

**Dr. Sami Makarem's essay “\*Remarks on Dr. Anis Obeid's *The Druze and their Faith in Tawhid*.”**

Dr. Makarem says,

(1) The Items in the Druze doctrine that are, according to Dr. Obeid, subject to discussion are considered to be major and basic. In Dr. Obeid's words, they are the following:

1. The precise status of al-Hakim;
2. The relation of the Druze interpretation of Tawhid to the monotheistic religions, specifically to the world of Islam; and
3. The question of closure of the Druze Call (da'wa ) to Tawhid and the potential for admission of individuals not born into the Druze faith.”<sup>60</sup>

The interpretation of such basic items in a way different from that of the Druze doctrine will definitely alter the very core of the Druze faith and will consequently result in the emergence of a completely new and different faith. If such a new faith would be based on erroneous premises and would be void of the revolutionary *raison d'être* of the Druze faith vis à vis the literal and exoteric system and even the esoteric and allegorical interpretation system of Islam, then it would not have the necessary ingredients for survival. This will definitely result, sooner or later, in its complete downfall especially when it will confront the more elaborate and well established world religions. Another alternative will face the followers of this new faith, namely their complete conversion to an irreligious recusant mentality in which they will be absorbed in every-day concerns abiding by the different social systems they belong to, but willingly yet torpidly deprived of their right, as human beings, and of any progressive spiritual development.

Let us now discuss those items one by one.

\*Dr. Sami Makarem's essay “\*Remarks on Dr. Anis Obeid's *The Druze and Their Faith in Tawhid*”

By Sami Nassib Makarem

When my dear friend Dr Anis Obeid asked me to write a foreword for his book *The Druze and Their Faith in Tawhid* I willingly accepted. He then sent me a draft of the manuscript to my office at the American University of Beirut, urging me to write the foreword as soon as possible: the book is already in press waiting only for the foreword to be printed. I immediately took the draft to read it. To my surprise the letters were printed on top of each other which made the reading of the manuscript next to impossible. But Anis is an old and intimate friend; I did not want to be the cause of any delay in the publishing of this book. Besides, although the subject matter of Tawhīd was not his field, I trusted his judgment and scholarly approach. **I managed with great difficulty to “decipher” some of the last chapter entitled “Concluding Remarks” so that I might get an idea about the book, hopefully enough to help me in writing my foreword**

(1). What I was able to read from this last chapter was not enough though. I put an additional effort and was able to skim through some pages of the book here and there.

From what I could read with extreme difficulty and perseverance, I was able to form an idea about the purpose that prompted Dr. Obeid to write his book. I was impressed by his lucid style in narrating the history of the Druze, and by his comprehension of the problems of the Druze and of the dilemma which they presently face in relation to religious faith versus modernity.

The difficulty I encountered in deciphering some pages of the manuscript was overcome though – or this was what I thought – by previous conversations with Dr. Obeid during his sporadic visits to Lebanon.

1 Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006.

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In July 2007 I received with gratitude a copy of Dr. Obeid's book (published in 2006) through a dear friend of mine who happened to meet Dr. Obeid during a visit to the United States. I would have liked to receive it earlier, but for some reason I did not. This time, I read it carefully.

**I do not want to say that I have regretted writing the foreword, but for sure I would have added to it some passages that would have made my friend Anis think twice perhaps before he would agree to put it as a forward to his book. I do not want to appear disappointing to a friend that I hold in great esteem, but truth, as I see it, is dearer, and must be held in even greater esteem, or else my friendship**

**and esteem of Dr. Obeid would be of no value (2).**

My following comments on Dr. Obeid's *The Druze and their Faith in Tawhid* will not constitute an overall review of his book. Such a review will take too long to accomplish and would end up to be a book in itself, perhaps bigger than Dr. Obeid's. So I shall confine myself to certain crucial points that are too important to be discussed later on. Moreover, such points which I will write about are very basic in evaluating a book, which has been earnestly awaited for since the turn of the last twentieth century. Besides, a book of such a caliber which, despite its misconstructions, contains much wisdom and is being written by such a sincere person should be, in my opinion, free from any major mistakes, falsities and misconceptions. My comments, therefore, are intended to be taken seriously, if convincing, that they may be considered in a future edition of this important work.

In his preface Dr. Obeid urges the Druze "to choose the road of openness and Evolution. **The Druze path in Tawhid deserves**", he said, **"to be interpreted and understood in a more scholarly historical context than has occurred thus far 2."** This is true and I endorse this sincere call forcefully. However, I would like to add to the "more scholarly historical context"; a more scholarly creedal context Because without a sincere, profound and solid understanding of the Tawḥīd faith, no road of openness and evolution will be open. Instead, a different faith will

2 Anis Obeid, *The Druze and their Faith in Tawhid*, p. XV

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**result and the road of openness and evolution will be replaced by a schismatic road of confusion and disunity, which will lead to a complete defeat of the purpose of Tawḥīd. No one can substantially reform a religious creed if he or she lacks a solid and profound knowledge of the fundamental concepts and philosophical, theosophical and theological principles of that creed. In case of the faith of Tawḥīd one should also have not only a mystical approach but even, I should say, a mystical apprehension; for mysticism plays a formative role in Tawḥīd. Hence, a genuine Druze reformer should add to his or her endeavor for reform such basic conditions, or else he or she would end up contriving or at least taking part in contriving, a schism founded on false pretense and erroneous principles which add to the problems instead of solving them. Besides, if such a "reformer" bases his or her arguments on false premises all his or her conclusions would be false no matter how attractive they may seem to the reader. Such a "reformer" will only convince the ignorant and this will contribute to the perpetuation of mediocrity in spiritual matters which will negatively affect the Muwaḥḥīd's participation in world civilization (3)...** Reform of religious orders founded on mystical and philosophical principles and based on the esoteric meaning of the scriptures should therefore emphasize such principles rather than weaken them by ignoring and shallowing them to make them easy to dispense of. By weakening such principles, reform will come to a halt to be replaced by mere annulment of the faith. In fact, Dr. Obeid was aware of this when he said: "We have to remember that inner meaning (bātin) is not for the common and ordinary people. It is mainly the prerogative of those who have reached a level of awareness and gnosis that entitles them to comprehend and internalize what the authors of the Druze epistles considered the core essence of divine messages and commands"<sup>3</sup> In an age of profound knowledge and extensive learning, reform of the Druze faith should be directed to the understanding of the tenets and foundations of the faith in depth, to the real meaning of God: the Lahūt and Nāsūt, to the □Aql and the five cosmic principles of existence, to the difference

3 p. 230.

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between origination (ibdā□), creation (khalq) and emanation (fayḍ, inbi□āth), to humanity as such, to truth, to the difference between Islām and Īmān and Tawḥīd, to form and matter, soul and body, virtue and vice, knowledge and Gnosis, life and death, religion and science, physics and metaphysics, individual and society, heaven and hell, to the meaning of both theophany and occultation, to the real meaning of freedom: the difference between freedom and free will, only to name a few examples of the main issues of the Druze faith. In the light of such issues one can discuss the problems that face the Druze in the west and the Middle East alike.

**A great number of such basic issues are discussed in Dr. Obeid's book without his having full**

**knowledge of them (4).** This short article, however, does not allow me to discuss all these points. **I shall instead choose only some basic misconceptions that I consider too grave to be left without being commented upon (5).** Dr. Obeid, for example, considers the disappearance of al-Ḥākim and Ḥamza and most of the “luminaries” to be “sudden and dramatic 4.” **I wish he had a deeper understanding of the Druze creed, he would have then surely known that such occultation was previously prescribed (6).** Contrary to Dr. Obeid’s statement and according to the Druze doctrine it did not occur suddenly. In fact, the Call to Tawḥīd necessitated such a disappearance. The legation of the Call to the fifth functionary Bahā ad-Dīn had been, according to the Druze religious constitution, concerted even before the beginning of the Call in 408 A.H/1017 A.D. It is outside the scope of this article to delve deeply into the real reasons of the disappearance of those main figures, even though I will discuss some of these reasons later. **However, according to the Druze creedal system such an occultation was by no means contradictory to the process of continuity and evolution of Tawḥīd as Dr. Obeid tried to claim 5 (7).** Moreover, **Dr. Obeid’s conclusion that this occultation, followed by the suspension or closure of the Call, contradicts the**

4 P. 129, see also pp. 229 and 253.

5 P. 129.

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**universality of Tawḥīd (8), is in fact a false and invalid conclusion (9). It falls short of enough depth in the knowledge of the Druze creed as such (10). Another major mistake is Dr. Obeid’s misunderstanding of the Arabic word ibdā He translated it sometimes as “creation” and sometimes as “emanation” (11). He also fails to distinguish between the neo Platonic theory of emanation (fayḍ) and the Druze theory of origination (ibdā ) (12).** The famous Islamic philosopher Ibn-Sīnā clearly distinguishes between khalq (creation) and ibdā (origination)<sup>8</sup> and so does the Islamic philosopher as-Sijistānī<sup>9</sup>. Ibdā, according to the Druze faith, is an act of God’s expression. It is a manifestation of the Divine, a reflection, so to speak, of the Absolute. It is by no means an act of creation (khalq). Khalq is the bringing into existence ex-nihilo (from nothing). As for emanation (fayḍ) it is also different from ibdā (origination). Emanation from God presupposes that God is the first cause<sup>10</sup>. The Druze categorically deny such a belief. For them, He transcends causality as such. He is rather the author of the first cause of existence (muḥill al-illa al-ūlā), and consequently the author of all causes (muḥill al-ilal). The first cause is rather the Aql who, unlike the Absolute Originator Who has no entity (dhātiyya), must have an entity of his own. Consequently he must be finite, hence his name Aql, an Arabic word which means inclusion, comprehension. A synonym of Aql is ḥadd. **Therefore the Aql, in this sense, as the first originated being, cannot be translated as “universal mind,” as Dr. Obeid and many others do (13).** The Aql in this context should rather be translated as “the all inclusive being”, in order to be in keeping with the true sense of the term. The Aql, according to Druze philosophy, is that purposive principle that originated

6 P. 129.

7 P. 129.

8 See Ibn Sīnā, “Ar-Risāla an-Nayrūziyya fī Maʿānī al-Ḥurūf al-Hijāʿiyya,” in *The Rasāʾil fī al-Ḥikma waaṭ-Ṭabīʿiyyāt*, Cairo, 1326/1908; Ibn Sīnā, *Al-Ishārāt wa at-Tanbīhāt*. Cairo, 1366/1947, part 3, p.115-116.

9 See Henry Corbin, *Trilogie Ismaʿālienne*, Tehran and Paris, 1961, p. 45, note 93.

10 See Sami N. Makarem “Ismaʿīli and Druze Cosmogony in Relation to Plotinus and Aristotle,” in Michael Marmura (ed.), *Islamic Theology and Philosophy*, Albany, 1984, pp. 88 ff.

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from the Absolute as His Will. He includes in his reality all existing beings; he is the cause of causes, the first cosmic principle of all Being. **Hence Dr. Obeid’s statement: “In Tawḥīd the first of God’s creation is the universal mind (al-aql alkulli)”<sup>11</sup> means nothing (14).** Al-aql al-kullī is neither a creation nor a mind.

**Another misconception is Dr. Obeid’s translation of the philosophical term ṣūra as image<sup>12</sup> (15).** The Arabic Aristotelian term should rather be translated as “form”, since it means the essential nature of a thing

in contrast with matter (huyūlā).

Ṣūra, in both Aristotelian and Druze usage, is that which gives to a thing its particular real meaning. In this sense the □Aql is a pure and complete form, and not simply an image.

**Another misconception is Dr. Obeid's translation of the term nūr as Enlightenment 13 (16).** This literal translation seems to be too cursory to convey the appropriate meaning of the word in this particular context. As-Sayyid al-Amir Jamāl ad-Dīn at-Tanūkhī, the famous and paramount Druze commentator explains it as the real essence (jawhar) of the □Aql. **Likewise, Dr. Obeid's literal translation of the Arabic term quwwa and fi'l as power and action respectively 14 is too remote to denote their philosophical implication (17).** Both terms are originally Aristotelian, and, therefore, should be translated respectively as potentiality and actuality. In fact, in Aristotelian usage, matter is to form as potentiality is to actuality.

Back to the □Aql. He is, as mentioned previously, the will of God, the all inclusive being, the manifestation of the Meaning of meanings (ma'ānā al-ma'ānī). He is to God as the word is to its meaning. This will of God then, in order to be manifested in this world, must necessarily be manifested in a human form. This is because man alone, among worldly beings is adequate enough to be cognizant of this reality. Man is fashioned according to the first cause of existence. This first

11 P. 130.

12 P. 130.

13 P. 130.

14 P. 130.

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cause is the perfect man (al-insān al-kāmil). This manifestation is exclusively the Imam. Such coherent unity that unionizes God's will and its human manifestation applies likewise to the human soul and body.

**Thus, soul and body, according to the Druze faith, are not simply co-dependent, as Dr. Obeid says 15 (18),** they are in fact "linked" in an undivided unity, just like that which "links" the meaning to its expression. The human body, according to the Druze, is the inevitable expression of the human soul. Soul and body are not originally separated and then linked together co-dependently. The soul is the very identity of a human being. It is his quidity (huwiyya) so to speak. Therefore no human soul, asserts the Druze faith, can ever exist without a human body, just like a meaning cannot be actually a meaning without being manifested in a certain way appropriate to it.

**Then one runs across another major delusive misconception when one sees how the author views the □Aql succumbing to self-aggrandizement as he calls it. This is a super grave mistake. In dealing with esoteric texts one should always be careful not to fall under the influence of plain literality so that one would not be subjected to inconsistency and contradiction. This is what happened to Dr. Obeid when he translated Ḥamza ibn □Ali's statement that the □Aql "a□jabathu nafsuh" into English as follows: (19).** "He (the □Aql) accordingly succumbed to selfaggrandizement 16." Dr. Obeid attributes the □Aql's succumbing to selfaggrandizement to his imperfection, as perfection belongs to God alone. Such imperfection destined the □Aql, as Dr. Obeid maintains to self- aggrandizement, pride and arrogance 17.

