

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 4, Winter 1431/2010

Editor-in Chief: Huj. Dr Mohammad Ali Shomali

Editor: Fatima Khimji

Editorial Board:

Huj. Mohammad Hasan Akhtari,
Secretary General, the Ahlul Bayt World Assembly

Huj. Abdulhusein Moezzi,
Director, the Islamic Centre of England

Huj. Dr Ahmad Rahnamaei,
Assistant Professor, the Imam Khomeini Education &
Research Institute, Qum

Dr Muhamamd Legenhausen,
Professor, the Imam Khomeini Education & Research
Institute, Qum

Dr Karim Aghili, Manchester

Published by

Ahlul Bayt World Assembly

Keshavarz Blvd., Opposite to Laleh Park, Tehran, IRAN
www.ahl-ul-bayt.org

in association with

Islamic Centre of England

140 Maida Vale, London W9 1QB, UK
www.ic-el.com

Email: info.thaqaalayn@gmail.com

Table of contents

| | |
|--|------------|
| Editorial..... | 7 |
| A Glance at the Process of Self-development..... | 17 |
| by Huj. Dr Mohammad Ali Shomali | |
| Thematic Approach to Qur'an Exegesis | 37 |
| by Huj. Dr Mahmood Namazi | |
| Shi'ite Social Theology..... | 57 |
| by Huj. Dr Mahmood Taghizadeh Davari | |
| Translated by S. Rahim Rastitabar | |
| Preparing the Shi'a for the Age of Occultation..... | 91 |
| by Huj. Dr Mohammad Reza Jabbari | |
| Translated by Mohammad Reza Farajian | |
| Imam Ali (A) the Herald of Unity..... | 111 |
| by Sayyid Kazim Mirjalili | |
| Translated by S. Zahra MirFenderski | |
| Shaykh Mufid's Account of Imamate in <i>Al-Irshād</i> | 131 |
| by Huj. Ghulam Hossein Adeel | |

“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

By the Grace of God, we present to our dear readers the new issue of the *Message of Thaqalayn*. Similar to the previous three issues, in this issue we once again address different aspects of Islamic thought, such as the Doctrines, Spirituality, Qur'anic Studies and History.

Publication of this issue has coincided with the first three months of the Islamic Lunar Calendar i.e. Muharram, Safar and Rabi' al-Awwal. This year Muharram has largely overlapped with January and therefore both Muslims and Christians have entered into their new year almost at the same time. The new year always brings new hope and new energy. Let us hope and pray that the year 1431/2010 will be a blessed year for all mankind and in particular for those who believe in God and His plan for humanity.

For those who know the Ahl al-Bayt (A), especially for their followers, the arrival of Muharram and Safar every year refreshes sad memories of tragic events of Ashura in Karbala. In the tenth of Muharram 61 A.H., Imam Husayn (A), the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad (S), and 72 of his companions including his sons, brothers and nephews were brutally killed and Imam Ali b. Husayn (A) who was severely ill at that time and the ladies and children were taken as captive. All over the world, the followers of the Ahl al-Bayt (A) commemorate the martyrdom of Imam

Husayn (A) and his companions from the beginning of Muharram by taking part in activities to strengthen the connection to the Ahl al-Bayt (A) and further their knowledge of Islam. The mourning for Imam Husayn (A) reaches its peak on the Day of Ashura and more or less continues till the Day of Arba‘in which is the 20th of Safar and marks the 40th day after martyrdom of Imam Husayn (A) and his companions.

According to a well-known hadith from Imam Hasan ‘Askari (A), visiting Imam Husayn (A) on the Day of Arba‘in is one of the signs of a true follower of the Ahl al-Bayt (A). Every year millions of people visit the shrine of Imam Husayn (A) on the Day of Arba‘in and those who cannot be there physically recite the ziyarah text from every corner of the world. Why is the fortieth day so important? Why is the ziyarah of Ashura not introduced as a sign even though it is recited on the day in which the beloved Imam was actually martyred?

My humble view is that ziyarah of Arba‘in shows the completion of an inner journey of the one who mourns for Imam Husayn (A). There may be many people who embark on this journey e.g. for a day or two, but to actually complete this journey and to achieve intellectual and emotional unity with Imam Husayn (A) and his cause one needs to continue this journey for forty days. In Islamic literature, there are many instances in which the number forty marks a turning point. In other words, “forty” in many cases represents the stage in which the increase in quality turns into transformation in quality. For example, the Prophet Musa (A), in order to be able to receive the Tablets, had initially an

appointment of thirty nights with God and then it was completed in forty nights. The Qur'an says:

And We made an appointment with Moses for thirty nights, and completed them with ten [more]; thus the tryst of his Lord was completed in forty nights. And Moses said to Aaron, his brother, 'Be my successor among my people, and set things right and do not follow the way of the agents of corruption.' (7:142)

Thus, Moses (A) needed these forty days to be ready for receiving the Tablets.

Similarly, when Moses (A) told his people to enter the Holy Land they did not listen and said, 'O Moses, there are a tyrannical people in it. We will not enter it until they leave it. But once they leave it, we will go in.' (5:22) They also said, 'O Moses, we will never enter it so long as they remain in it. Go ahead, you and your Lord, and fight! We will be sitting right here.' (5:24) As a result, they had to suffer for forty years, so that they could again qualify themselves for entering the Holy Land:

He said, 'My Lord! I have no power over [anyone] except myself and my brother, so part us from the transgressing lot.' He said, 'It shall be forbidden them for forty years: they shall wander about in the earth. So do not grieve for the transgressing lot.' (5:25 & 26)

Referring to the gradual development of man, the Qur'an considers the age of forty as the peak of man's strength and development:

We have enjoined man to be kind to his parents. His mother has carried him in travail, and bore him in travail, and his gestation and weaning take thirty months. When he reaches the age of full strength and attains forty years, he says, 'My Lord! Inspire me to give thanks for Your blessing with which You have blessed me and my parents, and that I may do righteous deeds which may please You, and invest my descendants with righteousness. Indeed I have turned to you in penitence, and I am one of the muslims.' (46:15)

The Prophet Muhammad (S) was appointed as a prophet at the age of forty.

Islamic hadiths indicate the significance of memorizing forty hadiths that people can benefit from to the extent that such person is promised to be resurrected as a learned scholar. For example, the Prophet Muhammad (S) is quoted as saying:

مَنْ حَفِظَ مِنْ أُمَّتِي أَرْبَعِينَ حَدِيثًا مِمَّا يَحْتَاجُونَ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ أَمْرِ
دِينِهِمْ بَعَثَهُ اللَّهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَقِيهًا عَالِمًا

The person from my nation who memorizes forty hadiths pertaining to those issues of religion which he is in need of, will be resurrected by Allah on the

Day of Judgement as a person with deep insight into the faith and as a scholar. (*Bihār al-Anwār*, vol. 2, p. 153)

Again according to hadiths, it is highly recommended to pray first for forty brothers and sisters in faith and then to pray for oneself. For example, Imam Sadiq (A) is quoted as saying:

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع قَالَ مَنْ قَدَّمَ أَرْبَعِينَ رَجُلًا مِنْ إِخْوَانِهِ فَدَعَا لَهُمْ ثُمَّ دَعَا لِنَفْسِهِ اسْتُجِيبَ لَهُ فِيهِمْ وَ فِي نَفْسِهِ

Whoever prays first for forty brothers and then prays for himself his prayers for them and for himself will be answered. (*Al-Khisāl*, vol. 2, p. 538)

There are also hadiths which indicate the impact that testimony of forty believers can have at the funeral of a believer: For example, Imam Sadiq (A) is quoted as saying:

عَنْ أَبِي عَبْدِ اللَّهِ ع قَالَ إِذَا مَاتَ الْمُؤْمِنُ فَحَضَرَ جِنَازَتَهُ أَرْبَعُونَ رَجُلًا مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فَقَالُوا اللَّهُمَّ إِنَّا لَا نَعْلَمُ مِنْهُ إِلَّا خَيْرًا وَ أَنْتَ أَعْلَمُ بِهِ مِنَّا قَالَ اللَّهُ تَبَارَكَ وَ تَعَالَى إِنِّي قَدْ أَجَزْتُ شَهَادَتَكُمْ وَ غَفَرْتُ لَهُ مَا عَلِمْتُ مِمَّا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

When a believer dies and forty believers attend his funeral and say, ‘ O Allah, verily we know nothing of him except good and you know of him more than we do’ Allah, the Blessed and the High, will say ‘verily I have accepted your testimony and

forgiven for him what I knew and you did not.

(Ibid.)

There are other instances which show the significance of number forty. I think what said so far is enough to support the above-mentioned idea that number forty signifies completion. In our case, the ziyarah on the Day of Arba‘in shows the completion of mourning for Imam Husayn (A) and durability of the outcomes of sharing with Imam Husayn (A) in his suffering.

The 28th of Safar is the anniversary of the demise of the Prophet Muhammad (S) and martyrdom of his grandson, Imam Hasan (A). The end of Safar marks the martyrdom of Imam Riḍa (A). These are all significant occasions to commemorate and great opportunities to study more about their lives and teachings.

The most important occasion in the month of Rabi‘ al-Awwal is the birth anniversary of the Prophet Muhammad (S) and Imam Sadiq (A). According to the majority of Shi‘a scholars and some Sunni scholars, the Prophet was born on the 17th of Rabi‘ al-Awwal, while the majority of Sunni scholars and some Shi‘a scholars believe that he was born on the 12th. Many Muslims especially in Iran and some other countries celebrate the birth anniversary of the Prophet Muhaamad (S) as the week of unity from the 12th till the 17th Rabi‘ al-Awwal. We pray wholeheartedly to Allah (SWT) to make all Muslims, and indeed all believers, united. In the previous issue we had two papers on unity and in this issue we have one more paper on unity.

Similar to the previous three issues, this issue also includes six papers. The first of the six papers is entitled: "A Glance at the Process of Self-development." Continuing the discussion on spirituality in the last three issues, in this paper Dr. Mohammad Ali Shomali gives a brief breakdown of the spiritual journey. The very first step is wakefulness. It is only when one becomes awake and spiritually alert that one decides to embark on the journey and not to lose any opportunity to obtain some provision for this journey. 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 Jami'at al-Zahra, the Islamic University for Women in Qum. God-willing, this series of papers will continue in the forthcoming issues.

The second paper is entitled: "Thematic Approach to Qur'an Exegesis." In this paper Dr Mahmood Namazi starts by studying the significance of the Qur'an and the requirements for interpreting the Qur'an, and then refers to the history of Qur'anic exegesis and different attitudes among the exegetes. The paper then examines the merits of the thematic approach to Qur'an exegesis. Hujjatu'l-Islam Dr Namazi is an assistant professor in the Dept. of Philosophy at the Imam Khomeini Education & Research Institute, Qum.

The third paper is entitled: "Shi'ite Social Theology." In this paper, Dr Mahmood Taghizadeh Davari starts by defining 'social theology.' He defines it as a branch of theology, which studies

human social life as well as its features, implications and consequences such as government, business, education, judgment, marriage/divorce, war and peace. The paper goes on elaborating on five subfields of social theology i.e. social hadith, social exegesis, social jurisprudence, social Kalam, and social ethics. They all fall under the category of theology, since each of them deals with religious texts (the Qur'an and hadiths), and tries to articulate and justify religious teachings, doctrines and precepts. This paper is originally published in Farsi in the journal of *Shi'eh Shneāsi* (Shi'ite Studies), vol. 6, no. 22, summer 2008 and is translated into English for *the Message of Thaqalayn* by Mr Rahim Rasti Tabar. Hujjatu'l-Islam Dr Taghizade Davari is an assistant professor and the Dean of Social Studies at the University of Qum.

The fourth paper is entitled: "Preparing the Shi'a for the Age of Occultation." In this paper, Dr Mohammad Reza Jabbari refers to some of the hadiths from the Prophet Muhammad (S) and Imams (A) from Imam Ali (A) to Imam Hasan 'Askari (A) about Imam Mahdi (A) and his occultation and tries to illustrate how the Prophet (S) and Imams (A) gradually prepared the Shi'a community for the Age of Occultation. This paper was originally written in Farsi and published in *Darsnāmeḥ Tāriḫ-e 'Asr-e Gheybat* by Mas'ud Pur Sayyid Aqā'i, Mohammad Reza Jabbari, Hasan 'Ashuri and Sayyid Mundhir al-Hakim (Qum: 2008, the International Centre for Islamic Studies, 2nd ed.). This paper has been translated into English for the *Message of Thaqalayn* by Mr Mohammad Reza Farajian from the International Institute for

Islamic Studies, Qum. Hujat'l-Islam Dr Mohammad Reza Jabbari is an assistant professor in the Dept. of History at the Imam Khomeini Education & Research Institute, Qum.

The fifth paper is entitled: "Imam Ali (A) the Herald of Unity." In the first part of this paper which is published here, Mr Sayyid Kazem MirJalili studies the significance of unity in Islam and then focuses on Imam Ali's (A) attitude towards unity. This paper was originally written in Farsi and translated into English for the *Message of Thaqalayn* by Mrs. Seyyedeh Zahra MirFendereski. Mr Mirjalili is a lecturer at the University of Yazd.

The sixth and final paper is entitled, "Shaykh Mufid's Account of Imamate in *Al-Irshād*." In this paper, Dr Ghulam Hossain Adeel starts with a brief account of the life and works of Shaykh Mufid (d. 413/1022) and then focuses on his *Al-Irshād*. The paper ends with a brief study of his account of Imamate in *Al-Irshād*. Hujjat'l-Islam Ghulam Hossain Adeel has obtained his doctorate from the University of Birmingham and is currently based in Manchester.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all who have contributed to this volume and pray for their success. I would also like to thank the Ahlul Bayt (A) 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 and to help us all achieve a unified worldwide community.

We welcome your feedback on this journal. If you have any comments or suggestions, please send them to info.thaqaalayn@gmail.com.

Mohammad Ali Shomali

January 2010

A Glance at the Process of Self-development

Mohammad Ali Shomali

The process of self-development has different stages. In what follows, I will try to study briefly the whole process and refer to its major stages.

1. Wakefulness or attention to one's self: The very first stage is wakefulness (*yaqzah*), that is, to awaken from the pre-occupation of worldly engagements and to remove negligence. To awaken is to remember to look after one's piety, life and spirituality. Many scholars such as Imam Khomeini in his book: *Jihad-e Akhbar* (the Major Jihad), which is a compilation of lectures given by him to Hawzah students, state that the first stage of self-purification is wakefulness. Indeed some mystics believe that this is only a preliminary stage and that the first stage comes after wakefulness. However, there is no doubt that this is the beginning. The departure point is to become awake. We may say that we are all 'awake', but this is a different kind of wakefulness. According to a hadith, the Prophet Muhammad said:

النَّاسُ نِيَامٌ فَإِذَا مَاتُوا انْتَبَهُوا

"The people are asleep and only wake when they die".¹

When they die, they wake and never go to sleep again. But then it is too late. Then they are like someone who wakes up when the train has gone, when the airplane has flown. At that time, there is no use or benefit in going to the airport because, although you are now awake, you have already missed the flight. All you can do is to blame yourself and be regretful. You might say that you will catch the next flight but unfortunately there are no more flights. It is the end of the world, that was the last flight and we missed it because we were asleep.

So, let us be awake. If we become conscious only when we die, we cannot do anything, as there is no opportunity to come back. Allah (SWT) talks of the people who ask to be returned, so that they can do something good. He replies "*this is just some words that this person says*" (23:100). If he is given a chance, he will not change, and even then, there is no opportunity; they just wait for the day of resurrection. Unfortunately, death has become so familiar or naturalised that we do not think we are going to die, and it will always happen to someone else. According to an Iranian poet,

"we are like a group of sheep, taken one by one to the slaughter house; each is enjoying, not thinking that they will be next".

According to a hadith, *the Tawrah* of Moses says: :

عَدِبْتُ لِمَنْ أَيْقَنَ بِالمُوتِ كَيْفَ يَفْرَحُ

“I am astonished that someone who is certain that he is going to die, can ever be happy”.²

So we need to become alert and wake up *before* we die. Sometimes this happens through a significant event such as the loss of a relative, severe illness, or in meeting a pious person. However we should not wait for something to happen before changing; we can just change, as there is no guarantee that something will happen to us.

It is very easy to become awake: it just needs determination and for us to think about how important and significant this life, this journey to get closer to Allah (SWT), is to us. This is the only chance that we have to obtain provisions for our eternal journey. According to a hadith, Imam Ali (A.S.) said:

إِنَّ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ يَعْمَلَانِ فِيكَ، فَاعْمَلْ فِيهِمَا

“Day and night are constantly affecting you so you should also try to affect them.”³

This means that your life is passing by quickly. Every day and every night is making you older. In other words every day and every night is bringing you nearer to your end of life in this world , so try to do something.

There is a beautiful analogy regarding our situation. Life in this world is compared to a rope for a person who has gone into a

deep well and is only holding onto that rope. If he loses this rope he will be finished. There are two mice, one white and one black, at the top of the well, gnawing on the rope. The time will come when the rope will definitely break. The mice are very determined and will not go away. This is our situation. The rope represents our life. The white mouse represents day and the black mouse represents night. Day and night are constantly 'gnawing' away at our life and sooner or later we will 'fall' and die.

So we must be awake and be very careful with this life, with this golden opportunity that has been given to us.

2. Knowing one's self: After becoming awake, we should try to find out what resources, opportunities and options are available to us. Now that we are awake, we want to do something. It is like someone who has no work or business and so has no source of income. Everyone tells him to be responsible and do something. He agrees that he should do something but does not know what to do. He cannot start from nothing. First of all he should discover what kind of abilities and skills he has. He should know what options are available. For example, he should try to learn about the state of the business market. He should find out who has been successful so that he can take them as role models. He should also see who has become bankrupt so that he can learn lessons from their situation and avoid becoming like them. This is what is called 'self-knowledge' (*ma'rifat al-nafs*) and is considered to be "the most beneficial knowledge". Why do we always tend to forget about ourselves and know about other things instead? For example, there are some people who may spend all their life

studying a rare species of insects but will not spend even one hour sitting down, trying to find out what God has placed inside them.

Muslim mystics say that there are two worlds: an external one consisting of the beautiful natural world of humans, animals, plants and non-living beings created by God and also an internal world inside our very selves. And they say that this world inside us is the greater world. What God has placed inside us is far greater than the whole physical world outside ourselves. This is why we read in a beautiful divine saying (*hadith-e qudsi*):

لَمْ يَسْغَنِي سَمَائِي وَلَا أَرْضِي وَ وَسِعَنِي قَلْبُ عَبْدِي الْمُؤْمِنِ

"Neither my heaven nor my earth could contain Me, it is only the heart of a believing person that has contained Me."⁴

From this hadith, we can understand that our heart must be even greater than all these stars and planets, than this whole creation that we can see.

So, we need to know ourselves properly. We often underestimate the potential that we have for perfection. There is an endless possibility for perfection before us. Even the most holy people can still advance. There is always further for them to go because the distance between man and God is infinite and so there is always a possibility to go still higher. This is why we pray after tashahhud, "O God! Please accept the intercession of the Holy

Prophet for us and also elevate his level". This means that the Prophet can go higher.

Many of us are too easily satisfied with our achievements. We need to be more determined and have greater expectations. If we are satisfied with small things, then we will lose out and maybe we will not even achieve those small things. It is said that once there was a religious scholar (*'âlim*) whose son had become a student of religion. The father asked his son what he wanted to become in the future. The son answered that he wanted to become like his father. The father replied that he felt very sorry for his son because he himself had wanted to become as much as possible like Imam Ja'far Sadiq, who was his role model, and yet his present situation was all that he had achieved. He told his son that if he only wanted to become like his father then he would not achieve anything. So, we should always have great ambitions and indeed God has created us with such a potentiality inside us.

So, we need to know ourselves, we should believe in our potential and be aware of the different things that can benefit or harm us.

3. Taking care of one's self: After wakefulness and self-knowledge, we need self-care. It is not enough simply to know things; knowledge should serve us by being put into practice. For example, if you know that smoking kills but have no concern for your health and so continue to smoke, there is no benefit in that knowledge. In fact it just makes you more responsible and accountable because you know. Of course, this does not mean

that we should avoid learning. To say we did not know is not a good enough excuse; we must learn and then put what we learn into practice. So we need to have self-care. The Qur'an states:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ لَا يَضُرُّكُمْ مَنْ ضَلَّ إِذَا
اهْتَدَيْتُمْ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَرْجِعُكُمْ جَمِيعًا فَيُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

“O believers, look after yourselves, if you are on the right path, you will not be harmed”. (5:105)

To look after oneself implies practicing one's social responsibilities as well, since Islam is a religion that asks us to be actively engaged in social life: all with the spirit of wakefulness and consciousness, and knowing what can benefit and harm us.

However, there is something that often happens to people in this state. When they become conscious and sensitive to spiritual issues, then unfortunately instead of being concerned with their own piety, instead of being mostly busy with their own problems, they become judgmental about other people. For example, they start thinking that this person is useless, that one is careless and another one is not really a believer. This is very dangerous. First of all and most of all a true believer should be busy with his own problems. We understand from hadiths that it is much better for us if we are busy sorting out our own problems and illnesses rather than thinking about others and being judgmental. For example, the Prophet Mohammad is quoted as saying:

طُوبَى لِمَنْ شَغَلَهُ عَيْبُهُ عَنْ غُيُوبِ غَيْرِهِ

Blessed is the one who is so busy thinking about his own deficiencies that he has no time to think about the deficiencies of others.⁵

Thus, we must start with criticising and assessing ourselves before looking at others. Sometimes we have an enormous problem within ourselves but we are not aware of it and yet we notice a tiny amount of that same problem when it is in someone else. For example, we may have eaten something like garlic and do not realise that our mouth smells and yet when we meet someone who smells in some way, we are so quick to think or say something about them.

