

ON THE RETURN

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The Twelver Shi'ites belief in the Return (*Raj'at*) is one of the most important tenets in their dogma. This subject has been well clarified and discussed by Dr. A. Sachedina in his "Islamic Messianism"¹⁾ mainly based on its traditional sources. The idea of the Return in fact works as a very essential component for formation of the so-called religious sentiment of the Shi'ite people. It is undeniable that this idea originated in various cultural traditions heterogeneous to the primordial Islām. Yet, it is also true that this idea owes a debt to the Quranic verses and the genuine, authentic traditions. The idea itself could be regarded as one of the proofs of the spiritual energy of early Islām in absorbing and assimilating other cultures. In this sense, we should not say that the idea of the Return is a pagan element²⁾ in Islamic teachings, but rather it well illustrates and reflects the Islamic way of acception of other cultural traditions.

Yet, unfortunately, this idea has been left undiscussed in a rational and logical manner. It has been believed even among the Twelver Shi'ite Ulamā that this is not appropriate for theological discussion, and

the traditional sources only are the basis for belief in this idea. Rational support for the belief in this idea has been scarcely given by the Twelver Shī'ite scholars except the late Allāmeḥ Rafī'ī Qazwīnī who himself has insisted in his article on the Return that he was the first scholar³⁾ who tried to demonstrate rationally and logically the possibility of the Return. In this sense, his article on the Return deserves special mention in the history of the Twelver Shī'ite theology. In fact, it is a very ambitious attempt. He tries to demonstrate the rational possibility of the Return of the Imāms' souls to this world based upon the hierarchical world view of traditional Islamic philosophy. The soul is destined to follow the course of self-perfection in the traditional understanding of Islamic philosophy regarding the soul. The Imāms' purified souls are the perfected soul in a sense. But, they could not display their perfected characteristics when they were in the physical bodies because of obstacles and compulsions. Yet, after separation from their bodies, they can display their abilities in a full and perfect manner. As far as the souls are perfected in actuality after death, it is a logical corollary that the souls in the invisible world will return to this world to complete the journey for perfection. This article is based on the theory of the four journeys⁴⁾ of the souls in the tradition of the Hikmat philosophy. In this short article, we witness the full blooming of the philosophic spirit of Hikmat philosophy.

Allāmeḥ Rafī'ī Qazwīnī was born in Qazwīn in 1310 (1892 A.D.) of the hejra year and died in 1395 (1975 A.D.) of the hejra year. He was one of the eminent scholars of his days. The following is a translation of his article on the Return.

The Return⁵⁾

Allāmeḥ Ayatollah Rafī'ī Qazwīnī

Praise God only and grace be upon his servants and Muhammad, the chosen and his family who are lord of people. It is clear and self-evident upon rational wisemen that it is impossible to have well-established and decisive faith in one of the religious subjects unless one reaches the level of rational logical understanding and unless the limits and contents of the religious subject is determined on the yardstick of rational ability.

The subject of the return of the luminous souls of the purified Imāms — upon them the grace of God, the Lord of all the worlds — into the physical bodies of the material space is one of the religious subjects of the Shī'ites, followers of the true path — may God the exalted help them — and expounding and clarifying the real essence of this subject in the mirror of reason is an important matter in particular in the time when most people conceive wrong ideas about rational sciences and have fallen in the darkness of doubts and wild guesses.

Recently, my excellent students and my friends in the field of academic research all together requested this humble servant to write about this subject a rationally argued article the contents of which may remove doubts and refutations. This humble one also accepted

this request and came to the workshop for its fulfillment with resorting to the help of God the exalted and His beautiful revelation and support.

According to the natural order which is clearly established in the series of knowledges and rational comprehension of objects of rational recognition, I will inevitably mention beforehand several premises in order to make a solid foundation for the subject.

The First Premise

It is clearly established that the soul has a complete relationship with the physical body. The reality of this relationship is reducible to an essential and natural relationship between spiritual ability and material, natural ability; whether the spiritual is a universal one like the universally influential ability under the influence of which volition all the natural world is in motion and goes on or a particular ability under the influence and care of which a natural and personal system is safeguarded.

Thereupon, it is possible to say that every universal nature in the world, be it higher or lower, is under the influence of the great spirit in the same manner as the nature of the physical body is under the rule and control of a rational soul which is a particular spirit.

But, there is a difference between the greatest spirit and the rational soul because the former is creator of forms and matters of the universe and is not a simple giver of forms and actualities but both matter and form become existent because of its causation, while the latter does not create the first materials of the physical body, but its

function is to keep perfection and actualities of the body like maintenance of structure, growth, benefits of senses and abilities because divine emanation comes to the body through the aisles of the souls; that is, the Truth — praise Him — gives grace through soul, controller of the body. Another difference is that while the greatest soul does not need universal matter of the world for its own perfection, rational soul needs matter called the body for its substantial progress and perfecting movement. There are other differences again between the two. But they are indifferent with our subject and expounding of them will make the speech long.