**This is in fact categorically contrary to the Druze belief, because of the following: being originated by and from God, the □Aql, though he has an entity (dhātiyya) of his own is the reflection of God (20).** In other words, he is the expression and manifestation of Truth; consequently he is the manifestation

15 P. 130.

16 P. 132.

17 P. 132, see also p. 240.

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of unity and order supreme. Therefore, he is by no means subject to imperfection and confusion, and cannot be characterized by self-aggrandizement, pride and arrogance, because such characteristics are the result of dualism, not unity.

Hence Ḥamza ibn □Ali's statement, a□jabathu nafsuh should simply be translated as "His 'very being' has excited his admiration". This is in line with the sheer logic of Tawḥīd, since the □Aql's "very being" is in itself the act of the Good, the Truth and the Beautiful. Such an act should definitely incite the □Aql's admiration (i□jāb).

Hence the □Aql 's admiration of his own being can by no means be understood as self-aggrandizement, nor can it be defined as arrogance or pride. On the contrary, beside being an act of admiration, it is an act of acknowledgement and gratitude. Yet, since it is an act of taking joy in the grace of God rather than remaining in full joy in the Godhead Himself, this act resulted in a deflection, a relative absence from the One, i.e. from the Light absolute. Such an act, however, does not affect the □Aql himself, as he at once returned to his original immersion in the Godhead Himself due to his genuine passion (shawq) and supplicant acknowledgement of his servility to God (taḍarru□ ). Nevertheless, the act of deflection becomes a fait accompli. It is now the antithesis (ḍidd) of the □Aql. Compared to the □Aql 's manifest light, this antithesis is sheer darkness. Hence out of complete submission (tā□a) came recalcitrance (ma□ṣiya), out of pure enlightened discernment (nūr) came obscure perplexity (ẓulma), out of self denial (tawāḍu□ ) came arrogance (istikbār), and out of sheer wisdom (ḥilm) came foolishness (jahl).

Such negative characteristics are the result of disorder of the positive characteristics of the □Aql. If the □Aql, as we have stated above, represents order, these negative characteristics of the antithesis represent disorder. Therefore in the Druze creed the negative characteristics by no means stand face to face to the positive characteristics of the □Aql. **Hence it is too remote to say that the philosophy behind the positive and negative characteristics of the □Aql and his antithesis respectively “can be traced to the Persian background of Ḥamza and his exposure to the lingering heritage of Zoroastrians and Manichaeism”, as Dr.**

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**Obeid maintains 18 (21). It is therefore out of context to say that “Ahura Mazda in Zoroastrianism is analogous to the mind [i.e. the □Aql ] in Tawhid, while the destroyer, known as Ahriman, is analogous to the antithesis”, as Dr. Obeid goes on saying 19 (22).**

**Such persistence by Dr. Obeid in dealing superficially with Tawḥīd is liable to mislead the reader and create much confusion in the minds and hearts of the Druze (23). First he insists that the □Aql is not perfect (24).** This attitude may easily result in maintaining that the □Aql 's teachings, through the Imam, his human representation, are not necessarily infallible. This may easily result in falling into the Antithesis's characteristic of recalcitrance, and consequently into confusion and disorder. **Secondly, such superficiality has led Dr. Obeid to consider the □Aql's self admiration as causing his fall analogous to the Biblical temptation and fall of Adam “who fell from eternal grace when he succumbed to the temptation of the forbidden fruit 20 (25).”** According to the Druze creed this is completely false and absolutely contrary to the Druze doctrine.

**Another misconception is Dr. Obeid's insistence on the difference in essence between soul and body (26),** although he admits that they are codependent. For him, the Imam, as an individual human being and a representation of the □Aql, is not at all the same as his archetype. The Imam Ḥamza is considered by Dr. Obeid as only the human agent of the □Aql, hence he is not, says Dr. Obeid, the ideal itself **21. This is by no means what the Druze doctrine maintains. The body is the medium of the soul (27).** The soul, as we have mentioned above, cannot act without its own medium. In fact with the existence of the framework of space and time, the soul can by no means even exist without the body. This is because the body, as mentioned above, is simply the expression of the soul. They are two aspects of one thing, like a leaf, it has two faces yet it is one. This is too clear in the

18 P. 135.

19 P. 135.

20 P. 133.

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Druze epistles to be overlooked, let alone be denied. **The relation of soul and body is therefore more subtle than what Dr. Obeid tries to say 22 (28).** Soul and body are not simply inseparable partners, nor is the body a home for the soul. **Hence Dr. Obeid's statement: "Without the body the soul remains a homeless spirit in a perpetual state of dormancy and therefore essentially nonexistent"23 is plainly inadequate and easily misleading (29).**

**Here we come to another misconception. It has to do with the afterlife. Although Dr. Obeid does not deny the hereafter, he seems to believe that one can reach self-realization before the Day of Judgment (30).** He says: "One does not have to wait until the Day of Judgment to experience the ecstasy that attends the presence of God; rather, such experience resides in the here and now as well 24." According to the Druze faith this is rather correct. This being so, however, what would then be the pertinent difference between the present life and the hereafter. How does the Druze doctrine view the afterlife? It is for the Druze the time when such a state of bliss will prevail forever, when everlasting justice, i.e. perfect balance of the human dispositions of the □Aql as such will have control over mankind. Such dispositions are: complete submission to God (tā□a), enlightened discernment (nūr), self denial (tawāḍu□), and sheer wisdom (ḥilm). This balance will be realized when the □Aql's divinely rarefied nature (luyūnat al-huyūlā) permeates those human dispositions of the □Aql and controls them, thus preventing any possible imbalance which necessarily reverses them to their opposites, namely recalcitrance (ma□ṣiya), obscure perplexity (ḡulma), foolishness (jaḥl), and arrogance (istikbār).

This state of everlasting balance is for the Druze what constitutes Paradise and Hell alike. It is paradise for those who in this world have disciplined themselves to such a balance, and it is hell for those who have led a life of confusion and disorder guided by self-absorption and stained by hatred and discord.

22 Pp. 146-147.

23 P. 147.

24 P. 144.

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**Here we come across another grave falsity that Dr. Obeid ascribed to the Druze Doctrine (31).** In the words of Dr. Obeid, "Eventually the individual soul along with the rest of creation will return to the Source 25." Such a belief is more like that of the Hindus than that of the Druze. In the Druze faith, the soul is never separate from its source so that it may go back to it. Likewise, it is always in need of its medium, i.e. the body, through which it is realized. The soul is to the body as the meaning is to the word.

**Then the author of *The Druze and their Faith in Tawḥīd* goes along to discuss other Druze subjects, but as usual he falls in more mistakes that show his falling short from delving more profoundly both in Druze subject matters in particular and in Islamic issues in general (32).** For example, when he discusses the topic of dissimulation (taqiyya) he finds it strange and even unacceptable when the Deputy Imam Bahā□ ad-Dīn invites the believers to deny him in case of serious dangers that require them to do so 26. **Since Dr. Obeid is emphatically against dissimulation as we shall see later, he hastily jumps to the conclusion that such an invitation by the deputy Imam totally contradicts the spirit of Tawḥīd (33).** "Thus," he says, "we have to take Baha□ al-Dīn's farewell dispensation of putting safety ahead of truthfulness as an extreme and rare exception to the otherwise inviolate rule of truthfulness in tongue"27. **To substantiate his argument he cites several passages by the Imam which he wrongly regards as contradictory to the Imam's**



deputy, simply because they urge the followers to Tawḥīd to hold fast in face of trials, as the Muwahḥid should always be solid in his belief, courageous and brave in holding to his faith, and the harder he faces difficulties and challenges the steadier becomes his loyalty to his religious belief (34). In fact, if one puts those passages in the right context, one would not see any contradictions. The imam, in these passages, is urging the followers of Tawḥīd not to yield to creedal and ethical temptations and not to let any trial and difficulty affect their convictions.

25 P. 156.

26 P. 177.

27 P. 177.

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Besides, dissimulation is not restricted to the Druze. Actually almost every denomination in Islam, including the Sunnīs, is liable to practice taqiyya.

Dr. Obeid has included in his “Bibliography” my book, *at-Taqiyya fi l-Islām (Dissimulation in Islam)* in which I discussed this important and basic issue at length. He should have read in it the various Qurʾānic verses, Prophetic traditions and sayings of Muslim Imams and scholars that have mentioned favorably the legitimacy of dissimulation in Islam (35). In fact, the Deputy Imam Bahāʾ ad-Dīn’s invitation of the followers of Tawḥīd to denounce him publicly in case of danger is completely in line with the following genuine (ṣaḥīḥ) tradition of the Prophet cited by leading Qurʾān commentators such as as-Suyūṭī, aṭ-Tabarī, Ibn Kathīr, al-Bayḍāwī, fakhṛ ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī, ath-Thaʿlabī, al-Baghawī, and al-Qurṭubī, only to mention a few 28. Although quoted in somewhat different versions by the above mentioned Qurʾān commentators the ḥadīth can be reconstructed as follows: ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir (a leading and famous companion of the Prophet, who was noted for his piety, sincerity, devotion and passion for Islam) was detained by some Pagans from Quraish while still in Mecca. They threw him deep in a well and ordered him to denounce the Prophet. He did so and was forced to curse him and praise the idols. A witness told the Prophet of what had happened saying that ʿAmmār had reneged Islam. The Prophet told him, “No, verily ʿAmmār has been filled with true faith from the top of his head to his feet; faith has indeed been mixed with his flesh and blood.” When ʿAmmār was released he rushed to the Prophet crying. The Prophet asked him while wiping off his tears, “What is the matter with you (mā lak)? How do you judge your heart (kayfa tajidu qalbak)?” ʿAmmār replied, “Still at rest in belief (muṭmaʾinnan bi l-īmān)”. The Prophet said, “If they return [to persecute you], return [to denounce me] (faʿin ʿādū faʿud). The following Qurʾānic verse was then sent down, (Whoso disbelieves in God, after he has believed – excepting him who has been

28 For further and more detailed information see my book, *At-Taqiyya fi l-Islām (Dissimulation in Islam)*. London: Druze Heritage Foundation, 2004, pp. 11 ff.

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compelled, and his heart is still at rest in belief – but whosoever’s heart is expanded in unbelief, upon them shall rest anger from God, and there awaits them a mighty chastisement.)29

Although Dr. Obeid admits how important dissimulation was for the Druze in the course of time, he invites them to put an end to this tradition. He said: “While it is true that complicated concepts may be misunderstood and misinterpreted without proper initiation and diligence, it is equally true that the journey cannot be postponed until preparations are fully completed. Therefore religious concepts, however complicated they may be, should not be withheld and protected in a manner that prevents the process of initiation from taking place. Otherwise, the

linkage between generations and groups will be interrupted or seriously impaired.” tribution to protection of any doctrine remains controversial, particularlyHe then concludes by saying: “the whole question of taqiya and its overall con in modern times when information reigns supreme.” He adds, “Ideas at the purely speculative level do not impact behavior and become largely irrelevant to human spiritual and physical advancement.”<sup>30</sup>

In fact, no one who thinks objectively disagrees with such statements. However, Druze traditions do not restrict creedal information to the initiated alone. Other Druze normally can have access to the general and common beliefs of the Druze, or at least those common beliefs are not emphatically withheld from them. The scarce knowledge of such general belief by some Druze, especially those who chose or were forced, for some reason or another, to be unassociated with the Druze community is not due therefore to strict prohibition rules as much as to lack of interest. Such a lack of interest is partially due to lack of effective communication either because of ignorance or difference in culture. What is withheld from the uninitiated though is the attendance of special periodical sessions where religious texts are recited by the initiated in pursuit of submerging in an atmosphere (jaww) of spirituality and holiness, hence such recitation is

29 The Bees (XVI): 106.

30 P. 196.

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described as jawwānī, i.e. an atmosphere which induces an inner spiritual and holy condition. This recitation is chosen from esoteric writings the reciting way of which is meant to create a mystical mood of spiritual elevation. Also withheld from them are the mystical levels of this speculative and Gnostic faith which, as Dr. Obeid says, “do not impact behavior”<sup>31</sup>. True, many of the initiated put much restriction on the uninitiated whose social behavior, from the traditional angle, does not encourage introducing them to the mystical and gnostic vistas of the faith. Actually, these gnostic vistas which only a few of the initiated are rapt in, should spiritually stay intact and unimpaired. These are what constitute the “forbidden fruit” which gives Tawḥīd its spiritual aura. This aura is like the night stars that every one marvels at, but not everyone can reach.

Hence, if we put in mind this kind of dissimulation and understand its real significance within this framework, if we respect such Gnostic vistas and do not try to desecrate them with our pseudo-modern and vain ulterior motives of egotism and self-overestimation and with our distortion and rape of sacred rights of those saintly lovers of God, and if, on the other hand, the initiated who are much absorbed in tradition would look at the uninitiated with tolerance and understanding of the contemporary social praxis, then we can easily go on to achieve the progress we are in dire need of, with an open mind and due respect and admiration for our religious heritage, and with all consideration for its spiritual legacy. If we thus understand dissimulation then we would be able to understand correctly the Shīʿite Imam Jaʿfar aṣ-Ṣādiq’s statement: “Dissimulation is my religion and the religion of my forefathers and whoever does not practice dissimulation has no religion.”<sup>32</sup> If we thus put dissimulation in its right context then it would become totally in line with the core of human freedom: freedom of thought, of speech, and of belief, and acceptance of others. **Hence, Dr. Obeid’s statement: “The practice of dissimulation (taqiya) can no longer serve as an**

31 P. 196.

32 Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb al-Kulaynī, *Al-Kāfi* (ed. Muhammad Jaʿfar Shams ad-Dīn), Beirut Dār at-taʾāruf lil-Maṭbūʿāt. 1419A.H./1998 A.D., vol. 2, p. 226.

