

Lesson 28: The Twelfth Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi (a.j.)

Imam Mahdi (a.j.) was born on 15th of the month of Sha'ban in the year 255 A.H. in the town of Samarra, and in 260 A.H., when his great father died, he assumed the exalted position of the Imamat. His name (Muhammad) and his agnomen epithet (Abul-Qasim) are the same as those for the holy Prophet (S). His father, the 11th Imam, was Imam Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.), and his mother was the great lady Nargis may the peace of Allah be with her.

For various reasons, the twelfth Imam, from the first day of his life, did not appear in public. For about seventy years people were in communication with him through his special representatives, whose names are as follows in order of succession: 'Uthman Ibn Sa'id, Muhammad Ibn 'Uthman, Husayn Ibn Ruh, and 'Ali Ibn Muhammad al-Sammam. This period of seventy years is known as the minor occultation (al-Ghaybat al-Sughra'), after which the major occultation (al-Ghaybat al-Kubra') began.

During the major occultation and until the time of his re-appearance, no one has been and will be his special representative. The people have the duty to refer in the matters of the Islamic laws to the Fuqaha, those excelling in knowledge of the Shari'ah and the narration of Hadith who are specialists in such matters.

Belief in Imam Mahdi (a.j.) and Universal Reform

The belief in the re-appearance of Imam Mahdi (a.j.) the universal reformer is not confined to the Shi'ah Muslims. Other Muslim groups and even non-Muslim groups like the Jews and the Christians and some of the great world intellectual figures believe in the appearance of a great spiritual reformer. The following passage is from Psalm 37:

“...Trust in the Lord and do good; so you will dwell in the land, and enjoy security.

...For the wicked shall be cut off: but those who wait for the Lord shall possess the Land.

...But the weak shall possess the land, and delight themselves in abundant prosperity.

...The Lord knows the days of the flawless, and their heritage will abide forever.

...For those blessed by the Lord, shall possess the land, but those cursed by Him shall be cut off.

...The righteous shall possess the land, and dwell upon it forever...”

The Holy Qur'an and belief In al-Mahdi (a.j.)

In the Qur'an a time is promised when the worshippers of Truth, the world's people of righteousness, will take over the power and government of the world, and the glorious Din, religion, Islam will reign all over the earth. Other verses have been revealed, which with proper exegesis point to Imam Mahdi (a.j.).

“We have written it in the psalms, which We had revealed after the Torah that the earth will be given to Our righteous servants as their inheritance (21: 105).

God has promised the righteously striving believers to appoint them as His deputies on earth, as He had appointed those who lived before. He will make the religion that He has chosen for them to stand supreme. He will replace their fear with peace and security so that they will worship God alone and consider no one equal to Him. Whoever becomes an unbeliever after this will be a sinful person. (24:55).

It is He who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the true religion to stand supreme over all religions, even though the pagans dislike it (61:9).

But We have decided to grant a favour to the suppressed ones by appointing them leaders and heirs of the land, (28:5).”

The above verses clearly show that in the end the world will come into the hands of Allah's worthy and righteous servants and that they will become the leaders of the people of the world. Then all people will accept Islam instead of all religions.

Belief in al-Mahdi (a.j.) and the Sunni Authorities

In this subject, the scholars in the Sunni school have related many Hadith from the Prophet of Islam, through narrators who they themselves trust. From among them are such Hadith expressing that the Imams are twelve persons and that they are all from the Quraysh.

Al-Mahdi, the promised one, is from the family of the Prophet (a.s) and is a descendant of Imam 'Ali and Sayyidah Fatimah al-Zahra (a.s.), and in many of these Ahadith, (plural for Hadith), it is mentioned that he is from the line of Imam Husayn (a.s.). They have mentioned and recorded hundreds of Hadith about al-Mahdi in more than seventy books by their own valued and dependable authorities of which the

following are a few examples.

- Al-Musnad of Ahmad Ibn Hanbal (d. 241 A.H.)
- Sahih Bukhri (d. 256 A.H.)
- Sahih Muslim Ibn Hajjaj Nishapouri (d. 261 A.H.)
- Sunan of Abi Dawud Sajistani (d. 275 A.H.)
- Sahih Muhammad Ibn 'Isa al-Tirmidhi (d. 279 A.H.)

