Shi’ite Islam: Orthodoxy Or Heterodoxy? Second Amended and Amplified Edition

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Luis Alberto Vittor

Translated by
John Andrew Morrow

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This book addresses many essential issues concerning the split between the followers of Ahlul Bayt and the followers of Ahlul Sunnah. Transcending the historical, the author focuses on historical aspects in the genesis of adherence, stressing the esoteric foundation of Shi's Islam, as opposed to the exoteric foundation of Sunni Islam which forces its followers to find spirituality in various Sufi orders.

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Translator(s):

John Andrew Morrow [6]

Dedication

We dedicate this book to our Master
Imam Muhammad al-Mahdi
May Allah hasten his Return!

Bismill□h al-Ra□m□n al-Ra□□m

In the Name of All□h, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful

بِسْمِ اللّهِ الرَّحْمَـنِ الرَّحِيمِ

ادْعُ إِلى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحِكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجَادِلْهُم بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَن ضَلَّ عَن سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ

Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and reason with them in the better way. Lo! Thy Lord is best aware of him who strayeth from His way, and He is Best Aware of those who go aright. (***Qur'□n 16:125***)

About the Author

Prof. Luis Alberto Vittor

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Professor Luis Alberto Vittor is a Professional Technical Support Person for Scientific Research at the Center for Research into the Philosophy and History of Religion (CIFHIRE) [*Centro de Investigaciones en Filosofía e Historia de las Religiones*]. The Center forms part of the Department of Philosophy at the School of Graduate Studies at John F. Kennedy Argentine University.

Professor Vittor is a writer, research scholar, lecturer, cultural journalist, and translator. His areas of expertise include medieval literature, religious symbolism, and the philosophy of Eastern religions, particularly with relation to Islām, the Middle East, Asia, and the Far East. He is proficient in multiple modern languages, and has reading comprehension of Classical and Semitic languages.

From 1989 to the present, Professor Vittor has served as a Professional Technical Support Person for Scientific Research. He has collaborated on the Critical Spanish Edition Project of the Coptic Library of Nag Hammādī under the direction of Dr. Francisco García Bazán. This project is sponsored by the National Commission for Scientific and Technical Research (CONICET), an organism dependent on the Secretary of Science and Technology (SECYT) of the National Government of the Republic of Argentina.

As part of his work as a Professional Technical Support Person for Scientific Research, he edits and reviews scholarly works in his areas of expertise, including graduate and post–graduate research projects. In his role as Professional Technical Support Person for Scientific Research, he has contributed to many different projects, including, Dr. John Andrew Morrow's *Allāh Lexicon Project* at Northern State University's Department of Modern Languages in South Dakota.

From 1989 to the present, Professor Vittor has been the Editorial Secretary for the academic journal *Epimeleia: Revista sobre Estudios Tradicionales*, the official organ of the CIFHIRE. He is also the Director of the Mullā Sadrā Center for Islamic Research and Documentation (CEDIMS) and the Editorial Center for Digital Islamic Texts (CETEDI). These research centers operate within the Department of

Social and Political Studies for Africa and the Middle East, and have offices at the Universidad Católica Argentina de La Plata (Sede Bernal). Professor Vittor also participates in research projects, translations, and editions of traditional Islamic texts, in conjunction with the Center for Oriental Studies at the Universidad Nacional de Rosario (Santa Fe, Argentina). He is also the Coordinator for Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Center for Oriental Studies at the University of Rosario in Santa Fe, Argentina.

As textbook editor, Professor Vittor has also been the director of collections of Fraterna Publishers of Buenos Aires from 1989–1991; literary director of the cultural supplement *Letras e ideas* from 1990–1992; director of the Journal of Oriental Studies, *Atma–Jñana*, from 1989–1992. As a cultural journalist, he has published various articles and essays dealing with Islamic literature, thought, art, culture, and spirituality. He is also the author of several books, including, *Simbolismo e iniciación en la poesía de Alberto Girri* (Fraterna, 1990), *El islam shiita: ¿ortodoxia o heterodoxia?* (Biblioteca Islámica Ahlul Bayt, 1998), and *Shīʻite Islām: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy* (Anṣāriyān, 2006).

In collaboration with Dr. John Andrew Morrow and Professor Barbara Castleton, Professor Vittor has completed the book *Arabic, Islām, and the Allāh Lexicon* (2006), published by the Edwin Mellen Press. He has published introductory studies for three of Dr. Morrow's books, *Amerindian Elements in the Poetry of Rubén Darío: The Alter Ego as the Indigenous Other* (Edwin Mellen 2008), *Amerindian Elements in the Poetry of Ernesto Cardenal: A Contemporary Voice for an Ancient People* (Edwin Mellen 2009), and *The Encyclopedia of Islamic Herbal Medicine* (McFarland, 2010). He is currently collaborating with Dr. Morrow on various projects.

About the Translator, Editor, and Annotator

Prof. John Andrew Morrow

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Dr. John Andrew Morrow is Associate Professor of Languages and Literature at Eastern New Mexico University in the United States. He has taught at the University of Toronto, Park University and Northern State University, and has lectured internationally on the subject of Hispanic, Native, and Arabic–Islamic Studies.

Dr. Morrow completed his studies at the University of Toronto, where he received an Honors B.A. in French and Spanish, as well as an M.A. and a Ph.D. in Spanish American Literature. While Dr. Morrow was an undergraduate student at Canada's premiere academic institution, Dr. Ottmar Hegyi introduced him to Islamic Spain and Aljamiado literature and encouraged him to pursue its study. It was at the University of Toronto that Dr. Morrow studied all periods of Spanish and Spanish American literature, acquired expertise in linguistics, and analyzed the Arabic influence on Spanish and French literature, as well as the Amerindian influence on Spanish American literature. Upon completion of his Ph.D., Dr. Morrow pursued post-doctoral studies in Arabic in Fez, Rabat, and Bouarfa, Morocco, and at the University of Utah's Middle East Center.

At all stages of his studies, Dr. Morrow has combined Hispanic Studies, Arabic-Islamic Studies, and Native Studies. Besides being trained by Hispanists who were also Arabists and Orientalists, he has studied the Islamic Sciences for decades, both independently, and at the hands of a series of Sunnī, ṣūfī, and Shī'ite scholars. As such, he embodies the best of both Western and Eastern education.

A prolific, internationally recognized research scholar, Dr. Morrow has over one hundred scholarly, literary, and artistic publications to his credit in over a dozen countries and in several different languages. His academic work has appeared in the following journals: *Intercultural Communication Studies*, *Sufi: A Journal of Sufism*, *The Humanities Journal*, *Romance Notes*, *The Canadian Journal of Herbalism*, *Texto Crítico*, *Alharaca*, *Nueva Revista del Pacífico*, *LEMIR: Revista Electrónica sobre Literatura Española Medieval y del Renacimiento*, *Tinta y Sombra*, and *The Canadian Modern Languages Review*, among other scholarly publications.

Dr. Morrow's journalism has appeared in *Radiance Magazine*, *Jafariya News*, *Iran Daily*, *The Exponent*, *Revista Ariadna*, *Revista Árabe*, *The Iranian*, *al-Bawaba*, *Crescent International*, *The Message International*, *Mahjubah*, *Que Pasa Magazine*, *Hispanos*, *Kauzar*, and other publications. His poetry has appeared in *Revista Oxígeno*, *Revista Voces*, *Los Lobos de Omaña*, *Divague*, *Escáner Cultural*, *Almiar*, *El Otro Mensual*, *El Cid*, *Le Message de l'Islam*, *Mahjubah*, and *Analecta Literaria*, among other literary journals.

Dr. Morrow has contributed encyclopedia chapters on the history of Latinos in South and North Dakota for *Latino America: State by State* (Greenwood Press, 2008), edited by Dr. Mark Overmyer-Velazquez, as well as a chapter on the history of Arabic literature for *The Cultural History of Reading* (Greenwood Press, 2008), edited by Dr. Gabrielle Watling. He has also contributed chapters on César Vallejo and *The Arabian Nights* for *The Literary Encyclopedia* and a chapter on "The Loss of the Allāh Lexicon" for *Global English: Issues in Language, Culture, and Identity in the Arab World*, edited by Dr. Aḥmad al-Issa and Laila Dahan.

Dr. Morrow has authored, edited and translated numerous books, including: *Arabic, Islām, and the Allāh Lexicon: How Language Shapes our Conception of God* (Edwin Mellen Press, 2006), *Shī'ite Islām: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy* (Anṣāriyān, 2006), *Amerindian Elements in the Poetry of Rubén Darío: The*

Alter Ego as the Indigenous Other (Edwin Mellen Press, 2008), *El islam shiita: ¿ortodoxia o heterodoxia?* (Anṣariyūn 2010), *Amerindian Elements in the Poetry of Ernesto Cardenal: A Contemporary Voice for an Ancient People* (Edwin Mellen Press, 2010), *Humanos casi humanos* (Eastern New Mexico University, Northern State University, Universidad Nacional de Rosario, Universidad Argentina John F. Kennedy, 2010), *The Book of Unity: Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* (The Saviour Foundation, 2009), and *The Encyclopedia of Islamic Herbal Medicine* (McFarland, 2010). He is currently completing numerous projects, including *Islamic Imagery*, as well as *Shī'ite Traditions from Islamic Spain*, the last of which was commissioned by the Spanish government.

Exordium

Luis Alberto Vittor's *Shī'ite Islām: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy* addresses many essential issues concerning the split between the followers of *ahl al-bayt* and the followers of *ahl al-sunnah*. Transcending the historical, the author focuses on ahistorical aspects in the genesis of adherence, stressing the esoteric foundation of Shī'ī Islām, as opposed to the exoteric foundation of Sunnī Islām which forces its followers to find spirituality in various ṣūfī orders.

Vittor's book challenges the prevailing view among Western academics, namely, the contention that Shī'ite Islām is "heterodox" while Sunnī Islām is "orthodox." He contends that **there is nothing non-orthodox or un-orthodox in Shī'ite Islām**, since the very principles that give life and identity to Shī'ite Muslims are deeply rooted in the Sunnah of the Prophet and the Twelve Imāms.

According to Vittor, **definitions such as "orthodox" and "heterodox" are misnomers when applied to Islām: they are Western impositions on an Islamic construct that are entirely false.** As the author explains, if one respects the meaning of the word "orthodox," which implies adherence to a specific set of beliefs and instructions, **Shī'ite Muslims are as orthodox as Sunnī Muslims.**[1] The book challenges the common misconceptions of Western academics, their bias towards Islām, and their tendency to interpret Shī'ite Islām through Sunnī lenses.

Unlike polemical publications dealing with the Sunnī-Shī'ī debate, the work does not belittle or put down the followers of *ahl al-sunnah*. The author explores Shī'ite Islām from within and examines the religious tradition on its own terms. As a result, he has produced a work of great critical importance, revealing the spiritual depth of Shī'ism to which many Shī'ites are oblivious.

As one reads the work, one develops a greater understanding of the inner meaning of essential elements of Shī'ite faith and religious practice. The work is sure to have great resonance during the month of *Muḥarram*, a time when Shī'ism is more or less viewed through Sunnī lenses. When Shī'ites commemorate the martyrdom of Imām Ḥusayn, they are often assaulted with questions and criticism.

Unless the spiritual foundations of Sh‘ism are fully understood, Sh‘ite efforts are expended to rebuttal at best or attack of *ahl al-sunnah* at worst. Both a defensive and an aggressive approach to inter-Islamic understanding are futile and reinforce the status quo. The solution to any Sunn confusion regarding *‘sh r’* will not be resolved in the realm of the political, but in the sphere of the spiritual. As Vittor's work reveals, **the sweetness of Sh‘ite Isl m is to be found in the inner meanings of the outer rituals.**

The chapter on Mukht r al-Thaq f is particularly revealing. Although I.K.A. Howard has provided a good historical rendition of Mukht r in *al-Serat*, Vittor captures the sense of spirituality emanating from his uprising. In the words of Howard Zinns, time has a way of nurting a certain moral and spiritual outrage: a sense of indignation that is missing at least today. As one reads Vittor's work, one senses the deep suffering and empathy that Sh‘ites feel for the suffering of *ahl al-bayt.*

Although not a survey of the Sh‘ite faith, Vittor's work covers the spiritual foundation of the Im mate to a sufficient degree. His work also touches upon the treatment of the Sh‘ite minority in the face of oppression, and the role of silent and quietist revolution as a means of protest, an approach which stands in stark contrast to the violent modes of expression and opposition seen in the Muslim world today.

Rather than radicalize, Vittor's work helps to sensitize Sh‘ites, an achievement of incalculable importance in the aftermath of the Iraqi quagmire.2 **These are times of reconciliation, not revenge. These are times of unity and not division.** Despite the dark moments that Sh‘ites have suffered, and continue to suffer, the tide of time is changing in the right direction, and many people are realizing the spiritual force of Sh‘ite Isl m, made obvious through its supplications, prayers, and salutations, as well as its Qur'nic commentaries and scholarly works, all of which are grounded in spirituality.

Luis Alberto Vittor's *Sh‘ite Isl m: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy* is a very concise book, and the greater portion of the work consists of highly informational scholarly notes making it an easy read for the novice or even the beginner. Due to its academic value and accessibility, its intellectual integrity, and its call for Islamic unity, we tremendously recommend this book, and hope to see it widely disseminated for the purpose of *da'wah* and *tabl gh*.

1. Editor's Note: The word "orthodoxy" refers to "the traditional beliefs of a religious group which are considered normal and acceptable by most people." When we say that most Muslim groups are "orthodox," it means that they form part of mainstream Isl m. It does not necessarily mean that the path they follow is perfectly straight. It merely means that they are within the main body of Isl m as opposed to outside of it.
When the author and editor say that Sunnis are orthodox Muslims, they refer to those Muslims who followed the four first Caliphs and who always maintained their love and respect for ahl al-bayt. The author and editor do not consider the followers of Mu‘wiyyah, Yaz d, and other despotic figures as ahl al-sunnah.
When the author and editor say that fis are orthodox, they refer to authentic Isl mic ‘irf n and not Pseudo-fism. The author and the editor are strongly opposed to the Pseudo-fism which is currently spreading throughout the West and which operates as a type of fifth column within Isl m.
The author's fieldwork has shown that some Bah ’ groups cultivate a typo of Pseudo-fism or Pseudo-‘irf n which is

dangerous because they do not present themselves as a ▯ar▯qah al-‘irf▯niyyah al-bah▯’iyyah, but rather as a ▯ar▯qah al-‘irf▯niyyah sh▯‘iyyah. The purpose of such deception is to cause confusion in the minds of Westerners who seek to spiritually connect themselves with Sh▯‘ite ‘irf▯n.
Neither the author nor the editor make any references to contemporary ▯▯fism, but rather to the traditional ‘irf▯n of Ibn al-‘Arab▯, Sa‘d▯ of Shir▯z, ▯▯fi▯, Mull▯ ▯adr▯, and so forth.
2. Author’s Note: For an insight into the crimes committed by Western mercenaries in Iraq, see the anonymously published review of Jeremy Scahill’s Blackwater: The Rise of the World’s Most Powerful Mercenary Army, which appeared in Crescent International in October of 2007.

Opening Remarks: The Foundations of Islamic Unity

Considering the current Sunn▯-Sh▯‘ah conflict occurring in the Middle East, and much of the Muslim world, Luis Alberto Vittor’s *Sh▯‘ite Isl▯m: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy* could not come at a more opportune time. Radically departing from the confrontational polemicist propaganda of the past, Vittor demonstrates that **the greatness of Sh▯‘ite Isl▯m does not reside in a denigration of Sunn▯ Isl▯m.** Sh▯‘ite Isl▯m is great in and of itself. One does not need to criticize the Companions or the Caliphs to exalt the Twelve Im▯ms. The Im▯ms of *ahl al-bayt* are great in and of themselves. One does not need to criticize the Im▯ms of the Sunn▯ schools of jurisprudence to exalt Im▯m Ja‘far al-▯▯diq. The Sixth Im▯m is great in and of himself, having left legions of scholars as a legacy.

Unlike some authors, who approach Sh▯‘ite Isl▯m from an apologetic perspective which seeks to appease Sunn▯ Muslims, Vittor approaches Sh▯‘ism from a position of strength, examining the religious tradition independently, in and of itself, from within, and on its own terms. He makes no apologies for Sh▯‘ite beliefs and practices and does not compromise on questions of principle. Unlike some overly enthusiastic authors, **Vittor does not exalt Sh▯‘ism at the expense of Sunnism.** As an honest, objective, and open-minded academic, he treats both of his subjects with respect, viewing them in complement rather than opposition: **there would be no Sh▯‘ism without Sunnism, and there would be no Sunnism without Sh▯‘ism**.

When engaging in inter-Islamic dialogue, it is important to respect the sensibilities of one’s target audience. In every instance, those who speak for Sh▯‘ism should avoid negative marketing, which focuses on belittling one’s adversary, as opposed to positive marketing, which focuses on the qualities of your candidate. Extremist sources which attack *ahl al-sunnah* only serve to drive Sunn▯s away from Sh▯‘ite Isl▯m. As such, c**asting doubt on the character of the Prophet’s Companions in order to replace them with the Twelve Im▯ms is a misguided effort of marketing**.

The Im▯ms themselves criticized such comportment. Rather than make value judgments, it is often

better to allow the historical sources to speak for themselves. Rather than attacking individuals and beliefs, Sh‘ites should speak exclusively about the Prophet, citing the Qur’nic verses and *a d th* in favor of the *ahl al-bayt*. Presented properly, by means of an intelligent, tolerant, and respectful approach, the Sh‘ite message is sure to have greater resonance among Sunn Muslims.

In order to guide an interested Sunn into Sh‘ite Isl m, all one has to do is cite the Qur’n, repeat the words of the Prophet, and demonstrate the wisdom of the Im ms, and that will be sufficient. One must address issues of faith, and the importance of the *im mah* and *wil yah*, before tackling controversial issues from the early days of Islamic history. Once a person is open to the divine authority, everything else will fall into place, and then, and only then, are individuals interested in Sh‘ism ready to deal with Tijan’s informative works. In our experience, works like *Then I was Guided*, *Ask those who Know*, *To be with the Truthful*, and *The Sh‘ah are* (*the Real*) *Ahl al-Sunnah* have an important place, but not necessarily in the first line of *da‘wah*.

Many Sh‘ite Muslims seem to forget that ***taqiyyah* is a form of tact** and every educational endeavor must proceed by stages. As Im m Ja‘far al- diq has said, “This affair (*amr*) [the Im mate and the esoteric meaning of religion] is occult (*mast r*) and veiled (*muqanna‘*) by a covenant (*m th q*), and whoever unveils it will be disgraced by All h” (Kulayn). Certain things are better left unsaid when dealing with people who are potential enemies of *ahl al-bayt*. As Im m Ja‘far al- diq warned:

Keep our affair secret, and do not divulge it publicly, for whoever keeps it secret and does not reveal it, All h will exalt him in this world, and put light between his eyes in the next, leading him to Paradise...Whoever divulges our affair publicly, and does not keep it a secret, All h will disgrace him in this world and will take away light from between his eyes in the next, and will decrease for him darkness that will lead him to the Fire...Taqiyyah is of my religion, and of the religion of my father, and who does not observe taqiyyah has no religion...It is necessary to worship in secret and it is necessary to worship openly...the one who reveals our affairs is the one who denies them. (*Kulayn*)

Im m Ja‘far al- diq also condemned those who spread the secrets of *wil yat All h* among the common people, saying: “Our secret continued to be preserved until it came into the hands of the sons of Kays n and they spoke of it on the roads and in the villages of the Saw d” (Kulayn).

Im m Ja‘far al- diq warned his Sh‘ites to: “**Fear for your religion and protect it (lit. veil it) with *taqiyyah*, for there is no faith in whom there is no *taqiyyah***” (Kulayn). He also advised his followers to: “Mix with the people (ie., enemies) outwardly, but oppose them inwardly so long as the Emirate is a matter of opinion” (ad q). The Im m always avoided controversy and conflict, saying: “Verily, when I hear a man abusing me in the mosque, I hide myself behind a pillar so that he may not see me” (ad q). On one occasion, Zakariyy ibn S biq was enumerating the Im ms in the presence of Im m Ja‘far al- diq.

When the Companion reached the name of Mu ammad al-B qir, the Im m interrupted him and said,

“That is enough for you. All□h has affirmed your tongue and has guided your heart” (Kulayn□). The Im□m also said that “**Verily, diplomacy (*al-ri’*□) with a true believer is a form of *shirk* (polytheism); but with a hypocrite in his own house, it is worship**” (□ad□q). These traditions are not saying that Sh□‘ite Muslims should not be sincere, and that they form some sort of secret esoteric sect. They are simply saying that they should not be stupid, and that they should only share their beliefs with a receptive audience in order to avoid provocation and enmity.

Rather than promote division and conflict, Im□m Ja‘far al-□□diq urged Sh□‘ites to pray with Sunn□s: “He who prays with them standing in the front row, it is as though he prayed with the Prophet in the first row” (□ad□q). The Im□m also encouraged Sh□‘ites to treat Sunn□s as their brethren: “Visit their sick, attend their funerals, and pray in their mosques” (□ad□q). Since the improper behavior of followers reflects poorly on their leader, the Im□m told his followers to “Become an ornament for us, and not a disgrace” (□ad□q). He also called upon his Sh□‘ites to encourage goodwill among all Muslims, saying, “May All□h have mercy on a person who inculcates friendship towards us among men, and does not provoke ill-will among them” (□ad□q). This Sh□‘ite spirit of Islamic unity was shown by ‘All□mah Shar□f al-D□n al-Musaw□ who ruled that the Sh□‘ites of Lebanon should celebrate the birth of the Prophet on the same day as the Sunn□s. Im□m Khumayn□ took this a step further by declaring the entire week, from the Monday to the Friday, as Islamic Unity week.

In twenty years of Islamic activism, we have observed that works like *al-Muraja‘□t* by ‘All□mah al-M□s□w□, which are calm, courteous, gentle, and convincing, are far more effective than caustic criticism. We have also found that **the most effective tools in Sh□‘ite *da‘wah* are the works of the Im□ms themselves**, *Nahj al-bal□ghah* by Im□m ‘Al□ ibn Ab□ □□lib, the □*a□□fah al-sajadiyyah* by Im□m ‘Al□ Zayn al-‘Abid□n, the *Lantern of the Path* by Im□m Ja‘far al-□□diq, as well as other biographical books such as *The Book of Guidance* by Shaykh al-Muf□d, which demonstrate the depth of knowledge of the Im□ms, as well as their profound wisdom, and piety.

Many Sh□‘ite Muslims would be well advised to live what they learn, to exhibit the true characteristics of followers of *ahl al-bayt*, to live according to Isl□m, and to lead by example. **The best converts to Sh□‘ite Isl□m never received a book. They were moved by the piety of Sh□‘ite Muslims, and their devout love and attachment to the Prophet and his family.** It should also be understood that the formal spreading of Isl□m is *w□jib kif□yah*; it is the obligation of certain members of the community, and should be left to the knowledgeable, competent, and qualified. The Prophet and the Im□ms warned us not to argue with the ignorant. In order to ensure that Isl□m was rightly represented the Twelve Im□ms trained Muslim missionaries to propagate the faith properly.

As any business professor can explain, attacking a rival is never good marketing. An advertiser should never point out the faults of others. It is not permitted in the best of mediums and is never good policy. The selfish purpose is always evident. It is unfair, impolite, unbefitting of a Muslim, and counter-Qur’□nic. As Almighty All□h says, “Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation, and

reason with them in the better way" (16:125). The Most High has also said, "Revile not those who invoke other than Allāh, lest wrongfully they revile Allāh through ignorance" (6:108). **If Muslims must not mock the beliefs of polytheists, the prohibition is even greater when it comes to the beliefs of other Muslims.**

While negative advertising has some advantages, it can evoke aggressive responses towards the source of the advertising. While it can motivate base support, verbal assaults against the opponent can alienate non-sectarian Muslims and outrage committed Muslims from the other camp, radicalizing rhetoric. What is worse, negative advertising often produces a backlash, which can result in violence, destruction, and death. While some Sunnīs and Shī'ites may pledge to refrain from negative marketing when discussing their differences, the pledge is often soon abandoned when the opponent is viewed as "going negative," inciting a series of retaliatory remarks.

Negative advertising is also entirely un-academic. Campaigners from one camp present twisted or spun information under the guise of bringing hidden negatives into the light. Such individuals have no place in the Sunnī-Shī'ite debate as they have the wrong intention from the onset. Their goal is not to unite, but to divide. They come to the table with a closed mind. They are not genuinely interested in inter-Islamic dialogue. They prepare their cases like lawyers. They are concerned with winning the case, rather than searching for truth. They concentrate on being quick, witty, and winning the argument, rather than analyzing the issues at hand. They use rhetorical devices such as straw man or red herring arguments to insinuate that an opponent holds a certain idea.

The Sixth Imām was highly critical of the superfluous debates of skilful verbal gymnasts: "When you debate, the nearer you are to truth and tradition on the authority of the Prophet, the further you are from it: you mix up the truth with what is false. A little truth suffices for what is false" (Mufīd). Without a judge or moderator to keep parties disciplined, Sunnī-Shī'ite debates soon degenerate into slander, libel, and defamation of character. Such efforts are of no benefit to the Islamic Ummah as they increase tension between the Sunnī and Shī'ite communities.

The very idea of "debate" between Sunnīs and Shī'ites is misguided as "debate" implies opposition with each party trying to defeat the other. It is foolish to believe that any party could actually "win" such a debate considering that Muslims have been polarized into two camps for nearly 1,500 years. **The very idea of Sunnī-Shī'ah debate should be cast aside and replaced by inter-Islamic dialogue.**

In order for Shī'ites and Sunnīs to move towards reconciliation, they need to recognize that any extreme polar position is only going to aggravate the conflict. For starters, all Muslims, Shī'ite, Sunnīs, and 'Ibadīs, must cease cursing Companions of the Prophet and cursing one another as such actions merely increase animosity. We have witnessed Salafis insult Fātimah, 'Alī, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn; Sunnī Muslims insult the *ahl al-bayt*, Twelver Shī'ites insult the Sunnī Caliphs, Ismā'īlīs insult Imām Mūsā al-Kāẓim, Ṣūfīs insult Sunnīs, and 'Ibādīs insult Imām 'Alī. Surely, such behavior must cease from all sides. As Imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq warned: "Do not revile them, lest they revile your 'Alī" (Ṣadīq). What

goes around comes around, and it is time for a truce if not a treaty of perpetual peace.

As any historian of early Islām is aware, the Companions of the Prophet had their differences, cursed each other, and killed each other. Surely, the sounds of mind do not seek to perpetuate such belligerent behavior *ad–eternam*. Questions of who was right and who was wrong are a matter of personal belief. There is no need to express them openly in contexts that arouse undue emotion. When it comes to some matters, **Muslims need to let differences die with those who differed**.

Over the course of 1,400 years of Sunnī and Shī'ite sectarianism, positions have become polarized and differences have become deeply entrenched. Muslims need to leave a little room for ambiguity. Despite what most Muslims would like to believe, early Islamic history was not black and white, and not everything was cut and dry. Muslims need to open up to uncertainty, move from the black areas into gray areas, and creative processes will emerge.

If Shī'ites and Sunnīs are sincere in seeking reconciliation, if they are honest about starting a dialogue, then they must agree to talk with respect. Both sides of the conflict need to be recognized. Both have wronged and been wronged. Muslims need refrain from belligerence and leave room for forgiveness. They need to set emotion aside or moderate it with intelligence. They need to stop trying to prove each other wrong. They must unite on the values and beliefs that they hold in common.

When outsiders look at Islām, all they see are Muslims. They do not distinguish between various sects. If they were to examine issues of *'aqīdah* between the various Muslim groups, they would be hard–pressed to find grounds for division. The Sunnī Muslims believe in:

***Tawīd*: Oneness of God**

Nubuwwah/Risālah: Prophethood and Messengership

***Kutub*: Divinely Revealed Books**

***Malā'ikah*: Angels**

***Qiyāmah*: The Day of Judgement**

Qadar: Predestination

They are also fond of combining both faith and belief in Five Pillars of Islām, consisting of:

***Shahādah*: Profession of Faith**

***Salāh*: Prayer**

***Sawm*: Fasting in Ramadān**

□*ajj*: **Pilgrimage to Makkah**

***Zak□h*: Alms**

The Twelver Sh□‘ite theologians prefer to separate creed from practice, presenting two lists, the Foundations of Faith, and the Branches of Faith.

U□□l al-d□n

***Taw□□d*: Oneness of God**

***‘Adl*: Divine Justice**

***Nubuwwah/Ris□lah*: Prophethood and Messengership**

***Im□mah/Wil□yah*: Im□mate or Guardianship**

***Qiyy□mah*: Day of Judgement**

Fur□’ al-d□n

□***al□h*: Prayer**

□***awm*: Fasting in Rama□□n**

□***ajj*: Pilgrimage to Makkah**

***Zak□h*: Alms**

***Khums*: Alms**

***Jih□d*: Struggle**

***Amr bi al-ma‘r□f*: Promoting good**

***Nah□ ‘an al-munkar*: Forbidding evil**

***Tawall□*: Attachment to ahl al-bayt**

***Tabarr□*: Separation from the enemies of ahl al-bayt**

For all intents and purpose, the Zaydiyyah share the same beliefs of the Ithn□ ‘Ashariyyah. The main difference between both groups is in their concept of the Im□mate, and the fact that Zaydiyyah *fiqh* is closer to Sunn□ □anaf□ and Sunn□ Sh□fi‘□ *fiqh*, with some elements of Sh□‘ah Ja‘far□ elements.

The Ism□‘□liyyah theologians have organized their beliefs into Seven Pillars of Isl□m, consisting of:

***Wil□yah*: Guardianship**

***□ah□rah*: Purity**

***□al□h*: Prayer**

***Zak□h*: Alms**

***□awm*: Fasting in Rama□□n**

***□ajj*: Pilgrimage to Makkah**

***Jih□d*: Struggle**

‘Ib□diyyah theologians have organized their beliefs into the following Five Pillars:

***Taw□□d*: Oneness of God**

***‘Adl*: Divine Justice**

***Qadar*: Predestination**

***Wil□yah/Tabarr□*: Attachment to Muslims and separation from infidels**

***Amr/Nah□*: Promoting good and forbidding evil; implementing the Im□mate when possible**

As can be appreciated from this overview, all Muslims believe in the following articles of faith:

***Taw□□d*: Oneness of God**

Nubuwwah/Ris□lah: Prophets and Messengers

***Qiyy□mah*: The Day of Judgement**

Although non-Sunn□s do not list the divinely revealed books (*kutub*) or the angels (*mal□‘ikah*) in their creeds, these are fundamental aspects of beliefs for all groups. If they do not cite them as individual items, it is because they form part of the belief in God and His Prophets.

The ‘Ib□diyyah and some of the Sunn□s adds *qadar* or predestination to their articles of faith while other groups insist on free will. Along with Sh□‘ite groups, the ‘Ib□diyyah focus on *‘adl* or divine justice, whereas some of the Sunn□s insist on *q□dir* or omnipotence. This difference is the result of philosophical differences in which the Sunn□ stress All□h’s Omnipotence over His Justice, while the Sh□‘ites stress All□h’s Justice over His Omnipotence.

In practical matters, the hierarchical differences between divine attributes are inconsequential and do not make or break a Muslim. In fact, the majority of Muslims are completely unaware of such philosophical

subtleties. If a Muslim does not believe in *taw□□d*, he is outside the fold of Isl□m. If a Muslim does not believe that Mu□ammad is the Final Messenger of All□h, he is outside the fold of Isl□m. If a Muslim does not believe in angels or in the Day of Judgement, he is outside the fold of Isl□m. If a Muslim prioritizes the attributes of All□h differently, he is a complete and total Muslim: he merely follows a differently philosophical school.

The Sh□'ah Ithn□ 'Ashariyyah, the Sh□'ah Zaydiyyah, the Sh□'ah Ism□'□liyyah, and the 'Ib□diyyah all believe in *im□mah* although their chains of Im□ms are different as are their qualities, attributes, and qualifications. In many respects, the Sh□'ite and 'Ibad□ belief in *im□mah* is similar to the Sunn□ belief in *khil□fah*. Whether it is an Im□m or a Caliph, whether he inherits his title or is elected, whether he is a righteous leader or an infallible Im□m, Sunn□, Sh□'ite, and even □□f□ Muslims believe in some form of religious authority, both spiritual and political, which should rule the Ummah and establish the *shar□'ah*.

As can be seen, **all Muslims share the same creedal concepts and religious practices.** They all believe in one God, the Prophethood, and the Day of Judgement. They all believe in angels and revealed books. They all pray, fast, make the pilgrimage to Makkah, and pay charity. Although the Sunn□s do not list *khums*, the 20% tithe, *jih□d*, promoting the good and forbidding evil, in their creed, all Sunn□s accept these as religious obligations. Although the N□□ib□ would reject the obligation to love the Prophet's Family, and the prohibition of dealing with those who hate the Prophet's family, every true Sunn□ loves and blesses the Prophet and his Family. Evidently, every true Muslim follows the *shar'□ah,* be he Sunn□, 'Ib□d□, Sh□'□ Ithn□ 'Ashar□, Sh□'□ Ism□'□l□, Sh□'□ Zayd□, or □□f□.

Although most Sunn□s and many Twelver Sh□'ites consider all the Ism□'□liyyah outside the fold of Isl□m based on the erroneous belief that they all fail to perform □*al□h*, fast during the month of Rama□□n, or perform the □*ajj*, the Ism□'□liyyah as a whole cannot all be condemned as *kuff□r*.

The Niz□r□ or followers of the □gh□ Kh□n, who are approximately 90% of Ism□'□l□s, do indeed believe that the *shar□'ah* has been abrogated. Like some □□f□ sects which believe Islamic law no longer applies, the Niz□r□ are misguided and, in many regards, outside the fold of Isl□m. Still, as they profess the *shah□dah*, they should be encouraged to mend their ways, complete the five daily prayers, fast in Rama□□n, and perform the pilgrimage in order to integrate entirely into the Islamic Ummah.

It should also be remembered that there are Twelver Sh□'ites, Sunn□s, and □□f□s who do not pray, do not fast, do not eat □*al□l*, and commit all sorts of □*ar□m*, insisting that faith is sufficient for their salvation. Muslims should be careful to cast all Ism□'□l□s in the same light as the Agh□–Kh□n□s since the Musta'al□ and their off–chute the D□w□d□ Bohras, who follow the F□□imid school of jurisprudence, all observe the *shar□'ah* and are very close to the Ithn□ 'Ashar□ in belief and to Ja'far□ jurisprudence in practice.

If there are any differences between Sunn□, Sh□'ite, 'Ib□d□, and □□f□ Muslims, they are relatively minor and revolve around aspects of religious practice. Muslims need to recognize and respect their tiny

technical differences. They need to remember that jurisprudence is not a goal in and of itself but a means to a goal, namely, the remembrance of Almighty All□h. As important as proper observation of Islamic practices may be, far too many Muslims focus on the form of worship as opposed to the essence of worship.

Islamic unity certainly does not mean uniformity. It does not mean that all schools of *fiqh* [jurisprudence] should merge into one. It merely means that there is more than one "right way" to do things, and that jurists have differences of opinion, based on different interpretations of the Qur'□n and Sunnah and on different methodologies. Every ruling is "right" according to the jurist who derived it. Every opinion is "correct" depending on one's point of view. All jurists agree on the issue, but they view the issue from a different perspective. One issue can be viewed as □*ar□m*, *makr□h*, and □*al□l* [forbidden / reprehensible / permissible]. In Isl□m, every issue can be seen from a 360 degree angle and there is ample room for a wide range of opinion.

Take the issue of consuming the meat of *ahl al-kit□b* [People of the Book]. According to most Sunn□ scholars, it is permissible for a Muslim to eat meat from animals slaughtered by Christians or Jews. They base themselves on the Qur'□nic verse: "The food of the People of the Book is lawful unto you and yours is lawful unto them" (5:5). Some Sunn□ scholars say that while it is permissible to eat the meat of Christians and Jews, it is preferable to eat □*al□l* meat if available.

Yet other Sunn□ scholars forbid the consumption of the meat of the Christians and Jews. They argue that the Christians and Jews of today are not truly "People of the Book," that they no longer slaughter animals in the name of All□h, which is a condition for the meat to be □*al□l*, and that there is no guarantee that the meat in non-Muslim countries was even slaughtered by a Christian or a Jew. A secular liberal, an agnostic, an atheist, a heathen, a Satanist or another unbeliever may easily have slaughtered the animal. And rather than having its throat slit in the name of All□h, it was likely killed incorrectly through an electric bolt, a gunshot, a blow to the head, a spike to the brain, a knife to the back of the skull, toxic gas or other brutal methods.

Twelver Sh□'ite scholars have always been unanimous that the meat of Jews and Christians is □*ar□m*. The reason for this position is lexical hermeneutics. As we read in Mir A□med 'Al□ translation of the Qur'□n:

According to Im□m Ja'far ibn Mu□ammad al-□□diq the word □*a'□m* implies food made of grains not containing flesh of permitted animals. The Jews and the Christians do not follow the prescribed method of slaughtering the animals, nor do they seek All□h's pleasure before killing the animal, therefore, to eat flesh of any animal offered by them is not lawful for Muslims. "Whosoever denies faith, his deeds will be rendered useless" clearly lays down the principle that good deeds cannot be of any use unless one believes in All□h, His Messengers and guides appointed by Him, and the Day of Judgement.

According to Ay□tull□h Pooya Yazd□: "This verse gives permission to the Muslims to eat the food (made

of grains) offered by the people of the book."

As can be seen, the Islamic attitude towards the meat of Christians and Jews ranges from *halal* to *makruh* and *haram*, which are all equally valid opinions. As *muqallidun* of *mujtahidun* [followers of jurists], Muslims are free to follow any of the rulings of their particularly *madhhab* [school of law] with confidence that they have acted correctly, complying with a valid interpretation of the Qur'an and Sunnah.

In many areas of Islamic law, differences of opinion are mainly differences of degree. These differences are a mercy and a blessing from Allah. No Muslim is obliged to submit to one set of rulings. Each Muslim is free to follow the rulings of the *mujtahid* [jurist] of his choice, to leave the *taqlid* [emulation] of one *faqih* [jurist], and to commence the *taqlid* of another he deems to be the most learned. Since all people are different, they have different levels of *din* [religion], different levels of faith, and different levels of understanding. There is no coercion when it comes to conforming to certain rulings.

In the absence of *halal* meat, a meat-loving Sunni Muslim who cannot find meaningful sustenance out of salad is free to feed himself the meat of *ahl al-kitab*. As Almighty Allah says in the Holy Qur'an, "No soul shall have a burden laid on it greater than it can bear" (2:233). For another Sunni Muslim, being a part-time vegetarian while traveling in *dar al-kufr* [the land of the unbelievers] is not a hardship, and he may wish to abstain from the meat of *ahl al-kitab*. Merely because one is stricter does not make one better Allah judges actions according to intentions and judges all people according to their intellectual abilities. As far as we are concerned, the arguments allowing the consumption of *ahl al-kitab*'s meat are weak and the Shi'ite argument is the strongest. This does not mean that we wish to impose the Ja'fari ruling on others, not does it imply disrespect to some of the Sunni rulings. They are opinions we respect, but opinions we do not share.

When a Salafi Shaykh was asked about Nuh ibn Mim Keller's belief that the references to the "hands" of Allah mentioned in the Qur'an (38:75; 48:10; 51:47) were figurative, representing the power of God, the Shaykh said that Allah indeed has literal hands and anyone who says otherwise is a *kafir* [infidel]. This is exactly the type of outrageous behavior that is unacceptable in Islam.

If the Salafiyyah wish to follow the Qur'an literally, they have the freedom to do so. They do not, however, have the right to denounce others as unbelievers because they believe the Qur'an contains allegorical and metaphorical meanings. Not only do Muslims need a lesson in moderation and tolerance, they need a lesson in basic manners.

The role of Islamic law is to set the limits of the permitted and the prohibited. When differences of opinion exist among Muslim jurists, it is the least restrictive ruling that becomes the law. If some *fuqaha'* [jurists] believe that women can show their faces and hands, and others believe that they must veil their faces, the most accommodating ruling becomes the law of the land, and veiling the face becomes an issue of personal choice. Attempts of extremists in Afghanistan, Iraq, and abroad, to impose the most

severe interpretation of the *sharī'ah* have been detrimental to the public image of Islām, alienating Muslims and non-Muslims from the Islamic religion.