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**operation model. Life in modern terms demands a different model, whereby the vicious cycle would be broken and the relationship redefined”<sup>33</sup>, would accordingly be invalid (36).**

If dissimulation would be conceived according to such denotations explained above, then it would not constitute “a vicious cycle”. Fortunately enough Dr. Obeid associated the occurrence of any possible change in traditional Islamic mentality with the Muslims’ adopting a more liberal thinking concerning their religion. “The Muslim majority”, he says, “should invite and welcome a pluralistic approach to spiritual expression and consider such diversity a sign of strength and a source of rejuvenation. The Druze, on the other hand”, he continues, “must share with fellow Muslims and with the rest of the world the basic tenets of their faith, without fear of alienation or persecution.”<sup>34</sup> If such an attitude from the part of the Muslim majority were to occur then the Druze or any other esoteric Muslim minority would not necessarily have to share the basic tenets of their faith with their fellow Muslims or with the rest of the world, because if such a liberal approach were to be adopted there would be no reason for the others to interfere in the religious beliefs of others (this would be only the concern of scholarship as such). Everyone would respect everyone else’s personal beliefs. God does not need any one to defend Him; it is man who is in need of defending himself against the enmity, intolerance and non-acceptance of each other.

**After discussing and commenting on the Druze creed, hitting the mark sometimes and missing the point many other times, Dr. Obeid proceeds in the last two chapters to discuss the reasons for the setback of the Druze in modern times and the ways and means he suggests for reform (37).**

He starts his discussion with an assumption that “the Tawhid faith, as expressed in the Druze tradition, did not really have a chance to consolidate its hold and develop its basic tenets to a sufficient level before it was crippled by the disappearance of its main figure, al-Hākim, and the disruption of its

33 P. 242.

34 P. 242.

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infrastructure”<sup>35</sup>. **By this statement and what follows, Dr. Obeid, whether intentionally or not, passes a final sentence on the Druze faith: it is not solid enough, its infrastructure is crippled and disrupted, and its basic tenets are not sufficiently developed to be substantial and worthy of credence (38).**

**Further, Dr. Obeid tries to enhance his point of view by stating other factors which serve, in his opinion, to render the Druze faith un-credited, namely “the premature disclosure [of the Movement] to the general public”<sup>36</sup> (39).** And “unresolved and profound disagreements and conflicts among the senior leadership of the faith, whose revolutionary and bold concepts were expected to create a backlash among the majority of Muslims both Shi‘a and Sunnī in the Fāṭimid realm.”<sup>37</sup> Another factor was the failure of the movement “to take off from its launching pad with enough vigor to break into the open and claim its proper place among religious approaches, particularly within the various schools of Islamic thought”<sup>38</sup> due to the backlash and persecution.

The first factor, i.e. the disappearance of the Druze movement’s main figure al-Hākim which, according to Dr. Obeid, resulted in the disruption of its infrastructure, was dealt with previously<sup>39</sup> when commenting on Dr. Obeid’s statement <sup>40</sup>. The disappearance of al-Hākim and Ḥamza and the other functionaries (except for Bahā’ ad-Dīn who was delegated by Ḥamza to continue the promulgation of the Call) was not sudden or premature. It was, as I stated before, concerted from even before the beginning of the Call. The Druze doctrine put much emphasis on this point which in its surface was socially and politically historical, but in reality pertained to the mystical and Gnostic prerogative. It had to

do with the very tenure of the Call and its historical relationship with the primordial aspect of Tawḥīd as well as with its speculative ramifications. It served

35 P. 207.

36 P. 207.

37 P. 207.

38 P. 207.

39 See p. 4 of this study.

40 P. 129

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likewise as a demarcation line between Gnostic certitude and mental doubtfulness among the followers.

As for the claim described by Dr. Obeid as a “premature disclosure [of the Movement] to the general public”<sup>41</sup>, or as “early and hasty”<sup>42</sup>, it was attempted in the year 407A.H./1016A.D. by a certain high state official called Anushtegīn ad-Darazī. Due to his high position in the state ad-Darazī was aspiring to be appointed as imam of the movement by al-Ḥākim who turned him down in favor of Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī, because of the former’s deficiency in knowledge and character. Soon after, he was expelled from any activity in the daʿwa. He unsuccessfully tried to usurp the imamate. He arranged for a belligerent confrontation against Ḥamza and his functionaries which cost him his life and resulted in the resumption of the Call with the same vigor it had started with.

**Hence ad-Darazī was far from being counted among “the senior leadership of the faith”, as Dr. Obeid likes to consider him (40).**

Furthermore, this interval in time between the transient withdrawal of al-Ḥākim in 409A.H./1018A.D. and the resumption of the daʿwa after ad-Darazī’s death in 410A.H./1019A.D. was meant to be, according to the Druze doctrine, a period of necessary trial to those who accepted the Call: whether they would stay intact and faithful to their faith or they would apostize from it. The technical term used in the Druze Scriptures for the period of trial is miḥnat shukūk (uncertainty test).

**Had Dr. Obeid mentioned this scriptural justification he would have avoided falling in an unscholarly explanation of historical facts (41). Besides, he would have thought twice before he would say: “The resulting backlash and persecution were a vital setback that stunted the movement at a critical juncture in its life.”<sup>43</sup> (42).**

Dr. Obeid goes on to say: “In essence, it (the daʿwa) was not able to take off from its launching pad with enough vigor to break into the open and claim its proper

41 P. 207.

42 P. 211.

43 P. 207.

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place among religious approaches , particularly within the various schools of Islamic thought.”<sup>44</sup>. This, as he continues, is due to the so called “unresolved and profound disagreements and conflicts among the senior leadership of the faith”. **I do not know which senior leadership of the faith did fall in such “unresolved and profound disagreements and conflicts”. I wish Dr. Obeid were clear enough to point out such matters, unless he meant the conflicts which occurred between Ḥamza ibn ʿAlī and ad-Darazī and the other renegades who followed, and which could be reduced to their moral behavior and lack of discipline (43).** On the contrary, the reasons for the Druze faith’s remaining unpopular among Shīʿas and Sunnīs alike could be found in the basic differences between the Druze faith and the various schools of Islamic thought. The deep and innate conflict between Sunnī jurisprudence and mysticism was an important factor that prompted negative

relations between the Sunnī majority and the Bāṭinī minorities whether Druze or otherwise. Similarly, the basic different concepts vis à vis the Imamate, and consequently the person of the Imam, was a main factor in Shīʿite-Druze conflicts and, accordingly, the long term offensive launched by aẓ-Ẓāhir (who succeeded al-Ḥākim as Caliph) against the Druze community emphasized such mutual estrangement. It also played a great role in obstructing any cultural thriving conditions of the Druze as well as their effective intellectual presence in the Islamic world. Besides, the constant wars the Druze were doomed to undertake in the course of history against the Fāṭimids, Ayyūbids, Mamluks, crusaders, Mongols, Ottomans and those in between and those who followed made it difficult for the Druze, except for sporadic and short lapses of time, to turn towards learning and culture. Yet they were able to produce some great personalities as as-Sayyid al-Amīr ʿAbdallāh at-Tanūkhī, ash-Shaykh al-Fāḍil, and Zayn ad-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ghaffār Taqīy ad-Dīn, only to mention a few who were able to leave their impact on learning within their community and even somewhat outside the confines of their people, whether in the fields of mysticism or philosophy, history or literature, Qurʾān commentary or theology, statesmanship,

44 P. 207.

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politics or ethics. It is worth of mention here that the Druze contribution in the fields of architecture and the arts were of much importance that their impact surpassed the confines of the land of the Druze. Dr. Zinat Bitar, professor of the history of arts and archaeology at the Lebanese University, is putting much effort in studying Druze patrimony in these fields, compensating thus for the works of many Lebanese historians who tried to undermine such contributions whether intentionally due to a sectarian and ideological inclination, or unintentionally due to lack of thorough research.

**When one reads Dr. Obeid's book carefully, one cannot but pose the following questions: Does the author wish to make the reader suspicious of the credibility of the Druze faith at large? Does he intend to free the Druze mind from any notion of sacredness of the Druze texts, so that the reader would justify the author's critique of many basic tenets of the Druze faith? (44) For no sooner had he indicted the Druze faith with lack of solidity, and its infrastructure and basic tenets with being crippled with disruption, than he reprehended the scriptures with "distortion and sabotage by the renegades."45 (45) The result of these charges, in his judgment, "is a confused state of a jigsaw puzzle with several missing errors in transcription, and the possible introduction of material that does not fit into the**

**main theme of the faith."46 (46) Such unfriendly and subjective statements are evidence that Dr. Obeid – though a distinguished scholar in medicine who has excelled in his field – does not follow the same scientific and objective methodology in the field of Islamic studies in general and Ismāʿīlī and Druze studies in particular (47). Here comes to my mind what Prof. M Arkoun, the world renowned Islamist, has said: "We notice that since the 19th century Muslims specialized in the exact sciences have started to intrude easily into Qurʾānic studies"47. **I do not mean that Dr. Obeid is an intruder into Islamic studies in****

45 P. 207.

46 P. 207.

47 M.Arkoun, *al-Qurʾān min at-Taḥsīn al Mawrūth ilā Taḥlīl al-Khiṭāb ad-Dīnī*, translated from the French by Hashem Salih, Beirut: Dār at-Ṭalīʿa, 2005, p.14.

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general and Druze studies in particular. This is because he did not go into such a field directly from the field of the exact sciences as such. On the contrary, as a child he was raised into the Druze faith by members of his immediate family and “the tightly knit Druze community”<sup>48</sup>, as he says. However, describing himself as being “largely tethered to the strong leash of dogma”<sup>49</sup>, he seems to be determined to deal with the Druze subject with an inimical spirit which is against the way in which human issues should be dealt with objectively (48). Such a way, in fact, transcends the modern way of thinking, though it comprises it. This process, which Prof. M. Arkoun prefers to call “la raison émergente”, does not stop at modernism, it rather emerges from it by sifting its findings to get rid of its negative and subjective traits, and thus it cherishes only the constructive aspects. Hence, contrary to the positivism of the 19th century, which continued to prevail over the Western mind until recent times, this raison émergente provides a wider and more broad minded reasoning process through which it earnestly rejects any oversight of the speculative and spiritual aspects of man. This raison émergente propagates an uninhibited and constantly progressive concept of historicity in contrast to the Middle Eastern mentality based on a static and authoritarian understanding of religiosity. I wish Dr. Obeid would have noticed this dynamic historicity that gave birth to a progressive spirit in the Tawḥīd faith (49). This progressive spirit made the Tawḥīd faith view Islam as a constant progression from a literal and exoteric perception of the truth to an inner conception of it until it reaches a deeper and more speculative level of knowledge pertaining to the unity of being (Tawḥīd ) as such. At such third level one would be ready to emancipate oneself from the bonds of formal religiosity to be immersed in the ocean of divine intimacy where humanity becomes to the Divine as the word is to the meaning. In such a case the word would be valued according to the meaning it denotes and not according to the alphabetical letters through which the meaning is expressed.

48 P. 205.

49 P. 250.

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Therefore Dr. Obeid's statement, namely “The Tawhid that the Druze inherited is like a big orchard that has been left fallow for a long time. One has to look for the fruit trees among an outgrowth of weeds and thistles to extract what is useful and discard the containments”<sup>50</sup>, should be reconsidered. Perhaps this orchard which appears fallow to some is in the eyes of a specialist well plowed, and these strange plants which seem to be weeds and thistles are, in the eyes of a medical doctor, herbs that make the owner of the orchard healthy enough to be able to benefit from his fruit trees to the full. In such speculative subjects as the Tawḥīd faith one should take matters with deeper insight and with a more intrinsic prospect to spirituality to be really living in this age of raison émergente. If we do so then we would not, as the author claims “get sidetracked into blind alleys and misleading paths.” Nor would we “lose the core in the jumble of confusion and distortion”<sup>51</sup>. Alleys and paths are blind and misleading either for those who insist on sticking to preconceived, prepossessed and sciolistic beliefs and ideas, or for those who are not aware of the very peculiarities of a highly advanced epistemological text for the simple reason that they do not admit that a text which does not claim to be revealed by God could be considered valid and authoritative; and thus they firmly believe that such a text, though possibly possessing the truth, is apt to lose it in a “jumble of confusion and distortion” as Dr. Obeid maintains <sup>52</sup>. Such a viewpoint, as Dr. Obeid argues, should prevent the Druze from adhering firmly to their doctrine. He says: “The contents of the epistles should invite discussion and discourse and encourage continuous development and refinement. Yet this did not happen. On the contrary, a doctrine that challenged dogma becomes itself a dogma”<sup>53</sup> (50). However, as stated previously, effective discussion and discourse should be undertaken by those who are deeply versed in the doctrine and in its philosophical and Gnostic objectives and ramifications.