The authors of the above books, each one of them are among the most authoritative books of the Sunni Muslims died either before the birth of the Imam of the Age (255 A.H.) or shortly after his birth.

Also of the works that mention Imam al-Mahdi are the following:

- Musabih al-Sunnah of al-Baghawi (d. 516 A.H.)
- Jami' al-'Usul of Ibn Athir (d. 606 A.H.)
- Al-Futahat al-Makkiyyah of Muhyiddin Ibn al-'Arabi (d. 638 A.H.)
- Tadhkira al-Khawas of Sibti Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 654 A.H.)
- Fara'id al-Simtayn of al-Hamawi (d.716 A.H.)
- Al-Sawa'iq al-Muhriqah of Ibn Hajar al-Haythami (d. 973 A.H.)
- Yanabi' al-Mawaddah of Shaykh Sulayman al-Qunduzi (d.1293).

Some of the Sunni scholars have written books especially about the Imam of the Age:

1. Al-Bayan fi Akhbar Sahib al-Zaman of al-Ganji al-Shafi'i.
2. Al-'Iqd al-Durar fi Akhbar al-Imam al-Muntazar of Shaykh Jamaluddin Yusuf al-Damishqi.
3. Mahdi of ale-Rasul of 'Ali Ibn Sultan Muhammad al-Harawi al-Hanafi
4. Kitab al-Mahdi of Abu Dawud.
5. 'Alamat al-Mahdi of Jalaluddin al-Suyuti
6. Manaqib al-Mahdi of Hafiz Abu Na'im al-Isfahani
7. Al-Qawl al-Mukhtasar fi 'Alamat al-Mahdi al-Muntazar of Ibn Hajar

8. Al-Burhan fi 'Alamat al-Mahdi Akhir al-Zaman of Mulla 'Ali al-Muttaqi

9. Arba'un Hadith fi al-Mahdi of Abul 'Ala' al-Hamadani.

The Hidden Reformer

There are three hundred Ahadith from the Prophet (S) and from the five Imams about the Imam of the Age. From them it is clear that the Imam of the Age is the ninth son of Husayn Ibn Ali. His father is Imam Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.), his mother Nargis Khatun. His name is the same as that of the Prophet (S) of the end of time; he is also called al-Mahdi. He was born during his father's lifetime; in Samarra, Iraq, that his father died when he was young, that he lives even to this day, and as long as God wishes it. Then he will reappear and the world will be filled with justice after a time of injustice everywhere and that why is he now hidden from the sight of men.

And when he comes, may his appearance be come soon, with his back towards the Ka'bah's edifice, he will lean against the wall and call out loud for his supporters and followers, who will number 313 persons. Prophet 'Isa (a.s.) will come from the heaven down to the earth, and will pray in a prayer led by al-Mahdi. The Imam of the Age will cause the commands of Islam to reach all over the world, and the earth will become like heaven.

There are many Hadith related by the Shi'ah and Sunni scholars on many aspects pertaining this great Imam (a.s.), and these are mentioned in books like Behar al- Anwar and Muntakhab al-Athar.

The following are some of the Hadith, which the authors of Muntakhab al-Athar have mentioned.

Subject	No. of Hadith
1. A Hadith in which it is said that the Imams (a.s) are twelve, the first being Imam Ali and the last Imam al-Mahdi (a.j.)	58
2. A Hadith, which gives news of the appearance of al-Mahdi (a.j.).	657
3. A Hadith, which identifies him as being from the descendants of the Prophet (S).	389
4. A Hadith, which says that his name and agnomen are the same as those for the holy Prophet (S).	48
5. A Hadith which says al-Mahdi (a.j.) is a descendant of Amir al-Mu'minin.	214
6. A Hadith, which says he is a descendant of Sayyidah Fatimah (a.s.)	196
7. A Hadith, which says he is a descendant of Imam Husayn (a.s.)	175
8. A Hadith, which says he is the ninth descendant of Imam Husayn (a.s.)	148
9. A Hadith, which says he is a descendant of Imam Zayn al-'Abidin (a.s.)	175
10. A Hadith, which says he is a descendant of Imam al-Baqir (a.s.)	103
11. A Hadith, which says he is a descendant of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.)	103
12. A Hadith, which says he is a descendant of Imam Musa al-Kazim (a.s.)	101
13. A Hadith, which says he is a descendant of Imam al-Rida (a.s.)	95
14. A Hadith, which says he is a descendant of Imam al-Jawad (a.s.)	90
15. A Hadith, which says he is a descendant of Imam Ali al-Hadi (a.s.)	90
16. A Hadith, which says he is a descendant of Imam Hasan al-'Askari (a.s.)	146

