

Section One: Period of the Presence of the Imams ('a)

General Objectives

After studying this discourse, students are expected:

1. To know the origin of the Sunnī and Shī'ah schools of thought and their main differences on the issue of Imamate;
2. To be acquainted with the manner of selecting the Imams and their continuity;
3. To understand the pivotal role of the Imams in protecting the foundation of religion, guiding the Muslims and propagating religious teachings; and
4. To be aware of the Shī'ah viewpoint on the savior and the constructive effect of waiting during the period of occultation.

Introduction

Clarification of the principle of Imamate and the circumstances surrounding its inclusion in the intellectual body of a group of Muslims (Shī'ah) as one of their ideological principles lies in paying attention to the following points:

1. Based on the monotheistic worldview, the One and Only God is the Creator of the universe and the Master and Cherisher of the entire creation including humanity. This is called "monotheism in Lordship" [*tawḥīd fī'r-rubūbiyyah*]. Accordingly, for a religious and monotheist person, God has the right to rule over human beings and assign duties to them such that every person has duties to God and there is no escape but to discharge them.

Therefore, God has the legislative right [ʿaqq-e tashrīʿ] and the people, in turn, are duty-bound to submit and surrender to Him. On the one hand, the principle of monotheism gives this right solely to God and it is wrong for people to associate this right to any other than Him. If we believe someone else to have such a right, we have actually drifted away from “monotheism in sovereignty” [tawḥīd fī’l-ʿimīyyah], and once we obey the command of other than God, we fall into the abyss of “polytheism in obedience” [shirk fī’l-ʿah].

On the other hand, the requisite of the acceptance of monotheism is the all-encompassing legislative sovereignty of God in the sense that human beings cannot accept the sovereignty of God only in some decrees or in a specific domain; rather, one should abide by every commandment of God, the Sublime, in every sphere.

2. God has exercised His legislative sovereignty by sending prophets and issuing orders and decrees through them. However, if the religion is meant to put Divine Sovereignty into action, as it is, and its ultimate goal is the implementation of religious commandments, such a goal is in need of prerequisites and special conditions apart from conveyance of the message.

Historically, the tasks done by the prophets of God have been more than the conveyance and elucidation of revelation. Their incessant struggles and untiring efforts were not only confined to communication of a message. In fact, the prophets (‘a) strived hard for the Divine Sovereignty in different facets of life. The loftiest of the goals and objectives of the prophets (‘a) was the emancipation of man from the bondage of the [ghafl](#) and drawing him to the servitude and worship of God.

3. For the monotheistic logic to rule over the life of man, first of all, we are in need of revelation and the conveyance of the message which is the primary function and duty of the prophets of Allah (prophethood). We are also in need of the elucidation, exposition and teaching of the conveyed message so as to avoid difference of interpretations (religious authority). In addition, there is a need for an executive and administrative institution to actually implement the religious commandments (leadership).

4. When the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) was alive, apart from conveying the revelation, which is a prophetic function, he practically assumed two other responsibilities. In case of any difference of opinions on a religious matter, his view and opinion served as the final word. He, who recited the Qur’an to the people, considered it also his duty to explain it to them and state the rulings and cases not explicitly mentioned in the Qur’an. This task of the Apostle (ﷺ) was actually complimentary to his role of receiving the revelation. As such, the *Sunnah* was of special importance and played the role of explainer and elucidator of the Qur’an. This is the same function of “religious authority” [marja’iyyat-e dīnī] which was also performed by the Holy Prophet (ﷺ).

The station of *wilāyah*² and leadership was among the designations of the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ). Any decision he took for the *ummah*³ was binding. From the very beginning of his prophetic call, he took steps for the Islamic *ummah* to establish a government. His steps from the beginning to the end bore

witness of the existence of a systematic program for the establishment of a religious government. The efforts made in Mecca were also a historical prelude for the establishment of a formal government in Medina. Purging of the internal enemies and the hypocrites in Medina and waging war against the infidels and foreign powers demonstrated the Muslims' motivation to establish a global government under the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ).

No Muslim at that time ever thought that the Prophet's (ﷺ) duty was only to convey the message. His all-encompassing authority was such that there was no separation between religion and politics.

In addition to the conveyance of revelation, the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) had two other responsibilities—intellectual authority and practical leadership of the Islamic *ummah*—exactly the same responsibilities shouldered by the Imams (‘a) after the Prophet (ﷺ). Apart from being the recipient of revelation, the Prophet (ﷺ) was also the Imam and *proof of Allah* [*Ujjaṭ Allāh*] for the people. His being the proof of Allah entailed responsibilities on the part of the people.

Firstly, whatever the Prophet (ﷺ) declared as lawful or unlawful—even though not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an—became a duty upon the people. Secondly, whatever policy he as the leader adopted, was thereafter an inviolable administrative measure or decree. Whatever dispute, whether theoretical or practical, that was settled in the presence of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) subsequently the people had to “hold fast” [*ṭiṭim*] to it as “Allah's cord” [*abl Allāh*].⁴

5. The Apostle (ﷺ), therefore, had **two functions**, viz. **apostleship** [*risālah*] and **leadership** [*imāmah*]. With the declaration of the finality of prophethood by God, *risālah* culminated with the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and the people were not supposed to look for another prophet after him. Until the end of the world, all must adhere to one religion—Islam—and its heavenly book—the Qur'an—must be the basis of religion.

However, after the demise of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ), this question was raised: With the departure of the Prophet (ﷺ), what is the designation of Imamate or religious authority and leadership [*imāmah*] of the Islamic *ummah*?

Shi'ism

Some believed that with the passing away of the Prophet (ﷺ), leadership [*imāmah*]⁵—in the sense of perfect interpretation of the religion—also came to an end. They believed that after the Prophet (ﷺ), God did not designate anyone to be the flawless interpreter of the religion. In this case, divine leadership [*imāmah*] ended and thereafter the implementers of divine sovereignty were general vicegerents, viz. the people. As such, *imāmah* was not a divine designation in the sense that God had not appointed someone for the post.

Accordingly, the people had to assume the responsibility of religious authority and the function of

interpreting the religion was delegated to them. The executive leadership of the people was determined by themselves. Consultation and election was the means to determine the successor and caliph [*khalifah*] of the Messenger (ﷺ) for the performance of the function of leadership. In the course of time, this notion became prevalent: “The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) has entrusted to the people the affair of religious leadership.”