50 P. 207.

51 P. 207.

52 P. 207-208.

53 P. 208.

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Those who take upon themselves such a task should at first take into consideration the genuinity and purity of the faith and its solidity and integral unity. Problems that face the Druze should be solved not by yielding resignedly to them no matter how compelling they are, but by facing them in the light of their very causes without fore asking the principles of the faith. By waiving such principles new problems will emerge which may threaten the very existence of the Tawḥīd doctrine as such. If the problems facing the Druze fellowship all over the world are to be confronted by simply succumbing to them, then it should be easier to convince oneself that the renegades, such as ad-Darazī, undertook “inclusion of material in several epistles that does not fit with the theosophical foundations of the faith,”<sup>54</sup> as Dr. Obeid insists on saying. **If one of the reasons of ad-Darazī’s expulsion from the da’wa is his inserting into the original doctrinal texts material discordant with the faith, then how could it be that he would be expelled while his very falsifications would stay imperviously incorporated in the Druze epistles (50)? I do not think that Dr. Obeid’s conclusions stand up in the face of logic. On the other hand, had Dr. Obeid studied the Druze doctrine thoroughly with all its intricacies and distinctive philosophical and theosophical traits, as well as the conclusions they necessarily resulted, had he studied in depth the revolutionary, intellectual and mystical movements that characterized the 3rd, 4th and 5th centuries A.H./ 9th, 10th and 11th centuries A.D. in which various schools and trends of Islamic thought flourished, had he done so then he would have realized that the Druze faith could never be outside this golden age of Islam (51). It is therefore far from being true that the Druze doctrine contained “inconsistencies and contradictions in different epistles or even in the same epistle”, as Dr. Obeid claims <sup>55</sup> (52). He should have studied the way the Islamic philosophers, such as al-Kindi, al-Fārābī and ibn Sīnā, and the way the famous Sufīs, such as Abū Yazīd al-Bistāmī, al-Junayd, and, later on, Ibn ʿArabī and the Bāṭinī scholars, such as al-Qāḍī an-Nuʿmān and al-Kirmānī, used to write. I do not think that Dr. Obeid has**

54 P. 208.

55 P. 208.

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**ever read Persecution and the Art of Writing by Leo Strauss <sup>56</sup>, Alfarabi’s Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle by Muhsin Mahdi <sup>57</sup>, and “Ibn Sīnā’s Essay on the Secret of Destiny” by George Hourani <sup>58</sup> or has thoroughly read my book Al-Taḥīyya fī al-Islām (Dissimulation in Islam) <sup>59</sup>. Had he done so, he would have known how Islamic philosophers, mystics and Bāṭinī scholars (including Druze dāʿīs) used to write, and then he would have realized that such writings did by no means contain “inconsistencies and contradictions (53)”.**

The Items in the Druze doctrine that are, according to Dr. Obeid, subject to discussion are considered to be major and basic. In Dr. Obeid’s words, they are the following:

“1. The precise status of al-Hakim;

2. The relation of the Druze interpretation of

Tawḥīd to the monotheistic religions, specifically to the world of Islam; and

3. The question of closure of the Druze Call (da’wa) to Tawḥīd and the potential for admission of individuals not born into the Druze faith.”<sup>60</sup>

**The interpretation of such basic items in a way different from that of the Druze doctrine will definitely alter the very core of the Druze faith and will consequently**

result in the emergence of a completely new and different faith. If such a new faith would be based on erroneous premises and would be void of the revolutionary *raison d'être* of the Druze faith vis à vis the literal and exoteric system and even the esoteric and allegorical interpretation system of Islam, then it would not have the necessary ingredients for survival. This will definitely result, sooner or later, in its complete downfall especially when it will confront the more elaborate and well established world religions. Another alternative will face the followers of this new faith, namely their complete conversion to an irreligious recusant mentality in which they will be absorbed in every-day concerns abiding

56 Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1952, the first two chapters.

57 New York: Agora Editions, The Free Press of Glencoe, 1962, pp. 4 ff.

58 *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (University of London), vol 29, part 1, (1966), pp.27-33.

59 London: Druze Heritage Foundation, 2004.

60 P. 209.

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**by the different social systems they belong to, but willingly yet torpidly deprived of their right, as human beings, and of any progressive spiritual development.**

Let us now discuss those items one by one.

1. Al-Ḥākīm

“One major issue regarding al-Ḥākīm,” says Dr. Obeid, “causes considerable confusion and uncertainty among members of the Druze community” **61**. **In fact, this issue does cause confusion and uncertainty but only among members of the Druze community who are too indoctrinated by an exoteric view of God that they have acquired from their ignorance of the Druze faith and their literal understanding of Islam and other Abrahamic religions, namely that God is up in the heavens and that he created the world ex-nihilo. That is why Dr. Obeid and other Druze who try to deal with the Druze faith in such a way cannot fathom the real meaning of the Islamic terms nāsūt and maqām (54).** In fact one can only know the true meaning of these terms in Druze terminology and their relation to lāhūt if one traces their connotations beginning from the three consecutive phases, namely those of surrender (islām), belief (īmān) and certitude (iḥsān, yaqīn, or tawḥīd). Such distinction between these three phases of gradual attainment of truth is based on the Qurʾānic verse: (The Bedouins say, “We believe.” Say: “You do not believe”; rather say, “We surrender; for belief has not yet entered your hearts”). **62** Also it is based on the genuine Ḥadīth of the Prophet: “... Islām implies that you testify that there is no god but God and that Muḥammad is the messenger of God, and you perform prayers give alms, observe the fast of Ramaḍān, and make the pilgrimage to the House if you are capable... [īmān] implies that you affirm your faith in God, in his angels, in His books, in His messengers, in the Day of Judgment, and you affirm your faith in the Divine Decree about good and evil... Iḥsān [implies] that you worship God as if you are

61 P. 209.

62 Al-Hujurāt (XLIX):14

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**beholding Him; for if you do not behold Him, He verily beholds you...”**63** It is not therefore a matter of “some extremists proclaiming the divinity of al-Hakim”, as Dr. Obeid maintains **64** (55). It has nothing to do with the divinity as much as it is a matter of logical sequence of a speculative process of religiosity and a spiritual guidance to true salvation through a dynamic ascent in the mystical knowledge of the Divine.**



Such knowledge of the Absolute cannot be realized by means of reason. The relative cannot know the Absolute. The Absolute therefore can only be mystically savored, so to speak. Man can only feel God's presence if he feels attracted intimately to Him. However, such attraction cannot be realized unless man is given the bliss of feeling God's infinite love. When such mutual love is felt by man, then divine intimacy prevails. **When humanly felt, such intimacy is called uns, when divinely bestowed by the Godhead (Lāhūt) on humanity, it is called Nāsūt (an Arabic word derived from the word nās, a collective noun which means humanity as such, i.e. the all-comprehensive reality of mankind). Nāsūt therefore is not "God's revelation" nor is it a "human medium" as Dr. Obeid claims it to be 65. Such definition of Nāsūt is completely foreign to the Druze doctrine (56).**

Now, does al-Ḥākim, the Fāṭimid Caliph-Imam, represent the station (maqām), i.e. where God resides?<sup>66</sup> According to the Druze faith, this is a misinterpretation as well of the term maqām. It is a superficial understanding of the position of al-Ḥākim. Being the head of the Fāṭimid State, which originally was meant to be the final cause of the Islamic message as such, the Fāṭimid Caliph-Imam represented the maqām, i.e. the station in which the divine message of Islam was realized. The Imam therefore, according to the Druze doctrine, was by no means the theophany of God, he is rather considered in the Druze doctrine as the ideative representation (Ṣūra) of divine intimacy by means of which divine

63 Bashshār □ Awwād Ma□rūf, *al-Musnad al-Jāmi□* vol. 13, pp. 484-486.

64 Pp. 209-210.

65 P. 209 and p. 211 respectively.

66 P. 209.

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omniscience has been revealed to man as much as man can possibly endure.

**The way Dr. Obeid has understood al-Ḥākim is therefore an adulterating misconception of the real meaning of this figure. Such an impaired simplification of the meaning of al-Ḥākim and other Fāṭimid Imams is either due to a hostile attitude towards mystical and Bāṭinī consequences different from traditional Islam or to ignorance of such elaborate and unconventional Bāṭinī conclusions. Mistakes, seemingly small but significantly big, can easily prove this. For example Dr. Obeid says that al-Ḥākim, "invited one of the main authorities on the Ismā□īlī doctrine, the venerated da□i Hamid ad-Dim al-Kirmanī, to Cairo to deal with the confusion and restore balance and order into the Tawḥid da□wa".<sup>67</sup> (57)** One can infer from such a statement that al-Kirmānī was invited by al-Ḥākim to straighten the Tawḥīd faith.

First, al-Kirmānī was not in any way associated with the Druze da□wa. It is true that he came to Cairo, probably by invitation of al-Ḥākim, in order to participate as a main figure in the Ismā□īlī da□wa, which continued to thrive side by side with the Druze da□wa.

Here it is worth mentioning that the Druze da□wa was not meant to replace the Ismāīlī movement. According to the Druze doctrine, the Druze da□wa was intended only to call those among the Ismāīlīs who were ready for the new Call. As for the Ismāīlī movement itself, it continued to perform effectively. It is too absurd and naïve to think that the Fāṭimid authorities, at the head of which was the Imam, ever thought to stop it to be replaced by the Druze da□wa.

Second, we should never take Bāṭinī literature, whether Ismā□īlī or other, at its face value. Taqiyya or dissimulation of beliefs is sometimes considered a must, or else such beliefs will be exposed to those who are not prepared for them. That is why Bāṭinī scholars, including al-Kirmānī himself, may write sometimes in a way which can be understood differently from what they actually mean.

Sometimes the meaning which was conveyed earlier would be elsewhere made

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clearer or more obscure or even made contradictory 68. It is not therefore easy for any reader to grasp the exact meaning a Bāṭinī writer really intends to convey. Only those who are versed in Bāṭinī methods of writing can realize what it really means. They alone can know the over-all picture of the text concerned and in the light of which they can establish the exact meaning the writer is trying to sham.

**Here also we are met with Dr. Obeid's overlooking the Ismā'īlī concept of Imamate as discussed by al-Kirmānī. Unlike his Risālat Mabāsīm al-Bishārāt bi l-Imām al-Ḥakīm bi Amrillāh, al-Kirmānī's Rāḥat al-□Aql puts the concept of the Imam in a more candid way. However, in an attempt to leave his convictions restricted to people of intellectual distinction, al-Kirmānī makes it a point to write Rāḥat al-□Aql in a more difficult and complicated style (58)**

In this book Rāḥat al-□Aql al-Kirmānī stated that the □Aql, i.e. the first inclusive being and the first cause of existence whose manifestation on earth is the Imam, is the first originated being. However, says al-Kirmānī, the Originator, i.e. God, together with this first originated being and the Originator's act of origination are in point of fact the same one. They constitute three aspects of one and only one reality 69. To such a statement the Druze doctrine is categorically opposed. In fact this belief of al-Kirmānī and other Ismā'īlīs is one of the major differences between Ismā'ilism at the time of al-Kirmānī and the Druze faith. In the Druze doctrine the first originated being who is the All inclusive being, the □Aql, as stated in my article, "Comparative Elements on the Imamate: Ismā'īlī and Druze Perspectives, a Philosophical Approach" 70 is definitely not one of the hypostases of a divine Trinity. As an originated being issued from the Absolute, the □Aql can never be considered absolute. As a first reflection of God "he is," as I said in my

68 See Leo Straws *op.cit.*

69 Aḥmad Ḥamīd as-Dīn al-Kirmānī, *Rāḥat al-□Aql*, ed. By M. Kamil Hussein and M. Mustafa Hilmi, Leiden: E. J. Brill, p. 73; see also my article, "The Philosophical Significance of the Imām in Ismā'īlism," *Studia Islamica*, no. 27 (1967), Paris: G. – P. Maisonneuve – Larose, p. 46.

70 To be published soon in *Proceedings of the Shī'ī Studies Symposium*, The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, U.K.

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article mentioned above, "an entity of his own, therefore he is finite, and so of course his human manifestation, the Imam. Through such a human manifestation, the □Aql guides the believers to behold such a reality' Man can only be acquainted with this divine reality by means of divine intimacy (Nāsūt), as much as it is humanly possible, as mentioned above.

**From what has been stated we conclude that al-Kirmānī, contrary to what Dr. Obeid claims 71, was much more of an extremist than of a moderate dā'ī. He who should be described as moderate is rather Ḥamza ibn □Ali and the ideology he represents (59).**

**Either Dr. Obeid did not read the entire collection of the Druze epistles or he read those epistles hastily with a not-so-friendly idea in his mind, or else he would not have come to the conclusion that Ḥamza and his team did not have "enough time or opportunity to sufficiently elaborate the complex system of God-man interaction and the concept of divinity in the Druze epistles." 72 (60)**

**Besides, one would wonder how Dr. Obeid could possibly consider the theosophical and philosophical conflict that occurred directly or indirectly between Ḥamza ibn □Ali and al-Kirmānī as a conflict between "myth and reality, generating tension almost to the breaking point" 73, as he says (61). In fact such**

intellectual argumentations between these two ideologies were among the distinguishing features that made the Fāṭimid period eminent and highly esteemed.

Another “evidence” which Dr. Obeid falsely relies on to prove that the Druze do deify al-Ḥākim is the very title of al-Ḥākim bi Amr Allah. He says: “The appellation al-Hakim refers to the ruler or the lord of the realm. That was the title”, continues Dr. Obeid, “by which the sixth Fatimid caliph and Ismaʿīlī imam, abu ʿAlī al-

71 Pp. 210-212.

72 P. 211.

73 P. 212.

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Mansur bi Allah (sic)<sup>74</sup> was known (62). However the same word al-Ḥākim could also be used as an attribute of the Supreme Ruler and Lord of all, the Almighty God<sup>75</sup>. In fact the word al-Ḥākim lexically does not originally mean ruler or lord. The true meaning of the verb ḥakama, according to E.W.Lane who relied on most of the known Arabic lexicons, is: “He prevented, restrained, or withheld, him from acting in an evil, or a corrupt manner... And hence, ḥakama... [means] He judged, gave judgment, passed sentence, or decided judicially.” Hence, Ḥākim is “One who judges, gives judgment; passes sentence, or decides judicially; a judge; an arbiter, arbitrator, or umpire between people”<sup>76</sup>. Although E.W. Lane continues to say that Ḥākim is the “one who expresses judicial authority, jurisdiction, rule, dominion, or government; a ruler, or governor”<sup>77</sup>. It is obvious that E.W.Lane states this last meaning as a derived meaning rather than an original one, or else he would have mentioned it at the beginning. Moreover those caliphial titles such as al-Ḥākim bi Amr Allah and the like are titles which the Caliphs, whether Abbasids, Fāṭimids, or Spanish Umayyads, were by large officially known by.

This, however, does not mean that al-Ḥākim, as a Fāṭimid Caliph-Imam, did not have a special position which made him according to the Ismāʿīlī as well as to the Druze doctrines, sacredly distinguished. He was to be considered the Resurrector of Resurrection (qāʾim al-qiyāma) (By resurrection it is meant the resurrection of the Third phase in Islam, i.e. iḥsān, as stated in the ḥadīth of the Prophet mentioned above)<sup>78</sup>.