There is a story in *Mathnawi* by Rumi that four people had an appointment with a king immediately after midday prayers. They were very concerned not to lose this opportunity to meet the king and did not want to be late. So they decided to say their prayers quickly and then go to meet the king. They started praying as soon as they reached the mosque. However while they were saying their prayers, the one who calls for prayer (*mu'adhdhin*) came into the mosque to climb the minaret. They were now unsure and began to wonder whether they had started their prayers too early or whether that day the *mu'adhdhin* had arrived late. So, whilst praying, one of them asked the *mu'adhdhin* whether the time for prayers had already arrived or not. The second person asked the first why he had spoken whilst praying because whether the time had arrived or not he had now made his prayers void by speaking. The third person pointed out that the second person had now also spoken by asking the first one why

he had spoken. However the fourth person considered himself to be "very clever". He said: 'Thanks to God that I did not speak!'

So, in this story we see that four people shared the same problem but each could only see it in the other people and not in themselves. In fact they repeated the very same mistake for which they were criticizing the others. Therefore it is so much better to be very concerned about ourselves rather than about other people. Sometimes people think that this means they should be indifferent to what is happening around them, in their community or in society. This is not the case. But if we want to be more useful to our community and to society then we should first start with ourselves and then we can help others. For example, we see that when giving instructions on a plane regarding the use of emergency oxygen masks, they always advise us to attend to ourselves first and then help those next to us. Otherwise, whilst we are trying to help the other person with their mask, we ourselves may collapse.

So, we should have self-care. But how should we care for ourselves? Should we only pray and recite the Qur'an? Should we just serve society by doing community work?

3.a. Acquiring appropriate beliefs and faith: The very first thing that we need to do is to acquire proper beliefs and a proper understanding of the world. If you want to be a good businessman you must know the market and the people who are in the same business. You need to know the present situation, future possibilities and the factors that work in that particular business.

If we want to be successful in this world we must know Who is the One who has control here. If we need to get permission to start a business we should know where to go to get that permission. In the same way, if we want to start a spiritual 'business' we should know from where to get permission. We should know what laws and regulations apply and should be observed. We should know what provisions are provided and what kind of loans and grants might be given to us.

Sa'di, a famous Iranian poet who wrote *Golestan* and *Bustan*, tells a beautiful story. He says that once a person went to do some business in another country. He realized that in that country the bell which they used to hang in the public bath-houses was very cheap to buy. For example, if the bell would have cost \$100 in his country then in that country it cost only \$1. So he sold all his goods and with whatever money he had, he purchased maybe a thousand bells. Then he expected to return to his country and generate \$99 profit on each bell. So he transported all these bells back to his home town. However the problem was that there were only two or three bath-houses in his town and so no-one wanted to buy the bells. No-one was interested, even when he offered them at half price. So he lost all his capital and became bankrupt because he did not know which were the right kind of goods that would be purchased in his country.

Many people are like this and invest in things in this world which will be of no value in the hereafter. We invest our life, which is the most valuable 'capital' that we have been given, in things which, when we arrive in the hereafter, we will be told were

pointless and thus we had wasted this ‘capital’. Hence we need to have faith and to know the way in which our life in this world can secure our happiness in the next world. We must have correct beliefs and we should be especially careful to understand the connection between our life in this world and our life in the hereafter. About one third of the Glorious Qur’an talks about the hereafter. There is so much emphasis on it to teach us that the eternal life is the thing for which we must really prepare ourselves.

Another useful parable can be found in hadiths. There is an example in the story of the person who worshipped day and night: one day an angel passed by, thinking that with such dedication, this person must have a very high status. When the angel went close to him, he realised that the person did not have proper understanding of God, as he said “I wish you had a donkey so I could feed him in my field, as I have lots of grass here”. This person saw God like a human being, who has a donkey. This kind of faith is not rewarding, and so *aqidah* is the first certainty that needs to be secured. We must make efforts to gain proper understanding of God the Creator, His position in this world, the belief in Unity, Prophethood, and Resurrection.

Therefore, first we should have correct beliefs, but not the kind of beliefs that we normally learn and can only repeat in a parrot-like fashion. It must be the kind of belief that we have completely absorbed into our very being so that if we say that there is only One God, then our whole body and soul would declare that we are monotheist.⁶

3.b. Performing acts of piety and refraining from sins and evil deeds: We should try to perform our obligations and observe all the requirements of our faith. Even if we have proper beliefs and perform all our obligations but do not stop committing sins, we will not succeed. If someone washes his hands ten times a day but continues to touch things which are dirty and polluted, he will become dirty again. It is no use saying that he washed his hands ten times that day. Daily prayer is like a spiritual bath which makes us clean but if we do the same things again afterwards then we are just making ourselves dirty again.

There is a beautiful example of someone who has a carrier bag into which he puts some purchases in order to take them home. But there is a big hole in the bottom of the carrier bag and so whatever he puts into the bag falls out through the hole. He is surprised and wonders how it could be possible that he has filled the bag with at least ten times its capacity but it still remains empty. He wonders where everything is going. In a similar way, depending on our age, we have worshipped God for 10, 20, 30 or 40 years. But where is the result of this worship? Why are we still the same kind of people? Why are we the same after the month of Ramadan as we were before it? It is because we do good things but in addition to this we also do bad things.

There is another useful example related by Rumi. There was a farmer who used to harvest his wheat and put it into his storeroom, hoping to fill it for the winter. But, to his astonishment, every time he went to the storeroom to fill it with more wheat he discovered that the level of the wheat would be

lower than before and thus the storeroom was never filled. So he was surprised, especially as the storeroom was always locked so that no-one else had access to it to take anything out. He would always carefully lock the door. So he decided that one night he would have to stay awake inside his storeroom so that he could find out what was happening. So one night he indeed remained awake inside the storeroom, silently watching. After midnight he realized that there were some huge rats coming and taking all the wheat out of the storeroom. Thus he realized that they were the real cause of the problem. So Rumi tells us that we are like this. There are some rats in our hearts which take away the light of our good deeds. If there are no rats, then where is the light of forty years of praying, the light of forty years of fasting, of going for Hajj, etc.? So we should be very careful not to do any sinful actions. We should not commit even one single sin. Of course we are human beings and we may make mistakes, but a real believer is the one who, if he makes a mistake, firstly always feels sad and bitter about it and secondly he quickly repents and sincerely decides not to repeat the same mistake again. So, if we commit a sin we must repent as soon as possible.

Unfortunately, amongst some people who are interested in spirituality there are those who think that the religious law (*shari'ah*) is only needed at the beginning and that afterwards we should be concerned with the requirements of the spiritual journey (*tariqah*). Sometimes they say that this is like someone who has reached the core and so no longer needs the peel. But this is a wrong idea because we always need to observe the

shari‘ah. The Holy Prophet and Imams of the Household of the Prophet (Peace be upon them all) always followed the shari‘ah and there is no one who can claim to be more pious than them. There is no incident where the Holy Prophet committed a sin and then said that it was alright for him to do so. For example he never said that we should not tell lies but that it was allowed for him to do so. Or that we should not drink alcohol or gamble but that for him it was acceptable. Unfortunately nowadays we find that there are some so-called Muslims who follow people calling themselves masters or imams who do not themselves follow the requirements of piety and still their followers believe in them and think that they will never be affected by their unlawful deeds.

However, according to the school of Ahlul Bayt this matter is very clear. We should observe the shari‘ah but this is not enough. There are two different ways of looking at shari‘ah. One is to believe that the shari‘ah is only for the beginner and that after we reach the higher levels we no longer need it. This is what some Sufis do. The second way is to say that the shari‘a is always needed but that by only following shari‘ah we will always remain at the lowest level. If we want to go to the higher levels, in addition to the shari‘ah we should try to go beyond the performance of mere rituals to discover the spirit contained within them. An example which might help is that of a person who is at primary school. If someone is at primary school and they feel satisfied with that, then their education will always remain incomplete. They need to go on to secondary school, to high school and then to university. But we cannot say that we will

go to secondary school and once there we will forget about everything learnt at primary school. Or that when we go to university we will forget about everything learnt at high school. This will not work.

It has to be noted that nothing can replace performance of the obligations and refraining from the sins. In *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Imam Ali says:

لَا تَكُنْ مِمَّنْ يَرْجُو الْآخِرَةَ بِغَيْرِ عَمَلٍ وَ يُؤَخِّرُ التَّوْبَةَ بِطُولِ
الْأَمَلِ

“Do not be one of the people who have hope for the hereafter without having good practice and who postpone repentance because he is too ambitious”.⁷

If we maintain proper practice, little by little, the light of our deeds will enlighten our hearts. Even if you do little good things, it can be built upon, as long as you do not commit sins. The Prophet Muhammad told Abu Dharr:

يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ يَكْفِي مِنَ الدُّعَاءِ مَعَ الْبِرِّ مَا يَكْفِي الطَّعَامَ مِنَ الْمِلْحِ
يَا أَبَا ذَرٍّ - مَثَلُ الَّذِي يَدْعُو بِغَيْرِ عَمَلٍ كَمَثَلِ الَّذِي يَرْمِي بِغَيْرِ
وَتَرٍ

“O Abu Dharr, with piety, you need to supplicate just the amount of salt you have on your food. O Abu Dharr, the example of the one who supplicates without practice is like the one who tries to shoot an arrow without rubber.”⁸

On the other hand, if someone commits sins the performance of lots of good deeds will not help. We cannot compensate for sins with good deeds. The Qur'an says:

وَ اتُّلُّ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأُ ابْنَيْ آدَمَ بِالْحَقِّ إِذْ قَرَّبَا قُرْبَانًا فَتُقْبَلُ مِنْ أَحَدِهِمَا وَ لَمْ يُقْبَلْ مِنَ الْآخَرِ قَالَ لَأَقْتُلَنَّكَ قَالَ إِنَّمَا يَتَقَبَّلُ اللَّهُ مِنَ الْمُتَّقِينَ

“God only accepts from the pious people”. (5:27)

3.c. Acquiring good characteristics and removing bad ones: In addition to having proper beliefs, performing our obligations and refraining from sins, we need to look into the qualities of our heart or spirit and find out what good qualities we lack so that we achieve them and what bad qualities we have so that we can remove them. This is what we normally learn in the science of Akhlaq (morality) and is much more difficult than having proper beliefs or proper practice. We often have bad habits which are difficult to change or even to notice, because they have almost become part of us. In this situation we need to struggle and we need cure. For example a person may be fearful. As soon as it gets dark, they become frightened. Sometimes the person may be very determined to overcome this fear but it is still very difficult and needs some kind of treatment. Somehow it is like a cancer which needs difficult therapy. Firstly we must identify our bad habits and then we should try to promise ourselves that we will not do anything according to that habit because if we act according to a bad habit it becomes stronger and stronger. For example we may have a bad habit which we cannot remove

immediately, but if we do not actually act according to that habit then gradually it becomes weaker and weaker. There are also specific solutions for particular bad habits depending on what kind of habits they are. So the general advice and solution is not to act according to a bad habit but also to apply specific solutions for the bad habits or qualities. For example if someone wants to stop smoking there are certain techniques to help break this habit which would not work for another habit.

Sometimes after decades you can become sure that you are good, and then you realise that you are bad. An example is someone who was always attending in the first row in the *jamaat* prayer, and after many years he realised it was not for the sake of Allah, since once when he came late and had to pray in the last row, he felt ashamed that people would think that he was not in the first row. He realised that it was for the praise of others that he was always early and in the first row. On the contrary, one may refer to an incident about Ayatollah Shaykh Mohammed Husayn Isfahani Qarawi, the teacher of the late Ayatollah Khu'i. Once some people on a street in Najaf, saw that he was smiling and happy and someone asked him why he was happy. The Ayatollah replied that his bag of vegetables had fallen down, and when he started collecting them he was not concerned that people were looking at him. This made him happy, because he remembered another incident that had taken place in the early years of his study at the *hawza*. At that time he had an expensive *tasbeeh* as he was rich, and when it broke, he did not collect the beads since didn't want people to look at him. Now he felt content, that even

though he was a great scholar, he did not feel bad that people were looking at him while he was picking up vegetables. At that point, he felt that there was no sense of pride in him.

In works such as *Mi'rāj al-Sa'ādah* and *Jāmi' al-Sa'ādah* we learn different faculties of our soul and the corresponding virtues and vices of each. We also learn the methods for obtaining the virtues and removing the vices.

3.d. Continuing the process of self-development until one becomes a true servant who meets his Lord: We should continue this process. It is a lifelong challenge which cannot be given a time limit of one month or one year or ten years after which time we could feel that we have completed it and allow ourselves to relax. On the contrary, as long as we remain in this world, up to the very last moment of our life, we must be careful. And we must not waste any opportunity. There is no age of retirement or graduation, because however much we manage to acquire, firstly it is not guaranteed that we will preserve them and secondly, even if we manage to maintain them, they will not constitute sufficient provision for our eternal journey. The Qur'an states, "And worship your Lord till certainty comes to you" (15:99). Before we meet Him, there is no sense of relaxation, retirement, graduation or rest. Insha Allah when we meet Him, then we can rest. So we must continue this process until we meet Him and He is happy with us.

There is an interesting story illustrating our situation. There was a group of people who were going to be sent to a dark tunnel. They

were told that when they entered the corridor it would be very dark and they would not be able to see anything. They were told that they must go from one end of this tunnel to the other end and that on the floor there would be some stones which they could pick up and bring out. They were told that if they took the stones they would regret it, but that they would also regret it if they did not take the stones! Then they were sent into the corridor. Some people thought that it was not worth collecting the stones because they would regret doing so. Some others thought, out of curiosity, that they might as well take some stones to see what they were, even if they might regret it later. Thus some collected stones whilst others did not and then they all came out of the corridor. When they were outside again, in daylight, those people who had collected stones realised that they were actually very expensive jewels. Those people who had not taken any stones saw this and became very angry. They started to protest, asking why they had been told that they would regret collecting the stones. Then they were told that although those people who do not collect any stones regretted this, even those who did take some regretted that they had not taken more and wished that they had collected more by filling their pockets as well.

So this is what we should do. We should make sure that our hands and pockets are overflowing with good characteristics and good deeds, get the benefit of them in this world and then take them to the hereafter.

Summary

There are various stages one must go through on the path of self building. We must first awaken from our slumber of negligence and realise the reality of our existence: only then will we know ourselves and take care of our actions. This must be coupled with true beliefs and faith in the One God. Faith is not complete without good actions and so we must also refrain from forbidden acts. Lastly, we must rid our soul of bad qualities and habits. Although the path is difficult to embark upon, Insha'Allah with Allah (SWT)'s grace we shall gain the *tawfeeq* to complete these stages and achieve proximity to Him with ease.

¹ *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 50, p. 134.

² *Irshād al-Qulub*, Vol. 1, p. 74.

³ *Ghurar al-Hikam*, No. 120.

⁴ *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 55, p. 39.

⁵ For example, see *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 1, p. 205.

⁶ Being a good, kind and caring person is necessary but not sufficient to attain a place in heaven: we must also have faith. If people are good in their dealing with others, and have no faith, there is no chance to go to heaven: maybe they will not be sent to Hell, or their punishment will be reduced, but there is no way of attaining heaven. To believe in God, as the One and only Creator is a necessary and fundamental belief.

⁷ *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Wise Saying No. 146 (150).

⁸ *Bihār al-Anwār*, Vol. 74, p. 85.

Thematic Approach to Qur'an Exegesis

Mahmood Namazi

Introduction

The Qur'an is a book of guidance, enabling man to live a noble life in this world and to enjoy eternal happiness in the world hereafter.¹ Since the Qur'an is the main source of Islamic beliefs, laws and practices, it provides the norms to which Muslims should try to approximate their beliefs and deeds. Consequently from the earliest times, there have been, among the Muslims, sustained efforts to understand the divine message enshrined in the Qur'anic verses. *Tafsir* (exegesis), i.e. explaining the meaning of the Qur'anic verse, clarifying its import and determining its significance, was one of the earliest of the Islamic sciences to develop. According to S. M. H. Tabātabā'ī, the verse "*Even as we have sent among you, of yourselves, a Messenger, to recite Our signs to you and purify you, and to teach you the Book and the Wisdom, and to teach you that you knew not*" (2:146) shows that the interpretation of the Qur'an began with its revelation.² This is because the above mentioned verse clearly indicates two things; the recitation of the Qur'an and its teaching. *Ta'lim* (teaching) in this verse means explaining the meaning of the Qur'anic verses.

The various interpretations of the Qur'an that are available belong to different stages of the intellectual history of Islam, and reflect in themselves the development of Islamic thought. In this paper I intend to examine briefly the meaning, history and approaches of *tafsir*, and then to consider analytical and thematic approaches to the interpretations of the Qur'an, explaining briefly their concepts and definitions and elaborating on their merits and demerits. I will also try to examine the superiority of the thematic approach to Qur'an exegesis. First, however, I would like to provide a glance at the Qur'an, and examine its significance and the conditions necessary for an exegete to understand it.

The Qur'an

No book in history has ever influenced human societies to the extent that the Qur'an has. To understand the significance of the Qur'an one should compare its contents with other books that existed at that time, especially other books of scripture. While the latter discuss only the problem of the existence of God and offer simple moral advice, the Qur'an formulates the tenets of faith and communicates the ideas and views that are essential for society. It contains the principles of moral, sociological and familial values for man and his society. Given its importance in Islam, the utilization of any other source depends upon a prior knowledge of the Qur'an. The Qur'an is the criterion and standard for judging all other sources. According to Shi'a belief in particular, *hadith* should be judged in the light of the Qur'an. A Shi'a Muslim can accept hadith only when it is in accordance with the teaching of the Qur'an.³

There are three significant distinct characteristics of the Qur'an which distinguish it from other religious writings. The first is that the Qur'an is all-authentic. The second characteristic of the Qur'an is the quality of its contents; its teachings are original and have not been adapted or plagiarized. The third characteristic of the Qur'an is its divine identity; its teachings have been delivered by God to the Prophet Mohammed (S), and he was only a recipient of this revelation and message.

The first two conditions necessary for understanding the Qur'an are a knowledge of the Arabic language and a knowledge of the history of Islam.⁴ The Qur'an was revealed gradually over a period of twenty-three years of the Prophet's life. Because of this fact, every verse of the Qur'an is related to a specific historical incident called a *sha'n-i nuzûl*. The *sha'n-i nuzûl* by itself does not restrict the meaning of the verse, but knowledge of the particulars of revelation throws more light on the underlying subject matter. Regarding the suggestive role of the *sha'n-i nuzûl*, Norman Calder states that the text in isolation of its *sha'n nuzûl* is not only unproblematic, it is meaningless.⁵ The text of the Qur'an takes on meaning only when it is systematically juxtaposed to a certain historical structure. I. H. A. Faruqi says that "there are occasions in the Qur'an which could not be easily comprehended merely by the knowledge of Arabic language. In the Qur'an one finds references to the history of the sons of Israel and other people, the costumes and practice of the pre-Islamic Arabs. Thus for the true understanding of the Qur'an one has to have the knowledge of Judeo-Christian and pre-Islamic Arab history as

well as the events which invited any particular revelation, besides, of course a good knowledge of Arabic language."⁶ The third and perhaps most important condition necessary for understanding the Qur'an is having a correct knowledge of Prophet Mohammed (S)'s sayings and realizing that he was the true interpreter. As the Qur'an says: "... we have sent down to thee the Remembrance that thou mayest make it clear to mankind what was sent down to them ..."⁷ "It is He who has raised up from the common people a Messenger from them, to recite His signs to them and to purify them, and to teach them the Book and the Wisdom ..."⁸ Therefore according to the Qur'an, the Prophet Mohammed (S) himself is the foremost exegete of the Qur'an. Whatever has reached us from the Prophet is of great help in our understanding of its text.⁹

Tafsir

The word "tafsir" is derived from the root *f-s-r* which has the meaning of "opening", or "unveiling".¹⁰ The word *tafsir*, Husain Dhahabi says,¹¹ in relation to the Qur'an, is understood in the sense of "unveiling" the will of God hidden in His speech as far as it is possible for human beings. It also contains all the related requirements which help in this effort. According to Andrew Rippin, *tafsir*, an Arabic word meaning interpretation, is itself used only once in the Qur'an (25:33). However there is much discussion in various Arabic sources concerning the exact meaning of this term and its relationship with other technical words such as *ma'āni*, *ta'wil* and *shar'*, all of which denote "interpretation" in some way.¹² The earliest major term used as

the title for the works of interpretation is "*ma'āni*" literally "meanings".

Tafsir and *Ta'wil*

Ta'wil is another word which, in earlier times, was understood differently from tafsir. While tafsir deals with direct, external and literal understanding of the Qur'an, ta'wil is a human attempt to explain the Qur'an in different ways based on arguments.¹³ With the passage of time (in the third to the tenth century¹⁴) this distinction was forgotten and these two words became almost synonymous and were understood to refer to all types of interpretation. However, the word ta'wil continued to be used for explaining the meaning of the Qur'an by rational argument, personal opinion, individual research, or expertise. An early exegete, Muqātil ibn Sulaymān (d.767), for example, defines tafsir as describing what is known on the human level and ta'wil as what is known to God alone, or tafsir as applying to passages with one interpretation and ta'wil to those with multiple aspects.¹⁵ A further suggestion is that of some Shi'a scholars who use the word ta'wil for the interpretation of the esoteric parts of the Qur'an.¹⁶

Sources of Tafsir

While the Shi'a rely heavily on the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet and Imams in order to understand the Qur'an, the Sunnites, according to I. H. A. Faruqi,¹⁷ rely on four basic sources for the interpretation of the Qur'an: the Qur'an itself,

Prophetic traditions, the Companions' independent opinions and Judeo-Christian traditions.