The type of relationship and concern which the higher one in the ranking of ontological hierarchy has toward the lower one is a kind of omnipotentiality as well as a special power which in the beginning may not have anything to do with the level in which due to the perfection of power of the soul a particular form can be given to the physical body in every period in accordance with its volition and with its special concern life can appear in material, but in the final level in the course of the substantial movement of the soul it will come to have something to do with that level.

From the above-mentioned premises will result the following matter; as is known well, the soul's relation to the body will be nullified completely at the natural and sensible death. Yet, this opinion is not right on the scientific yardstick, because as already has been clarified, it becomes clear on the careful survey that this relation is existential power of the rational soul and its existential superiority over the body itself, and moreover, it is the body's weakness and conqueredness under the influence of the soul. Since this sort of relation is originated in the

essential matters of the soul, it is impossible for the soul to continue to exist and to change and perish after death at the same time.

Well, the soul in its natural state of life due to its essential relation has special activities which are in fact to put this relation into practice. Yet, there are no activities of life after death, but it is not extinction of basis of the relation. People, who live in the sensible world only and have nothing to do with research of the truth and profundity, regard the soul's relation to the body as activities and rule of the soul in the body. Yet, this understanding is vulgar and has nothing to do with rational reality.

The fact is that the soul has force and superiority over the body and that the body is ruled by the soul and subservient to it is proved very clearly, because volitions, emotions and ideas in the rational soul set the body in motion and changes in the body follow changes in the soul. This fact has grave profundity. The soul's aspects, like pleasure, grief, fear, a sense of relief, a feeling of shyness, embarrassment, etc., appear and are witnessed clearly. So, ancient doctors used to cure diseases mainly with psychological treatment. The great teacher (*Ibn Sīnā*) has quoted a story full of interest about this subject in his book of "Departure and Terminus."⁶ Anyone who wants to see it should refer to that book.

So, aspects of the soul always come up to the stage of their realization. They manifest themselves and make themselves distinct in the horizon of the body which plays the role of the vast earth and the wide plain. As is clear from this explanation, if the rational soul's concern for the natural body is realized in a perfect man after death, a new life becomes possible, and this is not impossible for rational

method. Then, recurrence is possible from the viewpoint of the force of the essential relationship of the soul. If those who have objection to this theory insist in another way that it is impossible for the soul to return to the body, the answer to this objection will be given in the following chapters while pointing out the problems in their objection, obeying the will of God, the greatest.

Second Prolegomena: Searching and Elucidating the Rank of the Divine and Universal Soul

The phrase “divine and universal soul” is called “Prophet” or “Imām” or “Universal Guardianship (*welāyat-e kullīyeh*)”⁷⁾ in the Islamic terminology.

Know that every reality has characteristics and effects which are an indicator of its existential rank. These effects are explained by theosophic philosophers as follows: “external existence of quiddity is the rank as well as the plane (*mowten*) on which the effects designed by the quiddity are realized.” Effects and characteristics are inseparable concomitants of every existent which has actuality. Or, in fact, effects of existents are the aspect (*maqām*) of expansion and development of existence which has effects, just as existence is the plane of convergence and reception of its own effects. For example, the material nature which adorns physical matters has a special effect in each one of the various natures; for example, the vegetable soul has special effects like nutrition, growth acceleration, natural growth, generation and the animal soul and its powers and partial senses each

one of which is suitable for its special perception which is its effect. Man's rational soul is the plane of rational potentiality and it is the level for approach to the reality of the object of knowing. In the first stage, its effect is passiveness, receptiveness and the learning of knowledge and recognition from its superior being as well as its own rational principles, but in the final level, it becomes the unified intellect as well as the converging point of lights of knowledges and becomes holder of mighty power and penetration into the objects of knowing and becomes radiation and creator of intellectual lights. At this stage, the required characteristics and effects of its existence are either to shed light universally on the world of the human souls, or to exert influence on a unified group through dispatch of prophets and holders of the divine, universal souls because the existential planes of this stage are different and the instructive duty of the prophets varies in accordance with the extent of aptitude for the truth and the extent of intellectual influence and eloquency and literary elegance. If you bring higher this plane of the rational soul and make it arrive at the highest rank of the unified intellect with radiation which is the rank of purification and perfection of all the human souls, the sealing spirit will be realized.

In other words, the teacher of the whole, the organizer of the human worlds, or the constituent of all the possible existents which is dependent on the necessary existent in itself, the creator of the whole — May His name be exalted — will appear. In the above-mentioned stage, the characteristics and natural effects of this existential plane are suitable for the rank of the incomparable at the same time they are working in the rank of the universal teacher and purificator of all the souls. And they are running through all the times and transcend all the

celestial spheres. And they continue to exist for the day when the souls return to the inside of the natural world while the width of the nature, the movement and temporal perfection will be taken away and the day of the greater resurrection will appear.