17. A Hadith, which says that the name of his father is Hasan	147
18. A Hadith, which says that he will fill the world with justice	123
19. A Hadith which says his occultation will be prolonged	91
20. A Hadith, which speaks of the extent of al-Mahdi's life	318
21. A Hadith, which says that Islam will rule over the world through him.	47
22. A Hadith, which says he will be the twelfth and the last Imam.	136

When looking at the above mentioned and other Ahadith, it should be kept in mind that the Hadith mentioning al-Mahdi (a.j.) have been narrated most frequently, and that there are few subjects in Islam which have been mentioned in Hadith so often. Thus, in this light, belief in Islam and the Holy Prophet (S) must necessarily follow with belief in the existence of the promised Mahdi who is now in occultation.

The following are some text of these Ahadith.

1. The author of Yanabi' al-Muwaddah reports that the Prophet (S) said, "al-Mahdi is a descendant of mine. He will be in concealment, and when he manifests himself, the earth will become filled with justice, just as it was previously filled with injustice."

2. In this book it is also reported that Salman al-Farsi said, "I went to the Prophet, while Husayn Ibn 'Ali was sitting in his lap. The Prophet (S) was kissing his eyes and mouth saying, "You are a noble one, the son of a noble one, and the brother of a noble one. You are the Imam, the son of the Imam, and the brother of the Imam. You are the Authority, son of the Authority and the brother of the Authority. You will be the father of nine (divine) Authorities of whom the ninth will be the Qa'im, one of the names of Imam al-Mahdi (a.j)."

3. Ibn Abi Dalaf says: "I heard from Imam Ali Ibn Muhammad (the 10th Imam) who said, "The Imam after me will be Hasan, my son, and after him his descendant the Qa'im, who will fill the earth with justice, when it was previously filled with injustice."

4. Hudhayfah said that the Prophet (S) said, "If no more than one day is left of the world, God will make that day long enough to a man, descendant of mine, whose name is my name, to appear in the world." Salman asked: "O Prophet of Allah, which descendant will he be?" The Prophet placed his hand on Husayn and said that he will be one of his descendants.

5. Mas'adah reports from Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) who said, "The Qa'im will be born to Hasan (the eleventh Imam, Imam Hasan al-'Askari). Hasan will be the son of Ali (the tenth Imam, Imam Ali al-Naqi). Ali will be the son of Muhammad (the ninth Imam, Imam Muhammad al-Taqi). Muhammad will be born to Ali (the eighth Imam, Imam Ali Ibn Musa al-Rida). Ali will be the son of this child (he pointed to Imam Musa Ibn Ja'far, the seventh Imam). We are twelve Imams, all-pure and of noble birth. I swear by Allah, if there remains of the world no more than one day, Allah will make that day long enough so that the Qa'im of us, the Ahlul Bayt of the Prophet (S), will appear."

The Opinion of Sociologists

The world's foremost intellectuals are of the opinion that the wars, massacres, murders, irresponsible sexual behaviours, and all the evils of this age which are daily in the increase are because there is no equilibrium between man's material and spiritual requirements.

The man of today has turned his back on moral virtues and spiritual riches, although he has conquered the sea, the desert and space, and has taken himself to the moon.

It is obvious that by relying on force and power he cannot establish order and justice in the world, and that only with technology and the material sciences the happiness of humanity will not be secured. Man has no other resort than to strengthen his social relations on the basis of faith and virtue, and to save himself from the vortex of dangers with the guidance of a great world reformer, to establish a rule based on justice together with peace, security and sincerity. In this state of affairs, human society is moving quickly towards preparation for the rising up of the Imam of the Age (a.j.).

