

MESSAGE OF THAQALAYN

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of God,  
the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

# **MESSAGE OF THAQALAYN**

**A Quarterly Journal of Islamic Studies**

**The Ahlul Bayt World Assembly**

## ***MESSAGE OF THAQUALAYN***

A Quarterly Journal of Islamic Studies  
Volume 10, Number 2, Summer 1430/2009

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*Published by*

**Ahlul Bayt World Assembly**

Keshavarz Blvd., Opposite to Laleh Park, Tehran, IRAN  
[www.ahl-ul-bayt.org](http://www.ahl-ul-bayt.org)

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“The *Message of Thaqalayn* feels responsible to present the teachings of Islam in general and the School of the Ahlul Bayt (AS) in particular with complete honesty and accuracy and at the same time to emphasise the common ground that binds all Muslims together. Strengthening ties of brotherhood amongst all Muslims, whatever school of Islam they may adhere to, and establishing genuine, enduring and intimate friendship between all those who believe in God are two of the main aims and tasks of the *Message of Thaqalayn* and indeed, any responsible media.”

Editor-in-Chief

## Editorial

As promised in the editorial of the previous issue, now in the beginning of summer, we present to our dear readers the new issue of the *Message of Thaqaalayn*. Again in this issue we address different aspects of Islamic thought including the Doctrines, Spirituality, Law and History.

Publication of this issue has coincided great occasions in Islamic calendar. This summer comprises of the blessed months of Rajab and Sha‘ban and the holy month of Ramaḍan. The late Shaykh Abbas Qummi in his *Mafaātih al-Jinan* quotes the Prophet Mohammad (S) as saying: “Verily Rajab is the great month of God. No other month resembles it in its honour and merit. Fighting against infidels is forbidden. Beware, verily Rajab is God’s month and Sa‘ban is my month and [the month of] Ramaḍan is my nations month. Beware whoever fasts a day in Rajab greatest divine pleasure will become decisive for him and divine wrath will go away from him and one of the gates of hell will be closed to him”. He also quotes Imam Kazim, Musa b. Ja‘far (AS) as saying: “Whoever fasts one day of Rajab fire [of hell] will go away from him equal to distance of one year journey and whoever fasts three days [in Rajab] heaven becomes necessary for

him”. Asking forgiveness from God is highly recommended in the month of Rajab. Imam Sadiq (AS) reports that the Prophet Mohammad (S) said: “Rajab is the month of asking forgiveness [from God] for my nation, so ask for forgiveness in abundance. Verily, He is the Most-forgiving, the Most-merciful. Rajab is called “Rajab”, because mercy on my nation is poured down a thorough pouring. Therefore, say in abundance: ‘*Astaghfirullaha wa as’aluhū al-tawbab*’ (I ask forgiveness from God and ask Him [to enable me for] repentance).

Sha‘ban is the month which is attributed to the Prophet Mohammad (S). The Prophet Mohammad used to fast the whole month of Sha‘ban and connect its fasting to the fasting in the month of Ramaḍan. Imam Sadiq (AS) reports that after the arrival of the month of Sha‘ban Imam Sajjad (AS) used to gather his companions and say “O my companions, do you know what this month is? This is the month of Sha‘ban and the Prophet (S) used to say: ‘Sha‘ban is my month’. Therefore, fast [in] this month out of your love for your Prophet and seeking proximity to your Lord! By the One who has my life in His Hand, I heard my father, Husayn (AS), saying: ‘I heard the Commander of the Faithful saying: whoever fasts [in the month of] Sha‘ban out of love for the Apostle of God and seeking proximity to God, God will love him and will make him close to His honour on the Day of Judgement and make heaven necessary for him’.”

According to hadiths, Ramaḍān is one of the Names of God. Therefore, with respect to the month, we are recommended to say “the month of Ramaḍān” and not just “Ramḍān”. In any case, this summer will also include the holy and blessed month of Ramaḍān, in which we are invited to the “divine feast”. Although officially Islamic calendar in its lunar version starts with Muharram, it can be said that in Islam there is also a spiritual calendar that starts with Shawwal and in particular the Feast of Breaking Fast (*‘Id al-Fitr*). The last three months of the spiritual year are Rajab, Sha‘ban and the month of Ramaḍān. From the beginning of year, that is, the day of ‘Id al-Fitr, the wayfarer (the faithful who is moving towards God) starts preparing himself for witnessing and entering into the “divine feast” in the next month of Ramaḍān and in particular the Night/s of Qadr. Every day and indeed every moment of this yearlong journey is significant. However there are highlights and golden opportunities distributed all over the year like the times of daily prayers, the time before dawn for night prayer (*salat al-layl*), nights and days of Friday and night and day of ‘Arafah. Certainly the last three months of this journey i.e. Rajab, Sha‘ban and the month of Ramaḍān stand out and form a spiritual season. Although we must try to take advantage of every moment of life, in this season we must be extra alert, insha Allah.

The month of Ramaḍān is a great gift from God to us and a unique opportunity to get closer to Him. One of the specialities of this

month is what we can learn from the well-known sermon of the Prophet Mohammad (S) on the last Friday of Sha‘ban, known as “*Khutbah Sha‘baniyyah*.” Although we are only rewarded for those good acts that we have voluntarily done or for the good intentions that we have had, but were not able to actualise, the Prophet Mohammad (S) tells us that the month of Ramaḍan is so fertile and blessed that the situation would be different. According to what the Prophet Mohammad (S) said, “Your sleep in this month is considered as worship and when you breathe in this month it is considered as glorification (*tasbeeh*) of God.” It is only in the month of Ramaḍan that sleep is considered an act of worship, for which you will be rewarded and you will also be rewarded because of the air going into your lungs like the angels or the people who glorify God. In this month, we must be very careful not to miss this opportunity by negligence or, God-forbids, by committing sins. The month of Ramaḍan itself works day and night to purify us and then when we make more efforts e.g. by doing good deeds we will earn more and more.

This issue includes six papers. The first paper is entitled: “The Prophet’s Spiritual State at the Time of His Mission.” Continuing his discussion in the previous paper: “Life of the Prophet Mohammad before Starting the Mission” (*The Massage of Thaqalayn*, Vol 10, No. 1), in this paper Hujjatu’l-Islam Dr. Sayyed Ahmad Rahnamaei studies some major aspects of the life of the Prophet Mohammad at the beginning of his mission, especially the way he received revelation from God. Hujjatu’l-Islam Dr Rahnamaei is an assistant professor in

the Dept. of Education at the Imam Khomeini Education & Research Institute, Qum. This paper is a revised version of part of his M.A. dissertation submitted to the faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, McGill University, Montreal, Canada, in 1995. The author has revised this paper especially for this issue of the *Message of Thaqalayn*. God-willing, other aspects of the Life of the Prophet Mohammad (S) will be studied by him in the next issue of the *Message of Thaqalayn*.

The second paper is entitled: "Different Methodological Approaches to Spirituality." Continuing the discussion on spirituality in the previous issue ("The Significance of Self-control and Self-purification" in *The Message of Thaqalayn*, Vol 10, No. 1), in this paper Hujjatu'l-Islam Dr. Mohammad Ali Shomali studies different approaches adopted by Muslim scholars in studying spirituality in general and morality (*akhlaq*) in particular i.e. the Philosophical Approach, the Mystical Approach and the Scriptural or Text-Based Approach. Comparing these three approaches, he argues that an adequate approach must take into account advantages of each of the three and be a synthetic one. Hujjatu'l-Islam Dr. Shomali is an associate professor and the head of the Dept. of Religions at the Imam Khomeini Education & Research Institute, Qum. He is also the Dean of Postgraduate Studies for the International Students at the Jami'at al-Zahra, the Islamic University for Women in Qum. God-willing, other theoretical and practical aspects of Islamic spirituality

will be studied by the same author and others in the forthcoming issues.

The third paper is entitled: “An Outline of Governance from a Qur’anic Perspective”. Continuing the discussion in the previous issue on Islamic Law (“An Outline of Islamic Law from a Qur’anic Perspective” in *The Message of Thaqalayn*, Vol 10, No. 1), in this paper Dr Karim Aghili presents a brief summary and paraphrase of some of the salient points regarding governance from a Qur’anic point of view, based on *Law and Politics in the Qur’an* by Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi. This paper is an attempt to clarify that Islam aims at establishing an ideal society by having a just government. The paper continues with a brief discussion about governance during the period of occultation of the twelfth Imam, the theory of the mandate of the jurist (*wilayat-e faqih*) and the essential qualifications for administrators of the law. In addition to his studies in Iran, Dr Karim Aghili has completed his PhD. on Comparative Philosophy of Education at the University of Sheffield and is currently based in Manchester.

The fourth paper is entitled: “Ijtihād: *Taswib* or *Takhti’ah*”. In this paper Hujjat’ul-Islam Dr Mohammad Namazi studies a controversial problem in Islamic law, on which different schools of Islam may disagree. *Takhti’ah* is a type of fallibilism which holds that there is only one true judgement about the divine ruling in each particular case and the role of the jurists is to discover it. Although a qualified

jurist who has done his best to discover the divine ruling and those who follow him will be rewarded by God, there is no guarantee that his view is actually in compliance with the reality. Therefore, when there are opposing views among the jurists about the same issue there can be only one true view. Taswib is a type of infallibilism which holds that there can be more than one true views among the jurists. Every qualified jurist who does his best in understanding the divine ruling can be true. The Shi'a scholars believe in takhti'ah. Referring first to the definition and types of ijtiḥād, he examines briefly the arguments for each of the two positions according to both Shi'a and Sunni scholars and ends with preferring takhti'ah over taswib. Hujjatu'l-Islam Dr Namazi is an assistant professor in the Dept. of Philosophy at the Imam Khomeini Education & Research Institute, Qum.

The fifth paper is entitled: "Intellectual, Political and Social Status of the Shi'ites on the Verge of Occultation". In this paper, Hujjat'l-Islam Mas'ud Pur Sayyid Aqaei studies a very important part of the history of Islam, that is, the period of the lives of Imam Hadi (AS) and Imam Askari (AS). These two Imams made great efforts such as developing a network of agents (*wukalā*) to prepare the Shi'a community for the era of the occultation of Imam Mahdi (AS), in which for the first time in their history they were faced with their inability to meet their Imam and ask him directly for guidance. Hujjat'l-Islam Mas'ud Pur Sayyid Aqaei is a lecturer at the Islamic Seminary of Qum. The paper is

originally written in Farsi and is translated into English by Mr Mohammad Reza Farajian.

The sixth and final paper is entitled: “Reason, Faith and Authority: A Shi‘ite Perspective”. In this paper Hujjat’ul-Islam Dr Mohamad Ali Shomali studies two important concepts in Islamic thought i.e. reason, faith and authority and their relation and interaction from a Shi‘ite perspective. This paper was presented in the second Catholic-Shi‘a Dialogue in UK in July 2005 and published in *Catholic-Shi‘a Engagement: Reason & Faith in Theory and Practice* (2006).

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all who have contributed to this volume and pray for their success. I want to especially thank Mrs. Fatima Khimji from Canada for editing and proofreading all the papers of this publication and making valuable comments. I would also like to thank the Ahlul Bayt World Assembly and the Islamic Centre of England for their support and encouragement. And last, but not the least, I thank God the Almighty for His guidance and favour upon us in the past and present.

Mohammad Ali Shomali

July 2009

## **The Prophet's Spiritual State at the Time of His Mission**

**S. Ahmad Rahnamaei**

### **Preface**

This paper discusses the part of the life of the Prophet wherein all of the aims of the Prophet's apostleship and all of his teachings are concentrated. Those who believe in the doctrine of prophethood acknowledge that it is a divine duty and a mission from God. They consider that God appointed it to those whom He selected from among His good servants, from those who were exalted among mankind. They believe that Allah sent the Prophets to teach people wisdom and knowledge and the ways of happiness and goodness.<sup>1</sup>

Revelation is one of the most important basis upon which the ideology of religious truths, realities and teachings is constructed.<sup>2</sup> In other words, with Revelation "God prepares His prophet to receive from Him the highest cosmic truths that he may convey them to mankind."<sup>3</sup> Both remarks imply the same concept that is to say that

all of the basic premises of a religion such as Islam should have come through revelation.

Muslim scholars and biographers believe that the Mission of the Prophet began with a revelation which was sent from God through His angel Gabriel.<sup>4</sup> If so, the Prophet's Mission occupies the first position in his life. This is the common beliefs of all Muslim biographers, though, as we will see later, there may be differences between their attitudes on the issue of the Mission. In the present discussion, the spiritual and psychological state of the Prophet at the time of his Mission will be analyzed from the point of view of biographers. Here the following issues will be of concern:

- 1- The date of the Mission which is a Sunni and Shi'i debate.
- 2- The specific circumstances of the Mission, such as how prophethood began i.e., in sleep or through true visions. Did the Prophet tremble with fear when he received the revelation?

### **Where and When the Mission Occurred**

As depicted in *hadith* and *sirah* sources, there is no doubt that the cave in Mount Hirā', two miles north of Mecca, was the place where the first divine message was sent down.<sup>5</sup> The perfect silence of the cave with its total separation from Mecca, provided a comfortable location for worship and retreat.<sup>6</sup> Also, there is no disagreement that the Mission happened when Mohammad was forty years old.<sup>7</sup> It is said "When Mohammad retreated into the cave of Hirā' as he approached

the fortieth year of his age, his soul was fully convinced of the vision of truth he had seen.”<sup>8</sup>

All in all, most Sunnis agree that the Prophet’s Mission took place in the month of Ramadan,<sup>9</sup> yet the specific day in Ramadan is a subject of disagreement among them. According to what Tabari and later on Majlisi related, those who favour Ramadan can choose among three different dates, based on three groups of *hadith*: the seventeenth, the eighteenth, or the twenty-fourth. Still other Sunni traditions state that the Mission took place in Rabi‘ al-Awwal.<sup>10</sup>

Contrary to most Sunnis, the Shi‘i traditionists and biographers assigned -or as Majlisi states, came to the consensus that- the twenty-seventh of the month Rajab as the specific day and month of the Mission. This idea is found among some Sunni traditions as well.<sup>11</sup>

We accept the evidence for the twenty-seventh of Rajab which is related from the Imams of *Ahl al-Bayt* (the family of the Prophet, peace be upon them), since the descendants of the Prophet knew the Prophet’s personal affairs and his sayings better than others, that is to say the people of a house know better what occurs in the house. They state that the Mission was announced on the 27<sup>th</sup> of Rajab. This is what the vast majority or as Majlisi states, the consensus of Shi‘i scholars agree with.

One would say that there is no problem in accepting that the Prophet began to receive his prophecy in Rajab in preparation for the

reception of the *Qur'an* later on in Ramadan. This preparedness is something which is understood from the *Qur'an* itself, “*Surely We will cast weighty statement on you.*”<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, the *Qur'an* was sent down gradually in Ramadan. This conclusion is supported by a narrative according to which the angel of the revelation used to come to the Prophet and show himself to him before the *Qur'an* was sent down to him.<sup>13</sup> Thus, one may distinguish between the beginning of the mission which took place on the 27<sup>th</sup> of Rajab and the revelation of the entire *Qur'an* in the month of Ramadan.

### **The Beginning of the Revelation**

**A True Dream or a True Vision?** Relying on what is related through Ibn Ishaq<sup>14</sup> and Ibn Kathir,<sup>15</sup> some Sunni thinkers have come to the conclusion that the revelation began with the Prophet’s dream which occurred when he was asleep in the cave at Hirā’. For instance, Haykal says, “One day, while Mohammad was asleep in the cave, an angel approached with a sheet in his hand.” The angel asked Mohammad to read.<sup>16</sup> A. Wessels, discussing this point, says, “According to Haykal, Mohammad believed strongly in what he had seen in his ‘dream’.”<sup>17</sup> Haykal refers to another possibility which is suggested by some narrators of hadith and says, “Some of them have claimed that the beginning of revelation was in the hours of wakefulness, and they mention a hadith to the effect that Gabriel first said words of reassurance to assuage Mohammad’s fear at his appearance.”<sup>18</sup> Haykal then states:

In his *al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh*,<sup>19</sup> Ibn Kathir gave a quotation from the book, *Dala'il al-Nubuwwah* by Abu Na'im al-Isbahani, in which the latter reported that 'Alqamah b. Qays had said, "The first revelations came to the prophets in their sleep until their hearts were reassured."<sup>20</sup>

This point is also remarked upon by Bukhari. Regarding the beginning of the revelation, he related hadiths, among which one is as follows: "*The commencement of the Divine inspiration to Allah's Apostle was in the form of good dreams which came like bright day light (i.e. true)...*"<sup>21</sup>

The Shi<sup>ca</sup> thinkers, for their part, are quite clear that the first revelation occurred when the Prophet was praying in the cave. This revelation, descending to the Prophet in his perfect awareness, began with the Almighty God's words, "*In the Name of Allah the Beneficent the Merciful. Read in the Name of your Lord Who created. Who created man from a clot.*"<sup>22</sup> This is what has been received from the Imams of the *Ahl al-Bayt* and others.<sup>23</sup>

## **The Psychology of the Prophet When He Received the First Revelation**

Ibn Ishaq as well as other Sunni narrators of hadith and biographers describe the state of the Prophet when he received the first revelation.<sup>24</sup> Haykal, for example, paraphrases the story as follows:

Stricken with panic, Mohammad arose and asked himself ‘What did I see? Did possession of the devil which I feared all along come to pass?’ Mohammad looked to his right and his left but saw nothing. For a while he stood there trembling with fear and stricken with awe. He feared the cave might be haunted and that he might run away still unable to explain what he saw. He walked in the area around the mountain asking himself who could have commanded him to read. ... who was this who came to remind Mohammad of Him, that He had created man, and that He was the most gracious who taught man by the pen that which he does not know? Pursued by his own questioning and still trembling in fear of what he had seen and heard in the cave, Mohammad stopped in the middle of the road when the same voice called to him from above. Mesmerized in his place, Mohammad lifted his head toward heaven. He saw the angel in the form of a human giant across the sky. For a moment he sought

to escape, but wherever he looked or ran, the angel stood right there before him. ... Mohammad returned home once the angel disappeared. His state was one of extreme dread. ...As Mohammad entered his house he asked Khadijah to wrap him in blankets. She could see that her husband was shivering as if struck with high fever. When he calmed down, he cast toward his wife the glance of a man in need of rescue.<sup>25</sup>

The image of the Prophet shown in the mirror of these ancient texts has not been commented on nor criticized by Sunni biographers. The Shi'ī scholar Ja'far Subhani,<sup>26</sup> in his biography of the Prophet, says that it is surprising that Dr. Haykal, despite the well-managed preface to his book of the sirah, relates the same fabricated materials which are seen in the ancient books of hadith and sirah. Haykal believed that a lot of slander and lies were unjustly attributed to the Prophet, so he set out to purify the image of the sirah from such defamations.<sup>27</sup> As Wessels points out, "He wished to develop an image of Mohammad that would be acceptable primarily to modern educated Muslims, who in his view, needed to return to their own heritage."<sup>28</sup> Moreover, refuting the slander of epilepsy which is attributed by some Orientalists to the Prophet, Haykal, before coming to the section of the Mission, i.e. in his preface to the second edition of his biography of the Prophet, insists:

This was not the case at all with the Prophet at the moment of revelation, for his cognitive faculties used to be strengthened -rather than weakened- and do so to a superlative degree hitherto unknown by the people who knew him most. Mohammad used to remember with utmost precision what he received by way of revelation ...<sup>29</sup>

It is also stated by Haykal:

[Before the time of the Mission,] Mohammad began to see in his dreams visions of the truth he sought. Contrasted with these visions, the illusory character of this life and the vanity of its ornaments became especially apparent. He had become perfectly convinced that his people had gone utterly astray and that their spiritual lives had been corrupted by their idols and the false beliefs associated with them. He was also convinced that neither the Jews nor the Christians had anything to offer that would save his people from their misguidance.<sup>30</sup>

Accordingly, Mohammad's dreams gave him information about the truth he sought, and as a result he was perfectly convinced that his people were in need of a saviour who supposedly was none other than himself.

