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Prophet Muhammad from the Shi'ah Perspective

Prophet Muhammad (may the salutations of Allah and peace be upon him and his progeny) from the Perspective of the Shi'ah

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Introduction

Praise be to He who created all things; and created the best of His creations and His designs and the most refined of His prophets, Muhammad, may Allah bestow His blessings and benedictions upon him and on his progeny, whom He refined in the best way, and purified his qualities and characteristics, and made him His purified one and His beloved one and gave him precedence over all of those for whom He willed purification, and prompted him according to the characteristics by which He shaped him over all those He willed to be beloved by Him¹.

This prayer by Muhsin Faydh Al-Kashani (d. 1680) gives some indication of the high regard in which the Shi'a hold the Prophet Muhammad (S)². Indeed, he is held to be as perfect as it is possible for a human being to be; and yet, he is not considered an incarnation of divinity, for this is considered inconsistent with the greatness of God.

I am not going to review the biography of the Prophet (S). That has been done by others better than I could. Instead, I want to review the role that the Prophet (S) has among the Muslims, and particularly among the Shi'a. My account will not be historical. Suffice it to say that Muhammad Abu al-Qasim (S) was born to Abdullah and Amina in 571 C.E. His mission as a prophet began when he was forty years old, and he passed away when he was sixty-three.

In what follows, I want to examine how the image of the Prophet is reflected in various aspects of Shi'a thought, including the interpretation of the Qur'an (*tafsir*), theology (*kalam*), philosophy (*hikmat*), and mysticism (*irfan*). First, however, we should recall what it means to be a prophet.

Two words are used for the special people sent by God in His mercy: *Rasul* (Apostle) and *Nabi* (Prophet). The latter term is generally taken to include the former, that is, every apostle is a prophet but not every prophet is an apostle. The apostles are sent to bring divine law to the people. Prophets guard the law and, like the apostles, are also recipients of special revelations.

The number of prophets that God has sent is said to be 124,000. The prophets' missions are verified through miracles they perform. The first prophet is said to have been Adam (as), and he along with Noah (as), Moses (as), Jesus (as), and Muhammad (S) are considered the greatest of God's apostles.

The last and most noble of all the prophets is the Apostle Muhammad (S) to whom the Qur'an was revealed, and the Qur'an constitutes the great miracle by which the prophethood of Muhammad (S) is confirmed. Every prophet has a trustee (*wasi*) who is charged with protecting the mission brought by the prophet. The trustee of Moses was Aaron; the trustee of Jesus (as) was Peter (as); and the trustee of Muhammad (S) is Ali (as), the first of the Imams of the Shi'a.

Humanity has been entrusted by God with stewardship over the earth; so man is said to be the successor (*khalifah*) of God on earth. Man is given this distinction over all other creatures because of the knowledge God has given him "*of the names*"³. Human beings, however, betray the trust by acting unjustly, causing disorder, and treating the trust as though it were a personal property to squander and abuse.

God sends the prophets to show people how to return to their task of stewardship. The prophets are sent with good news and a warning: God is merciful and forgiving to those who will follow the way He shows them through His prophets, and there is a terrible chastisement for those who reject His guidance and mercy.⁴

So, to be a prophet is to be one of the special persons that God has sent and to whom He has given revelation. But the prophets are not just vehicles for the divine message. In order to serve in this function they must be completely trustworthy, and so they are protected by God from error (*ma'sum*).

Prophet Muhammad (S) is called the "seal of the prophets" in the sense that the chain of prophethood ends with him and is sealed with the most noble of all the prophets. For the Shi'a, however, the mission of the Prophet continues through the work of the Imams.

Prophet Muhammad (S) In The Noble Quran

It is customary to begin a discussion of just about any religious topic by examining the verses (*ayat*, lit. *signs*) of the Qur'an, followed by relevant narrations. For Muslims the Qur'an is the direct revelation of

God; and as such, its authority supersedes all other documented sources.

What the Qur'an Says About the Prophet (S)

The *ayat* of the Glorious Qur'an pertaining to Prophet Muhammad (S) and his mission are too numerous to list in an article. Thus only a selection will be given. In a sense, however, the entire Qur'an is about Prophet Muhammad (S), because it is a direct address of God to His prophet, and often God addresses the Prophet directly, using the second person, as in:

“O Prophet! Indeed We have sent you as a witness, as a bearer of good news and as a Warner and as a summoner to Allah by His permission, and as a radiant lamp. Announce to the faithful the good news that there will be for them a great grace from Allah” (33:45-47)

“Indeed We have sent you with the truth, as a bearer of good news and as a Warner, and you will not be questioned concerning the inmates of hell” (2: 119)

The point that the Prophet is not responsible for the deeds of others is a frequently mentioned theme.

“Obey Allah and obey the Apostle; but if you turn away, then Our Apostle’s duty is only to communicate in clear terms” (64: 12)

Sometimes the Qur'an directly addresses the people and informs them about the divine mission of Prophet Muhammad (S):

“Muhammad is not the father of any man among you, but he is the Apostle of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets, and Allah have knowledge of all things” (33:40)

“As We sent to you an Apostle from among yourselves, who recites to you Our signs, and purifies you, and teaches you the Book and wisdom, and teaches you what you did not know. Remember Me, and I will remember you, and thank Me, and do not be ungrateful to Me” (2: 151-152)

The Apostle of God is given authority over the people who he is ordered to announce to, that the people should follow him, and that he is responsible to guide them.

“Say: If you love Allah, then follow me; Allah will love you and forgive you your sins, and Allah is all-forgiving, all-merciful. Say: Obey Allah and the Apostle. But if they turn away, indeed Allah does not like the disbelievers” (3:31-32)

The following ayah contains the direct address of God to Muhammad (S), and also indicates the requirement for obedience.

“We did not send any apostle but to be obeyed, by Allah’s leave. Had they, when they wronged

themselves, come to you [Muhammad (S)] and pleaded to Allah for forgiveness, and the Apostle had pleaded for forgiveness for them, they would have surely found Allah all-clement, all-merciful” (4:64)

Although the Prophet Muhammad (S) may pray for the forgiveness of others, he does not redeem anyone’s sins, and it is God who forgives. The guidance brought to humanity through the Prophet Muhammad (S) is a divine light.

“O you who have faith! Be wary of Allah and have faith in His Apostle. He will grant you a double share of His mercy and give you a light to walk by, and forgive you, and Allah is all-forgiving, all-merciful” (58:28)

“...O you who possess intellect and have faith! Allah has certainly sent down to you a reminder, an apostle reciting to you the manifest signs of Allah that He may bring out those who have faith and do righteous deeds from darkness into light... “ (65: 10–11)

“O People of the Book! Certainly Our Apostle has come to you, clarifying for you much of what you used to hide of the Book, and passing over much. Certainly there has come to you a light from Allah and a manifest Book. With it Allah guides those who follow His pleasure to the ways of peace, and brings them out from darkness into light by His will, and guides them to a straight path” (5: 15–16)

“...[This is] a book We have sent down to you [Muhammad (S)] that you may bring mankind out from darkness into light by the command of their Lord... ”. (14: 1)

The humble background and humanity of the Prophet Muhammad (S) is also emphasized in the Qur’an.

“It is He who sent to the unlettered an apostle from among themselves, to recite to them His signs, to purify them, and to teach them the Book and wisdom, and earlier they had indeed been in manifest error” (62:2)

In the following verse, which occurs in a longer section in which God is addressing Moses (as), the coming of the Prophet Muhammad (S) is predicted, his humble origins are mentioned, and he is said to be sent down with a light.

“...Soon I shall appoint it [My mercy] for those who are God-wary and give the zakat and those who believe in Our signs—those who follow the Apostle, the unlettered prophet, whose mention they find written with them in the Torah and the Gospel, who bids them to do what is right and forbids them from what is wrong, makes lawful to them all the good things and forbids them from all vicious things, and relieves them of their burdens and the shackles that were upon them—those who believe in him, honor him, and help him and follow the light that has been sent down with him, they are the felicitous” (7: 156–157)

In the next ayah, the Prophet is commanded to announce his mission.

“Say: O people! I am the Apostle of Allah to you all, [of Him] to whom belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth; there is no god but He; He gives life and brings death. So have faith in Allah and His Apostle, the unlettered prophet, who has faith in Allah and His words, and follow him so that you may be guided” (7: 158)

Especially important for the Shi’ah is the following ayah, in which the importance of love for the *Ahl al-Bayt* (the family of the Prophet (S)); in this and in various other verses it is also stated that the Prophet does not desire any material compensation from those he guides. The material wealth he collected was used for the needs of the community and likewise the love he requested from the believers for his kin was also for the benefit of the community.

“... Say: I do not ask of you any reward for it [bringing the divine good news] except the love of my family” (42:23)

Muhammad (S) is the seal of the prophets who confirms what has come before and perfects it. Like Jesus (as), He is a Warner and a bringer of the good tidings of the kingdom of God:

“... He forgives whomever He wishes, and punishes whomever He wishes, and to Allah belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth, and whatever is between them, and toward Him is the return. O People of the Book! Certainly Our Apostle has come to you, clarifying for you after a gap in the apostles, lest you should say, There did not come to us any bearer of good news nor any Warner. Certainly there has come to you a bearer of good news and a Warner. And Allah has power over all things” (5: 18–19)

There is much in common between Christian and Islamic teachings about the divine kingdom, and in both traditions there is considerable ambiguity on this issue. What is explicitly denied in Islam however – which is clearly in contrast to some Christian views – is that there is a blood sacrifice by virtue of which believers may enter the kingdom. Believers are asked to repent and to establish a just society.