On the contrary, according to another group, just as prophethood is a divine designation, leadership [*imamah*] is also a divine covenant. They believed that “Sovereignty or rule is the right of God and He guarantees the perpetuity of His religion by designating the flawless interpreter and infallible leader after the Prophet (ﷺ).” Proponents of the second view who are called Sh‘ah are of the opinion that the institution of leadership [*imamah*] has been determined and defined by God Himself through the Prophet (ﷺ), and the people must abide by it.

According to the Sh‘ah, twelve persons have been designated as the leaders of the *ummah*, interpreters of the religion and masters of the affairs, and the Qur’an also enjoins us to follow them.⁵ According to this view, the sovereignty of God is observed through the Imams who are the vicegerents of God. All their commands are binding and their interpretation of the religion is the correct interpretation.

The two schools of thought—Sunnah and Sh‘ah—are the two main trends in the Muslim world. The issue of Imamate is the main issue that has divided Muslims into two groups.⁶

These two schools of thought differ on some issues:

1. The Sh‘ah regard the sayings and actions of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a), in addition to those of the Prophet (ﷺ), as the decisive proof and criterion of truth. According to this view, after the Apostle (ﷺ) a sort of religious authority based on “inspired knowledge” [*al-ilm al-ladunn*] is entrusted to the Imams (‘a). Through means beyond our comprehension, the Imams (‘a) had acquired the Islamic sciences from the Holy Prophet (ﷺ). Each of them then passed to his successor whatever he had inherited from the Prophet (ﷺ).⁸

The Ahl as-Sunnah, however, assert that only the Prophet (ﷺ) is infallible and only his sayings are devoid of any error, and none of his family members, companions and caliphs has such merit. As such, according to the Sunnis the sayings of the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) are at most as authoritative as those of religious scholars.⁹ Hundreds of mistakes of the companions and caliphs have been recorded in Sunnah books.¹⁰

2. According to the Sh‘ah, religious authority and leadership [*imamah*] is a divine trust which must be determined by God. As such, Imamate is not a customary position or designation that depends on public acceptance and allegiance. It is rather a program set up by God for the guidance of mankind which does not necessitate the acceptance and approval of the people. Linking the fate of religion to the will of the people is tantamount to the mixture of the will of God with that of the people, and this is incompatible with the necessity of Imamate and the infinite wisdom of God. The commandments of God constitute His

religion and Imamate, which in God's design for the guidance of humanity is an integral part of religion and one of the divine obligations. The people are duty-bound to implement this program. That is, the *ummah* has no option but to accept it and this acceptance is a religious obligation and a prerequisite of faith. From this perspective, there is no difference between *nubuwwah* and *imamah*. All those who accepted prophethood [*nubuwwah*] must also accept Imamate [*imamah*].

It is true that without the acceptance of the people, no program or design can be implemented successfully. Therefore, the materialization of Imamate depends on the will and approval of the people. It must be noted, however, that materialization is not identical with the rightfulness of a thing. According to the Shā'ah, some dimensions of the authority of the Imams ('a) were not put into practice, but this does not nullify in any way the legitimacy of Imamate. Similarly, the people's non-acceptance or denial of true prophets never affected the truthfulness of their messages.

According to Sunnī scholars, Imamate is an affair without any specified divine decree and religious authority can be assumed by common religious scholars. Leadership, therefore, is also an affair without any specified divine decree. They maintain that the caliph or Imam can be determined through general suffrage,¹¹ appointment or designation by the preceding caliph,¹² or by the use of force and violence.¹³

3. According to the Shā'ah, Imamate is one of the fundamental ideological principles which every Muslim must believe in and in which there is no room for emulation [*taqlīd*]. Since designation of the Imam is one of the prerogatives of God, it is one of the roots of religion [*uḥūḍ/ ad-dīn*] and scholastic theology [*ilm al-kalām*] is its proper place for discussion.¹⁴ The Ahl as-Sunnah, however, who regard Imamate as an affair of the people without any specified divine decree include it in the list of secondary duties in jurisprudence and discuss it in the science of jurisprudence [*fiqh*].¹⁵

4. In view of the aforementioned points, the Shā'ah definition of Imamate is totally different from that of the caliphate or leadership by the Ahl as-Sunnah, where the issue of leadership and government is only an outward aspect of the functions of Imamate and is not comprehensive in all its aspects.¹⁶

5. Most of the Shā'ah give a special position to the Imams ('a) in addition to their religious authority and political leadership. According to the Shā'ah, just as the legislative will of God is manifested through the infallible Imams ('a), who are in charge of religious guidance and sociopolitical leadership of the people, they also have guardianship or authority [*wilāyah*] in the cosmic world [*alam-e takwīn*] and serve as the medium between God and the people. According to this perspective on Imamate, the Imams ('a) have a third function, i.e. esoteric *imamah*. In other words, like the Prophet (ﷺ), the Imams ('a) are mediums of divine grace and, by the will of God, they have exceptional power over the world and mankind. Based on the Shā'ah teachings, the earth will not remain without the existence of a proof of Allah [*uḥḍat Allāh*]. The miracles shown by the infallible Imams ('a) are signs of this kind of *wilāyah*.¹⁷

The necessity of Imamate

No doubt, the compulsoriness [*wujūb*] of following the Imam is not the same as proof of the rational necessity of Imamate, but even if such necessity is not proven, the fact that we know that God has been kind to His servants and entrusted the Imams to the people is sufficient. Therefore, to search for the rational reason and at times to challenge the necessity, cannot affect in anyway the compulsoriness of obedience to the Imams (‘a). If the true sovereignty belongs to Him, as it does, He can also set a specific program for its materialization.

At the same time, great religious figures have never neglected discussing the rational justification of Imamate and have written much in this regard. Of course, Imamate in its broad sense—general Imamate—can be rationally justified very well but the number of the Imams or their names—specific Imamate—is beyond the confinement of rational proofs as it can only be proved textually [*naqlī*], i.e. by citing religious textual sources. The argument on the necessity of the existence of an infallible Imam is like the argument on the necessity of prophethood [*nubuwwah*] and revelation. This argument can be used in both functions of the Imam—religious authority and political leadership.

Regarding religious authority it can be argued that if religion is necessary and divine wisdom dictates, it must be clearly declared to the people and this declaration is not only confined to the Qur’an. In fact, a great portion of the laws needed by mankind cannot explicitly be inferred from the Qur’an. As dictated by divine wisdom, therefore, there must be infallible interpreters of the religion. This is the same principle which is sometimes called “grace” [*luḥf*] and this extent of grace is incumbent upon God.

