?When is the Promised Mahdi Expected to Appear

[(A Discouse on Imam Mahdi (A.J.T.F]

Dr. Jalali: When is the promised Mahdi expected to appear?

Mr. Hoshyar: No time has been fixed for his appearance (zuhur). As a matter of fact, the Imams have regarded those who fix the time of the Mahdi's appearance as liars. Thus, for instance, Fudayl, a companion of Imam Baqir, asked the latter whether there was any specific time when the Mahdi would appear. The Imam in his response said three times: "Any one who fixes the time of the appearance is telling a falsehood."

Another companion by the name of 'Abd al-Rahman b. Kathir was with Imam Sadiq when Mahzam Asadi came to visit the Imam and asked him: "When will the Qa'im from the family of the Prophet rise and establish the just government that you are expecting, for it has been delayed? When shall this be realized? " The Imam replied: "Those who fix the time of the appearance are certainly telling a lie. Those who become hasty in this matter will definitely destroy themselves. Those who are patient will be delivered and will return to us."

A prominent and well trusted companion of Imam Sadiq by the name of Muhammad b. Muslim was told by the Imam: "Any one who fixes the time of the appearance for you -- do not hesitate to falsify him, because we do not fix the time for the appearance." There are ten other traditions on the same theme.

These and many other traditions on this subject provide evidence that neither the Prophet nor any of the Imams ever fixed the time of the Mahdi's advent. Hence, if a tradition on this subject fixes the time and the tradition is attributed to the Imams and if the text is open to some exegetical explanation, then it should be explained. Otherwise, it should either be ignored or else falsified. An example of such an explanation of a weak and unreliable tradition is provided by the example of Abu Walid Makhzumi, who had attributed to the Imam a statement that said: "."Our Qa'im will rise in ALR

The Signs of His Appearance

Engineer Madani: How reliable are the signs of the appearance of the Mahdi?

Mr. Hoshyar: There are numerous signs of the appearance of the Master of the Command (may God hasten deliverance through him mentioned in the books on hadith. We cannot undertake to discuss each one of them because we do not have that much time. It will require

several sessions to cover even the most important of these. Nevertheless, some observations are in order, however brief. (a) The hadith-reports coming from the ahl al-bayt have divided the signs of the appearance into two parts: first, those reports that mention the signs that will occur without any question and which are unconditional. These signs must occur prior to the appearance of the Mahdi. Second, those signs that are introduced without their being absolute occurrences. These are the events that are not in any way definitely the signs of the Imam's appearance; rather, they are conditional. If the conditions are fulfilled, so too will be the signs; and if the conditions are not fulfilled, so it is with the signs. It was because of some exigencies that they have been mentioned as part of the signs of the appearance.

(b) The signs of the appearance are those things without which the twelfth Imam will not appear. The fulfillment of each of these signs indicates that the days of restoration and deliverance are to some extent close by. However, this does not mean that after the signs are fulfilled, without any delay, the Imam will appear. In the case of some of these signs it is mentioned that proximate with their fulfillment, the Imam will appear.

(c) Some of the signs of the appearance will occur as a kind of miracle, so that the claim to Mahdiism is confirmed and the extraordinary situation of the world is conveyed to the people. The status of these signs is the same as with other miracles, which, even when they do go beyond the world of natural and normal phenomena, should not be regarded as unacceptable.

(d) There is a kind of sign that is mentioned in some books and which seems customarily improbable, such as the saying that when the Mahdi appears the sun will rise from the west, and that the solar eclipse will occur in the middle of the month of Ramadan, whereas the moon eclipse will occur towards the end of the same month. All rational people know that the occurrence of these signs means that the natural order will have fallen apart and that the solar system will have changed. It must be pointed out that the traditions that report such events at the End of Time are no more than 'single' (ahad) transmission.

In other words, they do not generate certainty as to the substance that is being reported. If anyone probes into their chain of transmission (sanad), he may quickly discover that these were fabricated and circulated during the Umayyad and the 'Abbasid periods under their patronage. That period in history saw many individuals who claimed to be the awaited Mahdi and challenging the de facto governments by rallying the support of the people against the unjust rulers. Since the Umayyads and the 'Abbasids understood that it was not possible to falsify the traditions about the Mahdi that were reported uninterruptedly for several generations, they used a trick on the people to discourage them from revolting under 'Alawid leadership. Consequently, they fabricated and put into circulation traditions that carried

impossible signs for the appearance of the Mahdi. In this way they sought to dissuade people from following the 'Alawids in their rebellion against the injustices of the ruling house. However, if these traditions are true, then there is nothing problematic in visualizing catastrophic events preceding the advent of the Mahdi to inform the people about the importance of the event, and to arouse in them a sense of urgency to work for the government .of God on earth

The Story of Sufyani

Engineer Madani: What is the sign about the appearance of Sufyani towards the End of Time when the Mahdi is to emerge? Mr. Hoshyar: On the basis of numerous traditions it appears that before the rise of the Master of the Command, the twelfth Imam (peace be upon him), a man from the descendants of Abu Sufyan will rise. He has been described as an outwardly pious person who will take care to remember God at all times. But in reality he will be the most wicked person on earth. He will deceive a large number of people and will rally them around himself. He will gain control over five regions: Damascus, Hims, Palestine, Jordan and Qinnasrin, and the 'Abbasid's power will be permanently destroyed by his hand. He will kill a large number of Shi'is. Then he will learn of the emergence of the Imam and he will dispatch an army to fight him. But the army will be unable to get close to him and will sink into the earth in the area between Mecca and Medina.

Dr. Jalali: As you know the 'Abbasid empire saw its downfall a long time ago. There is no trace of it left that Sufyani could destroy!

Mr. Hoshyar: In a hadith reported from Imam Musa Kazim (peace be upon him) he says: "The 'Abbasid dynasty is founded upon fraud and deception. It will also vanish in such a way that no trace of it will remain. However, it will revive itself again in such a way that it would seem as if it never saw that decline." The apparent sense of this hadith suggests that 'Abbasid power will recur and that the final blow to it will be dealt by Sufyani. It is possible to maintain that although the rise of Sufyani could be regarded as one of the definite signs of the Imam's appearance, the manner and time of his emergence does not seem to be absolute. For example, it is possible that the destruction of 'Abbasid power at the hands of Sufyani may not be among the absolute signs of the appearance and it may take place at the hands of someone else.

