**Section:**

**An Account of all of their Abuses of the Qur’an**

Know that the dissident atheists, even though they have gone to great lengths in their abuses of the Qur’an, have not gone as far as certain sects that have embraced Islam. These are the extremists (*ghulāt*) and esotericists (*al-Bātiniyya*), who described themselves as being excellent, though they are far from this. They have abused the Qur’an in every possible way, and this is true for a class of the commoners as well as the people of *ḥadīth*. We will give an account of all of their mistakes, and then later on we will clarify them.

With regards to the Qur’an, a group of people said, “it has no meaning; rather, God revealed it so that it would be believed and recited.” Another group said, “it has meaning, though there is no indication of its meaning, hence we cannot know the Qur’an.” There is disagreement amongst those who have claimed this. Some said, “it is the manner of speech to not indicate meanings.” Others said, “it has signification, but God’s speech is special, and no one knows its meaning except the Messenger, peace be upon him. Thus, one must resort to what he has related concerning it.” Others said, “it is necessary to resort to what has been related from him [the prophet Muhammad], peace be upon him, or what has been related from the companions or the *tābiʿīn*, and no one after them can interpret or expound upon the Qur’an.”

There is also someone who said, “certainly it signifies esoteric content other than what is explicitly stated,” and they also claim, “this is well-known to the scholars.” Perhaps they also have said, “we resort to the proof (*al-ḥujja*) concerning it [the meanings],” and this is the prophet or the Imam. Another group said, “if the Qur’an does not signify esoteric content per what the *Bātiniyya* believe, then only the Imam knows its interpretation and exposition. Then there is no doubt that one must resort to him or the prophet.”

When they said, “its indication of the esoteric dimension is correct,” they have made the exoteric meaning (*al-ẓāhir*) more correct than the esoteric meaning (*al-bāṭin*). This is because the esoteric meaning is known by it, and if not for the exoteric, then the esoteric would not be known. Thus, they cannot abuse exoteric as such, because an abuse of it is an abuse of the esoteric meaning as well.

Perhaps they would say, “when God said ‘Lo! this my brother hath ninety and nine ewes while I had one ewe’ (38:23), God meant ‘woman’ by his statement ‘ewe’.” However, this is not linguistically possible, and they have therefore claimed that it is correct that the exoteric is esoteric.

It should be said to him, “how can it be that the intended meaning is what you mentioned without God providing an example to make us aware of this, and that he did not intend the exoteric meaning (*al-ẓāhir*)? Also, how can this be so, since it is established in the Qur’an that it is in the Arabic language. If the esoteric is intended by it, which is non-rational, then what is the difference between it being Arabic, and it being in the Zanj in the Coptic language? How can it be correct to say that it does not accord with linguistic convention, and it indicates a source (*umm*) at variance with it which linguistic convention does not support? How can it be that it indicates something more worthy than it? Also, how can it be correct in this statement that there be both figurative and literal usages in the speech, and that everyone is in agreement that there must be an esoteric dimension? Also, how can one trust your saying, ‘there must certainly be an esoteric dimension,’ since perhaps you intend something that is at variance with the exoteric? As such, you seek to negate that which is established, and establish that which is not, and [you seek] everything that is opposed to it.”

Also, how can one trust a school of thought, when at times one of them makes something public, though it is not necessarily true, because some of them disguise what they believe. The differing schools of thought (*al-madhāhib*) are only known without the concealment of beliefs, just as they [the schools of thought] are known by sound reports lacking this deceit, and there are not many reports like this with regards to them. Thus, it is not correct that they disavow what they know. They conceal their school of thought, and they make pacts and agreements to conceal it and hide it. So, because of this, we do not know their purposes and intents. Then how can one trust their word? Perhaps they mention “the proof” (*al-ḥujja*), and they intend “the doubt” (*al-shubha*), or they mention “the leaders” while they intend “others”. This requires that we refrain from debating them and distrust their statements. For this reason, there is minimal trust in what they make apparent to others, though there is an exception for the one who knows their way by prolonged time with them.

As we have made evident before, there is no proof with time, and that which they claim to be the established faultless Imam is not correct. If it were correct, it would not be true in this era. Since if it is true that one cannot know the esoteric meaning except in the presence of “the Proof” (*al-ḥujja)*, then it would not be known at all. For how can one know the same “proof” that one is [only] able to know in his presence?

If they say, “it is known by miracle.” Then it should be said, “how is signification by miracle correct when we have made evident signification only occurs for belief, and if belief does not mean anything for them, then the likes of it also does not occur.”

If they say, “[it is known] by the direct statement (*naṣṣ*) of the messenger of God concerning it,” then it is necessary that his statement (*naṣṣ)* indicate their esoteric claims. This is a refutation of all of that which is connected to them. We have made clear that if “the proof” *(al-ḥujja*) were well established, then one would no doubt know the esoteric dimension by the Qur’an or the Sunna and not anything else. This would require that the esoteric dimension (*al-bāṭin*) be apparent, since all people would be able to know it.

 As for their saying that the esoteric dimension (*al-bāṭin*) is affirmed as a test and an indication of the rank of the scholars, this is farfetched since the rank of the scholars is evident, even if the esoteric significance is not established.  This is because people differ in their lack of the knowledge of that which God has permitted and what he has not permitted, and in [in their knowledge of] language and its usage. Thus, what they claim is not correct, nor is it correct that they add more esoteric dimensions within the esoteric dimensions. He [God] made it manifest (*ẓāhir*) so that the test would be greater, and the indication of the rank of the scholars would be more established.