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Islam, the Qur'an and the Arabic Literature

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Since the advent of Islam and the revelation of the Qur'an in the early years of the seventh century AD, the Muslim Holy Book has been the subject of many extensive analytical studies. The focus of the great majority of these studies has been the theological and legislative aspects of the Holy Book, for the Qur'an provides Muslims with detailed guidance on their everyday problems. Together with the sayings, actions, and recommendations of Muhammad, the Qur'an has been the ultimate source of legal authority for Muslims over the past fourteen centuries. Muslim scholars have painstakingly examined, analyzed and interpreted the various verses of the Holy Book, detailing the requirements the Qur'an imposes on Muslims in order for them to achieve spiritual purity. Thus, in addition to its legislative and theological value, the Qur'an has also served as a source of spiritual guidance for the followers of Islam.

There is, however, another aspect of the Qur'an which has received far less attention than its theological and legislative guidance, namely its linguistic significance, for the Qur'an was undoubtedly the first book to be composed in Arabic. The advent of Islam and the revelation of the Qur'an have had far-reaching effects on the status, the content, and the structure of the Arabic language.^[1] This paper will examine the linguistic influence of the Qur'an and the impact of its revelation on Arabic. It will be argued that, while the Arabic language was extremely effective as the medium for the revelation of the Holy Qur'an and the dissemination of the new faith, the language benefited enormously from the new role it acquired with the advent of Islam.

Islam and Arabic: a unique relationship

The revelation of the Qur'an in Arabic set the scene for a unique and lasting relationship between the language and Islam. On the one hand, Arabic provided a very effective medium for communicating the message of the religion. On the other hand, Islam helped Arabic to acquire the universal status which it has continued to enjoy since the Middle Ages, emerging as one of the principal world languages. It has been argued that Arabic has not simply remained 'ancillary to Islam'^[2] but that it has also been significant as a means of 'cultural and national revival in the Arabic-speaking countries.'^[3] Arabic is a rich and expressive language and has played an important role in the cultural preservation of the Arabic-speaking people. However, without the bond it has had with Islam, Arabic would probably not have undergone the internal revolution it did, nor expanded beyond the borders of the Arabian Peninsula with such speed and magnitude.

The relationship of Islam and the Qur'an to Arabic involves more than just the use of a language to communicate a divine message. There are a number of factors which set this relationship apart from that which exists between other holy books and the languages in which they appeared, for Arabic has come to be closely associated with Islam, and in this way has acquired a semi-official status. It is implicit that anyone professing Islam cannot ignore the role Arabic plays in his faith.

Embracing Islam, therefore, entails exposure to, and familiarity with, the Arabic language. Such familiarity is necessitated by the fact that memorization and recitation of Qur'anic verses in their original language is necessary for the performance of the daily rituals. Other holy books may have had an impact on the languages in which they originally appeared, but the impact that Islam and the Qur'an have had on Arabic appears to be unique in its extent and durability. It has often been the case that a holy book appears in a given language and is then translated into other languages, in which it continues to be read and recited during the performance of rituals, but, in the case of the Qur'an, although it has been translated into many languages, these translations cannot replace the original language as a language of worship, which continues to be Arabic for all Muslims, native speakers and others.

Other holy books also came to be associated with specific languages, such as the Torah with Hebrew, and, perhaps less intimately, the New Testament with Greek and Latin. However, the nature of the relationship between the Qur'an and Arabic is still unique for reasons to be given below.

The Qur'an: Muhammad's strongest argument

It has often been argued that the Qur'an is not only the first book, and the highest linguistic achievement, of the Arabic language, but that it is also Muhammad's strongest argument against those who doubted his Message. The question that needs to be addressed here concerns the reason why a holy book, a composition of language, should be hailed as Islam's (and Muhammad's) strongest argument.^[4] The point has sometimes been made that other prophets had more tangible miracles. In the case of Muhammad, however, the miracle was not comparable to Moses' staff or Christ's healing powers, but was simply the expression in language of the Qur'an.

To understand why Muhammad's strongest argument or miracle was a book, the Holy Qur'an, it is necessary to understand the role language and linguistic composition played in the lives of the pre-Islamic Arabs. It is also important to understand the nature of the Arabic language itself during the pre-Islamic period. This understanding will help to show why the revelation of the Qur'an through Muhammad found attentive ears among his contemporaries, who not only were articulate users of the language but held those skilled in the arts of linguistic composition in high esteem.^[5]

The role played by language in pre-Islamic Arabia

Before the rise of Islam, Arabic was mainly a spoken language with an oral literature of elaborate poetry and, to a lesser extent, prose.^[6] Writing had not yet fully developed and memorization was the most common means of preserving the literature.^[7] Both poetry and prose in the pre-Islamic era dealt with a rather limited range of topics which included in the case of poetry praise, eulogy (panegyric), defamation, and love, and in the case of prose superstition, legends, parables, and wisdom tales.^[8]

Pre-Islamic Arabs took great pride in their language and in articulate and accurate speech, the latter being one of the main requisites for social prominence. On this particular point, Professor Hitti writes: No people in the world manifest such enthusiastic admiration for literary expression and are

moved by the word, spoken or written, as the Arabs. Hardly any language seems capable of exercising over the minds of its users such an irresistible influence as Arabic. ^[9]

What made this phenomenon even more remarkable is the near absence of other forms of artistic expression such as music, painting, and drama. The sole elaborate form of artistic expression available to the pre-Islamic Arabs was the art of the spoken word. ^[10] Eloquence and the ability to compose articulate prose or poetry were foremost among the traits of a worthy bedouin. ^[11]

Other such traits included horsemanship, courage, and hospitality. With its very nature and structure, its abundance of imagery, vocabulary, and figures of speech, the Arabic language lent itself to elaborate poetic composition and sonorous prose. The tremendous quantity of poetry that we have inherited attests to the significant role language played in pre-Islamic Arabia. In fact, the role language and poetry played was so important that other fields of study which developed during the first centuries of the Islamic era were greatly influenced by the then established study of poetic literature. ^[12]

The importance of poetry for that era is clearly manifest in the writings of scholars from subsequent centuries. Al-Jahiz (d. 869), for instance, quotes poetic works in his famous *al-Bayan wa l-Tabyin*. ^[13] The grammarian al-Asma'i (d. c. 830) used the term *fasih* (articulate) in reference to the poets whom he quotes. The following quotation from Ibn Rashid further illustrates the importance attached to linguistic skills in pre-Islamic Arabia. He writes:

Whenever a poet emerged in an Arab tribe, other tribes would come to congratulate, feasts would be prepared, the women would join together on lutes as they do at weddings, and old and young men would all rejoice at the good news. The Arabs used to congratulate each other only on the birth of a child and when a poet rose among them. ^[14]

In his *'Uyun al-Akhbar*, Ibn Qutayba defined poetry as follows:

Poetry is the mine of knowledge of the Arabs and the book of their wisdom, the archive of their history and the reservoir of their epic days, the wall that defends their exploits, the impassable trench that preserves their glories, the impartial witness for the day of judgement. ^[15]

Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406), a notable scholar of the fourteenth century, remarked on the importance of poetry in Arab life:

It should be known that Arabs thought highly of poetry as a form of speech. Therefore, they made it the archives of their history, the evidence for what they considered right and wrong, and the principal basis of reference for most of their sciences and wisdom. ^[16]

Almost four centuries earlier, Ibn Faris (d. 1005) elaborated on the same theme, but went further to comment on the quality of the poetry that was composed during the pre-Islamic era:

Poetry is the archive of the Arabs; in it their genealogies have been preserved; it sheds light on the darkest and strangest things found in the Book of God and in the tradition of God's apostle and that of his companions. Perhaps a poem may be luckier than another, and one poem

sweeter and more elegant than another, but none of the ancient poems lacks its degree of excellence. ^[17]

Such was the role that the spoken word played in the life of pre-Islamic Arabs. With the emphasis placed on eloquent and articulate speech, the prominent position occupied by those who had the talent for linguistic composition, and the pride the early Arabs took in their language, it is little wonder that the Qur'an was revealed in the most eloquent, articulate, and elaborate style the Arabic language has known. The Qur'an has without doubt provided a level of linguistic excellence unparalleled in the history of the Arabic language.

Theologians explain this phenomenon as God's wisdom in addressing the articulate Arabs through the medium in which they were most adept and with which they felt most comfortable. The effectiveness of the Qur'an was thus ensured by the fact that it represented a level of eloquence unattainable even by their most eloquent speakers. The Qur'an remains a book of inimitable quality, not only from a linguistic, but also from an intellectual, point of view. When Muhammad was challenged by his fellow countrymen to present a miracle, in keeping with the tradition of other prophets, he presented the Qur'an to them. The inimitability of the Qur'an is repeatedly emphasized in the Holy Book itself. Thus the Qur'an challenges the disbelievers:

And if you are in doubt as to what we have revealed, then produce a sura like unto it. (2: 23) ^[18]

A yet stronger challenge occurs in another chapter:

Or do they say: 'He forged it'? Say: 'Bring then a sura like unto it and call [to your aid] anyone you can. ' (10: 38)

The role of the poet in pre-Islamic Arabia

Except for a few proverbs, legends, and some magical and medicinal formulae, the bulk of the literary heritage from the pre-Islamic era was in the form of poetry. ^[19] Prose, which lacks the elaborate rhythm and formal structure of poetry, did not lend itself easily to memorization. Furthermore, in the absence of a developed system of writing, prose was much less easily preserved. Prose works from the pre-Islamic period were mainly genealogies (ansab) and legends dealing with inter-tribal wars (ayyam al-'arab). ^[20] Poetry therefore represents the main form of artistic expression during the pre-Islamic era.

The significance of poetry in pre-Islamic Arabia was underscored by the annual fairs, the most famous of which was the Suq Ukaz, in which poets competed for fame and recognition through recitations of poetry. The recitations constituted the main form of entertainment at the fairs, which were cultural as well as trading events.

The pre-Islamic poet, enjoying his enviable talent for composing poetry, played multiple roles. He was an artist, an entertainer, a journalist, and the spokesman for his tribe. Furthermore, he was the historian who kept alive the history and past glories of his tribe. His poetry provided a very effective means of propaganda and public relations. He was readily capable of influencing public opinion, and his poetry was sought by kings and tribal

chiefs who generously rewarded him. In short, the poet enjoyed a very prominent status in pre-Islamic Arabia. ^[21]

The inimitability of the Qur'an

The inimitability of the Qur'an is not limited to its content. In fact, the Holy Book of Islam is held by Muslim scholars to be inimitable not only in its content but also in its language. The Qur'an, it has been constantly maintained, embodies linguistic and literary beauty which exceeds anything of human origin. This is borne out by the fact that no-one has ever been able to compose anything remotely resembling it in its linguistic, literary, or conceptual elegance. ^[22] This point is repeatedly emphasized in the Holy Book itself. Thus the Qur'an says:

If the whole of mankind and the jinn were to gather together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed each other up. (17:88)

The inimitable nature of the Qur'an was recognized by generation after generation of scholars. Al-Tabari (d. 923) dealt with this subject in his voluminous study of the Holy Book. ^[23] Al-Zamakhshari elaborated on this theme in his famous *al-Kashshaf*, ^[24] as did Baydawi in his *Tafsir*. ^[25] Al-Baqillam, a prominent scholar, wrote a book which he devoted entirely to this subject and to which he gave the title *I'jaz al-Qur'an* (The Inimitability of the Qur'an). ^[26] Here he wrote:

The Qur'an is so wonderfully arranged and so marvellously composed, and so exalted is its literary excellence that it is beyond what any mere creature could attain. ^[27]

Al-Jawziyya, also a noted scholar, added that:

Whoever knows Arabic and is acquainted with lexicography, grammar, rhetoric, and Arabic poetry and prose recognizes ipso facto the supremacy of the Qur'an ^[28] Ibn Khaldun also dealt with certain aspects of the style of the Qur'an:

The inimitability of the Qur'an consists in the fact that its language indicates all the requirements of the situation referred to, whether they are stated or understood. This represents the highest degree of speech. In addition, the Qur'an is perfect in the choice of words and excellence of arrangement. ^[29]

The inimitability as well as the linguistic significance of the Qur'an can be better understood within its pre-Islamic context and according to the role language played during that period. Furthermore, the linguistic significance of the Qur'an can also be better understood within that same context. The linguistic aspect of the Holy Book was brilliantly used by the Prophet in challenging and eventually prevailing upon his fellow Arabs who held in high esteem those who were eloquent and articulate. The eloquence of the Qur'an clearly impressed and overwhelmed them. This explains why the Qur'an has been referred to as 'Muhammad's miracle', or, as the 'miracle of Islam'. The use of the power of the Qur'an as a means of persuasion was admitted by the Prophet himself and was mentioned repeatedly in the Qur'an mostly in the form of a challenge to the disbelievers to produce something similar. On the need and justification for the Prophet to use a book such as the Qur'an, Ibn Qutayba wrote:

God offered the Qur'an as the Prophet's sign in the same way as He offered signs for all the other prophets. He sent the things most appropriate to the time in which they were sent. Thus Moses had the power to divide the sea with his hand and rod, and to let the rock burst forth with water in the desert, and all his other signs in a time of magic. And Jesus had the power to bring the dead back to life, to make birds out of clay, to cure those who had been blind from birth and the leprous, and all his other signs in a time of medicine. And Muhammad, may God bless him and grant him salvation, had the book and all his other signs in a time of eloquence. ^[30]

The impact of the Qur'an of the Arabic language

Structure and content

As has already been pointed out, scholars have gone to great lengths over the past thirteen centuries to describe and emphasize the inimitability of the verses of the Qur'an. However, the impact of the revelation of the Qur'an on the Arabic language, its structure and content, has certainly been the focus of fewer studies. Works on the inimitability of the Qur'an have mostly focused on the literary beauty of the Holy Book, its conceptual strength and precision. Another important aspect of the Qur'an, one not adequately addressed, lies in its linguistic impact on the form and content of the Arabic language.

The Holy Qur'an has undoubtedly helped reinforce and deepen the Arab people's awareness of the richness and beauty of their tongue. From a linguistic point of view, the revelation of the Qur'an was the most important event in the history of the Arabic language. It was an event with far-reaching and lasting consequence, for the Qur'an gave Arabic a form which it had hitherto lacked. In fact, it was due to the desire to preserve the Qur'an that efforts were made to develop and refine the Arabic alphabet.

It was within the same context that Abu l-Aswad al-Du'ali developed the dot system in the first century of the Islamic era in his attempt to lay the basis for Arabic grammatical theory. ^[31] His efforts were among the first to establish a permanent form for the Arabic alphabet and hence the Arabic writing system. As deciphered from the earliest inscriptions, the Arabic alphabet was vague, unsystematic, and inefficient. The dot system as developed by al-Du'ah helped to clarify and establish distinctions which were otherwise unclear. In fact, it can be maintained that had it not been for the strong desire to preserve the Qur'an, its form, grammar, pronunciation, and accuracy, the Arabic alphabet and writing system might not have developed as quickly as they did.

The Arabic alphabet and writing system were only one aspect of the Qur'an's impact on the language; it also gave Arabic a rigidity of form and a precision of presentation which were novel to the language, as well as a host of new locutions, complex concepts, meanings, and arguments. Furthermore, the Qur'an enriched the lexicon of the language by bringing new words and expressions into use, and by introducing loan-words from foreign languages. It also presented a firm set of linguistic standards and directions which were instrumental in the subsequent documentation of Arabic grammar.

The Qur'an likewise helped to expand the scope of Arabic as it was known in the early years of the seventh century. Islam and the Qur'an helped to open new horizons and fields of study which included such disciplines as philology, Islamic law (the sharia), and Islamic philosophy. The Qur'an also introduced a host of new themes and linguistic forms not only to the Arabic language but to the Arab mind as well. Taha Husayn dealt with this particular aspect of the verses of the Qur'an when he wrote:

In its external form the Qur'an is neither poetry nor prose. It is not poetry because it does not observe the metre and rhyme of poetry, and it is not prose because it is not composed in the same manner in which prose was customarily composed. ^[32]

The Qur'an consists of verses which vary in length depending on their theme and the occasion for which they were revealed. What is most interesting about Qur'anic verses is the superb selection of words, a selection which helps to induce varying reading speeds, which render these verses most effective. On this particular point,

Taha Husayn wrote:

For example, those verses dealing with the dialogues that took place between the Prophet and the pagans as well as those dealing with legislation require the type of low reading speed appropriate to explanation and recapitulation. On the other hand, those verses in which the pagans are warned of the fate that awaits them require a higher speed appropriate to censuring and warning. ^[33]

The varying speeds which Taha Husayn mentions appear to be achieved with remarkable spontaneity, which is the result, in Taha Husayn's words, of 'a careful selection of words and expressions.' ^[34] He gives sura 26, al-Shu'ara', as an example of the type of verse requiring speedy reading, and sura 28, al-Qasas, as an example of that requiring slow reading.

Another aspect of the novelty of the Qur'an language has to do with its themes. These themes and topics represent a clear departure from those which had been hitherto familiar to the Arabs. As Taha Husayn explained: It does not deal with any such things as ruins, camels, or long journeys in the desert; nor does it describe longing for the beloved, love, or eulogy, topics most familiar to pre-Islamic Arabs. But rather it talks to the Arabs about such things as the oneness of God, His limitless power, His knowledge, which is unattainable, His will, which is unstoppable, and His creation of heaven and earth. ^[35]

This passage underscores yet another innovative aspect of the Qur'an, namely the presentation of novel themes through an abundance of examples all aimed at illustration and persuasion. The use of illustration is one of the most effective stylistic techniques of the Qur'an. One can hardly read a verse without experiencing the impact of this technique.

The art of narrative style represents another innovative aspect of the Qur'an. It relates in astounding detail the stories of Noah Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and Jesus, among others. It presents the dialogues that took place in such stories and the claims and counter-claims made by each of the opposing parties. Story-telling may not have been totally novel in pre-Islamic Arabia given the significant quantity of parables, epics, and myths

that were inherited from that period. What was novel, however, was the type of integrated, elaborate story involving such essential items as theme, plot, well-developed characters, and denouement which are to be found in the Qur'an, which refers itself to the benefit in telling such stories:

We do relate unto thee the most beautiful stories, in that We reveal unto thee this [portion of the] Qur'an. Before this thou too were among those who knew it not. (1: 3)

Lexical borrowing

Lexical borrowing is another area in which the Qur'an established precedent. The Holy Book draws freely on words of non-Arabic origin, including Persian, Sanskrit, and Syriac. The importance of the Qur'an in this respect can be better understood against a deep-seated theme which can be discerned in the writings of scholars of pre and early Islam, namely, that the Arabian Peninsula was, during the pre-Islamic era, more or less isolated from the rest of the world, and that the Arabic language, and consequently the Qur'an, was the unique product of the Arabian desert. Inherent in this theme is a belief in the 'purity' of the Arabic tongue and hence the scholars' reluctance to agree with the fact that in its attempt to illustrate the breadth of human religious experience the Qur'an drew on the lexicons of other languages and religions.^[36] The verse: Thus have We sent down this Arabic Qur'an is often cited in support of this view.^[37] It is obvious from the literature that the majority of the earlier scholars, for example, al-Shafi'i, Ibn Jarir, Abu ' Ubayda, al-Qadi Abu Bakr, and Ibn Faris, rejected the theory that some of the words of the Qur'an were not of Arabic origin.^[38] The question of lexical borrowing and the existence of foreign words in the Qur'an was viewed differently by different scholars. Thus the earlier scholars maintained that the existence of foreign words implied an inadequacy of the language. Al-Suyuti quoted Ibn Aws as saying:

If the Qur'an had contained anything other than Arabic, then it would be thought that Arabic was incapable of expressing those things in its own words.^[39]

Later scholars, however, viewed lexical borrowing differently. Thus, al-Suyuti explained that the adoption of some non-Arabic words in the Qur'an took place because such words denoted objects or ideas for which no Arabic words were readily available.^[40] Examples include the Persian words 'istibraq' (a thick, silky brocade), 'ibriq' (a water jug); the Nabatean word 'akwab' (goblets); the Aramaic word 'asfar' (a large book); the Hebrew borrowing 'rahman' (merciful); and the Syriac words 'zayt' (olive oil) and 'zaytun' (the olive tree). The Qur'an has several hundred such foreign borrowings. Earlier generations of Muslim scholars maintained that such words were either ancient Arabic words that had gone out of use until the revelation of the Qur'an, or that such words were ancient borrowings introduced into Arabic long before the Revelation which had since then acquired an Arabic pattern.^[41]

Whether we agree with the view that foreign words in the Qur'an are direct borrowings from other languages or with the view that the majority of these words were ancient borrowings which occurred in pre-Islamic poetry and which had been in use long before the revelation of the Qur'an, it is a

fact that the Qur'an contains words that are not of Arabic origin. Such words come from a host of languages including Ethiopic, Persian, Greek, Sanskrit, Syriac, Hebrew, Nabatean, Coptic, Turkish, and Berber. ^[42] By adopting words of non-Arabic origin, the Qur'an may have helped to legitimize a very important linguistic process, that of lexical borrowing.

The importance of this practice derives particularly from the fact that the use of foreign words was viewed unfavourably by a large number of Arab scholars at that time. ^[43] The term 'ajami (Persian, foreign) was used strictly in reference to non-Arabic words to set them aside from native Arabic words. During the documentation of the grammar in the first three centuries of the Islamic calendar, the same term was used to refer to less-than-native pronunciations of Arabic. In their attempt to document the grammar, the early scholars considered the speech of the bedouins in the heart of the desert to be the most reliable and purest, apparently due to their belief that the bedouins seldom left the desert or mixed with speakers of other languages. ^[44] Likewise, the early grammarians did not look favourably upon the adoption of foreign terms into Arabic, apparently in the belief that borrowing would indicate certain gaps or deficiencies in the language.

Since it contained words of non-Arabic origin, the Qur'an established a precedent for lexical borrowing as a tool whereby languages may enrich themselves. This was clearly one of the most innovative aspects of the Qur'an. It is particularly important given the unfavourable climate that prevailed among the early Muslim scholars with respect to lexical borrowing.

Structure and style

The Qur'an has made remarkable contributions to the structure and style of the Arabic language. It combines within its covers the first documentation of the sentence patterns of Arabic, and it was instrumental in the documentation of Arabic grammar which began in the first Islamic century. From the time of Sibawayh (d. c. 793) up to the present day there is hardly a page in any manual of Arabic grammar which does not contain one or more verses from the Qur'an. Furthermore, the strong interest in Qur'anic studies brought with it an equally strong interest in Arabic linguistic studies.

The style of the Qur'an helped to develop and enrich the Arabic language. As the first book in the Arabic language, it introduced stylistic innovations which greatly influenced trends in subsequent generations. Foremost among such trends is the Qur'an's abundant use of figures of speech in place of simple words. The Qur'an makes extensive use of illustrations, imagery, and metaphor, thus adding beauty, life, and colour to plain words. In fact, the ubiquity of figures of speech in the Qur'an has led Sayyid Qutb to conclude that 'the use of imagery and figures of speech is the Qur'an's preferred style.' ^[45] The preference for figures of speech over plain words appears to be a general trend that permeates the entire Book. Thus, the Qur'an affirms the impossibility of the disbelievers' entry into paradise:

Nor will they enter the Garden until a thick rope can pass through the eye of a needle. (7: 40)

Confirming that the disbelievers' actions will be in vain, the Qur'an conveys this notion in the following way:

The parable of those who reject their Lord is that their works are as ashes on which the wind blows furiously as on a tempestuous day. (14: 18)

Another idea, that of those who do charitable acts yet spoil what they have done by gloating and reminding others of such acts is conveyed thus:

they are in a parable like a hard, barren rock on which is a little soil: on it falls heavy rain which leaves it just a bare stone. (2: 265)

The opposite case, namely that of those who spend for God's sake rather than in order to boast, is also expressed through imagery:

as a garden, high and fertile; heavy rain falls on it but makes it yield a double increase of harvest. (2: 265)

Earlier in the same sura, the same idea is conveyed through a different figure of speech:

The parable of those who spend their money in the way of God is that of a grain of corn: it groweth seven ears and each ear hath a hundred grains. (2: 261)

Criticizing those who worship gods other than Allah, the Qur'an likens their actions to that of a spider building a web:

The parable of those who take protectors other than God is that of the spider building for itself a house; but, truly, the flimsiest of houses is the spider's house. (29: 41)

Doomsday is one of the frequent themes of the Qur'an. The description of the horrors of that day is also presented through figures of speech:

for the convulsion of the Hour will be a terrible thing! The day ye shall see it, each mother giving suck shall forget her suckling-babe, and each pregnant female shall deliver her load. Thou shalt see mankind as in a drunken riot, yet not drunk. (22: 2)

Another very characteristic stylistic device of the Qur'an is that of anthropomorphization. Thus it describes dawn as breathing away the darkness (78: 10), the night as concealing the sun and veiling the day, the wind as fecundating, causing the rain to fall (15: 22). The sea is likened to ink which, if used, will not suffice to write the words of God:

Say: If the ocean were ink wherewith to write out the words of my Lord, sooner would the ocean be exhausted, even if we added another ocean like it. (18: 109)

Slandering is likened to eating another persons's flesh:

Nor speak ill of each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother. (49: 12)

The rhythmic patterns of speech found in Qur'anic recitations is yet another remarkable aspect of the language of the Qur'an. These patterns are a reflection of the special array of words and arrangement of phrases found in the Book. In the view of many scholars such verses combine the characteristics of both poetry and prose.^[46] Unlike some poetry, the verses of the Qur'an do not have one single rhyme, thus there is more room for flexibility and freedom of expression. The Qur'an does, however, reflect certain aspects of poetry, especially with respect to its use of words with identical numbers of syllables.

This 'music' is more noticeable in short verses than it is in long ones.^[47] Sayyid Qutb cites sura 53 (al-Najm) as an excellent example of prose

rhythm produced by words similar in length and all ending in the same sound, in this case the long a^[48] There is another type of internal rhythm which is inherent in the structure of the single sentence. This is seen when the length of words varies within the same sura. A good example of this is sura 19 (Maryam), which begins with short words and phrases, then changes to longer ones. Furthermore, the rhythms of the various segments are enhanced by the use of two main rhymes throughout the entire sura. These rhymes end either in nun or mim preceded by either ya' or wa'w.

The narrative aspect of Qur'an style remains one of the most creative and innovative of the Holy Book, one which has profoundly influenced and enriched the Arabic language. Whatever narrative style the language had in pre-Islamic times were relatively crude and primitive. Even though the narrative parts of the Qur'an were clearly put to the service of the main theme of the Book, i.e., religion, the narrative was so highly developed and integrated that it became a work of art in itself. The Qur'an is remarkably innovative with respect to its method of presentation, which involves four different techniques.

One common technique is that of beginning a story with a short summary, followed by the details from beginning to end, as in sura 18 (al-Kahf). The second technique is that of beginning a story by presenting the conclusion first, then the lesson to be derived from it, and then the story from beginning to end, as in the story of Moses in sura 28 (al-Qasas). The third technique presents the story directly without introduction, as in that of Mary following the birth of Jesus in sura 19 (Maryam), and the story of King Solomon and the ants in sura 27 (al-Naml). The fourth, and perhaps most innovative, technique is that of presenting the story through dramatization. This technique gives only a brief introduction signalling the beginning of the scene, followed by a dramatization of the story with a dialogue among the various characters, as in the story of Abraham and Ismail in sura 2.

An important element in the structure of Qur'anic narrative is the varied use of the element of surprise. In some cases the anticlimax is kept from the main players and spectators, and is unfolded for both simultaneously towards the end, as in sura 18 in the story of Moses and the scholar. Another use of the element of surprise reveals the anticlimax to the audience but conceals it from the characters, who act in total ignorance. The Qur'an commonly uses this technique in situations where satire is intended (satire which is directed at the actors and their behaviour) as in the story in sura 68 (al-Qalam). A third technique reveals part of the anticlimax to the audience while keeping part of it concealed from both the audience and the characters, as in the story in sura 27 (al-Naml).

The structure of Qur'anic narrative displays the well-developed elements of an integrated literary work. One of the elements indispensable to dramatized narrative is change of scenery, which the Qur'an utilizes fully. In the story of Joseph in sura 12, the reader is presented with a succession of scenes, each of which leads to the next, picking up the main thread of the narrative. Joseph's story comprises some twenty-eight scenes, each of which leads to the next in a manner which maintains the organic unity of the entire

narrative. All such scenes are presented through dialogues replete with details and ideas.

The result of such a well-knit passage is that the reader finds himself drawn to the narrative, moving anxiously from one scene to another. This effect is achieved through a coherent series of events which sustain his curiosity and interest. In one scene, for example, we find one of Joseph's brothers entering the king's court in Egypt where Joseph is the keeper of the store-house. In this scene, Joseph stipulates to his brothers that they should bring their younger brother to the king's court in order to receive provisions. The next scene presents the brothers deliberating among themselves, which is followed by a scene in which they have returned to face their father, Jacob.

The following scene takes the brothers back to Egypt to confront Joseph. The presentation of the narrative in dramatic form involving a succession of scenes brings home effortlessly the main theme and the lessons to be derived from the whole narrative. The use of dialogue makes the scenes more vivid and closer to life. This is an art in which the Qur'an excels, and an art in which it is remarkably innovative. It is clearly a form of literary composition which the Qur'an, the first book in Arabic, introduced to the language.

The portrayal of personalities is a very significant element of the narrative; here, again, the Qur'an sets a precedent. The depiction of personalities in the various narratives manages to convey to the reader the precise dimensions and traits of such figures. This is done through the words and actions of the personalities portrayed. In the story of Moses, for example, the reader is readily able to discern, through Moses' actions, the type of aggressive yet emotionally sensitive person he was meant to portray. Conversely, in the story of Abraham, the Qur'anic verses carefully depict a calm, peaceful, and patient personality. This careful and accurate delineation of personality is effected largely through dialogue which skillfully brings out the traits of such personalities. The dialogue, in turn, is rendered even more effective by a very careful choice of words.

Islam, the Qur'an, and the internationalization of the Arabic language

The revelation of the Quran in Arabic in the early part of the seventh century AD helped the language to acquire an international status which it has continued to enjoy until the present day. It has been argued that Arabic has not simply remained ancillary to Islam but that it has been significant as a 'means of cultural and national revival in the Arabic-speaking countries.'^[49] It is true that Arabic has played an important role in the life and history of the Arab people, but without the bond it has with Islam it would not have been likely to have acquired the type of international status it has acquired through Islam. It was under the banner of religion that Arabic spread beyond the borders of the Arabian Peninsula. The early Muslims who emerged from the north-western part of the Arabian Peninsula brought with them not only the Islamic religion but Arabic as well. This phenomenon was so remarkable that, within a few centuries after the revelation of the Qur'an,

Arabic became the common language of government, correspondence, business, and literary expression.

The speed and facility with which Arabic was first accepted and then eventually absorbed in the new countries was remarkable, and it was largely due to its association with Islam. Converts to the new religion looked with great interest towards the original language of their Holy Book. ^[50] They were clearly fascinated by the new religion and its language. The desire on the part of the new converts to identify with the resourceful pioneers emerging from the Arabian Peninsula was yet another factor in their adoption of the language.

Arabic was able to replace such languages as Greek and Syriac in Syria and the Fertile Crescent, Coptic, Greek, and Latin in Egypt, and Pahlavi in Persia. Syriac, a dialect of the ancient Aramaic language, had a flourishing literature until it gave way to Arabic in the seventh century AD, and was subsequently limited to being a vehicle for translating Greek literature and philosophy into Arabic. In Egypt, the languages used until the early seventh century were Coptic and Greek; both languages, however, gave way to Arabic, which became the common language of the country, with Coptic as the language of the local Christian Church.

By the end of the ninth century, Arabic was already being used in churches alongside Coptic. ^[51] In Persia, Pahlavi, the language of the Sassanian dynasty (224-640 AD), used the Arabic alphabet and contained a large number of Arabic loan-words. Following the Arab conquest in 640, Pahlavi gave way to New Persian, which adopted the Arabic script and which was greatly influenced by Arabic. It is estimated that one third of the vocabulary of modern Persian (Farsi), is of Arabic origin. ^[52] Persian scholars engaged in the field of Islamic studies wrote mostly in Arabic. Among these were such prominent figures as Ibn Sina (980-1037), al Ghazzali (1058-1111), and Abu Bakr al-Razi of the twelfth century AD who wrote more than thirty books in Arabic. Even though Farsi began to develop its own identity and become gradually independent from Arabic around the tenth century AD, ^[53] the language is still written in the Arabic script. ^[54]

Similarly, the Arabic script was adopted for the Turkic languages following the conversion to Islam of speakers of these languages, which include, in the Southern Division, Turkish, Azerbaijani, Turkoman, and Chuvash, and, in the Eastern Division, Kinghiz, Kazakh, and Tatar. The Turkic languages continued to use the Arabic script until the early part of this century. The Turkish language, the most important of the Turkic languages, was doubly influenced by Arabic; first, through conversion to Islam, the adoption of the Arabic script, and the adoption of a large number of Arabic loan-words, and secondly through the medium of Farsi. As in the case of the latter, Arabic was the language of composition for many Turkish scholars, notably in the fields of religious and philological studies. ^[55]

In the Indian subcontinent, the introduction of Arabic was similarly largely due to the adoption of the Islamic faith. It was the language of government during the reign of the sultan Jalal al-Din (963-1014 AH). There is evidence, however, that Arabic reached India prior to the tenth Islamic century through Farsi, which was the language of the court in India

prior to the advent of Islam. Urdu, a written variety of Hindustani with a substantial quantity of Arabic words, is the language used by Muslims; it employs the Arabic alphabet. A great majority of the Urdu scholars of the twelfth Islamic century used the medium of Arabic for their writings. Prominent among them were Wali Allah al-Dihlawi, Shibli al-Na'mani, and Karamat Husayn. ^[56] Arabic gained more and more ground with the increasing Muslim influence in India. Urdu, which has a vocabulary of which at least thirty per cent is of Arabic origin, continues to the present to be the foremost among the dialects spoken among the Muslims of India and Pakistan. The impact of Arabic extended to other Indic languages such as Hindi and Sindhi, the latter using the Arabic alphabet.

In south-east Asia, the arrival of Islam in the fourteenth century AD brought with it the Arabic language, whose alphabet was subsequently adopted by the Malayo-Polynesian languages. These languages are spoken by the inhabitants of the Malay Peninsula, Madagascar, Taiwan, Indonesia, New Guinea, the Melanesian, Micronesian, and Polynesian islands, the Phillipines, and New Zealand. These languages employ writing systems based on the Roman, Hindic, and Arabic alphabets. ^[57]

The impact of Islam and the Arabic language was not confined to these parts of Arabia, Africa, and Asia. Indeed, the spread of Islam into the European continent led to the subsequent introduction of Arabic. Less than a century later, the impact of Arabic began to be felt on such languages as Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, French, English, and German. The impact was most noticeable in Spain and Portugal, where Arabic existed alongside the native languages and was used in church liturgy and in business transactions. It was generally through Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian that Arabic influenced other European languages, including the Scandinavian languages.

The number of Arabic loan-words in Spanish is in the thousands. Many names of cities, rivers, villages, and provinces in Spain have retained their Arabic forms, as in place-names which begin with the words bani, wadi, and al('son', 'valley', and 'the', respectively), as in Bani al-Madina, Wadi al-Kabir, and al-Qasr. ^[58] Among the Arabic loan-words in European languages there is a host of scientific terminology. The existence of scientific words of Arabic origin in European languages is attributed to the pioneering efforts of Muslim scholars in the fields of mathematics, physics, chemistry, and medicine. In their works, Muslim scholars had to coin an entirely new terminology to introduce their innovations, which included such novel concepts as algebra, the algorithm, alkali, alchemy, and alcohol. In addition to scientific terms, European languages contain many everyday words of Arabic origin, e.g., coffee, sugar, saffron, admiral, arsenal. Arabic numerals are another case in point.

Conclusion

The Arabic language has without doubt served as a very effective medium for the communication of the message of Islam, and as the Prophet's strongest argument against the challenges of his articulate and eloquent contemporaries. It has also served as a means for preserving the cultural and religious heritage of Arabic-speaking and Muslim peoples. In

this sense, the language has been extremely useful to the religion. However, in its role as the language of the Qur'an, Arabic has benefited enormously. There is a clear legitimacy to the claim that Islam and the Qur'an have helped to preserve Arabic from decay and deterioration, for it was mainly due to the need to preserve the accuracy and pronunciation of the verses of the Qur'an that efforts were instigated towards refining the Arabic alphabet.

Subsequently, the Qur'an was instrumental in the codification of Arabic grammar in the second and third Islamic centuries. Furthermore, the need for Muslims, whether native or non-native speakers of Arabic, to memorize and recite verses from the Qur'an in their daily worship has helped to keep the Arabic language alive. It was due to its association with Islam and the Qur'an that Arabic gained a good deal of prestige as the language of a young faith, a faith that was gaining more and more followers with each new day. The interest in the new faith this brought with it interest in the language of that faith. It was under the banner of Islam that Arabic spread beyond the borders of the Arabian Peninsula to far-off areas in Europe, south-east Asia, and Africa.

From literary, structural, and stylistic points of view, the Qur'an added immeasurably to the beauty of the language, introducing new styles, forms of expression, figures of speech, and structures. The Qur'an also enriched and expanded the vocabulary of the Arabic language by employing hundreds of words of foreign origin, thus demonstrating the legitimacy of lexical borrowing as a linguistic device. The Qur'an similarly presented Arab scholars with a higher criterion of literary excellence and set new and more rigid standards for literary composition for subsequent generations of Arab scholars.

The model that the Qur'an provided, while remaining inimitable, has sharpened the literary skill and kindled the talent of generations of scholars in their attempts to emulate the style and literary excellence of the Qur'an, the first book in the Arabic language. Interest in the Qur'an, its language, and its exegesis gave rise to a number of related disciplines, which include philological, religious, and linguistic studies. There is no doubt that the Arabic language was extremely useful as a medium for the revelation of the Holy Qur'an and for communicating God's final message to the pre-Islamic Arabs of the seventh century. It is, however, the conclusion of this paper that the Arabic language underwent drastic changes in its structure, content, and status due to its association with Islam and the Qur'an, changes that the language would not have undergone had it not been for the new role it acquired in its bond with Islam and the Qur'an.

Footnotes:

[1] See, for this view, 'Abbas Hasan, *Al-Lugha wa-l-nahw bayn al-qadim wa-l-hadith*, Cairo, 1966, and Ibrahim Anis, *Min asrar al-lugha*, Cairo, 1970.

[2] Anwar Cheyne, *The Arabic language: its role in history*, Minnesota, 1969, ch. 4, pp. 53 ff.

[3] *Ibid.*

[4] On this subject, see Taha Husayn's excellent argument in his *Mir'at al-Islam*, pp. 125 ff., and Sayyid Qutbs *Al-Taswir al-fanni fi l-Qur'an*, chs. 1-3.

[5] Philip K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, London, 1967, pp. 87 ff.

[6] Cheyne, *Op. Cit.*, ch. 4, pp. 52 ff.

- [7] Ibid. ,ch.4,pp.52ff.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Hitti, Op. Cit., pp. 90 ff.
[10] Ibrahim Anis, Fi l-lahajat al'arabiyya, Cairo, 1962, ch. 2, pp. 33 ff.
[11] Vicente Cantarino, Arabic poetics in the golden age, Leiden, 1975, pp. 17 ff.
[12] Ibid., ch. 1, pp. 9 ff.
[13] Al-Jahiz, Kitab al-Bayan, Cairo, 1965
[14] Ibn Rashiq, 'Umda, Cairo, 1934, vol. 1, 65; also in al-Suyuti, Muzhir,Cairo, n.d., vol. 2, 203.
[15] Ibn Qutayba, 'Uyun al-akhbar, Cairo, 1964, vol. 2, 185.
[16] Ibn Khaldun, Al-Muqaddima, vol. 3, 375.
[17] Al-Suyuti, Op. Cit., vol. 2, 291.
[18] All Qur'anic quotations are taken, with some modification, from the translation of Yusuf A. Ali, The Holy Qur'an, London, 1983.
[19] Hitti, Op. Cit., pp. 90-91.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Cheyne. Op. Cit.. pp. 56 ff
[22] A number of excellent works were devoted entirely to this aspect of the Qur'an, e.g., al-Suyuti, al Itqan, and al-Baqillani, I'jaz al-Qur'an, Beirut, 1979.
[23] Abu Ja far Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari, Tafsir al-Qur'an.
[24] Mahmud b. Umar al-Zamakhshari (d. 1143).
[25] Nasr al-Din al-Baidawi (d. 1286)
[26] Al Baqillan, Op. Cit.. pp 45 ff
[27] Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, Kitab al-Fawai'id al-mushawwig ila 'ulum al-Qur'an wa'ilm al-bayan, Cairo, 1909, pp. 7, 246.
[28] Ibn Khaldun, Op. Cit., vol. 3, 338
[29] Ibn Qutayba, Kitab Ta'wil mushkil al-Qur'an, Cairo, 1954, p. 10.
[30] Ibn Khaldun, Op. Cit., vol. 3, 1266
[31] Taha Husayn, Op. Cit., p. 129.
[32] Ibid., pp. 130 ff.
[33] Ibid., pp. 129 ff.
[34] Ibid., p. 125
[35] Arthur Jeffrey, The Foreign vocabulary of the Qur'an. Lahore, 1977, pp. 5 ff.
[36] Ibid., pp. 6 ff.
[37] Al-Suyuti, al Itqan, vol. 1, § 38, p. 136.
[38] Ibid., p. 136.
[39] Ibid., pp. 136 ff.
[40] Ibid., pp. 137 ff.
Ibid.
[42] Ibid., pp. 138 ff.
[43] Al-Suyuti, Itqan
[44] 'Abbas Hasan, Op. Cit., pp. 72 ff.
[45] Sayyid Qutb, Op. Cit., pp. 34 ff.
[46] Ibid., pp. 87 ff.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Cheyne, Op. Cit., pp. 5 ff.
[50] Anwar al-Jindi, Al-Fusha lughat al-Qur'an, Beirut, n.d., p. 31.
[51] Ibid, p. 45.
[52] Ibid., p. 72.
[53] Ibid., p. 72. See also Cheyne, Op. Cit., p. 1.
[54] Al-Jindi, Op Cit.,p. 77
[55] In a discussion with Dr Baynurza Hayit, a prominent Turkistani scholar who lives and writes in West Germany, at the third annual meeting of the American Council for the Study of Islamic Societies held at Villanova University in May 1986, he informed me that Turkic languages enjoyed a high degree of mutual intelligibility and interaction during that period in which the Arabic script was in use, and that this feature began to disappear following the switch of writing system in some of these languages.

[56] Al-Jindi, Op. Cit., p. 81.

[57] William H. Harris and Judith S. Levy, The New Columbia Encyclopedia, New York and London, 1975, p. 1670.

[58] Banilmadina is a large resort on the Costa del Sol in southern Spain, Guadalquivir is a river which runs through the ancient city of Seville, and the Alcazar is the famous palace in that city.

The Concept Of Martyrdom In Islam

A. Ezzati, Tehran University, Al-Serat, Vol XII (1986)

ISLAM as an all inclusive systematic religion is an interrelated set of ideals and realities covering the entire area of human notion and action, beliefs and practices, thought, word, and deed. Islamic principles and concepts cannot be fully and properly appreciated unless they are analysed and realized within the framework of Islam as a whole. ^[1]

The concept of martyrdom (shahada) in Islam can only be understood in the light of the Islamic concept of Holy Struggle (jihad) and the concept of jihad may only be appreciated if the concept of the doctrine of enjoining right and discovering wrong (al-amr bi'l-maruf) is properly appreciated, and good and bad, ^[2] right and wrong, can only be understood if the independent divine source of righteousness, truth, and goodness (tawhid), and how the Message of the divine source of righteousness and truth has been honestly and properly conveyed to humanity through prophethood, are understood. Finally the divine message may not be fully appreciated unless the embodiment of this divine message, or the Model of Guidance, and the Supreme Paradigm (imama or uswa) is properly recognized.

We can thus see how the concept of martyrdom in Islam is linked with the entire religion of Islam. This whole process can be somehow understood if the term 'Islam' is appreciated. This is because being a derivate of the Arabic root salama, which means 'surrender' and 'peace', Islam is a wholesome and peaceful submission to the will of Allah. ^[3] This means being prepared to die (martyrdom) in the course of this submission. Thus the concept of martyrdom, like all other Islamic concepts, can be fully and wholly appreciated only in the light of the Islamic doctrine of tawhid, or the absolute unity of Allah and full submission to His will and command. It cannot be fully appreciated in isolation.

In this sense, the concept of shahada is no exception. All Islamic concepts are interrelated, and should be appreciated within the framework of the doctrine of tawhid. ^[4]

The concept of shahada in Islam has been misunderstood by both Muslims and non-Muslims. As stated above, shahada is closely associated with the concept of jihad. Most non-Muslim scholars, intentionally or unintentionally, have defined jihad as only the Holy War, and thus have understood neither jihad nor shahada. ^[5] The Muslims, mostly taking into consideration the martyrs of the early days of Islamic history, define martyrdom in terms of the fatalistic death of those dear to Allah, and do not see the close link between continuous struggle in the cause of Allah (jihad) and martyrdom. ^[6]

Martyrdom is not the monopoly of Islam (though it is the monopoly of spiritual, religious, and divine systems, and cannot be claimed by followers of materialistic schools). Islam introduces its own concept of martyrdom. An Islamic concept should be explained within the framework of Islam, and not, by Muslims or by non-Muslims, in the light of non-Islamic concepts such as guilt and suffering.

Muslims are not allowed to explain Islamic principles without taking due consideration of the entire conceptual system of Islam. Shahada thus cannot

be explained purely in terms of intercession and mediation. That is to say, those early martyrs of Islam volunteered for death to be able to intercede and mediate for sinners on the Day of Judgement.

The Islamic concept of intercession and mediation (shafa'a) should be appreciated within the framework of the principle of causality, and not solely as spiritual mediation.^[7] Islam rejects the Christian concept of mediation without the personal responsibility for the salvation of oneself.

The concepts of martyrdom and Holy Struggle in the cause of Allah are interrelated. Both words have been frequently used in the Holy Qur'an.^[8] In fact, there is no martyrdom without struggle in the cause of Allah and for the cause of the truth. Both words have literal meanings different from their terminological meanings, although these terminological meanings were originally based on the literal meanings.^[9] They developed their terminological meanings later on, though the term shahada was used in the Qur'an for those who were martyred too.^[10] The Islamic concepts of both shahada and jihad have been misunderstood, particularly by non-Muslims, mainly by Orientalists.

The word shahada is derived from the Arabic verbal root shahada, which means to 'see', to 'witness', to 'testify', to 'become a model and paradigm'. Shahada therefore literally means to 'see', to 'witness', and to 'become a model'. A shahid is the person who sees and witnesses,^[11] and he is therefore the witness, as if the martyr witnesses and sees the truth physically and thus stands by it firmly, so much so that not only does he testify it verbally, but he is prepared to struggle and fight and give up his life for the truth, and thus to become a martyr. In this way, and by his struggle and sacrifice for the sake of the truth, he become a model, a paradigm, and an example for others, worthy of being copied, and worthy of being followed.^[12]

In this process, the keyword is 'truth' (haqq), its recognition and declaration, the struggle and fight for it, and the preparedness to die for its sake and thus set the model for the seekers of truth. The goal, motive, and the whole aim is the establishment of the truth. Jihad is the means for establishing the truth, and may lead to martyrdom, but does not necessarily lead to being killed for it in the battlefield, although it necessarily involves the continuous Holy Struggle, and death in the cause of the struggle.

We may therefore conclude that there is neither jihad nor martyrdom outside the realm of truth, that martyrdom applies only when it is preceded by jihad, that jihad is an inclusive struggle for the cause of the truth, that a mujahid dies the death of a martyr even though he does not fall on the battlefield. He dies as a martyr even though he is not killed, on the condition that he stays loyal to the divine truth and stands ready to fight for the truth and to defend it at all costs, even at the cost of his own life. He is a mujahid while he lives, and a martyr if he dies or is killed for it.

We have explained that a martyr establishes himself as a paradigm and a model. Both shahid (martyr) and shahid (model) are derived from the same Arabic root. In this sense, the concept of shahada is closely related to the concept of prophethood in Islam. Both the martyrs and the prophets are regarded as paradigms (2:143).

In Islam man needs guidance to the truth. The true guidance is from the whole truth, God, the Source of Truth and Guidance (50:6, 71, 88, 92:12). But since it is man who is to be guided, the guide should naturally be a man. Islam is the message from the source of truth, given to the Messenger as the guideline for leading mankind to the truth. Guiding humanity requires leading humanity.

The true faith is united with righteous living in Islam, and there is unity of belief and practice in Islam. A comprehensive guidance therefore involves leading in thought, words, and behaviour. The guide should therefore practise what he preaches,^[13] and should himself be the supreme incarnation and the perfect embodiment of the message he spreads. He should be a paradigm, a model, and a model-maker.^[14] Muhammad was thus the Messenger who brought the comprehensive universal Message of Allah, and he was the incarnation of the divine message,^[15] and the living example of his mission, the model (shahid), the paradigm (uswa). The key word in the concept of prophethood in Islam is thus human guidance.

This involves the recognition of what humanity should be guided to, what guidance is, how it should be done, and the realization of the guidance by being the true model of the actual guidance. This is why Muhammad was himself the first Muslim and the best model of Islam. And thus his practice is recognized as the guideline and standard pattern (sunna) for the Muslim community, the members of which are supposed to become models (shuhada) for the entire human community.^[16] The prophets, including Muhammad, were thus models and model-makers, and their disciples and companions were models. Thus those who carry on the struggle in the cause of the truth are mujahids and shahids at the same time.

The position of the prophets as the paradigms and model-makers in Islam gives the Islamic concept of prophethood a unique characteristic. Their main responsibility is thus leading and guiding humanity to the truth by being the true incarnation of God.^[17] They do not intercede and mediate between the source of the truth and humanity spiritually, in the sense that they come to be crucified to pay for the sins committed by humanity through Adam.

In Islam, everybody is responsible for his or her own actions.^[18] Nothing and nobody can intercede between the sinner and God. The concept of intercession in Islam should be appreciated within the framework of the principle of causality. That is to say that the prophets, by guiding and leading the people to the truth, cause their salvation (sa'ada).

Salvation must be earned and deserved, and the prophets and the Messengers of Allah provide us with the opportunity to earn and deserve salvation,^[19] that is to say, it is not the crucifixion and the cross that causes salvation, but it is the realization of the truth that causes it. Man is thus, originally sinless, good, and peaceful, and the role of the prophets is a positive one that of guidance and of being a paradigm, and not a negative one. Martyrs are the super-models of the divine message, too, and in this way they share a special responsibility and honour with the prophets.

Because the responsibility of the prophets is partly to provide the living example of the divine message, their message should be practical so that the rest of humanity, like them, is able to copy and follow them and practise the

Message too. What Jesus did, according to Christian doctrine, was a unique action by a unique being (the crucifixion of the Son of God), not possible and necessary for humanity to copy. But what Muhammad did was to convey the practical guidelines of righteousness, and he himself lived within those guidelines to prove their practicability for the rest of humanity. This is why the prophets are called shahids (paradigms and witnesses) in the Qur'an,^[20] a term used for martyrs later on in the early days of Islamic history.

^[21] Muhammad, therefore, like other Messengers, is the incarnation of Islam, full surrender to God, the universal religion of all of creation, including man.^[22] He was the model of what he taught, and a paradigm for humanity. A model attracts and leads people to the truth. He does not force them. This is in full harmony with the concept of man in Islam. Islam rejects the incarnation in man of the essence of the actual divinity, but fully encourages the incarnation of God's guidance, will, and command, to become the living example of God's full code of thought and life (din, religion) for man. The prophets are the living examples of the divine message, and by being so make others the examples. Martyrs are also full examples of the divine message, and thus the embodiment of the divine will. There are a few Islamic traditions which introduce the blood of the martyrs as the blood of God (thar Allah).

Shi'ism being one of the fundamental and original sects of Islam, and staying loyal to all authentic Islamic doctrines, lays great emphasis on the doctrine of the leadership (Imamate) of the Muslim leadership. I believe it is not inappropriate to suggest that all of Shi'ism revolves around one major principle, that of the leadership of the Islamic community (umma).

The keyword in Shi'ism is thus Imamate, which means leading and guiding those in need of guidance. If the community is to be led and guided, the leaders themselves should be the leading examples of the faith in what they try to lead the community to believe in, and models of the code of thought and practice they try to lead others to practice. The concept of leadership involves three elements: (i) those who lead (imam), (ii) those who are to be led (shia, mamum), and (iii) the actual leadership, guidance, and code of leadership. The community cannot be led unless those who lead believe in what they practice and in what they preach others to practice. In short, imams should themselves be the living examples and models for those they try to lead.

If prophethood and messengership involve two major responsibilities, namely, introducing and spreading the divine message, and setting the model and being the living example of the divine message, the Imamate involves only the latter responsibility. This is why every Messenger is also an Imam, but an Imam is not necessarily a Messenger. In fact, the office of the Imamate is the responsibility for providing the model for the office of messengership, and this is how he leads.

We can therefore understand that Shi'ism (following the leader) based on the doctrine of the Imamate (leadership) is more directly involved with the idea of setting the model, providing the example, and producing the paradigm. The entire history of Shi'ism, and the lives of the Shi'i Imams

should be appreciated in this context and within the concept of the Imamate, which is the leading of humanity to salvation by guiding them to the full implementation of Allah's code for the salvation of humanity, by being the supreme example in word and deed of that divine code. That is to say that they live a life of continuous struggle in the cause of Allah and of truth, and that is why they are all regarded as martyrs, whether they die on the battlefield or in bed.

The event of Karbala', the martyrdom of the Imam Husayn on 'Ashura', and the whole struggle he undertook, plays a very crucial role in the history of Shi'ism. Yet this unique historical event is seen by the Shi'a as a model event to inspire the Muslims. This is explained in the well known narration frequently quoted 'Every day is 'Ashura', and every place is Karbala'. This is partly why it has kept its dynamic, resilient, and revolutionary spirit, and features throughout history, and this is how Shi'ism truly reflects this spirit.

Notes

- [1] A. Ezzati, *The Spread of Islam*, (1976), p. 55
- [2] *Ibid.*, Introduction
- [3] *Ibid.*, pp. 39-42
- [4] Morrish, *BIC* p. 191
- [5] For this see N. Salihi, *Shahid-i-Javid*
- [6] Tabatabai, *Al-Mizan*
- [7] 2:218, 8:76, 9:115, 143, 13:43
- [8] 29:52
- [9] 4:72
- [10] Farhang Jami'i, *Mufradat Raghīb*. See 2:105, 143, 185, 282, 5:106
- [11] 2:142
- [12] 2:185
- [13] 2:142
- [14] 2:285
- [15] 6:48, 14:10-12, 16:43-3
- [16] 6:48, 14:10-12, 16:43-3
- [17] 6:164
- [18] Tabatabai, *Al-Mizan*
- [19] 2:142
- [20] 2:143
- [21] 4:69
- [22] *al-Kulayni, Usul al-Kafi*

Religious Education of the Younger Generation

Zakir Vol IV No. 1, 1398

At present the problem of imparting religious education to our children is exercising the minds of many parents and guardians. Those who are concerned about the weal, welfare and spiritual well-being of our budding youths feel concerned that, in the absence of proper understanding of the fundamental beliefs and cardinal principles of religion, our children may become preys to the scepticism and disbelief which is destroying the moral fabric of our society—society which is euphemistically called "permissive society".

This concern is felt in all parts of the world where people hold fast to their religious beliefs and cherish them as the storehouse of best moral values. In particular, in countries of the West, where our people are settled with their families, this concern is more vocally, and at times vociferously, expressed; and rightly so, because our children are amenable to extraneous influences which keep on assailing and undermining their religious beliefs, dogmas and susceptibilities.

Whilst I fully endorse the proposition that there is a crying need for imparting knowledge of the fundamentals of our religion and its cardinal principles to the new generation, I join issue with the proponents of these ideas on the methods to be adopted for achieving this end. My purpose in writing this article is to sound a note of warning that religious education of the conventional type which makes children of 6 to 10 memorise the "Usool-e-Deen" and "Furoo-e-Deen" with the dogmatic comments on them handed down to us from generation to generation, will not in the least serve the purpose we have in view, namely, to prepare our future generations for the onslaught from various quarters on their religious beliefs and practices.

When I say this, I am speaking from personal knowledge having attended such a "Maktab" (school) in my childhood where venerable preachers religiously repeated and reiterated all that they were expected to impart to their young pupils and, in fulfilment of what they thought to be part of their duty, made the pupils memorise them, and even chant them with all the zeal and fervour the young souls were capable of.

It is said that: "Truth is bitter but its fruit is sweet". I know that what I am trying to expound may be unpalatable or may seem to be gall and wormwood to the taste of many who are steeped in orthodoxy; but in the larger interest of truth it must be said for whatever it is worth. Present day knowledge of child psychology has led many advanced countries to modify and revise their concepts of children's education at the earliest stage.

It is now well-recognised that highly learned, capable and understanding teachers are required to handle children just when they embark on their studies because, during their formative years, they must be given every encouragement and opportunity to develop their enquiring minds. When we talk about the religious education of our children, do we have in mind selection and appointment of persons possessing aptitude and education of the highest standard both religious and secular, and capability to mould the character and develop the reasoning faculties of our children in the best of traditions?

Are we not thinking of taking unction to our souls by entrusting them to the care of half-baked teachers of theology who accept the appointments more for earning their livelihood than with the high motives of inculcating love of religion amongst the pupils by explaining and expounding the undercurrent of truth and love of God and His creatures which pervades His universe and which is the essence of our religion? When we ask the parents to send their children to religious schools, do we tell them to whose care they will be entrusted, or are we presuming that it does not matter a whit who is to be entrusted this sacred duty so long as he is having a smattering of the fundamental principles of our religion? I am sincerely of the view that imparting of religious knowledge in a perfunctory manner will not serve the purpose and those who receive it will remain as vulnerable as those who never attend such schools or classes. It would be like laying the foundation of a house on quicksand—building an edifice with a tottering base.

It may appear to quite a few that I am over-emphasising one particular aspect of the matter and magnifying it manifold, but I honestly believe that, so far, very little has been done to produce the right type of religious teachers who can handle the education of our younger generation and equip them with sound knowledge and beliefs that can withstand attacks of outsiders, and emerge successfully in later life with unflinching faith and unshakeable belief in the righteousness of our creed.

Some years back I got an English translation of "Bab-ul-Ahada Ashara" which is an exposition of the Eleventh Chapter of Allama Hilli's work on the fundamental principles of Shi'a beliefs by Miqdad-e-Fazil al-Hilli, one of the foremost disciples of Allama Hilli. According to the translator, this book is being taught in a large number of Shi'a religious schools because it explains and clarifies the fundamental principles of Islam as understood and applied by Shi'a theologians. The translator mentions that the Eleventh Chapter of the treatise of Allama Hilli is so difficult to understand that even scholars of religion cannot properly comprehend it and, for that reason, the commentator has expounded and elaborated the matters set out in it so as to make them easily understandable. With all due deference to the learned commentator, the book is full of puerile arguments developed in a laboured manner, reminiscent of the style of Greek logicians of yore.

These syllogistic exercises appear to be far below the standard to be expected in a work associated with the name of one of the most respected and learned Shi'a divines, Allama Hilli. Only very recently the late Agha Mirza Mehdi Pooya published his "Fundamentals of Islam" in English for the younger generation to meet a long-felt want. In my view, every person who wants his children to understand the fundamental principles of Islam, as enunciated by the Shi'a School, must make this book available to them. I may hasten to add that the work is not meant for children of very tender age but for those who have reached sufficient maturity and are capable of discernment.

To me it seems that religious knowledge, in the right sense of the word, as distinct and distinguished from religious jingoism, can be imparted only to children who have reached such age. Agha Pooya's "Fundamentals of Islam" may, perhaps serve a far better purpose than the classes conducted by

religious teachers whose scholastic credentials are suspect and whose own knowledge is strictly limited, and who, more often than not, are so hide-bound in their approach that they generate more heat than light in the course of the discussions and discourses. Lest I am misunderstood, I may clarify that I am all for selection and appointment of really learned and competent teachers of religious principles and doctrines, in the true sense of the term, who can inculcate and develop a taste and kindle a yearning for religion in their pupils and not merely teach as a fulfilment of their professional duty during the appointed hours; persons who can clear mental cobwebs and aberrations by encouraging questions and arguments and not stifle them by snubs and scorn, persons who, like Tennyson, feel:

There is more truth in honest doubts

Believe me, than in all your creeds.