Dr. Fahimi: I have heard that since Khalid b. Yazid b. Mu'awiya b. Abi Sufyan had the wish of gaining the caliphate which he saw in the hands of the Marwanids, he coined the tradition about the Sufyani to console himself and to boost the morale of the Umayyads. The author of

the book Aghani says the following about Khalid: "He was learned and a poet. It is said that he fabricated the tradition about Sufyani."

According to Tabari, the historian, 'Ali b. 'Abd Allah b. Khalid b. Yazid b. Mu'awiya arose in the year 159 AH/775 CE in Damascus saying that he was that awaited Sufyani. In this manner he used to call people to join his movement. From this historical evidence it is clear that the tradition about Sufyani is among the fabricated hadith.

Mr. Hoshyar: The traditions about Sufyani have been reported by both the Sunni and the Shi'i scholars. It is likely that the tradition is among the uninterruptedly (mutawatir) transmitted ones. Hence, by the mere fact of the appearance of a false pretender one cannot rule the tradition to be fabricated and, hence, spurious. Rather, one should say that since the tradition about Sufyani was well known among the people, they were awaiting him. Some took advantage of this and revolted against the rulers claiming to be the awaited Sufyani, thereby deceiving their followers.

The Story of Dajjal

Dr. Jalali: The rise of Dajjal is regarded as one of the signs of the appearance of the Mahdi. He has been described in the traditions as a disbeliever who does not have more than one eye which is located on his forehead and shines like a star. On his forehead is written the following: "He is a disbeliever," which every person, literate or illiterate will be able to read. There will be an abundance of food and a river of water with him at all the times. He will ride a white donkey whose each step will span a mile. At his command the sky will rain and the earth will grow vegetation. The earth will be at his discretion. He will bring the dead back to life. He will cry out in a loud voice that will be heard all over the world saying: "I am your almighty god who created you and who sustains you. Run towards me!"

It is said that there was a person during the Prophet's time who was called 'Abd Allah or Sa'd b. Sayda. The Prophet and his companions went to visit him in his house. He claimed to be a god. 'Umar wanted to kill him but the Prophet restrained him. He is still living and at the End of Time will emerge from Isfahan in the village of Yahudiyya.

It is reported from Tamim al-Dari, a Christian convert to Islam in the 9 AH/630 CE, who said: "I saw Dajjal in chains and fetters on one of the islands in the west."

Mr. Hoshyar: In English, Dajjal is known as the 'Antichrist', that is the one 'against' or the 'enemy' of Christ. The name Dajjal is not a proper noun of an individual, In Arabic any impostor or a deceiver is called 'Dajjal'. In the Bible also the word 'dajjal' can be seen in the same sense. In the First Letter of John 2:22 it is written:

Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, who denies the Father and the Son. In another place in the same letter, 2:18, it is written:

Children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come, therefore we know that it is the last hour.

And in 4:3, it says:

And every spirit which does not confess Jesus is not of God. This is the spirit of antichrist, of which you heard that it was coming, and now it is in the world already.

In the Second Letter of John, verse 7, it is written:

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh; such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.

From these references in the Bible it is evident that the word dajjal ('antichrist') is used in the meaning of a 'deceiver' and a 'liar.'

Moreover, the story of the rise of the antichrist was well known among the Christians who awaited his rise. It appears that Jesus (peace be upon him) had mentioned the emergence of the antichrist and had warned people about his sedition. Accordingly, Christians awaited him. In all probability, the antichrist mentioned by Jesus was the false messiah, a certain man named Dajjal, who appeared some five centuries following Jesus Christ and falsely claimed to be a prophet. It was he who was crucified and not Jesus, the Prophet. In Islam also there are a number of traditions about the existence of Dajjal. The Prophet used to warn people against the sedition of Dajjal, saying: "All the Prophets who came after Noah used to warn their community about the sedition of Dajjal."

The Prophet is reported to have said: "The Day of Judgement will not take place until thirty Dajjals emerge claiming to be a prophet."

'Ali b. Abi Talib said: "Be afraid of the two Dajjals who will be born of the descendants of Fatima. A Dajjal ('imposter') will arise from Dijla at Basra who is not from me. He will be the forerunner of a number of Dajjals ('deceivers')." In another tradition the Prophet said: "The Day of Judgement will not commence until thirty liars and Dajjal-like persons appear and ascribe falsehood to God and His Prophet."

In still another tradition the Prophet is reported to have said: "Before the rise of Dajjal, more than seventy Dajjals ('impostors') will precede."

From all these traditions it appears that 'Dajjal' is not the name of a specific person. Like the word 'antichrist' it is generally applied to any deceiver, imposter, and fraudulent person. In short, the roots of the story of Dajjal must be searched in the Bible and among the Christians. Thereafter, most of the hadith-reports on the subject, with all of their details, are to be found in

the Sunni books and were transmitted by their narrators. It is quite possible that the actual events concerning Dajjal, as foretold in some traditions, might be true. However, all the details about his features and character do not have the stamp of authenticity on them, since the majority of these descriptions, published in Bihar al-anwar and other books, are reported by unidentified narrators.

Consequently, even if it is hypothetically admitted that the actual instance of the appearance of Dajjal is authentic, the details that are provided have certainly been colored by fictitious stories. We can maintain this much without difficulty: that in the Last Days and close to the emergence of the twelfth Imam, a man will be found who will be singularly a deceiver and an imposter, surpassing in wickedness all the previous Dajjals. He will mislead a group by his nihilistic claims. He will present himself to the people as if he is in control of their bread and water. People will become so delinquent in moral discernment that they will begin to believe that the entire universe is within his control. In his deceitful communication he will introduce good works as bad and bad as good. He will show hellfire as paradise, and paradise as hellfire. But his disbelief will be evident to all literate and illiterate persons.

However, there is no evidence to regard Sa'id b. Sayd as the promised Dajjal or to believe that he continues to live since the time of the Prophet. For, apart from the weakness in the chain of transmission, the Prophet is reported to have said this about Dajjal: "He will not enter the two cities of Mecca and Medina." On the contrary Sa'id b. Sayd had entered these cities. He died in Medina and some people were witness to his death. If it is hypothetically accepted that the Prophet did name Sa'id as Dajjal, he must have used the word in its common meaning as a 'deceiver' and a 'liar' rather than as the Dajjal who is part of the signs of the appearance of the Mahdi. In other words, when the Prophet met Sa'id he introduced him as a personification of an antichrist to his companions. Following that, when he informed the people about the emergence of Dajjal in the Final Days, those who heard him thought the reference was being made to Sa'id b. Sayd whom he had called a Dajjal, and it is this Dajjal who would appear as one of the signs of the Last Days, akhir al-zaman. The tradition about Dajjal being alive and possessing a long age comes from this incident.