However, the above-mentioned passages portray a very different image from the one which Haykal depicts of the Prophet's state of mind at the outset of his Mission. Haykal's description of Mohammad's receiving of prophecy implies that he was astonished by an agent who appeared to him to be strange and fearful. Here, the Prophet felt discomfort in the face of this first inspiration, as if he had passed through a time of great distress of the soul. Seen from this perspective, the Prophet seems to have been an uncertain, anxious, sad, and wondering man who trembled with fear, and who was in need of rescue by a person, supposedly, his wife Khadijah or her cousin Waraqah. Such narratives speak of the Prophet's sense of unworthiness, his doubts and fears, and the difficulties of his mission.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, Bukhari in his Sahih, states that the story of the first revelation begins with what is related on the authority of al- Zuhri from 'Urwah b. Zubayr, from 'A'isha, who narrated,

The commencement of the divine Inspiration to Allah's Apostle ... was in the form of good dreams which came like bright daylight (i.e. true) and the love of seclusion was bestowed upon him. He used to go into seclusion in the cave of Hirā' where he used to worship (Allah alone) continuously for many days before his desire to see his family. ... till suddenly the truth descended upon him while he was in the cave of

Hirā'. The angel came to him and asked him to read.  
The Prophet replied, "I do not know how to read."<sup>32</sup>

According to this narrative, this incident occurred three times; each time the angel seizing Mohammad forcibly and pressing him so hard that he could not bear it any more. He then released him and again asked him to read and the Prophet replied, "I do not know how to read." Finally, the angel said, "Read, in the Name of your Lord, who created, created man from a clot. Read! And your Lord is the most Generous."<sup>33</sup> 'A'isha continued,

Then Allah's Apostle ... returned with the Inspiration and with his heart beating severely. Then he went to Khadijah bint Khuwaylid and said, "Cover me!" "Cover me!" She covered him till his fear was over and after that he told her every thing that had happened and said, "I fear that something may happen to me." Khadijah replied, "Never! By Allah! Allah will never disgrace you..." Khadijah then accompanied him to her cousin Waraqah bin Nawfil bin 'Abdul 'Uzza, who during the pre-Islamic period became a Christian and used to write the writing with Hebrew letters. ... Allah's Apostle ... described whatever he had seen. Waraqah said, "This is the same one ... (Gabriel) whom Allah had sent to Moses."<sup>34</sup>

Contrary to what is stated by Haykal and some other Sunni scholars, the Shi'ī description leaves no room for any of the afore-mentioned conditions attributed to the Prophet when he received the first revelation. Rather, it is insisted that the revelation was sent to the Prophet when he was fully aware and conscious. He saw and understood what was happening without any fear or doubt.

There are some other narratives concerning this issue of the very beginning of the Mission; nevertheless, all contradict each other in both verbal and conceptual aspects. One of the common ideas of this group of narratives is that they explain the roles of Khadijah, of her cousin Waraqah and of other monks named 'Addas, Nastur and Bahirā'. They illustrate how these monks, especially Waraqah, played an important role in the certification and approval of Mohammad's prophecy.

Such narrations can be evaluated from several aspects:

**1-The disputable chain of narration:** The most distinguished individuals among the chains of authority are people such as: al-Zuhri and 'Urwa ibn Zubayr.<sup>35</sup> Al-Zuhri was one of the supporters of the Umayyad dynasty upon whom he used to rely. He was in the court of Hisham b. 'Abd al-Malik and served him as his *kaatib* (scribe and recorder), and as his children's teacher.<sup>36</sup> 'Urwa ibn Zubayr was one of the *Tabi'in*, who had not seen the Prophet, but had seen some of his companions. He was also in close relation with Umayyads.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, it is not proved that al-Zuhri related from 'Urwa, even though some

narrationists have accepted this as being the case.<sup>38</sup> It should also be noted that ‘Aishah is the first person in the chain of narration in most of these narratives. She is the authority by whom the other authorities relate. However, she was born some years after the Mission had started; therefore, she could not be an immediate narrator of the details of the beginning of the Mission. In other words, she should relate on the authority of someone else, whose name is not mentioned. Thus, the quote above should be regarded as a ‘*mursal*’ i.e. a hadith that lacks the first immediate authority or authorities.<sup>39</sup> The validity of this kind of narrative is usually less than an authentic one whose authorities are all known and approved.<sup>40</sup>

**2- *Contradiction among all narratives:*** These narratives differ from each other, to greater or lesser extents in both verbal and conceptual content. This contradiction and inconsistency suggests that there was an attempt deliberately to fabricate untrue stories and anecdotes and attribute it to important personalities like ‘Aishah, the wife of the Prophet.<sup>41</sup> This was undertaken by the Umayyads for political purposes, as one observes in their treatment of the Prophet and his Household.<sup>42</sup>

**3- *Gabriel and his threatening the Prophet:*** It is not clear why the Prophet should have been threatened by the angel Gabriel. Why should the angel bother him and put him under so much stress and pressure that he imagined he was going to die? Why did the angel treat him

oppressively and without any mercy or flexibility, even when he saw that Mohammad was incapable of doing as he was commanded?

4- *The role of the monks and Khadijah*: When a researcher considers the role of the Prophet's wife and that of Waraqah (or others), he will be concerned with two points:

*a*: How can a person be the prophet of God while at the same time be ignorant of his prophecy or of his mission, and in need of the help of a woman or of some monks to guide him and calm him? Weren't these guides and helpers more deserving and more appropriate for prophecy than a fearful, doubtful man? Why could he not perceive and recognize the facts just as this woman and this monk did?<sup>43</sup>

How can one reconcile these opposing claims? On the one hand, it is said that "The commencement of the divine inspiration to Allah's Apostle was in the form of good dreams which came like bright day light (i.e. true)."<sup>44</sup> Ibn Ishaq for instance, relates that "... the first sign of prophethood vouchsafed to the apostle was true vision, resembling the brightness of daybreak, which was shown to him in his sleep."<sup>45</sup> According to another *hadith*, the Apostle at the time when Allah willed to bestow His grace upon him and endow him with prophethood, would go forth for his affairs and journey; and not a stone or tree he passed but would say, "Peace unto thee, O apostle of Allah."<sup>46</sup>

However, on the other hand, there are narrators of hadith and biographers who show an image of the Prophet as a man who became doubtful, astounded, ignorant, anxious, etc. after the angel appeared to him at the moment of the revelation. None of these narrators tries to answer this question or to harmonize these two opposing passages of narrations and descriptions.

*b.* There are some Qur'anic passages according to which God Himself is responsible for bracing the hearts of His Apostle and believers.

Say, 'The holy spirit has brought it down as truth from your Lord to brace those who believe, and as guidance and good news for Muslims'.<sup>47</sup>

Those who disbelieve say, 'Why has not the Qur'an been sent down to him in one single piece?' [It has been done] like that so your vitals may be braced by it; We have phrased deliberately.<sup>48</sup>

Also there are other verses that indicate the Prophet was following evidence from his Lord.

Say, 'I am [looking] for evidence from my Lord while you have rejected it. I do not have what you are trying to hurry up; discretion lies only with God. He relates the Truth and is the best decider.'<sup>49</sup>

Say, "This is my way. I and anyone who follows me, appeal to God through insight. Glory be to God! I am not one of the polytheists."<sup>50</sup>

Therefore, the prophecy and the descending of the Qur'an can be seen as having braced the Prophet's and believers' hearts. This is in contradiction with the allegation that his spirit was calmed by trusting in Waraqah's assurance.<sup>51</sup>

But what is the fact? In answering this question, and based on authentic narrations and rational arguments, we would say that Allah sent the first revelation down to the Prophet while he was in the cave. Then, being in good heart, he returned to his house rejoicing in the good tidings that Allah had given to him. He was certain about the important task which he was supposed to perform. When he was at home after the first revelation and shared the news with his wife Khadijah she believed in him and in what he brought.<sup>52</sup> There is one hadith on the authority of Ibn Kathir that seems to be closer to what the Shi'a in general advocate. Ibn Kathir narrates that the Prophet returned to his family, sure that he had been commissioned to perform a great task. He told Khadijah what he had seen, explaining that Gabriel had truly come to him and that he had received his apostleship from his Lord. Khadijah replied, "Rejoice! By Allah, He does good to you. This is surely the Truth; Rejoice! You are the Apostle of Him in certain."<sup>53</sup>

Imam Sadiq<sup>54</sup> said that Allah first selected one of His servants as His apostle. Then, He brought down upon him His immanence, peace, gravity and dignity so he would realize that what came to him was certainly from God not from Satan, and it would be the same as what he sees by his eyes.<sup>55</sup> The same Imam was asked how prophets understood that they were the apostles of God, and he answered that at the time of their apostleship, God removed any cover from their eyes and insights. Thus, they were able to see the Truth and distinguish it from untruth.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, Tabarsi states that Allah does not reveal to his Prophet except through brilliant shining proofs and evident obvious signs, all demonstrate that what was revealed was from Almighty Allah. Therefore, he never was in need of anyone else to guide him.<sup>57</sup>

In short, from the point of view of the Shi'a, there was no fear, nor anxiety from which the Prophet suffered due to the first revelation.

### **Summarizing Comments**

1. We realized that Sunni and Shi'a thinkers in large are on two different sides in regard to the attributes and qualifications of the Mission.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, such a difference can be regarded as a Sunni-Shi'a dispute.
2. As we have seen, according to the Sunni account of the Prophet's personality, there should be nothing destructive to the image of him if some fear, ignorance, anxiety, and doubtfulness

have been attributed to him. That is to say, Mohammad's life was a human life, and he was merely an ordinary man like other human beings except that the revelation was sent to him. "Like all men, Prophets are truly fallible; their distinction lies in that God does not leave them in their error. He corrects them and often even blames them therefore."<sup>59</sup>

**3.** Contrary to this account, the Shi'a believe that God has never revealed His divine message to one of His fallible and imperfect servants, rather He selected the one whom He purified since the very beginning of his life. In keeping with this, they believe, that the Prophet Mohammad, while in essence a man like any other, yet was an exalted and infallible servant of God. In Shi'a tradition any kind of defect or error has been removed from the image of the Prophet, especially at the start of his Mission, for a messenger of God should be infallible. This is why the Shi'a never accept any of the defects which are attributed to the Prophet. Muzaffar, a Shi'i theologian, maintains:

The reason for the necessity of the infallibility of a prophet is that if he commits a sin or mistakes, or is forgetful or something similar, we have to choose between two alternatives: either we obey his sins and mistakes, in which case in the view of Islam, we do wrong, or we must not obey his sins and mistakes, which too is wrong, because, if everything he says or

does has the possibility of being either right or wrong, then it is impossible for us to follow him. The result is that the benefit of his mission is lost; it becomes unnecessary, and the prophet becomes like ordinary people whose acts and speech do not have the excellent worth that we seek.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Al-Muzaffar, *The Faith of Shī'a Islam*, second edition (Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 1986), p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> Murtada, *al-Sabih*, Vol. 1, p. 234.

<sup>3</sup> Haykal, *The Life*, p. lxxiii.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 197 ; Haykal, *Hayat*, p. 133. The Mission began with the following verses:  
*In the name of Allah the Compassionate the Merciful*

“Read in the name of your Lord the Creator; Who created man from a clot; Read, your Lord is most Generous ...” (The *Qur'an*, 96 : 1-3)

<sup>5</sup> Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sirah*, Vol. 1, p. 263 ; Haykal, *The Life*, p. 70 ; Murtada, *Al-Sabih*, Vol. 1, p. 192 etc.

<sup>6</sup> Haykal, *The Life*, p. 70.

<sup>7</sup> Ibn Hisham, *al-Sira*, Vol. 1, p. 293 ; Haykal, *The Life*, p. 70 ; Murtada, *al-Sabih*, Vol. 1, p. 197 etc. Al-Tabari, in his history, mentions three sayings concerning the age of the Prophet at the time of the Mission. Besides those that say that Muhammad was forty when the first revelation came down to him, there is one *hadith* that advocates that the Prophet was forty three, and another that selects twenty as his age when he became the Apostle of God. See: al-Tabari, *Tarikh*, Vol. 2, pp. 290-292.

<sup>8</sup> Haykal, *The Life*, p. 73.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70; Murtada, *al-Sabih*, p. 192

<sup>10</sup> Tabari, *Tarikh*, Vol. 2, p. 293 ; Majlisi, *Bihar*, Vol. 15, p. 190 ; Murtada, *al-Sabih*, Vol. 1, p. 192.

<sup>11</sup> Murtada, *Al-Sabih*, Vol. 1, p. 192, quoting from Halabi, *al-Sira*, Vol. 1, p. 384, and Majlisi *Bihar*, Vol. 18, pp. 190 & 204.

<sup>12</sup> The *Qur'an*, 73 : 5.

<sup>13</sup> Murtada, *Al-Sabih*, Vol. 1, p. 195.

<sup>14</sup> Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sirah*, Vol. 1, p. 267.

<sup>15</sup> Ibn Kathir, *Al-Sirah*, Vol. 1, pp. 387-388.

<sup>16</sup> Haykal, *The Life*, p. 73.

<sup>17</sup> Wessels, *Biography*, p. 55.

<sup>18</sup> Haykal, *The Life*, p. 74.

<sup>19</sup> In Haykal's *Hayat*, p. 133, footnote # 2, it is mentioned that Ibn Kathir, in his *Tarikh*, cites al-Hafiz Abu Na'im . The reference should be to *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyah* and not to *Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh* since the latter is written by Ibn Athir and not by Ibn Kathir. This is apparently a mistake either by the author or by the translator. In all events, the above-mentioned passage is in fact cited from Ibn Kathir's *Sirah*, Vol. 1, pp. 387 & 388.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*; *Hayat*, p. 133, footnote.

<sup>21</sup> See: Bukhari, *Sabih al-Bukhari*, (Al-Madinah: Islamic University, Arabic-English edition translated by Muhammad Muhsin Khan, 1971.) Vol. 1, p. 2-3, *hadith* 3.

<sup>22</sup> The *Qur'an*, 96: 1-2.

<sup>23</sup> Murtada, *Al-Sabih*, Vol. 1, pp. 197 & 223.

<sup>24</sup> Nowhere in his *Hayat Muhammad*, does Haykal cite any reference on which he relies for his description. However, in the footnote, it is mentioned that Ibn Ishaq advocated the same idea and that the books of the *sirah* also reported the same. See: Haykal, *Hayat*, p. 133, footnote 2.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>26</sup> Ja'far Subhani, a contemporary Shi'i scholar was educated in Qum under the supervision of some of the great ayatollahs, among whom was the late Imam Khomeyni. He is presently professor of jurisprudence, philosophy and theology in the Islamic Seminaries of Qum. So far, he has written a great number of books in different areas, among which are his two analytical volumes on the biography of the Prophet in Persian, entitled *Furugh-i Abadiyat*.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Subhani, *Furugh-i Abadiyat*, eighth edition (Qum: Summer 1993), Vol. 1, p. 228; Haykal, *Hayat*, p. 40.

<sup>28</sup> Wessels, *Biography*, p. 43.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, The author's preface to the second edition, p. lxxii.

<sup>30</sup> Haykal, *The Life*, p. 72.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.73-75.

<sup>32</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih* (Arabic-English edition), Vol. 1, pp. 2 & 3.

<sup>33</sup> The *Qur'an*, 96: 1-3.

<sup>34</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih* (Arabic-English edition), Vol. 1, pp. 3 & 4.

<sup>35</sup> Here Murtada analyzes the story as a typical traditional *hadith* scholar.

<sup>36</sup> Murtada, *Al-Sahih*, v. 1, p. 221, citing Ibn Abi al-Hadid, *Sharh*, Vol. 4, p. 102 ; Majlisi, *Bihar*, Vol. 46, p. 143.

<sup>37</sup> Murtada, *Al-Sahih*, Vol. 1, p. 221, citing Bayhaqi, *Al-Sunan al-Kubra*, 1st edition (Haydarabad al-Dakkan, Hind: 1925), Vol. 8, pp. 165-166.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 222.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> Kazim Mudir Shanichi, *Im al-Hadith wa Dirayat al-Hadith*, 3rd edition, (Qum: Daftar Intisharat Islami, 1990), pp. 160-161. The author mentions that al-Suyuti related ten different ideas regarding the subject of authenticity and inauthenticity of *mursal*.

<sup>41</sup> Murtada, *Al-Sahih*, Vol. 1, pp. 222 & 223.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 17-30.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 225.

<sup>44</sup> Bukhari, *Sahih* (Arabic-English edition), v. 1, pp. 2-3.

<sup>45</sup> Ibn Ishaq, *The Life*, p. 105.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* ; Murtada, *Sahih*, Vol. 1, p. 226, citing Ibn Hisham, *Al-Sirah*, Vol. 1, pp. 264 & 265. Here Murtada does not deal with the details.

<sup>47</sup> The *Qur'an*, 16:102.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 25:32.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 6:57.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 12:108 ; Murtada, *Al-Sahih*, Vol. 1, p. 226.

<sup>51</sup> For more details see: Murtada, *Al-Sahih*, Vol.1, pp. 226-233.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 220 & 233 ; Ibn Kathir, *Al-Bidayah*, Vol. 3, p. 13.

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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Abu ‘Abdullah Ja‘far b. Muhammad, the sixth Imam of the Shi‘a called al-Sadiq (83-148/702-765).

<sup>55</sup> Murtada, *Al-Sabih*, Vol. 1, p. 223, citing Majlisi, *Bihar*, Vol. 18, p. 262.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, citing Majlisi, *Bihar*, Vol. 11, p. 59.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, citing al-Tabarsi, *Majma‘*, Vol. 5, p. 384.

<sup>58</sup> For instance, see: Subhani, *Furugh Abadiyat*, Vol. 1, pp. 213-237 ; Rasuli, *Tarikh*, Vol. 2, pp. 189-236.

<sup>59</sup> See: Haykal, *The Life*, p. xxiv, Foreword to the first edition, by al-Maraghi, 15, Feb., 1935.

<sup>60</sup> Muzaffar, *The Faith*, pp. 21-22.

## Different Methodological Approaches to Spirituality

Mohammad Ali Shomali

In the previous paper we discussed about the significance of self-control and self-purification. In this paper we will review and briefly discuss different methodologies among Muslim scholars in studying spirituality in general and morality (*akblaq*) in particular. In general, we can classify the attitudes of scholars into three main approaches:

1. The Philosophical Approach
2. The Mystical Approach
3. The Scriptural or Text-Based Approach

### The Philosophical Approach

Many Muslim scholars have found the outlook of some Greek philosophers, especially Aristotle, to a large extent appealing as a way in which to speak about the human soul. According to this view, the human soul has three different faculties (*qumwalb*) responsible for action; they are:

1. The rational faculty (*al-qumwab al-'aqliyyah*) is the faculty responsible for knowledge. It helps us to understand matters and enables us to engage in discussion. If this faculty functions properly, one can attain true wisdom (*bikmah*). This does not mean that one should strive for an excess of the rational faculty, as this is one of the causes of scepticism; rather, it means that we must be concerned with maintaining a balance. If a person is not rational enough, he can be too accepting and believe whatever he hears. This type of person can be easily deceived. Ibn Sinna, in a profound statement says *"Whoever is used to accepting an argument without any reason is no longer a human being."* This is because a fundamental part of humanity is rationality and human being is often defined by philosophers as "rational animal". Therefore one needs to strike a balance, and not to be too rational and critical or too receptive.
2. The faculty of anger (*al-qumwab al-ghaḍabiyyah*) is the faculty that controls our temper. Without this faculty, we would not have the motivation to protect ourselves from danger. However, if someone allows this faculty to be extreme, they would be aggressive and always ready to attack. On the other hand, if a person lacks the faculty of anger they would be a coward. The philosophers in this school of thought encourage us to attain a balance between these two, so that we can attain the virtue of bravery. A good person, therefore, is one who knows when to become angry and to the right extent.

3. The appetitive faculty (*al-qumwāb al-shahwīyyah*) is the faculty which mostly consists of sexual appetite, but also includes our appetite for food and other things. If the force of sexual desire did not exist in man, the continued existence of the human species would be endangered. This faculty must also be brought to a balance where a person is chaste and modest.

Therefore, if one were to strike a balance in all these faculties he would have wisdom, bravery and chastity; this is all one needs to attain justice. This means that one who is just or *‘ādil* is one who has attained perfection in every aspect of his soul. Being *‘ādil* is not merely about abstinence from sins, but it is also about the perfection of every faculty.

This school of spirituality sets out a very rational response to the question of self-building. Although it is rational, some feel that it is too abstract and lacks the inspirational and emotional qualities that can really engage people and leave them motivated to change. We are taught to strike a balance with our faculties but it can be difficult to know where that balance is in different circumstances. This approach is useful, but not sufficient; we must add practical and inspirational elements to our view of self-building.

### **The Mystical Approach**

The mystics consider the whole process of self-building as a journey towards God or perfection and as a matter of gradual growth. The

difference between the previous approach and this approach is as follows:

According to the first approach, the relationship of the soul and self-building can be considered in the following way. Imagine there is a house which you wish to beautify; there are a number of things you could do. You could take out the rubbish, then start decorating the house, and furnishing the house in a wise way. If one manages to remove the rubbish and all the ugly items from the house, and furnishes it with beautiful items, then the house becomes attractive. In the same way we can consider the house which we wish to beautify as the soul we wish to cleanse and adorn with good character. We must remove bad qualities from our hearts in order for Allah (SWT) to let the light in and furnish our hearts with a good character. For example, we read in a hadith, “*angels do not enter a house in which dogs are kept*”.<sup>1</sup> In a similar way we must consider the state of our hearts, and if they are aggressive like a dog, ill tempered or diseased we cannot hope for angels to enter. Therefore, this process involves three main stages

- *Takblyyah* – clean out
- *Tablyyah* - adornment
- *Tajlyyah* – starts shining (starts to happen automatically after you do first two).