According to the Shi’a, this virtuous city is headed by the Imam of the Age.

Prophet Muhammad (S) In Hadith Literature

The narrations that report the deeds and sayings of the Prophet are called *ahadith* (sing., *hadith*). They are found in various collections that have been compiled by Muslims throughout the ages. Among the Sunni Muslims, there are six standard collections that are considered to contain sound reports. For the Shi’a, there are various collections of reports, and the authenticity of each narration is evaluated by scholars on the basis of the chain of transmission (*isnad*) recorded with the *hadiths*.

In addition, there are some very famous *hadiths* attributed to the Prophet that lack proper credentials. However, the lack of documentation does not imply that they are inauthentic. The fact that they have

remained in circulation is itself a testimony to their influence in the Muslim community. Many of these unauthenticated narrations are common to the Shi'a and the Sunni communities.

Another important difference between Sunni and Shi'i collections of narrations is that the Shi'a collections include reports of the words and deeds of all of the fourteen infallibles – the Prophet, his daughter Fatimah, and the twelve Imams. The Shi'a justify the inclusion of these narrations on the grounds that all fourteen provide sources for the *sunnah* of the Prophet, since all of them are completely imbued with his character and teachings.

The subject matter of the *hadiths* varies widely, including matters of worship, trade, spirituality, politics, morals, health, etiquette, theology, law, and many others. The importance of *hadiths* to the religious practice of Muslims may be understood by reflecting on the fact that instructions for the ritual prayers are not found in the Qur'an. On the basis of the Qur'an alone – without the *hadith* literature – scholars would not be able to authenticate many of the most important rituals and precepts of Islam.

In order to understand the Prophet (S) on the basis of the Shi'i *hadith* literature, we should review the important collections to discover how the Prophet describes himself and his mission, and how the other infallibles describe him and his mission. Here, we can only suggest this task as a research program, and offer a couple of *hadiths* by way of samples.

In one of the most famous *hadiths*, the Prophet describes his mission as follows:

*“Verily, I have been commissioned to complete the perfection of morals.”*⁵

Another *hadith* frequently mentioned in the books of the Shi'a is,

*“I am the city of wisdom, and ‘Ali is its gate.”*⁶

One should recall that wisdom is one of the four cardinal virtues of Aristotle; so, it is natural that one who is commissioned to complete the perfection of morals should be the city of wisdom.

In addition to the words of wisdom that can be found in the *hadith* literature, the moral advice, spiritual insight, and legal rulings, there are several outstanding events in the life of the Prophet (S) reported in this literature that should be mentioned. For example, there is the final victory over the pagans in Mecca, when the Prophet (S) forgave his sworn enemies, or the event of *Ghadir*, when the Prophet (S) took the hand of Ali (as) and told the assembled crowd that whoever accepted his (Muhammad's) guardianship should accept Ali's, to mention just two of many fateful events.

Another event that is of particular importance is the *mi'raj* or “Night Journey”, about which there are several *ayah* of the Qur'an⁷ and a number of reports⁸ The *mi'raj* has been subject to numerous commentaries and interpretations of various sorts. The Prophet (S) himself is said to have remarked,

“The prayer (Salah) is the mi'raj of the believer.”

In brief, the angel Gabriel wakes Muhammad (S) and instructs him to mount *Buraq* (usually depicted as a winged horse with a human face), on which he flies to the Temple in Jerusalem where all the previous prophets are assembled and pray behind him.

He is then guided by Gabriel to the seven heavens and in each he meets a prophet. After this they visit hell and paradise. At the upper bounds of paradise, Gabriel admits that he can advance no further, but urges Muhammad on. Muhammad enters into a pure light, receives instructions for his followers, and then returns, meets Gabriel, and descends, saying farewell to the various prophets on the way down.

When he meets Moses, Moses asks him about the divine instructions. Muhammad tells him that the people are to perform fifty prayers a day. Moses tells him it is too difficult, and suggests he go back to God to get the number cut down. Muhammad goes back and gets the number reduced by ten. Moses asks what happened; Muhammad tells him; and Moses urges him to go back for a further lightening of the load.

This continues until the number is cut down to five prayers per day. Moses still warns Muhammad that the believers will not be able to perform their duty. Muhammad responds, "I am embarrassed to go back to Allah again. I will just be patient in relation to these five prayers." It is then reported that a voice is heard to say, "Since you have had patience, these five prayers will be counted as fifty prayers. Each prayer will be counted as ten prayers, and if one person from your community performs a good act, then ten good acts will be written for him, but if he performs one bad act, then only that one bad act will be written in his record." Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq said, "May Allah give Moses (as) great reward since because of him, the daily prayers were reduced to only five".⁹

Faydh Al-Kashani finishes his collection of narrations about the *mi'raj* with the in which the Prophet is reported to have answered as follows to a question about the voice of God during the *mi'raj*:

My Lord spoke to me with the voice of Ali ibn Abu Talib and said,

"O Ahmad! I am an Entity that is not like anything else. I cannot be compared to anything else and I know all the secrets of your heart. With the exception of Ali ibn Abu Talib, you have no other close friend. Thus, I speak to you with the voice of Ali ibn Abu Talib so that your heart will be at ease".

One of the frequently cited collections of narrations attributed to Imam Ali (as) is the *Nahj al-Balaghah*¹⁰. In this work we can find many narrations in which Imam Ali (as) describes the Prophet (S). A few of the most representative passages from the sermons are quoted below:

Here, Imam Ali (as) instructs his followers on how to invoke blessings for the Prophet (S):

"May Allah, the Spreader of the surfaces (of earth) and Keeper (intact) of all skies, Creator of hearts on good and evil nature, send Thy choicest blessings and growing favors on Muhammad Thy servant and Thy Prophet who is the last of those who preceded (him) and an opener for what is closed, proclaimer of

truth with truth, repulser of the forces of wrong and crusher of the onslaughts of misguidance. As he was burdened (with responsibility of prophethood) so he bore it standing by Thy commands, advancing towards Thy will, without shrinking of steps of weakness of determination, listening to Thy revelation, preserving Thy testament, proceeding forward in the spreading of Thy commands till he lit fire for its seeker and lighted the path for the one who grope in the dark”.

“Hearts achieved guidance through him after being ridden with troubles. He introduced clearly guiding signs and shining injunctions. He is Thy trusted trustee, The treasurer of Thy treasured knowledge, Thy witness on the Day of Judgment, Thy envoy of truth and Thy Messenger towards the people. May Allah prepare large place for him under Thy shade and award him multiplying good by Thy bounty”.

“May Allah give height to his construction above all other constructions, elevate his position with Thee, grant perfection to his effulgence and perfect for him his light. In reward for his discharging Thy prophethood, grant him that his testimony be admitted and his speech be liked for his speech is just, and his judgments are clear-cut. May Allah put us and him together in the pleasures of life, continuance of bounty, satisfaction of desires, enjoyment of pleasures, ease of living, peace of mind and gifts of honor”.
(S 70/72, 146)

In a number of places, Imam Ali (as) explains how the people had gone astray and were guided by the Prophet (S), such as the following:

“Allah sent the Prophet at a time when the people were going astray in perplexity and were moving here and there in mischief. Desires had deflected them and self-conceit had swerved them. Extreme ignorance had made them foolish. They were confounded by the unsteadiness of matters and the evils of ignorance. Then the Prophet – blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants – did his best in giving them sincere advice, himself trod on the right path and called (them) towards wisdom and good counsel”. (S 93/95, 184)

Later Imam Ali (as) extols the virtues of the Prophet (S) as follows:

“His station is the best of all stations and his origin the noblest of all origins in the mines of honor and the cradles of safety. Hearts of virtuous persons have been inclined towards him and the reins of eyes have been turned towards him. Through him Allah buried mutual rancor and put off the flames of revolt. Through him He gave them affection like brothers and separated those who were together (through unbelief). Through him He gave honor to the low and degraded honor (of unbelief). His speaking is clear and his silence is (indicative) like a tongue”. (S 94/96, 184–185).

Imam Ali (as) prays for the Prophet (S) as follows:

“The Prophet lighted flames for the seeker and put bright signs for the impeded. (S)o he is Thy trustworthy trustee, Thy witness on the Day of Judgment, Thy deputy as a blessing and Thy messenger of truth as mercy. May Allah distribute to him a share from Thy Justice and award him multiples of good

by Thy bounty. May Allah heighten his construction over the constructions of others, honor him when he comes to Thee, dignify his position before Thee, give him honorable position, and award him glory and distinction, and bring us out (on the Day of Judgment) among his party, neither ashamed, nor repentant, nor deviators, nor pledge-breakers, nor strayers, nor misleaders, nor those seduced". (S 104/106, 194)

In the following narration, Imam Ali (as) compares the Prophet (S) to a "roaming physician," that is, one who brings the cure where it is needed instead of waiting for patients to come to him. The Prophet was like a roaming physician who has set ready his ointments and heated his instruments. He uses them wherever the need arises for curing blind hearts, deaf ears, and dumb tongues.

"He followed with his medicines the spots of negligence and places of perplexity". (S 106/108, 195)

Imam Ali (as) cites the humility and other virtues of the Prophet (S) as he commands the people to follow him:

"You should follow your Prophet, the pure, the chaste, may Allah bless him and his descendants. In him is the example for the follower, and solace for the seeker of consolation. The most beloved person before Allah is he who follows His Prophet and who treads in his footsteps. He took the least (share) from this world and did not take a full glance at it. Of all the people of the world he was the least satiated and the most empty of stomach. The world was offered to him but he refused to accept it. When he knew that Allah, the Glorified, hated a thing, he too hated it; that Allah held a thing low, he too held it low; that Allah held a thing small, he too held it small. If we love what Allah and His Prophet hate and hold great what Allah and His prophet hold small that would be enough isolation from Allah and transgression of His commands".