In any case, the main source for interpreting the Qur'an is clearly the Qur'an. We should try to understand the Qur'an with the help of the Qur'an itself because the verses of the Qur'an constitute a completely united integral whole, a coherent unified structure. Thus if we single out a verse from the Qur'an and try to understand it in isolation from the rest of the book, we comprehend it, but not in a complete or a profound sense. This is because certain verses of the Qur'an explain other verses, or as the saying goes: *al-Qur'an yufassiru ba'duhu ba'dā*. This method has been affirmed by all great commentators of the Qur'an. There are many occasions in the Qur'an whereby if a single verse is studied without placing it in its proper context, it gives quite a different meaning than when it is seen in the light of the verses dealing with a similar subject.¹⁸

The Background of Qur'an Exegesis among Muslim Scholars

As was stated before, Tafsir, that is, explaining the meaning of the Qur'anic verse, clarifying its import and finding out its significance, is one of the earliest academic activities in Islam. S. M. H. Tabātba'i in his *Tafsir al-Mizān* reports that the first exegetes were a few companions of the prophet, like Ibn 'Abbās, 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar, Ubayy ibn Ka'b and others.¹⁹ Exegesis in those days was confined to explanation of the literary aspects of the verse, an account of its background and occasionally an interpretation of it with the help of another verse. If the verse was

about a historical event or was related to such topics as genesis or resurrection, etc., then sometimes a few traditions of the Prophet were narrated to make its meaning clear. This was true of the style of the disciples of the companions such as Mujahid, Qutadah, Ibn Laylā and others, who lived in the first two centuries after *hijrah*.

During the same period, when the Islamic Empire was expanding, the Muslims came into contact with many different peoples, and involved themselves in religious discussions with scholars of various other religions and sects. This gave rise to the theological discourse, known in Islam as *'ilm al-kalām*. Moreover, many of the works of the Greek philosophers were translated into Arabic. This created a taste for intellectual and philosophical arguments among the Muslim intelligentsia. At the same time *al-tasawwuf* (mysticism) developed a following in society; people were attracted to it as it held out the promise of revealing to them the realities of religion through severe self-discipline and rigorous asceticism, instead of entangling them in verbal polemic and intellectual arguments. There also emerged at this time a group whose members called themselves people of tradition (*ahl-i hadith*), and who thought that salvation depended on believing in the apparent meaning of the Qur'an and the tradition, without any scientific inquiry. The most they allowed was research into the textual value of the words.

Thus, before the second century had proceeded very far, Muslim society had broadly split into four groups: the theologians, the philosophers, the Sufis and people of tradition. There was

intellectual chaos in the Ummah. There was dispute over the meanings of the names and attributes of Allah as well as about His actions: there was conflict surrounding the reality of the heavens and earth and what is in them. Opinions differed whether man is a helpless tool in divine hands, or is a free agent. There was controversy about various aspects of reward and punishment and arguments about *al-Barzakh* (the intervening period between death and the day of Resurrection), Resurrection, paradise and hell. Every group tried to support its own views and opinions by referring to the Qur'an, and exegesis had to serve this purpose.

According to Tabātabā'i, the people of tradition explained the Qur'an with the traditions ascribed to the companions and overlooked the rational arguments.²⁰ But Allah has not said in His book that rational proof has no validity. How could He say so when the authenticity of the Book itself depended on rational proof. He has called mankind, rather, to meditate on the Qur'anic verses in order to remove any apparent discrepancy in them.

Allah has revealed the Qur'an as a guidance, and has made it a light and an explanation of everything. So why should light seek brightness from others' guidance? Why should "*an explanation of everything*" (16.89) be explained by other words? The theologians and the philosophers and the Sufis each clung to the verse that seemed to support their respective beliefs and tried to explain away whatever was apparently against it. Such exegesis should be called adaptation rather than explanation. There are two ways of explaining a verse. The first way seeks to answer the following question: "What does the Qur'an say?" The second way

however seeks to answer: "How can this verse be explained in such a way as to fit my belief?" The difference between the two approaches is quite clear. The former abandons every pre-conceived idea and goes where the Qur'an leads; the latter attempts to tailor the Qur'an to fit a set of pre-conceived beliefs, a method of exegesis which is dubious at best. Obviously the Qur'an was not revealed to guide any one particular group.

If we look at all the above-mentioned ways of exegesis we will find that they all suffer from a most serious defect. They impose the results of academic or philosophic arguments on the Qur'anic meanings; they make the Qur'an conform to an extraneous idea. In this way explanation turn into adaptation, the realities of the Qur'an are explained away as allegories and its manifest meanings are sacrificed for so-called interpretation. According to Tabātabā'i, the Qur'an itself provides the best explanation of its role, defining itself as "*guidance for the world*" (3.96), "*the manifest light*" (4.174) and "*the explanation of everything*" (16.89).²¹ So how is it possible for such a book not to be able to explain its own self? Also the Qur'an has described itself in these words: "*a guidance for mankind and clear evidence of guidance and discrimination (between wrong)*" (2.185) and Allah Himself has also said: "*and we have sent down a manifest light*" (4.174). The Qur'an is accordingly a guidance, an evidence, a means of discrimination between right and wrong and a manifest light for the people, to guide them properly and help them in all their needs. Therefore, there is only one way to explain a Qur'anic verse, and that is with the help of other relevant verses,

meditating on them together and identifying an individual person or thing by its particulars and attributes mentioned in the verse. Tabātabā'i insists that this is the only correct method of Qur'an exegesis.

The Legitimizing of Tafsir in the Qur'an

In the view of some Shi'i scholars who lived three or four centuries ago, the Qur'an is far too great a subject to be comprehended by humble human beings. These scholars also known as Akhbāris, believed that it was only the privilege of the Prophet and the Imams to ponder over the verses of the Qur'an. We ordinary human beings only have the right to read and recite the Qur'an. However the Qur'an itself explicitly refuses this approach, saying "*What, do they not ponder the Qur'an? Or is it that there are locks upon their hearts?*" (47:24); similarly, "*This is the Book We have revealed to you abounding in good, that they may ponder the verses*", "... *that those endowed with understanding may ponder its signs and so remember.*" (38:29). These verses clearly point out that we have not been sent the Qur'an merely for it to be kissed and embraced, but in order to read it and contemplate its contents.²²

Although *tafsir al-ma'thûr* (hadith-based interpretation) forms the main body of tafsir literature, there are a variety of methods to be found in the history of Qur'an exegesis. Among the most important ones are: narrative interpretation (Muqātil ibn Sulayman- *Tafsir al-Qur'ān*); legal interpretation (Muqātil ibn Sulayman- *Tafsir khams mi'ah āyah min al-Qur'ān*); textual

interpretation (al-Farrā'-*Ma'āni al-Qur'ān*), rhetorical interpretation (Abū 'Ubaydah d.824-*Majāz al-Qur'an*), and finally allegorical interpretation, which is clearly represented in Sufi tafsirs such as Sahl al-Tustari's *Tafsir al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓim*.²³ However it is extremely important to mention again that, opposed all these interpretations which seek to make the Qur'anic text conform with the prior views of a particular school, there is another kind that is unbiased in its own approach and merely seeks to draw from the Qur'an those understandings that the Qur'an itself wishes to impart, without attempting to make it conform to a single view point.

In seeking the Qur'an's view of itself, there are two fundamental methods of *tafsir* which developed with the growth of Islamic thought: the analytic approach to exegesis (*al-'ittijāh al-tajzi'i fi al-tafsir*), and the thematic or synthetic approach to exegesis (*al-'ittijāh al-mawḍū'i fi al-tafsir*).²⁴

The Analytic Approach

The analytic approach consists of the exegete dealing with the Qur'an verse by verse, following the Qur'anic text and interpreting it in a piecemeal manner. In this manner the exegete, while taking into consideration the context in which the verse occurs, uses those instruments of exegesis that he believes to be effective such as Arabic grammar, literal meanings, traditions or even other verses that have some word or meaning in common with the verse under study. This method began during the era of the Companions of the Prophet and the following generation

(*Tābi'ūn*) at the level of analytic explanation of some difficult words and verses of the Qur'an. By the end of the third and the beginning of the fourth Islamic centuries, it took its final and most extensive form in the works of Ibn Mājah, and al-Tabari. The development of the analytic method continued until it eventually acquired the most evolved form in the shape of encyclopedic exegesis, in which the exegete begins from the first verse of *Sūra al-Fātiha* and concludes with last verse of *Sūra al-Nās*, explaining the text verse by verse. Although in this method the exegete does not neglect other verses that are relative or even traditions in trying to understand the verse he is working upon, his use of other verses is limited to comprehending the literal meaning of the word of the verse being commented upon. Thus the exegete, without generally exceeding this limit, stops after comprehending the meaning of the certain part of the Qur'anic text. For the aim of the analytic method is to comprehend the meaning of God's words.²⁵

Merits and Demerits of the Analytic Approach to Qur'anic Exegesis

The analytic method of *tafsir* provides a vast collection of Qur'anic meanings when taken into consideration separately. In other words we become aware of a large number of ideas and teachings of the Qur'an which are disconnected, such that it is not possible for us to identify the relation existing between them or to discover their pattern of arrangement. The analytical method does not aim at giving the Qur'anic view regarding the different ranges of human activity. Therefore, what we may be left with is a huge

variety of facts between which we are unable to determine any connection. The second demerit of this method is that, because the exegete is by nature commenting on the meaning of isolated words by giving a synonym, clarifying unfamiliar terms, or applying new interpretations to the circumstances of the revelation (*asbāb al-nuzūl*), such activities have the potential of compelling the exegete to go beyond lexical meaning and to introduce innovations into the text of the Qur'an.

The Thematic Method

The term "thematic," i.e. relating to a theme, is used to describe the method in which an exegete selects a group of verses related to a single theme. We may also call this method "synthetic" because it does not seek to impose human experience on the Qur'an, rather it seeks to synthesize these verses and their meaning into a single composite view and to unite human experience with the Qur'an. In this method the exegete does not interpret the Qur'an verse by verse; rather the exegete attempts to study the whole Qur'an by taking up a single theme from various doctrinal, social, cosmological and ethical themes dealt with by the Qur'an. This method seeks to find or to discover the Qur'anic viewpoint concerning a particular issue from amongst the various issues related to life and the universe. For example it can be used to study the Qur'anic approach regarding prophethood, economic theory in the Qur'an and the cosmology of the Qur'an. However it should be mentioned that the kinds of Qur'anic studies which are occasionally referred to as "thematic exegeses" i.e., the studies of some exegetes concerning some specific topics such as *asbāb al-*

nuzûl of the verses, the *nāsikh* and *mansûkh* verses, the metaphors used in the Qur'an, etc. are not thematic exegesis. Such studies are compilations of a number of the problems which are raised in analytic tafsir. According to M. B. Sadr,²⁶ while the prevalence of the thematic study approaches in *fiqh* has greatly developed Islamic legal thought, the prevalence of the analytic method in Qur'anic studies, which has dominated *tafsir* literature for several centuries, has impeded the development of Qur'anic thought and resulted in its acquiring a quality of repetitiousness, so much so that we may say that centuries passed after the exegetic works of al-Tabari, al-Razi and al-Shaykh al-Tûsi without Islamic thought being able to create anything really new despite the extensive changes brought about over time in the various spheres of human life.

The Differences between the Two Methods

1. While the analytic method impedes the growth of Qur'anic thought, the thematic method, when applied to *fiqh*, has led to a creative expansion in the field of law.
2. The role of the exegete in the analytic method is generally passive because he starts by taking into consideration a particular Qur'anic verse without formulating any premises or plans beforehand. In this case the exegete is a pure listener. The exegete's preoccupation is to listen carefully with a clear mind and reach classical Arabic and its cultures and style. Therefore the exegete's role is passive while the Qur'an plays an active role.

3. The role of the exegete who adopts the thematic method is, on the other hand, active because he does not start his interpretation from the text of the Qur'an, but from the reality of life. He concentrates on the particular subject out of the great number of problems affecting humanity in relation to the ideological, social or cosmological aspect of life, and starts a dialogue with the Qur'an; the exegete questions and the Qur'an answers.²⁷ Consequently, the perpetual effort of thematic tafsir is to set the human intellectual heritage and experience as well as the contemporary problematic thoughts. In this task the tafsir does not begin and end with the Qur'an; rather it begins with reality and ends with the Qur'an as a true source.
4. As we know through the Qur'an itself, and through the hadiths, the Qur'an is a perennial, inexhaustible source. The inexhaustible bounty of the Qur'an is discoverable only through the thematic method because the potential of lexical exegesis is limited while the thematic method is developmental.
5. The thematic method goes a step beyond the analytic method. The analytic method tries to explain details while the thematic method seeks to know the relationship between the different verses whose individual details have been discovered by the analytic method. The thematic method is capable of continuous productivity and of replenishing new material provided by human experience.

Conclusion

By looking at the differences between the analytic and thematic methods one can conclude that the thematic method is the superior of the two. But it should be noted that there is no conflict between the two methods, because the thematic method evidently stands in need of the ascertainment by the analytic method of the meanings of the verses under study. Also, analytic tafsir, in the course of its thematic journey, does stumble upon Qur'anic ideas related to major issues of human life. However the superior quality of the thematic method over the analytic method does not mean that the former should replace the later. According to S. M. B. Sadr²⁸ what is meant is that we should add the former to the latter, because thematic tafsir is nothing but a step beyond the analytic tafsir. In other words we should unite the two methods because they are mutually supportive.

Bibliography

Books

Amir al-Mu'minin, Ali ibn Abi Tālib(A). *Nahj al-Balāgha*. Qum: Dār al-Hijra, 1990.

'Awwsi, Ali. *Al-Tabātibā'i wa Manhajuhû fi Tafsih al-Mizān*. Tehran: Mu'āwiniyyat al-Riyāsa lil-'Alāqāt al-Dawliyya, 1985.

Arberry, Arthur J., trans. *The Koran Interpreted*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964.

Dhahabi, Husain. *al-Tafsir wal-Mufasssirûn*. Vol. 1. Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Hadith, 1961.

Farûqi, I. H. Azād. *The Tarjuman al-Qur'an: A Critical Analysis of Maulana Abu'l-Kalam Azād's Approach to the Understanding of the Qur'an*. Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1982.

Hawting, G. R. and A. Sharif Abdul-Kader, eds. *Approaches to the Qur'an*. London & New York: Routledge, 1993.

Sadr, al-Sayyid Muhammad Bāqir. *Muqaddimāt fi al-Tafsir al-Mawḍû'î lil-Qur'an*. Bairût: Dār al-Tawjih al-Islāmi, 1980.

Suyûti, *al-Itqān fi 'Ulûm al-Qur`ān*. Vol. 2. Mahmiyah, Egypt: Idara Shaikh 'Uthmān `Abd al-Razzāq, 1206 A.H.

Tabātabā'i, Sayyed Muhammad Husain. *al-Mizān fi Tafsir al-Qur`ān*. 2nd ed. Bairût: Mu'assasat al-A'lami, 1972.

Zarkashi, *al-Burhān fi 'Ulûm al-Qur`ān*. Vol. 2. Cairo: Isā al-Bābi al-Halabi, 1957.

Articles

Andrew Rippin. "Tafsir." In *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 14. Ed. Mircea Eliade. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987, pp. 236-244.

Calder, Norman. "Tafsir from Tabari to Ibn Kathir". In *Approaches to the Qur'an*, ed. G.R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef, pp. 101-140. (London: Routledge, 1993).

Mutahhari, Murtaḡā. "Understanding the Uniqueness of the Qur'an." *Al-Tawhid* (1987), pp. 9-25.

Sadr, Muhammad Bāqir. "Thematic Approach to Qur'anic Exegesis." *Al-Tawhid* (1988-89), pp. 17- 29.

¹Arthur J. Arberry, trans., *The Koran Interpreted*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964). "That is the Book, wherein is no doubt, a guidance to the godfearing." 2:3 "...There has come to you from God a light, and a Book Manifest whereby God guides whosoever follows His good pleasure in the ways of peace,..."5:17-8

²Sayyed Muhammad Husayn Tabātabā'i, *al-Mizān fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*, 2nd ed. (Bairūt: Mu'assisat al-A'lami, 1972), p. 1. S. M. H. Tabātabā'i (d.1402/1981) is one of the most profoundly original and influential thinkers in recent Islam. His fame rests partly on his various academic works, the most important being his great thematic exegesis of the Qur'an, *Al-Mizān fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*. It may correctly be said to be the foundation stone of the Shi'i academic prestige which Tabātabā'i was accorded in the Muslim world. *Al-Mizān* is published in Arabic in 20 volumes which present a true picture of the author's academic approach and his way of thinking.

³Murtaḡā Mutahhari, "Understanding the Uniqueness of the Qur'an," *Al-Tawhid* (1987), pp. 9-10. There are four more books that come after the Qur'an and that are regarded as the most sacred and the most authentic sources by the Shi'a Muslim: *Al-Kāfi*, *Man lā Yahduruhu al-Faqih*, *Tahdhib al-Ahkām*, and *al-Istibsār*. However these sources and other sacred sources such as *Nahj al-Balāghah* and *Sahifah Sajjādiyyah* are as trustworthy as they may be in conformity with the Qur'an, and reliable so far as their words comply with the teaching of the Qur'an and do not conflict with it. According to the Shi'a hadiths, any hadith narrated from the Prophet Muhammad or the twelve infallible Imams should be checked against the Qur'an; if they do not comply with the Qur'an, they should be regarded as false since they have not said anything that can go against the Qur'anic teaching.

⁴Mutahhari "Understanding the Uniqueness of the Qur'an," p. 16.

- ⁵ Norman Calder, "Tafsir from Tabari to Ibn Kathir," in *Approaches to the Qur'an*, ed. G.R. Hawting and Abdul-Kader A. Shareef (London: Routledge, 1993) p.105.
- ⁶ I. H. A. Faruqi, *The Tarjuman al-Qur'an*, p. 5.
- ⁷ A. J. Arberry, *The Koran*, 16:47.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 62:2.
- ⁹ M. Mutahhari "Understanding the Uniqueness of the Qur'an," p. 16. It should be noted that according to the Shi'a the Prophet has transmitted everything he obtained from God to his successors i.e. the Imams. Thus, the tradition of the Imams possess the same degree of authenticity as those obtained directly from the Prophet. So these traditions are of great help in understanding the Qur'an.
- ¹⁰ Zarkashi, *Al-Burhān fi 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, vol. 2, (Cairo: 'Isā al-Bābi al-Halabi, 1957); and Suyūti, *al-Itqān fi 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, vol. 2, (Mahmiyah, Egypt: Idara Shaikh 'Uthmān 'Abd al-Razzāq, 1206 A.H.) p. 179. (quoted in I. H. A. Faruqi, *The Tarjumān al-Qur'ān*. p. 2.)
- ¹¹ Husain Dhahabi, *Al-Tafsir wal-Mufasssīrūn*, vol. 1. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Hadīth, 1961. (q. I. H. Azad Faruqi, *The Tarjumān al-Qur'ān*. 1982. p. 2.)
- ¹² Andrew Rippin, "Tafsir," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 14, ed. Mircea (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), p. 236.
- ¹³ Suyūti, *al-Itqān fi 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān*, vol. 2, p. 179. (q. I. H. A. Faruqi, *The Tarjumān al-Qur'ān*. 1982. p. 2.)
- ¹⁴ A. Rippin, "Tafsir", p. 236.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷ I. H. A. Faruqi, *The Tarjumān al-Qur'ān*, p. 5-7.
- ¹⁸ M. Mutahhari "Understanding the Uniqueness of the Qur'an," p. 17. See also Ali al-Awsi, *Al-Tabātabā'i wa Manhajuhū fi Tafsirih al-Mizān* (Tehran: Mu'āwiniyyat al-Riyāsa lil 'Alāqāt al-Dawliyyah, 1985), p. 125.
- ¹⁹ S. M. H. ŌabāŌabāi, *al-Mizān fi Tafsir al-Qur'ān*. vol. 1. p. 2.
- ²⁰ S. M. H. Tabātabā'i, *al-Mizān fi Tafsir al-Qur'ān*, v.1, p. 5.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² M. MuŌahhari "Understanding the Uniqueness of the Qur'an," p. 23. See also A. Rippin, "Tafsir," p. 238 and A. al-'Aowski, *Al-ŌabāŌbā'i wa Manhajuhū fi Tafsirih al-Mizān*, pp. 99.
- ²³ A. Rippin, "Tafsir", p. 238-9; see also I. H. A. Faruqi, *The Tarjumān al-Qur'ān*, p. 12-21. See also A. al-Awsi, *Al-Tabātbā'i wa Manhajuhū fi Tafsirih al-Mizān*. 1985. p. 99-110.
- ²⁴ Sayyid Muhammad Bāqir al-Sadr, *Muqaddimāt fi al-Tafsir al-Mawḏū'i lil-Qur'an*, (Beirut: Dār al-Tawjih al-Islāmi), 1980. p. 10. Or Muhammad Bāqir Sadr, "Thematic Approach to Qur'anic Exegesis" *Al-Tawhid*, (1988-9) p. 17.

²⁵S. M. B. Sadr, *Muqaddimāt fi al-Tafsir al-Mawḡū'i lil-Qur'an*. p. 10-12; M. B. Sadr, "Thematic Approach". *Al-Tawhid*, pp. 17-18.