It should also be recalled that the implementation of the *sharī'ah* by the Prophet was gradual and progressive, an example which must be emulated by any Muslim state. The punishment for theft should not be enforced until unemployment and poverty are eradicated. The punishment for adultery should not be enforced until temptation has been eradicated through modesty and marriage. **Proper conditions need to exist for Islamic punishments to be administered. The creation of socio-economic and spiritual justice is a necessary precursor to *sharī'ah* law.**

In closing, we would like to encourage all Muslims to unite on the basis of their common beliefs, remembering that unity does not imply uniformity. Muslims may come from various legal, theological, and philosophical traditions, but they are all one in the Oneness of God. **Muslims must reject absolutist literalist attitudes and embrace a Universal Islām, becoming multi-dimensional Muslims far removed from the fundamentalist fallacy. They need to embrace Islamic pluralism and Islamic diversity in accord with the Oneness of Allāh and the Qur'ānic message brought by the Messenger of Allāh, an Islām which includes rather than excludes, an Islām which enriches rather than impoverishes, a centrist, middle-road Islām (2:143), which opposes extremism, for as Almighty Allāh says, "Do not be excessive in your belief" (4:165; 5:81).**

While Islām rejects religious relativism and exoteric religious pluralism, it does accept that all revealed religions share the same esoteric spirit. Whether it is Judaism, Christianity or Islām, all revealed religions believe in One God, the Prophets, the Day of Judgement, and the Ten Commandments. However, **before Muslims can unite socio-politically with the true *ahl al-kitāb*, they must unite with themselves, embracing Islām as a totality, accepting the entire Islamic pie rather than a single slice. If the Europeans say, "All roads lead to Rome," we say, "All roads lead to Allāh," and this is precisely what the Qur'ān teaches: *Tawḥīd* is one, but the number of paths to Allāh is equal to the number of human souls.**[1]

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1. Author's Note: For a series of studies addressing this subject, see: Morrow, John Andrew "The Image of the Road in Islāmic Literature." Proceedings from the Image of the Road Conference. Eds. Will Wright and Steven Kaplan. Pueblo: SISSI, Colorado State U-Pueblo, 2005: 329-336; Morrow, John Andrew "Arabic Instruction in France: Pedagogy or Politics?" Humanities Journal 4:6 (2006): 17-24; Morrow, John Andrew "The Persian Alphabet in Peril." Iran Daily (May 27th, 2006): 2; Morrow, John Andrew "La enseñana de idiomas y la política exterior." Revista Cultural Ariadna (April 2004); "Language Study as an Indicator of Foreign Policy." Iran Daily (Dec. 7th, 2004); "Amoo Sam beh madreseh miravad: Defense Language Institute Program as an Indicator of U.S. Foreign Policy" (Dec. 7th, 2004) Iranian.; Morrow, John Andrew "El idioma árabe en camino de convertirse en un arma contra el Islam." Revista Cultural Ariadna (Oct. 2003).

Foreword by Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi

Body and soul are the two components of human beings; one is the husk and the outer shell while the other is the kernel and an inner spirit. Both dimensions need nourishment as well as protection. Almighty God says, "[I swear] by the soul and Him who shaped it [perfectly], and then inspired it [the innate ability to understand] what is right and wrong for it! Indeed successful is he who purifies it and indeed failure is he who corrupts it." (91:7–10) Each human being has the potential of soaring to the level higher than that of the angels and that top place in the pyramid of God's creation can only be reached by developing one's spiritual dimension.

Islm guides humans on both planes of their being: the ritual as well as the spiritual. The Prophet Muammad instructed the people on simple matters of hygiene, such as cleanliness, *wu'* and *ghusl*, as well as on loftier matters of spiritual ascension; he urged his followers to be physically strong to defend themselves in battlefields, and also charted for them the heavenly path of spiritual wayfaring.

After the death of the Prophet, regrettably the majority of Muslims were unable to combine the ritual and the spiritual dimensions in their religious life. They experimented with their faith in different ways: from the absolute freewill theory of Mu'tazilah to the disguised predetermination [*kasb* or *iktisb,* lit. "acquisition"] of Ash'ar, from literalism or "fundamentalism" of the anbilah to the esoteric explanations of the extremists, from indiscriminate adherence to *adth* by the Mlikis to the personal opinions [*qiyy*] of Ab anfah. Eventually, the Sunn Muslims settled with the Ash'ar theology and the jurisprudence of their Four Imms. However, the lack of spirituality in this strand of Islm gave rise to ffsm among the Sunns.

All along there was a minority which maintained, preserved, and spread the wholeness of Islamic teachings, and that was the Sh'ah strand of Islm headed by the Imms from the family of the Prophet, the *ahl al-bayt*. **Sh'ism emerged as the natural product of Islm which combined within itself its ritual as well as the spiritual dimensions. It is a path whose theology, jurisprudence, and spirituality flow from the same spring, the *ahl al-bayt.*** And, therefore, you will observe that the Sh'ah very rarely felt the need to form distinct spiritual fraternities like the ffs among the Sunns. You will indeed find *'uraf'* [scholars who specialize in gnosis] among the Sh'ah but not *murshidn* [spiritual masters] as found among the ffs.

A Sh' Muslim refers for all his religious guidance--from theology to jurisprudence, from ritual or spiritual--to the *ahl al-bayt.* Even if he just follows the rituals with understanding and comprehension, he will be led to the spiritual path. For example, a simple recitation of the Du' Kumayl, taught by Imm 'Al, elevates a Sh' from the basic level of worshiping God out of fear [*khawf*] to the level of worshiping God out of love [*ubb*]. And so there is no wonder when we see that almost all the ff fraternities trace their chain of masters back to one or the other Imm of *ahl al-bayt.*

In this background, it was indeed a pleasure to read and review the English translation of Professor Luis Alberto Vittor's *Sh□'ite Isl□m: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy* translated by Dr. John Andrew Morrow. The book has excellently captured the exoteric as well as the esoteric dimensions of Im□mate. I am sure that readers will come to realize that while Sunnism is more a legalistic aspect of Isl□m and □□f□sm is more a spiritual, mystical dimension, **Sh□'ism is the true legacy of the complete Isl□m of the Prophet Mu□ammad** (peace be upon him and his progeny).

May Almighty All□h bless the writer as well as the translator and commentator for their worthwhile contribution towards the understanding of Sh□'ah Isl□m!

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Commendatory Preface by Barbara Castelton

Luis Alberto Vittor's *Sh□'ite Isl□m: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy* provides a privileged and sublime view into the core and essence of Sh□'ism as well as the early history and development of Isl□m. Written for a Western audience, it restores Sh□'ism to its rightful place as a fully-fledged aspect of Isl□m, rather than as a rebellious offshoot which does not adhere to core Islamic beliefs and standards. In this task, the author's analysis of Isl□m and the meaning of sect and schism went the full distance in establishing Sh□'ism's complete legitimacy.

Further, the author takes the reader back to the birth of Isl□m and the profound influence of the Prophet Mu□ammad to demonstrate the partnership he intended to create between the secular and spiritual lives of Muslims via the *wil□yah* or guardianship of the correctly appointed Im□m. While not a Muslim myself, I could sense the generations' long frustration of those who believed that the very trajectory of Isl□m was altered by the ego/tradition driven actions of a few powerful men.

Analogy is perhaps the most eloquent means of describing what Sh□'ah Muslims believe happened with the appointment of Ab□ Bakr, instead of 'Al□, to the Caliphate. If a rocket is intended to land on a certain lunar crater 238,856 miles from Earth, the calculations must be precise to a ten-thousandth of a fraction. Any slight variation will mean that not only will the spacecraft not land on the right spot, but it may miss the moon entirely. I believe that the Prophet Mu□ammad's designation of 'Al□ as his successor was based on just such infinitesimal calculations; a complete knowledge of the Qur'□n and its divine message as well as a realization of human frailty.

The appointment of 'Al□ was meant to inhibit the incursion of human ego into the burgeoning

acceptance of the Qur'ānic message. When that did not occur, the human manifestation of Islām altered. The message and means remained pristine and perfect, but human interpretation was clouded by personal interests and a reluctance to release power. This volume offers a clear and rational look at events, ideas, and the essence of Muḥammad's intentions. For believers and non-believers, it is an authoritative source of arguments rarely heard. As such, it is a gift to a more complete understanding of this world-class religion and the place of Shī'ism within it.

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Translator's Preface

In 1994, our friend and colleague Héctor Manzolillo, a prolific professional translator, presented us with two volumes of the academic journal *Epiemelia* which contained the article "El islam shiita: ¿ortodoxia o heterodoxia?" [Shī'ite Islām: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy?]. He asked us to read the article and wondered whether we could translate it from Spanish into English. At the time we had recently completed our Honors B.A. at the University of Toronto, and were starting graduate school. While we were impressed with the arguments made by the author Luis Alberto Vittor, and we appreciated the scholarly contribution of his work, we declined the request to translate the article due to lack of time. We assured Héctor Manzolillo and Luis Alberto Vittor that we would translate the book at some time in the future.

It was only in the summer of 2004 that we were able to devote our time to the translation of the article in question. We had completed our Ph.D. in the year 2000, and found a position as an Assistant Professor at Park University in Kansas City in 2001. It took us several years to get settled in, both academically and financially, before we could devote our time to translating the article. It was thus, in the summer of 2004, that we informed Luis Alberto Vittor, now a close friend and colleague, a spiritual advisor and academic mentor, that we were ready to get to work.

Due to the specialized nature of the work, we felt it necessary to add extensive notes to make it more accessible to non-experts. While a scholar of Islām, a Muslim philosopher or an intellectual might comprehend the allusions being made by the author, most of them would escape the average reader as many of his sentences could be paragraphs, many of his paragraphs could be chapters, and many of his chapters could be books. What was supposed to be a small summer project turned into a major multiple year endeavor, as we found ourselves continuously expounding upon his arguments to the point that the article gradually turned into a full-fledged book.

The final product, a critically annotated translation of Luis Alberto Vittor's *Shī'ite Islām: Orthodoxy or*

Heterodoxy, was thus finally completed. Reviewed by several Islamic scholars, including Dr. Liyakat Ali Takim, Shaykh Feisal Morhell, Professor ḥasan ‘Abd al-‘Alī Bize and Sayyid Muḥammad Rizvī, the book was embraced by Mr. Muḥammad Taqī Anṣāriyān. As most academics who read the book have acknowledged, the value of the work resides in the fact that it is the first scholarly study to deal with Sunnī-Shī‘ī polemics from an esoteric and metaphysical perspective while providing a general criticism of Western Orientalism.

Luis Alberto Vittor’s criticism of Western Orientalism is amply justified and is certainly not the first. As is well-known, Edward Sa‘īd condemned Orientalism categorically, claiming that it served political ends. It is indeed correct that Orientalism was used to justify European imperialism in colonial times. It is equally correct that **Orientalism is used to support American and Zionist interests in the Muslim world in contemporary times.** While there is truth in Sa‘īd’s statement, it remains an over-generalization. The mistakes made by some Orientalists are not necessarily malicious. Many merely have a limited view because they never release their own history when looking at another’s. As Barbara Castleton explains,

It should be remembered that people can only look at something from a perspective they have experienced. While de Toqueville managed a brilliant analysis of America after being here a mere six months, this is not the norm. Nevertheless, he acknowledged that he wrote as an observer. An Orientalist, Arabist or Islāmicist, can never bring real veracity and authenticity to a subject that they are merely observing.

For some scholars, Islām is like an ocean which they explore from the shoreline. They can dip their toes in it, they can wade in it, and kick their legs up forcefully, but they never really learn to let go and swim in the sea. They never let go of the edge to feel the swirl of their topic ebbing and flowing all around them. Despite their shortcomings, many of these Orientalists have made contributions to the field of Islamic Studies. Others, however, are arrogant, insolent, and openly hostile to the Muslim faith. These scholars have never approached the ocean of Islām. Rather than revel in its riches and drink from its pristine purity, they stand firmly on its shoreline, pouring pollutants into its waters, vainly seeking to cloud its clarity.

While the English version of Luis Alberto’s book is sure to be embraced by Shī‘ite scholars and open-minded individuals, it may be criticized or conveniently ignored by some Western Orientalists who will allege a lack of objectivity on the part of the author. Ironically, they may accuse him of their own single greatest shortcoming: subjectivity. They may claim to see a mote in his eye while being blind to the beam that veils their own vision (Matthew 7:5). They may even complain that the author is writing from a Shī‘ite perspective and has not remained impartial, a rule which apparently applies only to Muslim scholars since most Christian scholars rarely detach themselves from their own religious and ideological points of view. In the worst of cases, Christian scholars do not even pretend to detach themselves from their own biases, prejudices, stereotypes, and other professional vices.

After calling into question his objectivity, this sector of Orientalists might move on to their second line of

attack: Vittor's approach and methodology. Despite the author's expressed aim to present the Sh‘ite position--in all of its esoteric and metaphysical dimensions--he may be criticized for writing from a religious perspective. To be succinct, this would be a polite way of saying he is subjective, biased, and partial. They might argue that the book is directed to English-speaking Muslims, rather than recognizing it as a scholarly work aimed at an academic audience.

If Luis Alberto Vittor had said that Sh‘ite Islm was a Persian creation, that the Qur'n was the work of Muammad which was copied from Jews and Christians, and that the corpora of prophetic traditions were mere legends, he would be embraced like a brother, cited incessantly, invited to conferences, and given generous grants. Eventually he might even be appointed to a prestigious Chair of Islamic Studies or counsel the American President regarding policies in the Muslim world. **While some Orientalists are eager to attack scholars who study Islm objectively, they rarely dare to criticize the pro-Christian or pro-Zionist perspectives of some of their most distinguished colleagues.**

Rather than dealing with concrete facts and responding with sound, solidly-based arguments, some Orientalists may dismiss the author's scholarship as subjective. These are the same scholars, however, who have shown little concern for the subjectivity of their own colleagues. There almost seems to be a consensus that Islm must only be studied by non-Muslims. If this is the case, it is certainly a strange double-standard as most scholars of Judaism are Jewish, and most scholars of Christianity are Christians, yet one rarely hears any of them being criticized for being biased.

It does not require much effort to find Orientalists responsible for reductionist readings of the Islamic faith. Take, for example, the attitude of the Islamologist Félix María Pareja who argued that "Islm is the religion of the sword." If a Muslim academic said that Christianity was a religion of Crusades, Inquisitions, and genocide, Western scholars would never let their roar of outrage recede. God forbid if a Muslim academic dared to say that Judaism was the religion of Zionism, Jewish imperialism, Palestinian concentration camps, Dayr Yssn, abr and Shtl, as well as the mass expulsion of Muslims. The words of Father Pareja, however, are not denounced by Western religious scholars. On the contrary, they are cited, and passed from textbook to textbook without the author's objectivity being called into question. As a priest who wrote from a Catholic perspective, can he be truly objective?

Rather than questioning the scholarship produced by Muslim scholars, Western Orientalists might consider criticizing the likes of Asín Palacios. Many Spanish Orientalists and Arabists now openly admit that he was slanted. Paradoxically, they continue to use his work as standard reference material despite his claims that ffsm was merely a Christianized form of Islm. If the thesis is wrong, the entire argument leading up to it is equally erroneous and needs to be discarded. The inconsistencies of Western philosophers are so widespread that Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont have spoken of "intellectual imposters" who rely on verbosity to cover their argumentative deficiencies. Unfortunately, there are some Western Orientalists who remain "slaves of old ideas," unable to appreciate the value of works written with academic freedom.

Despite their allegations of subjectivity with regards to the author, Western Orientalists would be hard-pressed to present a concrete criticism of the present work as its content is objective and scientific, both methodologically and epistemologically. While the work may have its shortcomings--for example, focusing only on certain aspects of the topic due to limitations of time and space--this certainly does not invalidate the text as a whole. That would be like discarding an Armani suit because the sewing-lady overlooked a tiny detail in the lining. Finally, what some Orientalists will find the most annoying about the current work of Luis Alberto Vittor is that it is a scientific study completed within the framework of the Islamic faith, without succumbing to bias or attempts to proselytize.

While their criticism may seem harsh to some, scholars like Edward Sa'īd, Aḥmad Ghurāb, and Luis Alberto Vittor, are neither "assassins of Orientalists" nor propagandists for the Islāmist cause. They are not out to destroy Western Orientalism nor do they have any missionary agenda. On the contrary, their comprehensive criticism addresses important methodological mistakes. It is a call for true scholarship at the service of science rather than political and economic ambitions. For Edward Sa'īd, Aḥmad Ghurāb, and Luis Alberto Vittor, Orientalism should be a means of *rapprochement*, a means of knowing others, not turning them into alter-egos, not demonizing them, not exoticizing them, not eroticizing them, and certainly not undermining them.

According to Sa'īd, Ghurāb, and Vittor, certain subjects are sacred, and while they can be studied scientifically and critically, this must always be done with an attitude of respect and tolerance. Whether it is Hinduism, Taoism or Buddhism, whether it is Judaism, Christianity or Islām, **all religious traditions deserve to be studied without being slighted, tarnished or disrespected.** This applies equally to any discussions of Shī'ite Islām which, due to Orientalist opinion, has been stigmatized as sectarian. **Showing a blatant disregard for etymology, many Orientalists have equated Shī'ism with the schism, claiming that the very word *shī'ah* signifies "sect" when it merely means "followers."** This misrepresentation of the Arabic language and Islamic reality was opposed by J. Spencer Trimingham almost forty years ago when he explained that:

In Western thought, a 'sect' is regarded as a group which has broken away from the parent religious community because of differing views. On such criteria Shī'ism is not a sect in its origins, since it springs directly from the main stream of Islamic development, which branched into two streams, following different interpretations, hardening into doctrines, about the origins and ordering of Islamic society. (79)

Clearly, Islām is not composed of a single Sunnī stream, from which heretical sects flow out as rivulets, drying out in the sands of infidelity and heresy rather than reaching the sea of eternity. If anything, Islām is an eternal tree. Its roots are the pillars of Islām; its trunk is the *sharī'ah*; its branches are its interpretations; and the fleeting leaves are its followers, coming and going with each revisited season. The dialogue between Shī'ism and Sunnism, however, has been far less poetic, ecumenical, and fraternal.

As experts in the field are aware, the debate between Sunnism and Sh‘ism has provided a large body of polemical literature. The Sh‘ite scholarship on the subject tends to be characterized by a scholarly approach. The Sunn and most particularly Salaf work, however, tends to be characterized by an attitude which is both divisive and destructive. In the best of cases, the authors are misinformed and misrepresent the teachings of Twelve Im m Sh‘ite Isl m. In the worst of cases, they lance allegations against Sh’ites based on dubious documents, fabrications and fantasy, in order to accuse them of heresy.

The classical Sunn heresiographers and polemicists include Ab al-asan al-Ash‘ar (d. 935-6), Ab al-Mu affar al-Isfar’in (d. 1078-9), Ab al-Q im ‘Abd al-W id b. A mad al-Kirm n (d. before 1131), Ab al-Faraj ‘Abd al-Ra m n ibn ‘Al ibn al-Jawz (d. 1201), Shahrast n (d. 1135) and Mu‘ al-D n M zr Makhd m (d. 1587). More modern authors include A mad b. Zayn Dahl n (d. 1886), a Sh fi‘ *muft* from Makkah, and M s J r All h (d. 1949).

In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Salafis, rather than Sunn s, have been at the forefront in producing polemical anti-Sh‘ite tracts. The most notorious of these authors include A mad al-Afgh n, Sayyid Ab al-asan Nadv, Ab Am nah Bil l Philips, Shaykh ‘Abd al-Ra m n Dimashqu, Shaykh Ya y Silm al-Saylan, and Shaykh Faisal. Some of these people, like Bilal Philips, a Canadian convert of Jamaican origin, have been supported by the Saudi establishment and represent the pro-Saudi Salafis. Others, like Shaykh ‘Abdull h al-Faisal, a Jamaican convert formerly known as Trevor William Forrest, represent the anti-Saudi Salafis. Shaykh Faisal is presently in prison in the U.K, convicted to a nine-year term in 2003 for incitement to murder. In his defense, he explained that the teachings he was given were “in accordance with the same at Im m Mu ammad ibn Sa‘ d Islamic University in Saudi Arabia” and that “all my teachings are from the Koran and Saudi Arabia” (Gillan).

To accuse Sh‘ite Muslims of “heresy,” as many Salafis do, is to play judge and executioner. It is well-known among Muslims that Islamic law prescribes the death penalty for heretics and apostates. Of course, not all authors are so subtle as to call Sh‘ites heretics and then drop the issue. There are those like A mad Sh h Mas‘ d from the Afghan *Muj hid n* and Northern Alliance, Gulbudd n ekmaty r, founder of the *Hezb-i Isl mi*, Mull ‘Omar from the *lib n,* and Us mah ben Laden, Ayman al- aw hir and the recently deceased Ab Mus‘ab al-Zarq w from *al-Q ‘idah*, who have openly advocated murder, declaring Sh‘ites to be worse than infidels, and claiming their blood is *al l*. Books like *Talb s Ibl s*, [*The Devil’s Deception of the Sh ‘ites*], extremist websites, and anti-Sh‘ite pamphlets are often all it takes to incite ignorant fanatics to vigilante violence. **The massacres of Sh‘ite Muslims in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq are partly the result of anti-Sh‘ah propaganda. The individuals responsible for encouraging and committing these atrocities are true terrorists with innocent blood on their hands.**

In many Western nations, like Canada, there are laws against hate literature. **It is time for all**

supporters of human rights to demand their application, put a halt to anti-Sh‘ hate propaganda, prohibit its dissemination, and press for the prosecution of those who produce it, distribute it, and profit from it. If Canada, the United States and other nations can ban David Irving, the Holocaust revisionist, from entering their countries, then surely they can ban extremist Salafis.

In the past fifty years, the ruling family and government of Saudi Arabia has indoctrinated millions of Muslims into the Wahhb ideology through its Islamic universities at home and affiliated institutions abroad, through its publishing houses, and through its network of Islamic organizations, mosques and associations. The vast majority of mosques in North America are controlled by ISNA, the Islamic Society of North America, which is the "official organ" of Saudi Salafism in the Western World. Frank Gaffney, founder and President of the Center for Security Policy in Washington and former Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy under President Ronald Reagan, reveals that:

The Islamic Society of North America is a front for the promotion of Saudi Arabia's Wahhb political, doctrinal, and theological infrastructure in the United States and Canada. Established by the Saudi-funded Muslim Students Association, ISNA has for years sought to marginalize leaders of the Muslim faith who do not support the Wahhbists' strain of 'Islmofascism,' and, through sponsorship of propaganda and mosques, is pursuing a strategic goal of eventually dominating Islm in America. ISNA provides indoctrination materials to about 1,100 of an estimated 2,500 mosques in the North American continent. Through its affiliate, the North American Islamic Trust (NAIT)--a Saudi government-based organization created to fund Islmist enterprises in North America--it reportedly holds the mortgages of between 50-79 percent of those mosques. Through this device, ISNA exerts ideological as well as theological influence over what is preached and taught in these institutions and schools.

Saudi oil money has spread Salafism to such an extent that, for a great part, Sunnism has morphed into Salafism. The "Muslim fundamentalist" menace has now hit home and Saudi Arabia is facing the return of their prodigal sons. Surely, Saudi dollars would best be spent delivering humanitarian aid to Muslim countries, supporting economic development, and encouraging Islamic unity, rather than encouraging Islamic extremism.

On December 7-8, 2005, a symbolic step towards Islamic unity was taken with the "Makkah al-Mukarramah Declaration" of the Third Session of the Extraordinary Islamic Summit Conference in which member states, including Saudi Arabia, reaffirmed their "unwavering rejection of terrorism, and all forms of extremism and violence." As Saudi King 'Abd Allh bin 'Abd al-'Az z declared, "Islamic unity would not be reached through bloodshed as claimed by the deviants."[1]

Considering the rise of sectarian violence in Iraq and the threat it poses to the entire region, **Saudi Arabia should reassess its state-sponsored Salafism and decide to work towards Islamic unity.** As Mu af R fi', Dr. Kalm Siddqu, Iqbal Siddiqu, Zafar Bangash, Shaykh Amad Deedat, Im m Muammad al-As, Im m 'Abdul-'Alm Mss, Am r 'Abdul Mlik 'Al, 'Abd al-Malik Mujahid, Dr.

Shah□d Athar, and other mainstream Sunn□ Muslims have impressed, **the fundamental beliefs which Muslims have in common far outweigh the historical differences which emerged after the passing of the Prophet.**[2] **Regardless of whether they are Sunn□, Sh□'□ or □□f□, regardless of the school of jurisprudence they follow, Muslims are Muslims first and foremost and should pose a united, non-sectarian front when confronting the enemies of Isl□m.** Opinions regarding the succession of the Prophet and interpretations of Islamic law are primarily personal convictions belonging in the private domain. Such ideas can be addressed in the proper academic context, to increase knowledge, and to develop an appreciation for the various expressions of the Islamic faith. There is no place, however, for divisive argumentation in Isl□m.

In contrast to the Sunn□ side, where calls for unity remain voices in the wilderness, the Sh□'ite side has a long history of scholarship with a fraternal foundation. With rare exception, **it has been the general consensus of Sh□'ite scholars that the followers of *ahl al-sunnah* are bona fide believers**; the only heretics being the Kharijites, the earliest Islamic sect which traces its beginning to a religio-political controversy over the Caliphate and which holds that 'Al□ and his followers became infidels; the *naw□□ib*, those who profess hatred towards the Prophet's Family and the *ghul□t*, the extremists who deify 'Al□.

Among the first Sh□'ite scholars to formulate the fundamentals of faith of the Twelver Sh□'ites from a polemicist perspective was Shaykh □ad□q, one of the scholarly pillars of Sh□'ism, in his famous *I'tiq□d□t*, translated loosely as *A Sh□'ite Creed*. He lived during intolerant times, a period of rampant *takf□r* [or accusations of infidelity] when tensions ran high between the various schools of thought in Isl□m, each one vying for supremacy. Although he was a deeply committed Sh□'ite, he was forthcoming in presenting Sh□'ite beliefs clearly and concisely in comparison with other currents in Islamic thought. Shaykh □ad□q's *I'tiq□d□t* was commented upon by one of his students, Shaykh al-Muf□d, under the title of *Shar□ 'aq□'id al-□ad□q*, and remains a popular theological text to this date. Numerous other Sh□'ite scholars wrote valuable books in which they contrasted Sunn□ and Sh□'□ beliefs, including Shaykh Ab□ Ja'far al-□us□ (d. 1067-8) and 'Abd al-Jal□l al-Qazw□n□ (d. 1190), who put forth some strikingly moderate view, as well as 'All□mah al-□ill□ (d. 1325).

In the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the leading figures of inter-Islamic ecumenism have included Shaykh Mu□ammad □usayn K□shif al-Ghi□□, Ay□tull□h Mu□ammad □usayn Burujerd□--who worked to unite the various schools of Islamic jurisprudence--'All□mah Mu□ammad Jaw□d Mughniyyah, Ay□tull□h Shariatmadar□, Ay□tull□h □asan al-Shir□z□, Im□m M□s□ al-□adr, and Ay□tull□h Mar'ash□-Najaf□--who had the unique distinction of having *ij□zah* [permission] of *riw□yah* [to teach Isl□m] from nearly 400 Sh□'□, Sunn□ and Zayd□ scholars--as well as Ay□tull□hs Behesht□, Muntazer□, Mu□ahhar□, among many others, all of whom defended the cause of Muslim unity. In recent years, Ay□tull□h al-U□m□ Sayyid 'Al□ al-□usayn□ al-Sist□n□, has repeatedly called for calm between both communities in the most trying of circumstances. **The greatest advocate of Islamic unity in recent history was none other than Im□m Khumayn□.** In fact, the late founder of the Islamic Republic ruled that:

Muslims should be awake, Muslims should be alert that if a dispute takes place among Sunn□ and Sh□‘ite brothers, it is harmful to all of us; it is harmful to all Muslims. Those who want to sow discord are neither Sunn□ nor Sh□‘ite, they are agents of the superpowers and work for them. Those who attempt to cause discord among our Sunn□ and Sh□‘ite brothers are people who conspire for the enemies of Isl□m, and want the enemies of Isl□m to triumph over Muslims. Muslim brothers and sisters will not be segregated by the pseudo–propaganda sponsored by corrupt elements. The source of this matter––that Sh□‘ites should be on one side and Sunn□ on the other––is on the one hand ignorance and, on the other hand, foreign propaganda. If Islamic brotherhood comes to the fore among Islamic countries, they will become such a great power that none of the global powers will be able to contend with them. Sh□‘ite and Sunn□ brothers should avoid every kind of dispute. Today, discord among us will only benefit those who follow neither Sh□‘ah nor Sunni. They neither want this nor that to exist, and know the way to sow dispute between you and us. We must pay attention that we are all Muslims and we all believe in the Qur’□n; we all believe in *taw□□d*, and must work to serve the Qur’□n and *taw□□d*.

This message of Islamic unity is one that all Muslims, be they Sunn□, Sh□‘□, or □□f□, should remember, as many of them seem to have forgotten it. While Im□m Khumayn□ worked tirelessly towards Islamic unity, some Sh□‘ite scholars have failed to follow in his footsteps and have promoted proselytism and sectarianism, rather than Islamic pluralism. Fortunately, for those interested in Islamic unity within diversity, there exists an excellent body of literature.

While there are many excellent books on Sunn□–Sh□‘ah dialogue, perhaps the finest work of scholarship on the subject was produced by the Lebanese erudite ‘Abd al–□usayn Shar□f al–D□n al–M□saw□ in his legendary *Mur□ja‘□t* or *The Evidence*, a discussion by correspondence which took place between the Sh□‘ite sage and his Sunn□ counterpart, Shaykh Sal□m al–Bishr□, the Dean of the University of al–Azhar in Cairo, Egypt. In fact, the debate was so productive in increasing Sunn□–Sh□‘ite understanding that it eventually resulted in Shaykh Shal□□□ issuing a historic *fatw□* recognizing the Ja‘far□ Ithn□ ‘Ashar□ *madhhab* as a legitimate school of jurisprudence in Isl□m which all Muslims are permitted to follow freely. The work is a model of the proper Muslim mores which are to be observed in any and all debates.

Another well–known polemical work is *Peshawar Nights*. While claims have been made that the book is of dubious origin, perhaps produced for propaganda purposes as part of Sh□‘ite missionary activities, this does not debilitate the arguments it contains. In recent years, the Tunisian Mu□ammad al–T□j□n□, has written several valuable books including *Then I was Guided*, *The Sh□‘ah: The True Followers of the Sunnah*, *Ask Those Who Know*, and *With the Truthful*, all of which have been translated into numerous languages.

On the positive side, T□j□n□’s books present a wealth of information and documentation supporting Sh□‘ism and have served to bring many Sunn□s closer to and even into Sh□‘ism. On the negative side, the author is neither an academic nor a traditional scholar of Isl□m, as he readily admits. As a result, his

books are not always free from error, contradiction, value judgments, and unbridled enthusiasm. At times, his arguments are expressed in terms which seem abrasive to some Sunnīs, sometimes accentuating division rather than attenuating it.

The belligerent attitude towards *ahl al-sunnah* is especially evident on websites like *answering-ansar.org* and in certain articles published on *shianews.com*. While both of these websites are informative, they fight fire with fire when they should be fighting fire with water. In the Preface of *Devil's Deception of the Nīīibī Wahhābis* which appears on answering-ansar.org, 'Abdul Ḥakeem Orano clearly explains that "This book takes the method of attack." Evidently, this is an inappropriate approach. As Almighty Allāh instructs, "Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance" (16:125).

As can be observed from the previous survey, the most serious shortcoming of scholarship in the area of Shī'ite-Sunnī dialogue is that it centers on the exoteric aspects of the religion. It deals with concrete, down to earth doctrines, as opposed to matters of spirituality, mysticism, and metaphysics. The present study, **Luis Alberto Vittor's *Shī'ite Islām: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy* takes the debate between Shī'ism and Sunnism to a higher plateau, elevating arguments to the spiritual sphere** in his profound philosophical tract.

In closing, we would like to thank Professor Luis Alberto Vittor for trusting us with this translation. We have remained as faithful to the text as possible and attempted to render it into a scholarly yet idiomatic English. We would like to thank Mr. Abū Dharr Manzolillo, a true friend and father figure, who has stood by our side for decades.

We would like to thank all the scholars who shared their knowledge with us, from Sayyid Muḥammad Zaki Baqri and Sayyid Muḥammad Rizvī in Canada, to the Grand Ayātullāhs in Qum and Najaf. We are equally indebted to our early guides and mentors, Ahmad Haneef, Khalid Haneef-Jabari, and Ali Muḥammad Shaheed Hasib.

We would like to thank Rachida Bejja, for repeatedly reviewing, correcting, and editing the Arabic transliteration, as well Yā-Sīn and ṭā-Hā. They all served as a constant source of support and solace and this work could never have been completed without them.

We would also like to send a special thanks to Mr. Muḥammad Taqī Anṣāriyān for graciously supporting this scholarly endeavor and commend him for his inestimable contributions to the field of Shī'ite studies through the publication and distribution of academic titles.

We hope and pray that the following translation will be a welcomed contribution to scholarship in the field of Islamic Studies, will benefit both scholars and students of Islām, serve as a wake-up call to Western Orientalists, and bring about a greater degree of understanding and appreciation for the unity within the diversity of Islamic orthodoxy.

Finally, as the translator and editor of Vittor's work, we have always accepted full responsibility for its content and committed ourselves to correcting any shortcomings that it may contain in future editions. As such, this second English edition contains some corrections of style, typos, and transliteration. While far from exhaustive, the index has also been considerably expanded. The second English edition has also been emended and amplified with an "Exordium," extremely important "Introductory Remarks" on "The Foundations of Islamic Unity," as well as an insight into the "Genesis of the Work." If there is any good in this work, it comes from God; only the errors are ours.

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1. "Moderation and Tolerance Urged at OIC Summit: Stress on Combating Extremism," The Dawn, Dec. 8, 2005.
2. Editor's Note: Mu□□af□ R□fi'□'s Isl□mun□ is one of the first efforts of a Sunn□ scholar to understand Sh□'□ Isl□m from within. Although the distinguished expert on Isl□mic law does not always fully understand the Sh□'ite views on certain subjects, his contribution to Isl□mic unity and Isl□mic reconciliation are significant.
Dr. Kal□m Sidd□qu□ was one of the leading intellectuals and Isl□mic movement activists of the modern era. Founder and director of the Muslim Institute, London, he helped forge the philosophy of the contemporary Isl□mic movement. He was a staunch defender of Isl□mic unity as is his son Iqbal Sidd□qu□, the current editor of Crescent International.
Zafar Bangash, a close colleague and associate of Dr. Kal□m Sidd□qu□, is currently the director of the Institute of Contemporary Isl□mic Thought. He is the former editor of Crescent International, the leading publication of the international Isl□mic movement.
Shaykh A□mad Deedat was a famous South African scholar specializing in Comparative Religion. A transcript of his speech on Sunn□-Sh□'ah unity can be found on the following web page: http://islam-usa.com/e114.htm [7]
Im□m Mu□ammad al-As□ is the elected Im□m of Washington D.C.'s Isl□mic Center, a regular contributor to Crescent International, and a leading activist in the Isl□mic movement. He is a staunch opponent of sectarianism.
Im□m 'Abdul-'Al□m M□s□ is a Muslim activist and director of Masjid al-Isl□m in Washington, D.C. He is also the founder and director of the al-Sabiq□nmovement which provides social and spiritual services to urban America. A supporter of the Isl□mic Revolution of Iran and Im□m Khumayn□, he made several visits to Iran as a representative of American Muslims and a supporter of the Isl□mic revival. Im□m M□s□ has spent the past two decades bridging the gaps between Muslims and stresses that the success of the Isl□mic movement depends upon Sunn□ and Sh□'ah unity. Am□r 'Abd al-Malik 'Al□ is one of the leaders of al-Sabiq□n. His speech opposing the present Sh□'ah-Sunn□ fitnah and encouraging Isl□mic unity is widely distributed on the internet through various podcasts.
'Abd al-Malik Muj□hid, is President and director of the Sound Vision Foundation and an Im□m in the Chicago area. His "Call for Sh□'ah Sunn□ Dialogue" and "Resolution" to be distributed to Im□ms, preachers, mosques, Muslim organization, and opinion leaders, can be found on the following web page: http://soundvision.com/info/muslims/shiasunni.asp [8]
Dr. Shah□d Athar is a Muslim activist from Indianapolis, Illinois. A Sunn□ by creed, Dr. Athar is an advocate of Isl□mic unity. His writings, many of which demonstrate his appreciation for Isl□m in all of its dimensions, can be found on the following web page: http://www.Islam-usa.com/ [9]

Acknowledgments and Observations

The present book is the second English edition of an article which was published in an academic journal in 1994 under the name “El islām shiita: ¿ortodoxia o heterodoxia?” [Shī‘ite Islām: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy?]. The article was well-received in academic circles and was soon widely circulated on various Islamic sites on the Internet thanks to a digital edition published by the *Biblioteca Islámica Ahlul Bayt* in Sevilla, Spain. Thereafter, in the year 2000, the article was published in three parts in *Az-Zaqalain*, a Spanish language academic journal published in Qum, Iran.

In response to the interest received by the article, Dr. John Andrew Morrow decided to translate, edit, and turn it into a book. As often occurs in such cases, the challenge of turning an article into a book relates to its amplification. Dr. Morrow resolved this problem by including an exhaustive amount of notes and bibliographical information from Arabic and Persian sources. In both quantity and quality, his notes make a notable contribution to the original work of the author.

For all intents and purpose, this book constitutes a slightly modified version of that article originally published in *Epimelia: Revista de Estudios Sobre La Tradición*. The journal in question is the official academic organ of the Center for Research into the Philosophy and History of Religion (CIFHIRE) [*Centro de Investigaciones en Filosofía e Historia de Las Religiones*] at the Department of Philosophy of the School of Graduate Studies at John F. Kennedy Argentine University.

The book, in its present form, contains nothing new with the exception of the valuable critical and biographical notes, the opening remarks, the translator’s preface, the genesis of the work, and the detailed index, provided by Dr. Morrow. It also contains an exordium, a foreword by Sayyid Muḥammad Rizvī, and a commendatory preface by Professor Barbara Castleton, as well as an author’s preface in which we expand our criticism of Orientalism from the point of view of the philosophy of the history of religion to the broader field of social studies.

Besides these addenda, we have not modified the original text in any substantial fashion for obvious reasons. For starters, it would be impossible to alter the sentences without changing their original intent. Furthermore, any such changes might arouse suspicion, leading some readers to believe that they were done for editorial reasons.

Finally, one of the main reasons for not making any changes, save those slight details brought to our attention by those who reviewed the original Spanish version or its English translation, is that the work was written with great haste in the space of two months. It was produced with the specific purpose of responding to endless allegations of Orientalists who, unsatisfied with characterizing Shī‘ism as a fundamentalist form of Islām, stubbornly insisted on labeling it as a heterodox sect. By doing so, these scholars were merely echoing old Orientalist prejudices and supporting Muslim reformists.

This reformist sector was quickly embraced by Western Orientalists as proponents of "moderate Islām" while the traditional sector was labeled as representatives of "extremist Islām," dangerous "fundamentalists" who make militant and violent interpretations of faith based on the Qur'ān.

The purpose of the original study, which has now been converted into a book, was to address this conceptual error which is incessantly repeated, *ad nauseam*, in academic circles and which passes from textbook to textbook. However, when the time came to review the book for publication, we felt much less optimistic with regards to our goal of conveying to Western readers that Shī'ite Islām is not an extreme, heterodox, fundamentalist or fanatical sect. Evidently, we never pretended to provide a definitive "solution" to such a complex problem. Any such effort would require broader and more detailed studies. We acknowledge that many of the issues related to the topic remained outside the scope of our study. Although we are most conscious of the gaps in our study, we would never even dream of trying to fill them in the space of this exposition. Such exclusion is the understandable result of the need to assume a determined perspective, forcing us to be selective in our choice of the material covered.

In order to avoid confusing or misleading our readers, we must point out that we never proposed to write an introduction to Shī'ite Islām. This book does not study certain aspects which are crucial in the understanding of the political and metaphysical thought of Twelver Shī'ism. It may touch upon them, it may gloss over them, but it certainly does not study them in depth.

Although we have drawn from primary sources in Arabic and Persian, presenting various legal and theological views with respect to issues like consensus [*ijmā'*], as well as traditional exegesis, both ancient and contemporary, it was not the objective of this book to expound exhaustively upon the views of every school of thought.

Our immediate and most pressing goal was to demonstrate that Shī'ite Islām is a genuine, legal and spiritual expression of traditional Islām, both in orthodoxy and orthopraxy. In the same way that Sunnī Islām is based in doctrine and practice on the basic principles of the Qur'ān and prophetic tradition, so is Shī'ite Islām, which, in its traditional form, has the added advantage of having been preserved and reaffirmed by a continuous and direct line of successors, the Holy Imāms, the natural heirs of the *wilāyah*, the Cycle of Prophecy.