In short, the meaning of the prophetic sealership (*khātemīyat*) is the power of perfecting and teaching of the Sealer for all the different planes of human beings as well as the power of taking away the human souls from the range of potentiality to the range of pure actuality from the viewpoint of the intellectual and practical perfection, and these powers continue to exist by the day of resurrection. Whenever this matter becomes clear, eventually the comprehensive rank (of the Sealer) will partake of the spiritual comprehensiveness and the power of universal instruction and spiritual purification, because the imāmanship (*imāmat*) and the deputyship (*khilāfat*) of the rank of the sealership (*khātemīyat*) are continuation of the power of the universal instruction as well as retention of the knowledges and morals which are suitable for the power of universal instruction and universal purification, and which have been legalized by the Prophet. Proof for the fact, that in the center of the noble existence of the Sealer and the successors of his rank has laid down and continues to exist the power of universal instruction for all the individuals whether they are their contemporaries or not until the final point of the period of the natural world is grasped from the generality of his mission and his universal prophethood, because according to the rational corollary such a great enterprise as well as an important deed has a creative origin which is suitable for the greatness of the work and the deed.

The Third Premise

Know that it has been proved and clarified in the divine philosophy and the science of the supernatural world that compulsion (*qasr*) will not continue to exist. Compulsion as a technical term implies an existential state which is interdicted from the display of its own natural effect in spite of its craving for its display and its (inclination of) move toward it from the viewpoint of the nature of the divine existence, for example, throwing forcibly and compulsorily upward a heavy body which in its nature or by means of attraction of the earth, which is natural too, has inclination to the center of the earth. This movement is called compulsory movement, because it is contrary to natural desire.

Another example of compulsion is change of the body from healthy condition into illness. This is an unnatural deviation. Illness appears through the causes extrinsic to the nature of the body and its faculties. Or, another example is the animal which is considered always to be interdicted from its self-perfection in the world system because of the inborn disposition toward carnal desire and animal pleasure. And it is obvious that one of the reasons why monastic life is blamed and hated in the brilliant law of Islām is that animal powers in man's existence never extinguish and become nullified.

Proof for the impossibility of perpetual compulsion and instability of it in the world order is as follows; as it has been known in the second premise, every existent is gifted owing to God's work with its own special ability in accordance with which they can manifest and make apparent their characteristics and defects. This ability is called nature, natural disposition, or the specific form in the things other than the

animals and the plants. Yet, it is called the vegetable soul in the plants and is called the animal soul in the animals. It corresponds to the existential power (*quwweh jouhariyeh*) of intellectuality and knowledge in pure reason, and it is the general leadership and the general tutorship as well as purification in prophets and imāms. Setting up of such ability in the inside of every existent conforms as a matter of course to the divine wisdom and is done in the most firmly established manner from the viewpoint of the perfect system of the greater world. In other words, since existence of such power is inevitably and necessarily in the system of the world, it is created. As far as such substance has been put as a deposit in the reality of everything, if anyone wants to always prohibit this power and substance from their own perfection and not to appear on the stage of the greater world, being concealed at all times in the veil of prohibition and confinement due to the perpetual presence of a constrainer and an interferer, and if the act of creating which is full of wisdoms of the world of being does not make it reach its own goal, according to the judgment of the innate reason it is naturally invalid and a mere waste to place such ability in the essence of the existent and to let it long for the realization of its own effect while creating the causes and factors of its deprivation in the existential system on the one hand. It contradicts the wisdom of the creator of the whole — may His name be glorified. Therefore, from the viewpoint of rational necessity, it is impossible and an absurd contradiction to place the natural origin and the effective ability in the inside of each one of the existents while permanently placing interferences and obstacles to prevent the effect from coming into existence in the world system; Wisemen never judge in that way. For this reason, the great scholars and sovereigns of the

domain of wisdom and knowledge argue that not only permanent compulsion but also semi-permanent compulsion is impossible to exist in the world system.

Words of Wisdom

Through deliberation of the truth seekers with the excellent insight, they will realize that the above-mentioned law, that is, the impossibility of the permanent existence of compulsion conforms to another law which has been mentioned by the divine philosophers in another place. For, it has been clearly established that existence in the entire world of being is divided into two groups below whether it is in the domain of the essentially necessary existence or in the domain of the possibilities.

(First), in the case that it is the pure good, in the sense that the natural order of its existence is preserved in perfection, completion, beauty and permanence as well as preserved in the domain of its own reality, and moreover it is an organizer of all the other existential planes as well as a giver of glory to all the realities, like the lord creator — may His name be glorified — and next those nearest to Him among the rational pure existents, for whom there is not the state of expecting perfection, and who are in the state of existence and its perfection in pure actuality, while having ability to perform good deeds toward the subordinates and the existents of the lower class owing to the grace of the Truth, the exalted.