My genuine apprehension is that such dedicated persons are so rare and difficult to find that, instead of searching for them far and wide, we may compromise by settling for and selecting persons who, to us, may seem to be second or third best but who, in reality, may be the very antithesis of what is needed by the yearning hearts and inquiring minds of our talented youths whose appetite for information and knowledge is whetted by the present day discoveries of science and progress in methods of education.

The topic of religious education cannot be discussed without mentioning the role of Majalis-e-Imam Husain which have acquired the status of a religious institution in our society. The platforms which they provide during the months of Muharram and Safar can be very effectively used for the purpose in view, but unfortunately it must be admitted in all honesty that they have not even touched the fringe of the problem. They have fallen far short of expectation, mainly due to the fact that many of the venerable gentlemen who adorn the pulpits and deliver lectures are so steeped in outworn concepts, wrongly called traditions, that, if I may be excused the use of the expression in connection with the performance of these august persons, they simply get "inebriated by the exuberance of their own verbosity".

More often than not, their sermons are "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing". Times out of number they put forward arguments which cannot bear scrutiny, knowing full well that what they say will go unchallenged because time-worn, unwritten rules of behaviour in such Majalis require the audience to mutely suffer such travesties of facts. They expound the view of some of the Ulema of bygone days who, with due deference to the very valuable work done by them and contributions made in the course of development of religious thoughts, have made many patent mistakes and errors of judgment. This is because they were of earth, earthly. This is because they were fallible human beings like us.

I am not saying these things to denigrate these learned masters of the past who have earned our respect and esteem by their voluminous positive contributions. The fault lies squarely with their successors who have not used their reasoning faculties, the most precious gift of God to mankind, and evading and avoiding all research, have adopted a subservient and even

atavistic attitude in using the material handed down to them by the past generation of religious scholars.

If many of the learned Ulema of the past made mistakes, they can well be attributed to the circumstances in which they were working, to the fact that they did not have at their disposal all the facilities for research that we have today. In those days, general knowledge in various fields was strictly limited, means of communication were scant and meagre. If our present day religious scholars fail to do research in various aspects and facets of religion and take shelter behind the works of past scholars, placing them on pedestals which facts and circumstances do not warrant, who is to be blamed for it? It is such unquestioning attitude that is likely to alienate our younger generation from religion and all that it stands for.

We find that in sermons delivered from the pulpits often there are glaring contradictions which create not only credibility gaps but also lead to the impression, albeit wrong, that what are narrated as facts of history are fibs, mere myths and figments of imagination. If sweeping statements are made in the course of these sermons which, on the face of them, are patently illogical and untrue, and they go unchallenged, many of our intelligent and discerning youths may begin to doubt and question the veracity of other facts and principles which are placed in juxtaposition with them. Such sermons prove counter-productive.

It is true that to the vast majority of people who attend the Majalis-e-Aza whatever is preached from the pulpit is the essence of truth and they just keep on gaping with admiration, unmindful of the correctness or otherwise of the utterances in the tradition of the admiration of the young pupils of Goldsmith for their teacher about which he has said:

And still they gazed and still their wonder grew
How one small head could carry all he knew.

But it is not what these majority of simple souls think or believe that really matters. It is what the thinking, brooding, reflecting intelligentsia amongst our younger generation think and believe that counts. It is these intellectual elites who can really mould and influence the future generations of our people and so it is our religious duty to cater for their spiritual needs and to ensure that they get ample opportunity to challenge all assertions and averments made in the course of the perorations.

This can be possible if we divide the time of our Majalis into two parts—one for delivery of the lectures as at present and the other, immediately following it, for discussions on various aspects of religion, including questioning of facts and principles enunciated during the harangue but not necessarily confined to it.

Such symposia can be held with two or three participants, including the speaker of that day, with some learned man presiding as compere to regulate the proceedings and ensure that the discussion is held at an intellectual level and there are no frivolities. Such programmes must, at the same time, provide utmost freedom to the participants to air their views without any recrimination and rancour, subject, however, to maintenance of standards of decency and decorum associated with such solemn functions.

Out of such functions and discussions, more often than not, considerable benefits are likely to accrue to the audience as well as the participants. It is possible that some of the other participants may be more knowledgeable than the main speaker of the day and the latter may himself gain the most from such discussions. At least, when he knows that he will not be able to get away with his "terminological inexactitudes" he will think twice before taking liberty with facts and common sense. Has not Firdousi the immortal poet of Iran, said:

I have heard from the wise man that there is a lot of wisdom (in this world) But it is scattered amongst a very large number of people.)

Unless we convert our Majalis-e-Aza into forums of such religious discussions, of course, retaining the essential characteristic of it by allocating a reasonable time for Azadaree-e-Husain, one of the most important purposes of it will be lost and frustrated.

I have made bold to say several things which may be unpalatable to many because I feel that truth transcends all other considerations. I am reminded of the verse of Sadi:

Sadi do not tread the path of formality
If you know the truth, speak it up and be done with it
Speak out what you know as the truth for it is better that way
Neither indulge in graft nor in blandishments.

Elegy (Marthiya) on Husayn: Arabic and Persian

Lynda Clarke, University of Toronto, Al-Serat, Vol XII (1986)

I propose to give here an account neither of the development, nor of the themes, of the elegy on Husayn, in Arabic or Persian, nor of the outstanding poets of elegy, the literature in both these languages is too vast for that, and spread out over too great a period. Rather, I would like to give some idea of the place of these marathi in literary and religious tradition, while giving in translation some examples of elegy on Husayn which should serve for those unfamiliar with these languages to form an idea of the beauty and effectiveness of this type of poetry.

I should warn English-speakers that my translations, in one essential respect, do not bear much resemblance to the originals. The Arabic and Persian poetical traditions, at least until very recently (only a few decades ago), required adherence to strict rhyme patterns, often monorhyme, and strict quantitative metre. These things are not only nearly impossible to reproduce in our English language, but also undesirable.

It is necessary to imagine that the examples I give had in their original a very regular rhythm, a rhythm which could also be important for ritual purposes, for instance, in religious processions. If the conceits used are sometimes also a little difficult for us to understand immediately, the ideas expressed, and the effect, are, I think, universal.

The tradition of elegiac poetry known in Arabic as marthiya had its roots, as regards themes as well as form, in pre-Islamic times.

The Arabic elegy, in the sometimes lengthy monorhyme qasida form, was like all pre-Islamic poetry highly conventionalized. The virtues of the deceased and the loss of the mourner are described, which then provides an opportunity to dwell on the pathos of this transitory life in the face of fate, always unalterable. Often the mourner curses the enemy and calls for vengeance. While the pre-Islamic elegy was conventionalized, it was also highly specific, or occasional: reflections on mortality only serve to frame a threnodic tribute to a specified personality.

If we express 'marthiya' as 'elegy', then it should be kept in mind that what we mean is not the elegy of Western tradition, which may designate any poem of a subjective kind, and one quite generally connected with the question of mortality. Most of even the earliest forms of the Greek elegiac couplet (from which the Latin and then Western languages take the genre and the name) do not display exclusively themes of death or loss.

If I bring up this point - which may seem somewhat distant from the question of elegy on Husayn in Arabic and Persian - it is to emphasize that the literature of marathi has but weak parallels in Western tradition. More particularly, it is not paralleled in Western Christian tradition, despite an extensive martyrology. Some of the social and attendant historical factors in this contrasting development may be surmised: for one thing, the influence of poetic tradition has been comparatively much stronger among the Arab-speaking peoples and among the once much wider circle of Persian speakers than in the West.

What is of relevance here is that it has clearly been the event of Karbala' which allowed this pre-Islamic Arabic tradition to continue into Islamic

times and take its central place in the languages of the Islamic tradition. Any elegy (in the restricted sense in which we are speaking here) may strike a universal note; in fact that is one of the requirements of an elegy, but very few examples tend to survive as poetry or as something which would continue to evoke deep emotion.

Practically our whole tradition of funeral elegy in English, for example, seems to be quite dead, in the poetical sense. In contrast to this, we have the tradition of Husayn and those martyred with him: the sacrifice of Husayn has provided a vital and meaningful subject for authors (both Shia and Sunni) for all of fourteen centuries (and into the future, God willing). Thus we see that even in Arabic, although the strong tradition of secular elegy continued into this century, that too has declined with other forms and themes considered 'artificial' by modern movements, while marthiya on Husayn and the other martyrs of Karbala' continues in both formal and popular language.

Alongside this, the event of Karbala' has provided a continuing ritual context for elegiac poetry. The marthiya in pre-Islamic times has a ritual function as a lamentation (nawh), often recited by women (and the best of its earliest practitioners known to us were women). Not only would the listener be invited to dwell in the virtues of the deceased, but the pathos of the situation was also revealed, and it may be assumed that those present were then moved to weep. Some of the earliest examples we have of marthiya on Husayn are in fact simple poems of this type: lamentations by his wives and daughters. This piece attributed to Rabab, beloved wife of Husayn, is particularly moving. Rabab said:

He who was a light, shining, is murdered;

Murdered in Karbala', and unburied.

Descendant of the Prophet, may God reward you well;

May you be spared judgement on the day when deeds are weighed;

For you were to me as a mountain, solid, in which I could take refuge;

And you treated us always with kindness,^[1] and according to religion.

O who shall speak now for the orphans, for the petitioners;

By whom shall all these wretched be protected, in whom shall they take refuge?

I swear by God, never will I wish to exchange marriage with you for another;

No, not until I am covered; covered in the grave.

And on another occasion Rabab said:

O Husayn! Never shall I forget Husayn!

Pierced by the spears of his enemies,

He whom they abandoned, in Karbala'.

May God now never water the plains of Karbala'!^[2]

And regardless of how well attested these pieces of elegy are as literary remains, I think we would have to say that the beauty and deep feeling here has something of the force of memory to testify to their authenticity. In many later elegies on Husayn, the lament is put into the mouths of females of his family, Fatima, for instance, or Zaynab, and this recalls the pre-Islamic elegy.

In the Umayyad period poets were invited to compose laudations (madh) and marathi for the rituals of the gatherings (majalis) of the noble members of the family of the Prophet. This narration concerning the sixth Imam shows the place of marathi in these gatherings:

Jafar b. 'Affan came to al-Sadiq's residence and seated himself next to him, upon which the Imam said, Ja'far, I have been told that you recite poetry for Husayn, peace be upon him, and that you do it well.' 'Yes, and may God make me a sacrifice for you!' replied the poet. 'Recite, then', said al-Sadiq, and Jafar recited these verses:

He who weeps for Husayn might well weep for Islam itself,
For the principles of Islam have been destroyed, and used unlawfully:
On the day when Husayn became the target of spears,
When swords drank from him, busy with their work.
And corpses, scattered, were abandoned in the desert.
Great birds hovering over by night and by day ...

And the Imam Sadiq wept and those around him with him, until his face and beard were covered with tears. Then he said, 'By God, Jafar, the angels closest to God are witness here and they hear your words; they have wept as we have, and more ...'^[3]

At the end of the 'Abbasid period, the reciter in these commemorative sessions was still known as a na'ih, a lamenter, or mourner.^[4]

These marathi, then, provided the germ for early gatherings of partisans of the House of the Prophet; they may also then be seen as the origin or earliest form of the ta'ziya as it is known today among Shi'i peoples. The literary forms known as ta'ziya and marthiya in Arabic are related, the ta'ziya being a kind of extended lamentation which is also intended to comfort the hearer in the face calamity, as the root meaning of the Arabic - 'comforting' - suggests.

^[5] The 'ritual context' for elegy on Husayn continues to be provided today not only by the developed ta'ziya, but also by various other gatherings within the ten days of Muharram in which marathi are recited. In the Shi'i area of Lebanon, for instance, there are many such gatherings held, and in both the Arabic- and Persian-speaking world gatherings are held exclusively for women.^[6]

It was inevitable that once the force of memory receded, themes had to be introduced into elegy on Husayn which would have the desired effect on the hearer by bringing forward the significance of his martyrdom; thus the elegy is linked with the issues surrounding his martyrdom. In the example we have already given by the poet Ja'far ibn 'Affan al-Ta'i (d. 150), Islam itself is put in the position of a martyr. This marthiya of the imam al-Shafi'i introduces, after protestations of personal sorrow, and the image of the martyr, his declaration of love for the House of the Prophet overall. The imam Shafi'i said:

My heart sighed, for my innermost being was in dejection;
Sleep no longer came, and sleeplessness was bewildering.
O who shall be the bearer of a message from me to Husayn,
(Though the hearts and minds of some may disapprove!)
Slaughtered, though without sin himself,

His shirt as if dyed through with crimson.
Now the sword itself wails, and the spear shrieks,
And the horse which once only whinnied, laments.
The world quaked for the sake of the Family of Muhammad;
For their sake, the solid mountains might have melted away.
Heavenly bodies sunk, the stars trembled,
Oh veils were torn, and breasts were rent!
He who asks blessing for the one sent from the Tribe of Hashim,
But attacks his sons; truly, that is strange!
And if my sin is love of the Family of Muhammad:
Then that is a sin which I do not repent.^[7]

This qasida of the imam Shafi'i is also notable in that it is, of course, a Sunn'i production; the fact that he composed other such elegies is well attested, and apparently many other Shafi'ites (and Hanafites) in this early period did the same.^[8] However, even the attestation by such a person as the imam Shafi'i of his love for the Family of the Prophet left him open in those dangerous times to accusations of 'unorthodoxy', as the following lines attributed to him suggest. The imam Shafi'i said:

They said, 'You are a Rafidi!', and I said, 'But no,
Nor is my religion nor are my beliefs of that kind ...
'But if love of the viceregent of God be Rafidism,
Then I am the most Rafidi of the servants of God!'^[9]

Continuing on the subject of 'Sunn'i' or perhaps we should say 'non-Shi'i', elegy about Husayn, here is a strong piece from the Hadiqat al-Haqiqa or 'Garden of Truth' of Sana'i, as a Persian example from the early twelfth century. I have abridged it in translation by about half; it is given the title 'Concerning Karbala', and the fragrant air of that most glorious place of martyrdom'. Sana'i says:

How excellent Karbala' ! and that honour it received,
Which brought to mankind the odour of Paradise as if on a breeze;
And that body, headless, lying in clay and dust,
And those precious ones, hearts rent by the sword.
And that elect of all the world, murdered,
His body smeared with earth and blood;
And those great oppressors, those doers of evil,
Persistent in the evil they do.
The sanctity of religion and the Family of the Prophet
Are both borne away, both by ignorance and inanity;
Swords are red like precious ruby with the blood of Husayn,
What disgrace in the world worse than this!
And Mustafa, his garments all torn,
And 'Ali, tears of blood raining from his eyes.
A whole world has become insolent in its cruelty;
The cunning fox has become a roaring lion.
But still unbelievers at the start of the battle,
Were reminded of the stroke of Dhu'l-Fiqar.

Yes, from Husayn they sought satisfaction for their rancour, but that was not to be;

They had to be content with their own malice and disgrace.
And know that any who speak ill of those dogs [those murderers of
Husayn]

Will be kings in the world to come!^[10]

In Arabic poems on Husayn, the elegy, the marthiya proper, becomes very soon only part of a larger developed narrative in which the deeds and nobility of the martyrs of Karbala' are described. This development of narrative can be seen already in the poetry of Di'bil b. 'Ali al-Khuza'i (d. 246) and in the large body of poetry composed by Ibn Hammad al-'Abdi (end of the 4th cent.). However, the marthiya form can still be seen intact within these longer qasidas, and the lament for Husayn still provides the emotional high point; it is often placed at the beginning of the composition. As another example from this early period we give a part of this well known elegy by al-Sharif al-Murtada (d. 406), which he is said to have extemporized on the spot at Karbala'.

In this qasida al-Sharif al-Murtada pictures Husayn calling out to his ancestors for aid, but they do not respond; the poet even seems to reproach God for the deaths of the martyrs. In fact, the 'reproach' is a common theme in elegy on Husayn, of the hearer, of the dead relatives of the martyr, or even of God. The elegy for Husayn then turns into a lament for all the Imams supposed to have been martyred, and ends with a call for revenge from the Prophet himself.

O Karbala! Ever is your name sorrow (karb) and tragedy (bala)!
O what you brought upon the family of Mustafa!
How much blood flowed upon your soil when they fell,
And how many tears were shed there!
And how many a noble horse there was, weeping, its tears coursing,
Its cheek next to one perished of thirst,
Wiping the dust off its hooves
On the stain of a throat covered in blood!
These guests came to a barren plain,
And there was no food to be served them;
Nor did they taste water, until they gathered
At the edge of the sword, and the spring of death.
O murdered one, who struggled with death,
Without uttering an insult, without killing anyone!
And they washed him only with his own blood, shed by spears:
Shrouded him only with a shroud of dust.
Exhausted, he calls, while there is no help for him,
In the name of his beneficent father, and his grandfather Mustafa,
And in the name of a mother for whom God has raised a standard,
Not found among all the women of humankind.
And what father, what grandfather does he call!
O grandfather, grandfather, help me, O father!
O Messenger of God, O Fatima,
O Prince of the Faithful, 'Ali, Murtada!
How would God not hasten for their sakes,
To cause the earth to heave, the sky to rain stones!

And O Imams, mountains of the earth, most great, most high;
O moons of this earth, shining, brilliant!
The disaster which befell you
Brought to us deep grief and weeping, never ending.
I know that sorrow for you is not to be forgotten, nor grief for your sake
comforted,
Though ages may pass;
For much time has passed since your deaths, and continues to pass,
Yet neither has grief abated, nor tears.
How far are you, O Imams, from him who hoped to achieve by you,
With the Apostle of God, victory and salvation;
On the day of the Great Encounter, when the Apostle Will turn his face
from those gathered, and say:
(Speaking to God against them, And how could a generation thus
accused prosper?)

'O Lord, on this day I am enemy to them;

I come as one wronged, and this is the day to judge.^[11]

The great impetus for the vast literature of elegy and dirge for Husayn in the Persian language, a literature which is now much larger than the Arabic, which includes a much greater element of elegy on the other martyrs of Karbala', and which has many more forms and recognized ritual uses than in the Arabic tradition, came with the establishment of the Safavid dynasty and the consequent consolidation for Shi'ism of the larger part of the Persian-speaking world.

Here as an example from the beginning of the Safavid period, is an elegiac qasida (abridged in translation) by Muhtasham-i Kashani, a favourite court poet. It shows some of the typical themes and imagery of the Persian genre, as well as imaginative expressions of the favourite elegiac theme of what later came to be known in Europe as 'pathetic fallacy'. Kashani says:

The name of this land full of tragedy (bala') is Karbala'.

O pitiless heart, where is your sigh of burning sorrow to burn the heavens?

This desert is the place of the murder of a lord who died athirst.

O tongue, it is the time for lamentation; O eye, it is time to weep!

This space still bears the mark of the sighs of ones wronged,

So if the sky is become black through the smoke of our sighs, it is fitting

This spot which today is covered by the canopies of the bubbles of our tears,

Was once the place where the tents of the People of the House were set up

Here the ship of Husayn's life foundered in disaster;

Then why is the ocean of our tears, in such a maelstrom, stormless?

Behold that dome filled with light from near and far;

Its world-illuminating rays show the way to those gone astray

Behold a grave most illumined, before which

The casket of the horizons with its hundred thousand petals and precious stones is as without value.

Behold beneath the earth, the cypress of the garden of the Prophet,

For sorrow of whom the sky is arched, bent over.^[12]

Behold, one clotted with blood, the tree of roses in the garden of Fatima,
a woman pure.

For whose defeat of whom the garments of the houris are rent like the
rose.

This is the lamp to the eyes of mankind, and now by the sword of
oppression,

Extinguished, as though merely a candle - a naked body, the head
separated from the rest.

This is the joy of Zahra's breast, and now by horses' hooves

His breast so full of wisdom trampled from all sides by tragedy (bala)

This is Husayn, son of 'Ali, beloved of the Prophet,

Now pierced through by the blade of oppression at the hand of his
murderer Sinan.^[13]

Set foot with reverence in this place of martyrdom, for its carpet most
illumed,

Is anemone colour with blood from the head of him who was the light of
the eyes of 'Ali, Murtada.

And even if the eye of a friend should not weep bitterly with sorrow,

Still the cry 'O sorrow!' would be upon the tongues of enemies, a cry of
regret!

Now night appears from the setting of the sun, for on the roof of the
horizons,

The black standard of the People of the Cloak falls from the shoulder of
ever-revolving time,

O viceregent of God, I, Muhtasham, the beggar at your threshold,

Stand at the door of helplessness, empty, and empty-handed.

O how long since I tore my heart from my homeland for your sake!

And now after the long road it has taken, it enters in this palace.

Now the suppliant hand of my heart is raised in wretchedness to the sky,

And that which it seeks depends on your favour.

And though, O Husayn, through the desires of the self, that lover of sin,

My heart sits at the banquet of sin, and astride the horse of error,

Yet since the plain of Karbala' is become covered with dust, it would be
fit

If you were to take away from this heart, the dust of sin.^[14]

Muhtasham's tarkib-band, a long strophic poem of twelve parts, is much
more well known than any other of his numerous elegies on Husayn, and
was imitated for centuries after him. Each strophe ends with a refrain, which
is particularly effective in elegy. As an example of a modern tarkib-band,
here is one strophe taken from a piece by a very popular contemporary poet,
Ansari, 'Poet of the House of the Prophet'. It seems that the poet may have
been inspired not only by the differing circumstances surrounding the
martyrdoms of 'Ali and Husayn, but by the contrast between Najaf and
Karbala' as well (Najaf is fairly well watered, but Karbala' is like a desert).

O breeze of morning, take to 'Ali these words of the poet Ansari;

Say: Husayn is fallen. Rise, then, go and see:

To Karbala' from Najaf where you lie,

His body in a hundred pieces pierced by the lance, the dagger, the sword.
O 'Ali! See who was once the light of your eyes,
Now the enemy around him like eyelashes around the eye;
And here you lie, in pleasant repose with Adam and Noah, at rest
While Husayn has as his resting place the burning sand of Karbala' !
Although you were made stranger to yourself by the stroke of the sword,
Around you were both stranger and kin, with refreshment and sweets;
While the body of your Husayn is rent the whole length with wounds.
And would you know the number of those wounds?
They are as many as the stars!
Wherever you turned your gaze, there stood a friend to see,
While Husayn's eye falls only on the enemy.
'Ali. when you gave your life, your family was there beside,
But there on a desert plain far from daughter or sister Husayn dies.
For you the Faithful Spirit, Gabriel, brought a shroud from heaven,
But Husayn fell there on the earth without ablution, without shroud!
'Ali, since Husayn in the last hour took your head on his lap to lie,
As kindness in return, then, lay his head on your lap 'til he dies.^[15]

As an example of modern Arabic elegy in the traditional style, here is a piece from the great Lebanese Shi'i scholar Muhsin al-Amin al-'Amili, taken from a collection of elegies he has made of his own and others' poems. Al-Sayyid Muhsin al-Amin died only recently; it should be mentioned that he was active not only in Shi'i scholarship and especially biography, but also in Sunn'i - Shi'i taqrib or rapprochement. This qasida, in a lightweight metre and a simple style, was composed in 1353/1934-5 while the author was travelling in Iraq and Iran, and it might not be too much to see some allusions to the political situation of those areas in certain lines. Al-Sayyid al-Amin says:

O Karbala', you have brought upon us great sorrow;
You have excited sadness and grief.
Now the eye must let its tears flow
To water the grave of one who died thirsty in al-Taff.
Glory, O Abu Fadl, brother of Husayn, for your ways have become
A lesson to the courageous; an example to the brave.
Your way, yes this is the way of brothers
(May the one not live who betrays his brother!)
Glory to you, O tribe of Hashim, for you offered your lives freely
And your lives were sacrifice for the religion of God.
On that day you bought glory dearly:
Your precious lives were the price of glory!
You gave your lives for little for the sake of the religion of Mustafa, and
by this
The measure of your lives is become more precious still - and who can
equal your deeds after this?
You left your family and your children, despite your love for them;
And you exchanged them for the maidens and the youths of Paradise.
Though kings set on their heads crowns of gold,
Yet it is glory which you wear as your crown.

No sword or spear is truly unsheathed, after you;
No, after your deeds, no weapon has found a hand worthy!
Glory itself submitted to your loftiness, it dared not come near;
And others never attained your station: they did not even approach it.
In excellence all mankind is below you, without exception,
And they who called you low, have ended in shame.^[16]

Elegy for Husayn continues in Arabic in popular or dialect form as well, proof of the power of the martyr to enter into and affect the life of the common people. The popular strophic form in Lebanese dialect known as zajal is used for many subjects, including political and nationalistic themes. Most villages (Muslim and non-Muslim) have their own zajal poet. A collection of some zajal compositions on the subject of the martyrdom of Husayn has been made by the Shi'i publishing house 'Irfan', but unfortunately I was unable to get the use of the book for this essay. Instead I offer this freely translated part of a piece by the Iraqi folk poet 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Umawi, entitled 'The Revolution of Husayn'. This modern folk poetry is particularly moving in its simplicity (sometimes naivety), and its closeness to the concerns of everyday and political life. As folk poetry often does, it has a great topicality. The poet says:

The revolution you made is holy, O Husayn,
Illuminating political thought, O Husayn;
Through it mankind is liberated;
Through it the earth is illuminated.
O Husayn, religion is a pearl, O Husayn
A precious pearl, and you protect it well, O Husayn.
All men honest and men of good will follow your way
Each philosopher is fascinated by your mysteries;
Even Jesus the Christ spoke of you.
And we are proud of our allegiance to you, O Husayn.
And famous Christian writers have recorded
The glory of your days and of your life, O Husayn.
Your uprising is glory and nobility for Islam,
And the greatest school of religion, O Husayn!
O Husayn, all the stagnation, the apathy,
With which our society is afflicted, O Husayn,
Came from the laws of the Umayyads, those despots
It is that which has brought us low, O Husayn.
And when you saw corruption victorious
The law was brought to life again through your devotion,
The goals of the Qur'an were realized through your determination,
And your blood watered the garden of compassion ...
And we are in awe of your deeds, O Husayn,
Because of these Islam is spread
Spread as far as any modern advanced science.
Then after your partisans had all died,
You offered up the beloved of your heart.
And your heart shook to its very depths
From the perfidious arrow which pierced it, Husayn.

And when you saw the mutilated body of 'Abd Allah,
The tears of your love flowed forth, O Husayn
His death overcame you with grief.
And your heart burst forth with hears,
The word, once wide, seemed as of it had become narrow:
O Husayn, O Husayn!^[17]

Notes

- [1] bi-'l-rahm: also, 'as one related to you'.
[2] Muhammad Jawad Maghniya, *Adab al-Taff aw Shu'ara' al-Husayn* (Beirut, 1388/1969), I, 61.
[3] Hibat al-Din al-Husayni al-Shahristani, *Nahdat al-Husayn* (Karbala, 1388/1969), p. 154.
[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 159-160.
[5] The K. al-Ta'azi wa al-Marathi of Muhammad h. Yazid al-Mubarrad (d. 282) explains the meaning of ta'ziya and gives examples (ed. Muhammad al-Dibaji [Damascus, 1396/1976], pp. 4ff).
[6] Waddah Sharara, *Transformations d'une manifestation religieuse dans un village du Liban-Sud* (Beirut, 1968), pp. 43ff, As to the Arab Ashura representation or ta'ziya, it seems that it has until now received too little attention. It may be that the actual dramatic form owes much to Iranian, and largely Safavid, origins, for instance, it is received knowledge among the inhabitants of the chiefly Shi'i town of Nabatiya in South Lebanon that it was Iranian immigrants at the beginning of the century who gave the ta'ziya there (the mere playing of which recently caused the occupying forces to fire on the participants) its present form. However, since the commemorative session itself began, of course, as an Arabic tradition, it would seem worthwhile to examine Arabic language ta'ziya separately for Arabic antecedents to the Persian.
[7] *Adab al-Taff*, I, 214.
[8] Dhabih Allah Safa, *Tarikh-i Adabiyat dar Iran* (Tehran, 2536), II, 195.
[9] *Adab al-Taff*, I, 217.
[10] Hadiqat al-Haqiqa ed. Mudarrisi Razavi (Tehran, 1950), pp. 270-271.
[11] *Adab al-Taff*, II, 206-208.
[12] The cypress in Persian poetry is thought of metaphorically as a possessor of fair stature. Here the tall-standing and erect cypress is brought down below the ground, and is also in contrast to the sky, bent over in sorrow (the sky is thought of as an arc or dome).
[13] Or: 'the spear of the son of mans, apparently implying the guilt of all humankind. Sinan b. Anos al-Nakhi, according to some accounts, was the murderer of Husayn.
[14] *Divan-i Muhtasham*, ed. M. Gurgani (Tehran, 1344/ 1965), pp. 299-300.
[15] *Divan-i Ansari*, ed. A. Usuli (Qum, 1342/1963), pp. 343-344.
[16] *Al-Durr al-Nadid fi Marathi al-Sibt al-Shahid* (Karbala', n.d.), pp. 339-340.
[17] Anataly Kova;enko, *Le Martyre de Husayn dans la poesie populaire d'Iraq* (Geneve, 1979), pp. 220-222

The Excellences of the Imam Husayn in Sunni Hadith Tradition

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HUMAN history may be seen as a record of the eternal struggle between right and wrong, virtue and vice, good and evil, and righteousness and wickedness. This struggle was decreed by God when Adam, an earthly creature, was sent to earth to engage in this eternal battle. It is through this struggle that human beings can earn their eternal bliss in the Gardens of Paradise, or their eternal punishment in the Fire. In the history of nations this struggle often attains universal significance as that moment of the struggle can speak to all subsequent times and situations.

Thus the Qur'an urges us over and over again to ponder the end of those who were before us, and how God dealt with them. In every case, moreover, a prophet or messenger of God was rejected by his people and killed or driven out. In this sense, therefore, the struggle is in the end between God and humankind, between truth and falsehood, and between right guidance and manifest error.

Nowhere is this struggle placed in sharper relief than in the life of the Prophet Muhammad, and the lives of the people of his House. The life and witness of the Imam Husayn in particular, has acquired special significance in Muslim piety. This is because he has provided a model for all martyrs in the way of God, for all time.

The purpose of this paper is to emphasize the universal significance of the Imam in Muslim tradition. It is important to observe that all the traditions cited in this essay are found in both Shi'i and Sunni hadith literature. But while in the Sunni community such traditions remain purely pietistic, Shi'i tradition has made them the basis of a complex theological system.

However, to appreciate the place of Husayn, 'the prince of martyrs', in Muslim history, a word must be said about the place of the Prophet's family (the ahl al-bayt) in Muslim piety. At the same time the people of the House of the Prophet Muhammad are not unique in the prophetic history of human societies. A word is, therefore, necessary concerning the families of other prophets, if we are to appreciate fully the devotion which Muslims throughout their long history have accorded the people of the House of Muhammad, the seal of the prophets.

Prophetic history begins, according to the Qur'an, with Adam, called safwat Allah (the elect of God). He was followed by Noah, the first of the prophets of power or resolve (ulu al-'azm). Noah was sent as a messenger by God to his people who rebelled against God's message, and were thus destroyed by the flood. Then came Abraham, the father of prophets. With his son Ishmael he built the Ka'ba, the first house for the worship of God.^[1] Ishmael was also a prophet, and the ancestor of the prophets Shu'ayb, Salih, Hud, and finally Muhammad, the last messenger of God to humankind.

Isaac, Abraham's second son, was also a prophet and the father of prophets. Among his descendants were the family of 'Imran, the father of Moses, and Jesus, as well as other earlier prophets who were sent by God to the Children of Israel. The Qur'an declares that God has elected Adam,

Noah, the family of Abraham and the family of 'Imran. It further states that they were a single progeny, one from the other'.^[2] All the prophets and their families are therefore of one physical and spiritual lineage. They and their households are the elect of God, purified and honoured over the rest of humankind.

The people of the House of the Prophet Muhammad were likewise chosen by God and purified from all evil and sin. The Muslim community did not, however, infer the status of the family of Muhammad from that of earlier prophets and their families.

Rather they too were chosen by God and purified from all evil and sin. Yet because Muhammad was the last prophet sent to guide humanity to God and the good, his descendants could not assume his prophetic role. Their mission was to be the Imams, or guides, of the Muslim community. Their task is to safeguard the message vouchsafed to Muhammad by God for humankind. Like many prophets, the Imams had to endure rejection by their people and much suffering at their hands; martyrdom in the cause of God was often their lot. Yet the greater the suffering, the greater is the reward and honour which God promises His prophets, friends (awliya'), and righteous servants. Thus the Prophet was asked: 'Who among men are those afflicted with the greatest calamity?' He replied:

The prophets, then the pious, everyone according to the degree of his piety. A man is afflicted according to his faith (din); if his faith is durable, his affliction is accordingly increased, and if his faith is weak, his affliction is made lighter. Afflictions continue to oppress the worshipful servant until they leave him walking on the face of the earth without any sin cleaving to him.^[3]

EXCELLENCES OF THE AHL AL BAYT

In both Sunni and Shi'i Muslim tradition, one important event symbolizes the status of the ahl al-bayt and the human as well as spiritual dimensions of their relation to the Prophet. This is the tradition or episode of al-kisa' (the mantle, or cloak) which the Prophet spread over himself and Fatima his daughter, 'Ali, and their two sons Hasan and Husayn. This tradition has come down to us in a number of versions, each stressing one or another aspect of the excellences of the family of the Prophet and his love for them. Ahmad b. Hanbal relates on the authority of Umm Salama, the Prophet's wife, that he said to Fatima one day:

'Bring me your husband and two sons.' When they had all come together he spread over them a mantle, and laying his hand over them, he said: 'O God, these are the people of the House of Muhammad! Let therefore your prayers and blessings descend upon Muhammad and the people of the House of Muhammad; for you are worthy of all praise and glory.' Umm Salama continued: 'I then lifted the mantle to enter in with them, but he pulled it away from my hand saying, "You too shall come to a good end".^[4]

The point which this version of the kisa' tradition emphasizes is that the ahl al-bayt are only the five: Muhammad, 'Ali, Fatima, and their two sons Hasan and Husayn. Umm Salama, one of the most highly venerated of the Prophet's wives, was denied this special status. We shall have more to say about this point, as it is emphasized in almost every version of this tradition.

In another highly interesting version of the kisa' tradition, related on the authority of 'Abd Allah b. Jafar b. Abi Talib, we read:

As the Apostle of God saw mercy descending, he demanded: 'Call them for me, call them for me!' Safiyya asked: 'Who should we call, O Messenger of God?' He answered: 'Call the people of my household: 'Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn.' When they were brought, he spread a mantle over them; then lifting his hands to heaven said: 'O God, these are the people of my House; bless, O God, Muhammad and the people of the House of Muhammad!' God then sent down the verse: Surely God wishes to remove all abomination from you, O People of the House, and purify you with a thorough purification. ^[5]

This version of the tradition provides the meaning of the kisa' and the basis of its significance. The mantle is a symbol of divine mercy and blessing covering the Prophet and his holy family. It is, moreover, a source or haven of consolation and serenity in the face of the great sufferings and martyrdom which the Prophet's family had to endure after him. In this infinite source of divine mercy, the pious also share in times of sufferings and afflictions. The kisa' finally sets apart the 'holy five' from the rest of the faithful, and distinguishes them from the rest of the Prophet's family.

The event of the kisa' provides the occasion for the revelation of the verse of purification just cited. Before the sectarian conflicts which split the Muslim community set in, classical tradition was almost unanimous in interpreting this verse as referring to the Prophet, his daughter Fatima al-Zahra' (the Radiant), her husband and cousin, 'Ali, and their two sons Hasan and Husayn. ^[6]

In still another version of the kisa' tradition, the continuity of the Prophet's family with those of earlier prophets is clearly indicated. Wathila b. al-Asqa', on whose authority this tradition in most of its variants is related, reports the following prayer uttered by the Prophet:

O God, as you have bestowed your blessings, mercy, forgiveness, and pleasure upon Abraham and the family of Abraham, so they ['Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husayn] are of me and I am of them! Bestow, therefore, your blessings, mercy, forgiveness and pleasure upon me and them.' ^[7]

This prayer echoes a prayer which Muslims repeat daily:

O God, bless Muhammad and the people of the House of Muhammad, as you have blessed Abraham and the people of the House of Abraham among all beings.

The House of Muhammad is, therefore, for all Muslims, 'the household of prophethood and the frequenting place of angels'. The famous Qur'an commentator al-Suyuti quotes a tradition attributed to Umm Salama in interpretation of the verse of purification: This verse was sent down in my house ... There were in the house then, seven: Gabriel and Michael, and 'Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn, and I stood at the door of the house. I asked: 'O Messenger of God, am I not of the People of the House?' He said: 'You shall indeed come to a good end! You are, however, one of the wives of the Prophet.' ^[8]

The close friendship between the Prophet and the holy family, a relationship which went far beyond the bond of blood relation, may be seen

in the incident of the mubahala, or prayer ordeal, with which the Prophet challenged the Christians of Najran.^[9] In the mubahala verse of the Qur'an, God orders the Prophet and his opponents to 'Call together our sons and your sons, our women and your women, and ourselves and yourselves.' In the view of most Qur'an commentators and traditionists, the Prophet's sons are Hasan and Husayn, 'his women' refers to Fatima, and 'his self' refers, apart from himself, to 'Ali. When the people of Najran saw them, they recognized their high status with God, and with great trepidation they declined the mubahala and opted instead for peace.

Tradition asserts that the Prophet sensed the hostility which his community was to show to the People of his House after him. He is said to have often declared, 'I am at war against him who fights against you, and will show peace toward him who shows peace to you.' This invective is strongly put in a tradition related on the authority of Abu Bakr, the Prophet's famous Companion and the first caliph. He said:

I saw the Messenger of God pitch a tent in which he placed 'Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn. He then declared: 'O Muslims, I am at war against anyone who wars against the people of this tent, and am at peace with those who show peace toward them. I am a friend to those who befriend them. He who shows love toward them shall be one of a happy ancestry and good birth. Nor would anyone hate them except that he be of miserable ancestry and evil birth.'^[10]

Love for the Prophet's family is enjoined by God in the Qur'an, where He says: Say, 'I ask no other reward of you save love of my next of kin' (42:23). Qur'an commentators have generally agreed that 'the next of kin' here intended are the ahl al-bayt.^[11]

The People of the House of the Prophet Muhammad have been for the pious an example of generosity, steadfastness in the face of hardship, and a source of solace in time of trials and afflictions. After days of fasting and prayers for the health of the two sick children Hasan and Husayn, the family fed the few morsels of dry bread and dates for which 'Ali had laboured so hard to the needy. On the first evening, we are told, a beggar came.

On the second, it was an orphan, and on the third, a captive. To each in turn, they gave the loaf of barley bread and few dates which Fatima had prepared for the family to break their fast. Thus God sent down the verse: They give food to eat, even though they cherish it, to the needy, the orphan and the captive.^[12] Yet, in the end, God sent down a celestial table to feed His friends.

Early tradition shows a tension in the relationship of the Prophet to the community and in the relationship of the latter to the holy family. Much of the literature reflecting this tension was most likely the product of a later age, but projected back to the time of the Prophet and his Companions. Here love for the Prophet's family is not simply recommended as a pious act, but is presented as a challenge, and in a harsh reproaching tone. Furthermore, it is on this love to the ahl al-bayt that rewards and punishments on the Last Day are predicated.^[13] Thus we are told that the Prophet said:

He who desires the pleasure to live my life, die my death and dwell in a garden of Eden which my Lord has planted, let him be a friend to 'Ali after

me. Let him also be a friend to his friends. Let him finally be guided by the Imams after me, for they are my progeny. They were created of my clay, and have been vouchsafed knowledge and understanding. Woe to those of my community who deny their superiority, and those who violate the demands of kindness to my next of kin. May God not grant them my intercession.' ^[14]

In another tradition, the Prophet promises his intercession to those who honour his descendants, provide them with whatever needs they may have, and those who love them with their heart and profess this love with their tongues. ^[15]

It has already been stressed that the ahl al-bayt share with the prophets of old and their descendants a high status and divine favour, but not the office of prophethood. They share, moreover, with the Prophet Muhammad the prerogative of intercession. This is expressed in hagiographical language, a language common to both Sunni and Shi'i tradition. One such common example may suffice to demonstrate the devotion in the piety of both traditions to the Prophet and the people of his household.

The Qur'an tells us that Adam received certain words of God which earned him God's forgiveness and mercy: Adam received words from his Lord, and He turned towards him; for He is relenting, compassionate (2:37). Suyuti reports that Ibn 'Abbas, the famous traditionist and authority on the Qur'an, asked the Prophet about the words which Adam received. The Prophet answered: 'He prayed saying, "O God, for the sake of Muhammad, 'Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husayn, do turn toward me", and He turned toward him.

' ^[16] In another highly dramatic version of this tradition, Adam is taught the words as the only means by which God would accept his repentance and forgive him. 'Ali, we are told, enquired of the Prophet concerning the verse under discussion. The Prophet told him that when Adam and his wife were expelled from Paradise, Adam wept bitterly over his sin for a hundred years. Finally, Gabriel came to him and spoke thus on God's behalf:

O Adam, did I not create you with my own hand? Did I not breathe into you of my spirit? Did I not command my angels to bow down before you? Did I not provide you with Eve my servant?' 'Yes', Adam answered. Gabriel asked: 'What then is the cause of this weeping?' Adam replied, 'Why should I not weep when I have been expelled from the proximity of the All-Merciful?' The angel then said: 'You must pray fervently with these words, and God will accept your repentance and forgive your sin. Say: "O God, I beseech you for the sake of Muhammad and the people of the household of Muhammad; nor is there any god but you. I have done evil, and have wronged my soul. Turn towards me for you are relenting, compassionate."

^[17]

HASAN AND HUSAYN

Islamic tradition has preserved numerous anecdotes depicting the tender care and love which the Prophet showed Hasan and Husayn. They were both born in Medina, and thus knew the Prophet only as children. It is therefore with the intimacy and love of a grandfather that the early life of the two Imams is coloured. Once more, these family anecdotes also reflect clearly

the theological and political tension within the community, a tension which largely centered around Hasan and Husayn. One such anecdote is the following.

One day, we are told, Hasan and Husayn were lost, and their mother Fatima came to the Prophet greatly alarmed. The angel Gabriel, however, came down and told the Prophet that the two youths were asleep in an animal fold some distance away. God, the angel reassured the anxious family, had charged an angel to keep watch over them. The Prophet went to the spot and found the angel had spread his two wings: one under them and the other over them as cover. The Prophet stooped over the two children and began to kiss them until they awoke.

He then carried them on his shoulders back to the city. A large crowd of Muslims followed the Prophet and his two grandsons to the mosque. The Prophet then addressed the assembled people and said: 'O Muslims, shall I inform you of those who have the best grandfather and grandmother of humankind?' 'Yes, O Apostle of God', they all replied. 'They are Hasan and Husayn', he said. 'Their grandfather is the Apostle of God, the seal of the Messengers, and their grandmother is Khadija, daughter of Khuwaylid, mistress of the women of Paradise.' The Prophet then declared Hasan and Husayn to have the best maternal uncle and aunt: Jafar and Umm Hani', son and daughter of Abu Talib. Their maternal uncle and aunt were likewise the best of all uncles and aunts:

they were al-Qasim, son of the Messenger of God, and Zaynab, daughter of the Apostle of God. The Prophet concluded: 'O God, you know that Hasan and Husayn shall be in Paradise, their uncles and aunt shall be in Paradise, and those who love them shall be in Paradise, while those who hate them shall be in the Fire.'^[18]

Abu Hurayra, the famous hadith transmitter, related that often when they prayed behind the Messenger of God Hasan and Husayn would jump on his back while he was prostrate in prayer. When he lifted his head, he would move them gently and place them beside him.

One evening, after prayers, Abu Hurayra offered to take the two youths home, but the Prophet wished them to stay. Soon, however, a flash of lightning illuminated the sky, and they thus walked in its light until they entered their home.^[19] The friends (awliya') of God, like the prophets, are favoured with miracles. These are not miracles proper (mu'jizat), but rather karamat (divine favours). The lightning incident was one such divine favour by means of which the Prophet wished to inform the community of the special status with which God had favoured the two Imams.

There is a unity between the Prophet and the ahl al-bayt, a unity not simply of blood, but also of the spirit. It is a unity symbolized by the kisa' event. It is, therefore, a unity of love, as the following statement of the Prophet clearly indicates. He said, as related on the authority of Salman the Persian: 'Whoever loves Hasan and Husayn, I love him, and whomsoever I love, God also loves, and whomsoever God loves, He shall cause him to enter into the gardens of bliss.' Likewise he who hates Hasan and Husayn shall be consigned to the Fire, because both God and his Messenger will hate him, 'and a terrible punishment awaits him'.^[20]

Muslim hagiographical piety extended this unity and intimacy between the Prophet and his two grandchildren to include the angels of heaven. Thus Hudhayfa, a well known companion and traditionist, reported that the Prophet said: 'An angel is here who never came down to earth before this night. He sought permission from his Lord to come down and greet me, and to bring me the glad tidings that Fatima is the mistress of the women of Paradise, and that Hasan and Husayn are the masters of the youths of Paradise.'^[21]

There is no doubt that the special status of the Imam Husayn in Muslim piety and devotion has in large measure been due to the Imam's great sacrifice of family, wealth, and life itself in the way of God. Husayn's martyrdom - his courage, steadfastness, dignity, and true devotion in times of great crisis - have inspired Muslims of all walks of life. Husayn has inspired the best poetry in all Islamic languages; even non-Muslim poets celebrated his great virtue and valour.

Above all, however, the Imam Husayn's martyrdom became a source of strength and endurance for Muslims in times of suffering, persecution and oppression. He has stood with every wronged man or woman before oppressive rulers, reproaching wrongdoers and encouraging the oppressed to persist in their struggle for freedom and dignity. The following encounter between Zayd b. Arqam, a venerable companion of the Prophet, and 'Ubayd Allah b. Ziyad is a living testimony to the struggle between illegitimate authority and the power of right. When the head of the Imam Husayn was brought before him, Ibn Ziyad began to poke its teeth and lips with a stick.

Zayd protested: 'Take away your stick! For, by God, I saw the Apostle of God often kiss these lips.' Saying this, Zayd began to weep. Ibn Ziyad reprimanded him, saying: 'May God cause your eyes to weep! Had it not been that you are an old and senile man, I would have cut off your head.' Zayd then walked away, exclaiming: 'O men, you are slaves after this day.

For you have slain the son of Fatima and set as amir over you the son of Marjana [i.e., Ibn Ziyad]. By God, he shall kill the best of you and enslave the most wicked among you. Perish those who accept humiliation and shame.' Zayd then said, 'O Ibn Ziyad, I shall tell you something that will enrage you even more. I saw the Apostle of God seating Hasan on his left leg and Husayn on his right, and say, "O God, I commend them and the most righteous of the people of faith to your trust." How have you dealt with the trust of the Prophet, O Ibn Ziyad?'^[22]

Divine wisdom in creation can be best discerned, according to the Qur'an, in the order of nature, and in the human individual and his society. Muslim hagiography has recorded the dramatic effect the death of Husayn had on nature. Thus the famous traditionist al-Bayhaqi reported that when al-Husayn b. 'Ali was killed, the sun was so deeply eclipsed that stars were seen at midday. People feared that it was the Day of Resurrection.^[23] Nadra al-Azdiya, a woman who was contemporary with the Imam Husayn, is said to have reported: 'When al-Husayn b. 'Ali was killed, the sky rained down blood, so that next morning we found our wells and water jugs filled with it.'^[24]

The memory of the martyred Imam has been kept alive and nourished by the tears of the faithful who vicariously share in the tragedy of the Imam Husayn and his loved ones and friends. Here again, tradition has extended the grief displayed by the pious for the tragedy of Karbala' to the cosmic order. Thus al-Suyuti reports in his commentary on the verse describing God's compassion towards the ancient martyr John son of Zachariah that 'The heavens did not weep for the death of anyone except John son of Zachariah and al-Husayn b. 'Ali. Its redness [at sunset] is the sign of its weeping.'^[25]

CONCLUSION

It has already been argued that there is an existential and all-inclusive unity between the Prophet and his daughter Fatima, her husband, 'Ali, and their two sons. This unity makes it impossible to discuss one without discussing all the others. We have, therefore, been concerned throughout this study with the Imam Husayn in the context of this essential unity. It must be added, however, that the Imam Husayn was especially close to the heart of his grandfather, the Prophet Muhammad.

It is of Husayn alone that he declared: 'Husayn is of me and I am of Husayn. May God love those who love Husayn.'^[26] When sura 108 (al-Kawthar) was revealed, the Prophet announced this great favour to his close companion Anas b. Malik, on whose authority this tradition is reported. Anas asked: 'What is al-Kawthar?' He answered: 'It is a river in Paradise, but neither those who violate my covenant (dhimma), nor those who shall kill the people of my House will be allowed to drink of it.'^[27]

Finally, Shi'i tradition has always insisted on the great merit the faithful earn in making pilgrimage (ziyara) to the tomb of the Imam Husayn and the tombs of the men who were martyred with him.

Yet Sunni tradition has likewise seen great merit in this pious act.^[28] The ziyara to the tomb of the martyred Imam has acquired this great significance in all Muslim tradition because the Imam and his fellow martyrs are seen as models of jihad in the way of God. It is related that the father of the Imams, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, passed by Karbala' after the battle of Siffin. He took a handful of its soil and exclaimed: 'Ah, ah, on this spot some men will be slain, and will enter Paradise without reckoning!'^[29]

The spiritual unity of the ahl al-bayt, symbolized by the kisa', is in turn a symbol of the unity of all Muslims. It is for the sake of this unity in faith and commitment (islam) to God and the truth that the Imam Husayn sacrificed his life. He refused a partisan Islam when he refused to legitimize Umayyad rule.

Because he refused humiliation, wrongdoing and deviation from the ideals of Islamic leadership as exemplified by the Prophet and his own father 'Ali, the Commander of the Faithful, the Imam Husayn drew once and for all the distinction between a true khalifa (representative) of the Apostle of God and the kings of this world. But above all, the Imam Husayn and his fellow martyrs accepted God's bargain with the people of faith to exchange their lives and wealth for the eternal bliss of Paradise.^[30] This divine challenge is no less relevant to the Muslim community today than it was

fourteen hundred years ago. It invites us still to 'a garden whose breadth is greater than the heavens and earth, prepared for those who fear God'.

Notes

- [1] See 2:127, 3:96.
[2] See 3:33.
[3] Musnad Ibn Hanbal, quoted in M. Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam* (The Hague, 1978), p. 25, and see also pp. 25-6
[4] Ahmad b. Hanbal, *Musnad* (Cairo, 1313), IV, 323.
[5] Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad b. Abd Allah al-Nisaburi, *Mustadrak al-sahihayn* (Haydarabad [Deccan], 1324), III, 147. See also 33:33.
[6] See, for example, the commentary on this verse in al-Zamakhshari and al-Tabari.
[7] Ala al-Din Ali al-Muttaqi b. Husam al-Din al-Hindi, *Kanz al-'ummal* (Haydarabad [Deccan], 1312), p. 217.
[8] See the commentary on 33: 33 in al-Suyuti, *Al-Durr al-manthur*.
[9] See 3:61. see also Muhammad b. 'Isa al-Tirmidhi, *Sahih al-Tirmidhi* (Cairo, 1920), II, 300, and Ibn Hanbal, I, 185.
[10] Abu Ja'far Ahmad al-Muhibb al-Tabari, *Al-Riyad al-nadira* (Cairo, n.d.), II, 199
For other versions of this tradition, see Murtada al-Husayni al-Fayruzabadi, *Fada'il al-khamsa fi sihah al- sitta* (Najaf, 1384), p. 252.
[11] See the commentaries on this verse in al-Zamakhshari, al-Tabari, and al-Suyuti.
[12] 76:8.
[13] For a detailed discussion of this tradition, see M Ayoub, pp 43-5.
[14] Abu Nu'aym, Ahmad b. Abd Allah al-Isbahani, *Hilyat al-awliya'* (Cairo, 1351). I, 86.
[15] Al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, VIII, 151, and IV 217. See also Shihab al-Din Ahmad b. Hajar al-Haytami al-Asqalani, *Al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqa* (Cairo, 1312), p. 150.
[16] See the commentary on 2:37 in al-Suyuti.
[17] Al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, I, 234.
[18] Al-Fayruzabadi, III, 187.
[19] Ibn Hanbal, II, 513; al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, VII, 109.
[20] Al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, p. 221
[21] Al-Tirmidhi, II, 307
[22] Ibn Hajar, p. 118.
[23] Abu Bakr Ahmad b Husayn b. al-Bayhaqi, *Al-Sunan al-Kubra* (Haydarabad, 1344), III, 337.
[24] Ibn Hajar, p. 291.
[25] See the commentary on 19:13 in al-Suyuti.
[26] Al-Tirmidhi, II, 306.
[27] See the commentary on sura 108 in al-Suyuti.
[28] Muhibb al-Din Ahmad b. Abd Allah al-Tabari, *Dhakha'ir al- 'uqba* (n.p., 1356), p. 151. Note also the popularity of the Mosque of the Head of the Imam Husayn in Cairo as a place of pilgrimage.
[29] Shihab al-Din Ahmad b. Hajar al-Haytami al-Asqalani, *Tahdhib al-tahdhib* (Haydarabad [Deccan], 1325), II, 348.
[30] See 9:111.

The Fast of 'Ashura

Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, Vol VIII No. 3 & 4

Some traditions are found in Sunni books to the effect that the Prophet (s.a.w.) on migrating to Medina found the Jews fasting on the 10th of Muharram. He asked them why, and was told: "It is an auspicious day; it is the day when God delivered the children of Israel from their enemy (i.e. Pharaoh); and, therefore, Moses fasted on that day." The Prophet (s.a.w.) said, "I am worthier of Moses than you are." Thereupon, he fasted on that day and ordered (the Muslims) to fast.

1. al-Sahih of al-Bukhari, Vol.3; Egypt ed.; p.54

2. Mishkatul-Masabih; Delhi ed.; 1307 A.H.; p.172

It is noted by the commentator of Mishkatul-Masabih that "it was in the second year, because in the first year the Prophet had arrived at Medina after 'Ashura, in Rabi'ul-awwal."

How much importance was this fast supposed to have may be judged from another tradition narrated in al-Sahih of al-Bukhari: "The Prophet (s.a.w.) ordered a man from the (tribe of) Aslam: Announce to the people that whoever has eaten should fast the rest of the day, and whoever has not eaten should fast (the whole day), because today is the 'Ashura (10th day of Muharram)."

That very year the fast of Ramadan was ordained and the obligation to fast on 'Ashura was abrogated, as has been claimed in other traditions narrated in the same book. Still, reportedly, it carries much importance as a voluntary fast.

Now let us look closely at these traditions:

First: The Jews had their own calendar and months. There is no logic in saying that they fasted on the 10th of Muharram - unless it could be proved that this date always coincided with a Jewish day of fast.

It was mentioned in my article, "Martyrdom of Imam Husayn and the Muslim and the Jewish Calendars" (Alserat, Vol.VI, No's 3 & 4; Muharram 1401 Nov.1980) that the first month of the Jews (Abib, later named Nisan) coincided with Rajab of the Arabs. W.O.E.Oesterley and Theodore H.Robinson have written that in Arabia "the most important of all the new-moon festivals was that which fell in the month of Ragab (sic), equivalent to the Hebrew month 'Abib, for this was the time when the ancient Arabs celebrated the Spring festival." (Hebrew Religion; S.P.C.K., London; 1955; p.128)

Probably, in ancient times the two branches of Abraham's house followed the same system of intercalating an additional month 7 times in a cycle of 19 years. And in this way the 7th Jewish month, Tishri I, coincided with Muharram. And the 'Ashura of Muharram synchronized with 10th of Tishri I, the Jewish Day of Atonement - a day of fast.

In that article, it was observed that the two calendars lost their synchronization when Islam, in the 9th year of hijra, disallowed intercalation. But on deeper consideration it transpired that that parity was lost long before the advent of Islam, because the Arabs did not follow any mathematical calculation in their intercalation. That was why the Muharram

of the 2nd year of Hijra began on 5th July, 623 C.E. (Al-Munjid, 21st ed.), months before Tishri I (which always coincides with September-October).

Clearly, 'Ashura of Muharram in that year (or, for that matter, during the Prophet's whole life at Medina) had no significance whatsoever for the Jews.

The question is: Why did they fast on that day?

Second: The Jewish Midrashic literature relates the 10th day of the 7th month (Yom Hakippurim - Day of Atonement) to the event of bringing the tablets of the Covenant from Mount Sinai, as Dr. Mishael Maswari-Caspi has written in his letter, quoted in my previous article, mentioned above.

The question is: If the Jews had wanted to keep the long-lost synchronization of Tishri I and Muharram in view, how was it that they forgot to narrate this tradition to the Prophet?

Third: The month in which God delivered the Israelites from Pharaoh was Abib (i.e. Rajab), as the Bible clearly says: "Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the Lord thy God: for in the month of Abib the Lord thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night." (Deut., 16:1)

The question is: How could the Jews transfer an event of Abib (originally coinciding with Rajab) to Muharram, in open defiance of their Torah? And lastly here is a point to ponder for the Muslims: The Prophet (s.a.w.) was sent with a religion to abrogate all previous religions and shari'ah. How was it that he deigned to imitate the custom of the Jews?

It is clear from above-mentioned facts that the Jews had no reason at all to fast on 'Ashura of Muharram at that period; and this story, built on that premise, is just that - a fiction. Obviously, it was invented by a narrator who only knew that once upon a time Muharram coincided with the Jews' Tishri I; but was totally unaware of contemporary Jewish religion and culture.

One feels constrained to mention here that this and other such traditions were forged by camp-followers of the Umayyads, after the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, as a part of their campaign to turn the 10th of Muharram into a day of rejoicing. These traditions are of the same genre as those which say that it was on the 10th of Muharram that Noah's ark rested on Mount Arafat, the fire became cool and safe for Abraham, and Jesus ascended to the heaven. In the same category came the traditions exhorting the Muslims to treat 'Ashura as a festival of joy, and to store one's food-grain on this very day as it would increase one's sustenance and bring the blessings of Allah to the household.

The History of the Islamic Calendar in the Light of the Hijra

Hakim Muhammad Said Vol X No. 1 , Spring 1984

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The course of history is generally thought to be along a progressive path, but there are occasions when its progress seems to come to a standstill, and it becomes quiescent and inactive. The release of energy in such situations is converted into entropy, i.e. energy that cannot be used.

Such situations and occasions are those that are opposed and are antithetical to the dynamism of history, its usual characteristic. When man, forgetting his Creator and his Benefactor, takes to the worship of the outward phenomena of nature and begins to ascribe the attributes of Deity to man and prostrates himself before human beings who temporarily hold the reins of power, he becomes increasingly prone to the violation of God's laws, thereby generating conflict on earth and tending to ignore moral laws and ethics.

He becomes, then, averse to light and takes to the worship of darkness. The course of history, in such a situation, becomes static. Such inertia is not the one that is opposed to dynamics but represents that inactivity-as has its birth in conflict and confusion. History in such a situation seems to assume the state of a spectator gazing at this spectacle with amazement and disappointment, and in utter dejection casts a look at the sky to find out what it has further in store for it.

Perhaps, it is in such circumstances that the Heavenly Court decides how to do away with the obstacles that lay athwart the path of progress and to remove these impediments cluttering up the course of history. These impediments are represented and epitomized by regressive, retrograde and unnatural cultures.

God Almighty has Himself pointed to the condign punishments that visit nations violating His laws. And so we are told: So We took each one in his sin; of them was he on whom We sent a hurricane, and of them was he who was overtaken by the (awful) cry, and of them was he whom We caused the earth to swallow, and of them was he whom We drowned. It was not for Allah to wrong them, but they wronged themselves. (129: 40).