The goal of this book, then, is to demonstrate that, far from being a heretical schismatic sect or fundamentalist form of Islām, as one hears over and over again, and which is more or less groundless, **Shī'ism is the living expression of original Muḥammadan Islām, perfectly preserved by his successors, the Holy Imāms from the Prophetic Household [*ahl al-bayt*].** It was for this reason, that we proposed, without any polemical or apologetic intent, to present the Shī'ite point of view, with the highest possible degree of objectivity, without any concession to the prejudiced views of its detractors, be they Muslim or non-Muslim. We have presented Shī'ite Islām from a Shī'ite point of view. We made sure to put aside outside influences received during our academic formation for, as G. Bachelard has pointed out, these can turn into real epistemological obstacles which impede objectivity.

Readers should not be offended if, at given moments, they get the impression that they are reading a panegyric. This impression is to be expected as this work does not contain the redundant repetition of pejorative postulations presented in Orientalist works which claim to present Islām and the Arab world "objectively." Despite the overt contempt its secular ideologists manifest towards Islām, the West remains cynically passive. This attitude, however, can only be understood within its historical context.

Western animosity towards Islām forms part of a long history of cultural encounters through which the West attempted to impose its hegemony on the East. It should come as no surprise that the unrepressed hatred towards Islām and Arabs forms the very basis of much Western Orientalism.

In many cases, Orientalism has been more or less officially at the service of the intellectual self–satisfaction of secular illustrated despotism and the conservatism of Western imperialist authoritarianism. **Be it politically, militarily or intellectually, Western imperialism rarely hides its overwhelming aversion towards those who resist being physically or economically annexed into colonies, and those who refuse to be assimilated culturally, linguistically, mentally and spiritually.**

It should be known from the onset that we are not unaware of the various aspects which have fallen outside of the reach of our study. Despite shortcomings related to time and space, we have attempted to develop our arguments in the most satisfactory fashion, using all our abilities to help readers overcome their resistance to the topic, the result of heightened sensitivities caused by events of worldwide repercussions which, directly or indirectly, involve Shī'ite Islām.

Since this book was written so rapidly as a response to current events, it cannot be considered an introduction to Shī'ite Islām. Any such claim would do a grave injustice to Muslim scholars who have devoted their entire lives to the study of one of the many fields which this book has merely surveyed with a bird's eye view. We have merely shown some of the scenery of Shī'ism, not its depth and detail. However, in our own defense, the general overview we have provided may be justified by the fact that it is not the fruit of improvisation.

This book is the result of years of study on the origins of Shī'ite Islām. Even though the book was written during the first semester of the 1994 academic year, it should be mentioned that its final form was based on various preliminary versions and partial drafts from courses and lectures that we delivered in the *Seminarios de historia, pensamiento y cultura del mundo islámico* [Lectures on the History, Thought, and Culture of the Islamic World] between 1991 and 1992. This serie of lectures was organized by the Argentinean Institute for Islamic Culture and the Cultural Bureau of the Iranian Embassy in Buenos Aires and took place in the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Buenos Aires. Any good which comes from this limited contribution to the topic of Shī'ite Islām is due, in great part, to the valuable critical interest displayed by colleagues, friends, and students, whose questions and observations contributed considerably to the preparation of the final version of the book.

The very idea of writing an article on the basis of those classes and lectures owes much to the guidance of Dr. Francisco García Bazán, Dean of the Department of Philosophy, and Director of the Center for Research into the History and Philosophy of Religion at John F. Kennedy Argentine University, as well as the Editor of the journal *Epimeleia*. Dr. García Bazán must be thanked first and foremost for encouraging me to write this article. He deemed the article a necessary contribution to scholarship. He understood, much better than most Orientalists, that **Sh‘ism, although representing a minority tradition, represents a spiritual current of Gnostic illumination, law and theology, which is entirely Islamic in orthodoxy and orthopraxy, to the same extent as mainstream and majority Sunn Islm**. To be sincere, we must recognize that it was our director, Dr. García Bazán, who revived our interest in writing that article which was always in an indefinite state and which we could never come around to completing.

Dr. García Bazán's constant encouragement gave us an almost journalistic rhythm of redaction and, in little time, he granted us the time and the confidence to transform those initial rough drafts into a completed work. We are greatly indebted to the generous spirit of Dr. García Bazán, who, besides always knowing how and when to help us, from start to finish, has been of great benefit due to his scholarly knowledge and experience, counseling and guiding us with mastery in many ways. We will always consider it a privilege and an honor to have worked besides this great master of philosophy and comparative religion. We also thank him for permitting us to republish our work.

We are equally grateful to *ujjat al-Islm wa al-Muslimn* Feisal Morhell of the *World Center of Islamic Sciences* of the *awah ‘Ilmiyyah* from Qum in the Islamic Republic of Iran, who also happens to be the Director of Cultural Affairs for the *Fundación Cultural Oriente* and editor of the Spanish version of the academic journal *Az-Zaqalain*, for his interest in republishing the article which gave origin to this book. *ujjat al-Islm wa al-Muslimn* Feisal Morhell is a young specialist in traditional Islamic sciences who is not alien to this work since he proof-read our Arabic and Persian translations and, furthermore, provided us access to all of the primary Islamic sources which appeared in the original article.

The bibliography for the book, however, has been greatly amplified by Dr. John Andrew Morrow. We would also like to thank *ujjat al-Islm wa al-Muslimn* Murtada Beheshti, General Director of the *Islamic Thought Foundation* of Tehran, and the Editor-in-Chief of the Spanish version of the journal *Az-Zaqalain*; *ujjat al-Islm wa al-Muslimn* Sayyid Muammad Rizv, the resident *‘lim* at the Ja‘far Islamic Center in Toronto, Canada, and Dr. Liyakat Ali Takim, Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Denver, whom we thank especially for reviewing the doctrinal, juridical, and historical aspects dealt with in the present book, with truly limitless dedication, patience and generosity.

There is no doubt whatsoever that we would have faced many difficulties during the preparation of this work were it not for the constant advice and observations made by these great scholars and brilliant Muslim. Thanks to their help, however, we have overcome many obstacles and we will be certain to include their contributions in a future edition of the Spanish version of the book.

There are many people in Argentina, the United States, Canada, the U.K., Spain, and Iran, who collaborated with us during the preparation of this study, in its dissemination, and in its first English translation. In this sense, we are particularly grateful to Mrs. Sumeia Younes from the *World Center of Islamic Sciences* of the *awah 'Ilmiyyah* in Qum in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Editorial Secretary for the journal *Az-Zaqalain*, for reading the manuscript of the first Spanish article. We are grateful to Professor Barbara Castleton from Ohio University for proofreading the English translation and preparing a commendatory preface. We are equally grateful to Rachida Bejja for painstakingly correcting the Arabic transliteration and to Professor Gustavo César Bize, Associate Professor of Arabic and Islamic Thought at Universidad de Buenos Aires and at the Universidad Nacional de 3 de Febrero, for reviewing the English translation.

We are also grateful to the following young Islamologists, Professor Ángel Horacio Molina and Professor María Eugenia Gantus, who read the final Spanish and English versions of the work. They are both young research scholars at the Center for Oriental Studies at the Universidad Nacional de Rosario, in Santa Fe, Argentina, an institution associated with the Mull Sadr Center for Islamic Studies and Research (CEDIMS) [*Centro de Estudios y Documentación Islámicos Mull Sadr*] at the Universidad Católica Argentina de La Plata (Sede Bernal). We are particularly grateful to its General Coordinator, Dr. Horacio López Romano, for the generous institutional space he has provided, and to Dr. Sonia Yebara, Director of the Center for Oriental Studies of the School of Literature of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at the Universidad Nacional de Rosario, for their unselfish institutional support.

Other friends and colleagues read fragments or complete version of our rough drafts, providing an impressive volume of critical observations and facts. It would be impossible to mention them all. Nevertheless, we would like to express our gratitude to the following persons for their constant kindness and cooperation. We would like to thank Mr. Ángel Almazán de Gracia, the Spanish cultural journalist, writer and historian who specializes in Sorian culture and Numantine archeology for enthusiastically reading this work and citing it in many of his articles and books. We would like to thank Mr. Mikail Álvarez Ruiz, Director of the *Biblioteca Islámica Ahlul Bayt* from Sevilla, Spain, to whom we owe the first digital version of the Spanish original, which was well received and distributed over the Internet. He was the first to conceive of the idea of turning our article into a book, and he is one of the most energetic promoters of our work on the Internet. Dr. John Andrew Morrow based his English edition on the digital edition prepared by him. I would also like to acknowledge the valuable collaboration of Mr. Héctor H. Manzolillo, one of the most prolific and recognized translators of Islamic texts in Spanish. He was kind enough to review the notes to the English translation, and make greatly appreciated corrections.

Finally, we would like to express our endless gratitude to the editor and translator, Dr. John Andrew Morrow, Associate Professor of Languages and Literature at Eastern New Mexico in the United States, to whom we owe the Spanish and English editions of our work, as well as his scrupulous critical annotations. Through of years of collaboration, we have come to know a marvelous human being who is wise, but humble, and who honors us with his irreplaceable friendship. We would also like to thank our

wife Mónica Delia Pereiras, for supporting patiently and lovingly our domestic “absences” through all the time it took us to write and correct this book. We would also like to thank our daughters Ruth Noemí, María Inés and María de los Ángeles, whose affectionate interruptions made the labor of this book both pleasant and possible; our parents, Saturnino and Elvira; our brothers, Daniel and Cristina; and all our family and friends for standing by us, unconditionally, in a thousand and one ways. Last, but certainly not least, we would like to thank Mr. Muḥammad Taqī Anṣāriyān and Mawlānā Muḥammad Rizvī for encouraging and supporting this academic endeavor.

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Genesis of the Work

As a result of the popularity of *Shīʻite Islām: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy*, many readers have inquired about its genesis. In light of such interest, we decided that it would be worthwhile to contextualize the historical moment in which the work was created, as well as its ultimate objective. As a close friend and colleague of the author, it is our privilege to share our inner knowledge of the work’s origin.

Although some rough drafts had been presented in the course of classes and conferences, it was not until 1994 that Luis Alberto Vittor felt the need to complete *Shīʻite Islām: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy*. The author’s desire to finish the work was motivated by two violent events: the explosions of the Israeli Embassy and the *Asociación Mutual Israeli–Argentina* or AMIA which occurred in Buenos Aires, Argentina on March 17th and July 18th, 1994, terrorist attacks which were both arbitrarily attributed to Shīʻite Muslims.

Due to the circumstances in which it was written, the work was redacted rapidly in response to an urgent need to confront journalists, specialists, and international observers who joined together to label Shīʻite Islām as a “sect” which was “heterodox” with respect to “orthodox” Sunnī Islām. The author was also

responding to seditious attempts to separate the Sunn□ and Sh□‘ite schools of thought, labeling Sh□‘ites a minority of hard-core religious fanatics with a history of violence. **The enemies of Isl□m rallied around the tragic events in Argentina denouncing Sh□‘ites as “fundamentalists” and “terrorists.” Their objective was clear: a callous attempt to isolate Sh□‘ite Muslims from the Islamic Ummah as an unorthodox faction composed of radical extremists.**

In an unparalleled fashion, many Argentinean and American Orientalists, made *tabula rasa* with everything written about Sh□‘ite Isl□m from Corbin to the present, and started to echo the most hostile attitudes towards Isl□m expressed by early Orientalists and which had long been rejected. It was evident from the onset that **certain academics were benefiting from the terrorist attacks in Argentina to launch an ideological assault against Sh□‘ite Muslims.**

In their zeal to prove that Sh□‘ite Muslims had been the instigators or perpetrators of the most serious criminal attacks ever suffered by Argentineans, Argentinean and American academics stressed the minority character of Sh□‘ite Muslims, characterizing them as a group of sectarian zealots who stood in clear contrast to the moderation and orthodoxy of the Sunn□ majority. Academic specialists, journalists, international observers, so-called “experts” on the Middle East, along with ex-intelligence officers, and military envoys, stressed the minority status of Sh□‘ites in order to accentuate their sectarianism.

Like cockroaches crawling from under the wood-work in the dark hours of night, these “experts” on Isl□m attempted to give the Sh□‘ah Ithn□ ‘Ashar□ traits which belonged to other Sh□‘ite schools like the Ism□‘□liyyah or the Zaydiyyah. They associated Twelver Sh□‘ites with Zayd□ revolutionaries, and the Ism□‘□l□ □*ashash□n* or Assassins, in order to establish that Sh□‘ites were historically a group of extremist rebels who never hesitated to use radically violent methods against their enemies. The enemies of Isl□m employed Ibl□s□ analogies to say that Sh□‘ite Muslims were all murderers. They argued that since the □*ashash□n* or Assassins were Ism□‘□l□s, and the Ism□‘□l□s were Sh□‘ites, then every Sh□‘ite was a potential assassin.

Evidently, both the premises and the conclusion were false. Nevertheless, this syllogism had the expected effect. The press and the airwaves were soon speaking about Sh□‘ite terrorism, Sh□‘ite fundamentalism, Sh□‘ite extremism, as if they were all synonyms. It was imperative for someone to come forward to demonstrate that these terms were the result of false logic or a false logical construct whose sole objective was to demean Sh□‘ite Muslims.

In an attempt to give credence to accusations against Sh□‘ite Muslims, there are those who continue to insist that the terrorist attacks which took place in 1992 and 1994 in the city of Buenos Aires were the work of Sh□‘ite Muslims. In effect, the majority of encyclopedias continue to attribute these crimes to □izbull□h or the Islamic Republic of Iran. Despite such stubbornness, nobody in Argentina believes in these accusations and Argentinean authorities are now exploring an Israeli trail. As a result, Washington is putting pressure on the Argentine government to put an end to its investigation which is starting to annoy the United States and Israel.

The Argentinean people, however, want the guilty parties brought to justice as the events were not without deadly consequence for Argentine society. On March 17th, 1992, a violent explosion destroyed the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires and seriously damaged the adjacent Catholic Church and school. Twenty-nine people were killed and 242 were injured. The deaths were gruesome. Argentine television broadcasted streets littered with human remains and rubble, pieces of mutilated corpses, like the leg of a woman with a sock and shoe which was severed from her body.

In the early days of the investigation, efforts were directed towards the Islamist trail. It was believed that the attack had been committed by a Palestinian suicide bomber who drove a mini-van full of explosives. It was suggested that he was a member of Islamic Jihad who wanted to avenge the death of 'Abbas al-Musawi, the head of the Lebanese Hizbullah, and his family. According to this version, the Buenos Aires operation had been prepared by a group of Pakistanis and coordinated by Mohsen Rabbani, the Cultural Attaché from the Iranian Embassy. This later was even detained, one year later, while he was in Germany, only to be liberated later due to lack of evidence.

On July 18th, 1994, another explosion devastated the Buenos Aires building of the *Asociación Mutual Israelita-Argentina* (AMIA) resulting in 85 deaths and 300 injured. The investigation into this new terrorist bombing also attempted to uncover an Islamist trail. The attack was attributed to a so-called Islamic "kamikazi:" 29 year old Ibrahim Hussein Berro who supposedly drove a vehicle full of explosives. While it is true that Ibrahim Hussein Berro existed, his brother demonstrated that he died in Lebanon several years before and not in the attack in Buenos Aires. Whoever drove the vehicle full of explosives, it could not have been Ibrahim Berro. Years later a warrant was released for the arrest of 'Imad Mughniyyah, a member of the Lebanese Hizbullah. Later, the ex-Ambassador of Iran in Argentina, Hade Soleimanpur, was detained in the United Kingdom but had to be released due to lack of evidence.

All of these elements, which seem to be definitive conclusions, have been reflected for years in various encyclopedias, books, and journalistic articles, although nothing can confirm them. The most interesting thing is that with the passing of time some Argentinean investigative journalists have debunked the versions of events proposed by the Israelis and the Americans, developing their own hypothesis, which is the exact opposite. **According to investigations conducted in Argentina, the two attacks were committed by Israeli agents in order to counter the growing anti-Zionism of the Jewish community in Argentina.** This discovery, however, took place after Vittor published his article in *Epimelia*.

At present, the supposed intellectual or material connection of Islamists to the Buenos Aires attacks has largely lost credibility. The Islamist trail is simply inconsistent with the facts and it for this reason that the American and Israeli governments are pressuring the Argentineans to put an end to their investigation. While it is presently possible to speak about these events with hindsight and tranquility, **the only individual who dared speak about such events, and defend Sh'ite Islam when it was being attacked by international public opinion, was Luis Alberto Vittor.**

Like Prophet Ya□y□, Luis Alberto Vittor was a voice in the wilderness, exposing himself to criticism, threats, and physical danger. Unlike some of the official Islamic authorities who stood still, making themselves complicit through their silence, **Vittor raised his voice and pen in defense of Sh□'ite Isl□m at a time when doing so was associating oneself, explicitly or implicitly, to a Muslim minority of "extremists" and "terrorists**." Putting his trust in Almighty All□h and the solidarity of his fellow Muslims, all of whom were simple believers with no power or political influence, Vittor produced the present work which was viewed as a moral and intellectual duty. Surely, in this lies the greatest value of his work. ***Sh□'ite Isl□m: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy* must be viewed as a work of service in defense of the followers of *ahl al-bayt***. At the time it was written, there was not a single Orientalist, Arabist or Islamologist, in Argentina or abroad, who was willing or capable of defending Sh□'ite Isl□m.

While the Sh□'ite community was being attacked from all sides, some Sunn□ Muslims sought to separate themselves from the Sh□'ites, echoing the arguments of the enemies of Isl□m who claimed that the followers of *ahl al-bayt* were sectarian extremists (*ghul□t*). As if that were not enough, Sh□'ite converts were accused of having links to so-called "Iranian-inspired Islamic terrorism." In order to divert attention from themselves, some sectors of the Sunn□ community insisted on proving the Orientalists thesis correct, accusing the Sh□'ite community of committing the terrorist bombings when the real perpetrators of the atrocities were not even Muslims.

As a result of these actions, many Sh□'ites, both Iranians and Latinos, suffered from severe social discrimination. Many *mu'min□n* [believers] lost their jobs. Many *mu'min□n* were forced out of university, including a group of Iranian medical students. Being both Sh□'ite and Iranian was seen as synonymous with terrorism and criminality. Fear ran so high during those days that, out of the entire community, only six or seven brothers, two of them converts, dared to attend the sole Sh□'ite mosque in the city.

Rather than coming to the rescue of Sh□'ite Muslims who were falsely accused of being violent sectarian terrorists, Orientalists like Bernard Lewis came forth to add fuel to the fire, arguing that there was a historic continuity and an ideological bond between medieval Muslims assassins, who were Ism□'□l□s, and contemporary Sh□'ite fundamentalists or extremists, who were Ja'far□s. For those who dabble in academic dishonesty, they were one and the same: socially maladjusted minorities who resorted to violence and terrorism as their only means of expression.

When one reads *Sh□'ite Isl□m: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy*, it is important to remember the context in which it was created. At a moment in which the enemies of Isl□m were attempting to divide the Ummah, Luis Alberto Vittor pulled up his sleeves and pulled out his pen to demonstrate that Sh□'ite Isl□m, despite being a minority, was as orthodoxy as the majority Sunn□ Isl□m. And not only that, the author demonstrated that Sh□'ite Isl□m was the only group which remained faithful to the will of All□h and the Prophet Mu□ammad: to hold fast to the Two Weighty Treasures, the Qur'□n and the Household of the Prophet.

Besides presenting the Sh□'ite position, the author's goal was to reestablish the balance between

Sunnism and Shī‘ism which some sectors were attempting to destabilize, labeling one group as orthodox and another as sectarian, heterodox, extremist, and heretical. It is for this reason that the author devotes so much time to explaining why it is improper to label Muslims as “fundamentalists.”

Considering the context and extraordinary circumstances in which the book was written, completely changes one’s critical appreciation of the work. ***Shī‘ite Islām: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy*** **was a lone voice denouncing despots in the desert, a strident voice denouncing the indifference of academia and the vested interests of those who sought to define Shī‘ite Islām as a radical, sectarian, heterodox form of Islām, rather than a traditional expression of its orthodoxy and orthopraxis.**

Although the author has accepted that his work to be annotated, he has always insisted that it remain intact as a reflection of the socio-historical context in which it was created. Attempting to modify certain concepts would undermine the very objective of the work, reducing it to a vain theoretical discussion. The author’s goal, of course, was other: to demonstrate that the claims made by the detractors of Shī‘ite Islām were false and illogical and that the fact that Shī‘ite Islām has a minority status does not imply, from an Islamic point of view, that it represents a sect in the sense in the Western Christian sense of the term.

The events of 1992 and 1994 which occurred in the city of Buenos Aires are not a thing of the past. Attempts to support the allegations made against the Shī‘ite Muslims of Argentina continue to be made, accusing them of implication in the terrorist bombings. Despite the fact that fourteen years have passed since this work was originally published, it continues to be current. **The enemies of Islām never sleep and nor do we.**

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Author’s Preface

The article “Shī‘ite Islām: Orthodoxy or Heterodoxy” was first published in 1994 in the journal *Epimeleia: revista de estudios sobre la tradición*. It was written with the purpose of analyzing the various arguments and approaches employed by Western scholars and opinion-makers to characterize “Islamic fundamentalism,” an ill-defined and ill-understood social phenomena occurring in the Muslim world.

The very term “fundamentalism,” as applied to Islām, is inappropriate and arbitrary, and finds its sole justification in the language of the press. The immediate objective of the article was to explain why such

a characterization of Islām was not only erroneous in application, but a serious oversimplification, a tendentious interpretation motivated by a hidden agenda.

The article also sheds light on questions related to the use and abuse of certain arguments. It exposed some of the mistakes made by Orientalists and corrected, once and for all, a series of serious shortcomings. It demonstrated how well-known Arabists and Modernist Muslim thinkers repeatedly misapply various terms. It exposed their misappropriation of Western religious terminology--filled with false assumptions and prejudices--and how they indiscriminately apply them to a wide variety of spiritual traditions.

Those who profess expertise in the study and understanding of Islām and Shī'ism, often without possessing even basic proficiency in Arabic and Persian, take terms from the Western world and attempt to apply them to the Eastern world. They take Christian terminology and attempt to impose it upon Islām.[1] Not only are these technical terms misappropriated, they are applied to traditional Islamic concepts which are taken totally out of context. This common practice is as ludicrous as taking Islamic terminology and applying it to the Christian world. Some scholars could argue that the Catholics are "Shī'ites," followers of the "infallible" Popes. Others would argue that the Catholics are the Sunnīs, and the Catholic Church is the Caliphate. The Protestants would be labeled as "Shī'ites," sectarian heretics who broke from the main body of believers. Yet others would say that the Protestants are "Wahhābis" since they are literalist fundamentalists while the Catholics are "Shī'ites" because of their hermeneutical tradition. Christianity would not be without its ādīfīs like Saint Theresa of Avila, San Juan de la Cruz, Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, Master Eckhardt, John Tauler, and Henry Suso and "martyrs" like Saint Joan of Arc. As misguided as it may be, this practice of imposing a Western religious framework on the Islamic faith has been done with impunity so much so that authors have not even seen the need to justify their extrapolations, to confirm their correctness, or to consider their relevance.

When we first wrote the article, we focused our criticism on Western Orientalism. Now, however, we have extended our critique--and most justifiably so--to the social and political sciences in general. In recent decades, these two fields have erroneously employed certain scientific and non-scientific terms. This includes terms like "fundamentalism" which the social and political sciences apply to anything in the Islamic world which seems reactionary or conservative. In fact, the half-religious, half-political phenomenon they are observing has nothing to do with "fundamentalism." **According to its original meaning, "fundamentalism" denotes a dry literalist spirit, a concept which is completely alien to the Islamic tradition.** As a result, the application of the derogatory term "fundamentalism" to Islām is a distortion of the true nature of things. It reflects an attempt to impose a label by lexical manipulation. To make matters worse, **the application of the term "fundamentalism" gives a false impression of Islām to Westerners. Rather than presenting Islām as it is, they present it as it is not.**[2]

Sacred tradition--the source of all spirituality--and religion, which is its outer aspect--cannot be subjected to the same scrutiny as the pure sciences. One cannot approach a spiritual tradition like a

physicist deals with gravity, a biologist deals with life, a meteorologist deals with the climate or an entomologist deals with insects. Studying religious tradition is not the same as observing natural phenomena. For the sociologist, political scientist or philosopher, it is impossible to split religious phenomenon into bits and pieces with the same callous indifference a coroner employs to dissect a cadaver. According to Positivism, such an aloof attitude is natural and to be expected of any scientist.

While the social sciences are not pure sciences, researchers in these fields also focus on observation. Social scientists employ rigorous methods of research, documentation, and analysis when studying a social system. They use statistics to bring together all the determining factors and conditions in order to describe social change. They attempt, to the highest degree possible, to be as strict and exhaustive as physicists and biologists when dealing with human factors. This scientific spirit forms the very basis of research in the social sciences. However, unlike the pure sciences, which are based on scientific facts, the social sciences rely on human factors, information provided by people, and so-called public opinion, making them particularly susceptible to subjectivity.

From the time the original article was written to the publication of the first English edition of this book over a decade has elapsed. During that time, we have observed how English terms like "fundamentalism" and "radical Islamism," along with Spanish and French terms like *integrismo* and *intégrisme*, have been consistently interchanged as if they were equivalents. These terms were treated as synonyms by specialists in Islamic Studies. They have been and continue to be used by social critics and political analysts when commenting upon foreign policy and international affairs. These spokespersons are often the initial source of public opinion. Subsequently, whether it embellishes or minimizes, public opinion is one of the greatest influences on public life in the Western world.

A nation's likes, dislikes, admiration, indifference and contempt are all sentiments which are based on public opinion. One has only to look at the popular media in the United States for proof of this assertion. **The powers that be are notorious for using public opinion to their advantage to bring people in line with their plans. It is apparent that wars of conquest are no longer waged in the name of expansionism and imperialism.** Whether it is called the New World Order of the Freemasons, the Illuminati, George Monbiot, and George W. Bush; the Jewish Conspiracy of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, Adolf Hitler, and Henry Ford; Karl Krause's World Republic; Aldous Huxley's Brave New World; George Orwell's Big Brother; the World Arrogance or the Great Satan of Imam Khumayni; the Z.O.G. of the Neo-Nazis; the Evil Empire of Paul Hellyer; the Shadow Government, the Trust, the Syndicate, the World Government or the Invisible Empire from popular culture; **globalization--the new term for socio-political and economic world domination--is now being carried out in the name of democracy and freedom of expression, effectively muzzling opposition from human rights activists.**[3] **People are no longer conquered and colonized, they are "liberated" and brought into the fold of Western-style "democracy," the new imperialism with its extreme economic model of carnivorous and cannibalistic capitalism. As for the "freedom of expression," it only applies to imperial propaganda aimed at manufacturing public opinion based on its socio-economic and**

political interests.

Since the message, which is emitted, serves the interest of the powers that be, it comes as no surprise that it has been systematically manipulated.[4] While such spin can be detected by expert analysts, it usually passes unnoticed by the masses. In many cases, the message is diluted by means of subliminal mechanisms which are not recognizable or even perceptible at a conscious level.[5]

This *public opinion*––which is really nothing more but the opinion of the socio–economic elite––is controlled and constructed by means of the mass media. Public opinion influences the minds of people and affects many aspects of their lives: from personal relations to group relations, from religious to political convictions, and even questions of personal taste. If public opinion is manufactured, as Noam Chomsky has eloquently postulated, the social sciences, which depend on the daily offerings of the mass media, find themselves in a particularly dubious position. Within the framework of this conundrum, it is imperative to examine how attempts to construct public opinion by means of the mass media result in what Jürgen Habermas calls a "non–public opinion."[6] It is a "non–public opinion" because––in reality––it merely reflects the interests of a certain sector of political and economic power. The creation of public opinion serves social, economic, and political purposes. Part and parcel of this political and economic sector is to use derogatory terms like "fundamentalism," *intégrisme* or *integrismo* to describe Muslims. By doing so, the *nouveaux maîtres du monde*, the new rulers of the world, as Jean Ziegler calls them, group all Muslims with violent extremists, and isolated groups of radical reformists. In this way, the manufacturers of public opinion act as if the term "fundamentalism" could be universally applied to all those who legitimately defend their traditional political and religious beliefs.

Considering the fact that the mass media is manipulated on a mass scale, the question begs to be asked: "Should the social sciences cast aside their objectivity and simply submit to this 'virtual reality' built upon falsehood and deceit?" The obvious answer is no. It should not and it must not. However, when we look at the cultural landscape in the Western world, when we read newspapers and watch television, we see that many social scientists are merely echoing false and deceitful public opinion. In fact, many of them use the same concepts and terms that social engineers use to falsify the facts. The situation has become so blurred in the social sciences that scholars need to seriously reassess their basic assumptions, academic objectives, and research tools. They need to start addressing these preoccupying epistemological problems. As Barbara Castleton explains:

We live in an age in which a selection of a dozen or so buzz words can turn a nation from protector to aggressor. We live in an age where lies revealed bring no shame in the liar, merely a restatement of the lie in a configuration that both extends and perpetuates it. Ours is not the first era in which this has occurred. History is replete with such episodes, notably the Crusades and the Holocaust. But the direction taken by the West in its pursuit of "terrorists," and in America's attempts to "protect the homeland" from said "terrorists" through a "war on terror" has ceased to have any meaning beyond the utterance of the words themselves.[7]

As any scientist or scholar knows, true science and epistemology is contrary to opinion because opinion is a notoriously flawed source of information. Opinion, be it personal or public, is subjective, and impossible to be validate scientifically. As Gaston Bachelard has pointed out, opinion does not think and when it does, it thinks poorly, turning need into knowledge.[8] Since public opinion is constructed, it can contribute nothing to science unless it is deconstructed à la Jacques Derrida.

The role of the scientist is to overcome opinion, to be utterly objective, to uncover the facts, and to let them speak for themselves. This is even more important for social scientists, those who work with human factors, since prejudice and falsehood can creep into opinion, interfering with the scientific spirit in a multitude of ways. Unless social scientists can overcome this epistemological obstacle––the perilous problem of tainted sources––their results will be flawed and their conclusions will be distorted. If social scientists compromise the scientific spirit, allowing distorted data to interfere with their observations, the result will be a slanted view of reality. These methodological mistakes will be implicit in their theoretical framework, inevitably leading to erroneous conclusions based on false premises.

Unfortunately, due to its reliance on public opinion, the field of social sciences now abounds with bias, resulting in a reductionist rendition of social reality. We could not have it any other way since public opinion, as generated by the mass media, reflects the surreal attitude of those who inhabit the world of "virtual reality." This virtual world has no relation whatsoever to the real world, with actual and factual representations of reality. The virtual world is merely a reflection of television which deforms images, creating a slanted vision of the world. Journalism, too, both oral and written, is aimed at creating public opinion. And it is from journalism that social scientists draw their material for the study of conflicts in the Middle East. **Journalism, to a large extent, is merely officially falsified information.** It describes the Islamic world with inaccurate and tainted terminology. In some cases, it is not only social scientists, but commentators and philosophers, who draw from this same terminology, who err in this way. These professionals, rather than clarifying concepts, employ terms as primitive weapons tossed at one's opponent in a grand scheme of international intrigue.

Within the field of social sciences are those who believe that traditional Islamic society can be conveniently split apart for the purpose of study. They attempt to separate Islm's sociopolitical aspects from its religious and legal ones. They attempt to separate Islm's outer aspects from its inner ones. By isolating elements, rather than studying them as parts of a cohesive system, they attempt to depict Islm as a type of reactionary conservatism. In order to make the definition even more damaging, they label Islm as "fundamentalist," *intégriste* or *integrista*. None of these verbal constructions are capable of providing a proper definition. To use the words of Saint Thomas Aquinas, the signifier and the signified are simply not the same.[9]

If this terminological incoherence, reminiscent of the Tower of Babel, existed solely among Western sociologists and political scientists, there would not be much at which to marvel. However, some modern Arab sociologists like Fimah Mernessi, and even Islmized Western philosophers like Roger Garaudy,

have joined this chorus of confusion. By embracing erroneous terms like “fundamentalism” and *intégrisme*, scholars like Mernessi and Garaudy give them scientific and philosophical legitimacy. Sociologists, political scientists, historians, and social thinkers, all use the terms “fundamentalism,” *intégrisme* and *integrismo* with complete confidence, as if these words expressed a positive reality and a defining characteristic of Islam. What is worse is that some of them use these terms in radically different ways. If we were to apply the judgement of R. Otto with respect to the term “irrational,” we would say that social scientists have made a “field day” or a real obsession of these words.

There are those who argue that sociology, political science, and history-- being reality-based sciences--must work within the framework of facts, concepts, terms, and materials provided by the mass media. However, since the terminology these social scientists use is drawn from the press-which is loaded with inaccuracies--the very basis of their studies can be called into question. If the terminology is incorrect, it undermines the understanding of the social phenomenon being studied. The terms “fundamentalism,” *intégrisme* and *integrismo* are examples of terms which journalists use abusively and irresponsibly. While these concepts can describe a positive reality when used appropriately according to their scientific sense, they are misused by the press, presenting readers with an erroneous interpretation of social events.

It makes little difference to the mass media whether “fundamentalism” is a cause or whether it is a response. For the social sciences, the phenomenon is studied in isolation. It is examined independently of its causes. As a result, the true nature of the subject is lost in thought, pigeonholed, and given the pejorative label of “fundamentalism,” *intégrisme* or *integrismo*. One must wonder whether this biased approach--which fails to contextualize its subject--is not the most blatant form of fundamentalism.

Whether it is close reading, the Feminist Criticism of Simone de Beauvoir, Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixoux; the New Historicism of Michel Foucault, Walter Benjamin, and Mikhail Bakhtin; the Psychoanalytic Criticism of Jacques Lacan; the Structuralism of Roman Jakobson, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Roland Barthes; the Marxist Criticism of Georg Lukács and Keith Ellis; the Postcolonial Criticism of Edward Sa‘id, Homi Bhabha, Benita Parry, Kwame Nkrumah, Albert Memmi, Aimé Césaire, Derek Walcott, and Gayatari Spivak or the Phenomenological Hermeneutics of Paul Ricoeur, Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer or Mario Valdés, a subject should never be studied outside of its context.

As I.M. Lewis asserted almost fifty years ago, “Islam can be analyzed sociologically only within the context of the actual life and...beliefs of living Muslim communities” (2). On what basis, then, do social scientists apply the label of “fundamentalism” to Islamic movements? Have they conducted fieldwork among Muslim activists? Have they analyzed the socio-political and economic causes of Islamic activism? On the contrary, much of what has been written about Islamic fundamentalism has been based on the media. One such book, dealing with the Islamic Revolution of Iran, was based exclusively on newspaper and magazine articles. Since such work is neither scholarship nor investigative journalism, it does not even merit to be mentioned by name. Clearly, if social scientists persist in viewing

their subject in isolation, no religious or political movement which resists globalization will be safe from the labels of "fundamentalism." This is the same reductionist and essentialist attitude adopted by Formalism and New Criticism with regards to literature.

Unless the methodology of the social sciences is modified, unscientific slurs such as "fundamentalism," *intégrisme* or *integrismo* will continue to circulate. Rather than describing and defining social behavior and concepts, terms like "fundamentalism" confuse them, diluting and distorting their true meaning. The only purpose these words play is to obfuscate, disqualify, discredit, abase, and reject…They reflect the very worst of sociological jargon.

As a result of this terminology confusion, it is necessary to clarify certain concepts like "Islamic fundamentalism," *intégrisme islamique*, *integrismo islámico*, and "radical Islamism." Despite the fact that these terms are used synonymously in the mass media as well the academic world, they refer to different political attitudes and currents. The only thing they have in common is that they are rooted in the Islamic cultural universe. Introducing the term "Islamism" or "radical Islamism" into our discussion is relevant as it is another label which is pinned to Muslims on top of "fundamentalism," *intégrisme* and *integrismo* which have been worn down through constant use. As for Sh'ite Islam, it is commonly considered the very manifestation of "radical Islamism" in its most militant and combative form.

In the lexical world, there exist words which are erroneous from every perspective: whether considered etymologically, semantically or lexically. One such term is "Islamic fundamentalism" which is erroneously employed in the French and Spanish sense of *intégrisme* or *integrismo*. All of these terms are drawn from modern Christian religious experience and all predate the phenomenon wrongly labeled as "Islamic fundamentalism," *intégrisme* or *integrismo*. Despite this fact, they are almost exclusively applied to Islam, without taking into consideration that **the term "fundamentalism" was introduced into Christian theological language as the result of a Protestant controversy which took place at the beginning of the twentieth century.** After that, the term was adopted into the language of secular philosophers and historians who were more or less unabashed enemies of both Christianity and Islam.

If we look beyond the present frenzy for the word "fundamentalist," we see that the concept serves to supplant an earlier term: *intégrisme* or *integrismo*. Despite the fact that "fundamentalism," *intégrisme* and *integrismo* have different etymologies they all express the same incorrect concept. As a result, they are interchanged without distinction and are considered synonymous. Rather than a desire for terminological precision, these terms reflect an ideological motive, a means of legitimizing sociologically what is in reality a political objective.

A Catholic writer, when speaking about traditional Islam, might employ the term "fundamentalist," associating it with Protestant conservatism. A Protestant, Marxist or secular liberal--all anti-Catholic to the core--might opt for the term *intégrisme* or *integrismo*, associating it with the reactionary conservative Catholicism of the nineteenth century. As can be seen, the choice of terms depends on the ideological inclination or conviction of the social scientist or philosopher. **The selection of terms like**

“fundamentalism,” *intégrisme*, *integrismo*, and “radical Islamism” are not casual or arbitrary. They are used as part of a deliberate and intentional political policy.

The general application of terms like “fundamentalism,” *intégrisme*, *integrismo*, and “radical Islamism” to every Islamic group which opposes Western secularism and cultural imperialism misleads those who seek to understand the true nature of Islam. This terminological mudslinging leads to confusion, giving the impression that traditional Muslims reflect the same reactionary and conservative attitude as some recalcitrant sectors of Christianity. It gives the impression that Muslim “fundamentalists” are the Islamic equivalent of Christian fundamentalists.

The use of terms like “fundamentalist,” *intégriste*, *integrista*, and “radical Islamist” may be well-established in the press; however, the language of the media merely reflects the vague, imprecise and indefinite terminology from the colloquial language. Consequently, it is not well-adapted to the use of science. It can only be of relative value to those who hide their ideological motives under the façade of a pseudo-scientific language.

The use of imprecise notions to describe the socio-political reality of Islam is clearly objectionable. It is inappropriate because it forces the reader to make mental contortions in search for the meaning behind such empty terms such as “fundamentalism,” *intégrisme*, *integrismo* and “radical Islamism.” There is no doubt that reality-based sciences are based on information taken from daily life. This applies to psychology, sociology, political science, history, and so forth. However, one cannot construct something concrete on the basis of concepts which are predicated on an entirely different socio-historical experience. If concepts are transformed into fact, they will vanish as soon as one attempts to reduce them to an abstract formula. Consequently, any sociological concept which is devoid of an intelligible and objective structure is inconceivable. Any sociological concept must refer to the concrete relation with an object. It must constitute a typical plexus of the significant intentions grouped together in the definition of the social reality. Let us analyze, then, the term “fundamentalism.”

Examining any aspect of the Islamic world on the basis of erroneous terms like “fundamentalism,” *intégrisme* or *integrismo* can only lead to perilous postulations. As we explained before, these terms are erroneous because they fail to consider the correlations between doctrine and social groups. As a result, the use of such terms prevents an objective analysis of the relationship between traditional Islamic thought, the Modernist mentality or any other political and religious currents.

No religious or political movement can be understood from the outside. It is essential to examine any such movements within the broader doctrinal controversies from which they surge and develop. In the case of traditional Islamic though, this is particularly relevant. **When applied to Christianity, the term fundamentalism fits the context: it has antecedents, off-chutes, and aberrations. When applied to Islam, the term *fundamentalism* is outside the framework of its socio-religious evolution.**

Unlike Christian fundamentalism, which has a history and a development which can be traced, *Islamic*

fundamentalism does not reflect a concrete doctrine like liberalism, fascism, socialism, communism or anarchism. The terms *Islamic fundamentalism*, *Islamic fascism*, *intégrisme* and *integrismo* are applied to a vast array of imprecise ideas covering virtually every political current in Islam. These multifarious manifestations of *intégrisme* or *integrismo* share a combination of social concern with religious doctrine. At the same time, they constitute other complex realities which are frequently only definable by their opposites.