Or, (second) the case that the good of existence excels the bad of

existence, and, it exists in its own divine system and the confusion of its existential system happens rarely in comparison with the stable state of its existence and also the same in comparison with the other. As a matter of course such an existent accepts generation and corruption in the material, physical world and sometimes causes collision and confrontation with others to harm them, like the existence of fire which causes sometimes the harm and the loss to others, which are not so serious from the viewpoint of benefits for the total system.

Yet, three cases that the total existence of an existent is bad, and it is called the pure bad which always deviates from its own existential order and stays in confusion and is harmful to the totality of the world and its parts.

Second is the case that its badness excels its goodness.

Third is the case that both the goodness and the badness keep balance in it.

These three cases are impossible as is known. It is clear for the seeker of the truth with expertness that the permanent compulsion and the semi-permanent compulsion come into these cases and impossible to exist, because they are permanently or semi-permanently deprived from their own natural perfection and their existential system is in confusion.

With perfect meditation and employment of insight and right thinking around the issue the result of all these premises becomes clear to rational wisemen. The result is that the Return, that is, the coming back of the sacred rational souls of the Prophet and the purified Imāms — may God bless them all — to their physical bodies and their earthly flesh is possible, or it is necessary from the viewpoint of rational

necessity, because it is clear from the first premise that the soul's concern for the physical body is one of necessary concomitants of the body while the spiritual has suzerainty over the material in its basic nature. This is possible in a two-folded way, or rather this relationship of suzerainty continues to exist after death as is already known and is impossible to perish. And, it is clear from the second premise that the spirits of the Prophet the Sealer and the pure Imāms are the guides and the purifiers of all the human being who are bringers of all to the greatest happiness and the union of confession and unity in the path to the tawhīd. And according to the rule of that all existence has a characteristic, their existential characteristic is this general instruction and purification.

It is clear for those who are well informed with histories and tales that the rise of the sun which is called the greatest happiness and the appearance of its effect was impossible in the social environment of the people of the ages of the Prophet and the Imāms, because of many obstructions and various compulsions, just as the human world is the best witness and the best proof for this matter at present. Therefore, according to the necessity of reason and the judgment established in the third premise it follows that compulsion and deprivation from perfection and prohibition from natural effect are impossible to continue permanently. As a matter of course, it should be clarified some day that the divine, universal souls and the teachers of the school called the world should accomplish the duty of universal education. In other words, the spirits of the masters of education pay attention to their bodies and make themselves appear in the society. (At this moment), obstructions for the effects of this divine power will be eliminated and

compulsion will become invalid, and the holy teachers whose essential duty is education of all the people in the world will appear for education and purification of all the souls of mankind, and they bring human beings to the state of perfection and make them arrive at the entire actuality. Each of the souls with the divine proof will acquire the realization of its effect and goal and the world becomes luminous. And, the secret of the (*hadith qudsi*) “I was a hidden treasure —” appears in the perfect form of its meaning from behind the veil of concealment to this world. Splendid expression of the phrase “the shape of man is the greatest proof for God’s creation” and the lofty truth of the (*quranic*) phrase “Verily we did man a special favour” come to public place from the secret hideout. And all the gates of the spiritual paradise and all the gates for the journey to the world of the spirit and confidence will be opened for all the people and everyone will experience the sweetness of human reality which is the product of fermentation of knowledge, theosophy and excellent virtues. If such times do not come, then to place noble abilities and grounds for universal instructions and species guidance in the noble spirit of the Sealer and his successors will become null and useless and contradict the wisdom.

Now, we have discussed the subject of the Return while the reality of Islam, universality of the mission of the Prophet — upon him and his family may God bless — the sealership of the prophet, truthfulness of the Shī’ite creed and truthfulness of the Imāms of the Twelver Shī’ite have been proved, and also decorporealization of the spirit and its existence after death have been demonstrated. Therefore, I refrain myself from investigating all these subjects since each one of these subjects is separated and they have independent titles respectively

about which it is not suitable for this tract to mention entirely.

Now, two important issues which are necessary to be mentioned remain.

The first issue is the soul of the divine universality in the Prophet and Imām which has two kinds of relation.

One of the two is the special connection with its blessed body, and this connection is like the connection of all the souls with their physical bodies.

Second is the ruling relationship which the universal soul has over the greater world, and it is this relationship that is the essence and reality of Imāmship as well as universal dutyship (*niyābat-e kullīyeh*). It is because of this relationship that they have said: "Water is running because of our blessings, and trees come into leaf and bear fruit owing to our favour." There are many similar remarks in holy traditions. Yet, the first relationship became invalid because of Imām's death and it is said that Imām left the world.

Yet, the second relation does not become invalid with death. The relations and connection of the universal soul with the body of the greater world is still being established and continues to exist like before the death. It is clear for wisemen that this produces a universal profit for the matter of returning in addition to the fact that this is itself a noble and complicated subject.