Although this approach is inspiring to an extent, and can provide us with a framework through which to self-build, it is not a dynamic approach, as it does not fully explain where one should precisely start and finish the spiritual journey. It does not say what we should clean first or what to adorn ourselves with. Again, this approach is useful, but not sufficient in itself as a complete plan of self-building.

According to the second approach, the relationship of the soul and self-building can be considered in the following way. A person is like a flower, and a flower can grow but not without care. A flower can grow like any other that has grown in the past; it is not a unique thing. A flower is gradually growing if everything is carefully looked after. This is similar to how a child grows into an adult. One cannot be a teenager before being a toddler. In the same way, one cannot give the food of a toddler to a teenager or vice versa.

Therefore, the second approach i.e. the mystical approach looks at spiritual growth in a dynamic way as a carefully planned procedure. One needs the guidance of the people who have been to this process, who can provide advice for what to do at each stage. With this approach, every stage must be undertaken separately. This means that the expectations in each stage should be different. What is good for one person at one level may not be necessarily good for another person at a higher level. For example, if a small child memorises *Surah Al-Fatibah* (the Opening) and recites it people would commend the child and would be impressed, but if the *Imam* of the prayer recited

the *Surah* in the same way, people would criticise him and not pray behind him. Everything is therefore a matter of comparison as to what we should expect from ourselves in different situations. It is a constant journey from one level to the next.

### **The Scripture/Text Based Approach**

According to this view, the best approach is to refer to the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (SAW) and his family (AS). Those who advocate this approach therefore felt there was no need for a philosophical framework, and instead they listed the desirable and undesirable qualities of man based on the Qur'an. For example, for the vice of greed they would extract verses from the Qur'an which reveal that greed is an undesirable quality and provide evidence and some solutions from hadith.

### **What should be our own attitude?**

All these scholars have made great contributions to Islamic moral thought. However, each of these approaches have their strengths and weaknesses and if we wish to benefit the most we must create a synthetic approach in which the advantages of each school of thought can be incorporated.

### **Requirements for an Adequate Approach**

1. Our moral outlook should be compatible with the Qur'an and Sunnah, as there is no one better than Allah (SWT) and the Holy Prophet (SAW) to guide, as to what is good or bad. All truth is

from Allah (SWT), no matter if it is relayed to us, by the mystics or the philosophers.

2. The ethical system has to be comprehensive. No aspect of the human being can be ignored. We do not want to have a person who is only developed in one aspect. A human being must grow in all different aspects.
3. The ethical system must be rational and supported by rational arguments, but it also must be practical and engaging.
4. The framework must be consistent and no contradictions should occur.
5. The ethical system must tell us what to do in different positions and stations as self-building is a dynamic process and is not static. In no field of study or practice can a person say they do not need consultation or advice.
6. Islam is a religion which considers reason to be very important. There is nothing irrational in Islam. There are many things taught by revelation, but this is not because they are *against* reason; it is because they are *above* reason. To illustrate the difference between something being against reason and above reason let us consider an example. If someone was asked how many people are in the next room, using their reason alone, they could not tell you. This answer does not come through reason. However, if someone

answered that there are one million people in the next room, knowing the size of the room, we could say that this answer is against reason.

### **Conclusion**

We need a moral system based on the Qur'an and Sunnah, while at the same time has rational and philosophical grounds. The system must also have clear priorities, and if two things are in conflict, the system must show which is more important. Lastly, we must be able to find out what we can expect from each stage, usually by those who have passed the stage we are now in, as their advice and help is extremely important. Among our contemporary scholars, there have been brilliant teachers of spirituality who have combined these schools of thought, and whom we can learn from, such as: Imam Khomeini, Allamah Tabatabai, Ayatollah Mutahhari and Ayatollah Javadi Amuli.

### **Endnote:**

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. *Bihar al-Ammar*, Vol. , p. 56, p. 177.

## **An Outline of Governance from a Qur'anic Perspective**

**Ayatollah Muhammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi**

**Summarized and Paraphrased by Karim Aghili**

This paper is an attempt to partially delineate the salient features of Shi'ite political thought. It seeks to clarify that Islam is an all-embracing religion consisting of a set of laws and injunctions which are requisites for the establishment of an ideal society. The paper presents a brief discussion about governance during the period of occultation of the twelfth Imam, the role of the supreme Leader and the essential qualifications for administrators of the law, especially for the one at the top of the pyramid of power.

### **Democracy and the Vicegerency of God**

From the Islamic point of view, the goal of law is not only to bring about social order and discipline, but also to establish social justice, because firstly, without justice the order would not be durable and the masses of the people would not tolerate injustice and

oppression forever; and secondly, in a society not governed by justice most people would not have the opportunity for desired growth and development and hence the goal of man's creation and social life would not be realised.

The main question is how and by whom the law should be legislated. The accepted theory in most current societies is that the laws should be legislated and approved by the people themselves or their representatives. Since the consensus of all of the people or of their representatives is practically impossible, the view of the majority (even if merely half plus one) is the criteria for the validity of the law.

This view, first of all, is based on the idea that the goal of secular law is to satisfy the people's desires but not to provide that which would truly benefit them. In other words, the goal of secular law is not to secure what is truly in the people's best interest and what is in conformity with their felicity. Secondly, since it is impossible to have unanimous agreement, we should content ourselves with the opinion of the majority. However, the first idea mentioned is not accepted by Islam, for many people wish to satisfy their bestial instincts and temporary lusts without thinking of their disastrous consequences. Usually the number of such people is at least one half plus one, so the social laws would be dictated by the desires of such people. It is obvious that the schools which believe in a goal

beyond animal lust and base desire will not be able to condone this idea.

With regard to the second idea, that is, the validity of the vote of the majority in the absence of unanimity, it should be said that only in absence of a deciding divine and intellectual criterion can the majority be the criterion for preferring an opinion. However, in the Islamic system there do exist such divine and intellectual criteria. In addition, a powerful minority, by using the facilities for widespread propaganda, has an important role in channelling the thoughts and beliefs of others, and in fact what is approved is only the desire of a limited but powerful minority, not the true desire of the majority of all the people. Furthermore, if the criterion is that the people's choice would be valid for themselves, why should we not also accept the choice of a minority as valid for itself, even if it would result in a type of autonomy? In this case, what would be the logical justification for governments to oppose the wishes of some social groups which they rule by force?

It is worth noting that the many Qur'anic verses that refer to the vicegerency (*khilafah*) of man indicate that *istikhlaf* (appointing as successor on earth) in the sense of rule is strictly restricted in its scope of usage and does not include all humans:

God has promised those of you who have faith and  
do righteous deeds that He will surely make them

successors in the earth, just as He made those who were before them successors, and He will surely establish for them their religion which He has approved for them, and that He will surely change their state to security after their fear, while they worship Me, not ascribing any partners to Me. And whoever is ungrateful after that —it is they who are the transgressors. (24:55).

### **Islam, an All-embracing Religion**

Islam holds that law should be legislated in such a way that they procure the benefits of the members of society, particularly those who desire to improve themselves and to gain eternal felicity. It is obvious that such law should be legislated by one who has enough knowledge about the real and eternal benefits of humans and secondly, who does not sacrifice the benefits of others for his personal interests and vain desires. It is obvious that there is no one wiser than Almighty God, Who has no need of His servants or their works, and Who has provided divine legislation only for the sake of benefitting His servants. Certainly, the social laws described in the Qur'an do not explicitly state all the social rules which are necessary for every time and place, but the Islamic Law does provide a general framework for the derivation of regulations necessary for changing conditions of time and place, and, at least by observing the limits

delineated by this framework it may be possible to avoid falling into the deadly valley of eternal perdition.

The sacred Law of Islam as an all-embracing religion is providentially destined for the whole of humanity in all times and places, and with regard to the legal issues including the designation of the legislator, the judge and the executor, all should be congruous with the laws and injunctions as laid down in the religion of Islam. In this regard, the Qur'an says:

So if they argue with you, say, 'I have submitted my will to God, and [so has] he who follow me.' And say to those who were given the Book and the uninstructed ones, 'Do you submit?' If they submit, they will certainly be guided; but if they turn away, then your duty is only to communicate; and God sees best the servants. (3:20)

There are some other verses which indicate that the differences between the members of a community should be settled by having recourse to the Scripture and the Law of God as was the case with the divinely-appointed prophets preceding the Prophet of Islam. For example, the Qur'an says:

Mankind were a single community; then God sent the prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He sent down with them the Book with the

truth, that it may judge between the people concerning that about which they differed, and none differed in it except those who had been given it, after the manifest proofs had come to them, out of envy among themselves. Then God guided those who had faith to the truth of what they differed in, by His will, and God guides whomever He wishes to a straight path. (2:213)<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, those who claim to have the right to make laws of their own are reproved by God Almighty. For example, the Qur'an says:

Say, 'Have you regarded what God has sent down for you of [His] provision, whereupon you made some of it unlawful and [some] lawful?' Say, 'Did God give you the sanction [to do so], or do you fabricate a lie against God?' (10:59)

Do not say, asserting falsely with your tongues, 'This is lawful, and this is unlawful,' to fabricate lies against God. Indeed those who fabricate lies against God will not be felicitous. (16:116).

There are some other verses which indicate that the Prophet of Islam was emphatically commanded by God to follow the Divine

Revelation only and at the same time, he was strictly prevented from following others' views:

... Say, 'Indeed it is the guidance of God which is the [true] guidance.' And should you follow their desires after the knowledge that has come to you, you will not have against God any guardian nor any helper. (2:120)

We have sent down to you the Book with the truth, confirming what was before it of the Book and as a guardian over it. So judge between them by what God has sent down, and do not follow their desires against the truth that has come to you. For each [community] among you We had appointed a code [of law] and a path, and had God wished He would have made you one community, but [His purposes required] that He should test you in respect to what He has given you. So take the lead in all good works. To God shall be the return of you all, whereat He will inform you concerning that about which you used to differ. (5:48)<sup>2</sup>

### **The Necessity of obeying the Holy Prophet**

At this point, we will refer to certain verses which relate to the holy Prophet of Islam and the necessity of obedience to him. These verses can be divided into three categories:

1. The verses which indicate that unconditional obedience to the Messenger of God is obligatory, such as:

... and whoever obeys God and His Apostle, He will admit him into gardens with streams running in them, and whoever refuses to comply, He will punish him with a painful punishment. (48:17)

These are God's bounds, and whoever obeys God and His Apostle, He shall admit him to gardens with streams running in them, to remain in them [forever]. That is the great success. (4:13)<sup>3</sup>

2. The verses which reprove those who disobey and oppose the Prophet, such as:

Say, 'Obey God and the Apostle.' But if they turn away, indeed God does not like the faithless. (3:32).

But whoever disobeys God and His Apostle, and transgresses the bounds set by God, He shall make him enter a Fire, to remain in it [forever], and there will be a humiliating punishment for him. (4:14)<sup>4</sup>

3. The verses which are on the rule and judgement of the Prophet and which specify that obedience to his rule and judgement is obligatory. For example, the Qur'an says:

But no, by your Lord! They will not believe until they make you a judge in their disputes, then do not find within their hearts any dissent to your verdict and submit in full submission. (4:65)<sup>5</sup>

### **The Rule of *ulu'l-amr* (those vested with authority)**

In the Qur'an, the necessity of obedience to those other than the Prophet has been mentioned, and they are called *ulu'l-amr* in the language of the Qur'an:

O you who have faith! Obey God and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you. And if you dispute concerning anything, refer it to God and the Apostle, if you have faith in God and the Last Day. That is better and more favourable in outcome. (4:59)

This verse obliges the Muslims to two types of obedience: First, the obedience to Allah; second, the obedience to the Apostle and 'those vested with authority from among you' (*uli'l-amr-i minkum*). The arrangement of the words shows that the obedience to *ulu'l-amr* is as much obligatory as is the obedience to the Apostle, though they are

certainly lower in rank than the Apostle. This verse clearly shows two things:

**First.** The authority of the Holy Prophet upon the believers was unlimited and all-comprehensive. Any order given by him, under any condition, in any place, at any time, was to be obeyed unconditionally.

**Second.** That supreme authority was given to him because he was infallible and free from all types of error and sin. Otherwise, God would not have ordered us to obey him unconditionally.

In this verse, *ulu'l-amr*, have been given exactly the same authority over the Muslims, because both the 'Apostle' and the *ulu 'l-amr* have been jointly mentioned under one word "obey"; which shows that the obedience of *ulu 'l-amr* has the same standing as the obedience of the Apostle. It naturally follows that *ulu'l-amr* must also be infallible and free from any type of error and sin.

Therefore, the only way to interpret this verse is to accept that it refers to the Twelve Imams from the Holy Prophet's household, the only people for whom the status of infallibility after the Prophet Mohamad has ever been claimed. They were, in their times, the most knowledgeable, the most illustrious, the most God-fearing, the most pious, the highest in their family lineage, the best in personal virtues, and the most honoured before God; and their knowledge was derived from their ancestor (the Prophet) through their fathers,

and by inheritance and by direct inspirations from God. All the Shi'ite scholars unanimously hold that *ulu'l-amr* are meant to be the twelve Shi'ite Imams, the first of whom is Imam 'Ali and the twelfth of whom is al-Imam Mahdi.

The next verse on the necessity of following those other than the Prophet is the verse of mastership (*wilyah*):

Your guardian is only God, His Apostle, and the faithful who maintain the prayer and give the alms while bowing down. (5:55)

The Muslim scholars, Sunni and Shi'a alike, agree that this verse was revealed in honour of Imam Ali. It clearly shows that there are only three types of masters for the believers. Firstly, God secondly, His Prophet and thirdly, Ali (with the eleven succeeding Imams).

The word *waliyy* in this verse signifies worldly and spiritual authority, and what is more is that the authority of the infallible Imams is juxtaposed with the authority of the Prophet and of God.

### **Islamic Government during the Occultation of the Twelfth Imam**

During the occultation of the twelfth Imam, Islamic society requires the existence of a government as a power which is able to prevent violations of the law, and lack of the government is equivalent to the suspension of law, chaos and the violation of the rights of the

weak. For further clarification of the necessity for an Islamic government during the occultation of the twelfth Imam, it will be pertinent to refer to the following points:

There is no separation of religion from politics in Islam. Belief in the necessity of forming a government and establishing an executive system is a part of *wilayah*. Likewise, any attempt in this direction is also part of the belief in *wilayah*. In other words, belief in *wilayah* is tantamount to that of the acceptance of the leadership of the infallible Imams. But a profound understanding of the declaration of a divinely-appointed leader of Muslims by the Prophet would make it clear that unqualified persons should not be allowed to rule over the Muslims. Thus, anybody who believes in *wilayah* should eschew entrusting the state to unqualified persons in the absence of Imam Mahdi.

The nature of Islamic law indicates that it is possible to form a government and manage the cultural, economic and political affairs of a society. Firstly, comprehensiveness of the Islamic laws and regulations ranging from the laws regarding the relations with one's neighbours, children, family, private affairs, matrimonial matters, war, peace, relations with other countries, economy, trade, industry, and agriculture all are meant for running the affairs of the society. These points indicate that Islam seriously deals with political and economic affairs. Secondly, a quick look at the nature of religious commandments will prove that it is necessary to form a

government. Without forming a government it is not possible to execute these laws.

By establishing an Islamic government man can establish justice and execute the divine commandments. This particular feature of Islam is not only related to the Prophet's time but it is applicable to all times including the period of the absence of Imam Mahdi.

Some of the reasons behind appointment of *ulu'l-amr* (those vested with authority) by God and making their obedience obligatory are as follows. Firstly, people would feel duty-bound to follow certain rules that would rescue them from corruption. It is not possible to follow such rules unless power is entrusted to a trustworthy ruler. Secondly, the prosperity of nations depends on the existence of rulers who try to solve their temporal and spiritual problems. God, the Wise, never leaves His creatures (people) without a guide. The third reason is that in the absence of a just and qualified leader and guide, the religious commandments and orders would be ineffective or abused.

Thus, Islam is a comprehensive religion consisting of the laws on politics, society, economy, etc, and the Divine commandments are applicable to all societies in all eras. Religious commandments are not useful unless they are applied to form a state on the basis of divine guardianship. Moreover, in order to protect the Islamic system, control the borders of Muslims from any encroachment by

the enemy, and prevent disorder in Islamic society, it is necessary to form an Islamic government.

The leadership of an Islamic government has not been specifically entrusted to a particular person during the occultation of Imam Mahdi; rather a qualified leader has been characterised in a general way. Since the government is Islamic in nature, its ruler should possess at least the following two qualifications: he should have command over religious laws (*fiqh*) and he should be a just and righteous person.

### **The guardianship of the jurist**

Basically, the basis of the thesis of *Wilāyat-e faqih* or the guardianship of the qualified jurisprudent, is the proposition that a person who is nearer to the station of infallibility should occupy the position of the infallible one, i.e. on the top of the pyramid of power, in order that this position may be occupied by the one with the best knowledge of the precepts and laws and their fundamental bases, and the one who has the most piety and self-control. By means of these two basic qualifications (expertise in jurisprudence and piety) it is at least possible that he will be less likely, intentionally or unintentionally, to transgress against values.

It should be emphasized that from an Islamic perspective no human has any intrinsic right to rule over another, even if he issues valid and just decrees. For all people, like other creatures, have been

created by and are the property of Almighty God, and no one may interfere with another's property without God's permission. A human being has no right even to use his own bodily organs in a manner contrary to God's Will and consequently he cannot allow others to do so. Hence, the only one Who Himself has an absolute right to govern. Every authority and *wilayah* should be from Him or at least with His sanction. It is obvious that no one would ever be able to execute the divine law without having the necessary knowledge of His laws, or without piety and the necessary moral qualifications.

On the other hand, we know that except for the prophets and their selected successors, no one else was specifically designated by Almighty God to execute the law and to govern. So, people must try to find persons who resemble the prophets and the infallible Imams as closely as possible. It seems that the best way is first to select committed experts of religion (pious jurists), and then to allow them to select from among themselves the best one, for the experts are more able to correctly identify the best amongst them. Such selection is safer from the defects of an intentional or unintentional character.

It has also become clear that the political features of Islam derive from the basic elements of the world view of Islam and its view of man. That is, the emphasis on the just character of law and its harmony with human spiritual development derives from the view

that God Almighty created all mankind in order that people may follow the way of development toward nearness to God and eternal felicity by their meritorious conduct in life.

The right of all humans to happiness and enjoyment of the blessings of this world exists in order that all may advance in the way of their development in a better and speedier manner. The legislation of the divine laws and religious principles, whether they apply to the individual or society, is for determining the basic outlines of this path. The conditions of expertise in law and piety, in addition to other necessary administrative qualifications, are required for securing the necessary conditions for the general development of the people, for reaching eternal felicity and for preventing intentional and unintentional deviation from the correct way of social life.

It should be noted that the ideal is that the administrator of the law should generally be completely free from ignorance, selfishness, and other vices, and such a person is one who, in religious terminology, is called *ma'sum* (infallible). All Muslims believe in the infallibility of the Prophet, may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and upon his progeny, and the Shi'ites also believe in the infallibility of the Imams, peace be upon them. In the absence of an infallible person, these criteria should be observed, to the extent possible, for the selection of the leader as well as for lower positions in the hierarchical structure of the government in a proportionate manner.

### The Qur'anic Basis of *Shura* (Consultation)

In view of the ultimate aim of consultation or *shura* as a collective rational means for arriving at truth, it may be added that the legitimacy of the principle of *shura* in Islam is supported both by reason and by prophetic revelation. Several verses of the Qur'an refer to consultation. According to the Qur'an, the Prophet himself was asked to consult the people:

It is by God's mercy that you are gentle to them; and had you been harsh and hardhearted, surely they would have scattered from around you. So excuse them, and plead for forgiveness for them, and consult them in the affairs, and once you are resolved, put your trust in God. Indeed God loves those who trust in Him. (3:159)

She (the Queen of Sheba) said, 'O [members of the] elite! Indeed a noble letter has been delivered to me. It is from Solomon, and it begins in the name of God, the All-beneficent, the All-merciful. [It states,] "Do not defy me, and come to me in submission." ' She said, 'O [members of the] elite! Give me your opinion concerning my matter. I do not decide any matter until you are present.' They said, 'We are powerful and possess a great might. But it is up to

you to command. So see what you will command.’  
(27:29-33)

And there came a man from the city outskirts, hurrying. He said, ‘Moses! The elite are indeed conspiring to kill you. So leave. I am indeed your well-wisher.’ (28:20)

House them where you live, in accordance with your means, and do not harass them to put them in straits, and should they be pregnant, maintain them until they deliver. Then, if they suckle [the baby] for you, give them their wages and consult together honourably... (65:6)

All the above verses indicate the significance of consultation and point out to a basic reality that a number of individuals, when organized into a group, can benefit from one another's understanding and intellect for the attainment of certain goals. The least that can be said about the people coming together for mutual consultation is that their individual understanding increases.

