THE

HASHIM AL-MUSAWI

THEIR ORIGIN AND BELIEFS

SHIA

TRANSLATED FROM ARABIC BY:
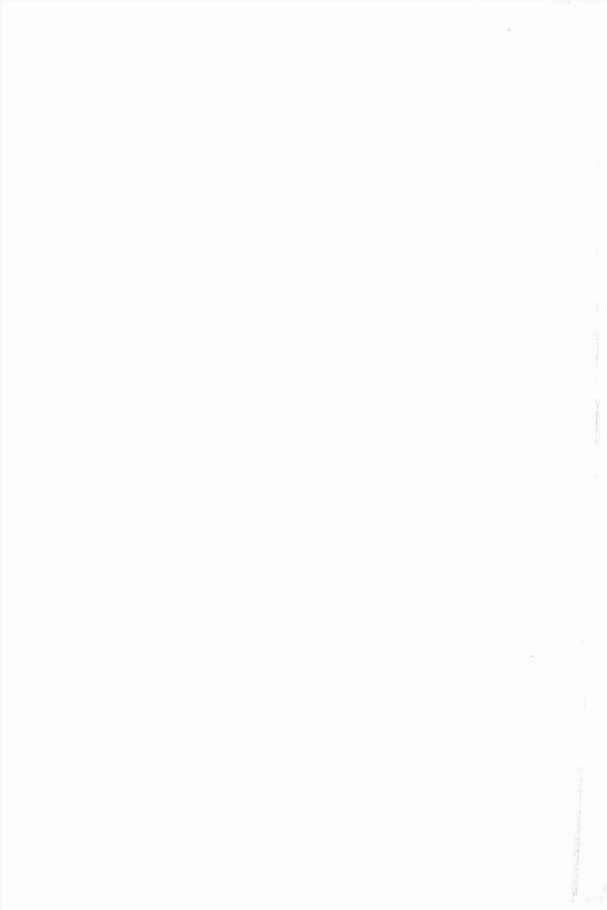HAMID S. ATIYYAH, PH.D

AL-GHADEER CENTER
FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES

THE SHIA: THEIR ORIGIN
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Contents

PREFACE

The objective of this book is to familiarize readers with the Shia beliefs, which is the Islamic faith as taught by the imams of the Prophet Household, and to correct misconceptions and dispel false notions about its origin and beliefs which have been concoted and propagated by its political opponents. In preparing this book the author has strongly adhered to objectivity and the rigorous principles of study and analysis, Events, doctrines and points of view related to this faith are critically and objectively analyzed with the purposes in mind of arriving at valid conclusions about this faith in order to promote greater understanding and unity between Muslims.

In preparing this book the author has also benefited from his long experience in writing in this field and wide knowledge of different viewpoints held by various Islamic sects. This book is also the last of several works written by the author and published by Muasasat al-Balagh and Munathamat Al-Elam al-Islami.

Prologue

Islam in the divine message directed to mankind at all times and places to offer them salvation, hope and guidance. Fulfillment of this divine message and the principles included in its two main sources, namely the Quran and the Prophet Tradition, could not be realized, without sincere and objective efforts to comprehend and implement them. Regretably, misconceptions and misunderstandings occured and these resulted from either lack of rigor in approach or personal biases which deeply influenced the thinking of some scholars. Wide differences in viewpoints on many issues among the followers of this faith are the outcome not only of imperfect human perception and understanding but also of lack of objectivity on the part of some scholars which took the form of suppression, altreation and even falsfication of historical accounts and records.

This intellectual and political controversy is casting its dark shadow on present-day Muslims, at the time when the Muslim nation faces difficult political and cultural challanges amounting to a cultural invasion and occupation of some its land by its enemies. To exacerbate this situation, some elements are devoting much effort to deepen and widen the gap of differences among Muslims by waging a relentless campaign to spread misinformation and encourage further division and schism. It is perhaps no coincedence that this is happening at the same time when the Islamic nation is witnessing a movement

advocating the return to Islamic roots in the Quran and building a new cultural, social and political order. Sincere efforts are thus needed to thwart these disruptive schemes and promote a return to the true Islamic identity and familiarize everyone with the Islamic faith and its global objectives of saving mankind and solving its problems.

In order to build the united Islamic society under the umbrella of the Quran and the Prophet Tradition, misconceptions regarding one of the major Islamic sects, namely the Imamiya Shia, must be removed by acquainting readers with the beliefs, methods of study and systems of thought characteristic of this sect. To accomplish this, I begin by tracing the origins of the Shia which is undoubtedly the oldest of Islamic groups. This is followed by a discussion of the methodology of thinking and analysis upon which this group has built its intellectual heritage and which attests to its originality and commitment to basic Islamic tenets. The focus then shifts to a consideration of the doctrinal pillars of this group, and its legislative-behavioral system which are the sources of understanding, deduction, *ijtihad* and application. It is hoped that this will provide the reader with a comprehensive picture of the origin and characteristics of this Islamic sect based on an objective review and analysis of religious scholars at al-Ghadeer Establishment for Studies and Publications for their constructive remaks and suggestions which helped immensely in improving this book.

Introduction
Unity at the Time of the Prophet

Allah chose to send his Prophet Muhammed with the true faith lead humankind out of the darkness of ignorance, underdevelopment, and dissent, to free it from the yoke of tyranny, enslavement and exploitation and to open in front of it the horizons of knowledge. The will of Allah was fulfilled; the truth prevailed and humankind was freed. The Prophet carried the message to the whole world, established the Islamic community and state and completes the process of transformation and construction. By the end of that era, all aspects concerning the life of individuals and the community had been specified in the Quran and the Prophet Tradition.

At that time, the Muslims formed a single nation which upheld the message and shared a common understanding and application of its principles. The Prophet reported the revelation nd transmitted all that Allah wanted mankind to learn. Religious doctrines and laws were directly related by the Prophet who also explained to the believers the verses of the Quran and other rules regarding various aspects of their lives. In performing this role, the Prophet acted as the religious authority and interpreter of the doctrines and laws.

Consequently, disagreements among Muslims over religious doctrines and laws never occured since analysis and opinions were not called for. It was the era of revelations and enlightments as made known to the Prophet by Allah. As a

result, the nation experienced a doctrinal and legislative unity and whenever a difference in opinion or disagreement arose the Quran showed them the solution:

> Should you disagree about anything, refer it to Allah and the Apostle.[1]

> Whatever the Apostle give you, accept it; and whatever he forbids you, forbear from it.[2]

In addition to this Quran-based doctrinal and legislative unity, political unity was achieved by the leadership of the Prophet who was not only Allah's Apostle but also the political ruler of the Muslim community. Consequently, this period was characterized by the absence of political disagreements and conflicts over the political and religious leadership, and the unity of the nation was not marred by the formation of political factions opposed to the Prophet's authority except the clandestine group of hypocrites.

Even at the time when the presence of the Prophet maintained the nation's doctrinal, legislative and leadership unity, the potential for division and conflict regarding ideas and personalities existed. The main causes of this potential schism were imperfect understanding of Islam and less than total acceptance of its principles especially among late converts and those who converted to Islam under the influence of events and circumstances rather than out of conviction.

History tells us of a special care showered by the Prophet on the vanguard of his companions to ensure the continunity of the Islamic mission. At the head of this group was Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib who received an intensive tutoring from the Prophet begining in the early years of his youth. This education helped to shape Imam Ali's personality and understanding of Islam. As a result, he played a distinguished role in promoting the new

religion as illustrated by his heroic stand in the battles of Badr, Uhud, al-Ahzab, Khaybar and Hunain. In view of this and his personal qualities, the Quran and the Prophet lavished on Imam Ali the highest praise which none of the Companions of the Prophet received.

Historians inform us also that the rise of Imam Ali among the ranks of early Muslims and the special care bestowed upon him by the Prophet met with varying reactions. Some looked upon him as a major competitor and rival since he was being prepared to undertake the nation's leadership after the Prophet. Other regarded him as a role model to follow and emulate. In essence, this was how loyalty to Imam Ali and Shiism emerged.

It must be mentioned that in addition to these two undercurrents there was the Omayyid clan, which Imam Ali played a prominent role in containing and weakening as a force opposed to Islam in the battles of Badr, Uhud and al-Ahzab and in discrediting its leader Abu Sufian.

Emergence of Political Factions

After the Prophet's death, a new stage in Muslim history began. The first critical issue that confronted the nation was the appointment of a leader who would continue the missionary effort and govern the nation. The meeting at al-Sakifa was thus a signficant historical event.

The Ansars, i.e. Medina's Muslims, met at Sakifa bani Saida and chose Saad ibn Abada as the head of the Muslims while Imam Ali and Bani Hashim (the Prophet's clan) were still preoccupied with conducting the burial rites for the Prophet. News of the meeting and the choice of Ibn Abada reached Omar ibn al-Khatab, Abu Bakr, Abu Ubaida ibn al-Jarah, and Abdul Rahman ibn Aouf who hurried to the Sakifa. Upon their arrival

an argument began between them and the Ansars over the choice of Ibn Abada and its soon developed into a serious disagreement in which threats and counterthreats were exchanged. The group of Omar, Abu Bakr and Ubaidah insisted that one of them must become the caliph and successor to the Prophet. They supported their claim by saying:

> Allah's Apostle was one of us and we have a right to take his place.[3]

Abu Bakr also repeated this claim in his address of the meeting:

> The Muhajiroon (immigrant Muslims from Mecca) are the Prophet's closest followers and clan and have more right to this (i.e. the caliphate) than any other group.[4]

When the disagreement intensified, the Ansars retreated from their early position and offered the following compromises: "Two emirs (governors), one of us and the other from your group."[5] This was, however, rejected and as the controversy continued unabated, Ali ibn Abi Talib was suggested by leading speakers from both sides as a candidate for the caliphate although he was not present and unaware of the Sakifa meeting. Specifically, he was nominated by Abdul Rahman ibn Aouf of the Muhajireen and al-Munthir ibn Arqam of the Ansars. The former argued with the Ansars that "though you possess undeniable merits, you do not have among you the likes of Abu Bakr, Omar and Ali." In reply to this, al-Munthir ibn al-Arqam said: "We do not deny the merits of those you mentioned and if one of them asked for this (the caliphate) none would oppose him" - he was actually referring to Ali ibn Abi Talib according to this source.[6]

Al-Tabari reported that the Ansars or some of them indicated they shall not pay allegiance to anyone except Ali.[7]

Finally, Bashir ibn Saad nominated Abu Bakr and Ussaid ibn Huthair seconded that. Both were of the Ansars. All those attending the Sakifa meeting except Saad ibn Abada endorsed this choice and pledged allegiance to Abu Bakr. Omar was enraged by Ibn Abada's position and said: "Kill Saad, May Allah kill Saad."[8]

The controversy, however, was not resolved and the meeting at the Sakifa proved to be the first chapter in a historical epoch characetrized by controversies, conflict and the rise of factions which left its deep marks on the history of Islam.

When Bani Hashim were informed about the outcome of the Sakifa meeting by al-Bara ibn Azib, one of them commented: "Surely the Muslims would not decide on anything in our absence. We are closer to Muhammed than anyone else." But Abbas, the Prophet's uncle, said: "By the Lord of the Qaba, they have done it," aluding to a hidden side to the Sakifa's meeting.

When Ali knew of the outcome of the Sakifa meeting, he and a group of companions objected to it and accompanied by his wife Fatima, the Prophet's daughter, he contacted the Ansars and Muhajireens to convince them to change their stands. This opposition continued until Fatima's death six months later and marked the birth of a group supporting Ali in addition to the groups supporting Saad ibn Abada and Abu Bakr at the Sakifa.

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4 Muhammed ibn Jareer al-Tabari, *Tarikh a-Tabari.* Beirut: Dar al-Turath, vol. 3, p. 208.
5 *Tarikh al-Yaqubi.* op. cit., vol. 2, p. 123.
6 ibid.
7 *Tarikh al-Tabari.* op. cit., vol. 3, p. 208.
8 Ibid, vol. 3, p. 210; *Tarikh al-Yaqubi.* op. cit., vol. 2, p. 124.
9 *Tarikh al-Yaqubi.* ibid.

Chapter One

The Origin of the Imamiya Shia

Introduction

Numerous researchers of Islamic sects have studied the emergence of the Shia, its doctrines and impact on the cultural and political history of Islam. Regretably, many of these studies, especially those by orientalists and scholars influenced by them, include numerous unfair and unobjective observations and conclusions. This reflected either an inadequate data base of lack of objectivity of their authors some of whom are even suspected of serving foreign colonial interests which the Imamiya Shia strongly resisted throughout history.

This chapter traces the birth of the Shia beginning with a definition of the term and how it developed into a political, intellectual and doctrinal entity under the leadership of the Imams of the Prophet Household to become the most remarkable of all Islamic sects and schools of thought in its impact on Muslims' lives, history and culture.

The Shia: A definition

Ibn Mandhur defined the Shia as a group of people who agree on something and share a common set of beliefs. The Shia, accroding to the linguist al-Zajaj, are a person's followers and

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partisans. Al-Azhari defined it as those persons who follow the Prophet Household.

This term has become a label of the followers of Ali and his Household to the extent that "when someone is called a Shia it implies that he is one of them, i.e. a member of the Shia sect. The origin of the term is *mushaia* which means loyalty."[1]

In the dictionary, *Mujam al-Waseet*, the Shia are defined as "a sect, group, partisans or followers who become known as a person's Shia, i.e. his followers. The descendants and recognize their right to leadership."

The word Shia is also used in the Holy Quran to mean partisans and followers:

And Abraham was one of his partisans.[2]

It can be concluded then that the term Shia generally implies a person's followers who espouse common views and ideas. The term has also been historically used to refer to followers of the Prophet Household.

The beginning of the Shia

Many authors have been unobjective in tracing the origins of the Shia; they have spread the unfounded allegation that the Shia sect was formed by a Jew named Abdullah ibn Saba. Others claimed that it emerged after the Prophet's death when a group of companions met at Ali's house and were supported by Ali's wife Fatima and his uncle al-Abbas, or that it came into existence many years later during the reign of Imam Ali as Caliph.

Another group of researchers argued that the Shia rallied round Ali at the time of the Prophet who was the first apply this term to Ali's supporters and followers. Abu Muhammed al-Hassan Ibn al-Nubakhti wrote in his book *al-Furaq wa al-*

Maqalat that "the Shia are Ali ibn Abi Talib group, called Ali's Shia during the time of the Prophet and afterwards. They are known for their loyalty to him and recognition of his leadership."[3]

More specifically, Abu Hatim al-Sajastani indicated that "the term Shia was known at the time of the Prophet as a special label attached to four of the Companions, namely Salman, Abu Thar, al-Muqdad and Ammar."[4] in interpreting the verse:

Those are the best of creation.[5]

Ibn Askar reported the following accounts by Jabir ibn Abdullah:

We were with the Prophet and Ali came towards us. The Prophet said:
By the One who has my life in His hand, he [meaning Ali] and his partisans will be the triumphants on the Day of Resurrection.

According to the same source, Ali was reported by Ibn Maradiway to have said: "The Prophet told me: Haven't you heard Allah's verse:

Those who believe and do good deed, those are the best of creation.

These are you and your partisans. We shall meet at the pool [al-Kawthar Pool]. And when nations will be called to account, you and your partisans will arrive in full glory."[6]

Ibn al-Atheer reported that the Prophet addressed Ali: "You and your partisans will come before Allah content and satisfied while your foes will be angry and in chains" and he put his hand around his neck to show how it will be done.[7]

According to al-Shabalanji, Ibn Abbas said: "When the following verses was revealed: 'Those who believe and do good deeds, those are the best of creation', the Prophet said to Ali:

Those are you and your partisans. You and they will arrive on the Day of Resurrection content and satisfied while your foes will be angry and in chains."[8]

Ibn Hajjar also reported that the Prophet mentioned the term 'Shia' or partisan when that verse was revealed referring to the Prophet's address to Ali as reported by al-Hafiz Jamal al-Deen al-Zarandi.[9]

On the subject of the origin of the Shia as Ali's supporters, the late al-Sadir observed that there were two views or lines of thought espoused by the Companions at the time of the Prophet. The first stand or viewpoint asserted that the text of the Quran and the Prophet Tradition must be totally adhered to and that no one has the right to make logical deductions on issues specified in the Quran or the Tradition. The other viewpoint claimed that it was permissble to make deductions on such issue even if these have been specified in the Quran or the Tradition.

These viewpoints developed into two distinct currents when they came across the Prophet's statements regarding the leadership (imama) of Ali. The former conformed to these statements while the latter made a deduction in variance with these statements. And this is how the conformist group supporting Imam Ali was born. Al-Sadir then added:

> These two viewpoints which were in disagreement at the time of the Prophet were reflected in the Muslim's positions regarding Imam Ali's leadership of the mission after the Prophet's death. Representatives of the conformist group considered the Prophet's state-ments as a sufficient basis for supporting Ali's leadership without hesitation or reservations. The other group thought it permissible to move away from the formula prescribed by the Prophet to an

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arrangement more suitable to their conception of prevailing circumstances. It can then be seen that the Shia was born immediately after the Prophet's death and included those Muslims who endorsed Ali's leadership as commanded by the Prophet to take effect immediately after his death. Accordingly, the Shia rejected the Sakifa's freezing of Imam Ali's leadership and the appointment of another person to this position.[10]

The gist of al-Sadir's analysis is that Muslims who did not choose Ali as the Prophet's successor justified this by allowing dedictions in variance with authentic statements by the Prophet confirming Ali's leadership after him.

Historical evidence reviewed so far clearly indicates that the Shia were the followers and supporters of the Prophet Household. And since the Prophet himself labeled Ali's followers as such, it can be argued that he was anticipating possible events by making it clear to all Muslims whom they should support and follow in case of disagreement and conflict. These historical facts also indicate that while the beginning of the Shia was at the time of the Prophet, it developed into a political grouping and a line of thought supporting Imam Ali after the Prophet's death.

Formation of the Shia

Ali was recognized as the most eligible person to succeed the Prophet by those attending the Sakifa meeting as well as by those excluded from it. When the Ansar and Muhajireen companions present at the Prophet's house heard of the outcome of the Sakifa meeting they came out and were addressed by al-Fadil ibn al-Abbas:[11]

Quraish [the Prophet's tribe] can not obtain the

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caliphate through deception. It is our exclusive right and our man [i.e. Ali ibn Abi Talib] has more right to it than any other Quraishi.

That was how the Shia group supporting Ali was born and the call for his leadership began on the day the Prophet died. This event also signaled the birth of the doctrinal and political Shia as a group. Al-Yaqubi commented on this:[12]

A group of Muhajireen and Ansar did not pledge allegiance to Abu Bakr and supported Ali ibn Abi Talib instead. They included al-Abbas ibn Abdul Mutalib, al-Fadil ibn al-Abbas, al-Zubair ibn al-Awam ibn al-A'as, Khalid ibn Saeed, al-Muqdad ibn Amro, Salman al-Farisi, Abu Thar al-Ghafari, Ammar ibn Yassir, al-Bara ibn Azib, and Ubai ibn Ka'b.

This group continued its political activities and meetings calling for a rethinking of the Sakifa decision. Historians inform us of the political meeting at Fatima's house to discuss the issue of the caliphate and leadership in the aftermath of the Sakifa meeting. Al-Yaqubi reported that after learning about a group of Muhajireens and Ansars meeting with Ali ibn Abi Talib at Fatima's house, Omar arrived with some men and attacked the house. The details of this event were described by Ibn Qutaiba as follows:[13]

Abu Bakr was informed that a number of persons who had not pledged allegiance to him were at Ali's house. He dispatched Omar to them. Omar called them to come out of the house but they refused. He ordered kindling to be fetched saying: By Allah either you come out or I shall burn down the house and whomever is inside it.

This also shows that the Shia as a doctrinal and political entity began in the first hours following the Prophet's death while Muslims were still arguing over the Sakifa's nomination

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for the caliphate and leadership. Consequently, it can be concluded that the Shia emerged from within the ranks of the companions at Medina. In order to maintain the unity of Muslims, Imam Ali chose not to enter into a political confrontation with those opposed to his leadership preferring instead to give advice and consultation to the caliphs Abu Bakr and Omar. His primary concern was the Muslim's welfare as the following statement reveals: "By Allah I shall keep my peace as long as the Muslim's interests are safeguarded."[14]

The pro-Ali group survived and emerged as a political and doctrinal force and as a party with specific views on the state's policy and its governing body when Othman became Caliph and the Omayyid clan assumed effective control of the nation's affairs. The Omayyid hegemony and their formation of a priviledged class was criticized by the Companions in Medina and by other Muslims residing in other Islamic counmtries such as Egypt and Iraq. Opposition to Othman was given impetus by vehment criticizms of his policies voiced by Aisha, the Prophet's wife, Talha and al-Zubair; al-Yaqubi reported that "those who incited people most against Othman were Talha, al-Zubair and Aisha."[15] Al-Yaqubi also reported that Othman was delivering a sermon when Aisha took out the Prophet's robe and shouted: "Muslims! This is the Prophet's robe which is not worn out yet but Othman has worn out his tradition."[16]

When Marwan ibn al-Hakam asked Aisha to intervene in the disagreement between Othman and the growing opposition movements among the inhabitants of Medina, Egypt and Iraq led by prominent companions, she refused saying: "You may think that I am undecided about your friend [Othman] By Allah I wish [it, was within my power] to carry him and throw him in the sea."[17]

The political atmosphere was electrified and the conflict was

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escalating between Othman and his Omayyid party on one side and the great majority of Muslims on the other who were dissatisfied with the Omayyid clan's interference in state affairs. Prominent Shia at that time such as Abu Thar al-Ghafari, Ammar ibn Yassir, Amro ibn al-Humq al-Khizai, al-Muqdad ibn Amro, Muhammed ibn Abu Bakr and Malik al-Ashtar were also among the leaders of the political opposition to Othman and the Omayyid hegemony. Because of his opposition, Abu Thar al-Ghafari was banished to al-Rabtha where he eventually died.

As the opposition to Othman intensitified, support for Ali among the companions increased. According to al-Yaqubi there was "a group which supported Ali and were critical of Othman."[18] This opposition was also described by Ibn al-Atheer as follows: "A group of people met with Ali ibn Abi Talib who then went to see Othman and addressed him: The people are behind me and they have expressed their opinions of you to me."[19]

Imam Ali refused to take part in this confrontation and instead advised Othman on how to avoid its escalation into a violent conflict endangering Islamic unity.

A review of the Shia movement and beliefs at that stage indicates that it advanced two basic beliefs:
1. The belief in Ali's inalienable right to the caliphate and leadership and that everyone owed him a pledge of allegiance.
2. The belief in the necessity of applying the commandments of the Quran and the Prophet Tradition.

These two principles constituted the foundation of the Shia doctrines throughout history.

The Shia and politics

After Othman assassination, Ali received a pledge of allegiance as the new Caliph from the nation including the Prophet Companions and Muslims outside the Peninsula with the exception of Muawiya ibn Abi Sufian, governor of al-Sham (Syria) who strongly opposed the new leader. Henceforth, two Shias or groups of partisans emerged: The Omayyid's Shia or partisans and the Prophet Household's Shia. The term, Shia, was commonly used to refer to supporters of one of these two groups as the following conversation between Imam al-Hassan ibn Ali and Muawiya ibn Abi Sufian shows:[20]

> Muawiya said to al-Hassan ibn Ali: Did you know that we washed, shrouded prayed upon and buried those of your father's Shia slayed by us? Al-Hassan replied: By Allah if we killed your Shia we would not wash, shroud, pray upon or bury them.

The term 'Shia' was also mentioned in the following account: "It was reported that Ziad ibn Abeeh had sent after a group of people who were alleged to be Ali's Shia to force them to choose between cursing Ali and denouncing him or be killed. They numbered seventy men"[21]

The term Shia appeared also in a letter sent by the people of Iraq to Imam al-Hussain ibn Ali in 50A.H as the following account indicates:[22]

> When the Shia knew of the death of a-Hassan ibn Ali they met at the house of Sulaiman ibn Surd in Kuffa. Among them was the clan of Judda ibn Hubaira. They wrote the following letter to al-Hussain ibn Ali expressing their condolences on the occasion of al-Hassan's death:
> In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful.
> To: al-Hussain ibn Ali, from his and his father's Shia.

Peace on you. We thank Allah who is the only God. We have learned of the death of al-Hassan ibn Ali. Peace on him, on the day he was born, on the day he died and on the day of his resurrection. May Allah pardon his sins, accept his good deeds, unite him with the Prophet and put you in his place. We submit to Allah's will. To Allah we belong and shall return to Him. How immense is the nation's loss and especially you and the Shia.

When Yazid ibn Muawiya assumed the caliphate as a hereditary right in contrary to Islamic principles Imam al-Hussain ibn Ali and other prominent Muslims refused to pledge allegiance to him because of his ineligibility and un-Islamic personal conduct. Soon after that, leaders of the Prophet Household's Shia in Iraq met and wrote the following letter to Imam al-Hussain:[23]

In the name of Allah, th Compassionate, the Merciful. To: al-Hussain ibn Ali from his faithful Shia and Muslims. Welcome, the people are waiting for you. You are their only Imam (leader). Make haste. Peace on You.

Ibn al-Atheer's discussion these events also included a reference to the Shia:[24]

When the citizens of al-Kuffa learned of the death of Muawiya and the refusal of al-Hussain, Ibn Omar and Ibn al-Zubair to swear allegiance to Yazid, they decided to rise against him. They met at the house of Sulaiman ibn Surd al-Khuzai and discussed al-Hussain's journey to Mecca. Those who wrote to him included Sulaiman ibn Surd al-Khuzai, al-Mussaib ibn Najba, Rifa' ibn Shadad, Habeeb ibn Mudhahir and others.

The term is also mentioned in the following letter from the

pro-Omayyid Abdullah ibn Muslim to Yazid ibn Muawiya warning him of the threat paused to his rule by the group who pledged allegiance to al-Hussain: "Muslim ibn Aqeel has arrived al-Kuffa and has taken oaths of allegiance to al-Hussain ibn Ali from the Shia. If you want to maintain control of al-Kuffa you must appoint a strong governor.."[25]

Muawiya ibn Abi Sufian also used the word Shia to describe Othman's partisans in his letter of appointment to al-Mughaira ibn Shuba:[26]

> I shall not fail to impress upon you the following quality: Do not desist from denouncing and cursing Ali, praying for blessings and forgiveness for Othman, finding fault with Ali's companions, keeping them at the distance, and never listen to them. As for Othman's Shia, praise them, keep them at your side and listen to them.

In a letter from Yazid ibn Muawiya to Ubaid Allah ibn Ziad appointing him as governor of al-Kuffa he used the term Shia to describe his supporters and those of the Omayyid clan; Yazid wrote: "My shia among the citizens of al-Kuffa have written to me informing me that Ibn Aqeel is organizing people.."

Further evidence supporting the meaning of the Shia as political partisans is provided by the following account involving the Omayyid ruler Abdul-Malik ibn Marwan:[27]

> Abdul-Malik arrived in Damascus in great haste fearing that Amro ibn Saeed may rise against him and seize the caliphate. Abdul-Malik then met with the people and said to them: I am afraid that you may have something against me. A group of Marwan's [his father] shia came forward and said: By Allah, you will either climb the pulpit or we shall kill you. He climbed the pulpit and received the oath of allegiance.

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It is clear from evidence reviewed so far that the term Shia means partisans and that it became a specified name for persons loyal to the Prophet Household, i.e. Ali and his descendants. Furthermore, the Shia began at the time of the Prophet and developed into a grouping among the companions who believed that Ali was the most eligible to the Caliphate. It later developed into a doctrinal and political sect with a distinctive under-standing and views of Islam based on those of Ali and his descendants. The final stage in this process was accomplished by the Imams Muhammed al-Baqir and his son Jafar al-Sadiq who were contemporaries of Abu Hanifa, Malik ibn Anas and other leading theologians of the Sunni sects (a sect is defined here as a method for understanding Islam and clarifying its doctrinal, legislative and political beliefs.)

The strength and number of the Shia increased during the struggle between Imam Ali and Muawiya. Supporters of Ali included prominent companions of the Muhajireen and Ansar especially those who fought at Badr and who pledge allegiance to the Prophet (al-Radwan's pledge of allegiance). They all fought alongside Imam Ali and against Muawiya ibn Abi Sufian at the battle of Suffeen. This was documented by al-Yaqubi as follows:[28]

> At the battle of Suffeen Ali's army included seventy of the companions who fought at Badr, 700 of those who pledged allegiance [the Radwan's allegiance] and 400 of the Muhajireen an the Ansars. On the other hand, the only two Ansars who fought on the side of Muawiya were al-Numan ibn Basheer and Musalama ibn Mukhalad.

At that time, Muslims were divided into four different political parties:

1. The Omayyid party led by Muawiya ibn Abi Sufian.

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2. The party of Aisha, the Prophet's wife, Talha and al-Zubair ibn al-Awam.
3. Al-Khawarij party who broke away from Imam Ali's army but were still considered Shia.
4. The party of Ali ibn Abi Talib who was the legimate Caliph and leader.

After the martyrdom of Imam Ali, the Shia continued as a political and a doctrinal group under the leadership of Ali's son, al-Hassan, who recieved an oath of allegiance from Muslims. However, adverse political circumstances forced al-Hassan to seek reconciliation with Muawiya and subsequently to abdicate the caliphate in favour of Muawiya on the condition that al-Hassan would succeed him. The agreement between al-Hassan and Muawiya included a clause binding Muawiya and his Omayyid party to refrain from harming the Shia. This clearly indicated that the Shia survived as a political and doctrinal groups and al-Hassan was concerned about their safely under Omayyid rule. But Muawiya repudiated this agreement by appointing his son Yazid as his successor, an act which not only contravened the agreement but was also a blatant mockery of the Islamic system of government.[29] Muawiya also did not honor other terms of the agreement as a result the Shia were systematically subjected to a merciless campaign of oppression, torture and murder. He ordered the execution of a number of prominent Shia who were also devout and pious Companions of the Prophet including Hujjar ibn Udai and six of his associates as well as Amro ibn al-Humq al-Khizai, Abdullah ibn Yahya al-Hadhrami, Rashid ibn Hujri, Juwairiah ibn Mushir al-Abdi, Awfar ibn Hussayn and many others.

Al-Hassan and his brother al-Hussain strongly objected to the Omayyid oppression of the Shia but the Omayyid persisted in their vicious campaign. After the poisioning of al-Hassan which

was ordered by Muawiya, the Shia contacted Imam al-Hussain requesting him to lead them in an uprising against Muawiya. Al-Hussain, however, instructed them to abide by the reconciliation agreement until Muawiya's death. As mentioned earlier, Muawiya appointed his son as his successor and thus transformed the caliphate into a hereditary rule. In respone, al-Hussain, leading companions and prominent Muslims refused to pledge allegiance to Muawiya's son Yazid.

The military confrontation became inevitable. Al-Hussain ibn Ali proclaimed his opposition to Yazid's rule after Muawiya's death and personally led the struggle against him as befitting the Muslims' leader responsible for safeguarding the message and the nation of believers.

The term Shia reemerged to denote the political group and body of beliefs supporting Imam al-Hussain and a continuation of the movement that supported his father Ali and his brother al-Hassan earlier. Reference to these Shia is found in the following letter sent by a group of Iraqis to Imam al-Hussain:[30]

> In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful. To: Al-Hussain ibn Ali, Prince of the faithful. From his Shia and the Shia of his father, the Prince of the faithful. The people are waiting for you and will recognize none but you. Make haste, grandson of the Prophet, [the circumstances are favourable] Come to us - if you wish - and lead us as your soldiers. Peace and Allah's mercy and blessings on you and your father before you.

Al-Hussain left Medina and headed for Iraq where he confronted the Omayyid army. Imam al-Hussain and seventy eight of his kindred and companions were martyred. It was a major catastrophy for the Prophet Household and it put and end to the stage of opposition by military means led by the

Imams, although several uprisings and revolts by groups of Shia occured latter.

Analysis of the religious and political struggle led by Imam Ali and his two sons reveals that their objective was mainly defending the Quran and the Prophet Tradition and adhering to them which defined the Shia's identity and served as the foundation of their doctrinal movement. This theme is clearly predominant in the views and statements of the Imams as for instance the terms dictated by al-Hassan in the agreement with Muawiya that the later "must comply with the Quran and the Prophet Tradition in governing Muslims." It is also reiterated in Imam al-Hussain's letter to his Iraqi supporters:

> I am sending this letter with my messanger and call upon you to follow the Quran and the Prophet Tradition. The Tradition has been put aside and *bida* (innovations or unorthodox ideas) have been introduced. If you listen to and obey me I shall lead you to the path of righteousness. Peace and Allah's mercy and blessings on you.

It can now be concluded that two shias parties appeared at that stage in Islamic history, namely the Shia or partisans of the Prophet Houschold under the leadership of Ali, al-Hassan and al-Hussain and the supporters (shia) of the Omayyid clan who dominated the political arena during the reign of Muawiya, his son Yazid and successive reules.

Divisions of the Shia

At the battle of Saffeen between the armies of Ali and Muawiya which ended in arbitration, Ali's army was split by a group who rejected the arbitration and became known as the Khawarij or the splinter group. Some historians classified them as a Shia group but this can be refuted on a number of grounds.

First, they rebelled against Imam Ali who was the founder of the Shia, disputed his leadership, waged war on him and finally assassinated him. Second, they established their own distinct political ideology and religious creed independently of that of the Prophet Household and their followers.

After al-Hussain martyrdom in 61 A.H, his successor as the leader of the Prophet Household, Imam Ali ibn al-Hussain chose not to pursue his forefather's policy of open military confrontation with their opponents in view of changing circumstances. However, he continued to lead and organize the Shia secretly and to dilgently perform his religious duty in safeguarding the mission, protecting its Quran-based purity and originality, and clarifying Islamic laws and principles. During that period, a number of Shia groups and sects rose against Omayyid rule. These were the *Tawabeen*[*] or Repentant movement, i.e. the followers of al-Mukhtar ibn Ubaida al-Thaqafi, and the Zaidis i.e. followers of Zaid ibn Ali ibn al-Hussain who rose against the Omayyid ruler Hisham ibn Abdul-Malik. After crushing their revolt, Hisham ordered the crucification of Zaid in 121A.H.

A large contingent of Zaidis Shia who believe that Zaid ibn Ali was an Imam live presently in Yemen. In addition to being a descendant of the Prophet's daughter Fatima, the Imam, according to them, must be knowledgeable, brave and rise against injustice.

During the lifetime of Imams al-Baqir and al-Sadiq, different views emerged regarding the leadership and indentity of the Imam among the Shia. Unorthodox groups such as the Mughairi and Khuttabia were formed and, contrary to allegations by some historians that they were Shia, they were

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* They were called as such because they repented their failure to support Imam al-Hussain at Kerbala.

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opposed and denounced by Imams of the Prophet Household. The campaign to safeguard Islamic principles in their original and authentic version which began at the times of Imams Ali, al-Hassan and al-Hussain continued by the Shia Imams Ali ibn al-Hussain, Muhammed al-Baqir, Jafar al-Sadiq, Musa ibn Jafar, Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha, Muhammed ibn Ali al-Jawad, Ali ibn Muhammed al-Hadi, al-Hassan ibn Ali al-Askari, and finally Muhammed ibn al-Hassan al-Mahdi. The belief in the leadership of these twelve Imams is a basic tenet of these Shia who became known also as the Imamiya Shia, or the Jafaria sect after Imam Jafar al-Sadiq whose knowledge of religion was widely acclaimed. More information about this sect are presented in the following chapters.

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Chapter Two

Method of Inquiry of
The Imamiya Shia

Introduction

The methodology of inquiry or study refers to the rigorous steps followed by a scholar in organizing and conducting his study in order to achieve the targeted results. Al-Fadli defined a study methodology as "the method applied by scholars in establishing the foundations of knowledge, and in arriving at results based on these foundations."[1] Every field and discipline has its own methodology but there are common elements among the methodologies of different fields of inquiry.

A close study of Islamic thought would reveal that Muslim scholars are required to follow a clear and systematic methodology in their studies and writings. Consequently, the theoretical framework of any branch of religious knowledge such as divine unity, ethics, the Tradition, and theology is consistently based on a methodology. Validity and reliability of these methodologies are assumed to be high so that any discrepancy in results obtained by different scholars is ascribed to scholars' errors. Also, each sect has developed its own unique methodology and doctrinal structure which distinguish it from other sects. The basic principles underlying each sect's

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methodology are integrated within its belief system. It is useful to briefly define the methodology used by scholars of the Prophet Household in the following fields:

1. The methodology of the theory of knowledge.
2. Doctrinal methodology.
3. Theology and deduction methodology.
4. Behavioral methodology.

These methodologies cover the scope of scholarly contributions in various fields of religious studies such as knowledge, divinity, nature, ethics, behavior and religious laws which make up an integrated intellectual body of knowledge.

It is also worth mentioning that Islamic thinking and knowledge passed through the following stages:
1. The religious texts (the Quran and the Prophet Tradition) stage.
2. The commentary and interpretation stage.
3. The theory-building stage.
4. The philosophy stage.

The last three stages, and especially the last two, were influenced by the cultures and intellectual heritage of other nations such as the Greek, and the Persians and the perverted ideas of other religions such as those of Christianity and Judaism. These influences led to the emergence of numerous sects and unorthodox movements.

The Imams of the Prophet Household especially Imam Muhammed al-Baqir and Jafar al-Sadiq struggled continously to maintain the purity of Islamic tenets, laws and thinking. In the following sections of this chapter we shall discuss the intellectual foundation which scholars of the Imamiya Shia established as the bases of this Islamic sect. It shall be shown that the methodology of study and thinking in this sect rests on

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a firm foundation of Islamic principles and rationality which protect it from irrational ideas and ensure its flexibility. Consequently, this sect was able to achieve conformity to Islamic principles in which it is firmly embedded as well as the ability to develop intellectually because it respected rational judgment and used deduction in a systematic manner.

Theory of Knowledge

Al-Shaikh al-Mufeed, a distinguished scholar of the Imamiya Shia in the fourth and fifth hegira centuries explained the bases of this sect's theory of knowledge which results in the endorsement of doctrinal beliefs:

> I believe that the way to establish the validity of knowledge is through proofs and evidence. And this knowledge must be acquired and it does not occur readily. It is like arriving at knowledge of unknown and undiscovered phenomena. This is the opinion of the scholars of Baghdad who differ with those of Basra...

The Imamiya Shia's theory of knowledge was also described by the distinguished scholar al-Hili as follows:[2]

> Perception is the clearest and most obvious [tool] through which things are known... This is why we should begin with it. Allah has created the human self with instincts and while it basically lacks knowledge[*] it can acquire it. This is clearly seen in the case of children. The Almighty Allah created human beings with tools with which perception is achieved. Those are the senses. Thus, an infant will feel things and can gradually distinguish with his eyesight between his parents and other persons. In the same manner he will

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* Two types of knowledge are identified by religious scholars:

1. Basic knowledge which include all knowledge not requiring proof such as the whole is greater that its parts.

2. Theoretical knowledge which requires proof such as the existence of God and the spherical shape of the earth.

achieve further knowledge of tangible things and even a perception of these senses themselves.

His intellect will then evolves to a perception of the whole through his senses of the parts and via analogy. After obtaining this knowledge and becoming aware of points of differences he will progress from perceptual knowledge to acquired or theoretical knowledge. This shows that the acquired knowledge is a branch of, and based upon, the wholistic, perceptual (or basic) knowledge which in turn is part of, or based upon, the particular knowledge derived through the senses. The latter is the foundation of all knowledge - and unless that foundation is valid all that branches from it can not be accepted. Casting doubt on this foundation is tantamount to disputing all that which is based on it. The Ashaira group who presently include all followers of the Hanafi, Shafi, Maliki and Hanbali [Sunni] sects excluding few theologians, reject the existence of tangible or perceptible things as will be explained later. Accordingly, they had to reject the logical wholes which are based on those tangibles as well as acquired or theoretical knowledge.

As the above texts indicate, the Imamiya Shia's theory of knowledge is based on the following principles:

1. The belief that the knowledge derived from the senses is the source of all human knowledge. Man perceives through his senses and accumulates basic knowledge about particular phenomena.