The Prophet used to eat on the ground, and sat like a slave. He repaired his shoe with his hand, and patched his clothes with his hand. He would ride an unsaddled ass and would seat someone behind him. If there was a curtain on his door with pictures on it he would say to one of his wives. "O" such-and-such, take it away out of my sight because if I look at it I recall the world and its allurements." Thus, he removed his heart from this world and destroyed its remembrance from his mind. He loved that its allurements should remain hidden from his eye so that he should not secure good dress from it, should not regard it a place of stay and should not hope to live in it. Consequently, he removed it from his mind, let it go away from his heart and kept it hidden from his eyes. In the same way he who hates a thing should hate to look at it or to hear about it.

Certainly there was in the Prophet of Allah all that would apprise you of the evils of this world and its defects, namely that he remained hungry along with his chief companions, and despite his great nearness (to) the allurements of the world (they) remained remote from him. Now, one should see with one's intelligence whether Allah honored Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him and his descendants) as a result of this or disgraced him. If he says that Allah disgraced him, he certainly lies and perpetrates a great untruth. If he says Allah honored him, he should know that Allah dishonored the

others when He extended the (benefits of the) world for him but held them away from him who was the nearest to Him of all men.

“Therefore, one should follow His Prophet, tread in his footsteps and enter through his entrance. Otherwise he will not be safe from ruin. Certainly, Allah made Muhammad (peace and blessing of Allah be upon him and his descendants) a sign for the Day of Judgment. a conveyor of tidings for Paradise and a Warner of retribution. He left this world hungry but entered upon the next world safe. He did not lay one stone upon another (to make a house) till he departed and responded to the call of Allah. How great is Allah's blessing in that He blessed us with the Prophet as a predecessor whom we follow and a leader behind whom we tread”. (S 158/160, 265–266)

In harmony with the *ayah* of the Qur'an,

“Hold fast, all together, to Allah's cord, and do not be divided. And remember Allah's blessing upon you when you were enemies, then He brought your hearts together, so you became brothers with His blessing, and you were on the brink of a pit of Fire, whereat He saved you from it” (3: 103)

Imam Ali (as) in his sermons repeatedly makes the point that the Prophet (S) taught the Arabs – who were in a state of ignorance when they were killing one another – how God would replace their enmity by friendship, as in the following:

“The Prophet (S) manifested whatever he was commanded and conveyed the messages of his Lord. Consequently, Allah repaired through him the cracks, joined through him the slits and created (through him) affection among kin although they bore intense enmity in (their) chests and deep-seated rancor in (their) hearts”. (S 228/231, 381)

The picture that emerges from the Shiite narrations, such as those found in the *Nahj al-Balaghah* and elsewhere, is that of divine guide destined from eternity to show humanity its potential. The honor and virtue of the Prophet Muhammad (S) is so great as to justify the entire creation. There are also numerous narrations according to which the Prophet (S) and Ali (as) were both created out of a single divine light prior to the creation of the world^{[11](#)}. Such narrations should not be dismissed as mere mythology, for they play an important role in shaping the Shiite understanding of the role and character of the Prophet (S), and of divine guidance generally.

Prophet Muhammad (S) In Shi'ite Kalam

The high stature of Prophet Muhammad (S) that can be appreciated by reflections on the Qur'an and *hadiths*, as formalized in the creedal statements of the Shiite theologians. The early theologians debated about the most excellent of all creatures. The Shi'ah came to the conclusion that the prophets and Imams are superior to angels^{[12](#)}. (There were even some extremists who claimed that ordinary Shiites

were superior to the angels, but this idea was rejected and considered heterodox.)¹³ Shaykh Saduq (d. 991) writes:

It is necessary to believe that Allah the Mighty and Glorious did not create any created thing more excellent than Muhammad and the Imams, peace on them, that they are the most loved of creatures in the eyes of Allah, and the most noble and the foremost among them, on account of their acceptance of Him (as their Lord).

“When Allah took the pledge (mithaq) of the prophets and “required them to bear witness of themselves (saying): Am I not your Lord? And they said: Yes, verily”. (7: 172)

And verily Allah sent His Prophet Muhammad (with a message) to the other prophets in the world of pre-physical existence (Adh-dharr). And verily Allah the Mighty and Glorious gave to each prophet (i.e. knowledge, power, etc.) according to the extent of his cognition (Ma'rifa), while the cognition of our Prophet Muhammad was greater and more sublime, for it took precedence in accepting Allah (as the Supreme Being).

We believe that Allah, Blessed and Exalted is He above all, created the whole of creation for him (the Prophet) and for the People of his House, and that but for them, Allah, Glory be to Him, would not have created the heavens or the earth, Paradise or Hell, Adam or Eve, the angels or (any) created thing (shay')—the Blessings of Allah upon them all¹⁴.

In view of this status, the theologians developed a doctrine of infallibility (*Isma*) with regard to (all of) the prophets, the daughter of Prophet Muhammad (Fatimah), the Imams, and the angels. According to this doctrine, the infallibles do not commit any sin, major or minor, and they act entirely according to the will of God. They possess attributes of perfection and knowledge from the beginning until the end of their careers¹⁵.

According to Shaykh Mufid (d. 1022), all of the prophets are protected by God from committing any major sin or any sin that could bring discredit to them; while Muhammad is absolutely protected from committing even the slightest sin that is possible for other prophets (prior to their mission)¹⁶. Mufid exceeds Saduq in his attribution of infallibility, for while Saduq holds that it was possible for the Prophet to be negligent in his prayer in such a way as to fall short of being even a minor sin, Mufid holds that such negligence is also impossible, even if it does not constitute a sin.

For anyone who wants to understand the development of Shiite theology, *The Abstract of Beliefs (Tajrid al-I'tiqad)* by Khwajah Nasir al-Din Al-Tusi (d. 1274) is essential. This work has become the most important statement of Shi'a theology for its period, largely due to the commentary written by Al-Tusi's student, Jamal al-Din Al-Hilli (d. 1325). This work represents the integration of Islamic philosophy in Shi'ite theology.

The section on prophethood (*nubuwwah*) is relatively short: fifteen pages in the Arabic edition together

with Allama Al-Hilli's commentary, compared with fifty-four pages for the previous section on proofs for the existence of God, and thirty-six pages on *imamate* in the subsequent section. The section on prophethood is divided into discussions of seven problems:

- (1) On the excellence of the prophetic mission;
- (2) On the necessity for the prophetic mission;
- (3) On the necessity for infallibility;
- (4) On the way of knowing the truth of the prophet;
- (5) On miracles;
- (6) On the necessity of the prophetic mission at all times;
- (7) On the prophethood of our prophet, Muhammad, may divine blessings be with him and his family.

It is the seventh section that is most pertinent to our concerns here. It is affirmed that Prophet Muhammad (S) is indeed a true prophet and evidence is found for this in his miracles, most prominently the Qur'an, and also because of his great sincerity and trustworthiness combined with his claim to being a prophet. Various narrations in addition to verses of the Qur'an are brought to support the claim of the universality of the prophetic mission, against those who viewed it as limited (only) to the Arabs.

Finally, the old discussion of the superiority of the prophet to the angels is mentioned, but a philosophical twist is given to the discussion. The reason for the superiority of the prophets to the angels is that the prophets must overcome their other (human) urges – such as lust and anger – while the angels are considered to be free from such sensations and sentiments. Hence, the philosophical point is made that the superiority of the prophets consists in the superiority of their reason, and this faculty is superior to what is found in the case of the angels because it must overcome the limitations, desires and other emotions characteristic of humanity¹⁷.

As examples of contemporary Shiite theology, we may consider Ayatullah Ja'far Sobhani's *Doctrines of Shi'i Islam* and Ayatullah Misbah Yazdi's *Amuzesh-e Aqa'id (Instructions in Beliefs)*, both of which are written in Persian. Like the *Tajrid* of Nasir al-Din Al-Tusi, the section on prophethood in Sobhani's book is divided into general considerations about prophethood, and specific discussions of Prophet Muhammad (S)¹⁸.

The specific discussions of Prophet Muhammad (S) begin with the confirmation of his prophethood, which is provided in three ways:

- (1) by miracles accompanying the prophetic mission;
- (2) by the accumulated evidence from companions and witnesses in support of the truth of the call;
- (3) by verification from reports attributed to previous divine messengers.

Each of these is discussed separately. These discussions are followed by treatments of two distinctive features of Prophet Muhammad (S):

- (1) the universality of his mission;
- (2) his being the final prophet sent by God for mankind, whose law has jurisdiction until the end of time.

Ayatullah Misbah's book has a section on leadership, which may be divided into chapters dealing with prophethood and those dealing with *imamate*. There are fifteen (short) chapters on prophethood. The first ten of these deal with problems pertaining to prophethood in general, including the traditional issues such as the need for prophets, how they can be recognized, miracles and infallibility. Also included are some new discussions, such as the relation between the prophet and the people and the opposition they found in some quarters.

The early books of creedal statements were designed to define orthodoxy. They tended to be sparse in order to be less exclusive. As time went on, issues were discussed in such works that were admittedly controversial, such that difference of opinion would not amount to heresy; but the inclusion of such topics could facilitate the understanding of the creed. So, for example, it is necessary for Muslims to believe in prophethood, generally, and in the prophethood of Muhammad (S) specifically.