The Length of al-Mahdi's Life

We believe that the lengthening of a man's life is not an impossibility, because it is explicitly said in the holy Qur'an that:

“We sent Nuh to his people, as he tarried among them a thousand years, all but fifty.” (29: 14)

What is more, research undertaken in the biological sciences has corroborated the possibility of lengthening the human life span. Even great scientists are of the opinion that food and drugs may be prepared which can prolong man's life.

The late Ayatullah As-Sadr¹ in his book “al-Mahdi”, quoted from a scientific article written in 1959, which stands as a witness to the above matter. Here is a summary of what scientists say.

“Authoritative scientists say that all the basic tissues of the animal body can live forever, and it is possible for man to live for a thousand years, provided that it doesn't happen that the thread of his life is not severed. These scientists do not speak on the basis of guesswork or surmise, for they have arrived at their conclusion through scientific experiment.

“A professor at Johns Hopkins University has said that it has been proved that the basic members of the human body have the potentiality for eternal life. Apparently the first person to carry out these experiments on parts of an animal's body was Dr. Jack Lubb, and after him Dr. Warren Lewis, who, together with his wife, proved that parts of bird fetuses could be kept alive in buffer solutions.

These experiments were systematically continued until Dr. Alexis Karel, as a result of further experimental work established that parts of animals subjected to experiments did not degenerate, and

even that they lived longer than the animal from which they had been taken. In January 1912 he started his experiments and by dint of self-sacrifice and removing the numerous difficulties, he discovered the following facts:

“1. Unless complications such as lack of nutrition or attack by microbes intervened, living cells would continue living forever:

These cells, which continued to live, also grew and multiplied.

2. The growth and division of these cells could be controlled by the nutrition given to them.

3. The passing of time did not affect them and did not make them age or lose strength. Not even the smallest effect of aging, was seen. Each year they grew and multiplied exactly as in previous years. So why does man die? Why is his span of life rarer more than a hundred years?

The part of the human or animals body are numerous and various, and there is also a perfect relationship and unity between them; so that the life of some of them depends on the life of others, and the failure or death of parts of human or animal bodies is the consequence of the death of the other parts. Sudden deaths, which are the result of infection, are for this reason, and it also provides the reason for the average limit of man's life being: around seventy to eighty years.

Of course, what experiments have shown is that the cause of death is not the arrival at seventy or eighty years of age, but that the fundamental causes are diseases and accidents which may attack one of the body's organs and put it out of work; then the death of this part causes a break in its relation to other parts and the death of other organs ensues.

Thus if science could eliminate accidents or obstruct their harmful effects, there would be no impediment to the prolongation of life.

So if we know that a greatly extended life is not an impossibility, there is no hindrance to prevent God, the All-powerful, from keeping a man safe and sound for thousands of years, because the regulations of a man's life is in the hands of God. He can bring a new harmony into existence, which has preference over the usual order of things, just as He did in the case of all the miracles.

The miracles of the prophets, the cooling of the fire for Ibrahim al-Khalil, the turning into a serpent of Prophet Musa's (Moses) staff, the bringing to life of the dead through Prophet 'Isa, (Jesus) and so forth, are all against the usual flow of things, but God brought another order into existence by His own power and a miracle occurred. All Muslims, Jews and Christians, believe in these miracles.

Similarly for the length of the life of the Imam of the Age (a.j.) there remains no place for any kind of objection, because if someone says that such a length of life is impossible, his claim cannot be at all accepted after that the Qur'an has spoken concerning the length of Prophet Nuh's life, and also after the latest revelations of biology.

If it is said that it is possible, but against the normal natural order of things, it can be answered that the length of life of the Imam of the Age (a.j.) is against the natural order just as the miracles of the prophets, and is carried out according to the will of God. Someone who believes in the power of God and the occurrence of the miracles of the prophets cannot have the slightest objection to the length of the Imam's life.

The Occultation of the Imam of the Age (a.j.)

The Prophet of Islam (S) sometimes gave people a hint concerning the occultation of the twelfth Imam, and the infallible Imams (a.s.) also reminded people of this matter, the news of the occultation of the Imam of the Age (a.j.) was so well known even before his birth, that everyone who believed in the birth of the Imam also believed in his prolonged occultation. The following indications have come down to us from many Ahadith on this subject.