As the sixth Fāṭimid caliph, al-Ḥākim was considered third in line after al-Muʿizz (al-Muʿizz, al-ʿAzīz, and al-Ḥākim). Since al-Muʿizz was considered to be the seventh of the second heptade of Ismāʿīlī imāms (sābiʿ al-usbūʿayn), the ninth

74 Al-Ḥākim’s name was simply al-Manṣūr, not al-Manṣūr bi Allāh.

75 P. 213.

76 Edward William Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, London: Williams and Norgate, 1865, article حكم.

77 *Ibid*.

78 See p. 24 of this article.

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was then al-Ḥākim. The famous grand jurist during the reign of al-Muʿizz, al-Qāḍī an-Nuʿmān (d. 363 A.H./974 A.D.) compared the ninth Imam to come (i.e. al-Ḥākim) with both the ninth month of pregnancy as well as with the month of Ramaḍān (the ninth month of the Hijra year); as the closing of both months are the seal of pregnancy and of fasting respectively, the ninth Imam is the seal of the period of taʾwīl (esoteric interpretation). With him another period begins inaugurating the time when iḥsān, yaqīn or tawḥīd would be relevant of being apprehended. Al-Qāḍī an-Nuʿmān says: “It was pronounced (qīla) that the third in line after the seventh Imam, who is next to his second (thānī thānīh) will be the

Seal. He will be the ninth Imam, similar to the ninth month of pregnancy.”<sup>79</sup>

Therefore the suspension and closure of the period of *taḥwīl* by al-Ḥākīm, according to the Druze doctrine, was not sudden and unplanned. Hence Dr.

**Obeid’s statement that such “arrest led to a state of confusion at the time and remains with us today”<sup>80</sup> is far from being true (63).**

As for the Ismāʿīlīs, the successor of al-Ḥākīm as Fāṭimid Caliph, Aẓ-Ẓāhir li-ʿIzz al-Dīn Allāh rejected this procedure to continue the process of unifying caliphate and imamate as was the case since the foundation of the Fāṭimid state in 297 A.H./909 A.D. by the Caliph-Imam ʿUbayd Allāh al-Mahdī.

**Finally Dr. Obeid calls upon the members of the Druze community to resolve this question of al-Ḥākīm bi-Amr Allāh, which he describes as “obvious blasphemy”. He says: “This obvious blasphemy is not and could not be compatible with the Druze interpretation of Tawḥīd nor with the teaching and policies of al-Ḥākīm or any of his predecessors.”<sup>81</sup> (64) Once again I say to Dr. Obeid, had he profoundly studied the Druze doctrine with all its ramifications and with all the cognate subjects especially Ismāʿīlism and Islamic mysticism, together with Greek**

79 Al-Qaḍī an-Nuḥmān, *Taḥwīl ad-Daʿāʾim*, vol. 3, ed. By Muḥammad Ḥasan al-Aẓamī, Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif fī Miṣr, 1972, p. 112; see also Sami Makarem, *Al-ʿIrḡān fī Maslak at-Tawḥīd*, London: Druze Heritage Foundation, 2006, pp. 22-23.

80 P. 213.

81 P. 218.

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**philosophy, and its relation to Islamic thought at large and to the Bāṭinī movements in particular, he would have understood this problem and consequently he would have capably participated in making it known to the Druze generations in the West and elsewhere.(65) But first he should have studied this doctrine with love. Yes I say with love, because no faith such as this faith, with all its intrinsic and mystical peculiarities and spiritual and Gnostic radiations, can be savored unless it is looked at from the inside. Only if he had done so he would have been in line with this new age of inquiry as we said before. It is not a matter of “hero worship” by the Druze, as Dr. Obeid accuses them of <sup>82</sup>, which constitute what Dr. Obeid calls “blasphemy”<sup>83</sup>. What is blasphemous indeed is to insist on looking at things at the surface without trying to delve into the real inner meaning of things (66).**

Further, by what right do we allow ourselves to accuse others of blasphemy, and on what grounds? What divine authority are we endowed with to charge others with such accusations?

Is this the way in which one can really better the Druze situation? There are many things that should be studied and many issues that should be discussed.

Dr. Obeid is right in saying that many “issues have to be addressed first by each person individually and second by the community as such in a democratic manner”<sup>84</sup>. But in order for the Druze participants to be effective, and in order for them to change democracy from being a perverted form of constitution (democracy) to a right form of constitution (polity)<sup>85</sup>, they should have a minimum cognizance of the Druze doctrine, especially of the *raison d’être* of their faith, so that the emotional and selfish factors be toned down, then they will have a better chance to think objectively in the light of both the *raison d’être*, and the genuine tenets of their faith. If this is too theoretical to be realized, at least those

82 P. 219.

83 P. 213

84 P. 219.

85 Aristotle, *Politica*, Book III, chapter 7.

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intellectuals among them should be genuinely educated in their faith. If this is realized then all segments of society including that of the  $\square$ uqqāl would be effective. **It is utterly and absurdly unfounded to agree with Dr. Obeid's declaring that "since the Druze gave up on the Imamate after al-Hākīm there are no persons who are empowered to resolve this or other related religious issues by edict (fatwa)"<sup>86</sup> (67).** How about the Imam Ḥamza ibn  $\square$ Alī? Is he not the Imam of the new phase (maslak at-tawḥīd)? How about his two disciples who authored with the Imam the doctrinal epistles of the faith? How about his other disciples? Are the Imam and his disciples not empowered enough? To say otherwise and to renounce such sanctified and sacramental authorities is, according to the doctrine of Tawḥīd, to plainly break away with the Faith. **How can an open dialogue be convened if the participants are originally at variance and basically adrift concerning issues which are not secondary, but most fundamental, to say the least** (68).

Before having a dialogue among people whose knowledge of the Faith is insufficient and consequently troubled with emotion and preconceived ideas one has to pave the way for such a necessary dialogue by genuinely educating the participants in the true Faith as well as in the principles of logical argumentation without undermining a most immanent factor: love. When those interested Druze acquire such an education the dialogue among them would be effective. Otherwise, any attempt of "dialoging" will result in more misinterpretation and will be of a schismatic nature.

**As for the  $\square$ uqqāl it is too illogical to undermine them. Dr. Obeid's saying, "The  $\square$ uqqāl order alone cannot be the sole source of authority"<sup>87</sup> should be revised so as not to be understood as thwarting them. Instead there should be an authentic rapprochement with them based on mutual understanding and sincere acknowledgement of contemporary problems and impediments that face the Druze in the present time whether in their countries of origin or overseas** (69). As

86 P. 219.

87 P. 220.

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sincere, knowledgeable and genuinely considerate as they are, the authentic  $\square$ uqqāl should stay a fundamental element in society in general and in such a dialogue in particular. For in addition to being spiritually well acquainted with the intricate values of the Faith and mystically experienced in its sacramental peculiarities they are the devout guardians of the temple of Tawḥīd against any possible outside elements that may roil the Faith and spoil its genuineness..

As farfetched as it appears to be, such a procedure is the only way to a safe and sound solution of the problems facing the Druze communities.

In fact the religious heritage whether metaphysical, mystical, ethical, judicial, or social that the saintly scholars, such as as-Sayyid al-Amīr  $\square$ Abd Allāh at-Tanūkhī, ash-Shaykh al-Fāḍil and Zayn ad-Dīn  $\square$ Abd al-Ghaffār Taqīy ad-Dīn, left behind, constitutes a very rich and most basic patrimony of knowledge. Such heritage should be thoroughly studied in order to enrich our spiritual understanding of Tawḥīd.

On the basis of this heritage Druze contemporary scholars are called to build up their Druze structure high and steady. **Once again I tell Dr. Obeid that his statement, "The efforts of the eminent religious scholars of the past, such as Emir Abdallah al-Tanukhi and Shaykh Taqi al-Din, were not enough for the tradition of scholarship to take hold and grow among the religious class (the  $\square$ uqqāl), nor to attract the secular intelligentsia to tackle matters of faith"<sup>88</sup>, is short of being**

**precise indeed (70).**

True, the initiates should continue building up the heritage by delving deeply for its theosophical and philosophical implications together with keeping abreast with the ever arising issues and problems of the Druze, so should the intelligentsia among the uninitiated. But first, such intelligentsia should get interested enough in such a heritage. In fact, unlike Christianity, Druzism, as an Islamic faith, does not recognize two different classes of believers: secular and clergy. The

88 Pp. 227-228.

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difference is rather between two diverse categories: one category consists of those who believe in the Faith and consequently acknowledges its tenets and religious heritage, with the knowledgeable among them building their reformatory ideas on such tenets and heritage; the other category consists of those who do not abide by the Faith and consequently have doubts of some or all of its tenets and religious beliefs. We can say however that the first category consists either of initiates who observe strict behavioral practices, or of the uninitiated who do not observe literally such practices; while those of the other category refuse to initiate themselves into the Faith, and accordingly look at it with a superficial view without pursuing and examining thoroughly its profundities. This does not mean however that those people are not interested in reforming the spiritual and social aspects of the foundations of Tawḥīd. Instead, their endeavor is mainly based on analogy with their personal opinions and judgments rather than on true knowledge of the Faith. Such a “reform” is liable therefore to exceed the scope of reform to a complete resignation from the faith of Tawḥīd for an entirely different faith.

Moreover, such opinions and judgments thus lead those who are doubtful of the Faith to suggest solutions to problems based on their genuine but partial experiences. This is because they neglect taking into account, as I said before, the very identity of the Faith and consequently its tenacity and coherence as a cognitive movement the message of which is to realize its *raison d’être* of spiritual ascension.

**In the chapter before the last, Dr. Obeid narrows down the objectives of the Druze community to two paradigms: “(see 71 below) One paradigm,” he says, “considers the Druze as a defined religious community with a distinct historical and anthropological profile. The other considers the Druze as self-appointed standard-bearers of the universal message of Tawḥīd that has distinct tenets and principles”. (71 see below)** Dr. Obeid continues, “These two points of departure are not identical because one deals with the profile of a people and is therefore restricted to the

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Druze community, while the other deals with the profile of a universal creed that is, by definition, inclusive of all humanity”<sup>89</sup>.

Looking at the actual setup of Druzism, both as a faith and a cultural formation, we find that the Druze, according to the Tawḥīd doctrine consider themselves as a defined religious community. They have a strong and genuine feeling of spiritual and epistemological belonging. They have a definite religious identity derived from their mystical belief that Tawḥīd is a continuous and progressive faith that started with the inception of man until it reached a status of maturity with the onset of the Tawḥīd da‘wa. This subject matter will be elaborated on below. It does not mean, however, that the Druze feel they have a special social and political identity different from any other religious communities in the countries they are actual citizens of.

As for the other paradigm, it is rather too rhetorical to accord with the Druze doctrinal concept. **It is out of context to say that the Druze consider themselves**



**as self-appointed standard-bearers of the universal message of Tawḥīd. (71)** This is because the doctrine of Tawḥīd, as pictured in the Druze religious sources, ascertains that Tawḥīd is spiritual union with the inherent properties of the All inclusive being (al-ʿAql). Such a union provides the believers with enough harmony and spiritual and mental pose to be able to achieve a mystical immersion in a set of correlative metaphysical, Gnostic and ethical admonitions. Such an immersion can only be realized if these admonitions become intrinsic dispositions (khiṣāl, sing.:khaṣla) of the Muwaḥḥid's self. These correlative intrinsic dispositions are the following:

- 1-Veracity in tongue (as a necessary result of veracity in belief and action);
2. Safeguarding one's fellow men;
3. Renunciation of any belief that leads to the negation of Existence and, consequently, to falsehood;
4. Dissociation from all fomenters of evil (abālisa) who propagate injustice, misdoing and inequity;
5. Tawḥīd, i.e. professing the oneness of God (Who has no otherness);
6. Contentment (riḍā) with the divine

89 P. 251.

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Will. Such contentment is to believe with certitude that all God's deeds are sheer wisdom. This is the result of one's love of the Divine; and

7. Surrender to God's amr, by acting in accordance with Truth as such, whether such acting brings joy or grief to the doer (fī s-sirr wa l-ḥadathān ). **Here we see that Dr. Obeid wrongly translates these two Arabic terms as "in private and in public."**<sup>90</sup> (72)

**Also, due to lack of well-founded knowledge of Tawḥīd, Dr. Obeid interpreted these seven admonitions as commands. (73)He could not grasp the difference in the Tawḥīd faith between commands which by definition are imposed forcibly by a superior power, and admonition which, by definition too, simply implies showing the right way to the person concerned. (74)** While command necessarily connotes coercion, admonition is indicative of impression on the self. **After reading Dr. Obeid's book we come to the conclusion that he missed the fact that the very concept of man in the Tawḥīd faith is freedom. (75)** Truth cannot be imposed as such, nor can belief. This is what the Qur'ān has stated: (And if thy Lord had willed, whoever is in the earth would have believed, all of them, all together. Wouldst thou then constrain the people, until they are believers?)<sup>91</sup>. That is why the Tawḥīd faith never considers the pillars of Islam as commands (takālīf , sing.:taklīf ). **Such a misconception is immediately followed by another. The seven admonitions are reduced to five. Dr. Obeid writes: "In translating the Arabic text of these commands into English, some of the nuance is either lost or becomes redundant (76).** Condensing the seven into five may facilitate the discussion in English; thus, in the following discussion the third and fourth commands are grouped together as 'Renunciation of idolatry and paganism,' and the sixth and seventh commands are grouped together as 'Submission to God's will in public and in private'<sup>92</sup>. But the terms "tark" (renunciation), "ʿadam" (nonbeing) and "buhtān" (falsehood) found in the third admonition, and the terms "barāʿa"

90 P. 171,

91 Jonah (10):99.

92 P. 172.

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(dissociation), "abālisa" (fomenters of evil), and "ṭughyān" (injustice) found in the

fourth admonition, are too different in meaning to be reduced to “renunciation of idolatry and paganism.” Likewise “riḍā” (contentment) found in the sixth admonition, and “taslīm” (surrender) found in the seventh admonition are also too distinct in meaning to be merged in one: “submission to God’s will”. Contentment in God’s will is, in Druzism, entirely different from submission, as was explained above. The Arabic verb *sallama*, the verbal noun of which is *taslīm*, can signify to submit as well as to keep unimpaired. The Druze faith ties the two meanings together: in order to submit yourself to God, first you have to keep yourself unimpaired, to free yourself from the evils of the ego. You cannot submit yourself to God if you are corrupted with vices and ethical and creedal defects.