As we have seen, the mass media is responsible for spreading falsehood and legitimizing slanderous and scientifically inaccurate terms like "fundamentalism," *intégrisme*, *integrismo* and "radical Islamism." This does not mean that the mass media is the mother of all evil––quite the contrary––it is the very concept of secular modernity and globalization, the "progressive" anti–traditional attitude of modern man which poses the greatest threat to humanity.

From the time concepts like secularism and Positivism first emerged in the West, the world has been transformed into a "global village," according to the definition of Marshall McLuhan. It is not the mass media, then, which is the cause of certain aberrations of interpretation which offend the good sense of any critic. It is part and parcel of the Western worldview.

As for us, we will continue to criticize social scientists and philosophers for converting "opinion" into "fact." While we risk sounding like a "fundamentalist," *intégriste* or *integrista*, our stance forms part of a long line of spiritual resistance to all attempts to homogenize the world and the word, seeking to lower language to the lowest common denominator; in this case, taking the language of science down to the level of the mass media.

As social scientist and philosopher, we find it difficult to digest that scholars in the social sciences––particularly anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists and modern historians––have refused to redefine the terms "fundamentalism," *intégrisme* or *integrismo*. Despite the rich body of terminology at their disposition and their ability to coin new terms, they have failed to reconsider the terms "fundamentalism," *intégrisme* or *integrismo*. This scholarly stagnation is startling considering the central importance of scientifically accurate terms to the social sciences. At the very least, one would have expected social scientists to employ different terms than the biased ones used by political commentators and opinion makers. It is certainly strange to see social scientists and philosophers give credibility to terms like *intégrisme* or *integrismo* when their use is technically inappropriate. Such terms contribute nothing to scholarship, nor do they enrich the language of journalism.

When people speak of "Islamic fundamentalism," they often forget that "fundamentalism" is a modern Christian term. Even though the concept has left its Christian origin and found broader applications, it continues to convey the idea of American Protestantism. Its application to Islam, which is completely distinct, contributes nothing to the understanding of the social reality in question.

The term "fundamentalism" may be appropriate as an analogy when comparing Christianity to Islam. In

the Muslim world, the term “fundamentalist” might be partially applicable to radical reformist movements like Wahhabism or Salafism.[10] However, if the term “fundamentalism” ceases to be used as an analogy and is considered as a definition, the end result is an erroneous oversimplification. We must always remember that fundamentalism is rooted in American Protestantism. The term does not refer to a universal phenomenon and is applicable exclusively to certain Christian currents in the United States.

Fundamentalism, per se, refers to a form of American Protestantism which opposes scientific and hermeneutical methods of scriptural criticism. Christian fundamentalists adopt a reactionary attitude which insists on a literal interpretation of the Bible. This is especially so with regards to those parts of the Scripture which refer to Creation. As a result of a literalist reading of Genesis, Christian fundamentalists reject the modern theory of biological evolution. As a result of this attitude, the issue of teaching evolution in public schools became a political controversy. Defending the infallibility of Scripture, Protestant fundamentalists attempted to organize a solid Christian block against Darwin’s theory of evolution.

Besides American Protestantism, there are other doomsday cults and charismatic evangelical movements that interpret contemporary events in light of biblical prophecy. Not only are they opposed to Western secularism, they are fervent defenders of the cultural supremacy and religious hegemony of Christian civilization. Religious fundamentalism, in the true sense of the term, is a purely Western phenomenon. It is the product of the “cultural wars” which took place at the beginning of the twentieth century and which have polarized American society into secular liberal democrats and neo-conservative right-wing Christian fundamentalists

The origin of Christian religious fundamentalism in the United States traces back to 1830. This was a period in which evangelical Protestantism had essentially become the official religion of American civil society. National identity was based on the perception that the United States was a Christian country. The defense of Christianity was viewed as the law of the land. During the nineteenth century, and despite the process of secularization and the separation of Church and State, Protestant Evangelism undeniably maintained its hegemony with regards to the religious, cultural and social life in the United States.

It was in this context, between 1910 and 1915, that a group of 64 Anglo-Americans published a series of twelve booklets titled *The Fundamentals: A Testimony to the Truth* which caused a controversy between two Christian currents: a radical conservative one and a more theologically liberal one. Written from a conservative Protestant perspective, the goal of the work was to confront modern liberal Christians who interpreted the Gospel in light of secular modernity. As a result of advances in science and scholarship, these liberal Christians came to view certain Biblical passages as allegorical and metaphorical rather than historical. This was fiercely opposed by Christian fundamentalists who insisted that the Bible was the literal word of God which could not be subjected to scientific scrutiny.

As a whole, *The Fundamentals* established five points which became the basis of Christian

fundamentalist identity: 1) the belief in divine inspiration and the infallibility of the Bible; 2) the belief in the divinity of Jesus, including his virgin birth; 3) the belief in his physical resurrection; 4) the belief in redemption through Christ's sacrifice on the cross; and, finally, 5) the belief in the immanent second coming of Jesus Christ. Adherence to these five fundamentals became a symbolic starting point for the fundamentalist movement. The title of the publication was used to identify this literalist movement within American Protestantism, which already had a long history.

As can clearly be gathered, fundamentalism is Christian in origin and is undoubtedly associated with Protestantism. Fundamentalism developed in the United States as a modern reaction of American conservatism. It is essentially anti-liberal and anti-modern. It opposes the critical analysis of the Bible, the secularization of the educational system, and Darwin's theory of evolution. Furthermore, it opposes socio-cultural, linguistic and racial diversity in American society.

It was only in the 1920's that Protestant fundamentalism joined its forces to fight its cultural and legal battles. They declared war against "heretical" modernism, secular humanism, and the liberal ideas circulating among Christians who were open to Darwinism, Freudism, and Marxism, which were being taught in high schools and universities throughout the country. Stressing the infallibility of the Bible and the messianic mission of the American people, Protestant fundamentalists struggled against modern liberal thought which they viewed as a foreign influence on the "American way of life."

For most of the twentieth century, Christian fundamentalists viewed Catholicism, secularism, and Socialism, as the greatest threats to their ideology. The first line of battle between fundamentalists and secular liberals was drawn around the teaching of evolution in the public school system. While the fundamentalists were able to win cases against Darwinist professors, the fall-back from public opinion was costly as Christian fundamentalists came across as backwards and intolerant. Their anti-modernist rhetoric had little resonance with an American society firmly focused on perpetual progress. **It is on the basis of this pre-existing public opinion of Christian fundamentalists that the mass media constructed the image of "Islamic fundamentalism,"** associating it excessively with the American Protestant fundamentalism of that period.

Protestant fundamentalism spread much easier in the southern states and the Mid-West than it did in the western and north-eastern states. The fundamentalist lobby was so strong in Tennessee that the state effectively prohibited the teaching of the theory of evolution, the culmination of the famous trail against Professor John Thomas Scopes in 1925. The law was later deemed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court of the United States in 1968. Despite this set-back, fundamentalist efforts opposing the teaching of biological evolution have continued to this day under the guise of presenting a "balanced view" of the two theories--evolutionism and creationism--and the recent incorporation of the "theory of intelligent design."

After 1925, Protestant fundamentalism lost much of its credibility. Unable to unite the nation under the banner of fighting the enemies of Christianity, the fundamentalist movement remained relatively inactive

in American society for the next fifty years. Nonetheless, the years of absence from the public sphere helped renew the ranks of the fundamentalist forces. The fundamentalists survived as a marginalized religious movement and remained vigorously persistent. It was thus that a Protestant fundamentalist sub-culture came to be created in the United States.

Although not numerous, Christian fundamentalists represents a solid, well-organized group with a strong identity. Protestant fundamentalists have attempted to present themselves as an alternative to liberalism, Catholicism and, in recent decades, to Islam, which has spread rapidly among African Americans. As part of their evangelical mission, fundamentalists have created their own particularly powerful press on top of their already Abundant body of publications thus helping to spread their theological message.

In the early 1930s, the programs *Old Fashion Revival* and *Lutheran Hour* greatly increased the fundamentalist presence in the mass media. In 1941, Carl McIntire, one of the leading fundamentalists in the Presbyterian Church, created the ACCC, the American Council of Christian Churches, to counter the creation of liberal organizations organized around the ecumenical FCC or Federal Council of Churches.

After the Second World War, the ACCC became one of the founders of the International Fundamentalist Council and one of the main opponents of the World Council of Churches. McIntire, the founder of the ACCC, and host of *20th Century Reformation Hour*, became the most fervent and closest collaborator of Joseph McCarthy, the Senator for Wisconsin and Chief of the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, notorious for the famous "witch hunts" he started during the presidency of Harry Truman. McIntire, the fundamentalist leader, would prepare black lists of pastors suspected of collaborating with the Communists and would hand them to McCarthy. McIntire, who crusaded against communism, ecumenism, and liberal theology, was convinced that the new translation of the Bible, the Revised Standard Version, was the result of a "red conspiracy."

All of these factors contributed to the resurgence of fundamentalism in the public sphere and political activity in the 70's and 80's and its impact on Presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush has been decisive. In the most recent Presidential elections in the United States, the neo-conservative protestant fundamentalist camp turned towards George W. Bush just like secular liberals turned towards John Kerry.[11]

In light of the above, it can be seen that **the term "fundamentalism"--as applied to Islam--has a pejorative connotation**. Originally, the term fundamentalism represented an intolerant attitude combined with a literalist interpretation of the Scriptures which was devoid of spirituality. When applied to Islam, however, the term "fundamentalist" represents a categorical rejection of modernism, secularism, and pluralism. While the meaning of the word has shifted semantically, it also serves as a politically motivated slur which poorly describes a social phenomenon.

As regards the other term, *integrismo*, it was first used in 1898 by Cándido Nocedal, a Spanish politician and journalist of Catholic faith, founder of the *Partido Integrista*. The term was used in the party's political

organ, *La Constancia*. It was also used by Cándido Nocedal's son, the Spanish journalist and playwright, Ramón Nocedal y Romea, the founder of the newspaper *El Siglo Futuro*. The term *integrista* was employed by the *Partido Integrista* to designate a political attempt to *integrate* and *unite* all Catholic and Republican forces opposed to progressive liberal policies under the banner of Isabel II and the Spanish monarchy.

In our days, the words "fundamentalism," *intégrisme* and *integrismo* are applied to completely different issues, thus impeding a correct understanding of the actual phenomenon. Unfortunately, these terms continue to circulate from article to article and from book to book, gaining more contemptuous connotations with each subsequent use. To add chaos to confusion, there are scholars who insist that there are different types of "fundamentalism," *intégrisme* and *integrismo*. This amplification, multiplication, and variation of these base terms––which are inherently flawed––makes it increasingly difficult to differentiate between the American Protestantism––which is truly fundamentalist––and traditional Islamic thought emanating from the Muslim world. The very ambiguity of the term "fundamentalist," *intégriste* and *integrismo*, should be sufficient to demonstrate that they do not designate anything objectively. They merely gather everything which is deemed intolerant under the same subjective umbrella.

The terms "fundamentalism," *intégrisme* and *integrismo* do not provide an objective description the Islamic phenomena they are supposed to describe. As a result, the validity of these terms cannot be acknowledged. They simply do not meet the scholarly standards established by the social sciences. Rather than reflecting a reality, the application of terms like "fundamentalism," *intégrisme* and *integrismo* to Islam manifests a psychological problem on the part of the observer. Since the observer is biased, the observer is subjective. Since the observer is subjective, the observer makes value judgments, dismissing as backwards anything which is contrary to personal concepts of progress and modernity. The observer views Islam as an obstacle to personal advancement. The observer is terrified by the term "fundamentalist," particularly when preceded by the adjective "Islamic," reflecting the observer's insecurity as well as an utter ignorance of the true nature of Islam. In fact, **if what is wrongly labeled "Islamic fundamentalism" were properly defined, it would no longer arouse fear**.

To object to the shortcomings of terms like "fundamentalism," *intégriste*, *integrista*, and "radical Islamist" is not a mere intellectual exercise. Besides being used as weapons against Islam, these terms are full of conceptual flaws. They impede a proper description of the phenomena in question because they identify it erroneously. **When Westerners think about "Islamic fundamentalism," they are not thinking about a spiritual tradition, but rather a type of Christian religious extremism characterized by a rejection of science, an attitude which is completely alien to Islam**. If it is an opposition to modernity which they wish to characterize, then it might be proper to qualify some types of Islamic activism as "traditionalism." This term, it should be noted, is coined for descriptive purposes. It is not used pejoratively as we have no malicious intent to discredit those who oppose the Western worldview.

As a result of this terminological confusion, we wrote a series of articles between 1994 and 1998 in which we attempted to differentiate between Protestant fundamentalists and Catholic *integristas* from the ill-named "Islamic fundamentalists" or *integristas.* 12 We referred to the latter as "principialists" rather than *integristas* or "fundamentalists."13 The term "principialist" is far better suited to describe those who adhere to the principles of faith than term "fundamentalist," with its strong right-wing Christian connotations. The term "principialist" is also the correct translation for the Arabic *u□□/ al-d□n* or the Basic Principles of Faith.

We proposed the term *principialist*, not to add another label, but as an objective acknowledgment that in Isl□m following the principles of faith is neither backwards nor the reflection of a medieval mentality. The principles of faith [*u□□/ al-d□n*] are the pillars [*al-ark□n*] on which any interpretation [*ijtih□d*] of Isl□m rests: its formulation, articulation, and development. At the same time, the *u□□/ al-d□n* represent the metaphysical or transcendent principles of the illuminative wisdom of Islamic Gnosis. The concept of the *u□□/ al-d□n* can also be translated as "roots," "bases," or "basic components" of faith. The *u□□/ al-d□n* represent the cultural foundation of what is erroneously labeled as Islamic fundamentalism. The *u□□/ al-d□n* are the roots or foundation of Isl□m because the term *a□/*, the singular form of *u□□/*, contains all of these shades of meaning.

The correct term to describe those who defend the integrity of traditional Islamic principles would be "Islamic principialists," which is far better than "Islamic fundamentalists," as the term "principialist" indicates a call for a return to the principles of Isl□m. What we refer to as "traditional principialism" is the common cultural foundation of Islamic thought. Like a polished diamond, "traditional principialism" presents multiple faces, reflecting different points of view with respect to political and doctrinal questions, yet which always emphasizes a strong Islamic identity.

Whether they are from the East or from the West, whether they are traditional activists or radical reformists, **Muslims have no doubt that Isl□m is the solution to all the problems faced by the world today.** This conviction is based on the fact that the Prophet Mu□ammad, as the Final Messenger of God [*Ras□l All□h*], brought forth a revelation, the Qur'□n, which would last until the end of times. **However, moderate or radical Muslims may be in the eyes of the Western world, they universally agree that Isl□m can solve every single economic, political or personal problem.** On the same token, these principles constitute the pillars or foundations [*al-ark□n*] of the Islamic tradition. These principles have governed the formation of Isl□m, its expression, and the development of its legal code.

At the same time, these principles are the metaphysical foundations of Isl□m. They transcend the limitations of the legal experience. They extend to speculative or contemplative matters of Gnostic illumination. They lead to Divine Truth, the Primal Cause, the source from which all knowledge flows as a guide to human beings, covering every dimension of human existence. For Muslims, the *u□□/ al-d□n* are *universal unitarian principles* which allow us to perceive the multiplicity within Divine Unity [*al-taw□□d*].

Besides Islam, all of the great religious, philosophical or legal traditions of the world are *principialist* because they are all based on their respective doctrinal principles. As the famous saying of Latin philosophers goes, *nihil est sine ratione*, "Nothing is without a reason." For many people, including a large number of specialists, the first problem posed by a study of Islamic movements is as elementary as the inappropriate use of the term "fundamentalism."

In general terms, the word "fundamentalism" can be used with extraordinary dexterity. It can be applied to many differing religious, political, and social phenomena. This very versatility, however, is the single greatest proof that the term is nothing more than an insidious and malicious label rather than the true formulation of a concept solidly grounded in a sociological, political or historical description.

Furthermore, the use of the term "fundamentalism," with regards to Islam, excludes the notion of spiritual tradition. This is because the term "fundamentalism" refers to modern attitudes which, by definition, are anti-traditional. **In the Islamic context, so-called "fundamentalism" is actually a traditional attitude in defense of the immutable principles of divine truth.** It is certainly strange to see how quickly certain ideas spread, imposing themselves with authority, when in fact, as in the case of "fundamentalism," they are a recent invention.

Considering this background of bias towards Islam, no sociological, political or historical study on so-called "Islamic fundamentalism," *intégrisme* or *integrismo* can be entirely objective. Rather than attempting to understand the phenomenon, they have simply labeled it, avoiding any other explanation. At no point in time have Western scholars considered that what is perceived on the outside as "fundamentalism," *intégrisme* or *integrismo*, may in fact correspond to an entirely different type of social conduct. The very term "fundamentalist" has become hopelessly confused due to excessive comparisons to the Christian model: be it Protestant fundamentalism or Catholic *intégrisme* or *integrismo*.

The use of terms like "fundamentalism," *intégrisme* and *integrismo* to refer to Islamic activism manifests "the fallacy of comparing Christian phenomena to Muslim phenomena. It is the proverbial case of comparing apples to oranges or, in this case, apples to cactus. By doing so, one commits an implicit logical error. Once established, however, and conveniently disseminated, terms like "fundamentalism," *intégrisme* and *integrismo* have become accepted by specialists as official truth and objective reality. As we have seen, however, these terms are not the least bit objective; they were drawn from Christian religious terminology and imposed on Islam when the model simply does not fit the mould.

Terminological half-truths can only be maintained by eradicating any conceptual differences, thus negating any distinctive traits in the observed phenomena. When one wishes to mislead, to misguide, to conceal and to camouflage a reality, there is nothing more fitting than reductionism. As a result, **whether they are Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Hindu or Muslim, those who adhere to their principles of faith, their traditional belief, and reject modernity, secularization and globalization, are denounced as irrational "fundamentalists,"** without the desire to understand or expose the reasons for

their resistance.

The result of this biased outlook, this desire to assimilate, to confine, to reduce, and to redefine reality, can be seen in the social sciences when scholars attempt to make the facts fit the definition. By doing so, they undermine a true interpretation of “Islamic fundamentalism” as a legitimate form of traditional resistance against an invading cultural force. **What is erroneously described as “Islamic fundamentalism” is the normal defensive mechanism of a healthy organism against a foreign body, a phenomenon described as “Occidentosis” by Jalal Aal A□mad and “Westoxication” by ‘Al□ Shariat□.**

Clearly, the biased approach of the social sciences is self-evident. The stubborn desire to follow a line of thought which goes against the observed facts, blindly following footsteps founded on fallacy, impedes any possibility of real research. Social scientists need to be reminded that the term *investigate* comes from the Latin *investigare* which means to “carefully research,” “to follow the path,” and to “discover.” It is derived from *vestigare* which means “to follow the track,” “to find the path,” and to “discover the traces,” in other words, the *vestigio*, from the Latin *vestigium* or “trace.” Any approach which claims to be critical and scientific, but which does not meet these conditions, does not merit to be called investigation or research.

If one wishes to identify scholars who seek to subvert Isl□m, it is quite simple: their works have the sole purpose of reinforcing the belief in “Islamic fundamentalism.” As a result of their myopic approach, they refuse to examine any evidence that might lead to a rectification or refutation of the concept in question, replacing the inexact term with one of greater precision. In other words, the approach of these scholars is biased from the beginning. Rather than being empirical from the beginning, letting the facts lead them to a conclusion, they commence their research with a thesis they seek to confirm at any cost.

In science, the theory needs to fit the facts. In pseudo-science, the facts are made to fit the theory. When studying Isl□m, many scholars collect evidence to support their hypothesis that Muslims are “fundamentalists,” failing to pursue other possibilities that might invalidate their arguments. As can be appreciated, this is not the approach of a scientist. It is the approach of a dogmatic fanatic: one who holds on to his dogma at all cost, refusing to examine other avenues.

When it comes to describing a social reality, sociology and political science already have a large body of technical terms. These words gain credibility through their use in the daily press which loads them with popular notions, giving rise to substantial interference. Considering this rich body of terminology, it is inconceivable that there does not exist a noun which can describe the phenomenon knows erroneously as “fundamentalism.” **Of all religions, Isl□m is the tradition which is the most opposed to the literal interpretation of Scripture.** It opposes any reading of the Qur’□n which does not consider the various layers of meaning and their interrelationship. The Qur’□n itself is opposed to literal exegesis. As the Prophet Mu□ammad explained, the Qur’□n has seven layers of meaning, and each of these seven levels contain numerous other levels of meaning which help interpret the others.[14] Both □□f□ and Sh□‘ite

Gnostics share this point of view.

Since ▯▯f▯sm and Sh▯'ism are both spiritual branches of Isl▯m, they are the ones that least deserve the groundless label of "fundamentalism." None of these two branches of Isl▯m engage in a dry literalist interpretation of the Scripture or the Prophetic Traditions and neither of them adopt characteristics of Catholic political conservatism known as *integrismo*.

Islamic activists are not "fundamentalists." With the exception of the Wahh▯bis, they are not literalists. Islamic activists are not opposed to science and modernity. They are opposed to secularism. Merely because they are opposed to liberalism does not mean that they are conservatives. They are political and economic centrists. If one does not wish to accept our proposal to replace the term "fundamentalist" with that of "traditional principialists," then it would suffice to simply refer to them as "traditionalists." Islamic activists are traditional Muslims who advocate a re-rooting in the principles of faith.

Our goal in writing this preface to the English edition is to call for greater accuracy in socio-political, religious, and philosophical terminology. Besides providing a proper definition for the term "fundamentalism," we explained the nature of this religious phenomenon. We examined whether its application to Isl▯m was justified and found that it was excessive.

The term "fundamentalism," when applied to Isl▯m, simply fails to distinguish between radical reformist literalists like the Wahh▯bis and genuine Muslims, disenchanted with secularism and liberalism, who wish to defend the fundamentals of faith of Isl▯m from outside interference or distortion.

We noted that the term "fundamentalist," traditionally applied to literalist Protestants, is now almost exclusively applied to radical, violent, and intolerant expressions of Isl▯m, without analyzing the problem in depth. When properly contextualized, so-called **"Islamic fundamentalism" is not a cause, it is an effect. It is not an action, it is a reaction. It is not aggressive, it is defensive. It is a response to centuries of Western colonialism and cultural imperialism.**

As part of its anti-Islamic onslaught, the Western world tries and tests the patience of Muslims, deliberately provoking them by insulting their faith, their religious symbols, mocking their lifestyle, the values they most treasure, and even slandering the Prophet Mu▯ammad. These provocations are not isolated incidents. They form part of a campaign to offend Muslim sensibilities organized by Western operatives and *agents-provocateurs*. Their purpose is two-fold. Their first goal is to determine the depth of commitment to Isl▯m in a certain region, to see whether more political pressure needs to be placed or whether it can be eased. The second goal is to incite violent reactions from Muslims in order to depict them as intolerant and backwards.

In most cases, Western media focuses exclusively on the effect, and not on the cause. In the event that they mention the cause, they never contextualize it. They trivialize the offence to make the reaction seem all the more absurd to Western readers and viewers. Western arrogance, with its notions of cultural supremacy towards traditional cultures continues to be a source of permanent conflict throughout

the world. **Unless people are Western in their attitude, attire, and lifestyle, they are condemned as backwards. This attitude of cultural superiority is no longer a simple prejudice. It has become a motive to encourage cultural, linguistic, and political assimilation of the entire Islamic world.**

Many "progressive" Westerners are fascinated with showing off their "cultural superiority." They are fond of contrasting their "tolerance" with traditional cultures which, for the sole fact that they are not ostentatiously "modern," are deemed backwards. In the Western world, it suffices for a Muslim student to appear in public with some "ostentatious" religious symbol like the *ijab* to offend the sensibilities of French and Québecois politicians. As soon as an incident like this comes to the fore, reactionary secular fundamentalists, the guardians of the flame of liberty which burns in the altar of modernity, rush forth in the name of "democratic values." They rise up to show off their "progressive mentality" and their incomparable "cultural superiority." They pass laws suppressing the civil and religious liberties of Muslim women which, had they been passed by so-called "Islamic fundamentalists," would have been denounced as backwards and medieval when in fact the laws of modesty called for by Muslim activists are merely a normal defensive reaction to so-called "progressive" and "modern" ideas.

In the Western world, "freedom of expression," "democracy," "liberalism" and "secularism" have all been used as a double-edged sword. As the Native American saying goes: "The white man speaks with a forked tongue." With the help of the mass media, terms like "freedom of expression," "democracy," "liberalism," and "secularism" are a highly effective instrument. They serve to construct public opinion in accord with the interests of the powers that be, supporting or discrediting any movement in accord with their interests.

The Muslims of the world have long understood the hypocrisy of Western rhetoric. However, as Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Fadlullah observed in the 1980's, the West claims to defend human rights and international justice while violating them at home and abroad: "Human rights are for them, not us." **Proud of its double-speak and unveiled hypocrisy, the Western world demands the Islamic world to respect freedom of religion and freedom of conscience while at the same time denying those liberties to the Muslims living in their midst, by prohibiting "ostentatious displays of religious symbols."** If Muslims nations require women to cover themselves, it is denounced as an oppressive violation of human rights. If Western nations oblige Muslim women to uncover themselves, it is viewed as an act of progress. The double-standards of the Western world speak for themselves.[15]

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1. Editor's Note: While most Orientalists have traditionally compared Sh'ites to Protestants, and Sunnis to Catholics, Bernard Lewis has suggested that the Sunnis are Protestants and the Sh'ites are Catholics. See: Lewis, Bernard. Islm in History: Ideas, People, and Events in the Middle East.
2. Editor's Note: Take, for example, the depiction of Arabs and Muslims by Hollywood. In Reel Bad Arabs, a comprehensive study of nearly one thousand films, Jack Shaheen has documented the tendency to portray Muslim Arabs as Public Enemy #1; brutal, heartless, uncivilized "others" bent on terrorizing civilized Westerners. Another older, but still useful, book is Edward Sa'd's Covering Islm: How the Media and the Experts Determine How we See the Rest of the World.
3. Author's Note: For more on the subject, see: Morrow, John Andrew "The Impact of Globalization on the Arabic Language." Intercultural Communication Studies (2007); and the anonymously published review of Scott Ritter's Target Iran: The Truth about the White House's Plans for Regime Change which appeared in Crescent International in June of 2007.
4. Author's Note: The bibliography on this subject is extensive. Consequently, we shall limit ourselves to suggesting a few introductory titles. Regarding the psychological manipulation of public opinion, see: Schiller, H.I., Los manipuladores de cerebros, Ed. Gedisa, (Buenos Aires 1974); for the use of stereotypes to defend political interests and to construct public opinion, see the following classic work: Lipmann, W., Public Opinion, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich (New York 1922). The latter work is available in a Spanish translation under the title of La opinión pública, Compañía Fabril Editora (Buenos Aires 1949). The third and eight parts are especially relevant. For more recent work on the topic, see: Price, V., Public Opinion, Sage Publications (Newbury Park, California, 1992).
For a clear example of media manipulation used to influence public opinion, we need look at no further than the treatment of the war in Iraq. The media coverage of this war by major broadcasting corporations like CNN highlights the way information is perverted by what Mattelart has labeled the "global democractic marketplace" in which the economic elite has become the political elite. During the Gulf War and the present invasion and occupation of Iraq we have witnessed various strategies of disinformation and media manipulation. Information has been censured, altered, and even invented in order to manipulate public opinion. This transmission of falsified information could only have been made possible through the complicity of the media conglomerates and the military and political establishment. This has been highlighted by Susan L. Carruthers who denounced the fact that the Rendon Group was hired to organize the clandestine propaganda campaigns of the Pentagon. Cfr. Carruthers, S. L., The Media at War, Ed. Macmillan Press Ltd., (London, 2000), 142–43. She says, Indeed, to understand how television became 'Pentavision,' it is necessary to consider not just how negative dimensions of the management system prevented news media from reporting certain aspects of the war but how readily reporters succumbed to the positive side of news management, relaying event through the eyes, and in the terminology, of the military. [...] Euphemisms were the order of the day. Emitting a stream of 'bovine scatology' (one of Schwarzkopf's more colorful coinages, though applied by him to journalists' stupid questions rather than to the briefings) the briefer used opaque jargon to obscure reality, so that civilian casualties became 'collateral damage' while 'degrading capabilities' was the preferred substitution for bombing.
For more on this issue, see: Mattelart, A., Historia de la utopía planetaria. De la ciudad profética a la sociedad global, Ediciones Paidós Ibérica, (Barcelona 2000), 431–32.
5. Author's Note: Cfr. Chomsky, N. and Herman, E., Los guardianes de la libertad, Editorial Grijalbo–Mondadori, (Barcelona, 1990):
The mass media acts like a system of transmission of messages and symbols for the average citizen. Its function is to entertain and to inform as well as inculcating values, beliefs, and modes of behavior in people that will ensure that they integrate into the institutional structures of society. In a world in which wealth is concentrated and in which there are great conflicts of interest between the classes, the fulfillment of such a role requires systematic propagation.
6. Author's Note: Cfr. Habermas, J., Conciencia moral y acción comunicativa, Editorial Península, (Barcelona. 1985).

7. Author's Note: The gravest terrorist threat in the world comes from its nuclear superpowers who threaten the planet with complete annihilation. For a striking analysis of the subject, see the anonymous review of Dr. Helen Caldicott's The New Nuclear Danger: George W. Bush's Military-Industrial Complex published in Crescent International in May of 2007.

8. Author's Note: Cfr. Bachelard, G. La formation de l'esprit scientifique. Paris, Librairie philosophique Vrin, 1999 (1ère édition : 1938), chapitre 1er; 13-14:

La science…s'oppose absolument à l'opinion. S'il lui arrive, sur un point particulier, de légitimer l'opinion, c'est pour d'autres raisons que celles qui fondent l'opinion; de sorte que l'opinion a, en droit, toujours tort. L'opinion pense mal; elle ne pense pas: elle traduit des besoins en connaissances. En désignant les objets par leur utilité, elle s'interdit de les connaître. On ne peut rien fonder sur l'opinion: Il faut d'abord la détruire. Elle est le premier obstacle à surmonter. Il ne suffirait pas, par exemple, de la rectifier sur des points particuliers, en maintenant… L'esprit scientifique nous interdit d'avoir une opinion sur des questions que nous ne comprenons pas, sur des questions que nous ne savons pas formuler clairement.

[Science…is absolutely opposed to opinion. If it happens to confirm opinion, it is based on reasons other than opinion because opinion, in and of itself, is always wrong. Opinion does not think properly. It does not think for itself. Opinion turns need into knowledge. By designating objects on the basis of their need, opinion prevents a proper understanding of them. Nothing can be based on opinion: it must first be destroyed. Opinion is the first obstacle which must be surmounted. It would not suffice, for example, to correct some aspects of it at the moment… The scientific spirit forbids us from having an opinion on questions which we do not understand, on questions we do not even know how to formulate clearly.]

9. Authors' Note: S. Tomás, Summa Theol. I, XIII, 8: Non est semper idem id a quo imponitur nomen ad significandum, et id ad quod significandum nomen imponitur.

10. Author's Note: As Morrow explains in Arabic, Islām, and the Allāh Lexicon, the wahhābiyyah and salafiyyah follow a literalist and essentialist interpretation of Islām which stands in sharp contrast to the intellectual and hermeneutic traditions of the mainstream Sunnī, Shī'ah and ṣūfī. In an attempt to "return to the roots of Islām," and "follow the letter of the law" as opposed to its spirit, the Salafīs wish to disregard and even wipe out fourteen centuries of sound scholarship (48). For more on the literalist approach of the Wahhābīs, see Wrestling Islām from the Extremists by Khaled Abou El Fadl and Islām, Fundamentalism, and the Betrayal of Tradition, edited by Joseph Lumbard.

11. Author's Note: For more on the rise of the Christian right in the United States, see the anonymously published review of Chris Hedges' American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America which appeared in the August 2007 edition Crescent International under the title "Incisive Analysis of the Emergence of the Christian Right in America."

12. Author's Note: Cfr. Vittor, L. A., "La Religión en el mundo contemporáneo: El fundamentalismo como encrucijada entre la tradición y la modernidad" en Enfoques. Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Comunicación (Buenos Aires 1998), Año I, Nº 4; 11-23; as well as "Situación actual del pensamiento tradicional en el mundo moderno" in Enfoques: Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Comunicación, Año II, Nº 5, (Buenos Aires 1999), 11-29; and especially "El Islām Ši'ita: ¿principialismo tradicional o integrismo iraní? Una respuesta a Roger Garaudy," published in three parts in Enfoques: Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Comunicación (Buenos Aires 2001), Año III, Nº 12; 17-35; Año IV, Nº 13, (Buenos Aires 2002), 11-29 y Año IV, Nº 14 (Buenos Aires 2002), 9-25.

13. Editor's Note: Attempting to find an adequate term to describe the phenomenon ackwardly defined as "fundamentalism" is no easy task. The term "principalism" is already an accepted term in English, French, and Spanish, and refers to those who defend the principles of a scientific method or a philosophical or legal school. The term "revivalism," in its general sense of "reviving practices or ideas of an earlier time," might be suitable. A "revivalist," however, refers to "a preacher of the Christian Gospel" and can be used pejoratively. "Revivalism" is thus an inadequate term, not only because it alludes to evangelical movements, but because Corbin has used it to refer to sectarian movements like the Bābis and the Bahā'ī who were opposed to Shī'ite Islām.

The term "foundationalism" can also be discarded as it refers to any theory in epistemology that holds that beliefs are justified based on what are called basic beliefs. The Arabic term uṣūlī conveys the sense of "foundationalist;" however, it is inextricably linked to the struggle between Shī'ite rationalists, the uṣūlī, and the traditionalists or akhbarī.

Despite the fact that it is used in the field of bioethics and jurisprudence, with the sense of respect for beneficence, non-maleficence, autonomy, and justice, the neologism "principialism" remains the most adequate term to describe "fundamentalist," "revivalist" and "activist" Islām.

The author, of course, does not limit the term “principialism” to its ethical uses. In reality, by selecting the term “principialism,” the author follows in the footsteps of French metaphysician René Guénon, a revert to Islām and naturalized Egyptian citizen, who took the name of ‘Abdul Wāḥid Yaḥyā. Guénon was the first to use the term “principial” to refer to the transcendental principals of faith which constitute the roots [uṣūl] or pillars [arkān] of a traditional doctrine. By using the term “principialism,” the author is echoing notions which are more metaphysical than they are legal, ethical or philosophical, although from a traditional perspective none of these aspects exclude one another.

14. Author’s Note: According to a ḥadīth, the Prophet Muḥammad said, “The Qur’ān has a beautiful exterior and a profound interior” (Kulaynī). He said that “The Qur’ān has an inner dimension, and that inner dimension has an inner dimension up to seven inner dimensions” (Kulaynī). Other versions of the ḥadīth explain that each of the seven levels has seventy to seven hundred levels. Each inner level is more profound than the previous one, yet each level contains and illuminates the others. According to some sources, each dot on the Arabic letters of the Qur’ān contains 70,000 meanings. The numbers 7, 70, 700, and 70,000 are symbolic in nature. They are used to indicate that the interpretation of the Qur’ān is limitless and inexhaustible. Attempting to empty the Qur’ān would be as absurd as attempting to empty the ocean in a glass. The Qur’ān will always be protected from any such attempts eminating from literalist or Gnostic sectors. As Imām ‘Alī has explained,

There is no Qur’ānic verse but it has four meanings: an outer one [al-ẓāhir], an inner one [al-bāṭin]; a limit [ḥadd] and a divine designation [muṭlaq, lit. “something which is absolute”]. The outer meaning is for oral recitation. The inner meaning is for in-depth understanding. The limit determines the legal and the illegal. The divine design is what Allāh proposes to achieve in humankind by means of each verse.

The Sixth Imām, Ja‘far al-ṣādiq, said that:

The Divine Book contains four modes: enunciated expression [‘ibārāt], allusion [ishārāt]; hidden meanings relating to the subtle word [laṭā’if], and elevated metaphysical truths [ḥaqā’iq]. The enunciated expression is the one which applies to all believers [‘awāmm]; the allusion concerns the spiritual elite [khawāṣṣ]; the hidden meanings are the domain of the awliyyā’ Allāh [the Holy Friends of the Divine]; and the elevated metaphysical truths belong to the Prophets [anbiyyā’].

15. Editor’s Note: For an analysis of the French attack against the ḥijāb, see: Morrow, John Andrew “El futuro del francés frente al anti-islamismo chiraquiano” o “El francés en manos de musulmanes.” Revista Cultural Ariadna (Feb. 2004); as well as “The Future of French in Light of French Anti-Islamism.” The Message International (March 2004). Unfortunately, this secular anti-Islāmic cancer has now spread to the province of Québec in Canada which opposes religious, cultural, and linguistic diversity. From a left-wing revolutionary movement with ties to Palestinian and Algerian freedom fighters, as well as African American Muslims, the separatist movement in Québec has moved more and more to the right over the past fifty years, becoming increasingly fascist in philosophy. Québec always encouraged immigration from North Africa, as Maghrebi Muslims were proud Francophones who integrated well into the French-speaking culture of the province. These Muslims are now becoming deeply disenchanted with the cultural and political situation in the province where attempts to outlaw the ḥijāb in schools, sports, and public venues are common-place. Once encouraged to immigrate to Québec with promises of religious freedom, Maghrebi Muslims in Québec are now being told that it is not sufficient that they live and work in French. They are now been told that they must abandon their religion and embrace secularism.

Introduction: The Issue at Hand

In a concise chapter dealing with Shī‘ism, Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen Gibb echoes a persistent prejudice: the categorical affirmation that Shī‘ite Islām, with respect to Sunnī Islām, is “the other main sect of Islām--the only important schismatic sect.”[1] To him, Shī‘ism is the *ubi consistam* [essence] of the definition of sect which, according to his understanding, embraces diverse “systems of Islamic

doctrines and beliefs which are generally repudiated by the orthodox...as heretical" (81). To speak of "heresy" in Islm, however, requires a sufficiently clear understanding of its meaning.2 When Gibb uses the word "heretical," however, he does not use it as descriptive adjective nor is he necessarily making a value judgement. For him, it is merely a matter of fact which needs to be analyzed. The most disturbing aspect of this conception of Shʿism, however, is not the simplistic explanation it gives to its historical development, but rather its excessively broad scope. It does not say anything for want of saying too much.

Gibb attempts to give a broad definition of "sect" and "heresy," applying it to everything in Islm that remotely resembles other Eastern traditions. The evidence he provides, however, is far too scarce. He insists on demonstrating, at any cost, that Shʿism is inherently schismatic and sectarian. He uses the literary elasticity of the word "sect" [in English] to explain that Shʿite Islm, due to its minority status in the Muslim world, must constitute a doctrinal off-shoot or a split from the Islamic majority. At the same time, he wishes to prove that true "orthodoxy" is to be found almost exclusively in the Sunn doctrinal tradition.3 The erroneous application of the term "sect" to Shʿite Islm, however, does not resolve the problem of its historical origin. A true understanding of Shʿite Islm cannot be obtained through insufficient scholarship. It can only be reached through a close analysis of its religious and spiritual psychology as manifested in the Islamic world.

The definition of Shʿism as the only "sect" of Islm is due in part to its more profound esoteric character which stands in contrast to the essentially exoteric character of Sunn Islm.4 **Although there are no substantial differences between the fundamentals of faith of Shʿite and Sunn Islm, Shʿism seems to possess something more profound in the spiritual realm.** Despite this fact, Western scholars tend to view the differences between Shʿite and Sunn Islm as the result of a mere political dispute relating to the succession of the Prophet Muammad rather than a transcendental metaphysical matter.5 However, it is only through an understanding of the mystical dimension of Shʿism that one can understand why it appealed to Hindus and Persians while at the same time some of the Arabs viewed it with reticence. In fact, even when some scholars stubbornly persist on calling Shʿism an "Aryan Persian creation,6" history is clear on the issue: Shʿism was introduced into Persia in the 16th century by a Turkish dynasty, the Safavids, who were, as is well-known, a *arqah* or ff brotherhood.7 Until then, the Persians were mainly Sunns. Shʿism was only unanimously accepted among them ten centuries after the death of ʿAl ibn Ab lib and the events that contributed to the creation of Shʿism.8

We are not going to get down to details at this point. For now, what needs to be stressed is the perfectly orthodox nature of Shʿite Islm and its reality as an integral part of the Islamic revelation.9 This fact is so clearly manifest that it cannot be overlooked on the basis of tendentious historical arguments that insist on confining Shʿism within the imprecise bounds of concepts like "sect" or "heresy." In this aspect, modern Western criticism of Shʿism is unjustified and misguided. **Contrary to the common views of Orientalists, Shʿite Islm is not a "sect," a "heterodox" form of Islm** or anything else that

fits into the definition made by Gibb or any other specialist.[10]

One of the most common mistakes made by Orientalists is the attempt to study Sh‘ite Isl‘m on the basis of such simplified sectarian parameters. It is all the worst when this approach reinforces the argument that Sh‘ism is the result of a separation, when **this Western concept of religious schism is totally alien to traditional Islamic thought.** If we wish to move beyond these objections against the orthodoxy of Sh‘ite Isl‘m, we should first note that Westerners often consider Isl‘m, in contrast to the multifarious branches of Christianity,[11] as a conglomerate of mutually contradictory doctrines which is patently not the case. We are not claiming that real differences never existed within Isl‘m. They did indeed exist, particularly during its initial period between the seventh and tenth centuries. It was then that a great variety of philosophical, theological and theosophical theories started to manifest themselves in all areas of Islamic thought.