2. The mind builds upon its knowledge of phenomena or parts a general knowledge about the wholes.

3. Achieving knowledge about the wholes from knowledge of the parts is essentially an inductive process.

4. Basic knowledge about the wholes is acquired through

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perception of particular phenomena.

5. Basic knowledge serves as the foundation for achieving theoretical knowledge. Accordingly, all acquired knowledge in the various physical and social sciences are derived from this general basic knowledge.

6. Based on this logical sequence in the theory of knowledge of the Imamiya school, it can be asserted that the belief in Allah and related beliefs are rooted in premises derived from knowledge about perceptible things. The principle of the ultimate cause and the law of cause and effect which lead us to believe in Allah are based on basic sense perceptions formed in the human mind. Man observes in the world of nature that phenomena are related through cause and effect relationships. The same principle also leads to the belief in Allah as the cause of creation.

Abu Issac Ibrahim al-Nubakhti in his book *al-Yaqut* likened the relationship between thinking and knowledge to that between cause and the effect which is based on the law of the ultimate cause upheld by the Imamiya but rejected by the Asharia. He explained that "thinking generates knowledge in the same way that causes generate effects."

Al-Nubakhti's statement was the subject of the following commentary by al-Alama al-Hili:[3]

> Opinions disagreed regarding this. The Mutazila believed that accurate thinking generates knowledge. The Ashaira, however, maintained that knowledge follows thinking as a matter of habit ordained by Allah. Abu Bakr al-Baqalani and Imam al-Haramain al-Juwaini asserted that by necessity knowledge requires thinking but does not result from it.

Essentially, the Imamiya Shia believe that thinking generates knowledge as a cause and effect relationship and that it is a

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human function. Thus, they differed with the Ashaira who rejected the law of causality and ascribed knowledge, as all acts, to Allah.

Doctrinal methodology

After defining the theory of knowledge and its major principles and pointing out that it is a comprehensive theory necessary to understand natural and supernatural phenomena and indeed all fields of inquiry, the Imamiya scholars turned to explaining how this theory leads to the belief in Allah. They began by maintaining that while the human mind can arrive at the conclusion 'that there is an omnipotent and all-knowing Creator who created the universe even if prophets had not confirmed this through revelations, a comprehensive knowledge of Allah, His Apostles and His religion can not be obtained solely by the human mind. For example, the human mind can not identify the nature of the afterlife, recompense, judgment in the grave and many of the issues revealed through the Prophets. It is also incapable of arriving at the specific rules regarding the obligations of fasting, prayers and how those rituals are to be performed without the guidance of religion.

The Imamiya school, thus, regarded the belief in Allah as a theoretical issue which must be proven. It is therefore unacceptable to believe in Allah simply because others such as Prophets do so because a Prophet's credibility must also be proven. When such proof is available then we can believe in Allah and the Prophets and that they are his messengers to humankind. This was clearly stated by al-Alama al-Hili as follows: "The Almighty must be known through proof and not by imitating others." In commenting on this, al-Muqdad al-Sayyuri wrote: "And since knowledge of Allah is necessary, it can be achieved only through thinking and proof." He also

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defined thinking as arranging known things to arrive at something different [or unknown], and reiterated that Allah should not be known through imitation.[4]

As the discussion of the theory of knowledge has shown above, a person's mind is born a tabula rasa, i.e. ignorant of any kind of knowledge. He then progresses from knowledge of phenomena by sense perception to knowledge of absolute wholes or principles. Building upon this elementary knowledge, he then moves to proving major and complex issues such as the belief in Allah and His attributes using his intellect. The next step is believing in the miracle of the Prophets and consequently he will obey all that Allah has revealed to His Prophets. This is confirmed by the Quran which commands us to meditate upon the creation of the heavens, the earth, the soul and the world of nature to arrive at the belief in Allah and His Prophets:

> In the creation of the Heavens and the earth and in the alternation of night and day, there are signs for thinking persons.[5]

To repeat again, the belief in Allah is an intellectual issue that must be proven and every person must perform it, i.e. it is an obligatory duty on every Muslim. After classifying duties into aini, i.e. obligatory on all Muslims and kaifi, i.e. it suffices if performed by a number of Muslims, al-Muqdad al-Sayyuri considered knowledge to be of the first kind. On the same subject, al-Hili wrote that "it is obligatory on all duty-bound believers."[6]

In the following passage, al-Shaikh al-Mufeed described the method for arriving at the belief in Allah:[7]

> Knowledge of Allah the Almighty, His Prophets, and the soundness of His religion chosen and approved by Him, and indeed of all things which can not be perceived by the senses and are not known a priori but

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can only be obtained by analogy, these are not known readily but must be acquired mentally. On the other hand, things which can only be known through the senses can not be understood through analogy... Knowledge of Allah is acquired and so is knowledge about His Prophets and such knowledge can not be obtained [or observed] readily. Thus is the belief of the Imamiya and some of the Mutazila.

Al-Shaikh al-Mufeed conceived of the following complimentary relationship between the intellect and religion to gain a full understanding of Allah:[8]

It is the consensus among the Imamiya that the mind must receive whatever the Prophet brought forward in order to arrive at this knowledge. Indeed, the mind does not cease to receive what the Prophet reveals so that even an uninformed person would know how to arrive at this knowledge. Accordingly, no obligation can be imposed without an apostle.

The intellect then can not obtain the specific knowledge regarding the belief in Allah without revelation and divine guidance. In this way, the revelation and the intellect act together to arrive at this knowledge; religion regulates and corrects while the mind obtains the evidence. Religion also provides knowledge about the doctrines and guides the mind in this regard. After the existence of Allah and the truthfulness of his apostles have been proven, the intellect must accept everything that religion brings forward. On these bases, al-Shaikh al-Mufeed criticized al-Mutazila, al-Khawarij and al-Zaidia for claiming that the mind operates independently without revelation or providence.

Further explanation of the Imamiya's stand on the belief in Allah was provided by al-Sharif al-Murtada in this reply to a

query on this topic:

> He (i.e. the inquirer), May Allah have mercy on him, asked about the path to knowing Allah. Is it through the intellect or revelation? The answer is that the path to knowing Allah is through the mind and can not be via revelations because the latter does not constitute evidence unless Allah and His wisdom are recognized first, and that He does not commit evil or approve of liars. So how can revelation lead to knowledge!

To repeat, the Imamiya believe that only through the mind can Allah's existence and the truthfulness of His prophets be proven and that this knowledge is obtained by the intellect. This belief recognizes the basic role of the mind or intellect in arriving at knowledge through evidence while religion acts as the guide and controller of the mind after it is convinced that Allah has ordained religion.

The Imamiya's theory of knowledge was further elaborated by the late philospher Muhammed Baqir al-Sadir[*] in his book *Al-Usos al-Mantiqia lil Istiqra'*. After identifying two methods of proof in the theory of knowledge, namely induction and deduction, he considered induction as the general instrument of proof in all fields of knowledge. He then adds:[10]

> Reasoning practiced by the human mind is usually divided into two major types: induction and deduction. Each of these has its own procedure. Deduction is the reasoning in which the conclusion is equal or lesser than its premises such as:
> Muhammed is a human being.
> Every human being must die.
> Muhammed will die.

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[*] A celebrated theologian and scholar executed by the Iraqi regime in 1980.

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Accordingly, we concluded that Muhammed will die through deduction and this conclusion is more specific than the premise because it applies to one human being namely Muhammed while the premise 'every human being must die' applies to everyone. As such, reasoning in this method progresses from the general to the specific, from the whole to the part, or from the general principle to the particular application. This Aristotlian logic or deduction is also known as *qiyas* or analogy. Analogy is considered as the typical example of deduction.

Induction, on the other hand, is the form of reasoning in which the conclusion is wider in application than its premises. For example, this piece of iron protracts with heat, and a second and a third piece of the same metal are also observed to be affected by heat in the same way and so it is concluded that iron protracts or expands with heat. The conclusion here has a wider applicability than the premises which cover only a limited number of iron rods. The conclusion not only applies to these rods but also to all iron rods which have not been tasted or observed.

The mental process of induction runs opposite to that of deduction; induction progresses from the specific to the general while deduction from the general to the specific.

Al-Sadir also argued that the logical foundation of scientific reasoning which is derived from observation and experimentation is also the basis for the reasoning which leads to a recognition of Allah by way of observing the signs of wisdom and order in this world. And if the scientific method of induction is accepted as a legitimate method of proof then the inductive reasoning leading to the belief in Allah must also be accepted. Finally, al-Sadir concluded that "in this way we have

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demonstrated that science and religion share common logical foundations."[11]

Doctrines and Opinions in the Imamiya thought

Doctrines are the building blocks of any religion. Islamic doctrines such as the belief in divine unity, the truthfulness of prophets and other beliefs can be classified into two types:

1. Basic doctrines regarding which no opinion or argument can be allowed such as the belief that Allah is one, His attributes are perfect and free of deficiencies, and that He sent the prophets and revealed to them the messages and the laws and shall resurrect the dead and judge people justly on the Last Day. These tenets and doctrines must be accepted by all Muslims.

2. Doctrinal issues which Muslims differed in interpreting. Numerous opinions regarding some of these issues may be found even within the same school including the Imamiya Shia.

Basic tenets which constitute the doctrinal structure of a sect must be distinguished from opinions and views espoused by scholars on secondary issues. These opinions must be subjected to rigorous scrutiny and should not be ascribed to a sect but rather to their owner(s). The criterion for accepting or rejecting any of these personal views is its congruence with Islamic tenets as dictated in their original source, i.e. the Quran, and explained by the Prophet Tradition. This criterion has been repeatedly stressed by Imams of the Prophet Household as follow:

"The true faith is that revealed by the Quran." Similarily, their disciples and followers adhered to the principle: "Do not exceed what is found in the Quran."

Another significant issue which deserve to be mentioned here

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is that reliance on the intellect or meditation with out recourse to religious sources in identifying the doctrines is rejected by the Imamiya school. Accordingly, extremist and unorthodox ideas and views held by some members of the Imamiya sect do not represent the orthodox Imamiya creed. Furthermore, reported accounts and sayings of the Prophet and the Imams of the Prophet Household must be verified to ascertain that they are authentic and not fabricated or altered before accepting them. Also, any conclusion regarding a doctrinal issue based on an unverified account or saying is unacceptable and can not be included among the Imamiya doctrines. Finally, doctrines can not be based on accounts reported by a single chain of narrators which does not constitute conclusive evidence.

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Chapter Three

Divine Unity
According to the Imamiya Shia

Say: He is the One Allah, the Eternal Allah He begot
none, nor was the begotten. None is equal to Him.[1]

Allah bears witness that there is no god but Him, and
do the angels and the knowledgeables, and that He
applies justice.[2]

Say whether you call on Allah or on the Merciful it is
the same for He has the most gracious names.[3]

Say I am commanded to worship Allah and worship no
other with Him.[4]

One of Imam Jafar al-Sadiq's disciple wrote to him that
"'there is a group of people in Iraq who describe Allah literally
so would you state the correct belief regarding divine unity?'
The Imam replied: You have asked - May Allah have mercy on
you - about divine unity and the convictions of those you
referred to. You must know that Allah is above everything and
there is nothing like Him. He is the all-hearing and all-seeing.
He is above all descriptions alleged by those who likens Him to
His creation. They do not tell the truth about Allah. You must
know - May Allah have mercy on you - that the true faith on
divine unity is found in those descriptions revealed in the Quran.

So exalt Allah above *butlan* (i.e. negation of attributes) and *tashbeeh* (i.e. ascribing human attributes to Allah). Both views are rejected. Allah is the constant and the everlasting. He is above descriptions. Do not deviate from the Quran and go astray for the true faith has been laid down."[5]

Imam Ali ibn Musa reported the following saying by the Prophet as narrated by Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib:[6]

Allah said: I am Allah. There is no god other than Me. Worship Me and pray for Me. Whoever among you testify sincerely that there is no god but Allah will be admitted into my fort and whoever enters my fort shall be spared my punishment.

The belief in divine unity is the foundation of Islam, the cornerstone of true religion and the pillar of all prophetic messages as the following verse asserts:

We sent all the apostles before you with the inspiration that there is no god but Me. Therefore worship Me.[7]

It is also the basic doctrine from which all articles of faith and beliefs are derived and the foundation of all of religion's cultural and behavioral features. Accordingly, the beliefs in revelation, prophecy, the afterlife, predestination, obligatory worship and the differentiation between permissible and forbidden things are all related to the beliefs in Allah and His divine unity. This belief entails that He must be recognized as the Creator of everything and the possessor of gracious names. There is no one like Him; He is all-hearing, all-seeing, omnipotent, perfect, free of injustice and needs and thus He alone, deserves to be obeyed and worshipped.

The Quran laid down the doctrine of divine unity clearly and precisely, and it was also elucidated by the Prophet Muhammed. The Quran encourages mankind to ponder creation in order to identify the manifestations of divine unity and the greatness of

the Creator. Thus, the Quran and the Prophet's statements were the sources of inspiration and explanation regarding divine unity.

Accordingly, scholars of the Imamiya school endorsed only those names or attributes of Allah found in the Quran. Al-Muqdad al-Sayyuri justified this standpoint as follows:[8]

> Allah's attributes and names belong to Him alone. Nobody has the right to use them except as revealed by Him. And even if it may be logically possible to use them in a different way, it is not polite to do so because this may be forbidden for a reason unknown to us.

However, many Islamic sects introduced aberrant ideas regarding divine unity. They misinterpreted Quranic verses to justify these ideas and views and resorted to fabricating and distorting the Prophet Tradition to defend them.

In the midst of this state of preplexity created by sectarian differences, the Imams of the Prophet Household and their disciples played a leading role in clarifying and preserving the doctrine of divine unity in its original and pure version. Their unique understanding of this doctrine is entirely based on the Quran in its adherence to The Quranic concept of divine unity and is clearly represented in their refutation of aberrant philosophical and unobjective personal views on its meaning and connotations. Invariably, the Shia Imams insisted on adherence to the Quran in understanding doctrines such as Allah's attributes, predestination, faithfulness, and choice and compulsion. To illustrate, Muhammed ibn Hakeem reported that Imam Musa ibn Jafar wrote to Muhammed's father that "Allah is so great and exalted that his attributes are beyond our undesrtanding. Describe Him as He describes Himself and desist from anything further than that."[9] Also, al-Fadhl reported asking Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha about Allah's attributes and that the Imam replied: "Do not transgress what is in the

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Quran."[10] The fact that the Imamiya Shia's conception of divine unity is strictly derived from the Quran was stated by Imam Jafar al-Sadiq as follows: "The correct belief regarding divine unity is that which is revealed in the Quran."[11]

This statement or principle drew the line separating the authentic Islamic belief on divine unity from conceptions and opinions based on new philosophical and ideological movements. Such aberrant beliefs led their advocates in some cases to heretic and extremist stands. To protect Muslims from these pitfulls, the Imams of the Prophet Household meticulously defined and expounded the meaning of divine unity as found in the Quran. A review of the Shia Imams' commentaries on the concise verses over which opinions and interpretation differed reveals that they sought to refute any notion that likened Allah to His creatures, emphasizing Allah's absolute perfection. To acheive this, they considered the *muhkamat* or clear verses and the Quranic tenets as the bases for explaining the Quran and expounding its meanings. In doing so, they laid down the following principles for the Quranic commentary:

1. The Quran is interpreted on the bases of the Quran itself and the Prophet Tradition. This is consistent with the principle of viewing the Quran as a consistent and uniform whole. Any other approach would only lead to disjointed and incoherent understandings.

2. The application of the human mind and intellect is necessary to understand and interpret the Quran. This disciplined use of the human intellect guided by the Quran and the Prophet Tradition has significantly contributed toward uncovering the meanings of Quranic verses.

3. The Quran must be understood on the basis of a thorough knowledge of the Arabic language and its literal as well as

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metaphorical usages.

This methodology proved its effectiveness in dealing with the following two critical problems which baffled other schools that did not endorse this methodology:

1. The tendency to suspend the role of the intellect and the use of induction which characterized *al-Dahiria* who insisted on interpreting the Quran literally.
2. Interpreting the Quran on the bases of personal opinion which paved the way for the introduction of sectarian biases and misinterpretation.[12]

Since the Quran expounded the principle of divine unity, Allah's attributes and His sacred names to early Muslims in their own language, there was little room for misunderstandings and misinterpretations at the time. And even when differences in understading occurred the Prophet was there to remove them by teaching Muslims the correct beliefs.

Later on and as a result of adopting different approaches to understanding the Quran and variations in the personal abilities of commentators, discrepancies in comprehension and inter-pretation of Quranic verses became widespread. Also, the sects and movements that strayed from the Quran added to these misinterpretations of the literal and the allegorical contents of the Quran.

The major religious schools which emerged beginning in the second half of the first Hegira century attempted to interpret Islamic doctrines and understand its concepts. The most prominent of those schools are the following:

1. The Dahiria school.
2. Al-Mutazila school.
3. The Prophet Household school (The Imamiya Shia).
4. Al-Ghulat (Extremist) school.

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5. Al-Ashaira school.
6. The school of philosophers influenced by Greek, Indian and Persian philosophies.
7. The Sufi (Mystic) school.

The opinions and heritage of these schools can be found in their writings and in the commentaries on the Quran influenced by their teachings and even in the false accounts fabricated to support and justify their beliefs.

The Imams of the Prophet Household laid down the teachings of their school either directly in their communications to their followers and the general public or indirectly through their discussions of opinions and attitudes of other schools and sects. For example, the Imamiya Shia's stand on divine unity was enunciated by Imam Jafar al-Sadiq as follows: "The true faith on divine unity is found in these descriptions revealed in the Quran... Do not deviate from the Quran and go astray for the true faith has been laid down."

Divine unity: An overview

After Islamic thinking came under the influence of philosophy giving rise to a number of schools of thought, the emergence of the literal approach to interpreting the Quran and heated arguments over Allah's attributes, the Imams of the Prophet Household proclaimed their teachings and doctrinal approach and emphasized the need to endorse divine unity as specified in the Quran. Accordingly, they defended divine unity an negated all forms of polytheism by discussing the following dimensions of divine unity.
1. Divine unity in Allah Himself.
2. Divine unity in Allah's attributes.
3. Divine unity in Allah's deeds.
4. Divine unity in worship.

These dimensions are considered in the following section.

Divine unity in Allah Himself

The Imamiya Shia regarded this principle to be the foundation upon which the structure of the faith stands. Every Muslim must believe that Allah is one and that nothing is like Him, and that He can not be grasped by the human intellect. Allah describes Himself in the Quran as follows:

> Nothing is like Him and He is the all-hearing and all-seeing.[13]

The Imams expounded this dimension of divine unity. Imam Ali said: "Divine unity necessitates that you should not know Allah by conjecture and it would not be just to accuse Him."[14] Also, Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha affirmed that "Allah is not really known by anyone who likens Him to His creation."[15] He also warned in the following statement against using *qiyas* or reasoning by analogy to know Allah because human thinking is deeply influenced by conceptions and meanings derived from the material world:[16]

> He who describes the Lord using analogy shall remain eternally in confusion straying from the right path and harboring deviant thoughts.. You should define Him as He defined Himself without seeing Him and describe Him as He described Himself without an image. Allah can not be perceived through the senses. He is also known without likening Him to anything.

Divine unity was also elucidated by Imam al-Sadiq who emphasized Allah's absolute unity and aloofness and rejected all false notions about divine unity introduced by some sects. These notions reflected their owners' incomplete humn comprehension and their inability to conceive of Allah in the abstract due to their over-materialist perception which led them to believe that

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Allah has a body and an image. Likening Allah to His creatures was considered as a form of polytheism by Imam al-Sadiq:[17]

> He who likens Allah to His creatures is a polytheist and he who denies Allah's abilities is a heretic.

Since the Imams of the Prophet Household believed that Allah is a unique fact beyond the limited comprehension of human minds, they warned against contemplating Allah's essence. They encouraged, instead observing His creation and deducing His attributes from the material world which serve as evidence of His greatness and divine unity. This is the message conveyed by the following statements by Imam Jafar al-Sadiq:

> Do not contemplate Allah per se. However, if you wish to witness His greatness then cast your eyes on the greatness of His creation.[18]

And:

> Discuss Allah's creation but not Himself. Discussing Allah will only increase one's quandary.[19]

These statements only reflected the principles established by the following Quranic verse:

> And they argue regarding Allah and His punishment is stern.[20]

Divine unity in Allah's attributes

Religious scholars, leaders of religious sects, and philosophers discussed this critical tenet at length producing numerous opinions and viewpoints on Allah's attributes and their meanings. Among those groups who voiced their opinions on this issue were the Imamiya Shia, al-Mutazila, al-Ashaira, the Sufis and many philosophers.

The most significant question posed under this topic was: Are Allah's attributes such as knowledge, and potency intrinsic or extrinsic? In other words, is He knowledgeable due to knowledge, omnipotent due to power, alive with life and so on?

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The Imamiya Shia's answer to this questions is that Allah's attributes such as knowledge, infinite power and life are intrinsic, and that these attributes do exist and should not be likened to those of His creatures. In the words of Imam Jafar al-Sadiq: "the true faith regarding divine unity is that revealed in the Quran. So reject Allah's lack of attributes and likeness to His creatures..."

Al-Hussain ibn Khalid reported that he heard Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha confirming: "Allah the Exalted will always remain knowledgeable, omnipotent, alive, the first, all-hearing and all-seeing. I said to the Imam: 'Grandson of the Prophet, some people claim that Allah knows with knowledge, omnipotent with power, alive with life, the first with seniority, all-hearing with a hearing faculty, and all-seeing with eyesight.' The Imam replied: "He who says this and believes in it worship other deities along with Allah and is not one of our followers.' And he added, 'Allah remains knowledgeable, omnipotent, alive, the first, all-hearing and all-seeing intrinsically. He is above all the claims of polytheisits and those who liken Him to His creatures.'"[21]

On the same subject, Imam Jafar al-Sadiq was reported, in a dialogue with Muhammed ibn Muslim, to have said: "'Some of Allah's attributes are that He is the One. the Eternal who has one essence and not several.' I said to him, 'some people in Iraq claim that Allah hears with something different from that which He sees with, sees with something different from that which the hears with.' He replied: 'They lied, blasphemed and likened Allah to His creatures. Allah is above this. He is all-hearing and all-seeing. He hears with what He sees with and sees with what He hears with.' I then said to the Imam, 'They also claim that He is all-seeing in the manner which they [as human beings] comprehend.' He replied, "Allah is exalted. Only those with

creatures' charateristics can be so comprehended and Allah is not as such."[22]

Classification of the attributes

To clarify their standpoints on divine unity, the Imamiya Shia classified divine attributes into two categories:

1. Affirmative, immasculate or sublime attributes which attest to Allah's perfection such as knowledge, omnipotency will, life and other attributes specified in the Quran and which can not be questioned.

2. Negative attributes which should not be associated with Allah because of their imperfect nature. The Imamiya's views on this issue are in variance with those of some Islamic sects such as the anthropomorphists and the predeterminists. These disagreements are ascribed to these sects' aberrant approaches especially in interpreting the Quran.

Human understanding naturally tends to use *qiyas* or reasoning by analogy and comparison without taking into consideration the uniqueness of some cases. To avoid this pitfall, the Imamiya school strictly adhered to the principle of the coherence of Quranic verses in defining divine unity and interpreting all Quranic verses dealing with it. Thus, they viewed Allah's attributes in the Quran such as the hand, chair, being seated, throne, anger and love figuratively, which is in my opinion the only acceptable method for understanding these verses.

Hundreds of statements by Imams of the Prophet Household discussed Allah's attributes and deeds and identified the attributes and deeds that can be ascribed to Allah. The Imamiya scholars also contributed to this effort by clarifying the doctrines on Allah's absolute and perfect attributes and refuting false notions advanced by other sects. On the negative

attributes, al-Hili wrote the following:

> The first attribute is that Allah can not be a compound, otherwise He would be in need of His parts and hence imperfect. The second attribute is that He is neither a body, a state nor an essence or He must occupy space and thus be subject to external events or even a product of such events, i.e. be a creature Himself which is impossible.* Also, He could not exist in a place or a direction or else He would be in need of being there.

In his commentary on Nasseer al-Deen al-Toosi's *Tajreed al-Itiqad*, al-Hili asserted that Allah can not be present in others which is contrary to the Christian belief that Allah descended to earth as Jesus and also the Sufi belief that Allah is present in the Sufi who achieve the highest level of knowing Him. He described this belief as "undoubtedly ridiculous."

The third 'negative' attribute discussed by al-Hili is that Allah is free of the feelings of pain or pleasure because "He is devoid of moods."[23] The fourth attribute is that Allah never unites with others. Al-Muqdad al-Sayyuri observed that this attributes is contrary to the Christian belief that Allah was united with Jesus and the Nusairiyah belief that Allah was united with Imam Ali and Sufi belief that Allah becomes united with those who reach the highest stage of knowing Him.[24]

The fifth attribute asserts that "Allah is not subject to events because He could not be responsive to others or deficient."[25] The sixth attribute refutes Allah's ability to see with an eyesight.[26] The seventh attribute rejects the idea that Allah may have partners as indicated by the prophets and logically supported. It is the consensus of all Allah's prophets that He has no partners. This is also confirmed by reasoning which is also derived from divine revelation in the Quran:[27]

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* Al-Fadhil al-Muqdad al-Sayyuri observed that this viewpoint contradicted the belief of the anthropomorphists.

Had there been other gods in heaven and earth besides Allah, both would have been ruined.[28]

The eight attribute is that Allah is free of 'faculties' because if He was omnipotent with power and knowledgeable with the faculty of knowledge then He would then be in need of these faculties and thus empowered.[29]

Finally, the ninth attribute asserts that Allah need nothing and nobody and this is confirmed by His existence without others while others clearly needs Him.[30] It must be pointed out that these viewpoints were directly derived from the Quran and the Prophet Tradition and not the product of Shia scholars and philosophers' thinking.

Divine unity in Allah's deeds

When he decrees a thing He needs only say: 'Be' and it is.[31]

Allah's attributes here are classified into two types. The first type include traits such as omnipotency wisdom, and so on which characterize Allah at all times because these are His only. The second group of traits are called the deed traits which include such traits as the creator, benevolent, angry, loving, resurrector, etc. All the latter traits are actually based on the former ones. Recognition of Allah's divine unity in His deeds is to believe that He alone is capable of His deeds such as creation, death and resurrection and that the universe and whatever occurs in it of births, deaths and other events are His deeds and none can perform such deeds, prevent or influence them. This also implies that all the forces of nature and the causal forces around us were created by Allah. Thus, the belief in the law of cause and effect is consistent with divine unity since it affirms that all causes which generate or influence natural events and

human behavior were introduced by Allah for this purpose.

The Imamiya belief in the law of causality as providing explanation of natural events and human behavior is contrary to the Asharia belief that this law does not exist and that associations between events and happenings are a product of habit. The Asharia belief that the law of causality and divine unity are inconsistent led them to endorse compulsion, i.e. that Allah is the cause of all human actions and therefore man has no free will or choice.

Another doctrinal issue around which the Imamiya Shia and the Asharia disagreed was the purpose of divine acts. The Imamiya maintained that all Allah's deeds are purposeful and beneficial to humankind. In other words, all divine acts have a purpose or an aim and Allah does not need to do anything for His own sake but He is the source of benefits for all His creatures.

The Asharia, on the other hand, rejected that Allah's deeds have a purpose, whether the deeds occur in the natural or the social-human spheres such as creation, death, enrichment, impoverishment, empowerment and weakness. They defended their position by arguing that whoever acts to fulfil a purpose is in need of achieving this purpose. In reply to this the Imamiya school countered that the need is inherent in the creatures and benefits accrued from these deeds belong to these creatures and not Allah. For example, the spherical shape of the earth fulfils a natural purpose and benefits those who live on it. Similarily, the atmospheric pressure has a purpose beneficial to humankind. Also, the thumb has a mechanical foundation which is essential for human dexterity. On the other hand, an act which lacks a purpose is a haphazard act and Allah is wise and does not act haphazardly.

Allah has justified many of his deeds and expounded their purposes for mankind in the Quran as the following verses show:

> I created the jinn and humankind in order that they worship Me.[32]

> He created life and death to put you to the test and find out which of you acquit himself best. He is the Mighty, the Forgiving One.[33]

> The unbelievers say if only the Quran was revealed to him in a single revelation. We have revealed it thus so that we may strengthen your faith. We have imparted it to you gradually.[34]

> We alternate these vicissitudes among mankind so that Allah may know the believers and choose martyrs from among you, He does not love the evil-doers;and that He may test the faithful and annihilate the infidels.[35]

> We afflicted Pharaoh's people with dearth and famine so that they might take heed.[36]

Accordingly, the Quranic justification of divine acts is the basis of the Imamiya's beliefs in the purposefulness of divine acts and the law of causality.

Divine unity in worship

Allah says: "I created the jinn and humankind in order that they worship Me."[37] This verse proclaims that worshipping Allah is the purpose of creation and the essence of religion. Also, "all creatures celebrate His praises. Yet you can not understand their praises."[38] Other dimensions of divine unity are closely related to worshipping Allah as the only God, the Almighty creator who possesses the powers of life and death. Any other thing worshipped or obeyed contrary to Allah's will

is an idol. This is why the Imamiya Shia judge the sincerity of worship by the worshipper's intention to worship Allah alone. Thus, any form of worship which is not directed solely to Allah is considered invalid and if it is not performed solely for Allah's sake it is then a hypocritical act and must be repeated.

Extremism and Anthropomorphism

A study of the various sects and schools of thought that arose within the Islamic community would reveal the deep controversy between advocates of the Quran-based divine unity and those who became Ghulat (Extremists), Mufawada (Delegation) of Mujasima (Anthropomorphist). The first two groups claimed to belong to the Shia while the third considered themselves to be Sunni. Both the Extremists and Anthropomorphists espoused unorthodox and deviant views. The Extremists or Ghulat claimed that some human beings possessed divine attributes. The Anthropomorphists, on the other hand, ascribed human attributes to Allah such as a body, a place, a movement and emotions. The Imams of the Prophet Household, their companions and disciples led an incessant campaign to expose and denounce advocates of such false ideas.

It should be pointed out that these sects resorted to devious and unscrupulous methods in defending their views. The Anthropomorphists, for instance, supported their beliefs by endorsing literal interpretations of Quranic verses which figuratively referred to Allah's throne, chair and hand and by producing unauthentic traditions to the same effect. The Extremists also defended their beliefs by misinterpreting Quranic verses and fabricating statements which they ascribed to the Prophet.

The Imams' stand on the Ghulat

It is commonly held that some people are more prone than others so exaggeration and extremism. Such tendencies have been observed among Jews and Christians who deified some prophets and went to unacceptable extremes in exalting them. The Quran criticizes them for this and advises them to desist from this unjustified devotion which is tantamount to idolatory as in the following verses:

> People of the Book do not transgress the bounds of your religion. Speak nothing but the truth about Allah. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was no more than Allah's apostle and His word which He conveyed to Mary: a spirit from Him. So believe in Allah and His apostles and do not say 'Three'. Forbear, and it shall be better for you. Allah is but one God. Allah is exalted above having a son. He possesses all that is within the heavens and the earth. Allah is the sufficient protector.[39]

> Say: People of the Book! Do not transgress the bounds of truth in your religion. Do not follow the whims of those who have already gone astray and have led many astray and have themselves strayed from the straight path.[40]

Extremist doctrines were introduced by splinter groups which borrowed these beliefs from other religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism and Zoroastrianism and from Indian and Greek philosopheies. They, however, denied that their beliefs were derived from these sources and insisted that they are Islamic. In this way, the ideas of *itihad* or union, transmigration and deification of human beings became known to Muslims. The Extremist movement begat during the reign of Imam Ali, and many of the Extremists claimed to be followers of the

Imams of the Prophet Household taking advantage of the Imams' superior status to prepetuate their deviant beliefs.

The Imams of the Shia strongly opposed this movement and sought to expose its deviant unIslamic beliefs to all Muslims. These laudable efforts, however, were ignored by opponents of the Imamiya Shia who maliciously tried to attribute much of the Extremists' views to the Imamiya Shia. And even after the Shia Imams and scholars condemned the Extremists as heretics and 'unclean', their opponents persisted in propagating the false claim that the Extremists belong to the Shia. In the following paragraphs, the Imamiya Shia's views on the Extremists are clarified beginning with definitions of the Ghulat and Mufawada by two prominent Imamiya scholars, al-Shaikh al-Mufeed and al-Shaikh al-Sadooq.

Al-Mufeed defined the term *ghulu* or extremism as "exceeding the bounds or the purpose. Allah says in the Quran: 'O people of the Book! Do not transgress the bounds of truth in your religion. Speak nothing but the truth about Allah'. In this verse, Allah forbade exceeding the limit in viewing Jesus and considered Christian beliefs on Jesus to be extremist. The Extremists who claimed to the Muslims are those who ascribed divine or prophetic qualities to Imam Ali and the Imams of his descendants or exalted their position in the religious and worldly realms beyond the acceptable limit. They are judged to be heretics whom Imam Ali condemned to death. The other Imams also branded them as heretics and non-Muslim.[41]

Al-Sadooq discussed the beliefs of the Mufawada and made clear the Imamiya views on them:[42]

> Al-Mufawada are a type of extremist. They differed
> from other extremists in believing that the Imams were
> created.. but they claimed that Allah created them
> distinctively and delegated to them the affairs of this

world and everything in it.. Followers of al-Halaj are a group of Sufis who believed in hilul, (i.e. Allah's presence in some of his devout worshippers) Al-Halaj pretended to be a Shia although he was known to be a Sufi. His followers are heretics who claimed that their leader performed miracles. Their claim is similar to the Maji claim that Zoroaster performed miracles and the Christians' claim that their monks performed extra-ordinary deeds.

The Imamiya scholars classified the following two groups among the Extremists: al-Khatabia who followed Muhammed ibn Muqlas Abi al-Khatab and al-Mughiria who are followers of al-Mughira ibn Saeed al-Ajli who led an uprising at Kufa and was subsequently killed by Khalid ibn Abdullah al-Qasri in 119 A.H.[43] These two sects and similar groups pretended to be followers of the Imams of the Prophet Household but were exposed by the Imams to be heretics.

Al-Mufadil ibn Miziad reported that Imam al-Sadiq said about followers of Abi al-Khatab and other Extremists: "Do not sit, or eat with them and do not shake their hands or befriend them."[44]

The Imam was also reported to have said: "May Allah curse Abu al-Khatab, those killed with him, those who survived him and whoever has compassion for them."[45] With regard to al-Mughira ibn Saeed he said: 'May Allah curse al-Mughira ibn Saeed because he lied in reporting my father's [Imam al-Baqir] accounts. Allah burned him in Hell. May Allah curse those who ascribe to us what we do not claim to have. May Allah curse any person who claims that we are not slaves and worshippers of Allah who created us, guide us and to whom we shall return."[46]

In another statement, Imam al-Sadiq related how the Extremists attempted to corrupt the faith and jurisprudence

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by fabricating accounts and statements and ascribing them to the Imams. This led his companions to be very strict in verifying the Imams' tradition.

Younis ibn Abdul Rahman, a prominent Imamiya Shia, was asked by another Shia: You are very strict with regard to statements rejecting many of those reported by fellow Shia so what influences you to do so? He answered: Al-Hisham ibn al-Hakam informed me that he heard Imam al-Sadiq saying: Do not accept any statement as ours unless it is consistent with the Quran and the Prophet Tradition or it is supported by a previously authenticated statement. Al-Mughira ibn Saeed, may Allah curse him, inserted in the writings of my father's disciples many statements falsely ascribed to him. Beware of Allah and do not accept as ours sayings which contradict Allah's commands and our Prophet Tradition. Younis added that he travelled to Iraq where he met few of Imam al-Baqir's disciples and many of those of Imam al-Sadiq. "I wrote down what they narrated and conveyed them to Imam Ali al-Ridha who rejected a number of them as being unauthentic. The Imam said: Abi al-Khatab was a dishonest narrator of Imam al-Sadiq's statements. May Allah curse him and his followers who continue to insert false sayings in the writings of Imam al-Sadiq's disciples. Do not recognize any tradition as being ours if it contradicts the Quran. When we speak we do in agreement with the Quran and the Tradition. We report only what the Quran and the Prophet said. We never report what other than these two source say and that is why we never contradict each other. What the last Imam said is, thus, congruent with that of the first Imam and similarily the last one confirms the statements of the first one. So whoever informs you to the contrary reject his account. Whatever we report brings to you the truth and enlightenment and if it is not so then it must be

the words of the Devil.[47]

On the same subject, Imam al-Sadiq was reported by Younis ibn Hisham al-Hakam to have said:[48]

> Al-Mughira ibn Saeed intentionally lied in reporting my father's [Imam al-Baqir] statements.. He used to obtain written statements from my father - and his followers also did the same and gave the statements to al-Mughira who inserted his heresies into them.. and ascribed them to my father. He then gave these distorted statements to his followers to circulate among the Shia. Every Extremist notion in the writings of my father's disciples was fabricated by al-Mughira ibn Saeed.

Imam al-Sadiq also maintained that these fabrications were intended to corrupt the Islamic message. According to Abdul Rahman ibn Katheer, the Imam cursed al-Mughira ibn Saeed and a Jewess he used to frequent and from whom he learned sorcery. He also said:[49]

> Al-Mughira lied in reporting my father's statements and because of this Allah deprived him of the true faith. Those who do the same Allah shall punish them with Hell. By Allah we are no more than servants of the One who created and elected us. We are incapable of bestowing providence or inflicting harm. If we live in bliss them it is His mercy and if He torments us then it is because of our sins. We have no influence over Allah and we have no license from Him. We shall die, be interred, resurrected and judged. Woe to them, may Allah curse them for the wrong they did to Allah and the Prophet.

Al-Shahristani also reported Imam al-Sadiq's stand on the Extremists in his book *al-Milal wa al-Nehal* as follows:[50]

Abu al-Khatab claimed that he was a follower Jafar ibn Muhammed al-Sadiq. But when al-Sadiq became aware of his false beliefs he denounced and cursed him and instructed his followers strongly to denounce him. Abu al-Khatab later proclaimed himself imam.

Following the Imams' stand on the Extremists and Mufawada, the Imamiya scholars decreed that they are heretics and unclean. These prominent scholars include Kadhim al-Yazdi in his book *al-Erwat al-Withqa* and, Muhsin al-Hakeem in his book *Mustamsak al-Erwat al-Withqa.*[51]

The Imams of the Prophet Household and the Anthropomorphists

The Imams of the Prophet Household also opposed the Anthropomorphists who ascribed human attributes to Allah. Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha, who lived during the second Hegira century when religious, philosophical and intellectual movements multiplied, refuted the beliefs of the Anthropomorphists in front of the Abbasid Caliph al-Mamoun as follows: "Allah is not known by a person who describes Him with human attributes and that which is described as such is certainly not Allah." He also added, that "There can be no religion without knowledge of Allah and there is no sincerity with anthropomorphism." A man present in that audience asked the Imam 'Grandson of the Prophet, Describe your God to us.' Imam al-Ridha replied, "He who describe Allah by *qiyas* (analogy) will always remain misled, straying from the right path.. I define Him as he defined Himself in the Quran without seeing Him and describe Him as He described Himself without an image. He can neither be preceived with the senses nor described by comparison with human beings. He is known without likening Him to His creatures.." He then quoted the

Prophet: 'He who likens Allah to His creatures does not know Him and he who ascribe his worshippers' sins to Him does not recognize Him as just.'"[53] According to Hamza ibn Hamdan, Imam al-Ridha wrote to him in reply to his query about the claim that Allah has a body and an image: "Exalted is the One whom there is nothing like Him and has neither a body nor an image."[54]

The Imamiya's position on Anthropomorphism was also stated by Imam al-Sadiq as follows: "He who likens Allah to His creatures is a polytheist and he who denies His abilities is a heretic."

Religious concepts

Development of Islamic thought led to the introduction of a number of concepts in the fields of doctrines, Tradition, and philosophy. A concept is defined as a term used by specialists in a field of specialization to convey a special meaning. Scholars studied these concepts relevant to their fields and accordingly classified definitions and meaning into the following three categories:

1. Literal definition: This refers to the linguist's definition of a term or a concept. Concepts here convey the meanings originally assigned to them by linguists.
2. Religious definition: The definitions or meanings of concepts such as prayer, fasting, pilgrimage are specified by religious sources.
3. Conventional definition: This include concepts whose meanings were established by custom and convention.