The period of life which the Prophet (peace be unto him) passed among the hard-hearted and unrelenting people of Mecca represented an era in which the caravan of history seems to have come to a stop, becoming static. When we examine the age, it seems as if the ever moving caravan of life is awaiting some terrible fate at the hands of heaven in the shadow of the hot mountains and feverish rocks. Such a decision is at last manifested. But the *raison d'être* for such a judgement was the person whom God Himself designated as *Rahma lil-'Alimin'* and the maximum extent to which his anger and displeasure could go was to turn his countenance away from his adversary. His compassion, his mercy, and his tolerance are also reflected in the code of laws which were made to descend upon him.

It was, therefore, decided by God Himself that the polytheists of Mecca be spared destruction used in all the other forms. Al-Hurmuzan, then,

explained to them how to use 'Umar, (however), said: "Give the people an era which they can use in business and which permits them an exact indication of the date in the mutual dealings". A Jewish convert to Islam who was present said: "we (Jews) have a similar calculation which we ascribe to Alexander". The others, however, did not like that era, because it was too far back.

Some were for the adoption of the Persian era. It was, however, objected that the Persian era had no fixed epoch year and always started entirely anew with the ascension (to the throne) of each new king. An agreement was reached to institute the era of the rule of Islam, beginning with the Hijra of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina. There are no such differences of opinion with regard to the date of the Hijra as there are with regard to the time when the call first came to Muhammad and with regard to the day and year of his birth. And although the date of his death is fixed, it is no pleasant thought to use (such a sad event) as the beginning of the era. The Hijra, moreover, coincided in time with the success of the religion (millah) of Islam, the frequent arrival of embassies, and the Muslim ascent to Power. It is a time of blessings and a very impressive (historical) event. The Hijra took place on Tuesday, Rabi 1, 8th.

The first of that year -that is, al-Muharram-fell on a Thursday according to the average (calculation). After this had become generally known, it was considered (the correct date). However, according to observation (of the new moon) and astronomical(?) calculation, the day fell on a Friday. The author of the *Nihayat al-idrak* said that (the Hijra) was used, and for all future times the era was counted from it. Agreement on this matter was reached in the year 17 of the Hijra, the fourth year of the caliphate of 'Umar.

Until then, each year (after the Hijra) was called after its main event, and this was used for dating purposes. The first year of the Prophet's residence in Medina was thus called: 'The permission to travel'. The second year was called: 'The year of the command to fight'. The third year: 'The year of the test', and so on. Afterwards, the custom of naming the year after the main events was abandoned.

'Ubayd b. 'Umayr said: "Al-Muharram is the month of God. It is the beginning of the year. It is used as the beginning of the era. In al-Muharram, the Ka'bah is clothed, and money is coined. There is one day in al-Muharram on which repenting sinners are forgiven".

A tradition regarding "the first month of the year being al-Muharram," ascribed to Muhammad appears in *ad-Daylamis Firdaws*. *Ad-Daylami's* son reported the same tradition on the authority of 'Ali without the indication of a chain of transmitters." (F. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, Leiden 1952, pp. 312-313).

At the dawn of history man tried to determine the significance of months and years in his own way. History is not in a position to tell which nation first divided the calendar into years, months, weeks and days-that is to say, how, when, and where it was that a collection of seven days was called a week, of thirty days a month, and twelve months a year. Despite the fact that this fact lies buried in the haze of obscurity, we can still gain access to it

through a process of visualization; and we can take the aid of reason to and that this River of Radiance should change its course.

Hijra does not signify merely a journey between the two cities (Mecca and Medina) of the Arabian peninsula but the movement by the caravan of history again from a static state.

When the Prophet (peace be upon him) began to depart for Medina, his steps were, on the face of things, treading on a journey, but in reality they were setting the wheels of history into motion. And history, when it witnessed this movement, again embarked upon a journey with fresh determination. Fourteen hundred years have passed since this journey was embarked upon; it is still on the move, and will be so till the end of the world.

What influence did Hijra exercise upon the history of man and what it gave to mankind is something that lies outside the scope of this paper. I now come to the theme of the history of the Hijra calendar.

When the need for toning up the administration of the Caliphate arose during the time of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab and it became necessary to have a calendar so as to fix the dates. The Caliph, who was so well aware of the sunna of the Prophet and of his temperament, instead of fixing the standard from the birth of the Prophet, which heralded an entirely new chapter in the history of man or his death which had placed such a heavy responsibility upon the shoulders of the Caliphs or some other event, he ordered the adoption of the Hijra as the basic date for the Islamic calendar.

Al-Hakim narrates the tradition on the authority of Ibn Shihab al-Zuhri that when the Prophet came to Medina, he ordered the introduction of the Muslim era, but this tradition has been held to be weak in authority by the Muhaddithun. The authoritative tradition, according to them, says that the custom of imprinting dates upon deeds, documents and epistles was given currency to during the time of the second Caliph according to the instructions left by the Prophet himself. (F. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, Leiden 1952, p.309.)

Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Rahman al-Sakhawi (d. 902) in his *al-Il'an bi'l-Tawbikh li-man dhamma ahl al-tawrikh* gives the following details about the origin of the Islamic calendar:

"A report on the authority of Ibn ' Abbas states that there existed no era in Medina when the Prophet arrived there. People came to use an era a month or two after his arrival. This continued until Muhammad's death. Then, the use of an era was discontinued, and there was none during the caliphate of Abu Bakr and the first four years of the caliphate of 'Umar. Then, the (Muslim) era was established.'Umar is reported to have said to the assembled dignitaries among the men around Muhammad: "The income is considerable.

What we have distributed has been without fixed dates. How can we remedy that?" One answer came from al-Hurmuzan. He had been king of alAhwaz. After his capture during the conquest of Persia, he had been brought to 'Umar and had become a Muslim. He said: "The Persians have a (method of) calculation which they call mahroz and which they ascribe to their Sassanid rulers.

The word mahroz was arabicized as mu'arrakh, and the infinitive ta'rikh was formed from it. It was also deduce that, as civilization became more complex and when it became necessary to devise ways and means of fixing periods and eras, man must have been guided by his day-to-day phenomena of repetition, based upon an ever-continuing rhythm-served as his guides. The flux and re-flux of the moon-tides must have drawn man's attention towards it, since on specific days it is crescent-shaped, on others gibbous, followed by increase in moonlight till it reaches its maximum limit, with subsequent decrease in an ever-continuing rhythmic cycle.

This phenomenon was so clear and simple that it hardly required any philosophization. Changes in the weather must also have struck man as being related to the moon, as the twelve lunar cycles provided him with a clue to the past weather. These were such clear and simple observations that they did not demand any sophisticated argumentation. And, therefore, despite the silence of history on this point, it can be said that the division of time into months and years on the basis of the lunar concept is the oldest insofar as history is concerned. There are other proofs for this belief, based upon semantics and sound; and history has been making use of them. Word-forms have. in the event, cultural and conceptual backgrounds.

History also provides us with alternative calendar systems for fixing historical periods, e.g. some major war or some important event. It has also happened that a calendar has had its origin in the enthronement of a king etc. All these systems are, however, arbitrary and local. On the other hand, the lunar calendar has a universal background, while the other systems are limited to geographical boundaries. Festivals and religious congregations also were specific to particular people or nations and did not carry equal significance for all.

When man took to agriculture, it was discovered that the lunar system did not fully correspond to the weather and the crops, and therefore some modification was necessary. It was felt that if within one lunar month a crop was harvested or some (particular) weather was witnessed, then after four years neither that crop nor the weather was to be seen. According to the astronomical principle, through waxing and waning of the moon there is a difference of one month in one year every four years. For both seasons and agricultural crops, the difference of one month bears some significance. Seasons are related to the solar system, as also are agricultural crops. Therefore, the lunar and solar systems were reconciled by adding a few more days to the lunar months, and the two systems were thus reconciled.

Lawnd or Kabisa

This method whereby the lunar months are reconciled with the solar system are designated as lawnd or kabisa. We get information about this system from the ancient calendars of India, China, Egypt and Syria. The Jewish calendar was also similar. Later on the lunar and solar calendars were separated, although for religious festivals it was the lunar system which was acknowledged as the guide, as in the case of the Christians Easter, and Diwali of the Hindus, and Yom Kippur of the Jews. The practical shape that this division took was that the lunar system was earmarked for religious occasions and the solar system for business and

administrative transactions. We have thus both systems running side by side.

The Solar Calendar

There are a few things connected with the solar system requiring consideration. We have to take into account the rotation of the earth which is of two kinds: (1) on its own axis in such a way as to produce day and night and (2) in an elliptical orbit round the sun giving rise to changes in seasons. One full rotation along this elliptical orbit is completed in 365/5/48/46 days, and the period is designated as the solar year. But it is not equally divisible into twelve months.

The present-day solar calendar-the Gregorian-has been so divided that seven months consist of 31 days, four months of 30 days, and one month of 28 days. In order to account for the fractions, every fourth year a day is added to the month of February, called the leap-year. But consideration will show that even this division does not do away with the fraction. After every four hundred years seasonal changes occur and probably because of this fact the solar calendar requires constant modification. It is just not possible to remove this discrepancy.

The League of Nations had set up a Special Committee at Geneva in 1923 charged with the formulation of a calendar that would be universally acceptable and would be reconcilable with seasonal changes. One of the recommendations of this Committee was that the year was to be divided into 13 months. However, such a calendar would not be devised as the seasons in the hemispheres differ in their periodic occurrence. The proximity and the distance of the sun in the East and the West naturally give rise to substantial differences. Because of this inherent discrepancy, it was not possible for the solar calendar to gain universal acceptance.

The lunar calendar system, on the other hand, is free from most of these defects, and admits of broader acceptance. It is not connected with seasonal changes. The appearance and disappearance of the moon twelve times in a year can be easily observed. It revolves round the earth, and since its orbit is elliptical and not totally circular, it comes close to the earth and becomes distant from it. Its speed of rotation is also not the same; hence it completes its trajectory sometimes in 30 and at others in 29 days. The total period taken in its rotation round the earth is 354/48/34 days. It is not visible at any place on the thirteenth time in less than this period. This, then is the basis of the lunar system.

We have now to consider what the Qur'an has to say about the computation of months and years. It is true that, having given man a code of conduct, it has given full thought and rational freedom to man but has circumscribed these limits. Insofar as the computation of months and years is concerned, the Qur'an has provided a guideline in one of the verses which is as follows:

He it is who appointed the sun a splendour and the moon a light and measured for her stages, that ye might know the number of the years, and the reckoning. (10:5)

The following verse directs us regarding the number of months:

Lo! the number of the months with Allah is twelve months by Allah's ordinance in the day that He created the heavens and the earth... (9: 36)

The purport of these Qur'anic verses is that we must take the moon to be the source of the calendar, and any other system that would be unnatural will not succeed, being non-natural and, therefore, it is that the Islamic calendar is based on the lunar system. Its beginnings can be traced to the Prophet, but, as a regular feature, it came into its own during the time of the second Caliph 'Umar I. Ahmad ibn Hanbal and al-Bukhari report through Maymun ibn Mihran that "an I.O.U.

payable in Sha'ban was presented to 'Umar I. Thereupon 'Umar asked which Sha'ban, last Sha'ban, or this one or the coming one? Give the people something that they can understand." (F. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, Leiden 1952, p.310). He then issued a regular directive and founded the present-day calendar in 16 A.H. from which time the practice is being followed. Al-Suyuti, in the chapter on "News and Ordinances" in his *Ta'rikh al-Khulafa'* (ed. Cairo 1351 A.H.) writes with reference to al-Musayyab that the second orthodox Caliph had the Hijra dates inserted in all administrative directives two and a half years after his assumption of the Caliphate on the advice of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, and this became the practice from 16 A.H. onwards.

Al-Tabari in his *Ta'rikh al-Rusul wa'l Muluk* gives the following exposition:

The Prophet on the occasion of the Hajjat al Wada' said:

O people! Time after undergoing a full revolution has returned to its original state; the day Allah created the heavens and the earth. (vol. iii, p.150, Cairo 1969).

It will be essential to keep some historical facts about ourselves in order to understand the pre-Islamic calendar. The Arabs were seized by the fatal malady of idolatry three hundred years before the advent of the Prophet, the Hajj for them was nothing more than a big festival. Their calendar being lunar, this feast was sometimes held in seasons when the crops had not been harvested and were not yet ready for sale. They, therefore, devised the method of kabzsa, according to which a year sometimes consisted of 13 months.

The period of the Hajj was also not specified. The responsibility for announcing the date of the Hajj was entrusted to a man from Banu Kinana named Qalammas, who was to announce on the occasion of the Hajj when the next pilgrimage was to be performed, and which month the thirteenth month was to follow. The first Qalammas was an individual, but then the name became specific to the announcer. We thus see a sizeable number of the Qalammasa. The Qalammasi calendar was based upon lunar computation, and another link in the historical chain is provided by the fact that among the Arabs the months of Rajab, Dhu'l-Qa'da, Dhu'l-Hijja, and Muharram were regarded as the months of peace and sanctity. But, with this calendar, these months also began to undergo changes, and it was one of the responsibilities of the Qalammasa to announce as to what months would be the sacred months in the following year. They are called al-nasi' in Arabic.

The custom of kabisa was current among the Beduins but not among the townsmen. The Arabs had, therefore, two calendars: one was with the kabisa, the other without it. The Prophet in his address, to which we have referred, announced the abrogation of both-i.e. the kabisa and nasi'. Thus the time for the pilgrimage was fixed and the lunar calendar was to be enforced without the kabisa.

The lunar calendar of the Muslims began with the Hijra of the Prophet. The first day of the month of Muharram of the year of the Hijra i.e. the migration of the Prophet, was the first day of this calendar. Despite its being known as the solar calendar beginning with the 20th of September 622 C.E., according to the Gregorian calendar, before that, the year of the Elephant was used by the Arabs as the epoch of their era. This previous lunar calendar of the Arabs was totally abrogated in the 10th year of the Hijra on the occasion of the Prophet's address at the Hajjat al-Wada'. The lunar calendar thus became current without any addition or modification.

Hastings' Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (vol. iii, p. 127) says that the Muslims have borrowed the concept of the week and the festivals from the Jews. As regards festivals, yawm al-nahr derives its importance from its association with the Prophet Abraham, from whom the Prophet was directly descended. According to Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti, it is one of the attributes of the Prophet that this festival should have vouchsafed to the Muslims the best of religions. It is, therefore, out of the question that it should have been borrowed.

The names of the Arabic months were retained by the Muslims with slight modifications because of their significance. The first month is al-Muharram and the last is Dhu'l-Hijja. The names of the months are consecutively as follows: Muharram al-Haram, ,Safar, Rabi' alAwwal, RabiC al-Thani, Jumada al-Awwal, Jumada al-Thani, Rajab, Sha'ban, Ramadan, Shawwal, Dhu'l-Qa'da and Dhu'l-Hijja.

The concept of the week in Islam derives from spiritual purgation and self-reform, while the name of the last day, al-Jum'a, is Qur'anic. The days have been serially named as yawm al-sabt, yawm al-a,had, yawm al-athnayn, yawm al-thalatha, yawm al-arba'a, yawm al-khamls, and yawm al-jum'a.

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Martyrdom of Imam Husayn and the Muslim and Jewish Calendars

Seyyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, Vol VI No. 3 & 4 , 1401

THE 1400th year of the hijra calendar is nearing its end. Since the last two years or more a substantial amount of time, energy and money is being spent of what has come to be known as the commemoration of the end of the 14th century of hijra and the welcome of the 15th. Seminars are being held, articles written, booklets published, postage stamps issued and a lot of trinkets designed, made and sold to honour this occasion. Not even the ruling dynasty of Saudi Arabia seems to mind that all these festivities—financed with petro-dollars and arranged with the active blessings of their religious leaders—are innovations (bid'ah), which the Muslims of even a century ago knew nothing about.

It is, of course, the natural offspring of a process started a few decades ago when western imperialism established its hold in the Middle East. The Muslims of Egypt and some other countries began celebrating the (Muslim) New Year on 1st Muharram. By this act, they introduced a new "festival" in Islam.

Of course, the justifications are many. It is claimed that these 14th century functions are held "to assess the impact of Islam on humanity and the contribution of Muslims to various branches of learning and in the upliftment of human society", "to probe into the past successes and failures" and "to hammer out new plans for the future".

Noble ideas, indeed. And nobody—least of all, the present writer—would deny their relevance and validity. But these rationalizations do not alter the fact that this celebration is an innovation (bid'ah). If such commendable goals may justify this innovation, then one has a right to ask these Muslims as to why they condemn the commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn as an unlawful act ?

Is not this mourning justified on these very grounds? The remembrance of Imam Husayn's supreme sacrifice on the altar of truth strengthens the moral fibre of the Muslims; keeps their feet firmly on the path of righteousness and piety; and creates in them a willingness to sacrifice their all in the way of Allah. It also helps the mourners in "probing their successes and failures" of the past year, and in "chalking out a new plan" for their religious, spiritual and social "upliftment for the future."

The principle should always remain the same, shouldn't it ?

Lest there be any misunderstanding, it should be clarified here that the mourning for Imam Husayn is not a bid 'ah (innovation) at all. It was started by the Holy Prophet of Islam himself, more than 50 years before the event; and he was seen in a vision by the Mother of the believers, Umm Salmah, on the day of Husayn's martyrdom, mourning for Husayn. And Allah has ordered thousands of angels to weep on the grave of Imam Husayn till the day of resurrection. These traditions are narrated in the Sunni books, and show that this particular mourning is the sunnah of the Holy Prophet and of the angels:

1. Some 50 years before the event of Karbala, the Prophet wept when he was told by the angel that Husayn would be killed by the army of Yazid in

Karbala. Then Gabriel asked, "O Prophet of God, do you want me to give you some earth from his place of martyrdom?" The Prophet said, "Yes". Gabriel gave him a handful of earth of Karbala and the Prophet began weeping uncontrollably.

This tradition is recorded in Mishkatul-Masabih, Musnad of Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, as-Sawaiqul Muhriqah of Allamah Ibn Hajar Makki and Sirrul-'alamin of Imam Ghazali; and has been narrated by Imam Sha'abi, Imam Baihaqi, Imam Hakim and scores of other traditionalists. The Prophet gave that earth to his wife, Ummul Mu'mineen, Umm Salmah, and told her, "When you see this earth turned into blood, know that Husayn has been martyred."

2. On the 10th Muharram, 61 A.H., Umm Salmah was asleep in the afternoon when she saw the Prophet in her dream: He stood there in a tragic condition, his hair was dusty and dishevelled, and in his hand was a bottle full of blood. Umm Salmah asked him what it was. The Prophet said, "This is the blood of Husayn and his companions. I was collecting it since this morning." Umm Salmah woke up and hurried towards the bottle which contained the earth of Karbala; she saw red blood flowing from it. Then she cried and called her relatives and started mourning for Husayn. This tradition is narrated in Musnad of Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, as-Sawaiqul Muhriqah, Mishkatul-Masabih, Sahih of Tirmidhi and other books.

3. Shaikh 'Abdul Qadir Jilani writes in his book Ghunyatut-Talebeen, Vol. II page 62; "70,000 angels came on the grave of Husayn bin 'Ali after his martyrdom and they are weeping on him and will remain weeping unto the Day of Judgement."

4. God says in the Qur'an about Pharaoh and his army: "neither the Sky nor the Earth wept for them and they were not given chance." (ad-Dukhaa, Verse 29)

Imam Muslim records in explanation of this ayat, "When Husayn was martyred, the Sky as well as the Earth wept on him and weeping of the sky is its being red." (Sahih of Muslim).

It is a sign of the greatness of the 10th Muharram that Allah commanded the Israelites to observe it as a day of mourning; it was accompanied by a stern warning that anybody disobeying that law would be cut off from his tribe. The following is the passage quoted from Leviticus (Chapter 23, verses 23-32):—

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, in the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation. Ye shall do no servile work therein; but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord. And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the Lord your God.

For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people. And whatsoever soul it be that doeth

any work in that same day, the same soul will I destroy from among his people. Ye shall do no manner of work; it shall be a stature for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.

This command is also briefly mentioned in Leviticus 16: 29-34. To understand what is meant by the seventh month, the following facts should be kept in mind:

1. The year of the Hebrews was based on lunar system. To make it coincide with solar year, a thirteenth month, Veadar, was added 7 times in a cycle of 19 years. The year began with the month of Abib (i.e., Nisan) with the new moon next before or next after the spring equinox.

2. The Arabs before Islam used to follow the same system. Thus their months coincided with the Jewish months; and Rajab coincided with Abib (i.e., Nisan) of the Jews. And the Jewish 7th month coincided with Muharram of the Arabs. (In original Hebrew reckoning, this seventh month was called Ethanim; now it is called Tishri I). As the original Jewish year began near the spring equinox (i.e. 21st March of the Gregorian calendar), the seventh month was bound to occur in September/October.

3. Some time after the Exile, the Jews changed the new year from Nisan to the day of the new moon of the 7th month. Now it is their first month; except that the system of fasting and observing other laws concerning the 1st, 9th and 10th days (of the 7th month) mentioned above continues unchanged. Yom Hakippurim is faithfully observed with all due solemnity on the 10th day of the original seventh (i.e. the present first) month. (The Hebrew term, Yom Hakippurim, is rendered as Yaum-ul-Kaffarah in Arabic and Day of Atonement in English. In 1973, the world became familiar with the term 'Yom Kippur' when Egypt chose that day to start war with Israel, and thus caught them unprepared—the whole country was engaged in observing the fast and other rules of the Day of Atonement).

4. In the 9th year of Hijra, Islam forbade intercalation of the additional month every leap year. "Surely the number of months with Allah is twelve . . . Postponing (of a month, i.e. by intercalation) is only an addition in disbelief..." (Qur'an, 9: 37-38) From then on, the parity between the Jewish and the Muslim calendars disappeared.

5. In spite of that disparity, the Muharram of 61 A.H. began with Tishri I; and 10th Muharram, the day when Imam Husayn was martyred was 10th Tishri (Yom Hakippurim). See, for reference, the chart comparing the Hijra and Christian calendars, given in the 21st edition of al-Munjid. Thus the relationship of Yom Hakippurim with 10th Muharram was true not only because originally Muharram used to coincide with Tishri, but also because the martyrdom actually occurred on that very day.

I once discussed this commandment with Professor N. Q. King, of California University. I told him that, as apparently no significant historical event had happened on that day in Jewish history, one might safely say that it was a sort of prognosis of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn. The Professor wrote about it to his colleague, Dr. Mishael Maswari-Caspi, who very

kindly wrote to me on March 28, 1978. In this letter, he writes, inter alia, on this subject as follows:

"If there is a link between the 10th of Al-Muharram and Yom Hakippurim, it is not just a coincidence, but emphasizes that we are truly close to each other." He agreed that "in both places, Leviticus 23 and Leviticus 16, historicization is not emphasized. Nor is the historical connection brought out in Tractate Yoms, the tractate dealing in many details of the Day of Atonement." He further writes that "although no historical correlation is found, the spiritual and religious aspects are of utmost importance in both Bible and Talmud, whereas in the Midrashic literature (Midrash Tanhuma, Tisa 31) they relate this holy day to the event of bringing the tablets of the Covenant from Mount Sinai.

It says 'The first time he went down on the 17th of Tammuz. He saw the calf and he broke the tablets. For two days he punished the people. He remained there from the 20th of Tammuz through the whole month of Ab, 40 days. Then he went up on the first day of Elul, staying 40 days, being the 10th of Tishri.' This is why this holy day is devoted to atonement, and this is why the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies not in his fancy cloth with stripes of gold (reminiscent of the golden calf), but in a purely white garment."

In view of the fact that the original commandment of Leviticus, as well as Tractate Yoms, does not refer to any historicization, one may safely say that the event mentioned in Midrash Tanhuma, Tisa 31, had no bearing, as a historical event, on this commandment. Rather it is the spiritual and religious aspects that are of paramount importance. The spiritual significance of bringing the tablets of the Covenant may be one of those aspects. And so may be the prognosis of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn not as a historical event but as a spiritual guiding light.

It is not uncommon about the early events of the Islamic history, and especially so if they happened in Muharram or Safar, that a difference of one year appears in their timing in various narrations. For example, the martyrdom of Imam Husayn is said to happen on 10th Muharram, in the year 60, or the year 61, depending on various reports. But in fact, in most cases, there is no material difference between the two.

Both speak of the same year—one calling it the 60th, and the other the 61st, year after Hijrah. The reason for this confusing discrepancy is as follows: As mentioned earlier, in pre-Islamic days the year of the Arabs coincided with that of the Jews—Muharram was identical with the first (i.e. the original seventh) month of the Jewish calendar.

When the Holy Prophet migrated to Medina in the month of Rabi'ul-awwal, the Muslims on the order of the Prophet himself started the Muslim calendar. They said that this or that event occurred in this or that month after Hijrah. This continued "till a year was completed", and then they began saying that a certain event occurred in the first or second year of Hijrah; and so on. And in this way the Hijra calendar was established.

Reports to this effect are given in the Annals of al-Tabari (Prima series, E. J. Brill, Laden, ed. 1882-1885) Vol. III p. 1250 from Ibn Shahab, Ibn 'Abbas and 'Amr b. Dinar; and in Vol. V, p. 2480, from Ibn 'Abbas.

It may be inferred from the words, "till a year was completed", that the year began with Rabi'ul-awwal and ended with Safar. According to another narrative, the Hijrah calendar was established in the region of the 2nd Caliph, in 16th year after Hijrah. The reports to this effect are found in the same two places of the Annals of al-Tabari. According to this narrative (of Sa'id b. Al-Musayyab), 'Umar gathered the people and asked them: From which day should we write (the Calendar) ? 'Ali said: From the day the Apostle of Allah migrated and left the land of polytheism. So 'Umar did so."

The day when the Holy Prophet left Mecca was 1st Rabi'ul-awwal. (Safinatul-Bihar, Vol. 2, p. 696).

It appears from the first narrative that the Muslim year began with the month of Rabi'ul-awwal; and that it was done by the order of the Prophet himself. And if the second narrative is correct, then 'Ali had advised to start the year from Rabi'ul-awwal, an advice that according to this report, the second caliph accepted.

But the Arabs were accustomed to count Muharram as the first month, and old habits die hard; and that is why many people continued to follow that custom. That is the only explanation why Muharram came to be counted as first month of the Hijrah calendar. Obviously, this month had nothing to do with the Hijrah the event upon which the Muslim year is based. There is a report in the same Annals, from Muhammad b. Sirin that the people, after discussion, had unanimously agreed to begin the year with Muharram. But obviously this report is an attempt to justify the practice which by the time of Ibn Sirin (d. 110 A.H.) had firmly established itself in the Muslim society.

For those who, in early days, counted Rabi'ul-awwal as the first month, Muharram was the 11th month of the old year; for others it was the 1st month of the new year. Thus by the former reckoning, Imam Husayn was martyred in Muharram that was the 11th month of the year 60 A.H.; by the later reckoning, the same Muharram was the 1st month of the year 61 A.H.

The Principle of Ijtihad in Islam

Murtada Mutahhari, Vol X, No. 1

(Translated by John Cooper. This translation was carried out during the period of tenure of a Fellowship of the British Institute of Persian Studies, for which the translator would like to express his gratitude.)

The article hereunder translated into English, first appeared in the collection "Bahthi dar bara-yi Marja`iyat wa Ruhaniyat" ^[1], which was reviewed by Lambton ^[2]. This volume contained essays by figures who were then prominent in the anjumanha-yi islami, an organization of groups with a religiously educated leadership concerned to initiate public debate of, and interest in, Islamic solutions to contemporary political, economic and social problems.

The occasion for the publication of this volume was the death of the marja` al-taqlid of his time, Ayatullah Burujirdi, in 1961, and the discussions contained therein dealt with various aspects of taqlid and the religious institutions. Summaries and discussion of the articles will be found in Lambton.

Most of the authors subsequently became leading names in the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Mahdi Bazargan, who had had both a religious and a secular education and had been influential among the younger generation as a professor at the University of Tehran and later as a politician, became the first Prime Minister of the new Islamic Republic's provisional government. Ayatullah Taliqani was an active revolutionary figure who had spent much time in SAVAK prisons.

He was particularly well known in Tehran where he commanded much respect. He died in the early morning of 10 September 1979 ^[3]. Sayyid Muhammad Bihishti became the first head of the Islamic Republican Party, as well as Chief Justice of the post-revolutionary High Court; he held both posts until his assassination in the bombing of the Party headquarters on 29 June 1981. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i was much weakened by illness by the time of the revolution, but was held in universal esteem for his piety and learning.

He died on 15 November 1981. All these figures, except `Allama Tabataba'i were also important members of the Revolutionary Council, which had been set up by Ayatullah Khumayni during his stay in Paris. The author of the present article, Murtada Mutahhari, had been appointed head of this Council by Ayatullah Khumayni, and it was he who had first convened it. After the victory of the revolution, the Council continued to play an extremely important role in the course of events, even after the setting up of the provisional government, indeed right up to the formation of the new Majlis.

Murtada Mutahhari was born in a village some forty kilometres from Mashhad in 1338/1919-20. After a primary education mostly at the hands of his father, he entered, still a child, the hawza-yi `ilmiya, the traditional educational establishment, of Mashhad, but he soon left for Qum, the centre for religious education in Iran. Even during the time of his elementary studies there he was greatly affected by the lessons in akhlaq (Islamic ethics) given by Ayatullah Khumayni, which Mutahhari himself described

as being in reality lessons in ma`arif wa sayr-u-suluk (the theoretical and practical approaches to mysticism) ^[4], and he later studied metaphysics (falsafa) with him as well as jurisprudence (usul al-fiqh).

He was especially attracted by falsafa, theoretical mysticism (ʿirfan) and theology (kalam), the "intellectual sciences", and he also studied these subjects with `Allama Tabataba'i.

His teachers in law (fiqh) were all the important figures of the time, but especially Ayatullah Burujirdi, who became the marja` al-taqlid, and also head of the hawza-yi `ilmiya of Qum, in 1945. Murtada Mutahhari studied both fiqh and usul al-fiqh in the classes of Ayatullah Burujirdi for ten years. He was also deeply affected at about this time by lessons on "Nahj al-Balagha" ^[5] given by Mirza `Ali Aqa Shirazi Isfahani, whom he had met in Isfahan. He later said that, although he had been reading this work since his childhood, he now felt that he had discovered a "new world".^[6] Subsequently, Mutahhari became a well known teacher in Qum, first in Arabic language and literature, and later in logic (mantiq), usul al-fiqh, and falsafa.

In 1952, Murtada Mutahhari moved to Tehran, where, two years later, he began teaching in the Theology Faculty of the University. Not only did he make a strong impression on students, but his move to Tehran also meant that he could become involved with such organizations as the anjuman ha-yi islami. These Islamic Associations were groups of students, engineers, doctors, merchants, etc., set up during the fifties and sixties; they formed the nucleus of the movement that was to become, eventually, the revolution. He was also a founder member of the Husayniya-yi Irshad, which played a central role in the religious life of the capital during the four years of its existence until its closure by the authorities in 1973 ^[7].

At the same time he maintained his contact with traditional religious activities, teaching first in the Madrasa-yi Marvi in Tehran, and later back in Qum, and also preaching in mosques in Tehran and elsewhere in the country. Through his lectures and writings - articles and books - he became a famous and much-respected figure throughout Iran, but it was mainly among the students and teachers of the schools and universities that he was most influential, setting an example and inspiring them as a committed and socially aware Muslim with a traditional education who could make an intellectually appropriate and exciting response to modern secularizing tendencies.

His wide-ranging knowledge and scholarship are reflected in the scope of his writings, which cover the fields of law, philosophy, theology, history and literature.^[8] He was also one of the few high-ranking `ulama' to be in continuous contact with Ayatullah Khomeini during the fifteen or so years in which the movement which led to the revolution was developing. He was actively engaged in all the stages of this movement.

His life came to an abrupt and untimely end when he was shot in the street by an assassin after a meeting of the Revolutionary Council on the evening of 1 May 1979. Animated mourning accompanied his funeral cortege from Tehran to Qum, where he was buried near the shrine of the sister of the eighth Shi'i Imam.

The discussion of taqlid had been important in the wake of Ayatullah Burujirdi's death for the reasons given by Lambton. A solution to the problems posed in those articles was never achieved, and events subsequently altered the whole structure of the discussion, but the issues raised did open important new areas for thought. As a result of the revolution, the question of wilayat al-faqih came to the fore, and taqlid became the subject of even greater public concern.

As long as taqlid had been restricted in the common understanding as applying only to matters which belonged to the rubrics of the collections of fatwas issued by the marja`s, the only real debate took place within the legal classroom; but during the seventies, and hand in hand with the reawakening of political sensibilities, the boundaries of fiqh were seen by the public to expand and encompass new territory. The definition of these new frontiers was a source of some confusion, and hence of heightened interest, and, in the great post-revolutionary surge of printing, the Burujirdi volume was re-issued.

Taqlid had long been a socially important element in Iranian society, and in Shi`i society in general, for it united people, at least as inhabitants of the same universe of duties and obligations, under their marja`s, but the events leading up to the revolution demonstrated the power that the marja`s could command through, among other means, their issuing of proclamations (ilamiyas); this was reminiscent of the mobilization of the Iranian people during the tobacco protest of 1891-2, and during the Constitutional Revolution of 1906-11.

The following article is presented as a description of taqlid and ijthad by a leading contemporary Shi`i mujtahid who strove to make Islam comprehensible to the modern Iranian and to find answers to the problems of his time within the Islamic framework. The text has been left in its entirety; there were no footnotes in the original.

It is not for the believers to go forth all together; but why should not a party of every section of them go forth, to become learned in religion, and to warn their people when they return to them, that they may beware. (9:122)
[9]

What is ijthad?

The question of ijthad is a very topical one these days.^[10] Many people ask, either aloud or to themselves, what form ijthad takes in Islam, and from where Islam got the concept. Why should one practice taqlid? What are the conditions for ijthad? What are the duties of a mujtahid?

Broadly speaking, ijthad has the meaning of being an authority in the matters of Islam; but there are two ways of being an authority and deriving opinions in the matters of Islam in the eyes of us Shi`i Muslims: one which is in accordance with the shari`a, and one which is forbidden by it. Similarly, taqlid is of two kinds: one which is in accordance with the shari`a, and one which is forbidden.

The kind of ijthad which is forbidden by the shari'a.

Now, the kind of ijthad which, in our opinion, is forbidden is that which means "legislating" or "enacting the law", by which we mean that the mujtahid passes a judgement which is not in the Book (the Qur'an) or the

Sunna, according to his own thought and his own opinion - this is technically called *ijtihad al-ra'y*. According to Shi'i Islam, this kind of *ijtihad* is forbidden, but in Sunni Islam it is permitted. In the latter the sources of legislation, and the valid proofs for determining the *shar'ia*, are given as the Book, the Sunna and *ijtihad*. The Sunnis place *ijtihad*, which is the *ijtihad al-ra'y* explained above, on the same level as the Book and the Sunna.

This difference takes its origin in the fact that Sunni Muslims say that the commands which are given in the *shari'a* from the Book and the Sunna are limited and finite, whereas circumstances and events which occur are not, so another source in addition to the Book and the Sunna must be appointed for the legislation of Divine commands - and that source is the very same as we have defined as *ijtihad al-ra'y*. Concerning this matter, they have also narrated hadiths from the Prophet, and one of them is that when the Prophet sent Mu'adh b.

Jabal to the Yemen, he asked him how he would issue commands there. He replied: "In conformity with the Book." "And if it is not to be found in the book?" "I will make use of the Sunna of the Prophet." "And if it is not to be found in the Sunna of the Prophet?" "Ajtahidu ra' yi," he replied, which means: I will employ my own thought, ability and tact. They also narrate other hadiths in connection with this matter.

There is a difference of view among Sunni Muslims as to what *ijtihad al-ra'y* is, and as to how it is to be conceived. In his famous book, the "Risala"^[11] which was the first book to be written on the principles of Islamic jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*), (...) al-Shafi'i insists that the only valid *ijtihad* according to hadith is *qiyas* [reasoning by analogy]. *Qiyas*, briefly, is the taking into account of similar cases, and ruling in a case from one's own opinion by comparing it with these other similar cases.

But some other Sunni *fuqaha* [experts in *fiqh*, sing.: *faqih*] did not recognize *ijtihad al-ra'y* as being exclusively *qiyas*; they also counted *istihsan* ["finding the good" by one's own deliberations] as valid. *Istihsan* means to see, quite independently, without taking similar cases into account, what is nearest to the truth and to justice, and to give one's opinion according as one's inclination and intellect approve. Similarly with *istislah* [determining what is in the interests of human welfare by one's own deliberations], which means the seeming of one thing as more expedient than another, and *ta'awwul* in which, although a ruling may have been reached in one of the *nusus* [the textual bases for a precept of the *shari'a* sing.:

nass], in a verse from the Qur'an or in a hadith from the Prophet, one still has the right, for some reason, to dispense with the contents of the *nass* and to give priority to one's own independent opinion (*ijtihad al-ra'y*). Each of these requires explanation and a detailed account, and the Shi'i-Sunni debate is relevant to such an account. Many books have been written both for and against this idea, viz., that *ijtihad* is on a par with textual evidence, and the best of them is the treatise written recently by the late `Allama, the Sayyid Sharaf al-Din, called "al-Nass wa l-Ijtihad".^[12]

Now, according to Shi`i Muslims, such a kind of ijtiḥad is not permitted by the shari`a. In the view of Shi`i Muslims and their Imams, the first basic principle of this matter, i.e., that the rulings of the Book and the Sunna are not adequate and that it is therefore necessary to practice ijtiḥad al-ra'y, is not correct.

There are many hadiths relevant to this discussion, and, in general, [they tell us that] there exist rulings for every eventuality in the Book and the Sunna. In "al-Kafi" ^[13], after the chapter on bid`a [innovation] and maqa'is [measurements], there is a chapter with the title: "Chapter on referring to the Book and the Sunna - and there is no halal [permitted thing] or haram [forbidden thing] or anything which the people need which does not come in the Book or the Sunna." The Imams of the ahl al-bayt have been known since the earliest days as opponents of qiyas and ra'y.

Of course, the acceptance or non-acceptance of qiyas and ijtiḥad al-ra'y can be studied from two angles. Firstly, from the aspect from which I have looked at it; that is to say, we count qiyas and ijtiḥad al-ra'y as one of the sources of Islamic legislation, and place it alongside the Book and the Sunna, and say that there are cases which have not been ruled upon by revelation and which mujtahids must explain using their own opinion. Or alternatively, [we can study it] from the aspect that (. . .) qiyas and ijtiḥad al-ra'y [are] a means for deriving the real rulings, just as we use the other ways and means such as khabar al-wahid.^[14] In other words, it is possible to perceive qiyas as either a substantive (mawdu`iya) [element in law], or a methodological (tariqiya) [principle].

In Shi`i fiqh, qiyas and ra'y are invalid in both of the above senses. In the first sense, the reason is that we have no ruling which is not given in the Book and the Sunna; and in the second case, the reason is that qiyas and ra'y are kinds of surmise and conjecture which lead to many errors. The fundamental opposition of Shi`i and Sunni legists in the matter of qiyas is in the first sense, although the second aspect has become more famous among the scholars of usul (the principles and methodology of fiqh).

The right of ijtiḥad did not last for long among the Sunnis. Perhaps the cause of this was the difficulty which occurred in practice: for if such a right were to continue [for any great length of time], especially if ta`awwul and the precedence of something over the texts were to be permitted, and everyone were permitted to change or interpret according to his own opinion, nothing would remain of the way of Islam (din al-islam).

Perhaps it is for this reason that the right of independent ijtiḥad was gradually withdrawn, and the view of the Sunni `ulama became that they instructed people to practice taqlid of only the four mujtahids, the four famous Imams - Abu Hanifa [d.150/767], al-Shafi`i; [d.204/820], Malik b. Anas [d.179/795] and Ahmad b. Hanbal [d.241/855] - and forbade people to follow anyone apart from these four persons. This measure was first taken in Egypt in the seventh hijri century, and then taken up in the rest of the lands of Islam.

Ijtiḥad permitted by the shari'a.

The word ijtiḥad was used until the fifth hijri century with this particular meaning, i.e., with the meaning of qiyas and ijtiḥad al-ra'y, a kind of ijtiḥad

which is prohibited in the eyes of the Shi`a. Up to that time, the Shi`i `ulama included a chapter on ijtiḥad in their books only because they wanted to refute it, to emphasize that it was null and void, and to proscribe it, as did the Shaykh al-Tusi in some of his works. But the meaning of this word gradually extended beyond this specific meaning, and the Sunni `ulama themselves began not to use 'ijtiḥad' in the specific sense of ijtiḥad al-ra'y, [as a source] which was on the same level as the Book and the Sunna.

[Such a shift in the meaning of the word can be seen with] Ibn Hajib ^[15] in his "Mukhtasar al-usul", on which `Adud al-Din al-Ijī wrote a commentary known as al-`Adudi, and which has been till recently, and maybe still is, the authoritatively approved book on [Sunni] usul, and before him with al-Ghazali ^[16] in his famous work "al-Mustasfa".

It then became used rather in the unqualified sense of effort or exertion to arrive at the rulings of the shari`a, and was defined as "the maximum employment of effort and exertion in deducing the rulings of the shari`a from the valid proofs (adilla, sing. dalil, see below). However, it is another matter to decide what the valid proofs of the shari`a are: whether qiyas, istihsan, and so forth, are among them or not.

From this time onwards, the Shi`i `ulama also adopted this word because they accepted this [general] meaning. This kind of ijtiḥad was a kind approved by the shari`a. Although the word had originally been one to be avoided among the Shi`a, after its meaning and the concept it denoted had undergone this change, their `ulama, discarded their prejudice and subsequently had no reservations about using it. It seems that in many instances the Shi`i `ulama, were careful to consider unity of method and conformity among Muslims as a whole.

For example, the Sunnis came to recognize ijma` (consensus of opinion among the `ulama) as a proof leading to certainty, and, in practice, they also held it to be fundamental and substantive (mawdu`i) just like qiyas, whereas the Shi`a did not accept it. However, to protect the unity of method, they gave the name ijma` to a principle which they did accept ^[17]. The Sunnis said that the valid proofs were four in number: the Book, the Sunna, ijma and ijtiḥad (qiyas); the Shi`a said the valid proofs were four: the Book, the Sunna, ijma` and `aql (reason). They merely substituted `aql for qiyas.

At any rate, 'ijtiḥad' gradually found a wider meaning, i.e., the employment of careful consideration and reasoning in reaching an understanding of the valid proofs of the shari`a. This, of course needs a series of sciences as a suitable preliminary basis on which to develop the ability to consider and reason correctly and systematically. The `ulama of Islam gradually realized that the deduction and derivation of the precepts from the combined valid proofs of the shari`a necessitated [the learning] of a series of preparatory sciences and studies such as the sciences of literature, logic, the Qur'anic sciences and tafsir (Qur'anic exegesis), the science of hadith and the narrators of hadith (rijal al-hadith), the science of the methodology of usul al-fiqh, and even a knowledge of the fiqh of the other sects of Islam. A mujtahid was someone who was a master of all these sciences.

I think it extremely likely, though I cannot state this categorically, that the first person among the Shi`a to use the words *ijtihad* and *mujtahid* [positively] was the `Allama al-Hilli.^[18] In his work " *Tahdhib al-usul*", he puts the chapter on *ijtihad* after the chapter on *qiyas*, and there he uses the word in the same sense in which it is used today.

[We can therefore say that] the *ijtihad* which is forbidden and rejected in the eyes of the Shi`a is *ra' y* and *qiyas*, which were originally called *ijtihad*, whether this is counted as a source of the *shari`a* and as an independent basis for legislation, or taken as a means for deriving and deducing true precepts; whereas the *ijtihad* which they deem correct according to the *shari`a* is that which means effort and exertion based on expert technical knowledge.

In answer to the question: what is the meaning, the use and the place of *ijtihad* in Islam, it can thus be said that it is *ijtihad* in the meaning that it is used today, i.e., competence and expert technical knowledge. It is obvious that someone who wants to refer to the Qur'an and hadith must know how to explain the meaning of the Qur'an, he must know the meaning of the verses, which verses abrogate which verses, which ones have clear meanings and which ones ambiguous meanings^[19] - and he must be able to distinguish which hadith is valid and authoritative and which not. In addition, he must understand, on the basis of correct rational principles, incompatibilities between hadiths to the extent that it is possible for him to resolve them, and he must be able to distinguish the cases in which the `ulama of the Shi`a sect have consensus (*ijma`*).

In the verses of the Qur'an themselves, and similarly in the hadith, a series of general principles [for verification and interpretation] are laid down, and the use and exercise of these principles need training and practice, just as in the case of all other basic principles in every science. Like the skilled technician who knows which material to choose from all the materials available to him, the *mujtahid* must have proficiency and ability.

In hadith, especially, there is a great deal of fabrication, the true and the false are mixed together; the expert must have the power to distinguish between them. In short, he must have enough preliminary knowledge so that he can exercise competence, authority and technical expertise.

The appearance of the Akhbaris in Shi'i Islam

Here we must mention an important and perilous current which first appeared around four centuries ago in the Shi`i world over the question of *ijtihad* - Akhbarism. If a group of the `ulama had not been forthright and challenged it, and had not taken a stand against this current and destroyed it, there is no knowing in what position we should be today.

The actual school of the Akhbaris is no more than four centuries old. Its founder was a man by the name of Mulla Muhammad Amin al-Astarabadi [d. 1033/1624], who was, personally, a gifted man who found many followers among the `ulama'. The Akhbaris themselves claimed that the original Shi`is, up to the time of the Shaykh al-Saduq^[20], were all followers of the Akhbari doctrine, but the truth is that Akhbarism as a school with basic postulates did not exist more than four centuries ago. These postulates were:

the denial of the possibility of arriving at certainty through exercising reason (*ʿaql*); the denial of the validity and the proof (*dalil*) of the Qur'an on the pretext that the understanding of the Qur'an lay exclusively in the hands of the Prophet's *ahl al-bayt*, and that our duty is to consult the hadith of the *ahl al-bayt* [for its interpretation and understanding]; the assertion that *ijma`* was the innovation of the Sunnis; the assertion that, of the four valid proofs (*adilla*), i.e., the Book, the Sunna, *ijma`* and *ʿaql*, only the Sunna is able to lead to certainty, the assertion that all the hadith that appear in the "four books" are true and valid, and of categorical provenance [from the Imams] (*qat`i al-sudur*).

In his book, "*Uddat al-Usul*", the Shaykh al-Tusi mentions a group of former Shi'i scholars under the name of the "*Muqallida*", and adversely criticises them; but they had no school of their own, and the reason that the Shaykh called them "*Muqallida*" was that even in the fundamentals of dogmatics (*usul al-din*) they constructed their proofs with hadith.

At any rate, the school of the Akhbaris took its stand against the school of *ijtihad* and *taqlid*. They denied the legal competence, jurisdiction and technical expertise that the mujtahids believed in; they considered *taqlid* of anyone else than the *ma`sumin*^[22] to be illegal. According to them, only the hadith are authoritative, and since there is no right of *ijtihad* or deriving of opinions, people must necessarily have recourse directly to the texts of the traditions and act upon them, no scholar calling himself a mujtahid or a *marja` al-taqlid*^[23] can act as an intermediary.

Mulla Amin al-Astarabadi, the founder of this school, and personally a very gifted man, learned and well-travelled, wrote a book called "*al-Fawa'id al-Madaniya*" in which he went to war with the mujtahids with astonishing stubbornness. He particularly tried to refute the principle of the authority of *ʿaql*. He claimed that it was only a proof in matters which had their origin in the senses, or which were related to sensory objects (such as in mathematics), and that in matters other than these it was inadmissible as a proof.^[24]

It so happens that this idea was practically contemporary with the appearance of empirical philosophy in Europe. The latter denied the validity of pure reason, and al-Astarabadi denied its validity in religion. Now where did he get this idea? Was it his own original idea, or did he get it from elsewhere? We cannot say.

I remember that in the summer of 1322 [Sh./1943] I went to Burujird, and at that time the late Ayatullah Burujirdi was still living there, not yet having come to Qum. One day, the talk was of this idea of the Akhbaris, and he criticised it, saying that the appearance of this idea among them was the effect of the wave of empiricism that had arisen in Europe. I heard this from him at that time.

Afterwards, when he came to Qum, and his lessons in *usul al-fiqh* reached this topic, i.e., the validity of certainty as a proof (*hujjat al qat`*), I was waiting to hear this opinion again from him, but unfortunately he did not say anything about it. Now, I cannot say if this had only been a conjecture which he had voiced, or whether he had evidence, but I, myself, have not till now found any evidence for it, and I feel it is extremely

unlikely that empirical thinking had then reached the East from the West. However, against this is the fact that Ayatullah Burujirdi never spoke without evidence. I now regret that I never asked him for an explanation at the time.

The struggle with Akhbarism

In brief, Akhbarism was a movement in opposition to `aql. An amazing ossification and inflexibility ruled in their doctrine. Fortunately, some discerning individuals like Wahid Bihbihani ^[25], famous as "Aqa", whose descendants are even now known as "Al-i Aqa (Family of Aqa)", and his pupils, and afterwards the late Shaykh Murtada al-Ansari ^[26], took a stand and fought against this doctrine.

Wahid Bihbihani lived in Karbala. ^[27] At that time, the author of the "Hada'iq" ^[28] an erudite Akhbari, was also in Karbala, and both of them had a following of students. Wahid was a follower of the doctrine of ijthad, and the author of the "Hada'iq" of the Akhbari doctrine, and occasionally there were bitter disputes. In the end, Wahid Bihbihani defeated the author of the "Hada'iq", and it is said that the outstanding pupils of Aqa Wahid, such as Kashif al-Ghita', Bahr al-'Ulum and the Sayyid Mahdi Shahrastani ^[29], had first of all been pupils of the author of the "Hada'iq" and had afterwards left him and joined the lessons of Wahid Bihbihani.

Of course, the author of the "Hada'iq" was a moderate Akhbari; he claimed that his doctrine was identical with that of Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi ^[30], half way between Akhbari and Usuli. Moreover, he was a pious and godfearing man of faith, and although Wahid Bihbihani fought against him vociferously and forbade congregational prayers behind him, he, quite the contrary, said that congregational prayers behind Aqa Wahid were valid. It is said that at the time of his death he left in his will that Wahid Bihbihani should recite his funerary prayer.

The struggle of the Shaykh al-Ansari was such that he managed to build a solid foundation for the science of usul al-fiqh; and it is said that he maintained that if Amin al-Astarabadi had been alive he would have accepted his usul.

Naturally, the Akhbari school was defeated as a result of this opposition, and now it has no following except here and there. However, not all the ideas of Akhbarism, which penetrated people's minds so quickly and securely after the appearance of Mulla Amin, and which held sway for more or less two hundred years, have disappeared. Even now we see many who do not recognize the permissibility of an exegesis of the Qur'an unless a hadith is quoted. The inflexibility of Akhbarism still reigns in many of the matters of akhlaq (ethics) and in social problems, even in some parts of fiqh. But now is not the time for me to expand on this.

One thing which is a cause of the popularity of the Akhbari way of thinking is their self-righteousness, which is pleasing to ordinary people, because their ideas are formulated in such a way that they seem to be claiming: "we are not saying anything we have invented ourselves, we are people of obedience and submission; we say nothing except what the Imam al-Baqir (or the Imam al-Sadiq, etc.) said; we do not speak ourselves, we only say what the ma`sumin said."

In the chapter on ihtiyat and bara'a (precaution and exemption from obligation) in his "Fara'id al-Usul" the Shaykh al-Ansari quotes from Ni`mat Allah al-Jaza'iri ^[31], who maintained the doctrine of the Akhbaris:

Can any rational person conceive the possibility that on the day of Resurrection they will bring forth one of the slaves of Allah (i.e., the Akhbaris) and ask him how he acted, and that when he says that he acted according to what the ma`sumin ordered and that everywhere there was no word from the ma`sumin he desisted as a precaution, they will take such a person to Hell, while they will lead a thoughtless person who was inattentive to the words of the ma`sumin (i.e., an Usuli who follows the doctrine of ijihad), who rejects every hadith on the slightest pretext, to heaven? It is not possible!

The answer which the mujtahids give is that this kind of obedience and submission is not submission to the words of the ma`sumin, but submission to ignorance. If it is really certain that the ma`sumin said something, then we must submit; but these people wanted to submit ignorantly to everything they heard. I will give as an example something which I have recently come across, so that the difference between the rigid Akhbari way of thinking and the ijthadi way of thinking can be seen.

A sample of the two ways of thinking

It has been commanded in many hadiths that the end of the turban should always hang down and pass round the neck, not only at the time of prayer, but at all times. One of these hadiths is as follows:

The difference between a Muslim and an unbeliever is the passing of the end of the turban round his neck (al-talahhi).

A number of Akhbaris have seized upon this hadith and those like it, and said that the end of the turban must always hang down. But Mulla Muhsin Fayd^[32], although he did not think very highly of ijtiḥad, did in fact act in accordance with ijtiḥad in his chapter on apparel and adornment (al-ziy wa l-tajammul) in his "Kitab al-Wafi": and say that in former times the unbelievers had a slogan to the effect that the end of the turban should be tucked in on top, and they called this act iqtī`at.

If someone did this, it implied that he was one of them, and this hadith ordered that this slogan should be challenged and not followed. However this slogan has for a long time ceased to be current, and thus the subject of the hadith is no longer a matter of concern; on the contrary, since everyone tucks the end of his turban in on top, it is forbidden for someone to drape it round his neck, for it would be dressing in a way which drew attention to oneself, and this is unlawful.

Here the ossified doctrine of Akhbarism ruled that the text of the hadith ordered that the end of the turban must hang down, and it is an interference with it for us to add our words to it and give our own opinion and practice ijtiḥad. But the thinking of ijtiḥad is that we have two commands: one is the command to keep clear of the slogan of the unbelievers, which is the spirit of the subject of this hadith; and the other is the command to avoid ostentatious dress.

In the days when this slogan had currency, and Muslims were trying to avoid appearing to comply with it, it became an obligation on everybody to keep the ends of their turbans hanging down; but now that this state of affairs no longer pertains and the slogan has fallen into oblivion, and now that ordinarily no-one lets the end of his turban hang down, if someone were to do this, it would be an instance of ostentatious clothing, and this is illicit. This is just one example which I wanted to give you: there are many like it.

It is narrated from Wahid Bihbihani that he said:

Once, the new moon of Shawwal [the month following Ramadan] had been established because it had been sighted by many people (tawatur). So many people came and said that they had seen the new moon that certainty had been obtained in the matter for me^[33], so I gave the order that that day was the `Id al-Fitr [the feast marking the end of Ramadan]. One of the Akhbaris protested to me that I had not seen it myself, and that it had not been witnessed by people who had been proven to be `adil [to always act in accordance with the shari`a], and that I should therefore not have given the ruling. I said that it was mutawatir, and that this was a source of certainty for me. He then asked me in what hadith it had been narrated that tawatur was a valid proof leading to certainty.

It is also well known that some of the Akhbaris gave the command that the testimony of belief should always be written on the shroud of the corpse in this way:

Isma`il yashhadu an la ilaha illa Allah (Isma`il testifies that there is no god but Allah).

Now the reason [they say] that the testimony is to be written in the name of Isma`il is that it is narrated in a hadith that the Imam al-Sadiq wrote in this way on the shroud of his son Isma`il. The Akhbaris had never stopped to think that it was written thus on his shroud because his name was Isma`il; and that now, for example, that Hasan has died, they should say: "We should write his own name on the shroud, not that of Isma`il." Instead they argued: "This would be ijthihad, resorting to one's own opinion and relying on `aql. We are the people of obedience and submission to the words of the Imams al-Baqir and al-Sadiq, and we, for our part, will not interfere."

The kind of taqlid that is forbidden by the shari`a.

Let us now turn to taqlid. It is [as was said before] of two kinds: licit and illicit [in terms of the shari`a]. There is a kind of taqlid which is the blind following of one's surroundings and of habit, which is, of course, forbidden, and it is this which is condemned in the Qur'an when those who say:

Behold, we found our forefathers agreed on what to believe - and verily, it is but in their footsteps that we follow. (42:23)

are condemned. We have said that taqlid is of two kinds: licit and illicit. What we meant by illicit taqlid is not confined solely to the kind of taqlid which is the blind imitation of one's surroundings, of habit, of one's parents or ancestors, but we wanted also to say that taqlid between those who do not have [the necessary] knowledge (al-jahil) and those who do (al`alim), the consultation of the faqih by the ordinary person, is of two kinds: licit and illicit.

We occasionally hear these days from some people who are looking for a marja` al-taqlid, that they are looking to find someone to whom they can give unqualified allegiance. We want to say that the taqlid which Islam has commanded is not "unqualified allegiance"; it is the opening, and keeping open, of one's eyes, of awareness. If taqlid takes on an aspect of devotion, thousands of evil affects will come about.

Now there is a well-known and detailed hadith on this subject which I shall quote for you:

Whichever of the fuqaha can protect his self ^[34], who can preserve his religion, who fights his desires and is obedient to the commands of his Master, should be followed by the people in taqlid.

This is one of the textual proofs for taqlid and ijthihad. The Shaykh al-Ansari said about this hadith that the signs of truth are evident in it.

It is an appendage to the following verse from the Qur'an:

And there are among them unlettered people who have no real knowledge of the divine Book, only wishful beliefs, and they depend on nothing but conjecture.(2:78)

This verse comes in condemnation of the ignorant and illiterate Jews who followed, and practiced taqlid of, their religious scholars and leaders, and it comes after some verses which mention the unattractive behaviour of the

Jewish religious scholars. It points out that a group of them were such ignorant and illiterate people that they knew nothing of the divine Book except a string of imaginary beliefs [about it] and such things as they wished to believe, and that they had gone after surmise and illusion.

The hadith of the sixth Imam concerning the kind of taqlid which is illicit

The following hadith is connected to the previous verse. Someone said to the Imam al-Sadiq that the ordinary, illiterate Jews had no other alternative but to take in everything they heard from their religious scholars and to follow them. If there is any blame, it should be directed towards the Jewish scholars themselves. Why should the Qur'an censure helpless ordinary people who knew nothing and were only following their scholars? What difference is there between the common Jew and the common Muslim? If taqlid by ordinary people and their following of the learned is forbidden, we Muslims, who follow our scholars, this person reasoned, must also be the objects of reprehension and censure. If the former should not have accepted what their scholars said, then the latter should not accept what their scholars say.

The Imam said:

In one respect there is a difference between the ordinary Jew and the Jewish scholars, and the ordinary Muslim and the Muslim scholars, and in another respect there is a similarity. In so far as there is a similarity, God has commanded the ordinary Muslim also not to practice that kind of taqlid of scholars, but in so far as there is a difference, He has not.

The person who had asked the Imam then said: O son of the Messenger of Allah, please explain what you mean.

Then Imam said:

The ordinary Jews could see from their scholars and the way that they behaved that they were quite clearly lying: they did not refrain from accepting bribes, they changed the laws and the rulings of the courts in exchange for favours. They knew that they displayed partiality to certain individuals. They indulged their personal likes and dislikes, they would give one man's right to someone else. .. On account of natural, common sense, which God has created in everyone, we all know that we must not accept the speech of people who behave in such a way as this; we must not accept the word of God and the prophets from the tongues of such people as this.

What the Imam meant here was that no-one can say that the ordinary Jewish people did not know that they should not act in accordance with what had been said by those of their scholars who acted contrary to the divine commands of their religion. This is not something that someone might not know. Knowledge of this kind is put by God into every person's nature, and everyone's reason acknowledges it. In the terminology of logic, it is a 'inborn' proposition; its proof is contained within itself. According to the dictate of every intellect, one must not pay any attention to the utterance of someone whose philosophy of life is purity and the rejection of the human passions but who pursues what his desires tell him to. Then the Imam continued:

It is the same thing for our people: they too, if they understand or see with their own eyes that there is behaviour contrary to the shari`a on the part of their scholars, strong prejudices, a scramble after the ephemera of this world, preference for their own supporters however irreligious they may be, and judgement against their opponents even when they deserve verdicts in their favour, if they perceive such behaviour among them and then follow them, they are just the same as the Jewish people and should be reprimanded and censured.