These different ideological currents that flourished were not “sects” in the true sense of the term and are most adequately called “schools of thought.”[12] While some of them survived to the present, most of them have disappeared, leaving us only their names.[13] In any case, we must not overlook the process of cultural and ideological interaction which takes place when Isl‘m comes into contact with foreign cultures. Such contact is an important aspect of what differentiates the Islamic tradition from others. **Although there are many traditions within the tradition, Isl‘m has always maintained its cohesion and unity**, a fact that often draws the attention of outside observers.

Although Isl‘m is united, it is not uniform. The sciences studied in any traditional civilization––namely, a civilization based on divine revelation––depend on the metaphysical principles and the religious fundamentals of that revelation. Consequently, Islamic doctrines, regardless of their modes of expression, have always reflected and echoed the central doctrine of divine unity [*taw‘‘d*]. It is due to the centrality of *taw‘‘d* that Isl‘m was capable of integrating various systems of thought into its perspective and final objective. **The presence of diversity within the Islamic tradition does not undermine its transcendence and inner unity.**[14] Rather, as Seyyed ‘ossein Na‘r explains, it is the means that assures the spiritual unity in a world composed of a conglomerate of diverse cultures, languages and races (*Sh‘ite Isl‘m* 3–28). It is in this sense that it is appropriate to speak of sects. In order to avoid any possible misunderstandings, however, it is essential to clarify the sense of the term.[15]

1. Editor’s Note: The author quotes from the Spanish translation. For the original English, see H.A.R. Gibb’s Mo‘ammedanism, especially chapter 7 “Orthodoxy and Sh‘ism.”
Author’s Note: The book is not very favorable towards Isl‘m. For starters, it defines Isl‘m as “Mo‘ammedanism” when it is well-known that Isl‘m does not demand a personal adherence to the Prophet like that of Christianity towards Jesus.
Editor’s Note: As Massignon explains: “If Christianity is fundamentally the acceptance and imitation of Christ before the acceptance of the Bible, Isl‘m, on the contrary, is the acceptance of the Qur’‘n before the imitation of Mu‘ammad, as the Prophet himself explicitly declared” (94–95).
2. Author’s Note: Like some modern Muslim authors, the only thing that Gibb retains from Sh‘ite Isl‘m is that it is a religious minority whose historical development has been, to a certain extent, interpreted as a “heresy,” although without the annoying nuance that word has acquired in the West. Be that as it may, none of the many schools of Isl‘m are willing to accept such a label, particularly as it is understood by Westerners, with all of its pejorative connotations. If, under certain

circumstances, anyone has labeled himself as a “heretic,” it has been as an act of opposition against all “heretics,” those who have made “order” out of their own “disorder,” considering it an “orthodox” norm. Sh□‘ism is a reaction, if we can say so, against those who have become “disordered.” It can thus be seen as a “disorder” which attacks the previous “disorder” in order to reestablish the old original order, from which the Muslim majority has become “separated.” On this basis, it can be understood why Im□m al-Sh□fi‘□ called himself a “heretic” (r□fi□□, from the Arabic “rejecter”) when he declared that “If loving the Family of Mu□ammad is ‘heresy’...May the Two Weighty Things (the jinn and men) testify that I am a ‘heretic’!” (in k□na rafdhan □ubbu □li Mu□ammadin fal yashhadith thaqalaan ann□ r□fi□□). One can be a “heretic” with respect to another “heresy” as in the case of Prophet Abraham who, according to Isl□mic tradition, confessed to being a “heretic.” The same applies to Mu□ammad with respect to the idolaters.

Editor’s Note: With its balance between the exoteric and the esoteric, Sh□‘ism can also be viewed as the true legacy of complete Isl□m which reestablishes its function in the face of incomplete Isl□m which is either legalistic in the cases of Sunnism or spiritual in the case of □□fism.

3. Editor’s Note: Merely because Sh□‘ites are a minority does not mean that Sh□‘ism is heterodox. T□j□n□ argues that the Sh□‘ites are representatives of Isl□mic orthodoxy and that they are followers of the prophetic Sunnah [Tradition]. See, The Sh□‘ah: The Real Followers of the Sunnah / al-Sh□‘ah hum ahl al-sunnah. In Sh□‘ite eyes, the Im□ms are the personification of the Sunnah. They are al-□ir□□ al-mustaq□m [the straight path], al-‘urw□ al-wuthq□ [the insoluble bond] n□r All□h al-h□d□ [the guiding light of All□h] al-im□n wa al-Isl□m [the faith, Isl□m] wa al-sunnah wa al-sal□m [the prophetic tradition and peace]. The author of this book, Luis Alberto Vittor, does not make an exclusive claim to orthodoxy; rather, he recognizes the orthodox nature of mainstream Sunn□ and Sh□‘ah Isl□m. This is the same position taken by Seyyed □ossein Na□r who writes that “Sh□‘ism and □□fism are both, in different ways and on different levels, intrinsic aspects of Isl□mic orthodoxy” (□□f□ Essays 104-105).

According to Na□r, Sunnism and Twelve-Im□m Sh□‘ism stand in the middle of the spectrum of Isl□m as far as orthodoxy and heterodoxy are concerned (The Heart of Isl□m 86). In Western studies, however, “orthodoxy is limited to its exoteric aspect” (86) which is inadequate as “[t]here is an exoteric orthodoxy and orthopraxy and there is an esoteric orthodoxy and orthopraxy” (86).

Exoterically, in practice, Wahh□bis and Kharijites are orthodox. Esoterically, in spirit, in scriptural interpretation, they might be viewed as heterodox by mainstream Sunnis and Sh□‘ites. If they are hostile towards the ahl al-bayt and their followers, Sh□‘ites would view them as heretical. So long as they observe the shar□‘ah, the □□fis and the Ism□‘□lis are orthodox. In orthopraxy, there is no objection against the A□madiyyah. It is in their ‘aq□dah [creed], their belief in a prophet after Mu□ammad ibn ‘Abd All□h, where their heresy lies.

It should be noted, however, that the followers of M□rz□ Ghulam A□med split into two camps after his death: one who believed that he was indeed a prophet, the Messiah and the Mahd□, and one who believed that he was not a prophet, but a reformer (and the Messiah and the Mahd□ based on a weak tradition within the corpus of Bukh□r□). The former are known as the A□mad□, and the later are known as the Lahori Group. Mu□ammad ‘Al□, the author of The Religion of Isl□m, was a member of the Lahori group, known as the Lahori A□madis.

The Moorish Science Temple, the Nation of Isl□m, the Five Percenters, the An□□r, and other cults, are evidently outside the fold of Isl□m in ‘aq□dah [creed], orthodoxy, and orthopraxy.

4. Editor’s Note: As Na□r notes, “the esoteric dimension of Isl□m...in the Sunn□ climate is almost totally connected with □□fism” (□□f□ Essays 105).

5. Editor’s Note: This is also the attitude of many Sunn□ scholars. As Sayyid Mu□ammad Rizv□ summarizes:

In the polemical writings of the Sunnis, it is asserted that Sunn□ Isl□m is “orthodox Isl□m” whereas Sh□‘ism is a “heretical sect” that began with the purpose of subverting Isl□m from within. This idea is sometimes expressed by saying that Sh□‘ism began as a political movement and later on acquired religious emphasis. (Chapter 1)

As Jafr□ explains, “It is...difficult to speak, at any stage of its existence, about the ‘political’ Sh□‘ah as distinct from the ‘religious’ one” (2). The historian Matti Moosa acknowledges that “Sh□‘ism, or the support of ‘Al□, grew in the early period of Isl□m as a spiritual movement, based on the assumption that the leadership of the Muslim community was a spiritual office and that ‘Al□ had been singled out from among all Muslims to fill it” (xv). Moosa confirms that:

It was in the time of ‘Uthm□n that the term Sh□‘ite, which until then had had only a spiritual connotation, began to assume a

political significance. Those supporting ‘Al□ became known as the Sh□‘ites [partisans] of ‘Al□, while those supporting ‘Uthm□n became known as the Sh□‘ites [partisans] of ‘Uthm□n. (xv)

The faction of ‘□’ishah, □al□ah and Zubayr [called the “People of the Camel” or a□□□b al-jamal] and the Syrians [ahl al-Sh□m] were also known as the sh□‘at Mu‘□wiyyah (Jafr□ 95-96).

6. Editor’s Note: As Massignon explains, “the theorists deny the authenticity of Isl□mic mysticism, which is portrayed as a form of the racial, linguistic, and national reaction by the Aryan peoples, particularly the Iranians, against the Arab Isl□mic conquest. Renan, P. de Lagarde, and more recently Reitzenstein, Blochet, and E.G. Browne, have helped to spread this theory” (46).

7. Editor’s Note: The Safavids were a dynasty that ruled Persia from 1501 to 1736. Founded by Ism□‘□l, leader of the □afaw□ □□f□ brotherhood, they imposed Twelver Sh□‘ism as their state religion for political purposes. At a time when various Muslim groups were vying for power, each claiming the right to rule, the Twelvers did not present a political threat since Im□m Mahd□ was in Occultation and would only return towards the end of the world. The spread of Sh□‘ism also helped protect the □afav□ds from the Ottoman threat to the West and from the Uzbeks from the East.

The □afaw□ period was a golden age for Sh□‘ite scholarship and produced such prolific scholars as ‘All□mah Majlis□, author of Bi□□r al-anw□r. While this work is monumental in size, it is flawed in many aspects: 1) the author was unable to review it and correct it; 2) it is an exceedingly late compilation of traditions; and 3) it contains an enormous quantity of false and fabricated traditions.

Despite the author’s enormous and commendable effort, the work has been given undue importance in recent times. Contemporary Iranian scholars have warned readers about this work, reminding them that it should not be placed on par with other more complete and reliable books of □ad□th. While Majlis□ planned to subject the traditions to critical analysis and due categorization, he died before being able to do so, and the subsequent Editors of his work have left it as such, without the editing it requires.

8. Editor’s Note: As Massignon explains, “In reality, Sh□‘ism, which is presented to us as a specifically Persian Isl□mic heresy, was propagated in Persia by pure Arab colonists, who had come from K□fah to Qum” (46). All of the 3,000 taww□b□n were Arabs (Jafr□ 232). For more on the falsity of the Persian origin of Sh□‘ism, see T□j□n□’s Then I was Guided 158-59.

9. Editors’ Note: As Na□r has observed, “The reality of Sh□‘ism and □□fism as integral aspects of the Isl□mic revelation is too dazzlingly clear to be ignored or explained away on the basis of a tendentious historical argument” (□□f□ Essays 104).

10. Editor’s Note: Na□r is correct when he states that “One should never refer to Sh□‘ism as a whole as sect, any more than one would call the Greek Orthodox Church a sect” (Heart of Isl□m 87). As Jafr□ explains, “In the infant years of Isl□mic history, one cannot speak of the so-called ‘orthodox’ Sunnah and the ‘heretical’ Sh□‘ah, but rather of two ill-defined points of view that were nevertheless drifting steadily, and finally irreconcilably, further apart” (2).

11. Editor’s Note: Christianity is divided into three major branches: Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy and Protestantism. There are further subdivided into rites and sects which number in the thousands. The Holy Qur’□n criticizes the schisms of the Jews and Christians (98:4; 10:93).

12. Editor’s Note: The Arabic term for “school” is madhhab. In Isl□m, there are numerous schools of jurisprudence, schools of recitation of the Qur’□n, schools of Qur’□nic commentary, schools of prophetic traditions, and schools of philosophy, rendering the Wahh□b□ refutation of madh□hibs senseless. The Isl□mic intellectual tradition was one of tolerance. The early Muslims argued with the best arguments, following the commandment of All□h: “Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance” (16:125).

While there were thousands of rays of reason, they all radiated from the same sun of taw□□d. The Prophet and the Im□ms debated and discussed in an atmosphere of respect and tolerance with Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, Manicheists, polytheists, and atheists. As Na□r explains, “On the basis of the Qur’□nic doctrine of religious universality and the vast historical experiences of a global nature, Isl□mic civilization developed a cosmopolitan and worldwide religious perspective unmatched before the modern period in any other religion” (The Heart of Isl□m 40).

The decline of Isl□mic civilization and culture is, in part, the result of the imposition of official orthodoxies. The exponential growth of science and scholarship in the early days of Isl□m was cut short when freedom of thought was suppressed and

dogmas came to dominate. The phenomenon of rapid evolution that came about through Islām applied to exegesis, jurisprudence, grammar, and a whole host of sciences. W.F. Albright's description of "cultural revolution" easily applies to Islām: "When a culture is replaced by another culture we almost always note a sudden change, a real mutation, with changes taking place in one generation which under normal circumstances would take a millennium" (88).

13. Editor's Note: The existing schools of Sunnī jurisprudence include the Ḥanafī, Shāfi'ī, Mālikī and Ḥanbalī. Other, no longer extant Sunnī schools of fiqh, include the Ẓāhirī school from al-Andalus, the Jarīrī school founded by Ṭabarī; and the schools of al-Awzā'ī, Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Abū 'Uyaynah, Ibn Abū Dhu'ayb, Sufyān al-Thawrī, Ibn Abū Dāwūd, and Layth ibn Sa'd, among others.

14. Author's Note: For an excellent overview of the diverse literature produced by early Islāmic civilization, see Morrow, John Andrew "Pre and Early Islāmic Literature." The Cultural History of Reading. Ed. Gabrielle Watling. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008.

15. Editor's Note: The author is alluding to Descartes' statement: "I will not argue with you unless you define your terms."

Chapter 1: Towards a Definition of Heterodoxy in Islam

The word "sect" comes from the Latin *sequi* or *sequor* and means "to follow." According to this definition, the term excludes the idea of schism or doctrinal rupture. In Christian usage, the term "sect" is not free from pejorative connotations although it is much better than the label "heretic." Nowadays, in Christian terminology, the word "sect" refers mostly to a body of people sharing religious opinions who have broken away from a larger body. "Sect" in the sense of "cult" refers to a group of people who follow the "revelations" made by its founder. Such sects, like the Mormons for example, differ from the Church, in the non-theological sense of the term, in that they recognize another new revelation. The sect insists on the need to understand the neo-testamentary text which is different in essence from the sacred scriptures.1 Besides that distinction, and as can be observed within the Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses, the cult believes in collective, not individual salvation, which is exclusively limited to its members.2

It must be understood, however, that the sects which the Church opposes in the name of orthodoxy are merely other religions with their own rites and dogmas which are only heretical with respect to official orthodoxy. If we attempt to remove the slippery polish from the word "sect," turning it into a simple technical term devoid of subjectivity, we will see that "the meaning of sect is closer to the Spanish word *séquito* [group of followers, adherents and devotees] than to what is commonly understood by *secta* [sect] and its derivative *sectario* [sectarian] which curiously and arbitrarily are applied to it" (García Bazán 114-18).3

As has been regularly documented, a persistent residue has adhered to the word "sect" as a result of use and abuse. In its common meaning, it applies to exclusivist religious minorities which are opposed to

a commonly accepted Church tenet. Sects are born through dissent and view themselves as a small flock of chosen ones. This is how quantitative differences come about between Church and sect. For the Western religious historian, what defines a sect is its character as a separate group, much more than its minority status, which can eventually reach the size of a Church. This is where we see the motives which drive Western religious historians like Gibb to come up with unilateral interpretations of complex concepts and doctrines. They explain and analyze them in terms that prevent the possibility of truly understanding what a sect or religion, such as Islām, really represents.[4]

It can never be sufficiently stressed that the general application of Western terms like "orthodoxy," "heterodoxy," "church" and "sect" to Islām is grossly misapplied, especially as Islām does not have a Church to define orthodoxy or the powers to excommunicate.[5] The use of such terms ends up simplifying complex issues, associating them with Western religious phenomena which do not have equivalents in the language of Islām. There is no place for such terms as "orthodoxy, "heterodoxy," "church," "sect," and "heresy" in an Islamic tradition rooted in the concept of divine unity.[6]

While there is diversity within Islām, there is not, simply by a slight difference in approach, a contradiction of its central doctrine of divine unity nor the gregarious separation in its fundamentals of faith or its community [*ummah*]. Rather, they are diverse tendencies that make up Islām and so long as they do not stray from the fundamentals of faith, they can all claim with some justification to represent its most authentic expression.[7] With this understanding, one can appreciate that in Islām there does not exist a clear line between orthodoxy and heterodoxy. As a result, the various Islamic currents are neither radically misguided groups which have broken from official orthodoxy nor are they separated from one another, as are the Christian sects of today.

Unlike the Western world, the Islamic world defines orthodoxy by means of the profession of faith or *shahādah*: *Lā ilāha illā Allāh / Muḥammadun rasūl Allāh* [There is no god but Allāh and Muḥammad is the Messenger of Allāh]. The *shahādah* is the most universal proclamation of divine unity and is not a strictly defined theological formula. There exists, of course, an orthodoxy in Islām, without which no doctrine or tradition is possible. However, contrary to Gibb's affirmation, Islamic orthodoxy has not been defined by *ijmā'* [scholarly consensus] in any restricted or limited sense. What is more, in Islām there has never existed a religious institution capable of deciding who is orthodox and who is not.[8]

Infatuated with every Western prejudice, Gibb seems to have translated the old axiom of *divide et impera* [divide and conquer] into the more modern: classify and discard! But to understand the history of Islām, however, requires more than merely counting or organizing dates. The eye of the scholar must be capable of discerning the profound print of his subject, its depth, its substance and its essence. He must belong to a tradition and provide us with comprehensive and broad formulas called critical approaches and methodologies. Gibb easily forgets that in Islām, **so long as a practice or a belief does not contravene the *sharī'ah* [Islamic law] and can be traced back to the Qur'ān and the *sunnah* it is clearly orthodox and cannot be deemed heretical.** This principle also applies to the genuine spiritual

paths of Islamic mysticism [*ta□awwuf*] in the Sunn□ world whose devotional practices and metaphysical doctrines cannot be judged on the criteria of "orthodoxy" that govern the exoteric forms of the religion. This is particularly so since the esoteric can never face the exoteric on the same plane. Both operate on different but not divergent orders of the same reality.[9] In other words, they constitute the "core" [*al-lubb*] and the "skin" [*al-qishrah*] of the religion.

In *Nahj al-bal□ghah* [*The Path of Eloquence*]--a collection of sermons, epistles, and aphorisms of 'Al□ ibn Ab□ □□lib compiled by Shar□f al-Raz□ (406/1015)--the First Im□m most brilliantly and masterfully settles the question of the diversity of schools and currents in Islamic thought. He describes them as parts of the spiritual freedom given by God which are in accord with His Oneness:[10]

Praise be to All□h who established Isl□m and made it easy for those who approach it and gave strength to its columns against any one who tries to overpower it ... It is the most bright of all paths, the clearest of all passages. It has dignified minarets, bright highways, burning lamps, prestigious fields of activity, and high objective. (Sermon 105: 249)

This Isl□m is the religion which All□h has chosen for Himself ... He made Isl□m such that its constituent parts cannot break, its links cannot separate, its construction cannot fall, its columns cannot decay ... It consists of columns whose bases All□h has fixed in truthfulness, and whose foundation He has strengthened, and of sources whose streams are ever full of water and of lamps, whose flames are full of light, and of beacons with whose help travelers get guidance. (Sermon 197: 408)

As one can gather from these words, **the Islamic tradition has, in a general sense, provided a broad umbrella which embraces a multiplicity of points of view** as distinct as the doctrinal masters of thought who formulated them. The only tension between them--when there was any at all--has normally been between the exoteric and esoteric dimensions of the tradition. This tension has always alternated harmoniously within the same dynamic rhythm. The temporal predominance of one over the other in the successive manifestations of the same living organism is comparable to the diastole and the systole of the heartbeat. Without alternation, these two essential movements continue in harmony, like the exoteric and the esoteric. Like any other tradition, Isl□m would cease to beat without them and would turn into a rigid form without a pulse.[11] In other words, the orthodoxy of the distinct schools of thought in Isl□m does not manifest itself solely through the preservation of its outer forms. It is expressed equally by its natural development and, especially, by its capacity to absorb any spiritual expression which is not essentially alien to the doctrine of divine unity.[12]

It is true that in Isl□m there is what in the language of the West is defined as "sect." The word "sect" in Arabic is *firqah* which comes from the Arabic *farraqa* which means "to separate" and "to divide." **Let us not make the mistake, however, of considering Sunn□ and Sh□'ite Isl□m as the two main sects of Isl□m. Let us not differentiate between them by applying normative and schematic judgments to decide, unilaterally, in accord with the mental and moral modes of historically European-based societies, which one of them is "orthodox" and which one is "heterodox."** If we have acknowledged

that there is diversity in Islām, we need to recognize that there is also a means to understand its unity. The unity of Islām rests on one sole factor: the uninterrupted event of the Qur'ānic revelation. In synthesis, the oneness of God and Islām is manifested in every aspect of its doctrinal reach in the affirmation of divine unity [*tawḥīd*], the proclamation that the beginning of existence is one as ratified by the apothegm *al-tawḥīdu wāḥidun*: "the doctrine of oneness is one." **For Islām, divine unity constitutes the only *raison d'être* [reason for being] and the essential criteria upon which all "orthodoxy" is based, regardless of its contingent modes of expression.** We can go further and affirm that, as far as Islamic thought is concerned, the doctrine of "divine unity" is the common denominator shared by all traditional monotheistic faiths without exception, so long as they adhered to pure and original monotheism.[13] We can expand upon this more and proclaim that the universal and the continuous in all things operate through this Unique Principle which invariably is everywhere and always identical to Itself.

The great metaphysical currents from East and West unanimously agree that the ultimate reality of all things, the essential state of all creatures, their beginning and their return, is divine unity.[14] In this sense, this Islamic concept runs parallel to those of Xenophanes, Parmenides, Plato, Aristotle, and Plotinus.[15] It runs parallel with those of Judaism, Taoism and Buddhism as well as those of the Advaita Vedanta, formulated by Master Sankara as a recapitulation of the Veda which, according to Muslim Gnostics, is the revelation God made to Adam.[16] This also applies to Alexandrine hermeticism--to the extent that it is a continuation of the tradition of Hermes or Idrīs, as he is known in the Islamic world--which is also embraced and integrated into Islām.[17]

The truth of the One Absolute, the identification of all things with a Sole Beginning, was revealed by the Qur'ān for Islām in the form of the *shahādah*.[18] The divine profession of faith stresses that "He is Allāh, the One and Only" (112:1), "there is no god but Allāh" (47: 19) and that "He has no partners" [*waḥdahu lā sharīka lahu*] or, as the chapter "Divine Unity" [*Sūrat al-tawḥīd*] or "Purity of Faith" [*Sūrat al-ikhlāṣ*] declares, "there is none like unto Him" [*wa lam yakun lahu kufu'an aḥad*] (112:-4). **To be considered as orthodox, Islām requires a true and sincere belief in monotheism.**[19] The contrary of *tawḥīd* is *shirk*: the attribution of partners or associates to God, idolatry and polytheistic paganism. *Shirk* is a mortal sin without possibility of pardon.[20] It is heresy incarnate which is why the Qur'ān warns: "Allāh forgiveth not that partners should be set up with Him; but He forgiveth anything else, to whom He pleaseth; to set up partners with Allāh is to devise a sin Most heinous indeed" (4:48).[21]

For Islām, the essential element which guarantees true orthodoxy is the belief in "monotheism." This applies not only to its own schools of thought or spiritual paths, but also to any traditional religion prior to Islām.[22] The term "monotheism," however, is inadequate when it comes to translating the sense of *al-tawḥīd*. The word "monotheism" can only be used to accommodate the lack of a better term in English and other Western languages, without giving it an exclusively religious connotation. The doctrine of "divine unity" is essentially metaphysical in the true and original sense of the term. But in Islām, as in other traditions, it also implies--in its direct application to diverse contingent domains--a whole network

of complicated and interlacing parts. These parts, within Islām, are not necessarily incompatible, despite their respective characters, as they are in the West since in Islām there is no division between the functions of “religion” and “state.”

Islām is a complete civilization and a complex culture in which all activities and spheres of daily life, individual, societal and governmental must reflect divine unity.23 Islām is not merely a “religion” if by religion one exclusively means an ecclesiastic system of belief and practice. More than that, Islām is a way of life with a faith or, if one wants, a traditional way of life [*dīn*] which, through the Qur’ān, the *sunnah* and the *sharī‘ah*, proclaims a faith and establishes rituals. It also prescribes an established social order on the basis of the “fundamentals of faith” or the “pillars of Islām” [*arkān al-islām*] for individuals and society in all areas that determine the condition and the *raison d’être* [reason for being] of the orthodox Muslim. An orthodox Muslim, as we have seen, is anyone who is sincere in his faith. A 20th century Gnostic, al-Shaykh al-‘Alawī from Mostagan, a *qutb* or spiritual pole of Sunnī Islām of the Shādhilī school,24 said that to be an orthodox Muslim it is sufficient to observe five things: to believe in God and recognize Muḥammad as his final prophet, perform the five daily prayers, give the prescribed alms to the poor, fast, and make the pilgrimage to Makkah (Lings 23).25 The *arkān al-islām* or pillars of Islām, as a whole, are the formal expression of Islām and encompass everything which Western language designates as strictly religious.26 The pillars of Islām also include all of the social and legislative realms which in the Islamic world integrate into the religion. Hence, the Western concept of separation between “religion” and “state” is something foreign to orthodox Islamic thought.

Besides these five fundamentals of faith there are five other pillars of religion [*uṣūl al-dīn*] according to Shī‘ite Islām which are in conformity with the *sunnah* of the Prophet.27 They include *tawḥīd*, the belief in divine unity; *nubuwwah*, the belief in the prophecy; *ma‘ād*,28 the belief in resurrection and the hereafter; *imāmah*, the Imāmate, the belief in the twelve Imāms as successors of the Prophet and depositories of his *wilāyah* [guardianship], the spiritual and temporal power of Islām and; *‘adl* or divine justice. Sunnīs and Shī‘ites agree upon the three basic pillars, namely, *tawḥīd*, *nubuwwah*, and *mā‘ād*. They only differ on the other two. **In terms of the Imāmate, what distinguishes the Shī‘ite perspective from the Sunnī one is the insistence on the esoteric function and spiritual supremacy of the Imām.** In Sunnī Islām, this difference is formerly overcome through gnosis [*ma‘rifah* or *‘irfān*] of ṣūfīsm [*taṣawwuf*] in which the *qutb* or spiritual pole of the age represents the esoteric and initiatory role that the Imām plays in Shī‘ism.29 In terms of *‘adl* or divine justice what distinguishes Shī‘ism is the stress given to this attribute as an essential quality of the divine reality. In its concept of divine justice, Shī‘ism considers this aspect as co-substantial with divinity.30 God cannot act unjustly because it is impossible for the Just to be unjust. There can be no division or contradiction in the One.

Finally, despite their external differences, Sunnīs, Shī‘ites and ṣūfīs share a stress on practice and conduct as opposed to doctrine. The faithful observance of the fundamentals of faith is what lies at the center of their thought and differences. It is only on the esoteric plane that every religious perspective can be placed so long as it does not contradict the transcendental unity which goes beyond any such

limitations. It is this unity which is found in the external expressions of each religion or theological school. **The transcendental unity of all religions is not broken in any way by the transcendence of Islm.**[31] Such unity is not a material extension and gradual development but rather the fundamental identity of the one within the multiple.[32] Even if it varies to infinity, it responds in different ways to the needs of different human cultures and races.[33] For this reason, the establishment of "orthodoxy" in Islm, based on uniformity instead of unity, as it exists with other religious forms, especially in the West, could never depend on the *ijm'* or the consensus of scholars. Gibb's reductionist doctrine wishes to liken Islamic *ijm'* to the "councils of the Christian Church" (90). It is only the metaphysical doctrine of unity which can reconcile all types of differences while maintaining the unity of the Islamic tradition, both exoteric and esoteric, over and above any tension or conflict of a political or religious order.

In this sense, Sh'ite Islm represents a balancing totality of various points of view. Due to the profoundly esoteric character of its doctrine, it represents a "middle path" between the excessive formal legalism of the jurists and the excessive introversion of the mystics.[34] The *tawwuf*, depository of gnosis in the Sunn world, can be defined spiritually as the Sh'ism of 'Al ibn Ab lib, the Fourth Caliph and First Imm of Islm.[35] Both fsm and Sh'ism, in accord with the traditions of the Prophet, view 'Al as the "gate" of initiation to the esoteric knowledge [*bin*] of Muammad who stated quite clearly: "I am the city of knowledge and 'Al is its gate. Whoever wants to enter this city must first pass through its gate."[36]

The symbol of the "gate" [in Arabic *b*] alludes to the esoteric function of the First Imm since it is through him that one gains access to initiation [from the Latin *inire* or to "enter"]. Found in many traditions, the "gate" alludes to initiation into the Muammadan "mysteries" or "secrets" [*sirr*].[37] In its universal sense, the "gate" refers to the spiritual office as the "seal" of the absolute *wilyah* [guardianship] and the esoteric pole of the prophecy who has opened the Cycle of Initiation [*dirat al-wilyah*] which, at the same time, has been sealed by the Twelfth Imm, al-Mahd, who closes the Muammadan *wilyah*.

In short, the completion of the doctrinal legacy of Islm explains, as does the absence of any unanimously accepted human authority who has received spiritual and temporal power from the Most High, the rather indefinite character of the notion of orthodoxy outside of what is established by the Qur'n, the *sunnah* and the *shar'ah*. In specific, with the exception of the Mahd, there does not exist in Islm a universally recognized magistrate capable of formulating new laws. The *Ayatullhs*[38] [from the Arabic *yat*, signs and *Allh*, God] which in our epoch appear more and more as the jurists [*mujtahidn*] and the depositories of the *wilyat al-faqh*,[39] that is, the spiritual and political leadership of Sh'ite Islm, limit themselves to interpreting the prescriptions and mandates of the Qur'n. They do so in accord with a tradition passed down from generation to generation by the Twelve Imms but with nuances and even considerable differences from one *mujtahid* to another.[40] One thing that must be clarified as well is that when we speak of Sh'ism we refer to the *ithn 'shar* or "Twelver" branch, also known as the Ja'far school of jurisprudence.[41] The term Sh'ism embraces many branches, each with

its own interpretation of Qur'ānic doctrine. The term Sunnism embraces various exoteric branches, including the four most famous schools of Islamic jurisprudence, the Shāfi'ī, the Ḥanafī, the Ḥanbalī and the Mālikī. The term ṣūfīsm also embraces various branches. In the esoteric world of *taṣawwuf* it is possible to distinguish spiritual paths [*ṭuruq*] equal in number to the infinite variety of souls or beings.42 As Ibn Khaldūn explains in his *Muqaddimah* [*Prolegomenon*], the profession of divine unity is the very secret [*sirr*] of these doctrines.43

So far, we have examined the fundamental *ubi consistam* [point of reference] of Islamic thought regarding the concept of "orthodoxy." Clearly, Shī'ite Islām must not be removed from this definition. **Excluding Shī'ite Islām from the realm of Islamic orthodoxy--by omission or by excess--is one of the most common mistakes made by Western scholars** who wish to give it a sectarian nature similar to reformist Christian sects. These scholars even go to the extreme of giving Shī'ism an allegedly "fundamentalist" character which, in the broadest sense, applies exclusively to certain forms of modern American Protestantism.

In present times, the term "fundamentalist" is commonly applied to Shī'ite Islām and to Islamic groups characterized by a rejection of all manifestation of secularism in the Eastern world.44 This is despite the fact that, in every sense, **Shī'ism represents the living tradition of Islām.**45 **Both in politics and religion, Shī'ite Islām is traditional.**46 When faced with outbreaks of innovation [*bid'ah*] Shī'ite Muslims, like all orthodox Muslims, react with the same hostility as any who face a subversive movement which seeks to overthrow the established order.47 **Due to its imminently esoteric nature and its acceptance of diverse levels of interpretation of the scriptures--each one more profound than the other--Shī'ism is, in the Islamic world, what least resembles "fundamentalism" if understood in its correct sense of extreme superficial and sterile literalism.**48

It may be worthwhile to mention at this point that **"fundamentalism" is a purely Christian term.** It seems to have come into use at the beginning of the twentieth century and describes, first and foremost, certain American Protestant sects, particularly those with a puritanical perspective. The sects in question are noted for interpreting the scriptures to the letter of the law, from a narrow-minded perspective. They reject any profound interpretation of the Bible, prohibiting any hint of hermeneutics. Notably, the term "fundamentalist" is now applied on a daily basis by many Muslims but stripped from the pejorative sectarian sense. Through a strange semantic distortion, they give the term the erroneous meaning and the distorted sense of a "return to the fundamentals" of the Islamic faith. They do so as if at some time in Islamic history, the *arkān al-islām* [pillars of Islām] had somehow ceased to exist, visibly or invisibly, in all spheres of Muslim existence and in all their manifestations in the Islamic world. Even when they are relinquished or temporarily placed on the back burner--as in the atypical case of Turkey--they have always been fully maintained in the spiritual and esoteric order without which any return to original Islām is impossible.49 In this sense, **the integral restoration of the true and original sense of the revelation depends on the *ta'ālīm* [spiritual guidance] of the Imāms, the fundamental touchstone of the illuminative awakening of Islamic gnosis.** They are invested with the initiatory function due to

their condition as divinely-inspired men and perfect interpreters of His message, well beyond the literary and philosophical paraphrase of rationalist jurists and theological puritans like Ibn Taymiyyah[50] and those of Abd al-Wahhab.[51]

A return to the fundamentals implies that a distancing or a partial separation [*firqah*] from them has taken place. If returning to the founding principles of the Islamic faith is used in the sense of returning to the straight path, then this may very well require a reencounter with Shi'ite Islam since its doctrine has always remained firmly grounded in the teachings of the Imams who are effectively the *arkan* [pillars] *par excellence*.[52] In the Shi'i view, **the Imams are the fundamental pillars of Islam in the sense that the essence of the revelation was passed on to them by the Prophet, both exoterically and esoterically, through the function of the Imamate or spiritual inheritance**, that is, the esoteric guidance of the prophetic *batin* [secrets]. According to the famous *hadith al-kisa'* [The Tradition of the Cloak], the Prophet called his daughter Fatimah along with 'Ali, Hasan, and Husayn, and covered them completely with his cloak.[53] This act symbolized the transmission of the universal *wilayah* of the Prophet, through the epiphany [*mazhar*] of the partial *wilayah* [*wilayah fatimiyyah*], to the plethora of the Twelve Imams, the Prophet's immaculate progeny [*ma'sumin*].[54]

Within the bounds of the excessively arid exteriorist "literalism" which defines Protestant fundamentalism, we can only include, in relation to Islam, the exceptional case of Wahhabism.[55] This obscure puritanical and reformist sect [*firqah*], derived from Sunni Islam's strict Hanbali school of thought, was founded by **Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, who can be called, without exaggeration, the Martin Luther of the Muslim World.**[56] His doctrine was inspired by the ideas of Ibn Taymiyyah, a rationalist rigorist who opposed the ideas of Ibn al-'Arabi.[57] 'Abd al-Wahhab found his ideological support in the political opportunism of the upstart emir of the Dariya tribe, Muhammad ibn Sa'id, the ancestor and founder of the actual Saudi dynasty which became the secular arm and executor of Wahhabism.[58]

Like Luther with respect to Christianity, 'Abd al-Wahhab called for a "return to the fundamentals" of faith. These, however, were reformulated literally and were stripped of the doctrinal complement brought by the teachings of the Imams and the exegetic and hermeneutical methods instituted by the Prophet as sacred sciences aimed at discerning the inner meanings of the scripture. **A "return to the fundamentals" of Islam, as proposed by 'Abd al-Wahhab, can only be brought about by the restorative action of the *ta'lim* or esoteric guidance of Imam Mahdi, the Hidden and Awaited Imam, and never through human initiative.**[59] We "return" [*ta'wil*] the revealed letter [*tanzil*] to the plane where it becomes real. The revelation [*tanzil*], according to Shi'ite Islam, is both exoteric [*zahir*] and esoteric [*batin*]. The process of understanding consists in starting from the exoteric in order to reach the esoteric. Metaphysical internalization, the cornerstone of Islamic Gnosticism, tends to revive, in the symbolic articulation of the scripture, its profound spiritual sense as revealed by Angel Gabriel to the Prophet according to its original enunciation. Consequently, *ta'wil*, [the allegorical interpretation], is the "returning ascent," the march up country [anabasis] of the *zahir* [exoteric] and the *batin*

[esoteric].60 The mission of the Prophet was the founding of the ẓāhir which implies a descent by the spirit to every formal point of expression of the scripture.61 **The mission or *ta'līm* of the Twelfth Imām al-Mahdī is to lead the ẓāhir [exoteric] to the *bāṭin* [esoteric] in our present cycle. This is why he is called *ṣāḥib al-zamān*** [the Lord of the Age].62 In order for there to be a "return to the fundamentals" of Islām, it is also necessary for there to be a universal restoration of the esoteric sciences in all of their traditions. For that same metaphysical reason, it requires a man who, besides being inspired by God and being a perfect interpreter who masters the exoteric and the esoteric scripture, is a spiritual heir, an inheritor and direct descendant of the Prophet from the line of Ḥusayn, the Third Imām.

According to Islamic metaphysics, which stems more or less directly from Shī'ism, the "heterodoxy" of any idea implies, in one way or another, the falsity of its formulations which are in absolute disagreement with the metaphysical and esoteric principles of the tradition. This is precisely what René Guénon63 warns of with respect to the Vedanta.64According to this definition, orthodoxy lies in a constant balance between immutable principles. In the Islamic tradition, these principles are contained in the Qur'ān. **The balance between the letter and spirit of the revealed text constitutes the criteria of Islamic orthodoxy which is founded on faith in the oneness of God.**65

The discussion of Islamic sects would be worthwhile if the term was restituted, as García Bazán demands, to the original sense the Romans gave it when they translated the Greek word *hairesis* as "sect" (114). The Greek word which has evolved into "heretic" merely means "selection," "option," or philosophical or religious "inclination" (115–17). It does not imply the idea of difference, separation or breaking from a tradition, nor does it possess the pejorative connotation that it has in Western languages. As García Bazán explains, even the middle form of *haireo* and *haireomai*, from which *hairesis* derives, simply means "selection" or "option."

In terms of Wahhābism, whose influence continues to be observed in Saudi Arabia and much of the Muslim world, "sectarian" deviations are not ritual or doctrinal: they are scriptural.66 With regards to the sacred text, **the Wahhābi "heresy" consists in a deformation and literal reinterpretation of the Qur'ānic text and even of innovation in the Islamic canon.**67 **They are "heretics" who are formally separated from the Islamic community, not by ritual practice, but by scriptural deviation.**68 These rigid rigorist literalists adhere to the external aspect of the written text and reject any extensions or interpretations transmitted through the oral and written tradition. In contrast, Shī'ite religious practice, as strict and legalistic as it may be, which assures a solid orthodoxy and orthopraxy, is accompanied, in the matter of faith, with a profound spirituality of a metaphysical and esoteric character which extends to its interpretation of the Qur'ān, the *sunnah* and the *sharī'ah*. It is for these reasons, for its Gnostic character, that the application of the term "fundamentalist" to Shī'ite Islām is totally unjustified. **In every sense, Shī'ite Islām represents Islamic orthodoxy as much as Sunnī Islām.**69 Without a doubt, it is the minority status of Shī'ism in the Muslim world, as opposed to ritual, doctrinal or scriptural deviation, that gives Westerners the impression that it is a "sect."