This argument can also be confirmed historically and objectively. Practically, the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) did not find the opportunity to completely explain the Islamic law [*shar‘ah*] to all people. By briefly referring to Sh‘ah books on tradition [*‘ad‘ath*], it will become clear that many laws that can be deduced from the sayings and actions of the Infallibles (‘a) cannot basically be found in the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (ﷺ). [18](#)

Notwithstanding all his efforts, the Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) did not find the opportunity to relay all the laws needed by Muslims, for during the 23 years of his prophetic mission, he had to deal with colossal problems such as three years of confinement in the valley of Ab‘lib and ten years of struggle and war with the enemies and the conspiracies of hypocrites. Besides, after him, people even differed on some laws which he taught to the people including the manner of performing ablution [*wuḥū*]. [19](#)

Concerning the necessity of the second function, i.e. political leadership, it can also be argued that after we acknowledge that sovereignty belongs to God and the people are in need of a leader, divine wisdom dictates that the Islamic society must not be devoid of righteous leaders. If obedience to individuals disapproved by God is supposed to be considered obedience to the *ḡh*, life in society is impossible without the ruler’s exercise of authority and the people’s adherence to it. So, religious arrangement for this post must have been formulated.

The historical reality or state of affairs of the Islamic society at that time also confirms this point. Firstly, it cannot be accepted that during the particular time when the Apostle (ﷺ) was pursuing his great mission and goal and the Islamic society was not yet well established, the *ummah* would be devoid of just leadership. Secondly, delegation of the issue of caliphate and leadership to consultation and general suffrage cannot be part of the Prophet's (ﷺ) instructions, for general suffrage at that time was an unknown method in society.

As a proof of this claim, the first and second caliphs also adopted appointment [*istikhlāf*], i.e. designation of the succeeding caliph (either by direct appointment or through a council). Thirdly, the peculiar conditions of Arabia at that time such as the prevalence of fanaticism and tribalism, the haughtiness of powerful foreign enemies, the conspiracy of the hypocrites, the possibility of schemes against the political authority of the Prophet (ﷺ), and the emergence of false prophets dictated that the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) would give special attention to the issue of leadership and leave no stone unturned in clarifying the ambiguities and doubts surrounding it.

Therefore, according to the Shari'ah, by settling the issue of religious authority and political leadership after him the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) had perfected the religion and guaranteed its implementation. What is mentioned as the last point of perfection in the religion was the scheme related to the existence of proof [*Ujjaḥ*] in society that could ensure the perfection of religion so that no loophole could be found in the religious authority. For this reason, from the Shari'ah viewpoint, Imamate is a complementary of apostleship. The Apostle (ﷺ) also strongly links the Qur'an which is the symbol of apostleship to his pure progeny [*'itrah*] (‘a) which embodies the *Sunnah*.

Imamate as a matter of appointment [manḥūl]

Infallibility [*iḥmah*], which is an essential characteristic of the designated intellectual authority and perfect interpreter of the religion, requires that the individuals occupying the post of Imamate must be identified by God. A study of the life of Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) clearly shows that he had strived throughout his life to introduce the Imams (‘a). During the third year of the prophetic mission [*bi'that*] when the Apostle (ﷺ) was commanded by God to openly invite his relatives to Islam,²⁰ he referred to Imam ‘Alī (‘a) as his brother, the executor of his will [*waḥī*] and successor [*khalāfah*] before an assembly of his kith and kin, asking them to recognize ‘Alī (‘a) as the caliph of the Muslims.²¹

Elsewhere, he introduced the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) as one of the Two Weighty Things [*thaqalayn*] inseparable to the Qur'an.²² It is clear that what must always be with the Qur'an is like the Qur'an in the compulsoriness of following it as an intellectual authority of the Muslims. Similarly, the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) had also likened the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) to the Ark of Noah (‘a). That is, those who will embark the Ark will be saved while those who will refuse to do so will be drowned.²³ In some instances, he introduced his *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) as the twelve caliphs after him and had not spared repeating and emphasizing this.²⁴

The Tradition of Ghadīr [ʿadāth al-Ghadīr]

The most explicit statement of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) about Imamate is the Tradition of Ghadīr [ʿadāth al-Ghadīr]. According to historians, on his way home from his Farewell Pilgrimage [ʿajj al-Wadīʿ], the Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) received a Qurʾanic verse [yāh] in a place called Ghadīr Khumm in which he was commanded to convey a message to the people, and he was inspired that if this message were not conveyed, his prophetic mission as a whole would not be fulfilled.²⁵ As soon as he received this verse, he decided to convey the message and gathered the people for this purpose. In this historic speech, he first asked the people: “Am I not your master [mawḥ]?” When the people replied in the affirmative, he held and raised the hand of ‘Alī (ʿa) declared him as the guardian or master [waḥ] after him. Then, the verse on the perfection of the religion and the completion of God’s favor was revealed whereby the universality of Islam and God being pleased with this revered religion was highlighted.²⁶

This event is recorded in history and books of ʿadāth as indisputably authentic, and more than a hundred companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) [ʿaḥbāb] have narrated it. From the beginning of the second century up to the fourth century AH, more than 360 Muslim scholars have reported this event.²⁷ Many books have also been written about the Tradition of Ghadīr. There is no doubt about the event and the statement of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). If there is any difference between the Sunnīs and the Shīʿah, it is in the interpretation of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) statements. The Shīʿah believe that the use of the word waḥ was in the sense of ‘Alī (ʿa) being the leader of Islamic society, while the Sunnīs are of the opinion that by using this word the Apostle (ﷺ) only wanted to introduce ‘Alī (ʿa) as “a person who must be respected and befriended by everybody.”²⁸

In examining the Sunnī interpretation of the event in Ghadīr, it is necessary to consider the following points:

1. According to what Muslim exegetes [mufasssīrīn] have reported, this event took place after God commanded the Prophet (ﷺ) to fulfill his duty and convey to the people a particular message, and after the conveyance of that message, the perfection of the religion and the completion of God’s favor would be fulfilled. As such, apart from being consistent with the purport of the two above mentioned verses, the message must be so important that its conveyance would signify the fulfillment of the prophetic mission and, in case of failure to convey it, it would mean that the religion of God would be imperfect and His favor incomplete. Obviously, respect and friendship, even if it be for ‘Alī (ʿa), would not be important enough to signify the fulfillment of the prophetic mission. On the contrary, it is negligence regarding the designation of the intellectual authority and religious leadership which could be tantamount to negligence in the fulfillment of the prophetic mission and bring about the imperfection of the religion.