The Signs of the Appearance (Zuhur) of the Mahdi

The session began promptly at 8 p.m. at Dr. Jalali's residence. He also opened the session by asking the first question. Dr. Jalali: Mr. Hoshyar, could you please tell us, how will the Master of the Command appear?

Mr. Hoshyar: On studying the hadith reported by the ahl al-bayt, it appears that when the world

has become psychologically ready to accept the government of God and when general conditions have become favorable to the idea of the rulership of the truth, God will permit the Mahdi to launch his final revolution. He will suddenly appear in Mecca and the caller of God will announce to the world that he has alighted. A few selected individuals, whose number has been fixed to 313 in some traditions, will be the first ones to respond to his call, and will be drawn to him like iron to a magnet in that first hour of his appearance. Imam Sadiq relates: "When the Master of the Age appears, the young among his followers (shi'a), without any prior appointment, will rouse themselves and reach Mecca that very night."

At that time the Mahdi will call upon the entire world to join his movement. Those who have suffered and lost all hope that their situation could improve will rally around him and will pay allegiance to him. In a short time a vast army made up of courageous, sacrificing, and reform-seeking peoples of the world will be prepared to be led by him. Imams Baqir and Sadiq (peace be upon them), have described the Qa'im's helpers thus:

They will occupy the east and the west of the world, will bring everything under his command. Each one of these soldiers will have the power of forty strong men. Their hearts will be harder than iron pieces so much so that in their march to the goal should they encounter mountains made of iron they will overcome them with their inner strength. They will continue their struggle until God's pleasure is acquired.

At that time, the imperious, sinful rulers, lacking any conscience yet sensing the threat, would come out in defense, calling out the oppositional forces made up of their own followers. But the soldiers of justice and reform, having been disgusted with the injustice and persecution of those evil forces, will take the ultimate decision of attacking them in unison and with total effort. With God's help and sanction they will wipe them out. Awe and fear will descend upon the survivors who will finally surrender to the rightful, just government.

On seeing the fulfillment of many of the signs promised in the traditions, a large number of unbelievers will turn towards Islam. Those who persist in their disbelief and wickedness shall be killed by the soldiers of the Mahdi. The only victorious government in the entire world will be that of Islam and people will devotedly endeavor to protect it. Islam will be the religion of everyone, and will enter all the nations of the world.

The Destiny of the Unbelievers

Dr. Jalali: What will happen to the unbelievers (kuffar) and those who associated partners with God (mushrikin)? Mr. Hoshyar: From the readings in the Qur'an and the hadith literature it appears that during the Mahdi's rule the government and the power will be taken away from

non-monotheistic and materialistic disbelievers, and will be vested in the hands of the Muslims and other worthy people of the world. Let us, for example, look at certain verses from the Qur'an: It is He who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, that he may uplift it above every religion, though the unbelievers be averse. (Saff , 9)

God has promised those of you who believe and do righteous deeds that He will surely make you successors in the land, even as He made those who were before them successors, and that He will surely establish their religion for them that He has approved for them, and will give them in exchange after their fear security: 'They shall serve Me, not associating with Me anything.' (Nur , 54)

Yet We desired to be gracious to those that were abased in the land, and to make them leaders, and to make them the inheritors, and to establish them in the land. (Qasas , 4)

These passages from the Qur'an give the glad tidings of that which will come when world power and government are in the hands of the qualified and worthy believers and Muslims, and the religion of Islam ("submission to the will of God") overshadows all other religions and actually eclipses them all.

The traditions speak about the period of the Mahdi's rule and assure the believers that the forces of disbelief and hypocrisy will be annihilated from the face of the earth. Everywhere there will be a true believer in God's unity. Thus, for example, the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny) said:

Even if there remains one day in the life of the earth, God will bring forth a man from among my progeny whose name and character will be like mine, and whose patronymic will be Abu 'Abd Allah. Through him God will revive His religion and bring it back to its early glory. God will also endow him with victory and there will remain on earth none other than the ones who will declare the Unity of God (tawhid).

The Prophet was asked as to which of his children's descendants he would be. The Prophet struck his hand on Husayn, and said: "From his [descendants]."

Imam Baqir has related a hadith in which he says: "The Qa'im and his companions will fight so much that there will no longer be those unbelievers who associate partners to God".

The Destiny of Jews and Christians

Dr. Jalali: Since Jews and Christians are the followers of the heavenly books that teach monotheism, what will happen to them when the Mahdi appears?

Mr. Hoshyar: The apparent sense of some of the verses of the Qur'an seems to suggest that they will be around until the Day of Judgement occurs. God says in the Sura Ma'ida, 14:

And with those who say 'We are Christians' We took compact; and they have forgotten a portion of that they were reminded of. So We have stirred up among them enmity and hatred, till the Day of Resurrection.

In the Sura Al 'Imran, 55, He says:

When God said, 'Jesus, I will take thee to Me, and I will purify thee of those who believe not. I will set thy followers above the unbelievers till the Resurrection Day.'

Again, in Sura Ma'ida, 64, He says:

The Jews have said: 'God's hand is fettered.' Fettered are their hands, and they are cursed for what they have said. Nay, but His hands are outspread; He expends how He will. And what has been sent down to thee from Thy Lord will surely increase many of them in insolence and unbelief; and We have cast between them enmity and hatred, till the Day of Resurrection.

As you can see, the literal reading of these verses suggests that the religions of the Jews and the Christians will be around until the Day of Judgement. Some of the hadith-reports corroborate this observation. Thus, for instance, Abu Basir asked Imam Sadiq: "What will the Master of the Command do to the 'protected peoples' (ahl al-dhimma)?" The Imam said: "Like the Prophet he will negotiate terms with them, and they will pay the jizya (poll tax), while accepting their inferior position [in the Muslim society]."

In another tradition Imam Baqir says:

The Master of the Command was named as the Mahdi because he will dig out the Torah and other heavenly books from the cave in Antioch. He will judge among the people of the Torah according to the Torah; among the people of the Gospel according to the Gospel; among the people of the Psalms in accordance with the Psalms; among the people of the Qur'an in accordance with the Qur'an.