1. The Prophet said, "The Qa'im of my descendants will disappear from public sight, as the result of a covenant between I and him, and then people will say that Allah has no need of the family of Muhammad and some will doubt his birth. So everyone who is aware of his time must act according to his religion, and must not let Shaytan enter him by faltering lest he be thrown out of my people and my religion."
2. Amir al-Mu'minin said, "Our Qa'im has an occultation which will be of great duration... Beware! Everyone who is firm in his religion, and does not become hard hearted from the lengthening of the occultation of this man (and turn away from his religion) will find himself in the same rank as I on the Day of Resurrection."

Then he said, "Our Qa'im, when he rises, has no responsibility for anyone's allegiance to him, and for this reason his birth will be secret and he will be hidden."

3. Muhammad Ibn Muslim said that he heard from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.) saying, "If you hear of the occultation of your Imam, do not deny it."
4. Al-Tabarsi has written this, "The Ahadith of the occultation were recorded by the Shi'ite narrators in books which were composed in the time of Imam al-Baqir and Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.). Of all these reliable narrators one was Hasan Ibn. About a hundred years before the time of the occultation, he wrote a book called "al- Mashiykhah., and mentioned the Ahadith about the occultation in it. The following is one of them.

"Abu Basir has said, "I said in the presence of Imam al-Sadiq (a s.) that Imam abu- Ja'far had said, 'The Qa'im of the family of Muhammad (S) will have two occultation; one prolonged, one short.' He said, "Yes, O abu-Basir, one of those occultation will be longer than the other."

The Prophet of Islam (S) and the infallible Imams (a.s.) reminded people that the report of the

occultation of the Imam of the Age (a.s.) became public with the announcement of the existence of the Prophet himself. Belief in the Imam's occultation is not separate from belief in the existence of the holy Prophet (S)

Shaykh Saduq has narrated from al-Sayyid al-Himyari, "I had some exaggerated idea about Muhammad Ibn al-Hanafiyyah, and believed that he was hidden, till Allah enlightened me through Imam al-Sadiq (a.s) and saved me from the Fire. I was guided to the true way, whereby after the Imamate of Ja'far Ibn Muhammad had been proved to me with solid evidence and reason, I said one day to him, "O son of the Prophet of Allah, tell me some Hadith from your forefathers about occultation and the truth of it. If you please, I would appreciate if you tell me for whom the occultation is." He replied, 'The occultation will occur for my descendant in the sixth generation, and he will be the twelfth Imam after the Prophet of Allah, the first one being 'Ali Ibn Abi Talib, and the last the Qa'im, the one who will stand for the Truth, the remaining of the reminders of Allah on earth and the Imam of the Age..."

Why is the Imam of the Age out of the Public sight?

In previous lessons it was said that the existence of the Imam (a.j.) and the successor of the Prophet (S) was necessary for a number of reasons, such as settling differences, explaining the laws of Allah, and giving spiritual, inward guidance, and that Allah, the Merciful, appointed Amir al-Mu'minin (a.s.) Ali Ibn Abu Talib and after him eleven people from his descendants, one after the other, as Imams after the Prophet of Islam (S).

It is obvious that the duties of the Imam of the Age, in all the aspects of the Imamate, leadership, are the same as that of his predecessors. If there were no hindrance, it would be necessary that he be clearly in public sight, so that people would prosper in all the benefits of his existence. So why was he went out of public sight at all?

Basically, there is no need to look for the philosophy or reasons behind his occultation so as to believe in the rule of Allah, for there is no obligation on one to know the basic reason for it, just as we remain ignorant of the metaphysical reasons behind many other things. It is sufficient that we know on the basis of the many Hadith and true proofs that God, the Almighty, sent his own Proof, but that, for various reasons, He kept him out of public sight.