So it is clear that unquestioning allegiance and shutting one's eyes to the truth is not the kind of taqlid which is encouraged or permitted by the shari`a. Licit taqlid means having one's eyes open and being observant and alert; otherwise it is accepting responsibility for, and being an accomplice to, an illicit act.

Regarding the popular belief that the `ulama cannot be tainted by immorality

Some people imagine that the effect of sin on individuals is not of only one kind: that sin has an effect on ordinary people which annuls their piety and right behaviour, but that it has no effect on the `ulama' who have some kind of immunity. It is like the difference between a little water and a lot which, if it is more than one kurr ^[35], cannot be tainted by any unclean thing. Now, in fact, Islam does not consider anyone to be untaintable, not even the Prophet. For why then should God have said:

[O Prophet] say: 'I also, if I commit a sin, fear punishment on the Great Day.'? Why should He have said:

If any kind of attributing godhood to other than Allah (shirk) enters your actions, your work will be spoilt?

All this is to show that there is no kind of partiality or discrimination, there is no immunity from sin for anyone.

The story of Moses and God's righteous servants, which is in the Qur'an, is a wonderful story. One moral which can be drawn from it is that the follower should surrender to the one he is following up to the point where basic principles and the law are not contravened. If it is seen that the leader does something against these principles, one must not remain silent. It is true that the fact that in the story the things which the servant of God does are not, in his view, against these basic principles, since he sees a wider horizon and can see into the heart of the matter;

they were, rather, his very duty and responsibility. But the question here is why Moses was not patient, and why he gave vent to his criticisms, despite the fact that he had promised [the servant of God] and himself that he would not make any objection? Why, then, did he protest and criticise? The defect in Moses' actions was not his protesting and criticising, but the fact that he was not aware of the undivulged aspect of the matter, the inward and secret side of the events. Of course, if he had been aware of the hidden reasons for what happened, he would not have objected, and he would have wanted to discover the secret of the affair;

but as long as his actions were, from his own point of view, against basic principles and the divine Law, his faith would not allow him to remain

silent. There are those who have said that if the actions of that servant of God were to be repeated on the Day of the Resurrection, Moses would still object to them and criticise them, unless, by that time, he were to become aware of the hidden reasons behind them. Moses said to the servant of God:

"Shall I follow you so that you may teach me, of what you have been taught, right judgement."

"Assuredly you will not be able to bear with me patiently." Then he explained the reason very clearly: "And how should you bear patiently what you have never encompassed in your knowledge?" Moses said:

"Yet you will find me, if Allah will, patient, and I shall not rebel against you in anything." Moses did not say that he would be patient whether he discovered the secret of the matter or not. He merely said that he hoped he would have that patience. Of course, this patience did exist within Moses as long as he understood the reason for things. Then the servant of God wanted to have something more definite from him; that, even if he did not discover the reason for what had happened, he would remain silent and not protest until the time came for him to explain.

"Then, if you follow me, do not question me on anything until I myself introduce the mention of it to you." (117:66-70) Here, the verse does not say if Moses accepted; it only says that after this they both set out together and continued till the end of the story which we all know.

At any rate, I wanted to show that the ignorant person's taqlid of the learned should not be blind allegiance. The unlawful kind of taqlid between one who is ignorant and one who has knowledge is that kind in which unquestioning obedience exists, which takes some such form as: "an ignorant person cannot quarrel with a learned person; we don't understand, perhaps the duties imposed by the shari`a necessitate its being like this."

I have mentioned this story as evidence and corroboration for what was in the hadith of the Imam al-Sadiq.

Taqlid permitted by the shari`a

After what I have narrated concerning the kind of taqlid forbidden by the shari`a, the Imam went on to explain the kind of taqlid permitted by the shari`a the kind which is to be praised, in these words: Whichever of the fuqaha' can protect his self, who can preserve his religion, who fights his desires and is obedient to the commands of his Master, then he should be followed by the people in taqlid.

Of course, it is clear that the struggle of a spiritual `alim with his weaker desires is very different from the struggle of an ordinary person, because the desires of each individual are associated with specific activities. The desires of a youth are one thing, the desires of an old man another; everyone, in whatever position, degree, stage or age he may be, has a particular kind of desire. The standard for subservience to inferior desires for a spiritual `alim is not what we see:

for example, whether he drinks alcohol or not, whether he has stopped praying and fasting or not, whether he gambles or not.^[37] The standard for the subservience to inferior desires for such a person is whether he desires position, to have his hand kissed, to become famous and popular and have people walk behind him, to use the wealth of the Muslims to lord over

others, to allow his friends and relatives, especially his sons, to benefit from the wealth of the Muslims. Then the Imam said:

Only some of the Shi'i fuqaha have these great qualities and traits of character, not all of them. This hadith, on account of its final phrases, is one of the pieces of evidence in the question of ijtiḥad and taqlid. So it is clear that both ijtiḥad and taqlid can be divided into two kinds: that which is permitted by the shari`a and that which is not.

Why is taqlid of a dead person not permitted

We have a principle in fiqh, which is one of the indisputable points of our fiqh, that taqlid of a dead person in the first instance is not permitted. If taqlid of a dead person is permitted, it is only when taqlid is carried on from someone who was followed [by the same person] while he was alive and is now dead.^[38] Moreover, the carrying on of the taqlid of a dead person must also be with the permission of a living mujtahid. I am not concerned here with the reasons in fiqh for this principle, so I will only say that it is a very basic idea, but only on the condition that the aim of the principle is clearly understood.

The first purpose of this principle is that it should be a means for the survival of the traditional centres of learning of the Islamic sciences, so that there should be continuity, and that the Islamic sciences should be preserved - not only preserved, but that they should advance day by day and be perfected, and that those matters which had not previously been solved should be solved.

It is not the case that all our problems have been solved in the past by our `ulama', and that now we have no more problems and no more work. We have thousands of riddles and difficulties in kalam (theology), Qur'anic exegesis, fiqh and the other Islamic sciences, many of which have been solved by the great `ulama' of the past, but many of which remain, and it is the duty of those who follow on to solve them and to gradually write better and more complete texts in each subject, to continue each subject and develop it, just as in the past, too, exegesis, theology and law were gradually developed. The caravan must not be brought to a halt in mid-journey. So people's taqlid of living mujtahids, and their heeding them, is a means to the continuance and development of the Islamic sciences.

Another reason is that every day Muslims are faced with new problems in their lives, and they do not know what their duty is in these matters. It is necessary to have living fuqaha', aware of the contemporary situation, to respond to this great need. It is narrated in one hadith concerning ijtiḥad and taqlid:

As for al-hawadith al-waqi`a, refer concerning them to the narrators of our hadith.

These hawadith al-waqi`a are exactly these new problems which arise as time passes. Study and research into the books of fiqh from different epochs and centuries shows that gradually, according to the needs of the people, new problems arise in fiqh, and that the fuqaha' set out to answer them. It is for this reason that the dimensions of fiqh have increased.

If a researcher were to make a tally, he could discover, for example, in what century, in what place and for what reason, such-and-such a problem

arose in fiqh. If it were not necessary for a living mujtahid to give answers to these problems, what difference would there be between taqlid of a living person and taqlid of a dead person? It would be better to follow in taqlid some of the dead mujtahids like the Shaykh al-Ansari, who, on the admission of the now-living mujtahids themselves, was the most knowledgeable and learned.

Basically, the 'secret' of ijtiḥad lies in applying general principles to new problems and changed circumstances. The real mujtahid is one who has mastered this 'secret', who has observed how things change, and subsequently how the rulings on them have changed. For there is no skill in only thinking about things which are in the past and have already been thought about; or, at the most, changing an `ala l-aqwa into an `ala l-ahwat.^[39] or vice versa; there is no need to make a song and dance about any of this.

Of course, ijtiḥad has many preconditions and prerequisites; a mujtahid must have acquired the various [preliminary] sciences. It is necessary that he should have applied himself to the study of Arabic language and literature, to logic, to the study of usul (jurisprudence), even to the history of Islam and the fiqh of the other sects, so that he might become a true and thorough faqih. No one can ordinarily lay claim to ijtiḥad just by reading a few books on Arabic grammar, or rhetoric and logic, then three or four of the set books for the intermediate stage, such as the "Fara'id", the "Makasib" or the "Kifaya"^[40], and then spending a few hours in the dars-i kharij.^[41] He does not then become qualified to sit with the "Wasa'il" and "Jawahir"^[42], in front of him and issue legal opinions.

He must be completely knowledgeable in exegesis and hadith, that is to say in the several thousands of hadith which appeared in the two and a half centuries from the time of the Prophet to the time of the Imam al-Hasan al-`Askari, and of the circumstances in which they appeared; he must also know Islamic history and the fiqh of other Islamic sects, and the narrators of traditions and their biographies and reliability.

Ayatullah Burujirdi was a true faqih. It is not my habit to mention people by name, and while he was alive I never mentioned him in my lectures. But now that he has died and there can be no ulterior motive, I can say that this man was truly a distinguished and outstanding faqih. He was conversant with, and proficient in, all these sciences, in exegesis, hadith, knowledge of the narrators of hadith, in the sciences of the evaluation of hadith (ilm al-daraya), and in the fiqh of the other sects of Islam.

How the faqih's outlook on the world affects the legal opinions he issues

The work of a faqih and mujtahid is the deduction and derivation of the precepts [of the shari`a]; but his knowledge and understanding of all things, in other words, his world-view, has a great influence on the decisions he makes. The faqih must have all the information on matters upon which he is going to issue a fatwa. If we imagine a faqih who is always sitting in the corner of his house or his madrasa, and compare him with a faqih who is conversant with the currents of life, both of them refer back to the valid

proofs of the shari`a, but each one of them will derive his legal rulings in a particular way, using a particular method.

Let me give an example. Suppose that someone who grew up in Tehran, or in a big town like Tehran, where running water is in plentiful supply and there are reservoirs and tanks and gutters, becomes a faqih and wishes to issue a fatwa concerning the precepts about what is pure and what is impure. When he refers to the hadiths on purity and impurity, such a person will, owing to his own previous experience, make a deduction in a way which will be extremely circumspect and will necessitate the avoidance of many things. But the same person, once he has been to the House of God [the Ka`aba] and seen the conditions of purity and impurity and the lack of water in that place, will find himself changing his outlook regarding the subject of purity and impurity. After such a journey, if he consults the hadiths on this matter, he will see them in a different light.

If someone compares the fatwas of the fuqaha' with each other, and then pays attention to the individual circumstances and each of these scholars' ways of thinking about living problems, he will see how the mental environment of a faqih and the information he has concerning the outside world influence his legal rulings in such a way that the legal rulings of an Arab faqih have an Arabic flavour, those of an Iranian have an Iranian flavour, and those of a country-dweller have a rustic flavour as opposed to the urban feel of those of a city-dweller.

This religion is the final religion; it is not exclusive to a particular time or place; it is relevant to all times and places. It is a religion which came to establish order and progress in the life of man, so how could a faqih who is uninformed of the natural arrangement and movement of things and who does not believe in a progression towards perfection in life, deduce the high and truly progressive laws of this upright (hanif) religion in a way which is in perfect accordance with the truth? For this religion came to give order to this natural arrangement, movement and development, and it guarantees its guidance.

The understanding of necessities

At the present time, we have some cases in our fiqh where our fuqaha' have given a definite ruling on the requirement of something only because they have seen the necessity and importance of the matter. In other words, since there is no transmitted evidence from the verses of the Qur'an or from hadith which is explicit and sufficient, and since there is also no valid consensus in the matter, they have used the fourth basic principle of derivation, i.e., the principle of independent reasoning (ʿaql).

In this kind of instance, the fuqaha' become certain that the command of God in such and-such a case is such-and-such, because of the importance of the matter and their knowledge of the spirit of Islam which leaves no important matter in abeyance. For example, in the case of the legal ruling given by the fuqaha' concerning the guardianship (wilaya) of the ruler and the subsidiary problems connected with it, if the importance of this matter had not been realised, no legal rulings would have been issued. The fuqaha' have only issued them to the extent which they understand to be necessary. Other instances similar to this can be found where the reason that a legal

ruling has not been given is the fact that the importance and necessity of the matter has not been fully realised.

An important recommendation

Here I have a recommendation which could be most useful for the advancement and development of our fiqh. It was previously put forward by the late Shaykh `Abd al-Karim al-Yazdi^[43], and I am here only reiterating his proposal.

He asked what it was that required people to follow only one person in taqlid in all matters. Would it not be better if specialised divisions were established in fiqh? That is to say, there would be groups who, after having completed the general study of fiqh and become experts in it, would specialise in one particular section, and then people would follow them in that particular section. For example, some would take as their specialisation `ibadat (the rites of Islam), and others mu`amilat (transactions), some siyasat (politics), and other ahkam (criminal law);

this is exactly what has been done in medicine where specialised branches have been created, and doctors divided into groups for each speciality, some being heart specialists, some eye specialists, some ear, nose and throat specialists, and others specialists in other branches. If this were done, each person could study his own branch more thoroughly. I believe that there is a discussion of this matter in the book "al-Kalam Yajurru l-Kalam" by the Sayyid Ahmad al-Zanjani.^[44]

This recommendation is a very good one, and I will add only that the need to divide fiqh up and to create specialised branches arose a hundred years ago, and in present circumstances the fuqaha of today will impede the forward development of fiqh and stunt its growth unless they heed this recommendation.

The division of the sciences into specialised branches

The division of the sciences is the result of their development, but also its cause. For a science gradually progresses until it reaches the point where it is no longer possible for a single person to investigate all the problems it raises. It must then necessarily be divided up into branches of specialisation. Thus the division of a science and the creation of branches within it is the result and the effect of the development of that science, while, at the same time, more progress is made when these branches are created, and thought can be concentrated on the special problems in each branch.

In all the world's sciences - medicine, mathematics, law, literature and philosophy - branches of specialisation have been created, and for that very reason progress has been accelerated in each of these branches.

The progress made in fiqh during the last thousand years

There was a time when fiqh was a very limited science. When we refer back to the texts before the time of the Shaykh al-Tusi, we see how restricted it was. By writing his "al-Mabsut", al-Tusi took fiqh into new realms and enlarged its scope, and in the course of time, as a result of the efforts of the `ulama' and fuqaha, and because of the creation of new problems and the initiation of new investigations to answer them, fiqh

progressed even further, to the point where, about a hundred years ago, when the author of the "Jawahir" wrote his complete compendium of fiqh, he was only just able to finish it.

It is said that he started his task when he was about twenty years old, and that, thanks to his extraordinary genius, continual work and a long life, he was able to write the last pages right at the very end of his life. The "Jawahir" was printed in six very bulky [lithographed] volumes, while the whole of al-Tusi's "al-Mabsut", which was in his time the example of a comprehensive work on fiqh, is probably less than half of one of these six volumes. After the author of the "Jawahir" died, the foundations of a new fiqh were laid by the Shaykh Murtada al-Ansari, and the epitome of this new fiqh was that great man's "al-Makasib" and "al-Tahara".^[45] Since his time, no-one could even conceive of teaching a complete cycle of fiqh with such thorough explanation and research.

At the present time, after this advance in the development of our fiqh, which occurred in the same way as similar advances in other sciences all over the world, and which has been the result of the efforts of the 'ulama' and fuqaha' of the past, the scholars of today will find themselves faced with the choice of either curbing any further progress in fiqh or putting this sensible and progressive recommendation into practice and creating branches of specialization, as a result of which people will come to discriminate in their taqlid, in the same way as they discriminate in referring to a doctor.

A council of fuqaha'

There is another recommendation which I wish to make, and the more fully I explain what I have in mind the better it will be. At the present time, when branches of specialization exist in every science, resulting in breathtaking advances in these sciences, there is another practice which, in its turn, has acted as a contributing factor, and this is practical and theoretical cooperation between first rank scientists and specialists in all the branches of science.

Now, solitary theorising or experiment no longer has any value, nothing is to be achieved from going one's own way. In every branch, scholars and scientists are constantly engaged in exchanging ideas; they put the results of their thinking at the disposal of other specialists, and the scientists of one continent cooperate with those of another. The result of this theoretical and experimental cooperation between first rank scientists is that if a useful and valid theory is put forward, it can be published and establish itself more quickly, whereas, if a theory is weak, its failing can be discovered and it can be eliminated sooner, so that in the future the pupils of the authorities who developed these theories will be saved from these errors.

Unfortunately, we still have not created any division of labour or specialization among ourselves, no practical or theoretical cooperation, and it is clear that as long as this is delayed, progress and the solution of difficulties cannot be achieved. There is no need for a proof of the need for scientific cooperation and the exchange of ideas since it is so self-evident, but so that it may not be doubted, I shall show, by quotations from the

Qur'an and "Nahj al-Balagha ", that this recommendation, this progressive order, is to be found within Islam itself.

In the Qur'an, in the sura called al-Shura (Counsel), it is said:

And those who answer their Lord, and perform the prayer, their affair being counsel between them, and expend of that We have provided them with. (42:38)

This verse describes the true believers and followers of Islam in this way: they reply to the call of God, they establish prayer, they do their work in consultation with each other, and they dispose of that which God has bestowed on them. So, in the view of Islam, consultation and the exchange of ideas is one of the basic principles of life for people of faith, the true followers of Islam.

In "Nahj al-Balaqha" it is said:

Know that a group of the slaves of Allah with whom knowledge of Allah was entrusted keep His secret; they cause His springs to flow (i.e., they open the springs of knowledge for the people), they have friendly relations with one another and feelings of affection, they meet each other with warmth and cheerfulness and love, they quench each other's thirst from the cup of their acquired knowledge, and they emerge with their thirsts quenched.

If scientific consultation were to come into existence in the science of fiqh, and the principle of the exchange of ideas were to be thoroughly practiced, many of the differences between legal opinions would be resolved, quite apart from the advances that would be made in the science as such. There is no alternative: if we maintain that our fiqh is also one of the world's genuine sciences, we must make use of the methods used in the other sciences. If we do not, the result will be that it will no longer be considered a science.

I have other useful and urgent recommendations, but my time is running out and I cannot mention them now, for it would take almost another three quarters of an hour, and I know that some people have a long way to go to reach their homes.

The verse of the Qur'an which I quoted at the beginning was:

It is not for the believers to go forth all together; but why should not a party of every section of them go forth, to become learned (yatafaqqahu) in the religion, and to warn their people when they return to them, that they may beware. (19:122)

This verse explicitly instructs that a group of the Muslims should study (tafaqquh) their religion and let others benefit from what they have studied. Tafaqquh is from the root f-q-h. The meaning of fiqh is not mere understanding: rather, it is deep understanding of, and perfect insight into, the truth of something. In his "Mufradat", Raghib^[46], says:

Fiqh is the reaching for hidden knowledge by means of manifest knowledge.

Taffaqquh is defined as: Going after something and becoming expert in it.

The above verse is addressed to Muslims whose understanding of Islam is not superficial, telling them to think deeply and discover the meaning and the spirit of the rules of Islam. This verse is the evidence for ijtihaad and the study of fiqh, and it is also the evidence for our recommendations. Just as

this verse lays the foundation for ijihad and tafaquh in Islam, so also it advocates that these two things should be more widely practiced. More attention should be paid to what is required, the `ulama' should start to sit in fiqh counsels, the individualistic approach should be discouraged, and branches of specialization should be created, so that our fiqh may continue on its path of perfection.

Footnotes

1. Tehran, 1962.
2. Lambton, A.K.S., 'A reconsideration of the position of the marja` taqlid and the religious institution., *Studia Islamica*, XX (1964), 115-135. (See also, *al-Serat*, Vol VII, No. 1 (1981), p. 12-27)
3. For further information on these two persons, refer to the section by Yann Richard on 'Contemporary Shi'i Thought' in: Keddie, N.R., *Roots of Revolution: an Interpretative History of Modern Iran*, New Haven, 1981.
4. See the author's introduction to the new edition of: Mutahhari, M., "Ilal-Girayish bi Maddigari" Qum, 1980, pp. 8-9.
5. The collection of orations, homilies and letters of the first Shi'i Imam, `Ali b. Abi Talib, compiled by the Sharif al-Radi (d. 406/1015).
6. For these and many other details of Mutahhari's life and times, reference should be made to the article 'Sayri dar zindigi-yi `ilmi va inqilabi-yi ustad shahid Murtada Mutahhari', in: `Abd al-Karim Surush (ed.), *Yadnama-yi Ustad Shahid Murtada Mutahhari*, Tehran, 1981, pp. 319-380.
7. It was reopened after the revolution.
8. For a complete list of his published and unpublished works, refer to: `Abd al-Karim Surush, op. cit., 436-556.
9. The translation of Qur'anic verses and hadiths has been made in accordance with the author's own Persian translation except where this is more an interpretation than a translation, in which case a more literal English translation is given.
10. This address was given on 1 Urdibihisht 1340 Sh. (21 April 1961), three weeks after the death of Ayatullah Burujirdi.
11. (Cairo, 1940) The main work in jurisprudence by Abu `Abdillah Muhammad b. Idris al-Shafi'i (150/767 - 204/820), the founder of the Shafi'iyah legal school. He laid the foundations for the systematic treatment of qiyas.
12. The Sayyid `Abd al-Husayn al-Musawi Sharaf al-Din (1290/1873-4- 1377/1957-8), born in Kazimayn, educated in Najaf, but subsequently resident mostly in the Lebanon. He is popularly famous for his "al-Muraja`at" (Sayda, 1355/1936-7; frequently reprinted), which contains his detailed correspondence with the Egyptian scholar Salim al-Bishri in defense of Shi'ism. His "Al-Nass wa l-Ijtihad" was published in Najaf in 1375/1955-6, and has also been reprinted several times. He is also the author of "Abu Hurayra" (Sayda, n.d.), a book about the controversial narrator of hadith.
13. "Al-Kafi fi `Ilm al-Din", (ed `A. A. Ghaffari, 8 vols., Tehran, 1377-9) the first and largest of the Shi'i collections of hadith, compiled by Muhammad b. Ya`qub b. Ishaq al-Razi al-Kulayni (d. 328/939). It contains over 16,000 traditions from the Prophet and the Imams covering all aspects of the usul (the 'roots', mainly theological) and the furu` (the 'branches', mainly preceptual) of the religion.
14. The khabar al-wahid is that kind of tradition which has not reached the status of tawatur, i.e., has not been narrated by so many traditionalists that there is no doubt about its validity. Under certain conditions, such traditions are admissible as proof (hujja) in the derivation of precepts.
15. Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. al-Hasan b. `Ali al-Tusi (385/995 - 460/1067), the Shaykh al-Ta'ifa (the Chief [scholar] of the [Shi'a] Sect), author of "'Uddat al-Usul" (Tehran, 1314).
16. Jamal al-Din Abu `Amr `Uthman b. `Umar b. Abi Bakr b. Yusuf, Ibn al-Hajib (570/1174 -646/1249), the Maliki legist, author of "Muntaha al-Su'al wa l-Amal fi `ilmay al-Usul wa l-Jada'" which he condensed into his "Mukhtasar al-Usul". Besides al-Iji's

commentary on this abridgement, there is also one by the `Allama al-Hilli (see below, note 19), called "Ghayat al-Usul" which he wrote to refute al-Iji's (see: "al-Dhari`a", XIV, p.56).

17. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Tusi al-Ghazali (450/1058 - 505/1111), who followed the Shafi`i madhhab. The full title of his work on jurisprudence is "al-Mustasfa min `ilm al-Usul" (2 vols, Cairo, 1356).

18. The main substantial difference between Shi`i and Sunni ijma` is that the former must contain the opinion of the Imam in the consensus. The discussion of how this can be achieved during the Imam's occultation forms one of the important parts of the science of usul.

19. Jamal al-Din Abu Mansur, Hasan b. Yusuf b. `Ali b. Mutahhar, the `Allama al-Hilli (648/1250 - 726/1325), the famous legist, philosopher and mutakallim, author of "Tahdhib Tariq al- Wusul ila `ilm al-Usul" (Tehran, 1308).

20. Abu Ja`far, Muhammad b. `Ali b. al-Husayn b. Babawayh al-Qummi (d. 381/991).

21. These are: "al-Kafi" (see note 13); "Man la Yahdurahu l-Faqih" (ed. H. M. Khirsan, 4 vols, Najaf, 1957, by 1958-62), also by al-Tusi. 22. The fourteen "impeccables": i.e., the Prophet, his daughter Fatimat al-Zahra, and the twelve Imams.

23. After the student of fiqh has mastered the necessary sciences, he may, if his teacher considers him to be capable of deriving his own legal opinions, receive a certificate authorizing him to do so; but he still cannot be followed by others in taqlid. For this to happen, he must rise to the final degree and become a marja` al-taqlid, where other qualities besides just his scholarship, e.g., his piety and conformity to the shari`a, cause him to be respected above other mujtahids, and thus to become a source of certainty to his muqallids that in following him they will not deviate from the shari`a.

24. This is a question of certainty (qat`, yaqin): the evidence for the existence of a precept must be such as to leave no room for any kind of doubt in the mind of the person who models his behaviour according to it; in the case of proofs concerning sensory evidence, the very data themselves are only probabilistic, so no proof employing them can arrive at demonstrable certainty. Therefore, in such a proof, other probabalistic elements such as `aql are admissible, but these cannot be used to derive the precepts of the shari`a.

25. Muhammad Baqir b. Muhammad al-Bihbihani (1116-8/1704-7 - 1208/1793-4).

26. The Shaykh Murtada b. Muhammad Amin b. Shams al-Din b. Ahmad b. Nur al-Din b. Muhammad Sadiq al-Shushtari al-Dizfuli al-Ansari (1214/1799 - 1281/1864), whose "Rasa'il", on usul al-fiqh were published as "Fara'id al-Usul"(Tehran, 1296). His works in usul and fiqh now form the backbone of the present-day teaching of these subjects.

27. One of the `atabat, the Shi`i sacred towns in Iraq, the site of the battle where the third Imam, al-Husayn, and his followers were massacred on 10 Muharram 61/680. It is about 95 kms. S.S.W. of Baghdad.

28. The Shaykh Yusuf b. Ahmad al-Bahrani (d. 1186/1772), author of "al-Hada'iq al-Nadira Ahkam al-`Itra al-Tahira" (ed. M.T. al-Irwani, 20 vols., Najaf, 1377-).

29. a) Ja`far b. Khidr b. Yahya al-Najafi (1164/751 - 1227/1812), known as "Kashif al-Ghita `an Mubhamat al-Shari`a al-Gharra" (Tehran, 1271). b) The Sayyid Muhammad Mahdi b. Murtada b. Muhammad b. `Abd al-Karim al-Hasani al-Husayni (1154-5/1741-2 - 1212/1797), known as the Sayyid Bahr al-`Ulum. c) The Sayyid Muhammad Mahdi al-Shahrastani al-Ha'iri b. Abi'l-Qasim al-Musawi (d. 1216/1801).

30. Muhammad Baqir b. Muhammad Taqi b. Maqsud `Ali al-Majlisi al-Isfahani (1037/1627 - 1111/1700), compiler of the encyclopaedic collection of Shi`i hadith, "Bihar al-A nwar" (110 vols, Tehran, 1376- [vol. VIII, Tehran, 1304])

31. The Sayyid Ni`mat Allah b. `Abdillah b. Muhammad al-Musawi al-Jaza'iri (d. 1112/1700), a pupil of the `Allama al-Majlisi (see previous note). 32. Muhammad b. Murtada b. Mahmud Muhsin al-Kashani (d. 1091/1680).

33. It is to be understood that tawatur is a proof of certainty according to the science of usul al-fiqh, and that it has been so established independently of textual proofs. This rational view was challenged by the Akhbaris precisely because of the lack of textual backing.

34. Protecting the nafs, the soul, the greater, moral jihad, as opposed to the lesser jihad of protecting Islam against the external enemy.

35. One kurr of water is approximately 377 litres. In religious law if an amount less than this comes into contact with a religiously impure thing, the water too becomes impure, whereas above this amount the purity is not endangered.

36. `Abd Salih, the "Righteous Servant". For this story see the sura of "al-Kahf", 60 - 82.

37. Since he obviously refrains from such activities.

38. According to a commonly accepted ruling, this applies only to those matters which the muqallid formerly performed according to the fatawa of the subsequently deceased marja` al-taqlid. If any new matter arises for him, he must follow the fatwa of a living, `adil mujtahid

39. Two principles (usul `amalia) for the preponderance of one opinion over another in fiqh. If one opinion is chosen over another `ala l-aqwa, it is chosen because the proof for it is thought to be stronger; if it chosen `ala l-ahwat, it is because of the principle of precaution (ihtiyat) which requires that what is least likely to be at variance with the shari`a should be adopted. It will be appreciated that there may be a good deal of rather trivial argument as to whether one or the other of the two opinions should be chosen, according to which of these two principles is preferred.

40. a) for "Fara'id al- Usul", see above, note 26. b) "Kitab al-Makasib", also by the Shaykh al-Ansari, an extensive exposition of the section in fiqh on transactions. c) "Kifayat al-Usul" (2 vols, Tehran, n.d.) by "Akhund" Mulla Muhammad Kazim al-Khurasani (d. 1329/1911), a systematic text on usul al-fiqh.

41. After the student (talaba, lit. 'seeker') has completed his reading of the main texts and mastered the necessary preliminary sciences, he may continue to the more detailed, but also more specialised, courses given by the main teachers of the subjects concerned. These lessons, the dars-i kharij, are kharij to (outside, beyond) the texts, and the teacher will expound his own opinions, thus teaching the actual practice of ijthad. The teacher will be able to assess the abilities of his pupils in these classes, and, in the case of fiqh, may subsequently award a certificate of ijthad to those he considers to have mastered all the required skills and to be consequently in a position to employ them to arrive at their own legal opinions (see also above, note 23).

42. a) "Wasa'il al-Shi`a" (ed. `A. al-Rabbani M. al-Razi, 20 vols, Tehran, 1376 -1389), by the Shaykh Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Hurr al-`Amili (d. 1104/1693); the most comprehensive collection of hadith relevant to fiqh, arranged according to subject matter. b) "Jawahir al-Kalam" (ed. `A. Quchani et al., 43 vols, Najaf-Qum-Tehran, 1377-1401), by the Shaykh Muhammad Hasan b. Baqir al-Najafi (d. 1266/1849); an extensive commentary on the "Sharayi` al-Islam" by the Muhaqqiq al-Hilli (602/1202 - 676/1277).

43. The Shaykh `Abd al-Karim b. Muhammad Ja`far al-Mirjirdi al-Yazdi al-Hairi (1276/1859-60 - 1355/1937), whose move from Arak to Qum in 1920 began the modern history of that city as a centre of Shi`i learning.

44. The Sayyid Ahmad al-Husayni al-Zanjani (1308/1890 - 1393/1973), a Qummi scholar. His "al-Kalam Yajurru l-Kalam" (3 vols, Tehran, 1363/1944) is a compendium of historical, literary, biographical and hadith information.

45. By the Shaykh al-Ansari.

46. "Al-Mufradat fi Gharib al-Qur'an", (ed. M. S. al-Kilani, Cairo, 1961), by Abu l-Qasim al-Husayn b. Muhammad b. al-Mafdal al-Isfahani (d. 502/1108-9), a famous lexicon of obscure meanings in the Qur'an.

The Illustrious Period of the Imamate of Imam Zayn al-'Abidin

Seyyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, Al-Serat, Vol. 5 (1979), Nos. 3 & 4

No Imam began his Imamate in a more tragic atmosphere. The first day of his Imamate saw him seriously ill and a captive of the army of Yazid in Karbala. His father and predecessor had sacrificed all he had on the altar of truth; and Imam Zayn al-'Abidin found himself with a group of helpless widows and orphans being led from place to place, from the durbar of Ibn Ziyad to the court of Yazid. Finally they were thrown into a prison, where the Imam spent the first year of his Imamate, cut off from the followers of his father and unable to look after their affairs.

Understandably, the tragedy of Karbala had created a chaos in the Shi'a world. Shi'as were in the throes of a dark pessimism, and the community was in disarray. A movement had already begun to accept Muhammad al-Hanafiyah, son of Amir-ul-Mu'minin 'Ali as the 4th Imam. Muhammad al-Hanafiyah himself had no such design. But the problem was: how to stop that movement without putting the life of Imam Zayn al-'Abidin in danger?

Yazid had not hesitated to murder Imam Husayn in spite of the highest prestige the Imam had in the Muslims' eyes. It would have been far more easier for him to kill Imam Zayn al-'Abidin a young man of 23 years of age, whose divine virtues were yet to shine before the Muslim community. And it was not in the interest of Islam that Imam Zayn al-'Abidin be martyred so soon after Imam Husayn.

Altogether, Imam Zayn al-'Abidin had three difficult tasks before him:

1. To announce his Imamate publicly without seeming to oppose outsiders.
2. To weld the community together, making a "tasbeeh" (rosary) out of the scattered beads - doing it in such a way as not to give Yazid and Yazidites an excuse to retaliate.
3. To expand true faith, providing a beacon of light to guide the seekers of truth to the safety of true faith and virtuous deeds - doing it without attracting untoward attention of his enemies.

Any of these Himalayan tasks would have defeated a lesser being. But Imam Zayn al-'Abidin under divine guidance did achieve all these aims in such a beautiful and unobtrusive way that even his followers, who tremendously benefited, and are benefiting, from his superb leadership did not consciously realise how they were being guided.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF HIS IMAMAT

This took the form of a family dispute:

Muhammad al-Hanafiyah claimed that he was the Imam after his brother, Imam Husayn (as Imam Husayn, had become Imam after the eldest brother, Imam Hasan). Imam Zayn al-'Abidin said that his uncle's claim was wrong; that he (i.e. Imam Zayn al-'Abidin) was Imam after his father, by divine appointment. This family "feud" apparently could not be resolved; and ultimately Imam Zayn al-'Abidin suggested that the "Black Stone" (al-Hajarul-aswad) of Ka'bah be approached for its judgement. Muhammad al-

Hanafiyah readily agreed and both parties went to Mecca during Hajj season, when thousands of pilgrims had assembled for the pilgrimage.

The stranger than fiction news must have spread like wild fire that 'Ali bin al-Husayn and Muhammad al-Hanafiyah wanted the Black Stone to judge between them. Everyone must have wondered how could a stone judge between two persons. They must have eagerly waited to see the outcome when the two parties would approach the Stone. What would they say when the Stone, being a stone, would not respond to their arguments!

This must have been the feeling of the crowd when the uncle and the nephew slowly advanced towards the Black Stone. First Muhammad al-Hanafiyah talked to the Stone; there was no response. Imam Zayn al-'Abidin said: "Had you, O Uncle, been the Wasi and Imam, it would certainly have answered you."

Muhammad al-Hanafiyah said "Now, O Nephew, you pray and ask it." Imam Zayn al-'Abidin prayed to Allah and then asked the Black Stone to declare in clear Arabic as to who was the Wasi and Imam after al-Husayn bin 'Ali.

There was a tremor in the Stone and then Allah made it speak in clear Arabic: "O Allah, verily Wisayah and Imamah, after al-Husayn bin 'Ali is for Zayn al-'Abidin 'Ali bin al-Husayn, son of 'Ali bin Abi Talib and Fatimah bint Rasulillah." Muhammad al-Hanafiyah accepted the verdict and declared his allegiance for Imam Zayn al-'Abidin.

(al-Ihtijaj of al-Tabrasi, al-Kafi of al-Kulaini, Basa'-erud-Darajat, A'lumul-wara, Manaqib of Ibn Shahr 'Ashob, Biharul-Anwar, Vol. XI, of Majlisi).

This "dispute" was the beginning of the end of the Kaisaniyah movement, which wanted to accept Muhammad al-Hanafiyah as Imam. The schism in the Shia rank was arrested; and as it was only a "family feud", Yazid could not object to it in any way.

But the miraculous nature of the episode and the timing served its purpose. The pilgrims on returning to their homes must have felt compelled to narrate this strange story; and thus the Shi'as throughout the Muslim world came to know, without any formal proclamation, that Imam Zayn al-'Abidin was their divinely-appointed Leader and Guide.

UNITING THE SHIA COMMUNITY

This is an even more fascinating aspect of his Imamah.

How was he to unite all the Shi'as in an, ever-lasting bond? What was the factor which could join them permanently?

Philosophical exhortations? But they have effect on only small group of intellectuals; man-in-the-street is not influenced by them. Moreover, it cannot influence the "feelings"; and "unity" is a feeling of oneness. Some joyous aspects of religion? Joy and happiness is a "feeling", no doubt. But it does not necessarily "unite" the people. Many is the time when a man celebrates a joyous function and his brother refuses to join him, because of some minor misunderstandings. But let there be a tragedy in that house, and the same brother would rush therein to share that sorrow.

This tendency of human nature brings us to the third alternative Sorrow.

Sorrow and grief succeeds in binding the mourners together, while intellectual arguments and joyous functions fail to achieve that object. Have not you seen how at the time of a national tragedy all political differences are genuinely forgotten and how the whole nation unites together to share the sorrow and shoulder the resulting responsibilities? Imam Zayn al-'Abidin under divine command selected this method to unite the community.

And again it was adopted apparently just as a personal way of life, without its being aimed against anyone.

Majlisi (in Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. XI) has written a chapter, "His mourning and Weeping on the Martyrdom of his Father, May Grace of Allah be on Both", in which he, inter alia, writes:

"And it is said that he (i.e. Imam Zayn al-'Abidin) continued to weep till his eyes were endangered. And whenever he took water to drink, he wept till the tears filled the pot. Someone talked to him about it and he replied: "Why should not I cry, when my father was denied the water which was free to the beasts and animals?"

"And never was food brought to him but that he wept, so much so that a servant told him: "May I be your ransom, O Son of the Messenger of Allah! I am afraid that you would die (of this weeping)". The Imam said: 'I only complain of my distraction and anguish to Allah and I do not know. Never do I remember the massacre of the children of Fatimah but that tears strangle me.'"

Naturally, this example set by their Imam was followed by the Shias every where; and they joined hands to establish mourning of Imam Husayn whenever possible. This created a feeling of oneness and unity in all persons attending those mourning-sessions.

And how could Yazid or Yazidites tell Imam Zayn al-'Abidin not to remember his father?

This institution of mourning became the focal-point of all religious activities of the Shia community and the life-line of their faith. In later periods, the enemies of the faith realised the vital role which the "mourning" plays in religious education and character-building of the Shias, and they tried to stop it by the force of their "Fatwa". Now they have changed their tactics. Now they ask: Why should one mourn for an event which occurred more than 1300 years ago? They ask it while they are fully aware that these mourning sessions (Majalis) are the best-organised, well-attended religious schools, where the participants willingly learn the basic tenets of faith, are exhorted to emulate the way of life of Ahl i-Bayt; and thus their Islamic outlook on the life and the world is fortified.

This seat of learning was given to the Shi'a community by Imam Zayn al-'Abidin so unobtrusively that even the community did not realise its importance and significance in the beginning.

TEACHING TRUE ISLAM

The previous two tasks were stepping-stones to reach this most important of his responsibilities. We have seen how the Imam announced his Imamate by means of a "family feud", and how he gave his followers a platform of unity in the form of his mourning for his father. In neither instance he addressed any outsider; still the message got through. Likewise, in meeting

this third and most important of his tasks, he did not address any human being. He selected the form of Du'a (invocation) for this purpose. He recorded his Du'as in a book form and asked his two sons to make copies of the book. This recording itself is an indication that these invocations were not just a prayer, but also a means of guidance for the Muslims.

How could anyone tell him not to ask his wants from Allah? How could anyone come between Allah and His servant, when raising his hands he called his Lord in a heart-rending voice to come to his aid and to help him out of his difficulties. But those recorded duas are a treasure of Islamic knowledge. One finds in them almost all theological and ethical questions answered eloquently and eruditely. Reading them, the heart is filled with true belief and sincere love of Allah; and the light of virtue and nobleness illuminates the character.

It is not possible to give here even a short review of this sacred book, generally known as "As-Sahifatus-Sajjadiyah" and "As-Sahifatul-Kamilah"; and also called "Psalm of 'Ale Muhammad" and "Injil of Ahlul Bait."

When this book was shown to Egyptian scholars, they were thunderstruck and awed by its beauty. They were amazed and stunned by the purity of thought and perfection of character to which this book irresistibly leads its reader.

The renowned scholar, late Al-Tantawi wrote:

"I have studied this book with utmost care. I have gone through the Du'as (invocations) and Munajats (supplications) with a searching eye. I was stunned by the lofty meanings and deep sense contained therein. I was deeply impressed by the value and magnificence of these invocations. I wonder how the Muslims all along been ignorant of such valuable treasure. They have been in deep slumber all these centuries. They could not even feel that Allah had supplied them with such a precious store of knowledge.

"The invocations in this book have two distinct approaches: the one seeks for the knowledge and guidance to keep away from sins and evil things, while the other persuades and exhorts one to enable one's 'self' by performance of virtuous deeds. We may say that these Invocations, full of knowledge and guidance, are a wonderful treasure of secrets, and contain hints regarding self-reproachment, admission of shortcomings, with tears and self-purification, warding off vicissitudes and difficulties, safe-guarding oneself from the tyrannies of the enemy, recovery from various diseases and so on. All such Du'as are found mostly in the first part of the book, while the later part consists of the loftiness and grandeur of Allah, His creation and other wonders of His power and might.

"Is it not wonderful? Does not it show that these holy personages are unveiling many secrets of learning and unravelling many mysteries of knowledge for Muslims, who happen to be completely ignorant of it. It is a fact that the affairs of human beings are divided into two parts: The one is to keep away from evil, the other to acquire good traits together with the knowledge of Divine existence, which is essential for self-purification and spiritual perfection."

Then he goes on expounding these points with help of many invocations. In another article, he compares an invocation of Imam Zayn al-'Abidin with

the prayer of the Prophet Nuh (Noah). Just to give an example of the high religious and ethical standard taught by our Holy Imam, I am quoting here extracts from a Du'a, known as Makerim-ul-Akhlaq (Noble Character). This Du'a is enough to lead the reciter on the right path, making him a perfect Muslim and a virtuous believer.

O Lord, Thou art my shelter if I grow sad, and Thou art my resource if I am in need and unto Thee I cry for help, when deeply afflicted, and with Thee is recompense for what is lost, and reformation for what is corrupted, and alteration for what Thou disapprovest:

Therefore, favour me with security before calamity, and bounty before begging (for it) and right direction before error and spare me from bearing me peace on the day of resurrection and favour me with hand some guidance.

O Lord, bless Muhammad and his Al (family) and ward off (evil) from me with Thy grace, and nourish me with Thy blessing, and reform me with Thy graciousness and cure me with Thy goodness and hide me in the shelter of Thy mercy and clothe me with Thy approbation, and help me, when matters grow difficult about me, (to choose) the most righteous of them, and when actions become dubious, (to select) the purest of them, and when the creeds conflict, (to adopt) the most praiseworthy of them.

O Lord, bless Muhammad and his Al (family) and crown me with sufficiency and adorn me with the grace of Thy love and grant me true guidance and do not try me with prosperity and confer on me the beauty of comfort and do not make my life a succession of trials, and do not reject my prayer with repulsion; for, I do not recognise any as Thy rival, and I do not call upon any as Thy equal.

O Lord, bless Muhammad and his Al (family) and restrain me from extravagance and preserve my subsistence from waste and increase my possessions by giving blessing therein and let me walk along the path of benevolence; in whatever I spend my (wealth). In this way Imam Zayn al-'Abidin spent his life providing guidance not only for the Muslims of his time, but also for the generations to come. When he left this world, he had more than accomplished all that he was entrusted with by Allah.

Imam Hasan 'The Myth of his Divorces'

S. Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, *Al-Serat*, Vol 4 (1978), No 3

Imam Hasan has been the victim of a most malicious propaganda for the last 1,250 years. He is portrayed as "fond of ease and quiet" by his admirers (Ameer Ali in "Spirit of Islam") and "the great divorcer" by his detractors (Willi Frischaurer in "The Aga Khans").

Before looking at individual reports, it is important to find out when this allegation was put forward, by whom and why. After a thorough study of these reports, I have found that the first man known to accuse Imam Hasan of "marrying and divorcing" was the 2nd Abbasid Khalifa, Mansur, who because of his dynastic policies was bent upon belittling Amir al-Mu'minin `Ali and his descendants.

It will help the readers to know how Abbasids came to power.

As Ameer `Ali writes in "Spirit of Islam" (p.302), "the tragical fate of Husain and his children sent a thrill of horror through Islam; and the revulsion of feeling which it caused proved eventually the salvation of Faith ... It made the bulk of Moslems think of what the Master had done, and of the injuries which the children of his enemies were inflicting on Islam."

By the beginning of the 2nd century of Hijra, "Persia, Irak and Hijaz, which had suffered most from the atrocities of the Bani-Omeyya, were honeycombed by secret organisations for the over-throw of the hated family. The Bani-Abbas were the most active in the movement to subvert the Omeyyad rule, at first, perhaps, from a sincere desire to restore to the Fatimids their just rights, but afterwards in their own interests." (Ibid, p.307.)

When Bani Hashim were planning to overthrow the Umayyad dynasty, they first secretly called a meeting of all members of the clan. They decided that, if they succeeded, they would make Muhammad, Nafs al-Zikiyya (Pure Soul) Khalifa. Muhammad was son of Abdallah son of Hasan Muthanna son of Imam Hasan. Among those who made the bid'a were Abu'l-Abbas (Saffah) and Mansur.

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq remained aloof from all these activities and told Abdallah (father of Nafs al-Zakiyya) that his son would not succeed; that Mansur would sit on the throne instead. Abdullah did not like this frankness and accused Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq of envy! Anyhow the slogan of Rida aal-Muhammad (to please the Descendants of the Prophet) proved a success and people gathered behind the agents of Bani Hashim, thinking that they wanted to remove Bani Umayya and install a descendant of the Prophet as Khalifa. Bani Umayya were overthrown in 132 A.H.

But when the time came to install a Khalifa from Aal-Muhammad, the Abbasids forgot all their pledges and their bay'a to Muhammad Nafs al-Zakiyya. They put Abu'l-Abbas Saffah on the throne.

Abu'l-Abbas died after four years, and his brother Mansur came to power. Muhammad Nafs al-Zakiyya did not forget that Mansur was under obligation to accept him as Khalifa; neither could Mansur forget it. The solution, according to Muhammad Nafs al-Zakiyya, was to rise against Mansur. The solution, according to Mansur, was to annihilate all the descendants of Imam Hasan.

"The same fierce jealousy with which the Bani-Omeyya had pursued or persecuted the Bani-Fatima, characterised the conduct of Bani-Abbas towards the descendants of Muhammad. They had no claim to the Caliphate themselves; they made the affection of the people for the children of Fatima the means for their own elevation, and when they had attained the desired end they rewarded the Fatimids with bitter persecution." (Ibid, p.304.)

Mansur came to Medina in 144 A.H. and in one sweeping operation arrested all the family of Imam Hasan and took them to Baghdad. It is not the place to enumerate the torture - physical and mental - meted out to the descendants of Imam Hasan.

Now Mansur wanted to absolve himself from the legal, and moral obligations of that oath of allegiance. It was not only the question of his own conscience; he had to assure the public also that he was the constitutional and rightful Khalifa.

For this purpose, he gave a public address after that mass arrest, in which he shamelessly said:

"By God, we left the descendants of Abu Talib and the Khilafat; we did not interfere at all. `Ali ibn Abi Talib became Khalifa. After him Hasan ibn `Ali became Khalifa. By God, he did not deserve it. He was offered money, which he accepted; Mu'awiya sent him a message that he would make him his successor. So, Hasan abdicated the Khilafat and left the government and power. He left everything to Mu'awiya, and turned his attention, to women, marrying one woman today, divorcing another one tomorrow. He remained like this till he died in his bed."

(Al-Mas'udi; in Muruj al-Dhahab, Vol.3, p.226)

The main theme of this address was that Muhammad Nafs al-Zakiyya had no claim of Khilafat because his great-grand-father, Imam Hasan, has relinquished this power.

Accordingly, he wrote a letter to Muhammad who was still at large and was gathering an army to fight against Mansur: "The Khilafat of your ancestor (Ali) reached to Hasan; he sold it to Mu'awiya in consideration of money and cloth. Now, if you had any right in the Khilafat, you had already sold it and received its price."

But Mansur knew that this line of argument solved only the immediate problem of the bay'a of Muhammad Nafs al-Zakiyya. It could not prevent one of the descendants of Imam Husain from claim to the Khilafat for himself. Therefore, he left no stone unturned to prove that the Fatimids were not entitled to the inheritance of the Holy Prophet at all; and that Bani' Abbas were the rightful heirs of the Holy Prophet. In Arabia, prior to Islam, inheritance "was governed by the rule of agnacy." It means that only those persons who were connected with the deceased 'through males' were recognised as entitled to take a share in his inheritance (they are called 'agnatic relatives'), and neither women nor persons connected to the deceased through them had any right of succession, (they are called 'uterine relatives').

"Thus it was that whilst adopted sons and even slaves had rights, the children of daughters and sisters had no place in the customary rules which regulated succession."

(Ameer `Ali in 'Mohammedan Law', Vol.2, p.75) Islam put an end to such affront to human nature, and in the Qur'an there are specific provisions for the succession of daughters, mothers and sisters.

But Mansur, in rank defiance of the Qur'an, revived the old custom of agnacy. Ameer `Ali writes: "When the Abbasids succeeded in overthrowing the Omeyyads, they found it necessary to legitimatise their title to the Caliphate, for the eyes of the Moslem world were still turned to the descendants of the Prophet as the rightful heirs to his temporal and spiritual heritage and in effecting this they found their chief support in the doctrine of agnacy. They claimed that as descendants of the Prophet's uncle, Abbas, they were his 'agnates' and as such had a better title than the descendants of his daughter Fatima. And this was the keystone of the fabric built up by the ablest monarch of the House of Abbas, Mansur, the real founder of the Sunni Church."

(Ibid, p.76)

And as a result, the Sunni Law still retains largely the customary rule of pre-Islamic Arabs. Ameer `Ali says: "The rule of agnacy has thus remained, chiefly from dynastic reasons, a part of Sunni system. In early times it was strongly enforced as under the old Romans. If a person died without leaving any 'agnatic' relations but a daughter's or sister's child, his property did not go to the latter but escheated to the Caliph (i.e. was taken over by the Caliph). In 896 A.D. the Caliph Mutazid Billah abolished this cruel rule, and laid down that in the absence of sharers and agnates (Asabah) the "uterine relations" should succeed. And this has remained the law ever since."

(Ibid)

But even after this half-hearted amendment, the uterine relations are placed in the last category, and it is only in the absence of sharers, agnates and (even) the emancipated that they receive any share in the inheritance.

(Ibid, p.68)

Thus this "ablest" monarch of the House of 'Abbas contrived to silence Muhammad Nafs al-Zakiyya by alleging that Imam Hasan had sold his right of Khilafat; and then by an ingenious reversion to pre-Islamic custom, disinherited all descendants of Fatima for ever! But, as Ameer `Ali has pointed out, descendants of Fatima were also descendants of `Ali who, as the son of Abu Talib, was 'agnate relative' of the Holy Prophet (connected to him by male relation)!"

This is not the place to explain why Imam Hasan entered into treaty with Mu'awiya; nor do I want to comment upon the claim made by Muhammad Nafs al-Zakiyya that he was entitled to Khilafat "because he was a descendant of Fatima." The Imamate is based not on inheritance, but on "Appointment by Allah" through the Holy Prophet or the preceding Imam. Muhammad Nafs al-Zakiyya based his claim on falsity, and Mansur tried to answer him with a bigger falsity. But in this conflict, the real sufferer proved to be Imam Hasan whose sacred name was made the object of the false propaganda that he married a woman today and divorced another tomorrow.

Bani Umayya had established a full-fledged department to fabricate "ahadith" to smear the names of Ahl al-bayt. But they were not as successful in their endeavours as Mansur was.

His rule of inheritance by agnates is still followed by the Sunni schools of Law; and his propaganda against Imam Hasan has even found its way into some Shi'a books.

Let us now look at these reports:

Some have reported 70 wives. Others have increased the number to 90. Still others have said 250 wives! The highest number is 300! The first report of 70 wives is given by Abu'l-Hasan `Ali ibn Abdullah Al-Basri Al-Mada'ini, who died in 225 A.H. This man was a partisan of Bani Umayya - he was a freed slave of Sumra ibn Habib, an Umayyad.

Ubn Adi has said of him: He is not strong in Hadith. (Mizan al-I'tidal, Vol.2, p.232, Lisan al-Mizan, Vol.4, p.253) This Madaini does not say from where he got this number of 70.

The second report of 90 wives appears in Nur al-Absar of Shablanji who died in 1298 AH. Reports of 250 and 300 wives are found in Quwwat al-Qulub (Vol. 2, p.246) of Abu Talib Makki who died in 380 A.H. He writes: "Hasan ibn `Ali married 250 wives; and it is said that 300 wives. `Ali was very much annoyed and grieved by it, because when Hasan divorced a woman, `Ali felt embarrassment before her family. `Ali used to say that 'Hasan is habitual divorcer; you people should not give your daughters to him.'" Then a man from the tribe of Hamdan said:

'O amir al-Mu'minin, by God, we will give him our daughters; and he may retain whomsoever he wishes and may divorce whomsoever he dislikes.' Hearing it, `Ali was very much pleased and recited the following poem:

"If I would be in-charge of any gate of Paradise I would tell the tribe of Hamdan, 'Enter into Paradise with peace.'" "Imam Hasan had likeness of the Prophet in facial features as well as in manners and character. The Holy Prophet told him, 'O Hasan, you are like me in features and character and manners.' Also he said, 'Hasan is from me and Husain is from `Ali.'" "Hasan, often married 4 wives in one sitting and then divorced 4 wives in one sitting."

Now this man Abu Talib had become mad at the time of writing this book Quwwat al-Qulub. He went to Baghdad and people came to see him. When they heard his senseless talk, all went away, and avoided him. One of his savings of that time is that "None is more harmful for the people than their Creator." The scholars have frankly said that he has written many things in that book which have no foundation at all. These were the original reporters. All those who came after them have blindly copied from their books.

The fact is that it was impossible for Imam Hasan to marry so many wives even if he wanted to. All the narrations imply that he started this alleged pursuit of pleasure during the Khilafat of his father in Kufa. `Ali came to Kufa in 37 Hijra. Imam Hasan had at least three wives in Kufa.

1. Khawal Fazariya, who was the mother of Hasan Muthanna (the grandfather of Muhammad Nafs al-Zakiyya). She survived Imam Hasan. This marriage had taken place in Medina.

2. Umm Ishaq bint Talha. She was the mother of Husain Athram, Talha and Fatima. This marriage also had taken place in Medina. She survived Imam Hasan; and was later married to Imam Husain.

3. Ju'da bint Ash-ath. This marriage took place in Kufa and she also survived Imam Hasan. (She poisoned him on instigation of Mu'aviya.) Islam allows a man to marry up to four women at any given time. As Imam Hasan already had three wives, who were with him up to the last day of his life, he could marry only one more woman at any time.

Bearing in mind this limitation, one can only regard the statement of Quwwat al-Qulub with amusement: "Often he (Imam Hasan) married 4 wives in one sitting and then divorced them in one sitting." How could he marry 4 wives in one sitting when he already had 3 wives? Now suppose that he married a fourth wife, and then divorced her. As long as that divorced wife was in 'idda (period of probation, normally 3 months) she was counted legally his wife, and Imam Hasan could not marry another wife before expiry of her 'idda.

Let us, now, suppose that he married a woman. As divorce cannot be given in a month in which co-habitation has taken place, the earliest that that wife could be divorced was in next month; her 'idda continued for 3 months. Thus, four months passed before Imam Hasan could be free to marry another wife. One wife in four months gives us a maximum of 3 wives in a year. Supposing that Imam Hasan had no other work except marrying and divorcing, as Mansur said, and if we count from 37 A.H. up to his martyrdom at the beginning of 51 A.H. to get a period of 14 years, this will give us a maximum number of 42 possible marriages.

And the minimum alleged by these scholars is 70 wives!

After this clarification, there is no need for further comment upon these reports. Yet it is worthwhile to examine these reports a little more in order to show how absolutely unreliable they are.

Abu Talib Makki says: "Ali used to say that Hasan is a habitual divorcer; do not give him your daughters." The question is, why `Ali told people in public not to give Hasan their daughters? Had he, first, told Hasan not to divorce so much? If so, did Hasan disobey him? Nobody says that Hasan was, God forbid, a disobedient son. Even Abu Talib Makki admits that Hasan was like the Holy Prophet in facial features and in manners and character. Can a disobedient son be universally accepted as having the character and manner of the Holy Prophet?

Or did `Ali forbid people in public without first trying to restrain Hasan from this alleged behaviour?

Can `Ali be expected to do such a childish thing, degrading his heir-apparent in public, without first advising him accordingly? As both alternatives lead to absurdity, the only conclusion remains that this report was forged by someone who wanted to discredit both `Ali and Hasan by one fabrication.

The most amusing is the report of aforementioned Abu'l-Hasan al-Mada'ini who says: "When Hasan died, all his former wives came out in a group in his funeral procession, with open heads and bare feet, and they were shouting "We are the wives of Hasan!" Who has ever heard of such a procession in Islamic society? What was the sense in shouting 'we are the wives of Hasan'? And how did their husbands of that time allow them to form that comic procession?

It will be interesting to see the gradual development of this propaganda.

First comes Mansur, in 144 A.H., declaring that Imam Hasan was 'marrying one woman today, divorcing another tomorrow.'

Then comes al-Mada'ini (died 225 A.H.) who gives a specific number of 70 and produces the procession of those divorced wives at the funeral.

Then al-Kafi (compiled in 326 A.H.) gives two 'Ahadith' that Imam Hasan divorced very much.

Then comes Abu Talib Makki (380 A.H.) who thought that 70 was not consistent with 'marrying a woman one day and divorcing another tomorrow'; so he increased the number to 250; still his mathematics was not satisfied, so he quoted an unknown source and finally said '300'.

Lastly comes the French historian, H. Lammens, who writes in 'Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam':

"He (Imam Hasan) spent the best part of his youth in making and unmaking marriages; about a hundred are enumerated. (Remember that Mansur had alleged this to happen after the treaty with Mu'awiya in the last ten years of Imam Hasan's life But this 'historian' antedates it to his youth! And so far as enumeration is concerned, only 14 are enumerated, not 100 as he alleges.) These easy morals earned him the title mitlak 'the divorcer' and involved 'Ali in severe enmities." (Now, on what authority this 'historian' has made this fantastic assertion? No evidence can be produced to support this allegation.)

In another place he writes: that Imam Hasan proved that he was very extravagant. He built separate houses for all those wives; each had her retinue of servants and attendants. Even during the Khilafat of 'Ali when there was hardship and strict financial control, he used to spend money in the same way.

Did Rev. H. Lammens produce even a fabricated Hadith or report to show that Imam Hasan had built separate houses for all those (100!) wives with all the paraphernalia which he so willingly enumerates? The answer is 'NO'. It is just the product of his fertile imagination. It is these people who take upon themselves the task of producing 'authentic' history of Islam for the receptive minds of Westerners!

The Scholarly Jihad of the Imams 95 - 148 A.H

Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi Vol IX No. 1 and 2

The period under discussion (95-148 A.H /712-765 A.D.) began and ended in the times of the Vth and VIth Imams. The persecutions of the Shi'is continued unabated from Mu'awiya's time to almost the very last days of the Umayyads, although this dynasty in its latter days was considerably weakened by internal strife. Zayd, the grandson of Husayn, rose up to establish the rule of religion and justice in 122/740, but he was felled by an arrow in his forehead, and his army of 15,000 fled.

His body was exhumed by order of the Umayyad caliph, Hisham, was mutilated, beheaded and crucified in Kufa and left there for years on the cross. Then Hisham's successor, al-Walid, ordered the body to be burned, and the ashes scattered on the banks of the Euphrates. Zayd's son, Yahya, rose up in Khorasan; coincidentally he also was killed by an arrow which pierced his brain. He was beheaded; the head was sent to al-Walid and the body crucified. This was in 125/743. The body remained on the cross till Abu Muslim al-Khurasani rose in Khorasan and the call rose up against the Umayyads "to please the progeny of Muhammad", and Umayyad rule ended.