### ***Shura* in the Political system of Islam**

Here we mean by *Shura* an assembly of a group of people who are capable, reliable and well-informed about a subject for the purpose

of making the best decision with respect to a given subject through consultation.

The subject of *shura* in Islam, that is, the affairs which are subject to counsel and consultation consists of all of the spheres of human life as well as the background for determination of the secondary laws (*al-ahkām al-thānawīyyah*). To explain this further, it may be said that all rulings pertaining to the individual and collective life of Muslims are divided into two categories: the primary (*amwalī*) and the secondary (*thānawī*) rulings.

### **The Primary Rulings**

The primary rulings constitute all Islamic duties and obligations deduced and inferred by jurists from the four sources consisting of the Holy Qur'an, the Sunnah, consensus and reason, and are communicated to all Muslims. The primary rulings constitute the duties of all responsible (*mukallaḡ*) Muslim men and women. These rulings are fixed and therefore they are not set forth for consultation, such as rulings pertaining to the acts of worship (like ritual prayer, fasting, pilgrimage to Mecca) and rulings pertaining to the commercial dealings, punishments (*hudud*), compensation (*diyāh*, blood money or indemnity for bodily injury), and yet others relate to the process of trial, testimony and litigation, and so on. The general definition for this category is that these rulings are those which, being based on the Qur'an, *sunnah*, *ijma'* and *'aql*, with due

consideration of the physical and spiritual nature of man and its proneness to various deviations and defects, and with a view to various things which are to its benefit and advantage, are not subject to any form of change whatsoever; although they are subject to modulation, depending on the varying states and conditions of a *mukallaf* (a responsible Muslim). These varying conditions of a *mukallaf* may be such as travelling, presence in one's home-town, compulsion, exigency, or any other ordinary or extraordinary condition.

### **The Secondary Rulings**

The secondary rulings are those deduced by a fully qualified jurist with due consideration for the circumstances and conditions of an individual or society. An example of this category of laws is the famous *fatwa* issued by the late Ayatollah Mirza Mohammad Hasan Shirazi (1815-1895), may God's mercy be upon him, forbidding the use of tobacco.

The difference between the primary and secondary rulings can be explained as follows:

1. The former are directly based on the four sources, which being the class of unchanging Islamic laws, together with the fundamental doctrines of the faith, constitute the framework of Islam. The secondary laws, on the other hand, do not directly correlate with the four above-mentioned sources, but are the product of juristic

inference drawn in light of the provisional conditions of an individual or the community. This does not, however, mean that the secondary laws deduced by a qualified jurist have no connection with the four sources of law. It means that the qualified jurist, perhaps in consultation with other jurists, issues a legal verdict for the benefit of the Muslim society, or in order to thwart a danger threatening it, through inspiration from general principles and laws that specify the duty to safeguard the existence of the Islamic society.

2. An important point to note in connection with the secondary rulings is that they relate to the category of actions and affairs that are generally considered *mubāh* or neutral. The primary rulings, on the other hand, are not changeable on any account.

3. The primary rulings which are suspended in case of *idtirār* (exigency), *ijbār* (coercion), or *karāhiyyah* (reprehensibility) should not be confused with the secondary rulings (*al-ahkam al-thanawiyah*). For instance, in case of insecurity of roads and sea routes the *faqih* may suspend the obligation of the *hajj* pilgrimage. This is not a secondary ruling because the duty of *hajj* is suspended, since *ilm* (knowledge), *ikhtiyār* (freedom) and *qudrab* (power) are the fundamental requirements for the application of an obligatory duty.

4. With the disappearance of the cause and motive behind the secondary rulings, their validity expires and the domain of its application returns to the sphere of primary rulings.

### **Conclusion**

The Islamic system of government is based upon the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The basic rules and principles are set out in the Qur'an but the details are for the Muslim jurists to extract from the four sources. The sovereignty of God is the foundation of the system. Legislation contained in the Qur'an becomes the basic law of the state.

The aim and purpose of Islamic government is the establishment, maintenance and development of those virtues which the Creator of the universe wishes human life to be enriched by, and the prevention and eradication of those evils which are abhorrent to God. That is why the prophets were sent by God to guide us over the centuries. It is the duty of every individual Muslim and of the Islamic government to strive for justice and to prevent and oppose evil. If injustice spreads in a community with no one to denounce it, then that whole community and its government is considered to be transgressing the law of God. Where injustice is rife, there cannot be an enduring peace. The Qur'an warns that nations in the past have been destroyed for such neglect.

The doctrine of *wilayat al-faqih* forms the core of Shi'ite political thought. It is a position which is delegated to a just and capable jurist who takes responsibility for Islamic government during the occultation of the twelfth Imam.

*Shura* also plays a major role in the political system of Islam. The subject of *shura* in Islam embraces all the spheres of human life as well as the background for determination of the secondary rulings. The secondary rulings are deduced by a fully-qualified jurist with regard to the circumstances and conditions of an individual or society.

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<sup>1</sup> See also the verse 42:3.

<sup>2</sup> See also the verses 33:2; 45:18; 45:19 and 5:47.

<sup>3</sup> See also the verses 4:69; 4:70 and 33:71.

<sup>4</sup> See also the verses 4:15; 4:42 and 5:49.

<sup>5</sup> See also the verses 4:105, 24:47, 24:48, 24:49, 24:50, 24:51 and 24:52.

## Ijtihād: *Takhti'ah* or *Taswib*

Mohammad Namazi

### Introduction

Since Islamic shari'ah (law) is for all people at all times and in all places, it provides for every Muslim all the legal rules regarding whether an act is obligatory, forbidden, disliked, recommended or permissible, which he needs in order to obtain his real salvation.<sup>1</sup>

Since the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet do not deal with all the individual rulings in a very specific and detailed way and contain mostly general rulings, ijtihād, i.e. a total expenditure of effort in the seeking of an opinion regarding a rule of divine law, is often needed.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>3</sup> According to B. G. Weiss, "since the law of God comprehends, in principle, the whole of life, it must be continually expounded as novel life situations present themselves. Consequently, the existence of ijtihād is not a right but a responsibility, one that rests in every age upon the community as a whole."<sup>4</sup> However one of the controversial problems in ijtihād is that of takhti'ah (fallibilism; admission of the possibility of error in the judgments of the jurist, *mujtahid*) and taswib

(infallibilism; maintenance of the jurist's infallibility and denial of any possibility of error). In other words, there is a question whether jurists holding conflicting opinions can all be said to be above error. Muslim thinking on this issue is truly divided. There are two completely different opinions. Shi'ah scholars and a number of Sunni scholars admit the possibility of error in the fatwas of the jurists and accordingly they are called, "mukhatti'ah (derived from *khata'*, error),<sup>5</sup> whereas a majority of Sunni scholars believe that the mujtahids are above error, and hence refer to them as *musammibab* (derived from *sawāb*)<sup>6</sup>. In this paper I intend to consider briefly the concept, definition, and types of ijtihād and then examine briefly the criteria and justification of takhti'ah and taswib according to both Shi'a and Sunni scholars. I will also try to present the arguments of both sides in the issue.

It is narrated that the great Hanafī jurist 'Alā' al-Dīn al-Kāshānī (d. 578/1182), once conducted a disputation about the Hanafī doctrine of ijtihād with another Hanafī jurist in Anatolia. Al-Kāshānī's opponent observed that for Abu Hanīfah, every mujtahid was correct. Losing his patience al-Kāshānī finally raised his whip to strike the other jurist.<sup>7</sup> Commenting on the doctrine that every mujtahid is correct, Aron Zysow quotes Bāqillānī as having said: "Had al-Shāfi'ī not accepted it I would not number him among the *usulīs*."<sup>8</sup> Consequently one important aspect of the intellectual doctrine of the infallibility of ijtihād is the emphasis it places on the act of the jurist, i.e. on the process of ijtihād as opposed to its product.<sup>9</sup>

In considering this problem, one should define *ijtihād* in detail according to both Shi'a and Sunni scholars in order to see what this word implies. Literally *ijtihād* means "a total expenditure of effort in the attempt to achieve something whose realization is burdensome and difficult."<sup>10</sup> In jurisprudence, according to *Âmidī*, it means "a total expenditure of effort in seeking an opinion regarding a religious ruling such that the one (putting forth the effort) senses within himself an inability to do more (than he has done)."<sup>11</sup> Although Shi'a scholars accept the above definition,<sup>12</sup> they nevertheless differ from Sunni scholars in enumerating the authentic sources. According to many Sunni Scholars, there are four sources of law: the Qur'an, the Sunnah, *ijmā'* (consensus) and *qiyās*. After the Qur'an and the Sunnah, instead of *qiyās* which does not lead to certainty, the Shi'a invoke to *'aql* (reason) and believe that decisive rational judgements are approved by religion. The Shi'a also accept *ijmā'* but not as an independent source from the Sunnah; for them it is accepted as a proof if and only if it could unveil the Sunnah.

It has to be noted that among the Sunni scholars especially in the early centuries, *ijtihād* was normally used in the sense of *qiyās*, that is to extend the ruling of one case for which we have proof in religious sources to another case for which we have no proof in religious sources, just because they look similar. Therefore, the Shi'a scholars were reluctant to use the term *ijtihād* for the whole process of exhausting one's talents and abilities to discover a religious ruling from its sources. Ayatollah Mutahhari was of the idea that presumably

“the first among the Shi‘a to use the term *ijtihād* and *mujtahid* in the latter sense was ‘Allāmah al-Hillī (647-726 A.H). In the chapter on *ijtihād*, in his book *Tabdhīb al-Wusūl ilā ‘Ilm al-Uṣūl*, he used the word in the same sense as it is used today.”<sup>13</sup>

### Types of Ijtihād

According to the Shi‘a scholars, *ijtihād* is of two types; one is legitimate and the other is forbidden. The forbidden *ijtihād* has the sense of legislation; i.e. when a *mujtahid* formulates a rule by his own personal judgment which is neither based on the Qur'an nor the Sunnah.<sup>14</sup> This is called, “*ijtihād bi al-ra'y*”. Unlike some Sunni scholars who consider this permissible and count it as an independent source of legislation parallel to the Qur'an and the Sunnah, the Shi‘a have forbidden it.<sup>15</sup> In this regard B. G. Weiss states:

The use of analogical reasoning (*qiyās*) to deduce additional rulings from rulings established through exegesis of the texts has been a matter of considerable controversy among Muslims. The main living adversaries of this method are *Twelve Shi‘i* scholars. Among *Sunnīs* of all four surviving schools of law, the method is universally accepted...In any case, *ijtihād* is clearly not to be identified solely with *qiyās*.<sup>16</sup>

*Ijtihād bi al-ra'y* is not considered legitimate by the Shi‘a and their Imāms. They reject it primarily on the basis that the general principles

and guidelines given in the Qur'an and the Sunnah are sufficient. For example, there are many hadiths in *Al-Kāfi*, a major collection of Shi'a hadith, stressing on the fact that there is no *harām* or *halal* and nothing needed by the people except that it is present in the Qur'an or in the Sunnah.<sup>17</sup> Discussing this point, J. Calmard states that "Imāmi methodology remains broadly anchored in *al-ijtihād al-sbar'i*, based on revelation and on the sciences of *hadīth* and its major authorities (*rijāl*) and not on *al-ijtihād al-'aqlī*, related to *qiyās*."<sup>18</sup> However it is beyond the limits of this paper to bring these considerations forward and discuss them.

For the Shi'a, who define *ijtihād* as the effort to discover the real law from the sources of the Shari'ah, it is difficult to imagine that every mujtahid is always right. According to Mutahhari, "it is not possible that whatever any mujtahid may judge should be correct and his judgment should be the real law; for it is possible that different mujtahids may hold divergent opinions simultaneously about the certain subject and the same mujtahids may hold different opinions at different times about the same issue. How is it possible that he should always be right?"<sup>19</sup> To elucidate the real significance of this idea, I must explain briefly the criteria of the opposite view i.e. *taswib* and the historical background of this subject.

### **Ijtihād and Taswīb**

The main issue between musawwibîn and mukhatti'in is this: when we have no certain text which is applicable to an event then is there truly a Divine law related to it and should the mujtahid try to draw it out? If he succeeds he is musib, if not, he is mukhti. Or perhaps God has no real law for every event or problem and the mujtahid's solution is entirely of his own devising. Thus, in a case where we have no text or proof, God's law is a function of the mujtahid's reasoning.<sup>20</sup> According to B. G. Weiss, "Though this way of thinking had at least one great Ash'ari divine among its supporters, it could clearly be disturbing to anyone who built his entire jurisprudence around the notion of a single correct rule as the object of the whole enterprise of ijtihād. ...if the law did not reside in an original intent of the Legislator, what was the mujtahid striving for in the first place? Was there an original intent that he should seek to understand."<sup>21</sup>

According to Mutahhari, the main element of the theory of taswib lies in a certain theory of ijtihād which is held by those who defined ijtihād as the practice of qiyās and ra'y. They point out that the laws sanctioned by the Prophet through revelation are limited, whereas issues and problems which require legislation are unlimited in number. Therefore, the laws given by the Divine Lawgiver are not sufficient to meet the requirements. Accordingly, God has given the right to the scholars of the Ummah, or a group of them, to employ their personal taste and intelligence in cases where there are no

religious dicta and select something which resembles other Islamic laws and is closer to the criteria of justice and truth. In accordance with this view of *ijtihād*, Mutahhari says, they accept the theory of *taswib*, for, according to this view, *ijtihād* itself is one of the sources of Divine Law.<sup>22</sup>

However, this idea is unacceptable to Shi‘a scholars because they believe that there is a real divine ruling pertaining to every problem and the most a jurist needs to do through *ijtihād* is to discover it with the help of reliable canonical sources. So, in the light of such an understanding of *ijtihād* it is impossible that every mujtahid should be right.<sup>23</sup> In this regard ‘Allāmah Hilli states:

The scholars are in agreement that there is only one correct opinion in rational matters (*al-‘aqliyyāt*),<sup>24</sup> except al-Jāhiz<sup>25</sup> and al-‘Anbari,<sup>26</sup> who were of the opinion that every person who practiced *ijtihād* with respect to rational issues produced a correct opinion, not in the sense of a correspondence with the truth but in the sense of a reprehensible error being eliminated. But the true opinion is the first, because God made the search for knowledge a duty and set up a proof for it, and whoever is incorrect therein still has to discharge his duty.<sup>27</sup>

So according to the Shi'a viewpoint, there is only one correct opinion, which is that which corresponds in reality to God's commandment. In other words the rule is specific and there is only one correct opinion, and one who opposes it is in error.<sup>28</sup>

### **The Idea of Taswib and Its Justification**

Those who believe in taswib have mentioned many arguments of which two are very important. The first argument which they employ is based on the following verses:

And David and Solomon-when they gave judgment concerning the tillage, when the sheep of the people strayed there, and We bore witness to their judgment and We made Solomon to understand it and unto each gave We judgment and knowledge. (21:79 & 80)

Those who believe in taswib argue that the final statement in this passage could not be true if one of the two men (let us assume David) was in error; therefore, both Solomon and David must be considered to have been right (*musîb*) even though their judgments differed.<sup>29</sup> Âmidî answers this argument by saying that the main point in this statement is that both David and Solomon possessed judgment and knowledge that God had given them. And this judgment and knowledge did not, in the case of David, necessarily support the case mentioned in this passage. The judgment and knowledge referred to could very well have consisted merely of judgment and knowledge

relating to the employment of indicators of the law and the methodology of derivation of law from texts, namely *ijtihād*.<sup>30</sup>

The second argument mentioned by Sunni scholars is based on the Prophet's saying, "My Companions are like stars; whomsoever you follow you will be guided". This statement makes the opinions of the Companions a source of guidance even if they differ from one another. It follows that if it were possible for any companion to err he could not therefore have been described as "like a star" in the sense intended by the Prophet; namely as a guide.<sup>31</sup> However the argument based on this hadith was criticized by Muslim scholars. Ayatollah Riḍā Sadr makes several points here:<sup>32</sup>

1. This hadith is weak, since it is not well documented.
2. To accept this report from a companion because every companion is to be taken as a guide is a clear circulation.
3. The expression "whomsoever you follow" requires possibility of following any companion, even the most ignorant of them. Clearly this is an injustice to the more learned companions.
4. If we accept this argument we should accept that guidance could be given even by two contradictory traditions, for, we often see that sometimes there are differences in the companion's views.
5. The comparison in this hadith does not take place between every one of the companions and every star, rather it is made between the

entirety of the companions and the entirety of the stars, which implies that we have to follow companions only in their totality, that is, when they are in complete agreement. For, although the stars have different locations and appear at different moments, all stars agree in indicating celestial time.

6. Âmidî also responds<sup>33</sup> to this problem by saying that although the Prophet's saying applies to all the companions, it cannot be taken to mean that we are to follow their example in all matters.

Finally according to A. Zysow some of the objectionable consequences of taswib are:

- a) rejection of the systematic quality of the legal process;
- b) the anti-systematic character of taswib appears in its relativism;
- c) taswib appears equally anti-systematic when looked at from the point of view of the lay followers (*muqallid*).<sup>34</sup>

### **The Idea of Takhti'ah**

As was mentioned before, the main idea of the mukhatti'ah is that there is only one correct opinion, which corresponds in reality to God's commandment. In other words, the rule is specific, and there is only one correct opinion, just as the one who opposes it, is in error.<sup>35</sup> According to Tusi, God has only one ruling for each problem, and a qualified jurist may err in discovering the real divine ruling, but he is

excused, if he has done his best.<sup>36</sup> According to Arthur Pap, in contrast to *taswib* which introduces into the law a discontinuity between the revealed texts and the product of *ijtihâd*, *takhtî'ah* holds that just as there can be no inconsistencies between the revealed texts, there can be none in the rules derived from those texts.<sup>37</sup> Pap also says: "Infallibilism is thus a form of pragmatism as opposed to the realism of fallibilism. It is essentially an extension of utilitarian ways of thinking (or speaking) from ethics to epistemology."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Bernard G. Weiss, *The Search for God's Law: Islamic jurisprudence in the writing of Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992), p. 683. See also Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī, *al-Ihkām fī Usūl al-Ahkām*, Vol. 4, (Cairo: Dār al-Hadīth, 19--), p. 218, where this definition of *ijtihād* can be found: "Istifrāghu al-wus‘ fī tahqīq-i amrin min al-umūr mustalzimin lil-kulfati wal-mashaqqah."

<sup>4</sup> Bernard G. Weiss, "Ijtihād", *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 7, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), p. 92. See also W. B. Hallaq, "On the Origins of the Controversy about the Existence of Mujtahida and the Gate of Ijtihād", *Studia Islamica*, vol. 63 (1986), pp.132-3.

<sup>5</sup> Āmidī, *al-Ihkām*, p. 247. Āmidī himself is in this group. I will discuss his ideas below. According to Āmidī, Ibn Furak and Abū Ishāq al-Isfarā’inī are also members. See John Cooper, trans. "‘Allāmah Hillī on the Imamate and Ijtihād", in *Authority and Political Culture in Islam*, ed. S. Amir Arjomand (Albany: State University of New York, 1988), p. 245. Hillī adds to this group Bishr al-Marīsī (d. 218/833).

<sup>6</sup> Āmidī, *al-Ihkām*, p. 246. Among those who supported this position Āmidī mentions Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī, Abū al-Hudhayl al-‘Allāf (d. 226/840-41 or 235/849-50), the first systematic theologian of the Mu‘tazilī school, Abū Alī al-Jubbāī (d. 303/915-6), and his son Abū Hāshim (d. 321/933) the famous Mu‘tazilī theologians. See also John Cooper, "‘Allāmah Hillī on the Imamate and Ijtihād", p. 245.

<sup>7</sup> Aron Zysow, *The Economy of Certainty: An Introduction to the Typology of Islamic Legal Theory* (Cambridge Mass. : Harvard University, 1984), p. 459.

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<sup>9</sup> A. Zysow, *The Economy of Certainty*, p. 460.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. See also R. Sadr, *al-Ijtihâd wa al-Taqlîd*, p. 19.

<sup>11</sup> B. G. Weiss, *The Search for God's Law*, p. 683. See also Âmidî, *Ihkâm*, p. 218.