It can also be found out from some Hadith that the basic and fundamental reason for the occultation will become known after the appearance of al-Mahd. 'Abdullah al-Fadl al-Hashimi says, "I heard Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (a.s.) saying, "The occultation (of the 12th Imam) will be indispensable, so that the people of vanity will fall into doubts about him." I asked, "Why is it so?" He said, "For a reason which I am not at liberty to declare." I asked, "What will his role be?" He replied, "The same role as existed in the occultation of previous divine authorities. It will not be disclosed until after his appearance, just as the role of the works of Khidr was not known (meaning the drilling of a hole in the boat, the killing of the youth, the repairing of the wall in the story of Khidr in the Qur'an) until Musa and Khidr decided to part

company.” O Fadl, the subject of the occultation is a command of Allah and a secret of His secrets, and since we acknowledge Allah, we must say that that His acts are done with Knowledge and Wisdom, even if the reason for them is not known to us.”

Of course the benefits of al-Mahdi's occultation can be discovered, and these have been indicated in some of the Ahadith.

1. A test for people is one of the benefits of the occultation of the Imam of the Age. On one side, the inner failings of the group without faith become evident. On the other side, those in the depths of whose hearts faith have taken root, their hope of deliverance, their patience in adversity, their faith in the unseen become more perfect, their worthiness become known.

Imam Musa Ibn Ja'far (a.s.) has said, “When my fifth descendant will go out of the [public sight, persevere in your religion, so that no one may turn you away from it. There will be an occultation for the Imam of that Age, when a group of believers in him will relinquish their belief. This occultation is a test with which Allah will test His slaves.”

2. A Protection for the Imam against being murdered. From a study of the leaders of Islam, and their situation i.e. the Umayyide and Abbaside Caliphs, it can clearly be seen that if the twelfth Imam would remain in public sight they would surely kill him like his forefathers or poison him. When they heard and knew that there will arise from the family of the Prophet, and from the descendants of 'Ali and Fatimah (a.s) someone who would destroy the government of the oppressors, and that that person would be a child of Imam Hasan al- 'Askari (a.s.), they, the Abasside planned to kill him. But Allah protected him and his enemies lost hope.

Zurarah reports from Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) that he said, “There will be an occultation prior to the appearance of the Qa'im.” Zurarah asked, “Why will it be there?” He replied, “So that he may escape murder, and that occultation will continue till the ground for his appearance and triumph over the rule of the oppressors is ready.”

3. The third benefit that can be gleaned from the Hadith is that by this means al-Mahdi will be saved from the allegiance to him of the oppressors, Caliphs, and usurping rulers. When he appears no one will swear allegiance to him, he can freely expose the truth and establish a just and righteous rule.

The Benefits of the Existence of the Hidden Imam (a.j.)

God appointed the Imam of the Age (a.j.) to be a guide for people. However, it is the people who are the obstacle to his appearance. Whenever they are ready for a single, Divine rule worldwide, formed on true justice and observance of all rights, truth and the practice of all the laws of Islam without any dissimulation or fear, al- Mahdi (a.j.) will openly declare himself.

So, with regard to Allah, the Merciful, there is not even the slightest lack of favour or mercy. The fault lies

with the people that the Imam is out of public sight and the appearance of his rule is delayed. Still, it must be remembered that the benefits of the existence of the Imam are not limited to outward guidance among people. Just the existence of the Imam has other benefits, which are not necessarily evident among people.

The most important benefit of the Imam's existence is that he is the intermediary for Divine favour. On the basis of the evidence the scholars have produced and also according to numerous Hadith which speak of the Imam, leadership, if there were no Imam the relation between the world and its Creator would no longer exist. All of the favors of Allah come through the Imam to the rest of humanity. In many Hadith it is said very clearly that the earth will not remain without an Imam.

The Imam is the heart of the world of existence, the leader, the preceptor of mankind, and for this reason his presence or his absence makes no difference. What is more, the spiritual guidance of the Imam towards worthy individuals will always be there, although they may not see him, especially as it is mentioned in Hadith that the Mahdi (a.j.) comes and goes among the people in the meetings of the believers without anyone understanding. Thus the guarding of Islam and the protection of the worthy is well undertaken by the Imam, even during the time of his occultation. In reality the hidden Imam is like the sun behind a cloud from whose light and heat existent things may profit, although the ignorant and the blind may not see it.

Imam al-Sadiq (a.s.) also said in answer to the question: "How can people benefit from a hidden Imam?" He replied, "Just as they do from the sun when it is behind a cloud."

The following is an excerpt from the writings of Henri Corbin the famous French scholar, "I believe that the Shi'ah sect is the only religion which maintains eternally the link of Divine guidance between God and his creation, and continually keeps alive the union of walayat.