As mentioned above specialists a professionals in a certain field of inquiry have their own specialized concepts. These concepts may already exist in the language but were used by specialist to convey specific meanings. For example, the

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concepts of prayer, essence, and *ijtihad* were given by jurists an philosophers definitions which may vary to a great or less extent from their conventional meanings.

Religious concepts were used variably by followers of different sects and this led to disagreements and controversies. In some cases these disagreements were essentially semantic as we shall find out in our discussion of the concepts of *bada* and *taqia*.

Semantic differences also occurred among scholars of the Imamiya Shia. For example, there was a protracted and heated controversy over the concepts of *ijtihad*, the role of the intellect and classification of the sayings according to the strength of their authenticity. Some scholars understood *ijtihad* to imply the use of *qiyas* or analogy and thus they rejected it. Only after a long debate that a consensus was formed regarding the meaning of *ijtihad* as exerting an effort to deduce specific religious laws from relevant evidence.

After controversy arose regardng the role of the intellect in legislation, some scholars rejected any role for the intellect assuming that it may be considerd as an independent source of legislation. However, this opposition ceased after supporters of the use of the intellect defined its scope as including "every issue grasped by the intellect and from which it can deduce a religious rule."[56] Accordingly, the intellect was recognized as the tool for finding a religious rule and not its source.

Imamiya Shia scholars also difined with followers of some sects over the definitions of the concepts of *bada* and *taqia*. Some understood *bada* to imply that Allah's knowledge is changeable and thus He does not know beforehand future events. This is contrary to the Imamiya understanding of the term. *Taqia* was also misconstrued   by some to justify a form

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of ideological and political hypocricy. In fact, it is a religious license granted by the Quran so that believers can protect themselves from harassment.

Bada

One of the basic points of disagreement between Islamic and Jewish thinking is whether or not divine commands and laws can be changed, either in the form of replacing one religion by another or substituting one religious rule by another within the same religion. A controversy also arose regarding Allah's ability to change and replace things in the world He created, or *bada*. The Quran and the Prophet testify that the substitution of one religion by another is an established divine tradition. Similarily, replacements and amendments of religious laws stand to reason while changes in creation are part of the natural order.

The concept of *bada* was used by the Prophet Household school to defend Islamic thought against Jewish doctrines and the beliefs of the Mutazila and those influenced by Greek philosophy. The use of this concept, however, led to gross misunderstandings. For example, some misconstrued *bada* to mean that Allah changes His will in response to events previously unknown to Him. This, of course, contradicts one of Allah's attributes. Such misinterpretations were intentionally made to malciously accuse the Imamiya Shia of endorsing unorthodox beliefs. As the following sections show, the Imamiya understanding and usage of this concept was totally consistent with divine unity.

Definition of bada

Bada literally means to appear, as it is used in the following Quranic verse:

And Allah will make apparent to them what they have

never reckoned.[57]

It is defined in the dictionary *al-Mujam al-Waseet* as the appearance of an opinion or the acceptance of something which was unknown before. It also means endorsing a new stand regarding an issue.

Prophet Muhammed was the first to ascribe the act of *bada* to Allah in the following account reported by al-Bukhari:[58] "Abu Huraira narrated that he heard Allah's Apostle saying: There were three jews, a leper, a blindman and one afflicted with alopecia*. Allah *bada*, i.e. decided to test them. He sent to them an angel who went first to the leper and asked him: what do you desire most? The leper answered: a nice color and a nice skin for the people consider me unclean. The angel then touched him and his ailment vanished... The angel then asked him: what kind of property do you like most? He answered: camels or cows. And he was given a fat she-camel and the angel said: May Allah make you fortunate through her. He then went to the one afflicted with alopecia and said to him: what do you like most? He replied: a nice hair and my ailment cured because the people consider me unclean. The angel touched him and he was cured and had a nice hair. The angel then asked him: what kind of property do you prefer? He answered: cows and he was given a cow. The angel said: May Allah bless you through her. The angel then went to the blindman and asked him: what do you like most? He answered: I wish that Allah restores my eyesight so that I can see again. The angel then touched him and his eyesight was restored. He then asked him: what kind of property do you prefer most? He answered: sheep and so he was given a pregnant ewe. Their animals gave birth and multiplied and each of them had a large herd. The angel, disguished as a leper,

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* A skin disease resulting in large bald spots on the patient's head.

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visited the one who was cured of leprosy and addressed him: I am a poor man and have become isolated in my travel. None can help me today except Allah first and then you. I beseech you by the One who bestowed on you this nice color and skin an this wealth to give me a single camel I can ride in my travel. The ex-leper said to him: I have already given much. The angel said: You certainly look familiar. Weren't you a leper scorned by others and a pauper before Allah blessed you? The ex-leper answered him: This wealth was handed down to me from my forefathers. The angel said: If you are lying may Allah reverts you to your former state. The angel then left to the one afflicted with alopecia and asked of him the same thing and heard the same reply of the ex-leper. The angel said: If you lie may Allah reverts to your former state. He then went to the man who was blind and said to him: I am a poor man and have become helpless in my travel. None can help me today except Allah first and then you. I beseech you by the One who restored your eyesight to give me a sheep that would sustain me during my travel. The man replied: I was blind and then Allah restored my eyesight and I was a pauper and He made me rich, take whatever you wish. By Allah I shall not refuse you anything given to me by Allah. The angel said to him: Keep your property. All three of you were being tested. Allah approves of you and disapproves of your associates."

Abu Musa al-Ashari reported that the prophet said: "Allah will bring together all nations on Resurrection Day. And if He *bada lahu* (i.e. chooses) to set them apart He would show each of them what they used to worship."[59] This demonstrates that the prophet was the first to use the term *bada* to label one of Allah's specific deeds.

A definition of the term *bada* in its religious context was provided by al-Shaikh al-Mufeed of the Imamiya scholars as

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follows:[60]

> My opinion on the meaning of *bada* is that of all Muslims regarding abrogation [of divine verses or commands] and such things as changes of fortunes from wealth to poverty, health to sickness and life to death. It also applies to what learned men say regarding the extension of one's life span and changes in fortune: [by Allah] depending on a person's deeds.

> The usage and the meaning of *bada* was indicated by revelations conveyed by the prophets and apostles from Allah to the believers. If I have not learned it from revelation I would not have accepted it. Similarily, If I have not been informed by revelation that Allah becomes angry, approves and likes I would not have ascribed these acts to Him. But since revelations have attested to them I have endorsed their meanings which are consistent with reason, as such there can be no disagreement between other Muslims and myself over this but there may be disagreement over the term used [i.e. semantic differences] I have clearly explained how it come to be used and this is the belief of all the Imamiya and whoever differs with them disagrees with them over the term and not the meaning or principle.

In spite of this, a debate over the meaning of this term continued for a long time between the Imamiya Shia and some Islamic sects especially the Acharia. It was essentially a disagreement over the use of this term despite the fact that it was specifically used by the Prophet. The Imamiya Shia's interpretation of it was also based on the Quran's reply to the Jewish claim that Allah's hands are chained:

> The Jews said: Allah's hands are chained. May their own hands be chained.[61]

This verse refers to the Jewish claim that Allah is unable to

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change creation or religion as He wishes after He has created them and accordingly they rejected the prophethood of Muhammed which is based on the abrogation of previous religions.

The Imamiya Shia based their definition of this term on the Quranic verses and the porphet's statements. In specific, the following verse:

If we abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten..[62]

confirms Allah's abrogation of religious laws while the verse:

Allah confirms or abolishes as He pleases. He has the Eternal Book.[63]

establishes that Allah may replace a whole religion with a new one. Accordingly, abrogation is a legislative change or amendment while abolition is a basic change in creation. Following the Prophet's use of the term, the Imamiya Shia considerd the term *bada* to be synonymous with abrogation, abolition or change.

Not only religion and religious laws are changed by Allah but also a person's lot. In the following verse indicates that Allah changes the social, economic and political conditions of a community if they change to the better:

Allah does not change a people's lot unless they change what is in their hearts.[64]

The Prophet also maintained that Allah may reward those who help their kindred by lengthening their lives' spans; the Prophet said, according to Abu Huraira: "Whoever wants his lot to be enhanced and his life span lengthened let him help his kindred."[65] The fact that these favors are dependent upon a person's conduct, supports the concept of *bada*.

Imam al-Sadiq meticulously explained this concept in a number of his statements. Mansoor ibn Hazim reported asking

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the Imam: "Could this day bring forth something which Allah did not know yesterday. The Imam answered: No! Whoever says this Allah will prove him wrong. I then asked him: Don't you say that whatever occured before and whatever shall happen till the Day of Resurrection is within Allah's knowledge. He answered: Yes, before He even created the universe."[66]

The following statements by Imam al-Sadiq further explain this concept:

If you hear someone claiming that Allah may decide on something of which He was not aware before then denounce him[67]; and

Whatever Allah decides regarding something He certainly knew about it before deciding on it[68]; and

Whoever claims that Allah decides on something out of regret is, according to us, a heretic[69]; and

Muayasar, addressing Muayasar ibn Abdul-Aziz, Pray and supplicate and do not think that things have been irrevocably decided; and

Allah may stop events as a result of supplications which He knew that He would change if supplicated-events, if a person were not to supplicate, [may have grave consequences for that person][70]; and finally

Allah never decides on anything out of ignorance.[71]

The Quran referred to the meaning and application of the term *bada* in some verses without actually mentioning it such as the following verses:

Every term has its appointment. Allah confirms or abolishes as He pleases. He has the Eternal Book.[72]

If we abrogate any verse or cause it to be forgotten we replace it by a better or a similar one. Do you not know that Allah has power over all things.[73]

All who dwell in heaven and earth beseech Him. Each

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day some new task employs Him.[74]

The Jews said: Allah's hand is chained. May their own hands be chained. May they be cursed for what they say. His hands are outstretched. He bestows as He will.[75]

He who has created you from clay. He has decreed a term and another term know to Him, still you doubt.[76]

And when he reached the age when he could work with him, his father said to him 'My son, I dreamt that I was sacrificying you. Tell me what you think'. He replied: 'Father, do as you are bidden. Allah willing, you shall find me of the patient ones'. And when they both submitted to Allah's will, and Abraham had laid down his son prostate upon his face. We called out of him saying: 'Abraham, you have fulfilled your vision. Thus did We reward the doers of good. That was indeed a bitter test. We ransomed his son with a great sacrifice.'[77]

Allah does not change a people's lot unless they change what is in their hearts[78].

To Allah is the command before and after.[79]

And Job when he called on his Lord saying: I am sorely afflicted and You are the most merciful. We responded to him and removed his affliction. We bestowed from Ourselves on him, his family and as many more mercy from Ourselves and a reminder to worshippers.[80]

And Zacharias who invoked his Lord, saying: 'Lord, let me not remain childless, and You are the best of inheritors. We responded to him, and gave him Yahya (John) curing his wife of sterility. they vied with each other in good works and called on Us with piety, fear and were humble to us.[81]

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He who responds to the oppressed when they cry out to Him and relieves their affliction.[82]

Porphet, encourage the faithfull to fight. If there are twenty steadfast men among you, they shall defeat two hundred, and if there are a hundred. they shall defeat a thousand unbelievers. for they are ingnorant people. Allah has now lightened your burden, for He knows that there is weakness in you. If there are hundred steadfast men among you, they shall defeat two hundred; and if there are a thousand. they shall, by Allah's permission, defeat two thousand, Allah comes to the aid of the steadfast ones.[83]

Acording to these verse, Allah may change the worshippers' fortune in battle in response to their sincere supplication or out of Allah's mercy and kindness to His weak worshippers. Evidently Allah was aware of all this before He instructed them to fight the infidels who were ten times more numerous.

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq explained the meaning of the concept of *bada* or change in these verse. For instance, his interpretation of the verse: "He who has created you from clay. He has decreed a term and another term known to Him, still you doubt"[84] was as follows:[85]

The predetermined destiny is the inevitable term or fate ordained by Allah. As for the named term it is the one subject to *bada* or change. He may hasten or delay its occurrence but the predetermined destiny can not be brought forward or delayed.

Imam al-Sadiq also commented on the verse: 'The Jews said: Allah's hand is chained'[86] by pointing out that Jews did not mean that literally but they maintained that after completing creation He could not add to or subtract from it. Allah's reply to them refutes their allegation: 'May their own hands be

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chained. May they be cursed for what they say. His hands are outstretched. He bestows as He will.'[87] And Allah also says in the Quran: 'Allah abolishes or confirms as He pleases.'[88]

The Imam also interpreted the following verse: "Allah abolishes and confirms as He pleases" by stating: " What does Allah abolish except what has been and what does He cofirm except what is yet to occur."[89]

Finally, Imam al-Sadiq iterpreted the account of Allah's command to Ibrahim to slay his son Ismail and how He changed that order and replaced it by a sacrifice. According to him, this case provides us with a clear example of bada or change: "There is no case of bada or change by Allah similar to that of my forefather Ismail. Allah ordered his father to slay him and then He replaced him with a sacrifice."[90]

Bada explained by religious scholars

Much efforts have been devoted by scholars of the Imamiya to explaining the concept of bada and clarifying its obscure aspects. One of the most informative treatment of this concept was provided by al-Shaikh al-Sadooq who after defining it drew attention to its significance in countering false Jewish beliefs.

Al-Shaikh al-Sadooq wrote:[91] "Al-Bada or change is not, as some unlearned pepole assume, a change of mind motivated by regret. Allah is exalted above this. But we must admit that bada or change belongs to Allah. It means that He may create something before another and then decides to abolish the first thing and replaces it by another. Similarily, He may command something and then forbids it or He may forbid something and then ordain as in the case of replacing religions, change of Qibla (i.e.the direction which worshippers must face during prayers) and change of ida (i.e.the period of morning before a widow can

remarry). Allah never commands his worshippers to do anything at one time unless He knows it is in their interest at that time. However, it may be in their interest at a different time to forbid them from doing something which He had allowed previously. At any time He commands them to do only what is in their interest. He who acknowledges that Allah can do whatever He wishes, abolish whatever He desires, replace it with whatever He sees fit, put forward things or postpone them. and ordains whatever He wishes in any way He likes accepts *bada* Allah's greatness could never be better recognized than by admitting that He can create, command, put forward, postpone abolish what exist and confirm what is yet to happen.

Al-Bada counters the Jewish belief that Allah after completing creation can no longer change it. Our belief that expressed in the verse: "Every day some new task employs Him" (i.e.creating, terminating, providing for and doing whatever He wishes). Also al-Bada is the appearance of something and it is not caused by regret [or second thoughts]. The word is commonly used by Arabs to mean 'appears' as in 'a person appeared to me on my way.. In the Quran Allah says: "And it will be made apparent to them by Allah that which they have never reckoned."[92] Thus when it appears to Allah that a worshipper is helping his kindred he would extend his life. On the other hand, if it appears to Allah that he is not doing so he would shorten his life. Similarily, if it appears that a person is committing adultery He would shorten his life and diminsh his fortune. but if he abstains from adultrey Allah would increase his fortune and lengthens his life."

Al-Sayyid al-Damad, a prominent Shia scholar and philosopher of the eleventh Hegira century wrote the following on bada:[93] "*Al-Bada* to creation is like abrogation to a law. As commandments and religious law are abrogated, creation can

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also be changed. Abrogation is a legislative *bada* or change is and change an abrogation of creation. However, there can be no change in *al-qada* or divine destiny and in Allah's traits. But what can be changed are *al-qadar* or predetermined things and the time span of their effectiveness. Thus in the same way that abrogation terminates a legislative rule, but does not abolish it from the world of reality, *al-bada* or change discontinues a creation. This occurs in relation to time but does not mean the disappearance of the creation.."

In defence of the Imamiya's belief on *bada*, Al-Majlisi wrote:[94] Authors have written at length on *al-bada* to refute the Jewish claim that Allah is finished with this world and the Mutazila belief that Allah created everything simultaneously as they are found now including human beings, animals, plants and minerals and cosequently the creation of Adam did not precede that of his offspring and that its antecedence is only in appearance and not in occurence and existence. The Mutazila borrowed this thesis from philosophers especially those who places Allah apart of His creation and ascribe events to the primary minds or spirit created by Him. The Imamiya rejected these beliefs and asserted that 'every day some new task employs Allah' such as discontinuing, creating, causing a person's death, or sustaining the life of another. This is done so that the faithful will not stop praying to Allah, obeying Him and seeking His approval and favor in this life and the afterlife. It is also done so that person would give alms, help their kindred, be kind to their parents, and generally perform good deeds in the hope that their lives would be lengthened and their fortunes increased."

Further clarification of this important concept was also provided by the Shia scholar Abu al-Qassim al-Khoei as follows:[95] "Undoubtedly the whole universe is within Allah's authority and power. The existence of any thing is certainly

dependent upon His will. It would continue to exist if He so wishes and it would vanish if He does not. Undoubtedly, Allah's knowledge encompasses everything and all things have a particular place within Allah's eternal knowledge which is known as Allah's predetermination or divine destiny. The meaning of destiny is that all thing were ordained in Allah's knowledge and that their existence depends on Allah's will which take into consideration changing advantages and disadvantages, all of which fall within His cognizance.

The Jews, on the other hand, believed that after the pen of divine destiny and predestination wrote its dictates, changing these became impossible. Accordingly they claimed that Allah's hand is chained and that He can no longer bestow or take away because everything has already been predetermind. This kind of *bada* or change is referred to in the following verses: "Allah abolishes or cofirms as He pleases, He has the Eternal Book,"[96] and "To Allah is the command before and after."[97] According to the Imamiya, change applies to the destiny which is not imperative while the imperative destiny remains fixed."

Al-Khoei also deduced from the Imams al-Baqir, al-Sadiq and al-Kadhim of the verse: "On that night when every precepts is decided"[98] that "Allah decides everything that will happen during that year. And since He possesses the powers of change and will He can put forward or postpone events of death, catastrophy, sickness and good fortune as He pleases. He can also add or subtract from them as He wishes. On the other hand, the imperative destiny which is referred to as *al-Lauh al-Mahfoud* (the Preserved Board), *Umm al-Kitab* (the Eternal Book), and Allah's stored knowledge are not subject to change."[99]

A related doctrine is that Allah's knowledge encompasses everything eternally so that not an iota of anything in heaven or

earth can be outside His knowledge. Al-Sadooq reported that Imam al-Sadiq said: "He who claims that a thing may appear to Allah of which He was not aware before must be denounced." The Imam also said that "Allah may put forward or postpone whatever He wishes. He may also abolish or confirm as He pleases and He has the Eternal Book. Whatever He wishes is also within His knowledge before He creates it. And whatever appears to him is undoubtedly within His knwoledge."[100]

The late scholar al-Khoei then turned to explaining the necessity of analyzing and understanding the concept of *bada*:[101] "Endorsing *bada* or change is a clear acknowledgement that the universe, its creation and continuity are subject to Allah's authority and power and that His will covers everything eternally. It also necessitates that a person must turn to Allah and pray and supplicate to him so that he may fulfil his needs and guides him to obedience and away from disobedience. To reject *al-bada* and thus accept that whatever has been predestined will totally and inevitably occur leads to a person's loss of hope in having his supplications fulfilled. Rejecting *al-bada* is also tantamount to claiming that Allah is incapable of changing His divine destiny. Allah is exalted above this."

Al-Khawaja Naseer al-Deen al-Toosi rejected some philosophers' claim that Allah's knowledge does not encompass particulars or details by asserting that 'changes in additions are possible'. This argument was the subject of the following commentary by al-Hili:[102]

> This reply is to the philosophers' rejection of Allah's knowledge of details. Their argument is that knowledge must change when the subject of that knowledge changes otherwise there would be no congruence. But particulars change and if these were knwon to Allah then His knowledge must also change and this is

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untenable. The gist of [al-Toosi's] reply in that this change occurs to the additions and not the essence or the real characteristics.

As a result of these commentaries and dicussions of the concept of *bada* or change by the Imams of the Prophet Household and the Imamiya scholars, a clear understading of this concept is now available. Accordingly, *al-bada* does not imply any change in Allah's knowledge or revocation of His will because His knowledge precedes all that will happen and all changes that are dependent on circumstances such as when a person reforms himself and in response Allah changes his fortune or when a person shows obedience and performs good deeds such as supplicating and giving alms and Allah fulfils his supplications and stop any harm or undesirable thing that was going to happen to him. All these deeds are within Allah's will and power as the following verses testify:

Allah abolishes and confirms as He pleases. He has the Eternal Book;[103] and

If we abrogate any verse or cause it to be forgotten, we replace it by a similar or a better one;[104] and

To Allah is the command before and after;[105] and

Allah does not change a people's lot unless they change what is in their hearts.[106]

The Imamiya understanding of the concept of *bada* can now be summarized into the following points:

1. The Prophet Muhammed was the first to use the term *bada*.

2. *al-bada* in the world of creation is as abrogation in the world of legislation.

3. All Muslims believe in the principle of *bada* but may disagree on the term used to convey this meaning. Since the Prophet himself used this term, this semantic disagreement should not have occured.

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4. The Imamiya's strong interest in the principle of *al-bada* was in response to the corrupt Jewish belief that Allah, after creating the universe, is unable to effect any changes in it. It was also emphsized to refute unorthodox notions advanced by philosphers influenced by Greek philosophy and Mutazila thinkers who deviated from the authentic conception of divine unity.

5. *Al-bada* does not imply any change in Allah's knowledge which is eternal and encompasses all occurrences and changes in creation.

6. The concept of *al-bada* or change is confirmed by the Quran when it tells of the fulfilment of supplications of prophets and oppressed or needy persons, and it is also confirmed by the Prophet Tradition which urges us to pay alms, be kind to our parents and help our kindred so that our lives can be lengthened and msifortune kept away from us.

7. Allah's stored knowledge which is found in the Eternal Book or Preserved Board and is known by Allah alone is the constant knowledge which can not be changed or substituted. However, change and substitution may happen to things in the world of creation as the following Quranic verses indicate:

> We revealed the Quran on the night of Qadr. And do you know what the night of Qadr is. The night of Qadr is better than a thousand months. On that night the angels and the spirit by their Lord's permission come down with His orders. It is a night of peace, till break of dawn;[108] and

> We revealed the Quran on a blessed night. We want to warn mankind. On that night every percept is decided as a commandments from Ourselves. We sent it down as a blessing from your Lord, who is the all-hearing and

all-knowing[109].

In commenting on these verses, the Imams of the Prophet Household explained that the fate and fortunes of all creation are decided on the night of Qadr for the coming year and until the following night of Qadr.

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99 Al-Khoei, op. cit., p.411.

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Chapter four

Divine Justice

Allah bears witness that there is no God but Him and
so do the angels and the knowledgeable. He upholds
justice.[1]

Justice is one of Allah's attributes. Scholars of divine unity
treated this attribute in their studies as a separate branch of
theology because of its importance and interrelations with many
doctrinal issues such as the prophetic mission, resurrection and
recompense. The concept of divine justice can be clearly seen in
the relationship between the prophetic mission and recompense;
prophets transmitted commandments which entailed recom-
pense in the afterlife and this fair recompense attests to divine
justice. Otherwise the good and the evil would be treated equally
and this unjustice is unworthy of Allah.

Al-Muqdad al-Sayyuri defined justice as "exalting the
Almighty from wrongdoing"[2] Allah is immune from doing
any wrong such as lying, injustice, and unfair punishment, and
also He does not leave out anything that is beneficial to believers
such as ordaining religions and sending prophets.

One of the most critical issues within the subject of divine
justice is *al-jabr* (necessitarianism or compulsion) and free will
which is closely related to recompense. In view of its

importance, religious scholars have devoted much attention to it. This has resulted in the emergence of three different stands on this issue espoused by the following schools: Mutazila, Ashaira and the Prophet Household schools. Each of these school developed its own conception of human will and free choice and a person's accountability for his acts of obedience or disobedience to religious principles and laws.

A summary of these divergent stands was given by Abu al-Fatih ibn Makdoom al-Husaini as follows:

> There is wide disagreement with regard to the issue of free will and human acts. The majority of the Mutazila believe that human acts are determined only by his will and free choice. Those who believe in compulsion advocate that Allah's power is the only force determining a person's act, and hence, a person has no will or power of his own. The majority of Asharia also maintain that the determining factor is Allah's power and that a person's ability to act has no impact but he chooses whether this act is intended as an act of obedience or a transgression.[3]

Al-Alama al-Hili, a prominent Imamiya scholar, reviewed the views of the Asharia and Imamiya on this topic in the following passage quoted by al-Sayyuri.[4]

> We act by free choice. This is necessitated by the obvious difference between a man's falling off a roof and descending the stairs... It would be unjust if Allah was to compel us to do something and then punish us for it. The Quran and the Tradition confirm that this is not the case... Abu al-Hassan al-Ashari and his followers (Asharia) believe that all acts are determined by Allah's will and that a person's acts are not his own. Some of them explained that the essence of any act emnates from Allah, and that a person reaps only the

Kasb or consequences which depends on whether it is an act of obedience or transgression.. Some maintained that if a person has the intention of committing an act, Allah may then make that act possible.

Interestingly, the Asharia argued that this belief is based on the principle of divine unity and that Allah alone is the creator and doer. But they erred in interpreting divine unity by denying a person's role as the actor in accordance with Allah's natural order and law and this led them to deny free will in a person and thus he is compelled to do or act.

Other religious schools including the Mutazila, the Zaidi and the Imamiya advocated that "a person's acts and their character and consequences are subject to a person's ability and choice and that he or she is not compelled to do anything. In other words, he or she may choose to act or not to act as he or she wishes, and this is the correct belief" according to al-Alama al-Hili.[5]

It is clear then that the Imamiya school disagreed with the Asharia over the subject of free choice. The Asharia ascribed all human acts to Allah arguing that He alone can determine and influence creation, a belief based on rejection of the law of causality in the world. They affirmed that a person gains only the consequences of his acts, which they called *al-Kasb*. Various definitions of this concept were offered by them. As mentioned earlier, some maintained that Allah creates an act after a person chooses to do it and He would not do so if a person does not choose to act. Accordingly, *Kasb* is the procedure by which Allah creates the act after a person consciously chooses it. Others, however, argued that Allah creates the act without any role for the person in the creation of it, but a person decides whether it is an act of obedience or disobedience. According to this view, all acts determined by Allah but the nature of that act

is decided upon by the doer.[6]

The Imamiya school took issue with this view by asserting that "the choice and the will are integral parts of the act and if a person is granted both then it follows that the act is his."[7] The Imamiya belief is based on their endorsement of the law of causality and that a person's will is the cause of his acts. They also maintained that man is not a mere conduit for acts and events in the same way that a riverbed is a channel for the flow of water. As such, the Imamiya disagreed with the Asharia and some of the Dahria who denied human free will and choice and thus espoused necessitarianism.

In addition to debating whether or not a person determines his acts and the role of free will and choice, these schools considered the responsibility for the outcomes of these acts. Obviously, when a person performs an act it leads to results such as charity, murder, adultery etc., and they also disagreed on whether these consequences can be ascribed to the person or not. The Imamiya regarded everything that results from our acts as ours while the Asharia argued that everything results from Allah's act. A different viewpoint was advanced by Muamar, Thumama ibn al-Ashrass who said that a person possesses only His will and all that happens as a result of that, i.e. his acts and their consequence, are shaped and conditioned by nature. Some of the Mutazila believed that a person's responsibility for an act is limited to his thought or intentions behind the act.

From the above discussion it can be seem that there were three major stands on this issue. The first viewpoint insisted that human acts have been delegated to the person concerned and that Allah's power is not involved in such acts and has no influence over them. Some even went to the extreme of claiming that Allah is unable to hinder a person from performing an act. This is the view of most of the Mutazila.

The second viewpoint claims that a person is compelled to act and has no influence over creation and hence the consequences of his acts can not be ascribed to him because Allah alone has the power to create acts. This viewpoint is shared by the Asharia and many of the Dahria .

The third viewpoint maintains that a person is willful, has free choice and his acts and their consequences must be ascribed to him. According to this interpretation, a person's role is that of the thinker and doer acting upon his free will and choice and that his will to act and ability to move things and behave are subject to the law of causality in the natural world, but are not the same as the role of Allah in the creation of acts. And since a person has the power of choice and the ability to act he is responsible for his acts and held accountable for them as the Quran indicates in the following verses:

> He who has done an atom's weight of good shall see it
> and he who has done an atom's weight of evil shall see
> it also.[9]
> Each person is responsible for his own deeds;[10]
> You will be recompensed in accordance with your
> deeds;[11]
> What prevent people from believing when guidance has
> been revealed to them.[12]
> Whoever wishes let him believe and whoever wishes let
> him deny.[13]

The Imams of the Prophet Household made it clear that while a person is not compelled to act in a certain way he has not been delegated total power. Imam Jafar al-Sadiq explained this as follows:[14]

> Allah created mankind and He knows their destiny. He
> also commanded them to do things and forbade them
> from doing other things. Whatever He commanded
> them to do He made it possible for them to do so and

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whatever He ordered them not to do, He also made it possible for them to refrain from doing. However, they do not obey or desist independently of Allah's permission.

The following statement on this intricate issue was ascribed to both Imams, al-Baqir and al-Sadiq:[15]

> Allah is too kind to His creation to compel them to commit transgressions and then punish them for doing so and Allah is so great that He would wish something and then it fails to occur. When [the Imam] was asked: Is there a third middle state between predestination and compulsion *(al-Jabir)* he answered: Yes and it is wider than what is between heaven and earth.

In reply to the following question by Muhammed ibn Ajlan: Did Allah delegate acts to mankind? Imam al-Sadiq said: "Allah is too generous to delegate to them. Ibn Ajlan then asked: Did He compel them to act? The Imam replied: Allah is just and He would not compel a person to do something and then punish him for it."[16]

Al-Hassan ibn Ali al-Washa reported that he asked Imam al-Ridha: "Did Allah delegate matters to mankind? The Imam answered: Allah is too great to do that. I then asked him: Did He then compel them to commit transgressions? He answered: "Allah is just and wise and would not do so. He then added: Allah said to mankind: I am more entitled to your good deeds than yourselves and you are more entitled to your transgressions than I am. You have committed transgressions with the powers that I have given to you."[17]

On the subject of compulsion and predestination al-Sadiq commented that "there is neither compulsion nor predestination but a state between them... which only Allah and those whom He taught know."[18]

Al-Zuhri reported that Imam Ali ibn al-Hussain gave the following answer to a question on divine judgment and predestination:[19]

> Predestination and deeds are like the soul and the body. A soul without a body can not feel and a body without a soul is a static image. However, when these two unite they become capable and effective. The same applies to predestination and deeds. If there was no predestination we would not be able to distinguish the Creator from His creation and predestination would have no effect. If the act was not committed in compliance with predestination it would not be fulfilled. However, when these two are combined together they become effective.

On the same subject, the Imam was also reported to have said:[20]

> I will give you on this a principle that you could not disagree upon... Allah was never obeyed as a result of coercion and He was never disobeyed because others were stronger then Him. He does not neglect those who worship Him. He owns what He gave to them and He is capable of what He enabled them to do. If they choose to obey Him, He would not deter them from doing so...If they, However, disobey Him, He is capable of stopping them if He wishes. If He does not stop them and they disobey Him, then He did not coerce them to disobey.

The Imam further expounded those views in his interpretation of two Quranic verses. On the verse: 'And He left them in darkness, unable to see', he commented that Allah knowing that these people would never abandon their heresy He left them to their choice. With regard to the meaning of the verse: 'Allah sealed their hearts and hearing'. the Imam explained that sealing refers to imprinting on the hearts of infidels as a form of

punishment for their rejection of the faith. This is confirmed by the following verse: "Allah imprints on them with their heresy so that little would they believe."

The late theologian al-Khoei attempted to explain the Imamiya's stand on this critical issue by giving an example:[21]

> Let us consider a case which would make clear to the reader the concept of the middle state which the Imamiya have derived from the Holy Book. Suppose a pesron has a paralyzed hand and a medical doctor managed to animate it with electricity so that this person can move it whenever the physician activates the hand's nerves by attaching it to an electrical source. Consequently, this person can only move his paralyzed hand if it is connected to an electrical source. This is similar to what we call the middle state or the state between the two states. In this case the power to move the hand does not belong solely to the person or the physician. The person can choose to move his hand and he is not compelled to do that but at the same time he has not been delegated the whole act. Similarily, any act is decided upon by a person's will but he can not do this without Allah's approval. This is supported by Quranic verses which deny compulsion, the belief of most non-Shia and confirm human will and choice. These verses also reject total delegation and ascribe acts to Allah... This is also the teachings of the Imams of the Prophet Household.

In conclusion, the Imamiya maintain that a human act is the product of neither compulsion nor delegation but that man is an actor who can choose his acts for which he is responsible and accountable. The basic principles underlying their conception of divine justice and human choice are as follows:

1. The belief in the law of causality and the ultimate cause in

nature and society and that man is an active causal factor in this world.

2. Man has the ability to perform good or evil acts.

3. Allah does not impose obligations on mankind beyond their abilities.

4. Man is an actor from which his acts emnate and all their consequences can be ascribed to him. This is stated in the Quran and supported by reasoning. Obviously every person knows that he may choose to perform or not to perform a variety of acts. In either case he is the originator and cause of his act but not its creator. And since he is the cause of this act and has free choice he is held accountable for it. Even this is part of the system of creation ordained by Allah and explains the relationship between Allah's and man's will.

5. Man is willful and has the power to choose and this is why he is recompensed. Having the ability to choose does not, however, constitutes a delegation of the whole matter to him to the extent that the divine will is neutralized and deprived of the ability to halt human acts

References

1 The Quran 3:18.

2 Al-Sayyuri, op. cit., p.25.

3 Ibid., p.155.

4 Ibid., p.23.

5 Ibid.

6 Al-Alama al-Hili, *Nahj al-Haq wa Kashf al-Sidq*, p.126.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid., p.132.

9 The Quran 99:7-8.

10 The Quran 52:21.

11 The Quran 16:90.

12 The Quran17:94.

13 The Quran 18:29.

14 Al-Shaikh al-Sadooq, *Al-Tawheed*, op. cit.,p.359.

15 Ibid., p.360.

16 Ibid., p.361.

17 Al-Kulaini, *Al-Usool min al-Kafi*, op. cit., vol.1, p.157.

18 Ibid., p.159.

19 Al-Shaikh al-Sadooq, op. cit., pp.366-7.

20 Ibid., p.361.

21 Abu al-Qassim al-Musawi al-khoe, *Al-Bayan fi Tafseer al-Quran*. Beirut: Dar al-Zahra lil Tiba, 1401 (1981), pp.102-3.

Chapter five

The Prophetic Mission

Mankind were once one nation. Then Allah sent forth prophets to give them good tidings and to warn them, and with these He sent down the Book with the truth, that it might judge the disputes of men. None disputed it save those to whom it was given, and to whom veritable signs were given and that was in deviation from the truth. So Allah guided by His will Those who believed in the truth which had been disputed. Allah guides whom He will to the right path.[1]

...messengers who brought good tidings and warnings to mankind so that they may have no plea against Allah after the coming of the messengers. Allah is mighty and wise. Allah bears witness to that which He has revealed to you that it has been revealed with His knowledge; and to that the angels bear witness. It is sufficient that Allah bears witness.[2]

Say: We believe in Allah and what is revealed to us and in that which was revealed to Ibraham, Ismael, Issac, Jacob and their descendants and in that which Allah revealed to Moses, Jesus and the Prophets. We discriminate against none of them. To Him we have surrendered ourselves. He who follows a religion other than Islam, it will not be accepted from him and he will

be one of the losers in the afterlife.[3]

Those who convey Allah's messages, fearing Him and fearing none but Him. Allah's reckoning is sufficient. Muhammed is father of no man among you. He is Allah's Apostle and the seal of the Prophets. Allah has knowledge of everything.[4]

And Jesus, the son of Mary who said to the Israelite: I am Allah's Apostle sent forth to you to confirm that which before me of the Torah and to give tidings of an Apostle who will come after me whose name is Ahmed. And when he showed them the proofs they said: This is clearly magic.[5]

The prophet was defined by al-Muqdad al-Sayyuri as that person "who conveys from Allah without a human intermediary."[6] The belief in the prophetic mission constitutes the second basic doctrine after the belief in Allah from which it is derived. Believing on Allah on the bases of rational evidence leads to the belief in prophets and that Allah ordained religions for mankind and sent down scriptures.

Theologians, philosphers, mystics and various Islamic thinkers studied and analyzed this important doctrine thoroughly because it stands out as the most remarkable supernatural phenomenon in the physical world linking it to the supernatural world. These studies focused on the following topics:

1. Humankind's need for prophets and whether it is obligatory on Allah to send prophets.
2. The methodology for verifying the truthfulness of prophets.
3. The Prophets' immunity from error.
4. Verification of the prophetic mission of Muhammed and that he is the seal of the prophets.
5. Different forms of revelations.

Opinions and viewpoints on these topic varied widely and some of these views did not conform to Islamic beliefs. The views of the Imamiya school on these topics are based on their belief in divine unity. These views are summarized in the following sections:

The need for Prophets

The Imamiya believe that humankind need prophets, as al-Alama al-Hili explains in the following passage:[7]

> People disagreed over [the need for prophets]. The Mutazila believed that it is a necessity while the Ashaira disputed this. The argument of the Mutazila is that obligations transmitted through revelations are a necessity and could only be known through prophets and hence the sending of prophets is inevitable...

Commenting on al-Hili's views, al-Muqdad al-Sayyuri wrote:

> Contrary to what the Ashaira maintained, the sending of prophets is obligatory. To prove this, it can be argued that since the purpose of creating mankind is to fulfil their welfare, to provide them with beneficial things and deter them from wrongdoing it stands to reason that [sending prophets] should be mandatory. Reason also necessitates the establishment of legal justice so that everyone will obey the commandments and desist from forbidden things. The person required to transmit these is the prophet and sending him is thus a necessity.

Accordingly, the Imamiya school considers the prophetic mission to be a necessary condition for human welfare and salvation. Furthermore, humankind can not find the path of righteousness, win Allah's favor and approval and live happily without prophetic missions and prophets. Allah's wisdom ordains this and since He seeks the welfare of humankind He

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would not leave it out. This is what religious scholars mean by saying that prophetic missions are a grace obligatory on Allah-obligatory is not being used here in the ordinary sense.

Verifying the truthfulness of prophets

A hasty review of human history would reveal that the controversy between atheism and the belief in divine revelation and prophetic missions has continued for a long time. Rejection of prophetic missions and prophets remains, in my opinion, the most serious problem faced by humankind. This is perplexing since religious doctrines are consistent with reason and are intended to benefit humankind through knowledge and guidance.

Many verses in the Quran address those who deny prophets presenting them with evidence of Allah's existence and powers. The Quran which was gradually revealed persistently confronted those unbelievers who denied the existence of prophets as a supernatural phenomenon in the natural world and also rejected the prophetic mission of Muhammed. The campaign against atheists and heretics was subsequently led by the Imams of the Prophet Household and Muslim scholars especially after the introduction of philosphy and new ideas from other cultures and religions. Indeed, the Imamiya played a leading role in defending prophetic missions in general and that of Muhammed in particular. A considerable portion of the intellectual effort in this field found in numerous books and letters is credited to Imamiya scholars.

The Imamiya relied strongly on reason to demonstrate the truthfulness of Prophet Muhammed by arguing first that the claim of a prophet like any other claim, requires substantiation. This proof is then attained through the mind and logical deduction and is also corroborated by divine miracles support-

ing the claim to prophecy.

According to the Imams of the Prophet Household, whoever claims to be a prophet and is supported by a miracle must be recognized as such and his message believed. And since Muhammed's claim was supported by the eternal miracle, namely the Quran, as well as other miracles then he is a prophet and the seal of all prophets. This was explained by al-Khawaja Naseer al-Deen al-Toosi as follows:[7] "Believing in the truthfulness of Prophet [Muhammed] is based on recognizing his performance of a miracle which is defined as an unusual or extraordinary occurrence or the negation of the usual and ordinary things."