## 2. The Relation of Tawḥīd to Islam and other monotheistic religions

We now come to the second item subject to discussion, as Dr. Obeid maintains<sup>93</sup>, namely the relation of the Druze interpretation to Tawḥīd to Islam and other monotheistic religions.

First, one cannot but say that Dr. Obeid was right in saying: “The Druze consider themselves to be members of an Islamic sect that is protective of its uniqueness and proud of its traditions”<sup>94</sup>. But his saying, “the Druze have survived to this day as a closed ethno religious group within the greater Islamic community”<sup>95</sup> (77) should be reconsidered. The word “closed” with which Dr. Obeid has labeled this community is to a great extent untrue (78). Here again Dr. Obeid shows a lack of correct understanding of the Druze epistemological stand point. (79)

According to the Druze religious system, a religious community having an esoteric (bāṭinī) approach does by no means signify that it is socially and culturally closed. On the contrary this inner esoteric approach is due, in fact, to the Druze epistemological belief in openness to other horizons. As a matter of

93 P. 208.

94 P. 220.

95 P. 220.

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fact Druzism is the result of refusal to succumb to pre-conceived and traditional, taken-for-granted ordinances, as well as refusal to follow literally religious injunctions without their inner connotations. In fact this belief, contrary to the teachings of the Druze scriptures and consequently to those of the main theologian after the daʿī wa as-Sayyid al-Amīr at-Tanūkī, caused many of the Druze of modern times to neglect the outward practice of some of the pillars of Islam. This neglect is due therefore to their ignorance of the basic principles of the Druze doctrine (recently His eminence Sheikh Naim Hassan, the Shaykh al-ʿAql, started a drive to correct this malpractice). As stated before, the observance of the Islamic ritual impositions does not contradict the Druze doctrine’s being open to world philosophical and mystical avenues like many other Islamic schools of thought. In fact we see that the Druze doctrine was ever open, and consequently was the product of a highly intellectual and cultural atmosphere that characterized the whole classical Islamic civilization. Furthermore, being the product of the Fāṭimid state, the Druze doctrine was by nature open to world civilizations. In my book, *The Druze Faith*, which apparently Dr. Obeid never read, I say: Besides founding al-Azhar, which became the main university of the Islamic world, the Fāṭimids also established Dār al-Ḥikma [the house of wisdom], known also as Dār al-ʿIlm [the House of Knowledge]. (80)

This Dār al-Ḥikma was established by the Fāṭimid Caliph-Imam al-Ḥākim bi-Amrillāh in A.H. 395 [A.D. 1005]. It was connected with the Royal Palace and contained a huge library and many conference rooms.

Lectures were given in both al-Azhar and Dār al-Ḥikma, and in many other centers of learning in Cairo and other places in the Fāṭimid Empire.

Scholastic activities were one of the main interests of the State. Cairo

became a center of scientists, philosophers, theologians, men of letters and scholars.

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In such an intellectual atmosphere, the Druze movement started in the year A.H. 408 [A.D. 1017], during the reign of the sixth Fāṭimid Caliph and Imam, al-Ḥākim bi-Amrillāh. It was the result of the intellectual ferment within the various philosophical and theosophical schools that had emerged in Islam <sup>96</sup>.

As for the political point of view, the Druze never constituted a closed community.

**Another book of mine, *Lubnān fī ʿAhd al-Umarāʾ at-Tanūkhīyyīn (Lebanon under the Tanūkid Emirs)*<sup>97</sup> which Dr. Obeid, as it seems, never became acquainted with, discusses the contribution of the Druze Tanūkhid emirs and the Druze people in the Lebanon, Palestine and Syria in defending the abode of Islam in the eastern shores of the Mediterranean (Bilād ash-Shām) against the invasions of the Crusaders and the Mongols.**(81)

It also discusses their cultural, political and administrative contributions, together with the Druze Maṣnūd Emirs who brought about the illustrious Fakhr ad-Dīn II, the founder of new Lebanon. Fakhr ad-Dīn's political, diplomatic, and cultural relations with Europe made Lebanon open up to the West to become a cultural bridge between the East and Europe.

This however does not mean that the Druze do not, in another sense, constitute a closed society. Poverty, lack of education, ignorance of basic principles of the Druze faith, and sectarian mentality, together with their being a minority in Middle eastern countries whose system of government is based either on open or behind-the-curtain sectarian discrimination are all factors that help in creating a

96 Sami N. Makarem, *The Druze Faith*, Delmar, N.Y.: Caravan Books, 1974, reprinted in 1979 and 2006, pp. 11-12. About Dār al-Ḥikma see also Taquyyuddīn Aḥmad al-Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Mawāʾiẓ wa l-ʾiṭtibār bi-Dhikr al-Kiṭāʿ wa l-Āthār*, Cairo: Būlāq, A.H. 1270, vol. 1, pp. 458 ff. Also see Dominique Sourdel, s.v. "Dār al-Ḥikma," in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, new ed. About al-Azhar see J. Jomier, s.v. "al-Azhar", in *ibid.*; about Cairo see J.M Rogers, s.v. "al-Kāhira", in *ibid.*, also see Gaston Wiet, *Cairo City of art and Commerce*, Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1964.

97 Beirut: Dār Sader Publishers, 2000; see also Abbas Abu Salih and Sami Makarem, *Tārīkh al-Muwaḥḥidīn ad-Durūz fī al-Mashriq al-ʿArabī*, Beirut. Druze Counsel for Research and Development, n.d.; Edmond Rabbath, *La formation historique du Liban politique et constitutionnel*, Beirut: Publications de l'Université Libanaise, 1973.

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closed society. Yet this closed nature, as stated above, contradicts the Druze doctrine which propagates openness to other cultures. Global education and social and political awareness, provided it is not based on Medieval traditional tribalism and sectarianism, are basic factors of openness as well. Finally one should be aware of the fact that openness is extroversion to different cultures; it is not dissolution in these different cultures. Losing one's identity is as deadly as sticking blindly to it.

**As for the Druze relation with the Ismāʿīlīs, Dr. Obeid is apparently ill-informed. His describing al-Ḥākim's appointment of ʿAbd ar-Raḥīm ibn Ilyās "instead of his son aẓ-Ẓāhir as successor in the caliphate, and bestowing the title of imam (according to Ḥamza) on a nonmember of the seed of ʿAlī", as being a revolutionary measure in the Ismāʿīlī movement** <sup>98</sup>, **is neither historically nor creedally correct.** (82)

I have explained above al-Ḥākim's position as the seal of the Imams according to the traditional Ismāʿīlīs as depicted by the grand jurist al-Qāḍī an-Nuṣmān. Accordingly, al-Ḥākim, as I showed in my article, "Al-Ḥākim bi-Amrillāh's Appointment of his successor"<sup>99</sup>, refrained from appointing aẓ-Ẓāhir as

imam. Instead he appointed ʿAbd ar-Raḥīm ibn Ilyās as Walī ʿAhd al-Muslimīn (in charge of the political and administrative affairs of the state), and a certain Abū Hishām ʿAbbās ibn Shuʿayb as Walī ʿAhd al-Muʿminīn (in charge of the Ismāʿīlī religious affairs). One cannot say that these measures taken by al-Ḥākim were confounding to the Ismāʿīlīs as Dr. Obeid thought **100**. They were, as a matter of course, expected by the Ismāʿīlīs. However, Sitt al-Mulk, aẓ-Ẓāhir’s aunt from the father’s side was able, after al-Ḥākim’s disappearance in 411 A.H/1021 A.D., to overpower ʿAbd ar-Raḥīm and, later on, to have him murdered in jail. She succeeded in installing aẓ-Ẓāhir as Caliph-Imam, thus reviving the old system of Ismāʿīlī Imamate. This coercive change of the status of Imamate by Sitt al-Mulk and aẓ-Ẓāhir was keenly arranged for by Ismāʿīlī intelligentsia. This seems to be

98 P. 221.

99 *Al-Abḥāth* (a journal for Arab studies published by the American University of Beirut), vol. XXIII, Nos.1-4 (December 1970), pp. 319-329.

100 P. 221.

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a main reason for the appearance, in this very period, of several works the principal theme of which was to prove the necessity of keeping the institution of Imamate of Taʿwīl ongoing. Al-Kirmānī wrote *Risālat mabāsīm al-Bishārat bi l-Imām al-Ḥākim bi Amrillāh* **101** and *Al-Maṣābiḥ fī Ithbāt al-Imāma* **102**, Abū l-Fawāris Aḥmad ibn Yaʿqūb, the Ismāʿīlī dāʿī in Syria, wrote *ar-Risāla fī l-Imāma* **103**, and Aḥmad ibn Ibrāhīm an-Nīsābūrī wrote *Kitāb Ithbāt al-Imāma* **104**

Examining these political, coercive, and intellectual procedures one may wonder which measure should be considered revolutionary: al-Ḥākim’s or Sitt al-Mulk’s? The former’s can be summarized by the declaration of the termination of the era (dawr) of Taʿwīl and the onset of a new era, that of Tawḥīd in accordance with the previous proclamation of the fourth Caliph-Imam al-Muʿizz and his grand jurist al-Qāḍī an-Nuʿmān **105**, while the latter’s by Sitt al-Mulk’s overthrowing ʿAbd ar-Raḥīm ibn Ilyās and restoring the Imamate of Taʿwīl, and the ascension to the throne by aẓ-Ẓāhir as Caliph-Imam. The first measure i.e. that of al-Ḥākim, was due to taking the notion of Imamate, as seen by al-Muʿizz and al-Qāḍī an-Nuʿmān, to its logical conclusion. From this particular angle it could not be considered revolutionary, what was revolutionary was rather the refusal by Sitt al-Mulk and aẓ-Ẓāhir of such a measure. But from the latter’s angle, “it was al-Ḥākim’s measure which was the revolutionary one, because it intended to turn the table of traditional Ismāʿīlism upside down by abolishing for good the institution of Imamate of Taʿwīl. **Dr. Obeid’s picture of this problem was therefore too one-sided to be considered objective and impartial (83).**

101 Edited by Muḥammad Kamil Ḥussein in his book *Ṭāʾifāt ad-Durūz*, Cairo: Dār al Maʿārif bi Miṣr, 1962, pp. 55-74.

102 Edited by Mustafā Ghālib, Beirut: Manshūrāt Ḥamad, 1969.

103 Edited and translated into English with introduction and notes by Sami N. Makarem in *The Political Doctrine of the Ismāʿīlīs (the Imamate)*, Delmar, N.Y. Caravan Books, 1977.

104 Edited with Commentaries by Arzina Lalani. To be published by the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London.

105 See pp. 29-30 of this study

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**Although Dr. Obeid tries to prove successfully that the inner and allegorical meaning does not necessarily contradict the literal meaning; he tries to prove unsuccessfully that the epistles which depict the inner meaning are characterized by “confusion and contradiction”**106**. To accuse the Druze epistles or some of them, of having confusing and contradictory statements means that he read them**

rapidly, without trying to dig into the inner meaning they imply. Sometimes one gets under the impression that Dr. Obeid's reading some epistles was not for acquiring knowledge as much as for verifying whether those epistles coincide with his own pre-set beliefs or not. When he would find out that they differ he would attribute such differences "to errors of omission or commission, including those attributed", as he says, "to subterfuge, ignorance, negligence, or combination of all the above"<sup>107</sup>. Dr. Obeid does not give a single undeniable evidence of such things. He simply makes accusations; as though he himself has fallen in subterfuge, ignorance, negligence, or a combination of all the above. He calls upon "the spiritual and secular leadership of the Muwahhideen to clarify any misunderstanding from the state of confusion by proper editing of some of the ambiguous or contradictory statements in the Druze religious writings and streamlining the core concepts that are at the heart of Tawhid faith of the Druze, in a concise and cohesive manner."<sup>108</sup> Such an invitation would be plausible, if those in charge be real believers and well-versed in the Druze faith in particular and in Islam in general as well as in all cognate religions, and if such an invitation be confined to streamlining the core concepts and elucidating them. Several books and manuals have been already prepared though. Others are in progress. This, however, does not mean that there is no need of more guidebooks and the like, ranging from elementary educative means to higher and more advanced material (84). Returning to Dr. Obeid's work, I could not but be impressed with his discussion of the Islamie Druze version of the pillars of Islam. **However when he touched upon Jihād (Strife in God's way), I was surprised to find out that he restricted the Druze concept of Jihād to strife for spiritual advancement (85).** He said: "In the  
106 P. 225.  
107 P. 226.  
108 P. 226.

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concept of Tawhid, jihad has only one function, and that is the quest for spiritual advancement along with the path of Tawhid."<sup>109</sup> In fact this quest for spiritual advancement is for the Druze the culmination of jihād. But such jihād is always in need for the strife (jihād ) against those who defy the word of God. That is why the history of the Druze was full of strife in defense of their land with all bravery, valor, and resoluteness. Courage, for the Druze, is an indispensable top virtue. It is one of the four Platonic cardinal virtues, namely wisdom, courage, temperance and justice. According to the Druze doctrine, man's reality, i.e. the human soul, is to the body as the meaning is to the word. As a word can never exist without a writing material on which it can be inscribed, so the Muwahhīd can never lead a meaningful life without a homeland, which he is "inscribed" in actuality. In fact, this explains the reason why the Druze are noted for their historical and earnest clinging to their home country, defending it with extreme courage and determination. Hence spiritual jihād can never be realized unless it is identified with jihād for the defense and preservation of one's homeland, hence the Druze maxim: "faith, honor, and homeland" (ad-dīn, al-irḍ, al-arḍ ). This jihād, whether spiritual or physical, is according to the Druze faith, at the core of the sixth admonition, namely contentment with God's will (riḍā ). God by nature only wills what is true, good and beautiful. Accordingly, order should be the natural particularity of God's first manifestation, the All-inclusive being (al-Aql ), who is the logos a fortiori. His antithesis therefore can be nothing but chaos. Hence, in order for the Muwahhīd to fulfill the state of contentment with God he must strive against chaos, and consequently against evil and injustice.