There are traditions that speak just the opposite of what the Qur'an and above-cited hadith speak. These traditions relate that during the rule of the Mahdi there will no other communities except the Muslims. The Mahdi will offer the religion of Islam to the Jews and the Christians; if they accept it they will be spared, otherwise they will be killed. Thus, for example, the following tradition in which Ibn Bukayr asks Imam Rida the interpretation of the verse: "To Him submits everything that is in the heavens and the earth, in obedience and in aversion." The Imam relates:

The particular verse is revealed in reference to the Qa'im. When he appears he will offer the religion of Islam to the Jews, Christians, Sabians, and the disbelievers in the east and the west. Any one who willingly accepts Islam will be asked to pray, give alms, and perform all the obligatory acts; and any one who refuses to do so will be killed. This will continue until there

remains none but a believer in and worshipper of One God everywhere on the earth. Ibn Bukayr said to the Imam that in that case there would be far too many people who would be killed. The Imam said: "Whenever God desires something to increase or decrease He can do so."

In another tradition, Imam Baqir related that God will open the east and the west for the twelfth Imam. He will put up the fight until there is no other religion than the religion of Muhammad. In his commentary on the verse that says: "He (God) will manifest it (Islam), even if the disbelievers are averse to it," The Imam said: "He will do it in such a way that there will be no one left except that he will have accepted the religion of Muhammad."

Hence, there are two kinds of hadith: one in favor and the other objecting. However, it must be pointed out that those traditions that agree with the Qur'an have preponderance over those that do not, and therefore the latter must be of necessity rejected as unreliable. Accordingly, the Jews and the Christians will remain under the government of the twelfth Imam, but they will have abandoned their belief in the trinity and all forms of disbelief connected with associating partners to God, and become worshippers of One God. They will continue to live under the protection of the Islamic government. At the same time, the corrupt and tyrannical governments will come to an end, and power will be exercised by the well qualified Muslims. Islam will be the world's religion, gaining precedence over all other religions and the call of the Unity of God (tawhid) will be heard all across the world. In this connection Imam Sadiq has said: "When our Qa'im rises there is no place on earth where one will not hear the testimony: I bear witness that there is no deity except God, and Muhammad is the Messenger of God." According to Imam Baqir: "When the Qa'im takes the command all the godless governments will become permanently extinct." Furthermore, in explaining the verse "when they will be consolidated they will establish worship and give alms," the Imam said: "This verse was revealed to describe the Imams, the Mahdi and his loyal followers. God will make them the commanders of the east and the west, and through them God will fortify the religion and eliminate innovation and false [interpretations in it]. Indeed the ignorant people have ruined the truth. All this will be accomplished in such a way that there shall remain no trace of injustice. He will execute the duty of commanding the good and forbidding the evil."

In another report Abu Basir says that he asked Imam Sadiq: "Who is the Qa'im of the ahl al-bayt?" He said:

O Abu Basir, he will be the fifth descendant of my son Musa, the son of the best among the slave girls. His occultation will be prolonged so much so that a group will fall into doubt. Afterwards God will cause him to appear and will make him conquer the entire world. Jesus,

the son of Mary, will descend [from heaven] and will perform his prayer standing behind him. In that afternoon the earth will brighten up with the Light of God and all spots on earth where other than God was worshipped will become a prayer house dedicated to God. Religion will be entirely God's, even though the disbelievers may be averse to it. Engineer Madani: I recall another related topic but, since the time is running short, I will raise it when we meet next time. The session was concluded for that evening and it was decided that the group would meet in a week's time at Dr. Jalali's residence.

The meeting started promptly at Dr. Jalali's place. It was indeed gratifying to know the number of issues related to the subject of the twelfth Imam (peace be upon him) that were raised, discussed and critically analyzed in the sessions that had met so far. The next important issue was the destiny of other peoples under the government of the Mahdi.

Will the Majority of the Peoples on the Earth Be Killed?

Engineer Madani: As you all are aware Muslims today are a minority in the world. The sizeable majority inhabiting the planet is non-Muslim. The Shi'a are also a minority in comparison to other schools of thought among Muslims. Among the Shi'a, it must be pointed out in all honesty, there are many evildoers and corrupt people. On the basis of the way things move in a society, in addition to some analogical deduction, this religious scene of the world is unlikely to change drastically. It is possible to speculate that at the time when the Mahdi appears the Shi'a will still be a minority. My question is this: Is it logical and credible to maintain that the majority of the world's population will simply submit and will not resist as they are being eliminated by the soldiers of the Imam of the Age? Moreover, if the majority of the inhabitants of the world are going to be killed, then this earth will look like a huge cemetery. Does it mean then that the Shi'a will rule over this large cemetery? Surely this action cannot be identified as an act of reform and such a government as the universal authority!

Mr. Hoshyar: Actually we do not have sufficient information about the future world. We cannot speculate about the future on the basis of the past. The Muslim assessment of the situation about the human condition is that humanity is already in a state of perfection in terms of capability and mentality. With the Mahdi's revolution they will be even more prepared to accept the truth. We often hear that many intellectuals in the east and the west have become aware that their own traditions and religions do not have the ability to satisfy their conscience. At the same time, the natural thirst to worship God and to search for a religion has not been entirely quenched and does not leave them in peace. As such, they are in search of a religion that is free from all sorts of superstitions and corrupt beliefs, and whose spiritual power can provide them with satisfying nourishment. It is in keeping with this human search for the path that can

satisfy their spiritual quest that one can speculate about the future human society's movement towards discovering the truth about Islamic knowledge and the permanence of its ordinances. At that point, it will become evident to them that the only creed which can respond positively to the inner needs and guarantee physical and mental happiness is Islam.

Unfortunately, we are not well equipped, both in terms of courage and means, to inform the peoples of the world about the Islamic truth and its pure teachings. Nevertheless, the people's search for truth, on the one hand, and the well stipulated ordinances of Islam, on the other, will ultimately allow the problem to resolve by itself. At such an opportune time, peoples of the world will convert to the Islamic faith in the thousands, making them a majority.

In addition, on the basis of general prevailing conditions at the time of the appearance, one can speculate that when the promised Mahdi emerges and presents Islamic truths to the world, informing humanity about Islam's revolutionary and reformative aspects, large numbers of people will accept Islam. Hence, they will save themselves from being killed. For, on the one hand, they will have perfected their ability to perceive religious truth and, on the other, they will have witnessed the miracles performed by the Imam of the Age. Moreover, they will find the social conditions extraordinary and inexplicable, and the call of the leader of the revolution will reach their ears. These circumstances will lead thousands and thousands of people to convert to Islam at the hands of the Mahdi, thereby saving themselves from destruction.

As for those who persist in their disbelief after all these signs, the Peoples of the Book, that is, the Jews and the Christians, will continue to receive the protection of the Islamic government. Other sinful and corrupt disbelievers will be killed by the universal upholder of justice, the Mahdi. The number of the latter group will, consequently, be insignificant.