<sup>12</sup> See al-'Allâmah Hillî, *Mabâdi al-Wusûl 'ilâ 'Ilm al-Usûl* (Beirut: al-Dâr al-Islâmîyyah, 1970), p. 24. See also Sheikh Hasan b. Zayn al-Dîn Shahîd Thâni, *Ma'âlim al-Usûl*, ed. Mahdî Muhaghgh (Tehran: Shirkat-i Intishârât-i 'Ilmî wa Farhangî, 1985), p. 268. See also al-Âkhûnd Muhammad Kâẓim al-Khurâsânî, *Kifâyat al-Usûl* (Qum: Mu'assisah Âl al-Bayt, 1990), p. 464.

<sup>13</sup> Murtadâ Mutahharî, "Ijtihad in the Imâmîyah Tradition", trans. Mahliqâ Qarâ'î, *Al-Tawhîd*, vol. 4 (1986-87), pp. 29-30.

<sup>14</sup> The *Sunnah* is the narrative recording the divinely sanctioned customs of the Prophet (and thirteen infallible members of his household).

<sup>15</sup> M. Mutahharî, "Ijtihad in the Imâmîyah Tradition", pp. 26-7; A. Zysow, *The Economy of Certainty*, p. 462. Zysow states that the objection against analogy had been raised earlier (than Abû Ya'la b. al-Farrâ) by al-Shaykh al-Mufîd in a disputation with al-Bâqilânî.

<sup>16</sup> Bernard G. Weiss, "Ijtihâd", *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 7, p. 91.

<sup>17</sup> M. Mutahharî, "Ijtihad in the Imâmîyyah Tradition", pp. 27-8.

<sup>18</sup> J. Calmard, "Mudjtahid" in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 19--), vol. 7. p. 297.

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<sup>20</sup> R. Sadr, *al-Ijtihâd wa al-Taqlîd*, p. 33.

<sup>21</sup> B. G. Weiss, *The Search for God's Law*, p. 700.

<sup>22</sup> M. Mutahharî, "The Role of Ijtihad in Legislation", p. 28. See also Muhammad Bâqir al-Sadr, *al-Ma'âlim al-Jadîdah lil-Usûl* (Tehran: Maktabat al-Najâh, 1975) pp. 38-9.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> I believe this term al-'Aqlîyât has the connotation that no text is available to aid in rendering a judgment.

<sup>25</sup> al-Jâhîz (160/776 - 255/868-9), the famous man of letters and Mu'tazilî theologian of the Basran school.

<sup>26</sup> 'Ubayd Allah b. al-Hasan b. al-Husayn al-'Anbari (105/723 - 168/785), a Basran jurist and traditionalist.

<sup>27</sup> J. Cooper, " 'Allâmah Hilli on the Imamate and Ijtihâd", p. 245.

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<sup>29</sup> B. G. Weiss, *The Search for God's Law*, p. 702.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. See also R. Sadr, *al-Ijtihâd wa al-Taqlîd*, p. 35-6.

<sup>32</sup> Sadr, Ibid.

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<sup>33</sup> B. G. Weiss, *The Search for God's Law*, p. 702. See also Âmidî, *al-Ihkâm*, p. 262.

<sup>34</sup> A. Zysow, *The Economy of Certainty*, p. 480-1.

<sup>35</sup> J. Cooper, "'Allâmah Hillî on the Imamate and Ijtihâd," p. 245. See also M. K. al-Khurâsânî, *Kifâyat al-Usûl*, p. 468-9. See A. Hillî, *Mabâdi al-Wusûl 'ilâ 'Ilm al-Usûl*, p. 244; See also H. Z. Shahîd Thâni, *Ma'âlim al-Usûl*, p. 272-3.

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## Intellectual, Political and Social Status of the Shi'ites on the Verge of Occultation

Mas'ud Pur Sayyid Aqaei

Translated by Mohammad Reza Farajian

In the period prior to the beginning of occultation (260 A.H), Shi'ites were fortunate to have outstanding intellectual scholars who were trained by Imams (A.S) and to whom the principles were taught. Those principles were known as the "Four Hundred Principles" (Usūl 'Arbi'a Mi'ah). Principles of Shi'ite jurisprudence and beliefs were explained by Imams (A.S) and were gathered in these collections of hadith. However, the situation was politically grave and critical. Imams of the Shi'ites were besieged and despite their firm *taqīyah* (prudent dissimulation); they were brought to Samarra from Medina to be kept under stricter control. Shi'ites' contact with Imams was very risky and difficult.

In that stage, when the struggle became so crucial and complex, the strategic plan of the Shi'ites was formed in the "Secret Network of Deputation"; a network which was founded during the age of Imam

Sādiq (A.S) and came to power during the age of ‘Askariyān (A.S) (the two imprisoned Imams i.e. the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> Imams). The secret network of deputation was a very complex organized system whose depth, complexity and significant role cannot be analyzed without an intensive study and analysis of its hidden aspects.

In that period, having hidden tactful contacts [with his companions] the Imams (A.S) developed that network and subsequently guarded, strengthened and developed the Shi‘ite community.

During that momentous stage of oppositions, another step that Shi‘ite Imams took was to support and advocate some of ‘Alawīs’ oppositions in weakening the pillars of Abbasid government and preventing their tyranny and aggression.

From the social view, the Shi‘ite community was under Caliphs’ strong pressure and aggression. Their properties were confiscated and their lives were in danger. They were also unseated from important posts and positions and oppressed as much as possible. Some of them took important posts by practicing *taqīyah* so that they could help the poor and the oppressed and take appropriate measures when necessary.

Although Shi‘ite leadership was kept under control, as with the other Imams (A.S), it had an outstanding authority among all social classes.

Kulayni quoted from a member of Banī Hanīfah tribe living in Sīstān who had told him: “At the beginning of Mu‘tasim’s Caliphate, I accompanied Abu Ja‘far, Imam Jawād (A.S), when he was going to Hajj. Then one day, when we sat to eat while some people of the royal court were with us, I told him: “O' May I be sacrificed in your way! Our governor is one who is among your Shi‘ites and in his records (account book, record book) some taxes are assigned for me. I wondered if you think it is appropriate that you write a letter to him and tell him to have mercy on me [about this].”

Abu Ja‘far (A.S) stated: “I do not know him.” I said: “O' May I be sacrificed in your way! As I mentioned, he is among your Shi‘ites and your letter will be to my benefit.” So, he (A.S) took a paper and wrote:

“In the Name of Allah the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful. And then; the carrier of this letter described your religion and undertaking as to be very nice. Surely, the beneficial deed for you is the one in which you do the good; then do well by your brethren and know (be aware) that the God Almighty will ask you about [your deed even if having] an amount of a particle.”

The man said: “when I came to Sīstān, I found that Ḥusayn b. ‘Abdullah Neyshābūrī, the governor, already knew about the matter. He came out of the city about two parasangs [about 11~12

kilometers] to welcome me; then I gave him the letter. He kissed it and put it on his eyes and asked me: “what do you want?” I said: “There is some tax assigned for me in your finance bureau.” He ordered to abolish that [unjust] tax from me.<sup>1</sup>

### A) Intellectual Status

Intellectually, Shi‘ites had a privileged status in that period. Moreover, their doctrines of religion were established by Imam Sādiq (A.S) and Imam Baqir (A.S) and also Hadiths were saved in forms of Uṣūl and Jawāmi‘<sup>2</sup> while validation criteria of Hadiths and their refinement were gained from Imams (A.S). Sheikhs, pupils and companions<sup>3</sup> were trained to resolve crises and also support Shi‘ite’s reputation in beliefs and jurisprudence against different groups and sects, especially those who had Caliphs’ support.

Guarding Islam and the concept of revelation and protecting it from misleaders and crises are among the duties of Imams (A.S). Some significant features of this period were ‘Askariyain’s (A.S) illuminations and true policy-makings against society’s intellectual deviances such as the Waqifites, the Mufawwiḍah, dualists (*thanawiyah*) and zealots (*ghulāt*).<sup>4</sup> Answering to jurisprudential questions and thought problems as well as keeping Shi‘ites away from engaging in useless debates and unnecessary conflicts were among remarkable characteristics of that period.

Once, in answering one of the Shi'ites' question about whether the Qur'ān is created [by God], Imam Hādī (A.S) wrote: "In the Name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful; May God keeps us from being affected by this tribulation for then He has bestowed us the greatest bounty and the rest is all distractions ahead of us. In our opinion, arguing about the Qur'ān (that if it has been created or it has been eternal) is a (reprehensible) innovation whose questioner and questioned are involved; because the questioner is looking for what he does not deserve it and the one who is questioned runs himself into trouble for an unimportant matter which is out of his competence. The creator is no one but Allah and all others are creatures except Him, so the Qur'ān is His words. Then, do not name it otherwise, for then you will be among the those who go astray. May Allah hold you and us up as exemplars of His word that states: "The pious who fear their Lord in secret, and who are apprehensive of the Hour. (21:49)."<sup>5</sup>

Of the other key measures 'Askariyān (A.S) took in that period was to provide intellectual preparation for Shi'ites for entering "the age of occultation"; among whose procedures were their hadiths about approaching occultation and their good news about the birth of Allah's authority (the promised Mahdi)<sup>6</sup>. Other activities consisted of referring the Shi'ites to Imam's deputies<sup>7</sup> and validating some of jurisprudential books and hadith references<sup>8</sup> and finally reducing their direct contacts with Shi'ites, until even in Samarra, they would answer Shi'ites' problems and issues by letter or their deputies and doing so,

they prepared the Shi‘ites to adapt themselves to conditions of the age of occultation and also indirect contact with Imam (A.S).<sup>9</sup> As we will see later, this was the policy that the Twelfth Imam (A.S) himself later on adopted during the age of “minor occultation” and gradually prepared Shi‘ites for the “greater occultation”.

## **B) Political Situation**

### **1. Transferring ‘Askariyān (A.S) from Medina to Samarra and strict Control Over Them**

In that period, the policy of the ‘Abbasid Caliph Mutawakkil was the same as Ma’mūn’s against Imam Riḍā (A.S) and Imam Jawād (A.S) and that was to draw Imam Hādī (A.S) nearer to the court and limit him to the periphery of government to be able to control Imam totally and to know about all his movements and to isolate him from the Shi‘ites. The same policy was followed with respect to Imam ‘Askarī (A.S); therefore, similar to his father, he was kept under control in Samarra and had to call the Caliph’s palace every Monday and Thursday.<sup>10</sup>

The reason for calling Imam Hādī (A.S) to Samarra was the reports that Mutawakkil had received about Imam’s activities in Medina and people’s attention and interest about him.<sup>11</sup> They brought Imam from Medina to Samarra forcibly<sup>12</sup> and kept him under strict control and attacked his house at midnight and inspected it on the slightest pretext, such as that Imam had hidden money and weaponry.<sup>13</sup>

After Imam Hādī (A.S) passed away, Imam ‘Askarī (A.S) became the next Imam at the age of 22 and until his martyrdom at the age of 28, he was under control of the Caliph’s agents in Samarra.

## **2. ‘Askariyān’s different methods of political oppositions**

‘Askariyān’s political oppositions, similar to their intellectual oppositions, had different approaches and aspects; from the policy of *taqīyah* to allowing some Shi‘ites to assume positions in the government (in order to help the poor and the oppressed),<sup>14</sup> preservation of the Shi‘ites<sup>15</sup>, fulfilling their needs<sup>16</sup>, approving and supporting some opposing groups<sup>17</sup> and most of all, developing and reinforcing the secret network of deputies; a network which was founded at the time of Imam Sādiq (A.S) and in ‘Askariyān’s period came to develop at a faster pace. More about this network and the factors of its development in that period, its importance, features and historical course will be discussed in detail in the next section; and are mentioned here just to introduce the matter. We will have a brief look at the policy of taqīyah as the key to understand Imamate history.

With respect to taqīyah, it should be briefly stated that it is a complex form of opposition. Taqīyah is not doing nothing, but it is doing everything needed in secret; and in all its kinds, it is a kind of holy struggle and defense. We read in hadiths, “Taqīyah is a part of my faith and my fathers’, and no one is faithful unless he practices taqīyah [if needed]”,<sup>18</sup> “Nine tenth of the religion is in taqīyah, and no one follows the religion unless he practices taqīyah”,<sup>19</sup> “The faithful

should be like descendants of Imam Ali. The faithful should be a [holy] struggler, but you are recommended to perform the practice of taqīyah under an illegitimate government and to fight full-frontally under a legitimate one.”<sup>20</sup>

Taqīyah has been the reason for Shi‘a’s survival against all illegitimate rulers and arrogant powers. The history of Imams’ taqīyah is the key to understand the history of Shi‘a, and without it, Imams’ movement will not be analyzable while it will also be considered as non-systematic, non-strategic, weak and cowardly. Inevitably, we have to cose this issue with three hadiths from Imam ‘Ali (A.S), Imam Hādī (A.S) and Imam ‘Askarī (A.S) about the importance of taqīyah.

Referring to the what happened after the demise of the Prophet Mohammad, Imam Ali (A.S) states: “...I sat aside and thought whether I have to fight without hands or I must be patient with the blind unknowingness. This unknowingness which kills the old, ages the child and grinds the faithful down in pain till he meets his Lord. I found patience with this all better and wiser. So I tolerated with wet eyes and aching throat; while I was watching my heritage being robbed.”<sup>21</sup> And that is the very Imam ‘Ali’s taqīyah. He had to forbear in loneliness.

Imam Hādī (A.S) told Dāwūd Sarumī: “O’ Dāwūd! I would have been right if I had stated that the one who ignores taqīyah is like the one who leaves daily prayer”.<sup>22</sup> In this tradition, giving up taqīyah is compared to giving up the prayer.

Imam ‘Askarī (A.S) told one of his Shi‘ites who had advised his friend to practice *taqīyah*: “You are the exemplar of what the Prophet (p.b.w.h) stated that: One who advises another to the good, it is as though he himself has done it.” Then Imam (A.S) continued:

God gave him reward for the sake of your friend’s *taqīyah* as to the number of those who practiced it and those who gave it up (rightly) from among our followers and Shi‘ites, as if the slightest amount of those rewards would absolve sins committed in a hundred years. Moreover, because of your advice you receive as much reward as your friend does.<sup>23</sup>

It is obvious that this much reward is for many fruits of *taqīyah*. The amount of practice of *taqīyah* during Imam’s (A.S) period was to such an extent that he would send his Shi‘ites a message that they had to point or wave with their hands instead of saying hello to Imam (A.S) in order to save their lives.<sup>24</sup> And once he (A.S) told one of his Shi‘ites openly that: “If you did not practice *taqīyah* you would be killed; [you have to choose] either *taqīyah* and concealment or death and being killed.”<sup>25</sup>

### C) Social Situation

In this part, we will analyze the social situation of the Shi‘ites, their status and their leadership authority.

#### 1. Shi‘ites’ Situation

Although in that period, many cities were Shi'ite-resident centres,<sup>26</sup> Shi'ites' condition could be described as being poor, suppressed, removed from posts and most of all, deprivation from the privilege of being with Imam (A.S) and in fact, reducing the contact with Imam (A.S) to the minimum.

### **1.1 Minimum contact with Imam (A.S)**

Although Imam (A.S) would make contact with his Shi'ites, by any means, strict control of Imam and torture and harassment of those in contact with Imam would lead the contact of Imam with his Shi'ite to be at a minimum. This very matter would lead to adverse consequences; although with Imam's wisdom, those consequences were kept at a minimum, but not completely eliminated.

### **1.2 Suppression**

In that period, Shi'ites were completely suppressed by Abbasid Caliphs. Mutawakkil's offences against Shi'ites varied from the network of the troops of Shākiriyyah to destroying Imam Husayn's (A.S) shrine. To suppress Shi'ites even more, Mutawakkil commanded the governor of Egypt to exile Talibiyūn to Iraq. The governor of Egypt did so; then in 236 A.H. Mutawakkil drove them out to Medina where earlier 'Alawīs (the descendents of Imam Ali) were exiled.<sup>27</sup>

Mutawakkil also warned residents of Hijāz not to make any contact with 'Alawīs or support them financially. Many of them were punished very severely because of disobeying his command. As

Isfahānī wrote, in this way, Mutawakkil treated ‘Alawīs very aggressively in Medina, whereby ‘Alawīs were completely segregated from others and deprived of the very basic means of subsistence.

### **1.3 Dismissal from posts**

According to Mas‘ūdī, Mutawakkil dismissed Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm, the governor of Samarra and Sirwān in Jabal province, from his post because of being a Shi‘ite.<sup>28</sup> Many other people also lost their positions because of similar reasons.<sup>29 30</sup>

### **1.4 Withholding financial aids**

Mutawakkil confiscated Fadak estates which belonged to the descendants of Lady Fatimah. According to Sayyid ibn Ṭawūs’ writings, the income of Fadak was more than 24,000 dinars at that time. Mutawakkil gave it to his friend, ‘Abdullah b. ‘Umar Bezyār.<sup>31</sup> And as mentioned before, he warned Hijāz residents not to make any contact with ‘Alawīs nor support them financially.

Abu al-Faraj Isfahānī wrote: “Mutawakkil put severe financial pressures on ‘Alawīs and officially banned giving any kind of aid to them. He severely punished the offenders.”<sup>32</sup>

## **2. Social Status and the Influence of Shi‘ite leadership**

Despite all obstacles put by the government in their way, spiritual influence of Shi‘ite Imams (A.S) increased every day. The influence was to such an extent that even extended to Caliphs’ courts. Many

people were greatly attracted to Imams (A.S); even some ministers and commanders wholeheartedly did believe that the Imams (A.S) were just and right, and knew them as deserving the Caliphate, although they concealed their belief. In this section some examples of Imam Hādī (A.S) and Imam ‘Askarī’s (A.S) social status will be mentioned.

### **A) Imam Hādī’s (A.S) authority**

Here we will mention his influence in the court, among ‘Alawīs, people of the Book, Medina residents and the Shi‘ites.

#### **1. In the Court**

Mutawakkil was suffering from a painful abscess. He was very ill and was dying from pain but nobody ever dared to perform a surgery on it. Mutawakkil’s mother (Shujā‘) made a vow that if her son recovered from the illness, she would send a great deal of money to Imam Hādī (A.S). Fath b. Khāqān – a nobleman very close to him<sup>33</sup> - suggested to Mutawakkil to send someone to Abu al-Hassan al-Hādī (A.S) and to ask him about the cure for this illness; for he (A.S) may know the cure for it and give an advice. Mutawakkil ordered: “Send somebody to him (A.S)” Then his messenger went and came back with an instruction which cured Mutawakkil.<sup>34</sup> Also Mutawakkil called Imam (A.S) by Yahya b. Harthamah to Samarra because of slanders against Imam (A.S) in Medina. Imam (A.S) set out for Samarra accompanied by his family. Yahya himself rendered the service to Imam (A.S) and became impressed by Imam’s piety. The caravan travelled through

desert and arrived in Baghdad. Ya‘qūbī said that as soon as Imam (A.S.) arrived in “Yāsiriyyih”, Īshāq b. Ībrāhīm the governor of Bagdad met Imam (A.S.). When he saw the eagerness and interest of people toward Imam (A.S), he invited him to stay in Baghdad that night.<sup>35</sup>

Yahya told Baghdad’s governor the story. Baghdad’s governor said: “This man is the Prophet’s son while you know Mutawakkil’s deviation from the Prophet’s family; so if you tell him a wrong word about Imam Hādī (A.S); he will kill Imam (A.S) and on the day of Judgment, the Prophet (p.b.w.h) will be your enemy...” Yahya answered: “Swear by God, neither did I see anything in him (A.S) but the good, nor anything I disliked...” then they left Baghdad and set out for Samarra. As soon as they arrived, Yahya reached Wasīf Turkī who was a high ranking official in the government and informed him of Imam’s (A.S) arrival. Wasīf also warned him of telling things that would cause any danger to Imam (A.S) and told him: “O’ Yahya! Swear by God, if ever slightest danger faces Imam (A.S), you will be the only person responsible for it...”

Yahya was surprised by the similarity of Ishāq and Wasīf’s concern about guarding Imam (A.S) and his health.<sup>36</sup> Imam’s (A.S) popularity was to the extent that upon his arrival in Mutawakkil’s court, all courtiers and security guards would stand up before him, involuntarily open the doors immediately without any delay or question and draw aside the curtains.

Once Imam (A.S) was invited to a banquet which was held for a Caliph's son's birthday celebration. When Imam (A.S) entered the party, everyone fell silent treating him out of respect...<sup>37</sup>

## 2. Among 'Alawīs and others

Muhammad b Hassan Ashtar 'Alawī said: "With my father, some of 'Abbasids, Tālibīs (descendants of Abu Talib, the father of Imam Ali), some of the army officers and some other people were standing in the doorway of Mutawakkil's palace and suddenly Abu al-Hassan Imam Hādī (A.S) came and wanted to enter the palace. All the people who were in attendance got down their mounts and show[ed] him great respect until he (A.S) entered the palace. One person got angry about such homage and tribute and began to complain that: "To whom does all this acknowledgement and courtliness belong? Why do we have to pay this young man this much respect? He is neither higher than us in rank nor older in age! Swear by God, we will not rise for him or come off our mounts at the time of his coming out..."