On the same topic, al-Sharif al-Murtadha wrote:[8]

> The truthfulness of a person who claims to be a prophet can only be proven by a miracle transcending the customary and ordinary things and which can not possibly be ascribed to a mortal... so that anyone who observes it will know that it was performed by Allah who does not uphold an untruth.

The Imamiya consider believing in prophets as a deductive problems which must be solved in the same way as other unknowns are solved. The deductive tool in this process is the human mind which after observing the miracle becomes convinced of the truthfulness of the prophet. In other words, when a prophet performs or brings forth what others can not make happen, it must be regarded as a divine miracle in support of a genuine prophet. thus, "knowledge of Allah's prophets, like knowledge of Allah, must be obtained in the same way that any other unknown is learned.."[9]

A debate arose among different sects and philosphical schools around whether Allah's appointment of a prophet is a grace from Allah who favored him with it or a perogative to which

this person is entitled as a result of his special merits. Al-Shaikh al-Mufeed summarized the two major viewpoints on this issue:[10]

> The appointment of a prophet is a grace bestowed by Allah on a person chosen by Him in view of His knowledge of the favorable consequences of this choice and the possession of that chosen person of unique traits distinguishing him from others. This person's entitlement to undertake the prophetic mission, and to the respect and obedience of others is thus justified by His knowledge. This is the belief of the majority of the Imamiya... Some of the Imamiya thinkers of Banu Nubakht and their followers as well as the majority of the Mutazila maintain that the appointment of a prophet is solely a grace from Allah.

The infallibility of prophets

Isma or infallibility literally means protection from undesirable things.[11] As a religious concept it was defined as "a hidden grace bestowed by Allah on an appointed person so that he would not have to abandon obedience and commit transgressions though he is capable of that."[12] Imam Jafar al-Sadiq defined the infallible person as the "one who refrains from all things forbidden by Allah."[13]

The infallibility or freedom from sin and error of prophets is one of the controversial issues in religion. Those who believe in it argue that it results from their possession of willpower, of clarity of understanding and other unique faculties in combination with guidance from Allah's grace so that the innerant person will serve as a model for humankinds, in words and deeds, and as leaders of human progress.

The possession of infallibility by prophets is indeed a

necessary condition for the success of their missions. This grace bestowed on prophets is intended to benefit humankind by guiding them to righteousness. Evidently a prophet urging others to follow the righteous path would not be believed or imitated if he himself does not abide by the high principles he advocates. Also, Allah would not urge mankind to follow prophets if He did not know that their proclamations and deeds will be representative of the religious message they have been chosen to convey. This is the theme of the following Quranic verses:

> You will find a good example in Allah's Apostle for those who look forward to Allah and the Last Day and remember Allah frequently.[14]

> Whatever the Apostle gives you, accept it; and whatever he forbids you forebear from it.[15]

Accordingly, the Prophet Tradition became a source of religious laws.

Islamic scholars devoted much attention to the topic of the prophet's infallibility. One of the major questions raised in these studies is whether or not prophets are free from cardinal and minor sins after as well as before their appointement and the beginning of their missions. Another pertinent question is whether this infallibility is limited to what prophets transmit from Allah or does it cover also their deeds and proclamations on religious and secular issues. In answering these questions, the Imamiya asserted that the prophets' infallibility means that everything they say and do is correct and consistent with religion. Furthermore, all their statements and deeds concerning secular issues are similarily correct.

This concept of infallibility was explained by al-Shaikh al-Mufeed as follows:[16]

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Infallibility bestowed by Allah is a protection against sin and error contrary to Allah-ordained religion. It is a grace from Allah upon those whom Allah knows would act accordingly. Infallibility does not mean inability to do evil and does not imply coercing the infallible person to do good. It is that thing which Allah knows, if it is done to one of his servants, that person would not commit any transgression. It does not apply to all persons but only to the elite chosen by Allah as made clear in the Quran: 'But those to whom we have already shown our favor shall be far removed from Hell.'[16] Also: 'And exalted them advisedly above all nations.'[17] And: " They are to Us among the chosen righteous people.'[18]

As mentioned earlier, infallibility was defined by al-Alama al-Hili as a hidden grace bestowed by Allah on the appointed person and without it he would not be believed and his mission would be futile,[19] Commenting on this definition, al-Muqdad al-Sayyuri wrote:[20]

The infallible person shares with others in Allah's graces but he is favored with an additional grace, because of his personal qualities, so that he would not disobey Allah or commit transgression though he is capable of that.

In addition to demonstrating the inerrancy of prophets, the Imamiya scholars also explained the nature of this quality as in the following extract by al-Shaikh al-Mufeed:[21]

All Allah's prophets are immune from cardinal sins prior to and after the beginning of their mission. They are also immune from committing minor transgressions which may belittle them. With regard to other minor transgressions, that may not belittle them, it is conceivable that these may occur before the mission

unintentionally, but not after the mission. This is the Imamiya's belief but it is not shared by the Mutazila. The Prophet Muhammed has never disobeyed Allah from the day he was born until he died. He also never disagreed with Allah or committed a sin intentionally or out of forgetfulness. This is the stand of the Imamiya but not of the Mutazila and others who quote verses such as: 'And may Allah forgive your previous and later sins' in support of their view. But the correct interpretation of this verse actually refute their claim and proof of this can be found in the following verse:

'By the declining star, your compatriot [Prophet Muhammed] has not lost his way nor was he led astray.'[22] Thus Allah negated the possibility of the Prophet committing a transgression or suffering a slip of memory.

On the Prophet's freedom from sin, al-Sadiq asserted that "the Prophet was supported by *Ruh al-Quds* (the Holy Spirit) so that he did not err in anything concerning civic affairs..."[23]

On the bases of this evidence the following conclusions can now be presented:

1. Infallibility is a permanent personal trait which immunizes its holder from committing transgressions as a result of Allah's grace bestowed on those who deserve it as the following verses indicate:

   They are to us among the chosen righteous persons.[24];
   And exalted them advisedly above all nations.[25];
   Allah knows best whom to entrust with His message.[26]

2. Prophets are guided and protected from errying in transmitting Allah's messages and in administering mankind. This freedom from committing transgressions and errors in words and deeds is the result of Allah's guidance and grace. If this

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was not true, The Quran would not urge us to follow and imitate them as the following verses indicate:

You Will find a good example in Allah's Apostle.[27]
Whatever the Apostle gives you, accept; and whatever he forbids you forbear from it.[28]
These are the ones whom Allah guided. Follow then their guidance.[29]
Your compatriot [Prophet Muhammed] has not lost his way nor was he led astray.[30]
Yours [Muhammed's] is an exalted morality.[31]
Allah knows best whom to entrust with His message.[32]
He does not speak out of whim. It is nothing but revelation that is revealed.[33]

Proving that Muhammed is a prophet and the seal of the prophets

The Imamiya argued that whoever claims to be a prophet and is supported by a miracle must be a prophet. Muhammed brought forth the Quran which is the eternal miracle addressing all mankind and was also supported by scores of miracles. The Quran confirms what previous prophets foretold that Allah's messages are sealed by Muhammed's message and that there will be no prophets after him and no message will be sent after his message:

Muhammed is the father of no man among you. He is the Apostle of Allah and the seal of the prophets. Allah has knowledge of all things.[34]

The coming of Prophet Muhammed was also foretold by earlier prophets including Moses and Jesus and he was also the personal fulfillment of the supplication of Abraham and Ismail as the following Quranic verse indicates:

And Jesus, the son of Mary, who said to the Israelite: I

am the apostle of Allah sent forth to you to confirm
what is before me of the Torah and to give tidings of an
apostle who will come after me whose name is Ahmed.
But when he showed them the proofs they said: This is
clearly magic.[35]

And:

...the illiterate prophet whom they shall find mentioned
in the Torah and the Gospel.[36]

The supplication of Abraham and Ismail was reported by the
Quran as follows:

And as Abraham and Ismail built the House [Kaba]
they said: Lord, accept this from us. You hear all and
You know all. Lord, and let us be Muslims [i.e.
submissive] to you. Teach us our rites of worship and
accept our repentence. You are forgiving and merciful.
Lord, send forth to them an apostle of their own who
shall recite to them your verses and teach them the
Book and wisdom and purify them of sin. You are the
mighty and wise one.

The fulfillment of this supplication is described in another
chapter in the Quran as follows:

He who has sent forth among the illiterate an apostle of
their own to recite to them His verses, to purify them
and teach them the Book and wisdom though they have
gone astray before then.[37]

Commenting on this verse, al-Tabrasi wrote:[38]

In this verse we find the proof that Abraham and Ismail
- Peace on them - called on Allah to bestow on our
Prophet Muhammed all the attributes of a prophet...
and they prayed that his nation will receive the grace
facilitating their commitment to the Quran and
religious laws. Thus supplication was presented by

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Ismail on behalf of the Prophet who is one of his descendants and not of the line of Issac. Indeed, Muhammed was the only prophet among Ismail's descendants.

Concerning the Quranic verse: 'Lord, send forth among them an apostle of their own', al-Tabrasi explained that "this refers to Prophet Muhammed who said: I am the supplication of my father Abraham and Jesus 'good tidings' which also refers to the following verse quoting Jesus: 'to give good tidings of an apostle who will come after me'. This was also the interpretation of al-Hassan, Qutada and a group of religious scholars. And since Abraham was praying for his progeny that will reside in Mecca and the surrounding areas as the Quran informs us, this applies to Muhammed chosen by Allah from among Abraham's descendants."[39]

The Quran also proclaims that all previous religions ordained by Allah have been abrogated:

> He who sent forth His apostle with guidance and the true faith to make it triumphant over all religions, however much the idolators may dislike it;[40]
> He who follows a religion other than Islam it will not be accepted of him and he will be one of the losers in the afterlife;[41] and
> The religion to Allah is Islam.[42]

Islam has, thus, superceded all previous religions because it is comprehensive and provides mankind with all that it may require at all times and places.

Forms of revelation

The Quran states:

> Allah does not speak to any mortal except by revelation or from behind a barrier or through messengers who

will reveal with His permission whatever He wishes. He
is exalted and wise.[43]

The belief in prophetic missions and revelations constitute
one of the pillars of the doctrine of divine unity. Forms of
revelation were specified by the Quran and were also explained
by the Imams and Imamiya scholars. On this topic, al-Shaikh al-
Mufeed wrote:

> A revelation generally means a hidden verbal commu-
> nication but may also be used to refer to any
> communication in which the message reaches only the
> receiver and is intended for him specifically. If the
> source of this revelation is Allah then the receiver must
> be a prophet.

Divine revelations may take any of the following forms:
1. Direct revelation: In this kind of revelation, the divine words
   are transmitted to the prophet directly and without an angel
   acting as an intermediary. Examples of this are Allah's
   words to Prophet Muhammed during his ascension to the
   highest heavens and the following statement spoken directly
   to Moses as reported by the Quran:

> When he came near it a voice called to him: Moses I am
> your Lord. Take off your sandals, for you are now in
> the sacred valley of Towah.

Imam al-Sadiq explained how this form of revelation occurs
as follows: "When revelations from Allah were received by the
Prophet through Gabriel he used to say: Here is Gabriel or
Gabriel told me... If, however, he received revelations directly he
would fall in a *sabta*", i.e. a deep sleep similar to a trance.

2. Revelation through the angel Gabriel as the following verse
   indicates:

> The faithful Spirit brought it down into your heart that
> you may warn mankind.[45]

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3. Revelation by putting the message into the prophet's mind as the following verse describes:[46]

> People, it has been put into my mind by the Holy Spirit that no one shall die before he receives in full his assigned favors.

4. Revelation through visions: The Quran also described this kind of revelation:

> Allah has shown to His Apostle the vision with truth.[47]

The beginning of revelation

Some historians and orientalists circulated imprecise accounts of the first revelation received by the Prophet. They claim that the Prophet did not comprehend the nature of that event and furthermore, that the revelation at Hara cave bewildered and frightened him to the extent that he was going to jump off the mountain. They also perpetuated the false account that the Prophet had to resort to his wife Khadija to explain to him what he had experienced and that his wife took him to warqa ibn nawfal who explained to him that it was a revelation through the angel Gabriel.

This account is clearly false since the prophet frequented Hara cave before the sending down of revelation to worship, contemplate the kingdoms of heaven and earth and await revelation. According to Imam al-Baqir, the first revelation received by the prophet was in the form of a true vision which The Quran identifies as a revelation. Imam Ali was also reported to have said that prophets' visions are revelations.

In the following passage, Imam al-Sadiq explained that Muhammed is a prophet and an apostle:[48]

> The apostle is the person to whom the angel Gabriel appears and speaks while a prophet is the one who sees

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visions in his sleep like Abraham and also our Prophet before the beginning of revelation and until Gabriel brought down Allah's message. Thus, Muhammed was first a prophet before he received the message through Gabriel.

The Prophet's wife Aisha also described these different revelations in the following statement:[49]

> The first revelation received by the Prophet was a true vision in his sleep. These visions were as clear as the crack of dawn. Then he developed a preference for seclusion and he worshipped in Hara cave at night... until revelation was brought down to him.

An explanation of why it was necessary for the revelation to begin with a vision is found in *al-Sira al-Halabia* as follows:[50]

> The Prophet saw the vision first so that he would not be surprised by the angel Gabriel conveying the message, [an event] which unprepared human faculties may find intolerable.

Thus, it becomes clear that Muhammed was a Prophet before Gabriel spoke to him at Hara cave and that when he frequented the cave he was already having the visions of prophets. Gabriel then came down with the message and the first revelation was the Quranic verse: 'Read in the name of Your Lord who created.'[51] The revelation of the Quran continued gradually over a period of 23 years until it was completed with the verse: 'This day I have completed your religion for you and fulfilled my grace to you and I have approved Islam to be your faith.'[52]

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Chapter Six

The Imama or Leadership

Introduction:

The dictionary defines the Imam as "the first among a nation or a community. The Imam is also the leader or chief as in the Imam of the Muslims."[1] Another source defines the Imam as "the person who is followed in words and deeds and regardless of wether he is right or wrong." This word is also mentioned in the following Quranic verse: "The day will surely come when We shall summon every nation with its Imam."[2] The Imam refers here to the person followed as a model."[3]

As a religious term, the Imama was defined by al-Alama al-Hili as "the general leadership is all religious and secular affairs performed by a person deputizing for or in place of the Prophet."[4] This definition underlines the importance of the Imama in the Islamic society as a continuation of the prophetic march in propagating the message, safeguarding the religious laws and leading the nation. The Imamiya conceives of a strong link between religious and secular affairs achieved through the Muslim imam's political role and his administration of the nation's secular affairs. Accordingly the imam was regarded as the Prophet's successor performing all of his functions except one. As defined earlier, the prophet is chosen by Allah and

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receives revelation from him without a human intermediary and he is also the leader of mankind who must be followed and imitated. The imam, on the other hand, succeeds the prophet and undertakes his responsibilities and tasks except that of receiving revelation which is limited to prophets only.

The great importance assigned by the Imamiya to the imama or leadership is Islamic society was best expressed in the following statement by Imam al-Sadiq: "If there were only two persons left on earth, one of them must be the imam."[5] The Imams of the Prophet Household also reported that Prophet Muhammed proclaimed: 'Whoever dies not knowing the imam of his times then he dies a pre-Islamic death.'[6] The Muslim nation needs imams because, as Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha said: "The imams are Allah's caliphs [i.e.rulers] on earth."[7]

The Quran and the Prophet Tradition stress the importance of the imama and its role in leading religious and other affairs of the Muslim nation. According to the Imamiya, this importance is also underscored by the attention given by the Quran and the Prophet to Imam Ali and his two sons al-Hassan and al-Hussain. The Prophet's special care for Imam Ali in particular clearly demonstrated his interest in preparing him intellectually and behaviorally to succeed him as the Muslims imam. Some of the Prophet's Companions were aware of this and as a result became Ali's partisans and followers.

After the Prophet's death, Muslims were divided into two groups:
1. Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib's Shia or partisans who believed that the caliphate belonged to him by right recognizing him as the political and intellectual leader of the nation. This stand was a virtual condemnation of the Sakifa meeting which deprived Imam Ali of his rightful position. This movement survived, gathered momentum and became an intellectual, political

and religious school led by the Imams of the Prophet Household and was known later as the Imamiya Shia.

2. The coalition of Abu Bakr and Omar which developed into a political and theological line and later emerged as a number of distinct sects known as the Sunni sects.

Regretably this division which was originally of an intellectual nature soon degenerated into a deep controversy marred by political and ideological oppression and violent conflicts in which the Shia were the enduring victims for many centuries.

In view of the importance of the imama. Muslim scholars have devoted much attention to it. It is extremely vital for contemporary scholars to arrive at a clear, consistent and correct understanding of the imama so that its incumbent can effectively fulfil the responsibilities of his position and lead the nation unhampered by long-standing controversies and disagreements which, in contrary to the Quran's call for unity, have created divisions and schism among believers.

The Imama

As mentioned earlier, the imam has been defined as a person who is followed. The word imam has also been used to describe certain books such as the Quran, Moses' scripture and the book in which records of human affairs are kept as the following verses indicate:

We record all things in a glorious imam [i.e. book].[8]

Are those who have received proof from his Lord, recited by a witness from Him, and before that the Book of Moses, an imam [i.e. guide] and a blessing? These have faith in it but the factions who deny it shall be consigned to the flames of Hell. Therefore do not doubt. It is the truth from your Lord; yet most persons do not believe.[9]

In the later verse, the world imam is used to refer to the Quran and other scriptures because they show mankind the religious and doctrinal path. Similarily the person who lead others on this path is called an imam. Indeed, any leader of a group may be called an imam because he guided others to follow a certain creed regardless of whether he is right or wrong. The Quran also describes prophets as imams because they transmit Allah's messages and people walk in their paths and imitate them. Leaders of infidels were also called imams. Examples of these usage are found in the following verses:

> When his Lord put Abraham to the test by revealing to him certain commandments and Abraham fulfilled them. He said: I appointed you an imam [i.e. leader] Abraham asked: And what of my descendants. Allah said: My convenant is not given to the evil-doers.[10]

> We ordained them imams to guide in our behest, and inspired them to do good deeds, to pray and to pay alms and they worshipped only Ourselves.[11]

> Make war or the imams of unbelief because they have no faith so that they may desist.[12]

According to these verses, the Imams or leaders of the believers, i.e. the prophets, are confronted by the imams or leaders of infidels and unbelievers.

The Imamiya Shia understood the Islamic imama as an intellectual and political function invested in the person of the imam who is a member of the Prophet Household. They also insisted that he must be the most knowledgeable of his contemporaries and thus rejected the leadership of the *mafdool*, i.e. anyone who is less than the most eligible, because, they argued, the imam is the guardian of religious laws who urges people to worship Allah and explains to them the Quran and the Tradition.

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Consequently, the Imams of the Prophet Household were recognized as the supreme intellectual leaders, the authorities on religion from whom theologians and religious scholars learned and whose teachings they followed. In addition to these, the Imams undertook two major tasks: the responsibility of *wilaya* or political leadership and acting as a role model to be followed and imitated.

The Imams of the Prophet Household concentrated their efforts on performing the intellectual and behavioral tasks of their leadership role since the times of the fourth Imam, Ali ibn al-Hussain. This covered the period beginning after the martyrdom of the third Imam, al-Hussain ibn Ali in 61AH. until the termination of contact between the twelfth Imam Muhammed ibn al-Hassan al-Mahdi and his followers in 329 A.H., excluding the span of time during which Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha became heir to the Abbasid Caliph al-Mamoun in 201 A.H. During this period, the Imams were denied the opportunity to perform the role of political leaders and while they continued their efforts to regain their political leadership positions they fulfilled their religious role in guarding and clarifying the sacred laws.

In defining the intellectual and political imama, the martyred scholar al-Sadir first referred to the following Quranic verses:[13]

> When your Lord said to the angels: I am creating on earth one that shall be a deputy. They said: Will you create there one that will perform evil and shed blood, while we sing your praise and sanctify your name.[14]

> The day will come when We shall call a witness from every nation to testify against it. We shall call you to testify against your people; for to you We have revealed the Book which explains everything, a guide, a blessing and good tidings to those who submit to Allah.[15]

> We have revealed the Torah in which there is guidance
> and light. By it the Prophets who submitted to Allah
> judged the Jews, and the masters of divine knowledge
> and the doctors because they were required to guard
> part of Allah's Book and of which they were
> witnesses.[16]

Al-Sadir then identified two lines: the caliphate line and the testimony or witness line. He adds: "This free agent who is chosen for the caliphate benefits from divine tutoring and favor. The *Shaheed* or witness progresses through another path laid down by Allah and runs parallel to that of the caliphate line and could be called the witness line. This line also represents the divine leadership and guidance on earth". Al-Sadir further identified the following representative of the witness line:

1. The Prophets.
2. The Imams who constitute the divine continuation of the Prophet along this line.
3. The religious scholars or authorities (al-marjaia) who constitute the continuation of the prophet and the Imams along this line.

The witness is defined by al-Sadir as "the intellectual and legal authority on doctrinal subjects who oversees the progress of the nation to ascertain its adherence to the divine message he conveys. If he observes any deviation he must intervene to correct it."[17] In another part of his book al-Sadir adds that "these two lines, the caliph and the witness lines. merge into one which is embodied in the person of the prophet... and this is why Islam ordained that the prophet must be infallible. Like the prophet. the imam is also a witness and Allah's caliph on earth."[18] It follows from the above that the caliphate and political and intellectual leadership are all combined in the persons of prophets and imams for the purpose of achieving mankind's material and spiritual objectives in this life

and the afterlife.

With regard to the intellectual and political leadership of the man, al-Toosi wrote:[19]

> To call someone an imam implies two things: First that his words and deeds are followed because the imam literally means a model to be followed and imitated. This is why the person who leads others in prayer is called the prayer imam. Second, the imam governs the nation politically, punishes transgressors, defends the believers, wages war on their enemies and appoints governors and judges.

In order for the imam to perform these functions, the imam must possess the qualifications necessary to undertake the multiple tasks of the caliph, witness and the nation's intellectual and political leader.

Traits of the Imam

After defining the functions and responsibilities of the imam, the focus shifts now to the traits that he must possess. In view of the important role played by the imam, the Imamiya argued that the imam who succeeds the prophet and carries on his responsibilities in leading the nation and implementing the divine message, must possess all the traits and qualities which qualify him to be a role model, a political overseer, the interpreter of the Quran and the Prophet Tradition and a just leader.

The Quran enumerated the traits of persons who deserve to become imams and leads the nation in the following verses:

> We made them leaders to guide in our behest because they were patient and in our verses they believed.[20]

> When his Lord put Abraham to the test by revealing to him certain commandments and Abraham fulfilled them. He said: I appointed you leader. Abraham asked:

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And what of my descendants? Allah said: My convenant is not given to the evil-doers.[21]

We gave him Issac and then Jacob for a grandson and we made each a rigtheous man. We ordained them leaders to guide mankind at our behest, and inspired them to do good deeds to pray and to pay alms and they worshipped only Ourselves.[22]

Say: Obey Allah and obey the Apostle. If they do not, he is only bound to do his duty, as you yourselves are bound to fulfil yours. If you obey him, you shall be guided. An apostle has only to give you a clear warning. Allah has promised those among you who believe and do good works to make them masters on this earth as He had made those before you, to strengthen the Faith He chose for them, and to make them secure after being in fear and so that they may worship Me and worship no other god. And he who disbelieves after that is clearly a wicked one.[23]

He said: Allah has chosen him [saul] to rule over you and made him wiser and strong. Allah gives His rulership to whom He will. He is munificient and all-knowing.[24]

Who say: Lord give us happiness through our wives and children and make us leaders to those who fear you.[25]

We said: David, We have made you master on earth. Rule with the truth among people and do not follow the whim which may turn you away from Allah's path. Those that stray from Allah's path shall be sternly punished on the Day of Judgment because of what they have forgotten.[26]

Moses said to his people: Seek Allah's help and be patient. The earth is Allah's whom He shall give to those He chose of his worshippers. Happiness is the reward of those who fear Him.[27]

> Who is more worthy to be followed: He that can guide to
> the truth or he that can not and is himself in need of
> guidance? What has come over you that you can not
> judge.[28]

These verses characterize the imam whether he is a prophet or his caliph and successor who carries on the tasks of governing and leading. The following traits of the imam are indicated in these verses:

1. The imam must be just because unjust person are not eligible.
2. Prophets are chosen by Allah to be imams because of their forbearance, belief in Allah's signs and performance of good deeds.
3. The imam or leader justly adjudicates between people and does not follow whims.
4. The imam fears Allah and exhibits forebearance.
5. The imam must have superior knowledge and great courage.

It follows from these that the imam must possess immunity from sin and error which implies total obedience to Allah and freedom from disobedience and transgression. It is, therefore, a grace bestowed by Allah on the most eligible of his worshippers. In addition to these, the imam must be knowledgeable, courageous and capable of running the nation's affairs.

The Imams of the Prophet Household further clarified the imam's traits. Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha described the imama as "the growing root of Islam and its sublime branch," and also "it provides leadership for religion, order for Muslims, goodness for the whole world and pride for believers."[29] On the same subject, Imam al-Baqir is reported to have said: "The imama is deserved by a man who possesses three traits: piety hindering him from forbidden things, the ability to control his temper and excellance in governing so that he acts like a merciful father to his subjects."[30]

He also described the imam as "a scholar known to everyone and governor who does not oppress his subjects. He possesses the essence of purity, piety, knowledge and ascetism. He has perfect knowledge, total control of his temper, the ability to lead, knowledge of politics,... the ability to obtain his subjects' obedience, implement Allah's commandments and maintain His religion."[31]

In his letter to the Iraqi people urging them to oppose the unjust Omayyid ruler yazid ibn Muawiya. Imam al-Hussain ibn Ali described the imam as "the one who governs in accordance with the Quran, rules justly adhering to the religion of justice and perform these duties for the sake of Allah."[32]

Al-Shaikh al-Mufeed pointed out that "the Imamiya agreed on the necessity of the religions imam being infallible, having mastery of religious knowledge, possessing total eminence and excellence of behavior over all others and for which he deserves eternal paradise."[33]

In conformity with these principles, followers of the Prophet Household's school throughout the centuries opposed rulers who did not possess the qualities of the imam specified in the Quran. Other sects, however, acquiesced in such rulers and even adapted their doctrines to accomodate and legitimize tyrannical rulers and unjust governors.

The need for the Imama

Given Islam's comprehensive ideological, political and social objectives, the need to propagate the message and maintain the Islamic community and since achieving of all these depends on having the Imam as the head of the nation, all Muslims, with the exception of some khawarij and Mutazila agreed on the necessity of having imams. The Imamiya scholars supported this view on

Islamic doctrines and principles which are reviewed here.

In demonstrating the necessity of the imama Abu Issac ibn Nubakht argued:

> It stands to reason that the imama must be recognized as a necessity since it is a grace bringing us closer to obedience and distancing us from disobedience. It is also mandatory because Allah laid down commandments and laws such as: 'And the man or woman quilty of theft cut off their hands'. These commandments necessitate the provision of means of enforcement. It is also compulsory in view of the Prophet's saying: 'The Imams belong to [the tribe of] Quraish'. Accordingly it is compulsory and this is the consensus of the Prophet's companions.[34]

Commenting on this text, Al-Alama al-Hili wrote:[35]

> The Imamiya endorsed the view that the imama is compulsory on the bases of evidence from the Quran and the Tradition as well as reason. This is also the belief of al-Kabi and Abi al-Hassan al-Basri and a group of Mutazila. The majority of the Mutazila and Ashaira cite evidence from the Quran and the Tradition only in support of this.

Al-Hili then explained that the Quranic verse on the punishment of thieves demonstrates that having an imam is a necessity, otherwise some laws would not be implemented. He goes on to point out that this is also supported by "the consensus of the Prophet's companions who never failed to appoint imams. And if it was not compulsory, they may have neglected it."[36]

One of the strongest proofs of the necessity of having an imam frequently mentioned by the Imamiya is the Prophet's saying: "whoever dies not knowing the imam of his time dies a pre-Islamic death."[37] They also cite the following statement by

Imam al-Sadiq: "If only two persons were left on earth one of them would be the imam."[38]

According to the Imamiya, the imam or leadership is needed to guide humankind and to reform individuals and society and thus it is recognized by them as a basic religious tenet. It is also necessary to achieve the objectives of Islam after the Prophet; without it, the nation may revert to the *Jahilia* or pre-Islamic state since the Islamic message was sent down to organize personal and social affairs, to reform and lead mankind along a path opposed to that of the Pre-Islamic epoch. This leadership is also required to fulfil the social objectives of the community and protect the Islamic doctrines and laws from corruption. Since the absence of an imam may lead to a regression to the Pre-Islamic state, anyone failing to pledge allegiance to the just imam shares in the guilt of those who die a 'Pre-Islamic' death.

The Imamiya regard the imama or leadership as a grace because the Islamic state led by an imam must be based on justice, equity and seeks to rid society of crime and delinquecy. This comprehensive system with its social, legal and educational subsystems will provide Muslims with an environment free from inducements to any forbidden behavior such as alcoholic beverages, vice, unlawful transactions, etc. Instead, this environment will encourage those living in it to be productive persons adhering to Islamic moral and ethical standards. In short, the imama is a grace bringing a person closer to obedience to Allah and distancing him from disobedience and thus enabling him to achieve the best of this world and the afterlife.

Appointment of the Imam

Although Muslims, with few exceptions, agree on the necessity of the imama, they disagreed on the selection and appointment of the imam. They were essentially divided into

two major schools:
1. The school committed to the religious text.
2. The *shura* or consultation school.

The first school advocated that the imam succeeding the Prophet must be specified in the religious texts, i.e. the Quran and the Prophet Tradition. Adherents of this school supported this ideological and political theory with evidence from the Quran and the Tradition as well as rational and historical evidence. The consultation school, on the other hand, argued that the selection and appointment of an imam must be based on consultation, a belief shared by several Islamic sects and groups committed to the necessity of the imama.

These two opposed viewpoints were represented at the Sakifa meeting where Muslims of Medina first elected Saad ibn Abada as caliph. This was then contested by a group of immigrant Muslims including Abu Bakr, Omar ibn al-Khatab and Abu Ubaida who defended the sole right of immigrant Muslims to the claiphate. Both choices were based on the principle of shura or consultation, and neither of them were justified on the bases of evidence from the Quran or the Prophet Tradition. Each group drew attention to its candidate's record in propagating the faith, supporting the Prophet and taking part in military compaigns against opponents of Islam. In addition to these, immigrant Muslims emphasized that they were the first to embrace the faith and are the Prophet's kindred. Attempts to supplement this viewpoint with a theoretical framework and support it with evidence from the Quran and the Tradition came much later. This framework was essentially a justification of an existing political situation expost factor. In their search for a theoretical foundation for the consultation doctrine, some ideological schools considered the decisions and acts of the Prophet's companions supporting this doctrine as sufficient

evidence of its legitimacy by claiming that these decisions and acts constitute a continuation of the Prophet Tradition and have the same legislative weight.

It is useful to review here some of the arguments advanced by the Ansars, i.e. Medina Muslims, who chose Saad ibn Abada as well as the counter argument of the Muhajereen, i.e. Immigrant Muslims, who chose Abu Bakr. According to Omar ibn al-Khatab, Abu Bakr adressed the Medina Muslims at the Sakifa meeting as follows:[39]

> You are indeed in possession of the merits you mentioned. But Arabs know no one eligible to this position save this group from [the tribe of] Quraish... I shall be content if you choose either of these two (holding the hands of Omar and Abu Ubaida) so pledge allegiance to one of them.

From the Medina Muslims al-Habab ibn al-Munthir al-Ansari defended their eligibility to the caliphate by saying: "Hold on to what is in your possession! These people [the immigrant Muslims] are under your protection and living out of your goodness. If they refuse then let there be a ruler from us and another one from them". Omar rejected this proposal by stating that "two swords can not be sheathed in one scabbard. Who dares to content our right to Muhammed's authority and inheritance, we who are his tribe and kinsmen, must be either a deceitful pretender or an evil doer."

It is clear from this exchange that neither of the two parties presented evidence from the Quran or the Tradition in support of his case. Instead, both used what their contemporaries would consider revelant and pertinent evidence. For this reason, supporters of Imam Ali argued that if the caliphate could be earned on the bases of tribal membership, family relation and precedence in embracing the faith then Ali (who is a Quraihi,

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the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law and the first male Muslim after the Prophet), and his son after him, are the most eligible persons especially since the Prophet Household led by the prophet's uncle. al-Abbas nominated him.

The Imamiya school which upheld choosing the caliph in accordance with the religious text opposed the mainly Sunni viewpoint which advocated the resort to consultation. The Imamiya school directed the following criticism to exponents of the consultation principle:

1. The 'nation' invested with the right to choose the imam succeeding the Prophet is not clearly defined. According to some views the nation includes all Muslims while others limited the application of this term to whom they called *ahl al-hal wa al-aqid*, literally those who had the power to do and undo. Some even went to the extent of giving this right to as few as two Muslims or even one Muslim.

2. This school eventually recognized as a legitimate imam any person who usurps authority with force in contrary to their ideology of consultation. Confirming this, Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal (founder of the Sunni Hanbali sect) wrote:[40]

> Whoever vanguishes them with the sword and becomes a caliph and is called a prince of the faithful, then no one who believes in Allah and the Judgment Day has the right to spend a single night without recognizing him as the imam regardless of wether he is pious or wicked for he is the prince of the faithful.

Al-Isfraini al-Shafi wrote in his book *al-Jinayat* that "the imama is conferred on a person by a pledge of allegiance from *ahl al-hal wa al-aqid* or still by force and even if that person is a foreigner, ignorant and wicked." An authority on the Sunni Hanafi theology wrote that the imam can not be punished for drinking alcohol because he is Allah's deputy. According to

Muhammed Hassan al-Mudhafar, the commentator on *Aqaid al-Nasifa* decreed that the imam can not be deposed because of his wickedness and injustice since leaders and princes who succeeded the first four caliphs behaved unjustly and perniciously, yet early Muslims obeyed them and performed Friday and Eid prayers with their permission.[41]

3. Only a small number of companions took part in the consultation at the Sakifa and they can not be considered representative of the whole nation. After the death of Abu Bakr, Omar undertook the caliphate as Abu Bakr's appointee. Omar later named six persons from whom his successor must be chosen but conditions laid down by him for choosing the caliph made it inevitable that Othman would be his most likely successor, an arrangement that was closer to a pre-determined succession rather than consultation.

Consequently theologians of this school not only deviated from the principle of consultation but also sanctioned the imama of unjust rulers who usurp the caliphate by force. In the following section, evidence will be presented in support of the eligibility of the Imams of the Prophet Household to the position of imam.

The Imama of the Prophet Household

The doctrine of the imama constitutes one of the pillars of the Imamiya thought. Indeed, their name, the Imamiya, is derived from their belief in the imama or leadership of the twelve Imams of the Prophet Household as successors of the Prophet. Those twelve Imams are Ali, his two sons (and grandsons of the Prophet) al-Hassan and al-Hussain, and nine of the successive descendants of Imam al-Hussain. The Imamiya defended their right to the imama on the bases of evidence from the Quran and the Prophet Tradition as well as rational evidence.

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1. Evidence from the Quran:

The Imamiya cited evidence from the Quran supporting the supreme status of the Prophet Household in general, and Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib in particular, and their eligibility to the position of imam. A number of Quranic verses refer to Ali's leadership of the Muslims while others speak of his precedence in embracing the faith, great knowledge, unblemished moral character and praise his personal qualities and remarkable stands which qualified him to the intellectual and political imama after the Prophet.

These verses are numerous and we shall refer first to some of the verses presented by the Imamiya scholars in support of Imam Ali's eligibility to the imama, such as the following verse:[42]

> Allah wants to remove uncleanliness from you and purify you thoroughly.

This verse constitutes one of the strongest evidence of the imama of the Prophet Household as the Imamiya believe and it also stipulates that the imams are immune from sins and disobedience. Accordingly, it clearly established the imama of Ali and his sons al-Hassan and al-Hussain who are referred to in the verse as confirmed by the Prophet and Quranic commentators. The Prophet made it clear that the Prophet Household mentioned in this verse were specifically Ali, Fatima, al-Hassan and al-Hussain. Al-Sayyuti wrote in *al-Dur al-Manthur*:

> According to al-Tabarani, Umm Salma reported that the Prophet said to Fatima: Fetch your husband and two sons. When she did as she was told, he threw a cover over them, put his hand on it and said: Lord, these are Muhammed's Household (or Muhammed's family as another version reports) bestow your prayer and blessings on Muhammed's Household as you have

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done to Abraham's Household... Umm Salma said: I
lifted the cover to join them but the Prophet pulled it
away and said: You shall come to a favorable end.

The fact that this verse applied to these four members of the
Prophet Household was also confirmed by accounts mentioned
by al-Hakim al-Haskani[43], Ahmed ibn Hanbal[44], al-Tahawi[45],
Ibn al-Atheer[46], al-Nisai[47], al-Tabari[48] and numerous other
commentators and historians of various sectarian affiliations.

To impress upon his nation this definition of the Prophet
Household whom Allah has removed uncleanliness from them
the Prophet used to stand at the door of Ali and Fatima's house
for six months and call: "It is prayer time, members of the
Prophet Household. Allah wants to remove uncleanliness from
you and purify you thoroughly.[49]

Further evidence from the Quran is found in the following
verse:[50]

Your leaders are Allah, His Apostle, and the faithful,
those who attend to their prayers, pay their alms-tax,
while they kneel. Those who follow the leadership of
Allah, His Apostle and the faithful, it is the party of
Allah that shall triumph.

Commentators have agreed that this verse refers specifically
to Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib who was bowing in prayer when he
gave away his ring to a beggar in the mosque. Al-Zamakshari
commented on this verse as follows:[51]

This verse was revealed to describe Ali who was asked
by a beggar while he was praying and Ali took off his
ring and gave it to him. He did this without too much
effort that would spoil his prayer. If you are wondering
why the plural form was used I would answer you that
it was used to encourage people to do likewise and
qualify for his reward and also to stress that Muslims

must be eager like Ali to perform good deeds, and care
for the poor even while they are performing something
that can not be delayed, such as praying.

Al-Wahidi also confirmed that "the latter part of this verse
describes Ali ibn Abi Talib giving away his ring to a beggar
while bowing in prayer."[52] Also, all six major religious sources
of Sunni doctrines are in agreement that this verse applies to Ali
ibn Abi Talib. The wording of the verse clearly bestows the
imama or leadership of the faithful on Imam Ali and hence he
deserved to become the Muslim's leader succeeding the Prophet.
This verse also instructs Muslims to follow those who believe,
pay the due tax (zakat) while bowing in prayer because they are
the victorious partisans of Allah.

Another verse states:[53]

Apostle, proclaim that which is revealed to you from
your Lord. If you do not, you will surely fail to convey
His message. Allah will protect you from all people. He
does not guide the unbelievers.

Several sources confirm that this verse was revealed in the
case of Imam Ali during the Farewell pilgrimage.[54] The events
leading to the revelation of this verse was documented by
historians as follows:[55]

During the pilgrimage, the following verse was
revealed: 'Today I have completed your religion,
fulfilled my grace on you and approved Islam as your
religion.' After that the Prophet departed to Medina.
Stopping at a place near al-Juhfa known as Ghadeer
Khom on the 18th of the month of al-Hija, he
addressed the congregation, holding Ali ibn Abi
Talib's hand: 'Am I not more deserving of leading the
believers than their own selfs? They replied: Yes,
Allah's Apostle. He said: He whom I have been his
leader then Ali is his leader. May Allah lead those who

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follow him and be hostile to his foes.'

Ahmaed ibn Hanbal also reported this account and added that "Omar ibn al-Khatab met Ali afterward and said to him: 'Congratulations son of Abi Talib. You are now the leader of every believer.'"[56]

It is also believed that the Quranic verses: 'Those who believe and perform good deeds are the best of creation' applies to Imam Ali. The Imamiya argue that since Ali is described by Allah as 'the best of creation'. he is. therefore, more eligible to succeed the Prophet as leader of all Muslims. According to a number of commentators and collectors of the Prophet's sayings, Ibn Abbas and Jabbir ibn Abdullah al-Ansari believed that this verse describes Ali and his followers. These commentators include al-Sayyuti, Ibn Hajjar. al-Tabari. al-Shalabanji, and al-Hakim al-Haskani.