But the persecution in itself was a major cause of the spread of the persecuted Shi'a faith. Muhammad Jawad al-Mughniya writes: "The Shi'is offered arguments from the Qur'an and the traditions of the Prophet and advanced intellectual reasons to the effect that the love of the Prophet's family-members was obligatory, and that it was essential to follow them and to hold fast to their rope; that it was obligatory to keep aloof from their enemies. They wrote many books about their superiority and virtues. But none of these books or arguments proved as effective in strengthening and spreading the Shi'a faith as did the policy of Mu'awiya and his Umayyad successors.

Surely the persecution carried out by the Umayyads was more effective than a thousand and one books or than a thousand and one proofs in proving the status of 'Ali and confirming his divine right to the Caliphate. ^[1] " Dr. Taha Husain says: "So far as propagating beliefs and attracting people to follow them is concerned, nothing is more effective than persecution. It creates sympathy for those who undergo suffering, and are engulfed by tragedies, and who are subjected to pressure by the ruler. To the same degree it creates revulsion against this ruler who resorts to injustice, carries his tyrannies to the furthest limit and overburdens the population with hardships.

For this reason, the Shi' a cause became great during the last decade of Mu'awiya's reign, and their call spread -and what a spread it was-in the eastern Islamic countries and southern Arabia. And by the time Mu'awiya had died, many people, and especially the general public in Iraq, believed that hate of Umayyads and love of the Ahl al Bayt was their religion.' ^[2] Wellhausen writes: "All the people of Iraq during Mu'awiya's reign, and especially the Kufites were Shi'i and this was not only among individuals but among whole tribes and chiefs of the tribes." ^[3]

Arabia, Iraq and Khorasan, together with the Yemen and Bahrain were in turmoil; hatred of the Umayyads became an established factor of the body politic, and to the same degree people gravitated towards the descendants of 'Ali. Several factors led to this result:

1. They were the Ahl al-Bayt; Allah had chosen that house for His Prophethood; it was appropriate that the people should choose them for their guidance.

2. They were the first to rise against the Umayyads and their tyrannies; they were the first to speak for the oppressed masses and to sacrifice their lives for this cause.

3. Not only the Ahl al-Bayt, but even their Shi'is, right from the beginning of Umayyad rule, worked openly and secretly against those tyrants; and they faced all the consequences: massacres, banishments, imprisonments, crucifixions, and all types of torture. ^[4]

Ibn al-Athir confirms that when the 'Abbasids joined this campaign towards the end, "they were using the slogan that they wanted to avenge the murders of Husayn, Zayd and Yahya." ^[5]

Wellhausen writes: "The 'Abbasids tried their utmost to keep secret from the people their intention that they wanted to replace the descendants of Fatima; instead, they pretended that they were doing whatever they were doing for the sake of the Fatimids. They rose in Khorasan and other places claiming that they wanted to avenge the martyrs of the children of Fatima." ^[6]

"The 'Abbasids rose in the name of the 'Alawites, and on the shoulders of their Shi'is. (After the success) they changed their attitude towards them, and their oppression of the Shi'is increased in magnitude and intensity." ^[7]

Muhammad Ahmad al-Buraq says: "The call really was for the 'Alawites, because the Khurasanis were attached to the descendants of 'Ali, not to the descendants of Abbas. That is why as Saffah and his successors always kept their eyes open and tried to prevent Shi'ism from spreading further in Khorasan They encouraged the poets to praise them (i.e., the 'Abbasids) and gave them rewards, and those poets used to cast aspersions against the descendants of 'Ali." ^[8]

"This led the 'Abbasid 'caliphs' to renounce the faith of Ahl al-Bayt (which they had followed up to the beginning of their period of rule) and accept Sunnism, because they were afraid that if Shi'ism spread, the rule would go to the 'Alawites. Thus the 'Abbasids faithfully followed the Umayyads in policy, belief and practice." ^[9]

Be that as it may, the Umayyads in their last days and the 'Abbasids in their first days could not give much attention to the Shi' is. Thus the fifth Imam started teaching his faith in Madina openly. People came to him from far and wide to learn from him explanations of the Qur'an, the traditions, rules of the sharia, theology, etc. It was not a formal madrasa (university, school); yet, for want of a better word, we shall call it the madrasa of the Imam. The fifth Imam Muhammad Al-Baqir (95-114/712-732) died before the madrasa had reached its point of perfection, but his son, the sixth Imam, Ja'far As-Sadiq developed it to such an extent that the number of his disciples exceeded four thousand. This continued up to 132/750 when the

'Abbasids came to power Although as-Saffah, the first 'Abbasid caliph, ruled for only four years, and that time was mostly taken up in consolidating his power, he found time to call the Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq to his capital, Hira, where he was held incommunicado. One man who wanted to see him had to disguise himself as a hawker of cucumber to reach the Imam.' ^[10] But later he came back to Madina.

Then came al-Mansur (13S158/754-775) whose only aim in life, it seems, was to kill every descendant of 'Ali. The Shi'is in general, and the 'Alawites in particular, were persecuted more brutally than they were during the reign of the Umayyads. He put even more hindrance in the way of the Imam. "He forbade the people to go to the Imam, and forbade the Imam to sit (outside) to receive the people, and put the utmost pressure on him. So much so that if a problem appeared in a Shi'is life concerning, for example, marriage, divorce or some other matter, and he had no knowledge of the rule of the sharia about it, he could not reach the Imam, and, as a result, the man and the wife had to separate. " ^[11]

After a long period, al-Mansur allowed the Imam to benefit the people with his divine knowledge, ^[12] but there were always spies to report his words and answers. Therefore, the Imam had to be cautious in his discourses. In short, the period of freedom had gone, so far as the Shi'is were concerned.

Anyhow, this period coincided with the movement of free thinking which had started in the Muslim world. Arabs came in contact with the older civilizations of Iran, Syria and Egypt, and became acquainted with Zoroastrian and Manichean beliefs and Greek philosophy. Some books had already been translated from Greek and other languages. Many scholars adopted strange beliefs and foreign ideas and spread them among the common people. One finds a bewildering plethora of new sects mushrooming.

Atheism was openly advocated even in the great mosque of the Ka'ba; the Murji'ites, by saying that faith is not affected by deeds, supported the tyrannies of the rulers; the "exaggerators" (ghulat) claimed divinity for this or that human being (even the Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq was believed to be God by Abul Khattab). The Kharijites declared that all Muslims who were opposed to them were infidels; The sufis adopted some ideas from Christian monks and Hindu ascetics, and led people away from Islamic monotheism; the traditionalists flooded the Muslim world with forged traditions. In short, there was a deluge of anti- Islamic ideals and ideas which inundated true Islam. Amidst this all, these two Imams guided to the truth.

These Imams and their faithful disciples were the first to see this danger, and they were ready to fight it with their logical evidence. They defended the true faith, repulsed its enemies, and raised the standards of the shari'a. They launched an unremitting jihad (academic, of course) against the ghulat and showed them in their true colours. They argued with the Muttazilites, the Murji'ites, and the Kharijites in public and proved the weakness of their standpoints. They exposed the sufis and refuted their arguments. They corrected what was wrong in the theological ideas of many Muslim scholars, and showed them where they had gone wrong in jurisprudence.' ^[13]

As we have explained above, the major part of this work was done by the Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq. As a result of his untiring defence of Islam, the Muslim world came to see in him the only hope for the salvation of Islam. Eyes turned towards him, thinkers accepted the Imam as their "great-teacher"; people used to come into his presence with pen and paper ready, and his words were recorded on the spot. Thousands of such notebooks were filled, and the words of the Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq attained the same prestige as those of the Messenger of God. Not only the Shi'is, Sunnis, Mu'tazilites and atheists, but also the Hindus and Christians came to him and benefited from his discourses. The Sunni Imam, Malik b. Anas, the founder of the Maliki school of law, said: "No eye ever saw, no ear ever heard, and no heart ever imagined anyone superior to Ja'far b. Muhammad in virtue, knowledge, worship and piety."^[14]

Ibn Shahr ashub writes: "So much knowledge has been narrated from as-Sadiq that has never been narrated from anyone else; and the scholars of traditions have collected the names of his trustworthy narrators of various beliefs and views, and they were four thousand men." Abu Na'im writes in Hilyatu l-Awliya: "Malik b. Anas, Shutba b. Hajjaj, Sufyan at-Thawri, Ibn Jarih, 'Abdullah b. 'Amr, Rawh, b. Qasim, Sufyan b. 'Uyayna, Sulayman b. Bilal, Isma'il b. Ja'far, Hakim b. Isma'il, 'Abdu l-'Aziz b. Mukhtar, Wuhayb b. Khalid, Ibrahim b. Tahman, among others ..., narrated from Ja'far as-Sadiq, peace be upon him."^[15] Quoting from others, Ibn Shahr 'ashub has added the names of the Sunni Imams Malik, ash-Shat and Ahmad b. Hanbal, and al-Hasan b. as-Salih, Abu Ayyub as-Sajistani and 'Umar b. Dinar.^[16]

Hasan b. Ziyad says that Imam Abu Hanifa (founder of the Hanafi school of Sunni law) was asked about the most learned man he had seen. He replied: "Ja'far b. Muhammad."^[17]

Nuh b. Darraj asked Ibn Abi Layla: "Would you leave (i.e. change) an opinion you have expressed or a judgment you have delivered for any other person's words?" He said: "No. Except one man." Nuh asked: "And who is he?" He said: "Ja'far b. Muhammad."^[18]

The above is only a partial list of Sunni scholars and Imams who came to the Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq and benefited from his teachings. Add to it the names of the sufis, atheists, Hindus and Kharijites who flocked to his madrasa, and one can appreciate what a treasure of knowledge was given to people by the Imam.

When others benefitted so much, how much more must have been gathered by the Shi'is. One of his well-known disciples, Aban b. Taghlib, narrated from him thirty thousand traditions. Hasan b. Ali al-Washsha' said: "I found in the mosque of Kufa nine hundred shaykhs, every one of them saying 'Ja'far b. Muhammad told me ...' "^[19]

In al-Munjid we find: "His (Ja'far as-Sadiq's) madrasa was the continuation of his father's (al-Baqir's) madrasa, and was extremely successful in spreading Islamic culture; the number of its students in Madina was at least 4,000, and they came from all Muslim countries. There was a large branch-school in Kufa. One of the greatest achievements of as-Sadiq was his call to write and edit; before that little writing was done. The

number of the books written by his students was at least four hundred by four hundred writers." [20]

The Shaykh Muhammad Husayn al-Muzaffar writes: "The best days for the Shi'is were the transition period, the last years of the Umayyads and the early years of the 'Abbasids ... The Shi'is took advantage of this breathing space to drink from the stream of the knowledge of the Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq; they traveled to him to receive from him the commands of religion and its reality. His disciples narrated from him in every branch of knowledge, as is seen in the Shi'is books. His disciples were not only from the Shi'a community, but all the sects narrated from him, as is clearly mentioned in the books of, hadith and rijal.

Ibn ' Uqdah, the Shaykh at-Tusi and the Muhaqqiq enumerated his narrators, and the total came to four thousand." [21]

This open teaching and unrestricted preaching increased the number of the Shi'is in every region throughout the Muslim world. It is not possible to give a list of well-known Shi's scholars and missionaries of that time, as it would be too lengthy. The teachings and explanations of the Imams removed the veils of ambiguity from the Shi'i faith and showed its teachings in clear terms. Theology, explanation of the Qur'an, morality, jurisprudence, in short every branch of religious knowledge, was explained in a clear perspective.

The faith had not changed an iota, nor the Qur'anic explanations, nor the traditions; but the discussions and arguments with the newly-appeared sects clarified many fine points and gave Shi'i theology its distinct shape. Also, Shi'i fiqh (law) was so developed at this time that people started calling it the Ja'fari school of law. The Shaykh Mustafa 'Abdur' Razzaq of al-Azhar University says: "The eagerness to codify law came to the Shi'is earlier than to other Muslims." [22] Some of the factors which helped in this development were:

1. The intellectual advancement of the Muslims;
2. The fortuitousness of the transitional period between the Umayyads and the 'Abbasids;
3. The gatherings of thousands of eager disciples.

Such favourable factors never came together before or after this period, and that is why other Imams could not do as much, although all of them possessed the same divine knowledge.

That knowledge was not confined to religious subjects only, and we shall mention in the next part of this article two examples of the contributions of this madrasa to other branches of knowledge.

Part II

In part I we examined the prominence of the school of the Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq in the religious sciences, and discussed the reasons for its pre-eminence. Now we shall see how it also contributed to other branches of knowledge, those of the natural sciences.

(a) CHEMISTRY. Jabir b. Hayyan (the Geber of the Latins), who has been called one of the 'fathers of chemistry' and 'the most famous Arabic alchemist' [23], was one of the students of the Imam Ja'far, as-Sadiq. The quantity of Jabir's output is quite staggering: besides his writings in

chemistry, he wrote 1,300 treatises on mechanics, 500 on medicine, and 500 against Greek philosophy, not to mention other subjects. The number of his books which have been printed in Latin, French and German since the 17th century comes to thirty, if we count his '500 booklets' as one book. There are 36 known manuscripts of his works in the British Museum, the Biblioteque Nationale in Paris and in other libraries in Germany, Egypt, Iran and Turkey. The extent to which he is indebted to the Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq in his research and teachings may be judged from the fact that in many of his books we find: 'My master and mawla, Ja'far, peace be upon him, told me that ...', and in his book, 'al Manfa'a' he explicitly says: 'I acquired this knowledge from Ja'far b. Muhammad, the leader of the people in his time.'

[24]

George Sarton, referring to Jabir's untranslated work, writes: 'We find in them remarkably sound views on methods of chemical research; a theory on the geologic formation of metals; the so-called sulphur-mercury theory of metals ...; preparation of various substances (e.g., basic lead carbonate; arsenic; and antimony from their sulphides). Jabir deals also with various applications, e.g., refinement of metals, preparation of steel, dyeing of cloth and leather, varnishes to waterproof cloth and protect iron, use of manganese dioxide in glass making, use of iron pyrites for writing in gold, distillation of vinegar to concentrate acetic acid. He observed the imponderability of magnetic force.' [25] He also discovered that each metal and material had a basic weight; he called this 'the knowledge of weights, 'ilm al-mawazin.' [26] He was, in the words of Sarton: 'a very great personality, one of the greatest in mediaeval science.' [27]

Several of his writings have been translated by scholars such as M. Berthelot, Octave Hodas, E. J. Holmyard, Ernst Darmstaedter and Max Mayerhoff. Berthelot wrote in his 'History of Chemistry': 'The name Jabir holds the same place in the history of chemistry which the name of Aristotle holds in the history of logic.' [28] Holmyard wrote: 'Jabir was the student and friend of Ja'far as-Sadiq; and he found in his incomparable Imam a supporter and helper, the trustworthy guide and helmsman whose direction is always needed. And Jabir wanted to free chemistry, through the direction of his teacher, from the myths of the ancients which had held it in shackles since Alexandria; and he succeeded to a great extent in this aim.' [29]

(b) ANATOMY. A Hindu physician attached to the court of al-Mansur once asked the Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq if he wanted to learn something in this field from him. The Imam said: 'No. What I have is better than what you have.' Then began a very interesting discourse, in which the Imam asked the physician questions like these: Why is the head covered with hair? Why are there lines and wrinkles on the forehead? Why are the eyes shaped like almonds? Why has the nose been placed between the eyes? Why are the hair and the nails without life (sensation)? These questions moved from the head downwards, till he ended up by asking: Why do the knees fold backwards, and why is the foot hollow on one side? To all these questions, the physician had only one reply: 'I do not know.' The Imam said:

'But I do know.' Then he explained all the questions, showing the wisdom and power of the Creator. The hair is created over the head so that

oil may reach inside, and heat may go out through it, and so that it may protect the head from heat and cold. There are lines and wrinkles on the forehead so that sweat from the head does not reach the eyes. giving the person a chance to wipe it away. The eyes are almond-shaped so as to make it easy to put medicine inside them and remove dirt from them. Had they been square or round, both would have been difficult. The nose is put between the eyes as it helps to divide the light equally towards both eyes. The hair and nails lack sensation to make it easier to cut and trim them. If there were life in them it would have hurt a person to cut them. The knees fold backwards because human beings walk forward, and the foot is hollow to make movement easier.' The physician became a convert to Islam. ^[30]

A booklet which was dictated by the Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq in four sessions to his disciple Mufaddal b. 'Umar was widely narrated, and has been widely studied and copied to the present day; al-Majlisi copied the whole book into the second volume of his 'Bihar al Anwar'. ^[31] In this book, the Imam explained the wonders of creation, showing at every stage how all of it is inter related and could not have come into being by chance. In the first session, he explained the creation of man, his organs of perception, the power of his mind, his gradual development. and all the functions of body and mind. In the second session.

he explained the animal world and its common features; then he divided animals into groups: carnivorous and herbivorous animals; birds and reptiles; and so forth, explaining every group's special characteristics. In the process of doing this he described the donkey. the dog, the elephant, the giraffe, the monkey, domestic mammals, reindeer, the fox, the dolphin, the pythom the ant, the spider, the chicken, the peacock the pheasant, the flamingo, the sparrow, the owl, the bat, the bee, the locust and fish. The third session was devoted to geography. geology. astronomy (not astrology) and other related subjects, such as minerals, trees and medicine. In the last session the Imam dealt with the most common objection made by atheists: If there is a Creator, then why is there so much suffering in the world? The Imam answered this with the same attention to detail as he had shown in the previous sessions, with systematic arguments.

This book is a treasure of knowledge, written to refute the ideas of atheists. Everywhere the Imam draws attention to the wisdom and power of the Creator. Two examples will be given here at random. 'Allah created eyesight to perceive colours; had there been colour but no eye to see it, there would have been no use for colour. And He created hearing to perceive sounds: had there been sounds but no ear to hear them, there would have been no reason to have them. The same is true for all kinds of perception. and the same is true in the opposite sense: had there been eyesight but no colour to see, eyesight would have been useless; and if there had been ears, but no sounds to hear, ears would also have been useless. Now, see how Allah has gauged everything to fit with everything else.

For every organ of perception he made something for it to perceive, and for every sensory phenomenon something to perceive it. Not only that. but He created the medium between the organs of perception and their objects, without which perception could not take place; for example, light and air: if

there were no light eyesight could not perceive colour; and if there were no air to carry sounds to the ear, it could not hear them. Can someone with a sound mind who observes all these interconnected phenomena fail to admit that they could not exist without the Will and Measuring of a Merciful, All-Knowing Creator?' [32]

At one point Mufaddal said: 'O My Master! Some people think that all this was made by nature ' The Imam dictated: 'Ask them about this nature. Is it a thing which has the knowledge and power for such work? Or is it without knowledge and power? If they say that it has knowledge and power, then why should they disbelieve in a Creator, because these [i.e., knowledge and power] are His attributes. And if they think that nature does it without knowledge and will, and yet there is so much wisdom and perfection in these works, they must admit that it could come only from a Wise Creator. [The fact is that] nature is only [a name for] the system in creation which operates as He has made it operate.' [33]

There is an interesting aside in the fourth day's session, where the Imam said: 'The name of the universe in Greek is qusmus (kosmos), and it means 'adornment'. This name was given to it by their philosophers and wise men. Could they have named it so except because of the order and system which they found there? They were not content to call it a system; they called it an 'adornment' to show that the order and system found therein has the highest degree of beauty and splendour.' [34]

Notes:

Notes

[1] Muhammad Jawad al Mughniya, ash Shia wal Hakimun, al Maktab al Ahliya, Beirut, 1st edition 1961, p. 75

[2] Taha Husain, Ali wa Banuh as quoted in ash Shia, p. 80

[3] J. Wellhausen, al Khawarij wa shia (trans into Arabic of his The Kharijites and the Shi'ites ed. 1985 p. 499) quoted by M. J. al Mughniya in his ash Shia wat Tashayyu, Maktaba al Madrasa wa Dar al Kitab al Libnani, Beirut, note 8 p. 68

[4] M. J. al Mughniya, as shia wat Tashayyu, pp. 134-5

[5] Ibn al Athir, al Kamil fi t Tarikh, Beirut, 1975, vol. 4 pp 330-2

[6] J. Wellhausen, Tarikh ad Dawlati l Arabiya (trans into Arabic of his History of the Arabs), p. 489, quoted by M. J. al Mughniya in his ash Shia wal Hakimun, p. 135

[7] M. J. al Mughniya, op cit pp 135-6

[8] Muhammad Ahmad al Buraq, Abu l Abbas as Saffah, as quoted in as Shia wal Hakimun, p. 134

[9] M. J. al Mughniya, op cit p. 139

[10] Muhammad Baqir al Majlisi, Bihar al Anwar, new edition, Tehran, 1385 A.H, vol. 47, p. 171 quoting Qutb al Din ar Rawandi, al Kharaij wa l Jaraih, p. 234

[11] Ibn Shahr ashub, Manaqib, vol. 4 al Matba al Alimiya, Qum, p. 238

[12] ibid, many similar reports are given in Fadl b. Hasan at Tabarsi, al Ihtijaj, and al Majlisi, op cit

[13] ibid

[14] Ibn Hajar al Asqalani, Tadhhib al Tadhhib, Hyderabad, 1325 A.H, vol. 2, p. 104

[15] Ibn Shahr ashub, Manaqab, vol. 4 p 247-8

[16] Ibn Shahr ashub, op cit, p. 248

[17] ibid, p. 254

[18] ibid, p. 249

- [19] Muhsin al Amin, Ayan ash Shia, vol. 4 Part II, Mathah al Imaf, Ebirut, ed. 1380/1920
- [20] Al Munjid fi l Alam, Beirut (21st ed.) 1973
- [21] Muhammad Husayn al Muzaffar, Tarikh ash Shia, Dar az Zahra, Beirut, 3rd edition 1402/1982 pp. 53, 55
- [22] M. Abdur Razzaq, Tahmid li Tarikh al Falsafat al Islamiy, Cairo, 1959, p. 202
- [23] G. Sarton. Introduction to the History of Science, vol. 1. Baltimore. 1927. p. 532.
- [24] 'Abdullah Nima. Falasifat ash Shi'a, Beirut, 1966. p. 196. This book is an excellent source for those who wish to examine the contribution of Shiah scholars to philosophy and science. The author discusses Jabirs life and contribution between pp. 184 and 231.
- [25] G. Sarton. op. cit., p. 532. For the Imam Ja'far as Sadiq. see, ibid.. p. 508.
- [26] Quoted by Abdullah Ni'ma. op. cit., pp. 61. 187.
- [27] G. Sarton. op. cit., p. 532.
- [28] Quoted by 'Abdullah Ni'ma. op. cit., p. 187.
- [29] Quoted by 'Abdullah Niima. ibid., pp. 193-4.
- [30] ash-Shaykh as-Saduq, Ilal ash shari'a, n.p., 1311. p. 44.
- [31] al Majlisi, Bihar al Anwar. new ed.. vol. 111, pp. 57-151.
- [32] ibid.,p.69.
- [33] ibid., p. 67. 34. ibid., p. 146.

The Interior Life in Islam

Seyyed Hossein Nasr Vol. III, Nos. 2 & 3

"O thou soul which are at peace, return unto thy Lord, with gladness that is thine in Him and His in thee. Enter thou among My slaves. Enter thou My Paradise." (Quran - LXXXIX; 27-30 (trans. by M. Lings.)

The function of religion is to bestow order upon human life and to establish an "outward" harmony upon whose basis man can return inwardly to his Origin by means of the journey toward the "interior" direction. This universal function is especially true of Islam, this last religion of humanity, which is at once a Divine injunction to establish order in human society and within the human soul and at the same time to make possible the interior life, to prepare the soul to return unto its Lord and enter the Paradise which is none other than the Divine Beatitude. God is at once the First (al-awwal) and the Last (al-akhir), the Outward (al-zahir) and the Inward (al-batin).

^[1] By function of His outwardness He creates a world of separation and otherness and through His inwardness He brings men back to their Origin. Religion is the means whereby this journey is made possible, and it recapitulates in its structure the creation itself which issues from God and returns unto Him. Religion consists of a dimension which is outward and another which, upon the basis of this outwardness, leads to the inward. These dimensions of the islamic revelation are called the Shariah (the Sacred Law), the Tariqah (the Path) and the Haqiqah (the Truth), ^[2] or from another point of view they correspond to islam, iman, and ihsan, or "surrender", "faith" and "virtue".^[3]

Although the whole of the Quranic revelation is called "islam", from the perspective in question here it can be said that not all those who follow the tradition on the level of islam are mu'mins, namely those who possess iman, nor do all those who are mu'mins possess ihsan, which is at once virtue and beauty and by function of which man is able to penetrate into the inner meaning of religion. The Islamic revelation is meant for all human beings destined to follow this tradition.

But not all men are meant to follow the interior path. It is enough for a man to have lived according to the Shariah and in surrender (islam) to the Divine Will to die in grace and to enter into Paradise. But there are those who yearn for the Divine here and now and whose love for God and propensity for the contemplation of the Divine Realities (al-haqaiq) compel them to seek the path of inwardness. The revelation also provides a path for such men, for men who through their iman and ihsan "return unto their Lord with gladness" while still walking upon the earth.

While the concrete embodiment of the Divine Will, which is the Shariah, is called the exoteric dimension in the sense of governing all of man's outward life as well as his body and psyche, the spiritual path, which leads beyond the usual understanding of the "soul" as a separated and forgetful substance in the state which Christians call the "fallen state", is called the esoteric dimension. In Sunni Islam, this dimension is almost completely identified with Sufism (tasawwuf) while in Shi'ism, in addition to Sufism, the esoteric and the exoteric are intermingled within the general structure of the religious doctrines and practices themselves.^[4] And even within

Sunnism, there is an intermediate region between the exoteric and the esoteric, a world of religious practice and doctrines which while not strictly speaking esoteric are like the reflection of the inner teachings of Sufism within the whole community and a foretaste of its riches.

In fact, many of the prayer manuals which occupy such a position in the Sunni world, such as the Dalail al- khayrat, were written by Sufi masters, while in the Shi'ite world, the prayers almost all of which, such as the al-Sahifah al-sajjadiyyah of the fourth Imam Zayn al- Abidin, were written by esoteric authors, partake of both an esoteric and an exoteric character.^[5] Occasionally, there has even been the penetration of one domain upon another, such as the sayings of many of the Imams which have appeared in Sufi writings and even of some Sufi writings which have penetrated into certain Shi'ite prayers identified with some of the Imams.^[6]

Prayers such as those of Khwajah 'Abdallah Ansari, the great saint of Herat contained in his Supplications (Munajat) are at once the deepest yearning of the heart for the Ineffable and the Infinite and common devotional prayers chanted by many of the devout in the community and thus belonging to the intermediate level alluded to above:

I live only to do Thy will,
My lips move only in praise of Thee
O Lord, whoever becometh aware of Thee
Casteth out all else other than Thee.
O Lord, give me a heart
That I may pour it out in Thanksgiving
Give me life
That I may spend it
In working for the salvation of the world.
O Lord, give me understanding
That I stray not from the path
Give me light
To avoid pitfalls.
O Lord, give me eyes
Which see nothing but Thy glory.
Give me a mind
That finds delight in Thy service.
Give me a soul
Drunk in the wine of Thy wisdom.^[7]

In the same way that the dimension of inwardness is inward in relation to the outward and the outward is necessary as the basis and point of departure for the journey toward the inward, so is the experience of the Divinity as imminent dependent upon the awareness of the Divinity as transcendent. No man has the right to approach the Imminent without surrendering himself to the Transcendent, and it is only in possessing faith in the Transcendent that man is able to experience the Imminent. Or from another point of view, it is only in accepting the Shari'ah that man is able to travel upon the Path (tariqah) and finally to reach the Truth (haqiqah) which lies at the heart of all things and yet is beyond all determination and limitation.

To interiorize life itself and to become aware of the inward dimension, man must have recourse to rites whose very nature it is to cast a sacred form upon the waves of the ocean of multiplicity in order to save man and bring him back to the shores of Unity. The major rites or pillars (arkan) of Islam, namely the daily prayers (salat), fasting (sawm), the pilgrimage (hajj), the religious tax (zakat) and holy war (jihad), are all means of sanctifying man's terrestrial life and enabling him to live and to die as a central being destined for beatitude. But these rites themselves are not limited to their outer forms. Rather they possess inward dimensions and levels of meaning which man can reach in function of the degree of his faith (iman) and the intensity and quality of his virtue or inner beauty (ihsan).

The daily prayers (salat in Arabic, namaz in Persian, Turkish and Urdu) are the most fundamental rites of Islam, preceded by the ablutions and the call to prayers (adhan), both of which contain the profoundest symbolic significance. The form of these prayers is derived directly from the sunnah of the Holy Prophet and the daily prayers are considered as the most important of religious deeds for as the Prophet has said, "The first of his deeds for which a man will be taken into account on the day of resurrection will be his prayer. If it is sound he will be saved and successful, but if it is unsound he will be unfortunate and miserable.

If any deficiency is found in his obligatory prayer the Lord who is blessed and exalted will issue instructions to consider whether His servant has said any voluntary prayers so that what is lacking in the obligatory prayer may be made up by it. Then the rest of his actions will be treated in the same fashion."^[8] The salat punctuates man's daily existence, determines its rhythm, provides a refuge in the storm of life and protects man from sin. Its performance is obligatory and its imprint upon Islamic society and the soul of the individual Muslim fundamental beyond description.

Yet, the meaning of the prayers are not to be understood solely through the study of their external form or their impact upon Islamic society, as fundamental as those may be. By virtue of the degree of man's ihsan, and also by virtue of the grace (barakah) contained within the sacred forms of the prayers, man is able to attain inwardness through the very external forms of the prayers. He is able to return, thanks to the words and movements which are themselves the echoes of the inner states of the Holy Prophet, back to the state of perfect servitude (ubudiyyah) and nearness to the Divine (qurb) which characterize the inner journey of the Holy Prophet as the Universal Man (al-insan al-kamil) to the Divine Presence on that nocturnal ascent (al-miraj), which is at once the inner reality of the prayers and the prototype^[9] of spiritual realization in Islam.^[10]

Not only do the canonical prayers possess an interior dimension, but they also serve as the basis for other forms of prayer which become ever more inward as man progresses upon the spiritual path leading finally to the "prayer of the heart", the invocation (dhikr) in which the invoker, invocation and the invoked become united, and through which man returns to the Center, to the Origin which is pure Inwardness.^[11] The interior life of Islam is based most of all upon the power of prayer and the grace issuing from the sacred language of Arabic in which various prayers are performed. Prayer

itself is the holy barque which leads man from the world of outwardness and separation to that of union and interiority, becoming ultimately unified with the center of the heart and the rhythm which determines human life itself.

The same process of interiorization takes place as far as the other central rites or pillars of Islam are concerned. Fasting is incumbent upon all Muslims who are capable of it during the holy month of Ramadan, a month full of blessings when according to the well-known hadith "the gates of heaven are opened".^[12] But the outward observation of its rules, while necessary, is one thing and the full realization of its meaning is another. Fasting means not only abstention from eating, drinking and passions during daylight but above all the realization of the ultimate independence of man's being from the external world and his dependence upon the spiritual reality which resides within him. Fasting is, therefore, at once a means of purification and interiorization complementing the prayers. In fact, it is itself a form of prayer.

The same truth holds true of the other rites. The pilgrimage or hajj is outwardly the journey towards the house of God in Mecca and inwardly circumambulation around the Ka'bah of the heart which is also the house of God. Moreover, the outward hajj is the means and support for that inner journey to the Center which is at once nowhere and everywhere and which is the goal of every wayfaring and journeying. The zakat or religious tax is likewise not only the "purifying" of one's wealth through the act of charity which helps the poor, but also the giving of oneself and the realization of the truth that by virtue of the Divine origin of all things, and not because of some form of sentimental humanitarianism,^[13] the other or the neighbour is myself. Zakat, therefore, is, in addition to a means of preserving social equilibrium, a way of self-purification and interiorization, of creating awareness of one's inner nature shown from artificial attachment to all that externalizes and dissipates.

Finally, the holy war or jihad is not simply the defense or extension of the Islamic borders which has taken place only during certain episodes of Islamic history, but the constant inner war against all that veils man from the Truth and destroys his inner equilibrium. The greater holy war (al-jihad al-akbar) as this inner battle has been called, by the Holy Prophet, is, like the "unseen warfare" of Orthodox spirituality, the very means of opening the royal path to the center of the heart.

It is the battle which must of necessity be carried out to open the door to the way of inwardness. Without this greater jihad man's externalizing and centrifugal tendencies cannot be reversed and the precious jewels contained in the treasury of the heart cannot be attained. The jihad, like the prayers, fasting, pilgrimage and religious tax, while a pillar of Islam and a foundation of Islamic society, is also a means toward the attainment of the inner chamber and an indispensable means for the pursuit of the inner life in its Islamic form.

An understanding of the interior life in Islam would be incomplete without reference to the imprint of the Divine Beauty upon both art and nature. Islamic art, although dealing with world of forms, is, like all genuine sacred art, a gate towards the inner life. Islam is based primarily on

intelligence and considers beauty as the necessary complement of any authentic manifestation of the Truth. In fact beauty is the inward dimension of goodness and leads to that Reality which is the origin of both beauty and goodness. It is not accidental that in Arabic moral goodness or virtue and beauty are both called husn.

Islamic art, far from being an accidental aspect of Islam and its spiritual life, is essential to all authentic expressions of Islamic spirituality and the gate towards the inner world. From the chanting of the Holy Quran, which is the most central expression of the Islamic revelation and sacred art par excellence, to calligraphy and architecture which are the "embodiments" in the worlds of form and space of the Divine Word, the sacred art of Islam has always played and continues to play a fundamental role in the interiorization of man's life.^[14] The same could of course be said of traditional music (sama`) and poetry which have issued from Sufism and which are like nets cast into the world of multiplicity to bring men back to the inner courtyard of the Beloved.^[15]

Likewise, nature and its grand phenomena such as the shining of the Sun and the Moon, the seasonal cycles, the mountains and the streams, are, in the Islamic perspective, means for the contemplation of the spiritual realities. They are signs (ayat) of God and although themselves forms in the external world, mirrors of a reality which is at once inward and transcendent. Nature is not separated from grace but is a participant in the Quranic revelation. In fact in Islamic sources, it is called the "macrocosmic revelation".

Virgin nature is the testament of God and gives the lie to all forms of pretentious naturalism, rationalism, skepticism and agnosticism, these maladies from which the modern world suffers so grievously. It is only in the artificial ugliness of the modern urban setting, created by modern man to forget God, that such ailments of the mind and the soul appear as real and the Divine Truth as unreal. Modern skeptical philosophies are the products of those living in urban centers and not of men who have been born and who have lived in the bosom of nature and in awareness of His macrocosmic revelation.^[16] In Islamic spirituality, nature acts as an important and in some cases indispensable means for recollection and as an aid towards the attainment of inwardness. Many Muslim saints have echoed over the ages the words of the Egyptian Sufi Dhu'l-nun who said:

"O God, I never hearken to the voices of the beasts or the rustle of the trees, the splashing of waters or the song of birds, the whistling of the wind or the rumble of thunder, but I sense in them a testimony to Thy Unity and a proof of Thy Incomparableness that Thou art the All-prevailing, the All-knowing, the All-wise, the All-just, the All-true, and that in Thee is neither overthrow nor ignorance nor folly nor injustice nor lying. O God, I acknowledge Thee in the proof of Thy handiwork and the evidence of Thy acts: grant me, O God, to seek Thy Satisfaction with my satisfaction and the Delight of a Father in His child, remembering Thee in my love for Thee, with serene tranquility and firm resolve."^[17]

St. Francis of Assisi would surely have joined this chorus in the praise of the Lord through the reflection of His Beauty and Wisdom in His Creation.

The goal of the inward life in Islam is to reach the Divine as both the Transcendent and the Imminent. It is to gain a vision of God as the Reality beyond all determination and at the same time of the world as "plunged in God". It is to see God everywhere.^[18] The inward dimension is the key for the understanding of metaphysics and traditional cosmology as well as for the penetration into the essential meaning of religion and of all religions, for at the heart of every authentic religion lies the one Truth which resides also at the heart of all things and most of all of man. There are of course differences of perspective and of form. In Christianity, it is the person of Christ who saves and who washes away the dross of separation and externalization. In Islam, such a function is performed by the supreme expression of the Truth Itself, by the Shahadah, La ilaha ill'llah. To take refuge in it is to be saved from the debilitating effect of externalization and "objectivization" and to be brought back to the Center, through the inward dimension.^[19]

It is not for all men to follow the interior life. As already mentioned, it is sufficient for a Muslim to live according to the Shari'ah to enter paradise after death and to follow the interior path after the end of his terrestrial journey. But for those who seek the Divine Center while still walking on earth and who have already died and become resurrected; in this life the interior path opens before them at a point which is here and a time which is now.

"It is related that one night Shaykh Bayazid went outside the city and found everything wrapped in deep silence, free from the clamour of men. The moon was shedding her radiance upon the world and by her light made night as brilliant as the day. Stars innumerable shone like jewels in the heavens above, each pursuing its appointed task. For a long time the Shaykh made his way across the open country and found no movement therein, nor saw a single soul. Deeply moved by this he cried:

"O Lord, my heart is stirred within me by this Thy Court displayed in all its splendour and sublimity, yet none are found here to give Thee the adoring worship which is thy due. Why should this be, O Lord? Then the hidden voice of God spoke to him: "O thou who art bewildered in the Way, know that the King does not grant admission to every passer-by. So exalted is the Majesty of His Court that not every beggar can be admitted thereto. When the Splendour of My Glory sheds abroad its radiance from this My sanctuary, the heedless and those who are wrapped in the sleep of indolence are repelled thereby. Those who are worthy of admittance to this Court wait for long years, until one in a thousand of them wins entrance thereto."^[20]

No religion would be complete without providing the path for the "one in a thousand". Islam as an integral tradition and the last plenary message of Heaven to the present humanity has preserved to this day the possibility of following the interior life, a life which, although actualized fully only by the few, has cast its light and spread its perfume over all authentic manifestations of the Islamic tradition.

Notes:

1. See F. Schuon, Dimensions of Islam, trans. P. Townsend, London, 1969, chapter 2.

2. See S. H. Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, London, 1966, chapter 1, 3 and 4 (trans. into Italian by D. Venturi as *Ideali e realita dell' Islam*, Milan, 1974).

3. See F. Schuon, "Iman, Islam, Insan", in his *L'Oeil du coeur*, Paris, 1974, pp. 91-94, where the relation of this division to the tripartite division of the Islamic tradition into Shari'ah, Tariqah and Haqiqah is also explained.

4. Concerning Shi'ism see Allamah Tabataba'i, *Shi'ite Islam*, trans. by S. H. Nasr, New York and London, 1975.

5. On Muslim prayers from both Sunni and Shi'ite sources and dealing mostly with this "intermediate" domain of religious life, between external religious acts and the "prayer of the heart", see C. E. Padwick, *Muslim Devotions, A Study of Prayer-Manuals in Common Use*, London, 1961.

6. For a rather remarkable instance of this second category dealing with a Prayer written by Ibn 'Ata'allah al-Iskandari in a famous Shi'ite prayer attributed to Imam Husayn the third Shi'ite Imam, see W. Chittick, "A Shadhili Presence in Shi'ite Islam?", *Sophia Perennis (Journal of the Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy)*, vol. 1, no. 1, Spring 1975, pp. 97-100.

7. Quoted in M. Smith, *The Sufi Path of Love, An Anthology of Sufism*, London, 1954, p. 82.

8. *Mishkat al-masabih*, trans. with explanatory notes by J. Robson, Lahore, 1972, p.278.

9. The external movements of the prayers are said, by traditional Islamic authorities to be reflections in the world of form, movement, time and space of the states experienced by the Holy Prophet during his nocturnal ascension.

10. Concerning the symbolism and inner meaning of the details of the movements actions and words of the prayers as reflecting in the teachings of one of the greatest of the Sufi masters of the recent period see M Lings, *A Sufi Saint of the Twentieth Century*, London, 1971, pp.176 ff. As for the inner meaning of the prayers as seen by a Shi'ite theosopher and saint see Hajji Mulla Hadi Sabziwari, *Asrar al-hikam*, Tehran, 1380, pp. 456 ff.

11. Jami has said, "Oh, happy man whose heart has been illuminated by invocation in the shade of which the carnal soul has been vanquished, the thought of multiplicity chased away, the invoker transmuted into invocation and the invocation transmuted into the Invoked." Quoted in F. Schuon, *Understanding Islam*, trans D. M. Matheson, London, 1976, p. 123.

12. *Mishkat al-masabih*, vol. II, p. 417, where many hadiths of this kind are accounted.

13. In modern times, few virtues have been as externalized, depleted of their spiritual significance and even made into a channel for demonic rather than celestial forces as charity whose modern, secularized understanding in the West is the direct caricature and parody of the authentic Christian conception of this cardinal virtue. See F. Schuon, *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts*, trans. D. M. Matheson, London 1953, pp. 171 ff. 14. Considering the spiritual principles of Islamic art see T. Burckhardt, *The Art of Islam*, trans. P. Hobson, London, 1976; and his *Sacred Art, East and West*, trans Lord Northbourne, London, 1967, chapter IV, also S. H. Nasr, *Sacred Art in Persian Culture*, London, 1976.

15. Concerning the spiritual and interiorizing effect of music in Sufism see J. Nourbakhsh "Sama", *Sophia Perennis*, vol. III no. 1, Spring 1977, S. H Nasr "Islam and Music", *Studies in Comparative Religion*, Winter, 1976, pp. 37-45. (italian trans. as "L'Islam e la musica secondo Ruzbahan Bagli, Santo Patrono di Sciraz," *Conoscenza Religiosa*, vol. 4, 1976, pp. 373 ff.

16. Concerning the Islamic and traditional view of nature and its contrast with the modern view see S. H. Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam*, New York, 1970 (Italian trans. as *Scienza e civiltà nel' Islam*, trans. L. Sosio, Milan, 1977), Nasr, *Man and Nature*, London, 1976 (Italian translation as *L'uomo e la natura*, trans. G. Spina, Milan, 1977); Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, London, 1977, Nasr, *Islamic Science - An Illustrated Study*, London, 1976, also Th. Roszak, *Where the Wasteland Ends*, New York 1973 and Roszak, *Unfinished Animal*, New York, 1975.

"Les vertus qui par leu; natupe meme temoignent de la Verite, possedent elles aussi une qualite interiorisante dans la mesure ou elles sont fondamentales, il en va de mem des etres et des choses qui transmettent des messages de l'eternelle Beaute; d'ou la puissance

d'interiorisation propre a la nature vierge, a l'harmonie des creatures, a l'art sacre, a la musique. La sensation esthetique-nous l'avons fait remarquer bien des fois-possede en soi une qualite ascendante- elle provoque dans l'ame contemplative directement ou indirectement, un ressouvenir des divines essences." F. Schuon 'La religion du coeur', Sophia Perennis, vol. III, no. 1, Spring, 1977.

17. A. J. Arbery, Sufism, London, 1950, p. 52-53.

18. See F. Schuon, "Seeing God Everywhere", in his Gnosis, Divine Wisdom, trans. G. E. H. Palmer, London, 1959, pp. 106 ff.

19. See S. H. Nasr, "Contemporary Western Man, between the rim and the axis" in his Islam and the Plight of Modern Man, London, 1976, pp. 3 ff.

20. From 'Attar quoted in M. Smith, Readings from the Mystics of Islam, London, 1950, pp. 26-27.

Kitab al-Irshad' by Al-Mufid

Dr. I. K. A. Howard Al-Serat, Vol. 3 (1977), No. 3

Al-Shaikh al-Mufid's full name was Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Nu'man al-Harithi al-Baghadi al-'Ukbari; his kunya was Abu 'Abd Allah. As well as being called al-Shaikh al-Mufid, he was known in both Shi'i and non-Shi'i circles as Ibn al-Mu'allim. He was born in the year 338 A.H./949 and was brought up in a village. His father brought him to Baghdad for his education. There he studied under Shi'i and Mu'tazili scholars. He showed such promise that one of his teachers recommended that he study under one of the leading scholars of the period, 'Ali b. 'Isa al-Ramani. He also studied under the leading Shi'i traditionists of the time, al-Shaikh al-Saduq.^[1]

Al-Mufid lived during the period when the Buyids held political sway over Baghdad. They permitted much more tolerance towards the Shi'ites whether of Imami or Zaidi persuasion; they themselves were probably of Zaidi persuasion. As a result of this tolerant attitude, the Shi'ites were allowed to celebrate in public the Days of Ghadir Khumm (when the Prophet is said to have nominated 'Ali as his successor before the people) on 18th Dhu'l-Hijja, and 'Ashura, 10th Muharram (when al-Husain was killed at Karbala'). As a counter demonstration, some of the non-Shi'ites celebrated the Day of the Cave, (when the Prophet with Abu Bakr took refuge in a cave to escape the Quraysh who were pursuing them) on 26th Dhu'l-Hijja and also the day when Mus'ab ibn al-Zubair defeated al-Mukhtar b. Abi 'Ubaid on the 18th Muharram.^[2]

It is said that al-Mufid earned his title of al-Mufid as a result of a dispute about the relative merits of the two events - Ghadir Khumm and the Cave. The story goes that when al-Mufid - Abu 'Abd Allah as he was - went to visit the scholar 'Ali b. 'Isa al-Ramani, mentioned above, there was a great crowd of people with the scholar.

When the crowd grew thinner, the young Abu 'Abd Allah approached the scholar. However, then the arrival of a man from Basra was announced. The two, that is 'Ali b. 'Isa and his visitor from Basra, spoke for some time. Then the visitor asked 'Ali b. 'Isa what he had to say about the events of Ghadir Khumm and the Cave. 'Ali b. 'Isa replied:

"The tradition of the Cave is definite knowledge (diraya) while the tradition of Ghadir is (of the status) of a narration (riwaya). A narration (riwaya) does not require the same (acceptance) as definite knowledge (diraya)." The Basran could not find an answer to this and departed.

However, al-Mufid took up the discussion:

"O Shaykh, I have a problem," he said to 'Ali b. 'Isa.

"Put it forward, then," replied the latter.

"What would you say about someone who fought against a just Imam?" asked al-Mufid.

"He is an unbeliever (kafir)," was the answer. Then after a pause he changed it to "grave sinner (fasiq)."

"What do you say about the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali b. Abi Talib?" . He was an Imam."

"What do you say about the Battle of the Camel, and some of the companions who fought against Ali b. Abi Talib." Therefore according to

the above argument they should be described as fasiq, that is grave sinners who would go to hell. (However there is a tradition that these companions were among ten people whom the Prophet said would go to heaven. Thus 'Ali b. 'Isa has to explain how they could be fasiq and go to heaven. He does this in his next answer.)

"They repented."

"The tradition of the Battle of the Camel is definite knowledge (diraya) while the tradition of the repentance is a narration (riwaya)," replied al-Mufid.

Thus al-Mufid had turned the tables on him. The event of the cave was something all Muslims accepted as fact but there was no point in giving the well-reported tradition of Ghadir Khumm inferior status since if this was done the same terminology could be used to question the repentance of the said companions, which was also accepted by most Muslims.

'Ali b. 'Isa was very impressed by the young man's reasoning. He asked him about his teacher and then gave him a note to take to that man. In the note he recommended his intellect and gave him the nickname of al-Mufid, "the one who gives benefit".^[3]

Al-Mufid soon became one of the foremost scholars of his time. He was an outstanding theologian and jurist, and a brilliant polemical writer on behalf of the Shi'ites. He became head of the Shi'i scholars in Baghdad and took part in many debates and discussions with his opponents.

As we have seen there was some rivalry between various groups during this period. This rivalry became much more tense during the time of the four rival days of remembrance which all came within four weeks of each other. Riots sometimes broke out and the authorities had to take firm action to restore the situation. After such a riot in 398 A.H./1007, al-Mufid was nearly exiled from Baghdad. However, in 410 A.H./1019, he was banished for a short time.^[4]

During his life, al-Mufid was not only a brilliant debater and disputer he was a fine teacher and an outstanding and prolific writer. As a teacher he will be remembered for the greatness of his three most outstanding pupils. They were the two 'Alids, al-Sharif al Radi and al Sharif al Murtada. Al Sharif al-Radi is perhaps best remembered as the compiler of many of Ali b. Abi Talib's speeches, sermons and letters Nahj al-balagha. His brother al Sharif al-Murtada was a brilliant theologian and an outstanding literateur. The other pupil was to become Shaikh al-Ta'ifa; he was Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Tusi.

The writings of al-Shaikh al-Mufid were numerous. Al-Tusi tells us in the Fihrist that they numbered nearly two hundred. A number of these still survive; some have been published and some are still in manuscript form. Among them is al-Muqni'a, a work on tradition, which al-Tusi used as the basis for his great work Tahdhib al-ahkam fi sharh a/-munqi'a.^[5] In theology, we are left with an important treatise Awa'il al-maqalat, where al-Mufid discusses Shi'i theology in relation to other schools; this work has been recently studied by a leading French scholar.^[6] A working on the battle of the Camel, known as Kitab al-Jamal also survives. There is also Kitab al-Irshad which will be discussed later.

Al-Shaikh al-Mufid died in the month of Ramadan in the year 413 A.H./1022. One report says that over 80,000 people attended his funeral.^[7] Al-Tusi himself reports that such a great crowd of mourners, both of opponents as well as friends, had not been seen before.^[8] Al-Sharif al-Murtada led the funeral prayers and gave an eulogy. After being buried in his own house, his body was later removed and buried near to the great shrine of two of the Imams in Baghdad, known as al-Kazimayn.^[9]

Kitab al-Irshad^[10]

This book sets out to name the twelve Shi'i Imams. It briefly describes the circumstances of the Imamate of each Imam, the miracles that each performed by which he gave evidence of his Imamate, the virtues of each Imam, and the circumstances of the death of all the Imams and the disappearance of the last Imam. It also gives an outline of the nass, or the nomination of each Imam.

The Imamate of 'Ali b. Abi Talib after the Prophet is the cornerstone of the Shi'i view of succession and the Imamate in general. Therefore it is natural that the book should devote considerable space to 'Ali. Nearly half of the book is concerned with him. In particular al-Mufid pays great attention to 'Ali's career during the life of the Prophet. 'Ali is revealed as the person of outstanding merit during that period, the one who most deserved and was most entitled to succeed the Prophet.

The reports of the traditions by which the Prophet is said to have made 'Ali's succession clear are fully reported, especially the tradition of Ghadir Khumm. In addition several of his speeches are given. Al-Mufid gives an account of some of 'Ali's legal decisions during the time of the three Caliphs, and he explains that 'Ali, although entitled to the office of the Caliphate, held back from attempting to seize the office or expressing public discontent. Little space is given to 'Ali's reign as Caliph, perhaps because these events had been discussed elsewhere by the author in Kitab al-Jamal for instance. The circumstances of 'Ali's murder by Ibn Muljam are given in full and the author quotes from historical authorities, such as Abu Mikhnaf and Isma'il b. Rashid.

The Imamate of al-Hasan is described more briefly by the author. The martyrdom of al-Husain at Karbala' is given at some length. In this account al-Mufid tells us that he has relied on Abu Mikhnaf and Ibn al-Kalbi, who were also the main authorities of the historian al-Tabari for this event.

The other Imams are dealt with more briefly and in succession. The final Imam - the Qa'im, the Mahdi - is dealt with in more detail. The author gives the evidence of those who saw him. This is particularly important as doubt was expressed of his existence. He also refers to miracles performed by him; he tells of the prophecies about him and gives an account of what will happen when he returns.

Al-Irshad represents an important statement of Shi'i belief. It is written more as a defence of the Imami Shi'i view of the Imamate and it takes care to provide believers with the evidence of the Imamate. In establishing the Imamate of 'Ali, the doctrine of nass is shown by the author to be legitimate.

Its legitimate use is carried on by 'Ali and his successors. In the author's view, the proof to the world of the Imamate of each of the Imams is

expressed in the miracles performed by each Imam. Important moments in the lives of the Imams, such as the martyrdom of al-Husain and the ghaiba, the disappearance of the last Imam, are dealt with in some detail.

Al-Irshad was not the first work to be written on the subject. Al-Tabari, who died in the second half of the fourth century wrote two volumes on the Imamate; the first, al-Mustarshid, deals with 'Ali b. Abi Talib and the second Dala'il al-imama is an account of Fatima, and the other eleven Imams. However these two works are not as well-organised as al-Mufid's, nor do they make as much use of non-Shi'i sources as al-Mufid does.

Al-Irshad, then, represents a valuable contribution to the history of the Imamate, It has been written by one of the outstanding Imami Shi'i writers of his time and must be considered as one of the definitive Shi'i works on the history of the Imamate.

Notes:

1. On al-Shaikh al-Saduq cf. A-Serat Vol.II No.2, June, 1976, 19-22;
2. H. Laoust, "Les Agitations Religieuses a Baghdad" in Islamic Civilisation 950-1150 (ed. D. H. Richards) (Oxford 1973), 170.
3. Ibn Idris al-Hilli, Kitab al-Sara'ir cited by al-Zanjani in his introduction to al-Mufid's Awa'il al-maqalat, (Tabriz, A.H. 1100%).
4. Al-Tusi, al-Fihrist (ed. Sprenger), new edition including indexes by Mahmoud Ramyar (Mashhad, A.H. 1351), 314.
5. Cf. Al-Serat, Vol. II No.3, September 1976, 23-25.
6. D. Sourdel, "L'Imamisme vu par le Cheikh al-Mufid", Revue des Etudes Islamique, XL, (Paris, 1972), 217-296.
7. D. Sourdel "Le Shaykh al-Mufid", Islamic Civilisation 950-1150, op. cit., 189, citing Ibn Abi Tayy.
8. Al-Tusi, op.cit., 315.
9. Al-Hilli, al-Idah at the foot of al-Tusi, op. cit., 316.
10. Kitab al-Irshad (ed. Al-Mayamawi) edition reproduced with additional notes by al-Akhundi, Teheran, A.H.1377.

Islam and the Question of Violence

Seyyed Hossein Nasr Vol. XIII, No. 2 Despite the presence of violence in many regions of the world ranging from Ireland to Lebanon to the Pacific Basin and involving many religions from Christianity to Hinduism, the Western world associates Islam more than any other religion with violence. The Muslim conquest of Spain, the Crusades - which were not begun by Muslims -, and the Ottoman domination of eastern Europe have provided a historical memory of Islam as being related to force and power. Moreover, the upheavals of the past few decades in the Middle East and especially movements using the name of Islam and seeking to solve problems of the Muslim world created by conditions and causes beyond the control of Muslims have only reinforced the idea prevalent in the West that in some special way Islam is related to violence.

To understand the nature of Islam and the truth about the assertion often made of Islam's espousal of violence. it is important to analyze this question clearly remembering that the word islam itself means peace and that the history of Islam has certainly not been witness to any more violence than

one finds in other civilizations, particularly that of the West. In what follows.

however, it is the Islamic religion in its principles and ideals with which we are especially concerned and not particular events or facts relating to the domain of historical contingency belonging to the unfolding of Islam in the plane of human history. First of all, it is necessary to define what we mean by violence. There are several dictionary definitions that can be taken into account such as 'swift and intense force', 'rough or injurious physical force or action', 'unjust or unwarranted exertion of force especially against the rights of others', 'rough or immediate vehemence' and finally 'injury resulting from the distortion of meaning or fact'. If these definitions are accepted for violence, then the question can be asked as to how Islam is related to these definitions.

As far as 'force' is concerned, Islam is not completely opposed to its use but rather seeks to control it in the light of the divine Law (al-shari'a). This world is one in which force is to be found everywhere, in nature as well as in human society, among men as well as within the human soul. The goal of Islam is to establish equilibrium amidst this field of tension of various forces. The Islamic concept of justice itself is related to equilibrium, the word for justice (al-'adl) in Arabic being related in its etymology to the word for equilibrium (ta'adul). All force used under the guidance of the divine Law with the aim of re-establishing an equilibrium that is destroyed is accepted and in fact necessary, for it means to carry out and establish justice.

Moreover, not to use force in such a way is to fall prey to other forces which cannot but increase disequilibrium and disorder and result in greater injustice. Whether the use of force in this manner is swift and intense or gentle and mild depends upon the circumstances, but in all cases force can only be used with the aim of establishing equilibrium and harmony and not for personal or sectarian reasons identified with the interests of a person or a particular group and not the whole.

By embracing the 'world' and not shunning the 'kingdom of Caesar', Islam took upon itself responsibility for the world in which force is present. But by virtue of the same fact it limited the use of force and despite all the wars, invasions, and attacks which it experienced, it was able to create an ambiance of peace and tranquillity which can still be felt whenever something of the traditional Islamic world survives. The peace that dominates the courtyard of a mosque or a garden whether it be in Marrakesh or Lahore is not accidental but the result of the control of force with the aim of establishing that harmony which results from equilibrium of forces, whether those forces be natural, social or psychological.

As for the meaning of violence as 'rough or injurious physical force or action', Islamic Law opposes all uses of force in this sense except in the case of war or for punishment of criminals in accordance with the shari'a. Even in war, however, the inflicting of any injury to women and children is forbidden as is the use of force against civilians. Only fighters in the field of battle must be confronted with force and it is only against them that injurious physical force can be used. Inflicting injuries outside of this

context or in the punishment of criminals according to the dictum of the shari'a and the view of a judge is completely forbidden by Islamic Law.

As far as violence in the sense of the use of unjust force against the rights of others and laws is concerned, Islam stands totally opposed to it. Rights of human beings are defined by Islamic Law and are protected by this Law which embraces not only Muslims but also followers of other religions who are considered as 'People of the Book (ahl al-kitab)'. If there is nevertheless violation in Islamic society, it is due not to the teachings of Islam but the imperfection of the human recipients of the Divine Message.

Man is man wherever he might be and no religion can neutralize completely the imperfections inherent in the nature of fallen man. What is remarkable, however, is not that some violence in this sense of the word does exist in Muslim societies, but that despite so many negative social and economic factors aggravated by the advent of colonialism, overpopulation, industrialization, modernization resulting in cultural dislocation, and so many other elements, there is less violence as unjust exertion of force against others in most Islamic countries than in the industrialized West.

If one understands by violence 'rough or immoderate vehemence', then Islam is totally opposed to it. The perspective of Islam is based upon moderation and its morality is grounded upon the principle of avoiding extremes and keeping to the golden mean. Nothing is more alien to the Islamic perspective than vehemence, not to say immoderate vehemence. Even if force is to be used, it must be on the basis of moderation.

Finally, if by violence is meant 'distortion of meaning or fact resulting in injury to others', Islam is completely opposed to it. Islam is based on the Truth which saves and which finds its supreme expression in the testimony of the faith, *la ilaha illa 'Llah* (there is no divinity but the Divine). Any distortion of truth is against the basic teachings of the religion even if no one were to be affected by it. How much more would distortion resulting in injury be against the teachings of the Qur'an and the tradition of the Prophet!

In conclusion it must be emphasized that since Islam embraces the whole of life and does not distinguish between the sacred and the secular, it concerns itself with force and power which characterize this world as such. But Islam, in controlling the use of force in the direction of creating equilibrium and harmony, limits it and opposes violence as aggression to the rights of both God and His creatures as defined by the divine Law. The goal of Islam is the attainment of peace but this peace can only be experienced through that exertion (jihad) and the use of force which begins with the disciplining of ourselves and leads to living in the world in accordance with the dicta of the shar'ia.

Islam seeks to enable man to live according to his theomorphic nature and not to violate that nature. Islam condones the use of force only to the extent of opposing that centripetal tendency which turns man against what he is in his inner reality. The use of force can only be condoned in the sense of undoing the violation of our own nature and the chaos which has resulted from the loss of equilibrium. But such a use of force is not in reality violence as usually understood. It is the exertion of human will and effort in the direction of conforming to the Will of God and in surrendering the

human will to the divine Will. From this surrender (taslim) comes peace (salam), hence islam, and only through this islam can the violence inbred within the nature of fallen man be controlled and the beast within subdued so that man lives at peace with himself and the world because he lives at peace with God.

The Spiritual Significance of Jihad

Seyyed Hossein Nasr Vol. IX, No. 1

And those who perform jihad for Us, We shall certainly guide them in Our ways, and God is surely with the doers of good. (Quran XXXIX; 69)

You have returned from the lesser jihad to the greater jihad. (Hadith)

The Arabic term jihad, usually translated into European languages as holy war, more on the basis of its juridical usage in Islam rather than on its much more universal meaning in the Quran and Hadith, is derived from the root jhd whose primary meaning is to strive or to exert oneself. Its translation into holy war combined with the erroneous notion of Islam prevalent in the West as the 'religion of the sword' has helped to eclipse its inner and spiritual significance and to distort its connotation.