2. In this ʿadāth, the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) asked those who were present: “Have I not more authority over you than yourselves?” All replied in unison: “Yes, it is so.”

This question is a hint—no, not just a hint, but an explicit referral, to this verse: “*The Prophet is closer to*

the faithful than their own souls”²⁹ which clearly proves the Prophet’s (ﷺ) authority [*wilayah*] over the Islamic society. After the people acknowledged his *wilayah*, the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: “Of whomsoever I am master [*mawla*], ‘Alī is also his master [*mawla*].” The rule of relationship among the parts of the sentence suggests that the *wilayah* of ‘Alī (‘a) indicated therein is the same *wilayah* of the Prophet (ﷺ) which has been acknowledged by the people.

3. Love of ‘Alī (‘a) and the Prophet’s *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) is something commanded also by the Qur’an, describing it as a sign of faith.³⁰ This fact is not something unmentioned in the Qur’an beforehand such that the failure to announce it would be considered imperfection of religion and negligence of a prophetic duty.

4. After this conveyance of the Apostle (ﷺ), Abū Bakr and ‘Umar (later to become the first and second caliphs) congratulated ‘Alī (‘a), each of them saying: “O son of Abū Ṭālib! You became my master [*mawla*] and the master [*mawla*] of every Muslim, man and woman.”

From this event which happened in the presence of a large group of Muslims and which was recorded in history, it can be deduced that the audience or addressees of this message understood *wilayah* not in the sense of “friendship and support” because the expression, “You became my *mawla*” is consistent only with *wilayah* in the sense of authority and leadership.

5. In the same gathering, after being granted permission by the Prophet (ﷺ), Ḥassan ibn Thabit, a famous Arab poet, versified the historic event of Ghadīr as follows:

فقال له: قم يا عليّ فإنني رضيتك من بعدي إماماً و هادياً

Then he said: “Stand up O ‘Alī! For, I am indeed well pleased that you are the Imām and guide after me.”³¹

The words “Imām” and “guide” [*hādī*] used in the verses clearly show that the true meaning and implication in the statement of the Prophet (ﷺ) was that of *wilayah* in the sense of authority and leadership.

This specific understanding of Imamate, especially in the event of Ghadīr Khumm, had always been confirmed and emphasized by the Imāms (‘a).³² It is clear, therefore, that Shī‘ism as a school of thought is a distinct understanding and interpretation of the religion of Islam and the prophetic message.

Historically, it can be traced back to the time of the prophetic call. Contrary to the notion of some people, Shī‘ism is not a school of thought which was later formed based on the emotions or feelings of a group. The necessity of the designation of the Imām as substantiated by religious text [*naṣṣ*] is exactly based on the Prophetic *Sunnah*. According to this viewpoint, based upon his divine mission, the Holy Prophet (ﷺ) has set the way of the Imāms and their leadership as the guarantor of the felicity of mankind.

The Role of the Imams (‘a)

It is evident that the digression in the history of Islam and the society’s refusal to accept the authority of the Imams (‘a) hindered the materialization of the true and essential role of Imamate in the Islamic society. Yet, it must not be imagined that the Imams (‘a) had an insignificant contribution in the development of Islamic culture and civilization. In spite of events, the role of the Imams (‘a) in fostering spirituality and religious sense, strengthening ideological foundations, expounding Islamic law [*shar‘ah*], interpreting the Qur’an, and sharpening the sociopolitical insight of Muslims has been considerable and fundamental. They have been the fountains of spirituality, the standard-bearers of the Prophetic *Sunnah* and Qur’anic culture, and the tributes of the Holy Prophet (ﷺ), and they have always been the focus of attention of the Islamic society.

A cursory glance at the history of Islam during the period of the Imams (‘a) shows well the following points:

1. A significant part of the religion of Islam consists of its worldview and ideological principles. The people’s understanding and interpretation of Islam depends on the extent and quality of their understanding of its ideological elements. If the public sphere of a society is away from the true understanding of these elements, this society will fall into the abyss of ideological deviation. When the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) is not present in the Islamic society and the grounds for encountering other cultures gradually increase, it is to be feared that ideological deviation and superstition might threaten the culture of society.

The pivotal role of the great scholars who have acquired correct understanding of religion from credible sources during such times is critically important. In dealing with ideas such as extremism [*ghul‘*], predetermination [*jabr*], *tafwidh*,³³ anthropomorphism, and many others, the Imams (‘a) as the intellectual authorities have had a crucial role in guiding the people. Sublime subjects contained in *Nahj al-Balaghah*, *al-Fa‘al as-Sajjidiyyah*³⁴ and narrations [*riwayat*] of the Imams (‘a) bear testimony to this fact.³⁵

2. It is clear that in view of the limited time and the absence of total stability of the Islamic state, the Prophet (ﷺ) did not have the opportunity to mention and experience all the needs of the society regarding Islamic law. Many needs came to light after him over the course of time. In that situation, the Qur’an and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (ﷺ) were naturally consulted, but the existence of different interpretations of these two sources entailed differences and discord.

In that state of affairs, the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a), as the true scholars and those knowledgeable of the Book and the *Sunnah*, played a key role. The extant numerous narrations from the Imams (‘a) prove that the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) had a significant contribution in expounding the Islamic law and training religious scholars and jurists [*fuqah*].³⁶ It is interesting to note that a number of *Sunnah fuqah* have been students of the Imams (‘a). By giving lessons to thousands of students, Imams al-Baqir³⁷ and al-

عقديق³⁸ (‘a) have indeed played a decisive role in training Sunn and Sh‘ah ‘ulam’.

3. As the spiritual and moral guides of the Islamic society, the *Ahl al-Bayt* (‘a) have had an undeniable impact in morally training the Muslims and spiritually nurturing them. Apart from the Sh‘ah who believe in the Imams (‘a) as having lofty stations, others have always considered the Imams (‘a) as their practical moral and spiritual guides and have been greatly influenced by the Imams’ spiritual merits.

Moreover, the valuable propagational role of the Imams (‘a) and their extremely profound and sublime supplications, which up to now have spiritually adorned the Muslim society, must not be forgotten. These individuals from the progeny of the Prophet (ﷺ) who were at the peak of spirituality, morality and insight kept the sparks of spirituality in Muslim society illuminated.