The second issue is that if one of the existential realities should actualize in a world whose location is underneath the higher world. It has no capability of encompassing the higher world, and it cannot become self-manifestation (*zuhūr o tajallī*) in the higher world because

of its peculiar individualization which it has in the lower world. Yet, if its reality is dominant in the world which encompasses the lower worlds, it can make itself appear and manifest in those worlds, like the sun and the moon in this visible world. Since the sun and the moon have their existential centrality in the upper part of the material world, they always become self-manifestations in the earthly world and their effect underlies the earth. Yet, phenomenon like this does not happen in the relationship which earthly existents have concerning the heavenly bodies. In other words, earthly existents cannot rule the higher world. But, some inhabitants of the earth, whose spirituality is over the heavenly world and the heavenly souls, are exceptional. They have capability of ruling the heavenly bodies because of their superiority over the latter in terms of spirituality (*rūhīyat o ma'navīyat*), like the story of the commander of the believers who called back the (setting) sun. This second issue also removes the impossibility of Return and is influential as well as effective to make people's hearts realize its gist.

Now, what is the most important is the solution of the objections of those who reject the theory of Return and I shall create a separate chapter for this matter and eradicate their false ideas with divine help.

Answer to Objections

In the form of questions and answers I propound it.

First question:

The Return of the Imāms' pure souls — may peace be upon them —

to the material world as well as their own physical bodies requires necessarily a descending procession of the soul in its own existence. After parting from this world and having been free from the prison of nature, their souls go back to be involved in this world again. It is quite clear for each reason that return to the starting point after completion of their own natural cycle is not right.

Answer:

Descending retrogradation happens necessarily at the time when the Imāms' souls — may peace be upon them — are prohibited at the time of the Return from full display of their own perfection and reality in the same manner as it was at the first time. Yet, the case is not so, for obstructions and compulsions will be removed and the evil souls will be defeated at the time of the Return and the divine universal soul will become independent to rule over the able souls and to concentrate on displaying in a perfect manner instruction and universal guidance. This situation did not exist in the beginning. Therefore, the Return does not mean going back to the first state. And, the present situation of imprisonment of the rational soul in a narrow cage of nature will not exist at the time of the Return. Rather, natures, abilities and senses which are in a descending course become subservient to the rule of the soul in general and are following procession of the universal soul. The soul of the Imām — may peace be upon him — is free at the time of returning and his holy bird (*tāer-e qudsī-e ān hazarat*) flies with perfect high-mindedness. The reason why Alī — may peace be upon him — showed his repugnance to this world was that his mammonish soul soaked in his carnal desires and did not obey the rational rule of

the soul which encompassed him, if it was not so (there was not reason other than it because), bodies and materials of this world and bodies and materials of the next world, as long as they are possible existents, are one in the eyes of men of theosophic insight. Therefore, criticism and grief of friends of God are originated in the rule of the world of nature, not in the natural world.

Second question:

Theory of the Return will necessitate that the time of advent of the Twelfth Imām, the proof of the holy age — may God, Lord of all beings bless upon him and his immaculate ancestors — is not sufficient for universal instruction of human society. In spite of the fact that it is accepted among the Shī'ites — the glorious God may support them — that after the advent of the Hidden Imām, all the souls will be made to reach the highest phase of self-perfection, why is the returning of other Imāms — may peace be upon them — necessary?

Answer:

First of all, after the Imām who was the ruler of the time (Twelfth Imām) — may peace be upon him — left the world, continuation and duration of this every impeccable perfection inevitably requires the returning of the universal souls of the Imāms. For, it is they who establish the found of predetermination, tawhīd and universal instruction established by the Imām of the time perpetually subsist. Secondly, each of those who attained intellectual and practical perfection in theoretical ability as well as in practical ability by means of the Jesusian soul and instruction of the Twelfth Imām will not exist

individually and will leave this world, and their successors entirely need the returning.

Third question:

As it is clarified in metaphysics, existence of all material being is connected with a specific time which is a part of extending reality called time while precedence and posteriority, beginning and ending, belong to the parts of essential time. For example, precedence of Thursday to Friday is an essential and substantial fact. Therefore, whenever the return of the previous Thursday is desired, it should return in corollary with the characteristic of its precedence to Friday. Therefore, whenever the Imāms — peace be upon them — return to this world, they must return with their self-same personality and specific individuality. If an individual wishes to return to this world with its own individuality, a specific time connected with original existence also will return. If the original time should return, it will not be accompanied with posteriority but will be necessarily accompanied with precedence in its returning. This contradicts the concept of returning, because returning means revisiting and secondary existence but it does not mean the starting of existence.

Answer:

The period of the Return is one of the planes of existence of the Imām. That is, time which is one of the characteristics of existence is divided according to the existential planes of an individual. For example, individual existence of a man continues to keep his/her own individuality from the beginning of his/her growth to the last of the

existential planes. For, natural order of this existence exists in the totality of time with this very width and extension, not in one of parts of time. Therefore, inevitably the period of childhood, other stages in life, period of *barzakh* and period of the next life will be individualized. As established in metaphysics, individualization is different from distinction, for it is possible for various parts of this existence to exist distinctively in one person although he/she keeps oneness as an individual, like early childhood, childhood, youth, mature age, old age, etc., in Zayd. Whenever we want to individualize Zayd in his old age, it is not necessary that his individuality in childhood is maintained. But, it is rather absurd.