We turn now to the verse:[57]

> To those that dispute with you concerning Jesus after the knowledge you have received. say: Come, let us summon our sons, and your sons, our women and your women, and our selves and your selves and we pray together and call down the curse of Allah on liars.

Commentators and historians are unanimous in interpreting the words 'our selves' to mean the Prophet and Ali ibn Abi Talib, 'our women' to refer to Fatima the Prophet's daughter, and 'our sons' as indicating al-Hassan and al-Hussain. The historical incident referred to in this verse was nothing less than a miracle supporting the Prophet's mission and the unique status of Imam Ali, Fatima, al-Hassan and al-Hussain.

This event began with the arrival of a delegation of Yemeni Christians from Najran who intended to challenge the truthfulness of Prophet Muhammed and the divine message he

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transmitted especially that regarding Jesus being a prophet and a human being and not the son of Allah. Allah ordered his Prophet to demonstrate to them the authenticity of his mission by the miracle of having his supplication answered. The Prophet accompanied by Ali, Fatima, al-Hassan and al-Hussain were to meet the Christian delegation at a designated place and call Allah's punishment on the untruthful of either party. Al-Zamakshari described the incident as follows:[58] "When the Prophet invited the Christians from Najran to *al-mubahala* (i.e. a challenge to expose the untruthful of two parties) the Christian delegation asked one of them named abdul Masiah: What do you advise us? He replied: You know that Muhammed is a Prophet and an Apostle and has come forth with the true knowledge regarding your Prophet. By Allah no people has ever challenged the truthfulness of a prophet and then their elder survived or they had children born to them after that. If you go through with this then you shall certainly perish. So if you wish to keep your faith then take your leave from him and return to your country. The Prophet came back carrying al-Hussain and holding al-Hassan's hand followed by Fatima and Ali. The Prophet was saying: "When I supplicate then you must believe." Al-Zamakshari also commented on this incident by wiriting: "Naming the Prophet Household before mentioning the Prophet [in the verse] testifies to their exalted position... It also serves as a strong evidence of the eminence of Ali, Fatima, al-Hassan and al-Hussain in addition to its support of the authenticity of the Prophet's mission since no one has reported that the Christian delegation met the Prophet's challenge." Al-Fakhar al-Razi concurred with this interpretation and confirmed that other commentators endorsed it.[59]

It follows that this verse, which in accordance with the Prophet's implementation of its commandment, identifies al-

Hassan and al-Hussain as the Prophet's sons and Ali as 'his self' or its equivalence, proves beyond any doubt the exalted status of the Prophet Household, their proximity to Allah and that they were chosen by Allah to disprove their opponents' claim. Indeed choosing them to perform this task clearly confirms their eligibility to lead Muslims in their struggle against Allah's enemies, shoulder the burden of propagating and safeguarding the message after the Prophet and succeed him in running the nation's affairs.

According to the Imamiya Shia, Ali and his sons are described by the Quran as having the qualities of eminence, purity and leadership, and also as being the best of creation, Allah's beloved and leaders of the faithful. Moreover, Love of his kindred is the only recompense asked by the Prophet in return for his struggle and sacrifices for the sake of mankind as the following verse indicates:

> Say I ask of you no recompense for it except love of my kindred.[60]

It is the consensus among commentators that the Prophet's kindred referred to in this verse include Ali, Fatima, al-Hassan and al-Hussain. Finally, the verse calling for prayer on the Prophet which he interpreted as calling for prayer on him and his Household has become an integral part of a Muslim's daily prayer.

2. Evidence from the Prophet's Tradition:

In addition to evidence from the Quran, supporters of the right of the Prophet Household to the imama cite evidence from the Prophet Tradition which are briefly reviewed here.

To begin with, it is commonly known that the Prophet took Ali into his custody when he was a boy and favored him with his

care and attention. This upbringing shaped Ali's character and inculcated in him the Prophet's manners and virtues. This unique relationship was aptly portrayed by Ali:[61]

> You have known my position with Allah's Prophet: a close proximity and a special status. He took me into his custody when I was a young boy... fed me with his own hand... and he never heard me tell a lie or act wrongly.

On another occasion he described it as follows:

> I used to follow him like a small camel following the lead of his mother. Everyday he showed me one of his virtues and instructed me to emulate him: And when he frequented Hara [cave] I was the only person who saw him. At that time those were only three Muslims: The Apostle, Khadija [the Prophet's wife] and myself. I witnessed the light of revelation and the message and smelled the sweet odor of the prophetic mission.

As a result of this upbringing Imam Ali never worshipped an idol or indulged in immoral or forbidden behavior. For this reason Muslims recite after mentioning his name the following words: *Karam Allah Wajhah* which literally means Allah has dignified his face, a phrase saluting him for never kneeling before an idol.

Other statements by Imam Ali describing his relationship with the Prophet include the following:

> I was assigned an hour during early morning in which I saw the Apostle. If he was in prayer he would praise Allah which indicated his permission for me to enter. If he was not praying he would ask me to enter.[62]

> I had two daily appointments with the Prophet: one at night and the other during daytime. When I showed up at night he [would give me permission to enter].[63]

> Whenever I asked the Apostle he would answer me and
> if I remained quiet he would instruct me.[64]

In addition to these verbal testimonies from the Prophet Tradition, some of the Prophet's deeds also attested to the exalted position of Imam Ali. To begin with, Ali was chosen by the Prophet as his brother when he instructed every immigrant and Medina Muslims to choose a 'brother' from the other group. Obviously, the Prophet would not have selected a person unworthy of becoming his brother. This remarkable step intended to strengthen relations between Muslims was described by al-Mutaqi al-Hindi as follows: "After the Prophet designated a brother for each Muslim, [a brother for Ali was not named]. Ali asked the Apostle: Allah's Apostle, you have chosen a brother for every Muslim except me? The Apostle said: I have retained you for mayself. You are my brother and I am yours. So if anyone challanges you tell them: I am Allah's worshipper and the brother of His Apostle. Anyone who claims this besides you is a liar."[65]

Further evidence of the special status of Imam Ali is provided by the Prophet's appointment of him as his deputy in Medina for the duration of the military campaign under the Prophet command against hostile forces at Tabok. Ibn Hanbal reported that on that occasion Ali said to the Prophet: "Allah's Apostle, I would prefer to accompany you. The Prophet said: Aren't you satisfied that you are to me in the position of Aaron to Moses except there is no prophet after me."[66] This account was also reported by Muslim, al-Bukhari, al-Tirmithi and al-Nisai.[67]

Scholars have carefully analyzed the Prophet's statement drawing a parallel between Aaron and Ali. They concluded that since Aaron was Moses' successor who carried on his responsibilities then Ali must also be Prophet Muhammed's successor.

Before that event and specifically in the early stage of the prophet's mission, the Prophet had promised the caliphate after him to Ali. This took place in Mecca where Allah commended the Prophet to "warn your nearest clan."[68] To fulfil this command the Prophet invited 30 men of his clan to a meal, and after they ate he addressed them: Who among you shall guarantee my faith, my covenant and be my successor and companion in paradise? Ali said: I will. The Prophet said: And it shall be you.[69]

The high status of Ali ibn Abi Talib distinguishing him from all the Prophet's companions was again confirmed during Khaybar battle. Al-Nisai reported the following eye-witness account by Ibn Buraida:[70] "We encircled Khaybar and the standard was first carried by Abu Bakr but we could not enter the fort. The next day Omar [ibn al-Khatab] took the banner but victory also eluded him. The army was exhausted. The Prophet said: I shall give my standard tomorrow to a man who address Allah and His Apostle and is loved by Allah and His Apostle. He shall not return until he is victorious.' We spent the night assured of victory. Next morning, the Prophet prayed and then asked for the standard. Everyone of us was hoping that he will be the one entrusted with it. The Prophet then summoned Ali ibn Abi Talib who had an eye infection. He rubbed his eyes with his saliva and presented him with the standard. Allah favored Ali with victory."

On another occasion, the Prophet said: "Ali is from me and I am from Ali. He alone can act on my behalf."[71] And when the Prophet gave his daughter in marriage to Ali, he said to her: "I give you in marriage to the one who is The best in moral character and knowledge."[72]

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3. Evidence based on reason:

In his book *Dirasat al-Wilaya*, al-Sadir analyzed the roots of the controversy over the imama:

> The Prophet made a remarkable progress in the process of change within a short span of time. But this process must continue its long march after the death of the Prophet who was aware that his life was coming to an end as his speech during the Farewell Pilgrimage indicates. This means that he had ample time to ponder the future of the mission after him, even if we put aside any divine revelations concerning this. In view of this, the Prophet had three choices from which he could choose regarding the future of the mission. First, he could take a 'negative' or passive stand and confine himself to leading the mission during his lifetime leaving its future to the mercy of circumstances and chance. This negative attitude could not be ascribed to the Prophet.[73]

To support this conclusion, al-Sadir first drew attention to Abu Bakr's appointment of Omar as his successor and Omar's appointment of a small group of Muslims from whom his successor would be chosen. He then argued that if Abu Bakr and Omar were convinced that the nation needed a leader then it does not stand to reason that the Prophet would ignore it.

The second choice available to the Prophet was to plan the mission's future after his death and entrust the leadership of the mission and the nation to early Muslims empowered with the consultation principle. After analyzing this possibility, al-Sadir rejected it by arguing that the Prophet did not prepare his followers for a leadership based on this principle since no trace of it can be found in the major currents or thinking among them. Instead the two leading viewpoints among the Prophet's companions were as follows:

1. The Prophet Household's stand which advocated adherence to the religious texts, i.e. the Quran and the Tradition.

2. The Sakifa stand under the leadership of Abu Bakr and Omar who appointed their successors and thus neither of them practiced or encouraged consultation in the selection of caliphs.

Al-Sadir concluded that these two major groups did not believe in consultation as a basis for the appointment of imams.

The third alternative which was most likely to ensure the future of the mission was for the Prophet to take a proactive stand and choose, with Allah's guidance, a person whom he would prepare religiously and morally to undertake the intellectual, religious and political responsibilities of the leadership after him.[74]

In attempting to explain why Imam Ali was not allowed to take his rightful position as the Prophet's successor, al-Sadir indentified two lines of thought among Muslims at that time. The first line of thought believed in religion and religious principles as the final authority and arbitrator and thus it advocated total adherence to religious texts. The second line of thought advocated that a believer is required to obey religious dictates within the sphere of the supernatural and worshipping leaving other things subject to personal understanding and deduction even if the outcome does not conform to the religious texts. These two lines were represented on the last day of the Prophet's life as this account reported by Ibn Abbas reveals:[75]

> When the time of the Prophet's death was approaching,
> a number of companions including Omar ibn al-
> Khatab were present in the Prophet's house. The
> Prophet said: I shall dictate to you a message so that
> you will never go astray afterward. Omar said: the
> Prophet is overcome with pain and you have the

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Quran. Allah's Book is sufficient. Persons present at the house argued among themselves, some said: Approach the Prophet so that he can dictate to you a message that will save you from going astray after [his departure]. Others repeated what Omar had said. When their arguments and noises increased, the Prophet said to them: Go away.

This event is sufficient to expose the depth of disagreement between the two groups. This disagreement also surfaced in response to the Prophet's appointment of Usama ibn Zaid as commander of a Muslim campaign. It prompted the Prophet to leave his illness bed to address them: "Men, it has come to my knowledge what some of you are saying regarding my appointment of Usama. You dispute my appointment of Usama and before that you disputed my appointment of his father. By Allah he was worthy of the command, and so is his son."

These two stands or lines of thought which were in disagreement during the Prophet's lifetime reemerged when Ali's candidature to the imama and the caliphate was considered after the Prophet's death. Those who advocated total commitment to the religious text found in the Prophet's statements a sufficient justification to endorse Ali's imama without hesitation or reservation. In contrast, the other group thought it permissible to disregard the Prophet's dictates in favor of an alternative which, in their opinion, is more suitable to prevailing circumstances.

The first line which believed in the inalienable right of Ali and his Houshold to the imama and leadership after the Prophet became more definite as a group after the Sakifa meeting. It soon emerged as an intellectual Islamic school rooted in the Quran, the Prophet Tradition and their rational understanding

of Islam. Similarily, their Sunni brethren had their own school of thought.

Justice and legitimate authority:

One of the pillars of the Imamiya political thought is that the ruler must possess moral rectitude and adhere to the religious laws in all personal, political, economic and other domains. Consistent with this belief, they insisted that the Prophet's successors must be immune from sin and error. They also maintained that there were twelve infallible Imams who are Ali, his two sons al-Hasssan and al-Hussain and nine of al-Hussain's descendants. In support of these beliefs they presented proofs from the Quran and the Tradition.

With regard to rulers other than the twelve infallible imams, they specified that in order for the ruler to obtain legitimacy and earn his subjects' obedience he must be just. They branded a ruler as unjust if he does not abide by the values and laws of religion. An unjust ruler is unfit to lead Muslims because as the following verses clearly indicate Islam is based on justice and morality:

> Allah commands justice, charity, help of one's kindred, and forbids indecency, wickedness and oppression. He admonishes you so that you may take heed.[76]

> Allah commands you to hand back trusts to their rightful owners and to pass judgment upon men with fairness. Noble is that which Allah exhorts you. He hears and sees all.[77]

> Allah has promised the believers among you and who do good deeds to make them masters of this earth as He had done to those before them, and to strengthen the faith He chose for them.[78]

When his Lord put Abraham to the test by revealing to him certain commandments and Abraham fulfilled them He said: I appointed you a leader of mankind. Abraham asked: And waht of my descendants. Allah said: My covenant is not given to the evil-doers.[79]

Put no trust in the wrongdoers, lest you incur the punishment of Hell.[80]

Do not follow the order of the transgressors.[81]

In addition to these divine commandments, the following statements stressing that only just rulers deserve to be obeyed are ascribed to the Prophet:

No person should be obeyed in defiance of Allah.[82]

The best kind of *jihad* (holy struggle) is to stand in defense of justice in front of an unjust ruler.[83]

Whoever pleases a ruler in a way that displeases Allah abandons Allah's religion.[84]

The master of martyrs is Hamza ibn Abdul Mutalib and also a man who goes in front of an unjust ruler, orders him [to do good deeds], admonishes him and is consequently killed by the ruler.[85]

In conformity to these Quranic and Prophetic principles the Imamiya school decreed that the imam or ruler must be just and that it is illegal to obey an unjust ruler who deserves to be overthrown and replaced by a just ruler whose conduct and decesions truly represent Islamic principles and codes of behavior. Accordingly, obedience to the just ruler is considered to be an article of faith and a basic obligation on all Muslim necessary to achieve the objectives of the Islamic political system as the following verse indicates:

Believers, obey Allah and the Apostle and those in authority among you.[86]

In accordance with these principles, the Imamiya school formulated its position regarding the unjust and corrupt rulers in the following points:

1. An unjust ruler must be boycotted and denied any form of assistance by Muslims. They must also reject the legitimacy of his authority and refrain from seeking his arbitration in disputes. The Imams of the Prophet Household adopted this policy towards corrupt rulers and instructed their followers not to cooperate with them so as to discourage these rulers from further pursuing their corrupt and oppresive practices and to pave the way for their removal and replacement by legitimate and just rulers. This clearly applies the following commmandment by the Prophet:[87]

> Whoever finds an excuse for an unjust ruler, Allah will send upon him a person who will do him injustice and then his supplications will not be fulfilled and Allah will not reward him for the injustice done to him.

Imam al-Sadiq was also reported to have said: "He who acts unjustly, anyone who supports him, and anyone who approves of his injustice are all of them partners in injustice."[88] The prohibition against giving any form of aid to unjust ruler is a unequivocal:[89]

> He who goes with an unjust person to support him and knowing of his injustice forsakes Islam.

In the following statement, Imam al-Sadiq considers anyone who gives an unjust person the slightest help as his accomplice:[90]

> On Judgement Day, a voice will call out: Where are the unjust persons and their supporters who brought them an ink pot, tied a bag for them, or wrote a single letter on their behalf, put them all together.

After studying the issue of working for an unjust ruler, the

Imamiya theologians concluded that it is generally forbidden except in cases which do not involve or lead to bloodshed. But if it entails bloodshed then it is strictly forbidden. This was explained by al-Hili as follows:[91]

> As for the unjust ruler, no one is permitted to accept any assignment for him willingly unless he knows or strongly thinks that if he does so he will be able to order good deeds, forbid wrongdoing, distribute alms to the deserving and be good to his brethren without forsaking a duty or commiting a transgression. Only then he is allowed to accept such a position. If, however, he knows or believes that he would not be able to do these things... then it is not permissible to accept it.

Among the forbidden earnings listed by the First Martyr, Muhammed ibn Jamal ibn Maki al-Amili was "giving aid to unjust persons in commiting injustice." He also mentioned examples of this such as "writing for them, capturing or bringing the victims of their injustice to them."[92] Imam al-Khomini concurred with that: "Supporting an unjust person in inflicting his injustice and in performing any forbidden act is strictly prohibited. The Prophet is reported to have said: He who goes with an unjust person to support him knowing of his injustice forsakes Islam."[93]

These condemnations of injustice and unjust rulers and their supporters deeply influenced the attitude and behavior of the Imamiya Shia throughout history and gave rise to strong anti-unjust rulers movements rejecting their illegitimate authority and refusing to cooperate with them.

2. Rising against an unjust ruler and overthrowing him.

The political and ideological opposition to an unjust ruler reaches its climax in declaring open revolt against him and using

force to overthrow and replace him with a Muslim ruler who qualifies to lead the nation in accordance with Islamic principles. This strategy was also adopted by the Imams of the Prophet Household and their followers in confronting unjust rulers. The first among the Imams to resort to force in an attempt to replace an unjust ruler was the martyred Imam al-Hussain, the grandson of the Prophet, who led a revolt against the illegitimate government of Yazid ibn Muawiya in 61AH. By doing this, Imam al-Hussain demonstrated to all Muslims that rising against oppressive rulers is a religious duty. Other revolts follwoed such as the uprising led by Zaid ibn Ali against the Umayyid ruler Hisham ibn Abdul Malik in 121AH. and the revolt of al-Hussain of Fakh in 169A.H. These revolts were approved of and supported by the Imams al-Baqir. al-Sadiq, al-Kadhim and al-Jawad.

The doctrinal foundation on which Imam al-Hussain based his uprising against the illegitimate rule of Yazid is made clear in his letters and proclamations urging Muslim to overthrow Yazid such as the following:[94]

> Men, the Prophet said: He who sees an oppressive ruler condoning or performing what Allah prohibits. breaching Allah's covenant and disobeying the Prophet Tradition by treating the faithful malicioulsy and oppressively and [that person] refrain from disuading that ruler by words or deeds then Allah is bound to treat them the same. They both obey the devil, forsake Allah's commandments, exhibit corruption, stop law enforcement, abuse revenues. permit what Allah forbids and forbid what Allah allowed.

In another statement. Imam al-Hussain described the traits of the just imam who must be obeyed:[95]

> The imam is none but the one who rules according to the Quran, governs with justice. adheres to the rightful

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religion...

Then he named Yazid ibn Muawiya as an example of the corrupt ruler who must be disobeyed:[96]

> Yazid is a corrupt person, drinks alcohol, kills innocent persons, openly admits his wickedness and the likes of me never pledges allegiance to the likes of him.

In another passage, the Imam asserts his rightful claim to the imama:[97]

> Men, if you take head of Allah and give to the deserving his right, Allah will approve of you. We are the household of Muhammed and are more eligible to undertake the leadership than those who claim what is not theirs and govern you unjustly and oppressively.

In another letter to the people of Iraq dispatched with Muslim ibn Aqeel, he stated the reasons for his resistance to the Omayyid rule:[98]

> Allah has chosen Muhammed from all mankind, favored him with the prophetic mission, and selected him to carry His message. Allah took him to his side after he gave advice to Allah's worshippers and conveyed the message. We are his kindred, trustees, inheritors and the most deversing of all people of his position. Other people, however, denied us our right and we acquiesced in to avoid creating divisions and to maintain the peace though we had more right to it than those who usurped it. I am sending this letter with my emissary urging you to uphold the Quran and the Prophet Tradition because the Tradition has been suppressed and corruption has been encourage. If you listen to me and obey me I shall lead you to the path of righteousness.

Other Islamic sects and schools of thought disagree completely with the Imamiya Shia over how to deal with

unjust and corrupt rulers. Contrary to what the Imamiya preached, a number of prominent Sunni theologians and scholars maintained that unjust and corrupt authority must be obeyed and that it is *haram*, i.e. forbidden, to rise against unjust rulers. One source wrote that the "Sunnis have agreed that a ruler should not deposed because of his wickedness... Sunni theologians have also maintained that the ruler should not be dismissed because of his wickedness or injustice and must not be deposed or violently opposed. Instead he must be admonished in conformity with relevant sayings of the Prophet."[98]

On the same subject, al-Baqilani wrote:[99]

It is the consensus of Sunni theologians that an imam can not be deposed for his corruption, injustice, unlawful taking of money, hitting people, murdering innocent persons or suspension of religious laws and must not be violently resisted. Instead he must be admonished while some of his orders contravening Allah's commandments may be disobeyed.

Similarily, the Sunni Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal decreed that "Whoever vanquishes them with the sword becomes a caliph and is called the prince of the faithful, and henceforth no one who believes in Allah and the Resurrection Day has the right to spend one night without recognizing him as his imam regardless of whether he is good or evil because he is the prince of the faithful."[100]

This viewpoint was supported by another prominent scholar who emphasized that "the imam can not be dismissed because of his wickedness or injustice since imams and princes succeeding the first four caliphs exhibited wickedness and injustice, yet early Muslims followed them and conducted prayers on Fridays and religious feasts with their permission."

In summary, two lines of thought emerged regarding the

imama, the characteristic of the legitimate authority and the duties of Muslims governed by unjust rulers. The Imamiya Shia stressed that the ruler must adhere to justice, otherwise he must be boycotted and actively resisted. The other viewpoint maintained that even if a ruler usurps authority he must be obeyed and opposing him is strictly forbidden.

The awaited Mahdi:

The conflict between the forces of good and evil is long lasting. Divine providence has naturally sided with the forces of righteousness by sending prophets to mankind with guidance and to lead the struggle against the forces of evil and wickedness. This confrontation is described in the Quran:[102]

> For every prophet we have made a number of adversaries among the wrongdoers.

Allah has ordained that Muhammed shall be the seal of the prophets and that no prophet will be chosen after him and no revelation will be sent down after the Quran. The path laid down by the Prophet was followed by Imams, scholars and reformers who sought to reform mankind and preserve the faith from corruption and deviation. a task which met with opposition from the forces of evil. But since they adhered to the faith they were certain that they will eventually triumph over evil as the following verse indicates:

> The earth will be inherited by my righteous worship-
> pers.[103]

Accounts reported by Muslims of various sects supported that the Islamic teachings foretold the coming of the Mahdi; who shall reform human society after it becomes infested with wickedness and evil. This belief is shared by all Muslims and not just the Imamiya Shia as some falsely propagate. This consensus was referred to by Shubar as follows:[104]

The coming of al-Mahdi has been reported in several accounts and sayings which also confirm that he will first disappear. These accounts have been reported by both Sunni and Imamiya sources. Among the Sunni authors who reported such accounts are al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawood and al-Tirmithi.. and the number of these accounts exceeds one hundred and fifty.. The number of supporting accounts reported by reliable sources, however, may be in excess of 1000. Ibn Hajjar [al-Haitami] in his book *al-Sawaiq al-Muhriqa* wrote the following on al-Mahdi and his father Imam al-Askari: Al-Askari left one son. Abi al-Qassim Muhammed al-Hujjat who was five years old when his father died. Allah favored him with wisdom and he was called al-Qaim al-Muntathar because he disappeared in Medina and henceforth his whereabouts were unknown. Ibn Khulakan also reported this as well as other Sunni sources such as *al-Fusool al-Muhima*, *Matalib al-Saoul*, and *Shawahid al-Nibwa*.

The current head of the religious establishment in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia wrote that the coming of "the Mahdi is a widely recognized fact and statements from the Tradition referring to him are numerous and authentic. These sayings clearly confirm that this awaited person is real and that his coming is a certainty. Abdul Muhsin al-Abad who is another Saudi scholar enumerated in one his lectures the names of 25 companions who reported the Prophet's sayings on al-Mahdi. They are as follows:[105].

1. Othman ibn Affan.
2. Ali ibn Abi Talib.
3. Talha ibn Abdulla.
4. Abdul Rahman ibn Aouf.
5. Al-Hussain ibn Ali.
6. Umm Salama.

7. Umm Habiba.
8. Abdullah ibn Abbas.
9. Abdullah ibn Massoud.
10. Abdullah ibn Omar.
11. Abdullah ibn Amro.
12. Abu Saeed al-Khudri.
13. Jabbir ibn Abdullah.
14. Abu Huraira.
15. Anas ibn Malik.
16. Ammar ibn Yassir.
17. Aouf ibn Malik.
18. Thauban.
19. Qurat ibn Ayas.
20. Ali al-Hilali.
21. Hudhaifa ibn al-Yaman.
22. Abdullah ibn al-Harith ibn Hamza.
23. Umran ibn Hussain.
24. Abu al-Tufail.
25. Jabbir al-Sadafi.

He also listed the names of the following 38 imams and scholars who reported the Prophet's statements on al-Mahdi:

1. Abu Dawood in *al-Sunnan*.
2. Al-Tirmithi in *al-Jami*.
3. Ibn Maja in *al-Sunnan*.
4. Al-Nisai.
5. Ahmed in his *Masnad*.
6. Ibn Habban in *al-Saheeh*.
7. Al-Hakim in *al-Mustadrak*.
8. Abu Bakr ibn Shaiba in *al-Musanaf*.
9. Naim ibn Hamad in *al-Fitan*.
10. Al-Hafiz Abu Naim in *al-Mahdi* and *al-Hulia*.
11. Al-Tabarani in *al-Kabeer*, *al-Awsat* and *al-Sagheer*.

12. Al-Darqutni in *al-Afrad.*
13. Al-Baroodi in *Marifat al-Sahaba.*
14. Abu Yali al-Mousalli in *al-Masnad.*
15. Al-Bazaz in *al-Masnad.*
16. Al-Harith ibn Abi Usama in his *al-Masnad.*
17. Al-Khateeb in *Talkhees al-Mutashabih* and *al-Mutafiq wa al-Muftariq.*
18. Ibn Assakir in his *Tarikh.*
19. Ibn Mandal in *Tarikh Asbahan.*
20. Abu al-Hassan al-Harbi in *al-Awal min al-Harbiat.*
21. Tamam al-Razi in his *Fawaid.*
22. Ibn Jarir in *Tahtheeb al-Athar.*
23. Abu Bakr al-Muqri in his *Mujam.*
24. Abu Omar al-Dani in his *Sunnan.*
25. Abu Ghanam al-Kuffi in *Kitab al-Fitan.*
26. Al-Dailami in *Masnad al-Firdoos.*
27. Abu Bakr al-Iskaf in *Fawaid al-Akhbar.*
28. Abu al-Hussain ibn al-Minawi in *Kitab al-Malahim.*
29. Al-Baihaqi in *Dalail al-Nibwa.*
30. Abu Omar al-Miqri in his *Sunnan.*
31. Ibn al-Jawzi in his *Tarikh.*
32. Yahya ibn Abdul Hameed al-Hamani in his *Masnad.*
33. Al-Rawiani in his *Masnad.*
34. Ibn Saad in *al-Tabaqat.*
35. Al-Hassan ibn Suffian.
36. Ibn Khuzaima.
37. Omar ibn Shaba.
38. Abu Awana.

Some of the sayings on al-Mahdi reported by these sources are as follows:

> Ali reported that the Prophet said: If there was only one day left in this world, Allah would send a man from us who would fill the world with justice after it has been

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filled with injustice.[106]

> The Prophet said: Al-Mahdi is one of us, the people of the Household, and one night Allah shall send him.[107]

Another source reported that the Prophet said: "Al-Mahdi is one of my descendants... He shall fill the earht with justice after it is filled with injustice and oppression and shall rule for seven years." Also, "Al-Mahdi is one of my descendants, of the lineage of Fatima."[108]

In conclusion, it can be said that the belief in the coming of al-Mahdi is shared by all Muslims, and not just the Imamiya Shia. They disagree only on his identity, but on the day Muslims will hear his call and witness his coming this disagreement will clearly disappear.

Al-Taqia

> The believers should not accept infidels as their rulers instead of the believers. He who does that does not belong to Allah. unless you want to protect yourselves from them. Allah warns you of Himself. To Him everyone shall return.[109]

> A faithful man of the people of the Pharaoh who was hiding his faith said...[110]

> Those who are compelled to recent while their hearts remain loyal to the faith shall be absolved, but those who deny Allah and eagerly accept unbelief shall incur the wrath of Allah and be sternly punished.[111]

All Muslims agree that the concept of *Taqia*, i.e. hiding one's true faith to avoid persecution, is mentioned in the Quran. Regretably, it has been misconstrued by some as a form of religious hypocricy resorted to by the Imamiya alone to escape political and religious persecution. The purpose of this section is

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to present a clear and precise definition of this important doctrine and its field of application.

Definition of taqia

Taqia is defined as a "protection from whatever may harm a thing..."[112] Another definition states that according to some Islamic sects, *taqia* is "hiding the truth and exhibiting agreement with other people to avoid harm."[113]

The concept of *taqia* is a religious concept mentioned in the Quran as the following verse indicates:[114]

> The believers should not accept infidels as their rulers instead of the believers. He who does that does not belong to Allah, unless you want to protect yourselves from them. Allah warns your of Himself. To Him everyone shall return.

In explaining this verse, al-Shaikh al-Toosi reported the following account:[115]

> Al-Hassan reported that Musailama al-Kathab (literally Musailama the Liar who claimed to be a prophet) captured two of the Prophet's companions. He asked the first: Do you testify that Muhammed is Allah's Apostle? The first companion said: Yes. Musailama then asked him: Do you testify that I am Allah's apostle? The first companion said: Yes. Then Musailama sent after the second companion and asked him: Do you testify that Muhammed is Allah's Apostle? And he answered: Yes. And he then asked him: Do you testify that I am Allah's apostle? The second companion answered: I am deaf and repeated it three times. It was done as a *taqia*. Musailama al-Kathab beheaded him. News of this reached Prophet Muhammed who said: As for the slain man he preserved his truthfulness and *taqia* and thus achieved

his exalted position... The other one made use of Allah's license and he is blameless... Accordingly, *taqia* is a license, but pronouncing the truth is a virtue. It is our belief that *taqia* is an obligation.

Al-Qurtibi commented on the taqia verse, "unless you want to protect yourselves from them," as follows:

Muath ibn Jabal and Mujahid said: *Al-Taqia* was practiced before Muslims became numerous and strong. As for the present, hower. Allah has strengthened Muslims so that they do not need to resort to it. Ibn Abbas said in defining taqia: Taqia is used when someone speak contrary to his faith. but his faith remains strong and without committing a sin or murder. Al-Hassan said: It is permitted to practice *taqia* until the Day of Resurrection as long as it does not involve killing someone. It is said that if a believer is residing with the infidels he may express in words what is acceptable to them if he fears for his life, provided that he keeps his faith and be satisfied with it. Al-Taqia is permissible if a person fears for his life, injury or great harm. Whoever is compelled to blaspheme it is best for him to resist and refuse to utter words of blasphemy but he is permitted to do so...

Al-Qurtubi also commented on the verse, "those who are compelled to recant while their hearts remain loyal to the faith," as follows:

According to commentators, this verse applies to the case of Ammar ibn Yassir who complied with what [the infidels] asked him to do... Ibn Abbas said: The infidels captured him along with his father, his mother Sumaia, Suhaib, Bilal, Khubab and Salem and then tortured them. Sumaia was tied to two camels then her private organs were lanced. She and her husband Yassir were killed and thus were the first martyred Muslims. Their

son Ammar, consented to repeat what they asked him to say. He later regreted this in front of the Prophet who asked him: 'How did you feel then?' He replied: 'Content with my faith.' The Prophet said: If they do it again, you may do the same.

Mansoor ibn al-Mutamar reported the following version narrated by Mujahid: The first female martyr in Islam was Umm Ammar (i.e. Sumaia) killed by Abu Jahl and the first male martyr was Mihja... The first Muslims were seven: the Prophet, Abu Bakr, Bilal, Khubab, Suhaib, Ammar, and his mother Sumaia. The Prophet was protected by Abu Talib, and Abu Bakr by his tribe. The other Muslims were captured, forced to wear heavy iron armour and kept under the sun for all day. In the evening, Abu Jahl arrived brandishing a spear. He raved and swore at them. After insulting Sumaia, he stabbed her in her private parts and killed her. The rest repeated what they were asked to say except Bilal. They tortured him to compel him to recant his faith but he refused repeating the word 'Ahad' (literally One and meaning that there is only One God). After losing interest in him, they tied him up, put a rope around his neck and gave him to their youngsters who dragged him around as a plaything until they were bored. Ammar reported: We all repeated what they wanted us to say except Bilal who could not bring himself to do it. They tortured him until they were bored... In another version, Bilal who was a slave was bought by Abu Bakr who gave him his freedom.

Another account narrated by Mujahid reported that a group of Muslims from Medina invited a number of Muslims from Mecca to immigrate to Medina. On the road to Medina, they were intercepted and captured by tribesmen from Quraish who compelled them to blaspheme. According to Mujahid, the *taqia* verse was revealed on that occasion.

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It is worth mentioning here that the Prophet praised Ammar for his strong faith on more than one occasion which indicates that Ammar's resort to *taqia* was legitimate. According to al-Tirmithi, Aisha reported that the Prophet said: "Given a choice between two alternatives, Ammar would always choose the best of the two." The Prophet is also reported by Anas ibn Malik to have said: "Paradise looks forward to [hosting] three: Ali, Ammar and Salman ibn Rabia."

Al-Qurtubi further commented on this subject:[117] Since Allah permitted persons to blaspheme against Him under duress, Muslim scholars argued that it is permissible to recant articles of faith if one is coerced to do so. This was confirmed by the Prophet who said:

My nation is not held accountable for mistakes, forgetfulness and whatever they are compelled to do.

Finally, scholars agree that whoever is compelled to blaspheme fearing for his safety is sinless provided he blasphemes in words only. Also, he can not be judged to be a heretic.

Another version of the Prophet's saying cited by al-Qurtubi above was mentioned by al-Shaikh al-Sadooq:[118]

My nation is not held accountable for nine things: mistakes, forgetfulness, whatever they are compelled to do, ignorance, whatever is beyond their abilities, envy, fear of bad omen and harboring unorthodox thoughts on creation provided they remain unspoken.

Another saying of the Prophet was interpreted to condone the resot to *taqia* by a person who faces a real threat to his safety, property and honor, provided he remains loyal to his faith. It is clearly evident from these verses and sayings of the Prophet that *taqia* is permissible under creation circumstances.

In conformity with the Quran and the Prophet Tradition, the

Imams of the Prophet Household resorted to *taqia* when their lives were threatened. The suffering of the Prophet Household was foretold by the Prophet when he said:[119]

> We are a household whom Allah has chosen for the afterlife rather than this life. Members of my Household shall meet hardship and banishment.

The Imams did this only in self defense and to protect the intellectual and political movement which they led in opposition to the unjust Omayyid and Abbasid rulers who oppressed them and thier followers.

The Imams of the Prophet Household indicated the cases in which *taqia* can be practiced. Imam al-Baqir stated that "*taqia* is allowed in cases of necessity and the person who resorts to it knows best [when it is necessary]."[120] He is also reported to have said: "*taqia* was introduced to avoid bloodshed... But if it leads to that (i.e. having to kill someone) then it is forbidden." Also, "the *taqia* is permitted in anything a person is compelled to do and Allah has sanctioned it."[121] It is then cleraly evident that *taqia* as a defensive act is a Quranic concept, confirmed by the Prophet, practiced by the companions and expounded by scholars of various sects, and not a thing invented by the Imamiya.

Accordingly, Imamiya theologians decreed that the resort ot *taqia* is compulsory and that a Muslim may conceal his true faith and beliefs and exhibits the contrary to protect his life, honor and possessions. They also laid down in detail the conditions for using it. According to al-Toosi, "*taqia* is an obligation when a person fears for his life but it has also been reported that in such a case a person may tell the truth."[122]

After defining *taqia* as "concealing one's faith and covering adherence to it," al-Shaikh al-Mufeed emphasized that "it is obligatory if one knows or strongly expects that failing to do so

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may endanger his life, honor or possessions but if no such harm is expected then it ceases to be obligatory." The Imams ordered a group of their followers to conceal their true faiths from the enemies of religion and to exhibit whatever may remove suspicions from them if it is in their interest to do so. They also ordered another group of their supporters to enter into a dialogue with their opponents when they knew that it did not involve any risk of harm to them.[123]

The use of Taqia

The need for taqia can be appreciated after knowing fully the plight of the Imams of the Prophet Household and their followers during the Ommayid and Abbasid eras in retaliation for their intellectual and political opposition to injustice, abuse of public funds and violation of Islamic doctrines and laws by unjust rulers. Historians drew horrifying pictures of the reigns of terror, oppression, imprisonment and murder to which the Imams and their followers were subjected. It began during the rule of the Omayyid Muawiya ibn Abu Sufian who is responsible for the murder of numerous supporters of Imam Ali and his sons al-Hassan and al-Hussain such as the companion Hujar ibn Udai whom the scholar al-Hakim described as 'the hermit among Muhammed's Companions' Other victims of Muawiya's and his lieutenants' murder campaign were Sharik ibn Shadad al-Hathrami, Saifi ibn Shaddad al-Shaibani, Umro ibn al-Humq al-Khuzai, Rashid al-Hujjari, Abdullah ibn Yahya al-Hathrami, Abdul Rahman ibn Hassan al-Unazi, and many others.

Muawiya was succeeded by his son Yazid who committed one of the most atrocious massacre in the history of Islam at Kerbala (in present day Iraq) where Imam al-Hussain ibn Ali, the grandson of the Prophet, seventeen members of his

household and sixty of his companions were killed. The body of the martyred grandson of the Prophet was savagely trampled by Yazid's horsemen. In that unforgetable massacre, not only defenders of the faith were killed and their possessions looted but children were also slain after they were denied access to water; the tents of the Prophet Household were burned; and finally, the women were captured and transported from Iraq to Syria along with the martyrs' heads carried on sticks and spears.

The confrontation between devout Muslims and the Omayyid rule spread to Medina where a revolution took place under the leadership of Abdullah ibn Hanzala. This revolution was mercilessly put down by the Omayyid army which subjected the inhabitants of the Prophet's city to a frenzy of slaughter, rape and looting. Al-Daynuri summarized the results of this tragic event as follows:[124]

> On the day of al-Hara [between the Omayyid army and
> the people of Medina] 80 of the Prophet companions
> were slain, including all the remaining companions who
> took part in Badr battle, as well as 700 from the tribe of
> Quraish and the Ansars and another 10.000 Muslims.
> This took place in the month of Dhu-Hija in 63A.H.

The ruthless campaign of terror against supporters of the Prophet Household continued throughout the Omayyid period and historians reported numerous accounts attesting to this policy such as the killing of Saeed ibn Jubair during the reign of Abdul Malik ibn Marwan who wrote in the letter of appointment of his governor Khalid ibn Abdullah al-Qisri:

> I have appointed as your governor Khalid ibn
> Abdullah al-Qisri, so listen to and obey him. And do
> not compromise yourself because [the penalty] is
> nothing less than death. The life of whoever gives
> shelter to Saeed ibn Jubair's forfeit.

After reading this letter, al-Qisri addressed the congregation as follows:

> I swear by the One to whom we make pilgrimage I shall kill the owner of the house in which we find Saeed ibn Jubair, then tear down his house and the houses of all his nieghbours, and allow all that is forbidden to be inflicted upon him. I hereby give you a three-day warning.

Some time later, Saeed ibn Jubair who was a leading supporter of the Prophet Household was apprehended and handed to al-Hajaj, the infamous Omayyid governor who systematically ordered the execution of tens of thousand of opponants of Omayyid rule including Ibn Jubair.

