

Teaching True Islam [through the *Sahīfa*]¹

The previous two tasks [i.e. the Announcement of His Imamate and Uniting the Shia Community] were stepping-stones to reach this most important of his responsibilities. We have seen how the Imam announced his Imamate by means of a “family feud”, and how he gave his followers a platform of unity in the form of his mourning for his father. In neither instance he addressed any outsider; still the message got through.

Likewise, in meeting this third and most important of his tasks, he did not address any human being. He selected the form of Du‘ā (invocation) for this purpose. He recorded his Du‘ās in a book form and asked his two sons to make copies of the book. This recording itself is an indication that these invocations were not just a prayer, but also a means of guidance for the Muslims.

How could anyone tell him not to ask his wants from Allah? How could anyone come between Allah and His servant, when raising his hands he called his Lord in a heart-rending voice to come to his aid and to help him out of his difficulties.

But those recorded Du‘ās are a treasure of Islamic knowledge. One finds in them almost all theological and ethical questions answered eloquently and eruditely. Reading them, the heart is filled with true belief and sincere love of Allah; and the light of virtue and nobleness illuminates the character.

It is not possible to give here even a short review of this sacred book, generally known as *Al-Sahīfab al-Sajjādiyab* or *Al-Sahīfab al-Kāmilab*; and also called “*Psalm of Ali Muhammad*,” “*Injil of Ahlul Bayt*.”

When this book was shown to Egyptian scholars, they were thunderstruck and awed by its beauty. They were amazed and stunned by the purity of thought and perfection of character to which this book irresistibly leads its reader.

The renowned scholar, late Al-Tantawī wrote:

“I have studied this book with utmost care. I have gone through the Du‘ās (invocations) and *Munājāts* (supplications) with a searching eye. I was stunned by the lofty meanings and deep sense contained therein. I was deeply impressed by the value and magnificence of these invocations. I wonder how the Muslims all along been ignorant of such valuable treasure. They have been in deep slumber all these centuries. They could not even feel that Allah had supplied them with such a precious store of knowledge.

¹ Syed Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, “The Illustrious Period of the Imamate of Imam Zayn al-‘Ābidīn,” from www.al-islam.org/al-serat/vol-5-no-3-4-1979/illustrious-period-imamate-imam-zayn-al-abidin-sayyid-saeed-akhtar-rizvi accessed on May 5, 2014. This article was first published by the author titled “Imam Zainul-Abideen” in *The Light*, v. VI, No. 3, Dar es Salaam, June 1972.

“The invocations in this book have two distinct approaches: the one seeks for the knowledge and guidance to keep away from sins and evil things, while the other persuades and exhorts one to enable one's 'self' by performance of virtuous deeds. We may say that these Invocations, full of knowledge and guidance, are a wonderful treasure of secrets, and contain hints regarding self-reproachment, admission of shortcomings, with tears and self-purification, warding off vicissitudes and difficulties, safe-guarding oneself from the tyrannies of the enemy, recovery from various diseases and so on. All such Du‘ās are found mostly in the first part of the book, while the later part consists of the loftiness and grandeur of Allah, His creation and other wonders of His power and might.

“Is it not wonderful? Does not it show that these holy personages are unveiling many secrets of learning and unravelling many mysteries of knowledge for Muslims, who happen to be completely ignorant of it? It is a fact that the affairs of human beings are divided into two parts: The one is to keep away from evil, the other to acquire good traits together with the knowledge of Divine existence, which is essential for self-purification and spiritual perfection.”

Then he goes on expounding these points with help of many invocations. In another article, he compares an invocation of Imam Zaynul ‘Ābidīn with the prayer of the Prophet Nūh (Noah). Just to give an example of the high religious and ethical standard taught by our Holy Imam, I am quoting here extracts from a Du‘ā, known as *Makārimul Akhlāq* (Noble Character). This Du‘ā is enough to lead the reciter on the right path, making him a perfect Muslim and a virtuous believer.

O Lord, You are my shelter if I grow sad, and You are my resource if I am in need and unto You I cry for help, when deeply afflicted, and with You is recompense for what is lost, and reformation for what is corrupted, and alteration for what You disapprove:

Therefore, favor me with security before calamity and bounty before begging (for it) and right direction before error and spare me from bearing me peace on the day of resurrection and favor me with hand some guidance.

O Lord, bless Muhammad and his Āl (family) and ward off (evil) from me with Your grace, and nourish me with Your blessing, and reform me with Your graciousness and cure me with Your goodness and hide me in the shelter of Your mercy and clothe me with Your approbation, and help me, when matters grow difficult about me, (to choose) the most righteous of them, and when actions become dubious, (to select) the purest of them, and when the creeds conflict, (to adopt) the most praiseworthy of them.

O Lord, bless Muhammad and his Āl (family) and crown me with sufficiency and adorn me with the grace of Your love and grant me true guidance and do not try me with prosperity and confer on me the beauty of comfort and do not make my life a succession of trials, and do not reject my prayer with repulsion; for, I do not recognize any as Your rival, and I do not call upon any as Your equal.

O Lord, bless Muhammad and his Āl (family) and restrain me from extravagance and preserve my subsistence from waste and increase my possessions by giving blessing therein and let me walk along the path of benevolence; in whatever I spend my (wealth).²

In this way Imam Zaynul ‘Ābidīn spent his life providing guidance not only for the Muslims of his time, but also for the generations to come. When he left this world, he had more than accomplished all that he was entrusted with by Allah.

² The author of this article had access to Muhani’s translation. Exact translation of these passages can be found in Ahmed Ali Mohani, *Sabīfat-ul-Kamīla*, pp. 74 -75, Madrastul Waizīn, Lucknow, 1969 (Publisher).