This requires an understanding that the prophets act as divine guides. How the prophets play this role of divine guide is subject to disagreement, but our understanding of the issue may be enhanced through discussions of the relationship that the prophets had with the people whom they addressed.

It is with the view to increasing our understanding of the way the prophets function to guide that Ayatullah Misbah discusses the relationship between the prophets and the people. Although the social dimension of prophethood was not featured in most books designed to state the Shi'ite creed, it was discussed earlier in the philosophical tradition from Farabi and Ibn Sina to Mulla Sadra, as we shall see later.

All of the prophets faced opposition to their mission, primarily from the wealthy and powerful. This opposition is directed against the person of the prophet and against their followers. Opposition takes the form of threats, insults and violence, on the one hand, and inducements and temptations, on the other.

The responses of the prophets to such opposition are by words and deeds. In their teachings, the prophets appeal to different classes of people through the use of rational argument, appeal to miracles, and the employment of rhetorical techniques. They also confirm the prophets that preceded them and those (if any) to come. In their deeds, the prophets make use of supernatural powers in their defense, as with the performance of miracles, and to more natural features of character, such as charisma, the exhibition of justice and mercy and other virtues, and defense, which may be exercised through various tactics, such as jihad, emigration, the forming of alliances, concealment, etc., in all of which a balance is displayed between firmness and tolerance.

The five chapters of *Amuzesh-e Aqa'id* on the Prophet of Islam (S) begin with verification of his claim to prophethood, the miraculous nature of the Qur'an, the universality of Islam and its eternity, and the finality of the mission of the Prophet Muhammad (S) [19](#).

Prophet Muhammad (S) In Islamic Philosophy

As one might expect, given the nature of philosophy, attention to the Prophet in Islamic philosophy is more on his role as prophet and less on the individual aspects of his life and character. There are narrations according to which the first thing that God created was the intellect (*Aql*); and several such narrations open the important early Shi'ite collection, *Usul al-Kafi* by Kulayni.

Given the narrations we have already mentioned to the effect that the first thing that God created was the divine light of Muhammad, it would be only natural to speculate about how this prophetic light could be identified with the intellect. As it is well known, among the philosophical views taken into consideration by the early Muslim philosophers, Neo-Platonism figures prominently.

The Muslim philosophers from Kindi (d. c. 866–873) onward interpreted divine creation by means of a theory of emanation in which the first things created were a series of intellects. Each of the intellects was associated with a celestial sphere or an angel or both. Now, the schemes that were developed do not correspond exactly to what is found in the traditional collections of narrations, but common themes stand out.

The philosophers allowed for a kind of unification between the prophetic intellect and the intellect of the angel of revelation; however the active intellect with which the prophetic intellect became unified was not the first emanation, but the lowest (traditionally the tenth) emanation, or active intellect.

According to Farabi (c. 870–950), the human intellect is at first merely potential. When the potential intellect takes on intellectual forms, it becomes the actual intellect. When it reflects upon itself and becomes self-intelligible and self-intellective, Farabi calls it the “acquired intellect”. The acquired intellect is capable of contemplating the tenth emanation, the Active Intelligence, identified with the Holy Spirit (often named as Gabriel, the angel of revelation, and, of course, not to be confused with the Christian understanding of the Holy Spirit).

As Fazlur Rahman explains, “In a few unique cases, when this happens, the Active Intelligence becomes the form of the *aql mustafad* [acquired intellect] and the perfect philosopher, or the Imam (or the Prophet) comes into existence”²⁰.

The theory of prophethood as expounded by Muslim philosophers is complex and remains quite controversial. There are also important developments in the history of Islamic philosophy on this issue. However, aside from such details, and without detracting from their importance, there are a couple general points worthy of notice.

First, the prophets are treated by the philosophers not merely as people to whom a divine message is brought, but as exceptional human beings who in some ways are united with immaterial divine emanations. Second, the idea of the prophets as being essentially immaterial intellects without

compromising their humanness (since these immaterial intellects are also embodied) is a theme that is common between the Shi'a and the philosophers.

With both the Shi'a and the philosophers, and, as we will see shortly, with the Sufis, there is an exaltation of the prophets and other divine guides. (This view can also be found among some of the *Mu'tazilites*.) Given the difficulties involved in the historical research on early Islam, it is beyond my capacity to offer a convincing case that the high status given to the divine guides in Shi'ism is causally responsible for analogous outcomes in Islamic philosophy and mysticism; however, there are a number of common themes to be found among the Shi'a theologians, the Muslim philosophers and the Sufis that distinguish their views from the *Ash'arite* theology that has tended to dominate Sunni Islam. Among these themes, one of the most important is the idea of the divine guide.

In addition to their works about the nature of the prophetic intellect and its (partial) union with the active intelligence, the Muslim philosophers wrote visionary recitals in which the role of the prophet is described by parables. The most famous of such essays are those of Ibn Sina^{[21](#)} and Sohrevardi^{[22](#)}.

In addition to Ibn Sina's visionary recitals, there is also an essay on the *mi'raj* attributed to him (and taken to be authentic in the Iranian tradition, although some have raised questions about this, although it is generally agreed that there is a high probability that the author of this was a Shiite)^{[23](#)}. In this work, Ibn Sina expresses his characteristic intellectual idea of knowledge of the divine. Henry Corbin describes this essay as follows:

Two hadith figure in it, suggesting a ta'wil [interpretation] that will safely conduct our Imamate philosophers to their goal. The Prophet, addressing the First Imam ("Center of Wisdom, Heaven of Essential Reality"), speaks as follows: "While the common run of mankind approach the Creator through every kind of piety, do thou approach Him by every form of intelligence: thou art before them all." And again: "O, Ali"! While men take such pains to multiply their acts of adoration, do thou attend to Knowledge of the intelligible world [Maaqul], so that thou shall be before them all"^{[24](#)}.

As Peter Heath explains, the essay consists of two main parts: in the first part, Ibn Sina provides a summary of his psychology and epistemology by means of which he will explain the *mi'raj*; in the second part he uses this philosophical theory to provide a running commentary and exegesis of the events reported in the hadiths about the *mi'raj*.

Henry Corbin contrasts the "orthodox" interpretation of the *mi'raj* as a corporeal flight into the heavens with the philosophical interpretation of Ibn Sina of the *mi'raj* as a mental or spiritual excursion^{[25](#)}.

However, Ibn Sina did not deny the physical nature of the ascent altogether, so that it should have nothing to do with mounting a marvelous steed and passing through the heavens; rather he interpreted the religious images as symbols for a deeper philosophical reality. The physical nature of the ascent is rightly accepted by the masses, but requires interpretation for the elite able to understand it philosophically. For those incapable of such an understanding, the marvel is not to be denied.

Intellectual truths as understood in philosophy are given sensible configuration in religion, according to the Muslim philosophers, so that, for example, nothingness takes the sensible form of darkness. “*In all this*,” Farabi says, “*the symbols should be as near to reality as possible*.”²⁶ This wording is unfortunate, for it invites the reaction of the orthodox that this implies that reality is to be found in philosophy and not in religion. There is a conflicting, as Corbin notices, instead of complementary (though hierarchically arranged) perspectives, as we will see is suggested by Mulla Sadra.

Sohravardi does not have a commentary on the *mi'raj*, but Corbin claims that his “*A Tale of Occidental Exile*” may be considered as such.²⁷ Aside from salutations, this essay does not explicitly mention the Prophet at all; but it describes how one can learn to escape the prison of the material or “occidental” world and ascend to join sublime celestial bodies and go beyond them to a paradise on Mt. Sinai. So, what we find in such allegories are symbolic treatments of what their authors take to be the essential mission of the prophets.

The Muslim philosophers also emphasized the social and political dimensions of prophethood. Ibn Sina held that the moral order of society backed by divine law is needed to curb the destructive results of unrestrained self-interest. For ordinary people, the divine law merely serves to organize society; but for those who are capable of higher motivation, the law becomes a basis for the acquisition of virtue.

The law can only play this dual role of organizing society and serving as the basis for moral development if it is brought by a prophet. Only a prophet, one who has achieved some degree of union with the active intelligence, is able to understand how laws can embody the intellectual forms of practice whose realization will lead to felicity. Furthermore, it is only a prophet who can establish the religious institutions that will serve to motivate obedience to the law and serve as reminders of its real purpose even after he has passed away.²⁸

Ibn Sina introduces his explanation of worship in this manner, and comments, “*It should be said to people: these actions would bring you near unto God and would cause the blessed good to come to you — and indeed, they should be really such*.”²⁹

In this last phrase we find, again, the idea that the esoteric is not opposed to the exoteric, but complements it and provides its depth and goal. Islamic philosophy among the Shi'a has continued its own path in the shadow of the towering figure of Mulla Sadra (d. 1640). He provides a discussion of prophethood in his *Al-Shawahid al-Rububiyah (Witnessing of the Lord)*.³⁰

This book is divided into five major divisions, the last of which is on prophethood and *wilayat*.³¹ This division, in turn, is divided into two parts: on the characteristics of the Prophet (S); and on the criteria for establishing the truth of the claim to prophethood.