4. For the Umayyad and ‘Abbasid rulers, the infallible Imams (‘a) were the main threats to their despotic rule, because the Imams (‘a) consistently propounded that their right to rule had been usurped, and that the caliphate was a fundamental departure from the political philosophy of Islam. Because they put forward this belief and because they were figures in the station of Imamate—and in view of their relation to the Holy Prophet (ﷺ)—they could always keep the torches of justice and anti-oppression illuminated in the hearts of the people. The spiritual power of the Imams (‘a) as the righteous descendants of the Apostle (ﷺ) had always threatened the rule of tyrants and frightened the oppressive caliphs. Their persistent decisions to persecute and martyr the infallible Imams (‘a) were signs of this fear and apprehension.

The opinions of the Imams (‘a) have been known to the people in every period. Everybody knew that the Umayyad and ‘Abbasid caliphs had basically never recognized the legitimacy of the Prophet’s progeny (‘a). As such, many Sh‘ah would not even refer to judges appointed by the government and, based on the religious teachings, they regarded referral to these judges as tantamount to disbelief [*kufr*].³⁹ It is true that the principle of dissimulation [*taqiyyah*]⁴⁰ served as an important rule in the sociopolitical life of the Sh‘ah, but the opposition of the Imams (‘a) to the rule of the caliphs was no secret. The caliphs had always felt threatened by them and strived to uproot their spiritual and social standing in society.

In view of the aforementioned points, it can be concluded that in addition to the intellectual current called Sh‘ism, in which the basis is the Imams’ interpretation of religion and leadership of the Sh‘ah who had always been a significant part of the Muslim society, the contributions of the Imams (‘a) in the ideological, moral, legal, and political spheres are indeed significant and known to all.

[Philosophy of Occultation \[ghaybah\]](#)

With the acceptance of Imamate as one of the principles of Sh‘ah faith, the following questions are raised: According to the Sh‘ah viewpoint and ideological foundations, Imamate is an essential principle, therefore what is the justification for occultation [*ghaybah*]? Since divine wisdom demands the existence of an Imam in every period, how is the long deprivation of the Muslim society from Imamate justified and

analyzed?

The answer to these questions can be inferred from the following points:

1. As stated earlier, only general *imāmah* can be proved rationally, but based on divine exigency, [the philosophy behind] the number of Imāms (‘a) is unknown to us and we cannot comprehend it based on rational means.
2. The presence of an Imām is a grace from God, but the deprivation from the presence of an Imām can be traced back to the actions of the people.⁴¹ This deprivation also existed to some extent during the periods of the Imāms (‘a) prior to the 12th Imām (‘a).
3. The people’s open connection to the hidden Imām (‘atfs)⁴² is in abeyance as far as his two functions of religious authority and political leadership are concerned, but the Imām’s esoteric Imamate continues and the people benefit from the blessing of his existence.

At this time, the Imām (‘atfs) is like the sun behind the clouds. Just as the sun behind the clouds is beneficial, the Imām (‘atfs) has an esoteric connection with his Shā‘ah and the people are able to benefit from the blessing of his existence. Basically, the world exists owing to his existence and this function of the Imām which is “ontological guardianship” [*wilāyat-e takwān*], “spiritual guardianship” [*wilāyat-e ma‘nawī*] or “esoteric Imamate” [*imāmat-e bāṭinī*] does not depend on his physical presence.

Keeping in view the above mentioned points, the principle of the occultation of the Imām (‘atfs) is compatible with the general theory on Imamate and it is here that the dynamic idea of “waiting” [*intiḳār*] takes form. It is true that this idea also exists in other religions,⁴³ but in Islam to wait for the day when the Savior [*munjī*] removes oppression from the world, turned the imaginary state of a totally hidden subject into a belief about a true celestial living being. Attention to a savior in the future turned attention to a living person who, along with all other people, is also waiting. He lives with us and actually feels our pains and sufferings.⁴⁴ Waiting is a positive and constructive idea, entailing many benefits some of which are as follows:

- a. The belief that the people are attached to his rule and consider other governments as usurpers is a kind of idealism, fundamentalism and legalism in their individual, social and political beliefs. It is exactly like the condition of a people who, on account of particular political conditions, feel as if their Imām is in exile and believe that they must pave the grounds for his advent or reappearance. As such, “waiting” [*intiḳār*] and “protest” [*j‘tir*] from the Shā‘ah viewpoint is an intellectual tradition within the core of the Shā‘ah political thought, and Imamate has not ended with the occultation of the last Imām (‘atfs) but it rather continues in a particular way.
- b. “Waiting” naturally gives direction to the human perspective as well as meaning to the future. It removes despair and hopelessness from the hearts of humanity. It gives purpose to their actions and makes them more ready to show all their talents. Hence, “waiting for deliverance [by the Imām’s

advent]" [*intiḡḡir al-faraj*] has been described as the activity of the Prophet's *ummah*.⁴⁵

"Waiting" has made the Shḡ'ah always endure difficulties and afflictions with optimism and dynamism and given them a profound perspective and positive orientation. Individuals whose aspiration it is to implement global justice, righteous government, benevolent administration, human dignity, and freedom from oppression no doubt follow a correct, lofty, goal-oriented, and divine social philosophy, and these are among the blessings of "waiting" and effects of the occultation [*ghaybah*].

c. The meaningfulness of history and the glad tidings of victory for the faithful, which have also been repeated many times in the Qur'an, is one of the secrets of *ghaybah*. The promises for the faithful to inherit the earth, their assumption of power, the establishment of the government of faith, the unification of religion, the unification of government, and the unity of society, among others, give enthusiasm to the faithful to engage in social struggle.⁴⁶ From the Islamic viewpoint, therefore, the philosophy of history acquires a particular meaning. Accordingly, the future is not a condemnation of the will of the powerful and the arrogant. Rather, the will of God will prevail through the establishment of a benevolent state, the dominance of the divine religion, and the prevalence of divine values throughout the world. Therefore, history is leading us towards a positive future.

d. "Waiting" requires emphasis on values and negation of anti-values. These ideals embellish the sociopolitical view of the faithful. The faithful who are eager to implement social justice and the rule of values will never submit to deviant viewpoints and always focus their attention on a better society and a righteous world.