Abu Hāshim Ja'farī answered him that: "Swear by God, you will respect him (A.S) in the humblest manner!" After some moments, Imam (A.S) came out of palace. The sound of acclamation echoed and all people stood up, showing respect to Imam (A.S); Abu Hāshim addressed people: "Were not you who decided not to respect his holiness?"

They answered: “Swear by God, we could not control our emotions and involuntarily came off our mounts to respect him (A.S).”<sup>38</sup>

Descendants of the Prophet (p.b.w.h) and noblemen were harmonious in respecting Imam (A.S) and all of them had accepted his leadership and preeminence. Zayd b. Mūsa b. Ja’far was among these ‘Alawīs known as Zayd al-Nār who was Imam’s (A.S) uncle and was so old and long-lived. Once when visiting Imam (A.S), he came to the doorway of the Imam’s (A.S.) house and wanted ‘Amr b. Faraj who was the doorway guard to ask entrance permission from Imam (A.S) for him. Imam (A.S) granted the permission and Zayd came in and sat politely and respectfully before Imam (A.S) who was sitting in the upper part of (assembly) room and doing so, he acknowledged Imam’s (A.S) supremacy and leadership.

Another day, Zayd came to see Imam (A.S) but Imam (A.S) was not present in the room and Zayd sat in the upper part of the room; after a few moments, Imam (A.S) entered; as soon as Zayd saw Imam (A.S), he rose from his place and offered the same seat to Imam (A.S) while he himself sat politely in front of Imam (A.S). This happened when Imam (A.S) was so young and Zayd was an elderly man; but Zayd’s action was considered as his acknowledgement of Imam’s (A.S) leadership and supremacy and it was similar to how all people acknowledged Imam’s (A.S) leadership.<sup>39</sup>

### **3. Among Medina’s residents**

When people of Medina found out about the mission of Mutawakkil's executive agent, Yahya b. Harthamah, who wanted to take Imam (A.S) to Samarra, they began to cry and weep in such a way that Yahya said: "I had never seen or heard like that, and that was so that I had to calm them down and that did not take effect until I swore by God that no harm would ever come to him."<sup>40</sup>

#### **4. Among People of the Book**

Imam's (A.S) authority was not limited to Shi'ites; it included people of the Book as well. They greatly respected Imam (A.S), and when having trouble and difficulty, they used to seek help from him. They even gave him presents.

Hibatallah b. Abī Maṣṣūr said: "Once Yusuf b. Ya'qūb who was Christian and of my father's friends, came to our home in Baghdad. My father asked him the reason for coming. Yusuf said: "Mutawakkil 'Abbāsī has summoned me, but I do not know why. So I have insured myself for one hundred dinars and have come to give them to 'Ali b. Mohammad b. Ali Riḡā."<sup>41</sup>

#### **5. Among Samarra Shi'ites**

Mutawakkil would always prevent people from visiting Imam Hādī (A.S). Once Imam (A.S) was in Mutawakkil's palace, and numerous people were behind the door. The narrator said that: "I asked them why they were gathering there. They answered that: "We are waiting

for our lord to see him and salute him and then we will go.” I asked them if they knew him. They answered: “Yes! We all know him”.<sup>42</sup>

## **B) Imam ‘Askarī’s (A.S) authority**

In this part, we will have a short review about Imam ‘Askarī’s social status in the court, among caliphs and ministers, to people of the Book, religious leaders, Shi‘ites and others.

### **1. Among Caliphs**

Some of that period’s caliphs like Mu‘tamid would seek recourse to Imam ‘Askarī (A.S) when they were in considerable need; and they would ask him for prayer.<sup>43</sup> They would also ask him for help in crises and at key points. For once Mu‘tamid ordered to free Imam ‘Askarī (A.S) from prison temporarily to stand against deviants’ perversities and to resolve all doubts and incredulities they had casted on people. Mu‘tamid addressed Imam (A.S) and said: “Save your father’s religion”!

Another time, he addressed Ja’far, Imam ‘Askarī’s (A.S) brother, when Ja’far asked Mu‘tamid to grant him his brother’s position; Mu‘tamid answered: “Your brother’s position was not in our hand, that it was from Allah; and despite our determined attempts in lowering your brother’s status, his authority would rise increasingly because of his knowledge and religious practices.”<sup>44</sup>

## 2. Among ministers

‘Ubayd b. Khāqān was one of the ministers in Abbasid’s caliphate who was concurrent with Imam (A.S). He said that: “If none of Abbasid caliphs is anymore caliph, then no one out of the Hashemite deserves caliphate but him (Imam Hassan ‘Askarī (A.S)). It is only this man who deserves caliphate because of his knowledge, virtue, guidance, self-possession, piety, religious practice and good morals. His father also like him was noble, generous, knowledgeable and well-meaning.”<sup>45</sup>

Ahmad b. ‘Ubaydillah b. Khāqān who was Nāsibī (anti-Ahlul Bayt), described Imam ‘Askarī’s (A.S) social status and authority like this: “In Samarra, I saw nobody among ‘Alawis like Hassan b. ‘Alī b. Mohammad al-Riḡa (A.S) in conduct, virtue, magnanimity, generosity, being respected by the family, the caliph and all Hāshimīs. Not only these people, but also all ministers, secretaries, commanders of army and others considered Imam (A.S) superior to all great ones.”<sup>46</sup>

He himself said that: “Anyone among the Hashemite, commanders, secretaries, judges, jurisprudents and other people would consider Imam (A.S) at the highest point of greatness, grandeur and superiority, when I asked them about him (Imam Hassan ‘Askarī (A.S)); They knew him (A.S) superior to all the relatives, nobles and all others and they would all say that: “He (A.S) is the leader of Shi‘ites” and he (A.S) was of great nobility and position before me

because everyone would speak of him as benevolent and widely regarded him as great.”<sup>47</sup>

### **3. Among Commanders**

One of the commanders and generals got off his mount as soon as he saw Imam ‘Askarī (A.S) and showed him respect. Imam (A.S) addressed him and stated: “Return to your place.” He returned while he was showing Imam respect.<sup>48</sup>

### **4. Before Mutawakkil’s doctor**

Bakhtīshū’ - Mutawakkil’s personal doctor – was one of the most distinguished doctors of his time. He told one of his pupils to perform phlebotomy for Imam (A.S). He told him: “Ibn al-Riḍa (Imam Askari) has asked me to send someone to perform phlebotomy for him; I chose you to go, you must know that he (A.S) is the most knowledgeable person living under the sun. So, do not ever neglect his orders or complain”.<sup>49</sup>

### **5. Among religious scholars**

Imam (A.S) had an absolutely outstanding status among his contemporaneous religious scholars. Jāhiz was among great writers of that period living in Basra. He met Imam (A.S) when he was a young man of 22 years old, and passed away five years before Imam’s (A.S) martyrdom. He said about Imam (A.S): “It has never happened for any of Arab or non-Arab ancestries except Tālibiyān that all of whom become scholars, virtuous, pious, brave, generous, pure, of a noble

nature and some of whom become the Prophet's successor and some others became the nominees of his successors; whose names from fathers to their sons are: Hasan b. 'Ali b. Mohammad b. 'Ali b. Mūsā b. Ja'far b. Mohammad b. 'Ali b. Husayn b. 'Ali".<sup>50</sup>

## **6. Among People of the Book**

Some of the nobles and scholars of the Book acknowledged Imam's (A.S) superiority and high status in a way Imam would state about some of them: "Praise be to Allah that made Christians more aware about our right than some Muslims."<sup>51</sup>

From among them, some became Muslims, such as Anūsh Nasrānī and the monk of 'Āqūl monastery.<sup>52</sup>

## **7. Among common people**

People would rush to meet Imam (A.S) from everywhere, and on the very day that Imam was supposed to come to the court, numerous Imam's devotees gathered with tearful eyes on Imam's route to meet him, in a way that the way would get blocked and no one could pass through. The sound of lament and wailing could be heard from everywhere but once Imam (A.S) came out of the door, silence would reign everywhere and everyone would be stunned by his supreme majesty and pave the way for him and stand there waiting for his return.<sup>53</sup>

Sheikh Sadūq quoted from Ahmad b. ‘Ubaydillah b. Khāqān – the caliph’s deputy in Qom - who was a Nāsibī and anti-Shi‘ite that he said:

“At the time of Imam ‘Askarī’s martyrdom, the whole bazaar (marketplace) closed and the Hashemite, all military men, secretaries, other people and my father (‘Ubaydillah b. Khāqān – Mu‘tamid Abbāsī’s minister) attended the Imam’s funeral. That day, considering the crowd, and the number of people wailing, was like a shot of the Day of Judgment.”

### **8. Among Shi‘ites**

Abu Hāshim Ja’farī who was among the faithful companions of Imam ‘Askarī (A.S) and Imam Hādī (A.S) had poems about Imam ‘Askarī which described his supreme status among Shi‘ites very well. Translation of some of those poems is the following:

“God granted him - Imam ‘Askarī - all miracles of Imamate as He had earlier granted Moses the miracles of splitting the sea, white hand and the stick.

God did not grant any miracles to the Prophets unless He granted Imams the same; and if you doubt about it, you may go and seek for the proof and evidence.”<sup>54</sup>

## Conclusion

Intellectual, political and social status of Shi'ites and their leadership in the time of the Imam Hadi (A.S) and Imam Askari (A.S) had special characteristics.

Shi'ite hadiths were compiled and masters of hadith and religious scholars were trained to resolve crises and troublesome events. Among Imams' efforts in that period were protecting Islam from being robbed by deviants, their proper positioning and elucidations, answering intellectual and jurisprudential questions and enabling Shi'ites to be prepared for entrance into the age of occultation of the Twelfth Imam (A.S).

In political aspect, the Shi'ite leadership was brought to Samarra from Medina forcibly and taken under strict control. Imam Hadi and Imam Askari began to develop and reinforce the deputies' network following the policy of *taqiyyah*.

Among their other measures were their support for some 'Alawīs' uprisings, preserving Shi'ites and allowing some of them to assume some positions in the government in order to help the poor and the oppressed.

From the social aspect, Shi'ites were in poverty, under pressure, suppression of beliefs and deprivation. And although Shi'ite leadership were besieged and restricted from making any contact with Shi'ites and other people, they had great influence among all classes

of society, from Shi'ites and common people to religious scholars, nobles, people of the Scriptures, commanders and ministers.

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### **Endnotes:**

<sup>1</sup> *Al-Kāfi*, Vol. 5, pp. 111 & 112; *Bihar Al-Anwar*, Vol. 50, pp. 86 & 87.

<sup>2</sup> Mohammad b. Ma‘ruf Hilālī said: “I went Hirah to Ja‘far b. Sadiq [Imam Sadiq] (A.S.). I could not reach him because of the many people around him, until the fourth day he saw me and took me beside himself. He went on pilgrimage to Imam Ali’s shrine after people went away, while I was his companion and heard what he stated. (Dr. Gorji, *Tārikh Fiqh wa Fuqaha*’, p. 115, quoted from *Rijal Najashī*) Hasan b. ‘Ali b. Ziyād and Sha’ told Ibn ‘Īsa: “I saw 900 Sheikhs in this mosque (Kūfah Mosque), all of whom would say: ‘Haddathani Ja‘far b. Mohammad [Imam Ja‘far Sadiq]’”.

Hafiz Abu al-‘Abbās b. Uqdah Hamidānī Kūfī (died 333 A.H) has written a book about the names of whom had quoted from Imam Sādiq (A.S) and has introduced 4000 persons.

During the time of Imam Baqir and Imam Sadiq, (A.S), hadithes spread so much among Shī‘ites that had never spread before in any period or religion. (ref. Faḍli, ‘Abdul Hādī, pp. 203 & 204) This period is called the period of spreading knowledge of ‘Aal-e Muhammad (A.S). (Ibid., p. 95)

<sup>3</sup> To know the number and the names of ‘Askariyān’s (A.S) pupils and companions ref. *Tārikh al-Tashri‘ al-Islāmī*.

Sheikh Tūsī counts the number of Imam Hādī’s (A.S) pupils in different fields as 185; among whom are distinguished people such as: Faḍl b. Shādhān, Husayn b. Sa‘id Ahwazi, Ayub b. Nuh, Abu ‘Ali Hasan b. Rāshid, Hasan b. ‘Ali Nāsir Kabīr, ‘Abdul ‘Azīm Hasani, ‘Utmān b. Sa‘id Ahwazi, some of whom have definitive works and publications in different fields of Islamic sciences. (*Al-Rijal*, Sheikh Tūsī, pp. 409 - 429) and also ref. *Hayāt al-Imām al-Hādī*, pp. 170 – 230.

Some researchers have counted the number of Imam ‘Askari’s (A.S) pupils and transmitters of his Hadiths up to 213; ref. *Hayāt al-Imām al-‘Askari*, pp. 345 – 413.

The author of *A'yan al-Shi'ah* also says: "Different sciences and knowledge acquired from Imam 'Askari (A.S) have filled papers of books." *A'yan al-Shi'ah*, Vol. 1, p. 40.

4 *Hayat al-Imam al-'Askari*, pp. 287-295.

5 *Tanbid*, p. 224.

6 *Hayat al-Imam al-'Askari*, p.316.

7 *Ibid.* p.324

8 *Ibid.* p.325

9 *Ibid.* p.324

10 *Al-Ghaybah*, Sheikh al-Tūsī, p. 139 (cited in *Tarikh Siyasi Gheybat-e Imam-e Davazdahom*, p.78); *Bihar al-Anwar*, Vol. 50, p.251; *Manaqib*, Vol. 4, p.432; *Dalail al-Imamah*, p.226.

11 *Al-Irshad*, p. 333; *Bihar al-Anwar*, Vol. 50, p. 200; *Ithbat al-Wasiyyah*, p. 225 (cited in *Tarikh Siyasi Gheybat-e Emam-e Davazdahom*, p.83).

12 Imam (A.S) himself stated: "They brought me from Medina to Samarra forcibly." (*Bihar al-Anwar*, Vol. 50, p. 129)

13 *Muruj al-Dhabab*, Vol. 4, p. 93; *Al-Irshad*, Vol. 2, p. 303.

14 Dr. Jāsim Hussain wrote that: "Imamate [deputies] network let its followers to work inside Abbasid Caliphate's government; therefore, Mohammad b. Isma'il b. Bazi, Ahmad b. Hamzah b. Qommī took prominent positions in ministry. (*Rijal Najashi*, p.254) Nooh b. Darrāj first became Baghdad's judge and then Kūfah's judge and he concealed his faith during his working life because his relatives were among Imam Javād's (A.S) officials. (*Rijal Najashi*, pp. 80 - 98) Some of the other Shi'ites like Husayn b. 'Abdullah Neishabūri became Sīstān's governor and Hakam b. 'Ulyā As'adi was elected as the governor of Bahrain. Both these people paid Khums (the one fifth tax) to Imam Javād (A.S) that suggested their allegiance to the Ninth Imam (A.S) (*Al-Kafi*, Vol. 5, p. 111); (*Al-Istībsar*, Vol. 2, p. 58); *Tarikh Siyasi Gheybat-e Emam-e Davazdahom*, p. 79.

15 Ref. *Bihar al-Anwar*, Vol. 50, pp. 140, 254, 269, 270 and 298.

16 Ref. *Bihar al-Anwar*, Vol. 50, pp. 259, 304; also ref. *Hayat al-Imam al-'Askari*, pp. 261- 266.

17 Ref. *Tarikh Siyasi Gheybat-e Emam-e Davazdahom*, pp. 85 – 89; Many historians like Isfahāni say that 'Alawwīan's uprisings in 250 – 251 A.H began in Kufah, Tabaristān, Rey, Qazvīn, Egypt and Hijāz. It is possible that these uprisings had been led by one group or more precisely, one leader.... Despite the Zaydi frontier of the uprising, many devoted Shi'as were involved. The leader of the insurgents was Yahya b. 'Umar who was assassinated (250 A.H.) while he was praised by Abu al-Qāsim Ja'fari, Imam Hādī's (A.S) deputy and gained his favor. (*Tabari*, Vol. 3, p. 1522)

Additionally, Mas'ūdī said that Ali b. Mūsā b. Ismā'il b. Mūsā al-Kādhim joined in the Rey's uprising but the caliph arrested him. Because this person was the grandchild of Ismā'il b. Mūsā al-Kādhim and served as an envoy of Twelvers in Egypt, it seems highly likely that his uprising was for Twelvers' support (*Muruj al-Zahab*, Vol. 7, p. 404). In addition, relevant information about secret activities of Twelvers and their role in the uprising is mentioned by Tabari. Government

officials considered the uprising to be by Zaydis rather than Twelvers. Mas'ūdī also said that 'Abbāsī spies discovered some correspondence between the leader of the uprising in Tabarestan called Hasan b. Zayd and his nephew, Mohammad b. 'Alī b. Khalaf al-'Atār. Both of them were devotees of Imam Hādī (A.S) (Tabarī, Vol. 3, pp. 1362, 1383; *Ikhtiyār*, p. 68). The Twelvers denied anyone among 'Alawīs who claimed to be the promised Mahdī (A.S), but they used to support some 'Alawīs' uprisings who were loyal to them. We can conclude that Imams (A.S) planned two ways to reach their goals. First they developed scientific, cultural and religious activities among people without their explicit engagement in political affairs. Next, they covertly supported some of the uprisings of their devotees in the hope that they could gain the power.

18 *Wasā'il al-Shi'a*, Vol. 11, p. 160.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid. p. 464.

21 *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon 3 (known as *Shaqshaqiyyah*).

22 *Wasā'il al-Shi'a*, Vol. 11, p. 466 (quoted from Ibn Idrīs, *Sarā'ir*); *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 50, p. 181.

23 *Al-Ihtijāj*, Vol. 2, p. 266 (quoted from *Hayāt al-Imām al-'Askarī*, p.240).

24 *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 50, p. 269. (quoted from *Hayāt al-Imām al-'Askarī*, p. 237)

25 *Ithbāt al-Wasīyyah*, p. 243. (quoted from *Hayāt al-Imām al-'Askarī*, p.238)

26 Refer to *Hayāt al-Imām al-'Askarī*, pp. 223 – 232. Among those cities are: Kūfa, Baghdad, Neyshābūr, Qom, Ābeh, Madāin, Khurāsān, Yemen, Rey, Āzarbāyjān, Samarra, Jurjān, Basra and tens of other cities. (Ibid.)

27 Kendī, *Wulātu Misr*, p. 177 (cited in *Tārikh Sīyāsī Gheybat-e Emām-e Davāzdahom*, pp. 83 & 849.

28 *Muruj al-Dhahab*, Vol. 4, p. 106; *Al-Kāfī*, Vol. 1, p. 500.

29 Refer to *Al-Kāfī*, Vol. 1, p. 500.

30 *Manāqib*, Vol. 4, p. 411; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 50, p. 127.

31 Sayyid b. Tāwūs, *Kashf al-Mubajjah*, p. 124.

32 *Maqātil al-Tālibiyyin*, p. 599 (cited in *Hayāt al-Imām al-Hādī* (A.S), trans. by Sayyid Hasan Islāmī, p. 326.)

33 *Muruj al-Dhahab*, Vol. 4, p. 86; cf. *Al-Fibrīst*, pp. 116 – 117.

34 *Al-Kāfī*, Vol. 1, p. 499; *Al-Irshād*, Vol. 2, p. 302.

35 *Tārikh Ya'qūbī*, Vol. 3, p. 209 (quoted from: *Hayāt al-Imām al-Hādī*, trans. by Sayyid Hasan Islāmī, p. 326.)

36 *Mir'at al-Zamān*, Vol. 9, p. 553; Ibn Jawzī, *Tadhkirat al-Khawāss*, p. 359 (quoted from: *Hayāt al-Imām al-Hādī*, trans. by Sayyid Hasan Islāmī, p. 263); *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 50, p. 203.

37 *A'lām al-Warā*, p. 346; *Manāqib*, Vol. 4, p. 407; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 5, p. 182.

38 *Manāqib*, Vol. 4, p. 407; *A'lām al-Warā*, p. 343; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 50, p. 137.

39 *Ma'āthir al-Kubārā*, Vol. 3, p. 94 (*Hayāt al-Imām al-Hādī*, trans. by Sayyid Hasan Islāmī, pp. 25 & 26.).

40 *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 50, p. 207; *Tadhkirat al-Khawāss*, p. 22 (quoted from *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 50, p. 201).