Nor has the appearance upon the stage of history during the past century and especially during the past few years of an array of movements within the Islamic world often contending or even imposing each other and using the word jihad or one of its derivative forms helped to make known the full import of its traditional meaning which alone is of concern to us here.

Instead recent distortions and even total reversal of the meaning of jihad as understood over the ages by Muslims have made it more difficult than ever before to gain insight into this key religious and spiritual concept.

To understand the spiritual significance of jihad and its wide application to nearly every aspect of human life as understood by Islam, it is necessary to remember that Islam bases itself upon the idea of establishing equilibrium within the being of man as well as in the human society where he functions and fulfills the goals of his earthly life. This equilibrium, which is the terrestrial reflection of Divine Justice and the necessary condition for peace in the human domain, is the basis upon which the soul takes its flight towards that peace which, to use Christian terms, 'passeth understanding'.

If Christian morality sees the aim of the spiritual life and its own morality as based on the vertical flight towards that perfection and ideal which is embodied in Christ, Islam sees it in the establishment of an equilibrium both outward and inward as the necessary basis for the vertical ascent. The very stability of Islamic society over the centuries, the immutability of Islamic norms embodied in the Shari'ah, and the timeless character of traditional Islamic civilization which is the consequence of its permanent and immutable prototype are all reflections of both the ideal of equilibrium and its realization as is so evident in the teachings of the Shari'ah (or Divine Law) as well as works of Islamic art, that equilibrium which is inseparable from the very name of islam as being related to salam or peace.

The preservation of equilibrium in this world, however, does not mean simply a static or inactive passivity since life by nature implies movement. In the face of the contingencies of the world of change, of the withering effects of time, of the vicissitudes of terrestrial existence, to remain in equilibrium requires continuous exertion.

It means carrying out jihad at every stage of life. Human nature being what it is, given to forgetfulness and the conquest of our immortal soul by the carnal soul or passions, the very process of life of both the individual

and the human collectivity implies the ever-present danger of the loss of equilibrium and the fact of falling into the state of disequilibrium which if allowed to continue cannot but lead to disintegration on the individual level and chaos on the scale of community life.

To avoid this tragic end and to fulfill the entelechy of the human state which is the realization of unity (al-tawhid) or total integration, Muslims as both individuals and members of Islamic society must carry out jihad, that is they must exert themselves at all moments of life to fight a battle both inward and outward against those forces that if not combatted will destroy that equilibrium which is the necessary condition for the spiritual life of the person and the functioning of human society. This fact is especially true if society is seen as a collectivity which bears the imprint of the Divine Norm rather than an antheap of contending and opposing units and forces.

Man is at once a spiritual and corporeal being, a micro-cosm complete unto himself; yet he is the member of a society within which alone are certain aspects of his being developed and certain of his needs fulfilled. He possesses at once an intelligence whose substance is ultimately of a divine character and sentiments which can either veil his intelligence or abett his quest for his own Origin. In him are found both love and hatred, generosity and coveteousness, compassion and aggression.

Moreover, there have existed until now not just one but several 'humanities' with their own religious and moral norms and national, ethnic and racial groups with their own bonds of affiliation. As a result the practice of jihad as applied to the world of multiplicity and the vicissitudes of human existence in the external world has come to develop numerous ramifications in the fields of political and economic activity and in social life and come to partake on the external level of the complexity which characterizes the human world.

In its most outward sense jihad came to mean the defence of dar al-islam, that is, the Islamic world, from invasion and intrusion by non-Islamic forces. The earliest wars of Islamic history which threatened the very existence of the young community came to be known as jihad par excellence in this outward sense of 'holy war'.

But it was upon returning from one of these early wars, which was of paramount importance in the survival of the newly established religious community and therefore of cosmic significance, that the Prophet nevertheless said to his companions that they had returned from the lesser holy war to the greater holy war, the greater jihad being the inner battle against all the forces which would prevent man from living according to the theomorphic norm which is his primordial and God given nature. Throughout Islamic history, the lesser holy war has echoed in the Islamic world when parts or the whole of that world have been threatened by forces from without or within.

This call has been especially persistent since the nineteenth century with the advent of colonialism and the threat to the very existence of the Islamic world. It must be remembered, however, that even in such cases when the idea of jihad has been evoked in certain parts of the Islamic world, it has not usually been a question of religion simply sanctioning war but of the

attempt of a society in which religion remains of central concern to protect itself from being conquered either by military and economic forces or by ideas of an alien nature. This does not mean, however, that in some cases especially in recent times, religious sentiments have not been used or misused to intensify or legitimize a conflict.

But to say the least, the Islamic world does not have a monopoly on this abuse as the history of other civilizations including even the secularized West demonstrates so amply. Moreover, human nature being what it is, once religion ceases to be of central significance to a particular human collectivity, then men fight and kill each other for much less exalted issues than their heavenly faith. By including the question of war in its sacred legislation, Islam did not condone but limited war and its consequences as the history of the traditional Islamic world bears out. In any case the idea of total war and the actual practice of the extermination of whole civilian populations did not grow out of a civilization whose dominant religion saw jihad in a positive light.

On the more external level, the lesser jihad also includes the socio-economic domain. It means the reassertion of justice in the external environment of human existence starting with man himself. To defend one's rights and reputation, to defend the honour of oneself and one's family is itself a jihad and a religious duty. So is the strengthening of all those social bonds from the family to the whole of the Muslim people (al-ummah) which the Shari'ah emphasizes.

To seek social justice in accordance with the tenets of the Quran and of course not in the modern secularist sense is a way of re-establishing equilibrium in human society, that is, of performing jihad, as are constructive economic enterprises provided the well-being of the whole person is kept in mind and material welfare does not become an end in itself; provided one does not lose sight of the Quranic verse, 'The other world is better for you than this one'. To forget the proper relation between the two worlds would itself be instrumental in bringing about disequilibrium and would be a kind of jihad in reverse.

All of those external forms of jihad would remain incomplete and in fact contribute to an excessive externalization of human being, if they were not complemented by the greater or inner jihad which man must carry out continuously within himself for the nobility of the human state resides in the constant tension between what we appear to be and what we really are and the need to transcend ourselves throughout this journey of earthly life in order to become what we 'are'.

From the spiritual point of view all the 'pillars' of Islam can be seen as being related to jihad. The fundamental witnesses, 'There is no divinity but Allah' and 'Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah', through the utterance of which a person becomes a Muslim are not only statements about the Truth as seen in the Islamic perspective but also weapons for the practice of inner jihad. The very form of the first witness (La ilaha illa' Lla-h in Arabic) when written in Arabic calligraphy is like a bent sword with which all otherness is removed from the Supreme Reality while all that is positive in manifestation is returned to that Reality.

The second witness is the blinding assertion of the powerful and majestic descent of all that constitutes in a positive manner the cosmos, man and revelation from that Supreme Reality. To invoke the two witnesses in the form of the sacred language in which they were revealed is to practice the inner jihad and to bring about awareness of who we are, from whence we come and where is our ultimate abode.

The daily prayers (salat or namaz) which constitute the heart of the Islamic rites are again a never ending jihad which punctuate human existence in a continuous rhythm in conformity with the rhythm of the cosmos. To perform the prayers with regularity and concentration requires the constant exertion of our will and an unending battle and striving against forgetfulness, dissipation and laziness. It is itself a form of spiritual warfare.

Likewise, the fast of Ramadan in which one wears the armour of inner purity and detachment against the passions and temptations of the outside world requires an asceticism and inner discipline which cannot come about except through an inner holy war. Nor is the hajj to the centre of the Islamic world in Mecca possible without long preparation, effort, often suffering and endurance of hardship. It requires great effort and exertion so that the Prophet could say, "The hajj is the most excellent of all jihads".

Like the knight in quest of the Holy Grail, the pilgrim to the house of the Beloved must engage in a spiritual warfare whose end makes all sacrifice and all hardship pale into significance, for the hajj to the House of God implies for the person who practices the inner jihad encounter with the Master of the House who also resides at the centre of that other Ka'bah which is the heart.

Finally the giving of zakat or religious tax and khums is again a form of jihad not only in that in departing from one's wealth man must fight against the covetousness and greed of his carnal soul, but also in that through the payment of zakat and khums in its many forms man contributes to the establishment of economic justice in human society. Although jihad is not one of the 'pillars of Islam', it in a sense resides within all the other 'pillars'. From the spiritual point of view in fact all of the 'pillars' can be seen in the light of an inner jihad which is essential to the life of man from the Islamic point of view and which does not oppose but complements contemplativity and the peace which result from the contemplation of the One.

The great stations of perfection in the spiritual life can also be seen in the light of the inner jihad. To become detached from the impurities of the world in order to repose in the purity of the Divine Presence requires an intense jihad for our soul has its roots sunk deeply into the transient world which the soul of fallen man mistakes for reality. To overcome the lethargy, passivity and indifference of the soul, qualities which have become second nature to man as a result of his forgetting who he is constitutes likewise a constant jihad. To pull the reigns of the soul from dissipating itself outwardly as a result of its centrifugal tendencies and to bring it back to the centre wherein resides Divine Peace and all the beauty which the soul seeks in vain in the domain of multiplicity is again an inner jihad.

To melt the hardened heart into a flowing stream of love which would embrace the whole of creation in virtue of the love for God is to perform the

alchemical process of solve et coagula inwardly through a 'work' which is none other than an inner struggle and battle against what the soul has become in order to transform it into that which it 'is' and has never ceased to be if only it were to become aware of its own nature. Finally, to realize that only the Absolute is absolute and that only the Self can ultimately utter 'I' is to perform the supreme jihad of awakening the soul from the dream of forgetfulness and enabling it to gain the supreme principal knowledge for the sake of which it was created.

The inner jihad or warfare seen spiritually and esoterically can be considered therefore as the key for the understanding of the whole spiritual process, and the path for the realization of the One which lies at the heart of the Islamic message seen in its totality. The Islamic path towards perfection can be conceived in the light of the symbolism of the greater jihad to which the Prophet of Islam, who founded this path on earth, himself referred.

In the same way that with every breath the principle of life which functions in us irrespective of our will and as long as it is willed by Him who created us, exerts itself through jihad to instill life within our whole body, at every moment in our conscious life we should seek to perform jihad in not only establishing equilibrium in the world about us but also in awakening to that Divine Reality which is the very source of our consciousness.

For the spiritual man, every breath is a reminder that he should continue the inner jihad until he awakens from all dreaming and until the very rhythm of his heart echoes that primordial sacred Name by which all things were made and through which all things return to their Origin. The Prophet said, 'Man is asleep and when he dies he awakens'. Through inner jihad the spiritual man dies in this life in order to cease all dreaming, in order to awaken to that Reality which is the origin of all realities, in order to behold that Beauty of which all earthly beauty is but a pale reflection, in order to attain that Peace which all men seek but which can in fact be found only through the inner jihad.

Karbala and the Imam Husayn in Persian and Indo-Muslim literature

Annemarie Schimmel, Harvard University, Al-Serat, Vol XII (1986)

I still remember the deep impression which the first Persian poem I ever read in connection with the tragic events of Karbala' left on me. It was Qaani's elegy which begins with the words:

What is raining? Blood.

Who? The eyes.

How? Day and night.

Why? From grief.

Grief for whom?

Grief for the king of Karbala'

This poem, in its marvellous style of question and answer, conveys much of the dramatic events and of the feelings a pious Muslim experiences when thinking of the martyrdom of the Prophet's beloved grandson at the hands of the Umayyad troops.

The theme of suffering and martyrdom occupies a central role in the history of religion from the earliest time. Already, in the myths of the ancient Near East, we hear of the hero who is slain but whose death, then, guarantees the revival of life: the names of Attis and Osiris from the Babylonian and Egyptian traditions respectively are the best examples for the insight of ancient people that without death there can be no continuation of life, and that the blood shed for a sacred cause is more precious than anything else.

Sacrifices are a means for reaching higher and loftier stages of life; to give away parts of one's fortune, or to sacrifice members of one's family enhances one's religious standing; the Biblical and Qur'anic story of Abraham who so deeply trusted in God that he, without questioning, was willing to sacrifice his only son, points to the importance of such sacrifice. Iqbal was certainly right when he combined, in a well known poem in *Bal-i Jibril* (1936), the sacrifice of Ismail and the martyrdom of Husayn, both of which make up the beginning and the end of the story of the Ka'ba.

Taking into account the importance of sacrifice and suffering for the development of man, it is not surprising that Islamic history has given a central place to the death on the battlefield of the Prophet's beloved grandson Husayn, and has often combined with that event the death by poison of his elder brother Hasan. In popular literature we frequently find both Hasan and Husayn represented as participating in the battle of Karbala', which is historically wrong, but psychologically correct.

It is not the place here to discuss the development of the whole genre of *marthiya* and *taziya* poetry in the Persian and Indo-Persian world, or in the popular Turkish tradition. But it is interesting to cast a glance at some verses in the Eastern Islamic tradition which express predominantly the Sunni poets' concern with the fate of Husayn, and echo, at the same time, the tendency of the Sufis to see in him a model of the suffering which is so central for the growth of the soul.

The name of Husayn appears several times in the work of the first great Sufi poet of Iran, Sana'i (d. 1131). Here, the name of the martyred hero can

be found now and then in connection with bravery and selflessness, and Sana'i sees him as the prototype of the shahid, higher and more important than all the other shahids who are and have been in the world:

**Your religion is your Husayn, greed and wish are your pigs
and dogs**

You kill the one, thirsty, and nourish the other two. [Divan, p. 655]

This means that man has sunk to such a lowly state that he thinks only of his selfish purposes and wishes and does everything to fondle the material aspects of his life, while his religion, the spiritual side of his life, is left without nourishment, withering away, just like Husayn and the martyrs of Karbala' were killed after nobody had cared to give them water in the desert.

This powerful idea is echoed in other verses, both in the Divan and in the Hadiqat al-Haqiqah; but one has to be careful in one's assessment of the long praise of Husayn and the description of Karbala' as found in the Hadiqah, as they are apparently absent from the oldest manuscripts of the work, and may have been inserted at some later point. This, however, does not concern us here.

For the name of the hero, Husayn, is found in one of the central poems of Sana'i's Divan, in which the poet describes in grand images the development of man and the long periods of suffering which are required for the growth of everything that aspires to perfection. It is here that he sees in the 'street of religion' those martyrs who were dead and are alive, those killed by the sword like Husayn, those murdered by poison like Hasan (Divan 485).

The tendency to see Husayn as the model of martyrdom and bravery continues, of course, in the poetry written after Sana'i by Persian and Turkish mystics, and of special interest is one line in the Divan of 'Attar (nr. 376) in which he calls the novice on the path to proceed and go towards the goal, addressing him:

Be either a Husayn or a Mansur.

That is, Husayn b. Mansur al-Hallaj, the arch-martyr of mystical Islam, who was cruelly executed in Baghdad in 922. He, like his namesake Husayn b. 'Ali, becomes a model for the Sufi; he is the suffering lover, and in quite a number of Sufi poems his name appears alongside that of Husayn: both were enamoured by God, both sacrificed themselves on the Path of divine love, both are therefore the ideal lovers of God whom the pious should strive to emulate. Ghalib skillfully alludes to this combination in his tawhid qasida:

God has kept the ecstatic lovers like Husayn and Mansur in the place of gallows and rope, and cast the fighters for the faith, like Husayn and 'Ali, in the place of swords and spears: in being martyrs they find eternal life and happiness and become witnesses to God's mysterious power.

This tradition is particularly strong in the Turkish world, where the names of both Husayns occur often in Sufi songs.

Turkish tradition, especially in the later Bektashi order, is deeply indebted to Shi'i Islam; but it seems that already in some of the earliest popular Sufi songs in Turkey, those composed by Yunus Emre in the late 13th or early 14th century, the Prophet's grandsons played a special role.

They are described, in a lovely song by Yunus, as the 'fountain head of the martyrs', the 'tears of the saints', and the 'lambs of mother Fatima'. Both of them, as the 'kings of the eight paradises', are seen as the helpers who stand at Kawthar and distribute water to the thirsting people, a beautiful inversion of Husayn suffering in the waterless desert of Karbala'. (Yunus Emre Divani, p. 569.)

The well known legend according to which the Prophet saw Gabriel bring a red and a green garment for his two grandsons, and was informed that these garments pointed to their future deaths through the sword and poison respectively, is mentioned in early Turkish songs, as it also forms a central piece of the popular Sindhi manaqiba which are still sung in the Indus Valley. And similar in both traditions are the stories of how the boys climbed on their grandfather Prophet's back, and how he fondled them. Thus, Hasan and Husayn appear, in early Turkish songs, in various, and generally well known images, but to emphasize their very special role, Yunus Emre calls them 'the two earrings of the divine Throne'. (Divan, p. 569)

The imagery becomes even more colourful in the following centuries when the Shi'i character of the Bektashi order increased and made itself felt in ritual and poetical expression. Husayn b. 'Ali is 'the secret of God', the 'light of the eyes of Mustafa' (thus Seher Abdal, 16th cent.), and his contemporary, Hayreti, calls him, in a beautiful marthiya, 'the sacrifice of the festival of the greater jihad'. Has not his neck, which the Prophet used to kiss, become the place where the dagger fell?

The inhabitants of heaven and earth shed black tears today.

And have become confused like your hair, O Husayn.

Dawn sheds its blood out of sadness for Husayn, and the red tulips wallow in blood and carry the brandmarks of his grief on their hearts ... (Ergun, Bektasi sairleri, p. 95).

The Turkish tradition and that in the regional languages of the Indian subcontinent are very similar. Let us have a look at the development of the marthiya, not in the major literary languages, but rather in the more remote parts of the subcontinent, for the development of the Urdu marthiya from its beginnings in the late 16th century to its culmination in the works of Sauda and particularly Anis and Dabir is well known. In the province of Sind, which had a considerable percentage of Shi'i inhabitants, Persian marthiyas were composed, as far as we can see, from around 1700 onwards.

A certain 'Allama (1682-1782), and Muhammad Mu'in T'haro are among the first marthiya-gus mentioned by the historians, but it is particularly Muhammad Muhsin, who lived in the old, glorious capital of lower Sind, Thatta, with whose name the Persian marthiya in Sind is connected. During his short life (1709-1750), he composed a great number of tarji'band and particularly salam, in which beautiful, strong imagery can be perceived:

The boat of Mustafa's family has been drowned in blood;

The black cloud of infidelity has waylaid the sun;

The candle of the Prophet was extinguished by the breeze of the Kufans.

But much more interesting than the Persian tradition is the development of the marthiya in Sindhi and Siraiki proper. As Christopher Shackleton has

devoted a long and very informative article on the Multani marthiya, I will speak here only on some aspects of the marthiya in Sindhi. As in many other fields of Sindhi poetry, Shah 'Abdu'l-Latif of Bhit (1689-1752) is the first to express ideas which were later taken up by other poets. He devoted Sur Kedaro in his Hindi Risalo to the martyrdom of the grandson of the Prophet, and saw the event of Karbala' as embedded in the whole mystical tradition of Islam. As is his custom, he begins in media res, bringing his listeners to the moment when no news was heard from the heroes:

The moon of Muharram was seen, anxiety about the princes occurred.
What has happened?

Muharram has come back, but the Imams have not come.

O princes of Medina, may the Lord bring us together

He meditates about the reason for their silence and senses the tragedy:

The Mirs have gone out from Medina, they have not come back.

But then he realizes that there is basically no reason for sadness or mourning, for:

The hardship of martyrdom, listen, is the day of joy.

Yazid has not got an atom of this love.

Death is rain for the children of 'Ali.

For rain is seen by the Oriental poets in general, and by Shah 'Abdul Latif in particular, as the sign of divine mercy, of rahmat, and in a country that is so much dependant on rain, this imagery acquires its full meaning.

The hardship of martyrdom is all joyful rainy season.

Yazid has not got the traces of this love.

The decision to be killed was with the Imams from the very beginning.

This means that, already in pre-eternity, Hasan and Husayn had decided to sacrifice their lives for their ideals: when answering the divine address Am I not you Lord? (7:171), they answered 'Bala' (=Yes)', and took upon themselves all the affliction (bala) which was to come upon them. Their intention to become a model for those who gain eternal life by suffering and sacrifice was made, as Shah 'Abdu'l-Latif reminds his listeners, at the very day of the primordial covenant. Then, in the following chapter, our Sindhi poet goes into more concrete details.

The perfect ones, the lion-like sayyids, have come to Karbala';

Having cut with Egyptian swords, they made heaps of carcasses;

Heroes became confused, seeing Mir Husayn's attack.

But he soon turns to the eternal meaning of this battle and continues in good Sufi spirit:

The hardship of martyrdom is all coquetry (naz).

The intoxicated understand the secret of the case of Karbala'.

In having his beloved suffer, the divine Beloved seems to show his coquetry, trying and examining their faith and love, and thus even the most cruel manifestations of the battle in which the 'youthful heroes', as Shah Latif calls them, are enmeshed, are signs of divine love.

The earth trembles, shakes; the skies are in uproar;

This is not a war, this is the manifestation of Love.

The poet knows that affliction is a special gift for the friends of God, Those who are afflicted most are the prophets, then the saints, then the others in degrees', and so he continues:

The Friend kills the darlings, the lovers are slain,
For the elect friends He prepares difficulties.

God, the Eternal, without need what He wants, He does.

Shah 'Abdu'l-Latif devotes two chapters to the actual battle, and to Hurr's joining the fighters 'like a moth joins the candle', e.g., ready to immolate himself in the battle. But towards the end of the poem the mystical aspect becomes once more prominent; those who 'fight in the way of God' reach Paradise, and the houris bind rose chains for them, as befits true bridegrooms. But even more:

Paradise is their place, overpowering they have gone to Paradise,

They have become annihilated in God, with Him they have become He ...

The heroes, who have never thought of themselves, but only of love of God which makes them face all difficulties, have finally reached the goal: the fana fi Allah, annihilation in God and remaining in Him. Shah 'Abdu'l-Latif has transformed the life of the Imams, and of the Imam Husayn in particular, into a model for all those Sufis who strive, either in the jihad-i asghar or in the jihad-i akbar, to reach the final annihilation in God, the union which the Sufis so often express in the imagery of love and loving union. And it is certainly no accident that our Sindhi poet has applied the tune Husayni, which was originally meant for the dirges for Husayn, to the story of his favourite heroine, Sassui, who annihilated herself in her constant, brave search for her beloved, and is finally transformed into him.

Shah'Abdu'l-Latif's interpretation of the fate of the Imam Husayn as a model of suffering love, and thus as a model of the mystical path, is a deeply impressive piece of literature. It was never surpassed, although in his succession a number of poets among the Shi'i of Sindh composed elegies on Karbala' .

The most famous of them is Thabit 'Ali Shah (1740-1810), whose speciality was the genre of suwari, the poem addressed to the rider Husayn, who once had ridden on the Prophet's back, and then was riding bravely into the battlefield. This genre, as well as the more common forms, persists in Sindhi throughout the whole of the 18th and 19th centuries, and even into our own times (Sachal Sarmast, Bedil Rohriwaro, Mir Hasan, Shah Naser, Mirza Baddhal Beg, Mirza Qalich Beg, to mention only a few, some of whom were Sunni Sufis). The suwari theme was lovingly elaborated by Sangi, that is the Talpur prince 'Abdu'l-Husayn, to whom Sindhi owes some very fine and touching songs in honour of the prince of martyrs, and who strongly emphasizes the mystical aspects of the event of Karbala', Husayn is here put in relation with the Prophet.

The Prince has made his miraj on the ground of Karbala',

The Shah's horse has gained the rank of Buraq.

Death brings the Imam Husayn, who was riding his Dhu'l janah, into the divine presence as much as the winged Buraq brought the Prophet into the immediate divine presence during his night journey and ascent into heaven.

Sangi knows also, as ever so many Shi'i authors before him, that weeping for the sake of the Imam Husayn will be recompensed by laughing in the next world, and that the true meditation of the secret of sacrifice in love can lead the seeker to the divine presence, where, finally, as he says Duality becomes distant, and then one reaches unity.

The theme of Husayn as the mystical model for all those who want to pursue the path of love looms large in the poetry of the Indus Valley and in the popular poetry of the Indian Muslims, whose thought was permeated by the teaching of the Suf'is, and for whom, as for the Turkish Suf'is and for 'Attar (and innumerable others), the suffering of the Imam Husayn, and that of Hasan b. Mansur, formed a paradigm of the mystic's life. But there was also another way to understand the role of Husayn in the history of the Islamic people, and importantly, the way was shown by Muham-mad Iqbal, who was certainly a Sunni poet and philosopher.

We mentioned at the beginning that it was he who saw the history of the Ka'ba defined by the two sacrifices, that of Ismail at the beginning, and that of Husayn b. 'Ali in the end (Bal-i Jibril, p. 92). But almost two decades before he wrote those lines, he had devoted a long chapter to Husayn in his *Rumuz-i bekhudi* (p. 126ff). Here, Husayn is praised, again in the mystical vocabulary, as the imam of the lovers, the son of the virgin, the cypresso of freedom in the Prophet's garden.

While his father, Hazrat 'Ali, was, in mystical interpretation, the b of the bismi'llah, the son became identified with the 'mighty slaughtering', a beautiful mixture of the mystical and Qur'anic interpretations. But Iqbal, like his predecessors, would also allude to the fact that Husayn, the prince of the best nation, used the back of the last prophet as his riding camel, and most beautiful is Iqbal's description of the jealous love that became honoured through his blood, which, through its imagery, again goes back to the account of the martyrdom of Husayn b. Mansur al-Hallaj, who rubbed the bleeding stumps of his hands over his blackened face in order to remain surkh ru, red-faced and honoured, in spite of his suffering.

For Iqbal, the position of Husayn in the Muslim community is as central as the position of the surat al-ikhlas in the Holy Book.

Then he turns to his favourite topic, the constant tension between the positive and negative forces, between the prophet and saint on the one hand, and the oppressor and unbeliever on the other. Husayn and Yazid stand in the same line as Moses and Pharaoh. Iqbal then goes on to show how the khilafat was separated from the Qur'anic injunctions and became a worldly kingdom with the appearance of the Umayyads, and it was here that Husayn appeared like a raincloud, again the image of the blessing rain which always contrasts so impressively with the thirst and dryness of the actual scene of Karbala'. It was Husayn's blood that rained upon the desert of Karbala' and left the red tulips there.

The connection between the tulips in their red garments and the bloodstained garments of the martyrs has been a favourite image of Persian poetry since at least the 15th century, and when one thinks of the central place which the tulip occupies in Iqbal's thought and poetry as the flower of the manifestation of the divine fire, as the symbol of the Burning Bush on

Mount Sinai, and as the flower that symbolizes the independent growth of man's khudi (=self) under the most difficult circumstances, when one takes all these aspects of the tulip together, one understands why the poet has the Imam Husayn 'plant tulips in the desert of Karbala'. Perhaps the similarity of the sound of la ilah and lala (=tulip), as well as the fact that lala has the same numerical value as the word Allah, e.g., 66, may have enhanced Iqbal's use of the image in connection with the Imam Husayn, whose blood 'created the meadow', and who constructed a building of 'there is no deity but God.'

But whereas earlier mystical poets used to emphasize the person of Husayn as model for the mystic who through self-sacrifice, finally reaches union with God, Iqbal, understandably, stresses another point: 'To lift the sword is the work of those who fight for the glory of religion, and to preserve the God-given order.' 'Husayn blood, as it were, wrote the commentary on these words, and thus awakened a sleeping nation.'

Again, the parallel with Husayn b. Mansur is evident (at least with Husayn b. Mansur in the way Iqbal interprets him: he too claims, in the Falak-i mushtari in the Javidnama, that he had come to bring resurrection to the spiritually dead, and had therefore to suffer). But when Husayn b. 'Ali drew the sword, the sword of Allah, he shed the blood of those who are occupied with, and interested in, things other than God; graphically, the word la, the beginning of the shahada, resembles the form of a sword (preferably a two-edged sword, like Dhu'l-fiqar), and this sword does away with everything that is an object of worship besides God. It is the prophetic 'No' to anything that might be seen beside the Lord. By using the sword of 'No', Husayn, by his martyrdom, wrote the letters 'but God' (illa Allah) in the desert, and thus wrote the title of the script by which the Muslims find salvation.

It is from Husayn, says Iqbal, that we have learned the mysteries of the Qur'an, and when the glory of Syria and Baghdad and the marvels of Granada may be forgotten, yet, the strings of the instrument of the Muslims still resound with Husayn's melody, and faith remains fresh thanks to his call to prayer.

Husayn thus incorporates all the ideals which a true Muslim should possess, as Iqbal draws his picture: bravery and manliness, and, more than anything else, the dedication to the acknowledgement of God's absolute Unity; not in the sense of becoming united with Him in fana as the Sufi poets had sung, but, rather, as the herald who by his shahada, by his martyrdom, is not only a shahid, a martyr, but at the same time a witness, a shahid, for the unity of God, and thus the model for all generations of Muslims.

It is true, as Iqbal states, that the strings of the Muslims' instruments still resound with his name, and we may close with the last verse of the chapter devoted to him in the Rumuz-i bekhudi:

O zephir, O messenger of those who are far away
Bring our tears to his pure dust.

'Al-Kafi' by Al-Kulayni

Dr. I. K. A. Howard Al-Serat, Vol. 2 (1976), No. 1

The Author

The author of al-Kafi was thiqat al-Islam, Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. Ya'qub b. Ishaq al-Kulaini al-Razi. He died in 328 A.H. or 329 A.H. (939 or 940 A.D.). Very little is known of his life and there is some dispute as to whether the nisba by which he is known is al-Kulaini or al-Kulini. However, it is agreed that it refers to a village in Iran, Kulain or Kulin; both were villages there.^[1]

He first worked as a religious scholar and faqih (student of fiqh or religious law) among the Imami-Shi'i scholars of al-Raiy in Iran. Then he moved to Baghdad and became head of the religious and legal scholars of the Imamis during the time when al-Muqtadir was Caliph. Al-Kulaini's life's work took place during the time of the sufara' of the Mahdi (the agents who acted on behalf of the Hidden Imam during the lesser occultation, al ghaiba al-sughra).^[2]

Al-Kulaini is accredited with several works during this period. Among these are, as well as al-Kafi, a Kitab al-rijal, (a book in which men are assessed as authorities for traditions), al-Radd 'ala 'l-Qaramata ("Refutation of the Carmatians", Rasa' il al-a'immata "Letters of the Imams" and an anthology of poetry about the Imams. Only al-Kafi appears to have survived.^[3]

Al- Kafi

Al-Kafi is a collection of the traditions taught by the Prophet and the Imams and handed down to the Muslim Community by the disciples of the Imams. The name al-Kafi means "that which is sufficient" that is, the book was intended to be a comprehensive collection of Imami-Shi'i traditions. This is explained by al-Kulaini in his introduction to the work:

"...You wanted to have a book which would be sufficient (for your religious needs) (kafin), which would include all kinds of knowledge ('ilm) of religion, which would be adequate for the student, and to which the teacher might refer. Thus it could be used by anyone who wanted knowledge of religion and of legal practice ('amal) according to sound traditions (athar) from the truthful ones (the Imams) ..."

It is claimed that it took al-Kulaini twenty years to complete al-Kafi. It is indeed a very full and comprehensive work, divided into three sections, al-usul, al-furu and al-rawda.

The usul give traditions concerning the principles of religion and principles on which religious law is based. The furu' concern the traditions which elaborate the details of religious law, while the rawda is a collection of traditions outlining various points of religious interest and including some of the letters and speeches of the Imams.

One of the principal features of the work is that the traditions are presented systematically in chapters according to their subject matter. This is a system which Islamic scholars had begun to use in the second half of the second century and in the third century of the Islamic era. Al-Kulaini was not the first Imami scholar to use the method. There are other works of

traditions which use the same method, notably Kitab al-Mahasin of Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Khalid al-Barqi (d. 274/887).^[4] However it seems to have been the first work to present such a comprehensive survey of Imami traditions in this manner.

The source collections of traditions were known as *usul*. These were collections of traditions, either heard directly from the Imam or at least at second hand. There were said to have been four hundred of such collections.^[5] These traditions were not arranged in chapters according to subject but arranged in the order in which the traditions were heard, regardless of subject matter or which particular Imam they were heard from.^[6] It was these *usul* as well as earlier edited collections which were the basis of al-Kulaini's collection as he heard them taught by earlier scholars. Unfortunately with the development of the comprehensive collections, the *usul* must have become less important, and only a few survive in manuscript.

Traditionists before al-Kulaini and traditionists after him, examined the *isnads* (chain of authorities) with great care. Their purpose was to make sure that all reporters of a particular tradition were men of true faith; al-Kulaini himself seems to be less concerned with the *isnad* than with the *matn* or content of the tradition.

Thus he sometimes reports traditions with men in the *isnad*, who were not strictly speaking disciples of the Imams; sometimes they belong to a different persuasion like the Zaidis, sometimes they are *ghulat*, extremists in their views. Some men in the *isnads* are those who regarded one of the earlier Imams as the final Imam and there are even men entirely unconnected with Shi'i views.^[7] The scholars of tradition elaborated a system of categorising the different traditions according to the level of authenticity of a tradition, in terms of *isnad* and subject matter.

The number of traditions in al-Kafi is 15,181,^[8] according to another reckoning 15,176.^[9] If the traditions reported in different sections are counted, the number is over 1,000 more. Of the basic traditions, 5,072 are considered sound (*sahih*) by scholars, i.e. first category; 144 are regarded as good (*hasan*), second category; 178 are held to be trustworthy (*muwaththaq*), third category; 302 are adjudged to be strong (*qawi*), fourth category; and 9,484 are considered weak (*da'if*), fifth category.^[10] The fact that a tradition is considered weak does not mean that it is not true.

What it means is that the scholars of tradition have found some weakness in the tradition, usually one of the persons in the *isnad*, which suggests the possibility that the tradition might not go back to the Imam as claimed. The science developed by Islamic scholars of tradition in order to examine the *isnads* and subject matter of traditions is a very specialised study; it involves, in particular, *'ilm al-rijal*, the study of the backgrounds of individual traditionists who have handed on the tradition.

The *usul* of al-Kafi are divided into eight *kutub* or chapters and most of the *kutub* are divided into *abwab* or sections. The eight *kutub* are.

1. Kitab al-'aql wa-'l'jahl, "The Chapter of Reason and Ignorance". This chapter presents the theological distinction between reason and ignorance.

2. Kitab fadl al-'ilm, "The Chapter of the Excellence of Knowledge". In this chapter knowledge ('ilm) is dealt with on the basis of its basic early Islamic meaning of the traditional knowledge of Islam, i.e. knowledge of religion that has been passed on and inherited. In the course of this chapter, sections deal with the methods of approaching Islamic traditional knowledge; the methods of judging the truth of the subject matter of traditions, a description of traditions from the Imams and arguments against the use of personal opinion (ra'y) and analogy (qiyas). 3. Kitab al-tawhid, "The Chapter of Unity". This, as its name suggests, deals with the theology of God.

4. Kitab al-hujja, "The Chapter of the Proof". This deals with the need for man and the world to have "a proof". That "proof" is the Imams, and before them it was the prophets. It also includes an historical section on the Imams.

5. Kitab al-Iman wa-'l-kufr, "The Chapter of Faith and Unbelief". This is a comprehensive survey of the elements of faith (iman) and unbelief (kufr). It includes such important topics as "the pillars of Islam", and it also deals with the difference between faith (iman) and submission to God (Islam).

6. Kitab al-du'a', "The Chapter of Prayer". This does not concern the statutory salat which is also translated "prayer". This chapter deals with personal prayers (du'a') as distinct from the salat which is performed in a prescribed manner at prescribed times. It records prayers recommended by the Imams for a variety of situations and occasions.

7. Kitab al-fadl al-Qur'an, "The Chapter of the Excellence of the Qur'an". The title of the chapter shows that it concerns the advantages that accrue to the believer who recites the Qur'an, as well as advising on the methods of recitation.

8. Kitab al-ishra, "The Chapter of Companionship". At first sight it seems rather surprising to find such a chapter included in the usul or principles of religion. The main concern of the other chapters has been man's relationship with God. This chapter emphasizes that that relationship with God also encompasses man's relationship with his fellow men.

The furu' of al-kafi are concerned with the elaboration of the details of Islamic law. Islamic law, as is well known, concerns the whole man and his conduct towards God is as much a matter of Islamic law as his conduct towards his fellow men. The furu' contain many more traditions than the usul and there are 26 kutub.

It opens in the traditional Islamic manner with the Kitab al-tahara, "The Chapter of Purity", which concerns the ritual purification that is necessary before prayer (salat) and when the state of ritual purity is broken. The next book Kitab al-haid, "The Chapter of Menstruation" concerns one of the important states in which ritual purity is broken, that of menstruation. The third book also concerns a state which breaks ritual purity, that of death and Kitab al-jana'iz, "The Chapter of Funerals" deals with funerals and other matters concerned with burial rites. The Kitab al-salat, "The Chapter of Prayer" outlines the rules for ritual prayer, and also gives details of supererogatory prayer.

Following Kitab al-salat is another pillar of Islam, the alms tax (al-Zakat) paid as a Muslim. After this comes the Kitab al-siyam, "The Chapter of

Fasting". Here the rules of the prescribed fast of Ramadan are outlined as well as those of voluntary fasts, and fasts performed as an act of expiation. Kitab al-Hajj, "The Chapter of the Pilgrimage" gives the rules of that great Islamic rite. Al-Kulaini also includes in this chapter a section on visiting the tombs of the Prophet and the Imams (al-Ziarat).

The next chapter Kitab al-jihad presents traditions on the regulations for holy warfare. It is followed by Kitab al-ma'isha which concerns the manner of earning one's living. All sorts of trading problems are treated in this chapter. Marriage (nikah) is the subject of the next book. There are numerous details including a very detailed section on mut'a or temporary marriage. Marriage is naturally followed by the birth of children and the next book deals with what is necessary and what is recommended at that time.

Although it deals with a variety of matters concerned with the birth and bringing up of children, it is called Kitab al-'aqiqa. Aqiqa is actually a sacrifice performed on behalf of a seven-day old child. The hair of the child is cut off and its weight in silver given as sadaqa "charity". The Prophet performed this sacrifice on behalf of al-Hasan and al-Husain and Fatima gave away the sadaqa. After marriage and children, the next subject is that of divorce (al-talaq). The different laws concerning divorce are detailed in traditions from the Prophet and the Imams.

Then the different kinds of slaves and the different methods of freeing them are discussed in kitab al-'itq wa-l-tadbir wa-l-katiba. The next two chapters concern hunting (said) and ritual slaughter (dhaba'ih). There follow three chapters on daily living: one is concerned with foods (at'ima) another drinks (ashriba), and the third with clothes, ornaments and courteousness (al-ziq wa-l-tajammul wa-l-muru'a). After this comes a chapter on domestic animals (dawajin).

Two chapters deal with inheritance. The first entitled al-wasaya deals with bequests while the second al-mawarith outlines the ordinary laws of inheritance. The remaining chapters all concern the administration of the law. Kitab al-hudud outlines the circumstances and the manner in which punishments, which have the authority of the Qur'an, and the Prophet should be administered, while al-diyat concerns the laws of blood vengeance and details the compensation that must be given if someone harms another physically.

Kitab al-shahadat concerns the requirements for testimony in legal cases, and Kitab al-qada' wa-l-ahkam outlines the code of behaviour incumbent upon judges and what type of people they should be. The furu closes with a discussion of oaths, vows and the manner of atonement when the former two are broken in Kitab al-aiman wa-l-nudhur wa-l-kaffarat.

In the rawda of al-Kafi, al-Kulaini does not follow the systematic method he had used in the usul and the furu'. The traditions follow one another in what appears to be a fairly inconsistent order. It certainly lacks the detailed systematic approach that is so obviously present in the other two parts of the book.

In presenting the traditions in al-Kafi, al-Kulaini's main approach seems to have been to let the traditions speak for themselves. He intervenes very

little himself. Sometimes he thinks it necessary to explain some discrepancy or apparent inconsistency, but these occasions are very rare. His main contribution to the task has been the massive work of collecting and editing.

The importance of al-Kafi as a work of tradition is considerable. It is regarded as one of the four major works of Shi'i traditions. This has led to considerable number of commentaries being written about it by later writers. The most important of these is Mir'at al-'uqul fi sharh akhbar al al-rasul by al-Majlisi (d. 1110/1698). Other commentators include Mulla Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi (d. 1050/1640), al-Mazandarani (d. 1080/1699), al-Qazwini (d. 1089/1678) and Muhammad Baqir b. Damad (d. 1040/1630). All these commentaries have been published, though most of them nearly a hundred years ago. In addition to these commentaries, there are numerous others, many of which have also been published.^[11]

The great value of al-Kafi to Shi'i Muslims is emphasized by the number of outstanding scholars of their community who have considered it worthwhile to write commentaries on the work. Al-Kafi represents a decisive moment in the collection of traditions from the Prophet and the Imams and their systematic presentation.

Notes:

1. Cf. 'Ali Akbar al-Ghaffari's introduction to his eight volume edition of al-Kulaini's al-Kafi Teheran, 3rd edition 1388-), I, 9-13
2. Ibid. I 13-14
3. Ibid. I 14
4. Ibid. I 23-24 citing page 8 of al-Kulaini's text.
5. This work has been edited in two volumes by Jalal al-Din al-Husaini and published in Teheran, 1370 A.H.
6. On the Usul, see Agha Buzurg al-Tihrani al-Dhari'a ila tasanif al-Shi'a (Najaf and Teheran, 1963-), II, 125-129.
7. Hashim Ma'ruf al-Hasani Dirasat fi 'l-Kafi wa'l-Sahih (Sur 1968) 137-8
8. Based on a count of the various categories of Traditions given by Agha Buzurg al-Tihrani op.cit. XVII 245.
9. This number is given by Ali Akbar al-Ghaffar'i in his introduction to al-Kafi, I, 28 footnote 3
10. Agha Buzurg al-Tihrani, op.cit., XVII, 245.
11. F. Sezgin, Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums (Leiden 1967-), I, 541-2.

The Imam Husayn's Concepts of Religion and Leadership

S.H.M Jafri Vol XI No. 1

ONLY now and again does there arise above the common level some rare spirit, who, having looked upon God face to face, reflects more clearly the divine purpose, and puts into practice more courageously the divine guidances. The light of such a man shines like a strong beacon on a dark and disordered world. Our concepts of human values, human dignity and human freedom are better understood today because there has come into its life, among others, a personality that is a flame of God.

His suffering embodies the pride of mankind, and in his sacrifice is reflected the eternal patience of man's greatness. An intrepid spirit, an impregnable will-power, and a superhuman passion for truth and justice are his main characteristics. And that man is Husayn b. 'Ali, the grandson of the Prophet of Islam. He presents to us the purest, the most elevating and the most inspiring ideal known to man. He is the one who taught man that death is not worse than a dishonourable life. He showed the world the real meaning of religion and the function of the leaders of mankind.

Religion as such is as old as man himself and is an inseparable part of his history, and therefore it has always been an object of deliberation, speculation, interpretation and also of rejection and criticism. From its earliest form of animism, nature-worship or totemism to that of its purest form of monotheism, religion in its broadest sense symbolizes and articulates society's most basic values and commitments. Moreover, there is the elemental urge in man not only to live, but to live nobly. When our passion for noble living receives cosmic backing, we have the peculiar ardour of religion. There is no one who does not raise at some time or other these fundamental questions: What am I? What is my origin? What is my destiny?

Religion is based on the discovery of the essential worth and dignity of the individual and his relation to a higher world of reality. When the human being perceives that he belongs to an order of reality higher than brute nature, he cannot be satisfied by worldly success or materialistic achievements. That he is capable of martyrdom for ideals shows that he lives in and for a world of eternal realities. Worship is man's reach out to the divine.

Religion is the discipline which touches the conscience and helps us to struggle with evil and sordidness, saves us from greed, lust and hatred, releases moral power, and imparts courage in the enterprise of saving man from his inordinate desires. As a discipline of the mind, it contains the key and the essential means of coping with evil which threatens not only the dignity of man but his very existence. It implies the submission of our thinking and conduct to eternal truth. In its essence, religion is a summons to spiritual adventure. It is not theology, but practice and discipline. It is the only remedy for a pride of spirit which has divorced itself from the eternal; when the human spirit defies its sources and conditions and claims absolute self-sufficiency, it becomes insane and suicidal.

To restore the lost relationship between the individual and the eternal is the purpose of religion. It is this basic and fundamental relationship which alone can bring ease and harmony in man's relationship with God, with himself, with his fellow man or with the society in which he lives, and with nature. If the relationship between the individual and the sole Creator is broken, the entire fabric of peaceful and meaningful human life will be broken. It is this harmony which religions serve to establish, Islam being the last of them.

Islam means peace as well as submission to the will of God and this is the essence of the Islamic concept of religion. The submission to God in Islam implies, in attitude and action, a regulation of our lives. God, according to Islam, is not a dogma but an ideal and a regulative force in life, and a guarantee of our highest values. Thus, the submission to God, the 'Ideal', with a firm belief in its reality, is a life both of virtue and inner happiness. A man who submits himself to God is true to his real self and, therefore, attains inner peace, which is real happiness, and quite different from worldly pleasures. This happiness more than compensates for any lack of material gain, or for physical pain and suffering.

It is with this concept of religion in general and Islam in particular that we should try to understand how the grandson of the Prophet of Islam, the Imam Husayn b. 'Ali, explains the meaning of religion and the function of religious leadership. The question of the leadership of mankind is the oft-repeated topic of the Qur'an. Whenever the Qur'an talks about divine guidance it also points out those who are entitled to guide. The Qur'anic terms for leaders of mankind are *rasul*, *nabi* and *imam*.

The first two are specific terms, whereas the word *imam* is used in a rather general sense for those who are endowed with the special qualities with which they can lead others to righteousness and good deeds. Thus, for example, we read in the Qur'an that when Abraham, the patriarch of the prophets was told by God 'Behold, I make you an *imam* (leader) of the people', he asked:

'And what about my offspring?' God replied: 'My covenant will not go to evildoers.' Thus an *imam*, or leader, of the people is one who leads the people in all cases of conscience, keeps the covenant of God remembered and the teaching of the Prophets alive and effective. He is to protect the religio-ethical message delivered by the messenger of God from being corrupted and changed, and to save it from the reactionary forces which emerge from time to time.

The Message of the Prophet of Islam passed into the hands of the worldly Umayyads within thirty years of his death. After the death of 'Ali in 40/661, Mu'awiya b. Abi Sufyan appropriated the office of the leadership of the community for himself through the use of force and deceit and ruled the Muslims for twenty years. On Mu'awiya's death, his son Yazid assumed the role of the leadership of the Muslims as the caliph in accordance with the former's unprecedented testament.

Yazid's anti-Islamic behaviour and openly irreligious practices were well known throughout the Muslim world and earned for him contempt and disfavour, especially among those who cared for Islamic religio-ethical

values. An embodiment of all sorts of vice, tyranny, injustice, oppression and despotic rule, Yazid wanted Husayn to pay him homage as the leader of the Muslim community and submit himself to his authority. That was the crucial point in Islamic history when the meaning of religion had to be reasserted and the function of leadership redefined.

This was done by Husayn b. 'Ali with the most effective method of sacrifice, suffering and martyrdom. In reply to the letters written by the people of Iraq inviting him to come to Kufa to take up their leadership, as they had no imam other than him, Husayn wrote to them:

From Husayn b. Ali to the believers and Muslims [of Iraq]: You have invited me to come to you because you have no imam to guide you, and that you hope my arrival there will unite you in the right path and in the truth. You must be clear about the fact that the imam can only be one who follows the Book of God, makes justice and honesty his conduct and behaviour, judges with truth, and devotes himself to the service of God.

In response to the invitation of the people of Basra, Husayn replied:

. . . I have sent my messenger to you and I call you to the Book of God, and the sunna of his Prophet, the sunna which has become obliterated; innovations have become active and energetic. If you listen to me and obey my orders, I will guide you to the right path. May the peace and mercy of God be upon you.

There is space here only to give these two quotations from numerous such statements which Husayn made from the time he left Medina till his martyrdom about six months later. These quotations are by themselves a complete explanation of Husayn's approach to the question of leadership as well as of the function of religion in society. They also explain the duties of an imam and the nature of the Imamate which was so distorted at this point in Islamic history.

The main points which emerge from them are: (i) that an imam is one who unites the people; (ii) that he should lead them to the right path and to truth; (iii) that the Qur'an, as the Book of God, is an eternal truth, and the duty of the imam is to follow its model, and conduct his life according to the will of God; (iv) that the imam must make justice and honesty the cornerstones of his life; (v) that truth in its most universal and absolute form must be his only criterion; (vi) and that he must devote himself to the service of God.

The functions of the imam enumerated here are both particular and universal, descriptive and normative, and primary and evaluative; they can be applied in every society, time and epoch. They are particular, descriptive and normative when read strictly in the context of Islam, and are universal, primary and evaluative if read in their general meaning which embraces all religions and the whole of humanity.

The key terms in Husayn's declarations are: the unity of people (which is basically a unity of purpose), the right path, truth, justice and honesty, and devotion to the service of God. These are in the essence of all religions as well as of Islam. Here religion is not separated from the well-being of society, and society is based on the eternal reality which creates consciousness in society.

An inseparably implied meaning of Husayn's declarations is that the leader of men need not take an active part in politics or in governmental affairs. His primary function is to serve humanity with ethical and normative integrity. He must create moral consciousness and a sense of responsibility which transcends the limits of the political community.

He must serve social and spiritual values, but unfortunately totalitarian and despotic regimes subordinate spiritual and moral activities to their ends. It is at this point that Husayn rises up to set a new standard of leadership for challenging totalitarianism, despotism and the forces of evil. There were two ways open to him, one to mass his forces, gather strength, power, weapons and the military might to combat the despotic rule of Yazid. This would not have been difficult for the prestigious grandson of the Prophet, if he had wanted to resort to such action. But the actions of Husayn show that from the beginning to the end his strategy aimed at a much higher goal than simply accession to the caliphate, the term given to temporal authority in Islam.

There is no evidence that he tried, while at Mecca, to enlist active supporters from among the people who gathered around him, or to propagate his cause among the great number of people who were coming to Mecca for the hajj; there is also no evidence that he attempted to send his emissaries to stir up any rebellion in the provinces such as the Yemen or Persia, which were sympathetic to his household, even though he was advised by some of his family members to do so. Above all, had he acted promptly on the invitation of the Kufans, while Umayyad control over the city was weak, he might have had a fair chance of success in grasping temporal power. In the six-month period before the battle of Karbala', Husayn did nothing to consolidate his strength and military power. Instead, throughout this period he was preparing himself for a different strategy of revolution.

Some of the writers on Karbala', looking at it from the common standards of war and victory, describe Husayn's action as an ambitious attempt to wrest political power and as an error of judgement. Husayn's numerous speeches, addresses, letters and statements bear testimony to the fact that he was fully aware of the situation and the consequences. Suffice it to point out that on the road from Medina to Mecca, then at the time when he was being the 'House of God' for Kufa, and finally throughout the journey from Mecca to Kufa he was informed and warned by dozens of people about the danger and that 'the hearts of the Iraqis were for him but their swords were for the Umayyads'. But Husayn's replies to all of those who attempted to deflect him from his purpose were always more or less in the same vein:

I leave it to God to choose what is best.... God is not hostile to him who proposes the just cause.

From these replies it is clear that Husayn was fully aware of the dangers he would encounter and that he had a certain strategy and plan in mind to bring about a revolution in the consciousness of the Muslim community. Furthermore, it is also very clear from the sources, as has been pointed out above, that Husayn did not try to organize or mobilize military support,

which he easily could have done in the Hijaz, nor did he even try to exploit whatever physical strength was available to him.

On the contrary, from the moment he left Mecca for Kufa, time and again he gathered those accompanying him and asked them to leave him alone and go to safety, the last of these requests being on the night of 'Ashura'. Is it conceivable that anyone striving for political ascendancy would ask his supporters to abandon him? No one can answer this question in the affirmative. What then did Husayn have in mind? Why was he still heading for Kufa?

A careful study and analysis of the events of Karbala' reveals that from the very beginning Husayn was planning for a complete revolution in the religious consciousness of Muslims. All of his actions show that he was aware of the fact that a victory achieved through military strength and might is always temporary, because another stronger power can, in the course of time, bring it down in ruins. But a victory achieved through suffering and sacrifice is everlasting and leaves permanent imprints on man's consciousness. Husayn was brought up in the lap of the founder of Islam and had inherited the love and devotion to the Islamic way of life from his father.

As time went on, he noticed the great changes which were rapidly taking place in the community in regard to religious feelings and morality. The natural process of conflict and struggle between action and reaction was now at work. That is, Muhammad's progressive Islamic action had succeeded in suppressing Arab conservatism, embodied in heathen pre-Islamic practices and ways of thinking. But in less than thirty years' time this Arab conservatism had revitalized itself as a forceful reaction to challenge Muhammad's action once again. The forces of this reaction had already moved into motion with the rise of Mu'awiya, but the succession of Yazid was a clear sign that the reactionary forces had mobilized themselves and now re-emerged with full vigour.

The strength of this reaction embodied in Yazid's character, was now powerful enough to suppress, or at least efface, the Prophet's action. His conduct amounted to open ridicule of Muhammad's sunna and the norms of the Qur'an. He openly defied the Prophethood of Muhammad and the revelation received by him. Now this same Yazid had become the head of the Muslim community and was asking Husayn to accept his authority. Husayn's acceptance of Yazid, with the latter's reactionary attitude against Islamic norms, would not have meant merely a political arrangement but an endorsement of Yazid's character and way of life as well. Thus the entire ethical and religious system of Islam, in the thinking of Husayn, was now in dire need of the reactivation of Muhammad's action against the old Arabian reaction and required a complete shaking up.

He realized that mere force of arms would not save Islamic action and consciousness. To him it needed a shaking and jolting of hearts and feelings. This, he decided, could only be achieved through sacrifice and suffering, and therefore, in order to save Islam and its values, and the freedom of man and his dignity, Husayn made one of the greatest sacrifices in human history. Eighteen male members of his family including a six-month-old

son and 44 of his companions were killed in front of him and then he himself laid down his life at the altar of truth and human rights.

Husayn's body, already torn by numerous wounds, was trampled under the hooves of the horses, his tents were burnt and looted; the helpless women and children were shamelessly paraded through the streets of Iraq and Syria as captives, and were treated with humiliation at the crowded courts of Ibn Ziyad in Kufa, and Yazid in Damascus.

Husayn was fully aware of the extent of the brutal nature of the reactionary forces. He knew that after killing him the Umayyads would make his wife and children captives, and take them all the way from Kufa to Damascus. This caravan of the captives of the Prophet's immediate family would publicize Husayn's message and would force the Muslims' hearts to ponder on the tragedy. It would make the Muslims think over the whole affair and would awaken their consciousness. This is exactly what happened; Husayn succeeded in his purpose.

It is difficult today to evaluate exactly the impact of Husayn's action on Islamic morality and way of thinking because it prevailed. Had Husayn not shaken and awakened Muslim consciousness by this method, can it be said that Yazid's way of life would not have become standard behaviour in the Muslim community, endorsed and accepted by the grandson of the Prophet. Even after Yazid, despotic rulers have held power in Islam, and the character and personal behaviour of these despotic rulers has not been very different from that of Yazid, but the change in thinking which prevailed after the sacrifice of Husayn always served as a criterion of distinction between the Islamic concept of leadership and the behaviour of totalitarian and despotic rulers. Husayn tells the world that it is no use destroying man; we must destroy man's anti-human actions and conduct. If rulers are overthrown but the system remains unaltered, nothing is gained.

Imams - Clear and Coherent Policy

S.J Hussain, Vol V No. 3 & 4 , 1400

A question has puzzled some believers a great deal, namely why did al-Husayn fight with the sword, while his successors refrained from doing so, especially as all the Imams subscribed to a single and coherent ideology. For, if al-Husayn, in spite of the small number of his followers rose up against injustice, demanding his usurped rights, why did Imam al-Sadiq, for example, not rise up when the numbers of his partisans had increased.

This question necessitates knowledge of the circumstances faced by al-Husayn, compared to those which faced the other Imams, so that we can recognise our task today.

It is, naturally, well-known that the Prophet started his mission peacefully and secretly, and that this continued for more than ten years. During these years he succeeded in forming a group of followers, who firmly believed in the new message and rejected everything which was connected with the time of the jahiliyya.

Eventually the Prophet felt that this group was capable of confronting the power of the jahiliyya, and so raised the jihad with the sword, and, after a bitter military struggle, succeeded in founding the Islamic state in Medina. This hard task which led to the Prophet's establishment of a new society, was left, in its entirety, to Imam Ali, so that he could complete what the Prophet had initiated, as regards the complete elimination of the beliefs of the Jahiliyya, and then establish a society which would base its relationships upon the prescribed rule of God's law.

However Imam Ali did not come to power immediately after the death of the Prophet. On the contrary he was prevented from achieving power, and had but a few loyal supporters, having discovered that many of those who had been converted to Islam had only embraced it externally, without true belief in their hearts, and acted according to the customs of the Jahiliyya, while covering it with a superficial belief in Islam. Such a situation confirmed the predictions of the Quranic verse which says, "If he dies or is killed you shall turn your backs" (Imran, 144), that is you shall return to your old beliefs. The Imam found that he could not rise to recover his rights, so he did not rebel.

but strove throughout his life, to organise a group of sincere believers from among the Community, attentive to the objectives of the new religion, believing in the legitimacy of Ali's claims to the Imamate, and applying the Sunna of the Prophet in their daily lives. When he finally came to power, after the death of Uthmans Imam Ali did not demand silence as regards economic and political corruption, but rather encouraged the Community to purify their hearts and their actions, and fought those Muslims who sought to exploit the Islamic expansion to their own ends, or interpreted the laws of Islam according to their own desires and interests, at the expense of those of society at large.

Al-Hasan followed in the footsteps of his father in the fight against the power of the Jahiliyya, and against some of the Muslims, whose souls had not been purified by the fear of God, and who were exploiting the economic and political advantages of the Islamic expansion into Syria. For this reason

he continued to fight and encourage his followers in their struggle, but some of his followers refused to obey his commands, and one even tried to assassinate him in al-Mada'in, which resulted in al-Hasan's receiving a serious leg injury, which contributed to his later agreement to a truce.

The splits amongst the followers of al-Hasan, and the spread of the disturbances amongst his army on, one hand, and the unity of the opposition and their insistence on continued hostilities on the other, forced al-Hasan to sign the truce with Mu'awiya. Some of the most important stipulations of this truce was that Mu'awiya would not endanger the life or the properties of al-Hasan's followers, or curse the People of the House, in the mosques, and that al-Husayn should succeed Mu'awiya on the death of the latter.

Imam al-Husayn committed himself to acting according to the stipulations of this agreement, whereas the opposition, during the twenty years of Mu'awiya's rule, systematically broke the points of agreement one after another. In the last years of his rule Mu'awiya designated Yazid as his successor, thus breaking his promise to al-Hasan, that al-Husayn would succeed him.

Al-Husayn had been keeping a careful watch on the activities of Mu'awiya during his rule, and had, accordingly, prepared his followers for any eventuality. In the light of what reached him from Iraq al-Husayn believed that the people were ripe for rebellion on one hand, while, on the other hand, he noticed that the Community as a whole had become stagnant and needed somebody to bring it back to life. Therefore he advanced towards Kufa and, in spite of the fact that the Kufans who had previously promised to help him, had withdrawn their support and listened to the overtures of the authorities, he determined to fight despite the fewness of his followers, until all of them perished at the Battle of Kerbala.

From this it is clear that al-Husayn's decision to fight was by no means an innovation but rather a continuation of the policy of his brother, father and grandfather, as regards opposition to the power of the Jahiliyya whenever possible. The assassination of al-Husayn led al-Sajjad and the other Imams to adopt their quiescent policy towards the authorities who had seized power, because he realised that:

i. (Firstly) In spite of their numbers, the followers of al-Husayn did not possess sufficient loyalty to surrender themselves and their possessions in the path of God, according to the instructions of the Imam;

ii) (and secondly) Many of the Community were unaware that al-Husayn was the rightful Imam and the leader of the Islamic community, by the Prophet's designation, just as they were unaware that the existing authorities were illegal.