²⁶S. M. B. Sadr, *Muqaddimāt fi al-Tafsir al-Mawḡū'i lil-Qur'an*. pp. 13-18; M. B. Sadr, "Thematic Approach". *Al-Tawhid*, pp. 19-21.

²⁷Ali ibn Abi Tālib (A), *Nahj al-Baāgha*, (Qum: Dār al-Hijra, 1990), Khutba 158. p. 223. "... That (light) is the Qur'an. Try to make it speak, it will never speak, though I will inform you about it. Indeed, it contains the knowledge of the future and the reports of the past, the cure for your ills and the system of (organizing) your affairs."

²⁸S. M. B. Sadr, *Muqaddimāt fi al-Tafsir al-Mawḡū'i lil-Qur'an*, pp. 29-30; M. B. Sadr, "Thematic Approach". *Al-Tawhid*, p. 28.

Shi'ite Social Theology

Mahmood Taghizadeh Davari

Introduction

Social theology is a synthetic discipline composed of various branches such as social hadith, social exegesis, social *Kalam*, social jurisprudence and social ethics. Its subject matter includes both the religious texts on human social life and the related features, implications and consequences such as family and spouse selection, occupation and business, state and government, education, discrimination and justice. Furthermore, this discipline includes both primary religious texts, i.e. the Qur'anic verses and hadiths, and secondary religious texts, i.e. the collection of exegeses, and interpretations made by scholars of hadith, exegetes, theologians, jurists, and ethicists. Thus, the human collective life and the related issues – as put forward in Islamic and especially Shi'ite exegeses – constitute the subject of this discipline. Naturally, this subject has conventional and abstract unity rather than internal and real unity (Mutahhary, [n.d.], vol. 2, pp. 16-7).

The method of this discipline is a composition of the methods common in sciences of hadith, exegesis, theology, jurisprudence and ethics, dealing with the chain of authorities of the texts (authenticating them) and with interpreting and analyzing their contents. For example, social *Kalam* employs the method common in theology, and social jurisprudence employs the methods commonly used in jurisprudence.

Therefore, this discipline, just as theology itself, aims ultimately at defending religious doctrines, claims and laws; in other words, satisfying and justifying pious people, explaining, teaching and preaching to its audiences, and overcoming its opponents. Accordingly, this discipline is on the same track as what is commonly called modern theology, except for being more limited in scope of its subject. The field of modern theology encompasses all religious texts – whether related to divine world or material world, to social life or historical life; social theology, however, encompasses only the texts related to collective activities of human beings.

Though not taught in the form of an independent course in local and non-local educational institutes of Iran, social theology has been undoubtedly of great importance, especially after the Islamic Revolution. If Islam is a social religion having a philosophy for social life and its consequences, it must be taught in this way in academic centers so that the collective reason seeks and finds the solution to the problems of humanity and society. Social theory is thus born, and Muslims' social science develops along with their other sciences.

In any case, to limit the scope of the subject, the present article deals with a review of Shi'ite works, deferring a detailed discussion of the subject to another study. Accordingly, a brief discussion on each of these five subcategories is presented, so that in the end a clear-cut picture of the notion of Shi'ite social theology is provided for the reader.

1. SOCIAL EXEGESES

By social exegeses, we mean the body of exegeses, explanations, inferences, and analysis presented by exegetes under the social verses of the Qur'an throughout centuries. Social verses are those verses dealing with human's social life and its features and consequences. These are numerous and various, extending from marriage to war and peace; therefore, the related verses constitute a large part of the Qur'anic verses. Some examples are as follows:

A) Commenting on the verse 3:200: "O ye who believe! Persevere in patience and constancy; vie in such perseverance; strengthen each other; and fear Allah; that ye may prosper", 'Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabātabā'i (d. 1360 S.A.H) in his well-known exegesis entitled *Al-Mīzān*¹, has presented an extensive discussion on "mutual relationship in Islamic society". He studies fifteen subjects such as human, society, history, politics, evolution and freedom in a philosophical and analytical

manner.² Under the title "Islam recognises both individual and collective relationships", he writes:

Human beings, though [personally] numerous, are [naturally] unique; the persons' actions are also multiple in number, but unique in nature. These are collected together and integrated with one another, just as a specific amount of water poured into different containers. Here, though we have numerous [containers of] water, their nature remains the same: multiple characters while of a unique nature; and the more the water collected in a specific place, the stronger its character and more effective it would be...this real relationship between the individual and society would necessarily lead to the emergence of another being in the society, of course to the extent to which the individuals assist it with their existence, characteristics and effects. Another being – similar to the individual in its nature and characteristics – thus emerges in the society, and this is evident; accordingly the Qur'an recognises for all nations the following: existence, life, book, consciousness, understanding, practice, worship and disobedience, saying: "To every people is a term appointed: when their term is reached, not an hour can they cause delay, nor (an hour) can they advance (it in anticipation)." (7:34). It also says "every nation shall be called to its book" (45:28),

and that "Thus have We made alluring to each people its own doings." (6:108)...; thus we see the Qur'an paying special attention to the history of nations as well as the biography of individuals.³

He supports his theories of "individualism and collectivism" in the Qur'an by saying:

... and on the whole, as mentioned earlier, social faculties and forces are [quite] powerful so that they overcome the individual effects and forces in case a conflict arises, as attested by experience and common sense both for effective forces and affected ones; therefore, the collective will does not allow for any resistance on the part of the opponent individual wills in cases of social conflicts. So the individual/part would not have any choice other than following the society/whole and moving in its path to the extent that the whole deprives the parts from their thought and common sense.⁴

B) Commenting on the verse 49:13: "O you men! surely We have created you of a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other; surely the most honorable of you with Allah is the one among you most pious", Murtaḍa Mutahhari (d. 1359 S.A.H) writes:

In this glorified verse, while giving a moral injunction, the Qur'an refers to the social

philosophy of human's special creation, saying that human beings were created in the form of different national and tribal groups; in this way, it is possible for people to recognize one another through ascription to different nations and tribes – this being a necessary condition for social life; that is, if there were no such ascriptions (which are on one hand a point of similarity and on the other hand an element of distinction for individuals), it would be impossible for people to identify one another, and this would make social life based on human relations impossible. It is these features and the like, such as difference in appearance and colour, that gives any individual his personal identification; if all persons were of the same appearance, colour and form, and if there were not different relations and ascriptions among people, they would be like uniform products of a factory, unable to distinguish between one another; so their social life based on relations and exchange of thoughts, services and goods would be impossible. Ascriptions to groups and tribes have thus a natural goal and philosophy, i.e. distinction among individuals and their identification which is an inevitable condition for social life; these ascriptions are not for ostentations and pomposity, for it is piety that counts as honour and dignity.⁵

C) Commenting on the verses 10:49 and 7:34, Muhammad Baqir Sadr (d. 1358 S.A.H) states:

The notions 'term' (*ajal*) and lifetime (*'umr*) are related to community (*ummah*) in both verses, i.e to a collective body of people and not to this or that individual. Here, therefore, there is a 'term' for social existence of people beside the limited and certain lifetime for each person; this is for *ummah*, i.e. the community with some relations and bonds among its members based on a host of thoughts and wishes originated from a series of faculties and capacities. This community referred to as *ummah* in the Holy Qur'an has its own term, an end, a lifetime, a motion; just as a person moves as he/ she is alive, and then dies, the community is similarly alive and then dies out; and just as a person's death is based on a rule, the community's end is also based on rules; it has its own specific and recorded term.⁶

D) Muhammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi states:

One of the so-called sociological precepts is that if most members of a group or a social stratum perform a particular action, it would affect all members (not the majority of them). This sociological rule has been referred to in numerous cases in our religious texts. In the verse 7:96 we

read: “If the people of the towns had but believed and feared Allah, We should indeed have opened out to them (all kinds of) blessings from heaven and earth”. This means if most members of a society become believers and pious, earthly and heavenly blessings would considerably increase for them, such as the following: in-time and ample rainfalls; increase in crops, livestock, and removal of pests and plagues; physical health; mental peace and comfort; and social security. The opposite situation is also possible; that is if most members of a society move in the path of disbelief, polytheism, hypocrisy, oppression, and debauchery, the natural undesirable consequences of these attributes and actions would afflict all members of the society, even the believers and virtuous people; just as if most members of a society do not observe the sanitary principles, this would lead to an outbreak of diseases which would afflict the minority as well: “And fear tumult, which affecteth not in particular (only) those of you who do wrong...” (8:25). The rule that the attributes and actions of most individuals would have consequences afflicting the minority as well is related neither to individual psychology nor to social psychology. It reveals, while having no reference to the existence or unity and real character of the society, a real and natural

relation, not a conventional one. This natural law must be regarded a sociological law.⁷

E) Naser Makarem Shirazi in his exegesis on the verse 8:53: “That is because God never changes a blessing that He has bestowed on a people unless they change what is in their own souls, and God is all-hearing, all-knowing”, after a discussion on philosophy of history under the title “The Causes for Nations’ Life and Death”, deals with a subject in the same field entitled “Determinism Forbidden in Destiny, History and the Like” and writes:

Another issue clarified in the abovementioned verses is the fact that human beings have no predetermined destiny and they are not influenced by “determinism of history”, “determinism of time”, and “environment”; rather, the formative factor of history and human life is the variations made by his own will in his way of life, morality, thought and spirit. So those who believe in predestined dispensation, holding that all events occur according to God's mandatory will, are condemned by the abovementioned verse; and the material predestination which regards human as a plaything in the hands of his immutable instincts, or the environmental predestination which regards him as convicted by the economical and production conditions are both valueless and wrong convictions from Islamic and Qur’anic viewpoint. Human is

free and creates his destiny with his own hands. In view of the principle we find in the abovementioned verses, human being has his time of destiny and history at his disposal, preparing the ground for his victory or his fall. His pains and cures are due to his own actions; unless he makes a change in his condition and varies himself through self-making, there will be no change in his destiny.⁸

2. SOCIAL HADITHS

This section encompasses a wide range of Islamic hadiths: from the most serious realms of humans' social relation – i.e. the relations pertaining to power and wealth – to the most popular realm – i.e. the family relations – as well as the most peripheral one, that is the free time and entertainments. A selection of the hadiths related to politics and power relations will be presented and explained.

A) Muhammad b. Ya‘qub Kulayni (d. 329 AH) in his glorified book entitled *Al-Kāfi* under “*Taqiyyah*” mentions about 23 hadiths in favour of taqiyyah (concealing one's true religious beliefs) and its formative function for the survival of the Shi‘ite community. One example is as follows:

Habib b. Bishr quotes Imam Sadiq as reporting his father's saying to the effect that “I swear God that there is nothing more favourable to me than

taqiyyah”. Imam Sadiq then says: “Oh Habib! Verily, any one who performs taqiyyah would be elevated in position by God. Oh Habib! He who refrains from taqiyyah would be debased by God. Oh Habib! People would live in peaceful coexistence through taqiyyah. Then when that event [Imam Mahdi’s uprising] happens, this [taqiyyah] would be put aside.”⁹

No doubt, this hadith offers a peaceful, safe and prudent policy to Shi‘ites, discouraging any fanatic approach and overt warlike activity, as would be done by Alawis and Zaidis of that period.

B) Sheikh Muhammad b. Hasan Hurr ‘Ameli (d. 1104) in the sections devoted to jihad and enjoining good in his *Wasā’il al-Shi‘ah* opens a chapter on “Obligatory jihad through Imam's permission and forbidden jihad without a just ruler” containing ten hadiths on permissibility of war only in the presence of a legitimate ruler. For example, he quotes:

Bashir said I told Imam Sadiq that “I dreamt I asked you whether fighting alongside a ruler whose obedience is not obligatory [because of his illegitimate rule] is forbidden just as [eating] carcass, blood and pig's flesh; and you answered [in dream] yes, that's right”. Imam Sadiq said: “That's right...that's right”.¹⁰

C) Hurr ‘Ameli quotes seventeen hadiths on denunciation and prohibition of armed rising in the Age of Occultation in a chapter on ”Rising with sword before Imam Mahdi's rising”. For example, he quotes:

Ibn Basir quotes Imam Sadiq as saying “every flag of uprising displayed before Imam Mahdi's rising belongs to an unjust leader, and [in that uprising] someone other than God is worshipped”.¹¹

In any case, the abovementioned example stresses avoidance of any warlike approach and military activity, attempting to form a non-extremist, moderate and realist political character for Ja‘fari Shi‘ites.

D) Sheikh Muhammad b. Ali b. Bābawayh known as Sheikh Saduq (d. 381 AH) in his *‘Ilal al-Sharāyi‘* quotes a hadith under the topic “the causes for the prolongation or shortening of a king's rule” to the effect that Imam Sadiq said:

God Almighty has determined a time span for every ruler, with fixed days, nights, years and months; if those rulers act justly among people, days and nights, months and years would pass slowly by God's order so that his rule will be prolonged; and if the ruler acts unjustly and oppressively, days and nights, months and years would pass more quickly, and verily God will fulfil his promise about them very soon.¹²

This hadith clearly shows a cause and effect relationship between just and equal policies of a government and its political lifetime, and also between oppressive and discriminatory policies of a government and its short lifetime. This provides a positive guideline for political activists and parties, whether inside the government or outside it.

3. SOCIAL KALAM

Theology deals with issues from human's social life as well, and theologians explain the necessity of God's (guiding) relation with human and human communities as well as prohibition of leaving human to himself (without guidance). Theologians attempt to rationalize for their audiences those religious texts related to God's law on human in history – usually called legislative guidance and the law of sending prophets – through rational and philosophical reasoning as well as historical and empirical evidences. They attempt to persuade their readers that human communities in their historical circulation have never been derelict; rather, they have enjoyed support, orders, deprecations, guidelines, injunctions, praises, blessings and so on in different historical junctures. Discussions on divine actions are certainly theological ones in nature. However the theologian is connected with the social philosopher and theology is connected with social philosophy. Some examples are cited which support this idea:

A) Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Nu‘mān ‘Ukbari, known as Sheikh Mufid (d. 413 A.H) has enumerated a range of social issues including prophethood, Imamate, justice, taḡiyyah, enjoining good and forbidding evil, participating in the government of oppressors and assisting them in three of his books entitled *Al-Nukat al-I‘tiḡdiyyah*, *Tashīh al-I‘tiḡdāt al-Imāmiyyah* and *Awā’il al Maḡālāt* (Mufid, 1413 S.A.H, no. 4, pp. 32-45; idem 1317 S.A.H/ 1413 A.H, no. 6/ pp. 101-105 and 137 & 138; idem, 1413 S.A.H., no. 8, pp. 63 & 64 and 118-121). On “enjoining good and forbidding evil” he says:

I would say enjoining good and forbidding evil through talking is a general obligation (*Wājib-e Kifā’ī*), provided that it is needed, i.e. if through warning, the unaware person is informed, or he is assured of advisability of this enjoining and forbidding. But the carte blanche is in the hands of the ruler/ government. He commissions or accredits someone for this, and it is not allowed to change this condition. This is dependant on believing in justice and Imamate, nothing else.¹³

Sheikh Mufid also adds:

Assisting oppressors (= the unjust rulers) to achieve one's right and what is in their disposal, is permissible and even obligatory; but choosing them as companions is forbidden. Working with them is not permissible, unless Imam Mahdi permits and it

is according to conditions determined by him, and this idea is just specific to Imami Shi'ites (and due to reasons too long to be stated here); following their order, however, is permissible in cases where there is apparently no harm to the Shiites' faith and entails no sins; nevertheless it is permitted to earn money from them (based on what described above); and it is also permissible, though doubtful, to use their properties, of course for those believers whom we call 'elites of the believers' not for other people; but what is at the disposal of those oppressors from believers' properties, if certain, is not permitted to be optionally used; and if one is forced to use them, it would be permitted just as it is in the case of compulsory eating of carcass flesh and blood. However, as mentioned before, one must not exceed the limitations in such cases. This opinion is peculiar of Imami Shi'ites and I know no one agreeing to this idea among Sunnis.¹⁴

B) Sheikh Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Hasan Tusi (d. 460 A.H) in his *Tamhīd al-Usūl* commenting on *Risālat Jumal al-'Ilm wa'l-'Amal* by Sayyid Murtaḍā 'Alamu'l-Hudā (d. 436 A.H) in a chapter on "Necessity of headship" in justifying the need for government, writes:

Forming government is an obligation for any legally competent non-impeccable person...; for when people have a fully authorized ruler who governs

them and their affairs, protects the weak persons from abuse by the strong ones, punishes the oppressors, and confronts the enemy, then goodness is promoted and corruption is reduced while he is present, but corruption is spread out and goodness declines while he is absent.¹⁵

C) ‘Allamah Hilli (d. 726 A.H) in his well known commentary on *Tajrīd al-I’tiqād* by Khaja Nasir al-Din Tusi (d. 672 A.H) entitled *Kashf al-Murād fī Sharh Tajrīd al-I’tiqād* explains the argument of Khaja for the necessity of Imamate as an implication of divine grace as follows:

The author writes on the necessity of appointing an Imam that Imam is a grace, and bestowing a grace is an obligation for God. The minor premise is clear for the intellectuals; for we understand necessarily that when wise people have a ruler who protects them from wronging each other, takes them away from sins, prepares them for performing obligatory tasks and doing justice and fairness, then they would be closer to goodness and farther from corruption, this being an axiomatic premise not doubted by any wise person; as for the major premise [the obligation of divine grace], we have already clarified the point.¹⁶

D) Sheikh Muhammad Riḡā Muḡaffar (d. 1384 A.H) in his *‘Aqā’id al-Imāmiyyah* has discussed social issues under the titles

such as: “Our opinion on oppression”, “Our opinion on assisting the oppressors” and “Our opinion on the absolute right of a Muslim”. In the discussion “Our opinion on working in an unjust government”, he writes:

Knowing that assisting the oppressors (even if by giving them a palm date, or being interested in their survival) is among the most important practices forbidden by our Imams, what would be the case for those who participate in their government, governmental services, administering the provinces, or those who take part in establishing their state, or those who are among the pillars of their dominion and established rule? The reason for this prohibition is that the authority of the unjust ruler would lead to abusing all truths and reviving all vanities and publicity of oppression and corruption. The same thing has been stated by Imam Sadiq in a hadith narrated in *Tuhaf al-'Uqūl*. Of course we have hadiths quoted from Imams in which the authority of the unjust ruler is permissible provided that justice is protected from abuse, divine limits are observed, good treatment of believers is widespread, and enjoining good and forbidding evil are promoted. Verily, there are some people in the courts of the oppressors, through whom God clarifies the proof, giving them authority in all lands, whereby protecting His friends from dangers

and ordering Muslims' affairs...; and the same points appear in a hadith from Imam Musa b. Ja'far.¹⁷

Regarding Muslims' unity he then says:

The Prophet's Household are well-known for their insistence on survival of Islamic manifestations and calling to Islamic glory, Muslims' unity and brotherhood among them, and removing boredom and animus from their hearts. Imam Ali's position compared to his preceding caliphs is memorable: while dissatisfied with them and holding that they were usurpers of caliphate, he would tolerate them and treat them peacefully, not referring to his right of caliphate [through the Prophet's order].¹⁸

4. SOCIAL JURISPRUDENCE

By social jurisprudence we mean that part of jurisprudence dealing with the precepts related to social issues and collective relations; it states the positive and situational precepts; it clarifies legal and illegal jobs, activities, laws, contracts; it expounds obligatory tasks, unlawful activities, approved duties, and undesirable actions by states, communities, groups, and companies; and determines the ownership scope and discretionary license of representatives and advocates of the community (governments, mayoralities, ...) through the very

common method of legal reasoning. Social jurisprudence is formed when the scope of a jurist's professional activity goes beyond setting the individual's obligations and extends to the scope of collective and social activities. Two examples related to social jurisprudence are as follows:

A) Ayatollah Ruhullah Khomeini (d. 1368 S.A.H) while discussing Jurist's Authority (*Wilāyat-e Faqīh*) in his *Kitāb al-Bay'* writes on the necessity of establishing Islamic state:

Islamic precepts – including economic, political and legal precepts – are in force and irrevocable up to the Resurrection Day. None of the divine laws has been abrogated and this necessitates a system which ensures the validity and enforcement of those laws, for it is impossible to enforce divine precepts without establishing Islamic state. Otherwise, the society would lead to anarchy, dominated by disorder and perturbation. Since preserving the society's system is among the emphasized divine obligations, disorder and turmoil in Muslims' affairs being improper and reprehensible, and since it is quite clear that this would not be achievable without Islamic state, there remains no doubt in necessity of establishing a government. Besides, protecting the frontiers of the Islamic country from foreigners' invasions and preventing invaders' dominion are both rationally and religiously obligatory. This also is not possible except through

the Islamic state. Verily those very reasons proving the necessity of Imamate after the Prophet does also prove the necessity of [Islamic] government in the Occultation Period. Establishing a state in order to promote justice, education, preserving the society's system, removing oppression, protecting the country's frontiers and preventing foreigners' invasions is among the most axiomatic premises, there being no difference between the period of Imam's presence and the Occultation Period or between this and that country.¹⁹

Replying to a letter written by the Iranian president of that time (Ayatollah Khamenei), Imam Khomeini expounds his own jurisprudential views on the theory of Jurist's Authority as follows:

From what you said in Friday's prayer, it seems you do not accept the government as meaning the absolute authority relegated by God to the holy Prophet, being one of the most important divine precepts, and prior to all divine religious laws; and your reading of my saying that 'government is authorized in the scope of divine laws' is completely opposed to what I had said. If the government was authorized in the scope of secondary divine laws, the divine government and the absolute authority relegated to the Prophet would be a meaningless phenomenon. I should refer to its consequences

which nobody can be obliged to observe. For instance, constructing avenues which requires seizure of a house or its surrounding is not in the scope of secondary laws. Military service and forcible dispatch of individuals to the fronts, preventing [illegal] import and export of foreign exchange or any other kind of goods, forbidding hoarding, tariff and taxes, preventing extortion, setting prices and preventing spread of drugs as well as any kind of addiction (except alcoholic drinks), taking any kind of arms, and many other examples which are in the scope of the government's jurisdiction would be out of the scope of Jurist's authority according to your reading. I must say that government is a branch of the Prophet's absolute authority; it is one of the primary precepts of Islam, prior to all secondary precepts, even prayer, fasting and Hajj. The [legal] ruler can destroy a mosque or a house which is in the street path, paying the money to the owner; he can close a mosques if necessary and destroy a mosque which belongs to the hypocrites (in case no other choice is available). The state can unilaterally abrogate legal contracts concluded with people if those contracts are against interests of the country and Islam and may prevent anything – ritual or otherwise – as long as it is against Islam. The state can temporarily recess Hajj

– one of the important divine obligations – in cases it is against the benefits of Islamic country.²⁰

B) Ayatollah Husayn Ali Muntazeri in his book *Dirāsāt fī Wilāyat al-Faqīh* states:

Those who refer to the Qur'an and Sunnah, whether Shi'ites or Sunnis, would clearly find that the Islamic precepts brought by the Prophet are not confined to individual rites; rather, they encompass all human needs in all stages of personal, family and social life; Islam not only contains knowledge, moralities, and ritual worships, but also transactions, politics, and economics. A survey in hadiths of Shi'ite and Sunni sources and their jurisprudential decrees in various subjects of Islamic law leads us to the idea that government and enforcement of governmental orders are parts of Islam; thus Islam is inherently both a religion and a state, is worship as well as economics and politics.²¹

Then under the title of “The importance of governmental jurisprudence and general social issues” he continues:

You should know that there have been two flagrant defects in Muslims' jurisprudential discussions (whether Shi'ites or Sunnis) in recent times: one in their quantity, i.e. there have been a decrease in the number of seminary schools and Islamic centres as

well as skilful jurists due to efforts by colonialists and their agents; another in their quality, i.e. those discussions have just focused on ritual issues and individual religious precepts, neglecting public/general issues afflicting the Muslim community and refraining from vocalizing Islamic precepts in such issues.²²

In any case, *Dirāsāt fī Wilāyat Faqīh* is the most comprehensive work on Shi'ite political-social jurisprudence in modern times.