**Now we come to the seventh admonition, i.e. submission (taslīm ). As was shown above<sup>110</sup>, Dr. Obeid failed to distinguish between it and the sixth admonition, contentment (riḍā ). As strife in God's way (jihād ) is at the core of contentment,**

109 P. 237.

110 See p. 37 of this article.100

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**allegiance (walāya ) is at the core of surrender or submission (taslīm) (86) .** Taslīm In the Druze doctrine, as was mentioned above<sup>111</sup>, means submission to God's will, as well as keeping oneself integral and intact (for the word taslīm is the infinitive of the verb sallama which means both to submit and to make someone or something intact. In fact, intactness and integrity of oneself are conditional for submission to the will of God. Because, as stated above, God, by His own nature, only wills what is true, good and beautiful. Hence submission to God necessarily means an active endeavor (fiʿl ) towards God's will. i.e. towards the True, the Good and the Beautiful. Hence, if contentment (ridā ) means admission to God's will, then submission (taslīm ) means constant endeavor for the realization of the will of the Divine<sup>112</sup>. This is what as-Sayyid al-Amīr at-Tanūkhī meant when he said, "Contentment is admission (qabūl ), whereas submission is active enterprise (fiʿl )<sup>113</sup>". This is what is meant by real allegiance. **Dr. Obeid uses a quotation taken from a book of mine, which he translated into English as such: "This, then, is the true meaning of allegiance, that which facilitates the efforts of the believer to come closer to the universal being (sic.), and that is through the guidance of God's first creation (sic.) and the expression of his will, the universal mind (sic.)."**<sup>114</sup> Unfortunately, his English version is too ambiguous and misleading. "The universal being" is a wrong translation of al-huwiyya al-Kulliyya, i.e. God, the Absolute reality. Likewise, instead of "God's first creation" he should have said: "God's first originated being", as explained above<sup>115</sup>, there is a basic difference between the concepts of creation (khalq) and origination, as there is a basic difference between the words "ʿaql", the human mind and "ʿaql" as a philosophical term which denotes the all purposive and controlling principle <sup>111</sup> See p. 37 of this article that originated from the Absolute as His manifestation and

112 See my book, *Al-ʿIrfān fī Maslak at-Tawḥīd (ad-Druziyya)*, London: Druze Heritage Foundation, 2006, pp. 167 ff.

113 *Ibid.* p. 168.

114 P. 241. The Arabic text can be found in my book, *Maslak at-Tawḥīd*, Beirut, 1980, pp. 199-200.

115 See p. 5 of this article.

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**Will and that contains all beings<sup>116(87)</sup>..**

**Here also Dr. Obeid falls into grave mistakes which are liable to mislead the reader and distort many basic points in Tawḥīd (88).** Unfortunately similar mistakes and misconceptions are also committed by many of the Druze intelligentsia and are among the main causes behind Druze mediocrity in matters related to Druze legacy. Few people among Druze intellectuals are versed in the Tawḥīd religious heritage. This is caused in fact by a serious shortage of research institutions, as well as a lack of material subsidy, enhanced by a materialistic and politically oriented mentality and an emotionally based frame of mind, together with a frightening scarcity in profound intellectual consciousness, a manifest tendency for facility and shallowness, and an unhidden fear of delving thoroughly into intellectual subjects and, last but not least, a passionate love for egocentricity and self-applause.

**To be exposed to these destructive and morbid elements and to those who are afflicted by them is going definitely to affect any serious attempt to understand thoroughly the problems facing the Druze of today. This is what Dr. Obeid is facing, and this is what makes his argumentation a mixture between right reasoning and invalid conclusions (89).**

Let us read what he suggests and see how much it agrees with the Tawḥīd



principles: **He says: “Perhaps many aspects of the Druze path in Tawhid, with the emphasis on the mind and on the free will of the individual, along with the attenuation of ritualistic practices and hierarchical control of religious institutions, may be what is needed to meet the evolutionary pressures of modern life. After all it is the restless elements, the idealists, the ones who cannot endure the dull cadence of monotony and the oppressive control of the establishment in any origination, who take the lead in the initiative for change. Once established the reformed state itself, if not continuously modified to adjust to life changes, will**

116 See p. 5 of this article.

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**become liable to the ills of stagnation and dogma until a fresh batch picks up the challenge and the cycles continue. The Druze initiative in formulating the Tawhid concept was, at onset, a revolutionary movement in Islam. When that movement was stifled, it stopped evolving and abandoned its role in championing change and promoting enlightenment.”<sup>117</sup>**

**This statement of Dr. Obeid’s seems at first glance to be impressive. It is rhetorically beautifully styled and meticulously phrased. However, when one analyzes it objectively, how much can he or she find it accordant with the Druze philosophy that Dr. Obeid appears to promote? (90)**

**First, the emphasis on the mind alone is not enough to tread the path of Tawḥīd safely.** Together with the mind, the Muwaḥḥid needs another element, that of love. As a mystical approach to truth, Tawḥīd soon finds that the mind is too finite to suffice for the Muwaḥḥid’s quest for truth. As much as logic is necessary, it cannot be the only means for self-realization. Take, for example, the seven admonitions; if one out of the seven is missing one cannot accomplish Tawḥīd. Logic says that seven minus one makes six; Tawḥīd tells you seven minus one makes zero. Your mind can never reach the knowledge of the Divine; but through love the Divine glows with His (sic) illuminant face as bright as one can endure.

**Second, In Tawḥīd, freedom can by no means be identified with free will.** Free will is to choose between two or more things without being compelled by an outside force, regardless of their being good or bad. On the other hand, freedom, according to the Tawḥīd faith, is identified with virtue. It is as al-Amīr as-Sayyid at-Tanūkhī says, “to fulfill your own excellence (kamālak al-akhaṣṣ bik ). In freedom, therefore, there is no room for choosing. Fulfilling your own excellence is fulfilling your own virtue, your perfection.

**Third, the individual: The Tawḥīd faith teaches that as long as you insist on your individuality you belong to the realm of deficiency and chaos.** Tawḥīd is based on

117 P. 243.

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the genuine feeling of being one with the One. To insist on being a distinct individual is to denounce the oneness of God.

**Hence, Dr. Obeid’s statement in the above quotation: “... the emphasis on the mind and on the free will of the individual”, is utterly in contradiction with the Tawḥīd faith. It is a regression, not a progression towards Tawḥīd. Free will is no more than a first step toward freedom.**

**Forth: Then Dr. Obeid continues: “It is the restless elements, the idealists, the ones who cannot endure the dull cadence of monotony and the oppressive control of the establishment in any organization, who take the lead in the initiative for change”. How can Tawḥīd be monotonous or how can it have a dull cadence when it is an endless journey within the absolute? The cadence that Tawḥīd has is even variegated and overflowing and harmoniously diversified. How can**

**Tawḥīd, this gnosis of the Divine, have a dull cadence or a monotonous rhythm when it is both divine witnessing by the Absolute and a spiritually visionary consumption of the Muwaḥḥid according to his human preparedness?** Certainly, those who do not experience such spiritual and ecstatic intimacy are going to feel restless, but out of confusion not out of love. Surely they miss such a spiritually penetrating experience. Instead, they will be experiencing steep boredom and dullness, and sheer annoyances and infelicity.

**Fifth: Finally how can such confused, ill-informed and “restless elements... take the lead in the initiative for change”? How can such elements be described as “idealists” if so confused, ill-informed, and restless elements take the lead in the initiative for change. (91)** They would certainly lead to nothing. Confusion leads to chaos, ill-information to ignorance, and restlessness back to confusion, a viscous circle that leads to nothing.

**Then we hear Dr. Obeid invite the Druze to “define their own portrait as a religious community... once a clear self-portrait as a religious community... once a clear self-portrait is defined and presented by the Druze”, he continues “it**

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**would then be up to the Islamic majority to recognize the legitimacy of the Druze faith within the wide stream of Islam or to reject the innovations as having gone too far beyond the limits of acceptance... alternatively”, he goes on to say, “it could lead to the emergence of the Druze faith as an independent religion... In either case the relationship would be healthier than it has been up until now.”118 (92)**

First, the Druze have already defined their own portrait as a religious community:

Tawḥīd is their path, Imān is their way and Islam is their religion. It is up to the Druze themselves to recognize the legitimacy of their faith as an Islamic one. It is not up to anyone else to do so for them. In fact Druzism is a faith that believes in Tawḥīd. Legitimacy in religion is the concern of this particular faith itself. It is not up to the others to decide to which religion one belongs, nor is it up even to the followers of this particular faith to decide. It is the tenets of the faith as such that define what this faith actually is.

However, if the Tawḥīd faith is Islamic, it does not mean that it should forsake its peculiarities and cling only to the origin. It is in the nature of mankind to differ from one another in their thinking and speculations, and in their convictions and beliefs. This is what distinguishes mankind from other beings, and this is the secret behind their constant evolution and progress. In this respect we read in the Qurʾān: (Mankind were only one nation, then they fell into variance. But for a word that preceded from thy Lord, it had been decided between them already touching their differences119). Also we read: (To every one of you we have appointed a right way and an open road. If God had willed, He would have made you one nation; but that He may try you in what has come to you. So be you forward in good works; unto God shall you return, all together; and He will tell you of that whereon you were at variance)120. This is therefore the will of God, the True, the Good and the Beautiful, that mankind be at variance in order to compete with each other in good works.

118 Pp. 243-244.

119 Jonah (10):19

120 The Table (5):48

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**Hence, I would like to address Dr. Obeid with the following: If you are at variance with the Tawḥīd faith, or with some of its tenets and beliefs, you are not to say that when its “core concept is freed from the distortions and inaccuracies that have marred its image and hindered its progress, only then can it be properly understood and accurately assessed”121.(93) According to this very core concept of**

the Tawḥīd doctrine and in line with its philosophy and raison d'être, those beliefs, which you describe as distortions and inaccuracies, are at the very basis of the Druze faith. The Druze da□wa, as you well know, considers itself as having transcended the exoteric meaning of the scriptures to the esoteric one. When you insist on clinging to the exoteric meaning, and when you judge anachronistically old texts no matter how sacred they are, when you arrive at your conclusions without examining the reasons and circumstances impartially, then you would be committing injustice, and above all you would be using a nonobjective method in tackling your subject matter. (94) As a matter of course, you would be plainly unscientific. In fact, when you insist on considering such beliefs as being distortions and inaccuracies, then the core concept of the Tawḥīd faith would be impossible for you to understand or appreciate. It is therefore this biased attitude which mars the right image and blinds you from the real intended meaning of these so-called "distortions and inaccuracies". (95)

Now, coming to the final section of the chapter before the last of Dr. Obeid's book, I would like to summarize what I had said before about the role the Druze are meant to play<sup>122</sup>. The Druze doctrine teaches that Tawḥīd is a spiritual union with the intrinsic properties of the All-inclusive Being. Such a union, as aforementioned, enables the Muwahḥid to achieve a real immersion into mystical inner qualities that prepares him or her to realize an ideal state of being whereby he or she would live in inward harmony which disciplines him or her in order to be able to achieve and enjoy universal felicity of cognizance both in the present life

121 P. 250.

122 See p. 35 of this study.<sup>115</sup>

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and in the life after when he or she will relish an ideal state in which an all comprehensive world order shall prevail.

### **3. The question of the closure of the Druze da□wa.**

This spiritual union with the intrinsic dispositions of the □Aql, i.e. God's All-inclusive Being and Manifestation cannot be realized in one life span. Such a union (Tawḥīd ) was willingly accepted by those humans who espoused the guidance of the □Aql. He then helped them witness the truth which he deems appropriate according to the preparedness of each one of them. The Tawḥīd doctrine teaches that those who singled out the guidance of the □Aql went on ascending, under his providence, in the knowledge of Tawḥīd. They joined the various monotheistic religions and were nurtured with their teachings until they embraced Islam. They scaled the steps of Islām and Īmān. It was with the Tawḥīd da□wa that they ascended to the third step of iḥsān<sup>123</sup>, a spiritual vista which drove them sailing in the ever mighty ocean of Tawḥīd. There they kept navigating. As for those who had not learned how to swim well (yusabbihūna ) in that luminous and infinitely vast ocean, they eventually went back looking for a shore to land on. However, the ocean into which they were thrown was shore less. Nowhere could they go. Perplexed and confused they were, and still are, thrown here and there by merciless waves, jostled up and down by high winds, and zigzagging left and right as blizzards furiously blew them to bits.

To pass from the discipline of Islām into that of Īmān is a matter of progress in religious and theosophical learning, but to pass into the perspective of iḥsān or tawḥīd needs past-to-present continuous mental and ethical, as well as mystical and Gnostic preparation. This can only be realized by a genuine readiness and passion to accept the guidance of, and submission to the All-inclusive Being as manifested in the Imam. Those who had not prepared and disciplined themselves for accepting this guidance and submitting themselves to the Imam would naturally keep away from such mystical union. If such people were excessively

123 See p.24 of this study.

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solicited to Tawḥīd regardless of their ethical mental and spiritual susceptibility, they would be spiritually more harmed and consequently more hindered from any spiritual progress. This was the reason why the closure of the call to Tawḥīd took place when it did.