The Teachings of Islam Will Be Proclaimed to the World from Qum

From the hadith-reports related by the ahl al-bayt it appears that in the near future the Shi'i religious establishment, having grasped better than ever before the teachings of the ahl al-bayt in matters of faith and practice, will come out from its state of disorder, regalvanize itself with modern communications technology, and begin to reach out to the people all over the world with correct information about the teachings of the Qur'an and Islam. They will reintroduce those Islamic teachings that guarantee human happiness and will emphasize the factors that underscore the eminence and advancement of Islam. In this way they will prepare the way for the appearance of the twelfth Imam (peace be upon him). May those days come soon!

In one of the hadith Imam Sadiq says:

Very soon Kufa will be empty of the believers. [Religious] knowledge will disappear from that

region the way a snake disappears from its abode into a hole in the earth, [without leaving any trace]. Then it will reappear in the city known as Qumm. That city will become the treasure of religious knowledge and excellence. From there it will spread throughout the world, thoroughly eliminating ignorance in matters of religion among the destitute, including women [who will participate in this process of learning anew about Islam].

This will happen close to the appearance of our Qa'im. In this way, God will make Qumm and its inhabitants a substitute for His proof. If it does not happen so, the earth will sink, engulfing its inhabitants, and there will remain no proof. Religious knowledge will spread across nations from Qumm and God's proof will have been provided to all people in such a way that there will not be a single person on earth who will not have heard about the religion and its wisdom. It will be following this event that our Qa'im will appear. God's punishment and tribulation will be ready for execution, because God exacts His revenge only when the people have rejected His proof.

In another place the Imam says:

God made the city of Kufa and its inhabitants to serve as a proof over all other places. He will make Qumm also a proof to serve over other places, and through its inhabitants He will make an argument against all those, including humans and jinns, who reject the proof of His existence. God will not disgrace and humiliate Qumm and its peoples; on the contrary they will always enjoy God's grace and support.

He then went on to say:

The religion and the religious in Qumm, being deficient, will not draw the attention of the people. Had it not been that they were going to serve as God's proof both the city and its inhabitants would have perished, and there would have remained no divine proof for the rest of the world. In addition, the heavens would not have remained secure and no warning would have been given to the people. Qumm and its inhabitants will remain immune from all the calamities. There will come a time when Qumm and its residents will become a proof for God's existence for the entire world. This will happen during the occultation of our Qa'im until he appears. If this does not happen, then the earth will engulf its inhabitants. God's angels will remove all afflictions and calamities from the people of Qumm. Any oppressor who commits aggression against Qumm will be destroyed by those who fight against these oppressors. Furthermore, they will be met with distressful calamity or will encounter a powerful enemy who will keep them occupied. Just as these oppressors would have forgotten remembrance of God, God will make them forget Qumm and its inhabitants.

Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib predicted the following about Qumm:

There will be a man from Qumm who will call people towards truth. Some will respond to his call and will rally around him like pieces of iron [that are drawn towards a magnet]. Strong winds will not be able to move them from their place. They will not be tired of warfare and will be fearless. They trust in none but God. At the end the victory is for those who are godfearing.

Dr. Jalali: You have predicted that Muslims will be in the majority in the future. This speculation is contradicted by some hadith-reports. Thus, for instance, the Prophet is reported to have said:

There will dawn a time when there will remain nothing but a trace from the Qur'an. And from Islam there will survive only a name. There will be people called Muslims, but they will be the farthest of all other people from Islam. They will have well built mosques; but these will be devoid of guidance.

Mr. Hoshyar: In such hadith-reports the Prophet has not predicted more than a particular detail that there will be a time that the true Islam will disappear and no more than an image of it will remain; and that, although there will be Muslims, they will be far from the true Islam. However, this prediction is also in accord with Muslims being in the majority, because it is possible that in spite of being Muslims they will be little affected by the truth and spirituality of Islam. Yet the heavy dust of inconsistency and antiquated traditionalism that will have descended upon Islam will be eradicated by the very existence of the twelfth Imam, who will lay the foundation for a renewal of the religious edifice. In this regard it is worth recalling the Prophet's tradition in which he said: I swear by the One in Whose hand is my life that Islam and Muslims will always be in increase, whereas disbelief and those who associate other beings with God will be in decrease.

He then added:

I solemnly declare that wherever night reaches this religion will reach.

It is sufficient to point out that, first of all, it is predicted that before the twelfth Imam appears the Muslim community will attain a majority status. Second, when he appears many people will convert to Islam because the level of human perfection will have advanced to such heights that it will enable people to accept the truth of Islam, as many traditions have reported. In the following tradition Imam Baqir has declared:

When our Qa'im rises, God will stroke the heads of His creatures with mercy, thereby making their mind more flawless, and able to realize their dreams by means of it.

Imam 'Ali b. Abi Talib said:

In the Last Days and the days of calamity and ignorance of the people, God will appoint a person and will support him and protect his followers through angels. He will help him through

miraculous signs and will give him victory over all the people of the world, so that whether they like it or not they will convert to the true religion. He will fill the earth with justice and equity, and brilliance and rationality. The distances between places will shrink for him in such a way that no unbeliever will remain except that [the appointed one] will bring [to him] faith, and no sinful person will remain except that he will become pious. "Your Enemies Will Destroy Each Other"

Another matter that helps to resolve the problem raised by Engineer Madani is that the general conditions of the world, the advancements in dangerous scientific discoveries and the arms race between the western and eastern nations, in addition to a general moral decline in humanity, allow us to anticipate that great powers, including the Jews and the Christians, would engage each other in hostile activities, and would destroy a majority of the world's population by means of destructive weapons. Another large group will become the victims of precarious diseases that will surface as a result of human destruction of the natural immune system provided by God in human bodies and in the environment.

A companion of Imam Baqir by the name of 'Abd al-Malik A'yan relates that he once stood up in the Imam's presence and, leaning on his two arms, wept and said: "I was hopeful that I would witness the period of the Qa'im while there was still some strength left in me." The Imam, consoling him, said:

Are you not pleased that your enemies are busy with each other [in conflict], while you are safe in your homes? When our Qa'im arises each one of you will gain the energy of forty men. Your heart will become like pieces of iron, which, if hurled against mountains, will break them through. You will be the leaders of the world and its keepers. In another report Imam Sadiq predicted the following:

Before the Qa'im's rise two deaths will occur: one death red and the other white. These will kill five out of every seven persons. The red death will occur by means of killing and the white through epidemics.