For this reason we find al-Sajjad following a policy of silence towards the authority of the Umayyads, however this silence did not indicate recognition of their authority, but rather that his own followers were few. Similarly his isolation from society was by no means an escape from reality, but was in fact tacit opposition to the corruption and tyranny which had brought about the assassination of al-Husayn, the burning of the Ka'ba, and the attacking and plundering of the City of the Prophet, which had lasted for three days.

Al-Sajjad, during the time of his Imamate, concentrated his efforts on purifying the souls of his people and encouraging fear of God in their acts and in their statements, giving priority to the purification of the soul by applying the rules of God firstly upon the individual, discouraging him from the self-interest which had contributed to al-Husayn's death.

Al-Sajjad's intentions were to bring together a group of sincere Muslims, who adhered to the objectives of Islam and performed its rules, called people to obey God in their actions before their tongues, and followed the Imam in all things. Furthermore, al-Sajjad insisted that his followers understand that any war with the sword could only be a jihad, if the one who proclaimed it possessed the necessary quality of calling people to God through his acts rather than his statements.

It is stated that he mentioned the following Qur'anic verse, "They are the ones who turn to God in repentance, who worship him, who praise him, who go about in the land serving him who bow down to God, who prostrate themselves in prayer, who enjoin good and forbid evil, and who watch the limits set by Allah And give glad tidings to those who believe." (113, Tawba). Thereafter he stated, "When we find those who possess these attributes, jihad with them is better than the Pilgrimage." (Kafi, 5/22).

Imam al-Baqir followed his father's policy and did not rebel against the Umayyads, and advised his brother, Zayd, not to rise in arms against the illegal authority of the Umayyads, because the Community was not sufficiently politically aware to rebel against the government. So al-Baqir began to disseminate political awareness in the Community, by means of Prophetic tradition just as he commanded some of his followers to remind the people of al-Husayn's struggle and his martyrdom during the Hajj each year, thereby hoping to kindle the feelings of the Community, to move their hearts and to inflame their emotions so that they could sympathise with the ideology of revolution for upright causes.

For, the time of the Hajj is one of gathering for Muslims from all countries, and the dissemination of the objects of the struggle and martyrdom of al-Husayn, and the illustration of his close relationship to the Prophet, encouraged both complaint and doubt concerning the legitimacy of the authorities, which in turn created a fertile environment for a movement towards bring about their downfall.

Despite the fact that the cultural activities of al-Sajjad and al-Baqir drew a large number of followers to them, al-Baqir did not consider them suitable for rebellion, because they lacked the necessary loyalty and organisation. Al-Kulayni reports that 'Abd Allah b. al-'Ata once said to al-Baqir, "Indeed your party is large in Iraq. By God, there is nobody amongst your people like you. So why do you not rise in arms?" So he replied, "O 'Abd Allah b. al-'Ata, you have taken to listening to the masses." While it is also related that al-Sadiq himself did not count the large number of his followers as an integral part of his plans for revolt. On the contrary, he gave precedence to their faith, their fear of God, their courage in standing by the truth, and their loyalty and obedience to the Imam.

The resolute policies of the Imams al-Baqir and al-Sadiq, were not unplanned, but were in fact based on bitter experience. Many reports state

that the plans of the Imams involved a rebellion in 70 A.H., but the martyrdom of al-Husayn delayed these plans. There is also evidence in these plans of a revolt to be staged in 140 A.H. But due to the lack of organisation amongst the Imam's followers, and their inability to keep the date of the revolution secret, their plans became known to their enemies, and so, the later Imams did not inform their followers of any subsequent intended uprising.

From this survey, it is clear that the Imams actually possessed a clear and coherent policy. For example Imam Ali made a truce with the contemporary rulers when he had only a few followers, but, when the numbers of his followers increased, he took arms openly, and similarly al-Hasan fought when he and his party were strong, but made a truce in the time of weakness. Al-Husayn did likewise, and rebelled in the way of God, depending upon the loyalty of the Kufans, while the other Imams refrained from doing so, until they had established a strong body of loyal followers, capable of transforming the ideology of the Community in favour of God's law.

The main task of the faithful at the present time, is to cleanse themselves of any act related to the era of the Jahiliyya, and this can be achieved by following the orders of God, as illustrated by the behaviour and daily life of the Prophet and his Household. Every believer who claims allegiance to the present Imam should present his allegiance and his loyalty to the Imam by performing the obligatory commands and rules, such as the prayers, fasting, the zakat, the Hajj, and by showing obedience to the legal 'Ulema of Ahl al-Bayt, following their instructions and calling people to good and forbidding evil acts.

Similarly they should perform actions which strengthen the social ties of society and establish it firmly and safely, such as obedience to parents and relations, respect towards neighbours, trustworthiness in agreements and contracts, loyalty in their occupations and in their dealings with people and to the country in which they live.

The one who is loyal to Ahl al-Bayt and the Imam of the Age, is the person who refrains from bad deeds, such as polytheism, disobedience to their parents, slandering women as adultresses, killing innocent people, lying, theft, the drinking of alcohol and any act which separates one from God. If the faithful perform the obligatory deeds, refrain from what is forbidden and obey God loyally, this will lead to the establishment of a society free from complexity and corruption, in which the faithful can be sincerely loyal to the commands of the Imam of the Age.

The Prophet and Prophetic Tradition - The Last Prophet and Universal Man

Professor Syed Hossein Nasr, Vol III No. 1 , 1397

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The Prophet as the founder of Islam and the messenger of God's revelation to mankind is the interpreter par excellence of the Book of God; and his Hadith and Sunnah, his sayings and actions, are after the Quran, the most important sources of the Islamic tradition. In order to understand the significance of the Prophet it is not sufficient to study, from the outside historical texts pertaining to his life.

One must view him also from within the Islamic point of view and try to discover the position he occupies in the religious consciousness of Muslims. When in any Islamic language one says the Prophet, it means Muhammad—whose name as such is never iterated except that as a courtesy it be followed by the formula 'Sall' Allahu 'alaihi wa sallam', that is, 'may God's blessing and salutation be upon him'.

It is even legitimate to say that, in general, when one says the Prophet it means the prophet of Islam; for although in every religion the founder who is an aspect of the Universal Intellect, becomes the Aspect, the Word the Incarnation, nevertheless each founder emphasizes a certain aspect of the Truth and even typifies that aspect universally. Although there is belief in incarnation in many religions, when one says the Incarnation it refers to Christ who personifies this aspect.

And although every prophet and saint has experienced 'enlightenment', the Enlightenment refers to the experience of the Buddha which is the most outstanding and universal embodiment of this experience. In the same manner the prophet of Islam is the prototype and perfect embodiment of prophecy and so in a profound sense is the Prophet. In fact in Islam every form of revelation is envisaged as a prophecy whose complete and total realization is to be seen in Muhammad—Upon whom be peace. As the Sufi poet Mahmud Shabistari writes in his incomparable *Gulshan-i raz* (the Secret Rose Garden):

The first appearance of prophethood was in Adam,

And its perfection was in the 'Seal of the Prophets'. (Whinfield translation)

It is difficult for a non-Muslim to understand the spiritual significance of the Prophet and his role as the prototype of the religious and spiritual life, especially if one comes from a Christian background. Compared to Christ, or to the Buddha for that matter, the earthly career of the Prophet seems often too human and too engrossed in the vicissitudes of social, economic and political activity to serve as a model for the spiritual life.

That is why so many people who write today of the great spiritual guides of humanity are not able to understand and interpret him sympathetically. It is easier to see the spiritual radiance of Christ or even medieval saints, Christian or Muslim, than that of the Prophet; although the Prophet is the

supreme saint in Islam without whom there would have been no sanctity whatsoever.

The reason for this difficulty is that the spiritual nature of the Prophet is veiled in his human one and his purely spiritual function is hidden in his duties as the guide of men and the leader of a community. It was the function of the Prophet to be, not only a spiritual guide, but also the organizer of a new social order with all that such a function implies. And it is precisely this aspect of his being that veils his purely spiritual dimension from foreign eyes.

Outsiders have understood his political genius, his power of oratory, his great statesmanship, but few have understood how he could be the religious and spiritual guide of men and how his life could be emulated by those who aspire to sanctity. This is particularly true in the modern world in which religion is separated from other domains of life and most modern men can hardly imagine how a spiritual being could also be immersed in the most intense political and social activity.

Actually if the contour of the personality of the Prophet is to be understood he should not be compared to Christ or the Buddha whose message was meant primarily for saintly men and who founded a community based on monastic life which later became the norm of a whole society. Rather, because of his dual function as 'king' and 'prophet', as the guide of men in this world and the hereafter, the Prophet should be compared to the prophet-kings of the Old Testament, to David and Solomon, and especially to Abraham himself.

Or to cite once again an example outside the Abrahamic tradition, the spiritual type of the Prophet should be compared in Hinduism, to Rama and Krishna, who although in a completely different traditional climate, were avatars and at the same time kings and householders who participated in social life with all that such activity implies as recorded in the Mahabharata and the Ramayana.

This type of figure who is at once a spiritual being and a leader of men has always been, relatively speaking, rare in the Christian West, especially in modern times. Political life has become so divorced from spiritual principles that to many people such a function itself appears as an impossibility in proof of which Westerners often point to the purely spiritual life of Christ who said, 'My Kingdom is not of this world.' And even historically the Occident has not witnessed many figures of this type unless one considers the Templars and in another context such devout kings as Charlemagne and St. Louis.

The figure of the Prophet is thus difficult for many Occidentals to understand and this misconception to which often bad intention has been added is responsible for the nearly total ignorance of his spiritual nature in most works written about him in Western languages of which the number is legion. One could in fact say that of the major elements of Islam the real significance of the Prophet is the least understood to non Muslims and especially to Occidentals.

The Prophet did participate in social life in its fullest sense. He married, had a household, was a father and moreover he was ruler and judge and had

also to fight many wars in which he underwent painful ordeals. He had to undergo many hardships and experience all the difficulties which human life especially that of the founder of a new state and society, implies. But with-in all these activities his heart rested in contentment with the Divine, and he continued inwardly to repose in the Divine Peace. In fact his participation in social and political life was precisely to integrate this domain into a spiritual centre.

The Prophet entertained no political or worldly ambition whatsoever. He was by nature a contemplative. Before being chosen as prophet he did not like to frequent social gatherings and activities. He led a caravan from Mecca to Syria passing through the majestic silence of the desert whose very 'infinity' induces man towards contemplation. He often spent long periods in the cave of Hira' in solitude and meditation. He did not believe himself to be by nature a man of the world or one who was naturally inclined to seek political power among the Quraysh or social eminence in Meccan society although he came from the noblest family.

It was in fact very painful and difficult for him to accept the burden of prophecy which implied the founding of not only a new religion but also a new social and political order. All the traditional sources, which alone matter in this case testify to the great hardship the Prophet underwent by being chosen to participate in the active life in its most acute form.

Modern studies on the life of the Prophet which depict him as a man who enjoyed fighting wars are totally untrue and in fact a reversal of the real personality of the Prophet. Immediately after the reception of the first revelation the Prophet confessed to his wife, Khadijah, how difficult it was for him to accept the burden of prophecy and how fearful he was of all that such a mission implied.

Likewise, with the marriages of the Prophet, they are not at all signs of his lenience vis-a-vis the flesh. During the period of youth when the passions are most strong the Prophet lived with only one wife who was much older than he and also underwent long periods of abstinence. And as a prophet many of his marriages were political ones which, in the prevalent social structure of Arabia, guaranteed the consolidation of the newly founded Muslim community.

Multiple marriage, for him, as is true of Islam in general, was not so much enjoyment as responsibility and a means of integration of the newly founded society. Besides, in Islam the whole problem of sexuality appears in a different light from that in Christianity and should not be judged by the same standards. The multiple marriages of the Prophet, far from pointing to his weakness towards 'the flesh' symbolize his patriarchal nature and his function, not as a saint who withdraws from the world, but as one who sanctifies the very life of the world by living in it and accepting it with the aim of integrating it into a higher order of reality.

The Prophet has also often been criticized by modern Western authors for being cruel and for having treated men harshly. Such a charge is again absurd because critics of this kind have forgotten that either a religion leaves the world aside, as Christ did, or integrates the world, in which case it must deal with such questions as war, retribution, justice, etc. When Charlemagne

or some other Christian king thrust a sword into the breast of a heathen soldier he was, from the individual point of view, being cruel to that soldier. But on the universal plane this was a necessity for the preservation of a Christian civilization which had to defend its borders or perish. The same holds true for a Buddhist king or ruler, or for that matter any religious authority which seeks to integrate human society.

The Prophet exercised the utmost kindness possible and was harsh only with traitors. Now, a traitor against a newly founded religious community, which God has willed and whose existence is a mercy from heaven for mankind, is a traitor against the Truth itself. The harshness of the Prophet in such cases is an expression of Divine Justice.

One cannot accuse God of being cruel because men die, or because there is illness and ugliness in the world. Every construction implies a previous destruction, a clearing of grounds for the appearance of a new form. This holds true not only in case of a physical structure but also in case of a new revelation which must clear the ground if it is to be a new social and political order as well as a purely religious one. What appears to some as the cruelty of the Prophet towards men is precisely this aspect of his function as the instrument of God for the establishment of a new world order whose homeland in Arabia was to be pure of any paganism and polytheism which if present would pollute the very source of this new fountain of life. As to what concerned his own person, the Prophet was always the epitome of kindness and generosity.

Nowhere is the nobility and generosity of the Prophet better exemplified than in his triumphant entry into Mecca, which in a sense highlights his earthly career. There, at a moment when the very people who had caused untold hardships and trials for the Prophet were completely subdued by him, instead of thinking of vengeance, which was certainly his due, he forgave them.

One must study closely the almost unimaginable obstacles placed before the Prophet by these same people, of the immense suffering he had undergone because of them, to realize what degree of generosity this act of the Prophet implies. It is not actually necessary to give an apologetic account of the life of the Prophet, but these matters need to be answered because the false and often malicious accusations of this kind made against the founder of Islam in so many modern studies make the understanding of him by those who rely upon such studies well nigh impossible.

Also the Prophet was not certainly without love and compassion. Many incidents in his life and sayings recorded in Hadith literature? point to his depth of love for God which, in conformity with the general perspective of Islam, was never divorced from the knowledge of Him. For example in a well known Hadith, he said, 'O Lord, grant to me the love of thee. Grant that I love those that love thee. Grant that I may do the deed that wins thy love. Make thy love dear to me more than self, family and wealth.' Such sayings clearly demonstrate the fact that although the Prophet was in a sense a king or ruler of a community and a judge and had to deal according to Justice in both capacities, he was at the same time one whose being was anchored in the love for God. Otherwise, he could not have been a prophet.

From the Muslim point of view, the Prophet is the symbol of perfection of both the human person and human society. He is the prototype of the human individual and the human collectivity. As such he bears certain characteristics in the eye of traditional Muslims which can only be discovered by studying the traditional accounts of him. The many Western works on the Prophet, with very few exceptions, are useless from this point of view no matter how much historical data they provide for the reader.

The same holds true in fact for the new type of biographies of the Prophet written by modernized Muslims who would like at all cost to make the Prophet an ordinary man and neglect systematically any aspect of his being that does not conform to a humanistic and rationalistic framework they have adopted a priori, mostly as a result of either influence from or reaction to the modern Western point of view.

The profound characteristics of the Prophet which have guided the Islamic community over the centuries and have left an indelible mark on the consciousness of the Muslim cannot be discerned save through the traditional sources and the Hadith, and, of course, the Quran itself which bears the perfume of the soul of the person through whom it was revealed.

The universal characteristics of the Prophet are not the same as his daily actions and day to day life, which can be read about in standard biographies of the Prophet, and with which we cannot deal here. They are, rather characteristics which issue forth from his personality as a particular spiritual prototype. Seen in this light there are essentially three qualities that characterize the Prophet. First of all the Prophet possessed the quality of piety in its most universal sense, that quality which attaches man to God. The Prophet was in that sense pious. He had a profound piety which inwardly attached him to God, that made him place the interest of God before everything else including himself. Secondly he had a quality of combativeness, of always being actively engaged in combat against all that negated the Truth and disrupted harmony. Externally it meant fighting wars, either military, political or social ones, the war which the Prophet named the 'little holy war' (al-jihad al-asghar). Inwardly this combativeness meant a continuous war against the carnal soul (nafs), against all that in man tends towards the negation of God and His Will, the 'great holy war' (al-jihad al-akbar).

It is difficult for modern men to understand the positive symbolism of war thanks to modern technology which has made war total and its instruments the very embodiment of what is ugly and evil. Men therefore think that the role of religion is only in preserving some kind of precarious peace. This, of course, is true, but not in the superficial sense that is usually meant. If religion is to be an integral part of life it must try to establish peace in the most profound sense, namely to establish equilibrium between all the existing forces that surround man and to overcome all the forces that tend to destroy this equilibrium. No religion has sought to establish peace in this sense more than Islam.

It is precisely in such a context that war can have a positive meaning as the activity to establish harmony both inwardly and outwardly and it is in this sense that Islam has stressed the positive aspect of combativeness.

The Prophet embodies to an eminent degree this perfection of combative virtue. If one thinks of the Buddha as sitting in a state of contemplation under the Bo-tree, the Prophet can be imagined as a rider sitting on a steed with the sword of justice and discrimination drawn in his hand and galloping at full speed, yet ready to come to an immediate halt before the mountain of Truth.

The Prophet was faced from the beginning of his prophetic mission with the task of wielding the sword of Truth, of establishing equilibrium and in this arduous task he had no rest. His rest and repose was in the heart of the holy war (jihad) itself and he represents this aspect of spirituality in which peace comes not in passivity but in true activity. Peace belongs to one who is inwardly at peace with the Will of Heaven and outwardly at war with the forces of disruption and disequilibrium.

Finally, the Prophet possessed the quality of magnanimity in its fullness. His soul displayed a grandeur which every devout Muslim feels. He is for the Muslim nobility and magnanimity personified. This aspect of the Prophet is fully displayed in his treatment of his companions which, in fact, has been the model for later ages and which all generations of Muslims have sought to emulate.

To put it another way, which focuses more sharply the personality of the Prophet, the qualities can be enumerated as strength, nobility and serenity or inner calm. Strength is outwardly manifested in the little holy war and inwardly in the great holy war according to the saying of the Prophet who, returning from one of the early wars, said, 'We have returned from the small jihad to the great jihad.' It is this great jihad which is of particular spiritual significance as a war against all those tendencies which pull the soul of man away from the Centre and Origin and bar him from the grace of heaven.

The nobility or generosity of the Prophet shows itself most of all in charity towards all men and more generally towards all beings. Of course this virtue is not central as in Christianity which can be called the religion of charity. But it is important on the human level and as it concerns the person of the Prophet. It points to the fact that there was no narrowness or pettiness in the soul of the Prophet, no limitation in giving of himself to others. A spiritual man is one who always gives to those around him and does not receive, according to the saying, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'. It was characteristic of the Prophet to have always given till the last moment of his life. He never asked anything for himself and never sought to receive.

The aspect of serenity, which also characterizes all true expressions of Islam is essentially the love of truth. It is to put the Truth before everything else. It is to be impartial, to be logical on the level of discourse, not to let one's emotions colour and prejudice one's intellectual judgment. It is not to be a rationalist, but to see the truth of things and to love the Truth above all else. To love the Truth is to love God who is the Truth, one of His Names being the Truth (al-haqq).

If one were to compare these qualities of the Prophet, namely, strength, nobility and serenity, with those of the founders of the other great religions one would see that they are not necessarily the same because firstly, the Prophet was not himself the Divine Incarnation and secondly, because each

religion emphasizes a certain aspect of the Truth. One cannot follow and emulate Christ in the same manner as the Prophet because in Christianity Christ is the God-man, the Divine Incarnation.

One can be absorbed into his nature but he cannot be copied as the perfection of the human state. One can neither walk on water nor raise the dead to life. Still, when one thinks of Christianity and Christ another set of characteristics come to mind, such as divinity, incarnation, and on another level love, charity and sacrifice. Or when one thinks of the Buddha and Buddhism it is most of all the ideas of pity for the whole of creation, enlightenment and illumination and extinction in Nirvana that stand out.

In Islam, when one thinks of the Prophet who is to be emulated, it is the image of a strong personality that comes to mind, who is severe with himself and with the false and the unjust, and charitable towards the world that surrounds him. On the basis of these two virtues of strength and sobriety on the one hand and charity and generosity on the other, he is serene extinguished in the Truth. He is that warrior on horseback who halts before the mountain of Truth, passive towards the Divine Will, active towards the world, hard and sober towards himself and kind and generous towards the creatures about him.

These qualities characteristic of the Prophet are contained virtually in the sound of the second Shahadah, Muhammadun rasul Allah, that is Muhammad is the Prophet of God, in its Arabic pronunciation, not in its translation into another language. Here again the symbolism is inextricably connected to the sounds and forms of the sacred language and cannot be translated. The very sound of the name Muhammad implies force, a sudden breaking forth of a power which is from God and is not just human.

The word rasul with its elongated second syllable symbolizes this 'expansion of the chest' {inshirah al-sadr), and a generosity that flows from the being of the Prophet and which ultimately comes from God. As for Allah it is, of course, the Truth itself which terminates the formula. The second Shahadah thus implies by its sound the power, generosity and serenity of reposing in the Truth characteristic of the Prophet. But this repose in the Truth is not based on a flight from the world but on a penetration into it in order to integrate and organize it. The spiritual castle in Islam is based on the firm foundations of harmony within human society and in individual human life.

In the traditional prayers on the Prophet which all Muslims recite on certain occasions, God's blessing and salutation are asked for the Prophet who is God's servant ('abd), His messenger (rasul), and the unlettered Prophet (al-nabi al-ummi). For example, one well-known version of the formula of benediction upon the Prophet is as follows:

'Oh, God, bless our Lord Muhammad, Thy servant and Thy Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, and his family and his companions, and salute them.'

Here again the three epithets with which his name is qualified symbolize his three basic characteristics which stand out most in the eyes of devout Muslims. He is first of all an 'abd; but who is an 'abd except one whose will is surrendered to the will of his master, who is himself poor (faqir) but rich on account of what his master bestows upon him. As the 'abd of God the

Prophet exemplified in its fullness this spiritual poverty and sobriety which is so characteristic of Islam.

He loved fasting, vigilance, prayer, all of which have become essential elements in Islamic religious life. As an 'abd the Prophet put everything in the hands of God and realized a poverty which is, in reality, the most perfect and enduring wealth.

The rasul in this formula again symbolizes his aspect of charity and generosity and metaphysically the rasul himself is sent because of God's charity for the world and men whom He loves so that He sends His prophets to guide them. That is why the Prophet is 'God's mercy to the worlds.' For the Muslim the Prophet himself displays mercy and generosity, a generosity which flows from the nobility of character. Islam has always emphasized this quality and sought to inculcate nobility in the souls of men. A good Muslim must have some nobility and generosity which always reflect this aspect of the personality of the Prophet.

Reflections on Islam and Modern Life

Seyyed Hossein Nasr Vol. VI, No. 1

FEW subjects arouse more passion and debate among Muslims today than the encounter between Islam and modern thought. The subject is of course vast and embraces fields ranging from politics to sacred art, subjects whose debate often causes volcanic eruptions of emotions and passions and vituperations which hardly lead to an objective analysis of causes and a clear vision of the problems involved. Nor is this debate which consumes so much of the energies of Muslims and students of Islam helped by the lack of clear definition of the terms of the debate and an insight into the actual forces involved.

The whole discussion is also paralyzed by a psychological sense of inferiority and a sense of enfeeblement before the modern world which prevents most modernized Muslims from making a critical appraisal of the situation and of stating the truth irrespective of the fact whether it is fashionable and acceptable to current opinion or not. Let us then begin by defining what we mean by modern thought. It is amazing how many hues and shades of meaning have been given to the terms "modern" ranging from contemporary to simply "innovative", "creative", or in tune with the march of time. The question of principles and in fact the truth itself is hardly ever taken into consideration when modernism is discussed. One hardly ever asks whether this or that idea or form or institution conforms to some aspect of the truth. The only question is whether it is modern or not.

The lack of clarity, precision and sharpness of both mental and artistic contours, which characterizes the modern world itself, seem to plague the contemporary Muslim's understanding of modernism whether he wishes to adopt its tenets or even to react against it. The influence of modernism seems to have dimmed that lucidity and blurred that crystalline transparency which distinguish traditional Islam in both its intellectual and artistic manifestations.^[1]

When we use the term "modern", we mean neither contemporary nor up-to-date nor successful in the conquest and domination of the natural world. Rather, for us "modern" means that which is cut off from the transcendent, from the immutable principles which in reality govern all things and which are made known to man through revelation in its most universal sense. Modernism is thus contrasted with tradition (al-din); the latter implies all that which is of Divine Origin along with its manifestations and deployments on the human plane while the former by contrast implies all that is merely human and now ever more increasingly subhuman, and all that is divorced and cut off from the Divine Source^[2].

Obviously, tradition has always accompanied and in fact characterized human existence whereas modernism is a very recent phenomenon. As long as man has lived on earth, he has buried his dead and believed in the after life and the world of the Spirit. During the "hundreds of thousands" of years of human life on earth, he has been traditional in outlook and has not "evolved" as far as his relation with God and nature seen as the creation and theophany of God are concerned.

^[3] Compared to this long history during which man has continuously celebrated the Divine and performed his function as God's vicegerent (khalifah) on earth, the period of the domination of modernism stretching from the Renaissance in Western Europe in the 15th century to the present day appears as no more than the blinking of an eye. ^[4] Yet, it is during this fleeting moment that we live; hence the apparent dominance of the power of modernism before which so many Muslims retreat in helplessness or which they join with a superficial sense of happiness that accompanies the seduction of the world.

A word must also be said about the term "thought" as it appears in the expression modern thought. The term thought as used in this context is itself modern rather than traditional. The Arabic term fikr or the Persian andishah, which are used as its equivalence, hardly appear with the same meaning in traditional texts.

In fact what would correspond to the traditional understanding of the term would be more the French pensee as used by a Pascal, a term which can be better rendered as meditation rather than thought. Both fikr and andishah are in fact related to meditation and contemplation rather than to a purely human and therefore non-divine mental activity which the term thought usually evokes. ^[5] If then we nevertheless use the term thought, it is because we are addressing an audience nurtured on all that this term implies and are using a medium and language in which it is not possible, without being somewhat contrite, to employ another term with the same range of meaning embracing many forms of mental activity but devoid of the limitation in the vertical sense that the term "thought" possesses in contemporary parlance.

All these forms of mental activity which together comprise modern thought and which range from science to philosophy, psychology and even certain aspects of religion itself, possess certain common characteristics and traits which must be recognized and studied before the Islamic response to modern thought can be provided.

Perhaps the first basic trait of modern thought to be noted is its anthropomorphic nature. How can a form of thought which negates any principle higher than man be but anthropomorphic? It might of course be objected that modern science is certainly not anthropomorphic but that rather it is the pre-modern sciences which must be considered as man-centered.

Despite appearances, however, this assertion is mere illusion if one examines closely the epistemological factor involved. It is true that modern science depicts a universe in which man as spirit, mind and even, psyche has no place and the Universe thus appears as "inhuman" and not related to the human state. But it must not be forgotten that although modern man has created a science which excludes the reality of man from the general picture of the Universe, ^[6] the criteria and instruments of knowledge which determine this science are merely and purely human.

It is the human reason and the human senses which determine modern science. The knowledge of even the farthest galaxies are held in the human mind. This scientific world from which man has been abstracted is,

therefore, nevertheless based on an anthropomorphic foundation as far as the subjective pole of knowledge, the subject who knows and determines what science is, is concerned.

In contrast, the traditional sciences were profoundly non anthropomorphic in the sense that for them the locus and container of knowledge was not the human mind but ultimately the Divine Intellect. True science was not based on purely human reason but on the Intellect which belongs to the supra-human level of reality yet illuminates the human mind.

^[7] If medieval cosmologies placed man at the center of things it is not because they were humanistic in the Renaissance sense of the term according to which terrestrial and fallen man was the measure of all things but it was to enable man to gain a vision of the cosmos as a crypt through which he must travel and which he must transcend. And certainly one cannot begin a journey from anywhere except where one is. ^[8]

If the characteristic of anthropomorphism is thus to be found in modern science, it is to be seen in an even more obvious fashion in other forms and aspects of modern thought whether it be psychology, anthropology or philosophy. Modern thought, of which philosophy is in a sense the father and progenitor, became profoundly anthropomorphic the moment man was made the criterion of reality.

When Descartes uttered "I think, therefore I am" (cogito ergo sum), he placed his individual awareness of his own limited self as the criterion of existence for certainly the "I" in Descartes assertion was not meant to be the Divine "I" who through Hallaj exclaimed "I am the Truth" (ana'l-Haqq), the Divine "I" which according to traditional doctrines alone has the right to say "I". ^[9] Until Descartes, it was Pure Being, the Being of God which determined human existence and the various levels of reality.

But with Cartesian rationalism individual human existence became the criterion of reality and also the truth. In the mainstream of Western thought, and excluding certain peripheral developments ontology gave way to epistemology, epistemology to logic; and finally by way of reaction logic became confronted with those anti-rational "philosophies" so prevalent today. ^[10]

What happened in the post-medieval period in the West was that higher levels of reality became eliminated on both the subjective and the objective domains. There was nothing higher in man than his reason and nothing higher in the objective world than what that reason could comprehend with the help of the normal human senses.

This was of course bound to happen if one remembers the well-known principle of adequation (the adaequatio of St. Thomas Aquinas) according to which to know anything there must be an instrument of knowledge adequate and conforming to the nature of that which is to be known. And since modern man refused to accept a principle higher than himself, obviously all that issued from his mind and thought could not but be anthropomorphic.

A second trait of modernism, closely related to anthropomorphism, is the lack of principles which characterizes the modern world. Human nature is too unstable, changing and turbulent to be able to serve as the principle for something. That is why a mode of thinking which is not able to transcend

the human level and which remains anthropomorphic cannot but be devoid of principles. In the realm of the life of action, namely the domain of morality (although morality cannot be reduced simply to action) and, from another point of view, politics and economics, everyone senses this lack of principles. But one might object that principles do exist as far as the sciences are concerned.

Here again, however, it must be asserted that neither empiricism nor validification through induction nor yet reliance upon the data of the senses as confirmed by reason can serve as principles in the metaphysical sense. They are all valid in their own level as is the science created by them. But they are divorced from immutable principles as is modern science which has discovered many things on a certain level of reality but because of its divorce from higher principles has brought about disequilibrium through its very discoveries and inventions. Only mathematics among the modern sciences may be said to possess certain principles in the metaphysical sense.

The reason is that mathematics remains, despite everything, a Platonic science and its laws discovered by the human mind continue to reflect metaphysical principles as reason itself cannot but display the fact that it is a reflection, even if a dim one, of the Intellect.

The discoveries of the other sciences, to the extent that they conform to some aspect of the nature of reality, of course possess a symbolic and metaphysical significance, but that does not mean that these sciences are attached to metaphysical principles and integrated into a higher form of knowledge. Such an integration could take place but as a matter of fact it has not. Modern science, therefore, and its generalizations, like other fruits of that way of thinking and acting which we have associated with modernism, suffer from the lack of principles which characterize the modern world, a lack which is felt to an even greater degree as the history of the modern world unfolds.

It might be asked what other means of knowledge were available to other civilizations before the modern period. The answer is quite clear at least for those Muslims who know the intellectual life of Islam: revelation and intellectual intuition or vision (dhawq, kashf or shuhud) ^[11]. The Muslim intellectual saw revelation as the primary source of knowledge not only as the means to learn the laws of morality concerned with the active life.

He was also aware of the possibility for man to purify himself until the "eye of the heart" ('ayn al-qalb), residing at the center of his being, would open and enable him to gain the direct vision of the supernal realities. Finally he accepted the power of reason to know, but this reason was always attached to and derived sustenance from revelation on the one hand and intellectual intuition on the other. The few in the Islamic world who would cut this cord of reliance and declare the independence of reason from both revelation and intuition were never accepted into the mainstream of Islamic thought.

They remained marginal figures while in a reverse fashion in the post-medieval West those who sought to sustain and uphold the reliance of reason upon revelation and the Intellect remained on the margin while the mainstream of modern Western thought rejected both revelation and

intellectual intuition as means of knowledge. In modern times even philosophers of religion and theologians rarely defend the Bible as a source of a sapiential knowledge which could determine and integrate scientia in the manner of a St.

Bonaventure. The few who look upon the Bible for intellectual guidance are usually limited by such shallow literal interpretations of the Holy Book that in their feuds with modern sciences the rationalistic camp comes out almost inevitably as the victor.

When one ponders over these and other salient features of modernism, one comes to the conclusion that in order to understand modernism and its manifestations, it is essential to comprehend the conception of man which underlies it. One must seek to discover how modern man conceives of himself and his destiny, how he views the anthropos vis-a-vis God and the world.

Moreover, it is essential to understand what constitutes the soul and mind of men and women whose thoughts and ideas have molded and continue to mold the modern world. For surely if such men as Ghazzali and Rumi or for that matter an Erigena or Eckhardt were the occupants of the chairs of philosophy in leading universities in the West another kind of philosophy would issue forth in this part of the world.

A man thinks according to what he is, or as Aristotle said, knowledge depends upon the mode of the knower. A study of the modern concept of man as being "free" of Heaven, complete master of his own destiny, earth-bound but also master of the earth, oblivious to all eschatological realities which he has replaced with some future state of perfection in profane historical time, indifferent if not totally opposed to the world of the Spirit and its demands and lacking a sense of the sacred will reveal how futile have been and are the efforts of those modernistic Muslim "reformers" who have sought to harmonize Islam and modernism in the sense that we have defined it. If we turn even a cursory glance at the Islamic conception of man, at the homo islamicus, we shall discover ,the impossibility of harmonizing this conception with that of modern man.^[12]

The homo islamicus is at once the slave of God (al-'abd) and His vicegerent on earth (khalifatallah fi'l ard).^[13] He is not an animal which happens to speak and think but possesses a soul and spirit created by God.

The homo Islamicus contains within himself the plant and animal natures as he is the crown of creation (ashraf al-makhluqat) but he has not evolved from the lower forms of life. Man has always been man. The Islamic conception of man envisages that man is a being who lives on earth and has earthly needs but he is not only earthly and his needs are not limited to the terrestrial. He rules over the earth but not in his own right, rather as God's vicegerent before all creatures.

He therefore also bears responsibility for the created order before the Creator and is the channel of grace for God's creatures. The homo islamicus possesses the power of reason, of ratio which divides and analyzes, but his mental faculties are not limited to reason. He also possesses the possibility of inward knowledge, the knowledge of his own inner being which is in fact the key to the knowledge of God according to the famous prophetic hadith

"He who knows himself knoweth His Lord" (man 'arafa nafsahu faqad 'arafa rabbahu).

He is aware of the fact that his consciousness does not have an "external, material cause but that it comes from God and is too profound to be affected by the accident of death.^[14] The homo islamicus thus remains aware of the eschatological realities, of the fact that although he lives on this earth, he is here as a traveller far away from his original abode. He is aware that his guide for this journey is the message which issues from his home of origin the Origin, and this message is none other than revelation to which he remains bound not only in its aspect of law as embodied in the Shari'ah but also in its aspect of truth and knowledge (Haqiqah).

He is also aware that man's faculties are not bound and limited to the senses and reason but that to the extent that he is able to regain the fullness of his being and bring to actuality all the possibilities God has placed within him, man's mind and reason can become illuminated by the light of the spiritual and intelligible world to which the Holy Quran refers as the invisible ('alam al-ghayb).^[15]

Obviously such a conception of man differs profoundly from that of modern man who sees himself as a purely earthly creature, master of nature, but responsible to no one but himself and no amount of wishy-washy apologetics can harmonize the two. The Islamic conception of man removes the possibility of a Promethean revolt against Heaven and brings God into the minutest aspect of human life.^[16] Its effect is therefore the creation of a civilization, an art, a philosophy or a whole manner of thinking and seeing things which is completely non-anthropomorphic but theocentric and which stands opposed to anthropomorphism which is such a salient feature of modernism.

Nothing can be more shocking to authentic Muslim sensibilities than the Titanic and Promethean "religious" art of the late Renaissance and the Baroque which stand directly opposed to the completely non-anthropomorphic art of Islam. Man in Islam thinks and makes in his function of homo sapiens and homo faber as the 'abd of God and not as a creature who has rebelled against Heaven. His function remains not the glorification of himself but of his Lord and his greatest aim is to become "nothing", to undergo the experience of fana' which would enable him to become the mirror in which God contemplates the reflections of His own Names and Qualities and the channel through which the theophanies of His Names and Qualities are reflected in the world.

Of course what characterizes the Islamic conception of man has profound similarities with the conception of man in other traditions including Christianity and we would be the last to deny this point. But modernism is not Christianity or any other tradition and it is the confrontation of Islam with modern thought that we have in mind and not its comparison with Christianity. Otherwise what could be closer to the Islamic teaching that man is created to seek perfection and final spiritual beatitude through intellectual and spiritual growth, that man is man only when he seeks perfection (talib al-kamal) and attempts to go beyond himself than the

scholastic saying *Homo non proprie humanus sed superhumanus est* (which means that to be properly human man must be more than human).

The characteristics of modern thought discussed earlier, namely its anthropomorphic and by extension secular nature, the lack of principles in various branches of modern thought and the reductionism which is related to it and which is most evident in the realm of the sciences are obviously in total opposition to the tenets of Islamic thought, as the modern conception of man, from whom issue these thought patterns is opposed to the Islamic conception of man.

This opposition is clear enough not to need further elucidation here.^[17] There is one characteristic of modern thought, however, which needs to be discussed in greater detail as a result of its pervasive nature in the modern world and its lethal effect upon the religious thought and life of those Muslims who have been affected by it, namely, the theory of evolution.^[18]

In the West no modern theory or idea has been as detrimental to religion as the theory of evolution which instead of being taken as a hypothesis in biology, zoology, or paleontology, parades around as if it were a proven scientific fact. Furthermore, it has become a fashion of thinking embracing fields as far apart as astrophysics and the history of art.

Nor has the effect of this manner of thinking been any less negative on Muslims affected by it than it has been on Christians. Usually modernized Muslims have tried to come to terms with evolution through all kinds of unbelievable interpretations of the Holy Quran forgetting that there is no way possible to harmonize the conception of man (Adam) to whom God taught all the "names" and whom He placed on earth as His khalifah and the evolutionist conception which sees man as "ascended" from the ape.

It is strange that except for a few fundamentalist Muslim thinkers who have rejected the theory of evolution on purely religious grounds, few Muslims have bothered to see its logical absurdity and all the scientific evidence brought against it by such men as L. Bounoure and D. Dewar^[19], despite the ecstatic claims of its general acceptance by various standard dictionaries and encyclopedias. In fact, as it has been stated so justly by E. F. Schumacher, "evolutionism is not science; it is science fiction, even a kind of hoax."^[20] Some Western critics of evolution have gone so far as to claim that its proponents suffer from psychological disequilibrium^[21] while recently a whole array of arguments drawn from information theory have been brought against it.^[22]

It is not our aim here to analyze and refute in detail the theory of evolution, although such a refutation by Muslim thinkers is essential from a scientific as well as metaphysical, logical and religious points of view as it has been already carried out in the Occident. What is important to note here is that the evolutionary point of view which refuses to see permanence anywhere, for which the greater somehow "evolves" from the "lesser" and which is totally blind to the higher states of being and the archetypal realities which determine the forms of this world is but a result of that loss of principles alluded to above.

Evolutionism is but a desperate attempt to fill the vacuum created by man's attempt to cut the hands of God from His creation and to negate any

principle above the merely human which then falls of necessity to the level of the sub-human. Once the Transcendent Principle is forgotten, the world becomes a circle without a center and this experience of the loss of the center remains an existential reality for anyone who accepts the theses of modernism, whether he be a Christian or a Muslim.

Closely allied to the idea of evolution is that of progress and utopianism which both philosophically and politically have shaken the Western world to its roots during the past two centuries and are now affecting the Islamic world profoundly. The idea of unilateral progress has fortunately ceased to be taken seriously by many noted thinkers in the West today and is gradually being rejected in the Islamic world as an "idol of the mind" before which the earlier generation of modernized Muslims prostrated without any hesitation.^[23] But the utopianism which is closely related to the idea of progress bears further scrutiny and study as a result of the devastating effect it has had and continues to have on a large segment of the modernized Muslim "intelligensia".

Utopianism is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as follows: "impossible ideal schemes for the amelioration of perfection of social conditions". Although the origin of this term goes back to the well-known treatise of Sir Thomas More entitled *Utopia* and written in 1516 in Latin, the term utopianism as employed today has certain implications ante-dating the 16th century although the term itself derives from More's famous work.

The Christian doctrine of the incarnation, combined with a sense of idealism which characterizes Christianity were of course present before modern times. Utopianism grafted itself upon the caricature of these characteristics and whether in the form of the humanitarian socialism or such figures as St. Simon, Charles Fourier or Robert Owen or the political socialism of Marx and Engels, led to a conception of history which is a real parody of the Augustinian City of God.

The utopianism of the last centuries, which is one of the important features of modernism, combined with various forms of Messianism led and still lead to deep social and political upheavals whose goals and methods cannot but remain completely alien to the ethos and aims of Islam.^[24] Utopianism seeks to establish a perfect social order through purely human means. It disregards the presence of evil in the world in the theological sense and aims at doing without God, as if it were possible to create an order based on goodness but removed from the source of all goodness.

Islam has also had its descriptions of the perfect stage or society in works as those of al-Farabi describing the *madinat al-fadilah* or the texts of Shaykh Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi referring to the land of perfection which is called in Persian *na kuja-abad*, literally the land of nowhere, utopia.

But then, it was always remembered that this land of perfection is nowhere, that is beyond the earthly abode and therefore identified with the eighth clime above the seven geographic ones. The realism present in the Islamic perspective combined with the strong emphasis of the Holy Quran upon the gradual loss of perfection of the Islamic community as it moves away from the origin of revelation prevented the kind of utopianism present

in modern European philosophy from growing upon the soil of Islamic thought.

Moreover, the Muslim remained always aware that if there is to be a perfect state, it could only come into being through Divine help. Hence, although the idea of the cyclic renewal of Islam through a "renewer" (mujaddid) has been always alive as has the wave of Mahdi'sm which sees in the Mahdi the force sent by God to return Islam to its perfection, Islam has never faced within itself that type of secular utopianism which underlies so much of the politico-social aspects of modern thought.

It is therefore essential to be aware of the profound distinction between modern utopianism and Islamic teachings concerning the mujaddid or renewer of Islamic society or the Mahdi himself. It is also basic to distinguish between the traditional figure of the mujaddid and the modern reformers who usually, as a result of their feeble reaction to modern thought, have hardly brought about the renewal of Islam.

There is finally one more characteristic of modern thought which is essential to mention and which is related to all that has been stated above. This characteristic is the loss of the sense of the sacred. Modern man can practically be defined as that type of man who has lost the sense of the sacred, and modern thought is conspicuous in its lack of awareness of the sacred. Nor could it be otherwise seeing that modern humanism is inseparable from secularism.

But nothing could be further from the Islamic perspective in which there does not even exist such a concept as the profane or secular,^[25] for in Islam, as already mentioned, the One penetrates into the very depths of the world of multiplicity and leaves no domain outside the domain of tradition. This is to be seen not only in the intellectual aspects of Islam^[26] but also in a blinding fashion in Islamic art. The Islamic tradition can never accept a thought pattern which is devoid of the perfume of the sacred and which replaces the Divine Order by one of a purely human origin and inspiration.

The confrontation of Islam with modern thought cannot take place on a serious level if the primacy of the sacred in the perspective of Islam and its lack in modern thought is not taken into consideration. Islam cannot even carry out a dialogue with the secular by placing it in a position of legitimacy. It can only take the secular for what it is, namely the negation and denial of the sacred which ultimately alone is while the profane or secular only appears to be.

In conclusion, it is necessary to mention that the reductionism which is one of the characteristics of modern thought has itself affected Islam in its confrontation with modernism. One of the effects of modernism upon Islam has been to reduce Islam in the minds of many to only one of its dimensions, namely the Shari'ah, and to divest it of those intellectual weapons which alone withstand the assault of modern thought upon the citadel of Islam.

The Shari'ah is of course basic to the Islamic tradition; it is the ground upon which the religion is based. But the intellectual challenges posed by modernism in the form of evolutionism, rationalism, existentialism, agnosticism and the like can only be answered intellectually and not

juridically nor by ignoring or disregarding them and expecting some kind of magical wedding between the Shari'ah and modern science and technology.

The successful encounter of Islam with modern thought can only come about when modern thought is fully understood in both its roots and ramifications and the whole of the Islamic tradition brought to bear upon the solution of the enormous problems which modernism poses for Islam. At the center of this undertaking lies the revival of that wisdom, that hikmah or Haqiqah, which lies at the heart of the Islamic revelation and which will remain valid as long as men remain men and bear witness to Him according to their theomorphic nature and their state of servitude before the Lord ('ubudiyah), the state which is the *raison d'etre* of human existence.

Notes

1. Islam is based on intelligence and intelligence is light as expressed in the hadith, *inna'l-'aqla nurun* (Verily intelligence is light). The characteristic expression of Islam is the courtyard of an Alhambra whose forms are so many crystallizations of light and whose spaces are defined by the rays of that light which symbolizes, in this world, the Divine Intellect.

2. On tradition and modernism as used here and in fact in all of our writings see F. Schuon, *Light on the Ancient Worlds*, trans. Lord Northbourne, London, 1969; and R Guenon, *The Crisis of the Modern World*, trans. M. Pallis and R. Nicholson, London, 1962.

If we are forced to re-define these terms here, it is because despite the considerable amount of writing devoted to the subject by the outstanding traditional writers such as Guenon, Schuon, A. K. Coomaraswamy, T. Burckhardt, M. Lings and others, there are still many readers, especially Muslim ones, for whom the distinction between tradition and modernism is not clear. They still identify tradition with customs and modernism with all that is contemporary. Many Western students of Islam also identify "modern" with "advanced", "developed" and the like as if the march of time itself guarantees betterment.

For example C. Leiden, a political scientist and student of contemporary Islam writes, "Equally important is how the term modernization can itself provide insight into these questions. This is not the first time in history that societies have undergone confrontation with other 'advanced' societies and have learned to accommodate to them. Every such confrontation was, in a sense, a clash or contact with modernization." J. A. Bill and C. Leiden, *Politics Middle East*, p 63. The author goes on to cite as example the confrontation of the Romans with the Greeks and the Arabs with the Byzantine and Persians. However, despite the decadent nature of late Greek culture, neither the Greeks nor certainly the theocratic Byzantines and Persians were modern in our definition of the word according to which this is the first time that traditional societies confront modernism.

3. Despite the totally anti-traditional character of the perspective which dominates modern anthropology, even certain anthropologists have come to the conclusion that from a metaphysical and spiritual point of view, man has not evolved one iota since the Stone Age. If in the early decades of this century this view was championed by a few scholars such as A. Jeremias and W. Schmidt, in recent years it has received a more powerful support

based on extensive evidence reflected in the studies of such men as J. Servier and from the point of view of religious anthropology, M. Eliade.

4. It must be remembered that even during this relatively short period of five centuries, the Muslim world has remained for the most part traditional and did not feel the full impact of modernism until a century ago. See S. H. Nasr, *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man*, London, 1976.

5. In the famous Persian verse "Invoke until thy invocation gives rise to meditation (fikir) And gives birth to a hundred thousand virgin "thoughts" (andishah)." In these verses the relation of mental activity in a traditional context to spiritual practice and contemplation is stated clearly.

6. There have been recent attempts to escape from the reductionism of classical physic and to introduce both life and even the psyche as independent elements in the Universe. But the general view of modern science remains the reductionist one which would reduce spirit to mind, mind to the external aspects of the psyche, the external aspects of the psyche to organic behaviour, and organisms to molecular structures. The man who knows and who has the certitude of his own consciousness is thus reduced to chemical and physical elements which in reality are concepts of his own mind imposed upon the natural domain.

See A. Koestler and J. R. Smythies (eds.), *Beyond Reductionism*, London, 1959., especially the article of V. E. Frankl, "Reductionism and Nihilism" where he writes, 'the present danger does not really lie in the loss of universality on the part of the scientist, but rather in his pretense and claim of totality the true nihilism of today is reductionism Contemporary nihilism no longer brandishes the word nothingness; today nihilism is camouflaged as nothing-but-ness. Human phenomena are thus turned into mere epiphenomena." See also the remarkable work of E. F. Schumacher, *A Guide for the Perplexed*, New York, 1977, especially chapter one where this question is discussed.

7. See F. Brunner, *Science et realite*, Paris, 1956, where the author displays clearly the non-anthropomorphic nature of the traditional sciences based on their reliance upon the Divine Intellect rather than mere human reason.

8. Concerning the study of the cosmos as a crypt as far as Islam is concerned see S. H. Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, London, 1978, chapter 15.

9. See S. H. Nasr, "Self-awareness and Ultimate Selfhood," *Religious Studies*, vol 13, no. 3, Sept. 1977, pp. 319-325.

10. The classical study of E. Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* is still valuable in tracing this development in Western thought.

11. It was especially Sadr al-Din Shirazi who elucidated, perhaps more than any other Muslim philosopher, the relation between the three paths of reason, intuition and revelation open to man in his quest for the attainment of knowledge. See S. H. Nasr, *Sadr al-Din Shirazi and his Transcendent Theosophy*, London, 1978.

12. There are of course many men and women living in the modern world who would not accept this description of modern man as far as it concerns themselves. But such people, whose number in fact grows every

day in the West, are really contemporary rather than modern. The characteristics which we have mentioned pertain to modernism as such and not to a particular contemporary individual who may in fact stand opposed to them. See G. Eaton, *The King of the Castle*, London, 1977.

13. On the Islamic conception of man see S. H. Nasr, "Who is Man, the Perennial Answer of Islam," in J. Needleman (ed.), *The Sword of Gnosis*, Baltimore, 1974, pp. 203-17.

14. Consciousness has no origin in time. No matter how we try to go back in the examination of our consciousness, we cannot obviously reach a temporal beginning. At the heart of this consciousness in fact resides the Infinite Consciousness of God who is at once the Absolutely Transcendent Reality and the Infinite Self residing at the center of our being.

In general, Sufism has emphasized more the objective and Hinduism the subjective pole of the One Reality which is at once pure Object and pure Subject, but the conception of the Divinity as pure Subject has also been always present in Islam as the reference in the Holy Quran to God as the Inward (al-batin), the prophetic hadith already cited and such classical Sufi treatises as the *Conference of the Birds* (Mantiq al-tayr) reveal. See F. Schuon, *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts*, trans. D. M. Matheson, London, 1953, pp. 95ff.

15. It is of interest to note that one of the outstanding treatises of Islamic philosophy dealing with metaphysics and eschatology is a work by Sadr al-Din Shirazi entitled *Mafatih al-ghayb*, literally *Keys to the Invisible World*.

16. "In Islam, as we have seen, the Divine ray pierces directly through all degrees of existence, like an axis or central pivot, which links them harmoniously and bestows upon each degree what is suited to it; and we have also seen how the straight ray curves on its return and becomes a circle that brings everything back to its point of departure ..." L. Schaya, "Contemplation and Action in Judaism and Islam," in Y. Ibish and I. Marculescu (eds.), *Contemplation and Action in World Religions*, Seattle and London, 1978, p. 173.

17. Of course the ramification of this opposition and the details as they pertain to each field are such that they could be discussed indefinitely. But here we have the principles rather than their applications in mind. We have discussed some of these issues in detail in our *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man*.

18. "... in the modern world more cases of loss of religious faith are to be traced to the theory of evolution as their immediate cause than to anything else for the more logically minded, there is no option but to choose between the two, that is, between the doctrine of the fall of man and the 'doctrine' of the rise of man, and to reject altogether the one not chosen" M. Lings, review of D. Dewar, *The Transformist Illusion*; in *Studies in Comparative Religion*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1970, p. 59 One might also explain the rapid spread of the theory of evolution as a pseudo-religion in the West by saying that to some extent at last it came to fill a vacuum already created by a weakening of faith.

But as far as Islam is concerned, its effect has been to corrode and weaken an already existing faith as it was for those Christians who still

possessed strong religious faith when the theory of evolution spread in the late 19th century and in fact up to this day.

19. See L. Bournoure, *Determinisme et finalite, double loi de la vie*, Paris, 1957; *ibid.*, *Recherche d'une doctrine de la vie. Vrai savants et faux prophetes*, Paris, 1964; and D. Dewar, *The Transformist Illusion*, Newfreesboro (Tenn.), 1957. We have also dealt with this question in our *Man and Nature*, London, 1977.

20. Schumacher, *Guide for the Perplexed*, p. 114. "It is far better to believe that the earth is a disk supported by a tortoise and flanked by four elephants than to believe, in the name of 'evolutionism', in the coming of some 'superhuman' monster. "A literal interpretation of cosmological symbols is, if not positively useful, at any rate harmless, whereas the scientific error such as evolutionism - is neither literally nor symbolically true; the repercussions of its falsity are beyond calculation." F. Schuon, *Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts*, p. 112.

21. "If we present, for the sake of argument, the theory of evolution is a most scientific formulation, we have to say something like this: 'At a certain moment of time the temperature of the Earth was such that it became most favourable for the aggregation of carbon atoms and oxygen with the nitrogen-hydrogen combination, and that from random occurrences of large clusters molecules occurred which were most favourably structured for the coming about of life, and from that point it went on through vast stretches of time, until through processes of natural selection a being finally occurred which is capable of choosing love over hate and justice over injustice, of writing poetry like that of Dante, composing music like that of Mozart, and making drawings like those of Leonardo.

' Of course, such a view of cosmogenesis is crazy. And I do not at all mean crazy in the sense of slangy invective but rather in the technical meaning of psychotic. Indeed such a view has much in common with certain aspects of schizophrenic thinking." K. Stern, *The Flight from Woman*, New York, 1965, p. 290. The author is a well-known psychiatrist who has reached this conclusion not from traditional foundations but from the premises of various contemporary schools of thought.

22. See especially the works of Wilbur Smith.

23. We have discussed the idea of progress and its reputation in our *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man*. See also M. Jameelah, *Islam and Modernism*, Lahore, 1968. For an eloquent refutation of the notion of progress see M. Lings, *Ancient Beliefs and Modern Superstitions*, 1967; also Lord Northbourne, *Looking Back on Progress*, London, 1968.

24. On the deeper roots of utopianism in the West see J. Servier, *Histoire de L'utopie*, Paris, 1967.

25. This is proven by the lack of such a term in classical Arabic or Persian.

26. We have dealt with the sacred quality of all aspects of Islamic learning even science in our *Science and Civilization in Islam*, Cambridge (U.S.A.), 1968; also *Islamic Science - An Illustrated Study*, London, 1976.

Revelation and Salvation Towards an Islamic View Of History

Mahmoud A. Ayoub

Islam is a conscious act of submission of the creature to the will of the creator. I use the words 'conscious act' deliberately to distinguish between inherent islam, which is the law of God for all created things in nature, and voluntary islam, which is the human faith-commitment to affirm the Oneness (tawhid) of God and obey His will. Faith and obedience, however, presuppose knowledge and knowledge requires communication. This communication of the divine will to humankind is what Islam calls wahi, or revelation. Yet revelation is not simply the issuance of edicts which must be unquestionably obeyed. It is rather a relationship of intense involvement of God in human history and of man in the divine challenge as God's viceregent (khalifa) in the earth. ^[1]

God, the Qur'an tells us, ^[2] communicates to all creatures what we may call their instincts of survival. He communicates through normative laws to the sun and the moon, to the stars, and to day and night to follow a predetermined course and not to overstep their limits. ^[3] In this general sense, all things are 'muslims', submitters to the will of God. This universal islam is presented in the Qur'an as a challenge to man's willful rejection of faith. How would you, humankind, reject faith in God when to Him have submitted all that is in the heavens and on the earth voluntarily and by coercion? (3: 38). Thus what we term the laws of nature, such as the law of gravity, are according to Islam the ways in which nature expresses its islam to God.

Angels, like the rest of creation, are muslims by nature or, in some sense, by compulsion. They lack the faculties which distinguish man as a volitional being from the rest of creation. Angels cannot disobey God or commit acts of evil and sin. I believe Satan was not an angel even though, under the influence of Jewish and Christian tradition, some Qur'an commentators and traditionists have argued this only as a possibility. ^[4] Nor is Satan's power to do evil beyond the divine will and decree. He is simply given respite to the day when they (humankind) shall be raised up (15: 28-35). Hence human evil-the only true evil in the world because it is an act of voluntary choice can be overcome by divine guidance which is the task of prophets, the recipients of divine revelation.

Islam insists, both in the Qur'an and prophetic, hadith tradition, that every human being is born with an innate knowledge of God. This knowledge is not so much awareness or information, rather it is a state of innocent faith, a state (fitra) of the original creation expressed anew in every child. 'Every child,' the Prophet is said to have declared, 'is born in the (state) of fitra; then his parents make him into a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian (i.e., Zoroastrian).

' In another version of the same tradition, the Prophet adds: 'And if (the parents) are Muslims, then a Muslim.' ^[5] The Qur'an states, even more precisely, that this state is the fitra in which God created humankind, there is no changing of God's creation (30: 30). Man is therefore created with a primitive but wholesome knowledge of God. The role of the prophets is to

guide humanity through revelation to live the full implications of this knowledge.

History is, according to the Islamic view of revelation, the history of God's dealing with humanity through His prophets. Yet revelation in its primordial beginnings belongs to metahistory, the time when we were all in the realm of atoms, ideas in the mind of God. On that primordial day, the Qur'an states, God took from the children of Adam, from their loins, their progeny and made them bear witness against themselves, saying:

'Am I not your Lord?' They answered: 'Yes, we hear and we witness' (7: 172). This primordial act of divine revelation was the covenant which God made with all human beings to 'hear and witness' to His absolute sovereignty and lordship over all creation. The rest of human history continues to echo, through the prophets whom God sent to every nation, this divine challenge. History is, moreover, the stage on which we act out our response to this primordial question.

In yet another Qur'anic verse we read: We have offered the trust (amana) to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refuse to bear it and covered before it. Yet man bore it, for man is truly wrongdoing, foolish (33: 75). This trust is, according to tradition, divine Oneness with all the implications of this knowledge for human life and history.

Man is foolish not because he is unable to bear the trust he voluntarily chose to bear, but rather because he continuously wrongs his own soul by knowingly breaking his covenant with God through the sin of association (shirk) of other things with Him, yet God is All-Merciful and Compassionate. In His infinite mercy, He called man time and again back to Him. This He did through a long series of prophets from Adam to Muhammad whose number was, according to tradition, 124,000.

This divine insistence on our salvation through prophetic guidance implies two important but paradoxical principles. It implies first that man is a sinner, capable of great evil. The second principle is that man is nonetheless God's viceregent in the earth whose ideal goal is prophetic existence. These two principles are dramatically expressed in the Qur'anic portrayal of Adam as the crown of creation before whom angels had to bow down in respectful obeisance. In contrast, the Qur'an portrays Adam and Eve as disobedient sinners begging for divine mercy and forgiveness.^[6]

The story of Adam's creation, fall and restoration as related in the Qur'an is an instructive commentary on the biblical account which the Qur'an accepts in its broad outlines. When God decided to create Adam, He announced to the angels: 'I am about to make a viceregent in the earth.' The angels protested: 'Will you place in it one who would spread corruption in it and shed blood while we proclaim Your praise and sanctify You?' Then God told Adam all the names, which may be regarded as the first act of divine revelation to man in history. God then challenged the angels to name the things whose identities He revealed to His viceregent, but they admitted their ignorance and sought God's mercy. 'Praise be to you, we have no knowledge save that which You taught us....' Adam, who was taught by God the art of language with all its symbolism, was higher than the angels. Thus they were ordered to prostrate themselves before him in veneration, not

worship; they all did except Iblis (Satan) who refused and was puffed up with pride (2: 30-34).'^[7]

In an interesting colloquy between God and Satan, reported in the Qur'an, we see both the reason for man's exultation and for Satan's pride. God asks Iblis: 'What prevented you from prostrating yourself before one whom I fashioned with my two hands . . . ?' Satan answered: 'I am better than he; you created him of clay and created me of fire' (38: 75).^[8] Thus God expelled the arrogant Satan from his presence and placed Adam in the garden of Paradise.