The first part, in turn, is divided into ten sections: (I.1) on the rank of the prophets among the other ranks of human beings; (I.2) on the principles of miracles and departures from what is normal; (I.3) on three features: (I.3.a) purification of the soul, (I.3.b) ability to see the hidden world in a conscious state through

the fortified power of the imagination, and (I.3.c) other powers of the soul; (I.4) the difference between prophets and soothsayers and others; (I.5) on the qualities of the prophetic warnings; (I.6) on the differences among revelation, inspiration, and learning; (I.7) on the quality of the unity of the prophet with the world of divine revelation and the judgment of the Lord and the reading of the protected tablet and the effaced tablet and the denial of the abrogation of precepts; (I.8) on what has come down in reports about attributions of hesitation to God; (I.9) that the prophet is situated at the border between the world of intellect and the sensory world; (I.10) on the number of attributes that the Prophet personally must have as primary head.

The second part (on the criteria for establishing the truth of the prophetic claim) is divided into nine sections: (II.1) on proving the existence of the prophet; (II.2) on what is needed and necessary in law (*shari'ah*) for ordinary people; (II.3) on the wisdom of the political arrangements and punishments; (II.4) on the difference between prophethood, the *shari'ah*, and politics; (II.5) an indication of the secrets of the *shari'ah* and the benefits of obedience; (II.6) on the advantages of certain acts of worship; (II.7) on a criteria by which to distinguish major from minor sins; (II.8) on the exterior and interior and the first and last of the *shari'ah*; (II.9) on the sense in which prophethood and the prophetic mission on earth have been discontinued.

Although it would take too long to summarize all of these sections, a brief review of those sections most relevant to the theory of prophethood and the character of the Prophet (S), is provided below:

(I.1). Human beings are of different ranks and stations, some of which pertain to the sensory world, some to the imagination, some pertain to the world of thought and intellectual perceptions, others pertain to the world of witnessing (*shuhud*) and their objects (*ayan*). Just as these worlds are ranked one above the other, so too, within each of these worlds there are degrees and rankings. Even in the sensory world, for example, the station of the butterfly is higher than that of the caterpillar. The station and status of every person is in accordance with the station and status of his or her perceptions. For the angels there are also levels and stations. These worlds of different levels and the sub-levels within them are the stations through which human beings are constantly traveling, so that they can go from a beastly state to an angelic one, and from there they can ascend to the level of the lovers of God. The highest degree of human perfection is the station of the prophets and *Awliya*. **(337–340/466–470)**

(I.2). Persons who reach the most comprehensive levels of perfection with regard to the three worlds of sensation, imagination, and intellection, are the vicegerents of God. Such people are deserving of leadership over other people, and so God appoints them to be his apostles, gives them revelations, by means of miracles confirms them, and provides them with divine aid against their enemies.
(340–341/470–471)

(I.3.a). The first of three features of the prophets mentioned by Mulla Sadra is that God elevates the rational soul of the prophet with respect to his theoretical faculties to a level of purity so intense that it becomes similar the great spirit (*Ruh al-azam*) and is united with it, whenever he wants, without need for

much meditation or thinking until knowledge of world effuses to him without the mediation of an ordinary human learning process. This becomes so intense that the oil of the receptive intellect is ignited by the flame of the active intelligence, which is not outside the reality of the sacred essence³². (341/471)

Mulla Sadra explains that just as there are some human souls that are so weak that they have trouble learning anything, there are others who seem to gauge or judge correctly with hardly any instruction. The prophets have the most excellent powers of estimation and are united with the world of light. Their illumination reaches such an extent that their powers of judgment are such that in a short time they are able to understand things which ordinary people are incapable of understanding, except to some extent and only after a long period of spiritual discipline and meditation. In its most excellent parts, the performance of miracles is due to this ability. This feature is shared by both the prophets and the *Awliya*. (342/472)

(I.3.b). As for the second feature, it is that the imaginative faculty (*Takhayyul*) becomes so powerful that the hidden world is witnessed in a conscious state and it takes imaginal and occult forms; and sensible sounds are heard from the celestial kingdom (*Malakut*) from the midst of the station of the celestial earth (*Hurqaliya*) or from other places, so that he [the prophet] sees an angel bearing the revelation; and what he hears are words configured by Allah, the Exalted, or a book on pages. In this the *Awliya* do not have a share, in contrast to the first feature. (342/472)

(I.3.c). As for the third feature, it is the faculty of the soul with respect to its practical part and its power of excitation that has an influence over the matter of the world, and it is through this power that miracles are performed such as when some material may take the form of a snake, or the weather may change on command, the sick may be cured, and other affairs in which bodies become obedient to the influencing souls. Mulla Sadra compares this with the physical effects that occur in the body prior to coitus that result from the form of the sexual act in the mind. Hence, it should not be surprising to find that in those persons in whom the practical part of the soul is perfected by God, that it should have influence that extends beyond their own bodies to other bodies and aspects of nature, just as sexual arousal occurs without physical contact. At the highest level, the most perfect soul will be able to influence what occurs in all the bodies of the entire world just as ordinary souls are able to influence the movements of their own specific bodies. (342–344/472–474)

There follows a short section called *tadhnib'arshi* (throne-like appendage).

The substance of prophethood is like a collection of lights, lights pertaining to the intellect, the soul, and to the senses. By the spirit and intellect, he becomes a seraph (Malakan min al-muqarabin), by the mirror of his soul and his mind, he becomes a celestial sphere far above the animal world and a tablet protected from the touch of the devils, and by his sensory faculties he becomes a king of the greatest sultans.

So, the Prophet, by his unique personality, is like an angel, a celestial sphere, and a king. He is the

composite of the three realms in their perfection. By his spirit, he is of the exalted kingdom (Malakut); by his soul, he is of the middle kingdom and in accordance with the lower kingdom, he is the vicegerent of Allah and the collection of the places for the manifestation of the divine names and the perfections of Allah completely, as with the saying of our Prophet (S), “There has been given to me the most comprehensive speech”. (344/474–475)

(I.4). According to another famous hadith, the Prophet (S) prayed to be able to see things as they really are. Mulla Sadra explains that the above features of prophethood all derive from seeing things as they really are, and that since the *Awliya* are completely connected to the Prophet, to a large extent they share in this knowledge. This sort of abilities can be found – in a much more limited extent – in cases that sometimes occur in which someone sees the future in a dream, or when someone becomes subject to the influence of evil spirits. In the former case, the soothsayer is able to see future physical events; and in the latter case, a body is dominated by spirits other than its own spirit.

Even more ordinary is what happens when an impressionable person comes under the influence of someone else and is dominated by them. In such cases, there is a spiritual domination over the physical activity and, hence, the body of another, without any physical force. Sometimes the look by another is enough for a person to come under the other’s spell, as it were. In the case of the prophets, such powers are so intense that they obtain knowledge of the entire universe and the entire universe comes under their control³³.

Mulla Sadra concludes that ordinary people – since they are dominated by their material needs – pay the most attention to the miracles and wonders of the prophets and *Awliya*, since miracles and wonders pertain to domination over the material world, and they neglect the special status of the prophets with respect to the imaginal world and the intellectual world. The people of intellect, however, are most impressed with the prophets’ stature with regard to the intellectual world, then the imaginal world, and lastly the sensory world; and the first status is shown through goodness and virtue. (344–345/474–476)

As mentioned above, section (I.5) is about the qualities of the prophetic warnings; and (I.6) is on the differences among revelation, inspiration, and learning.

(I.7). This section is on the nature of the union of the Prophet (S) and the world of revelation. Mulla Sadra explains that in each of the three domains of senses, imagination and intellect, God has created appropriate realities, each in accordance with a plan that exists in His knowledge, and He has given human beings appropriate faculties to perceive some of the realities at these three levels. At all three levels, human cognition occurs with the union of the faculty of the knower with the form of the reality at the corresponding level. Since the intellectual domain is a temporal, none of the realities at that level can be said to change, and are said to be written on the “protected tablet” (*Lawh al-mahfuz*).

Just as the engineer makes a plan of the form of the building of a house, then carries it out in physical construction, so too, the Originator of the heavens and the earth writes a plan according to His mercy,

and carries it out from the first to the last in the world through the acting angels that are at the service of the knowing angels. When the existence of the world is completed in its form, Allah creates humans from clay and wills to make from them a khalifah (vicegerent, steward) in the world and a deputy in the final abode, and so He grants them faculties and consciousness, which are the organs of senses, imagination, and intellection. When one perceives the form of the world, that external form produces another sensory form, and from this, another imaginal form. (350/481–482)

Mulla Sadra goes on to explain that this process continues with the formation of an intellectual form, whereby “there is acquired in the intellect the realities (*haqayiq*) of things that enter into the senses and the imagination.” (350–482)

*So, what is obtained in the human intellect agrees with the world that is existent in his soul, and the world of being corresponds to the copy of the existent that is in the intellectual tablet, and that is the hearts of the seraphim (the nearest angels [to God]), and this, as you learned, is prior to its existence in the tablet of destiny (*Lawh al-qadari*), and prior to its existence as a corporeal being; which is the reverse of the order whereby the sensory existence is followed by the imaginal and then the intellectual, I mean, its existence in the intellectual faculty. (350–351/482)*

Mulla Sadra then reminds his readers of his epistemological theory of the union of the intellect with what is known through intellection, and likewise the union of the form of what is sensed with the sensory faculty, and the union of the imaginal with the imagination. When a human being reaches the divine station (*al-maqam al-rabbani*), everything that is in the divine decree and destiny appears for him, and he witnesses the Pen and the Tablet, that is, the intellectual world and the world of the soul.

Although there is no change in the Protected Tablet, the realm of the intellect, but only in the lower realms, and since the divine laws given to the different prophets were dissimilar, the form of the divine laws is not in the intellectual realm, but in the imaginal realm, that is, the divine law is recorded in the Tablet of Erasure and Recording (*Lawh al-mahwwa al-ithbat*). However, the changes in the divine law are not to be seen as overturning what came before, but as due to changes in the circumstances that make a ruling inapplicable rather than changes in the rulings.