Now, since the period of returning of the Imām is an extended part of his individual existence and included in the natural order of his existence, his returning will be realized in the expected time of his return. The return of the time previous to the Return is not necessary as well as not permissible as mentioned before, because this period in actuality of the existence of the Imām is not indebted to the time previous to the Return. So, returning of an individual does not necessitate the return of the previous time and the return of the original existence. It is clear for bright theosophers that since the period of returning is definitely different from various periods in past from the viewpoint of nature and state, the states and movements of the heavenly bodies and spheres must be regarded accordingly different from those in the past. As far as the movements of the heavenly bodies are different from those in past, time becomes a different time because time is originated in the movements of the heavenly bodies and the universal changes of the material world. This is clear for men of insight.

Fourth question:

In books of traditions are recorded some stories about the Return which seems to be impossible, like story of Imām Alī — may peace be upon him — who will make a great war on Satan and to this war Satan will urge his offsprings and all his armies. Similar strange stories are recorded in some of the traditions.

Answer:

What has been decisively proved is the principle of the Return, removal of obstacles and compulsions, universal instruction and purification. As regards the details of the subject of the story as mentioned above, it is necessary to have been transmitted through the right course and should not be deviated from the limits of allowance for reliable traditions and should not be away from certainty of each tradition which has been proved in the religious sciences. And as regards each case, attention should be payed to the materials and the course of its transmission in order to decide judgment. And rejecting subject simply because of its impossibility must be considered not to be right way. It shows only arrogance and complete stupidity of the rejector. Great scholars and philosophers put the matter of which denial is not necessary and decisive in the state of suspension of judgment after full investigation about it and do not hurry to deny it.

Ibn Sīnā, the great teacher, one of the great Muslim philosophers, has confessed his inability on several subjects in physics and metaphysics in the book of “Cure” and acknowledged his lacking of understanding on them. Yet, he has not denied those matters. In the tenth chapter of his book of “Suggestions and Admonitions,” all the

surprising natural phenomena which seem to be deviated in man's external eyes from the flowing course of nature are not denied, but he has rather recommended repeatedly not to hurry to deny or accept them. This is also a right way.

Fifth question:

If the Return was proved with rational demonstration to be necessary on the yardstick of rational necessity, it will become natural that the souls of all prophets and messengers (since the creation of the world) should return on some day. So, why do the Shī'ites confine the return to the Prophet Muhammad and the Imāms — may peace be upon them?

Answer:

This objection will become meaningful when the objector could prove that the souls of all the prophets previous to the Prophet Muhammad possess ontological status and competence of propagation in a more intensive way than they used to possess them in those days they lived. This matter is not self-evident. The reason is that it is in the case of the Seal of the prophets only that universal propagatorship and messengership for all the members of mankind with the required physical strength and mental characteristics are approved as shown in the phrases of the Qur'ān and the genuine traditions. But, concerning the other prophets, the correct, rational as well as traditional materials are required.

But, when universal propagatorship and messengership were proved about their cases, there is no problem in their return. But, it

must be verified that the return of prophets other than the Prophet Muhammad to this world in order to supplement their own way of tawhīd and Sharī'ah is impossible. The reason is that Islām becomes the nullifier of the previous Sharī'ahs only in the case that the former Sharī'ahs reach the ultimate point of its self-perfection and completion and each of those attains the goal of which each one was in pursuit. Otherwise, a religion becomes nullifier of another religion. In other words, a religion interrupts the other previous religion before reaching its perfection. Such annulment is naturally invalid. Then, the meaning of annulment of other religions by Islām is appearance of genuine and self-evident principles and regulations of Islām after the ending and completion of developing process of the former religion. Simple suggestions have been made in the religious sciences on this subject. Therefore, the above mentioned objection is irrelevant and the returning of the prophets previous to the Prophet Muhammad is not proved.

Sixth Question:

According to the theory of substantial movement which Sadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī studied, and is right also, the soul after being free from the world of nature and separation from the body instinctively turns its face toward the interior of existence to contemplate the invisible world and its own deeds and knowledges, because in the process of the substantial movement, the changes in each one of the planes of the developing phase will result in a great existential and natural change from one phase to another phase. According to this principle it raises a question that if the face of the soul which shows really its existential way wants to return to this world from the invisible world which is

necessary for returning, how is it possible to suppose that a thing which has already attained actuality goes back again to potentiality. How is it possible to assume that a seeker would part with his own demanded object without having a higher and more perfect one when he had attained the former after great efforts.