5. SOCIAL ETHICS

A social norm is called *adab* (an etiquette), and social norms are called *ādāb ijtimā'i* (social etiquette). The norms are the rules of behaviour in different situations, determining our duties in different situations, telling us what is right and what is wrong in those situations. For instance, greeting, being winsome and shaking hands when meeting others are among Islamic etiquettes, while refraining from greeting, being stern, and not shaking hands are regarded signs of impoliteness.

A large part of Shi'ite ethical books is devoted to social ethics. Moral advice has been offered sometimes generally on the human social life and sometimes individually on particular cases of social relations. Etiquette of fellowship, family and spousal ethics, neighbourly etiquette, professional ethics, judicial etiquette, war and peace ethics, power and rulership ethics are

among prominent examples mentioned in ethical sources and texts.

A) Mulla Ahmad Naraqī (d. 1245 A.H) in his *Mi'rāj al-Sa'ādah*, in a chapter on earning illicit income, classifies different types of thieves and beggars, which is relevant here:

...as for the first class, i.e. thieves: some of them have a community in which they unite and do robberies in roads; they are bandits. Some others appeal to the kings, viziers and rulers, oppressing people and seizing their properties through companionship of great personages and dignitaries; still another group who have no share in people's properties through these methods, use other ways such as tunnelling, lassoing, picking pockets, entering people's houses and so on.

As for the second type, i.e. beggars, they are divided into several groups: some malingering, pretending to be blind, paralytic or ill, or have a child lie down on people's ways, pretending to be ill; some others cry and lament, and some proceed to insist and importune; some do strange things or say strange words to win people's helps, as some clown or say jokes or fool or flatter and hail; some tell stories and some are dervishes; a group read humorous poems or rhymed prose with an attractive voice, such as singers; and some others use prudery,

imposture, wool clothes, heavy beads and litany for subsistence; some use studying and sitting in schools or panegyric of the martyrs or being prayer leader as a means for begging. Another group call themselves doctors or surgeons, gathering some useless plants around themselves to make admixtures and cheating women or other insane persons; some others are fortunetellers, stargazers, augurs or interpreters of dreams... All these cheat people in this or that way, leading a beggary life, and are negligent of origin and end of creation.²³

B) Mulla Muhsen Fayḍ Kashani (d. 1091 A.H) in his famous book entitled *Al-Mahhajjah al-Bayḍā* devotes a large section to "the etiquettes of companionship", citing many moral hadiths in support of his ideas:

You should know that familiarity is the result of good character, and dissension derives from bad character. Good character leads to affection, familiarity and mutual agreement; and bad character results in enmity, jealousy, and mutual hate. The fruit is favourable as much as the root. The virtue of good character is clearly stated in religion and is the very thing because of which God has praised his Prophet: "Verily you have a great disposition" (68:4); and the Prophet says "two believers who meet one another are analogous to two friends one of whom washes the other; never do two believers

meet but God bless one of them through the other”,²⁴

In Kashani’s view, a religious community is a moral community with the following virtues and ideals:

- Its members are affable and sympathetic to one another; as Imam Ali (A.S.) says: “a believer is affable and there is no goodness in a person who is neither sympathetic towards others nor lets other[s] be sympathetic towards him”²⁵
- They are winsome and genial; as the Prophet says: “Oh sons of ‘Abdul Muttalib! You cannot attract people through your properties; but through geniality and winsomeness.”²⁶
- They are benevolent toward and advise one another; as Imam Sadiq (A.S.) says: “It is incumbent upon any believer to be benevolent towards his religious brethren in their presence or absence.”²⁷
- They are witty and make one another laugh; as Imam Sadiq (A.S.) says: “A person's smile [when] meeting his [religious] brother is a virtue, as it is in case of removing barb and tinder from him; and there is no worship better than cheering up the believers.”²⁸
- They talk well and positively to one another, avoiding mischief-making and aspersion; as the Prophet says: “the most favoured ones of you before God are those affable to others and make people be affable; and the most hated ones

of you before God are those who are telltales and mischievous, causing friends to dissociate.”²⁹

- They treat one another with compromise and tolerance. The Prophet says: "My God ordered me to treat people with tolerance, just as He ordered me to perform religious obligations.”³⁰ The Prophet also says: “treating people with tolerance is half of the faith and accompanying them is half of happiness and contentment.”³¹

- They try to preserve the secrets of one another, not exposing one another's faults; as the holy Prophet says: “the speeches of people talking in meetings are trusts and no one is allowed to reveal anything from anyone's talks if he does not like this”.³² He also says: “Any person who sees a fault in his [religious] brother and conceals it will be entered into paradise by God.”³³ (*ibid*, p. 375).

- They do not tease one another by their hands or tongues; as the Prophet says: “Do you know who is a Muslim? The Companions said that God and His Messenger know better. The Prophet said: ‘A Muslim is someone from whose hands and tongue Muslims are safe’. They asked: ‘who is a believer then?’ He answered: ‘One from whom the believers’ properties and lives are safe’. They asked: ‘Who is an Immigrant (*muhājir*) then?’ He answered: ‘One who is far from evildoing.’”³⁴

- They attempt to fulfil the needs of one another; as Imam Sadiq (A.S.) says: “One who fulfils the needs of his [religious] brother is as someone who has served God in his whole lifetime.”³⁵ He also says: “One who tries to fulfil the need of his [religious] brother and devotes an hour of the day or night to this – whether succeeds in fulfilling that need or not – will be given the reward of two months of religious seclusion by God.”³⁶

- In transaction and relation with one another, they do not cheat or oppress; as Imam Sadiq (A.S.) says: “A believer is the brother of another believer, his sighted eye and his guide; he does not betray him, oppress, cheat or breach his promise.”³⁷

- In quarrels and conflicts, they try to reconcile between two parties; as it is quoted from Imam Sadiq (A.S.): “When relations among people deteriorates, reconciling them is a charity God favours and when they separate, making them approach [is a charity God favours].”³⁸

- And in case of illnesses, they go to visit one another; as Imam Sadiq (A.S.) says: “Any Muslim has some rights to be observed by his [religious] brother, including greeting him when meeting him, visiting him when he is ill, [and] being benevolent towards him when he is absent.”³⁹

Conclusion

As attested by the present article, the Muslims' social knowledge has its origin in the Qur'an. In the holy Quran and Islamic hadiths various issues of human social life have been mentioned, and these two illuminative sources have always been an invaluable treasure for informing and inspiring Muslim scholars in the realms of human and social sciences. Historically speaking, social issues have always been mentioned discursively and unsystematically in texts on sciences of exegesis, hadith, theology, jurisprudence and ethics. These topics all together constitute social theology. Social theology, in addition to primary social texts (social verses of the Qur'an and hadiths), include secondary social texts as well, i.e. the body of expositions, exegeses, inductions and inferences from primary social texts by exegetes, scholars of hadith, theologians, jurists and scholars of ethics. Accordingly, social theology compared with two other Muslims' social sciences, i.e. social philosophy and sociology, have been affected more greatly and have been more considerably intimate with social passages in Qur'anic verses and Islamic hadiths. This discipline is able to develop greatly due to its pure and fine sources, and it can be linked to the social issues of the modern times with the assistance of experts in social issues to be used in improving the condition of the society. In this way, an idea comes to a sharp-sighted theoretician's mind, and a social theory emerges from those priceless social doctrines.

Bibliography

- Muhammad b. Hassan Hurr ‘Ameli, *Wasā’il al-Shī‘ah*, 2nd ed., vol. 11, Beirut, Dār Ihyā al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, [n.d.]
- Sayyid Muhsen Kharrazi, *Bidāyat al-Ma‘ārif al-Ilāhiyyah fī Sharh al-Imāmiyyah*, 2nd ed., Qom, Islamic Publications Institute, 1416 AH.
- Ruhullah Khomeini, *Shu‘ūn wa Ikhtiyarāt-e Waliyy-e Faqīh* (translation of Wilayat-e Faqīh chapter in *Kitāb al-Bay‘*), 3rd ed., Tehran, Publication of Ministry of Islamic Culture and Guidance, 1372.
- Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, *Sahīfa-ye Nūr* (the collection of Imam Khomeini's works), vol. 20, 2nd ed., Tehran, 1379.
- Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Sadr, *Al-Madrasaa al-Qur‘āniyyah*, Beirut, Dār al-Ta‘āruf lil-Matbū‘āt, 1400.
- Muhammad b. Ali b. Bābiwayh, *Ilal al-Sharāyi‘i*, 2nd ed., Qom, Dār al-Zahrā Publications, 1384 S.A.H/ 1428 AH.
- Muhammad Husayn Tabātabā‘i, *Al-Mīzān*, vol. 4, Qom, Ismā‘ilian Publication Institute, 1394 A.H.
- Abu Ja‘far Muhammad b. Hasan Tusi, *Tamhīd al-Usūl fī ‘Ilm al-Kalām*, ed. and intro. Dr. Mishkat al-Dini, Tehran, Tehran University, 1362 S.A.H.

- Khaja Nasir al-Din Tusi, *Kashf al-Murād fī Sharh Tajrīd al-I'tiqād*, Qom, Islamic Publication Institute, [n.d.]
- Mulla Muhsen Fayḍ Kashani, *Al-Mahajjah al-Bayḍā*, 2nd ed., vol. 3 and 4, Qom, Islamic Publications Institute, [n.d.]
- Muhammad b. Ya'qub Kulayni, *Al-Usūl min al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islami, [n.d.]
- Mahammad Taqī Mesbah Yazdi, *Jāme'eh wa Tārīkh az Didgāh-e Qur'ān*, 2nd ed., Tehran, International Publications Company (Islamic Propaganda Organization), 1379.
- Murteza Mutahhari, *Āshnāī bā 'Ulūm-e Islāmī*, ii (theology and mysticism), Qom, Sadra Publications, [n.d.]
- *Jāme'eh wa Tārīkh*, Qom, Islamic Publications, [n.d.]
- Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Nu'man, *Al-Nukat al-I'tiqādiyyah*, in the collection of Sheikh Mufid's writings, no. 4, Qom, The International Conference on the Thousandth Memorial of Sheikh Mufid, 1413 AH.
- ----- *Tashīh I'tiqādāt al-Imāmiyyah*, in the collection of Sheikh Mufid's writings, no. 6, Qom, The International Conference on the Thousandth Memorial of Sheikh Mufid, 1317 S.H/ 1413 S.A.H.
- Naser Makarim Shirazi, *Tafsir Nemuneh*, vii, Tehran, Dār al-Kutub al-Islamiyya, 1408 AH.

- Mulla Ahmad Naraqī, *Mi‘rāj al-Sa‘ādah*, 4th ed., Qom, Qa‘im Al-e Muhammad Publications, 1386.

¹ O ye who believe! Persevere in patience and constancy; vie in such perseverance; strengthen each other; and fear Allah; that ye may prosper.

² Tabatabaie, 1394 AH., vol. 4, pp. 92-133.

³ Ibid. p. 96.

⁴ Ibid. p. 97.

⁵ Mutahhari, *Society & History*, n.d., pp. 14 & 15.

⁶ Sadr., 1400 A H, pp. 56 & 57.

⁷ Mesbah Yazdi, 1379 S.A.H, pp. 128 & 129.

⁸ Makarem Shirazi., [n.d.], vol. 7, pp. 213& 214.

⁹ Kulayni, [n.d.], 2nd section, p. 217, no. 4.

¹⁰ Hurr ‘Ameli, [n.d.], vol. 11, p. 32, no. 1.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 36, no 6.

¹² Saduq, 1386 S.A.H/ 1428 A.H, p. 745.

¹³ Mufid, 1413 A.H., no. 8, p. 119.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 120 & 121.

¹⁵ Tusi, 1362 A.H, p. 348.

¹⁶ Tusi, [n.d.], p. 362.

¹⁷ Kharrazi, 1416 A.H, ii, p. 220.

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 222.

¹⁹ Imam Khomeini, 1371 AH, pp. 23 & 24.

²⁰ Institute for Compilation and Publication of Imam Khomeini's Works, 1379 S.A.H, xx, pp. 451 & 452.

²¹ Muntazeri, 1408 A.H, vol. 1, p. 8.

²² Ibid. pp 20 & 21.

²³ Naraqī, 1386 A.H., pp. 356 & 357.

²⁴ Fayd Kashani, [n.d], vol. 3, pp. 284 & 285.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 291.

²⁶ Op cit.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 406.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 407.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 288.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 401.

³¹ Op cit.

³² Ibid. p. 327.

³³ Ibid. p. 375.

³⁴ Ibid. p. 358.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 404.

³⁶ Op cit.

³⁷ Ibid. p. 406.

³⁸ Ibid. p. 374.

³⁹ Ibid. p. 356.

Preparing the Shi'a for the Age of Occultation

Mohammad Reza Jabbari

The doctrine of “Mahdi” has a long history among Muslims, especially Shi'ites. Muslims have been familiar with the matter through Prophetic and Imams' hadiths. Islamic sources contain many hadiths in which the Holy Prophet (S) and the Imams (A) have reported on the happening of the occultation and its relating issues. Sheikh Tusi narrated the matter that: “...frequent and widespread reports have been received from [Imam] Mahdi's fathers (A) long before (the happening of) occultation about his Imamate. Reports confirming that there will be an occultation for the Master of this affair (*Sāhib-u hādha'l Amr*) and addressing what will happen, indicating that there will be two occultations for him, one of which will be longer than the other....”¹

There is also a great number of hadiths quoted about it from the Holy Prophet (S) and Imams (A) in sources such as Sheikh Sadūq's *Kamāl al-Din wa Tamām al-Ni'mah* and also in B. Abi Zaynab Nu'māni's *Al-Ghaybah*. There are also many hadiths about this issue in Sunni sources. Based on these hadiths, as researchers have also mentioned, it can be claimed that the doctrine of Mahdi (A) has been one of the well-known, common

and undeniable issues. Therefore, Shi‘ites would enter the “age of occultation” with a long-enough preparation and 260 years of history.

The Shi‘ites’ knowledge of the doctrine of Mahdi did not only concern the heart of the matter but also included its features and details. To illustrate this fact, we will now review some of the hadiths from the Holy Prophet (S) and Imams (A) about this matter. It should be mentioned that everything in this chapter is only based on the contents of the three major Shi‘ites’ books which are Nu‘māni’s *Al-Ghaybah*, Sheikh Tusi’s *Al-Ghaybah* and Sheikh Sadūq’s *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni‘mah*. For further hadiths, dear readers are recommended to refer to other Shi‘a and also Sunni sources concerning Imam Mahdi’s (A).

1. The Holy Prophet (S)

‘Abd al-Rahmān b. ‘Abbas quotes the Holy Prophet (S) as saying:

Allah, the Exalted, cast a glance at the earth and chose me as His prophet, then another time showed grace [toward us] and chose ‘Ali as Imam and ordered me to choose him as my brother, the waliy (guardian), the designated successor, the aider and the caliph [after me]; so, ‘Ali is in bond with me and he is the husband of my daughter and father of my two grandchildren: Hasan and Husayn. Then, know that Allah has presented us as

clear proofs to His servants and from Husayn's blood has appointed Imams who will be the upholders of my command and keep their followership of me and the ninth of them will be the Upriser of my household, [the promised] Mahdi for my ummah. He will be the most similar to me in looks, speech and actions and will appear after a prolonged occultation and a distracting confusion [of my ummah]. He will disclose and unveil the divine command and reveal the divine religion. He will be supported by Allah's help and His angels and will fill the earth with justice after it is filled with oppression and injustice."²

2. Imam Ali (A)

'Abd al-'Azim Hasani reported from Imam Jawād (A) who quoted from his fathers (A), [originally] from Imam 'Ali (A) that:

There will be a long [period of] occultation for the Upriser of us; and I see my Shi'ites like a flock of sheep looking for their shepherd but they cannot find him during [the period of] occultation of the Upriser. Then, know that who could remain on the path of the religion and does not become hardhearted during occultation of the Upriser, then he will be the one with me standing at my level.

Then Imam Ali (A) continued: “Surely comes the time when the Upriser of us rises. He owes no one an allegiance and therefore his birth will be hidden and he will be absent [from eyes].”³

3. Lady Fātimah (A)

In a hadith reported in different sources, Jābir b. ‘Abdullah Ansāri reported about a book, he saw in the hands of Lady Fātimah (S.A) shining wonderfully; in which there were names of the Twelve Imams (A) together with their mothers’ names and the last name had been the name of the Upriser (A) of the Household (A).⁴

4. Imam Hasan Mujtabā (A)

Abu Sa‘id reported that after Imam Hasan’s (A) peace treaty with Mu‘āwiyah was signed, people went to Imam (A) and, some of them criticized him. So, he (A) stated:

Woe to you! You do not know what I did! What I did for my followers is better than whatever sun has been shining at when rising or setting. Do you not know that I am your Imam to be obeyed and one of the two masters of the youths in paradise?

“Yes!” they answered. [Then] Imam (A) stated:

Do not you know that when Khidr punctured the ship and later killed a child, Moses became angry, for the philosophy of that was hidden from him,

while before God, that [Khiḍr did] was of great wisdom and truth? Do not you know that there would not be any of us, unless he is forced to show allegiance to the illegitimate rulers of his time; except the Upriser, who will be followed by Jesus, son of Mary, *ruhullah* (A Spirit from God)? Allāh has kept his birth time secret and will make him absent for he (A) would not be forced to give allegiance to anyone at the time of his reappearance. He (A) will be the ninth Imam descending after my brother, Husayn (A), who will be the son of the chief of women. Allāh will prolong his life during his occultation and then will let him reappear, with His mighty power, as a young man of less than forty years old. And that is to make everyone understand that God is able to do everything.⁵

5. Imam Husayn (A)

‘Abd al-Rahmān b. Hajjāj narrated from Imam Sādiq (A) who reported from his fathers quoting Imam Husayn (A) as saying:

The ninth [Imam] of my descendants will have a sign of Joseph, the prophet and a sign of Moses b. ‘Imrān; the Upriser of us, the Household (A), whose task will be assigned by God overnight.⁶

A man from Hamdān reported that he heard from Husayn b. ‘Ali (A):

The Upriser of this ummah is the ninth [Imam] of my descendents and he has the occultation; the one whose heritage will be shared while he will be alive.

6. Imam Sajjād (A)

Abu Khālid Kābuli reported: I went to my master Imam Sajjād (A) and said: ‘O’ My master! Please, inform me of those, God has made their obedience obligatory for us!’ He (A) stated:

The ones God has made their obedience obligatory and has chosen them Imams for people are the Commander of the Faithful, ‘Ali b. Abi Tālib, and his two sons, Hasan and Husayn (A). Now I am given this position.

At this moment, the Imam became silent. Abu Khālid said: I stated: ‘O! My master! It is quoted from the Commander of the Faithful (A) that, earth will not be empty of God’s Proof (*hujjah*)! Who will be the God’s Proof and Imam after you?’ He stated:

My son, Muhammad and after him [his son] Ja‘far!’ Then he (A) mentioned a hadith from the holy Prophet (S) that stated: ‘when my [grand] son, Ja‘far is born; name him Sādiq, for the fifth of

his descendants whose name will be Ja‘far will claim imamate. Then, he will be Ja‘far Kadhdhāb (in Arabic, the liar) the slanderer before God; and he is who is going to tear divine veil (disclose divine secrets) during the occultation of the Waliy of God (A)’.