What is revealed at the imaginal level is a reflection in temporal form of the realities that exist timelessly at the intellectual level. What is revealed to the prophets are the forms recorded in the Tablet of Erasure and Recording. All of the judgments of the law are for reasons, and these for other reasons that go back to definitive divine judgments and ultimately to the divine names. One who understands how the divine realities of the intellectual forms are reflected in the imaginal world in the way that this is made manifest to the prophets, can make no mistake in even the slightest detail of how this becomes manifest in the world of plurality and change.

(I.8). Although what is in the intellectual world does not change, there can arise situations in which the divine decree appears to human beings to change because the human understanding of the decree

depends upon the changeable conditions in which it is understood.

(I.9). This section explains how the prophet is situated at the boundary between the world of intellects and the sensory world. It opens with the observation:

Verily the human heart, which is of the rational soul, is like a throne on which mercy is seated, like the Throne on which the Merciful is seated. It is an open gate toward the celestial kingdom (Malakut), which is the realm of the protected tablet, the source for the knowing and acting angels, as mentioned, and an open gate toward the faculties of perception and motion. (355/486–487)

The prophets, whose hearts are the purest of all humanity, have clear access to the divine realm from which they receive revelation, and to the realm of God's creatures, to which they show God's mercy. These are the most perfect levels of humanity and the first conditions for a person to be an apostle of God.

In addition, the prophets have been granted the power of speech and excellence of imagination so that they can make use of all they are taught by God for the sake of the guidance and direction of the people toward felicity, and so that the people learn to perform those actions that will lead to their felicity. They are also granted polemical skills with which they are able to show the people the invalidity of disbelief.

(I.10). Mulla Sadra claims that there are twelve essential attributes of the Prophet (S).

The first is excellent understanding, such that he understands everything that he hears and what is said to him as intended by the speaker with the utmost illumination of the intellect and light of the soul.

The second is memory, so that he never forgets, and his soul is united with the protected tablet.

Third is that he has a sound nature and balanced temperament.

Fourth is eloquence and good speech without having been taught or having received any human instruction.

Fifth is love of knowledge and wisdom, and his mastery of both without exertion of effort or study.

Sixth is the disposition of not following lusts and desires.

Seventh is greatness of soul and nobility, and distaste for all that is ugly and base, which he would only put up with as a kind of spiritual discipline.

Eighth is love and kindness toward the creatures of God, so that he would never display wrath; and yet without dismissing the divine punishments.

Ninth, he had a brave heart and did not fear death.

Tenth, he was generous and was never stingy because he knew that the divine bounties are inexhaustible.

Eleventh, he was the most blissful of all creatures in solitude with God, because he was an '*Arif* (knower of God) to the highest degree.

Twelfth, he was not strict and insistent. He invited people to establish justice and fairness in a pleasant way. He was, however, firm and assertive in opposing injustice and refused to accept oppression.

Mulla Sadra ends this section by pointing out how rare it is for someone to be able to merge all these attributes, and that there are very few temperaments that could maintain such virtues. Just as very few are able to attain knowledge of God at the degree of entering into the divine sanctuary.

With the section summarized above, Mulla Sadra finishes the first part of his discussion of prophethood and *wilayah*. The second part begins with a discussion of how to prove that the prophetic claim is true.

(II.1). Mulla Sadra starts off with comments in the tradition of Ibn Sina, to the effect that human beings need to live in communities. These communities must be governed by law in order to prevent oppression and maintain order. Since God has mercy on His creatures, He should provide them with guidance through a law by means of which they can live in peace and draw closer to Him.

This law can only be brought to human beings through a prophet. The prophetic guides must be of a fitting stature and have the virtues to guide individuals and communities to felicity in both this world and the next. As such, the prophets are human manifestations of divine mercy.

(II.2). The prophet should prescribe rules of conduct and worship for the people so that they may be led from the condition of being like animals to that of being like angels. The benefits of various forms of worship are mentioned.

(II.3). This world is a place in which human beings set out on a journey toward God. The journey has many stations, from that of the material, through the various vegetative and animalistic stations, to the stations of humanity, and finally to the angelic stations. In this journey, some are more advanced than others.

The prophets are those who are most advanced on this way, and who can therefore lead others toward God. For this purpose, that is, to establish an order with justice and security within the framework of which people can live and worship and advance further in their own spiritual journey, political arrangements and punishments are established by divine law.

(II.4). Mulla Sadra opens this section with a comparison:

The relation of prophethood to the shari'ah is like the relation of the spirit to the body in which the spirit is, and politics without religion (or divine law) is like the body in which there is no spirit (364/496).

He goes on by explaining that while some of the so-called philosophers have claimed that there is no difference between politics and *shari'ah*, the difference is affirmed in Plato's Laws; and he goes on to elaborate how they differ. For Mulla Sadra, *shari'ah* means the rule of divine law and is contrasted with politics which he takes to be rule for individual interests.

(II.5). Continuing the Platonic theme, Mulla Sadra asserts that just as man is divided into three faculties, rational, imaginal, and sensory, so too, the people that make up a society may be divided into corresponding groups. The secret to understanding the rules of the *shari'ah* is that they all serve to lead man through successively higher levels.

The next three sections, (II.6), (II.7), and (II.8), are about particular acts of worship, sin, and different aspects of the divine law, or *shari'ah*, respectively. In the final section (II.9), Mulla Sadra concludes that although prophethood has been discontinued with the demise of Prophet Muhammad (S), in the sense that no one after him is to be called a prophet, and for none of them is revelation brought through the angel Gabriel as it is for the Prophet, there is a sense in which it continues, insofar as God continues to inspire the Imams and others following them to lead people in the right way towards Him.

Prophet Muhammad (S) In Irfan

The Sufis, generally speaking, take the same sort of view of prophethood – in general, and Prophet Muhammad (S), in particular – as is held among the Shi'a. They hold that the prophets are on an exalted status. They also accord the existence of the Prophet Muhammad (S) metaphysical significance.

In this regard we might consider the famous Sufi poet, Farid al-Din Attar (d.c.1221). Although it is believed that, Attar followed Sunni jurisprudence (Hanafi), his praises of the first three Caliphs as well as the Shiite Imams Baqir and Sadiq have confused scholars with regard to his confessional loyalties.

In his Book of God (*Ilahi Namah*)³⁴, Attar begins, as is customary, by praising God and honoring the Prophet. The section on the Prophet is too long to quote here, but more than a few passages are worth quoting or summarizing. The section begins as follows:

Muhammad (S) is the exemplar to both worlds, the guide of the descendants of Adam.

He is the sun of creation, the moon of the celestial spheres, the all-seeing eye;

The torch of knowledge, the candle of prophecy, the lamp of the nation and the way of the people;

The commander-in-chief on the parade-ground of the Law; the general of the army of mysteries and morals;

The lord of the world and the glory of the "But for thee"³⁵; ruler of the earth and of the celestial spheres;

The most loyal of the Prophets, the proof of the Way, the king without a seal, the sultan without a crown.

As a king he reared up a lofty palace, but he followed the principle of "Poverty is my pride"³⁶. (6)

He, and only he, is without question the most excellent of mankind; he and he only, is the confident of

God.

The seven heavens and the eight gardens of paradise were created for him; he is both the eye and the light in the light of our eyes. (6)

With his mind [fekresh, literally, his thought] he solved the difficulties of all mankind for his mind had seen the first design in Eternity Past. (7)

He was indeed the culmination of the Prophets; when he came, the Prophecy was complete. Hast thou not seen how first the army comes and then the noble King arrives. The Prophets are like the army; they came only to announce the king.

When the sultan of Prophecy was born, the Prophecy came to an end for he was the culmination thereof. (7)

Without love for him the heavens cannot revolve; without their longing for him the angels cannot breathe.

The Faith itself could have nothing without his support; no eye ever saw him knit his brow. He was pure contentment with no feeling of anger; no eye ever saw him frown. (8)

When he returned, with a hundred honors, from his ascension [mi'raj], his face never grew dark. His stars relate that when he sat like the moon in their company, He eclipsed that company with a light such as that with which the sun eclipses a candle. (10)

There is a lyrical account of the mi'raj that goes on for several pages. With reference to the "two bow lengths" mentioned in the Qur'an,

"Then he drew nearer and nearer until he was within two bow lengths or even nearer" (53:9)

Attar comments:

When, in the first place, he set out towards God, he sped upwards like an arrow from the bow. And when, in the end, he was sent back to mankind, he was discharged like an arrow from the bow. These two flights were from two bows, hence the parable of the two bows. And since Sagittarius is always in two houses, therefore there are always two parts to that bow.

One thou knowest as that of Ahad [unity], and the other is that of the eternal Ahmad [Muhammad]. The attraction of God shot forth like an arrow and split the mim of Ahmad in two like a hair. The mim of Ahmad fell out and it became Ahad; and all duality became unity. (16)

God, Who to glorify Adam revealed to him the names of all things, Revealed to Muhammad the things themselves and therefore made him illiterate and poor. Going beyond names to the nameless state of things he had no need to read and was therefore illiterate. Since he went disembodied along the road of God he became from disembodiment absolutely poor. (17)

Attar finishes his exordium to the Prophet with a story, according to which there was once a prostitute who came to the Prophet (S) and asked for a gift. She complimented the Prophet (S), and he gave her his only cloak and asked his friends to each give her something. The result was that she became rich.