Answer:

It is a contradiction that when the Return from the invisible world to this world to go to the world of nature, a thing would part with substantial movement despite attainment of its perfection and lose its own perfect and high actuality which was obtained through the essential changes and transmutations. Yet, such a state will not be necessary upon returning. The reason is that the soul can keep all the worlds and the existing phases through the power of its existence and the width of its ipseity, that is, the soul can pay attention to the world of nature and this world in spite of the fact that its face is directed completely toward the invisible world, just as in the most sacred existence of the truth — glory to Him — who contemplates perfectly his own essence, names and attributes there is a face being directed toward the world of possibilities with continuous grace in it. The necessary consequence of substantial movement is essential transition to the interior of this world, even if it makes this plane conform to attention to the lower plane. From the above-mentioned explanation, a clear answer will be given to the question of metempsychosis when someone argues that in short the coming back as well as the returning is the same as metempsychosis which impossibility has been rationally established.

Consideration of the answer to this argument will clarify that

metempsychosis means the return of the soul with the original actuality and the weakness of existence to another body. Yet, it is not absurd that the soul with the plane of perfection as well as the special substantiality which will be obtained by the soul after death can control the body in a more perfect manner than before. But, this is different from metempsychosis. The case of the Angels may well illustrate this fact who substantiate themselves in specific bodies in several cases by the order of God in spite of the fact that they do not need the perceptible body for their self-perfection. Mary, mother of Jesus, is its example. In that case, Gabriel self-substantiated himself in the human form.

Survey in a concise manner on this subject may clarify that sometimes it is necessary for the soul to own the physical and external senses in order to attain the plane of perfection, that is to say, it is necessary for the realization of perfect reason that universal knowledges and cognitions acquired through the aisles of external senses must be established in the very essence of the soul. This is the earthly journey as well as substantial movement. And the perfect spiritual abilities, after attaining perfection, sometimes show themselves in the world of images, and they are found in the sensible forms being grasped through the sense perceptions. This Epiphany, i.e. manifestation, is called substantiation. This does not mean that the soul needs abilities and perceptions. Yet, if the soul needs them, it follows that retrogradation, i.e. descending from actuality to potentiality, must happen. Now this is illumination of the soul upon the lower plane. One who would not make a distinction between simple descending from a higher position as well as parting with higher status and illuminative Epiphany of a higher thing on a lower one will be captured with this kind of satanic whisper-

ings and suspicions.

Now, it is clear that the return of the perfect soul to his world and the perceptible world is similar to substantiation of the holy spirit into the garment of human being. This subject requires sufficient consideration for the understanding of its true aspect as mentioned before.

Seventh question:

Although it is said that it is incumbent on Prophet and Imām from the viewpoint of reasoning and Sharī'ah to enact regulations and to guide people to tawhīd and good deeds as well as the way to salvation in the next world, the activities in such extent have been done by the Seal of prophets and his successors in their own times, and the Imām, — may peace be upon them — who were successors of the Prophet, have assumed the mantle of the Prophet. Anything other than the above-mentioned is not necessary in the potentiality of the Prophet and Imām. If so, why is it necessary for what is expected to appear at the time of returning and has remained in the plane of potentiality to the arena of actuality?

Answer:

The subject of discussion is not related to the matter of doing duty in religious law and rational law. Undoubtedly, the Prophet and the Imāms have done their duties of propagation and guidance in accordance with the amount of their duties as far as they can. But, the subject of our talk concerns the creative effect, the existential virtue and the inborn characteristics in the Prophet and the Imāms. And this creative effect as mentioned before is necessary to be realized and to

become apparent some day in the arena of possibility according to the law of impossibility of perpetual compulsion. In short, the essential effect of the Prophet of Islām and the Imāms must come to the arena of self-manifestation at the time when human abilities and the human souls are unified and confrontation is removed and all is guided to the road to perfect tawhīd and is ornamented with spiritual virtues in the level of the unified soul as well as the unified reality so that the banner of Islām would flutter all over the world and every man would come under the shadow of the world of pure tawhīd. This could be likened to abilities and senses of the rational soul in the microcosm of man which are united in the level of one unique ability in spite of the fact that each of them has different characteristics, different effects and different positions respectively in the human body and differs from one another, but they work as a united power because all of them are the rays, reflex and illuminations of the soul. So, individualization of a person does not depend on discord and plurality of diverse abilities. And, according to the law of conformity between the context of the microcosm and that of the macrocosm which is the whole of the world of creation, this kind of unity which was mentioned already should be realized in the perfect system of the macrocosm. This world which is in the self-perfectioning course will finally reach the plane where all human souls attain self-same disposition. At that time, due to the gracious fact that all human beings will be perfect followers of the Sealer of the Prophethood — may God bless him and his family — and the souls of his successors, everyone will attain the rank of ray and reflex of the holy reality of guardianship (*velāyat*) and will become pure followers of this.