From ancient times until the present, the notion of “sect” has not been freed from the prejudice that it applies only to small religious groups. As the old Latin proverb goes: *Si duo faciunt idem*, *non est idem* [If two do the same thing, it is not the same thing]. Obviously, these ideas about sects are applied by Westerners to whatever phenomenon they can reduce to this label. Evidently, this is done without considering their inner aspects, where major spiritual differences are really hidden. Moreover, we cannot dismiss the ill-concealed aims of certain specialists to place all minority religions into the framework of a single verdict of justification or rejection. They wish to do this by exclusively considering the external manifestations of religion, which constitute the visible skeleton of orthodoxy, when it is essentially a question of interiority.

Finally, if we have spent more time than necessary dealing with term “fundamentalism,” it is because the general use of this term conveys a “sectarian” attitude. Its use is obviously misguided and distorted because it is born out of a fanatic and uncompromising attitude in favor of one party or one idea. **It is always convenient to give a sectarian nature to Sh‘ite Islm by means of the “fundamentalist” label, without understanding that the real reason for its existence is clearly traditional.** The phenomenon we refer to is a common vice. In fact, it is the main reason why the Western mentality is unable to understand the Eastern spirit. Clearly, it is not a question of cultural differences or contradictions in term, but, to paraphrase the words of Suhrawardi,[70] forms of spiritual participation or perspectives between an Orient of Illumination [*ishriq*] and an Occident of Exile.

There is no point in denying that the most esoteric of these Islamic sciences was related to neo-Pythagoreanism[71] and hermeticism.[72] It was through them that Islm came into close contact with the Sabians of Harrn.[73] They were responsible for transmitting astronomy, astrology and mathematics from Babylonian sources and later Chaldeans bound with the hermetic-Pythagorean ideas of Alexandria to Islm. All of this is true.[74]

It is also true that medicine and cosmology reached the Muslims by means of the Hindus and the Persians. These sciences were eagerly embraced by Islm since, far from being secular forms of knowledge, they were intrinsically linked to the central doctrine of “divine unity.” On the other hand, some aspects of classical Greek and Hindu culture, like the secular philosophies of the Epicureans,[75] some of the cynics[76] and the naturalism of the anatomists, barely aroused the interest of the Muslims. It was impossible for knowledge of this type, based on sensuality and a dualistic relativism, to be integrated into Islamic thought in a cohesive and cogent form since they were outside of the nature of the Gnostic experience. The Mu‘tazilite’s refutation of certain aspects of dualist and Trinitarian theories, however, brought Islm a theological solution in accordance with the concept of divine unity. In their defense of Greco-Alexandrian philosophy, the Mu‘tazilites created favorable conditions for study and scholarship in Sh‘ite intellectual circles. This affinity and sympathy between the Mu‘tazilites and the Sh‘ites must not be confounded in any way as identity.[77] On fundamental issues, such as the significance and function of the Im‘m, they differ completely. On that issue, the Mu‘tazilite perspective is much closer to that of the Sunn. What is clear is that during the entire history of Islm, the pre-Islamic

legacy of cosmological sciences and metaphysical doctrines were united, as they were in the Jabirian corpus or in the *Ras□'il* [Epistles] of the *ikhw□n al-□af□'* [The Pure Brethren / The Brotherhood of the Pure][78] in a perfect synthesis. Science and scholarship from external sources never ruptured Isl□m's monotheistic mandate.

Modern Muslim scholars like Seyyed □ossein Na□r, 'All□mah Sayyid Mu□ammad □usayn □ab□tab□'□, A□mad A□mad□, and Orientalists like Henry Corbin,[79] Titus Burckhardt, René Guénon, and Frithjof Schuon,[80] teach us to view Isl□m from a perspective which appreciates the diversity within its unity. The harmonious integration of diverse systems of thought within its unitarian perspective makes it all the more appealing particularly since it is the product of the Mu□ammadan spirit which is essentially metaphysical and ethical. Thanks to the research of these scholars and the research of those who follow in their footsteps like William C. Chittick, Christian Jambet, and Pierre Lory, to mention only a few, Isl□m is no longer a mass which crushes us under its enormous religious weight.[81] It is also no longer a primitive pastoral religion of shepherds or an Arab imitation or adaptation of Judaism and Christianity.[82] On the contrary, Isl□m is now presented as a type of intelligent filter that magically selects, cleans and purifies, preserving what is of value, while filtering out and rejecting what is harmful and useless, from profane secular knowledge. Like these scholars, we view the transfer or transmission of the pre-Islamic legacy as a natural unveiling of the universal continuity of the same spiritual inheritance.[83] Due to its metaphysical nature, its development is indefinite. It manifests itself in given historical moments and takes root in the most fertile field to ensure its spiritual blooming. This is how we see things as opposed to embracing theories of "influx" and "imitation." Our perspective is not a personal one. It is entirely in accord with the eternal sacred tradition.

But let us be candid. Even if we were to view Isl□m as the result of some historical "influx" or as a "copy" or a pre-Islamic religious model--rejecting everything that is authentic and unique in its own revelation--we should recognize as well, as does Cruz Hernández, that even under such conditions **no religion has turned out better than Isl□m.**[84]

It was Cruz Hernández, the distinguished professor from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, who presented a staunch criticism of the methodology employed by Asín Palacios. As Cruz Hernández points out, Palacios' attitude is not only the product of his social context, and his training as a Catholic priest, it also reflects the state of scientific thought of his time (490). Like Cruz Hernández, our goal is not to cast doubt on the value of Asín Palacios work as a whole by criticizing a widely held prejudice against Isl□m which was also applied to other religions. We all owe a debt of gratitude to Palacios for his important contributions to the knowledge of Isl□m during the period of al-Andalus. Although much of his work has merit, it must be stressed, however, that the methodology he employs, which is employed by Gibb as well, is completely wrong. Their approach is erroneous for the simple fact that it is based on a principle which is inherently flawed. The problem with their approach is the belief that for religious studies to be scientific, to come to an understanding of religion in general and Isl□m in particular, it is necessary to narrow things down to a few facts.[85] Once non-essential elements have been reduced to minimal terms,

to abstract formulas and to skeletal hypotheses, all traditions can be condensed into an imaginary framework of classifications that conveniently explain certain similarities between the Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions through theories of "assimilation" or "successive reproduction."[86]

As can be appreciated, we would exhaust ourselves uselessly attempting to criticize such an understanding of religion. The case has been judged and the verdict has been given. As René Guénon has observed in relation to the Vedanta, Eastern and Western concepts of "religion" are profoundly different.[87] In order to prevent such confusion from extending to Islam, it is important to remember here that tradition, as opposed to religion, is the vital source of all religious forms. A tradition does not have established dogmas or precepts; it has universal meanings which are applied to dogmas and religious precepts. **At the end of this cycle and the beginning of the next cycle, it is exceedingly important not to reject tradition.**[88] **So long as we believe that the part is present in the whole there will be religion. Revelation, faith, truth, and religion are neither fact nor are they ideas. They are expressions of a sole spiritual beginning.**[89] In the Western world, however, specialists have a very different conception of religion. Some will argue that if you know one religion then you know them all. Others hold that if you know one religion, you know none of them. And there are still others who hold that a religion outside of your own is incapable of teaching you anything and is not even worthy of consideration.[90] These are the very same specialists who stubbornly insist on portraying Islam as an Arab invention based on Judeo-Christian traditions or a classic case of "assimilation" or "successive reproduction."[91] Religious traditions from East and West do indeed share many similarities which are more or less obvious to scholars.[92] Nowadays, most sincere scholars are willing to drop the term "religion" in favor of the more appropriate term "tradition," a concept that acknowledges God as the eternal source of all revelation.

1. Editor's Note: The Mormons are followers of the Church of Latter Day Saints founded by Joseph Smith (1830) in the state of New York. His authority rested on the revelation to him of The Book of Mormon, an alleged pre-Columbian work giving the history of American peoples of Hebrew origin from the Diaspora to 800 A.D. After Smith's death, Brigham Young became leader and transferred the movement to Salt Lake City, Utah (1847), where a prosperous community was established. When the practice of polygamy was stopped, Utah was incorporated (1896) into the Union as the 45th state. Mormons believe that The Book of Mormon is of equal inspiration with the Bible. The Church of Latter Day Saints is considered by some to be a cult.

2. Editor's Note: The Seventh Day Adventists are members of an Adventist sect founded in 1844 in the U.S.A. Like the Mormons, they also follow a modern "prophet." As for the Jehovah's Witnesses, they are a Christian sect founded in 1872 in Pennsylvania by Charles T. Russell. They accept a literal interpretation of the Bible and stress the imminent coming of a terrestrial, theocratic kingdom, into which only the Witnesses will pass. The Seventh Day Adventists hold that Ellen G. White (1827-1915) was given the gift of prophecy by the Holy Spirit and was the Lord's messenger, her writings serving as an authoritative source of trust, guidance, instruction and correction. See "Fundamental Beliefs," Seventh Day Adventist Church: http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/ [10] fundamental/index.html. The Ellen G. White Estate, Inc. Website, explains that:

Seventh-day Adventists believe that Mrs. White was more than a gifted writer; they believe she was appointed by God as a special messenger to draw the world's attention to the Holy Scriptures and help prepare people for Christ's Second Advent. From the time she was 17 years old until she died 70 years later, God gave her approximately 2,000 visions and dreams. The visions varied in length from less than a minute to nearly four hours. The knowledge and counsel received through these revelations she wrote out to be shared with others. Thus her special writings are accepted by Seventh-day

Adventists as inspired. (White)

3. Author's Note: For the development of heterodoxies in Christianity, the following should be considered: A. Orbe, Parábolas evangélicas en San Ireneo–I–II (460 and 515 respectively).

4. Editor's Note: Some Orientalists seek to cause confusion, to put up smoke screens and to undermine Islām at the behest of certain states, for purely political reasons. Historically, some Orientalists served the imperial intentions of colonial masters. For more on Orientalist efforts to undermine Islām, see Aḥmad Ghurāb's Subverting Islām: The Role of Orientalist Centers. The book is also available in Spanish translation by Héctor Abū Dharr Manzolillo, under the name Subvertir el Islām: La función de los centros orientalistas.

5. Editor's Note: As Nwyia explains,

On sait que les fuqahā', qui lisent le Coran en philologues ou en juristes, rejettent la lecture spiritualiste des soufis comme une nouveauté étrangère et infidèle au texte sacré. Or, parce que leur point de vue légaliste s'est imposé dans l'Islām officiel et est devenu pour ainsi dire le point de vue de l'orthodoxie, les soufis ont pris, aux yeux de l'histoire, figure de secte plus au moins hétérodoxe, leur lecture du Coran a été considérée comme une lecture tardive et étrangère à l'Islām primitif. (23)

[It is well–known that the fuqahā', who interpret the Qur'ān as philologists or jurists, reject the mystical interpretations of the ṣūfis as a foreign innovation which is unfaithful to the sacred text. Since their legalistic perspective imposed itself in official Islām it became the orthodox position. In the eyes of history, the ṣūfis were relegated to the status of a more or less heterodox sect and their interpretations of the Qur'ān viewed as a later development which was alien to primitive Islām.]

As Murata observes,

Though the proponents of al–kalām [scholastic philosophy] have often been looked upon by Western scholars as the representatives of 'orthodox' Islām, this is to impose an inappropriate category upon Islāmic civilization, as many other scholars have pointed out. In fact, by and large the criteria for being Muslim have been following the sharī'ah and acknowledging the truth of a certain basic creed. Beyond that, a variety of positions concerning the details of the creed was possible, and none could be said to be 'orthodox' to the exclusion of others. (8)

ṣāriq Ramaḍān, grandson of Ḥasan al–Bannā, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, confirms that "[a]ll Muslims––Orthodox, Sunnī, ṣūfī, or Shī'ah––are part of the same understanding of the sharī'ah" (211–212).

6. Editor's Note: Muslims, in general, should oppose the labels imposed on them by outsiders. This applies to the terms "heterodox," "heretical," "sect," "fundamentalist" and "Islāmist." The author and the editor, however, must use them in order to disprove them.

7. Editor's Note: In this sense, Sunnism, Shī'ism and ṣūfism can all claim to be authentic expressions of Islām. As Sachiko Murata explains, "When we look at the Islāmic intellectual history...we see...that there is no question of a universally recognized 'orthodox' school of thought, but rather a large number of schools that debate among themselves concerning how the basic items of the creed are to be understood" (The Tao of Islām 8).

8. Editor's Note: As Naṣr has put it, "There is no Magisterium in Islām" (The Heart of Islām 85). While Vittor and Naṣr are correct that there is no official institution which speaks for Islām in matters of orthodoxy, for Shī'ites, there is a Magisterium in Islām, the Imāmate, the throne of which is mostly empty, in the absence of the chief magistrate, Imām Muḥammad al–Mahdī.

9. Editor's Note: In simpler and more modern terms, the esoteric and the exoteric are two faces of the same coin. For scholars like Corbin, Shī'ism and ṣūfism were identical in essence and Shī'ism was only the outer form of Islāmic mysticism. Evidently, this is not the case as Shī'ism represents a balancing totality between both the esoteric and exoteric dimensions of the dīn [religion].

10. Author's Note: The following quotations are from Nahj al–balāghah / Peak of Eloquence translated by Sayed 'Alī Reḍā. It contains an interesting preface, a brief biography on the compiler, and abundant notes.

Editor's Note: The work is also available in a Spanish translation titled La cumbre de la elocuencia. An abridged Arabic / French edition translated by Samih Atef El–Zein also exists but devoid of most of the sermons dealings with the status of the ahl al–bayt .

11. Editor's Note: Allawī's "Sufyānī and Muḥammadī Islām" gives an exposition of two distinct interpretations of the Muslim religion. There cannot, however, be two versions of Islām, a good Islām and a bad Islām. There is only Islām and

what is not Islām. As Hector Abū Dharr Manzolillo explains in his article “La filosofía de Abū Sufyān,” “Abū Sufyān no veía ni entendía cual era la misión de Muḥammad (tenéis ojos pero no veis, tenéis oídos pero no oís, como decía Jesús). Lo único que veía y entendía era que la religión daba poder mundanal que era lo que él quería” [Abū Sufyān could not understand the mission of Muḥammad. As Jesus, peace be upon him, used to say, “You have eyes but you can’t see. You have ears but you can’t hear.” Likewise, the only thing that Abū Sufyān could understand was that religion leads to worldly power, which was exactly what he wanted.]

12. Editor’s Note: The ṣūfī Muslims, for example, embrace music and poetry from other cultures as a means of drawing people into Islām. As Naṣr explains, “ṣūfism has had the greatest role in the spread of Islām, in addition to its vital function in the preservation and purification of ethical life, the creation of the arts, and the exposition of unitive knowledge [ma‘rifah] and metaphysics within Islāmic society” (Heart of Islām 63–64). Massignon notes that “In India, Islām was spread not by war but by mysticism and the great orders of mystics” (61). Islām is a great syncretic sponge. Its survivability is the result of its adaptability.

13. Editor’s Note: Strictly speaking, the ahl al-kitāb, the People of the Book, are the Jews and Christians. Ṭabaṭabā‘ī and Lankarānī include Zoroastrians in this definition. Mawlānā Muḥammad ‘Alī, the Aḥmadiyyah scholar, is the most liberal, claiming that “the Pārsīs, the Buddhists and the Hindus all fall into this category” (614). He even believes that “Pārsī and Hindū women may be taken in marriage, as also those who follow the religion of Confucius or of Buddah or of Tao” (615). He criticizes the narrow conception of the word ahl al-kitāb adopted by jurists and holds that “there is no reason why the Magians, the Hindus and others who profess a religion and accept a revealed book, should not be treated as such” (615).

14. Editor’s Note: This is an allusion to the Qur’ānic verse: “From Allāh we come and to Him is our return” (2:156).

15. Editor’s Note: Xenophanes (6th c. B.C.) was a Greek philosopher and poet known for his monotheism. He is not to be confused with Xenophon (c. 430–c. 355)––the Greek general and writer––the disciple of Socrates. Xenophanes, who particularly objected to the anthropomorphism of Homer and Hesiod in their portrayal of the gods, gave the following definition of the Divine: “God is one, greatest among gods and men, in no way like mortals either in body or in mind” (qtd. Netton 1). Parmenides (c. 504–450 B.C.) was a Greek Eleatic philosopher. He regarded movement and change as illusions, and the universe as single, continuous and motionless. Plato (c. 428–c. 348 B.C.) was a Greek philosopher who was a follower of Socrates. Aristotle (384–322 B.C.) was a Greek philosopher, pupil of Plato, tutor of Alexander the Great, and founder of the Peripatetic School at Athens (335 B.C.). His philosophy grew away from the idealism of Plato and became increasingly concerned with science and the phenomena of the world. His analyses were original and profound and his methods exercised an enormous influence on all subsequent thought. Plotinus (205–70) was a Roman philosopher of Egyptian birth. After studying in Alexandria, he established his Neo-Platonic School in Rome (244). He used the metaphysical truths of Plato [esp. the dialectic of love] to create a mystic religion of union with the One through contemplation and ecstatic vision. Through Saint Augustine his theory of the human spirit entered into the mainstream of Western philosophy.

16. Author’s Note: For a comparison of the doctrines of Plotinus and Sankara, see García Bazán, in Baine Harris (ed.), Neoplatonism and Indian Thought (181–207); Neoplatonismo y Vedanta; La doctrina de la materia en Plotino y Sankara and for a paragon between Plotinus and Isām see Nabi, “Union with God in Plotinus and Bayazid” in Harris (227–232). Most importantly, one should consult the volume prepared by P. Morewedge, Neoplatonism and Islāmic Thought.
Editor’s Note: Sankara was a commentator on the Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita, writing in c. 800 A.D. He was an upholder of traditional monistic Hinduism, which reduces all reality to a single principle or substance.

17. Editor’s Note: Idrīs is the Arabic name for the Hebrew Hanokh and the English Enoch, the Biblical prophet who supposedly lived from 3284 to 3017 B. C. In the Holy Qur’ān, Almighty Allāh says that: “He was a man of truth and a prophet. We raised him to a lofty station” (19:56–57) and refers to him as a man of “constancy and patience” whom Allāh admitted to His Mercy as a righteous one (21: 85–86). More than a man, Idrīs is an archetype, a sublime soul appearing in various cultures as Thoth, Hermes, and Metraton, among others.

18. Editor’s Note: The first sentence of the shahādah is typically translated as “There is no god but Allāh” but it can also be translated as “There is no god; only Allāh.” The attributes of Allāh can also be used in the shahādah as in “There is no Reality but the Reality” which leads to the metaphysical notion that nothing exists outside of Allāh.

19. Editor’s Note: The words “faith” and “belief” cannot convey the sense of the Arabic imān which means “absolute

knowledge, belief and conviction."

20. Editor's Note: As Shaykh ▯ad▯q explains, "There can be no forgiveness for skeptics [ahl al-shakk] and polytheists [ahl al-shirk]; nor for unbelievers [ahl al-kufr] and those who are persistent in their denial [ahl al-ju▯▯d]. But the sinful among those who believe in the unity of All▯h [ahl al-taw▯▯d] may be forgiven" (122).

21. Editor's Note: For the Qur'▯nic quotes in this translation, we have relied mostly on the English translation of 'Abdull▯h Y▯suf 'Al▯. We have also consulted Mu▯ammad Marmaduke Pickthall and M.H. Shakir; the French translations of Mu▯ammad ▯am▯dull▯h and Denise Masson, as well as the Spanish translations of Julio Cortés and Juan Vernet. The Y▯suf 'Al▯ translation is closer to conveying the style as opposed to the literal sense of the Qur'▯n which Pickthall adheres too more closely.

The original Y▯suf 'Al▯ commentary was a fine work of scholarship. Over successive editions, however, the text and tafs▯r [commentary] have been "purged" of any and all ideas which are not in line with Wahh▯b▯ ideology. The value of Shakir's translation resides primarily in its clear modern English. The ▯am▯dull▯h translation, the product of two years of labor, adequately conveys the meaning of the scripture and is accompanied with a basic commentary. The Masson translation, however, the result of three decades of effort, is far superior stylistically. However, the modified ▯am▯dull▯h version prepared in Saudi Arabia is the most perfect. While the Vernet translation manifest a pro-Christian bias which often substantially modifies the sense of certain figures of diction and classical Arabic formulas its literary value far exceeds the crude and vulgar translation made by Cortés.

While the Vernet translation is more manicured, both the Vernet and Cortés translations manifest distortions and corruptions of the Qur'▯n. Vernet's introduction and notes are devoted to casting doubt on the authenticity of the text on the basis of sloppy scholarship which is easily dismissed by Ay▯tull▯h M▯rz▯ Mahd▯ Pooya Yazd▯'s comprehensive criticism of ta▯r▯f [textual change], "Originality and the Genuineness of the Holy Qur'▯n in its Text and Arrangement" which accompanies A▯med 'Al▯'s translation of the Qur'▯n which itself is very poor and which can only be partially redeemed by its philosophical commentary. See also, Ta▯r▯f al-Qur'▯n: A Study of Misconceptions Regarding Corruption of the Qur'▯nic Text" by Mu▯ammad B▯qir An▯▯r▯.

22. Editor's Note: As Almighty All▯h explains:

Those who believe [in the Qur'▯n], and those who follow the Jewish [scriptures], and the Christians and the Sabians,- any who believe in All▯h and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. (2:62, see also 22:17 and 5:69)

This could also be applied to Vedic Hinduism. In the Vedas, we read that God has many names but the wise call Him One. In the 20th century, the Arya Samaj reformist movement was formed within Hinduism. It calls for a rejection of all polytheism and idolatrous worship in favor of the Vedas alone. This acceptance of previous religions applies to pre-Isl▯mic times and to those who, since the advent of Isl▯m, were not reached by its message. According to the Qur'▯n and Sunnah, it is incumbent on all believers to accept Mu▯ammad as the final Messenger of All▯h.

23. Editor's Note: Taw▯▯d is also the union of the divine order and the worldly order, between religion and state.

24. Editor's Note: As Gibb explains: al-Sh▯dhil▯ (d. 1258) studied in Fez under a disciple of Ab▯ Madyan. Eventually settling in Alexandria, a circle of pupils gathered around him. He had no monastery and no set form of rituals. He discouraged his followers from giving up their trades and professions for the contemplative life. But little more than a generation later, his disciples adopted the normal organization of a ▯ar▯qah, which spread over North Africa and into Arabia. The town of Mokha in the Yemen in particular adopted al-Sh▯dhil▯ as its patron saint and venerates him as the originator of coffee-drinking. The Sh▯dhiliyyah order is in general more extravagant in ritual and more ecstatic than the Q▯diriyyah, but is remarkable especially for the large number of sub-orders to which it gave rise, both directly and in conjunction with the Q▯diriyyah. Among the best known are the '▯s▯wiyyah, with its famous sword-lashing ritual, and at the other extreme the orthodox and austere Derq▯w▯ of Morocco and Western Algeria (108).

25. Editor's Note: When asked what one needed to do to attain Paradise, the Messenger of All▯h stated: "Offer your five obligatory prayers, observe fast during the whole of the month of Rama▯▯n, pay the poor due (zak▯h) out of your wealth and obey whatever He commands you, then you will enter the Paradise of your Lord" (A▯mad). The Qur'▯n and the Sunnah are explicit in establishing Mu▯ammad as the final prophet and messenger. Almighty All▯h says that: "Mu▯ammad is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the Messenger of All▯h, and the Seal of the Prophets [kh▯tim al-nabiyy▯n]:

and All□h has full knowledge of all things." (33:40). The Messenger of All□h said on numerous occasions that "There will be no prophet after me" (Bukh□r□, Muslim, H□kim, □ad□q, Muf□d, Kulayn□, Majlis□).

Consequently, the sects and cults who believe in a prophet after Mu□ammad cannot be considered Muslims. These include the A□madiyyah who believe that M□rz□ Ghulam A□med was a prophet, the Nation of Isl□m and its offshoots (the Five Percenters, the An□□rs, and so forth). The followers of Elijah Mu□ammad and Louis Farrakhan are outside of the fold of Isl□m for, as the "Muslim Program" explains on their web site and their publications, they "believe that All□h (God) appeared in the Person of Master W. Fard Mu□ammad, July, 1930; the long-awaited "Messiah" of the Christians and the "Mahd□" of the Muslims."

The NOI believes that Master W. Fard Mu□ammad was All□h and that Elijah Mu□ammad was his Final Messenger. This is whom they refer to when they say "There is no God but All□h and Mu□ammad is His Messenger." The belief in □ul□l [incarnation] is the antithesis of taw□□d [oneness of God] and the belief in a prophet after Mu□ammad is clearly inconsistent with the Qur'□n and Sunnah.

The NOI believes in racial separation and that "intermarriage or race mixing should be prohibited" while Isl□m has abolished racism (49:13: 4:1; 2:213; 6:98; 7:189; 21:92; 23:52). As the Prophet said in his Farewell Sermon, "All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over a black nor a black has any superiority over a white - except by piety and good action" (Muslim, A□mad, D□rim□, Ibn M□jah, Ab□ D□w□d, Ibn □ibb□n et al.).

The NOI believes "in the resurrection of the dead--not in physical resurrection--but in mental resurrection" while Isl□m believes in physical resurrection. The NOI believes that black people "are the people of God's choice" while Isl□m does not believe in Chosen People. In short, the Nation of Isl□m has little in common with Isl□m besides its name.

Claude Andrew Clegg is thus in error when he claims that "in regards to traditional or orthodox Isl□m, the Nation of Isl□m was heterodox in many of its views and practices; however, it was arguably a legitimate Muslim sect given its marginal adherence to central tenets of the Isl□mic faith." (68). He adds that "overall, the basic outlines of both religious traditions do appear to overlap enough to allow the black organization to reasonably claim membership in the body of Isl□m, albeit as a heretical limb" (69). The Nation of Isl□m cannot be heterodox, a legitimate Muslim sect, a member in the body of Isl□m, and a heretical limb at the same time.

26. Editor's Note: The term ark□n al-d□n is not used by Sh□'ah scholars, but there is mention of da'□'im al-Isl□m in Sh□'ah tradition with five items with an interesting modification: □al□t, □awm, zak□t, □ajj and, nota bene, wil□yah. For example, Im□m Mu□ammad al-B□qir said, "Isl□m is based on five [pillars]: on □al□t, sawm, zak□t, □ajj and wil□yah--and nothing has been promoted more than the promoting of wil□yah" (Kulayn□). In another □ad□th, the same Im□m has been quoted in the same way with the addition of the following sentence at the end "...but the people took the four and abandoned this one [ie. wil□yah]."

27. Editor's Note: Sh□'ite scholars prefer to list belief, u□□l al-d□n [the pillars or religion] and practice, fur□' al-d□n [the branches of religion], separately.

28. Editor's Note: The term qiyy□mah [Resurrection] is used synonymously to express this pillar.

29. Editor's Note: Whereas the Sh□'ite might seek the intercession of the Im□ms, the □□fis seek the intercession of their awliyy□' or saints. For more on intercession in Isl□m, see 'Abd al-Kar□m Bi-Azar Shir□z□'s "Tawassul." The Salaf□s do not believe in tawassul.

30. Editor's Note: Most Sunnis, however, follow the Ash'arite school of theology established by Ab□ al-□asan 'Al□ al-Ash'ar□ (c. 874-935), a famous Arab theologian from Iraq. Ash'ar□ insists that, since God is All-Powerful, he can do as He pleases, placing a good person in hell and a bad person in Heaven. The Ash'arites give precedence to God's All-Powerful attribute as opposed to the integral attribute of justice which is stressed by Sh□'ite theologians. They also hold that the Qur'□n is the uncreated word of God, an idea rejected by Sh□'ites as only All□h is eternal. For more on the differences in the approach to the concept of divine justice among the theologians and philosophers of Sh□'ah Isl□m, see the introduction to Shah□d Mu□ahhar□'s al-'adl al-il□h□ which has recently been published in English as Divine Justice.

31. Author's Note: For the distinction between "tradition" and "religion," see Guénon, Introduction générale à l'étude des doctrines hindoues (4) and García Bazán, "La tradición y la unidad transcendente de las religiones" in Atma Jnana (5-8). See, as well: Schuon, L'unité transcendente des religions.

Editor's Note: Islām recognizes all revealed religions. In the Islāmic view, Judaism and Christianity are steps on the spiritual road to salvation: its followers are People of the Book. The religions revealed by God are different crystallizations of the divine message. It should be noted, however, that the author is not advocating religious relativism or pluralism. His thoughts are more in line with the perennial philosophy of René Guénon and Frithjof Schuon which holds that all religions teach the same thing, but in different ways. However, in order to see this universal core, one must turn from the exoteric to the esoteric aspects of the religions. As regards the divinely sanctioned nature of religions outside of Islām, Muslims scholars are divided. Western-trained Orientalists like Naṣr and Sachedina believe that all Abrahamic religions remain valid, based on the following Qur'ānic verses:

Those who believe [in the Qur'ān], and those who follow the Jewish [scriptures], and the Christians and the Sabians,- any who believe in Allāh and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. (2:62; 5:69)

According to Naṣr "al-islām refers to that universal surrender to the One and that primordial religion contained in the heart of all heavenly inspired religions, not just to Islām in its more particular sense" (The Heart of Islām 17). Ibn al-'Arabī, the great spiritual master, observes that:

Religion is of two kinds, the religion of God and those whom God has taught His religion and those whom they have taught and, second, the religion of created beings, which God acknowledges. The religion of God is that chosen by Him and set by Him at a level far above the religion of creation. (Bezels 113)

According to the Shaykh al-Akbar, the Qur'ānic verse "The religion with Allāh is Islām" (2:132) means following, obeying, yielding and submitting to God, regardless of one's religion. In the eyes of Ibn al-'Arabī, there is truth even in pagan deities since "in every object of worship there is a reflection of the Reality" (Bezels 78). Ayatullāh al-Uẓmā Shaykh Yūsuf Sanā'ī goes even further arguing that:

I am of the opinion that paradise is the result of doing good deeds and avoiding evil deeds according to the best of one's understanding. Regardless of the religion people practice, and so long as they are convinced without a doubt of the righteousness of their belief, they will get what they deserve. God says, "Good deeds will be rewarded ten times as much as they deserve, and evildoers will be given punishment which fits the evil; You shall not be unfairly treated." According to Molla-Sadra, paradise inevitably evolves from spiritual development. In some Qur'ānic verses, faith is a vital prerequisite for paradise. According to my interpretation, faith is a sincere belief in the goodness of one's deeds, not belief in God. Strong belief is associated with the mental serenity, and it contributes to spiritual development. However, someone with a sense of being under compulsion can never be consistent in doing good deeds and improve. Neither identification nor label, be it Christian, Muslim, or Buddhist, is the requirement for paradise, but indeed good deeds are. An agnostic involved in his skepticism cannot believe in God or prophet. Neither do Christians put trust in Prophet Muḥammad. It would be utterly inconceivable if God called for a particular identification on the Doomsday. Would it be unfair? The Qur'ān says reassuringly: "God shall not be unfair to any of his creatures." Similarly, evil doing mortifies the human soul, which leads to hell. It makes no difference which religion or belief you follow but the deeds you perform. If doubt is cast upon the authenticity of one's religion, one must seek the truth; otherwise one is guilty of laxity.

(http://www.saanei.org/page.php?pg=showmeeting&id=22&lang=en [11])

With all due respect, Ayatullāh Sanā'ī's interpretation of the Qur'ānic imān as faith in one's deeds and not faith in God is clearly untenable as it is duly defined by Almighty Allāh as āmana bi Allāhi wa al-yawmi al-ākhiri wa al-malāikati wa al-kitābi wa al-nabiyyina, namely, belief in Allāh, and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Book, and the Messengers (2:177).

Ayatullāh Sanā'ī further holds, "all non-Muslims, including Hindus, fire-worshippers, and cow-worshippers, are pure," only atheists are unbelievers. He holds that spiritual impurity is the result of ascribing partners to God while one knows that He is One. He claims that "ascribing partners to God through neglect does not make one an unbeliever, merely unenlightened." However, if Muḥammad had adopted this pluralistic position, the prophetic mission would surely have failed.

According to traditional Muslim scholars and jurists, Islām has fulfilled all previous monotheistic religions, superseded them, abrogated them and replaced them. In their view, Islām has precedence over its predecessors. As Legenhausen explains:

Islām not only shatters previous forms in the name of the spirit, however, it also imposes its own form in place of those it has shattered. It is that form, or exterior, which constitutes the gateway to its spirit, or interior, which, by virtue of its content

and the position of Islām in the line of succession of revealed religions, is more comprehensive than any other is. Furthermore, Islām does not violate the truths of the previously revealed religions; rather it confirms them. What Islām shatters is what is false in the other religions because of corruption and deviation or because of the temporal limitations of their validity.

Sachedina was reproached by Ayatullāh al-'Uzmā Sistānī for his belief that salvation can be obtained through any major monotheistic religion so long as one submits to God (Sachedina "What Happened"). His position find support in Imām al-Rizā's ḥadīth which states that: "Whoever denies the Prophet of Allāh is like one who has denied all the prophets of Allāh." Sachedina's belief that all Abrahamic religions are valid and equal in truth was dismissed by Ayatullāh Sistānī as "nonsense" ("What Happened"). According to Sachedina, the word islām, as it appears in the Qur'ān, merely means an act of submission and is not the name of a religion ("What Happened"). According to Ayatullāh Sistānī this is not the case. Sachedina's interpretation is based on a failure to understand the basic rules of Arabic grammar regarding definite and indefinite nouns ("What Happened"). The word islām is accompanied by the definite article al- [the] which makes it a proper noun. As such, the Qur'ān is speaking about Islām as a religion and not "submission" as a vague, indefinite, generalized concept. Scholars like Sistānī cite the following verses of the Qur'ān to argue that, since the coming of Muḥammad, the Final Messenger, there can be no salvation outside of the religion of Islām:

The Religion before Allāh is Islām. (3:19)

O ye who believe! Fear Allāh as He should be feared, and die not without being Muslims. (3:102)

Those whom Allāh willeth to guide, He openeth their breast to Islām; those whom He willeth to leave straying. (6:125)

This day have those who reject faith given up all hope of your religion: yet fear them not but fear Me. This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen for you Islām as your religion. But if any is forced by hunger, with no inclination to transgression, Allāh is indeed Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful. (5:3)

If anyone desires a religion other than Islām, never will it be accepted of him; and in the Hereafter He will be in the ranks of those who have lost [all spiritual good]. (3: 85)

Those who die rejecting faith, and die rejecting, on them is Allāh's curse, and the curse of angels, and of all mankind. (2:161)

The followers of past monotheistic religions, prior to the advent of Islām, have nothing to fear:

Those who believe [in the Qur'ān], and those who follow the Jewish [scriptures], and the Christians and the Sabians,- any who believe in Allāh and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. (2:62; 5:69)

According to most traditional scholars of Islām, the Qur'ānic verses which reassure that the People of the Book will have their reward (2:62; 5:69) apply to monotheists of all times who were not reached by the prophetic message but who would have embraced it had they heard about it. From the time of Muḥammad, they argue, there is only one path, one right religion, for as Almighty Allāh says, "But set thou thy face to the right Religion before there come from Allāh the Day which there is no chance of averting" (30:43). And as the Messenger of Allāh warned, "Any Jew or Christian who heard about me and did not believe in me and what was revealed to me in the Holy Qur'ān and my traditions, his ultimate destiny is the [Hell] Fire" (Bukhārī). As for Sachedina, Ayatullāh al-'Uzmā Sistanī has expressed the following:

I have looked at the presentation of the writings and statements of Dr. 'Abdul 'Azīz Sachedina that was sent [to me]. Whereas his views on the issues presented are based on incorrect understandings, and are incompatible with religious and academic standards, and cause confusion in minds of the mu'minān [believers] all the brothers and sisters in imān [faith] (may Allāh help them in [gaining] His pleasure) are enjoined to refrain from inviting him for lecturing at religious gatherings, and not to approach him for seeking answers to questions pertaining to beliefs. [21 August 1998] (Sistānī "Translation of the Letter")

32. Editor's Note: The author is alluding to the Prophet's saying that "The number of paths to God is equal to the number of human souls" (qtd. Chittick, A Shī'ite Anthology). Since Dr. Chittick did not provide the source of this saying, I contacted him for more details. He responded to me that:

When I wrote A Shī'ite Anthology, I was much more inclined to accept the oral reports of my teachers than I am now. Also, the grammar of the passage demands "breaths" rather than "human souls,"given that anfas is the plural of nafas, not nafs. Anyway, in one passage in the Futūḥāt (II 317), Ibn al-'Arabī cites it without ascription, and says, "which means that every

breath is a path to God, and that is correct,"and goes on to add some clarification. In another passage (III 411), he ascribes it to ahl All□h, "the folk of God" (i.e., great □□fis), and says, "Each breath emerges from the heart according to the heart's belief concerning God"(cf., the gods of belief, Chap. 19, □□f□ Path of Knowledge). A couple of the Fu□□□ commentators cite it with the expression, "It has been said" (qil). So, I would say that opinion 2 is correct.
(Personal email from Dr. William Chittick to the editor, dated Dec. 18, 2007)
In short, the tradition attributed to the Prophet should read: "The number of paths to All□h is equal to the number of human breaths." In one passage, Ibn al-'Arab□ attributed the tradition to the Prophet; in another, he presents it as a □□f□ saying. Although the content of the tradition is correct in the sense that it agrees with the Qur'□n and the Sunnah, it does not have an isnad [chain of narration] and would thus be rejected by □ad□th scholars.
33. Editor's Note: The differences in Isl□mic schools of thought are a mercy upon the Muslims. As the Prophet said, "Difference of opinion among the ummah is a blessing from All□h" (Bayhaq□, Maqdis□, Daylam□). It is clear from the Holy Qur'□n that Almighty All□h appreciates differences and diversity:
O mankind! We created you from a single [pair] of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other [not that ye may despise each other]. Verily the most honored of you in the sight of All□h is [he who is] the most righteous of you. And All□h has full knowledge and is well acquainted [with all things]. (49:13)
34. Editor's Note: The author is alluding to the Qur'□nic teaching concerning the middle path (17:110; 35:32). As Almighty All□h says in the Holy Qur'□n, "We have appointed you a middle nation, that ye may be witnesses against mankind, and that the messenger may be a witness against you (2:143). As Im□m Khumayn□ explains, "The faq□h imagines that there is nothing but fiqh; the mystic, that there is nothing but mysticism; the philosopher, that there is nothing but philosophy; and the engineer, that there is nothing but engineering... Knowledge, once seen in this way, becomes the thickest of all veils" (Isl□m and Revolution 395). To be a complete Muslim requires a balance between the inward and the outward.
35. Editor's Note: As Na□r explains, "the Im□ms of Sh□'ism are seen in the □□f□ perspective as the spiritual poles of their age. They appear in the spiritual chain [silsilah] of various □□f□ orders, even those which have spread almost exclusively among Sunnis" (□ab□tab□'□ A Sh□'ite Anthology 7).
The Sh□'ite origins of □□fism are well-documented by Na□r in his "Sh□'ism and □□fism: their Relationship in Essence and in History" found in his □□f□ Essays. As Na□r explains, "from the Sh□'ite point of view Sh□'ism is the origin of what later came to be known as □□fism" (106). According to Moosa, "since the early period of Isl□m, the Sh□'ites...were strict z□hids [ascetics], who were the forerunners of later □□fis (xxii). Awani confirms that
There is a close relationship between Sh□'ism and □□fism... From an esoteric Sh□'ite point of view, Sh□'ism is the origin of what came to be known as □□fism. Sh□'ite Im□ms play a very basic and fundamental role in □□fism, but not as Sh□'ite Im□ms, rather as representatives, par excellence, of Isl□mic esoterism...almost all □□f□ orders [sal□sil] trace their spiritual pedigree to the Holy Prophet through Im□m 'Al□. (172-73)
As he explains, "Both Sh□'ism and □□fism can be described as the Isl□m of Al□ ibn Ab□ T□lib. Both emphasize the principle of wil□yah [friendship of God or proximity to Him] which in both is traced to the Sh□'ite Im□ms and F□□imah. Both believe that the cycle of sanctity [d□'irat al-wil□yah] starts immediately after the termination of the cycle of prophecy [d□'irat al-nubuwwah] (173). As Na□r explains, the cycle of initiation guarantees the ever-living presence of an esoteric way in Isl□m (□□f□ Essays 108).
36. Editor's Note: This □ad□th can be found in □□kim, Ibn Kath□r, □abar□n□, Suy□□□, Kulayn□ and Muf□d. A variant version is also found in Tirmidh□, Ibn Jar□r and Suy□□□.
37. Author's Note: For the symbolism of the "gate" see Guénon, Símbolos fundamentales de la ciencia sagrada, especially chapters 25 and 41.
38. Editor's Note: The Ay□tull□hs, it should be noted, are jurists and not theologians. The titles Mawl□n□, □ujjat al-Isl□m and Ay□tull□h, among many others, are honorary titles given by the people and have no theological or jurisprudential implications. In the Sh□'ite system of scholarship, the main academic titles are '□lim or scholar, an individual who has completed approximately 10 years of study in the □aw□ah or Isl□mic seminary; mujtahid, a Muslim lawyer or attorney, an individual who has reached the level of jurist, after an average of 20 years of study; and Marja' al-Taql□d, popularly known as Ay□tull□h al-'U□m□ or Grand Ay□tull□h, a title acquired after 30 to 50 years of study by individuals who have devoted their entire lives to the Isl□mic sciences and who are acknowledged by their peers as the foremost jurists and de facto

heads of the ▯aw▯ah.