The spirit of waiting is an emphasis on the theory of Imamate and the negation of any dispute over it. The Shḡ'ah waits for his Imḡm and this negates the sovereignty of any other.

e. For those who wait for the Imḡm [*muntaḡirḡn*], any social change is valuable provided that it contributes in the realization of the ideals of the period of occultation. Thus, "waiting" itself is a positive social movement and a sublime idea within a revolutionary thought. For this reason, in terms of implementation, objectives, achievements, and elements the Islamic Revolution in Iran must be compatible with the ideals of the period of waiting. "Waiting" teaches the Shḡ'ah not to gather under any banner that is incompatible with the global revolution of the Mahdḡ (*'atfs*).

Moreover, the ideal or aspiration of "waiting" gives a particular rationality to the Revolution. Since the period of occultation is always a period of waiting, the revolution constantly continues in different aspects until the establishment of the global government of the Mahdḡ (*'atfs*).

f. Belief in Imamate during the period of waiting endows humanity with the opportunity to follow the perfect man [*insḡn al-kḡmil*] (of his time). Based on following the perfect man, the waiting person is always strengthening himself spiritually.

A question

Given the prolongation of the period of occultation, the following questions may be raised: How can it be accepted that a hidden Imām is living with us? Or, is not the belief that a perfect man could be living with us for so long in occultation a superstitious one?

In reply to these question, some points are worth considering:

Firstly, the reality of the occultation of the Mahdī ('atfs) has been mentioned by the infallible Imāms ('a). Therefore, those who believe in the truthfulness of Imāms ('a) can easily accept the 12th Imām's ('atfs) occultation.⁴⁷ The acceptance of the long life of an Imām who is commissioned by God is not an unusual thing in religious culture.

حکیمی کین جهان پاینده دارد

تواند حجّتی را زنده دارد

The All-wise Who created this world,

Can prolong the life of a proof.

Also, the event of the birth of the Imām of the Time ('a) has been mentioned in history and books of tradition [ʿadāth], and even those who witnessed the event have been identified.⁴⁸

Secondly, the Imām of the Time ('atfs) was in minor occultation [ghaybah aṣ-ṣughra] for around 70 years⁴⁹ during which period, the proof of his existence had been well known to the Shāh. Through his special deputies [nawwāb], he had contact with the people. Apart from the four special deputies, he had also appointed his representatives [wukalā] in different cities and towns. Naturally, his deputies and representatives were men of distinction and honor. It is absurd to think that distinguished men would have been in contact with an imaginary and superstitious person for 70 years. During that period, many individuals had submitted their requests to the Imām ('atfs) through his envoys, and in reply to some of them, the hidden Imām ('atfs) had written letters. These letters are technically called *tawqīʿ* some of which are recorded in ʿadāth books.

Imamate and the duty of the faithful [mu'minīn]

After the acceptance of Imamate as an ideological principle, this question is raised: What is the duty of a faithful believer with respect to the principle of Imamate?

Undoubtedly, the primary requisite of the belief in the Imām ('atfs) is that we have to accept the way of

the Imams (‘a) as our intellectual, ideological and practical reference. This means that alongside the Qur’an, we have to give importance to the sayings and actions of the infallible Imams (‘a). Relying only on the Qur’an and ignoring the authentic narrations is tantamount to ignoring the intellectual authority of the infallible Imams (‘a) which is in no way compatible with true Shā‘ah doctrines.

Thus, one of the duties of the faithful is to love their Imams (‘a). In the Holy Qur’an, love of the Prophet’s (ﷺ) relatives [*dhī’l-qurbā*] has been mentioned as the reward for his prophetic mission.⁵⁰ Many of the laws and rules of etiquette prescribed in Shā‘ah collections of law for the people are meant to attain the station of affection—nay love—of the pure Imams (‘a). In the Shā‘ah way of thinking, the Imam is the theoretical and practical leader to whom the people have also deep emotional attachment.

The emphasis on the performance of pilgrimages [*ziyārat*] and establishment of esoteric relationship with the Imam (‘atfs) which are common in Shā‘ah tradition generates a particular disposition in the faithful. Attachment to the truth and the truthful [*tawallī*] and the establishment of affectionate relationship lead to the intellectual and emotional fondness of the faithful to the perfect man.

This characteristic naturally influences the political insight and attitude of the faithful. Love of those who have dedicated themselves to the religion and the struggle against the *ẓāghit* makes the heart of the faithful overflowing with abhorrence and disgust for the oppressors and infidels. As such, *tawalli* and *tabarri* [disgust for falsehood and the people of falsehood] have a pivotal role in the attitudes and interactions of the faithful society.

Apart from purifying man’s soul, love of the Imams (‘a) generates similar loves, embellishes his beliefs, organizes his actions, fosters idealism, and cleanses his sociopolitical insight and outlook.

Meanwhile, the people have been invited to take the Imams (‘a) as their mediators in their supplications and connections to God. In our religious sources, supplication without any mediator or medium [*wasālah*] has been described as defective and unanswered.

The practice of *tawassul*⁵¹ which is one of the elements of the Shā‘ah beliefs is in no way incompatible or inconsistent with monotheism [*tawḥīd*]. It is rather the acceptance of a kind of linear system in the relationship with the Creator. In the Shā‘ah culture, the Imam is the embodiment of *tawḥīd* on earth. In establishing communication with him, the people are actually connected with the vicegerent of God and this never contradicts the sovereignty of God. In fact, it is exactly dependence on God.

Tawassul is the fostering of a special type of spiritual thinking in which the perfect man is highlighted and in the relationship between human and God the existence of the Imam is not ignored. In principle, the term *tawassul*, or resorting to intermediaries, is the promotion of the idea that God is the Essence of the universe and through the means of *tawassul* we seek to connect to this Essence. In this idea, the Imam is the cord of Allah [*ʿabī Allāh*].

By clinging to this cord, the people provide the means for their improvement and proximity to God. Just

as facing the *qiblah* (the *Ka'bah*) is a manifestation of *tawqūd* and can never be considered worship of an object, turning to the Imams (‘a) and seeking their intermediation is also not a negation of *tawqūd*. In fact, the Imams (‘a) are *the spiritual ka'bah of the hearts*. By drawing the people toward it (the more they pay attention to the Imams (‘a)) the more their belief in God will increase.

