's acceptance of Shi'as'ism

Nawab: Holy sir, for the last several nights, we have heard many discussions in these sessions. Some of us used to discuss the points of arguments among ourselves each day. I thank Allah Almighty that He has shown us the way. The utterly false information of the opponents misled us. Now it is clear that the Shi'as Ithna Asharis are rightly guided.

Both those of us who have attended these meetings and many people of the city who have read the accounts of these debates in the newspapers have been shown the truth about Islam. Of course they all cannot publicly declare their faith because of their personal dealings with the opponents, but they have told us in private that they have accepted Shi'as'ism.

But some of us are not afraid of anyone and are prepared to announce that during these nights we wanted to reveal our change of allegiance. There was no opportunity to do so. We have heard your convincing arguments, and now our belief is quite firm.

Permit us now to draw the curtain aside. Let our names be recorded as Shi'as of our master, Amiru'l-Mu'minin and the twelve Imams. Kindly announce to the people of the Shi'as sect that we are one with them.

Bear witness on the Day of Judgement before the Divine Court of Justice and before your exalted grandfather that we have complete faith in the twelve Imams as the successors and vicegerents of the Holy Prophet of Allah.

Well-Wisher: I am glad that some of you have recognized the truth. According to a hadith recorded by Imam Ahmad Ibn Hanbal in Musnad Ibn Abi'l-Hadid in Sharh al-Nahju'l-Balagha, by Muhammad Ibn Talha Shafi'i in Matalibu's-su'ul, by Ibn Maghazili in Faza'il, by Khawarizmi in Manaqib, by Sulayman Hanafi in Yanabiu'l-Mawadda, and by many others, the Holy Prophet has guided us to this path. He said, "'Ali's path is the path to truth." I hope

that my other brothers in Islam will also give up their intolerance.

Nawab: We are extremely grateful for your kind and learned interpretation of facts. There is still one point which disturbs us. It concerns the imamate of the twelve Imams and their names. In the past ten nights Amiru'l-Mu'minin 'Ali was the focus of our discussion.

First tell us the verse of the Holy Qur'an which proves the imamate of the twelve Imams. Second, are the names of the twelve Imams recorded in our books?

Well-Wisher: It is an appropriate question and I would be happy to respond. But it is now nearly dawn, and my answer cannot be brief.

Tomorrow is the birthday of the grandson of the Holy Prophet Imam Husain and the Qizilbash family has arranged a celebration in the Risaldar Imambara. Perhaps I will reply to your question on that occasion.

Nawab: I quite agree with you.

Last Session, Sunday, 4th Sha'ban, 1345 A.H.

[Birthday of Imam Husain](#)

A large celebration was held to commemorate the birthday of Imam Husain. The author, Sayyid Muhammad Sultanu'l-Wa'adhim Shirazi, addressed the gathering. It was his final speech, and as he promised on the previous night, he answered the question about the imamate, the number and names of the Imams in the Holy Qur'an and the hadith. He began his speech with the following ayat:

"O You who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you; then if you quarrel about anything, refer it to Allah and the Apostle, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. This is better and very good in the end." (4:59)

[Genuine Liberty](#)

Well-Wisher: The idea of liberty, that people should be free, has long been a popular idea. The superficial notion about freedom is that it means doing as one likes, a notion which has resulted in the rejection of divine law. But of course real freedom is submission to Allah, the Creator of all things.

The Holy Qur'an frequently commands the believers to obey Allah and those fit to be followed from among ourselves. The Holy verse which I have recited as the theme of my discourse is one such verse which indicates whom we should obey. It commands us to obey Allah, the Holy Prophet, and those vested with authority.

There is no difference of opinion among Muslims concerning the obedience due to the Holy Prophet. However, there is difference of opinion about the meaning of the words "those