At present, some of the top Sh▯‘ite Sources of Emulation in Najaf include: Ay▯tull▯h al-U▯m▯ al-Sayyid ‘Al▯ al-▯usayn▯ al-Sistan▯, Ay▯tull▯h al-U▯m▯ Bash▯r al-Najaf▯, Ay▯tull▯h al-U▯m▯ Mu▯ammad Is▯▯q al-Fayy▯d, and Ay▯tull▯h al-U▯m▯ Sayyid Mu▯ammad Sa‘▯d al- ▯ab▯tab▯’▯ al-▯ak▯m, among others.

Some of the top Sh▯‘ite Sources of Emulation in Qum include: Ay▯tull▯h al-U▯m▯ al-Shaykh Mu▯ammad Taq▯ Behjat Fuman▯, Ay▯tull▯h al-U▯m▯ al-Shaykh N▯▯ir Makarim Shiraz▯, Ay▯tull▯h al-U▯m▯ al-Sayyid M▯s▯ Shubayr Zanjan▯, Ay▯tull▯h al-U▯m▯ al-Shaykh Lu▯full▯h S▯f▯ Gulpaygan▯, Ay▯tull▯h al-U▯m▯ al-Shaykh Nur▯ Hamadan▯, Ay▯tull▯h al-U▯m▯ al-Shaykh ▯usayn Wa▯▯d Khuras▯n▯, Ay▯tull▯h al-U▯m▯ Sayyid ‘Abd al-Kar▯m M▯saw▯ Ardebil▯, Ay▯tull▯h al-U▯m▯ Sayyid Mu▯ammad ▯usayn▯ Shahroud▯, and, according to some, Ay▯tull▯h al-U▯m▯ al-Shaykh Y▯suf San▯‘▯.

Ay▯tull▯h al-U▯m▯ al-Sayyid ‘Al▯ Khamene’▯ has muqallid▯n [followers] from mostly outside of Iran. Ay▯tull▯h al-U▯m▯ al-Sayyid Mu▯ammad ▯usayn Fa▯lull▯h, whose ijtih▯d [authority to interpret Isl▯mic law] is called into question by the Sources of Emulation in Iraq and Iran, is also very popular among young people due to the more pragmatic and lenient nature of his edicts; his greater accessibility to the laity, and his acquaintance with Western culture (Tak▯m). For links to all the leading scholars of Sh▯‘ism, the Marji‘iyyah al-d▯niyyah (Religious Authority), see: Aalulbayt Global Information Center: http://www.al-shia.com/html/eng/p.php?p=Miscellaneo [12] us&url= Ulama.

39. Author’s Note: See Ay▯tull▯h ‘Al▯ Mishkin▯, “Wil▯yat al-Faq▯h: its meaning and scope” in al-Taw▯▯d: A Quarterly Journal of Isl▯mic Thought and Culture (Tehran 1406/1985): III, 1, 29-65.

Editor’s Note: The concept of the “Authority of the Jurisconsult” was developed by Im▯m Khumayn▯ who brought Sh▯‘ite political thought in line with the Sunn▯ perspective which views the head of the Isl▯mic state, the Caliph or Im▯m, as political successor of the Prophet. Traditionally, Sh▯‘ite scholars have considered all governments to be illegitimate in the absence of the Twelfth Im▯m.

40. Editor’s Note: The differences between Sh▯‘ite jurists are mainly ones of degree, expressing different dimensions of the same issue. For example, one jurist may hold that a certain act is forbidden [▯ar▯m], another one may consider it a precautionary prohibition [▯ar▯m i▯tiyy▯▯ w▯jib] and yet another may hold that it is merely reprehensible [makr▯h].

41. Editor’s Note: The complete name of this branch of Isl▯m, which represents 10 % of Muslims worldwide, which is the majority in Iran and Iraq, and is strongly represented in Lebanon, Afghanistan and Pakistan, is sh▯‘ah im▯miyyah ithn▯-‘ashariyyah or Twelve Im▯m Sh▯‘ism. Its school of jurisprudence, the Ja‘far▯ madhhab, is named in honor of the sixth Im▯m, Ja‘far al-▯▯diq who, along with his father, Mu▯ammad al-B▯qir, were the founding fathers of fiqh. The Ja‘far▯ madhhab is also known as the fifth school of thought in Isl▯m, along with the four Sunn▯ schools. The orthodox nature of the Ja‘far▯ school of jurisprudence was admitted by Shaykh Mahmood Shal▯▯▯, the head of al-Azhar University, in his historic ruling of 1959 in which he recognized the ithn▯ ‘ashar▯ school as an acceptable school of jurisprudence in Isl▯m which Muslims were free to follow like any other school of jurisprudence among the Sunnis:

Isl▯m does not command any of its followers to follow a particular Isl▯mic madhhab. On the contrary, it establishes for every Muslim the right to follow, at the beginning, any one of the correctly conveyed madh▯hib, whose verdicts are recorded in their respective books. It is permissible also for any one that follows one of these schools to change to another one--any other school--and he is not sinning by doing that.

The Ja‘far▯ school which is known as ‘the madhhab of the ithn▯ ‘ashar▯ im▯m▯ sh▯‘▯’ is a sound madhhab. It is permissible to worship God according to its teaching, like the rest of the Sunn▯ madhhabs.

The Muslims ought to know this and get rid of their undue bigotry for particular madh▯hib. The religion of All▯h and His law do not follow, nor are they bound to, a particular madhhab. All [the founders of these madh▯hib] are mujtahids [jurists], reward-deserving from All▯h, and acceptable to Him. It is permissible to the ‘non-mujtahid’ to follow them and to accord with their teaching, whether in devotions or transactions. (“Epilogue” Chirr▯)

Sh▯‘ite minorities are present wherever there are Muslims. For a study on the Sh▯‘ites of the Maghreb, see “Sh▯‘ism in Morocco.” The article was published in Jafariya News on July 27th, 2006 and has appeared on many websites.

42. Editor’s Note: See note 29 and A▯mad A▯mad▯, “‘Irf▯n and Ta▯awwuf (▯▯fism)” in al-Taw▯▯d (Tehran 1404/1984), I 4: 63-76.

43. Author’s Note: See, Ibn Khald▯n, Muqaddimah (Cairo 1957) 321; as well as the English version by F. Rosenthal, Ibn Khald▯n, The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History (New York: 1958): 3 vols.

Editor's Note: 'Abd al-Ra□m□n Ibn Khald□n (1332-1406) was an Arab historian most famous for his Muqaddimah in which he develops a scientific philosophy of history. While he recognized the Sh□'ite influence on □□fism (Aw□n□ 172-73), he held some distorted views about Sh□'ism and rejected the belief in Im□m Mahd□ (al-K□f□, 2:4, 479, note 2).

44. Editor's Note: Na□r defines "fundamentalism" as a reaction to the onslaught of modernism and secularism (The Heart of Isl□m 40). It is worth recalling that terrorism is strictly prohibited in Isl□m and the events of September 11th were condemned by Muslim scholars, both Sunn□ and Sh□'□. Ay□tull□h al-U□m□ Y□suf San□'□ has said,

In [the] Sh□'ite religion terror is definitely condemned. Therefore you are not able to find a Sh□'ite Muslim in [the] □□lib□n movement. We are Sh□'ite Muslims, and my interpretation as well as that of other religious leaders in Isl□m, is that Isl□m does not accept terror. Terror in Isl□m, and especially [in] Sh□'ite [Isl□m], is forbidden. (MacIntyre)

45. In an interview with Christiane Amanpour for the CNN investigative report God's Warriors, Ay□tull□h al-U□m□ Y□suf San□'□ stated that "Terrorists should go to hell."

For rulings against terrorism, see H□r□n Yayh□'s Isl□m Condemns Terrorism http://www.geocities.com/ [13] Islamicissues/terrorism.html which has been translated into Spanish by Ab□ Dharr Manzolillo; "Muslims against Terrorism," Internet: http://www.islamfortoday.com/ [14] terrorism.htm; "Muslims Condemn Terrorist Attack; http://www.muhajabah.com/ [15] otherscondemn.php, as well as the following links: http://groups.colgate.edu/ [16] aarislam/response.htm and http://www.cair-net.org/html [17] /911statements.html; http://www.unc.edu [18] /~ kurzman/terror.htm.

Editor's Note: Sh□'ite scholars are unanimous in their insistence that, in matters of fiqh, one can only commence the taql□d of a living mujtahid. For Ay□tull□h al-U□m□ Sayyid Mu□ammad □usayn Fa□lull□h, it is a question of precaution (http://www.bayynat.org/www/english/Fatawa/ijtihad.htm [19]). For all others, it is an obligation. See A Concise Commandments of Isl□m by Khumayn□ with footnotes from Shariatmad□r□, Najaf□-Marash□, Gulpayg□n□, Khunsar□, Shiraz□, Khu'□ 3; Khumayn□'s The Practical Laws of Isl□m 18; Khu'□ 18; Gulpayg□n□ 22; Lankar□n□ http://www.lankarani.com/English/ [20] onlinepub/tawdhih-al-masael/taqleed.htm; Sist□n□ http://www.sistani.org/ [21] html/eng/main/index.php?page=3&lang=eng&part=1. This prevents scholarly stagnation and allowing for gradual evolution of interpretation. The Sh□'ite shar□'ah is not static nor is it stagnant.

46. Editor's Note: Both the quietist and activist approaches are sanctioned by Sh□'ism and find ample justification from the lives of the Prophet and the Im□ms. In the early days of Isl□m, the Most Noble Messenger was obliged to adopt a quietist approach. After the establishment of an Isl□mic State, his policy became an activist one. While his Caliphate was usurped, Im□m 'Al□ adopted a policy of strategic compromise. When he assumed power, he adopted an activist line. Im□m □asan moved from activism to quietism while Im□m □usayn took activism to its glorious pinnacle of martyrdom. All of the Im□ms after □usayn adhered to the quietist line. Since the Occultation of the Twelfth Im□m, Sh□'ite scholars have followed the quietist approach, which predominates in the □aw□ah in Najaf or the activist approach, which finds its bastion in the seminary in Qum. For more on the quietist and activist approaches, see my "Strategic Compromise in Isl□m" For more on activist scholars refer to Ten Decades of 'Ulam□'s Struggle by Aq□q□ Bakhshayesh□.

47. Editor's Note: The Sh□'ite condemnation of bid'ah is as strong as the Sunn□ one. The Messenger of All□h is quoted as saying "When innovation appears among my people [the Muslims], it is the obligation of scholars to declare thei knowledge. May All□h curse the scholars who do not declare [the truth]" (al-K□f□ 1:2 141: □ad□th 160). The Messenger of All□h is also reported to have said that

For each and every innovation [in Isl□m] which deceives the very faith, there will be after my death, a sentinel and guide Im□m from my progeny, being in charge of the belief to challenge it, to defend it. He will speak under inspiration from All□h, will declare and enlighten the truth, will negate the wiles of the cunning and will speak on behalf of the meek. (143: □ad□th 163)

The Messenger of All□h has also said that "Every innovation [in religion] is misguidance. And every misguidance leads to hell" (146: □ad□th 166). Im□m 'Al□ has said that "No innovation is introduced unless one sunnah is forsaken, keep away from the innovations and stick to the broad road. Surely the old tested ways are the best and the innovated ones are bad" (Nahj al-bal□ghah 302).

48. Editor's Note: Sh□'ism belongs to a true living hermeneutic tradition. As Im□m Khumayn□ explains, "The Qur'□n has seven or seventy levels of meaning, and the lowest of those levels is the one where it addresses us" (Isl□m and Revolution 391). He was referring to the tradition of the Prophet which states that "The Qur'□n has been revealed on seven levels

(a□ruf), each having an outer and inner meaning, and ‘Al□ ibn Ab□ □□lib has knowledge of both” (430). A similar tradition is related in Sunn□ sources on the authority of Ibn Mas‘□d (Kha□□b al-Tabr□z□, Book 3, Chap. 37 No. 605). It is also related that the Prophet said that: “The Qur’□n has a beautiful exterior and a profound interior” (□ab□tab□’□, The Outward).

49. Editor’s Note: The author alludes to Mu□□af□ K□mel At□türk (1881-1938), the Turkish soldier and statesman who was the founder and first President of the Republic of Turkey. He contributed to the destruction of the Ottoman Empire and abolished the Caliphate in 1924. As a result, Isl□m ceased to be a political force in the world. He closed theological schools and replaced the shar□‘ah with a law code based on the Swiss legal code, the German penal code and the Italian commerce code. He outlawed traditional Isl□mic headdress for men and insisted that all Turks wear European style hats. He banned the □ij□b and encouraged women to wear western dress and enter the work force. In 1928, in an effort to distance the people from the Qur’□n, the government decreed that the Arabic script was to be replaced by a modified Latin alphabet. All citizens from six to 40 years of age were obliged to attend school to learn the new alphabet. The Turkish language was “purified” by the removal of Arabic and Persian words and replaced by new Turkish ones. Mu□□af□ K□mel opened art schools so that boys and girls could engage in the visual representation of human forms which has been banned during Ottoman times. At□türk, who was most fond of the national liquor, raki, and consumed vast quantities of it, legalized alcohol which is strictly forbidden in Isl□m. In 1934, he required all Turks to adopt Western style surnames. Ironically, after waging war against the Turkish culture and religion, he adopted the name Kem□l At□türk meaning “father of the Turks.” He died in 1938 of cirrhosis of the liver, the result of years of excessive drinking. He left Turkey with a divided identity, trapped between East and West, Europeanized but not quite European, alienated from the Isl□mic world but still a Muslim country.

50. Editor’s Note: Ibn Taymiyyah (661- 728) was a scholar of the □anbal□ school of thought. He held that All□h’s “hand,” “foot,” “shin” and “face” were literal [□aq□q□] attributes and that All□h is upon the throne in person. Sunn□ authorities like Taq□ al-D□n as-Subk□, Ibn □ajar al-Haytham□ and al-‘Izz ibn Jama‘ah passed rulings against following him in matters of ‘aq□dah [religious beliefs] as his views fell outside of the consensus of Sunn□ scholars. Ibn Taymiyyah is considered one of the ideological forefathers of Wahh□bism and Salafism. For more on his views see Allaw□’s “Sufyan□ or Mu□ammad□ Isl□m.”

51. Editor’s Note: Mu□ammad ibn ‘Abd al-Wahh□b (1703-92) founded the puritanical Wahh□b□ sect of Isl□m in Nejd c. 1744. The Wahh□bis conquered Arabia (1803), were beaten by the Ottoman Turks (1819) and acquired political power under King ibn Saud (early 20th c.). They destroyed the tombs of the Prophet’s Family and Companions in the Cemetery of al-B□q□ in Mad□nah. They were poised to raze the Prophet’s tomb but were forced to retreat due to Egyptian threats of war. Extremist Wahh□b□s hold that all Muslims, with the exception of themselves, are heretics and infidels whose blood is □al□l. This has resulted in the rape and slaughter of Sunn□, Sh□‘ite and □□f□ Muslims throughout the Isl□mic world, most particularly in Arabia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, and India.

52. Editor’s Note: It is for this reason that Sh□‘ite Isl□m is described as Isl□m-Original and the Im□ms are viewed as the Pillars of Isl□m.

53. Author’s Note: The word kis□’ means “mantle” or “cloak.” In Sh□‘ite Gnosticism, the practice of wearing and passing on the mantle is associated with the passing of the spiritual and temporal authority of the Mu□ammadan wil□yah. Among the □□fis from the Sunn□ world, the practice of wearing and passing on the mantle is intimately associated with the transmission of the “sanctifying grace” of “blessed influx” [barakah] of the wil□yah [holinesss] which, in its origins, is related to Sh□‘ite esoterics and the Gnostic doctrines of the Im□ms. This □ad□th appears in different form in Sh□‘ite sources like Gh□yat al-mar□m (Tehran 1272, 287).

The recognition of the spiritual supremacy of ahl al-bayt (The Prophetic Household), namely, F□□imah, ‘Al□, □asan and □usayn by Umm Salamah, the wife of the Prophet, who did not include herself among them, appears in many Sunn□ sources like, □a□□□ Tirmidh□ (vol. 5, 31 (H. 3258), 328, (H. 3275); 361, while the recognition of this spiritual supremacy by another wife of the Prophet, ‘□’ishah, who also excluded herself from the ahl al-bayt, appears in □a□□□ Muslim (Cairo, many different editions), ed. ‘Is□ al-Halab□, vol. 2, 368, vol 15, 194; as well as □a□□□ Bukh□r□ (Cairo, 1932) vol I, 39, and Tirmidh□ V. 31.

54. Editor’s Note: The author refers to al-Kawthar, [the Fountain], the titled bestowed upon the Prophet’s daughter, F□□imah al-Zahr□’, the wife of ‘Al□, the First Im□m, and the mother of the eleven Im□ms that followed. According to some

Sh‘ite sources, Sūrat al-Kawthar was revealed by Almighty Allāh regarding the birth of Fāṭimah al-Zahrā’.

55. Editor’s Note: For an analysis of the genesis of Wahhābism, see Ḥamīd Algar, Wahhābism: A Critical Essay. Oneonta (N.Y.): Islāmic Publications International, 2002. See also, Wahhābism by Ayātullāh Ja‘far Subḥānī.

56. Editor’s Note: Martin Luther (1483-1546) was the leader of the Protestant Reformation. By labeling ‘Abd al-Wahhāb as the “Luther of the Arab World,” the author wishes to stress the similarities between Protestant and Wahhābī reformism. Luther, like ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, was opposed to all metaphysical speculations, that is, to any interpretation which was not strictly literal. Luther, like ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, was a rigid and uncompromising moralist and Luther, like ‘Abd al-Wahhāb was a simpleton, devoid of intellectual lucidity.

When the author makes an analogy between Luther and ‘Abd al-Wahhāb, he does so to stress the dry, literalist and fundamentalist spirit of these Christian and Muslim innovators. While Luther is widely considered a “reformer,” he did not reform Christianity in the least bit. Protestantism remained the same as the Catholic Church from which it separated: Trinitarian, believing in the divinity of Jesus, his incarnation, and his crucifixion. The only change that Luther instituted was a moral reform, a reform in customs, in much the same way as ‘Abd al-Wahhāb did.

If the author has compared these two figures it is because they wanted to adjust the sense of the scripture to their own literal interpretation. Furthermore, both figures manifested a narrow-minded, fundamentalist and fanatical spirit. If Netton is justified in saying that “Ibn al-‘Arabī is the Meister Eckhart of the Islāmic tradition,” the author is amply authorized to compare ‘Abd al-Wahhāb to Luther, particularly considering the audience to which the book is addressed: the Western World. As the Qur’ān says, speak to the people in the language of the people (14:14).

In the present-day Sh‘ite world, reformist figures include the philosopher ‘Abd al-Karīm Soroush, often likened to Martin Luther, and Ayātullāh al-Uẓmā Yūsuf Sanā‘ī who is at the head of what has been described as a full fledged Islāmic Reformation, an event comparable in many ways to the Christian Reformation of the 16th century. Sanā‘ī has passed many modernist reformist rulings. He allows sex change operations under certain circumstances (Fatāwī). He has legalized abortion in the first trimester, and not only due to a mother’s health and fetal abnormalities. He believes that “under some conditions--such as parents' poverty or overpopulation--then abortion is allowed.” The Ayātullāh even writes letters of consent for women to take to their doctors (Wright). He believes in a slack enforcement of ḥijāb: “There is no need for admonishing against women who leave their hair uncovered if it is considered as inefficient” (Hamshahri Newspaper). His attitude toward nikāh al-mut‘ah is the most restrictive of all Sh‘ite scholars. In his view, “temporary marriage basically is not a lawful revelry in Islām or something parallel to permanent marriage. So for those whose wives are available and they can provide their sexual needs with her, temporary marriage, even with Muslim women is problematic, in my idea, and even possible to prohibit” (Hamshahri). He has even ruled that: “There is no oppression and denial of rights [in Islām] and all human beings are honored. And Allāh says, “We have honored the children of Adam.” Thus, there is no racial discrimination in Islāmic laws and the black and the white are equal. There is no sexual or national discrimination either.” Several years ago I suggested to Ayātullāh al-Uẓmā Lankarānī that an edict prohibiting racism would be in order. He explained that no edict was required for such a matter as “Islām has abolished racism.” Rulings and edicts are only required for new issues and developments. There is no need for a fatwā against racism because Islām clearly condemns racial discrimination.

The populist apologetic edicts of Sanā‘ī, who is described as “Khomeini’s feminist protégé,” find ample support among liberals, reformists, feminists and non-Muslims. Nonetheless, Sanā‘ī has made some important rulings regarding women’s rights which are most welcomed, namely: “Blood money for intended-like murder of women and men is equal and this is provable from reasons of blood money” (Hamshahri); and “Studying science and jurisprudence cannot be excluded to men, since all humans are encouraged to study and they can have all decrees of judgement, jurisprudence, authoring, and leadership” (Hamshahri). Women are thus equal before the law and free to assume any role within society.

57. Editor’s Note: Ibn al-‘Arabī (1165-1240) is perhaps the most famous mystic of Islām. His chief works, Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam and al-Futūḥāt al-makkiyyah [The Makkan Openings] form an encyclopedia of ṣūfī doctrines. The attitudes of philosophers towards Ibn al-‘Arabī are divided.

58. Editor’s Note: Saudi petrol dollars, the CIA, and the Israeli secret services, are accused of spreading the Wahhābī ideology worldwide. See, Richard Labevière’s Dollars for Terror.

59. Author’s Note: For the eschatological notion of the parusia of the Twelfth Imām al-Mahdī, the Hidden and Awaited

Imm, see Corbin, “L’Imm et la rénovation de l’homme dans la théologie shi’ite” in Erannos-Jahrbuch (Zurich 1960), XXVIII, 87; Muahhari and Baqir al-adr, L’Imm Occulto (Roma 1987), translated and edited by Palazzi; ‘Allmah abtabi‘i, Shi‘ite Islm (Qum 1409/1989), especially chapters VII, 210-214; as well as Shaykh al-Mufid’s Kitb al-irshd: The Book of Guidance (Tehran 1377), with a preface by Nasr and translated by Howard, IX, 524-551.

Editor’s Note: Numerous traditions establish Imm Mahdi’s role as religious reformer. According to the Sixth Imm, When the Qi’im, peace be on him, rises, he will summon the people to Islm anew and guide them to a matter which had become lost and from which people had gone astray. He is only called the Mahdi [the one who has been guided] because he guides to a matter from which [men] have deviated. He is only called the Qi’im [the one who rises] because of his rising. (Mufid 551)

60. Editor’s Note: Ta’wl can be translated as spiritual hermeneutics. Literally, it means to go to the origin of a thing. As Nasr explains, “It means to penetrate the external aspect of any reality, whether it be sacred scripture or phenomena of nature, to its inner essence, to go from the phenomenon to the noumenon” (Shi‘ite Islm 85).

According to Nwyia, Sunni exegesis is a tafsir, an explication of the text at the level of the letter of alfi; whereas Shi‘ite exegesis is more of a ta’wl, that is, an interpretation at the level of the ma‘ni: it seeks, beyond the literal sense, the hidden sense, the secret of which belongs to the ahl al-bayt, the Family of the Prophet (33). The book then becomes an esoteric revelation, a sealed treasure which can only be opened by the Imms, the retainers of ta’wl and the guardians of the book (33).

To speak of Sunni exegesis as literal and Shi‘ite exegesis as profound is a groundless generalization since most tafsir, of both branches, is simply tafsir, commentary. It is only the Gnostics, of both branches, who have interpreted the Qur’n according to the ta’wl. Nwyia’s comments need to be further qualified as they imply an inaccessibility of the Scripture to all but an exclusive elite of initiates, the Prophet and His Family.

As Imm Khumayni explains, “The Qur’n is like a banquet from which everyone must partake according to his capacity. It belongs to everyone, not to any particular group; there is a share in it for everyone” (Islm and Revolution 424); “The Qur’n possesses everything. It is like a vast banquet that God has spread out in front of all humanity and that everyone partakes of according to his appetite” (414). “The highest share,” however, “is reserved for the one to whom it was revealed: ‘The only person who truly knows the Qur’n is he who was addressed by it’” (415); “only he who was addressed by it fully understands it” (393-94); “Full benefit can be drawn from the Qur’n only by the man to whom it was addressed--The Messenger of God” (392). “All others are deprived of such complete benefit,” he continues, “unless they attain it by means of instruction from him, as was the case with the awliyy’.” (392). We can understand only a given aspect or dimension of the Qur’n; interpretation of the rest depends upon the ahl al-‘imah (365-66). This is consistent with the Qur’nic verse which states that: “We bequeathed the Book on those of Our servants We chose” (35:32).

As Imm Khu’i explains, “the knowledge of the Qur’n’s reality is exclusively with the Imms (A) and others do not have a share in it.” The Prophet made it clear that personal interpretation of the Qur’n was forbidden. He stated that: “Whoever interprets the Qur’n according to his opinion, let him seek his abode in the fire” (Tirmidhi); and “He who makes tafsir according to his own opinion has become an unbeliever” (Kashni and Ibn al-’Arabi qtd in Murata 227). The interpretation of the Qur’n lies with the Prophet and the Holy Imms for as Imm al-iiqiq has said, “We are the custodians of Allh’s affairs, the treasurers of Allh’s knowledge and the containers of Allh’s revelation” (Kulayni 2:1 74: iadith 505). By tafsir bi al-ra’i, the Prophet and the Imms were referring to interpreting the Qur’n without the necessary skills.

61. Editor’s Note: As Imm Khumayni explains:

The Qur’n indicates that it descended to the Prophet: ‘The Trusted Spirit descended with it to your heart’ (26:193). The Qur’n underwent a descent to the Prophet by means of the Trusted Spirit so that it might be received by him at his station. In the same connection, God says, ‘We sent it [the Qur’n] down on the Night of Power’ (97:1); that is, ‘We sent it down in its entirety to the Prophet on the Night of Power, in the form of a manifestation.’ First, the Qur’n was in the keeping of the Trusted Spirit, and then it underwent a descent in order to enter the heart of the Prophet.

The Qur’n descended, then, from level to level, from degree to degree, until finally it assumed a verbal form. The Qur’n is not verbal in substance; it does not pertain to the audiovisual realm … When the manifestation of God Almighty emerges from the unseen and descends to the world of nature or bodies, there is a vast distance separating this lowest degree from the infinite realms of the unseen, and beyond them, the first appearance of that manifestation. There is a correspondingly

vast distance separating our perception from that of those superior to us, at the pinnacle of whom stand the awliyy□' and the prophets of God. (Isl□mic Revolution 393)

The Qur'□n is a mystery, a mystery within a mystery, a mystery veiled and enveloped in mystery. It was necessary for the Qur'□n to undergo a process of descent in order to arrive at the lowly degree of man. Even its entry into the heart of the Prophet was a descent, and from there it had to descend still further in order to become intelligible to others. (409)

Or, as the Prophet put it, "This Qur'□n is God's banquet" (D□rim□ qtd. in Murata 291).

62. Editor's Note: The Mahd□ is also known as Im□m al-'A□r, the Im□m of the Age.

63. Editor's Note: René Guénon became a □□f□ Muslim in 1912 under the influence of 'Abdul-H□d□ (1869-1917), formerly known as Yvan Aguéli, a Swedish painter who was a convert to Isl□m. Upon taking his shah□dah, Guénon adopted the name 'Abd al-W□□id Ya□y□. Shortly thereafter, he received the barakah, namely, the spiritual initiatory influence of Muslim mysticism from 'Abd al-Ra□m□n Alish al-Kab□r, a shaykh of the Sh□dhil□ order.

Guénon left Paris in 1930 and moved to Cairo, where he lived the rest of his life as a □□f□, married to F□□ma H□nem, the daughter of Shaykh Mu□ammad Ibr□h□m, with whom he had four children, two girls and two boys, A□mad and 'Abd al-W□□id. Since the 1930s, he had been surrounded by numerous European "disciples" who were drawn to Isl□m and □□fism, including Frithjof Schuon who visited him in Cairo in 1935, as well as Titus Ibr□h□m Burckhardt, Martin Lings, whose Muslim name is Ab□ Bakr Sir□j, Michel Mu□□af□ Vâlsan, and others.

René Guénon was the restorer or reviver of traditional thought in the West and its most eloquent exponent. Subscribing to the doctrine of perennialism, the Traditionalists believe that all "traditional" religions share the same essence. They believe that salvation can be found by means of Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Isl□m. They reject Sikhism, Bah□'ism, and other newer religions, sects, and cults.

The Traditionalist movement divided in 1948-50 after a split between Guénon and the Swiss □□f□ Shaykh Frithjof Schuon (1907-98), founder of the Maryamiyyah □ar□qah. As Mark Sedgwick explains, Traditionalism was developed in different directions by Schuon and by two other followers of Guénon: Baron Julius Evola (1896/8-1974), and the scholar Mircea Eliade (1907-86) who had a far-reaching influence in American academia. Over the second half of the twentieth century, "Schuon's □□f□ order remained secret, but grew in influence in Europe and America, and in Iran under the leadership of Seyyed □ossein Na□r (1933-). Although many of Guénon's followers professed the shah□dah, not all Guénonian Traditionalists are Muslims.

Guénon died in 1951, shorty after becoming a naturalized Egyptian. Unlike Henry Corbin, who left no Muslim followers, René Guénon brought hundreds of thousands of people into Isl□m in France, the United States, Latin America, Spain and Portugal. Like many Sunn□ Muslims, Guénon had many misconceptions about Sh□'ites. He did acknowledge, however, that all Isl□mic spirituality was Sh□'ite, in the true sense of the term.

There are those who wish to dismiss Guénon for being a Freemason, however, it should be recalled that he wrote strong articles against modern Masonry and was even a member of the magazine La France Antimaçonique. It must be recalled that Masonic Lodges operate independently. There is also a major difference between the Masonry practiced in France and the Masonry practiced in Scotland, for example. Guénon was opposed to the modern, anti-traditional, Speculative Masonry, not the traditional Operative Masonry of the middle Ages which build magnificent cathedrals. The original Freemasons disappeared in the XVII century and were replaced by a speculative Masonry based on Protestant ideas of free thought and progress. Despite being a Mason, Guénon lived and died as a pious Muslim, having brought many Masons into the fold of Isl□m.

64. Author's Note: See R. Guénon, Introduction général à l'étude des doctrines hindoues. III 3.

Editor's Note: The Vedanta is the orthodox Hindu school of philosophy concerned chiefly with the latter part of the Vedas, the four books of the ancient Hindu scripture.

65. Editor's Note: The goal of Isl□mic hermeneutics is to establish a balance between the letter of the law and its spirit; not focus exclusively the letter of the law as the Wahh□bis and Sal□fis do; nor focus exclusively on the spirit of the law as some mystics do.

66. Editor's Note: While Wahh□bism aims to cleanse Isl□m of what its adherents view as innovations, deviations, heresy and idolatry, most historians (both Arab and non-Arab) hold that Wahh□bism is in fact a new form of Isl□m, containing many changes in both theology and practice. Shaykh Hish□m Kabban□ from the Isl□mic Supreme Council of America has

estimated that 80% of mosques in the United States follow the Wahh□bi ideology. He was criticized, however, for failing to substantiate his claim.

67. Editor's Note: The Wahh□bis accuse ahl al-sunnah and ahl al-bayt of innovations when they themselves are the greatest of innovators.

68. Editor's Note: An example of Wahh□b□ scriptural deviation includes the application to Muslims of Qur'□nic verses that were specifically revealed regarding polytheists. For a contentious overview of Wahh□b□ / Salaf□ / Deoband□ beliefs, see Zubair Qamar's "Wahh□bism: Understanding the Roots and Role Models of Isl□mic Fanaticism and Terror" and Fayad A□mad's "Some Beliefs of the Sipah e Sahaba and Lashkar e Jhangavi."

69. Editor's Note: As Asaf Fyzee observes, "As for 'orthodoxy,' a minority, however small, may well have retained a very close touch with the original tradition; the majority, however preponderant, may conceivably have lost it in the stress of political conflicts" (3-4).

70. Editor's Note: Suhraward□ was the founder of the School of Illumination in which the symbolism of light and darkness prevails.

71. Editor's Note: Neo-Pythagoreanism refers to the doctrines of an Alexandrian school of philosophy (1st c. A.D.) which put a mystical interpretation on many Pythagorean ideas. Pythagoras (c. 580-c. 500 B.C.) was a Greek mathematician and philosopher. He founded the Pythagorean School which believed in metempsychosis, that the soul imprisoned in the body could be purified by study, and following a strict discipline of purity and self-examination.

72. Editor's Note: Hermeticism pertains to alchemy or magic relating to the writings attributed to Hermes Trismegistus.

73. Editor's Note: The Sabians were a sect from □arr□n which followed astrological doctrines. According to some interpretations, they were Manicheists. They are not to be confused with the Sabaeans, the inhabitants of Saba, mentioned in the Qur'□n. These latter developed a flourishing kingdom (c. 930-c. 115 B.C.) in South Arabia. They are mentioned in the Qur'□n but are no longer extant.

Author's Note: Both the origin and meaning of the term Sabian is uncertain, and many etymologies have been suggested to define it. Many linguists lean towards the Arabic verb □abba (convert, namely, one who receives the "baptism" instituted by John the Baptist). The term □abba is known to Arabic-speaking Muslims and the Sabians are mentioned in the Qur'□n (5:73; 2:59; 22:17) as People of the Book. The title of "Baptists" is based on the regular use of baptism as a religious discipline. It is for this reason that the Christian Patriarchs referred to them by the Greek term emerobaptistai, namely, those who practice baptism on a daily basis. Even the term soubaioi was known among Greek writers. Nevertheless, the most common name used in religious literature is that of Nasoreans, from the Arabic na□□r□). This extraordinary coincidence is startling since the Nasoreans are not the least bit inclined to Christianity. On the contrary, they look down upon it and detest it. Their doctrines are also far removed from Christian beliefs, with the exception of the belief in a Saviour, and some superficial similarities their ceremonies have with Christian rites.

It has also been argued that the term Sabean is derived from the Hebrew saba [one who walks]; the Ethiopian Sbh [scattered souls], and even the Syrian sb [to baptize]. Some claim that the term probably derives from the Egyptain root sba which means "star-guide" and "star-god." This is quite possible as the Sabians of □arr□n were the ancient Chaldeans who professed a doctrine containing neo-Pythagorean and Hermetic elements. As such, they were the last representatives of Alexandrine Hermetic gnosis. They are those with whom the prophet Abraham dealt with since he was born among "star-worshippers."

Muslim researchers have identified the Sabians of □arr□n as the true Sabians mentioned in the Qur'□n and which are described as "star-worshippers" and "idol-worshippers." Both practices were very common among the Sabians of □arr□n and Abraham struggled against them. □arr□n was founded as a city some 4,000 years ago, as a business post for the city of Ur, the birthplace of Abraham, located on the commercial route of Mesopotamia. Despite the fact that they worshipped idols and celestial bodies, the Sabians of □arr□n believed in one God, IL, unique and unknowable, beyond the comprehension of His creatures. They also believed in the need for messengers of God to educate humankind.

The Sabians believed that they had received their religión from Seth, the son of Adam, which is why they are identified with the Gnostic Sethians and with Idris or Enoch who is usually identified with Hermes Trismegisto. The Isl□mic tradition recognized Hermes or Enoch as a prophet. The names Hermes, Idri or Enoch all refer to the same Person.

Sabianism flourished from the 9th to the 10th centuries under Isl□mic rule. They Sabians produced philosophers,

astronomers, medical doctors, and botanists. The most distinguished figure from that renaissance was the great Sabian astronomer Th□bith ibn Qurrah, one of the main trasmittors of ancient science to Isl□m, who attempted, unfruitfully to reform his religion and to free it from the superstitions of its priests. In the year 717, the Caliph Umar the Second, founded the first Isl□mic university in □arr□n. To get the university off to a good start, the Caliph invited the last Hermenesian philosophers from Alexandria to move to □arr□n. In the 9th century A.D., there existed four hermenesian schools in □arr□n.

74. Editor's Note: Like Ay□tull□h Mi□b□h Yazd□, the author does not deny the existence of foreign elements among Muslim Gnostics or □□fis. Both scholars assert the originality of Isl□mic Gnosis. This does not, however, mean that they condone whatever has been called gnosis or □□fism in Isl□m since many of the views and manners of behaviour of the □□f□ Orders are disputable. The key to differentiating between a true Muslim mystic and a pseudo-□□f□ charlatan is the respect, application and practice of the shar□'ah. There can be no esoteric without its exoteric grounding. It was these pseudo-□□fis who were cursed by the Im□ms, and not the true followers of the spiritual path. For more on the image of the path in Isl□m, refer to our study on this subject: Morrow, John Andrew "The Image of the Road in Islamic Literature." Proceedings from the Image of the Road Conference. Eds. Will Wright and Steven Kaplan. Pueblo: SISSI, Colorado State U-Pueblo, 2005.

75. Editor's Note: Epicureans were the followers of Epicurus (341-270 B.C.), an Athenian atomist philosopher. He regarded sense perception as the only basis of knowledge and believed that material objects throw off images which enter our senses. He considered the highest good to be pleasure, but this meant freedom from pain and emotional upheaval, achieved not through sensual indulgence but through the practice of virtue. His teachings formed the basis of the De rerum natura of Lucretius.

76. Editor's Note: The Cynics were members of a school of Greek philosophy founded by Antisthenes. They taught that virtue is the only good and that it is to be won by self-control and austerity, not by social conventions.

77. Editor's Note: Bil□l Philips is wrong to link Sh□'ite and Mu'tazilite philosophy (5).

78. Author's Note: For the ikhw□n al-□af□', see S.H. Na□r, An Introduction to Isl□mic Cosmological Doctrines (London 1978), 1, I to IV, 25-104; Isl□mic Life and Thought (London 1981), especially chapters 10 and 11.

79. Editor's Note: Henry Corbin privately professed to be a Sh□'ite Muslim mystic. He acknowledged his belief in the secret of Sh□'ism, namely, the existence of the Living Im□m. 'All□mah □ab□tab□'□, Ay□tull□h □asanzadeh Amoli, Seyyed □usein□ Tehran□, and Seyyed □ossein Na□r have all attested to Corbin's acceptance of Twelver Sh□'ism. It is said that Corbin performed the pilgrimage to Makkah with Na□r.

A perusal of Corbin's scholarship, however, demonstrates his interest in "spiritual Sh□'ism," consisting of the ghul□t and the Ism□'□l□s, as opposed to "official Sh□'ism," namely, the mainstream legal tradition of Twelver Sh□'ism. Although he greatly admired the Twelve Im□ms, Corbin held many "heterodox" beliefs. For example, he believed that the occulutation of the Mahd□ was permanent and that he would only reappear in the hearts of believers.

According to Ismael Velasco, Corbin's work "constitutes a philosophical bridge between the B□b□-Bah□'□ Faiths and the philosophical and religious matrix within which they were conceived" and may be seen "as a veritable Prolegomenon to the study of B□b□ and Bah□'□ scripture." In the words of Velasco, "Corbin followed the thread of Isl□mic spirituality from the Twelve Im□ms at its genesis, to the Shaykh□ school at its terminus." It is important to mention, however, that although his works represents a conceptual link between Shaykhism, B□bism, and Bah□'ism, Corbin was critical of these last two movements.

For more on the subject, see the following works by Vittor: "La fe bahai y la contra-tradición en el mundo islámico," a paper read on October 23rd, 1997 at the Joseph de Maistre Institute of Traditional Studies in Buenos Aires, and amplification and expansion of an article previously published in Atma-Jñana. Revista Bimestral de Síntesis Espiritual 8 (Buenos Aires 1990): 17-29; "Guénon y la iniciación en el esoterismo islámico" a paper read on August 23 rd, 2001, during the Primera Semana Guenoniana de Buenos Aires, celebrated in the Library of Congress, as well as the article "El Concepto del ta'wil desde la perspectiva fenomenológica de H. Corbin" in the cultural suplement Letras e Ideas 18 (Buenos Aires 1991): 3-8.