41 *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 50, pp 144 & 145; the rest of the story is:

“My father encouraged him. After a while, he left Baghdad and set out for Samarra. Some days later Yusuf came back to our home happily. My father asked him about what had happened. He said: “It was the first time I have been in Samarra and I would like to give my present to Ibn al-Riḡā (Imam Hādī) before going to Mutawakkil. But I found out that Mutawakkil did not let him go out of home and he was always at home. I wondered what to do. If I asked for his address, I would cause myself more trouble. For a while I was looking for a solution before a thought crossed my mind. I got on my animal and let him go wherever he wanted. He passed quarters and markets (bazaars) one after another, until he stopped in front of a house and refused to go farther. I felt that house was Imam’s, so I wanted my slave to ask whose house was that. The slave asked and told me it was Ibn al-Riḡā’s. “O’ My God! Swear by God, It is an obvious sign!” I thought to myself. Suddenly a black slave came out of the house and asked me: “Are you Yusuf b. Ya‘qūb?” I said: “Yes”. He told me to get off the animal and I did. Then he guided me through a corridor into the house. I thought to myself he called me by my name, while nobody knew me in that town, so I considered it as another sign. Soon after, the slave came back and said: “Give me those one hundred dinars that you have hidden inside your sleeve.” I gave them to him and thought to myself that it was the third sign. He took them to Imam (A.S), then he came back and let me go in. I went in and saw Imam (A.S) was sitting alone. He gave me an affectionate look and said: “Is not it the time to come to the right way and become guided?” I said: “O’ My lord! I saw enough obvious signs and proofs to be guided.” But Imam (A.S) said: “Alas! You will not submit to Islam, but your son will soon submit to Islam and will become Shī‘ite. O’ Yusuf! Some people think that our love and friendship is not beneficial for ones like you. Swear by God, they are telling lies. Go on to see Mutawakkil and be sure your wish will be fulfilled.

Hibatallah added: “After Yusuf passed away, I met his son. He was a Muslim and a real faithful Shī‘ite. He told me that his father had died as a Christian, but he [Yusuf’s son] converted to Islam and became one of the real friends of the Prophet’s household. He would always say that: “I am the good tiding of my patron – ‘Alī al-Hādī (A.S)”.

42 *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 5, p. 148.

43 *Manāqib*, Vol. 4, p. 430; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 50, p. 309; *Al-Irshād*, p. 324.

44 *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni‘mah*, p. 479.

45 *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni‘mah*, p. 41; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 50, p. 327 (quoted from *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni‘mah*) To know more about his talk to Ja‘far,

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Imam 'Askari's brother in paying respect to Imam (A.S) see cf. *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni'mah*, p. 44; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 50, p. 329.

46 *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni'mah*, p. 42; *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 50, p. 327.

47 Ibid.

48 *Madīnat al-Ma'ājiz*, p. 570 (cited in *Hayāt al-Imām al-'Askari*, p. 97).

49 *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 5, p. 261 (cited in *Al-Kharā'ij*, Vol. 1, p. 422).

50 *Āthār Jābiḡ*, p. 235 (cited in *Al-Hayāt al-Siyāsiyah li'l-Imām al-Riḡā*, p. 403).

51 *Safīnat al-Bihār*, Vol. 1, p. 260 (cited in *Hīyat al-'Abrār*, Vol. 2, p. 268 (cited in *Hayāt al-Imām al-'Askari*, p. 98).

52 *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 50, p. 261 (cited in Ibid.) To know more about these two occurrences and Imam's meeting with them refer to above mentioned sources.

53 Ṭūsī, *Al-Ghaybah*, p. 128; *Dalā'il al-Imamah*, p. 226.

54 *A'lām al-Warā*, p. 372 (cited in *Hayāt al-Imām al-'Askari*, trans. by Sayyid Hasan Islāmī, p. 64).

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## Reason, Faith & Authority: A Shi'ite Perspective

Mohammad Ali Shomali

From a Shi'a point of view, there are four sources on which any investigation about Islam has to be based: the Glorious Qur'an, the Sunnah (including sayings, actions and tacit approval of the Prophet), reason, and consensus. After a careful consideration of these four sources, it becomes clear that the Qur'an and the Sunnah both originate from revelation and that consensus is reducible to the Sunnah. Therefore, there are two types of sources:

- the Qur'an and the Sunnah that constitute the revealed or the transmitted sources (*al-adillah al-naqliyyah*)
- reason or intellect that constitutes the rational source (*al-dalil al-'aqli*).<sup>1</sup>

It has to be noted that what has been said above does not mean that every single enquiry must be based on all the aforementioned sources; rather it means that there is no way to establish the truths about Islam other than referring to one or more of the above

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sources. There are fields of studies that are completely intellectual such as natural theology or philosophy, and there are fields of study that are purely based on revealed information such as revealed theology, and there are fields that rely on both, such as law and morality.<sup>2</sup>

It should also be noted that when Muslim scholars mention the Qur'an and the Sunnah as revealed sources this does not mean that they do not believe in previous revelations. Indeed, it is part of Islamic faith to confirm all the previous prophets and revelations. The only problem here is how to identify what was actually revealed to them. Therefore, whenever something is known to represent a fact or a universal or unconditional rule revealed previously by God, that too, is certainly accepted.

Thus, we can conclude that there are two major common ways to understand and discover religious truths: revelation and reason.<sup>3</sup> The Shi'a believe that reason is a reliable source of knowledge and that it is in complete harmony with revelation. According to some hadiths, God has two proofs (hujjah) through which humans can understand His will: the internal one, reason (al-'aql), and the external one, the prophets. Sometimes reason is called, "the internal prophet" and the prophets are called "the external reason". There is an established rule among Shi'a jurists that whatever judgement is made by reason is the same as that made by religion (shar') and vice versa.

In what follows, I will try to explore the status of reason in Islam and then I will refer to different roles of reason in general and in understanding moral values in particular. Having studied revelation and reason as two sources of understanding Islam, I will briefly refer to the Shi'a understanding of faith and authority.

### *The status of reason*

Islam regards reason as one of the greatest blessings bestowed by God on human beings. It is by means of reason that we understand ourselves and the world around us. It is by means of reason that we realise the necessity of investigating our origin and the One who has created us. If we had no reason, we would not be responsible for our acts or beliefs. In Shi'i Islam in particular, great emphasis has always been placed on reason and the rational sciences. This emphasis derives from the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet and the Imams of his household. The Qur'an says in several verses:

Surely there are signs in this for those who ponder.

(13:4; 16:12; 30:24)

The Qur'an also condemns more than once those who do not think or use their reason. The following two traditions, selected from the large number of hadiths available on the subject, show the place of reason in Shi'a belief. Imam Sadiq (A.S.) says:

Whoever has intellect has faith and whoever has faith will enter Paradise.<sup>4</sup>

With reason one comes to understand the truth, to believe in Islam and follow the teachings of the Prophet, and consequently will be able to enter Paradise. In an insightful hadith addressing one of his companions, Hisham b. Hakam, Imam Musa Kazim said:

With reason God completes His proof. God has equipped His prophets with the ability of expressing their ideas in a way that all people can understand. God has shown people His lordship through reason.

Then the Imam recited the following verse of the Glorious Qur'an, "Your God is the One God, there is no god but God who is the Compassionate the Merciful...Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth and in the alternation of days and night, and in the ships that move in the sea, and in the rain that descends from the sky to bring life on the earth, and all kinds of animals that God has spread over the earth, and also in the movement of the wind and the clouds which God has kept between the earth and the sky-- in all these there are signs for those who are thoughtful." (2:163 & 164) Then the Imam said:

God has made these signs a proof to show people that they have a Creator Who arranges everything for them and Who directs everything, because God then

says “surely there are signs in these facts for those who use their reason”.<sup>5</sup>

Many other references to the Qur’an are made in this tradition to show that God in His final message considers reason as the only means by which human beings become responsible. It is unanimously accepted that one of the conditions of moral or legal responsibility is to have sound reason. If someone is insane, he is not considered as responsible for his acts. What is expected of people in religion also varies according to their mental and rational capacity. Those with a higher degree of intelligence or learning are expected to be more knowledgeable, pious and obedient than others.<sup>6</sup>

On the continuity and development of the philosophical tradition, S. M. H. Tabataba’i (1892-1981), who was the most celebrated contemporary master of Islamic philosophy, writes:

In the same way that from the beginning Shi’ism played an effective role in the formation of Islamic philosophical thought, it was also a principal factor in the further development and propagation of philosophy and the Islamic sciences... In the same manner, in the other intellectual sciences, there appeared many outstanding figures such as Nasir al-Din Tusi (who was both philosopher and

mathematician) and Birjandi, who was also an outstanding mathematician.

All the sciences, particularly metaphysics or theosophy (*falsafab-i ilabi* or *bikmat-i ilabi*), made major advances thanks to the indefatigable endeavour of Shi'ite scholars. This fact can be seen if one compares the works of Nasir al-Din Tusi, Shams al-Din Turkah, Mir Damad, and Sadr al-Din Shirazi with the writings of those who came before them.<sup>7</sup>

On the place of intellectual sciences among the Shi'a, Yann Richard writes:

Today, however, one of the originalities of Shi'ite Islam is to recognize that metaphysical speculation and philosophical discourse have a certain place in religious knowledge. The Centre for Theological Studies at Qom is certainly the only place of Islamic studies in the world where one dares comment on the philosophical treatises of Aristotle or Avicenna, and where the post-Platonic philosophical tradition has remained alive. Ayatollah Khomeini was known at Qom up till the beginning of the 1950s for his philosophy course.<sup>8</sup>

*Different roles of reason*

In general, reason contributes to religious sciences in the following major areas:

I. The first step towards religion, inquiring into it and searching for its truth, is taken by reason. It is reason that drives us to take the issue seriously and tells us that our interests would be harmed if the claims of religion are true and we fail to discover and believe in them. According to the Qur'an, God requires all human beings to exercise their rational faculty and to ponder on His signs and communications in the universe. On many occasions disbelievers are condemned and criticized because of their failure to think or to act according to rational requirements. For example, they are condemned because of their blind imitation of their ancestors, and there are many verses containing rhetorical questions calling on people to think, such as the following: "Do not they think?", or "Do not they ponder?"

II. The second role of reason is to set up standards and logical processes for reasoning and for inference from the Scriptures. Once we have started our research and investigation, it is again reason that instructs us on how to think and how to argue. It is also reason that tells us to be fair and committed to the truth during and after the entire process of rational discovery.

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III. The third is to understand the realities of the world, such as the existence of God and the truth of religion. The Shi'a believe that by the exercise of reason every person can come to understand that God exists, that He has sent certain people as His messengers, and that Resurrection will take place. Indeed, it is obligatory for every Muslim to examine and question his beliefs until he attains certainty, and to be able to support his beliefs with valid logical arguments, including the intellectual ones. Muslims are not allowed to say that they believe in God for no particular reason, or call themselves Muslim simply because their parents are Muslim, or because they were born in a Muslim community. Faith is a matter of reasoning, not of imitation. Everyone is advised to secure his faith with sound arguments. In this way, one can have complete confidence in his belief, and nothing can cause him to doubt it.<sup>9</sup> Of course, once the truth of a given prophet or book is established, many further truths can be learnt from that prophet or that book.

IV. The fourth is to understand and present moral and legal principles, such as the wrongness of oppression and the rightness of justice. Details are, of course, provided by religious sources, although the process of understanding the Scriptures and the implications of religious judgements again is governed by reason. For example, if God says that you must perform *hajj* (the pilgrimage to Mecca), it rationally implies that we must make all necessary preparations, such as buying tickets or obtaining a visa. If there is a conflict between two obligations such as saving an innocent life and

performing our prayers, what should we do? In this case, even if there is no explicit or specific religious instruction we still rationally understand that we must act according to the certain and clear judgement of our reason, which is to save the person's life.

All the above roles of reason are recognised and, indeed, encouraged and urged in Islam. In contrast, the role of revelation or the scripture in religious sciences can be summed up as follows:

- confirming truths that are already known by reason;
- teaching truths that are not known by reason, such as the details of the resurrection and detailed injunctions of moral and legal systems;<sup>10</sup>
- establishing due recompense sanctions through the religiously determined system of reward and punishment.

Here I should make two points:

a. One has to distinguish between the decisive and certain rational judgements and things such as guessing or personal opinions or weak arguments. There have always been some people who introduced their ideas, or even they themselves thought so, as enjoying rational grounds, while after consideration it becomes clear that there is no basis for such a claim. Similarly, there are people who represent their ideas as Islamic ideas, while religious sources do not support them in any known way.

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b. Although reason is recognised as an independent source of knowledge, it has its own limits. There are many things on which reason has no judgement and is silent, because they are beyond its scope. Therefore, there might be many things that we can understand by other ways of understanding such as perception, intuition or revelation that do not fall in the scope of reason. You can not really understand through rational arguments how a rose smells or what a mother feels when her child is dead. In respect to religious issues, there are many facts that are not knowable by reason, such as many details of the resurrection. What is important is that there is nothing in Islam that contradicts reason. One must therefore distinguish between what lies beyond one's actual rational capacity and what conflicts with rational standards.

Thus, we should not base our acceptance of religious facts on finding a rational proof or justification for them, though they must be rationally possible. The Qur'an sometimes uses the expression of "vision" and attributes it to the heart for some type of knowledge which is much higher than perception and rational knowledge. For example, on the ascension of the Prophet Muhammad to the heaven, the Qur'an says:

“ما كذب الفؤاد ما رأى”

The heart did not tell lies about what it saw. (53:11)

***Role of reason in understanding moral values***

Now let us study in more detail the role of reason in understanding moral good and bad or what is right and wrong. This has been an important issue for all religious traditions, especially Judaism, Christianity and Islam. According to “Divine Command Theory”, “good” or “morally right” means “Commanded by God”, and “bad” or “morally wrong” means forbidden by God.”<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, there have also been some theologians who have argued for rational approach to ethics. They believed that there are independent criteria of good and bad that can be understood by our reason. God’s commands are not arbitrary and we can exercise rational methods to discover moral norms. Among Muslim theologians, the Ash‘arites held the former view and the Shi‘a and the Mu‘tazilites held the latter.<sup>12</sup>

According to the Ash‘arites, all values are determined by the will of God and moral concepts such as ‘good’ and ‘right’ have no meaning other than ‘that which God wills’ or ‘what is commanded by God’. These words have no objective meaning. According to the Shi‘a and the Mu‘tazilites, values such as justice and goodness have a real existence, independent of anyone’s will, even God’s. Values are objective.

Based on the above question, the other controversy concerns the question of whether good and evil are rational (*al-busn wal qubb al-*

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*‘aqliyyān*) or revealed. The Shi ‘a and the Mu ‘tazilites believed that good and evil are objective and therefore can be known rationally. Allamah Hilli, a great Shi ‘a scholar, in his comments on *Al-Yāqūt* by al-Nawbakhti writes:

The principle, on which the problems concerning justice depend is that God is the Wise, He never does an evil action and He never fails to perform any necessary (*wājib*) action. When this principle is proved questions concerning justice, such as goodness of obligation (*taklīf*), necessity of Grace (*lutf*) and the like are constructed upon. And since this principle depends on knowing good and evil and their rationality, the author started his discussion with these. (*Anwār al-Malakūt fī Sharḡ al-Yāqūt*, p. 104)

Else where he writes:

Imamites and their followers, the Mu ‘tazilites, believe that goodness and badness of some actions are known by reason evidently such as our knowledge of goodness of beneficial telling truth and badness of harmful lies, on which no reasonable person have doubt, and his certainty about this is not weaker than his certainty about the need of a

contingent being [in its existence] to a cause or about the equality of two things which are each equal to a third thing. They believe that there are some actions, understanding of whose goodness or badness needs reflection such as goodness of harmful telling truth and badness of beneficial lies, and finally that there are some actions, on which reason is unable to make judgement and their goodness and badness is to be expressed by the religious law, *Shari‘ah*, such as [how to perform] worships. (*Nahj al-Haqq wa Kashf al-Sidq*, p. 82)

On the other hand, there are the Ash‘arites who deny rationality of goodness and badness. Shahrestani in his *Al-Milal wa al-Nihal* describes the idea of Ash‘arites as follows:

All obligations are to be learnt from the scriptures. Reason (*al-‘aql*) does not make any thing obligatory and does not make anything deserve to be considered as good or bad. Thus, knowing God becomes possible by reason and becomes obligatory (*wajib*) by the scripture (*sam‘*). God, the most High, says: “We have never chastised unless we have despatched some messenger”. (The Qur’an, 17:15) Similarly, gratitude to the blessing-giver, rewarding the obedient and punishing the disobedient all

become obligatory (*wājib*) by the revealed, and not reason. (Vol. 1, p. 115)

In contrast, the Shi ‘a and the Mu ‘tazilites have argued that if goodness and badness were just religious and not understandable by reason, unbelievers would not recognise them today or before they knew of revelations e.g. the Qur’an. But we know that there are many common values and moral principles among both theists and atheists. ‘Abd al-Jabbar, a great Mu ‘tazilite theologian, says: “any sane person knows his obligations even though he does not know that there is a commander and forbiddler” (*Al-Mughni*, Vol. 1, p. 45).

The Qur’an in fact implies in many statements that knowledge of what is obligatory, good, and evil is accessible to everyone, “Surely God bids to justice and good-doing and giving to kinsmen, and He forbids indecency, dishonour and insolence”. (16:92) These virtues and vices must have been understood as such prior to revelation. The objectivity of ethical value is asserted or implied all through the Qur’an. For instance, the repeated commands of God to do what is right would be empty of force and spirit if they meant only “commands to do what He commands”. It is even harder to make sense of statements that God is always just to His servants on the supposition that “just” means “commanded by God”.

None of this means, of course, that humans are not in need of religious guidance. The argument is rather that in order to benefit

fully from religious guidance, humans have been endowed with reason, and it is only when they are thoughtful and rational that they can comprehend revelation. The truth of religion and the principles of morality are understood by reason, but there is much more to be learnt from revelation. According to Shi 'a thinkers, religion can provide us with a fuller and more comprehensive account of morality, and moreover motivates us to observe moral requirements.

### ***Faith & reason***

Before we study the relation between faith and reason we need to know more about the nature of faith.

### ***The nature of faith***

Faith is a voluntary act of human kind, although some degrees of faith may require special grace and guidance of God. Man needs to try to be faithful and make preparations for faith. One reason for holding faith as a human act is that according to the Qur'an the people are held responsible or accountable for being faithful or non-faithful. People, on occasions, are blamed in the Qur'an for their failure in becoming faithful and this shows that it is because of their own decision. The other reason is that in the Qur'an or hadiths people are encouraged to have faith by referring to its good outcomes. The other reason is that faith may decrease or increase depending on human practices and characters. Imam Ali (A), the

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first Shi'ite Imam, says: "Do not be jealous because jealousy eats away faith just as fire eats away dried wood."<sup>13</sup>

Among philosophers of religion, there are two main views about the nature of faith: the propositional view which takes faith as "belief that" (*fides*) and the non-propositional which takes faith as "belief in" (*fidusia*). Of course, each may imply the other secondarily and in practice a faithful person is the one who both believes that God exists and trusts Him. However, the question is which one primarily constitutes the faith

Reflecting on relevant verses of the Glorious Qur'an, normally the assumption among philosophers of religion is that in Islam faith has a propositional nature. For example, we read:

"... the believers; they all believe in Allah and His angels and His books and His apostles; we make no difference between any of his apostles; and they say: we hear and obey, our Lord".<sup>14</sup>

"the believers are only those who believe in Allah and His Apostle then they doubt not".<sup>15</sup>

I think faith means acceptance of or submission to certain truths and involves three elements, but it is not identical with any of them:

(a) A heartfelt knowledge. This knowledge is propositional. No one can be faithful while he is in doubt. It should be noted that

according to the Glorious Qur'an, faith is different from knowledge, because sometimes a person may have knowledge in its most certain form, but lack faith. Sometimes people know some truths, but deny them unjustly or arrogantly.<sup>16</sup> The knowledge, thus, prepares the ground for faith, and faith needs knowledge; but it is not knowledge.

(b) A verbal declaration of that heartfelt knowledge.

(c) Acting in accord with that knowledge. The believer in his life must work in harmony with that knowledge he has, otherwise there would be no benefit in that knowledge. When Imam Ali (A) was asked about belief, he said: "Faith involves appreciation with heart, acknowledgement with tongue and actions with limbs."<sup>17</sup>

Thus, faith is a voluntary act for which knowledge is a pre-requisite) and should imply declaration with tongue and practice with limbs. Faith is a reality that might decrease or increase. Taking into account all the above aspects of faith and based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah, I believe that faith consists in submission to certain truths, such as existence of God (God exists).<sup>18</sup> Therefore, faith is neither "belief that" nor "belief in". One may believe that something is true and at the same time deny or reject it. Among those who believe in basic religious truths and commit themselves to those truths, some people may be prepared to commit and submit themselves just in declaration of faith, some may be

prepared to fully or partly practice their faith and some may be prepared to submit their entire reality including acts, heart and mind to God. Faith may also have degrees according to different degrees of the required knowledge or different degrees of the consequent acts.