Adam, however, was made not for Paradise but for the earth. God therefore gave Satan authority over Adam and his descendants in order that the eternal battle between good and evil should rage on its legitimate stage, earth. Adam was tempted by Satan with eternal life, everlasting dominion and angelic existence. He fell and was sent with his spouse to the earth to exercise their true mission, God's viceregency.

From the beginning, God created the human soul and inspired it with its evil and piety (91:6-7). Thus man is as prone to evil and destruction as he is to righteousness and good deeds. With this choice, however, go sin and repentance, and forgiveness and guidance. Adam did disobey his Lord, but then he received certain words from his Lord and He turned towards him, for He is truly relenting, compassionate (2: 36). Thus Adam sinned and was guided back to God by God through revelation. Adam was both the first sinner but also the first prophet.

Every man and woman thereafter carries in him or herself the same potential. This is not to say that every human being is a prophet, but that the goal of humanity is life with God. Nowhere more powerfully and aesthetically has this ideal been interiorized and presented than in the lives and works of the mystics, the friends (awliya') of God, whom we call Sufis.

It has already been observed that every human individual is born in the state (fitra) of innate faith in God as the one and only creator and sovereign lord of all beings. What then, it must be asked, is the role of the prophets in human history? Their role is twofold, first to remind men of their covenant with God, or bring them back to the state of pure faith. Man, according to the Qur'an, is a forgetful creature.

The Qur'an was sent, as were other scriptures, from God as a reminder. Indeed, one of the many names of the Qur'an is al-Dhikr (the remembrance). The second task of the prophets, or to be more precise, the prophet-messengers, is to transmit divine precepts or moral imperatives which are to regulate human conduct. In Islam, this is known as the shari'a, or sacred law.

Islam distinguishes between a prophet and a messenger, and between these and the righteous friends (awliya') of God. A prophet is one who receives revelation in dreams and by other indirect means. He may be sent to only a few people and for a specific purpose, or he may be a prophet in himself. In contrast, a messenger is one who receives direct revelation through an angel, or even more directly from God, as was the case with Moses. A messenger, in addition, is a legislator. Every messenger (rasul) is a prophet (nabi) but not every prophet is a messenger. This is because the main distinction between the two rests not on revelation, but on the

promulgation and application of sacred laws based on revealed divine principles.

Among the 124,000 prophets, tradition asserts that there were 313 messengers. The Qur'an refers to eighteen, five of whom are known as ulu-al-'azm, or messengers with power or resolve. These are: Noah, the father of humanity after the Deluge; Abraham, the archetypal man of faith in the one God; Moses, the recipient of the Torah; Jesus, the Word of God and His spirit and the recipient of the Evangel; and Muhammad, the recipient of the Qur'an, the seal of the prophets and last messenger to humankind. Moses and Muhammad, however, occupy a special place in prophetic history because they were prophets and statesmen. They did not simply transmit the message, they implemented it in the life of a socio-political order.

Islamic tradition insists that God never left any community without a warner, in order that men should have no argument or contention (hujja) against God after the apostles (4: 165). The question was inevitably asked: What becomes of humanity in times of prophetic interruption (fatra), and even more seriously after prophecy has ceased altogether? Several answers to this question have appeared in the form of minority sects in Islam, some of which, like the Bahais, broke away completely from the community. What may be termed the 'orthodox' Shi'i answer has been more or less tolerated as a fifth way (madhhab) alongside the four official Sunni schools.

Based on a complex system of Qur'an exegesis and prophetic hadith tradition, Shi'i Muslims early in the community's history posited another cycle concentric with that of prophethood and extending beyond it. This is the cycle of walaya, (authority or allegiance) or imama (temporal and spiritual headship) of the Muslim community. The imams must always be physical as well as spiritual heirs to the prophets. With the exception of Jesus whose first heir or viceregent (wasi) was Simon Peter, the imam must be a brother or descendent of the Prophet. The imam may also be a prophet, as was the case of Abraham.

^[9] But in general, the imamate is higher than prophethood and below apostleship. The imam is the bearer of the knowledge of the prophet whom he succeeds and by prophetic inheritance from one prophet to the next, the imam is also heir to the knowledge of all previous prophets. His task is not to promulgate new laws, rather it is to interpret, safeguard and implement the shari'a of the prophet of whom he is the heir. Like prophets, the imams must be protected (ma'sum) by God from error. They must also manifest miracles as proof of their imamate.

The doctrine of the imamate no doubt evolved as part of the general loyalty of an important segment of the Muslim community to 'Ali (the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet) and his descendents. As a result of complex historical circumstances which cannot be considered here, the Shi'a (followers) of 'Ali and devotees of the ahl al-bayt (household) of the Prophet Muhammad, built an impressive philosophy of history and a tragic ethos around the personalities of the imams. For the purpose of this discussion, it must be observed that while the imams are not recipients of revelation, they are muhaddathun (i.e., spoken to) by angels. ^[10] More importantly, the imamate is a necessary extension of prophethood.

Without it, revelation remains unfulfilled beyond the time of the prophet to whom the revelation was sent. Of course, Shi'i Muslims in all this had the Qur'an in mind. But it was inevitable that a universal doctrine of the imamate had to evolve to fit the Islamic universal doctrine of prophethood and revelation. ^[11]

I spoke earlier of Abraham as the 'archetypal man of faith'. He exhibits in the Qur'an and Islamic tradition a robust and dynamic personality. More significantly, however, Abraham typifies man's spiritual journey from that primal state (fitra) of innocent faith in God to doubt, then to faith, and finally to absolute certainty.

From a contemplative observation at night of the universe around him, Abraham deduced that it must have a lord. He first took the moon, on account of its splendour, to be that Power. But the moon set and Abraham cried with disappointment: 'I do not love those that set.' He then saw the sun, even more luminous and of much greater magnitude. Abraham exclaimed: 'This is my lord, this is greater!' But when the sun also set, he exclaimed: 'O my people, I dissociate myself from what you do' (7: 76 8). Finally, in an outburst of divine illumination, Abraham cried out: 'I turn my face to Him who created the heavens and the earth, a man of pure faith, nor am I one of the Associators [i.e., of other things with God]' (6: 79).

It was after this discovery of the truth by his unaided reason that Abraham received revelation. He discovered God, as it were, then God guided him and granted him the gift of prophethood, then chose him as His intimate friend (khalil) and finally appointed him as the imam (leader) of humankind. It is perhaps not fortuitous that Abraham, the father of prophets and first muslim, left us no specific corpus of revelation. 'The scrolls of Abraham' are mentioned in the Qur'an, ^[12] but tradition asserts that they were lost. Abraham left no revelation of his own because he belongs to all revelation. He is the hero and maker of revelation-history rather than its guide. The mission of Muhammad and the Qur'an was to call men to the pure (hanif) faith of Abraham, who was neither a Jew nor a Christian but a man of pure faith, a muslim, that is, a submitter to God. ^[13]

The Qur'an is, for Muslims, the final revelation to humankind. Before discussing the nature of the Qur'an and its relationship to human history, it may be well to say a word about the life and character of Muhammad and the manner of the revelation of the Qur'an to him. Mecca before Islam was a thriving commercial city in north Arabia lying on the trade route between Syria in the west and south Arabia and India in the east. Mecca also housed the ancient shrine of the Ka'aba, which was an important place of pilgrimage and a lucrative source of income for the city. With the rise of material wealth, morals declined so that sensitive men and women rejected the idolatry of their society and its moral turpitude. They either turned to Judaism or Christianity, or privately worshipped God in anticipation of a new prophet who would usher in a new era. It was in this highly charged atmosphere that Muhammad, son of 'Abd Allah, was born in 570 or 71 AD.

Muhammad lost his parents in infancy and was cared for by his grandfather, 'Abd al-Muttalib, and when he died, he was cared for by his uncle, Abu Talib. Muhammad was, according to tradition, a man of mild

and contemplative nature. At the age of 25, he married a rich widow, Khadija, who stood by him until she died about ten years later. Khadija had a Christian cousin named Waraqa b. Nawfal who may have been well-versed in scriptures.

Tradition tells us that Waraqa could read and write both Hebrew and Arabic and that he read the Gospel in Hebrew and translated it into Arabic. At the beginning of Muhammad's prophetic career when he was uncertain of the source and nature of his revelation, he found great support in this Christian man who on seeing him and hearing what he had to say, cried out: 'Holy, holy! Verily by Him in whose hand is Waraqa's soul, . . . there has come unto him the greatest Naimus (law) who came to Moses aforetime, and lo, he is the prophet of this people.' Soon, however, Waraqa died. ^[14]

Every year, we are told, Muhammad used to leave his home during the month of Ramadan for Ghar Hira, a cave on a mountain outside Mecca. There he spent his nights in devotion and contemplation until one day an angel appeared to him, later identified as Gabriel, the angel of revelation, who communicated the first five verses of the Qur'an:

- (1) Recite in the name of your Lord who created
- (2) created man from a blood clot.
- (3) Recite, for your Lord is most magnanimous,
- (4) Who taught by the pen.
- (5) He taught man that which he knew not (95: 1-5).

After a brief interruption, revelations continued to come, warning the Meccans of the coming day of judgement and calling them to moral righteousness and the worship of the one and only God. (1) Have you considered him who cries lies to the faith? (2) It is he who repulses the orphan; (3) nor does he urge the feeding of the needy. (4) Woe to them that pray, (5) but are negligent in their prayers; (6) they who act hypocritically, (7) and withhold the utensil (102). In this brief sura of the Qur'an is expressed the entire message of the Book. The message is to have faith in God and manifest this faith through worship and good works.

In Mecca, this message was couched in a powerful, eschatological language. When, however, the Prophet and a small band of his followers migrated to Medina in 622 AD, the message was expressed in normative moral and religious precepts necessary for the regulation of a socio-political and religious community. These norms were to provide the primary source of Muslim sacred law, the shari'a. By the time the Prophet died in 10 AH/632 AD, all the fundamentals Islam and its rites of worship were instituted. In one of the last verses of the Qur'an to be revealed, God says: I have perfected your religion for you; I have completed my favour towards you, and have accepted Islam as a religion for you (5: 3).

The Qur'an was revealed over a period of twenty-two years during Muhammad's prophetic career, first for twelve years in Mecca as a warner and preacher, then the remaining ten in Medina as a warner, preacher, prophet, and statesman. Thus we can see how the Qur'an is intimately related to the life of an actual society.

Yet the Qur'an is also the transcendent Word of God, preserved from eternity in the well-guarded tablet (85: 21-2). It is at once a book of

guidance sent down by God through the angel Gabriel, who actually taught it to Muhammad, and a numinous power sent down upon your (Muhammad's) heart (26: 194). Two modes of revelation are described by tradition.

The first is the direct communication by the angel to the Prophet who then dictated the verses or suras to scribes as he did not know how to read or write. The second mode is a sound which the Prophet heard in his ears, while in a trancelike state, a sound like the ringing of a bell. 'This,' the Prophet said, 'was the hardest for me to bear.'^[15] This is the Qur'an in its primordial essence, unfettered by human sounds and letters. It is the Qur'an as it is 'in the Mother of the Book,' the archetypal source of revelation.

The Qur'an is, for Muslims, the literal and timeless divine Word which entered our time. It became a book which Muslims write down, memorize, recite, and live by. The Qur'an is therefore analogous to Christ in Christianity, who is the eternal Logos that was made flesh and dwelt among us (John 1: 14). Yet with this similarity, there is an essential difference. Christ is God's self-revelation or disclosure through incarnation. Hence, the Word was with God and the Word was God (John 1: 1).

The Qur'an, on the other hand, is the revelation of God's will and purpose for humanity. Although the Qur'an shares in divine transcendence, God remains the wholly other, absolutely transcendent lord over his entire creation. This crucial difference has, as we shall see, set the two communities of faith far apart, thus making any meaningful dialogue between them a hard challenge to the principles of love and tolerance which are basic to the faith of both communities.

The analogy of the Qur'an with Christ may be carried a step further into the history of Muslims and Christians. The christological controversies which so intensely engaged the Fathers of the early Church were paralleled in early Muslim history by theological controversies regarding the createdness or eternity of the Qur'an. In both cases, the issue was the relationship of the revelation to the revealer, and hence the fear of compromising the unity and transcendence of God.

Furthermore, as the Church has through the ages been occupied with the humanity of Christ, so have Muslims been occupied with the question of earthliness, or humanity, of the Qur'an. In my view, neither community has been able to recognize the full implication of the humanity of the revelation even though in both cases the man Jesus and the earthly Qur'an have imposed themselves so powerfully on our history and theology.

For Muslims, this is clear from the fact that the Qur'an followed the course of their formative history with an amazing intimacy. It dealt with the community's hopes and failures; it consoled the Prophet and his people and reproached them. Of even greater significance has been the fact that many of its verses were revealed in answer to specific problems or questions of individual Muslims. Thus the occasions or reasons (asbab) of the revelation (nuzul) of the Qur'an has become an important branch of the sciences of the Qur'an.

Having considered the Islamic view of revelation as it relates to the Qur'an, we shall now consider more specifically the Qur'anic view of

previous revelation. The Qur'an asserts that to every nation or community God sent an apostle to convey to them the message of his lord in their own tongue. Thus what has been said regarding the Qur'an applies to all scriptures. They were all with God, preserved in a celestial archetype which the Qur'an calls umm al-kitab (Mother of the Book).

The truth they contain is, moreover, one and the same: to have faith in God alone and not associate any other thing or being with Him, to worship God, and to do good works. Differences, when they exist, are simply due to the variety in human culture and historical circumstances. Each messenger had to let the message entrusted to him by God speak the truth as it relates to the condition of his people. It may be further argued that inasmuch as all the major revelations are meant for humanity in the various stages of its progress, revelation must also be progressive so as to speak meaningfully to the human condition at every stage of its history.

Thus details relating to laws of sanction and prohibition in one revelation could be changed or abrogated by a subsequent one. Jesus thus claims in the Qur'an, 'I have come to make lawful for you (the Jews) some of the things that were unlawful' (3: 50). This process, however, stopped with the Qur'an. Thereafter men are to understand and apply the precepts of this final revelation in their lives. Henceforth God's guidance will be through inspiration and not revelation.

The Qur'an deals only with the Torah of Moses and the Gospel of Jesus as specific instances of revelation. Christians and Jews are called 'people of the book,' an appellation which applies indirectly to Muslims as well: Say, O people of the book, come to a common word [of agreement] between you and us that we worship no one beside God ... (3: 64). The Qur'an further asserts that in the Gospel ... there is guidance and light (5: 44). Let therefore the people of the Gospel judge in accordance with what was revealed in it, the Qur'an enjoins (5: 47). The Qur'an further challenges Muhammad and the Jews who came to ask him to judge among them, How could they make you a judge over them when they have the Torah in which is the judgement of God? (5: 43).

If the Torah, the Gospel and the Qur'an are one in their message and purpose, they why are they so different in reality and why are the three communities of faith in such discord among themselves? These differences, the Qur'an asserts, are due to the fact that some of the Jews and Christians have willfully altered words from their rightful places (4: 46).

This accusation of tahrif (altering or distorting) by the Jews and the Christians of their own sacred books has played an unfortunate role in Muslim-Jewish-Christian polemics.

The problem of tahrif is a very complex one which cannot be discussed in this general essay. It must be observed, however, that the Qur'an seems to suggest that such alteration or distortion was more of the interpretation or meaning rather than the actual text of the Torah and Gospel. An example of this misinterpretation is the verses in both scriptures referring to the coming of Muhammad and which were given different interpretations by the scholars-priests and rabbis of the two communities.^[16] Another and even more serious example of Christian misinterpretation of the message and

personality of Christ is their assertion that Christ is God or the Son of God.
^[17]

All this notwithstanding, the Qur'an still leaves much room for dialogue and amity among the faithful of the three communities. It was unfortunately not the scriptures of the three communities that were called upon to judge and decide among their people; but rather political, economic, and military exigencies were to determine the relations among Muslims, Christians and Jews.

The Qur'an never criticized the faith of Christians and Jews, or Judaism and Christianity as such. Rather it always qualifies its statements with: Some among the people of the book . . . or a group of the people of the book ..., and so on. Later tradition could not be satisfied with such an open relationship. Thus tahrif was taken to mean an actual change of the text of the scriptures through interpolations and deletions. In an interesting, hadith the Prophet says:

'Do not believe the people of the book nor disbelieve them. Rather say, we believe in that which was sent down to us.'^[18] This ambivalence towards the people of the book is even less apparent in the Qur'an. In several places the Qur'an invokes previous scriptures and their people to argue for its own claim to authenticity. Thus the Qur'an addresses Muhammad: If you are in doubt concerning that which we have sent down to you, then ask those who have been reading the book before you ... (10: 194). The Qur'an similarly enjoins the Muslims: Ask the people of remembrance (ahl al-dhikr) if you do not know (16: 43). The people of remembrance are the people of the scriptures which the Qur'an often designates as the Remembrance.^[19]

Every religious tradition, or at least the three with which we are here concerned, must in the end see itself as in some way the last word of divine truth or revelation to humanity. Islam adopted an open and unique attitude to previous religious traditions and their revelations, an attitude made necessary by the Islamic view of history as revelation-history.

Since revelation ceased with the Qur'an, and apostleship with Muhammad, Islam has seen itself as the final confirmation and fulfillment of all previous revelations. By dint of geographic and cultural proximity of the Muslim community to Christians and Jews, this openness and challenge had to be directed at the people of the book. Thus it was inevitable that conflict would arise.

The Qur'an sees itself not only as dependent for its own claim to authenticity on the Torah and the Gospel, but also as 'confirming' the truth which they contain and superceding them. This view which the Qur'an holds of itself and the attitude it evinced within the Muslim community of Medina led to sharp and tragic conflict with the well-established Jewish community. This in turn resulted in open hostility on both sides.

The Qur'an exhibits greater hostility towards the Jews than towards the Christians but here again it may be argued that this hostility was directed towards the Jews of Medina with whom the Prophet and early Muslim community had many political and economic problems. The Qur'an admits the favour of God towards the children of Israel and their covenant with Him, but rejects the Jewish notion of chosenness and exclusivity. This

problem, I believe, is older than Islam. It was quite prevalent in the earlier culture of the Syro-Aramaic Near East and is reflected even in the Gospel.^[20]

The contrast between the Qur'anic treatment of the Jews and Christians may be best seen in a late verse revealed in the context of much Jewish-Muslim conflict in a still nascent and imperiled Muslim community. The verse reads: You would find the greatest of hostility among men towards those who have faith to be Jews and those who have associated (other things with God); and you would find the nearest of them in love towards those who have faith to be those who say, 'We are Christians.' This is because there are among them pastors and monks; nor do they act arrogantly (5: 82). But by the Jews, the Qur'an intended those of Medina, and by the Christians those of Abyssinia and their legendary king, al-Najashi (Nagus), who received Muslims well when they had to flee Mecca in the first Muslim migration.^[21]

Every sacred book, be it the Qur'an, Torah or Gospel, is open to many kinds of interpretation in accordance with our increased knowledge of one another and the historical circumstances which we together share. The ancient biblical promise to the Jews of Zion has been interpreted both spiritually and politically. The political ramifications of that interpretation are still very much with us. Likewise, the Gospel parable of the king's wedding feast^[22] gave St.

Augustine scriptural authority to argue for the compulsion of the Donatist back to the Church even if coercion were necessary. Sufis have often interpreted the Qur'anic verses enjoining the faithful to strive in the way of God with the sword to mean striving against the evil in one's own heart and soul with the sword of truth.

They found clear support in prophetic hadith for this view which called the jihad against the carnal soul 'the greater jihad.' The Qur'an also distinguishes between the jihad in the way of God and jihad in God, where God says: And those who strive in Us, We shall guide them to our ways (29:69). The ways of God are designated by another verse as the ways of peace (51:16).

The ancient divine promise of guidance in the face of evil and sin was made not only to Adam and his spouse but to all their progeny after them. Guidance in Islam is analogous to the Holy Spirit in Christianity. God will still guide those who seek peace to understand His revelations and learn from them.

In our world of great possibilities for a better life of health and plenty or total devastation, we need to interpret our scriptures in ways that promote a meaningful dialogue which would lead to a true fellowship of faith. He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8 (RSV)). You will know the truth and the truth will make you free (John 8:32). ... Guidance shall come from me to you, and whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor will they grieve (2:38).

Notes:

- [1] See 2: 30.
[2] See 16:68.
[3] See 36: 40.
[4] See Ayoub, *The Qur'an and its Interpreters*, 1, New York: SUNY Press, 1983, ad 2: 30-34.
[5] *Sahih Muslim*, 3rd ed., Beirut: Dar al-Fikr. 1398/1978. XVI, 210
[6] See Ayoub, *op. cit.*, 1, ad 2:30-38.
[7] See the previous footnote.
[8] See also 7: 12.
[9] See 2:123.
[10] Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Ya'qub ibn Ishaq al-Kulayni al-Razi, *Al-Usul min al-kafi*, 3rd ed., Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyya. 1388, I, 174 6.
[11] For a useful summary of the doctrine of the imamate, see M. Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering in Islam: a Study of the Devotional Aspects of 'Ashura' in Twelver Shi'ism*, The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1978, pp. 5348; and Henri Corbin, 'De la philosophie prophetique en Islam Shi'ite', *Eranos Jarbuch*, xxx (1962), 49-1 16
[12] See 82:18-1 9
[13] 3:67. On Abraham in the Islamic tradition see Kenneth Cragg, *The Privilege of Man*, London: University of London, Athlone Press, 1968, ch. 3; and Youakim Moubarac. *Abraham dans le Coran*, Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1958.
[14] A. Guillaume. *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishaqs Sirat Rasul Allah*. 3rd ed.. Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 170.
[15] 'Imad al-Din Abu 'l-Fida' Isma'il b. Kathir, *Al-sira al-nabawiya*, Beirut: Dar al-Ma'rifa, 1396/1971, I, 421.
[16] See Guillaume, *op. cit.*, p. 103; and Ali b. Rabban al-Tabari, *Al-din wa'l dawla*, 3rd ed., Beirut: Dar al-Afaq al-Jadida, 1979. (The book has also been translated into English under the title *Religion and the Empire*.)
[17] See Q. 5:17, 73. and 116.
[18] *Sahih al-Bukhari*, Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, n.d., v, 150.
[19] See 15:9 and 21: 105
[20] See J. Spencer Trimingham, *Christianity among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times*, London: Longman, 1979, pp. 41 49. See also Matt 3: 9.
[21] See Guillaume. *op. cit.*, pp. 146-50.
[22] See Luke 14:16-24

'Man la yahduruh al-Faqih' by Al-Saduq Dr. I. K. A. Howard Al-Serat, Vol. 2 (1976), No. 2

The Author

Al-Shaikh al-Saduq is the title given to Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. 'Ali ibn Babawaih al Qummi. He was the leading traditionist of his time (4th Century A.H.) and one of the most outstanding traditionists of Shi'ite Islam. He earned the title of al-Shaikh al-Saduq on account of his great learning and his reputation for truthfulness. It is a title which he also shares with his father.

Al-Shaikh 'Ali, the father of the author, was a leading figure among the scholars of Qumm. By the father's time the family were established as strong adherents of Shi'ite Islam. However, it is not known how early the family entered into Islam.^[1] Al-Shaikh al-Saduq is sometimes known as Ibn Babawaih. This is the family name and indicates the Persian origin of the family. For Babwaih is an Arabicized version of the Persian form Babuyah.^[2]

The date of al-Shaikh al-Saduq's birth is not known exactly. However an interesting story surrounds the circumstances of his birth. When his father was in Iraq, he met Abul Qasim al-Husain b. Rawh, the third agent of the Hidden Imam. During their meeting he asked the latter several questions. Later he wrote to al-Husain b. Rawh asking him to take a letter to the Hidden Imam. In this letter he asked for a son. Al-Husain sent back an answer telling him that they (the Hidden Imam and al-Husain) had prayed to God to ask Him to grant the request and he would be rewarded with two sons. Another version of the story says three sons. The elder, or eldest, of these sons was Muhammad, that is al-Shaikh al-Saduq, our author.

On the basis of this story, early Shi'ite scholars have placed his birth after the year 305 A.H. probably 306 A.H. For al-Husain b. Rawh was the agent of the Hidden Imam from 305 A.H. until his death in 326 A.H. Al-Shaikh al-Saduq was born and grew up in Qumm. He was educated by his father and came into close contact with all the leading scholars of Shi'ite Islam in Qumm and studied under many of them.^[3]

Qumm was one of centres of the study of Shi'ite traditions and it was this form of religious learning which held great influence over al-Shaikh al-Saduq. He travelled widely visiting many cities in search of traditions and as a result the number of scholars whom he learned traditions from is considerable. The number is put at 211.

The importance of traditions is emphasized by al-Shaikh al-Saduq and he quotes traditions against speculative theology. His works reflect this interest in traditions and nearly all of them take the form of compilations of traditions. However he did write a creed of Shi'ite Islam al-I'tiqadat. His pupil, the eminent theologian al-Shaikh al-Mufid, wrote a correction of this creed Tashih al-i'tiqad where he criticises him on several points.^[4]

The number of al-Shaikh al-Saduq's works is considerable.^[5] Al-Tusi says that they numbered over 300 but list only 43 of them that he has immediately in his possession, while al-Najashi lists 193 of them. Curiously enough al-Najashi does not mention the important work Man la yahduruh

al-faqih! Many of the works of al-Shaikh al-Saduq have been lost but a considerable number survive and have been published. There are also other works not yet published but extant in manuscript form.

As has been mentioned during his life al-Shaikh al-Saduq devoted most of his energy to the collection and compilation of traditions; he was also a great teacher of tradition. During the last years of his life al-Shaikh al-Saduq lived in a Rayy. He had been invited there by the Buyid Rukn al-Dawla.^[6] He seems to have been well-treated and honoured there by Rukn al-Dawla and took part in many discussions with him. However it is reported that his teaching was eventually restricted by the Buyid Wazir Ibn 'Abbad. The attack appears to have been aimed at traditions for several Sunni traditionists also suffered similar restrictions at the hands of Ibn 'Abbad.^[7]

Al-Shaikh al-Saduq died in al-Rayy in 381 A.H. and he was buried there. He was probably more than 70 years of age. He left behind him many collections of traditions which are of great importance.

Man la yahduruh al-faqih

This work is included in the four major books of the traditions of Shi'ite Islam. Despite the fact that many of his other works are extremely important, this book must be regarded as his most important work. However some authorities maintain that there were five major books of traditions and they include another of al-Shaikh al-Saduq's works *Madinat al-'ilm*, in this number.^[8] Al-Tusi mentions that the latter work was bigger than *Man la yahduruh al-faqih*.^[9] It appears that this book is no longer extant. It seems to have been concerned with *usul al-din* (the principles of religion) rather than the *furū'*, which are the practical regulations for carrying out the *shari'a*, the holy law of Islam.

As its title implies *Man la yahduruh al-faqih* was concerned with *furū'*. It has been neatly translated by E. G. Brown as "Every man his own lawyer"^[10] In his introduction to the book al-Shaikh al-Saduq explains the circumstances of its composition and the reason for its title. When he was at Ilaq near Balkh, he met Sharif al-Din Abu 'Abd Allah known as Ni'mah whose full name was Muhammad b. Al-Husain b. Al-Husain b. Ishaq b. Musa b. Ja'far b.

Muhammad b. Ali b. Al-Husain b. Ali b. Abi Talib. He was delighted with his discourses with him and his gentleness, kindness, dignity and interest in religion. He brought a book compiled by Muhammad b. Zakharia al-Razi entitled *Man la yahduruh al-Talib* or "Every man his own doctor" to the attention of al-Shaikh al-Saduq. He, then, asked him to compile a book on *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *al-halal wa-'l-haram* (the permitted and prohibited) *al-shara-i' wa-'l-ahkam* (revealed law and (ordinary) laws) which would draw on all the works which the Shaikh had composed on the subject. This book would be called *Man la yahduruh al-faqih* and would function as a work of reference.^[11]

In fact the work represents a definitive synopsis of all the traditions which al-Shaikh al-Saduq had collected and included in individual books on specific legal subjects. In the lists of books of al-Shaikh al-Saduq, individual works are attributed to him on every subject of the *furū'*; examples are such works as *Kitab al-nikah* "Book of Marriage" or *Kitab al-hajj* "Book of the

Pilgrimage". That this was the intention of both the author and the learned member of Ahl al-bait is emphasised by the author when he says that Sharif al-Din had asked him for this work despite the fact that he had copied or heard from him the traditions of 145 books.^[12]

Another element in the work that stresses that it was conceived as a reference book to help ordinary Shi'ites in the practise of the legal requirements of Islam is the general absence of the isnads for traditions. The isnads - or the chain of authorities by which the tradition had been received from the Prophet or one of the Imams - was, and is, an all-important feature of the science of traditions. Therefore this book was not meant to be a work for scholars, who would want to check the authorities. Scholars could check the isnads in the numerous individual studies compiled by al-Shaikh al-Saduq.

This book was a summary of the study of legal traditions by one of the great scholars of traditions. Al-Shaikh al-Saduq says that he complied with the request for him to compile the book "... because I found it appropriate to do so. I compiled the book without isnads (asanid) so that the chains (of authority) should not be too many (-and make the book too long-) and so that the book's advantages might be abundant. I did not have the usual intention of compilers (of books of traditions) to put forward everything which they (could) narrate but my intention was to put forward those things by which I gave legal opinions and which I judged to be correct."^[13]

Al-Shaikh al-Saduq also gives an account of some of the earlier works which he referred to. These works were the books of Hariz b. 'Abd Allah al-Sijistani - he died during the life time of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq; the book of 'Ubaid Allah b. 'Ali al-Halabi - who was also a contemporary of Imam Ja'far; the books of Ali b. Mahziyar - who took traditions from Imam 'Ali al-Rida, Imam Muhammad al-Jawad and Imam al-Hadi; the books of al-Husain b. Sa'id - who also heard traditions from those three Imams; the Nawadir of Ahmad b. Muhammad b. 'Isa - who died in 297 A.H. and also heard traditions from those three Imams; the Kitab nawadir al-hikma of Muhammad b. Yahya b. 'Imran al-Ash'ari; Kitab al-rahma of Sa'd b. 'Abd Allah - who died in 299 A.H. or 301 A.H.; the Jami' of Muhammad b. al-Hasan - who was one of the teachers of the Shaikh and died in 343 A.H.; the Nawadir of Muhammad b. Abi 'Umayr - who died in 218 A.H.; the Kitab al-Mahasin of Ahmad b. Abi 'Abd Allah al-Barqi (i.e. Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Khalid al-Barqi) who died in 274 A.H. or 280 A.H. (this book has been published in Teheran); and the Risala which his father had written to him.

The Shaikh goes on to mention that he also consulted many other works whose names occur in the book-lists.^[14] This inclusion of the list of some of the works consulted is useful evidence that the works of both al-Shaikh al-Saduq and his predecessor, al-Kulaini, who compiled the first of the four major books of Shi'ite traditions, al-Kafi, represent the culmination of works of traditions which had been compiled in a continuous process from the earliest times and at least from the time of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq.

In addition to these references which the author gives in his introduction he frequently refers to his own works during the course of the book. Thus at the end of his Bab nawadir al-hajj (Chapter of Exceptional Traditions of the

Pillgrimage), he says: "I have published these nawadir with isnads with others in Kitab jami', nawadir al-hajj."^[15]

Another feature of the work is the method used by the author. He does not leave the traditions to speak for themselves but frequently draws rules from the traditions or explains their meaning. In a summary of the various traditions on the pilgrimage, he gives a long outline of all the rituals which should be performed by the faithful with very few traditions intervening in his outline.^[16]

The book covers most of the points concerned with the furu' (practices) of fiqh jurisprudence. It is not arranged in chapters (kutub) but in smaller sections (abwab), with the various categories such as fasting and pilgrimage following closely after each other. As indicated, its lack of isnads and al-Shaikh al-Saduq's own explanations make it an extremely useful compendium of law for ordinary Shi'ite Muslims of the period.

The book, naturally as one of the four major works of traditions, has had many commentaries written on it. Among the great Shi'ite writers who have written such commentaries are al-Sayyid Ahmad b. Zain al-'Abidin al-'Alawi al-'Amili (died 1060 A.H.) and Muhammad Taqi al-Majlisi al-Awwal (died 1070 A H).^[17] The book itself has been recently published in four volumes in Teheran.

Notes:

1. Cf. "Introduction" by al-Sayyid Hasan al-Musawi al-Khurasan in his edition of Man la yahduruh al-faqih (4 volumes Teheran, 1390), I, pages h-w
2. A. A. Fyzee, A Shi'ite Creed (Calcutta, 1942), p.8 footnote 2
3. Cf. al-Sayyid Hasan al-Musawi al-Khurasan, "Introduction", op cit, I, pages z-t
4. W. Madelung, "Imamism and Mu'tazilite Theology", Le Shi'isme Imamite, (Paris 1970), 21
5. Al-Shaikh al-Tusi, al-Fihrist (Mashhad 1351 A.H.S.), 303
6. Cited by A. A. Fyzee, op cit., 11, 16
7. Cited by W. Madelung, op cit., 20
8. Al-Sayyid Hasan al-Musawi al-Khurasan, op cit., page Ar
9. Al-Shaikh al-Tusi, loc cit
10. Cited by A. A. Fyzee, op cit., 6
11. Man la yahduruh al-faqih, I, 2-3
12. Ibid, I, 3
13. Ibid
14. Ibid, I, 3-5
15. Ibid, II, 311
16. Ibid, II, 311
17. For a full list cf. "Introduction", ibid pages Aba-Ana

Why "Islamic" Science?

Yahya Cooper, Vol IX No. 1

The Islamic world today is the inheritor of an intellectual tradition which stretches back to the time of the Qura'nic revelation and beyond. Although we lack a comprehensive account in modern literature of a history of this tradition, situating it in the framework of the general history of ideas, this is not because the idea for such a project is a novelty. We find references to this continuity of thought in and beyond the Islamic context in all the great works of the Islamic tradition.

While some philosophers (in metaphysics and certain natural sciences) trace their origins back through the lens of the revelation to the ancient Greeks, others find their ancestors in ancient India, Iran and Egypt, among other places. Even the more strictly theological sciences can trace their development by way of the prophets who preceded Muhammad. The Qur'anic revelation was the point in time and consciousness at which all these different rays of thought were refracted into a new and shining beam. This beam has seemed to diminish in intensity, and many Moslems today have found themselves asking why this should have happened. Anxious to re- instate the "Islamic sciences", they have first tried to find out why they were eclipsed by their Western counterparts or why, in some cases, they just disappeared.

In a more mystical vein, some authors have suggested that, like bottled sunshine, this wisdom is protected from desecration within the depositories of the true guardians of Islam. Our intention here is not to investigate these whys and wherefores; we shall take off in a different direction in the hope of finding new horizons. We shall begin by examining the identity of the "Islamic sciences", and in the process we shall become aware that this identity lies not within the sciences themselves, but in something more fundamental.

As an example of a science that is still practised in Islamic centres of learning, "Islamic philosophy" provides us with a good starting point. What is it about this philosophy that makes it "Islamic"? It could be one of three things: either its subject matter is Islamic, or its practitioners are, or its methodology is. Now the odd thing about its subject matter is its surprising lack of specificity as regards religious affiliation. There is, of course, a large part of it which is concerned with matters either entirely, or, at any rate, partly, theological in character: the Oneness of God and the nature of His attributes (particularly His knowledge) in metaphysics, and the source of authority in the "practical" philosophy of ethics and politics are witnesses to this.

In a more indirect way, many of the problems which were taken up by the early philosophers of this tradition, and which have become conventional topics in the literature, owe their conception to the fact that they were originally subjects of debate among the kalam theologians which the philosophers tried to settle by their own methods. But this in itself makes their philosophy no more "Islamic" than similar considerations would make contemporary Western philosophy "Christian", and we would do well

to note that when "Western philosophy" investigates matters of theology this is referred to as philosophy of religion, not "Christian philosophy".

It is perhaps more revealing, in this context, that Western authors have given us "Buddhist philosophy", "the philosophy of the Vendanta", and so forth despite the fact that they have given us no "Christian philosophy" (unless they can restrict it to such things as Neo-Thomism, for example), nor do we find any reference to "atheistic philosophy". It seems on this score, then, merely a convenience for bracketing up "alien" philosophies, for apparently rather dubious motives, and relegating them to other areas of research - anthropology, history, sociology, etc. - and leaving the field of "true philosophy" (or "philosophy per se") to contemporary Western philosophy.

There is, of course, a large part of "Islamic philosophy" which does not directly concern itself with the kind of subject matter we have so far mentioned. Logic is not regarded as part of philosophy as such in so far as it remains purely within its own bounds and stays formal, so to speak, but whenever logic raises questions outside this boundary, questions which involve the notions of existence or knowledge, for example, such questions become a part of "metaphysics in its more general sense" (al-ila-hiyat bi 'l-ma'na 'l-'amm), and it would be difficult to see how anyone could have thought this to be "Islamic" in subject matter.

Indeed its practitioners have thought it to apply well beyond the bounds of any theological considerations to all human thought. There would seem to be little of a sectarian nature about discussions of the law of the excluded middle, for example. What is true about this section of philosophy, however, is its Aristotelian nature, and there can be no doubt that it should properly be regarded as one of the streams flowing from the First Teacher (al-mu allim al-awwal). (The intention here, it must be pointed out, is not to claim that this part of the philosophy is non-Islamic, as will become clear later; we are merely innocently asking what it means to call it "Islamic", and specifically as regards its subject matter.)

It used to be the fashion to use the term "Arabic philosophy" until it was protested that many of the practitioners were not Arabs. This really is beside the point, as "Arabic" refers almost exclusively to the language, and, while many works have been written, especially latterly, in non-Arabic languages, the main vehicle for the philosophy can justifiably be claimed to be Arabic. However, this is certainly an accidental feature, and to specify the subject by its language only panders to a far from scholarly preoccupation with the undesirable connotations of nationalism.

Both the adjectives "Arabic" and "Islamic", however, and more importantly, must be regarded with suspicion since their only function seems to be to direct attention away from the variety within the philosophy and the serious compatibility between the subject matter of this philosophy and that of other "non-Islamic philosophies". When we move on to consider the practitioners of the science, and whether their being Islamic or not is the reason for calling their philosophy "Islamic", it becomes even clearer that motives other than the purely scholarly are involved.

Now it is perfectly true that nearly all "Islamic" philosophers have been Moslems, and the exception are those earlier Christian and Jewish philosophers who, because of geographical and social factors, found themselves in a tradition which was almost entirely practised by Moslems. It is also unquestionably the case that practically all of these Moslem philosophers considered they were following the Islamic injunction to pursue knowledge, when they studied, taught and wrote about the science.

So much for history. But while it may be of interest, often of great interest, to know the religious beliefs of a philosopher, it is very often a red herring if his work is considered entirely from this point of view; and, especially when he claims a degree of universality for his ideas, the philosopher deserves to be given the benefit of the doubt, at least when his claim so made is being examined. The point is that when a philosopher is discussing, let us say, the nature of human knowledge, and as long as he restricts the method of his discussion to philosophical reasoning, whatever that may be and however it may be understood, we are more likely to understand him if we also restrict our reading of him to the same topic and analysis. The distractions that are bound to accompany our constantly being reminded of his religious affiliations in this context are more than likely to result in non-comprehension.

These considerations may be important elsewhere, when, for example, it is of great relevance to consider Copernicus' neo-Platonic affinities in the context of the evolution of his ideas; but it can hardly be of much help in understanding the mathematics of his astronomical tables. Again, if, having read a philosopher on his own grounds, we can seriously claim that he has written nonsense or is incomprehensible, it is then of some interest to ask if this is the result of his religious beliefs, at least as far as the discipline of the history of ideas is concerned.

Up to now, we have refrained from anything more specific than hinting at the true reasons for the popularity of the term "Islamic philosophy". It is time we were more direct. The reader so far may think that he is in for another diatribe against the wicked ways of the orientalists, but we think that quite enough has already been said about their motives to give them a rest for the time being. The problem we have is both more general and more specific than could be meaningfully dealt with by attacking them. Moreover, the use of the term "orientalist" is now encouraging the same kind of distractions as we have found associated with the use of the term "Islamic philosopher".

The more general aspect of the problem does concern the person steeped in Western culture. We can notice, on the one hand, an awareness that the increasing specialization of Western science is rendering it literally meaningless; its mystification by the scientists themselves demands a long period of "initiation" for anyone who would attempt to understand some part of it, an "initiation" which, it is increasingly being understood, does not lead the acolyte along a path of careful reasoning, slowly unfolding intricacies to him, as his initiators would like him to believe, but which employs a wide variety of other techniques designed to ensure that he accepts ways of looking at things without subjecting these ways to profound scrutiny.

This is a necessary initiation, for it is quite impossible for a human being to assimilate the conclusions of any modern science without accepting many steps uncritically; modern sciences are that complex. This is all very good for modern science, but should the acolyte get lost, or decide that he would prefer not to accept something he is required to accept uncritically, he will no longer be treated as a co-researcher, entitled to all the sympathy a fellow traveller could expect to receive; other techniques are at hand, besides that of patient critical re-examination, to determine whether he should be allowed to continue his journey.

On the other hand, a dissatisfaction with the results of modern science (and note the irony of this, for it is with the claim that modern science shows its superiority by its unparalleled results that its practitioners construct their first line of defence) leads more and more people to look elsewhere for answers to the problems created by these results. Now this rebellion can be contained as long as the search by the dissatisfied results only in indigestion from the intake of too much cross-cultural ice-cream, for it can be ascribed to the weakness of the human soul which, finding the complexities of "science" too much to take in, indulges itself in the luxuries of irrational but comforting exotic alternatives on the menu. The more exotic, the more this "argument" seems to hold out.

Our intention is not to claim that anything with the adjective Islamic added to it is the correct antacid for the indigestion; far from it. But it is surely a great advantage that an adjective which has such alarming connotations for the Westerner can be attached to a whole scientific tradition, thus effectively striking centuries of human thought off the menu with one stroke of the pen, even putting it on the list of prescribed drugs, and effectively out of the reach of any but the most intrepid dietary sleuth.

To round things off, and just in case anyone wishes to raise the objection that philosophy is not science, let us now come to our third suggestion for why the term "Islamic" has been used. This third suggestion concerns the methodology of "Islamic philosophy".

What has been said so far as regards subject matter and practitioners took philosophy as its example; but there is nothing which could not equally well have been applied to natural science or any other brands of learning, say law or history, just to take two examples. And this generalizing step can equally well be applied in the case of methodology.

Although it is no longer current practice in the West to call philosophy a science (or history and law for that matter), this is not the case in other traditions, especially in Islam. Here science and knowledge each share the same Arabic word (ilm), and each area in which knowledge is thought to be acquired becomes a science.

We need not concern ourselves here with why philosophy is not considered in science in the West, let alone with what it might be if is not one, but since within the tradition we are considering philosophy is a science, we can, for our present purposes, use this fact to justify our generalization from philosophy to all forms of knowledge, particularly as far as methodology is concerned. And here there does seem to be an element in

the way in which knowledge is pursued which is so particular and so applicable to all the sciences as to justify the use of the term "Islamic" .

It may be thought that we are speaking here of no more than the Aristotelian scheme of deductive science, which, starting from first principles seeks to derive in its special way all that can be known (perhaps we should say known with certainty), but we must stress that this is not so. It is quite true that the Aristotelian system for classifying the sciences is the preferred methodological starting point of the "Islamic philosophers", so that even law and history become classified according to it; and it is also true that besides metaphysics and logic (are the Western versions of these Aristotelian?) perhaps the only surviving example of what we might call a rigorously Aristotelian science, namely that of jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*), is to be found within the present Islamic educational system; but this is not the feature which makes these sciences "Islamic". It is rather something else within the Islamic tradition as a whole which finds a special affinity with the Aristotelian approach.

If any Muslim is asked what the central belief of his faith is, he will undoubtedly reply: *tawhid*. Even before he speaks of prophethood or Muhammad. The outsider may see the decisive distinguishing feature of Islam to be the declarer of the revelation, but the Muslim sees not this but the belief in *tawhid*—"making one". He believes that this is the real message not only of Islam, but of all religions, but that it was conceived in its perfection for the Islamic revelation. It is sometimes translated as "monotheism", and this is contained within its meaning, but a look at its grammatical form discloses its active aspect of making unity. It is this aspect of bringing together into a oneness that justifies the affinity which Islamic scholars have for the Aristotelian scientific system, and helps to explain the degree to which it was elaborated by them.

We said earlier that there was a specific aspect to our problem, as well as the more general one which concerned the West, and the specific aspect concerns the Muslim. For the Muslim has taken to neglecting his own scientific tradition. The campaign of Western science has been largely successful in suppressing competition not only in the West but also elsewhere, perhaps nowhere more successfully than in the Muslim world. In which universities in Muslim countries, or anywhere else, are the Islamic sciences practised, not as a historical discipline, but as "living" sciences?

It is perhaps true that a large factor in this transformation has been the idea that since Aristotelian science has been the foundation of the "Islamic sciences", it is necessary for anyone who wishes to pursue the tradition to accept the Aristotelian system as a dogma, but we have tried to show that this is a mistake. There is nothing dogmatic about the Aristotelian system; it is chosen because of its great affinity to the idea of *tawhid*. It must therefore be, and is, open to examination, and if it is found to be unsatisfactory as a principle of knowledge, appropriate steps should be taken to rectify the situation.

We do not wish in any sense to imply that there is something wrong with the Aristotelian world view, and it seems that there is good reason to suppose that many of the criticisms directed at it in the West are not

founded on the "rational" principles that have been claimed to support these criticisms. However, this matter is an area of research which has scarcely been opened up, and is one which should engage the attention of any true, dare we say, Islamic philosopher. When such a study is undertaken, proper attention will have to be paid to the reasons for which this Aristotelian system has proved so attractive to Muslim thinkers, but the belief that such a system is intrinsically "inferior" should be rejected at the beginning - no *petitio principii*!

The problem, then, is one of penetrating behind labels, especially labels not chosen by oneself, to see whether they did not in fact carry with them unwanted subliminal messages in the way of uncritically accepted ideas which hamper healthy growth. The thinker should not be frightened out of exploring new (or old) territory simply because others have tried to convince him by dubious strategies either that he is entering upon an illicit venture or that what he intends to do is a waste of time. Few things in the history of ideas receive fatal blows from the onslaught of scientists and philosophers; they have a habit of reappearing.

So before we all do what we are supposed to do and confess that the Islamic contribution to science has had its day, we should examine whether there are any good reasons for such a recantation. It goes without saying that the history of the sciences in the Islamic lands is not an unbroken chain of one "discovery" following upon another, any more than is that of modern science; within them too there is an abundant wealth of ideas, sometimes taken up and developed, sometimes rejected and forgotten, but never lost for ever.

A serious study of these (by which we mean something more than a historical study) can, side by side with a serious study of new ideas, bring renewed vigour into the sciences in the Islamic world and enable solutions to be found to the increasing problems facing man which have resulted from his monomaniacal obsession with what has now become of ficial science, the child he thought he had brought into the world unaided, and which now threatens to smother him under its own weight.

"Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth".

'Tahdhib al-Ahkam' and 'Al-Istibsar' by Al-Tusi

Dr. I. K. A. Howard Al-Serat, Vol. 2 (1976), No. 2

The Author

Shaikh al-ta'ifa (the teacher of the community) Abu Ja'far Muhammad b. al-Hasan b. 'Ali b. al-Hasan al-Tusi was born in Tus in Iran in the year 385 of the Islamic era. His career marks the climax of a very great period in Shi'ite Islamic scholarship and learning. It was during this period that Shi'ite scholars were without rivals in the Islamic world. Al-Shaikh al-Tusi's teachers included al-Shaikh al-Mufid, and the two brothers, members of Ahl al-bait and both outstanding scholars, al-Sharif al-Murtada and al-Sharif al-Radi.

This period of great public Shi'ite Islamic scholarship had begun with al-Kulaini (died 328/9 A.H.), whose collection of traditions, al-Kafi, is the first of the four major works of Shi'ite Islamic traditions.^[1] It was then continued with al-Shaikh al-Saduq Ibn Babawaih (died 381 A.H.); his great collection of traditions, Man la yahduruh al-faqih, is the second of the major works of traditions.^[2] The remaining two major collections of traditions were compiled by al-Shaikh al-Tusi and they are Tahdhib al-ahkam fi sharh al-munqi' a^[3] and al-Istibsar fima 'khtalaf min al-akhbar.^[4]

Al-Shaikh al-Tusi grew up in Tus and began his studies there. In 408 A.H. he left Tus to study in Baghdad. There he first studied under al-Shaikh al-Mufid, who died in 413 A.H. Leadership of the Shi'ite scholars then fell to al-Sharif al-Murtada. The latter remained in this position until his death in 436 A.H. During this time al-Shaikh al-Tusi was closely associated with al-Sharif al-Murtada. His vast scholarship and learning made him a natural successor of al-Sharif al-Murtada as the leading spokesman of Shi'ite Islam. So impressive was his learning that the Abbasid caliph, al-Qadir bi-'Allah, attended his lectures and sought to honour him.

In the closing years of al-Shaikh al-Tusi's life the political situation in Baghdad and the domains of the Abbasid caliphate was in turmoil. The Saljuqids fiercely anti-Shi'ite, were gaining commanding power in the centre of the Islamic Empire at the expense of the Buyids who had always seemed tolerant to Shi'ite views.

In 447 Tughril-bek the leaders of the Saljuqids entered Baghdad. At this time many of the 'ulama' in Baghdad, both Sunni and Shi'ite were killed. The house of al-Shaikh al-Tusi was burnt down, as were his books and the works he had written in Baghdad, together with important libraries of Shi'ite books. Fanaticism against the Shi'a was great.

Al-Shaikh al-Tusi, seeing the danger of remaining in Baghdad, left and went to al-Najaf. Al-Najaf, the city where 'Ali b. Abi Talib had been martyred, was already a very important city in the hearts of Shi'ite Muslims. However, it was al-Shaikh al-Tusi's arrival which was to give that city the impetus to become the leading centre of Shi'ite scholarship. This is a role, which it has maintained down to the present day.

Al-Shaikh al-Tusi died in al-Najaf in 460 A.H. His body was buried in a house there, which was made into a mosque as he had enjoined in his will. Even today his grave is a place of visitation in al-Najaf. Al-Tusi was

succeeded by his son al-Hasan, who was known as al-Mufid al-Thani, and was himself an outstanding scholar.^[5]

The learning of al-Shaikh al-Tusi extended over the whole of Islamic studies. He was a learned traditionist, whose two compilations will be discussed below; but he was not only a traditionist, he was also an authoritative jurist, who could interpret traditions to meet the needs of jurisprudence, and many of his works on jurisprudence and the principles of jurisprudence still survive, in particular al-Mabsut and al-Nihaya. In addition, he was the leading Shi'ite theologian of his time.

As well as writing works of a general theological nature, he also wrote specific works on individual topics. On the Imamate, he wrote Talkhis al-Shafi, which was based on al-Sharif al-Murtada's al-Shafi fi 'l-imama. He wrote a work on al-Ghaiba, the occultation of the 12th Imam. As a traditionist, he naturally had an interest in the men who related traditions, in his Kitab al-rijal, he tries to list most of the important Shi'ites.

His Fihrist is an important work of Shi'ite bibliography. In it he lists many of the works of early Shi'ite writers and sometimes gives an account of their writers and the contents of the works. This work may to some extent reflect al-Tusi's own library before it was so tragically destroyed.

Tahdhib al-ahkam fi sharh al-muqni 'a

The title of this work could be translated as "The Refinement of the Laws (as Discussed) in Terms of the Explanation of the Sufficiency". "The Sufficiency" or al-Muqni'a was a work on traditions by al-Shaikh al-Mufid, the teacher of al-Tusi, who has been mentioned earlier. Thus the original intention of al-Tusi had been to write a commentary on al-Muqni'a of al-Mufid.

However, he makes it clear in his introduction that his work would only concern the furu' of Islamic law, i.e. the practical regulations for carrying out the sharia, the holy law of Islam. He said: "I went first to the chapter which was connected with ritual purity (tahara), leaving aside the (chapters) which preceded it, which were about the Unity of God (tawhid), Justice ('adl), Prophethood (nubuwwa) and the Imamate (imama), because the explanation of these would be too lengthy, and also because it was not the intention of this book to elucidate the principles of religion (al-usul).^[6]

In his introduction, al-Tusi makes it clear that the principal motive for writing this work and limiting it to the furu', was the great differences which were arising in Shi'ite traditions. He mentions that these differences were being used against the Shi'a by their opponents as an argument against the truth of Shi'ite beliefs. The situation had become so critical that al-Tusi reports al-Mufid's account of one Shi'ite adherent who had left the community because of the contradictory traditions. Al-Tusi set himself the task of analysing the traditions concerned with furu', explaining which traditions were deficient and reconciling apparent contradictions in sound traditions. He used al-Mufid's al-Maqni'a as the basis for this task.^[7] However, he did not only deal with the traditions used in al-Muqni'a; he analysed many more traditions which he included at the end of various sections, appendices of traditions not mentioned by al-Mufid, which he also discusses.

The method used is to quote the traditions and then al-Mufid's comments on them. This is often followed by al-Tusi's explanation of al-Mufid's comments. Sometimes, it is not always clear whether the explanation belongs to al-Mufid or al-Tusi. However, he quite often makes it clear that it is al-Mufid when he says: "Al Shaikh said..." But sometimes a discussion is introduced by the ambiguous terms: "He said..." This could refer to either al-Mufid or al-Tusi. In the appendices al-Tusi makes it quite clear that he is making the comments, for he says: "Muhammad b. al-Hasan said..."

The discussions on the traditions are sometimes of considerable length. An example is the discussion of the method of performing ritual ablutions, there quotations are made from Arabic verse to support the Shi'ite version of rubbing the feet instead of washing them.^[8]

The work is divided into chapters (kutub) and the chapters into sections (abwab) with appendices following when appropriate. The work is a very comprehensive study of Shi'ite traditions and consists of the following chapters:

- al-Tahara
Ritual Purity
- al-Salat
Formal Prayer
- al-Zakat
Alms Tax
- al-Siyam
Fasting
- al-Hajj
Pilgrimage
- al-Jihad
Sacred War
- al-Qadaya wa-'l-ahkam
Judgements and Legal Requirements
- al-Makasib
Acquisitions
- al-Tijarat
Trading
- al-Nikah
Marriage
- al-Talaq
Divorce
- al-'itq wa-'l-tadbir wa-'l-mukatba
Manumission of Slaves (according to the various methods)
- al-Ayman wa-'l nudhur wa-'l-kaffarat
Oaths, Vows and Atonements
- al-Said wa-'l-dhaba'ih
Hunting and Ritual Slaughter
- al-Wuquf wa-'l-sadaqat
Endowments and Alms
- al- Wasaya
Bequests

al-Fara'id wa-'l-mawarith
Formal Rules of Inheritance
al-Hudud
Punishment prescribed by Revelation
al-Diyat
Indemnities for Bodily Injury

It is said that al-Tusi began this work during the life of al-Mufid and had reached the end of the chapter on "Ritual Purity" by the time of his death (413 A.H.). However the work was not finally finished until al-Tusi moved to al-Najaf (448 A.H.).^[9]

One of the remarkable features of this work is that despite the great number of traditions, which had become known to al-Tusi since the time of al-Kulaini and Ibn Babawaih, al-Tusi's interpretation of what are the correct traditions, preserves Shi'ite law in a very similar position to that of al-Kulaini and Ibn Babawaih. The reason for the great spread of diverse traditions during the period from al-Kulaini's death to al-Tusi's (328/9 A.H.) death (460 A.H.) may have been the fact that this was a period in which the Buyids held sway in Baghdad; they were very sympathetic towards the Shi'a. Thus, this was a period in which the Shi'a were not persecuted and could admit their beliefs without too much fear.

In such circumstances, there was much more opportunity for outsiders to bring extraneous traditions into the Shi'ite corpus. However al-Tusi had available to him many of the early works of Usul which had been available to the earlier Shi'ite compilers of collections of traditions. Al-Tusi says about this work: "When our companions looked at the akhbar (traditions) connected with what is permitted and forbidden (al-halal wa-'l-haram) which we had collected in it, they saw that they included most of what the sections of laws connected with jurisprudence. In all its sections and its chapters, only very little of the traditions of our companions, their books, usul and compilations has escaped."^[10]

Al-Istibsar fima 'khtalaf al-akhbar

Al- Istibsar is the fourth and last of the major works of Shi'ite Islamic traditions. It covers the same field as Tahdhib al-ahkam but is considerably smaller. Al-Tusi mentions that his colleagues, after seeing the size of Tahdhib al-ahkam considered: "..... It would be useful that there should be a reference (madhkur) book which a beginner could use in his study of jurisprudence, or one who has finished, to remind himself, or the intermediate (student) to study more deeply.

Thus (so that) all of them could obtain what they need and reach their soul's desire, what is connected with different traditions would be set in an abridged way . . . Therefore they asked me to summarise it (Tahdhib al-ahkam) and devote care to its compilation and abridgement, and to begin each section with an introduction about what I relied on for the legal decisions and traditions in it; then I should follow with those traditions which disagree and explain the reconciliation between the two without leaving out anything which was influential. I would follow my practice in my big book mentioned earlier (i.e. Tahdhib al-ahkam) and at the beginning of the book, I would explain briefly how traditions are weighed against each

other, and how the practice of something was possible through (the authority) of (some of) them to the exclusion of the rest ..."^[11] Al-Tusi, then, follows this statement with a brief but comprehensive and clear outline of the principles of jurisprudence.^[12]

As can be seen from al-Tusi's own introduction, al-Istibsar is essentially a summary of Tahdhib al-ahkam. Its methods are similar but briefer; there are not so many traditions used in the work and the explanations are more concise. In many ways it is closer to Man la yahduruh al-faqih, although unlike the latter it gives full isnads for the traditions quoted. However it is possible to say that al-Kafi and Tahdhib al-ahkam represent comprehensive collections of traditions, while Man la yahduruh al-faqih and al-Istibsar are books intended to be used as ready reference works for students and scholars.

The collections and commentaries of Shi'ite traditions did not end with al-Tusi but his works mark the high point in this process. It had begun with al-Kulaini, whose al-Kafi, while not the first collection, was certainly the first major collection based on the early works of usul. The process had been continued by Ibn Babawaih; in his introduction to Man la yahduruh al-faqih he makes it clear that he had also used these usul. Al-Tusi, the author of the other two major works of Shi'ite traditions also admits his dependence on these early works. As has already been pointed out, these three authors and their four major works of tradition present a generally consistent picture of Shi'ite Islamic legal thinking. It is a remarkable picture of tradition and shows that, whatever the vagaries of individuals may have been, leading Shi'ite scholars had a clear and consistent view of their traditions.

Notes:

1. On al-Kulaini and al-Kafi, cf. Al-Serat, Vol. II, No.1 (March, 1976), 28-32
2. On Ibn Babawaih and Man la yahduruh al-faqih, cf. Al-Serat, Vol.II, No.2 (June, 1976), 19-22
3. New edition in ten volumes edited by al-Sayyid Hasan al-Musawi al-Khurasan, published in Teheran (3rd edition) 1390 A.H.
4. New edition in four volumes edited by al-Sayyid Hasan al-Musawi al-Khurasan, published in Teheran (3rd edition) 1390 A.H.
5. The details of the life of al-Shaikh al-Tusi have been taken from al-Sayyid Bahr al-Ulum's introduction to al-Tusi's Talkhis al-Shafi (3rd edition) (Qumm 1974) 1-45
6. Tahdhib al-ahkam, op.cit., I, 3
7. Idem 2-3
8. Idem, 66-74
9. al-Musawi, "Introduction" Tahdhib al-ahkam, I, 46 citing al-Sayyid Bahr al-Ulum.
10. al-Istibsar, op.cit. I, 2
11. Idem 2-3
12. Idem 3-5

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