Then Imam Sajjād (A) bitterly wept and stated:

I see Ja‘far [Kadhdhāb] invoking the illegitimate rulers of his time to question the order of the Waliy of God.... The occultation of the Waliy of God, the Twelfth of the successors after the Holy Prophet, will be prolonged. O’ Abā Khālid! Surely, the people living at the age of his occultation are who believe in his Imamate and wait for his reappearance. They are better than people of all other ages, and because of their abundance of knowledge and wisdom, the occultation is like a true vision for them; and God will give them the same position as that of those who fought for His sake in the presence of the Holy Prophet. They will surely be the faithful believers, true Shi‘ites and the inviters to the Right path.

Then he (A) stated: ‘Waiting for the relief is among the best of reliefs.’⁷

7. Imam Bāqir (A)

Hadiths quoted from Imam Bāqir (A) and Imam Sādiq (A) about Imam Mahdi (A), his occultation, his reappearance, the signs of his reappearance and happenings after his reappearance are very significant, since they have mentioned the heart of the issue as well as some of the characteristics of occultation. Here are some hadiths to prove this claim.

Ibrāhim b. ‘Umar Kanāsi said that he heard from Imam Bāqir (A):

Surely, there are two occultations for the Master of the Affair (*Sāhib-u hādha’l Amr*); and the Upriser will rise while he owes no one an allegiance.⁸

Abū Basir quoted from Abū Ja‘far Muhammad b. ‘Ali al-Bāqir (A) who stated:

There will come nine *Imams* after Imam Husayn, the ninth of whom will be the Upriser from among them.

Jābir Ju‘fi quoted Imam Bāqir (A) as saying:

There will come an age to people whose Imam will be absent. Then, blessed are those who keep on our command. Surely, their least award is that God address them that: ‘O’ My male and female servants! You came to believe in My secret and

affirmed My concealment; then glad tidings be to you having My best of awards. You are My male and female servants! I accept from you and forgive you and through you I send My blessings to My servants and it is because of you that I ward off disaster from My servants....⁹

8. Imam Sādiq (A)

Imam Sādiq's (A) hadiths about this matter are much more than those received from Imam Bāqir (A). There are more characteristics and details mentioned in Imam Sādiq's (A) hadiths. For example, Safwān b. Mihrān quoted Imam Ja'far b. Muhammad al-Sādiq (A) as saying:

Whoever professes to all Imams but disclaims Imam Mahdi is like the one who professes to all the prophets but disclaims Muhammad (S).

Someone asked: "O' the son of Allah's Apostle! Which one of your sons is [the promised] Mahdi (A)?" He (A) answered:

The fifth Imam after the seventh Imam. He will become hidden from you and you are not permitted to pronounce his name.¹⁰

In some ḥadiths, Imam Sadiq (A) warned Shi'ites about denial of [Imam] Mahdi (A) during the age of occultation, and by this means, he (A) prepared Shi'ites more and more for the advent of occultation. Abu Basir, quotes Imam Sādiq (A) as saying:

If your master [Imam] happens to be absent, never deny him.¹¹

‘Ubayd b. Zurāreh reports that he heard Imam Sadiq (A) saying:

People will lose their Imam, then he will attend to hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) and sees them, but they do not see him.¹²

In some hadiths, Imam Sādiq (A) informed about two occultations, one minor and one major. In his *Al-Ghaybah*, after quoting some of these hadiths, Nu‘māni writes:

The hadiths about two occultations are authentic, and God revealed the truthfulness of Imams’ words, for two kinds of occultation have actually occurred. In the first occultation, when there were deputies between Imam and people, the healings would be processed through their hands and by whom the answers to questions were given. But the second occultation is the one, during which there are no [specifically appointed] deputies or agents....¹³

9. Imam Kāẓim (A)

Relying on his own chain of authorities, Muhammad b. Ya‘qūb Kulayni quoted from ‘Ali b. Ja‘far who quoted from his brother Imam Kāẓim (A) who stated:

When the fifth Imam after the seventh is absent, be careful about your religion, for there will be an occultation for the Master of this Affair during which, believers in his imamate give up from this faith; and this is a trial [for them] by God ...¹⁴

Dāwūd b. Kathir Riqqi said: “I asked Abu al-Hasan Mūsa b. Ja‘far (A) about the Master of this Affair. He (A) answered:

He [Mahdi] will be rejected (by people) and isolated and absent from his household and he is the only son of his father.¹⁵

10. Imam Riḍā (A)

‘Abd al-Salām b. Sālih Hirawi said: I heard from Di‘bil b. ‘Ali Khuzā‘i who said that: ‘I recited an ode to my master, Imam Riḍā (A), which started as:

Schools of teaching Qur‘an before, therein no recitation now
Descending place of revelation once, no reflection now

until I came to these two verses:

No doubt, once an Imam (A) comes In the Name of
Allah, in His Benisons

Reveals all the Truth, all the False who gives all's own
rewards.

At this point, Imam cried bitterly. Then he (A) raised his head and stated:

O' Khuzā'i! It was the Holy Spirit who ran these two verses on your tongue! Do you know who is that Imam (you mentioned him and his reappearance), and when will he reappear?

I said: 'No! My Master! It is just that I have heard an Imam of your descendants will rise who will eliminate corruption from the world and fill it with justice.' Imam Riḡā (A) then stated:

'O, Di'bil! The Imam after me is Muhammad, my son, and the Imam after him is his son, 'Ali, and after 'Ali, his son, Hasan and after him, his son is hujjat [the Proof], the Expected Upriser, who will be expected [to come] after his occultation and will be obeyed at the time of his reappearance. If one day remains to the end of the world, surely, God would prolong that day until he comes and fills the earth with justice after it is filled with oppression. But to know the time of his uprising is among the news of the time. That surely, my father quoted from his father who quoted from his fathers, from the holy Prophet (S) that someone asked him: O, the Apostle of God! When will the Upriser will rise from among your descendants? He (S) stated: "It is similar to the Resurrection, about which, Allāh has mentioned: '...none except

Him shall manifest it at its time. It will weigh heavy on the heavens and the earth. It will not overtake you but suddenly' (7: 187).”¹⁶

11. Imam Jawād (A)

‘Abd al-‘Azim Hasani said: “I came before my master, Muhammad b. ‘Ali al-Jawād, and wanted to ask him about the Upriser if it is him (A) or someone else. So he (A) started speech and stated:

O’ Abu al-Qāsim! For sure, the Upriser of us is Mahdi; it is obligatory for people to expect him during the age of his occultation and to obey him at the time of his reappearance. He will be the great grandson of my son and swear by God that appointed Muhammad (S) as the Prophet and designated us especially for imamate, if one day remains to the end of the world, surely, God would prolong that day until he comes and fills the earth with justice after it is filled with oppression. And God will assign his task overnight as he assigned his task for Moses, His Interlocutor, overnight and that was when he went to light a fire for his family and when he returned he was a messenger and a prophet.

Then, Imam Jawād (A) stated: “The best act of our followers is to expect the relief.”¹⁷

12. Imam Hādi (A) and Imam ‘Askari (A)

As it became clear in the past sections, preparation of Shi‘ites for entering the age of occultation, promotion of necessary thoughts for them to accept the issue of occultation, the distance from the infallible Imam and deprivation from direct contact with him were all part of a process which started from the age of the Holy Prophet (S) and continued progressively during the ages of each of the Shi‘ite Imams (A).

But when we reach the age of Imam Hādi (A) and Imam ‘Askari (A), we face a new period, during which, additional measures were adopted and the preparation for entering the Shi‘ite for the age of occultation was culminated. Generally, Imam Hādi (A) and Imam ‘Askari’s (A) measures can be summarized as follows. Their first action was the same as the Prophet’s (S) and other Imams’ in informing and prophesying about [Imam] Mahdi (A) and the facts about his occultation, reappearance and whatever Shi‘ites needed to know about this issue.

Another action which was carried out by both of these Imams (A), sometimes wittingly and sometimes compulsorily, was to reduce direct and oral contact with Shi‘ites; for Shi‘ites were supposed to enter an age in which there was no possibility of making contact with Imam, except in written form and through mediums; therefore, it was necessary that both Imam Hādi (A) and Imam ‘Askari (A) practically enabled the Shi‘ites to become accustomed to this situation.

The third important action of Imam Hādi (A) and Imam ‘Askari (A) in making preparations for occultation was to reinforce the network of agents as a key factor in making contact between Imam and the Shi‘ites whether in presence of Imam (A) or in his absence.

Each one of the above-mentioned measures needs more explanation which is given below:

I To explain the imamate of Imam Mahdi (A) and his occultation

As mentioned before, the idea of Mahdi and his occultation was explained by the Prophet (S) and all Imams previous to Imam Hādi (A) and Imam ‘Askari (A); so Imam Hādi (A) and Imam ‘Askari (A) mainly emphasized the proximity of coming of his age and warned Shi‘ites from being trapped in bewilderment, straying from the truth or apostasy. In many hadiths, Imam Hādi (A) is quoted as saying:

Surely, the Imam after me is my son Hasan and after him [the Imam is] his son, the Upriser, who will fill the earth with equity and justice after it is filled with oppression and cruelty.¹⁸

In some hadiths from Imam Hādi (A), Shi‘ites are informed that [the promised] Mahdi (A) is the one whose birth is hidden from others. Such hadiths from Imam Hādi (A) are warnings for Shi‘ites not to have doubt in their hearts about Imam Mahdi (A) because of his birth being hidden.

When Imam Hādi (A) was martyred, Imam Hasan b. Ali ‘Askari (A) took over a heavier responsibility in making preparations for occultation. During Imam ‘Askari’s (A) imamate, Mahdi (A) was born and there was a short time left to the beginning of the age of occultation; therefore, Imam ‘Askari (A) had both responsibilities of not only explaining the heart of the doctrine of Mahdi and his occultation but also proving the birth of the promised Mahdi (A). This is why Imam ‘Askari (A) honoured some of the intimate and trustworthy Shi‘ites by giving them the permission to see his son Mahdi (A).

In some cases, Imam ‘Askari (A) pinpointed the exact time for the beginning of the age of occultation. Abu Ghānim quotes Abu Muhammad Hasan b. ‘Ali al-‘Askari (A) as saying:

My Shi‘ites will face the detachment and separation in the year (260 A.H).¹⁹

Also in some hadiths, Imam ‘Askari (A) clearly mentioned the divergence of opinions among Shi‘ites just after the beginning of the age of occultation. Mūsā b. Ja‘far b. Wahab Baghdādi reported that he heard Imam ‘Askari (A) saying:

It is as if I see you have disagreements over my successor after I pass away...Know that there will come an age of occultation for my son, during which people will have doubt [in their faith] except those who are saved by God.²⁰

Also in some other hadiths, Imam ‘Askari (A) ordered Shi‘ites to be patient and expect the relief during the age of occultation. One of such cases is his letter to Abu al-Hasan, ‘Ali b. al-Husayn b. Bābiwayh Qummi in which he (A) stated:

It is expected from you to be patient and expect the relief! [for] The Holy Prophet (S) stated: “Best of my Shi‘ites’ actions is the expectation of the relief” and our Shi‘ites will always be in grief and sadness until my son, about whom the Holy Prophet (S) has given the good news, reappears and fills the earth with justice and equality. Then, O’ Abu al-Hasan ‘Ali! Be Patient and call my Shi‘ites to be patient, for the earth indeed belongs to Allah, and He gives its inheritance to whomever He wishes of His servants, and the outcome will be in favour of the God wary.²¹

II Reduction of direct contact with Shi‘ites

Gradually veiling from Shi‘ites was among other actions of Imam Hādi (A) and Imam ‘Askari (A) in making preparations for the occultation of Mahdi (A). This fact is fully clarified through the explanation from Mas‘ūdi, the famous historian in *Ithbāt al-Wasiyyah*; when he mentioned:

Imam Hādi (A) would stay away from most of his friends except few favoured ones; and when [after him] Imam ‘Askari (A) became the Imam, he (A)

would speak with both common and favoured friends from behind a curtain except for the time he (A) would ride to the king's palace.”

These two great Imams (A) were away from Shi'ites compulsorily or willingly because of being under control of Abbasid rulers in Samarra's fortifications and also because of living just before the age of occultation. Most of their affairs and contacts with Shi'ites were through correspondence, writings and agents. And it was for the validation of these correspondences that Ahmad b. Ishāq Qumi, for example, asked Imam 'Askari (A) a piece of his handwriting in order to be able to recognize his (A) handwriting from the rest.²²

And therefore, crowd of Shi'ites would sit on the way and wait for Imam (A) to take the advantage of seeing him when going to Caliph's house weekly.

III Reinforcing the network of agents

Another way of preparing the Shi'ite to the age of occultation by Imam Hādi (A) and Imam 'Askari (A) was to reinforce the network of agents. To know more about that network, the way it developed and its status at the age of Imam Hādi (A) and Imam 'Askari (A) and also the age of occultation, it is necessary to pay a particular attention to that important network, understanding the process of its establishment and evolution and its other features and tasks. These issues will be studied in the second part of this paper.

¹ Sheikh Ṭūsī, *Al-Ghaybah*, p. 101.

² Sheikh Sadūq, *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni'mah*, vol. 1, p. 257; Sheikh Ṭūsī, *Al-Ghaybah*, p. 95.

³ Ibid. vol. 1, p. 303, no. 14.

⁴ Ibid. vol. 1, p. 305, chapter 27; Sheikh Ṭūsī, *Al-Ghaybah*, p. 92.

⁵ *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni'mah*, vol. 1, p. 315. About the same issue, Sheikh Ṣadūq reported a hadīth from Imam Jawād (A) in which he (A) recounted the story of Imam Ḥasan's (A) answering three questions of Khidr (A) that after his answering, Khidr (A) professed his faith to oneness of God, prophethood of the Holy Prophet (S) and imamate of Imam Ḥasan, Imam Ḥusayn (A) and other Imams until Imam Mahdī (A.J) and reported about his task of establishing justice.

⁶ Ibid., vol. 1, p. 316, chapter 30, no. 1.

⁷ *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni'mah*, vol. 1, p. 320. There are nine hadiths concerning this matter which Ṣadūq quoted from Imam Sajjād (A). We just referred briefly to the hadīth reported by Abu Khālid Kābulī. Researchers may refer to the mentioned source.

⁸ Nu'mānī, *Al-Ghaybah*, p. 113.

⁹ *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni'mah*, vol. 1, p. 330. Hadīths received from Imam Bāqir (A) about Imam Mahdī (A), his occultation and its characteristics and his reappearance are reported in chapter 32 of Sheikh Ṣadūq's *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni'mah* as well as Sheikh Ṭūsī's *Al-Ghaybah*, p. 92 onwards and Nu'mānī's *Al-Ghaybah*, pp. 97 – 113.

¹⁰ *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni'mah*, vol. 1, p. 333, ch. 33, no. 1.

¹¹ Sheikh Ṭūsī, *Al-Ghaybah*, p. 102.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Nu'mānī, *Al-Ghaybah*, p. 114.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 100.

¹⁵ *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni'mah*, vol. 2, p. 361, no. 4.

¹⁶ Ibid. vol. 2, p. 372, ch. 35, no. 6.

¹⁷ Ibid. vol. 1.

¹⁸ *Kamāl al-Dīn wa Tamām al-Ni'mah*, vol. 2, p. 383, ch. 37, no. 10.

¹⁹ Ibid. no. 6.

²⁰ Ibid. no. 8.

²¹ Cf. *Manāqib*, vol. 3, p. 527; *Tārīkh al-Ghaybat al-Ṣughrā*, P. 217.

²² Cf. *Manāqib*, vol. 3, p. 533; *Tārīkh al-Ghaybat al-Ṣughrā*, P. 224.

Imam Ali (A) the Herald of Unity

Part I

Seyyed Kazem MirJalili

Introduction

In Islamic thought, “unity“ has a high status in continuation of the holy Prophet (S) and Imams’ (A) mission. Thus, a thorough research of the conduct and speech of Imam Ali (A), who was the herald of unity, would show the status of unity and its various dimensions in true Islam. Imam Ali (A) viewed unity as the fruit of the mission of the holy Prophet (S), among whose results is burying mutual rancor and developing brotherhood and affection among Muslims. Criticizing disunited nations, Imam Ali (A) mentions that division leads to destruction of dignity and honour while unity leads to the descent of divine blessings.

To establish unity, Imam Ali (A) urged people toward unity in every context and asked the governors to refrain from carrying out any alteration (restructuring) and preserve good traditions in society in order to promote unity of Islamic society. He (A) knew unity and establishing justice as developing each other and expected the government to fulfil them. He (A) reinforced the

judicial system, selected special people to judge and exercised intensive supervision over his executive officers. In Imam Ali's (A) viewpoint, paying attention to people's legitimate demands and true emotions were among material and social causes of creating unity among people. He (A) would count Allah, the holy Prophet (S), the leader, law and the Qur'an among the spiritual elements which facilitate unity, and in this regard, would emphasize the role of the leader. He (A) also regarded disbelief, deviation from truth, worldliness, lawbreaking and arrogance as some of the major elements which cause divisions. He (A) gave orders to prevent these elements.

Prior to studying Islamic unity, we must have a clear definition of "religion" in general, as well as in terms of true root of Islamic community, for the whole Islamic community has a single religious identity.

"Religion", which in its general meaning embraces all human and divine beliefs, is bound by a collection of ideological and moral teachings as well as a set of laws and rules. However, religion in its specific meaning (according to scholars' point of view) is to believe in one God, the all-Knowing, the all-Powerful, who possesses all attributes of perfection; the One who has created the whole universe based on wisdom and justice and has called human beings to move towards achieving perfection until they meet with Allah, with the help of two proofs of revelation and reasoning capability. This is a movement whose departure and destination are Allah, as mentioned in the verse of *Istirjā'*: "Verily, to Allah we belong and to Him we shall return." (2:156)

The leaders of the movement are the reason and conscience which are internal proofs as well as the Prophets (A) and their successors who have been appointed by God to guide people. And by “Islamic community” we mean those who have accepted Islam as the religion that can secure their happiness in both material and spiritual lives.

Islam is a religion which encompasses all individual, social, material, cultural, political, martial and economic aspects of life and it has not ignored even a single point which would play a role in the material and spiritual progress of both individuals and society. Islam is a religion which brings happiness to believers in this world and the hereafter when they properly observe Islamic rules. Islam is against oppression, plundering and corruption and enables a human being to get closer to perfection. However, one cannot observe Islamic rules properly unless he knows Islamic teachings and clings steadfastly to the practical conduct of the holy Prophet (S) and his true successors.

Accordingly, the life of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali b. Abi Tālib (A), after the holy Prophet (S) is very special. The name of “Ali” is associated with attributes such as bravery and patience, devotion to God and justice, truthfulness and loyalty, knowledge and piety and other human virtues.

The life of Imam Ali (A) had different stages, among which the stage of his caliphate is of a special significance. This stage has various aspects such as the rising of Imam Ali (A) to political power, complicated political conditions, civil wars, the

approaches and strategies of Imam Ali's (A) opposition and Imam's manner in dealing with them, cultural, economic and political problems of the society and finally Imam's (A) approach in dealing with thought-provoking problems.

On the other hand, the short period of Imam Ali's (A) caliphate is truly an excellent model of Islamic government provided for humanity; a government which would quench human's thirst for justice and equity. The unity of Islamic community has a special status and its importance for Imam Ali (A) is no secret to anyone based on his attempts in preserving Muslims' unity. He (A) can certainly be called the great herald of unity in the holy Prophet's (S) ummah in both his words and conduct. Imam Ali (A) did not hold back any efforts to achieve and preserve unity.

In the present article, Imam's words in *Nahj al-Balāghah* are selected in order to prove the fact that he (A) has been the greatest herald of unity of Islamic community and he (A) constantly made efforts to achieve and preserve it. In some cases, Imam's (A) conduct is also mentioned as portrayed in the historical sources. In what follows, firstly, we will study Imam 'Ali's (A) theoretical view on unity and its fruits and then we will refer to the factors which create unity in Islamic community.

Imam Ali's (A) theoretical view on unity

During the history of Islam, disunity of Islamic sects and nations has caused irreparable material and spiritual damage to the body of Islamic community. This wound on the beautiful face of

Islamic community has not been hidden from the reformers of ummah, and it has worried them. Thus, some of them planned to create unity among Muslims and to somehow heal the excruciating pain of the heart of Islamic community.

Ali (A) is among the distinguished reformers who sought unity after the holy Prophet (S). After the Prophet himself (S), he (A) is truly the greatest herald of unity of the Islamic community. He (A) knew the consequences of disunity and knew that political, economic, social, cultural and martial disunity within an Islamic community would bring about many negative effects, the removal of which if not impossible, would be very difficult.

Unity had a wide scope in Imam Ali's (A) point of view and it embraced all human beings in the world as well as Muslims and underprivileged ones in Islamic community. Imam Ali's (A) goal in seeking unity was to pursue Islamic causes and to establish social justice. The call for unity can be heard from the most of his sermons, maxims and letters.

In a letter addressing Muslims, Imam Ali (A) stated that:

Steer clear through the waves of mischief by boats of deliverance, turn away from the path of dissension and put off the crowns of pride. If I speak out they would call me greedy towards power but if I keep quiet they would say I was afraid of death. By Allah, the son of Abu Tālib is more familiar with death than an infant with the

breast of its mother. I have hidden knowledge, if I disclose it you will start trembling like ropes in deep wells.¹

The knowledge which Imam (A) talks about is awareness of terrible consequences of disunity and conflicts. He (A) knew that disunity and civil war would cost Muslims their religion (Islam) and a return to the beliefs of the Age of Ignorance.