The other duty of the faithful is to increase their knowledge of the Imams (‘a). In religious sources, it is stated that knowledge of God depends on knowledge of the Imams (‘a).⁵² In the words of the Imam (‘a) himself, it is thus narrated: “God has no sign greater and more important than us for the people⁵³ and had it not been for us, God would not have been recognized (as He ought to be recognized).”⁵⁴

1. – The term *ṭaghūt* applies to any idol, object, or individual that prevents men from doing what is good, and leads them astray. The term has been used eight times in the Qur’an. Prior to Islam, *ṭaghūt* had been the name of one of the idols of the Quraysh tribe. This name is used also to mean Satan. Moreover, the term is used to indicate one who rebels against lofty values, or who surpasses all bounds in his despotism and tyranny and claims the prerogatives of divinity for himself whether explicitly or implicitly. [Trans.]

2. – For further information about the idea of guardianship [*wilāyah*] and the guardian [*walī*], see Murtadā Mutahharī, *Wilāyah: The Station of the Master*, trans. Yahyā Cooper (Tehran: World Organization for Islamic Services, 1982). [Trans.]

3. – Ummah: the entire Islamic community which knows no territorial, racial, national or ethnic distinction. [Trans.]

4. – See *Sūrah ‘Alī ‘Imrān* 3: 103.

5. – *Sūrah Nisā’* 4:59: “O you who have faith! Obey Allah and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority among you.”

6. – See *Shahristānī*, *Al-Milal wa’n-Nihal*, vol. 1, p. 24.

7. – *Ahl al-Bayt*: according to authentic *hadīths* recorded in both *Sunnī* and *Shī‘ah* sources, the term *Ahl al-Bayt*, and interchangeably *Itrah* and *‘al*, is a blessed Qur’anic appellation that belongs exclusively to the Prophet, ‘Alī, *Fatimah*, *Hasan*, and *Husayn* (‘a). The members of this Family of five, with the Prophet Muhammad (s) at its head, were the ones present at the time the Qur’anic verses regarding their virtues were being revealed to the Prophet (s). However, nine other Imams from the descendants of Imam al-Husayn (‘a) are also included in this chosen Family, the final one being Imam al-Mahdī (‘a). For further information, visit: <http://www.al-islam.org/faq> [1]. [Trans.]

8. – *Murtadā Mutahharī*, *Imāmat va Rahbarī* [Imamate and Leadership], p. 52.

9. – See *Sunnī* books on the principles of jurisprudence and Sayyid ‘Abd al-‘Usayn Sharaf ad-Dīn al-Mūsawī, *Al-Murāj‘at*, Correspondence 13.

10. – *Mutahharī*, *Imāmat va Rahbarī*, p. 53.

11. – *Sa‘ad ad-Dīn Taftāzānī*, *Sharḥ al-Maqṣūd*, vol. 5, p. 233; *Shahristānī*, *Al-Milal wa’n-Nihal*, vol. 1, p. 72.

12. – *Abū ‘l-‘Asan Mawwardī*, *Al-Aḥkām as-Salṭaniyyah*, p. 7.

13. – *Taftāzānī*, *Sharḥ al-Maqṣūd*, vol. 5, p. 233.

14. – ‘Abd ar-Razzāq *Lahjī*, *Gawhār-e Murūd*, p. 467.

15. – *Taftāzānī*, *Sharḥ al-Maqṣūd*, vol. 5, p. 232.

16. – See *Mutahharī*, *Imāmat va Rahbarī*, p. 70.

17. – See *Uṣūl al-Kifāy*, “*Abwāb al-‘Ujjah*”; *Mutahharī*, *Imāmat va Rahbarī*, p. 56.

18. – By referring to the *Shī‘ah* books on tradition [*ḥadīth*], it will become clear that the magnitude of narrations [*riwāyāt*] is ten times greater than the Holy Qur’an and sayings of the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ). For instance, *Was‘īl ash-Shī‘ah* compiled by the late Shaykh *‘Urr al-‘Imilī* consists of 30 volumes; *Mustadrak al-Was‘īl* by *Mu‘addith Nūrī* in 18 volumes; and *Biṣṭr al-Anwār* by ‘*Alīmah Majlisī* in 110 volumes contain narrations from the Infallibles (‘a).

19. – See *Mutahharī*, *Imāmat va Rahbarī*, p. 93; *Muhammad Taqī Mīsbāhī Yazdī*, *‘Amuzesh-e ‘Aq‘id*, p. 305.

20. – *Sūrah Shūrā’* 26:214: “Warn the nearest of your kinsfolk.”

21. – This account is recorded as *ḥadīth ad-Dīr* in *Sunnī* history books. For example, see *Tārīkh aḥ-ḥabar*, vol. 2, pp. 319–321; *Al-Kāmil fī ‘t-Tārīkh*, vol. 2, p. 62; *Ibn Abū ‘l-‘Adīd*, *Sharḥ Nahj al-Balaghah*, vol. 13, pp. 22, 244; *Kanz al-*

'Ummī], vol. 15, p. 115. The text of the ḥadīth is as follows: "Verily, this is my brother, executor of will and my caliph after me. So, listen to him and obey him."

22. – Known as ḥadīth ath-Thaqalayn, this statement is recorded without a broken chain of transmission [mutawattīr] from the Holy Prophet (ﷺ). It is narrated by 53 companions of the Prophet (ﷺ) [ṣaḥābah] and recorded in more than 200 Sunnī books on history, tradition and Qur'anic exegesis [tafsīr]. See, for example, Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, vol. 4, p. 873; Ṣaḥīḥ Tirmidhī, vol. 5, p. 663; Musnad Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, vol. 5, p. 182; Sunan ad-Darīmī, vol. 2, p. 231.

23. – This statement of Prophet Muḥammad (ﷺ) is known as ḥadīth as-Safinah, narrated by famous ṣaḥābah such as 'Alī ibn Abī Ṣāliḥ, 'Abd Allāh ibn 'Abbās, Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, Abū Sa'īd al-Khidrī, Anas ibn Mālik, and others, and recorded in Sunnī books.

24. – In some of these narrations, the names of the twelve caliphs or Imāms are mentioned while in some others only the names of the first and the last.

25. – Sūrah Mā'idah 5:67: "O Apostle! Communicate that which has been sent down to you from your Lord, and if you do not, you will not have communicated His message."

26. – Sūrah Mā'idah 5:3.

27. – See 'Allamah Amīnī, Al-Ghadīr, vol. 1, pp. 14–151.

28. – Sharaf ad-Dīn al-Mūsawwī, Al-Murja'at, Correspondences 57–58.