Attar continues, addressing the Prophet (S):

Since the woman had a cloak from thee, I too should have a present.

Thou art king in both worlds and canst bestow divine robes of honor.

Honor his body with such a robe of which even his shirt will not be aware.

Adorn his heart with a belief in God's oneness such as cannot enter a specific body.

All that I seek is disembodiment, but why do I speak seeing that thou knowest and art able? (20)

One of the scholars most famous for his explicit avowal of both the Sufi path and the Shiite denomination was Sayyid Haydar Amuli (d.c. 1391), who studied under Allama Al-Hilli's son, himself a great scholar, known as Muhaqiq Al-Hilli (d. 1369).

*In his Secrets of the Path (Asrar al-Shari'ah)[37](#) he discusses each of the various elements of the Shiite creed and practice from three perspectives: the exoteric view, *shari'ah*; the esoteric view, *tariqah*; and finally, the ultimate view, *haqiqah*. The discussion of prophethood is preceded by a short introduction that affirms the philosophical view that the prophets receive knowledge from God "by means of essence of the First Intellect, known sometimes as Gabriel and sometimes as the Holy Spirit." (109)*

In his review of prophethood according to the people of *shari'ah*, he states that prophethood is recognized by three features: (1) the rationality of what he establishes in word and deed; (2) his call for obedience to God; and (3) miracles. He also discusses how God's kindness obliges Him to send prophets for human guidance, as well as the infallibility of the prophets.

In his summary of prophethood according to the people of *tariqah*, Sayyid Haydar strikes a philosophical note, as he writes in the following passage:

The prophetic mission is an expression of the special treatment of man by God. This special relationship issues from Him by means of His revelation. This revelation is in the form of those divine emanations or unveilings which cause the bringing into being of the source-forms in the realm of knowledge; these emanations are also known as the most sacred divine outpourings. (112)

When he turns to prophethood from the perspective of the people of the truth (*haqiqah*), Sayyid Haydar Amuli writes:

Know that the prophethood of this group is an expression of the good news or revelation from the divine: the prophet is the one who is informed of the Essence of Allah and of His Attributes, His Names, His laws and His wishes. The real and essential prophetic announcement is nothing other than that. The Greater Spirit was sent by Allah to the First Universal Soul and from there to the particular individual soul

in order to inform it, in the language of the intellect, of the Unity of Essence, the Attributes from before endless time, the divine Names, the illustrious laws and His revered will. Every prophet from Adam to Muhammad is a manifestation of the various manifestations of the prophethood of the Greater Spirit: the prophethood of the latter is essential and eternal; the prophethood of the various other manifestations is incidental and interrupted – except that of the prophethood of Muhammad whose prophethood is eternal and uninterrupted since his reality is the reality of the Greater Spirit and his form includes the various forms in which this reality manifests. The rest of the prophets manifest by means of some of the names and qualities: each manifestation is an emanation of one of the qualities, or one of the names, except that of the Muhammadi manifestation which emanates from the essence of the Greater Spirit and by means of all its qualities. Moreover, in this manifestation prophethood comes to a close. The Messenger, may Allah bless him and his family, preceded all the prophets with respect to the reality of prophethood, yet comes after them with respect to outward form. He himself has said: “We are the last and the first” and also “I was a prophet when Adam was (in a state) between water and clay.” (113–114)

This last hadith is also emphasized in the treatment of prophethood by Muhsin Faydh Al-Kashani (d. 1680) in his *Kalimat-e Maknuneh (Hidden Words)*³⁸. Faydh also explicitly describes prophethood in terms of the Sufi concept of the perfect man (*insan al-kamil*).

The perfect man is either a prophet or a saint, and there are two aspects of each of these. First is the aspect of absoluteness and second aspect of being restricted and conditional. In other words, there are the general and specific aspects. Absolute prophethood is real prophethood acquired in pre-eternity and remaining until post-eternity. That is the prophet’s consciousness – exclusive to he who has it [the absolute prophethood] – of the capacities of all existents according to their essences and whatnesses, and his granting the rights of everything that has a right, which is sought by the tongue of its capacity, in this regard that this prophethood is informed about the essences and the true eternal teachings, called the greatest lordship and the major sovereignty. One who has this position is called the greatest vicegerent, the pole of poles, and the great man, the real Adam, referred to as the highest pen, the first intellect and the greatest spirit. There is reference to this in his (S) saying, “The first thing that Allah created was my light”, and “I was a prophet when Adam was between water and clay”, and others of this sort. All knowledge and practice depends on him, and ultimately all levels and stages, whether of prophethood or sainthood, of an apostle or legatee, lead to him.

The interior of this prophethood is absolute sainthood (wilayah), which is the acquiring of all these perfections esoterically from pre-eternity and their remaining until post-eternity. This returns to the annihilation of the servant in al-Haqq and his persistence in Him, and there is an indication of this in his saying, “I and Ali are from a single light,” and “Allah created my spirit and the spirit of Ali ibn Abu Talib two thousand years before He created people, and He raised Ali with every prophet secretly, but with me openly”. This is also indicated by the saying of the Commander of the Faithful (as),

“I was a saint when Adam was between water and clay,” and others of the same sort. (167)

(In the context of) Restricted prophethood, (the respective prophet) is granted knowledge about divine realities, that is, gnosis of the essence of al-Haqq and His names, attributes, and precepts. If the propagation of the precepts, training people in morals, teaching them wisdom and taking a political stand, are added to this, it constitutes legislative prophethood, only for an apostle. Parallel to this is restricted sainthood. Insofar as prophethood and sainthood are divine attributes, they are absolute, and insofar as they are based on the prophets and the saints, they are restricted. The restricted is based on the absolute, and the absolute is manifest in the restricted. (168)

Fayd goes on to explain that the prophethood of each of the prophets is a particular instance of absolute prophethood, and the seal of both absolute and restricted prophethood, beyond which there is no further level of prophethood, is Muhammad (S). He quotes the following hadith to confirm this point: “A parable for prophethood is that of a house built with only one brick missing, and I am that brick.”

The discussion continues with an elaboration of the concept of the Prophet as the supreme instance of the perfect man whose reality (*haqiqah*) is the form of the One.

The root and source, return and origin of all creatures is reality of all realities, and that is the Muhammadan reality and the Ahmadian light which is the form of the Unitary One. It includes all divine and cosmic perfections, and is the setter of the scales of all the levels for angelic, animal and human temperance. The world and its inhabitants are the form and parts of his elaboration. Adam and humans are subordinate to him for his perfection. This is indicated by his (S) words, “I am the master of the children of Adam,” and by his words, “Adam and those who came after are under my banner”. (168)

There is no intermediary between him and al-Haqq, mighty is His sovereignty, as he said, “The first thing that Allah created was my spirit (or my light),” and he is the goal of all actions, as He said, “If it were not for you, I would not have created the celestial spheres”. (169)

Faydh continues that our Prophet is the most perfect of all creatures, even considering the Imams and *Awliya* (saints), who are, “after him [Muhammad], the best creatures and the most perfect creatures, especially the Commander of the Faithful [Imam Ali (as)]”. (169)

Prophet Muhammad As Absolute Prophet

Although we have divided the discussions of the Prophet (S) in religious texts, doctrinal statements, and books on philosophy and *irfan*, the division is somewhat artificial, for the boundaries of these fields are porous, and many individuals throughout Shiite history have displayed a perspective that synthesizes what are found in all these different areas.

So, for example, Nasir al-Din Al-Tusi and Jamal al-Din Al-Hilli both wrote works of dogmatic theology, philosophy, and *irfan*³⁹, and Mulla Sadra and his son-in-law, Faydh Al-Kashani wrote works in the areas of Qur’anic interpretation, theological works, philosophy and *irfan*. So, the divisions we have made

among the texts considered should not be understood as indicating different factions among the Shi'a, but rather different textual traditions that often merge.

In the course of the history of these textual traditions, there is a movement towards idealization: Prophet Muhammad (S) is understood as the climaxing personification of the theory of prophethood as elaborated over the course of the centuries.

This is not to deny the historical person or to oppose the historical person to the idealization, for there is a single person who appears in history who was orphaned and raised by an uncle and experienced all the details of the life of the famous religious leader of Arabia some six hundred years after Christ, but at the same time is one who was appointed by God and given a mission of warning and bearing the glad tidings of divine mercy and sovereignty, and again, is the same person who is the pure light of God's first creation and for the sake of whom the entire world has been created.

In Shi'ite thought, these are not to be understood as opposing paradigms, but as different hierarchically ordered aspects of a single reality.

The lowest level of such aspects is that of the Arabian man's physical history, his movements and what he ate. At a higher level, there is the person Muhammad as prophet and apostle of God, the recipient of divine revelation, and divine guide. Finally, there is Muhammad as the light of the intellect, pure illumination and virtue, a cosmic reality totally annihilated in divinity. This division is reflected in Haydar Amuli's division of *shari'at*, *tariqat*, and *haqiqat*, and in Mulla Sadra's division of the sensory, imaginal, and intellectual worlds.

As we have seen, Muslim writers often divide their discussions of prophethood into general discussions of what it means to be a prophet and specific discussions of the prophethood of Muhammad, or as Faydh Al-Kashani put it, between absolute and restricted prophethood. As Faydh writes, "*The restricted is based on the absolute, and the absolute is manifest in the restricted.*"

In Muhammad (S), however, the instance and the universal paradigm are united in one, in a manner analogous to Plato's early theory of the forms as perfect paradigms, except that for Plato, the paradigm could never exist as concrete embodied reality, for material existence was itself seen as contrary to the ideality of the forms. In Shiite thought, on the other hand, there is a single reality that is at once material and immaterial, corporeal and non-corporeal, but at different levels of its existence.