The Jewish religion, finished prophethood, which is the relationship between God and the world of man, with Moses, and do not acknowledge the prophethood, of Jesus or Muhammad. Thus they have served this link. The Christians, also, stopped with Jesus, and the Sunni Muslims stood still with Muhammad. With the seal of prophethood among the latter, they admit of no further link being maintained between the Creator and creation.

"Only the Shi'ah faith believes that the prophethood ended with Muhammad, but that walayat, which is this link of guidance and progression, continues to live after him and forever.

"Indeed, only among the Shi'ah does this reality between the world of man and the Divinity remain forever."

Belief in the Imam of the Age means that the link between people and the unseen world is inseparable. If someone believes this, he must always remember the Mahdi and await the appearance of this hidden reformer.

Waiting for the Imam of the Age does not mean that all Muslims and Shi'ah should fold their arms and take no steps and measures in the way of furthering the aims of Islam but only wish him to appear. The great Shi'ah scholars have been saying from the earliest times that a Muslims and a Shi'ah has the duty to make every effort to establish and strengthen the Islamic system of education and laws in the face of injustice and evil.

In other words, to strive prepare for a just rule and harmonize the society that justice is served to the suffering. Oppression and cruelty are condemned. Every Muslim has the duty to offer some in the way of Imam and Islam, and to always be prepared to welcome the promised al-Mahdi (a.j.). One must so order his life that it may be not contradict the project of the Imam, and that he may take his piece in the ranks in support of the Imam and fight against the enemies.

Questions

1. Where and when was Imam Mehdi born?
2. Who were his father and mother?
3. For how long did this Imam communicate with these people and through how many people?
4. What is the duty of the people in the absence of the Imam?
5. Who else besides the Shia Muslims believe in universal reform?
6. What does psalm 37 say?
7. What does verse 108 ch. 21 say?
8. What does verse 55 ch. 24 say?
9. What does verse 9 ch. 61 say?
10. What does verse 5 ch. 28 say?
11. What do these verses establish?
12. a) How many Imams according to Sunni Muslim Hadith are after the Holy Prophet?
b) To whose family does Imam Mahdi belong?
c) How many books, Hadith, and by how many Sunni Muslim scholars have been reported about Imam Mehdi?
13. According to the text, how many Sunni scholars have written books about Imam Mehdi?

14. How many Hadith about Imam Mehdi do we have from the Holy Prophet and the five Imams and what do they (Hadith) prove?
15. How many people will be of his special helpers?
16. How many Hadith are mentioned in the text from Muntakhab al-Athar?
17. Why should people believing in Islam and the Holy Prophet believe in Imam Mehdi also?
18. What do the Hadith 1–5 mentioned in the text say?
19. What do the sociologists say about the social events?
20. What does verse 14 ch. 29 say?
21. Can life be prolonged according to science?
22. What has Ayatullah Sadr said about a long life?
23. What has Dr. Alexis Karel said about a longer life?
24. Can science eliminate accidents?
25. Can God give long life to someone?
26. What did God do in case of fire and Prophet Abraham?
27. How can Imam Mehdi live for so long?
28. What has the Prophet said about the occultation of Imam Mehdi?
29. What has Imam Ali said about the occultation of Imam Mehdi?
30. What has Muhammad Ibn Muslim said about the occultation of Imam Mehdi?
31. ?
32. What has Shaikh Saddiq narrated from Humyory?
33. For what do the people need the Imams?
34. When will the reason for the occultation of the Imam be made public?
35. Why are such reasons not made public now?
36. What are the benefits of Imam Mehdi's occultation according to Hadith 1–3?

37. In what kinds of conditions will Imam Mehdi appear in public?

38. ?

39. What does the Hadith of Imam as-Sadiq say about the benefits of the existence of Imam Mehdi?

40. What has Henri Corbin said about the Shia Muslims?

41. What is the meaning of the belief in the Imam of the age?

42. What is the duty of the Muslims during the absence of Imam Mehdi?

[1.](#) Muhammad Baqir as-Sadr, a learned scholar of Qum (1882–1953), father of the well-known Sayyid Musa Sadr of Lebanon

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