In 121 A.H. Zaid ibn Ali ibn al-Hussain ibn Ali led an uprising against the Omayyid ruler Hisham ibn Abdul Malik and as a result he along with a group of his supporters were killed. Zaid's body was curcified then cremated and his ashes were strewn over the river Euphrates and adjoining orchards. The harsh measures to which the Omayyid authority subjected his brother Imam al-Baqir and his nephew Imam al-Sadiq, Al-Baqir's son, subsequently intensified.

The suffering of the Prophet Household's followers was summarized by one of their leaders in the following address:[125]

> You were routinely murdered, your hands and legs amputated, your eyes put out and you were hanged or crucified on palm trees just because you followed the Prophet Household, and in spite of your submission to your enemy.

Under the Abbasid rule, the persecution of the Prophet Household and their followers continued unabated and sometimes even reached unprecedented levels. Imam al-Sadiq was put under continuous surveillance and every movement of his was

clearly watched and reported. After al-Sadiq's son Musa became Imam, al-Hussain ibn Ali ibn al-Hassan led an uprising against the Abbasid caliph al-Hadi at a place called Fakh. This uprising ended in the death of its leader and a number of his followers. Imam Muhammed al-Jawad described this tragic event as follows: "After al-Taff (i.e. the battle in which Imam al-Hussain was martyred) we suffered no greater calamity then that of Fakh."[126]

Soon after that Imam Musa ibn Jafar was imprisoned by the Abbasid ruler al-Rasheed and he reamined in jail until his death of poisoning in the prison of Shahik ibn Sindi, the chief of al-Rasheed's police. The two Imams Ali al-Hadi and his son al-Hassan al-Askari were also subjected to various forms of persecution and harassment. An example of these brutal measures was provided by Ali ibn Ibraheem, one of Imam al-Hassan al-Askari's companion, in the following account:[127]

> We met at Samara and waited for the Imam to come
> out of his house. He then sent us the following message:
> No one should salute me, point in my direction or wave
> a hand at me because your life would be endangered.

On another occasion, one of Imam al-Askari's followers was given the following advice:[128]

> If you hear someone insulting us, do not stop and never
> answer him back or expose your identity because we
> live in an evil country and in an evil city.

Further evidence of this oppression was given by Muhammed ibn Abdul Aziz al-Bilkihi who reported that he was sitting in a street when "Imam al-Askari come out of his house and he said to himself 'If I now shout that this man is the Imam whom you must recognize would they kill me? When the Imam came near me he put his finger against his mouth indicating that I should keep silent. I saw him later in the evening and he told me: Keep

silent or you shall perish."[129]

One of the most extensive historical sources on the plight of the Prophet Household under the Omayyid and Abbasid reigns is *Maqatil al-Talibieen* by Abi al-Faraj al-Asfahani (284 - 356 A.H). The Prophet Household's struggle, suffering, persecution, imprisonment and brutal death at the hands of unjust rulers. One of the most cruel enemies of the Prophet Household was the Abbasid ruler al-Mutawakil whose treatment of them was described by al-Asfahani in the following paragraph:

"Al-Mutawakil treated the descendants of Abi Talib (i.e. Imam Ali's father) harshly and he harbored much suspicion, anger and hate towards them. His minister Ubaid Allah ibn Yahya ibn Khaqan shared in these sentiments and encouraged him to persevere in his oppression of them to a level unattained by his Abbasid predecessors. One of his acts was ordering the destruction of al-Hussain's tomb and the land in which he was buried to be ploughed. He also posted sentries on the roads leading to [al-Hussain's] shrine to arrest those who dared to visit it. Those were either killed or severly punished... The name of the person whom he dispatched to till the ground on which the tomb stood was al-Daizag who was a Jew before converting to Islam. He first destroyed the surrounding areas then demolished the building and ploughed a large area around it. When he reached the tomb he stopped and sent after a group of Jews who did the ploughing... Al-Mutawakil appointed as governor of Medina and Mecca Omar ibn al-Faraj al-Rakiji who prohibited giving any kind of aid to the descendants of Abi Talib. Anyone who disobeyed this order was severly punished and heavily fined. The situation was such that some kinswomen of the house of Abi Talib possessed only a single dress among themselves which they used mainly for praying. This continued until al-Mutawakil was assassinated. His successor was lenient and

kind to them and treated them properly."[130]

In another part of his book, al-Asfahani described how the caliph al-Mansoor had a number of the descendants of Abi Talib killed:[131]

> Abu Jafar [al-Mansoor] had them brought before him and among them was Muhammed ibn Ibraheem ibn al-Hassan ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib. He asked him: Are you the one they call the Dibaj al-Asfar (literally the yellow silk) He answered: Yes. Al-Mansoor said to him: By Allah I shall kill you in a way that none of your household had suffered before you. He then ordered that a large column in a building be opened and vacuated from one side and for Muhammed to be put inside. He was still alive when it was sealed on him.

These incidents constitute only a fraction of the long history of repression which the Omayyid and Abbasid rulers and governors inflicted on the Imams of the Prophet Household and their followers. In view of this, the practice of *taqia* can be regarded as a defensive tool to avoid oppression and as a method of safeguarding the faith and preserving it for future generation. For these reasons, *al-taqia* was allowed by Islam. It is still widely practiced by opposition Islamic movements to avoid official harassment.

Contrary to what some think, *al-taqia* neither encourages acceptance of the status quo nor hypocricy in views and stands and, thus it does not weaken opposition to injustice or corruption. Essentially, *al-taqia* protects the faith by transforming political opposition to a secret movement until the time is ripe for open confrontation when it becomes obligatory upon Muslims to sacrifice their lives and possessions for the sake of Islam. Consequently it does not invalidate the duty of ordering others to do good deeds and forbidding them from committing

transgressions and does not allow a person to assist an unjust ruler in any way that may undermine Islam.

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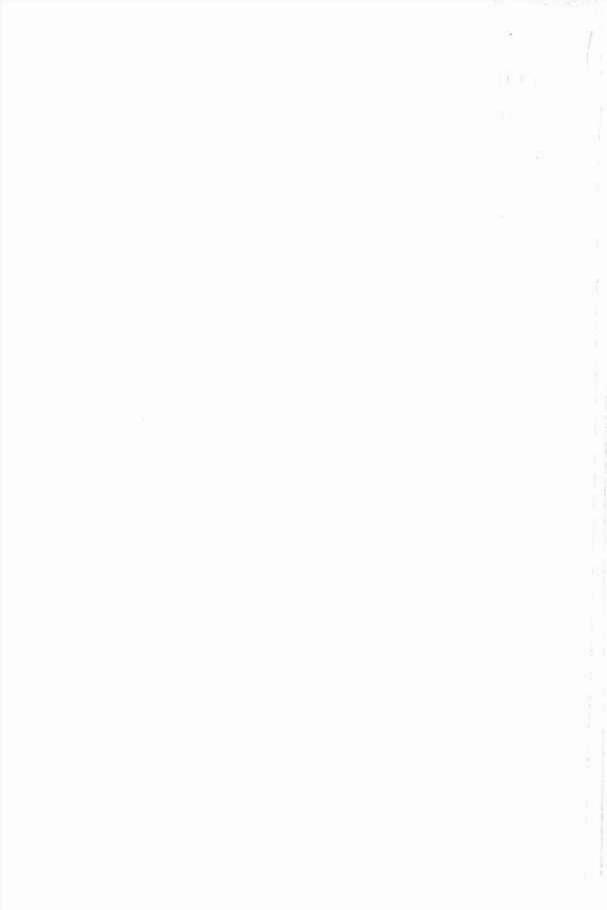22 The Quran 21:72-3.

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Chapter Seven

The Belief in the Afterlife

The belief in the afterlife is one of the basic doctrines in Islam. It is essentially based on the belief in Allah and his ability to create all things from nothingness as the following verse indicates:

> He forgets his own creation saying: who will reaminate bones where they are rather? Say: He who created them at first will reanimate them. He has knowledge of every creation.[1]

Several verses in the Quran deal with the afterlife. All divine messages teach the belief in the afterlife as the life in which one recieves his recompense for his deeds in this life in fulfillment of divine justice, promises and warnings. If there is no afterlife, it would be futile to impose obligations on mankind and the incentive to adhere to these obligations would be lacking. The importance of this religious tenet is underlined in the following verses:

> Righteousness is not in whether you face towards the east or the west. The righteous man is he who believes in Allah, and the Last Day, in the angels and the Books and the prophets; who for the love of Allah gives money to his kindred, the orphans, the needy, the wayfarers and to the beggars, and for the redemption

of captives; who attends to his prayers and pays the
alms-tax; who is true to his promises and steadfast in
trial and adversity and in times of war. Such are the
true believers; such are the God-fearing.[2]

Believers have faith in Allah, His Apostle, in the Book
He has revealed to His Apostle, and in the Books He
previously revealed. He who denies Allah, His angels,
His apostles, and the Last Day, has strayed far from
the truth.[3]

A typical comprehensive study of the concept of the afterlife
usually covers the following topics:
1. The existence of the soul and its relationship with the body.
2. The world of the *barzakh* or the state of existence between this
world and the afterlife.
3. The resurrection.
4. Judgment, recompense, intercession and related issues.

These topics have been the subjects of study, debate and
controversy among Muslim scholars and philosphers. The
Imams of the Prophet Household and Imamiya scholars have
devoted much effort to eexplaining and defending this tenet
which has profound impacts on the political, economic, social
and personal spheres. In the following sections, the Imamiya's
views on these topics are briefly outlined.

The soul and its relationship to the body

Islamic teachings regard comprehension of the spirit to be
beyond human cognition as the following verse indicates:
They ask you about the soul. Say: The soul is at my
Lord's command. What you have recieved of knowl-
edge is meagre.[4]

The contribution of the Imamiya philospher Sadir al-
Mutali'heen in this field was highly praised by the martyred

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theologian al-Sadir in the follwoing passage: "The conception of man as a spiritual and corporeal existence was aptly explained by the Muslim philospher Sadir al-Mutaliheen al-Shirazi who identified a core movement in the center of nature which is the essence of all such perceptive movement or transformation. As conceived by al-Shirazi, this core movement is the bridge linking matter to the soul. Matter in the course of its core movement attains completion and perfection by relinguishing under certain conditions its material aspects becoming an incorporeal or spiritual entity. According to this conception there are no barriers between the material and spiritual spheres because they are two states of existence and though the spirit is not material it has a material origin being the final stage of the process of completing or performing matter in its core movement or transformation.

In the light of this we can now arrive at an understanding of the relationship between the soul and the body. It is normal that the mind and the body, i.e. the soul and the matter, should be interrelated because the mind is not widely separated from the matter, contrary to Descarte's rejection of mutual influences and his assumption that they exist in a state of equilibrium. Indeed, the mind itself is nothing more than a material state that has ascended to a higher level... And the difference between the material and the spiritual states is in degrees only like the difference between high and low temperatures.

This does not mean that the soul is the product of an effort exerted by the matter but rather it is the outcome of the core movement which does not emnate from the same matter because the movement, or any movement for that purpose, is the gradual transformation of a thing from a potential force to a form of action, and a force does not create action as an ability is not sufficient to produce creation. The cause of the core movement,

thus, lies outside the sphere of the transforming matter and the soul which is the incorporeal part of a person is the result of this movement which is the bridge between matter and spirit."[5]

Al-Shirazi expounded his views on the soul's independence from the body and how the soul leaves the body as follows: "In summary, the soul and the body move together in natural transformation and progress toward completion and perfection in ways appropriate to each until the soul becomes separate from the body."[6] According to Abdullah Shubar, those who believed in the soul as having an abstract nature include, in addition to the Imamiya scholars al-Mufeed and al-Baha'e, al-Ghazali, some Mutazila and most philosophers.[7]

The barzakh

The dictionary defines al-barzakh as any barrier between two things. In religion, it refers to the state of existence between death and the Day of Resurrection. Life in the afterlife begins after death and thus death is actually the rebirth of a person in the afterlife. Several verses in the Quran and sayings of the Prophet mention the interrogation in the grave and the torment or happiness in the world of *al-barzakh* which begins when the body of a dead person is burried and the soul returns ot it to be held accountable. One of these sayings which provide evidence of the existence of *al-barzakh* is found in the following account:[8]

> On the day of the battle of Badr, the Prophet addressed
> the dead Muslims: Did you find what Allah promised
> to be true? Some said: Allah's Apostle, these persons
> are dead so why do you ask them? The Prophet said:
> They hear better than you.

The Quran also refers to the *barzakh* where martyrs live until the Day of Resurrection in the following verse:

> You must not think that those who were slain in the

cause of Allah are dead. They are alive and well provided for by their Lord.[9]

Commenting on this verse, al-Tabrasi wrote that "the statement that 'they are alive' was given different interpretations. One of these, which is the correct one, is that they are alive in the usual sense until the Day of Resurrection. This is the opinion of the Companions Ibn Abbas. Mujahid, Qutada, and also of al-Hassan, Amro ibn Obaid, Wasil ibn Ata and the commentators al-Jubai and al-Romani."[10]

The Prophet is also reported to have said after praying on and burying Saad ibn Muath: "Saad was held tightly in his grave because he was sometimes unkind to his family."[11] In describing the existence in the grave, Imam Ali ibn al-Hussain said that "the grave could be a garden in Paradise or alternatively a hole full of Hell's fire." On the some topic, Imam al-Baqir said: "Those who are interrogated in the grave are the devout believers and the extremely heretical... As for the rest, they are ignored."[12] This statement was also repeated by Imam al-Sadiq.[13]

On the Imamiya's position with regard to *al-barzakh*, al-Majlisi wrote:[14]

> There is a consensus among Muslims regarding the punishment or reward in *al-barzakh* with the exception of a small minority. Authentic sayings on this topic have been reported by both Sunni and Shia sources. Also, most philosphers and followers of other religions agree that souls remain after bodies die and only a small inconsquential minority denies it...

The belief on *al-barzakh* can now be summarized in the following points:

1. The Imamiya strongly believe that a person is interrogated in the grave after the return of the soul to the body.

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2. Interrogated persons include the devout believers as well as the extremely heretical while those who have committed good and bad deeds are judged on the Day of Resurrection.

3. In the *barzakh* state believers are rewarded while heretics are punished until the Day of Resurrection.

Resurrection

Muslims derive their beliefs on the resurrection from the Quran and the Prophet Tradition. The end of this world, the terrible events leading to that end and the resurrection are mentioned in the Quran. After philosphical ideas were introduced into Islamic thought, the meanings associated with the soul, mind, resurrection and recompense sometimes varied from authentic Islamic definitions. Some scholars attempted to achieve a compromise between Islamic and philosphical definitions of these doctrinal concepts.

According to al-Alama al-Hili, the Imamiya consider the belief in resurrection as a "basic article of faith and endorsing it as one of the basic pillars of religion, and he who denies the corporeal resurrection, recompense and description of the afterlife is a heretic by consensus."[15]

Further explanation of this resurrection was given by theologian Abdullah Shubar as follows:[16]

> Resurrection is both corporeal and spiritual. The corporeal resurrection means that Allah returns our bodies to their original states before death, while the spiritual resurrection means that the soul after leaving the body exists in a state of bliss or anguish depending on its deeds in this world. This is also the view of philosphers who interpreted punishment in Hell or reward in Paradise similarily.

Shubar also cited the opinion of al-Dawani on resurrection:[17]

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The corporeal resurrection is a basic tenet and he who deniesit is a heretic. As for the belief in spiritual resurrection, i.e. the happiness or anguish felt by the soul after learning the body, it is not considered an obligation and he who denies it is not a heretic but at the same time it is not forbidden to believe in it.

Al-Alama al-Hili also pointed out that "contrary to the philospher's view, the resurrection is believed by Muslims to be corporeal."[18]

Opinions reviewed so far indicate that these are three interpretations of resurrection:

1. The resurrection is only corporeal.
2. The resurrection is only spiritual.
3. The resurrection is both spiritual and corporeal.

According to Subar, evidence from the Quran, the Prophet Tradition and the intellect support that the resurrection is spiritual and corporeal. It can also be argued that since both the body and the soul share in performing good or bad deeds, then both must be resurrected. Resurrection is the theme of the following verses:

Whenever they are given fruit they will say: This is what we were given before.[19]

And We shall wed them to dark-eyed houris.[20]

In in there is everything that your souls desire and please the eyes.[21]

No mortal knows what bliss is in store for him.[22]

And they will repent in secret when they see the chastisement.[23]

A forgiveness from Allah and His approval.[24]

And What is more they shall have His approval that is the supreme achievement.[25]

In conclusion, the Imamiya believe that the resurrection is a basic tenet and it means that Allah returns bodies to their original state so that they can be held accountable and recompensed.

Recompense:

We shall set up just scales on the Day of Resurrection, so that no person shall in the least be wronged. Actions as small as a grain of mustard seed shall be weighed out. Our reckoning shall suffice.[26]

Allah will reward each person according to his deeds. Swift is Allah's reckoning.[27]

On that day mankind will come separately to be shown their labors. Whoever has done on atom's weight of good shall see it, and whoever has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it also.[28]

This book of Ours speaks with truth against you. We have recorded all your actions.[29]

When the two Angels record, one seated on his right, the other on his left, each word he utters shall be noted by a vigilant guardian.[30]

The fate of each man We have bound around his neck. On the Day of Resurrection We shall confront him with a book spread wide open, saying: Here is your book: read it. It is enough on that day for yourself to call you to account.[31]

So that when they reach it, their ears, eyes and their skins will testify to their deeds.[32]

None has the power to intercede for them save him who have recieved a permission from the Merciful.[33]

Allah, there is no God but Him, the Living, the Eternal

One. Neither slumb nor sleep overtakes Him. His is what the heavens and the earth contains. Who can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is before and behind men. They can grasp only that part of His knowledge which He wills. His throne is as vast as the heavens and the earth, and the preservation of both does not weary Him. He is the Exalted, the Immense One.[34]

On that day none shall have the power to intercede for them except him that has recieved the Merciful's permission, and whose word is acceptable to Him.[35]

One of the basic tenets of Islam is the belief in recompense in the afterlife which is shared by all divine messages transmitted by prophets. It is based on the belief in Allah, His justice, truthfulness, and His ability to resurrect the dead and to create the afterlife. According to the Imamiya, the belief in the afterlife incorporates the following:

1. The belief in the two angels who record a person's major and minor deeds in this life.
2. The records of every person's deeds are made known to him.
3. A person's organs will testify to his deeds.
4. The belief in the scale which is the weighing of a person's deeds and the recompense.
5. The belief in the *hawdh* (the pool).
6. The belief in the Straight Path and the *A'raf*.
7. The belief in intercession and divine forgiveness.
8. The belief in accountability of human beings.
9. The belief in eternal recompense of true believers in Paradise.
10. The belief in eternal punishment of pagans and atheists.
11. The belief in temporary punishment of sinners who believe in divine unity but do not benefit from divine forgiveness and intercession and these are later admitted into Paradise.

12. Compensation for the suffering and pain inflicted on persons and animals as a result of Allah's action, excluding that which is a form of punishment, and also compensation for sufferings inflicted by a man or an animal on another man or animal.

Pain and compensation

> Fighting has been ordained upon you though you hate it. But you may hate something although it is good for you, and love a thing although it is bad for you. Allah know, but you do not.[36]

> You may hate something in which Allah puts tremendous good.[37]

The subject of suffering has been studied by religious scholars because it is connected to Allah's justice and recompense. The Imamiya school reached the conclusion that the pain and suffering inflicted on human beings may have a positive or benign outcome and this is inflicted by Allah or another human beings or it may have a negative outcome and this is done by other human beings only. On this issue, Nasr al-Deen al-Toosi wrote:[38]

> Pain inflicted by us could be evil but that which is inflicted by Allah may be beneficial. The latter is considered to be benign either because we deserve it ot it provides us with some benefit or helps us to avoid a greater harm.

Al-Alama al-Hili expounded the Imamiya's viewpoint on pain and suffering as follows:[39]

> The Imamiya believe that the pain brought by Allah on his worshippers may be a punishment as the following verses indicate: 'You have learned of those of you that broke the Sabbath. We said to them: You shall be

changed into lowly apes."[40] And 'Do they not see how every year they were tested once or twice? Yet they neither repent not take heed."[41] This kind of pain is not compensated.

The other kind of pain is inflicted by Allah for a good cause and subject to the following conditions. First, it results in some benefit to the person concerned given the belief that Allah does not act haphazardly. Second, the person will receive compensation in excess of the pain he suffered... Hurting a person or an animal for no reason or benefit to the person or animal concerned is contrary to justice and fairness and it is impossible for Allah to do that.

Accordingly, Allah must compensate those upon whom underserved pain and suffering is inflicted such as illnesses, worries, forfeiture of certain benefits such as payment of zakat and any damage resulting from actions permitted by Him such as the slaughter of animals during pilgrimage and feasts, hurting animals and pain inflicted by verocious animals.

In conclusion, the Imamiya's belief on compensation for pain and suffering can be summarized in the following points:

1. There is no compensation for the suffering which a people or individuals bring upon themselves in fulfillment of Allah's justice and wisdom.

2. Suffering such as tiredness, wory, pain and wounds inflicted by Allah upon a person may be beneficial to that person in helping him to avoid a greater suffering or for some other purpose and in accordance with the principle of Allah's justice all such sufferings must be compensated.

3. The compensation received by a person for his suffering is so immense that if a person is given a choice he would certainly choose to endure the sufferings and be eligible for the compensation later.

4. On judgment Day, Allah will compensate those treated unjustly by others for their sufferings. According to Abdu al-Fatih al-Hussaini, "Allah would not only compensate those upon whom He had inflicted suffering but also those upon whom others have inflicted pain..."
5. Finally, Allah shall also compensate animals for their sufferings.[42]

Intercession

The following Quranic verse establishes the principle on which recompense in the afterlife is based:[43]

> Whoever has done an atom's weight of good shall see it, and whoever has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it also.

The Quranic also defines a related principle, namely intercession, in the following verses:

> None has the power to intercede for them save him who received a permission from the Merciful.[44]

> On that day we shall have the power to intercede for them except him that has received the Merciful's permission.[45]

> None can intercede with Allah except him who has received His permission. When fear is banished from their hearts they shall ask what has your Lord said? They shall answer: the truth. And He is the Most High, the Supreme One.[46]

> Those they pray to besides Him do not have the power to intercede save him who testifies to the truth, knowing it.[47]

> He knows what is before them and behind them. They intercede for none save those whom He approves and tremble for awe of Him.[48]

Pray during the night, an additional duty may your Lord exalt you to an honorable position.[49]

Beware of the day when every soul will stand alone: when neither intercession nor ransom shall be accepted from it, nor any help be given it.[50]

Who can intercede with Him except by His permission.[51]

Commenting on the verse 'Beware of the day when every soul stands alone: when neither intercession, nor ransom shall be accepted from it, nor any help be given it,' al-Tabrasi wrote: "According to commentators, the verse: 'No intercession shall be accepted from it,' applies to the Jews who claimed that the prophets who are their forefathers will intercede for them. In this verse Allah negates their claim. It is the consensus among Muslims that Prophet [Muhammed] can intercede and his intercession will be accepted. However, they differed on how this intercession is applied. It is the [Imamiya] belief that it helps in reducing punishment to which believers are liable for their sins. The Mutazila believed that intercession benefits obedient and repentent believers but not disobedient ones. According to the Imamiya, intercession can be performed by the Prophet, his devout companions, the Imams of the Prophet Household, and all devout believers. By accepting their intercession, Allah will pardon many sinners. This is confirmed by the Prophet's saying: 'I will intercede on the Day of Judgment and my intercession will be accepted. My Household will also intercede and their intercession will be accepted. The believer with the least right to intercede can intercede on behalf of forty of his brothers, each one of them deserving Hell's fire. On that day, the unbelievers will be sorrowful because they will be deprived of the benefits of intercession as the following verse: 'And we have no interceders or a close friends.'[52]

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Clarification of the principle of intercession and its application can also be found in the Prophet Tradition, such as the following account reported by Abu Thar:[53]

> During prayer one night, the Prophet repeatedly recited the verse: 'If you torment them they are your worshippers. If you pardon them, You are the Mighty and Wise One.' He did this every time he bowed or knelt down in prayer. After he finished, I said to him: 'Apostle, you repeatedly recited the verse whenever you bowed or knelt down in prayer? He said: I have asked Allah to grant me intercession on behalf of my nation and He did. With Allah's permission, it shall benefit anyone who worship only Allah.

Imam Ali also reported that the Prophet said: "My intercession is for those among my followers who commit cardinal sins."[54] The following sayings on intercession was reported by Abu Saeed al-Khudari:[55]

> One man from my nation will intercede on behalf of a group of persons who will enter Paradise because of his intercession. One man may intercede for a whole tribe who will enter Paradise because of his intercession. And a man may intercede for another man and his household and they shall enter Paradise because of his intercession.

Imam Jafar al-Sadiq emphasized the importance of the belief in intercession as a basic tenet of the Islamic faith; "Whoever rejected three things is not one of our followers: ascension of the Prophet to the heavens, accountability in the grave and intercession."[56] In a letter written to the Caliph al-Mamoun, Imam Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha asserted that "the sinners among those who believe in divine unity will enter Hell but will be discharged from it and may benefit from intercession."[57]

The Imamiya belief on intercession can now be summarized

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in the following points:

1. In response to intercession, the punishment which believers deserve for committing sins may be abolished.
2. Those who can intercede include the Prophet Muhammed, other prophets, Imams, martyrs and believers.
3. Intercession must be pre-approved by Allah.
4. Muslims who have committed cardinal sins may also benefit from intercession.

These beliefs are also shared by Sunni Muslim as the following statement indicates:[58]

> The Sunni believe that the Prophet and devout Muslims can intercede on behalf of Muslim sinners including those who have only an atom of faith but those who deny intercession are deprived from it.

Supplication through devout Muslims

One of the basic tenets of Islam that Allah alone created this universe and nothing occurs in it without His permission and that there is no force or thing that influence creation except Him. This belief does not contradict the causal order of things established by Allah. Causes of events in this world are of two kinds: natural such as those found in the laws of physics and biology, and subjective, i.e. subject to Allah's permission and will and include intercession, personal supplication and supplication through devout persons. The resort to interceders is not done because they have any power or influence over creation and Allah certainly hears a person's supplication directly and without the need for a intermediary but interceders are close to Allah as a result of their strong faith and this is why their intercession is sought.

Early Muslims used to supplicate through devout members of

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the Prophet Household because of their distinguished status. An example of this is the supplication of Omar ibn al-Khatab through al-Abbas, the Prophet's uncle as the following account reported by al-Yaqubi indicates:[59]

> The people were afflicted with drought and starvation was widespread in the *ramdha* year (18 A.H). Omar prayed for rain and the people joined him in prayer. He held al-Abbas ibn Abdul Mutalib's hand and said: Allah, we implore you by Your Prophet's uncle. Allah, do not disappoint them in their Prophet and following that it rained.

The Prophet sanctioned this practice as the following statement shows: "When a man supplicate for his brother in his absence, the Angel will say: Amen, and you shall have the same."[60] A person's intercession on behalf of a fellow Muslim is, therefore, acceptable. This intercession is justified on the basis of the status accorded by Allah to the person whose intercession is sought because of his devotion to the faith and piety. And since the supplication is through the status of that devout person it does not make a difference whether he is alive or dead because the status he earned in his life remains unchanged after his death.

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Chapter Eight

Al-Ijtihad and the Imamiya's Sources of Rules

During the lifetime of the Prophet, the Companions obtained the rules and interpretations of the Quran directly from him. Consequently, no legisaltive problem or disagreement arose among Muslims over the rules in that period. Divine revelation and prophetic explanation ceased with the Prophet's death but by that time the message had been transmitted in full and mankind had at its disposal all that it needed of divine guidance and legislation.

Social relations and conditions in human communities are continuously evolving and changing and new political, social, economic and other problems are faced at the individual, social and universal levels. And since Muslims are obliged to seek the religious rule on every issue or problem, Muslims, after the Prophet's death, resorted to the learned Companions of the Prophet to explain to them the Quran and the Traditions and derive from those sources the rules needed. Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib was recognized as the most knowledgeable among religious authorities from whom Abdullah ibn Abbas and Abdullah ibn Massoud learned much.

The Prophet testified to Ali's vast knowledge of religion when

he declared that "Ali is the best in judgment among you," and "I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate."[1] The Prophet also prayed that Ali would comprehend religious doctrine. This occurred when the following verse was revealed: "Attentive ears might comprehend it,"[2] and the Prophet said to Ali: 'I prayed that these will be your ears.'[3]

Ali's knowledge was also praised by the Prophet's wife Aisha who said: "He is the most knowledgeable of all people on the Tradition."[4]

Social development and change in Islamic communities gave rise to unprecedented issues which required appropriate religious rulings. As a result, the end of the first Hegira century and the beginning of the second century witnessed tremendous development in the fields of Islamic legislation, commentaries and thought. At the same time, new sects were born and the theoretical framework for *ijtihad* was established. During that period also, the two Imams. al-Baqir and al-Sadiq emerged as the founders of a school which strongly advocated adherence to the Quran and the Tradition while recognizing the proper role of the intellect in understanding Islam and opposing attempts to undermine the Prophet Tradition. Muslim scholars, theologians and historians acknowledged the intellectual contribution of the Imams al-Baqir and al-Sadiq and their eminence in devotion to Islam, piety and the struggle to propagate and defined Islam..

As other sects were named after their founders such as Abu Hanifa's sect. Malik's sect. and Ahmed ibn Hanbal's sect, the school of the Prophet Household became known as the Jafari sect in recognition of the immense contribution of Imam Jafar al-Sadiq to this sect in terms of knoweldge on the Quran and the Tradition and explanation of religious tenets and laws.

The Imamiya scholars were not the only students taught by

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the Imams al-Baqir and al-Sadiq. The Sunni Imams Abu Hanifa and Malik were also taught by Imam al-Sadiq and since Abu Hanifa educated al-Shafi who in turn taught Ibn Hanbal then it can be seeen that the chain of learning of the founders of the Sunni sects can be traced back to Imam Jafar al-Sadiq. These theologians, however, developed their own independent schools of religious thought.

The Imams al-Baqir and al-Sadiq were highly praised by scholars belonging to other sects such as Ibn Saad who described al-Baqir as "an authority and knowledgeable about religion and [the Prophet's] sayings."[5] Sabt ibn al-Jawzi cited the following statement on al-Baqir by Ata, a prominent early theologian: "I have never found how little scholars know except in the presence of Abi Jafar (al-Baqir)."[6] Ibn al-Imad al-Hanbali also praised him as follows:[7]

> Abu Jafar Muhammed al-Baqir was one of the theologians of Medina. He was called al-Baqir because he 'cut open' religious knowledge. comprehended its bases and the vague aspects of it, and developed and added to it.

Similarily, Jafar al-Sadiq was highly praised by biographers such as Ibn Habban who wrote that "he was one of the masters of the Prophet Household in theology, religious knowledge and eminence. He was quoted by al-Thawri, Malik, Shuba and others."[8] Al-Saji was reported to have said that "al-Sadiq was truthful and reliable. And if his sayings are reported by reliable sources than they are authentic. According to al-Nisai, he was an authority whom Malik frequented for some time and he said that every time he visited him he was either praying, fasting or reading the Quran."[9]

Muhammed Abu Zahra, the late Shaikh of al-Azhar introduced his volume on Imam al-Sadiq as follows: "I have

decided with Allah's help to write on Imam Jafar al-Sadiq after writing on seven prominent imams. But this should not be understood to mean that his religious knowledge is less than any of them. On the contrary, not only he was ahead of most of them but he also benefited the greatest among them. Abu Hanifa learned from him and praised him as the most informed person about differences in opinion and the most knowledgeable theologian. Imam Malik frequented him as a student and a narrator. Having taught Abu Hanifa and Malik is a clear indicator of his eminence in religion surpassed by none. Furthermore, he is the grandson of Zain al-Abdeen [Ali ibn al-Hussain] who was the most prominent person in Medina at his time due to his knowledge of religion and high status. Many Muslim's including Ibn Shuhab al-Zuhri were taught by him. Al-Sadiq's father is Muhammed al-Baqir who 'cut open' knowledge and reached its essence. Al-Baqir possessed, by Allah's favor, not only a self-earned eminence in religion but also the additional honor of being a Hashemite and a descendant of the Prophet.

We believe that al-Sadiq was an Imam in theology who had a distinct line of thought. He took from companions and early Muslims who preceeded him and especially prominent members of his household." Abu Zahra adds: "Imam al-Sadiq was one of the distinguished theologian of his times, if not the most distinguished. His knowledge of theology was acclaimed by the theologian. Imam Abu Hanifa whom al-Shafi praised him as follows: "People owe much in theology to Abu Hanifa." In one meeting, Abu Hanifa asked Imam al-Sadiq about forty issues and he answered him by pointing out what the Iraqi and the Hijazi (Medina and Mecca) theologians thought regarding each issue and whether he agreed with either of the two opinions or favored a different view. This incident prompted Abu Hanifa to

say that "the most knowledgeable person is the one who knows about differences in opinions."[10]

In addition to his knowledge of theology, Imam al-Sadiq was a narrator of the Tradition, and Sunni theologians who reported the Tradition from him include Sufian ibn Uyainah, Sufian al-Thawri who was also one of his disciples. Malik, Abu Hanifa, Yahya ibn Saad al-Ansari, as well as collectors of the Tradition such as Abu Dawood, al-Thirmithi, al-Nisai, Ibn Maja and al-Darqutni.

Before al-Baqir and al-Sadiq there was Imam Ali ibn al-Hussain, al-Baqir's father. Ali ibn al-Hussain was known as Zain al-Abdeen (literally the best of worshippers) because of his devotion to worship, piety and vast knowledge of religion. Al-Zuhri, a prominent scholar and one of the Imam's students said: "I have never seen a Quraishi better than Ali ibn Al-Hissain."[12] Similarily, Imam Malik praised him by saying that "there is no one like Ali ibn al-Hussain in the Prophet Household."[13] Also, al-Shafi described him as "the most learned of the Medina citizens in theology."[14]

It is worth remembering that Zain al-Abdeen's father was Imam al-Hussain ibn Ali, the martyred grandson of the Prophet, and his uncle was Imam al-Hassan while his grand-father was Imam Ali ibn Abi Talib. The list of the Imams of the Prophet Household who reported the Prophet Tradition and taught Muslims the Islamic doctrines, laws and theology include the following:

1. Ali ibn Abi Talib: born ten years before the beginning of the Prophet's mission and was martyred on the 21st of Ramadan in 40A.H.

2. Al-Hassan ibn Ali ibn Abi Talib: born in 3A.H and died of poisoning in 50AH.

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3. Al-Hussain ibn Ali: born in 4AH. and was martyred in Kerbala on the 10th of Muharam in 61AH.

4. Ali ibn al-Hussain (Zain al-Abdeen): born in 38AH. and died in 94AH.

5. Muhammed ibn Ali ibn al-Hussain (al-Baqir): born in 57AH and died in 117AH.

6. Jafar ibn Muhammed (al-Sadiq): born in 80AH and died in 148AH.

7. Musa ibn Jafar ibn Muhammed (al-Kadhim) born in 128 and was martyred in 183AH in caliph al-Rashid's prison in Baghdad. He was renowned for his religious knowledge which earned him the following praise by the famous biographer al-Razi: "Musa ibn Jafar reported from his father and was described as a reliable authority and one of the Muslim's Imams."[15] The biographer al-Dhabi wrote that Imam 'Musa was one of the most generous, pious and wisest of believers and his shrine is located in Baghdad."[16] Al-Shabalanji also praised him for his piety and knowledge.'[17]

8. Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha (148 - 203 AH): He was born in Medina and in 201AH Caliph al-Mamoun chose him as his heir to the caliphate. Al-Asqalani testified that al-Ridha "was a man of knowledge and eminence in religion in addition to his honorable ancestory."[18] His vast religious knowledge eraned him the highest acclaim.[19]

9. Muhammed ibn Ali al-Jawad (195 - 220 AH). He was born in Medina. In his biography of the Imam, al-Safadhi wrote that "Muhammed ibn Ali is the Jawad ibn al-Ridha ibn Musa al-Kadhim. He was called al-Jawad (the generous), al-Qani, and al-Murtadha and was one of the elite of the Prophet Household."[20]

10. Ali ibn Musa al-Hadi (214 - 254 AH). Al-Dhabi included a biography of the Imam in his book on the history of Islam in which he described him as "a theologian, and one of the Twelve [Imams], and the Imamiya cal him al-Hadi."[21] Al-Haithami wrote that "Ali al-Hadi inherited his father's knowledge and generosity."[22] The biographer Abu al-Falah al-Hanbali al-Yafi described him as "a theologian and a devout Imam."[23] He was burried in Samara in Iraq.

11. Al-Hassan ibn Ali al-Askari (232 - 260 AH). He was born in Medina and according to Ibn al-Jawzi, "he was a reliable scholar who reported the Prophet's sayings from his father and grandfathers."[24]

12. Muhammed ibn al-Hassan al-Mahdi: He is the Mehdi foretold by the Prophet in several of his authentic sayings such as the following: "If there was only one day left in the lifetime of the world, Allah would send a man from my Household to fill it with justice after it has been filled with injustice."[25] The biographer Ibn Khulkan wrote that al-Mahdi was "the Twelfth Imam according to the Imamiya's belief and is known as al-Hujja."[26]

On the necessity of recognizing the Imams of the Prophet Household, Al-Asfraini wrote the following:[27]

> With regard to pious early Muslims, it is the consensus among the Sunni that the immigrant and Medina Companions were true believers. They also share in their devotion to al-Hassan, al-Hussain and other descendants of the Prophet such as al-Hassan ibn al-Hassan, Abdullah ibn al-Hassan, Ali ibn al-Hussain Zain al-Abdeen, Muhammed ibn Ali ibn al-Hussain al-Baqir to whom the Companion Jabir ibn Abdullah al-Ansari conveyed the Prophet's greetings, Jafar ibn Muhammed known as al-Sadiq, Musa ibn Jafar, Ali

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ibn Musa al-Ridha and all persons who followed the
path of their pious, sinless fathers.

These are the Imams of the Prophet Household who were
referred to and praised in the Quran, and by the Prophet and
Muslim scholars. Their religious knowledge, piety and high
moral calibre qualified them to become the intellectual and
political leaders of the Muslims. The school of the Prophet
Household relied entirely on the Quran and the Tradition from
the time of Imam Ali till the time of Imam Muhammed ibn al-
Hassan al-Mehdi. Throughout this period, the Imams were the
reliable sources of religious knowledge and the Prophet
Tradition. According to al-Hafiz ibn Uqda al-Zaidi, the
number of those who reported from Imam Jafar al-Sadiq
amounted to almost four thousands.

Sources of rules in the Imamiya school

The Imamiya school recognized the following sources of
legisaltion:
1. The Quran.
2. The Prophet Tradition.
3. The intellect or reason.
4. Consensus.

As will be shown later, the Quran and the Tradition are
sufficient sources of the laws and there is no issue or problem for
which a rule can not be found in these two sources without
denying the admissibility of deduction as a source of rulings.
With regard to consensus, it is considered by the Imamiya as a
tool for identifying rules and not as a legitimate source or base
for rules.

On the subject of sources of legisaltion, al-Sadir wrote: "It is
necessary to point out that the sources used in arriving at rulings

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are the Holy Quran, and the Prophet Tradition as reported by reliable narrators regardless of their sectarian affliation. As for *qiyas* (i.e. reasoning by analogy and comparison), *istihsan* and other methods we do not think that there are sufficient justification for using them. With regard to reason or intellectual evidence, theologians disagreed on whether it is admissible or not. It is my opinion that it is acceptable but I have not come across a single ruling based entirely on intellectual evidence because any ruling arrived at through this method is certainly stipulated in the Quran or the Tradition. As for *idjma* (or consensus of learned doctors) it is not a source of rulings like the Quran and the Tradition but can be relied upon as a tool of proof in some cases. In conclusion, the only legitimate sources of rulings are the Quran and the Tradition. We pray to Allah to help us in adhering strongly to them because as the following Quranic verse[29] indicates he who does so 'shall grasp a firm handle that will never break. Allah hears all and knows all."[30]

The historical study of legislation and sources of religious rulings clearly indicates that the school of the Prophet Household strongly adhered to the path drawn by the Prophet and the Imams in endorsing the Quran and the Tradition as the sources of rulings. When sects and theological schools emerged and some of the leaders of these sects, like Abu Hanifa deduced causes from available rulings to arrive at new rulings by comparison, the Imams of the Prophet Household beginning with Imams al-Baqir and al-Sadiq initiated a debate with these leaders on the sources of rulings and strongly urged adherence to the Quran and the Tradition as the only sufficient sources of rulings and deductions.