Zurarah b. A'yan, Imam Sadiq's close associate, on one occasion asked the Imam: "Is the call from heaven, [as predicted in the traditions about the Qa'im's rise,] a true thing?" The Imam replied: "I declare with solemnity that indeed that will occur just as all the peoples [having heard it] will repeat that [call] on their tongues." He then added: "The Qa'im will not rise until nine out of every ten persons is annihilated."

War Is Inevitable

Dr. Fahimi: Is not it possible that the preparations of the Mahdi's revolution might be done in

such a way as to avoid war and bloodshed in establishing his government?

Mr. Hoshyar: As things normally proceed in such events, it seems unlikely that this catastrophe can be avoided even when the level of people's thinking changes to the extent that the number of good people increases, the oppressors and egotistic persons will still be there in the midst of human society. This group will indisputably be opposed to justice and will never give up their stubborn antagonism against any power. Such people will do anything against the promised Mahdi to protect their vested interests. Moreover, they will do anything within their power to demoralize and combat those who support the Imam. To crush the negative influence of this group there is no other solution except warfare and bloodshed. It is for this reason that the hadith-reports from the ahl al-bayt have regarded warfare and bloodshed inevitable.

In one of the traditions Bashir, another companion of Imam Sadiq, asked the Imam about what the people were saying about the rise of the Mahdi: 'When he rises not even an amount of blood as small as that which is usually allowed to flow during the cupping procedure will be shed.' The Imam retorted that such a thing was impossible:

"Had such a thing been possible then it would have been done for the Prophet (peace be upon him and his progeny). Actually, in the battle against the enemy, the Prophet's blood flowed as his teeth and his forehead were injured. By God, the revolution of the one who will command the affairs [of the Muslim community] will not be accomplished until we sweat on the battlefield and blood is shed." He then wiped his hand on his forehead.

The Mahdi's Defense

Dr. Jalali: I have heard that the Imam of the Age will rise with a sword. This is something that does not seem to be right. The reason is that so far humankind has created and discovered various kinds of weapons to be used on the battlefields. Nuclear proliferation and weapons of mass destruction are recent additions to the array of weaponry in human arsenals. With the use of chemical and biological weapons, including remote detonation devices for binary weapons, thousands upon thousands of people can be destroyed in one blow. The question arises that with all these weapons existing now, how can one imagine that the Mahdi and his soldiers will be triumphant fighting with swords?

Mr. Hoshyar: Yes, indeed the subject of the Mahdi's rise with the sword is mentioned in the traditions. Let me cite some examples. Imam Baqir relates:

The Mahdi resembles his forefather, the Prophet, in that he too will rise with a sword to wipe out tyrants and those who mislead people, the enemy of God and the Prophet. He will attain victory by sword and scare, and none of his troops (lit. flags) will return [with a defeat].

However, the rise with the "sword" is a metaphor for warfare. It indicates that war and bloodshed are part of the official task of the Mahdi. He is commanded by God to make Islam a universal faith and to confront injustice and tyranny, even by force and by means of a sword. His circumstance is contrary to his forefathers' careers, which did not require them to face the situation in that forceful manner, as their charge was limited to admonition and counsel. Consequently, "to rise with a sword" does not mean that his weapons of defense are limited to a sword, and that he is to restrain himself from using any other kind of weapons. To be sure, he too might employ the weapons of the day or even create new weapons to overpower all the known weaponry of his time. The truth is that our knowledge about the future events of the world is limited; nor do we know in any detailed manner about the future destiny of humankind and the course of its technological enterprise. As such, we do not have the right to judge the future on the basis of the past without any evidence. We do not know which country or nation will have a technological and civilizational advantage and superiority over others. It is possible that the weak and divided nations of the Islamic world will wake up and put aside their minor differences to create the universal brotherhood under the mighty banner of tawhid, the Unity of God, and adopt and implement the Qur'anic guidance as the constitution of the universal Muslim nation.

The united Islamic peoples could then utilize their natural resources to their advantage and come out of a self-cultivated laziness and self-imposed isolation to take up the challenge of becoming leaders of human civilization in sciences, industry, and ethics. They can bring under their control the unleashed and boundless energies of the east and the west in order to channel them into preparing for the final launching of the Mahdi's revolution. At that time the Mahdi can appear and destroy the unjust and tyrannical powers with the help of the mighty forces at his disposal. Furthermore, with divine assistance and promises of victory, in addition to the extraordinary energy that emanates from the position of the wilayat (the exercise of divinely-ordained sovereignty under the Imamate) he can lay the foundation of a just and equitable government of God on the earth.

At that moment the scientists and scholars whose research made possible the discovery of all the tools and technology will feel sadness and remorse because their discoveries had not been used for the betterment of human life but were instead employed to colonize and to suppress the peoples of the world. Hence, in order to give recompense for the abuse of their scientific contributions, they will see no other way but to respond to the call of the Mahdi to fight for justice and work for the good of the peoples of the world. We cannot foretell how people in the future will abandon their arrogance and stubbornness, come out from their ignorance and work

towards the eradication of weapons of mass destruction and the decisive implementation of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. But all the wealth that is now being used to produce such weapons could then be diverted for the elimination of poverty, the advancement of education .and the well being of humankind

The World under the Mahdi

Engineer Madani: Could you give some indications about the conditions that would prevail under the rule of the Mahdi? Mr. Hoshyar: It is possible to reconstruct the following picture of the future from the traditions related by the ahl al-bayt: When the promised Mahdi, the twelfth Imam (peace be upon him), appears, following his victory over the evil forces of the world, he will administer the entire world under one Islamic government. He will appoint well-qualified individuals as the governors of different regions of the world with clear instructions and programs for the peaceful and just administration of the region under their governance. The entire earth will flourish under their administration. The Mahdi will distantly oversee the whole earth himself, with its widespread regions and extensive affairs accessible to him like the palm of his hand. His disciples and helpers also will observe and talk to him from remote distances. The entire earth will be filled with justice and equity.

People will have become kind and will treat each other with honesty and sincerity. There will be security everywhere as no one will wish to cause harm to another. The economic condition of the people will improve enormously. There will be plenty of rain to cause the earth to become lush with greenery and there will be all kinds of grains and fruits in abundance. Necessary improvements will be introduced in agricultural methods. People will pay more attention to God's presence than to sins. Islam will become the official religion of the world, with the call of the Unity of God arising from all corners of the earth.

In the matter of building the roads, interesting programs will be introduced. Main roads will be sixty yards wide. In building the roads there will be so much diligence that the mosques standing in the middle will be demolished. Footpaths will adorn the streets.