Conclusion:

Know that one of the eminent characteristics of the school of the Shī'ites — may God the exalted help them — is their belief in the rank of velāyat. Scholars of the school of theosophy put the velāyat above the rank of reason. They say that velāyat is a status beyond the status of reason (*al-wilāyah taur warā' taur al-'aql*). This could be likened to the fact that in the level of sense and sensible things there are difficult questions like belief in the creator of the world — may his name be honored — and belief in absolute immateriality of the soul (*tajarroḍ-e rūh*) which are out of scope of capacity of sense for their solution, but these difficult questions become easy in the presence of reason, that is, in the study place of rational cognition. In other words, rational abilities will solve the difficult questions for senses. In the same way, in the level of reason and rational cognition there also are difficult questions and enigmatic subjects which will be solved clearly and distinctively in the presence of the lights of velāyat and in the study place of Prophethood and velāyat. In fact, this is the cause which makes human beings require the velāyat and Prophethood and existence of prophets and the heavenly books. My intention is that if those who deny the Return while approving the universal velāyat should consider carefully over the degrees of cognition and the upward transition from a level to a higher level in them while representing the width of the world of velāyat, they will not deny the Return. There are many difficult subjects like this, but they are being taught and explained in the higher study place of velāyat. To the same genre of the difficult question belongs the subject of physical punishment and reward in the tomb or the subject of the questioning of Munkir and Nakīr in which

the Sunnites share with us in the belief. As regards the characteristics of reward and punishment, and the ranks of paradise and hell which are illustrated in the glorious Qur'ān, the Sunnites share with us in belief in them. So, if one is not ready to prostrate himself before the doctrine of velāyat, he must deny all the above-mentioned subjects — may God, the exalted, protect us from the evils and safeguard our limited means of cognition.

At any rate, we — by the help of God, glory to Him — rationally arranged the subject of the Return and established it through sapiential demonstration. With expression of thanks to the grace of the Truth, it could be said that nobody of both scholars in the past and these days have written this kind of tract on this subject until now. This is not an exaggeration and is not contrary to fact.

Apology:

Brothers in religion, who are not familiar with sciences and theosophy, may realize that this tract is written in Persian for the purpose of public benefit but is (in fact) prepared for the benefit of students of sciences and researchers in the field of thought. If ordinary people could not get any profit from this tract, I have to apologize that it is impossible to make this obscure scientific subject easier and simpler than this degree. Secondly, I have to apologize that I did not quote and discuss the transmitted proofs like the many Quranic verses and veritable traditions and the unanimously agreed opinions of the Shī'ite scholars for demonstration of the theory of the Return. The reason is that my objective was simple expounding the important points which may solve questions. So, people who want to know more about them

are recommended to make reference to the materials like “Bihār al-anwar” and “Haqq al-Yaqīn” by late Majlisī and “ilm al Yaqīn” by late Allāmeḥ Feyz in which the Quranic verses and traditions about the Return are recorded.

Praise be to God as the first, the last, the exterior and the interior. May God bless the lord of the ancients and the moderns, the noblest of the friends of God, the first among the first people and the last among the last people, our chief Muhammad, the unique pearl among descendants of Ibrāhīm al Khalīl and his family and relatives who are lamps for guidance and Imāms of creatures.

Author of this tract, Abū-l-Hasan al-Qazwīnī, the most miserable who is proud of his being related to the family line of Prophethood and messengership finished writing this tract in the month of Shawāl of the year 1353 A.H. (January 1935 A.D.). May God always give success to him in his work.

NOTES

- 1) Prof. A.A. Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism*, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1981, pp. 150-179.
- 2) In Zoroastorian tradition there is a theory of the Return of the Savior at the end of the world.
- 3) See part of the conclusion in the following translation.
- 4) That is: first, journey from created things to the Truth (*safar min al-khalq ilā al-haqq*), second, journey in the Truth with the Truth (*safar bi-l-haqq fi-l-haqq*), third, journey from the Truth to created things with the Truth (*safar min al-haqq ilā al-khalq bi-l-haqq*), fourth, journey in created things with the

Truth (*sayr fi-l-khalq bi-l-haqq*).

- 5) Text for this translation is based on Raffī Qazwīnī's article on the Return in *Majmū'eh Rasā'el o Maqālāt-e Falsafī, Allāmeḥ Ayatollāh Raffī Qazwīnī*, edited by Gholāmḥosein Rezānezhād and printed in the Iranian year of 1367, Sepher.
- 6) See pp. 87-88 in "al-Mabda' wa al-Ma'ād" by Ibn Sīnā, ed. by A. Nūrānī, Institute of Islamic Studies, Tehran, McGill University, 1984.
- 7) The word "*welāyat*" has another way of reading; that is "*walāyat*." The meaning of the *welāyat* is different from the *walāyat*. See Prof. Ashtiyānī *Sharḥ-e Moqaddameh-ye Qaisarī*, pp. 865-866, Markaz-e Enteshārāt-e Daftar-e Tablīghāt-e Islāmī in the Iranian year of 1365. Also see Tabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān*, Dār al-Fikr Beirut, 1984, Vol. 9, p. 251.

Key Words: Sealership, Imāmship, Guardianship, the Return, Prophethood