The prophets come as guides to show the path toward God. This also occurs on several levels, the way of the outward law – the *shari'ah*, the inward way – the *tariqah*, and the fully realized way of the truth – *haqiqah*. All three of these levels are brought to completion by the Prophet Muhammad (S), although in different ways.

With respect to the law, he is the final prophet to bring a divine law and book. With him the succession of prophets comes to an end, but divine guidance continues through the succession of the Imams. God

completes His religion through Muhammad when the Qur'an has been revealed and Muhammad has announced the divine appointment of Ali. These two "weighty things" (*thaqalayn*), the Qur'an and the household of the Prophet, are like two points that determine a line that extends toward the realization or *haqiqah*, indicated by "the Pond" (*Kawthar*), in accordance with the famous hadith in which the Prophet (S) is reported to have said:

Verily, "I am leaving behind two precious things (thaqalayn) among you: the Book of God and my kindred (itrah), my household (Ahl al-Bayt), for indeed, the two will never separate until they come back to me by the Pond (of al-Kawthar on the Judgment's Day)".^{[40](#)}

The series of divine prophets is one of those who brought divine law, which is the exoteric aspect of *din* (religion in the sense of divine guidance). With the passing away of the Prophet (S), not only does the individual pass away, but the entire series of prophets also comes to an end. Universal or absolute prophethood is in this way, too, united with the individual prophethood of Muhammad (S).

The esoteric aspect of his mission and the mission of prophethood in general, however, continues through the series that constitutes the Imamate, for the Prophet (S) is not only prophet, but also a *wali*; and it is his *wilayah* that continues through the sequence of Imamate.

According to some Shiite narrations, the Pond is also a symbol for the Prophet's daughter, Fatimah, the wife of Imam Ali. Her position as daughter and wife makes her the link that joins prophethood and Imamate, the exoteric and esoteric. The ultimate realization is the offspring of the exoteric and the spouse of the esoteric.

These relations between the external, interior and realization, however, are not merely abstract speculations, for they speak directly to the establishment and spiritual direction of the religious community. Hence, the narration of *thaqalayn* is not merely descriptive; rather it is guidance to the believers that they should cling to the divine book revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (S) and the leadership of the Imams that he announced at Ghadir (and other places) in order to approach the Kingdom of God on Judgment Day.

Prophet Muhammad (S) can be considered the absolute prophet not only because absolute prophethood is manifest in him, but because each of the levels of prophethood achieves fulfillment in him, since it is through his life, revelation and designation of the Imamate that he makes manifest his own spiritual ascent and invites the believers to take up the quest themselves as individuals and as a community.

^{1.} Faydh Al-AI-Kashani, *Al-mahjat al-baydha fi tahdhib al-ihya*, (Qom: Daftar-e Intisharat Islami, 1415/1994), Vol. 4, 118.

^{2.} It is strongly recommended that a short prayer of benediction should be recited whenever the Prophet's name is mentioned: "May the blessings of Allah and peace be granted to him and to his progeny." This is abbreviated here according to the custom, by the Arabic letter sad, here transliterated: "(s)". Note that the phrase "and to his progeny" is specific to the Shi'ahs. Likewise, after the mention of the Imams and other prophets, one says "alayhi al-salam" (peace be upon him) and for Fatimah, "alayha al-salam" (peace be upon her).

^{3.} See Qur'an (2:31).

4. See Sachiko Murata and William C. Chittick, *The Vision of Islam* (New York: Paragon House, 1994), ch. 4, 132–137.
5. Kanz al-‘Amal, hadith no. 5217.
6. For a review of the sources and variations on this narration see URL=
<http://marifah.net/articles/lamhouseofwisdom-alialqari.pdf> [2]
7. (17: 1), (53: 1–21), (81: 19–25).
8. The most important such narrations in the Shi’a collections have been gathered by Muhsin Faydh Al-AI-Kashani, the translation of which may be found at URL =
<https://www.al-islam.org/al-miraj-the-night-ascension-mullah-faidh-al-ka...> [3]
9. Ibid. from Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 18, 330–331, Bab 3, hadith 34.
10. Page references will be given (according) to the English translation of Jafar Husain (Qom: Ansariyan, 1989) in the following form: (S xx/yy, nn), where xx is the sermon number and nn is the page number in the Ansariyan edition, and yy is the sermon number in the web edition: <https://www.al-islam.org/nahjul-balagha-part-1-sermons> [4]
11. See Ali Amir-Moezzi, *The Divine Guide in Early Shiism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 30.
12. Shaykh Saduq, *A Shiite Creed*, tr. Asaf A. A. Fyzee (Tehran: WOFIS, 1982), 81.
<https://www.al-islam.org/shiite-creed-shaykh-saduq> [5]
13. Shaykh Saduq (1982), 145.
14. Shaykh Saduq (1982), 84.
15. Shaykh Saduq (1982), 87.
16. See Martin J. McDermott, *The Theology of Shaikh Al-Mufid* (d. 413/1022) (Beirut: Dar el-Machreq, 1986), 99ff.
17. Allama Al-AI-Hilli, *Kashf al-Murad fi Tajrid al-I’tiqad* (Qom: Mu’assissah Nashr Islami, 1404/1363/1984), 346–360.
18. Ja’far Sobhani, *Doctrines of Shii Islam* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001), 61–96.
19. Ayatullah Muhammad Taqi Misbah Yazdi, *Amuzesh-e I’tiqad* (Tehran: Sazman-e Tablighat-e Islami, 1374/1995).
20. F. Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1958), 14.
21. See Henry Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital* (Irving: Spring Publications, 1980).
22. W. M. Thackston, *The Mystical and Visionary Treatises of Shihabuddin Yahya Suhrawardi* (London: Octagon, 1982).
23. A translation of the essay along with an argument in favor of the attribution of it to Ibn Sina may be found in Peter Heath, *Allegory and Philosophy in Avicenna (Ibn Sina): With a Translation of the Book of the Prophet Muhammad's Ascent to Heaven* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992). Additional evidence of Ibn Sina’s being a Shi’ite is that all the names of his household that are known were popular among the Shi’a. See Arthur J. Arberry, *Avicenna on Theology* (Westport: Hyperion, 1979), 5.
24. Corbin (1980), 251.
25. Henry Corbin, *Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 318 n. 8; 282–283 n. 76.
26. Farabi, *Tahsil al-Sa’adah* (Haydarabad: A. H. 1345), 40, cited in Rahman (1958), 61. Corbin (1980), 166.
27. Corbin (1980), 166.
28. See Rahman (1958), 52–64, who traces elements of this sort of approach to Plato and to the Stoics.
29. Ibn Sina, *Najat* (Cairo: 1938), 10, cited in Rahman (1958), 55. Rahman sees the ultimate conflict between the philosophers and the “orthodox” to lie in the contrary ideals of contemplation and activism. However, this only describes orthodoxy as developed in Sunni kalam; for the Shi’a (and Heath’s arguments for the authenticity of Ibn Sina’s *Miraj Nama* provide evidence for his Shiism, as well) the contemplative and the active goals are by no means opposed; just as justice and wisdom are not opposed. Compare the opposition described by Rahman (1958), 64, 110, with the views described below of Sayyid Haydar Amuli, Mulla Sadra, and Faydh Al-AI-Kashani .
30. Sadr al-Din Shirazi, *Al-Shawahid al-Rububiyah* (Mashhad: Mashhad University Press (1346/1967). I have also benefited from the Persian translation of this work by Javad Mosleh (Tehran: Soroush Press, 1996). Page references will be given in the form (n/m) where n is the page number of the Arabic text and m is the page number of the Persian translation.
31. The term wilayah means both guardianship (of the other believers) and authority, and is closely related to the term walah, signifying love (of the Ahl al-Bayt). The prophets and Imams are said to be Awliya (sing. wali), meaning that they have divine authority, and that they are the special friends of God. Orientalists often translate this as “sainthood”.
32. Here Mulla Sadra refers to the verse of light in the Qur’an, (24:35).

- [33.](#) The position taken here with regard to occult influences is a development of discussions of this topic that can be found in Ibn Sina (Isharat), as explained by Rahman (1958) 51.
- [34.](#) All the quotations are from Farid al-Din Attar, *The Ilahi-nama or Book of God*, tr John Andrew Boyle (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976); page numbers will be given in parentheses after quoted text.
- [35.](#) This refers to the hadith according to which God said to Muhammad, “But for thee, I would not have created the heavens.”
- [36.](#) This is a well-known hadith.
- [37.](#) Sayyid Haydar Amuli, *Inner Secrets of the Path* (Longmead: Element Books, 1989) Page numbers will be given after quoted text from this translation.
- Online at: <https://www.al-islam.org/inner-secrets-path-sayyid-haydar-amuli> [6]
- [38.](#) Muhsin Fayd Al-Al-Kashani, *Kalimat-e Maknuneh* (Qom: Matbu’at-e Dini, 1386/2007). Page references for my translations will be given to the original Persian/Arabic text of this edition.
- [39.](#) See the discussion of such connections by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “Shi’ism and Sufism: their relationship in essence and in history,” in his *Sufi Essays*, 2nd ed. (Albany: SUNY, 1991), 104–120
- [40.](#) For a discussion of the variations on this hadith, and their narrators, see URL <https://www.al-islam.org/hadith-al-thaqalayn> [7] (accessed 1 February 2009).

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