The sayings of Imam Ali (A) about the root, nature and fruits of unity are mentioned under seven headings:

1. Unity is the fruit of the mission of the Prophet (S)

Imam Ali (A) knew unity as the fruit of the mission of the holy Prophet (S); the blessing bestowed by God to humanity. Imam (A) described people's condition before Islam and the great influences and blessings of Islam and the mission of the holy Prophet (S) in a sermon in which he stated:

The people of the earth at this time were divided in different parties, their aims were separate and ways were diverse. They either likened Allah with His creation or twisted His Names or turned to else than Him. Through Muhammad (S) Allah guided them out of wrong and with his efforts took them out of ignorance.²

Imam Ali (A) knew burying mutual rancour and developing brotherhood affection among Muslims as the fruits of the mission of the holy Prophet (S), as he (A) stated in a sermon:

Through him Allah buried mutual rancour and put off the flames of revolt. Through him He gave them affection like brothers and separated those who were together (through unbelief).³

In another sermon regarding the same issue, he (A) stated:

Allah repaired through him the cracks, joined through him the slits and created (through him) affection among kin although they bore intense enmity in (their) chests and deep-seated rancour in (their) hearts.⁴

Imam Ali (A) knew the Prophet's (S) mission as a great blessing which brought tranquillity to all Muslims through uniting the Islamic community. Regarding the high status and importance of unity, he (A) stated:

Certainly, it is a great blessing of Allah, the Glorified, that He has engendered among them unity through the cord of affection in whose shade they walk and take shelter. This is a blessing whose value no one in the whole world realizes, because it is more valuable than any price and higher than any wealth.⁵

It can be understood from Imam Ali's (A) words that the Islamic community gained a strong rope of unity through the holy Prophet's (S) mission. Today, the same strong rope can create unity among the followers of Islamic community.

2. Unity results in descent of divine grace

Imam Ali (A) viewed the unity of Islamic community as a cause for descending the blessings of God. He (A) saw the divine blessings and grace during all periods of Islam by himself and knew with all his heart and soul that these blessings were bestowed because of the unity of the Islamic community, so he warned people of disunity:

Certainly, Allah the Glorified has not given any person, whether among the dead or among those who survive, any good from separation.⁶

In another sermon, referring to the consequences of disputes, Imam (A) blames dispersed people of his time and states:

How strange! How strange! By Allah, my heart sinks to see the unity of these people on their wrong and your dispersion from your right."⁷

Reproaching disunited people of Kufah, Imam (A) preferred to exchange them with the people of Syria (al-Sham) like Dinars (golden coins) with Dirhams (silver coins) and stated:

O' those whose bodies are present but wits are absent, and whose wishes are scattered. Their rulers are on trial. Your leader obeys Allah but you disobeyed him while the leader of the people of Syria (al-Sham) disobeys Allah but they obey him. By Allah, I wish Mu'āwīyah exchanges with me like Dinars with Dirhams, so that he takes from me ten of you and give me one from them.⁸

Imam (A) considers large number of people as insignificant when they are disunited and states: "There is no benefit in the majority of your numbers because of the lack of unity of your hearts."⁹

Imam (A) maintains that a group of people who are united may have victory, even though they may be in error. He (A) reproached the people of Kufah and stated:

By Allah, I have begun thinking about these people that they would shortly snatch away the whole country through their unity on their wrong and your disunity (from your own right) and separation.¹⁰

Imam Ali (A) also believed that the destruction of right thought and counsel was an adverse consequence of division and disunity, and, of course, without right thought and counsel, making any progress and reform in the society is impossible. Regarding this issue, Imam Ali (A) states: "Opposition destroys good counsel."¹¹

Furthermore, Imam (A) viewed losing honour, dignity and divine blessings as the fatal consequence of disunity:

Thereafter, also see what happened to them towards the end when division overtook them, unity became fractured, and differences arose between their words and their hearts. They divided into various groups and were scattered fighting among themselves. Then Allah took away from them the apparel of His honour and deprived them of the prosperity produced by His favours. Only their stories have remained among you for the guidance of those who may learn the lesson from them.¹²

3. Unity under all circumstances

In all stages of his life, whether in the period of Prophet's (S) mission, the period when he (A) had to be silent, or in the period of his Caliphate, Imam Ali (A) invited the Islamic community to unity. Even in the bed of martyrdom, he (A) advised his children who are guides and Imams after him to preserve unity and avoid separation. In his will, Imam Ali (A) told Imam Hassan (A) and Imam Husayn (A):

Stick to unity and avoid division and turning away (from each other's help) and withholding the hand from one another's assistance.¹³

In order to preserve unity, Imam (A) criticized some scholars for their opposite verdicts and reminded them that their God, their prophet and their book are the same:

When a problem is put before anyone of them he passes judgment on it out of his own imagination. When exactly the same problem is placed before another of them he passes an opposite verdict. Then these judges go to the chief who had appointed them and he confirms all the verdicts, although their Lord is the One (and the same), their Prophet is the same, their Book (the Qur'an) is the same. Is it that Allah ordered them to differ and they obeyed Him? Or He prohibited them from it but they disobeyed Him?¹⁴

Regarding the importance of unity and destructiveness of division in military affairs, Imam Ali (A) advised soldiers and commanders of Islam's troops to preserve unity and avoid division: "Beware of dispersal. When you halt do so together and when you move you should move together."¹⁵

4. The ideal community

For Imam Ali the ideal world, which he wished human beings to reach by clinging to the real Islam, is the celestial and angelic world. He (A) has described the people of that world as follows:

They did not differ (among themselves) about their Sustainer as a result of Satan's control over

them. The vice of separation from one another did not disperse them. Rancour and mutual malice did not overpower them. Ways of wavering did not divide them. Differences of degree of courage did not render them into divisions.¹⁶

In fact, all human beings will be like angels, even superior to them if they pay attention to the main goal of creation which is proximity to Allah and achieving happiness in all aspects of life, and they know that they would attain this goal only through obeying Allah's commands, cleaning their vices and decorating their hearts with virtues and acting upon them.

5. The borderline between tradition and innovation

Good traditions are among the elements which maintain unity within communities and also the consolidation of society. The governor of an Islamic society must keep such traditions alive and defend them. The governor who is indifferent about such traditions and customs and does not try to preserve them will create divisions within the society and weaken the pillars of the government.

Regarding this issue, Imam Ali (A) wrote to his executive officers as follows:

Do not discontinue the good lives in which the earlier people of this community had been acting, by virtue of which there was general unity and through which the subjects prospered. Do not

innovate any line of action which injures these earlier ways.¹⁷

Imam (A) believed that the correct way of distinguishing between truth and falsehood when being drawn into a dispute about something was to refer to Allah's words (Qur'an) and the Prophet's (S) Sunnah [tradition], and he stated:

Addressing the people whom Allah the Sublime, wishes to guide, He said: "O' you who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Prophet (S) and those vested with authority from among you; and then if you quarrel about anything refer to Allah and the Prophet (S) if you believe in Allah and in the Last Day (of Judgment). (Qur'an, 4:59)

Referring to Allah means to act according to what is clear in His Book and referring to the Prophet (S) means to follow his unanimously agreed Sunnah in regard to which there are no differences.¹⁸

6. Unity as a prerequisite for administration of justice

Imam Ali (A) believed that the administration of justice was a divine obligation and never considered it right if Muslims acquiesced in discrimination and injustice. When the society is divided into two classes of the oppressors and the oppressed, while the former are gluttonous and the later are hungry, Islam does not allow Muslims to be indifferent. That was why Imam

(A) himself accepted the heavy responsibility of Caliphate. In this regard, he (A) stated:

Behold, by Him who split the grain (to grow) and created living beings, if people had not come to me and supporters had not exhausted the argument and if there had been no pledge of Allah with the learned to the effect that they should not acquiesce in the gluttony of the oppressor and the hunger of the oppressed I would have cast the rope of [the camel of] Caliphate on its own shoulders and would have given the last one the same treatment as to the first one.¹⁹

The main goal of Imam Ali (A) was to administer the justice; as he (A) intended to head the government to return people to the Prophet's (S) Sunnah, to stop class distinctions, and to divide the spoils [of war] equally. To achieve this goal, he (A) certainly encountered difficulties since it was obvious that there were self-seekers and worldly people who attempted to stand against his justice-seeking method by causing war and creating divisions.

However, Imam Ali (A) knew that creating unity within the Islamic community was a prerequisite for establishing justice, and he wanted warmongers to end wars so that justice could be established. In this regard, Imam (A) stated:

We suggested to them to appease the situation by calming the temporary irritation and pacifying the

people till matters settled down and stabilized when we would gain strength to put matters right.²⁰

The Commander of the Faithful (A) believed that there was a mutual relationship between unity and justice: “If justice does not exist in a society, then there is no unity in that society either.” Thus, since he (A) knew the oppression of governors as the cause of people's separation from governments in the period of his caliphate, he (A) always controlled his executive officers and observed them in different ways. If one of them committed an offence, he (A) would advise him and, when necessary, dismiss him.

Such supervision was not confined to high-ranking officers, but rather Imam (A) ordered his executive officers to check their assistants' activities and have people who would keep an eye on them and report their wrong actions. In this regard, addressing Mālik Ashtar Nakha‘i, Imam (A) states:

You should also check their activities and have people who report on them who should be truthful and faithful, because your watching their actions secretly will urge them to preserve trust with and to be kind to the people.²¹

Then he (A) continued:

If any one of them extends his hands towards misappropriation and the reports of your reporters

reaching you confirm it, that should be regarded enough evidence. You should then punish him and recover what he has misappropriated. You should put him in a place of disgrace, blacklist him with (the charge of) misappropriation and make him wear the necklace of shame for his offence.

From Imam Ali's (A) point of view, the Islamic judicial system is established to solve political, social and financial problems and also disputes among people. In the Islamic judicial system, the right of the oppressed is claimed from the oppressor; the weak should have a feeling of safety and the oppressor should be worried. Imam (A) introduced the judicial system to his executive officers as follows:

Have a good will when judging people; because judgment is to restore the right of the oppressed from the oppressor and the right of the weak from the strong and to establish rules of God in a way which improves the cities and their residents.

Because of the important role of the judicial system in establishing justice, Imam (A) set up the judicial system based on Islamic rules in his short term government and he never compromised in implementation of justice and made no difference between the rich and the poor, rulers and peasants, friends and enemies.

Imam Ali (A) was very strict about appointing judges and he (A) would only select people who had special qualifications. Regarding this issue, Imam (A) tells Mālik Ashtar Nakha‘ī that:

For the settlement of disputes among people select him who is the most distinguished of your subjects in your view. The cases [coming before him] should not vex him, disputation should not enrage him, he should not insist on any wrong point, and should not grudge acceptance of the truth when he perceives it; he should not lean towards greed and should not content himself with a cursory understanding [of a matter] without going thoroughly into it. He should be most ready to stop [to ponder] on doubtful points, most regardful of arguments, least disgusted at the quarrel of litigants, most patient at probing into matters and most fearless at the time of passing judgment. Praise should not make him vain and elation should not make him lean [to any side. Such people are very few.²²

7. **Valueless unities from Imam Ali’s (A) point of view**

Imam Ali (A) would consider some types of unity as valueless, such as the unity between gangsters and those who tend towards falsehood.

These are the people who, when they assemble together are overwhelming but when they disperse they cannot be recognized.²³

It is narrated another way as:

These are the people who when they assemble together cause harm but when they disperse are beneficial.²⁴

Someone told him (A) that: “We know their harm at the time of their assembling, but what is their benefit at the time of their dispersal? Then he (A) replied:

The workers return to their work and people get benefit out of them, like the return of the mason to the building site, that of the weaver to his loom, and that of the baker to his bakery.²⁵

Imam Ali (A) implored Allah to shatter such unities:

O’ my Allah! If they reject truth disperse their group, divide their words (opinions) and destroy them on account of their sins.²⁶

¹ *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Sermon no. 5.

² *Ibid.* Sermon no. 1.

³ *Ibid.* Sermon no. 96.

⁴ *Ibid.* Sermon no. 231.

⁵ *Ibid.* Sermon no. 191.

⁶ *Ibid.* Sermon no. 175.

⁷ *Ibid.* Sermon no. 27.

⁸ *Ibid.* Sermon no. 97.

-
- ⁹ Ibid. Sermon no. 119.
- ¹⁰ Ibid. Sermon no. 25.
- ¹¹ Ibid. Maxim no. 215.
- ¹² Ibid. Sermon no. 192.
- ¹³ Ibid. Sermon no. 192.
- ¹⁴ Ibid. Sermon no. 18.
- ¹⁵ Ibid. Letter no. 11.
- ¹⁶ Ibid. Sermon no. 91.
- ¹⁷ Ibid. Letter no. 53.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ Ibid. Sermon no. 3. (F: please check why 20, 22, and 23 are highlighted in green)
- ²⁰ Ibid. Letter no. 58; Ibn Abi al-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāghah*, vol. 17, p. 68.
- ²¹ Ibid, vol. 17, p. 68.
- ²² Ibn Shu‘bah Ḥarranī, *Tuhaf al-‘uqūl*, 1363, p. 135.
- ²³ *Nahj al-Balāghah*, Maxim no. 199.
- ²⁴ Ibid.
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Ibid. Sermon no. 124.

Shaykh Mufid's Account of Imamate in *Al-Irshād*

Ghulam Hossain Adeel

Introduction

Theologian, jurist, traditionalist and logician Muhammad b. Muhammad b. al Nu'man, Abu Abdillah, known as Shaykh al-Mufid is one of the world's great Islamic scholars. Shaykh Mufid was known as "a triumphal sun and morning light" in the shi'ite history. He addressed many different theological issues. He provides resolutely a theological, logical and historical analysis of the role of Imamate in shaping the Islamic social system.

The most important focus of his attention was to illuminate the role and the nature of Imamate (divinely appointed leadership) in the course of Islamic history. Consequently Mufid synthesised some popular themes that have engaged theologians of religious sciences throughout the ages. Specifically, he seeks to show links between the two significant key themes, *nass* (designation) and *'ilm* (knowledge). According to Shaykh Mufid these two components are considered as the basic principles in Imamate doctrine.

Nass means that the Imamate is a prerogative bestowed by God and only with the guidance of God it can be transferred from one Imam to his successor. Therefore Imamate in this sense is restricted, through all-political circumstances and secular spheres.

The second principle in the doctrine of Imamāt is that of *‘ilm*. This means that an Imam has an extraordinary knowledge of all affairs not possessed by anyone else. Consequently an Imam has an exclusive and authoritative source of knowledge. This repository of God’s knowledge includes both the exoteric (*ẓāhir*) and esoteric (*bāṭin*) meanings of the Qur’an. The esoteric and exoteric knowledge of religion is concluded in *Wilāyah*, which God entrusted to the Prophet, who in turn, handed it to his successor with the guidance of God.

Imamate in Twelver Shi‘ism rotates around *nass* and *‘ilm*. Because of these two principles, the Imam must be inerrant (*ma‘sum*). Inerrancy of the Imam guarantees the infallibility of his decisions in religion as well as in the matters of law. This paper provides a study of Shaykh Mufid’s theological account of Imamate in his *Al-Irshād*. Firstly, I will look briefly at the Shaykh Mufid’s works and, in particular, his *Al-Irshād*. Secondly, I will focus on Shaykh Mufid’s theological account of Imamate in *Al-Irshād*.

A study of the works of Shaykh Mufid

Shaykh Mufid’s full name was Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Nu‘mān al-Hārithi al-Baghdadi al-‘Ukbari; his *kunyah* was Abu

‘Abdillah. As well as being called Shaikh Mufid, (Shaikh mean “scholar” and Mufid means ‘one who brings benefit’) he was known in both Shi‘i and non-Shi‘i circles as Ibn al-Mu‘allim. He was born in the year 338/949 and was brought up in a village. His father brought him to Baghdad for his education. There he studied under Shi‘i and Mu‘tazili scholars. He showed such potential that one of his teachers recommended that he study under one of the leading scholars of the period, Ali b. ‘Isā al-Ramani. He also studied under the leading Shi‘i scholar of hadith, Shaykh al-Saduq.¹

He was an outstanding theologian and jurist, and a brilliant polemical writer on behalf of the Shi‘ites. He became head of the Shi‘i scholars in Baghdad and took part in many debates and discussions with his opponents.

During his life, Mufid was not only a brilliant debater, he was a fine teacher and prolific writer. As a teacher he will be remembered for the greatness of his three most outstanding pupils: al-Sharif al-Raḍiyy, al-Sharif al-Murtaḍā and Shaykh Al-Tusi. Al-Sharif al-Raḍiyy is perhaps best remembered as the compiler of *Nahj al-Balāghah*, a collection of sermons, letters and wise-sayings of Imam Ali b. Abi Talib. His brother al-Sharif al-Murtaḍā was a brilliant theologian and an outstanding writer. The other pupil was Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Tusi who was to become Shaykh al-Tā’ifah (the Master of the Shi‘a community).

The writings of al-Shaikh Mufid were numerous. Al-Tusi tells us in the *Fihrist* that they numbered nearly two hundred. A number

of these still survive; some have been published and some are still in manuscript form. Among them is *al-Muḡni‘ah*, a work on tradition, which al-Tusi used as the basis for his great work *Tahdhib al-Ahkām fi Sharh al-Muḡni‘ah*.²

Shaikh Mufid died in the month of Ramadan (on Thursday) in the year 413/1022. One report says that over 80,000 people attended his funeral.³ Al-Sharif al-Murtada led the funeral prayers and gave an eulogy. After being buried in his own house, his body was later removed and buried near the great shrine of two of the Imams in Baghdad, known as al-Kazimayn.⁴

Al-Irshād (the guidance)

This book sets out to describe the lives of the twelve Shi‘i Imams. ‘Imam’ literally means ‘the leader’ or ‘guide’. It briefly describes the circumstances of the Imamate of each Imam, the miracles that each performed by which he gave evidence of his Imamate, the virtues of each Imam, and the circumstances of the death of each of the eleven Imams and the disappearance of the last Imam. It also gives an outline of the *nass*, or the nomination of each Imam.

The Imamate of Ali b. Abi Talib (A) after the Prophet (S) is the cornerstone of the Shi‘i view of succession and the Imamate in general. Therefore it is natural that the book should devote considerable space to Imam Ali. Nearly half of the book is concerned with him. In particular Mufid pays great attention to Imam Ali’s career during the life of the Prophet. Ali is revealed as the person of outstanding merit during that period, the one who

most deserved and was most entitled to succeed the Prophet (S). The hadiths by which the Prophet (S) is said to have made Ali's succession clear are fully reported, especially the tradition of Ghadir- e Khumm.

In addition several speeches of Imam Ali (A) are provided in the book. Mufid gives an account of some of Ali's legal decisions during the time of the three Caliphs.⁵

He explains that Imam Ali, although entitled to the office of the Caliphate, held back from attempting to seize the office or expressing public discontent. Little space is given to Imam Ali's reign as Caliph, perhaps because these events had been discussed elsewhere by the author in *Kitāb al-Jamal* for instance. The circumstances of Imam Ali's murder by Ibn Muljam are given in full and the author quotes from historical authorities, such as Abu Mikhnaf and Ismā'il b. Rashid.

One of the important things that Mufid provides is a rational substratum for the Imamite faith during the absence of the Imam. He had to meet not only the objections of outsiders but also the demands of believing Shi'ites for an explanation of how what is proposed for belief does not contradict what they already knew.

Al-Irshād represents a valuable contribution to the history of the Imamate. It serves also as a defence of the Imami Shi'i perspective on the issue of Imamate and tries to provide believers with the evidence of the Imamate. In establishing the Imamate of Ali, the doctrine of *nass* is shown by the author to be legitimate.

Its legitimate use is carried on by Imam Ali and his successors. In the author's view, the proof for the Imamate of each of the Imams is expressed in the miracles performed by each Imam. Important moments in the lives of the Imams, such as the martyrdom of Imam Husayn and the occultation of the last Imam, are dealt with in some detail.

Shaykh Mufid's theological account of Imamate in *Al-Irshād*

Definition of Imamate

According to Mufid, the Imams “take the place of Prophets in informing religious rulings, seeing to the execution of the legal penalties, safeguarding Islam, and educating mankind”.⁶

In Islamic terminology *al-imāmah* (*Imamate*) means “universal authority in all religious and secular affairs, in succession to the Prophet”.⁷

Therefore Imamate is defined as a divine position proceeding over all the Muslim's affairs both spiritually and materially whether individual or social, internal or universal. Consequently, the Imam is an authoritative teacher of mankind in all their affairs.

According to Twelver Shi'a Islam, recognition of the Imam is the absolute duty of every believer. The Prophet has said:

Whoever dies without recognising the Imam of his time, has left the world with ignorance (*jāhiliyyah*)”.⁸

The reason for this is that during the Age of Ignorance (pre-Islamic era of ignorance) the people were polytheists; they knew nothing of either monotheism or of Prophethood.

One aspect in Mufid’s theology is the vital need for the Imamate to entail the management of the affairs the Muslim society.