29. – Sūrah Ahzāb 33:6.

30. – Sūrah Shūrā 42:23: "Say, I do not ask of you any reward for it except the affection for [my] relatives."

31. – Khwārazmī al-Mālikī, Al-Manāqib, p. 80; Sibī ibn Jawzī al-Anafī, Tadhkirat Khawāzīm al-Ummah, p. 20; Ganjī Shāfi'ī, Kifāyah al-Ṣāliḥīn, p. 17; and others. [Trans.]

32. – For example, it is mentioned by Imām 'Alī (a) as narrated by Ibn Qayyim in Lisān al-Mawzūn, vol. 2, p. 285 and Aḥ-ḥawā'iq al-Muṣriqah, p. 126; adh-Dhahabī in Mawzūn al-'Itidāl, vol. 1, p. 441; Qundūziy in Yanābi' al-Mawaddah, vol. 1, p. 134, bāb 38; Imām Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal in Musnad Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, vol. 1, p. 119; Imāms Ḥasan and Ḥusayn (a) in Al-Ghadīr, vol. 1, p. 197.

33. – Tafwīḥ: the belief that after creating all beings, God has left them to administer their own affairs and follow their own wills. In other words, it is the upholding of freewill [ikhtiyār] vis-à-vis predestination. [Trans.]

34. – The book of fifty-seven prayers known as as-Sahāfah (al-Kāmilah) as-Sajjidiyyah, which is one of the major Islamic manuals of supplications, was transmitted from Imām Zayn al-'Abīdīn as-Sajjīd, the fourth of the Twelve Imāms and the only son of Imām Husayn to survive the massacre at Karbala. See Sahāfah al-Kāmilah, <http://www.al-islam.org/sahifa> [2]. [Trans.]

35. – In addition, many volumes of narrations on beliefs can be observed in books on ḥadīth such as Al-Kulaynī, Uṣūl al-Kāfi'ah and Shaykh aḥ-ḥadāq, At-Tawḥīd.

36. – Many collections of juristic narrations have been compiled in books of ḥadīth the most famous of which is Was'īl ash-Shāh by Shaykh Ḥurr al-'Amlī.

37. – Imām Muhammad al-Baqir: the fifth Imām from the Holy Prophet's Progeny. He was born in 57 AH/675 CE and spent most of his life in Medina, until his martyrdom there in 114 AH/732 CE. See Baqir Sharīf al-Qarashi, The Life of Imām Mohammed al-Baqir, trans. Jāsim al-Rasheed (Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 1999). [Trans.]

38. – Ja'far ibn Muhammad (a) entitled, as-Sādiq [The Truthful]," is the sixth Imām from the Prophet's Progeny (83–148 AH). Many of the Sunnī and Shāh 'ulam and scholars attended his teaching classes and seminars. Narrators of tradition have quoted the number of Imām as-Sādiq's students as four thousand. The socio-economic conditions of his time necessitated utmost efforts to be made by the Imam (a) in the areas of expanding authentic and original Islamic teachings and in the training and education of the faithful students. For this reason the books of tradition and other books quote and cite more traditions from Imām Ja'far as-Sādiq than from any other infallible Imāms. See Shaykh Mohammed al-Husayn al-Muzaffar, Imām Al-Sādiq, trans. Jāsim al-Rasheed (Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 1998). [Trans.]

39. – Al-Kāfi, vol. 1, p. 67.

40. – Taqiyyah: prudential dissimulation of one's true beliefs under conditions of acute danger to one's life, property, or honor, a practice based on Qur'an, 3:28. As its observance depends on certain terms and conditions, it may be obligatory [wājib], recommended [mustahab], abominable [makrūh], or forbidden [ḥarām]. For a discussion of taqiyyah, see Sayyid

Saeed Akhtar Rizvi, Taqiyyah (Dar es Salaam: Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania, 1992), <http://www.al-islam.org/taqiyyah>; [3] Al-Taqiyya/Dissimulation, <http://www.al-islam.org/encyclopedia/chapter6b.html>; [4] and ‘Allamah Tabataba’i, Shi’ite Islam (Albany, N.Y., 1975), pp. 223–225, <http://www.al-islam.org/anthology> [5]. [Trans.]

[41.](#) – See ‘Allamah Hilli, Kashf al-Mur’id fī Tajrīd al-Itiqād, Section on Imamate.

[42.](#) – The abbreviation, ‘atfs stands for the Arabic invocative phrase, ‘ajjalallahu ta‘ala farajah ash-shar‘f [may Allah, the Exalted, expedite his glorious advent], which is invoked after mentioning the name of Imam al-Mahdī (‘atfs). [Trans.]

[43.](#) – See Muhammad Riḍā Fakhrī, Khurshīd-e Maghrib, chaps. 4–6; Gulpygn, Muntakhab al-Ṭh̄r.

[44.](#) – See Sayyid Muhammad Bāqir Ḥadr, Baṭh Ḥawl al-Mahdī, p. 55.

The book’s English translation is An Inquiry Concerning Al-Mahdī (Tehran: World Organization for Islamic Services, 1980). [Trans.].

[45.](#) – ‘Allamah Majlisī, Tuḥaf al-‘Uqūl, p. 37.

[46.](#) – See Sūrah Anbiyā’ 21:105; Sūrah Nūr 24:55; Sūrah Qaṭa’ 28:5.

[47.](#) – See Uṣūl al-Kḥf, “Kitāb al-Ḥujjah,” Bāb fī’l-Ghaybah”; Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. 51, p. 110.

[48.](#) – Gulpygn, Muntakhab al-Ṭh̄r, p. 355.

[49.](#) – During the first 70 years of his Imamate, the Imam of the Time (‘atfs) had special deputies to manage on behalf of the Imam the affairs of the Shāh. This period is known as the minor occultation.

[50.](#) – Sūrah Shūrā 42:23: “Say, I do not ask of you any reward for it except the affection for [my] relatives.”

[51.](#) – Tawassul: literally, to resort to intermediaries. Technically, it refers to the practice of petition prayer addressed to God through a holy personage such as a prophet [nabī] or a saint [walī]. [Trans.]

[52.](#) – Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. 5, p. 312 as narrated from Imam al-Ḥusayn (‘a).

[53.](#) – Uṣūl al-Kḥf, vol. 1, p. 207.

[54.](#) – Shaykh aḥ-Ḥadīq, At-Tawḥīd, p. 290.

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