Pedestrians will be asked to cross the roads at the proper pedestrian's crossing; whereas the drivers will be asked to move into the middle. All the windows of the homes that open to the street will be closed. There will be prohibitions against constructing open drains and sewage on the streets. Imposing structures will be demolished. The highly decorative and elevated mosques as well as minarets and the grills separating the leader of the congregational prayers from the worshippers will be destroyed. During the age of the Mahdi human reason will have reached perfection. General information among people will have advanced to such a degree

that women will be able to formulate judicial decisions while at home. Imam Sadiq says: Knowledge is divided into twenty-seven parts. No more than two parts has been acquired by human beings so far. When our Qa'im arises he will expose the rest of the twenty five parts and distribute it among the people. People's faith will have attained excellence and their hearts free of malevolence and resentment. Finally, let me remind you that all this elaboration has been extracted from pertinent hadith-reports, and most of these traditions are rare and reported by a single narrator. Anyone desiring more details can refer to volumes 51 and 52 of Bihar al-anwar, volumes 6 and 7 of Ithbat al-hudat, and Nu'mani's Kitab al-ghayba.

The Victory of the Prophets

Dr. Jalali: From all the descriptions and excellences that have been related about the Mahdi, the twelfth Imam (peace be upon him) in the traditions, it would seem that he is more excellent than all the Prophets, including the Prophet of Islam (peace be upon him and his progeny). After all, none of them succeeded in reforming human society, establishing a world government founded upon the Unity of God, implementing the divine ordinances in their entirety, executing the divine scales of justice perfectly, and eliminating injustice and tyranny absolutely. The only person able to accomplish all these tasks is the Mahdi, and none other!

Mr. Hoshyar: In reality, the reform of human society, and the execution of divine laws has been the aspiration of all the Prophets. Each one of these divinely appointed reformers endeavored to accomplish their goal in accord with the possibilities and capacity that were available to them in their particular age and thereby drew the people closer to God. If they had not struggled and made the necessary sacrifices, then government based on God's unity would have never taken off. In this sense, all these Prophets are participants and have a share in this final success. The accomplishment of the Mahdi should be regarded as the success of all God-worshipping peoples in the line of the Prophets and religious leaders. The Imam's victory is not his own personal victory; rather, with the amazing energy of this Imam this will be the victory of truth over falsehood, of piety over disbelief. It will be the fulfillment of the past Prophets' promise to their followers, and the realization of their ideal for human society. The accomplishment of the promised Mahdi, in truth, is the accomplishment of Adam, Seth, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, and all other Prophets (peace be upon them). They were the ones who, through their sacrifices and perseverance, prepared this highway and, to some extent, the people's intellect to accept this call. The program was conceived and the struggle begun by the past Prophets. Each one of them provided an example through their own conduct and pushed the level of the people's comprehension of God's purposes until the line

reached the Prophet of Islam. He outlined the complete program and provided the comprehensive blueprint for the transformation of the world. At the time of his death he handed that over to his rightful successors, the Imams. The Prophet and the Imams, then, endeavored on this path to execute the divine plan for humanity and in so doing encountered severe opposition and made great sacrifices. Many more years should go by, and many more crises and revolutions must be faced by humanity in order for it to mature and become worthy of the government based on tawhid. It will only be then that the last barrier of disbelief and irreligiosity will be surmounted by the astounding energy of the Mahdi (peace be upon him), only then will the dream of humanity materialize.

Hence, the promised Mahdi is the executor of the Prophet's plans, including those of the past Prophets. His victory is the victory of the revealed religions. God promises victory to David in the Psalms, and in one of the passages of the Qur'an revealed to underscore the Mahdi's final accomplishment, God reminds Muslims of that promise, saying: "We have written in the (Psalms that Our righteous servants shall inherit the earth." (Anbiya', 105

The Mahdi and the New Constitution

Dr. Jalali: I have heard that the twelfth Imam (peace be upon him) will bring a new religion, constitution, and laws for the people. The present laws of Islam will be abrogated by him. How reliable is this account?

Mr. Hoshyar: The source of this information are the traditions on this subject. Thus, to clarify the issue we must cite some of these hadith.

'Abd Allah b. 'Ata' asked Imam Sadiq about the character and conduct of the Mahdi. The Imam said: He will carry out the same mission that the Prophet did. He will eradicate prevailing innovations, just as the Prophet destroyed the foundation of the jahiliyya (pre-Islamic Arab morals), and then rebuild Islam afresh. In another hadith Abu Khadija relates from Imam Sadiq, who said:

When the Qa'im rises he will come with a new commission, just as the Prophet in the beginning of Islam called the people to a new commission. In still another hadith Imam Sadiq says: When the Qa'im emerges he will come with a new commission, a new book, a new conduct and a new judgement, which will be strenuous for the Arabs. His work is nothing but to fight, and no one [among the disbelievers] will be spared. He will not be afraid of any blame in the execution of his duty.

The Conduct of the Mahdi

However, these and other traditions point to an important factor in Mahdi's behavior -- that his conduct will be based on that of his forefather, the Prophet. He will defend the religion and the Qur'an that were given to the Prophet. For instance, the Prophet is reported to have said: "One of my ahl al-bayt will rise and will act upon my tradition and my custom." And, he said: "The Qa'im among my children, will have my name and my patronymic. He will possess my features and will follow my conduct. He will command the people to my obedience and to my law; and he will call them to the Book of my Lord."

In another tradition he said:

My twelfth descendant will disappear in such a way that he will not be seen at all. There will come a time when there shall remain nothing but a name from Islam. And, there shall remain nothing but a trace from the Qur'an. At that time God will permit him to revolt and through him God will reinforce Islam and revive it.

In still another hadith the Prophet said: "Mahdi is from my family and will fight for my tradition, just as I fought for the Qur'an."