In his *Al-Ifsāh*, Mufid elaborates on a fourfold proof of the need for an Imam:

From the Qur’an, from tradition, from consensus, and from reason and experience. And the last part of the proof, from reason and experience, rests upon two premises: one, that it is impossible to carry out the legal duties of the believer without an Imam, and, second, that God does not oblige what is impossible.⁹

Mufid also argues against the Ash‘arites that God is just and does not command man beyond what he is capable of.¹⁰

This leads him also to consider whether God acts for man’s best interests, and whether God does so because He is obliged in justice, or whether He puts Himself under a kind of moral obligation rising from His nobility and generosity.¹¹

According to Shi‘i Islam, the Imamate is a covenant between God and mankind. The Imams are the *hujjah* (proof) of God on earth; their words are words of God, their verdicts are the verdicts of God and their commands are the command of God, because they are inspired by God.

Designation by God

Does the accession to the position of Imamate depend on designation by God or is the question of succession to be decided by people? Shaykh Mufid provides many references from the Qur’an and Sunnah of the Prophet (S), which expresses that Imamate is a divine covenant. Therefore it totally depends on God’s designation.

It is for this reason the Shi‘ah (The Twelvers) believe that only Allah can appoint a successor to the Prophet; that the *Ummah* has no choice in this matter; its only duty is to follow such a divinely-appointed Imam or caliph.

And thy Lord creates what He wills and chooses;
they have no right to choose; glory be to Allah, and
exalted be He above what they associate!¹²

This clearly shows that people have no right to make any selection here; it lies entirely in the hands of Allah. Also as Allamah Hilli puts it: “*Imamate* is not an acquired job; it is a position bestowed by Allah.”¹³ In contrast, the Sunni Muslims believe that it is up to the *Ummah* to appoint a caliph. However, the Qur’an confirms that only God can appoint an Imam or

successor to the Prophet. Consequently, before creating Adam (A), God informed the angels:

Verily I am going to make a caliph on the earth.¹⁴

And when the angels demurred politely at the scheme, their protest was brushed aside by a curt reply:

Surely I know what you know not.¹⁵

Therefore, if the infallible angels were given no say in the appointment of a caliph, how can fallible humans expect to take the whole authority of such an appointment in their own hands?

Another evidence from the Qur'an is that Allah Himself appointed Prophet David (A) as caliph on the earth:-

O David! Verily, We have made thee (Our) caliph on the earth...¹⁶

In every case God attributes the appointment of the caliph or the Imam exclusively to Himself. Likewise, the call went to Prophet Abraham (A):

(Allah) said: "Surely I am going to make you an Imam for men." (Abraham) said: "And of my offspring?" He said: "My covenant will not reach the unjust."¹⁷

This verse leads us to the correct answers of many important questions concerning *Imamate*.

I. Allah said: “Surely I am going to make you an Imam for men.” This shows that *Imamate* is a divinely appointed status; it is beyond the jurisdiction of the *Ummah*.

II. “My covenant will not include the unjust.” This clearly says that a non-*ma‘sum* cannot be an Imam. Logically and rationally, we may divide mankind into four groups:

1. Those who remain unjust throughout their lives;
2. Those who are never unjust;
3. Those who are unjust early in their lives but later become just;
4. Those who are just early in their lives but later become unjust.

The Prophet Abraham (A) was too wise to request *Imamate* for the first or the fourth group. This leaves two groups (the second and the third) which could be included in the prayer. However, God rejects one of them i. e., those who are unjust early in their lives but later become just. This leaves only one group which can qualify for *Imamate*: those who are never unjust throughout their lives i.e. *ma‘sum* (inerrant).

III. Reflecting on God’s answer to Abraham i.e. “*My covenant will not reach the unjust*”, we realise that God did not say the unjust would not reach my covenant; because it would have implied that it was within the power of man (albeit a just one) to attain the status of *Imamate*. The present sentence does not leave room for any such misunderstanding; it clearly shows that

receiving *Imamate* is not within human jurisdiction; it is exclusively in the hands of Allah and He gives it to whom He pleases.

Then as a general rule, it is stated in the Qur'an:

And We made them Imams who were to guide by
Our command ...¹⁸

When Prophet Musa (A) wanted a vizier to help him with his responsibilities, he did not appoint someone by his own authority. He prayed to Allah:

And make for me a vizier (helper) from my family,
Aaron (Harun) my brother. Give me support
through him and make him participate in my affair
so that we may glorify You much and we may
remember You much ...¹⁹

And God, the Most Exalted said:

You are indeed granted your petition, O Moses!²⁰

This verse confirmed that Aaron had a share with Moses in prophecy and in helping in delivering the message and his support was strengthened through him by his aid. Moses also told Aaron of deputising for him (when he said):

.... Deputise for me among my people. Act for
(their) benefit and do not follow the path of the
corrupters.²¹

This confirms his succession by the precise statement of revelation. On the other hand, there is the Prophet's (S) statement to Imam Ali at the time of setting out to (the battle of) Tabuk:

You are in the same position with respect to me as Aaron was to Moses except that there is no prophet after me.²²

Thus he required him to have the office of helping (i.e. administering) and to be characterised by love and outstanding merit over everyone. He also required his deputising for him both during his life and after his death.

Therefore when the Apostle of God (S) gave all the ranks, which Aaron had from Moses, to Imam Ali (A) except for prophecy, all such things were required of him as helping the Apostle, giving him support, outstanding merit, love and deputyship. The expression "except that there is no prophet after me" shows that these qualities continue even after the Prophet's demise and this turns deputyship into successorship.

Divine selection is made known to the *Ummah* through the prophet or the preceding Imam. This declaration is called *nass* (designation of the succeeding Imam by the prophet or preceding Imam). According to the Shi'i belief, Imam must be *mansus min Allah*, i.e., designated by Allah for that status. This point will be discussed later.

Another reason for the Shi'ites' support for Imam Ali (A) was what the Prophet (S) said on the day of the assembly at his house.

He had especially gathered the Banu ‘Abd al-Muttalib in order to make the (following) solemn pledge:

Whoever helps me in this matter will be my brother, my testamentary trustee (*wasiyy*), my helper, my heir and my successor after me.²³

Then Imam Ali who on that day was the youngest of them, stood up before the Prophet among all the gathering of the people and said:

O Apostle of God, I will help you.²⁴

Then the Prophet (S) said:

Sit down, you are my brother, my trustee, my helper, my heir and successor after me.²⁵

This is a clear statement about the succession after the Prophet.

Furthermore, Imam Ali (A) had been specially singled out by the Prophet from among (all) his relations because of (the qualities) which no other relation, apart from him, shared with the Prophet and because of the nomination (*nass*) of his authority (*wilāyah*) by God in the Qur’an where He says:

Your authority is God and His Apostle and those believers who perform the prayer and pay alms (*zakat*) while they are bowing (in prayer).²⁶

It is known that no one except Imam Ali paid alms while bowing (in prayer).

Shaykh Mufid emphasised that it has been established in language that waliyy means “the most appropriate for authority” (*awlā*), without there being any opposition to this definition.

In addition, there is also what the Prophet (S) said on the day of Ghadir Khumm. The community had gathered to listen to the sermon (in which he asked):

Am I not more appropriate for authority (*awlā*)
over you than yourselves?²⁷

“Yes”, they answered. Then he spoke to them without any interruption in his speech:

Whomsoever I am the authority over (*mawlā*), Ali
is also the authority over him.²⁸

Thus the Prophet required for Ali through laying down obedience to him and his authority over them the same authority as he had over them, and which he made them acknowledge and which they did not deny. This is clear evidence of the designation of him for the Imamate and for succession to his position.

After ceremony a great commotion appeared among the Muslims and they all congratulated Imam Ali (A) for his new post. Abu Baker, ‘Umar and ‘Uthman in the presence of the crowd said to Imam Ali (A):

Congratulation to you, O son of Abu Talib, you have become our leader and the leader of all believing men and women.²⁹

It was exactly on this sacred occasion that the holy verse was revealed.

On this day I have perfected your religion. Completed my favours to you. And chosen Islam as your religion.³⁰

Then the Prophet said “I praise Allah for the completion of his message through the leadership of Ali (A) after me”.

Did the Prophet mean “friend” or “leader”?

There is no doubt in the authenticity of the *hadith* of Ghadir, but some scholars try to downplay its significance by saying that the word “*mawlā*” in this *hadith* means 'friend', and the Holy Prophet wanted to announce that: “Whoever whose friend I am, Ali is his friend!” But the problem is that not a single person, who was present in Ghadir, grasped this meaning. Hassān b. Thābit, the famous poet of the Holy Prophet, composed a poem and recited it before the audience, in which he said:

The Prophet then said to him: “Stand up, O Ali, as I am pleased to make you Imam and Guide after me.”

Let us examine logically and rationally the meaning of *mawlā* in this context;

1) The occasion, place and time:

Imagine the Holy Prophet breaking his journey in midday, waiting for those who were far ahead and also waiting for those who were far behind the group. Also imagine the Prophet detaining more than one-hundred-thousand pilgrims under the terrible heat and burning sun of the Arabian desert, making them sit in a thorny place on the burning sand, and making a pulpit of camel saddles; then imagine him delivering a long lecture and at the end of all those preparations coming out with an announcement that: “Whoever whose friend I am, Ali is his friend!”

Is it plausible that the Prophet would detain everyone in the unbearable heat just to tell them Ali was their friend?

2) After the sermon of the holy Prophet everyone congratulated Imam Ali (as)

Congratulations to you, O son of Abu Talib, you have become our leader and the leader of the people, men and woman who have faith.

‘Umar b. Khattab congratulated 'Ali in these words:

Congratulations son of Abu Talib, this morning and evening you are the patron of every believing men and woman.

If *mawlā* meant only ‘friend’ then there would not be any need for the congratulations. And was Ali ‘enemy’ of all believing men and women before that time, such that ‘Umar b. Khattab could have meant ‘this morning’ you became friend of them all?

3) Imam Ali (A) himself wrote to Mu‘āwiyah:

And the Messenger of Allah granted to me his authority over you on the day of Ghadir Khumm.³¹

4) *After the sermon Holy Prophet prayed to God and said:*

O Allah! Be the Guardian of those whose guardian is Ali! Be enemy of who has enmity against Ali! Help the one who helps Ali! Forsake the one who forsakes Ali!³²

Can this prayer and supplication be just for friendship?

5) Many scholars of the Qur’an, Arabic grammar and literature have interpreted the word “*mawlā*” as “*awlā*” which means “having more authority”.³³

In fact all the historical and logical evidence gives clear indications that *Mawlā* here could not mean ‘friend’.

Proofs similar to these are so numerous that it would make the essay unduly long to mention them all.

Protection from sin and error

In Al- Mufid's perspective Imams must be inerrant and immune from all sins. Inerrancy of the Imams in order to fulfil their duties without leading the community into error also guarantees the infallibility of his decision in religion and law. Moreover inerrancy of the Imams preserves the purity and sanctity of the person responsible for such a great task. Therefore Imams are protected to the extent that:

They cannot commit small sin, except such as were mentioned as being possible to the Prophets. Nor can they be negligent in anything pertaining to religious duty. Nor can they forget any of the rulings of the Law.

This is the doctrine of all the Imamites, except those who are eccentric and sticks to the letter of traditions, even if they have interpretations contrary to their pernicious opinions in this matter. All the Mu'tazilites oppose it, allowing grave sins and even apostasy to occur on the part of the Imams.³⁴

According to Mufid even the dreams of the Imams and Prophets are protected from all errors:

I say that the dreams of the apostles, prophets and Imams are true and that God has protected them from false dreams. Widespread traditions have come from them clearly indicating this.³⁵

However inerrancy is a very powerful inner attribute of self-restraint. It is derived from vision of the supersensible and supernatural world, extensive knowledge and the very essence of all creation, and it is so effective that it prevents the one endowed with this capability from embarking on any kind of sin or error.

In contrast, the Sunni perspective is that it is not an essential component to accept anyone as caliph or Imam with any precondition. Also they do not insist on inerrancy and immunity from sin. But the problem is that if Imams were not free from sins then we would face many fundamental difficulties:

Contradiction in method: If Imams were not free from sins or not protected from error that would mean people would be bound to follow him in that sin as well. The untenability of such a position is self-evident; for obedience in sin is evil, unlawful and forbidden. Moreover, it would mean that he should be obeyed and disobeyed at one and the same time; that is, obedience to him would be obligatory yet forbidden, which is manifestly absurd.

Authority will be held in contempt: If it would be possible for an Imam to commit sin it would be the duty of other people to prevent him from doing so (because it is obligatory on every Muslim to forbid other people from unlawful acts). In such a case, the Imam will be held in contempt; his prestige will come to an end and instead of being the leader of the ummah he will become their follower, and his Imamate will be of no use.

Fallible cannot be entrusted: Moreover, the Imam is the defender of the divine Law and this work cannot be entrusted to fallible hands nor can any such person maintain it properly. For this very reason, infallibility has been admitted to be an indispensable condition to Prophethood; and the considerations which make it essential in the case of a prophet make it so in the case of an Imam and caliph as well.

In the context of Mufid's system, the Imamate and prophetic office are basically given by God's favour. It is impossible for a just God to mislead people by asking people to follow those who are fallible.

Based on the perspective of Shaykh Mufid, the Imams are human but are infallible i.e. they can commit sin but they do not, as they possess an inner attribute of self-restraint. This can be illustrated in an example where a stranger can walk up to someone and cause injury to him; however, most people are prevented from doing these sort of actions as their conscience forbids them doing so. Some people in society can be seen to be infallible in some cases, (but the Imams are infallible in comprehensive sense) such as pious persons who have so much dignity and respect to uphold, that perpetuating any sin such as walking through the streets naked, even though he is capable of doing so would not be imaginable. When Imam Ali (A) was asked why the Imams were infallible he replied that for an Imam to commit sin would render them impure and hence make them incapable to be an Imam.

Another aspect is that any undesirable act is the result of not knowing how harmful and ugly the act is. If one is aware of the danger of committing an act, his faith seeks to warn and alert him, and that creates a certain immunity in man, to not commit that undesirable act. Let us observe what, Muhammad b. Abi 'Umayr says:

I asked Hisham (a celebrated pupil of Imam Sadiq (A)) about inerrancy of Imam Sadiq (A), whether he possessed the quality of immunity. He answered, yes he did. Then I asked him to contextualise for me the concept of inerrancy.

Hisham replied:

Several things lie at the origin of rebellion and sin—greed, envy, lust, anger and so forth—and none-of these can penetrate the soul of the Imam. How might he be greedy, considering that he has everything at his disposal, including even the treasury of Muslims? How might he be envious, for there is no station for him higher than the Imamate. As for anger, it is impossible that the Imam can be angered by any worldly concern, for God has entrusted to him the implementation of His laws. But in connection with anything touching on the hereafter, anger is not at all undesirable. The Imam will never fall prey to lust, for he is well aware that the pleasure and desirable things of this

world are transitory and valueless when compared with the reward that God shall bestow on His worshippers on the day of resurrection.³⁶

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Holy Qur'an, published by Tahrike tursile Qur'an, New York, 1991, 4th Ed

'Allamah Hilli, *Al-Bābu'l-Hādi 'Ashar*, Eng. tr. W. M. Miller.

Mughniyyah, *Falsafat Islamiyyah*.

Ahmad b. Hanbal, *Al-Musnad*,.

Ali in the Books of Sunni's 1996, published by Markaz e Fiker e Islami, Rawalpindi Pakistan

Amini, 'Abdulhusayn, *Al-Ghadir*, vol. 1I, published in Qum

Beaheshti & and Bahonar, *Philosophy of Islam*, 1990, published, Islamic seminary of Pakistan-Karachi.,

D. Sourdel "Le Shaykh al-Mufid", *Islamic Civilisation* 950-1150, op. cit., 189, citing Ibn Abi Tayy, quoted from Dr. I. K. A. Howard, *Al-Serat*, Vol. 3 (1977), No. 3

Hilli, *Al-Idah at the Ffoot of al-Tusi*, op. cit., 316 quoted from Dr. I. K. A. Howard, *Al-Serat*, Vol. 3 (1977), No. 3

Izutsu, Toshiko, *Comparative study of the Kkey philosophical concepts in Sufism and Taoism—Ibn ‘ Arabi and Lao-Tzu, Chuang-Tzu*, —by Toshihiko Izutsu, 1996, published by the Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, Keio University, Minatoku, Tokyo, Japan.

Lari, Sayyid Mujtaba Musavi, *Imamate and Lleadership*, 1996, published by the Foundation of Islamic Culture, Qum.

McDermott, Martin, *The Ttheology of Shaikh al-Mufid* (d.413/1022), Beirut, 1978

Mufid, *Al-'Ifsāáh. fi Iimāámat Amir al-Mu''minin*.

Mufid, *Kitab al-Irshād*, Ansariyan publications, Iran.

On al-Shaikh al-Saduq cf. *A-Serat* Vol. II No.2, June, 1976

Razi, Fakh al-Din, *Tafseer al-Kabir*, vol. 12.

Saduq, *Awāá'il*, pp. 24-25, *Theology*, p. 156

Shablanji, *Noor al-Absār*.

¹ On al-Shaikh al-Saduq cf. *A-Serat* Vol.II No.2, June, 1976, 19-22

² Cf. *Al-Serat*, Vol. II No.3, September 1976, 23-25

³ D. Sourdel "Le Shaykh al-Mufid", *Islamic Civilisation 950-1150*, op. cit., 189, citing Ibn Abi Tayy, quoted from Dr. I. K. A. Howard, *Al-Serat*, Vol. 3 (1977), No. 3

- ⁴ Al-Hilli, *Al-Idah at the foot of al-Tusi*, op. cit., 316 quoted from Dr. I. K. A. Howard, *Al-Serat*, Vol. 3 (1977), No. 3
- ⁵ Shaykh al-Mufid, *Al-Irshad*, the book of guidance, Ansariyan publications, Iran, p.138-164
- ⁶ *The Theology of al-Shaikh al-Mufid* (d.413/1022) 1978, Beirut. Chapter V, p.105
- ⁷ al-'Allamah al-Hilli: *Al-Babu'l-Hādi 'Ashar*, Eng. tr. W. M. Miller, p. 62; Mughniyyah: *Falsafat Islamiyyah*, p. 392
- ⁸ Ahmad b. Hanbal, *Al-Musnad*, p.96
- ⁹ *Al-'Ifsāh. fī Imāmat Amir al-Mu'minin*, pp. 3-4, *Theology*, p. 120
- ¹⁰ *Awā'il*, pp. 24-25, *Theology*, p. 156
- ¹¹ *Awā'il*, p. 26, *Theology*, p. 77
- ¹² Qur'an 28:68
- ¹³ Al-'Allamah al-Hilli: *Al-ābu'l-Hādi 'Ashar*, Eng. tr W.M. Miller, p.68
- ¹⁴ Qur'an 2: 30
- ¹⁵ Qur'an 2: 30
- ¹⁶ Qur'an 38:26
- ¹⁷ Qur'an 2:124
- ¹⁸ Qur'an 21:73
- ¹⁹ Qur'an 20:29-35
- ²⁰ Qur'an 20:36
- ²¹ Qur'an 7:142
- ²² *Irshad*, p.4.
- ²³ Ibid, p. 3.
- ²⁴ Ibid. p. 3.
- ²⁵ Ibid. pp. 3 & 4.
- ²⁶ Qur'an 5:55
- ²⁷ *Irshad*, p.4
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ (*Al-Musnad* Ahmad bin Hanbal v4, 281 *Tafsir al-Kabir* by fakharuddin Razi v12, pp. 49-50) *Noor al-Absār* by Shablanji, p4
- ³⁰ Qur'an 5:3
- ³¹ Amini, *Al-Ghadir*, vol. I, p. 340
- ³² *Irshad*, also, Ahmad b. Hanbal, *Al-Musnad*, vol., 4 p.368, 372; *Ali in the Books of Sunnis*
- ³³ *Irshad*, p.3, also the names of the following scholars may be quoted here as examples: Ibn 'Abbas (in his *Tafsir*, on the margin of *Al-Durr al-Manthur*, vol. 5, p. 355); al-Kalbi (as quoted in *Al-Tafsir al-Kabir* of Razi, vol. 29. p.227; Alusi, *Ruh al-Ma'āni*, vol. 27, p. 178); al-Farrā', (Razi, *ibid.*; Alusi, *ibid.*); Abu 'Ubaydah Mu'ammār b. Muthanna al-Basri (Razi, *ibid.*; and al-Sharīf al-Jurjani, *Sharh al-Mawāqif*, vol. 3, p. 271); al-Akhfash al-Awsat (in *Nihāyat al-'Uqul*); al-Bukhari (in *Sahih*, vol.7, p. 240); Abu'l-'Abbas Tha'labi (in *Sharh al-Sab'ah al-Mu'allaqah of al-Zuzani*); at-Tabari (in his *Tafsir*, vol.9, p. 117);

al-Wahidi (in *Al-Wasit*); al-Tha‘labi (in *Al-Kashf wa al-Bayān*); Zamakhshari (in *Al-Kashshāf*, vol. 2, p. 435); Bayḍāwi (in his *Tafsir*, vol.2, p. 497); Nasafi (in his *Tafsir*, vol. 4, p. 229); al-Khazin al-Baghdadi (in his *Tafsir* vol. 4, p. 229); and Muhibb al-Din Afandi (in his *Tanzil al-Ayāt*). (See Amini, *Al-Ghadir*, Vol. 1, pp. 344-50, for detail references.

³⁴ *Awā’il*, p. 35, quoted from McDermott, *The Theology of al-Shaikh Al-Mufid*, 1978, Beirut. p.107

³⁵ *Awā’il*, p. 42, quoted from McDermott, *The Theology of al-Shaikh Al-Mufid*, 1978, Beirut. p.107

³⁶ Saduq, *Al-Amāli*, p.376, quoted from *Imamate and leadership*, by Lari, Sayyid Mujtaba Musavi, 1996, pp. 166-167.