The position of the Imams of the Prophet Household on this issue is represented in their numerous sayings and accounts

collected by al-Kulaini in his manuscript aptly entitled "Referring Everything to the Quran and the Tradition: whatever is permitted or forbidden or that people need is stated in the Quran and the Tradition." The same author reported that Imam al-Sadiq asserted that "Allah revealed clarification of everything in the Quran. Allah left out nothing that a believer need to know so that no one can say: 'If only this was revealed in the Quran,' because Allah has certainly revealed it in the Quran."[31] In the same source, al-Sadiq is reported to have said: "'When I speak to you, you can ask me about things in Allah's Book.. Allah's Apostle forbade idle talk and questions and the expenditure of money on forbidden causes.' He was asked: where is this found in the Quran? He answered: 'In the following verses:

> There is no benefit in much of their councels: only in his who orders charity, kindness and peace among men[32]; and

> Do not give the feeble-minded the wealth with which Allah has entrusted you.[33]; and

> Do not ask questions about things which, if made known to you, could only annoy you.[34]

When Imam Musa ibn Jafar was asked by one of his companions: Is everything in the Holy Book and the Prophet Tradition or do you add your opinions? He answered: "Everything is in the Holy Book and the Prophet Tradition."[35]

The general principle on this issue is found in the following saying of the Prophet reported by Imam al-Sadiq: "For every right there is a truth, and for every righteousness there is a light so endorse whatever agrees with the Quran and reject whatever disagrees with it."[36]

When the Imam al-Sadiq was asked about differences and contradictions betweeen sayings he said: "If a saying is

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supported by the Quran or the Prophet Tradition you should accept it." He also asserted that "everything must originate in the Quran and the Tradition and any saying that does not conform to the Quran is fabricated."[37]

In a conversation with Yahya ibn Aktham, Imam Muhammed al-Jawad said:[38]

> The Prophet said on the Farewell Pilgrimage: 'Those who fabricate sayings and attribute them to me have become numerous and shall even increase more after I am gone. He who does so intentionally shall occupy his due place in Hell. If you hear a saying ascribed to me, check it against the Quran and the Tradition. If it is consistent with the Quran and the Tradition accept it, but you must reject all that is inconsistent with the Quran.[38]

Imam al-Sadiq also reported the following statement by the Prophet: "Whatever you receive that is ascribed to me and is consistent with the Quran, then it is my saying. If it is inconsistent with the Quran, then it is not my saying."[39] The Imam also said: "He who contradicts the Quran and Muhammed's Tradition blasphemes."[39] Further confirmation of this principle is included in the following statement by Imam al-Baqir: "He who transgress the Tradition must be brought back to it."[40] The following account also serves to underline the significance of this principle in the identification of religious rules:[41]

> Younis said: I travelled to Iraq where I met few of the companions of Imam al-Baqir and several companions of Imam al-Sadiq. I copied many of the Imams' sayings which they had recorded. I then showed these to Imam al-Ridha who said to me: Abu al-Khatab falsified sayings and ascribed them to Imam al-Sadiq. May Allah curse him and his followers who still insert such

statements into the writings of Imam al-Sadiq. So don not accept as ours anything that disagrees with the Quran, because when we speak we do in agreement with the Quran and the Tradition, and we report only what Allah and the Prophet said. We never say: this person or that person said [so and so] because then our statements may be confused. The sayings of our first Imam is the same as that of the last of us and the sayings of the first Imam confirm what the last of us said. If anyone tells you differently, you should reject [his accounts]... because with every one of our sayings there is truth and light. Whatever is not supported by the truth and there is no light on it must be the saying of the devil.

From the above it can be firmly concluded that the sources of all laws and rulings in the school of the Prophet Household are the Quran and the Tradition. Accordingly, they defined *ijtihad*, i.e. logical deduction, as exerting on effort to deduce rulings from these sources or in their light.

The principal task of the Imams of the Prophet Household was safeguarding and applying the Quran and the Tradition and because of their devotion to performing this noble task the Imams Ali, al-Hassan, al-Hussain and Musa ibn Jafar were martyred and the other Imams were persecuted.

Understanfing the Quran and the Tradition and deducing from them

After establishing that the Quran and the Tradition are the sources of rulings and that *ijtihad* is the tool of deducing from them, it is useful to explain the Imamiya's method for understanding the Quran and the Tradition and deducing from them. This method is explained in the following sections.

The Quran is the primary source of legislation

The Quran is regarded by the Imamiya as the primary and basic source of legislation and theology. There are approximately 500 verses in the Quran of a legislative nature. The Quran is also the holy text against which the authentically of sayings and accounts attributed to the Prophet are checked, regadless of whether these are reported by the Imams ot other narrators. The Imamiya school is strongly committed to the verification of every tradition before accepting or rejecting it in accordance with the principle laid down by Imam al-Sadiq: "everything must originate in the Quran and any saying that does not conform to the Quran is fabricated."

Evidence from the literal Quran

The Imamiya Shia believe that theological deduction fron the Quran is based on the conviction that the Quran is the divine text safeguarded from corruption. They also confirm that the text available ot us now is the same one revealed to the Prophet and as a result there is no need to prove the authenticity of the Quran because Allah has vowed to preserve it from corruption and alteration as the following verse indicates:

> We revealed the Quran and shall Ourselves preserve
> it.[42]

Obtaining the theological laws in the Quran is based on accepting the obvious meaning of the Quran as evidence. The Quran is evidently a divine message directed to all mankind at all times and places. Undoubtedly, the Prophet communicated the full text of the Quran without any deletion and he conveyed all that he was commanded by Allah to transmit of obligations and laws to his followers and did not conceal anything from them. This was done in Arabic as spoken and understood by his comtemporaries as the following verses show:

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> We have made the Quran easy to remember; but will any take heed.[43]

> We have sent each apostle with a message in his people's tongue to make clear to them...[44]

The deductive approach adopted by the Imamiya Shia in understanding the Quran is based on the principle of seeking the obvious meanings of the Quran. Contrary to what some claim, they did not search for hidden or symbolic meanings. Accordingly, they applied themselves entirely to the comprehensive and analytical study of Quranic terms to arrive at their meanings in the context of the common usage and understading of the Arabic language at the times of the Prophet.

Al-Sadir distinguished between the literal or obvious evidence, i.e. the *nas* or text, and the *mujmal* or concise evidence. He defined first the *mujmal* or concise evidence as "that which can have one of two or several of meanings that can be justifiably associated with it." The *nas* or text, however, has one and only one acceptable meaning. If the Quranic text can have either of two meanings of which one customarily comes to mind then it is called the obvious or apparent evidence. As for dealing with each of these, al-Sadr explains that the *mujmal* or concise evidence can be used for the purpose of establishing the commonalities among probabilities. The application of the *nas* or text is, on the other hand, mandatory. Finally, the obvious meanings can be sought by the following means:

1. By following the methodologies employed by the theologians among the companions of the Prophet and the Imams.
2. Using intellectual evidence.
3. Endorsing whatever calls for adherence to the Quran and the Tradition.[45]

This clearly shows that in their search for meanings and understanding, the Imamiya did not look for symbolic or

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hidden meanings and avoided historical excercises. Instead, they defined interpretation as simply "the search for the meaning of difficult terms."[46]

The Prophet Tradition

The Prophet Tradition includes all that emnated from the Prophet in the form of oral or written communications and deeds.[47] It is considered to be the second source of legislation in the Imamiya theology. In specific, the Imamiya regarded the Tradition as the source of explanations of the Quran and Quranic laws. The Quran commands believers to endorse the tradition and apply its commandments as the following verse indicates:[48]

> Whatever the Apostle gives you, accept it: and whatever he forbids you forbear from it.

The Prophet also urged Muslims to memorize, record and narrate his sayings: "May Allah bless any person who listened to my saying and reported it. It is possible that the transmitter of religious knowledge may not be himself a theologian, and it is possible that the transmitter of religious knowledge may convey it to others who are more steeped in theology."[49] Similarily, the Prophet said: "May Allah have mercy on my successors," and he repeated it three times. When he was asked about these successors, he replied: "They are the ones who narrate my sayings and traditions after my departure."[50]

The Prophet also encouraged the preservation of his sayings in writing as the following account shows: "Omar ibn Shuaib reported that his grandfather asked the prophet: we do not memorize your sayings, shouldn't we then write them down? The Prophet said: Yes, write them down." The same source also reported that Abdullah ibn Amro ibn al-A's said: "I used to

write down whatever I heard from the Apostle so that I can memorize it but men from [the tribe of] Quraish ordered me to stop claiming that the Apostle is an ordianry person who sometimes speaks in anger... so I stopped. I then mentioned this to Apostle who pointed at his mouth and said: "Write it down. By the One who has my life in His Hand, nothing comes out of it but the truth."[51]

Historical sources indicates that opinions differed regarding the transcription of the Tradition. The Imams of the Prophet Household believed that it was necessary to write down the Tradition and preserve it from loss and corruption. Imam Ali and his son al-Hassan ordered the transcription of the Prophet's sayings and documenting their sources. According to al-Dailami, Imam Ali said: "When you write down a saying, you should also mention its source."[52] Imam Ali himself recorded the Prophet's sayings in a scroll which the Imams inherited from him.

On the other hand, the Caliphs Abu Bakr and Omar forbade the transcription of the Prophet's sayings and the Omayyid rulers also enforced this ban until Omar ibn Abdul Aziz became caliph and sent the following message to the people of Medina: "Look fot the Apostle's sayings and write them down because I fear that these will fade out and the persons who remember them will pass away. Ibn Shuaib al-Zuhri was the first to write down the sayings and after that many collections appeared."[53]

The ban on transcribing the Prophet's sayings by Abu Bakr, Omar, Othman and most Omayyid rulers and the destruction of collections prepared by some of the Companions had a negative impact on the Sunni school. As a result of this policy, this school lost many of the authentic sayings of the Prophet while hundreds of thousands of fabricated sayings and accounts especially those based on Jewish stories and legends were

introduced as prominent collectors of sayings such as al-Bukhari, Ahmed and Muslim admitted. Al-Bukhari confirmed that the 7275 sayings he included in his *al-Saheeh* were chosen from a told of 600,000 sayings attributed to the Prophet.[54] Similarily, Ibn Hanbal reported that he chose the contents of his collection of the Prophet's sayings entitled *al-Masnad* from a total of 750,000 sayings.[55]

To compensate for the loss of numerous sayings and accounts, Sunni theologains had to resort to the methods of *qiyas* and *istihsan* to arrive at religious rulings. In contrast, the Imams of the Prophet Household wrote down the Prophet's Tradition which was handed down from one Imam to another. All of the Imams were known for their truthfulness and reliability and thus there was no weak link in the chain of narrators of the Tradition in the Imamiya school. Consequently, there was no need resort to other sources of legislation besides the Quran and the Tradition.

The Companions' tradition

One of the major controversial issues in Islamic thought is whether or not the traditions of the Companions can be accepted as a source of rulings. The disagreement between the Imamiya Shia and other sects over this issue centered around the following tow points:
1. Definition of the *sahib* or companion.
2. The justification for accepting whatever emnated from the Companions as a tradition that must be followed.

In the following sections, opinions on these topics will be briefly reviewed and discussed.
1. *Who qualifies to be included among the Prophet's Companions:*
   The dictionary defines a companion as "a close associate such as a human beings or on animal, a place... It makes no

differences whether the association is physical, i.e. in person, which is the common implication or [symbolic] in the form of showing interest or care... It is commonly used to refer to the one who is frequently associated with."[56]

The following definition of the companion could be regarded as representative of the Sunni's viewpoint:

> The Companion is the one who met the Prophet, believed in him and died as a Muslim, whether this association is long or short, whether he reported his sayings or not, and whether he fought with him or not. It applies also to anyone who saw him in person but did not sit with him and anyone who did not see him because of his blindness.[57]

The Imamiya Shia rejected this definition arguing that the word companion has a definite meaning in language and it does not apply to those who saw the Prophet once, visited him, sat with him or were his contemporaries from a distance. They asserted that this label should be applied only to those who believed the Prophet, were closely assocaited with him, listened to him, emulated him and took part in his undertaking by words and deeds.

The Imamiya alos calssified the Companions into different groups in accordance with their knowledge, piety and judgment. They justified this by drawing attention to individual difference, and primarily to the Quranic evidence regading variations in the strength of convictions of Muslims who were contemporaries of the Prophet such as the following verses:

> Some of them say: Give us leave to stay behind, and do not expose us to temptation. Surely they have already succumbed to temptation.[58]

> Some worship Allah on the borderline. If he is endowed with good fortune he would be content, but when an

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ordeal befalls him, he turns upon his heels forfeiting
this life and the afterlife.[59]

Commenting on the second verse, Ibn Abbas said that at that
time a man arriving at Medina would praise Islam as a good
faith if his wife gave birth to a boy or his horse was with foal. If
not, he would say that it is a bad religion.[60]

The following verses describe those contemporaries of the
Prophet whose faith was weak or superficail.

They say: Our homes are defenceless. In truth, they are
not, they only wish to flee.[61]

There are some among them who speak ill of you
concerning the distribution of alms. If a share is given
them, they are contented, but if they receive nothing,
they grow resentful.[62]

On the other hand, the true believers are described in the
following verses:

But there are others who would give away their lives in
order to find favor with Allah. Allah is compassionate
to His worshippers.[63]

Among the believers there are men who have been
true to Allah. Some have died, and others await their
end, exhibiting no change.[64]

All those referred to in these verses believed in the Prophet,
saw him and lived near him. Nevertheless, the Quran calssified
them in terms of the sincerity and strength of their faith and
even described some of them as lacking the quality of *adala* or
fair judgment. An explanation of these verses can be found in
the following saying of the Prophet:

On the Day of Judgment, and observing that some of
my followers are being led away I would say: Mu Lord,
they are my companions. I would be told: You do not
know what they have committed after you passed

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away. I would then say as the Pious Believer [i.e. the
Prophet Jesus] said: I was a witness on them while I
lived among them but after I died You are their
Overseer. I will be told then: These have turned on their
heels since the day you left them.[65]

The fact that the faith of some of the early Muslims was weak
is indicated in the following condemnation of Abu Sufian by
Imam Ali after the Sakifa's decision: "By Allah you only seek to
create dissent and controversy among Muslims and you always
whished to undermine Islam. I have no need for your advice."

In view of this overwhelming evidence, the Imamiya Shia
asserted that not all those who embraced Islam and saw the
Prophet possessed religious knowledge and sound judgment
because it is also probable that some of them lacked both. It
would be more reasonable to conclude that while some of them
were steeped in religious knowledge, others needed someone to
explain religious laws to them. Accordingly, the Imamiya Shia
would propbably approve of the following definition of the
Companion by al-Asqalani:

We do not consider as Companions all those who saw
the Prophet, visited him occasionally, or met him for a
specific purpose and then departed. Instead we refer to
those who kept his company, supported him, and
followed the faith revealed to him. They were truly the
triumphant ones.[66]

On the basis of this definition, the Imamiya argued that not
all those who are generally and indiscriminately described as the
Prophet's Companions can be accepted as reliable sources of the
Tradition. Moreover, the traditions of those Companions can
not be regarded as legitimate sources of deduction and rulings,
contrary to what other sects maintained. The Companions'
rulings was one of the sources of laws endorsed by the Sunni

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Imam Ahmed ibn Hanbal.[67] Abu Hanifa also indicated that he relied on these rulings: "If I can not find a ruling in the Quran or the Prophet Tradition I would endorse the sayings of his Companions, chosing among them as I wish."[68] Justification of this practice is usually based on the following saying attributed to the Prophet:[69]

> My Companions are like stars and whomever you follow among them will guide you correctly.

Most experts on the Tradition agree that this saying is not adequately supported while al-Jawziah dismissed it as unauthentic.[70] After reporting other scholars' criticisms of its narrator Jafar ibn Abdul Wahid al-Hashim because of his unauthentic and fabricated accounts, al-Dhabi stated that "one of his blunders was the saying: my companions are like stars..."[71] Ibn Taimia also concluded that since the authenticity of this saying was disputed by experts on the Prophet's sayings, it is therefore inadmissible.

In addition, the following saying was also advanced as justifying the acceptance of whatever emnated from the Companions, i.e. their traditions: "Follow my Tradition and that of the guided, rational Caliphs, and [adhere to them strongly]."[72] Al-Razi, however, reported that this sayings's chain of narrators includes an unreliable source, namely Buqia al-Waleed.[73] This was also the opinion of al-Asqalani,[74] and Abdul Rahman ibn Amro al-Salmi. Consequently, this saying is judged to be unauthentic. The Imamiya Shia believe that the Companion is a narrator whose accounts of the Tradition must be rigorously scrutinized while his own statements can not be accepted as a source of legislation unless these conform to the Quran and the Tradition.

Traditions of the Imams of the Prophet Household

According to al-Shaikh al-Mufeed, there are three sources of rulings: the Quran, the Prophet Tradition and the Imam's sayings. This represents the Imamiya Shia belief that all that emnated firm the Imams of the Prophet Household, i.e. Ali, his two sons al-Hassan and al-Hussain and nine Imams of al-Hussain's descendants, must be endorsed and relied upon in deducing rulings in accordance with the following saying of the Prophet:[75]

> I am about to answer the call [i.e. die] and I leave with you the two heavy things: Allah's Book and my Household. Allah has informed me that they shall not separate until they join me at the Pool [in Paradise]. See how you treat them after my departure.

Furthermore, the religious knowledge of Imam Ali and his excellence in this field was confirmed by the Prophet's sayings: "Ali is the best in judgment among you" and "I am the city of knowledge and Ali is its gate." The Imamiya Shia also point at the numerous testimonies by leaders and scholars of other sects that the Imams of the Prophet Household excelled in religious knowledge. It follows, they argued, that these Imams must be followed and their rulings given precedence over the opinions of the others. The Imamiya Shia also emphasize that these Imams inherited their knowledge from each other and ultimately from the Prophet who favored the first Imam, Ali, with his tutoring and special attention. Consequently, their chain of learning was not exposed to external negative influences. It should also be remembered that the Imams relied entirely on the Quran and the Tradition as the two sources from which they derived religious rulings. This was clearly stated by Imam al-Sadiq in his replies to Suwara ibn Qulaib who asked him first: "From what the Imam obtain the rulings? the Imam answered: The Quran. I

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[Suwara ibn Qulaib] said: And if he can not find it in the Quran? He said: The Prophet Tradition. I then asked him: And what if he can not find it in either the Quran or the Tradition? He answered: everything is in the Quran and the Tradition."[76]

Jabir, one of Imam al-Sadiq's companion reported that the Imam told him: "If we rule on the bases of our opinions and whims then we are lost but all our rulings are based on the Prophet's Tradition and the knowledge we inherited [ultimately from him] which we cherish like some people cherish their gold and silver."[77] Before him, his father Imam al-Baqir said: "If we rely on our opinions we may go astray as those who were led astray before us. We rely only on the evidence revealed by God to His Prophet who in turn gave it to us."[78]

Undoubtedly, Allah favors with His guidance those who demonstrate their devotion to Allah and piety, as the experience of true believers attest to and the following verses support:

> Those who fight for Our cause We will surely guide to our Own paths.[79]

> Those who follow the right path. Allah will strengthen their faith.[80]

> Allah guides to His Light whom He will.[81]

> Surely in this there is a sign for true believers.[82]

> Allah will strengthen the faithful with His steadfast Word.[83]

This divine guidance bestowed on the Imams which the Imamiya scholars call 'inspiration' is in fact synonymous with the Sunni concept of *idjma* which al-Amidi al-Hanbali explained as follows: If the question is raised: Do they reach a rulings on the bases of the religious texts, i.e. the Quran and the Tradition, or other sources of deduction, the answer would be: Evidence is not necessary here, but the consensus may emnate from

guidance, that is when Allah guides them to choose the right thing.[84]

Before concluding this section on the Tradition it must be pointed out that the verbal part of the Tradition is understood in the same way as the Quran. Interpreting the deeds of the Prophet. however. needs specific evidence. Thus, any deed performed or sanctioned by the Prophet or the Imams is permissible but proving that it is compulsory requires further evidence. Similarily, what the Prophet or the Imam refrained from doing is not necessarily forbidden and further evidence is needed to prove whether it is forbidden or permissible.

Verification of the Tradition

The Tradition is the reservoir of Islamic laws. However, some unscrupulous narrators have intentionally falsified sayings or introduced unsupported accounts in the Tradition. Even at the time of the Prophet there were such attempts which prompted him to warn his followers of them. To eliminate these unauthentic sayings and accounts, the Imamiya Shia introduced the discipline of *Elm al-Rijal*, i.e. biographies, to study the records of each narrator in order to assess his reliability and thus decide whether to accept or reject his reports. Accordingly, they authored numerous biographical works which include a register of narrators and a critical assessment of their reliability on the bases of their conduct. The rigorous method for performing this assessment laid down by the Imamiya specifies in detail the evidence required to evaluate each case. The most important of these biographical sources are those authored by al-Toosi, al-Najashi, al-Kishi and ibn al-Ghadiri. Theologians of other sects have also developed their own methods and criteria for assessing a narrator's reliability and those vary from one sect to another.

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Applying these criteria by the Imamiya scholars led to the rejection of many accounts and sayings attributed to the Prophet and the Imams. Consequently, only accounts which satisfy the rigorous conditions for authenticity are actually accepted.

The need to evaluate the Tradition on the bases of the character and conduct of the narrator means that none of the available collections of Tradition can be accepted as totally authentic whether these were prepared by the Imamiya Shia such as *al-Kafi, Min La Yahthurhu al-Faqih, al-Tahtheeb,* and *al-Istibsar* or by Sunni scholars such as the collections of al-Bukhari, Muslim, al-Nisai, al-Tirmithi and Ibn Maja.

Imamiya scholars argue that sayings included in thses sources can be accepted only if the reliability of their narrators is established and regardless of their sectarian affiliation. As a result, several of the narrators cited by them belong to the Sunni sects such as Muhammed ibn Qayis whose accounts appear in most works by Shia theologians. The objectivity of this rigorous method was emphasized by al-Sadr in his discussion of the sources of rulings: "It is essential that we briefly point out the sources used in arriving at these rulings. As we mentioned earlier, these include the Quran as well as the Tradition as related by trustworthy [narrators] regardless of their sect."

Although opinions on this issue somewhat vary within the Imamiya school, the following principles are generally regarded as the criteria for evaluating sayings or accounts:
1. An account or a saying must not contradict the Quran.
2. An account or a saying is accepted only if it is reported by a reliable narrator.
3. The sectarian affiliation of the narrator must be neglected when his reliability is assessed.
4. A narrator whose reliability is confirmed by one biographer

but criticized by another must be disqualified.

5. Accounts narrated by single chains of narrators have finally been accepted. Originally opinions differed on whether these are acceptable or not. Among the prominent scholars who rejected them were al-Shaikh al-Mufeed, al-Sayid al-Murtadha and Ibn Idrees while those who defended accepting them included al-Toosi.

6. In the seventh Hegira century and at the time of the scholar Ibn Taoos and his student al-Alama al-Hili, the single-narrator accounts were classified into four categories. After a long debate this calssification was endorsed by the Imamiya school as a scale for measuring the strength of such accounts. This classification had been earlier accepted by the Sunni sects. According to this calssification, single-chain accounts were classified on the bases of the reliability of their narrators into the following categories:

1. *Saheeh*, i.e. correct or authentic accounts;
2. *Hassan*, i.e. good accounts.
3. *Muwathaq* or documented account.
4. *Daheef* or weak account.

Supporters of this calssifications believe that single-chain accounts should be accepted in spite of the doubt over-shadowing them since there is evidence from the Quran and the Tradition supporting them.

With regard to *mutawatir* or multiple-chain accounts, i.e. accounts reported by several chains of narrators, the Imamiya Shia agree that being reported by several chains of narrators which nullifies the possibility of collusion among them in fabricating the accounts constitutes conclusive evidence of the authenticity of these accounts as al-Hili explain.[85]

The multiple-chain accounts are necessary for obtain-

ing religious knowledge. As for treating this knowledge, Abu Hashim of the Mutazila school and his followers believe that it is *dharuri*, i.e. not requiring substantiation. Al-Mufeed who is one of [the Imamiya] believes that it is *kasbi*, i.e. requiring proof. Its verification is conducted as follows: If we hear an account from a single source then we regard it as a possibility but if it is repeated by other narrators, this probability increases in strength until it is accepted as a fact.

Using al-Muhaqiq al-Hili's reasoning, al-Sadr explained how results obtained from multiple-chain accounts are arrived at:[86]

The truth is that certainty regarding a multiple-chain account is of an objective, inductive nature. According it is arrived at after numerous supporting proofs accumulate. Each narration is regarded as a probabilstic evidence but when it is repeated the evidence increases and accumulates and thus the probability of the authenticity of the multiple-chain account increases, and simultaneously the probability that it is unauthentic decreases until it approaches nouhgt.

7. Scholars of the Imamiya Shia found several accounts whose chains of narrators include unreliable persons and also weak accounts that were used and relied upon by earlier scholars who lived soon after the times of the Imams. This issue received wide attention and discussion among scholars. A group of them argued that the endorsement of these accounts by these early scholars compensate for any insufficiency in their supporting evidence because they believed that more knowledge were available to these scholars than later scholars. However, another group of scholars rejected this argument refusing to consider the endorsement of an account by early scholars as sufficient evidence of its authenticity. The same disagreement arose

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regarding the rejection of these early scholars of accounts reported by reliable sources.

Consequently, two lines emerged among the Imamiya Shia scholars: the first line endorses the early scholars' acceptance of an inadequately supported account or rejection of a strongly supported account and a second line which disregards the decisions of these early scholars and insists on assessing these accounts independently.

8. *Accepting accounts of the 'consensus group'.* This opinion emerged among late theologians and specifically since the beginning of the fourth Hegira century end the time of the scholar al-Kishi. This assumption states that there were a number of the Imams' companions numbering eighteen, including six of the companions of Imam al-Baqir, six companions of al-Sadiq and six companions of Imams al-Kadhim and al-Ridha, who should be regarded as trustworthy and reliable whether or not they demonstrated the authenticity of their accounts. According to al-Toosi, the accounts of these persons, such as Muhammed ibn Umair, Safwan ibn Yahya, and Ahmed ibn Muhammed ibn Abi Naseer who report only from reliable sources, were considered to be equal in reliability to supported accounts and accordingly they accepted their accounts even if these were not repeated by others.[87] Al-Nuri considered the neeed to further investigate this theory and its role in the formation of doctrines and theology in the Imamiya school and came to the conclusion that this should be one of the themes of the field of *Elm al-Rijal*, (i.e. biographies of narrators) because thousands of syaings and accounts that are unauthentic have been endorsed as a result of this [assumption].[88]

The scholars and theologians who rejected this assumption saw no reason to treat the accounts of these 18 scholars

differently from other accounts and insisted that their accounts be subjected to verification in order to judge the authenticity of each account on its own merit. This position was expounded by Abu al-Qassim al-Khoe as follows:[89]

> Accepting the accounts emnating from the 'consensus group' referred to above is not justified by their vast knowledge of religion but by the claim that they would never report anything without first being satisfied with its authenticity and though their tools in achieving that are unknown or unclear their sources and works are considered reliable. But this claim is totally erroneous and can not be surmised from al-Kishi's argument. And even if this was his claim it remains erroneous because the consensus group relied on weak sources in several cases.

9. *Reliability of the ijaza or licensed scholar:* The second Martyr, Zain al-Deen al-Amili defined the license in religious teaching: as "a permission.. [as for instance when someone says] I licensed him to report this or that. Its strongest form is licensing a person to report a specific book, followed by licensing a person to report whatever he hears from you."[90] The purpose of the licensing system is to preserve and transmits sayings and accounts. The Imamiya scholars differed on whether or not the reliability of the licenced scholar can be accepted. Al-Khoe found that "it has become generally assumed that the reports of licensed scholars do not need verification."[91] Al-Mamaqani stated that "the reports of reliable persons based on weak sources are not inviolable. [the fact that a reliable person chose these sources] does not consitute evidence of their reliability. regardless of whether the report is transmitted orally or in written form in accordance with a license." Al-Khoe concurred with the opinion by asserting that "the license

granted by a scholar does not prove the reliability of the licensee."[92]

10. Opinions inside the Imamiya Shia school differed on how to treat the four major collections of sayings in this school, namely al-Kulani's *al-Kafi*, al-Toosi's *al-Istibsar* and *al-Tahtheeb*, and al-Sadooq's *Min la Yahtharahu al-Faqih*. The gist of this debate is whether or not the contents of these collections can be regarded as completely reliable and accurate and thus must be put into practice because their authors are distinguished scholars of the Imamiya sect. This debate resulted in two distinctive viewpoints, the *Ikhbari* or transmission view and the *Usoli* or fundamentalist view. The former holds that the contents of these books are reliable and accurate and thus there is no need to study the biographies of their narrators to assess their reliability. Supporters of this view also objected to the classification of sayings adopted at the times of Ibn Tawoos because the reliability of these sayings have already been verified by the authors of these collections, namely al-Kulaini, al-Sadooq and al-Toosi.

The *Usooli*, on the other hand, believe in the need to subject every account included in these collections to verification although they do not doubt the reliability of these three scholars. This viewpoint was defended by al-Khoe as follows:[93]

A group of scholars supported the authenticity of the accounts in the four collections a priori. This is unacceptable because we know that among the narrators relied on in these collections are known fabricators, as we shall see later. And the claim that these narrators are reliable in their narration of accounts because there is evidence to that effect is baseless because either such proof is lacking or that which is presented as evidence of the authenticity of

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accounts is inconclusive.

Accordingly, the Usoolis believe that the four books are collections of sayings and accounts whose authenticity must be proven before these can be endorsed and relied upon in arriving at rulings. The same evaluation applies to books of sayings collected by scholars of other sects. Studies have shown that a large number of the narrators in these books are unreliable. Consequently, numerous reports attributed to the Prophet in these collections such as al-Bukhari's *Saheeh* and Muslim's *Saheeh* are false. Instead, the reliability of more than 400 of al-Bukhari's narrators is suspected. Some of the scholars who criticized al-Bukhari's sources are Ahmed ibn Hanbal, al-Nisai, al-Shafi, al-Darqutni, al-Zuhri, al-Thalabi, al-Awzai, al-Thawri, al-Darmi, Abu Dawood, and al-Hakim in his *al-Mustadrik*. A list of these 400 discredited narrators was made by Ibn Hajjar al-Asqalani who referred to the controversy sorrounding their reliability in the introduction to his book *Fath al-Bari fi Sharh Saheeh al-Bukhari*.[94]

Al-Sayyuti pointed out that al-Bukhari and Muslim did not conform to their own criteria for accepting sayings and criticized each other's narrators. He wrote:[95]

> Shaikh al-Islam said: It is interesting to know that al-Minaji mentioned in his book *Ma la Yasau al-Muhadith Jahluhu* that conforming to their criteria means that they would only include in their books authentic accounts which are reported directly from the Prophet by at least two Companions, or reported by four narrators from a single Companion, provided that four narrators transmit from each of these four... Shaikh al-Islam commented on this: These are the words of someone who does not have a detailed knowledge of these two books [by al-Bukhari and Muslim]. It would not be incorrect if someone says that not a single saying

included in these books satisfy these criteria.

Al-Sayyuti also mentioned that 430 of al-Bukhari's sources were excluded by Muslim and of these eighty were suspected of being 'weak' sources. The number of sources or narrators accepted by Muslim but not by al-Bukhari numbered 6200 of whom 106 were thought to be 'weak' narrators.[96] He also asserted that the authenticity of Malik's *Masnad* is not recognized by all: "Malik's *Masnad* is authentic according to him and those who endorse his method such as accepting unsupported accounts or accounts supported by interrupted chains of narrators."

It should be obvious by now that the controversy regarding the verification of sayings and accounts can only be resolved by rigorous investigation. It would also be unfair to dismiss the Imamiya heritage because of few inadequately supported accounts found in some of their books which the Imamiya scholars had themselves rejected.

11. Dealing with conflicting accounts: in their analysis of classification of sayings, scholars came across some accounts which satisfy the criteria of authenticity but are contradictory, e.g. some accounts forbid something while others permit it. In specific, this problem is faced when one account or saying contradicts another and provided that both accounts are equally supported.

The study and resolution of these issues is the subject of a subdivision of theology called *al-Ta'ridh* or controdiction. Contradiction was defined by one religious scholars as "the inconsistency in meanings between two things because of their contradiction or mutual negation."[98] It should be remembered that one of the basic tenets of the Islamic faith is the nonexistence of contradicitons between the Quran and the

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Tradition as the following verse confirms:

> If it had not come from Allah, they would have surely
> found in it many contradictions[99]

However, some accounts were fabricated while others were altered and there are the main sources of contradictions in addition to human errors in communication.

Specialists on this subject laid down the following guidelines for dealing with contradictory or conflicting accounts:

1. These accounts must be thoroughly studied and analyzed to ascertain whether the contradiction is real or apparent. For example, there is no real conflict between an account that establishes a general rule and another account that specifies the details of the rule. In this case, the specific account is given precedence over the general account.

2. If one of two supported but contradictory accounts is in conformity with the Quran or another authentic account or is reported by several narrators then it is endorsed while the other account is neglected in view of overriding evidence.

3. If the two contradictory accounts are equally strong and neither is supported by overriding evidence, i.e. they are irreconcilable, then either of the following two approaches for dealing with them can be used:

1. *Al-Tasaqit* (mutual negation): Some scholars advocated the rejection of both accounts.

2. *Al-Takh'year* (choice): Another group of scholars argued that since both accounts are equally supported one may choose either of them.

In the following accounts, the Imam al-Ridha explains how such accounts should be treated:[100]

> [Al-Hassan ibn al-Jahim] said to the Imam: We obtain

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contradictory sayings which are ascribed to [the Imams]. He replied: Whatever you obtain as being ours must be checked [to find out if they conform] with the Quran or our [authentic] sayings. If it is consistent then it is ours. If it is inconsistent then it is not ours. I then said to the Imam: What if two men who are equally reliable report two contradictory sayings and we can not tell which of the two is authentic. The Imam said: If you can not tell, then you are free to choose one of them.

In essence, the Usooli or orthodox line in the Imamiya theology deals with contradictory accounts of equal support in the following manner:

1. Accepting one of the two accounts on the bases of overriding evidence supporting it.

2. If one of two contradictory accounts allows something while the other forbids it, then it is concluded that doing such a thing is *makrooh*, i.e. disagreeable. Also, if one of the two accounts is general while the other is specific, then precedence is given to the specific one.

3. If the contradiction between two accounts is irresconcilable, then one has the choice to accept either of them.

4. The two irreconcilable, contradictory accounts may both be disregarded.

The relation between the Quran and the Tradition

Since the Tradition is the second source of legisaltion, interrelations exist between the Quran and the Tradition. These legisaltive interrelations were meticulously expounded by the Imams of the Prophet Household as follows:

A. The tradition clarifies the Quran: Several of the religious laws

are stated in the Quran in the form of general principles such as those regarding ablution, prayer, pilgrimage and zakat. These laws were specified by the Prophet. Scholars call such principles which require clarification and explanation as *mujmal* or concise principles while those that do not require clarification are called *mubayyan*, i.e. explicit. The Imamiya Shia advance that the Prophet explained the *mujmal* by the following methods:

1. Verbally: Many of the concise principles were explained in the Prophet's statements addressed to his Companions.

2. In written form: The Prophet dictated tens of letters and communications addressed to his district governors, kings and rulers, and promulgated several pacts and conventions in which explanations of many of these concise principles are found.

3. By sign language: Explanations were also made using the sign language when the Prophet demonstrated the length of a month with his fingers.[101]

4. By acts or deeds: On this subject, al-Muhaqiq al-Hili wrote the following: "Some people rejected this and the correct position is that it is acceptable since the Prophet explained the rites of pilgrimage and ablution by actually performing them in front of Muslims but it is not considered an explanation unless the Prophet confirmed this as when he said: 'Pray in the same way as I did."

5. Discontinuing something: This happened when the Prophet stopped doing something which he had done before.

B. The Tradition elaborates the Quran: The imamiya believe that the Tradition elaborates the general principles revealed in

the Quran. According to al-Muhaqiq al-Hili "elaboration of the Quran by the Quran is possible... and also elaboration of the Quran by the Tradition as in the elaboration of the inheritance verse by the Prophet's saying: "The murderer shall not inherit."

C. The Tradition restricts or limits unspecified concepts and laws of the Quran: Some of the general concepts and laws of the Quran are specified by either other Quranic verses or by the Tradition. For example, the following verse:

> Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those in authority among you.[102]

was restricted by the Prophet's saying: "No one should be obeyed in disobedience of Allah's commands." By combining the Quranic verse and the Prophet's saying a new theological principle is obtained establishing that obedience to rulers is conditional upon their obedience to Allah.[103]

D. *The Tradition abrogates the Quranic laws:* Scholars thought it possible that the Tradition may obrogate a Quranic law in the same way that a Quranic verse may abrogate another verse. In reality, however, scholars did not record a single case of this.

Intellectual evidence

Islam opened wide the horizons of thinking and understanding and urged mankind to ponder the kingdoms of heavens and earth in order to recognize Allah, discover signs of His greatness and become convinced of the sincerity of His prophets. Accordingly, the belief in Allah and His prophets was considered to be within the jurisdiction of the mind and the intellect.

It follows from the above that the mind is also capable of recognizing religious laws either independently or with the aid

of religious texts. As a result, it was accepted as a tool of understanding and deduction in religion. The Imamiya Shia endorsed it as such when they classified the bases for obtaining rules into religious and intellectual types as al-Sadr explained in the following:[104]

> The supporting evidence for a theological issue, whether it is conclusive or not, is classified into two kinds. [First there is] the religious evidence and by this we mean all that emnate from the legisaltive sources, i.e. the Quran, the Prophet Tradition and sayings of the Imam. The second type is the intellectual evidence and by this we mean the subjects or issues understood by the mind and from which it can deduce a religious ruling such as the case which stipulates that the accuracy of any conclusion necessitates the accuracy of its premises.

The endorsement of the intellect as a tool for obtaining rules in the Imamiya theology initially met with strong opposition because it was misunderstood as accepting the intellect as a source of legislation which implies admitting personal opinions in deducing rules, a viewpoint that was strongly rejected by the Imams of the Prophet Household. This controversy between the *Ikhbari* who initially rejected it and the *Usooli* who endorsed it ceased when a consensus was reached over a definition of this concept.

Definition of intellectual evidence

Al-Sadr defined the intellectual eevidence as "any issue understood by the intellect and thus a religious ruling can be deduced from it."[105] Al-Mudhafar also defined it as "every judgment by the intellect which conclusively support a religious rule or alternatively it is every intellectual issue from which we attain a conclusive understanding of a religious rule."[106]

This is how the *Usooli* Imamiya conceived of the mind or the intellect as a tool for arriving at rulings. The mind have refers to theoretical or basic intelligence. These definitions also explain that the intellect here refers to the intellectual perception of any issue which brings us to a conclusive knowledge of a religious rule such as the mind's perception that a person must travel the distance between his abode and the places for performing pilgrimage in order to fulfil this ritual or to a mosque to perform the Eid or Friday's prayer.

Types of intellectual evidence

In accordance with the definitions of intellectual evidence mentioned earlier, religious scholars calssified this evidence into two kinds:

1. *Al-Mustaqilat* or intellectual indpendencies: These are the rules which the mind can independently arrive at such as the wickedness of injustice, chaos, and unjustified punishment. Religious texts are not needed here to support the intellectual judgment.

2. *Ghair al-Mustaqilat* or intellectual dependencies: These are the rules which the mind can attain with the aid of religious texts such as recognizying the need to prepare for performing an obligatory duty after the text has enforced it. One of religious rules obtained in this way is forbidding anything that deter one from performing an obligation.