As one can observe, these traditions clearly indicate that the twelfth Imam's agenda and his plan of action are to propagate Islam and to revive the importance of the Qur'an. In order to execute the teachings of the Prophet he will strive with force. Hence, if there is any ambiguity in the earlier traditions cited in this section, the above traditions help clarify them. Over all, the traditions should be interpreted as follows:

During the occultation, innovations will appear in the religion, and the ordinances of the Qur'an and the teachings of Islam will be interpreted in accordance with people's likes and dislikes. As a result, many teachings and laws will be forgotten as if they were never even a part of Islam. When the Mahdi appears he will invalidate these innovations and will restore the ordinances of God as they were when they were commanded. He will institute the penal laws of Islam without any leniency. Evidently, such a program will be perceived by the people something new. Imam Sadiq in another hadith has made the aforementioned role of the Mahdi explicit: "When the Qa'im rises he will emulate the conduct of the Prophet, except that he will elaborate the traditions of Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny)." Fadl b. Yasar heard Imam Baqir saying: "When our Qa'im rises he will face so much difficulty from the people, that even the Prophet during the period of jahiliyya did not face." Fadl asked: "Why should that be so?" The Imam said: When the Prophet was appointed people worshipped stones and wood. However, when our Qa'im arises people will interpret the ordinances of God against his interpretation, and will argue with him and dispute by means of the Qur'an. By God, the justice

.of the Qa'im will enter inside their homes, just as the heat and the cold enter them

The Freshness of the Explanations Offered by the Mahdi

People, having abandoned the absolute principles and fundamental teachings of Islam, merely follow the outward forms of religion and regard those to be sufficient. These are the people who, besides the five daily obligatory prayers, the fasting of Ramadan, and avoidance of external pollution (najasat), know nothing of Islam. Besides, some of them have limited religion to the mosque and, hence, its reality has very little impact upon their actions and behavior. In the life outside the mosque, that is in the market place or at work, there is no trace of their Islam. They do not regard ethical behavior and moral precepts to be part of Islam. They give no importance eschewing to immoral conduct and make an excuse of not following moral guidelines since there is dispute about the obligatoriness and the prohibitions of certain requirements. They go as far as turning the prohibitions of the law, through trickery, into something permissible. They also shun their responsibility for paying the dues that are imposed by the law on them. In other words, they are engaged in interpreting the religion according to their desires.

When it comes to the Qur'an, they think it sufficient to pay attention to its formal recitation and to respect the conventions in that connection. Hence, when the twelfth Imam appears it is obvious that he will ask them as to why they have abandoned the essence of religion and have interpreted the Qur'an and the hadith to fit their own preferred meanings. Why have they left the truth of Islam while being satisfied with mere outward adherence to it? Why have they not sought to conform their character and their actions with the true spirit of Islam? Why have they twisted the meanings of the religion to accord with their own personal avarice? Since they pay so much attention to the proper recitation of the Qur'an, they should also put its directives into action. The twelfth Imam has the right to ask: "My grandfather, Imam Husayn, did not get killed for the sake of mourning. Why have you forsaken my grandfather's goal and destroyed it?"

The Imam will ask them to learn the Islamic social and moral teachings and apply them in their everyday lives. They should avoid the forbidden acts, and take care of their financial obligations, without making flimsy excuses. They should also keep in mind that remembering the merits of the ahl al-bayt and weeping for their suffering can never substitute for the zakat and khums and taking care of one's debts. Nor can they substitute for such sinful behavior as taking interest and bribes, cheating others and treating them with dishonesty. They should recognize that weeping and sighing for Imam Husayn can never substitute for having ill-treated orphans and widows. More importantly, they should not limit piety to the mosque; rather, they

should seek participation in the society and carry out the duty of commanding the good and forbidding the evil and fight the innovations that have crept into Islam.

Certainly, such a religion would seem new and difficult to these people, and they might not even consider it to be Islam, because they have imagined Islam to be something else. These people used to think that the progress and greatness of Islam lay in decorating the mosques and in constructing tall minarets. If the twelfth Imam says: "The greatness of Islam is righteous action, honesty, trustworthiness, keeping promises, avoiding forbidden acts," this would appear to them altogether new! They used to assume that when the Imam appears he will make amends for all the actions of the Muslims and will retire with them in the corner of a mosque. But if they witness that blood is dripping from the Imam's sword and that he is calling people to jihad and to command the good and forbid the evil, and that he is killing the unjust worshippers and returning the goods they have stolen to their rightful owners, such actions of the Imam they will indeed find new!

Imam Sadiq relates:

When our Qa'im arises he will call people anew to Islam, guiding them to the old thing from which people have turned away. He will be called Mahdi because he will guide people to the thing from which they have been separated. He will be called Qa'im because he will be commanded to establish the truth.

In short, there is a total difference between the assumed Mahdi and his agenda, and the true Mahdi and his role. It is for this reason that since his actions will not be approved by the people, they will desert him in the beginning. However, since they will find no one else who can deliver them they will submit to him. Imam Sadiq says:

I can witness the Qa'im wearing the particular garment and taking out the letter of the Prophet sealed with a golden seal, and after breaking the seal he reads aloud to the people. The people disperse from him as the sheep do from the shepherd. And no one besides his vizier and eleven chiefs remain with him. Then people begin to search for a reformer everywhere. But, since they do not find anyone besides him who can help them, they rush towards him. By God, I know what the Qa'im is telling them which they refuse to acknowledge.

The Mahdi and Abrogation of the Ordinances

Dr. Fahimi: If I recall, you had said earlier that the Mahdi is not the lawgiver, and neither is he the abrogator of the law. This statement of yours does not agree with the substance of the following tradition: Imam Sadiq said: Two cases of bloodshed are permissible in Islam. But no one executes the divine ordinance in those two cases until God sends the Qa'im from the ahl

al-bayt who can execute God's injunction in those cases without requiring any witnesses: one is the case of a married man committing adultery who will be stoned by him; and the other is the case of a person refusing to pay the zakat. In another tradition the Imam said: "When the Qa'im from the family of Muhammad appears he will judge among people without requiring witnesses in the manner of David and Solomon."

These and other such traditions imply that Islamic ordinances will be abrogated by the Imam who will substitute for them new ordinances. By holding such beliefs you are actually proving the prophethood of the Mahdi, even though you do not call him a prophet!

Mr. Hoshyar: First of all, allow me to point out that the source of such beliefs consists of rare traditions reported by a single narrator. Second, I do not see any problem with the proposition that God may reveal a law to the Prophet and inform him that the law will be applicable to him and his followers until the time when the Qa'im appears. When the twelfth among his descendants appears he should follow a second injunction. The Prophet also informs about this arrangement to his successor until the information reaches the last Imam. In such a case the ordinance is not abrogated, and the Imam does not introduce a new ruling that was revealed to him. Rather, the first injunction was already limited in time, and the Prophet was already informed about the second one.

Thus, for instance, social expediency required that the judge should confine his judgement to an objective proof, seeking witnesses, and an oath. The Prophet and the Imams were also required to follow the same procedure in their administration of justice. However, when the Mahdi appears and establishes the Islamic government, he is required to decide the case on the basis of his knowledge. Thus, this latter ordinance was already part of Islamic judisprudence, awaiting execution after the appearance of the Mahdi.

Source: Imam Al-Mahdi, The Just Leader of Humanity, By:Ayatollah Ibrahim Amini. To study the source book with all references, please click here.