Hence, according to the Druze, a Muwaḥḥid must have accepted the call to Tawḥīd since the very beginning of the time when mankind became mentally and spiritually mature enough. When the time was ripe, i.e. after the Muwaḥḥid was nurtured with the various preceding religions, he accepted the call to Tawḥīd. His acceptance of the Call is therefore the result of his spiritual progress. Hence, it is not by accident a Muwaḥḥid is what he is (unless his acceptance was a product of insincere and selfish motives). Since a human soul cannot, according to the Druze faith, realize itself without a human body; therefore, it should be born in a body that enables it to carry such a spiritual legacy. Consequently its birth in such a body is by no means an accident. Hence, it is completely contrary to the Druze faith when Dr. Obeid writes: “it is the soul of the individual that carries the spiritual legacy regardless of the accident of birth”<sup>124</sup>, or when he says: “It is amazing how this tradition has been accepted at face value and the logic never challenged”<sup>125</sup>. **What is amazing actually is Dr. Obeid’s understanding this fundamental issue at face value. In his statement, though he tries to use his medical expertise, he soon shifts to his preconceived traditional beliefs that he has acquired either from non-Druze sources or from his unversed understanding of the Druze faith.**(96) He starts his argument by explaining death as such: “The body becomes a mere physical structure when the soul departs.” He then says: “the error in traditional Druze thinking becomes obvious when that thinking designates the body as the determining factor in the choice of residence for the soul of the believer in Tawḥīd”<sup>126</sup>. **Actually, the error is in Dr. Obeid’s traditional thinking. According to the Druze doctrine the soul is not something that enters the body from outside, stays in it for a certain time, and then departs, as explained**

124 P. 261.

125 P. 256.

126 P. 257.

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**above<sup>127</sup>, the soul is the very identity of the human being.** (97) It is his huwiyya, i.e. his quidity, his very meaning so to speak. It is to the body as the meaning is to the word. As a word when effaced, its meaning continues to exist and acquires another expression, so is the human body, when it dies, its meaning, i.e. the so called soul, acquires another human body by means of which it continues to exist and to realize itself. Therefore, it is logically imperative, according to the Druze faith, that both soul and body define the spirituality of the individual. This is because, as explained above, the body is merely the manifestation of the soul, just as the soul is the very meaning, the huwiyya, the real identity of a human being.

**This unity of soul and body in the Druze faith is unfortunately not in the least understood by Dr. Obeid; hence he says: “The spiritual essence cannot be subservient to the body anymore than the permanent to the temporary”<sup>128</sup>.**(98) It is not a matter of one thing being subservient to the other. Body and soul are not two distinct things; they are rather two aspects of one and only one substantiality. **Back to the issue of the closure of the da‘wa, Dr. Obeid’s claim that “the exercise of closure was no more than temporary suspension prompted by situational**

considerations and not doctrinal content”<sup>129</sup>, is therefore wrong.<sup>(99)</sup> Likewise, the different arguments that Dr. Obeid gives to prove that there are no convincing reasons for the closure of the da‘wa show in fact that he is only an outside “observer” who does not clearly understand the mystical aspect of the Druze da‘wa.<sup>(100)</sup> If taken in its real sense, the closure of the da‘wa is a necessary and natural measure. It is not simply dictated by tradition as Dr. Obeid claims<sup>130</sup>.<sup>(101)</sup> Disclosing the da‘wa after its final closure is therefore a desecration of the very reality of its mystical identity. Dr. Obeid’s statement that the disclosure of the da‘wa “represents one of the most pressing issues that modern life poses for the Druze and

127 See p. 7 of this study.

128 P. 257.

129 P. 253.

130 P. 252.

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challenges their ability to adapt in the open and pluralistic societies of the West”<sup>131</sup>, such a statement is therefore completely out of context. <sup>(102)</sup>

This is because integration and openness are only necessary and imperative in social and human affairs and the like. As for one’s inward affinity with the divine, it stays within one’s own confines. No one has the least say in one’s religious concerns unless they injure the beauty of one’s human and humane relations. In fact, the more your affinity with the Divine is within your inner soul the closer you are to Him, and the closer you are to Him the more intimate with Him you become, and the more intimate with Him you become the more susceptible you feel to His teachings, and the more susceptible to His teachings you feel the more you love Him, and the more you love Him the more you love mankind. The Qur‘ān says: (Remember thy Lord within thyself, humbly and fearfully, below thy breath, at morn and eventide. Be not thou among the heedless <sup>132</sup>).

To top it all one wonders how Dr. Obeid confuses between the fact that God never leaves his subjects without a dā‘ī invoking them to Tawḥīd and the fact that the da‘wa was closed <sup>133</sup>. Dr. Obeid’s misunderstanding of the core of Tawḥīd and his ignorance of the mystical nature of the Tawḥīd faith led him to such confusion. The occultation of a master is sometimes necessary and imperative. It puts the disciples’ mystical experience under a critical test: how sincere and genuine their mystical experience is, how much they are dependent on the master’s presence, how much his presence can be replaced by his teachings, how clearly the genuinely sincere disciples can be distinguished from those who are insincere, how positively the absence of the master can trigger the real disciples to increase their knowledge, how effectively it can ignite their longing and need for his spiritual guidance, as well as it can incite their reliance on his teachings and on recalling his tutelage. As for the outsiders who do not believe in the master or his teachings, the master’s occultation could make them forget him

131 Pp. 250-251.

132 The Heights (VII): 205.

133 P. 255.

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eventually, then their resentment of him could gradually be replaced by oblivion; and tolerance could slowly make its way.

Had Dr Obeid really understood the mechanics of the da‘wa he would not have decided on his own that, “in keeping with the core concept of Tawhid, the doors to Tawhid could not have been shut”<sup>134</sup>.

The reason why Dr. Obeid was earnest to demonstrate that the da‘wa has never been shut was apparently to prove the following two points:

**First: the da□wa is still open to receive new converts as, according to Dr. Obeid, it did before.**

**Second: the Tawhīd doctrine does by no means prohibit mixed marriages.**

**As to the first point, we see that in order to prove his point of view, Dr. Obeid relies on history by giving examples from the past that he thinks to be true. (103)** He says that the door has not been closed “for some families and individuals from other sects to be incorporated into the community either through marriage or through seeking refuge among Druze families leading to full integration”<sup>135</sup>. As an example, he takes the Jumblatt family. He says: “Among the most famous in this regard is the Jumblatt family, of Kurdish (and presumably Sunni) background, originally from the Aleppo region in modern day Syria. The scion of this noted family, the late Kamal Jumblatt, does not mention the Druze origin of his family. However,” continues Dr. Obeid, “since there are no known Druze among the Kurds then or now, the Jumblatts most likely became Druze through marriage into one of the Druze feudal families in Lebanon”<sup>136</sup>. **Here again we see Dr. Obeid fall into a mistake, not only into a creedal mistake, but also into a historical one. First, it is not historically established that the Jumblatt family is Kurdish in origin; second, even if it were Kurdish this does not mean that it was an intruder**

134 P. 256.

135 Pp. 257-258.

136 P. 258.

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**to the Druze faith. (104)** The Druze da□wa, contrary to what Dr. Obeid maintains, did reach the Kurds, as well as the region of Aleppo. From among the Kurds who embraced the Druze da□wa was the famous Sukayn though he was ousted from the da□wa later on. As for intermarriages, particularly with other Islamic sects, they did occur in history. But such intermarriages did occur in the past with members of though prominent political families, but not of religious ones. Although they occurred mainly with other Islamic sects, they also occurred with non-Islamic sects. In recent times, mixed marriages are very common; however, they take place only among non-initiated individuals.

**In any case, whether the Jumblatt family is Kurdish or Arab, or whether it is Druze in origin or non-Druze, it is not a main issue for Dr. Obeid. All what he is trying to get to is that non Druze may have been converted to the Druze faith after the closure of this da□wa.(105)** If this was the case in the past, why do the Druze in the present refuse any new converts, especially, as he says, children who are supposedly of Druze parents, may have been sired by non Druze fathers; for “racial purity”, as he states, “is a myth, particularly in areas that have witnessed a long history of invasion from East and West and have experienced multiple civilizations, as in the case in the Levant, the point of origin of the Druze. Therefore, there is no rational defense to subjecting spiritual identity to a biological abode.”<sup>137</sup>

In reply to this, one should say that although such incidents are liable to happen at any time, they do not affect the authentic Muwahhīd whose real identity, i.e., his soul, as has been said above<sup>138</sup>, has accepted the call to Tawhīd from before and has been ever since subjected to gradual and progressive spiritual teachings and ethical discipline that lead to its constant ascendancy in self realization. In the Tawhīd doctrine, the mere belief in the tenets of the faith does not necessarily render the believer a Muwahhīd. This is one of the differences between an initiated and a non-initiated believer. A real Muwahhīd must, therefore, be in

137 P. 258.

138 See pp. 117 ff.



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constant spiritual rejuvenation, regenerating in his or her soul the real sense of Tawḥīd and reassessing to him or herself his or her intimate and sincere adherence and faithful constancy to Tawḥīd both in spirit and practice. Here we come to the second point, namely mixed marriages in the present time. As explained above at length <sup>139</sup>, the philosophical, theosophical and Gnostic setup of the Tawḥīd faith makes it emphatically necessary for the adherents to Tawḥīd to abstain from mixed marriages. The physical setup of the Muwaḥḥid should be in complete harmony, accordance and conformity with his or her spiritual legacy. Physicality is an expression of spirituality. Both constitute the human being who is actualized in a social setup accordant with his modal existence and spiritual framework. As a word, by its own nature, does not operate in a manner that does not express the meaning it manifests, the human body does not operate in a manner that does not express the real identity it manifests. Dr. Obeid's statement: "The Druze should change their orientation to the future, based on the timelessness of their core beliefs"<sup>140</sup>, is absolutely right, provided it is not intended to be directed to motives ulterior to genuine Tawḥīd. The Druze doctrine, as has been said above, is a doctrine that promulgates a spiritual approach to the Absolute. It has a number of clear and defined principles that help the adherent to the faith to tread this spiritually oriented road to the Truth. Its legacy is, therefore, deep-rooted in the domain of cognizance both intellectual and mystical, spiritual and Gnostic, social and ethical. **Such a legacy is by no means based, as Dr. Obeid claims on "shackled monotony of tradition"<sup>141</sup>. Only those who can neither appreciate nor understand the spiritual legacy of Tawḥīd say so. (106)** Certainly there are serious challenges and problems that face the Druze of today wherever they are. But before one puts solutions to those problems the way he or she sees them fit, one has to work for creating educational means whereby the Druze can be acquainted with their faith in a way that complies with their educational and cultural background. Then they can

<sup>139</sup> See p. 49-51 of this study.

<sup>140</sup> Pp. 258-259.

<sup>141</sup> P. 259.

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choose freely whether they want to abide by the tenets of the faith or not, rather than indoctrinating them with what one thinks is True. In fact, freedom is utterly against both indoctrination and thinking on behalf of others. Freedom requires education, real education, so that the individual may become genuinely able to understand and appreciate such a gift. Freedom is not doing whatever you desire, or else you would be the slave of those desires. Freedom is rather doing what is right. It is you and only you who decides what is right for you, but after you are clearly acquainted with all the various alternatives. When one is acquainted with all the pros and cons, then he or she can decide freely. As to the issue of mixed marriages it is utter prejudice from your part to convince the Druze people and their children that your opinion is in line with the Druze doctrine. What is healthy and objective, and not misleading is that you tell those Druze people and their children, with all impartiality, what the Druze doctrine teaches, with all the justifications it offers; and then you tell them your opinion with all the justifications you offer, also with all impartiality and without the least attempt of persuasion either way. This was the method used by al-Ḥākim and his daʿīs. It is worth noticing that when the Tawḥīd daʿīwa started, al-Ḥākim continued to patronize the Ismāʿīlī daʿīwa <sup>142</sup> and also continued the Fāṭimid tradition of patronizing the Sunnī and Shīʿa curricula at various Fāṭimid academies such as Dār al-Ḥikma <sup>143</sup>. Had he not done so, the Tawḥīd daʿīwa would be propagating

Tawḥīd in name only. It would be the result of a coercive measure which is in utter contradiction with the real objectives of Tawḥīd.

In case of mixed marriages, they may be the product of mutual love; they may last for life or for a definite time. They may bring happiness to the married couples and to their offspring, or they may bring distress, as any other marriage in the world. Love between the married couples may continue intact; but it will

142 See pp 61-62 of this study.

143 See D. Sourdel, "Dār al-Ḥikma", in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, new ed., see also Aḥmad al Maqrīzī, *al-Mawāʿiẓ wa l-iʿtibār bi dhikr al-Kuṭat wa l-Āthār*, vol. 1, Cairo: Dar aṭ-Ṭibāʾ al-Miṣriyya, 1270 A.M., p.458.

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certainly remain within the confines of temporality. It will never reach the heights of spirituality and genuine self-realization, i.e. the ultimate end of marriage. It will remain a worldly institution, perhaps a positive one, but, because of its worldliness, it will always be based on personal emotions and interests, or on shrewdness, and motivated by ulterior motives and reasonable objectives, but it will be always short of reaching a genuine spiritual integration between the two spouses. This is because such integration is, according to the Druze faith, the result of inter-historical spiritual ascendancy, rather than the result of only an emotional or temporary rational pursuit of one life span. **Hence according to the Tawḥīd faith which rejects categorically the idea that human beings are products of birth accidents, as Dr. Obeid has mentioned in his book more than once 144, sharing spiritual experience among people cannot come true unless they are of accord and congruent spiritual and cognitive backgrounds where harmony and affinity in both material and spiritual human disposition prevail. (107)** Finally, in the last paragraph of his "Concluding Remarks", **Dr. Obeid puts the Druze in front of two choices. He says: "The choice between seizing the initiative to rehabilitate a potentially forward-looking doctrine (the core of which is suited to modern times), and maintaining the status quo 145."** It goes without saying that he chooses the first alternative: **To seize the initiative to rehabilitate the forward looking Tawḥīd doctrine. However, rehabilitation should not lead to destroying this faith of Tawḥīd by exchanging it with a completely different faith as Dr. Obeid seems to strive for. (108)** In fact, any reform should not be in the doctrine itself, but rather in understanding it. It should be preceded by knowing the Tawḥīd faith in its reality, including its tenure and objectives.

144 Pp. 261 and 263.

145 P. 274.\_\_\_\_

**\*Remarks on Dr. Anis Obeid's *The Druze and Their Faith in Tawhid***

**Dr. Makarem made remarks throughout the essay; they are designated in purple, and they are numbered in blue. There are 108 such remarks. The numbers in red are for Dr. Makarem's footnotes.**

**\*\*I took these words "Truth as I see It." from the Introduction by Sami Nassib Makarem to Dr. Anis Obeid's book *The Druze and their Faith in Tawhid*.**