On this subject al-Mudhafar wrote the following:[107]
Intellectual evidence refers to the theoretical intellectual evidence indicating an association between a rule demonstrated on the bases of texts or intellectually and another religious rule... such as the principle that the important rule has precedence over the less important rule in casees involving the application of

both rules concurrently and from which we deduce that
the more important rule has absolute precedence in
religion...[108]

From the above we conclude that the mind is the tool for
recognizing the association between two religious rules or
between a religious rule and an intellectual one and the outcome
of this process is considered to be a sufficient base for action. It
must be remembered that the intellect here does not refer to
personal ideas or opinions. And, as al-Sadr pointed out in the
following passage, whatever is proven by the intellect has
already been established by the Quran or the Tradition:[109]

With regard to the intellectual evidence which scholars
disagreed on its admissibility we believe it is admissible
but we have not come across a single rule whose proof
depends on the intellectual evidence only because any
rule proven by the intellect has already been established
by the Quran or the Tradition.

Idjma or Consensus

After considering the three sources of religious rules, i.e. the
Quran, the Tradition and the intellect attention shifts to a
discussion of *idjma* or consensus as a potential source of rules.
The word *idjma* means determination, agreement or consensus.
As a religious concept, its definitions varied with the sectarian
affiliation of scholars. Some defined it as the consensus of all
Muslims while others asserted that it refers to the agreement of
religious scholars at a specific time. Malik defined it as the
consensus of the people of Medina. Others still defined it as the
consensus of the citizens of Mecca and Medina, or those of
Kuffa and Basra, or of the two collectors of Tradition in the
Sunni school al-Bukhari and Muslim, or of the first four Caliphs
who succeeded the Prophet.[110]

The Imamiya Shia accepted the relevancy of the consensus but scholars disagreed over its definition and its scope of application. Al-Sadir believed that the consensus is a tool for discovering the religious evidence and is not a religious evidence by it self equal to the Quran or the Tradition. He also defined it as the consensus of early senior theologians in the Post-Imams period even though the bases of this consensus are not made clear. These theologians were uniquely fortunate in obtaining such knowledge or bases for such knowledge from their predecessors. In explaining the formation of a consensus, al-Sadir argued that a theologian would not advance a ruling without supporting evidence, though he may not specify it. Nevertheless, his ruling in this case could be either right or wrong but when other theologians concur with him, a consensus is formed. Each agreement with this rule is considered as further support of its validity and "the accumulation of these transform this rule from a probable to a certain one because the probability of dissent progressively diminishes."[111]

Theology and ijtihad

Definition of theology

Theology is defined as the tool for attaining knowledge about an unknown thing from available knowledge. The verb form *fiqeh* or theology means to understand or to specialize in this field. Mention of this word is found in the Quran: "That they may become learned in religion." Al-Razi pointed out that theology meant understanding in general before it became a specific term for the field of understanding religion.[112]

As a religious concept, theology was defined by al-Mishkini as the knowledge of detailed religious rules. And if the field of theology is the knowledge of detailed religious rules such as those concerning prayers, fasting, commerce, the family,

international relations, penal code, partnerships, and duties toward neigbours, then the theologian is the person who possesses the knowledge to deduce rules on the bases of evidence. It is clear that theology which is defined as the process of deducing rules from evidence and *ijtihad* which is the exertion of an effort to deduce a detailed religious rule are closely related. Al-Akhwand al-Kharasani defined *ijtihad* "as literally an effort... As a religious concept and following al-Hajibi and al-Alama [al-Hili] it means using one's abilities to seek a probable religious rule. Others defined it as the ability which enables one to deduce a detailed religious rule from the tenets.."[113] He also suggested that the former difinition should be amended so that the rule become certain instead of probable.[114] It was also defined by al-Muhaqiq al-Hili as "literally exerting an effort in seeking one's objectives while in religion it is exerting an effort to obtain religious rules, and thus any act of deducing a rule from religious sources is called an *ijtihad*. "He then posed the question whether the Imamiya Shia practice *ijtihad* or not, and he answered it in the affirmative but qualified this as follows: "There may be a vagueness involved here because *qiyas*, (i.e. deducing rules by analogy) is considered a form of *ijtihad*. However, if we exclude *qiyas* then it can be said that [the Imamiya] endorse *ijtihad* to obtain rules by theoretical means."[115]

To sum up, *ijtihad* in the Imamiya Shia theology means the process of arriving at Islamic laws and rules from the Quran and the Tradition in order to specify the religious duties of believers. In performing this, the theologian may not act upon his ideas and opinions in deducing evidence and rules and should arrive at his deduction in much the same way as the scientist. And like other scientists, he may err in his attempts to discover the laws of his field.

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Religious scholars established theology as a discipline to specify the rules of deduction in their field and to safeguard theological thought from deviation by laying down rigorous criteria for deducing rules when a religious text is unavailable. Accordingly, theology was defined as "the field of searching for the laws of the Islamic faith on the bases of evidence."[116]

The principles, topics of study and subdivisions of theology were laid down by the Imams al-Baqir and al-Sadiq who handed down their knowledge to their disciples. In recognition of these two Imams' pioneering role in this field, Hassan al-Sadir wrote the following: "It should be known that the Imams Muhammed al-Baqir and his son al-Sadiq laid down the foundations of theology, and clarified its topics of study. They dictated these principle to their disciples and collected cases which were later classified in accordance with a system and on the bases of authentic accounts attributed to them. Sources reporting these theological cases are available to us and include *Usool Al al-Rassol* by Hashim al-Khonsari al-Asfahani, *Al-Usool al-Asila* by Abdullah al-Hussaini al-Gharawi, and *Al-Fusool al-Muhima fi Usool al-A'ima* by Muhammed ibn al-Hur al-Mashgari. In view of this, al-Sayyuti's claim in his book *al-Awail* that al-Shafi was the first to write on theology is unfounded because Hisham ibn al-Hakam, who was one of al-Sadiq's companions, wrote his book entitled *al-Alfadh wa Mabahuthuha* before al-Shafi. Also, Younis ibn Abdul Rahman [an Imamiya Shia scholar] wrote his books entitled *Ikhtilaf al-Hadeeth wa Masa'eluhu* and *Masa'el al-Tadil wa al-Tarjeeh fi al-Hadethain al-Mutaridhain.* - The latter work reporting the teachings of Imam Musa al-Khadhim. These two authors were mentioned by the biographer Abu al-Abbas al-Najashi and they preceeded al-Shafi."[117]

In his book *al-Awail*, al-Sayyuti traced the establishment of theology within the four Sunni sects and also mentioned the first

scholar among the Imamiya to write in this field:[118]

> It is the consensus that the first, [among the Sunni leading theologians] to write on theology is al-Shafi. Similar to al-Shafi's book in its brevity and organization of contents is *Usool al-Fiqih* by al-Mufeed, Muhammed ibn Muhammed ibn al-Nouman, also known as ibn al-Mualim, the Imamiya Shia's scholar.

This field continued to grow and develop within the Imamiya school, as evidenced by the numerous books authored on this subject, because *ijtihad* was not discontinued in this school.

Identifying the character of a thing or a deed

In order to identify what a person should or should not do and what may or may not emnate from Allah, theologians established criteria for judging *al-husun* (i.e. good) or *al-qubuh* (i.e. wickedness) or the advantages and disadvantages of things and deeds. As a result, scholars of the three major schools, i.e. the Mutazila, Ashaira and Imamiya Shia, pondered the following question: Do things and deeds have an intrinsic character which is good or bad, i.e. advantageous or disadvantageous that can be diagnosed by the human mind or are these labels, i.e. good or bad, decreed by religious authorties? The Imamiya Shia maintained that a thing is intrinsically either good or bad in such a way that it possesses within itself its good or bad characteristics and that the intellect can identify some of these features without religious guidance while other features can only be recognized with the help of religious sources which also specify whether they should be performed or not.

The Ashaira rejected that things are intrinsically good or bad and asserted that a thing or a deed is good if it is described as such by religious sources and it is bad if judged by these sources

to be so. According to them, human characteristics and deeds such as honesty, drinking alcohol, adultery and usury would not have a good or bad character if the religious authority may forbid what it has previously allowed and allow what has been forbidden so that the good becomes bad and vice versa. This subject was explained by al-Alama al-Hili as follows:[119]

> The Imamiya Shia and those of the Mutazila who agree with them believe that the good or bad nature of deeds are known by the mind such as knowing that beneficial truthfulness is good while harmful lying is bad. A sensible person would undoubtedly agree with. His certainty of this is not less than that of knowing that an event or an effect is the outcome of a cause and that two things equal to a third are equal. Other things may be identified as good or bad by way of learning such as the good of harmful truthfulness and the wickedness of beneficial lying. There is still a third group of things whose good or bad nature can only be decided by religion. The Ashaira maintained that the good or bad character of things is decided by religion, and not the intellect, and accordingly whatever it decrees to be bad is bad. This viewpoint is fallacious.

The Imamiya Shia defended their position on this issue by observing that reasonable atheists criticize dishonesty and praise truthfulness, honesty and fairness. And if the character of things and deeds are not intrinsic Allah may mistreat his believers by not fulfilling his promises to them or burdening them with obligations beyond their abilities because such acts do not possess the quality of being good or bad intrinsically, Evidently, Allah is immune from such acts and His commandments enforce only those things that are good and advantageous in themselves and their beneficial nature can be identified by the fact that He ordered them. Similarily, the things He forbade are intrinsically

bad and He identified their wickedness and harmful nature to us by commanding us to forbear from them. Thus, after studying relgious rules, theologians recognized the following three principles on which each rule stands:

1. *Al-Malak* or substance of the rule.
2. The will.
3. *Al-Itibar* or expression and formulation of the rule.

Al-Sadir explained these principles as follows:[120]

"If we analyze an obligatory rule such as that which ordains what should be done, we find that it is formed in two stages: the first stage is deciding on the rule and the second stage is announcing and enforcing the rule. In the first stage, the advantages included in [or produced by] the deed in decided on and this is called *al-malak*. And when the deed is found to have a specific advantage, a will for implementing it is generated and in correspondence with the percieved advantage. Consequently, this will is expressed in the form of *al-itbar*, i.e. enacting the deed as the responsibility of the person obliged to perform it..."

Finally, scientific findings in the fields of medicine, psychology, economics and social sciences have confirmed that certain patterns of behavior are intrinsically harmful even if allowed by law such as the harmful influence of alcholic drinks on personal health and behavior, and the disruptive impact of usury and monopolies on the economy. And even if such practices are not legally banned, their harmful effects remain and can never be transformed into advantages. Similarily, adultery and homosexuality have serious harmful effects on human health and society not because religion forbids them but because these practices are intrinsically harmful. In this way the Islamic viewpoints of the Imamiya Shia coincide with scientific findings.

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Responsibility and obligation

Nonliability:

Identifying the religious rule regarding a social, political, or economic issue or on a religious obligation of worship involves searching the sources of evidence, i.e. the Quran and the Tradition, so that if a clear indication is found on whether it is permissible or not, then a person is bound to obey Allah's command. But what must be done if no such indication can be found? Most theologians agree that a person is not held responsible for a duty if he is not sure whether or not it is obligatory. They justified this by arguing that Allah would not punish his worshippers for something which they were not aware of. Accordingly, they formulated the religious principle that a punishment is unjustified unless the obligation is established. In other words, a person is considered nonliable unless he is informed of the commandment or obligation. This is clearly stated in the following Quranic verse:

> We do not punish a nation until we have sent forth an apostle to warn them.[121]

The Prophet was also reported to have said: "My nation is not held accountable for nine things: mistakes, forgetfulness, whatever they are compelled to do, ignorance, whatever is beyond their abilities and endurance, whatever they have to do out of necessity, envy, superstition, and harboring unothodox thoughts as long as they remain unspoken."[122]

The prinicipal of permissibility

The Imamiya Shia maintain that things and deeds are considered permissible unless there is evidence to the contrary. This is called the principle of permissibility and is supported by the following Quranic verse:

> Say: I find nothing in what has been revealed to me that forbids men to eat of any food except carrion, blood, and the flesh of swine, for these are unclean, and any flesh that has been profanely consecrated to gods other than Allah. But whoever is compelled to eat of any of these, not intending to sin or transgress, will find Allah forgiving and merciful.[123]

This indicates that forbidden things were specified by divine revealation and all other things are, therefore, permissible, as Imam al-Sadiq explained that "everything is permissible unless it is specified to be forbidden."[124]

The principle of cleanleness or purity

In addition to the tenets of nonliability and permissibility the Imamiya Shia established a third tenet or principle stating that all things are clean and pure unless conclusive evidence of its uncleanliness can be found. This principle was clearly formulated by Imam al-Sadiq as follows: "Everything is clean unless you know it to be unclean."[125]

In conclusion, the Imamiya Shia laid down these three tenets or principles to clarify a person's religious duty and responsibility regarding issues for which no text or evidence is available. These principles are as follows:
1. The nonliability of a person for unspecified duties.
2. All things are permitted unless otherwise specified.
3. All things are clean unless otherwise ordained.

However, al-Sadr maintained that the responsibility of a person for a doubtful or unclear obligation remains unless there is a religious license to disregard them, and accordingly Allah may hold us responsible for these obligations.

The concepts of right and wrong

Islamic jurisprudence dealt with all issues and laid down rules for organizing and conducting personal and social affairs including the family, personal finances, the economy, and the judicial and political systems in addition to specifying religious matters such as worship, prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, clean and unclean foods, drink and personal behavior. This comprehensive scope of the Islamic teachings was referred to by Imam Jafar al-Sadiq as follows: "Everything is found in the Quran and the Tradition," and also "Allah, the Almighty, revealed in the Quran clarifications of everthing. He did not leave out anything needed by his worshippers so that no one can say if only this was revealed in the Quran because everything is found in the Quran."[126]

The Imamiya Shia theology is based on the principle that Allah has ordained rules regarding every personal and social issues but there remain religious and social issues which were not clearly dealt with in the Quran or the Tradition. A controversy has arisen regarding whether or not there exist rules for these issues in Islamic jurisprudence.

Muslim scholars were divided into two groups regarding this: the first group believed that Allah has decreed a rule for every issue in the form of a text in the Quran or the Tradition or which can be obtained on the bases of evidence or other tools of proof. It is the responsibility of the religious scholar to find the unspecified rule and in attempting to do this he may succeed or fail like other researchers in the different fields of inquiry. If he fails then the results he obtains can not be considered to be representative of the truth and a religious rule can not be derived from them, and this is why the outcome of *ijtihad* is regarded as probabilistic. The scholar is absolved of guilt if he fails. This is the viewpoint of the Imamiya Shia who believe that

there is an intrinsic advantage or disadvantage inherent in everything which calls for formulating a rule allowing or forbidding it.

The formulation and application of a rule goes through the following stages:
1. Legisaltion by Allah.
2. Transmission of the rule by the Prophet.
3. Obedience and implementations.

The Imamiya argue that for every issue there is a rule in the state of legisaltion but sometimes it does not reach us because it is lost or we fail to find it in its basic sources, i.e. the Quran and the Tradition. Our inability to discover the rule may also be due to the fact that the Prophet Tradition did not reach us in its entirety either because it was not totally preserved or as a result of the inclusion of fabricated accounts in it. Thus although "everything is found in the Quran and the Tradition"[127] as Imam al-Sadiq confirmed, imperfect human perception and analysis as well as shortages in the preservation of the Tradition hinder efforts to identify the rules in the basic religious texts and scholars are thus required to deduce the rules in accordance with the rigorous methods of deduction. It should be noted that some theologians belonging to other Islamic sects believe that in such cases there are no divine rules and the rules obtained by the scholar must be regarded as representative of Allah's will and therefore the scholar is considered to be always right.

Rules and types of rules

Al-Sadir defined a religious rule as "the legisaltion emnating form Allah to organize man's life and to guide him."[128] It was also defined by al-Hakeem as "a religious decree concerning the believers' deeds directly or indirectly."[129]

Rules are classified into two types:

1. *Al-Takleef* rules are the religious rules emnating from Allah in the form of obligations and involve a choice.

2. *Al-Wadhi* rules are the religious rules emnating from Allah but do not specify obligation and do not involve a choice.[130]

The first type of rules was subdivided into five categories: two of them are obligatory and these are the obligatory duties and forbidden things and the remaining three are optional or involving choice and these are *ibaha* or allowance, *karaha* or undesirable and *nadib* or desirable but not obligatory.

These were defined as follows:

1. Obligatory duties: These are imposed as duties by the religious authority such as prayers, fasting, pilgrimage. holy war, etc.[131]

2. *Al-Hurma* or forbidden things which humankind was instructed to refrain from doing such as drinking alcohol, committing murder, adultery and backbiting.[132]

3. *Al-Mandoob:* This refers to what the religious authority encouraged us to do but did not impose it as a duty such as additional prayers, reading the Quran, cleaning our bodies on Fridays, lending money to the needy etc.

4. *Al-Karaha* or undesirable: This include things which the religious authority discourage us from doing but allowed them such as laughing in graveyards and inhaling perfumes by a fasting person.

5. *Al-Ibaha:* The religious authority gave us the choice to do or refrain from doing such things without favoring either choice such as choosing a vocation.[133]

These subdivisions were further studied and analyzed and especially the first kind, i.e. obligatory duties.

Forms of rules

The Imamiya Shia defined a rule as the legisaltion emnating from Allah in accordance with the following verse:

> He has ordained for you the faith He has revealed to you and formely to Noah, and Abraham, Moses and Jesus, saying: Observe this Faith and be united in it. But that to which you call them is unacceptable to the idolators. Allah chooses for it whom He will and guides to it those that repent.[134]

In the bases of this the Imamiya maintained that a legisaltion can not be considered to be part of the Islamic creed unless it emnates from Allah as an expression of His will and concern for his believers and fulfilled through His revelations to the Prophet Muhammed. The forms in which a rule is expressed in its source are as follows:

1. Clear and obvious rules which are not contradicted such as forbidding the consumption of alcohol and the obligatory duty of praying and fasting.

2. Concise rules which require clarification.

3. Controversial rules such as the case in which a rule imposes a thing while another forbids it.

4. General religious rules whose fields of application are not specified.

5. Justified legisaltion: Here rules are applied to similar things such as forbidding alcoholic drinking is justified because of its intoxicating effect and thus all intoxicants are prohibited.

6. Some texts prohibit wicked or harmful things and this prohibition is extended to cover all things which are even more wicked or harmful. For example, Allah commands us on how to treat our parents:

Show them no sign of impatience.[135]

Accordingly, all acts which exceed being impatient with one's parents are also prohibited.

7. There are texts which specify that we are nonliable for anything on which there is no text.

Stages of proving a religious rule

According to theologians there are two stages for obtaining conclusive evidence of a religious rule and these are:

1. The stage of direct identification: This is the stage of obtaining a direct indication of the permissibility or prohibition of a thing such as the evidence that prove the five prayers, fasting and pilgrimage to be obligatory or that drinking alcohol and adultery are prohibited.

2. The stage of indirect identification: This occurs when conclusive evidence is found supporting a probabilistic evidence such as the account of a trustworthy person or a single-chain account. The former evidence strengthens the probabilitic evidence and transforms it into a conclusive one and thus it is no longer a conjecture which must not be followed as the Quran indicates:

> Most of them follow nothing but mere conjecture. But conjecture is no substitute for the Truth. Allah is cognizant of all their actions.[136]

Searching for the rule

According to the Imamiya Shia theology, the process of searching for a rule involves the following steps:

1. The process begins by looking for the concclusive evidence

that would lead to the religious rule. If this evidence such as an authentic saying is found then it becomes obligatory.

2. If a conclusive evidence can not be found but the rule is identified through an acceptable means such as the account of a trustworthy person then the rule becomes obligatory.

3. If neither a direct nor an indirect evidence of the rule can be found then the scholar must resort to the practical tenets which specify his religious duty under such circumstances.

Practical tenets

For every personal or social issue there is a tenet and religious rule. As mentioned previously, if evidence of the rule is located then it becomes obligatory or alternatively we must go back to the tenet. These practical tenets include the followings:

1. *Al-Istishab:* This means that a person must accept an existing situation if he doubt that it has not been changed as for example when a person is certain that a piece of land is illegally obtained and he later doubts whether this illegality has been removed or not then he is obliged to act as if the original situation has not changed and thus should refrain from buying or using it. The opposite is also true as the following statement by Imam al-Sadiq indicates:

> He who is certain [of something] and then becomes uncertain, let him proceed on the basis of his certitude because the doubt does not nullify the certainty.[137]

2. The nonliability principle: This applies when a person is unsure about the rule regarding an issue, as when he doubts whether it is prohibited or not and has no evidence or means of proof then he is considered nonliable.

3. *Al-Ihtiat,* i.e. precaution: This means that a duty or a thing

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which is probably pbligatory must be performed and that which is probably prohibited must be refrained from. The cause of this state of uncertainty may originate in the concise nature of the text, its vagueness, inconsistencies between texts or the lack of a specific text.

4. *Al-Takh'year* or choice: This rule gives a person a choice between performing or not performing something, or between two acts and provided there is no cause for applying the precaution principle. This occurs when a person is faced with a choice between two things of which neither has an advantage over the other and thus he has the right to choose either of them.

Classification of tenets

Theologians studied the basic tenets carefully because these are their tools for locating the evidence leading to a religious rule. As a result they divided tenets into two categories:

1. Practical tenets: Examples of these were discussed in the previous section. These were labeled as practical because these are the tenets which a person must resort to when he is in doubt regarding his religious obligations and despaairs of finding the evidence.

2. Semantic tenets: These are called semantic tenets because they apply to the language used. Thus when we are not sure of the meaning of a text, i.e. whether its author intended it to be allegorical or not, we dismiss the possibility of an allegorical meaning and endorse the common one. Also, if we are in doubt of the meaning of a term, we should endorse the common meaning unless evidence to the contrary is found. In this manner, theology solved the problem of semantic uncertainty.

This methodical concern for precision in understanding the Quran and the Tradition and in conducting the process of deduction demonstrates the Imamiya Shia's strict commitment to the religious texts and their adherence to rigorous and objective study and analysis.

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Chapter Nine

The Behavioral Model of
the Imamiya Shia School

Islam is the divine message aimed at transforming humankind through education and influencing attitudes and behavior. In this process of global change, the Prophet performed the pivotal role of the transmitter of the message as well as the role model for all believers to follow and emulate. Soon after the Prophet's death, this process was weakened by the emergence of new ideas and contingencies influencing Muslims' attitudes and behavior in ways that are inconsistent with the objectives of Islam. Most of those influences were exerted by the following three factors:

1. Politics and governments.
2. The cultures of nations and peoples with whom Muslims came into contact.
3. The personal characteristics of individuals who attempted to understand Islam and deduce from it a behavioral model and theories of education and ethics.

Islam, as applied by the Prophet, is a practical religion that laid down a way of life for humankind and a bridge connecting this world with the afterlife. It rejects any separation of body from spirit, worship from deeds, and ethics from society and calls for total development of mankind in terms of ethics,

behavior, laws and worship.

It is not difficult to identify the impacts of these three factors on personal behavior and social relations in Muslim communities. Rulers that controlled these communities subscribed to their own understandings of Islamic doctrines, theology, ethics, and they influenced patterns of thinking and behavior as a result of their monopolization of authority and power. These rulers such as the Omayyid and Abbasid dynasties advocated and often imposed religious ideas suitable to their vested interests such as *al-jabr* or compulsion, *al-irja* or deferment of judgment and the precedence of political expediencies over religious principles. These ideas not only served to maintain their holds over power but also justified their suppression of dissidents and opponents.

The oppressive policies which these rulers systematically applied led a number of Muslims to seek shelter in a life of seclusion and meditation. Furthermore, these ruler's preoccupation with safeguarding their positions of power even at the expense of religious principles and their pursuit of a life of extravagant luxury and pleasures encouraged the rise of ideas preaching a separation between religious and worldly affairs and between thinking and working for the enjoyment of this life and preparing for the afterlife. Undoubtedly, the rise and spread of such ideas were a major setback to Islamic thought and development.

Muslim communities were also influenced by Greek, Indian and Chineese cultures and by other religions such as Buddhism and Christianity and these influences led to the emergence of monastic attitudes and Sufisms which rejected the pursuit of worldly pleasures and called on individuals to retreat from society into a life of seclusion. Ethical theories were also developed to justify leading a monastic life in *takias*, i.e. Sufis'

monasteries and mountain caves where self-fulfillment could be attained through self-discipline and spiritual exercises far from society and social interactions. Supporters of these ideas also attempted to find religious justification for them by interpreting Quranic verses and the Tradition to serve their purposes. These attempts had grave repercussions on Islamic thought.

The Imamiya Shia adhered to the Islamic message in constructing their behavioral model and consequently it was different from the Sufi model and other models. In specific, their commitment to the Quran and the Tradition, their insistence on the rulers behaving fairly and impecably, and their beliefs in the human freedom of choice and in the intellect as a legitimate tool for the study and understanding of religious issues produced a behavioral model with its distinct attitudes and behavior in the intellectual, social and political domains. These efforts also made a significant contribution towards the development of Muslim communities by clarifying the social aspects of religious values and in particular the Muslim's role in the political domain and specifically his responsibility in opposing injustice.

The Imamiya behavioral model is based on the following principles:

1. The belief that man is a free agent.
2. The belief in the intellect and reason as a tool for understanding every issue including social issues, and supernatural and physical phenomeni. This freed thinking from superstition and other forms of irrational beliefs.

3. Commitment to the literal evidence of the Quran and the Tradition and endorsement of their obvious meanings and this protected thought and behavior within the Imamiya school from undisciplined interpretations.

4. An active and constructive participation in the social and

political domains through political action and opposition to deviant and corrupt practices.

5. Rejection of any separation between politics and religion and between this world and the afterlife by believing in the principle of the imama (leadership) as the embodiment of the intellectual and political functions within the Muslim nation.

6. Opposition to unorthodox beliefs which called for the separation of the world of the spirit from that of the matter, and of this life from the afterlife and rejection of sufisms and attitudes which advocated a monastic way of life.

In this manner the Imamiya Shia developed a behavioral model for individuals, society and the state based on a clear and rational understanding of Islam and its objectives. The Imams exemplified this model in their training of their disciples and their debates with followers of other sects such as the Sufists and the Necessitarians, advocates of deviant and corrupt beliefs and apoligists for tyrannical rule.

Endorsement of this model is not achieved through imitation but through understanding and conviction as Imam Jafar al-Sadiq explained:

> Allah does not accept a deed not based on knowledge, or a knowledge without a deed. Thus, he who grasps this knowledge will be guided by it to the deed, and he who does not perform the deed does not possess the knowledge...[1]

He also said: "He who sincerely proclaims that there is no god but Allah will be admitted into Paradise. His sincerity in proclaiming this testimony will stop him from committing what Allah forbade."[2] Also, the Imam was asked by one of his companions about the Muslim's faith and he answered him: "It

is the testimony that there is no god but Allah and Muhammed is Allah's Apostle." The companion then asked him: Isn't this considered a deed? The Imam said: Yes. The companion asked him: A deed is then part of the faith? The Imam said: A person's faith is not proven without deeds and the deeds are part of the faith."[3] In this statement, the Imam explained the relationship between faith, knowledge and deeds and that faith is based on knowledge and deeds and also complement them. Accordingly, knowledge of Allah, recognition of His religion, believing in Him and obeying His commandments are interrelated elements of the intellectual structure of one's faith.

The individual is thus responsible for his knowledge, faith and deeds and must work with himself the process of self-audit and self change to implement the behavioral model. This was expressed by Imam Ali al-Hadi as follows: "He who does not bring himself to account every day is not one of us. Thus, if he performs a good deed he should implore Allah for more, and if he commits a wicked deed he must ask for Allah's forgiveness and repent."[4]

Self-discipline and development of a religious conscince are repeatedly emphasized. Imam al-Sadiq said: "Allah says: He who remembers me privately I shall remember him publically." He also said: "Our partisans are those who frequently remember Allah when they are by themselves."[5]

The Imams of the Prophet Household required their partisans to be totally committed to Islam and its principles. It is crucial to recognize that this is not a nominal membership but an ideological and behavioral commitment to Islam and its teachings, as Imam al-Sadiq explained:

> Our partisans are those who are chaste, pious, devout,
> honest, woship Allah and perform 51 bows in one day
> (i.e. the obligatory and 'nafila' or additional prayers),

those who pray at night, fast during the day, pay zakat, perform pilgrimage and avoid every forbidden thing.[6]

The Imam also defined the Shia or partisans of Ali as "those who eat permissible food, are chaste, obey Allah, look forward to His recompense and fear His chastisement."[7]

In the following dialogue with Jabbir al-Jifi, Imam al-Baqir refuted the false belief that supporting the Prophet Household is sufficient to enter Paradise and consequently no additional deeds or obedience are required from their supporters:[8]

The Imam said to Jabbir al-Jifi: Is it enough for those who expouse Shiism to proclaim their devotion to the Prophet Household? By Allah our partisans are those who fear Allah and obey Him. They are known for their humility, worship, honesty, frequent remember-ance of Allah, fasting, praying, kindness to their parents, and care for their poor neigbours, and the impoverished, the orphans and those in debt. [They are also known of their] truthfulness, reading the Quran and remembering only the good qualities of absent persons.. Jabbir said: But we know no one with such characteristics. The Imam said: Do not think that it is sufficient for a man to say that he loves Ali and recognize him as his leader. If he would say that he loves the Apostle, who is better than Ali, but fails to follow his path and implement his Tradition then his love would be of no benefit to him. So take heed of Allah and obey His commands. Allah is the kin of no one. The closest of Allah's believers to Him are those who obey Him. Jabbir, the only way to come close to Allah is through obedience. We give no absolution or immunity from Hell's fire... He who obeys Allah is our partisan and he who disobeys Him is our enemy. Our leadership is earned only through good deeds and devotion.

The Prophet's immaculate conduct is presented by the Imams of the Prophet Household as the role model to be emulated in addition to their stress on total commitment to the Quran as the following statement by Imam al-Sadiq indicates:

> Allah the Almighty has bestowed on his Apostle the best of ethical attributes so put yourself to the test. If you possess them then be grateful to Allah and beg Him for more. These attributes are ten: certitude, contentment, patience, being grateful, forgiveness, good conduct, generosity, helpfulness, bravery and humanitarianism."

This was again emphasized by the Imam when he said: "I hate for a man to die without exhibiting one of the characteristics of Allah's Apostle."[10]

Implementing the commandments in the Quran is considered by the Imamiya Shia to be of paramount importance for achieving a true Islamic character and conduct as Imam al-Sadiq indicated in the follwing statement:[11]

> The Prophet said: the upholders of the Quran is the most deserving of all for the credit of obedience and piety in private and public and the most deserving of people in private and public of the credit for prayer and fasting is the upholder of the Quran. And he then shouted: Upholders of the Quran, be humble so that Allah will exalt you and do not act with pride or Allah may humiliate you. Upholders of the Quran, adorn yourself with it to Allah and Allah will adorn you with it. Do not adorn yourself with it to impress others because He may disgrace you with it. He who reads the Quran entirely has the prophetic mission inside him except he does not receive any divine revelation. And he who comprehends the Quran should not reciprocate insult or anger but should be forgiving in respect of the

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Quran. And he who is given comprehension of the Quran and thinks that someone else was given a better thing is exalting what Allah disparaged and disparaging what Allah exalted.

Finally, the merchants among his Companions were urged by the Prophet to read the Quran in the follwing statement:[12]

What hinders any of you merchants, who may be busy in his market, from reading a chapter of the Quran after he returns home. For each verse he reads he would be granted ten good deeds and ten of his wicked deeds would be pardoned.

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Conclusion:

"Hold Fast to Allah's Faith All of You"

Your nation is one nation, and I am Your only Lord. Therefore worship Me.[1]

Cling one and all to the faith of Allah and let nothing divide you. Remember the favors He has bestowed upon you; How He united your hearts when you were enemies, so that you are now brothers through His grace, and how He delivered you from the abyss of the fire when you were on the very brink of it. Thus Allah makes clear to you His revelations, so that you may be rightly guided.[2]

Should you disagree about anything refer it to Allah and the Apostle.[3]

Islam is the universal religion directed to all mankind at all times and places. One of the principles of this religion is the unification of all Muslims into a single nation sharing in a common ideological and social systems and living under a single political leadrship. This total unity which is free of ideological and political controversies was achieved under the Prophet's leadership.

In view of the significance of this unity for the Islamic coomunity, many of the Quranic verses and saying of the

Prophets dealt with it and the fulfillment of the conditions for its establishment and maintenance. And since the fate of the Islamic message and the Muslim nation are dependent on this unity, Allah ordered believers to adhere strongly to the Quran and the faith and prohibited any form of dissent and controversy that may weaken this unity as the following verse indicates:

> Obey Allah and His Apostle and do not dispute with one aonther, lest you should lose your strength. Have patience: Allah is with those that are patient.[*]

Regretably, this message was not headed by some and as a result, Muslims were divided into factions and difference between them solidified into psychological barriers and deep animosities. Consequently they have become weak and apprehensive of neighbouring nations as Allah foretold in the Quran, and in spite of their large number exceeding one billion, immense natural resources and unique strategic location.

Their cultural, human and natural resources qualify Muslims to become a leading, prosperous nation if they were not afflicted with sectarian, national, regional and political divisions. It is worth mentioning that differences among religious sects and factions center around the following issues:

1. The controversy over the leadership: This controversy was the first to disrupt Islamic unity. It occured immediately after the Prophet's death when participants in the Sakifa meeting disagreed over the successor to the Prophet. Three candidates were nominated to fill this important position: Saad ibn Abada, Abu Bakr and Ali ibn Abi Talib.

The political role of Saad ibn Abada ended immediately after the conclusion of that meeting, but Imam Ali remained as the most eligible candidate for the caliphate supported by many Companions. The Imam, however, chose not to enter into a

political confrontation with any of the three Caliphs who succeeded the Prophet because he did not want to jeopardize Islamic unity. Instead, he devoted his efforts to performing his religious and educational role as an advisor to Muslims on religious affairs. He expressed this position in his famous statement:

"I shall maintain the peace as long as Muslims' interest are safeguarded."

Imam Ali's refusal to escalate his rightful claim to the leadership into a controversy was clearly stated in his reply to Abu Sufian who tried to incite a violent clash among Muslims by saying to Ali: "Why was [the caliphate] given to the least important clan in the tribe of Quraish. By Allah if I wish I could muster a large force of men and horses." Ali rejected his offer by replying: "You only wish to create dissent and controversy and by Allah you have always wanted to harm Islam so we have no need for your advice."[5] By opposing those who wanted to escalate this disagreement into a major conflict Ali safeguarded the Muslims' unity.

However, these differences surfaced again when the Omayyid clan emerged as the principal political force during the reign of the third Caliph, Othman. The Omayyid party persistently pursued a policy opposed to the Prophet Household and targeting in specific Imam Ali and his leadership role and views.

After the martyrdom of Imam Ali and the abdication of Imam al-Hassan to Muawiya, the Omayyid clan persisted in their attempts to split the Muslims' rank by waging a continuous campaign against the Prophet Household. They established the practice of cursing Imam Ali in mosques until Omar ibn Abdul Aziz put an end to it. The dissent and schism encouraged by their policies led to the emergence of different

sects. These differences continued and intensified as a result of the practices of successive rulers and more recently by the policies of foreign colonial powers whose interests are served by a divided Muslim nation.

A new era in Islamic history was heralded by the Islamic revolution in Iran and its success in establishing a political system based on the Quran and the Tradition. The major powers were alarmed by this development and saw in it a direct threat to their hegamony over Islamic countries. And when it became obvious that the Islamic movement initiated by Iran was spreading to other countries, the enemies of Islam began a vicious campaign aimed at sensitizing Muslims to sectarian differences. By constantly reminding Muslims of their sectarian affliation and urging them to adhere to their sectarian teachings it was hoped that the new calls for unity and cooperation among Muslims emnating from Iran would be ignored. What these forces have failed to understand is that the principles underlying this movement are found in the Quran and the Tradition and are thus shared by all Muslims.

2. Theological differences: Theological differences initially emerged as a ressult of the resort of the Companions and early Muslims to *ijtihad* to obtain religious rules and these differences became extensive and rigid after the rise of schools of thought and sects. Although any search for knowledge is expected to result in differences in opinion, some of these differences are regretably due to the lack of methodological rigor and closed-mindedness on the part of some scholars. The objective religious scholar who is aware of the importance of his task in discovering religious rules and that he is accountable for his actions will not hesitate to endorse the truth even if another scholar discovers it before him. This objectivity is required of all Muslims as the

follwoing verse indicates:

> Give tidings to My worshippers, who listen to
> statements and follow that which is best.[6]

Islamic thought is the product of attempts to understand the Islamic message contained in the Quran and the Tradition. This heritage include a multiplicity of ideas and opinions which played a major role in the emergence of schools of thought, sects and theological differences. Consequently, possible human errors or shortages in understanding the religious teachings have become burried in an immense number of personal interpretations and opinions to the extent that these are virtually undetectable.

And since the Islamic message is directed to all mankind regardless of individual differences as the following verse indicates: "Say to all people that I am Allah's Apostle sent forth to all of you,"[7] and everyone must obey the commandments ordained by Allah, Muslims became followers of different sects adopting their perceptions and understandings of the Islamic faith. These theological differences are not only found between different sects but also among scholars within the same sect. It is evident then that these differences are purely theological and the outcome of attempts to understand the religious doctrines and not of a political rivalry or the disagreement between the Sunni and the Shia sects. The political controversy between supporters of the right of the Imams of the Prophet Household and those who disagreed with them is not pertinent at this time and this leaves the theological differences which must be dealt with in a serious and objective manner. But even if attempts to resolve these differences do not succeed completely, residual differences in opinion should be tolerated provided Islamic unity is not impaired.

It is useful to identify here the causes of theological differences among Muslims. These include the followings:

1. Differences over the sources of rules: All Muslims believe that the Quran and the Tradition are the sources of Islamic doctrines, teachings and rules. However, they differed over the legitimacy of other sources of rules such as the Companions' traditions and methods of deducing rules as *qiyas*, *istihsan* and personal opinion. Such differences exist between all Muslims sects and even withing the same sect.

2. Differences over methods of verifying the Tradition: This is another major source of theological differences among Muslim. Differences among scholars over the reliability of sources of the Tradition and thus the authenticity of the Prophet's sayings and accounts led to variations in the accepted sources of rules. These differences occurred between religious scholars of all sects and not particularly between Sunni and Imamiya theologians.

3. Differences over the meanings of religious text constituted another source of these theological disagreements. These are obviously due to variations in theological knowledge and comprehension and not to sctarian differences between the Sunni and Shia schools.

4. Semantic differences: Theologians, and regardless of their sects, disagreed over the meanings of some religious texts such as the ablution verse or the meaning of some terms which, in turn, led to theological differences.

5. Differences over whether certain rules were abrogated or not such as the disagreement between Sunni and Shia theologians over the *mut'a*, i.e. temporary marriage.

Since these differences are mainly theological and doctrinal, Islamic sects which halted the process of *ijtihad* or deduction

should reactivate it again so that an objective dialogue between all sects can be conducted to evaluate these differences thoroughly and objectively and consequently remove all misconceptions and barriers between Muslims. It is recommended here that conferences and conventions be held to bring together Muslims from different sects to discuss these differences and conduct joint studies that would hopefully move Muslims closer to their cherished goal of unification. Within this framework of cooperation and unity, differences in views must be expected and tolerated as the natural consequences of the process of religious enquiry or *ijtihad*. By adhering to this objective approach, two prominent Grand Shaikhs of al-Azhar, namely Mahmoud Shaltut and Muhammed al-Faham arrived at an impartial evaluation of the Imamiya Shia and concluded that it was their religious duty to inform Muslims about this sect and ruled that it is permissible for Muslims to practice their religion by following the teachings of the Imamiya Shia. In conclusion, all Muslims are reminded of Allah's commandment in the following Quranic verse:

Hold fast to Allah's faith, all of you and be united in it.

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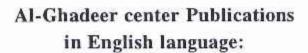Al-Mufeed (Al-Shaikh). *Al-Muqanat.* Qom, Iran: Maktabat al-Marashi, al-Najaf al-Ashraf, 2nd ed., 1408 (1987).

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الشيعة والتصحيح/غلاف

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المواجهة مع رسول الله(ص) واله (القصة الكاملة)

المحامي أحمد حسين يعقوب

الوطن الإسلامي بين السلاجقة والصليبيين

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