***Faith requires reason***

As we saw above, reason comes before faith, and proves the existence of God and His attributes, like His omnipotence, omniscience, goodness and charity, and etc. For this purpose, there are many intellectual discussions in the Shi'ite theological books and, indeed, one part of Islamic theology is called "intellectual kalam". Imam Sadiq (A) referred to faith as a soldier of reason or its minister.<sup>19</sup> And in another narration, he said: "with reason, worshippers know their Creator, and know that they are creations of Him and He is their Lord ... and with reason the worshippers separate good and evil acting and ..."<sup>20</sup>

Faith, however, is more than knowledge; reason, by securing required knowledge, just prepares the ground for faith. In the end it is the individual himself that decides whether to commit himself or not. A person becomes faithful and a believer only when he has respect and love for certain facts i.e. articles of faith. Once the Prophet Muhammad asked his companions of "the firmest handhold of faith". They suggested different things like prayer and

hajj. When they could not give the appropriate answer the Prophet said:

“The firmest handhold of faith is to love for the sake of God and to hate for the sake of God, to befriend God’s friends and to renounce His enemies.”<sup>21</sup>

The same idea is emphasised by Imams of the Household of the Prophet. For example, in reply to the question whether love and hatred derive from faith, Imam Sadiq said: “Is faith anything but love and hate?”<sup>22</sup> It is also narrated that Imam Baqir said: “The faith is love and love is the faith.”<sup>23</sup>

### ***Faith supports and strengthens reason***

With disbelief, reason loses its power and sharpness and may fail to discover or acknowledge even trivial facts. Disbelievers are like those who walk in darkness and do not know which path they have taken:

“God is the guardian of those who believe. He brings them out of the darkness into the light; and (as to) those who disbelieve, their guardians are Satans who take them out of light into the darkness...”<sup>24</sup>

That is to say, they do not know about their world and their purpose of life. They have no insight about reality. In Islamic thinking, two kinds of guidance must be distinguished: primary or

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inclusive guidance and secondary or exclusive guidance. The former is for all humans, with which mankind potentially might acquire and obtain some initial knowledge about the world and its creator and the need for prophecy and religion. The latter is only for believers. The Qur'an says:

“Surely (as for) those who believe and do well, their Lord will guide them by their faith.” (10:9)

“Those who guided, We will add their guidance.”  
(47:17)<sup>25</sup>

Reason after faith is different from reason before faith. Faith helps reason to have complete function. Faith without reason is blind and reason without faith is crippled and barren. Faith opens for reason realms other than worldly life and reason makes grounds for true belief and faith.

### ***Authority***

In Islam, everything originates from God. Islam also emphasises that, “There is no authority except for God and whoever is appointed by God”. In what follows, I will try to refer to the principles, on which the Islamic view on authority is based:

### ***Principle One: Obedience belongs only to God***

God is the only One that we have to obey. Independent from Him, nobody can ask for obedience. He has created us free. Why should

anyone obey men like Nimrod or Abu Sufyan or the arrogant people of his time? God has created us free so that nobody can ask us to obey him.

***Principle Two: Human freedom***

We are free. This is philosophically true because no one has complete control upon our decision or acts by himself. This is also morally and politically true because no one other than God has authority upon us and therefore needs to be served or obeyed. In a well known hadith, Imam Ali (A) says:

“Do not be a servant of other people. God has created you free.”

***Principle Three: Delegation of obedience***

God, due to some benefits for us, may ask us to obey some people or groups of people, e.g. our parents. We obey our parents because God has asked us to obey them.<sup>26</sup> As a result, if they want us to disobey God then we would not obey them. The general rule (without exception) is: ***There is no obedience to the creature in the disobedience of the Creator.*** Thus, when obeying the legitimate leader one first of all obeys God and then the position of leadership and not the person *per se*. Even the person who is a leader, he himself must respect the position of leadership and act according to his commands as a leader.

***Principle Four: Authority of the Prophet***

As we saw above, the authority or the right to be obeyed originally belongs to God, but God Himself may have given this authority in a limited or unlimited way to others. Above all, the Prophets were given this authority. Among the Prophets, some had more authorities including the authority to rule. The Holy Qur'an is very clear in this regard and we can find many verses about the Prophets who have had this position, e.g. the Prophet Abraham and the Prophet David.

The Prophet Muhammad was not just asked by God to recite and teach the Holy Qur'an; he was also asked to rule, that is, to implement the Qur'anic rulings in the socio-political life of the nation. The following verses indicate the necessity of obedience to the Holy Prophet:

‘O you who believe! Obey God and obey the Apostle and those in authority from among you!’ (4:59)

‘The Prophet has a greater claim on the faithful than they have on themselves.’ (33:6)<sup>27</sup>

To have a better idea, we should note that there were three areas in which the Prophet exercised his authority:

### **First: Delivering Divine Message**

For delivering the Message, he was answerable to God. Teaching Islam and delivering the Message involved reciting the Holy Qur'an to the people, teaching them the Holy Qur'an, teaching them moral values, and exemplifying in his life those values.

### **Second: Judgement**

One of the roles of the Prophet Muhammad was to judge among the People. The Qur'an says:

‘Surely We have revealed the Book to you with the truth that you may judge between people by means of that which God has taught you.’ (4:105)

To judge is only for God, the Holy Prophet and those who are given authority by God. The Qur'an says:

‘O David! Surely We have made you a ruler in the land; so judge between men with justice...’ (38:26)

Therefore, if a judge is appointed by an unjust ruler, he has no authority to force people to abide by his judgement. It is a principle of Shi'i *fiqh* (jurisprudence) that the judge must be appointed by a just ruler who in turn gets his authority from God.

**Third: Rule**

The Prophet as reinforced by himself at Ghadeer al-Khum, had the position of *wilayah*, that is, the authority to rule and the people needed to obey him. The Prophet asked the crowd:

*“Do I not have a greater right on your souls than you yourselves have on them?”*

They answered with one voice:

*“The Apostle of God has a greater right on our souls than we ourselves have on them”.*

The Prophet has more authority on the believers than what they have on themselves. Why? This is because God has this authority and has given it to the Holy Prophet.

***Principle Five: Delegation of the Prophet’s Authority to Imam Ali and successive Imams***

In the same event, the Prophet was asked by God to transfer this same authority to Imam Ali. He was commanded to tell the people that which, if he did not tell, was as though he had not delivered the entire message.

*“All those men and women who acknowledge me as their Master, I want them to acknowledge (at this point he held Imam Ali’s hand and lifted it high over*

his head) Ali also as their Master. Ali is the Master of all those men and women whose Master I am.”

This indicates the point of delegation of the Holy Prophet’s authority to Imam Ali by divine command.<sup>28</sup> As soon as this announcement was made, the following verse was revealed:

“This day I have perfected for you, your religion and have completed My favour upon you, and have *chosen* for you Islam to be your religion.” (5:3)

We also read in the Qur’an:

“Only God is your Guardian and His Apostle and those who believe. Who perform prayer and pay alms while they bow”.<sup>29</sup> (5:55)

The Shi’a believe that the Imams who succeeded the Prophet continued the same roles in presenting Islam (teaching and preaching), judging and leading the society. The difference was that there was no further revelation after the demise of the Prophet; all knowledge of Imams was received from the Holy Prophet.

***Principle Six: Delegation of the authority of Imams to the jurists***

During the time of the occultation of the Imam Mahdi (A), in which they have no direct access to the Imam, the Shi’a *fuqaha* (jurists)

inherit the authority which was originally given by God to the Prophet and then to the Imams. In what follows, I will first describe the concept of *faqih* and then refer to the extent of the authority that a Shi'a *faqih* has. Of course, a proper review of the topic needs a thorough discussion about the institution of *marji'yya* and that of *wilayat al-faqih* (mandate of the jurist), including their requirements and responsibilities.

***Who is a faqih?***

A *faqih* or *mujtahid* or *Ayatollah* is the one who has the quality of *ijtihad*. Technically, *ijtihad* means 'the process of deriving religious rulings from their religious sources'. For example, it is the role of such person to discover Islamic view on banking or politics or international relations. Of course, the procedure is very sophisticated.<sup>30</sup> Sometimes for one single *fatwa* (edict) to be issued, *ijtihad* might involve weeks of enquiry and investigation of religious sources. Obviously *ijtihad* must be based on revelation and reason.<sup>31</sup>

***The role of jurists in the time of minor occultation***

The period of the presence of the Imams ended in the year 260AH, when Imam Askari was martyred. This period is called '*asr al-zuhur* (the age of the presence), in contrast to '*asr al-ghaybah* (the age of the occultation).

In the time of the presence of the Imams, the role of Shi'a jurists was not very complicated since most of the time there was more or

less the possibility of referring to the Imams personally and asking them for guidance.<sup>32</sup> Of course this was not always easy and free from risks. Therefore, during the time of the Imams, they trained a group of the companions to start *ijtihād*, to start deriving specific rules from general rules. In a clear and very well known *hadith* (narration), Imam Sadiq said to one of his companions:

*“Our task is to give you the principles and your task is to derive the implications”.*

There are also cases in which the Imams have asked some of their companions, e.g. Aban ibn Taghlib to issue *fatwa* for the Muslims.

After the martyrdom of Imam Askari, the Shi‘a started to experience a new age in which they could not visit their Imam (i.e. the 12<sup>th</sup> Imam). This was the period of the minor occultation. The 12<sup>th</sup> Imam personally appointed four individuals (one after the other) to act as representatives for himself to the Shi‘a community. These deputies of the Imam were called the *numwab al-arbi‘ab* (the Four Deputies) including Uthman ibn Sa‘id, his son, Mohammad ibn Uthman, Husayn b. Ruh and Ali b. Muhammad al-Saymuri respectively. When the Shi‘a had questions for the Imam they referred to these deputies who then acted as a means of communication between the Shi‘a and Imam Mahdi.

One reason for having this state was to prepare the Shi‘a for the next age, which is known as *ghaybat al-kubra* (the major occultation).

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Before Ali ibn Mohammad died, Imam Mahdi gave him a message. This message was a condolence to the Shi'a for losing him (in advance) as he was the last means of communication to the Imam and a command to Ali b. Muhammad not to introduce anyone as the deputy after himself. So with the passing away of Ali b. Muhammad, the major occultation started. In this period no particular person was appointed as deputy and the age of generally appointed deputies (*al-na'ib al-'amm*) started.

The scope of the authority or deputyship of faqih is one of the most essential elements of the Shi'a political doctrine. In what follows I will try to briefly point out the main areas of this authority:

**Authority in presenting Islamic rulings and issuing fatwa:** A Faqih is the one who has the authority in presenting Islamic views on practical issues including moral and legal ones e.g. abortion, euthanasia, banking, insurance and marriage. With respect to the beliefs, everyone is responsible to investigate and inquire about the principles of the faith by himself and cannot rely on anyone. Of course, having proved the truth of the religion for himself, one can refer in details to the experts. Expertise needed for doctrinal issues include great knowledge of both intellectual and revealed theology and it is obvious that to be able to understand the revealed theology one needs to master the methodology of understanding the Qur'an and the Sunnah which is provided in fiqh and its principles.

It has to be noted that a faqih or any other scholar has no authority to legislate or alter the laws. His role is just to do his best to understand the religious position by scholarly consulting the Scriptures and reason.

This type of authority is unanimously accepted.

**Authority in judging:** This is also unanimously accepted.

**Authority in administering hisbah affairs:** It is unanimously accepted that a Faqih is responsible for administering hisbah affairs i.e. those things that we know for sure the Legislator is not pleased with them being ignored or unattended, even though they are not as such or primarily obligatory. For example, if there is an orphan who possesses some money but he has no guardian to look after his money to his best interest all Shi'a faqihs say that this is responsibility of the just faqih to undertake such task. Or if there are properties whose owners are unknown it would be again the responsibility of faqih to protect them from being wasted. Any social affair with whose negligence the Legislator is not pleased, thus, must be undertaken and supervised by the just faqih.

**Authority in ruling the society:** As we saw above, there is no doubt among the Shi'a scholars that the faqih has responsibility and authority for getting somehow involved in socio-political spheres. Islam is to bring happiness by offering a comprehensive plan of life and it is job of the faqih to understand, present and implement this

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plan. No one can remain indifferent in respect to what happens in the society and the knowledgeable people have greater responsibility.

Unlike some faqihs who had the idea that the authority of faqih in socio-political affairs is limited to hisbah affairs, some have had the idea that the Faqhi has all the power needed to rule the society. The Ayatollah Khomeini has said:

‘By authority we mean governance, the administration of the country and the implementation of the sacred laws of the Shari‘ah. This constitutes a serious and difficult duty but does not earn anyone an extraordinary status or raise him above the level of common humanity. In other words, authority here has the meaning of a government, administration and execution of law. Contrary to what many people believe, it is not a privilege but a grave responsibility.’<sup>33</sup>

This is echoed in the constitution of Islamic Republic of Iran as follows:

‘The powers of government in the Islamic Republic of Iran are vested in the legislature, the judiciary, and the executive powers, functioning under the

supervision of the absolute religious leader and the leadership of the Ummah.’ (Article 57)

Thus, it becomes clear that in Shi’i Islam the authority primarily belongs to God and then to the people with whom God is pleased. After the Prophets and Imams, just faqihs are granted such authority. The main requirement for having such authority is justice and deep acquaintance with the religious sources, i.e. the Qur’an, the Sunnah and reason. Reason is one source and at the same time reason helps us to define the proper method for understanding the first two (the Qur’an & Sunnah). Once again it becomes clear how important reason, justice and piety are for Shi’i Islam.

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### Endnotes:

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<sup>1</sup> By "reason" we mean an instrument or a faculty of understanding of theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge. With the first, we can obtain some knowledge about existing things in the world, and with the second we can acquire some knowledge about what humans must or must not do. In other words, reason enables us to know what *is* there in the world and ability to know what one *ought to do*.

For example, see Mohammad Taghi Misbah Yasdi, *Dorus-e Falsafe-ye Akhlagh*, Ettela'at Publications, Tehran, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Al-Ghazali, a renowned Sunni thinker from the Ash'arite tradition, divides theological issues into three categories: issues that can only be known through religious sources, issues that can only be known with the intellect, and issues that can be known in both ways. He mentions the visibility of God (according to the Ash'arites, God is visible, at least in the Hereafter) as an example for the first category and exclusiveness of creating movements to God for the second category.

With respect to cases in which both intellect and *naql* (transmitted knowledge) have judgement, al-Ghazali adds that whenever we receive something from religious sources, we have to see what the rational judgement is. If intellect allows us to do so we have to follow the religious sources. But if that thing is rationally impossible we have to interpret that text in another way, since there is no disharmony or contradiction between religion and intellect. Then, al-Ghazali adds that in cases in which intellect is silent again we have to accept and follow the demands of religious sources. He insists that rational permission for possibility of something is not required. What is really required is to be free from rational impossibility. "There is a [subtle] difference between these two, which unintelligent people sometimes fail to recognise." [*Al-Iqtisaad fi al-I'tiqaad*, (Arabic), p. 133]

<sup>3</sup> Things which are understood through personal intuitions or mystical experiences are valid for the very person who has had these intuitions or experiences, and is certain about the truth and validity of them or beliefs which are based on them. However, these are not included in our discussion here, partly because this sort of knowledge cannot be communicated through discussion or argumentation to others. The only way to learn and accept these issues is to undergo the same experiences.

<sup>4</sup> *Ussul al-Kaafi*, Vol. 1, p.11.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> For example, we read in a divine saying (*al-hadith al-qudsi*) in *Ussul al-Kafi*, the Book of Reason & Ignorance that "God rewards and punishes people in proportion to their reason".

<sup>7</sup> Tabataba'i, *Shi'ite Islam*, Part II, "Outstanding Intellectual Figures of Shi'ism".

<sup>8</sup> Richard, p. 61.

<sup>9</sup> M. R. Muzaffar in his commentary on reason says the following:

We believe that Allah has endowed us with the faculty of the intellect (*'aql*), and that He has ordered us to ponder over His Creation, noting with care the signs of His Power and His Glory throughout the entire universe as well as within ourselves. It is stated in the Qur'an:

"We shall show them Our signs on the horizons and  
in themselves, till it is clear to them that it is the  
Truth." (41:53)

Allah has shown His disapproval of those who blindly follow the ways of those who were before them:

“They say: ‘No, but we will follow such things as we found our fathers doing’. What! And if their fathers had no understanding of anything.” (2:170)

And He has shown His dislike for those who follow nothing but their own personal whims:

“They follow naught but an opinion.” (6:117)

Indeed, our intellect forces us to reflect upon Creation so as to know the Creator of the universe, just as it makes it necessary for us to examine the claims of someone to prophethood and to consider the truth of his miracles. It is not correct to accept the ideas of someone without criticism, even if that person has the gift of great knowledge or holds an esteemed position.

<sup>10</sup> Having verified the truth of the Prophet or the Qur’an, we come to know many things that we were unable to know by ourselves, because of our lack of access to certain realms of reality or certain evidence.

<sup>11</sup> In this regard, George Hourani says:

“It (Ash’arite view, or what he calls ‘theistic subjectivism’, or what others have called ‘ethical voluntarism’) is not peculiar to Islam, since it occurs in medieval Judaism and occasionally in western thought; but it was probably more prominent and widespread in Islam than in any other civilization.” (1985, p. 57)

<sup>12</sup> Despite some differences in positions of the Shi’a and the Mu’tazilites, they are both called “*abl al-’adl*” (the people of justice), because they both believe in independent moral values and in the existence of rational criteria for judging what is good and what is bad, and because a proper defence of the principle of divine justice depends on the belief in independent and rational good and evil.

<sup>13</sup> Imam Ali, *Nahj al- Balaghah*, Sermons, no. 86.

<sup>14</sup> *Qur’an*, 2:285. This verse indicates that the believers are those who believe that Allah, His angels, His books and His apostles are true.

<sup>15</sup> *Qur’an*, 49:15. This verse indicates that the believers are only those who believe that Allah and His Apostle are true.

<sup>16</sup> *Qur’an*, 27:14.

<sup>17</sup> Imam Ali, *Nahj al- Balaghah*, Sayings, no. 227.

<sup>18</sup> According to the Glorious Qur’an, the objects of faith include: God (2:62) and His attributes (67:29); the day of Judgment (2:62); God’s Apostles and His revelations to the apostles (2:285; 3:53); God’s Angels (2:285) and the invisible world (2:3).

<sup>19</sup> Al-Kulayni, *Usul al-Kafi*, the Book of Reason and Ignorance, no. 14.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 34.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, the Book of Faith and Disbelief, "Bab al-hubb fi Allah wa ai-bughd fi Allah", No. 6, p.126.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 5, p. 125.

<sup>23</sup> Al-Majlisi, 1983, *Kitab al-iman wal-kufi*, "Bab al-hubb fi Allah wa al-bughd fi Allah", lxvi, p. 238.

<sup>24</sup> *Qur’an*, 2: 257.

<sup>25</sup> See also the verses: 8:29 & 20:123.

<sup>26</sup> Obedience here does not mean inferiority. Even the Prophets had to obey their parents.

<sup>27</sup> See also the verses: 5:55 and 59:7.

<sup>28</sup> For a comprehensive list of non-Shi'a sources of this hadith, see numerous volumes of *'Abaqaat al-Anwaar* by Mir Haamid Husayn al-Hindi (d. 1306 A.H.) and *Al-Ghadir* by 'Abd al-Husayn al-Amini (d. 1390 A.H.).

<sup>29</sup> For more information about this verse and some debates that have arisen by the verse among Shi'a and Sunni scholars refer to: Sharafud-Din, Abdul Husayn, *Al-Muraja'at*, translated from Arabic to English by Yasin T al-Jibouri, World Ahlul-bayt Islamic League (WABIL), pp. 173-180.

<sup>30</sup> Ijtihad is a very demanding qualification and involves deep knowledge of several disciplines and mastering several skills. Nowadays it usually takes around twenty years or even more of hard study to become a well-established mujtahid. However, the time taken is somewhat dependant on one's talents. Thus, it becomes clear that in the Shi'i thought respect for and obedience to the faqih is respect for and obedience to knowledge and piety that qualify someone to have such a position and not to the person as such. The Shi'a follow the most knowledgeable and the most pious jurist, since he is the person who would be most likely to represent the views of the Prophet and the Imams.

<sup>31</sup> The methodology of understanding religious rulings from the sources is well studied in the science of the principles of jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*).

<sup>32</sup> We say most of the time because during this period it was not always possible to refer to the Imams (AS), especially when they were under house arrest, e.g. the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Imams (AS), and the Shi'a had no easy access to them. Or sometimes the Shi'a were living in some cities far away.

<sup>33</sup> Ayatollah Khomeini, *Islam and Revolution*, pp. 62-62.