8th of Rabi al-Akher, Food for Thought

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O You, Whose light covers darkness, O You, by Whose holiness rugged mountain passes are“ lit, O You, to Whom all the inhabitants of the earth and the heavens submit, O You, to Whom every insolent tyrant surrenders with obedience, O You the Aware of hidden consciences. You are Merciful to everything and Aware of everything, forgive those who repent and follow Your path; protect them from the torment of Fire, give them soon Your victory that You have promised them of and You do not fail the promise! Devastate the people of evil and take them to the worst abode in the worst punishment and the ugliest retreat.”

The above phrases are part of a lengthy Qonout or the supplication that believers recite by raising their palms towards heavens after recitation of the Surah al-Hamd and another surah in the second rak’at of a ritual prayer.

The choice of words show the hallmark of divine authority, for the one who expressed them was indeed not an ordinary person.

Nor was he one of those self-styled scholars, who lord over laymen as ‘ulema’ on the flimsy basis of whatever little they have acquired of knowledge, after lengthy years of trial and error, yet still not sure of their proper cognizance of Prophet Muhammad (SAWA) and Islam, let alone consciousness of God the Almighty Creator.

Then who was he? What was his connection with God and the Prophet? And what lasting legacy did he leave?

Good questions indeed. Today the 8th of Rabi al-Akher affords us the opportunity to enlighten our minds and souls with his cognition and position in Islam.

As a matter of fact, he was born this day in Medina in 232 AH to parents who were paragons of virtue. He was named Hasan in honour of the Prophet’s elder grandson, Imam Hasan al-Mujtaba (AS).

His father was the namesake of the Prophet’s cousin, son-in-law, and divinely-decreed vicegerent, Imam Ali ibn Abi Taleb (AS).

To be more precise, he was none other than the 11th of the Twelve Rightful Successors that the Prophet had said would follow his path, with the last one reappearing in the end times as Mahdi al-Qa’em to cleanse the world of all vestiges of corruption and oppression by establishing the global government of peace, prosperity and justice.

Thus, these were the factors that made the tyrannical Abbasid usurpers of the Islamic realm

keep him and his father under close surveillance in Samarra, in the vain hope that the Prophet's famous hadith of Twelve Immaculate Successors would never materialize, if Imam Hasan al-Askari (AS) is to be martyred through poison in the prime of youth.

Now we know the real identity of the person, glimpses of whose Qonout Supplication we mentioned at the beginning of this brief newspaper column.

Succeeding his martyred father, Imam Ali an-Naqi al-Hadi (AS) at the age of 22, as per God's Will, during the brief six years of his imamate, Imam Hasan al-Askari (AS) did not spare any efforts to enlighten the ummah of the truth of Islam – not the distorted court version of the Islam of Saqifa Bani Sa'da, but the pure and pristine message of Islam as bequeathed by the Prophet to his Infallible Progeny, on receiving it from God Almighty during the 23 years of his mission, including the memorable proclamation at Ghadir Khom for continuation of divinely-decreed leadership.

Here we mention some bezels of wisdom from the 11th Imam, but for whose guidance Yaqoub ibn Ishaq al-Kindi, the Philosopher of the Arabs would have slipped into the bowels of hell by raising doubts over certain ayahs of the holy Qur'an on the speculation that he had a more rational mind: "(At times) Polytheism of (certain) people is more hidden that the creeping of ants of a black piece of cloth in a gloomy night."

"To greet everyone you pass by and to sit in a place other than the first class of a session are signs of modesty."

"Reasonless laughter is a sign of ignorance."

"Anger is the key to every evil."

Peace upon Imam Hasan al-Askari (AS), the member of the Rasekhouna fi Ilm (Repositories of Knowledge) mentioned by God in the Qur'an, and may God hasten the reappearance of his son and successor to rid our world of oppressors and deviators.