80. Editor's Note: Editor's Note: Frithjof Schuon (1907-1998) was a German-Swiss scholar. A convert to Isl□m, his Muslim name was '□sa N□r al-D□n A□mad. He was a student of René Guénon, the reviver of the Traditionalist theory, with whom he broke from in 1950. He claimed to have been visited by the Virgin Mary in the 1960s. According to Schuon, the Virgin Mary gave him the universal message of proclaiming the transcendental unity of religion. As a result of this series of visions, he formed his own □ar□qah known as the Maryamiyyah.

It should be stressed that the Maryamiyyah, which was named after the Virgin Mary, was an invention of Schuon, who claimed she had invested him from on high. In an interview with the magazine Vers la tradition Khaled Bentounès, the present Shaykh of the ▯ar▯qah ‘Alawiyyah categorically denied any ties between Schuon’s group and the mother ▯ar▯qah from 1954 onwards. As such, there was a clear rupture in the silsilah, the chain of transmission, which is an essential compoment of the spiritual universe of Isl▯mic initiatory orders. While Shaykh Bentounès does not deny the value of Schuon’s work, he views the Swiss as a scholar and not as a spiritual guide. In his article “René Guénon y la iniciación en el esoterismo islámico” (Buenos Aires 2001), Luis Alberto Vittor makes the following observation:

As is well-known, while Schuon was living in Paris in the early 1930s, he wrote to Guénon, then a resident of Cairo, asking his advice as to which “spiritual guide” he should associate himself with. Before receiving a response from Guénon, Schuon moved from Paris to Marseilles. While at a z▯wiyyah with some Algerian fuqar▯’ from the ▯ar▯qah ‘Alawiyyah, he was persuaded to pay a visit to Shaykh A▯mad Mu▯▯af▯ al-‘Alaw▯. In the middle of all this turbulence, he received the response from Guénon advising him to head to Mostagan to contact Shaykh al-‘Alaw▯. This answer finally convinced Schuon, who set off to Mostagan in 1932, to join the ▯ar▯qah of Shaykh al-‘Alaw▯. It was in Mostagan that Schuon embraced Isl▯m, adopting the Muslim name ‘▯s▯ N▯r al-D▯n. By this time, Guénon had already established ties with Shaykh Salama Ra▯▯, the founder of the ▯ar▯qah ▯am▯diyyah Sh▯dhiliyyah, whom he met on his way to Mosque of Sayyidin▯ al-▯usayn where he regularly went to pray.

In order to avoid controversy, and simple “refutations,” we will not pass judgement, but merely pose a question. Why did Guénon advise Schuon to go to Mostagan to contact Shaykh al-‘Alaw▯ rather than having him contact his own shaykh in Cairo? Perhaps some passages intersperced through his letters may give us a hint.

In a letter dated November 1st, 1927, Guénon made the following comments regarding the opening of a z▯wiyyah of the ▯ar▯qah ‘Alawiyyah in Paris: “It seems that this brotherhood is spreading to great extent. I have also been informed that it has a z▯wiyyah in Paris, on Boulevard Saint-Germain, a few steps from here. Otherwise, it arouses suspicion that it might become too open and can mislead like many others.”

In another letter dated December 31st, 1927, he repeats:

I think I already mentioned that the ‘Alawis have a center in Paris which is aimed exclusively at Arabs and Kabyles. Although I have been invited to contact them I have not had time to do so, despite the fact that I am close by. Nonetheless, it would be interesting to see it, as it might be more interesting than the brotherhood presently in formation and in which Europeans will also be admitted. As I believe I already mentioned, the introduction of Western elements can easily become a cause of misguidance.

Note that both passages correspond to letters written in 1927, three years before Schuon requested Guénon to recommend him a spiritual guide. A detractor of Schuon might easily wonder why Guénon directed him to the ▯ar▯qah ‘Alawiyyah when he apparently disapproved of the openess to Western elements manifested by the Parisian z▯wiyyah. It is not our aim to examine the reasons which led Schuon to deviate from straight path. It suffices to say that it is likely related, consciously or subconsciously, to the influence of anti-traditional forces which made him a mere instrument. One must wonder whether Guénon viewed Schuon as one of those destructive Western influences through which misguidance might enter Isl▯m. Later developments regarding the devious practices and innovations made by Schuon seem to give credence to those who affirm that Guénon had perceived the shadow of his twisted spirituality.

It should be stressed that Shaykh ‘Abd al-W▯▯id Ya▯y▯ never had issues with the ▯ar▯qah ‘Alawiyyah itself as its chain of initiation is legitimate and unobjectionable. His only concern was that one of its branches in the West might undermine traditional principles, distorting its teachings, and introducing innovations. As far as the author and Editor of this work are concerned, we have no doubts that these were the concerns of Guénon as we have both observed deviant developments throughout the Western world.

Whether Schuon was a bona fide ▯▯f▯ Shaykh revolves around the famous ij▯zah he received from the hands of Shaykh Adda Ben T▯nis▯. Luis Alberto Vittor was fortunate enough to have an Arabic copy of the ij▯zah before his own eyes, graciously provided to him by ex-members of the ▯ar▯qah. As he explains in his article:

From the beginning of Schuon’s trip to Mostagan and his contact with Shaykh al-‘Alaw▯, a great misunderstanding developed which we now hope to clarify. This misunderstanding--which has nothing to do with the ▯ar▯qah ‘Alawiyyah--revolves around the supposed ij▯zah [authorization] that Schuon had received as muqaddam [delegate] at the hands of

Shaykh Adda Ben T□nis□, the successor of Shaykh al-‘Alaw□, allegedly authorizing him to initiate others in the Western world. The dispute between Schuon and Guénon derives precisely from a misinterpretation of the contents of the licence, particularly with regards to the true role Schuon was supposed to play as muqaddam.

In the famous document, whose Arabic original we have before our eyes, Shaykh Adda Ben T□nis□ clearly says, qad adhintu f□ nashr al-da‘wah al-isl□miyyah [I grant him permission to call people to Isl□m], talq□n kalim□t at-taw□□d: L□ il□ha ill□ All□h [to preach the profession of faith: There is no god but All□h], and most importantly, to teach al-w□jib□t al-d□niyyah [the religious obligations]. This means that Shaykh Adda Ben T□nis□ merely gave Schuon a permission [idhn] to do da‘wah, namely, to spread the message of Isl□m in the West, that is, to teach the basic exoteric aspects of the religion. The Shaykh did not, in any means, grant him the authority to act as a spiritual guide or initiator.

On the basis of the evidence, Shaykh Adda Ben T□nis□ never authorized Schuon to transmit the □ar□qah to others. Guénon himself seems to have been confused with respect to the reach and restrictions of the permission [idhn] since in a letter dated July 7th, 1949, he writes: “In any event, Shaykh ‘□sa’s title of muqaddam, with the power of transmission which it implies, cannot be questioned.”

In all fairness, we must admit that the “permission” [idhn] which Schuon received from Shaykh Adda Ben T□nis□ does not specifically grant the authority to initiate others into Isl□mic esoterism. Schuon had claimed to have the ij□zah of Shaykh al-‘Alaw□, and Guénon, out of good faith, had accepted his word. The ij□zah in question, however, merely mentions that Schuon is designated the muqaddam or representative of the Shaykh with regards to simple daily observances, the basic, elementary teachings used to spread the exoteric or universal pillars of Isl□m. In other words, the license given by Shaykh Adda Ben T□nis□ only permits Schuon to fulfil the basic works which every Muslim must accomplish de motu propio [on his own] and which does not require any special permission. Schuon may have been a great scholar, philosopher, and talented artist; he was not, however, a certified shaykh of the ‘Alawiyyah Order.

In 1954, Schuon cut his ties with the □ar□qah ‘Alawiyyah, abruptly breaking the chain of initiation in a fashion which, to say the least, is entirely unusual. The break was formalized when Schuon founded his own, entirely autonomous, □ar□qah, separate from the mother branch, and which he eventually named the Maryamiyyah. By breaking ties with the □ar□qah ‘Alawiyyah of Mostagan in 1954, Schuon created a □□f□ order which was totally anomalous. Unlike other orders, it was devoid of any silsilah or initiatic chain of transmission. In the □□f□ world, any □ar□qah needs to provide a silsilah tracing its spiritual lineage back to the Prophet, thus assuring its authenticity. It is perhaps due to this reason that Guénon described the Maryamiyyah as a “vague ‘universalist’ order.” In a letter from Cairo dated October 9th 1950, Guénon says,

...in Lausanne, the ritual observances have been reduced to a strict minimum. Most of them no longer fast during the month of Rama□an. I never thought things could reach such a point. It seems that I was entirely correct when I said that, soon enough, it would no longer be a □ar□qah but a vague “universalist” order, more or less like the disciples of Vîvêkânanda!

In yet another of his letters from Cairo dated September 18th 1950, Guénon makes the following observations with regards to Schuon, Burckhardt, and other members of the □ar□qah Maryamiyyah:

On the other hand, I received a letter from Burckhardt regarding my responses to M.L. [Martin Lings] saying that “the violence of my letters has deeply troubled him, and that he cannot understand the reasons for such severe remarks.” It seems to me that it should not be very difficult to understand! ... It is shocking how far bad faith can go. I, for one, am not the least bit surprised since, from a technical point of view, the ignorance of those people, starting with F.S. [Frithjof Schuon] himself, if truly frightening...

Ex-members of the Maryamiyyah have revealed disturbing information about its founder and the ritual practices of the secretive □ar□qah to several Muslim scholars, including a Shaykh from the Jerrahi Order.

Some of the early followers of Schuon included Marco Pallis, Charles Le Gai Eaton, John Levy, and Léo Schaya. The Swiss born Charles Le Gai Eaton (1922-) embraced Isl□m in 1951 and is presently a consultant to the Isl□mic Cultural Center in London. Other Schuonian writers include: Thomas Merton, Huston Smith, Jean Borella, Joseph Epes Brown, Titus Burckhardt, Rama Coomaraswamy, Keith Critchlow, James Cutsinger, Victor Danner, Michael Oren Fitzgerald, Martin Lings, Jean-Louis Michon, Vali Reza Na□r, Osman Bakar, Roger du Pasquier, Whithall Perry, Philip Sherrard, Huston Smith, and William Stoddardt. Seyyed □ossein Na□r was a member of the Maryamiyya □ar□qah, a discipline of Schuon, and is now his most influential student. Dr. Mark Sedgwick’s academic website, traditionalism.org, describes Na□r as “the leading Maryami author” who took over from Schuon.

81. Editor's Note: As Naṣr notes, "the voices of Louis Massignon, H.A.R. Gibb, and Henry Corbin, followed by a later generation of sympathetic Western scholars like Annemarie Schimmel, remain truly exceptional" (Heart of Islām xii). It would also be worthwhile to add Sachiko Murata to this list.
82. Editor's Note: As Murad Wilfried Hofmann explains in his review of Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-'Azamī's History of the Qur'ānic Text, Christian demagogues like John of Damascus, Peter the Venerable, Raymundus Lull, and Martin Luther, followed by infamous Jewish, Christian or secularist Orientalists like Julius Wellhausen, Gustav Flügel, Theodor Nöldeke, Ignaz Goldziher, Alphonse Mingana, Snouck Hurgronje or Joseph Schacht, all did their best to prove that Islām was a corrupted Jewish-Christian copy, based on forged aḥādīth, without any originality or saving grace.
83. Editor's Note: As Héctor Abū Dharr Manzolillo explains in his article "Los 'conversos' en países con minorías musulmanas," revealed religions correspond to different steps along the same path to spiritual perfection. Hence, going from Judaism to Christianity and from Christianity to Islām is part of a logical continuation established by God.
84. Author's Note: See M. Cruz Hernández, "Los estudios Islāmólogos en España en los siglos XIX y XX" in A. Heredia Soriano (ed.), Exilios filosóficos de España (Salamanca 1990): 490. Editor's Note: The author is playing the devil's advocate with Orientalists. Even if scholars subject Islām to the most rigid and merciless scientific analysis, Islām, even as an allegedly man-made religion, comes out on top.
85. Editor's Note: As Naṣr notes, "most of these Orientalists studied Islām in the arrogant belief that they possessed a flawless scientific method that applied universally to all religions" (Heart of Islām xii).
86. Editor's Note: The Islāmic attitude, however, is not that Muslims copied Christians who copied Jews who copied Egyptians and Babylonians but that the similarities between their legislation can be accounted for the fact that they come from the same eternal source: God.
87. Editor's Note: The Western concept of religion is narrow. The Eastern concept of religion is much broader and encompasses all aspects of human existence.
88. Editor's Note: According to Islāmic sources, the hundreds of prophecies signaling the End of Days have been fulfilled. Only the final major signs remain: the appearance of the anti-Christ, the return of Imām Mahdī along with Jesus, the Messiah, and the sun rising in the West which, for some, is not meant to be taken literally and refers to the rise of Islām in the Western world. The return of the Twelfth Imām is imminent.
89. Editor's Note: This is an allusion to the Qur'ānic verse: "To Allāh We belong, and to Him is our return" (2:156) and (49:13). The author is also alluding to the prophetic traditions concerning God creating everything out of his own light.
90. Editor's Note: We remember vividly how Nigosian, our religious studies professor at the University of Toronto, started his class on world religions: "Religion is the product of the human imagination..." For many such scholars, atheism is the basis for the "scientific" study of religion.
91. Author's Note: See Henry Daniel-Rops, La vida cotidiana en Palestina en tiempo de Jesús (Buenos Aires 1961), III, 1, 382-83; as well as Hans-Joachim Schoeps, El judeocristianismo: Formación de grupos y luchas intestinas en la cristianidad primitiva (Valencia 1970: 146-150).
92. Editor's Note: Similarity between religions does not imply that they borrowed from one another but rather that they have the same spiritual origin: God.

Chapter 2: Towards a Definition of Shi'ism

As we have seen before, "election," "option," and "inclination" are some of the comprehensive meanings the Greek language gave to the term *hairesis*. These meanings were passed into Latin, with the necessary etymological adjustments, as *hoeresis* which conveys the ideas of "opinion," "dogma," "party" and "sect." Dictionaries define the meaning of "sect" as a "body of people sharing religious opinions who

have broken away from a larger body." It is often used as a term of disapproval and is thus inconsistent with its original meaning of "doctrine of a particular teacher who developed it and explained it and which is accepted and defended by a group of followers." By straying from their original meanings and etymological roots, the words "heresy" and "sect" have been applied for centuries to those who professed "false" beliefs worthy of excommunication. In this limited sense, the word "heresy" has more in common with the Hebrew term *herem*, meaning excommunication and anathema, and the Arabic word *ḥarḥm*, from the root *ḥarrama*, which means to deprive, to anathematize, to remove and to excommunicate. The words "heresy" and "sect" were used in ancient times to describe various schools of philosophy. Over the course of centuries, however, the terms acquired pejorative connotations which eventually came to dominate and replaced their original meanings. The terms "heresy" and "sect" came to be commonly applied to all religious groups which broke away from an original doctrine and who were in disagreement with the dogmas and rituals which were officially orthodox.

For the Roman Catholic Church, all protestant sects born from the Reformation were, in a strict sense, "heretical" and "heterodox" from the moment they broke away from the Vatican. From around 1971, the term "heretic," with all of its connotations, was suppressed from the Catholic ecclesiastic lexicon.[1] Consequently, there are no longer any "heresies", these have been replaced with "mere doctrinal errors" which do not merit excommunication. The modern mentality was evidently unsatisfied with its classical lexical heritage and along with the older terminology, it developed a wide body of new definitions. The Western world uses these terms in so many contradictory ways that they do not have a constant meaning. They apply them to religious phenomenon which they view with suspicion but which they rarely try to understand. This state of confusion is created by the modern habit of calling everything into question.[2] It is also a reflection of the total failure of the "opinion-makers" who insist on taking the concept of "sect"--as vague as it may be--as their sole starting point.

As Rudolf Otto has explained, the use and misuse of terms like "sect" and "fundamentalism" quickly reaches an irrational point. What is most surprising, however, is that this feeble conceptual chain has been forged and molded to subject the same unknown enemy who frequently changes forms like a many-sided proteose. The multitude of contradictory definitions proposed by the "opinion-makers"--in a dry attempt to describe diversity--actually impede proper classification.

The situation further complicates itself when some Orientalists, rather than researching thought, move on to studying ideological struggles. As a result, they divide themselves between scientific and political work. If we focus so much on this issue, it is because our critical stance requires us to do so. We are well within our rights to criticize the attitude of those who, deliberately or involuntarily, by a mere concession to modern language, spread falsehood and error.[3] It is as if the terms "sect" and "fundamentalism" were merely simple theological references or epithets without any moral implications. We must ask ourselves: Is it really possible that the richness of classical definitions and terminology has been reduced to the point of describing general ideological types?

It should be noted that the term “sect” is unduly applied to Shī‘ite Islām without doctrinal justification and without paying attention to whether such a definition is actually compatible with its perfectly orthodox and traditional spirit. If this is not a case of terminological standardization, then what is the point of insisting on its application? Should the generic sense of “sect” be applied by default to every religious minority on the basis of the same rigid and arbitrary interpretation? We refer, of course, to those scholars who fancifully turn every minority tradition into a “sect” without considering the true meaning of its definition. In fact, these scholars often label certain religious groups as “sects” when their followers are numerically equal to the main groups within their tradition. Certain religious minorities which are considered as “sects” in the West are perfectly orthodox religious expressions. Such is the case with Shī‘ite Islām in the Middle East, Buddhism or Taoism in the Far East, to mention some of the most common examples. But, as we have seen, the tendency to give Shī‘ite Islām the stigma of “sect” is premeditated. It is not by chance that some “opinion–makers” and Orientalists have agreed on applying this term. The definition of “sect,” as they know better than anyone else, can conveniently be substituted––in a theological and philosophical sense––by the more insidiously political and provocative one which defines a sect as a “group of partisans with extreme and violent ideas.”

Faced with simplistic and reductionist interpretations which are obsessed with grouping all religious minorities under one general label, the indiscriminate application of the term “sect” continues to be accepted. This is despite the fact that the commonly accepted meaning of the term is nothing more than a convention or a deep–rooted prejudice accepted by all without reserve. Even among educated people, the very idea of “sect” always presupposes a deep–rooted reactionary and intolerant attitude, which is how the *factio* [sect] can be recognized and differentiated from the other majority “factions.” If anything novel is added to this connotation, it reduces itself to concrete applications that are called upon by the same semantic concessions of language that adapt to changing circumstances. We refer specifically to the neologism “fundamentalism” which implies an entire axiological classification which, when dealing with Shī‘ite Islām, even descends to the basest contempt.[4]

The term “fundamentalist” can be correctly applied to American Protestantism since its attitude and behavior is consistent with such a definition. However, the new tendency is to give the term a political sense linking it even more strongly with Shī‘ite Islām. The use of the term “fundamentalist” in a political sense is really a recent development. It traces back to the famous controversy between American Protestants and the supporters of Darwin’s Theory of Evolution. The dispute centered on the question as to whether state education should be separated from religion as a means to promote the atheist doctrine of evolution which is incompatible with the idea of God and divine creation.[5] At that time, the use of the term “fundamentalist” was far from commonplace. The term “fundamentalist” has acquired a political connotation which every day is more effectively integrated into the vernacular, becoming normal in English and standard in other Western languages. It is applied to a series of Islamic groups which resist and reject any type of Western interference. It should be noted that the French prefer the term *intégriste* and the Spaniards the word *rigorista* when they try to define the same phenomenon.

Due to limitations of time and space, we cannot examine in depth the reasons why the Western world insists on applying “sectarian” and “fundamentalist” labels to Sh‘ite Isl m. For the sake of brevity, we will limit ourselves to saying that the application of such terms to Sh‘ism is a form of reductionism which attempts to tarnish an entirely orthodox expression of Isl m. Not only do such labels impoverish understanding and distort definitions, what is worse today is that they are used without any conceptual contact with the true reality of its thoughts and doctrine. Such definitions are often taken “lightly” because they do not destroy the doctrines of Sh‘ite Isl m. Nonetheless, we must avoid indiscriminately applying such labels to Sh‘ism and other schools of thought since they imply inclusion or exclusion of Islamic doctrines on the basis of the one and only orthodoxy.

The same definition of “sect,” with some slightly different shades, prevails among the Orientalists who wrote about f sm and Islamic gnosis in the nineteenth century. Likewise, certain Orientalists have applied the label of “sect” to Sh‘ite Isl m. They were fond of giving a Christian character to certain Sh‘ite beliefs and practices rather than recognizing them as entirely Islamic in origin. These Arabists preferred the term “sect” to that of “heresy.” They categorized Muslims on the basis of Christian standards. For them, the “heretics” were those Muslims who broke away from the doctrinal unity of the Islamic “Church” while the “sectarians” were those who broke away from its socio–political hierarchy. In this respect, it is important to remember that, Saint Augustine, particularly in his admonitions against the Pelagian, Manichaean, and Donatist heresies, rejected reductionism.6 He categorically warned how difficult, if not impossible, it was to give a definition of “heresy” that corresponds exactly to its essential characteristics. For that reason, he warned against the temptation of labeling doctrines as “heretical” considering how harmful the label of “heretic” can be.7

From a subjective psychological perspective, the characteristics of heretics include intolerance, obstinacy, rebellion, and unsociability. Those who hold erroneous, misguided or false ideas, yet believe with good faith that their doctrine is the same as taught by the Church, cannot be labeled as heretics or sectarians.8

Imbued with such ideas, some Orientalists use the Catholic concept of heresy as their theoretical framework. As a result, they labeled the f s as heretics because they were “mystics” who believed in doctrines which differed from those of the majority orthodox Sunn “Church.” Despite the fact that they profess the same fundamentals of faith, the Sh‘ites were labeled as sectarian because they broke away from orthodox Sunnism. After drawing these dogmas from Christian doctrine, Orientalists rushed to apply them to Sh‘ism, labeling it as “heretical,” “schismatic” and “sectarian” merely because it represented a minority tradition, a fact which *in se* and *per se* [in and of itself] does not constitute heresy. They failed to heed Saint Augustine’s warning that appearances can be deceiving. 9 They reduced Sh‘ism to the level of a “heretical sect” despite the fact that there are no doctrinal differences between Sunn and Sh‘ite Isl m. Unfortunately, some contemporary Orientalists––the heirs of the old mentality––continue to stubbornly label Sh‘ism as a “sect” outside the fold of Isl m. **Although Sh‘ites profess to be Muslims and share the same beliefs as Sunn s, they are, in the eyes of these specialists, openly**

sectarian extremist heretics.[10]

In short, the tendency of some Orientalists to separate Sh‘ite Islm’s visible or exoteric aspects––social and political––from its esoteric aspects–– mystical and metaphysical––started in the nineteenth century and intensified in the twentieth and early twenty–first century. According to Alessandro Bausani, the increasingly radical differentiation between a political and religious Sh‘ism provides an opportunity for Arabists and Orientalists to eclipse the West from the spiritual, metaphysical and esoteric aspects of a formal traditional expression (4: 112–15). We have reason to fear that this initiative is a last ditch effort on the part of the West to subject one of the last genuine reserves of traditional thought into an indefinite zone of relative obscurity and of temporal oversight. In other words, **when some Orientalists and "opinion–makers" take interest in Sh‘ite Islm, these professional polemicists are motivated by a desire to create a false and distorted image of Sh‘ism**, isolating and stressing **its exclusively political aspect.**[11] Is this not a most extreme case of ideological "fundamentalism?"

The one thing these theories––and others which are even more groundless and fanciful––have in common is a desire to single handedly understand the global reality of Sh‘ite Islm in all of its dimensions: exoteric and esoteric, political and religious, metaphysical and spiritual. But in fact, **the only thing they want to retain from their research is that Sunn Islm is the rule and Sh‘ite Islm is the exception.** The Sh‘ites, they claim, view themselves as a small flock of chosen ones. They are those who split from the orthodox majority, those who were schismatic, who sought to foment dissent, spread discord, and provoke division, because of some political question related to the succession of the Prophet.[12] As will be seen, these claims made by scholars are based exclusively on Sunn sources.[13] And it is these Sunn scholars who brought the idea to Western scholars that, like the councils of the Christian Church, the election of the Caliph or successor of the Prophet can be decided "democratically" by means of consensus [*ijm‘*].

1. Editor's Note: This was an extension of the innovations agreed upon by the Second Vatican Council which was held between 1962 and 1965. It included liturgical reform, called for mass to be held in the language of the people and not Latin, removed the requirement for religious dress for nuns, as well as the need for women to cover their hair while in Church.
2. Editor's Note: Modern popular thought is characterized by cynicism and contradictory reasoning. This attitude can be traced back to Descartes who, by calling everything into doubt, laid the foundations of modern philosophy.
3. Editor's Note: The author alludes to the Qur'nic verses: "There will every soul prove [the fruits of] the deeds it sent before: they will be brought back to Allh their rightful Lord, and their invented falsehoods will leave them in the lurch" (10:30); "[In such falsehood] is but a paltry profit; but they will have a most grievous Penalty" (16: 117); and "These our people have taken for worship gods other than Him: why do they not bring forward an authority clear [and convincing] for what they do? Who doth more wrong than such as invent a falsehood against Allh" (18:15).
4. Author's Note: Recent studies fully illustrate the changes the term "fundamentalism" has undergone from a theological sense to an ideological one. See E. Patlagean and A. Le Boulluec, Les retours aux Écritures: Fondamentalismes présents et passés (Louvain: Paris 1993); especially J. Bauberot, "Le fondamentalisme: Quelques hypothèses introductives, ibid, 13–30 ; J. Séguy, "Le rapport aux Écritures dans les sectes de terrain protestant" ibid 31–46; and tracing the modern misguided aberations we already denounced, we must also present the contrasting opinion of M.A. Amir–Moezzi, "Réflections sur une évolution du sh'isme duodécimain: tradition et idéologisation." Ibid 63–82.
5. Editor's Note: For a scientific attempt to refute the theory of evolution, see Hrn Yay's Evolution Deceit.
6. Editor's Note: Pelagianism is the "heresy" originated by Pelagius. It denied original sin and the need for baptism, and

held that grace was not necessary for salvation. It asserted that free will and the law are sufficient for man to live without sin. It arose in a reaction to Gnosticism and Manichaeism, in the interests of a higher morality which Pelagius found lacking in Rome. Originally, an attempt to heighten human responsibility, it fell into the extreme of diminishing divine grace. Opposed by Saint Augustine of Hippo, the "heresy" and Pelagius were condemned by several synods (411–18). A form of the "heresy," with emphasis on free will, arose briefly (late 5th c.) in France but was condemned (528–9). Pelagianism long continued as a trend in Christian philosophy.

Manichaeism is the religion founded by Mani (c. 216–c.276), a Persian who held that the universe is dually controlled by opposing powers of good and evil, which had become intermingled in the present age, but at a future time would be separated and return to their own realms. Mani's followers were to aid this separation by leading an ascetic life. The religion spread widely in Asia and around the Mediterranean, but died out in the West by the 6th c., although it was a major religion in the East until the 14th c. It influenced several early Christian heresies.

Donatism is a 4th century schism in the North African Church which followed the apostasies during the Diocletian persecutions. Donatists held that sacraments were invalid outside the one visible Church, that sinners should be excommunicated, and that the State had no rights in ecclesiastical matters. It is named after one of its leaders, Donatus, who was bishop of Carthage. The schism drew from Saint Augustine his lasting definition of the nature of the ministry and sacraments of the Church.

7. Editor's Note: The Prophet has condemned the practice of takf□r, namely, accusing Muslims of being infidels and unbelievers. The Messenger of All□h has said that: "If a Muslim calls another k□fir, then if he is a k□fir let it be so; otherwise, he [the caller] is himself a k□fir" (Ab□ D□w□d); "No man accuses another man of being a sinner, or of being a k□fir, but it reflects back on him if the other is not as he called him" (Bukh□r□).

Likewise, the scholars of ahl al-sunnah have warned against the takf□r of Muslims. Im□m Ab□ □an□fah said that he did not consider anyone who prays facing the qiblah [Makkah] to be a k□fir and that this was the consensus of the majority of 'ulam□'. He wrote in his will that "The followers of Mu□ammad can be sinners but they are believers, not kuff□r." Im□m Sh□fi'□ said, "I do not consider anyone who prays to be a k□fir on account of his sins." For more on this, see "Who is a Believer and who is an infidel?" in Na□r's The Heart of Isl□m.

The general rule in Isl□m is to treat as Muslims all those who assert that they are Muslims unless their words, beliefs or actions clearly demonstrate the contrary. Ab□ Sufy□n, Mu'□wiyyah and Yaz□d in days of old; the Shah of Iran and Saddam □usayn in recent times all claimed to be Muslim while waging war against Isl□m.

8. Editor's Note: Likewise, in Isl□m, God judges people according to their intentions: "All□h will not call you to account for thoughtlessness in your oaths, but for the intention in your hearts; and He is Oft-forgiving, Most Forbearing" (2: 225). While there are certain beliefs that lead to disbelief--for example, believing that the □ar□m is □al□l or the □al□l is □ar□m--this does not apply to those who do so out of ignorance.

9. Editor's Note: Saint Augustine of Hippo (354–430) is known as the African Latin Church Father. He converted to Christianity through the influence of his mother, St. Monica. His speculation on freedom, history, time and the nature of man give him a prominent place in the history of philosophy. The profundity of his thought was such that both Catholics and Protestants look to him (esp. to his treatise on grace) for doctrinal authority. His De civitate Dei (413–26) has been the basis of much political theory. He sought to reconcile Platonic thought and Christian dogma, reason and faith.

10. Author's Note: For example, the Spanish Arabist D. Cabanelas, professor at the Universidad de Granada, believes that the label "sect" "must only be applied to those groups who are opposed to consensus on fundamental issues, who separate themselves from the orthodox Sunnah and form a dissident community... The faithful followers of 'Al□, on the other hand, were given the name of Sh□'ites, openly dividing themselves into various sects, some of a markedly extremist character." D. Cabanelas, "No hay más Dios que All□h," apud J. Samso, J. Vernet, D. Cabanelas and J. Vallve, Así nació el Isl□m (Madrid 1986) fasc 2, 23.

11. Editor's Note: This equally applies to some Orientalists who take interest in Isl□m in general.

12. Editor's Note: As Fyzee explains, "earlier Orientalists believed that Sh□'ism was a pernicious corruption of Isl□m, concocted mainly, if not solely, for political reasons. Also that the Sunn□ faith is the 'orthodox' faith and the Sh□'ite, the 'heterodox' one" (3).

13. Editor's Note: The general acceptance of Sunn□ views over "heterodox" Sh□'ite views by Orientalists demonstrates "the

profound Sunnī bias of Western scholarship on Islām" which Richard W. Bulliet observes.

Chapter 3: al-Ijma‘ or Scholarly Consensus, An Accepted Method for Controlling Heresy?

Orientalists who follow the Christianizing interpretation of Islamic thought have attempted to present the doctrine of *ijmā‘* as an accepted means of controlling "heresy" in Islām.[1] According to Gibb, the doctrine of *ijmā‘* can be viewed from the perspective of Christian orthodoxy and can be likened to the case of the council.

Despite their external differences, a certain analogy can be made between the concept of "consensus" of the Christian Church and the Islamic concept of *ijmā‘*. In some cases the results of both procedures were quite similar. For example, it was only after *ijmā‘* was acknowledged as a source of law and doctrine that a definitive proof of "heresy" became possible. Any attempt to interpret Scripture in a way that negated the validity of a given and accepted solution was by consensus, a *bid‘ah*, an act of "innovation" and "heresy" (Gibb 90).

Gibb's main thesis is that the concept of "council" in Islām forms part of a secular organism that mends Islamic doctrine. It does so in light of a sovereign authority, thus fulfilling the work of purging and purifying matters of faith that can be assimilated into the work of ecclesiastic canonists. He understands the concept of "council" as a juristic entity, like a council of bishops. In order to protect the theological doctrine of the "Church," the Islamic Caliphate relied upon the doctrine of *ijmā‘* as the basis for the orthodox refutation of "heretical" Shī‘ite ideas.

When Gibb speaks of *ijmā‘* in terms of councils or ecclesiastic consensus, the distinguished Orientalist maintains himself firmly within a Christianizing interpretation of Islām. The word "council" is derived from the Latin *concilium* which comes from *cum*, "with," and *calare*, "to call" and "to proclaim," hence the sense of convocation and assembly. The word "council" is a Latin term which defines, much like the Greek root of Church [lit. *ekklesia*, from *ek* and *kalo*] a flock or congregation of faithful Christians under the guidance and direction of their pastors. It applies to a group of individuals with the same character in a double sense: active like convocation of bishops, and passive like a congregation of the same in an organization, a society or a collegial body. Viewing the doctrine of *ijmā‘* through the Christian concept of council presupposes the existence of an orthodox "Church" in Islām which, like the Christian Church, can be recognized and differentiated from other "sects" or "heresies," and as a juridical, hierarchical, sovereign, visible, empirical, and easily perceived institution for all to see.

Gibb's ecclesiastic conception of Islamic consensus is misguided and even false. It fails to appreciate

that in Islām both elements are identical: the doctrine of *ijmā‘* as a source of law and canon of the Scriptures, on the one hand, and Islamic orthodoxy, both internal and external, on the other. Both of them co-exist and coincide in the application of the *sharī‘ah* and the *sunnah* of the Prophet as sovereign expressions of the Qur’ān in both Sunnī and Shī‘ite Islām.2

Let us now turn from a general critique to some more specific observations. It must be noted that Gibb’s Christianizing conception traces back to the 1950s, a period when the type of distinction we are discussing was not viewed with the same importance as it is currently. Hence, the absence of a broader and more elaborate perspective is fully justified. Many of the problems we are discussing here, such as the question of “sects,” had barely even been posed.

What we would have liked to observe, among the Orientalists who followed the same Christianizing line as Gibb, is a degree of academic, analytical and philosophical evolution. Above all, we would have liked them, starting with Gibb, the Orientalist from Oxford, to come to a better understanding of the questions raised by the study of Shī‘ite Islām. Unfortunately, this has not been the case. Besides a handful of honorable exceptions, **the majority of research published in the West** during the last decade of the fifties and even well beyond **consists of nothing more than worthless compilations whose theoretical weakness is in sad contrast to the solid scientific work done by Orientalists in the past.**3

These solid scholars include Reynold A. Nicholson, Louis Massignon, Jacques Berque, Miguel Asín Palacios and, why not, even Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen Gibb. Despite their incomprehension of the Islamic spirit, they practiced and professed a science which was more consistent with their intellectual qualifications. Their work is less suspicious of compromise with ideological controversy which reduces religious polemics, in all of its shades, into terms of extreme triviality and doubtful scientific integrity. It is the ancient affliction that appears to worsen in the West, especially in recent times, in which a host of “opinion-makers,” turned into **“specialists” of Islām, have come forth like black heralds repeatedly croaking the same mistakes *ad nauseam*.**4

Without doubt, the knowledge and analogical application of these theological principles must have seemed very convenient to Gibb in his work of comparing the Islamic concept of *ijmā‘* as a consensus of scholars with that of the Christian council as a consensus of ecclesiastics. This is even more evident when Gibb alludes to the role of analogy in his comparison and confesses that such a comparison is possible despite the external differences of the Christian councils. This is absolutely false. Regardless of such esoteric formulaic divergences, there is no Church in Islām. Furthermore, **there is no organized clergy in Islām in the ecclesiastic sense of the priesthood because Islām does not accept the mediation between God and man.** In Islām, there does not exist a religious establishment lead by a Pope with a hierarchy of bishops, cardinals and priests, all ranked according to their level of merit and the closeness to the central power of the Church. We must not forget that any attempt to look for examples of consensus in Islām comparable to the Christian councils of Nicea, Lyon, Letran, Trent, and

the Vatican, would be useless.[5]

In the entire history of Islām, there has never been a case in which qualified scholars and jurists gathered in diverse synods to examine a doctrine that they considered erroneous and who then related their conclusions in letters to a prelate in which they asked for this error to be condemned as a heresy by the entire Islamic community. There were many times, however, when Caliphs or *mujtahidūn* reacted on the basis of arbitrary and erroneous decisions of incompetent authorities, ignorant of the very basis of the discussed doctrine. We are not claiming that "heretical" doctrines or misunderstood minorities have never been challenged, refuted, condemned and persecuted in Islām because the facts speak for themselves.[6]

We have the examples of martyrs for whoever would categorically deny any affirmation to the contrary. These include al-Ḥallāj, Suhrawardī, Uways al-Qaranī, Qanbar, Maytham al-Tammār and, among the followers of 'Alī, the very Imāms, of which the most tragic case was that of al-Ḥusayn, *sayyid al-shuhadā'* [the Lord of Martyrs].[7] Is it not clear that all of these deaths were the consequence of emphatic and arbitrary decisions? In any event, we have made no attempts to deny or to justify the persecution of those who were accused or suspected of heresy as this goes beyond the scope of this study.[8] On the contrary, our goal here has been to demonstrate that the concept of consensus as a type of council is an erroneous misrepresentation of the function of *ijmā'* in Islām. **In the Muslim tradition, the concept of consensus does not express an accepted mode of controlling heresy or the unanimous authority of all the scholars of the Islamic community.**[9]

We understand perfectly well that Gibb's goal is to present the concept of *ijmā'* in socio-religious terms that are more readily understandable in the West, by linking it to the Christian concept of *consensus*. In our opinion, however, such simplifications do nothing other than complicate any attempt to penetrate Islamic thought, particularly when it is done by examples that are as divergent as they are foreign to the Islamic faith. When we say that concepts such as "councils" are foreign we do not mean to imply that Islām is somehow backwards or less up to date as religious institutions in the West, particularly it terms of its formal religious expressions.

According to the generally accepted etymology given by Arabic linguists, the technical term *ijmā'* comes from the Arabic root *jama'a*. It has several definitions, each of which relates to the concept of agreement, the first of which is "consensus." Hence, there can be no doubt as to the concept the word expresses. Both the Arabic word *ijmā'* and the Latin word *consensus* convey the idea of being free from coercion, being able to distance oneself from anything oppressive which limits freedom of choice. The *mujtahidūn* [lit: "those who make an effort" in the personal interpretation of the law] define *ijmā'* as a "point of view" and, in such a sense, it is closer to the Vedic concept of *darsana* than to the Christian concept of *council*. In effect, *ijmā'* as a source of law and doctrine, does not present contradictory concepts, but rather different points of view and differing aspects of the same many sided concept.[10]

The doctrine of *ijmā'* is obviously found in both the Sunnī and Shī'ite traditions. However, both of these

orthodox tendencies interpret and apply it differently. It is universally agreed that what has more weight in Islamic law is the Qur'□n, the Sunnah, and the companions of the Prophet, those who lived alongside him, were chosen by him, and who heard his sayings directly. This is followed by the followers [*t□bi'□n*] of the companions and, finally, the followers of the followers, those who received from their masters what their masters had received from their masters.

With the disappearance of this last generation, for the majority of Islamic schools of jurisprudence the consensus now rests with the *mujtahid□n*, whose edicts [*fat□w□*] vary in accord with their philosophical postures. If Sunn□ Isl□m declared that the door of *ijtih□d* [personal deduction of the law] was closed in the 10th century [we know that some Sunn□ *'ulam□'* have now reopened the door], Sh□'ite Isl□m, on the other hand, never recognized this closure.[11] Sh□'ite jurists and theologians, known as *mujtahid□n*, have always defended this right. Although enlightened individuals and scholars can appreciate the inner meanings of the sacred law in all of its dimensions, none can any longer claim perfection and infallibility. Since scholars, regardless of their erudition, are human, their understanding of the law can only be imperfect.[12] Hence, they must allow themselves to be guided by the consensus of the *sunnah* of the Prophet and the authorized interpretations of the Holy Im□ms.[13]

In conclusion, it is wise to recall that the fundamentals of faith and principles upon which the Muslim faith is based are irrefragable. Complete faith requires complete acceptance of tenets which are not and cannot be the work of men or the result of human consensus.[14] God is the Sole Sovereign and the Final Source of Legitimate Authority.[15] The essence of His law is immutable truth. His law is more immutable than the process of human thought for it is eternal and never changes.

1. Author's Note: Concerning ijm□', see G. Hour□n□, "The Basis of Authority and consensus in Sunn□te Isl□m" in Studia Isl□mica XXI (1964), 13–60; for ijtih□d, see M.I. Jannat□, "The Beginnings of Sh□'ite ijtih□d" in Taw□□d (1988), VI, I, 45–64; in relation with Isl□mic jurisprudence and for a comparison between the different points of view of different schools see, A.R.I. Doi, Shar□'ah: The Isl□mic Law (London 1984), 315; S.H. Na□r, Ideals and Realities of Isl□m (London 1966) IV.
2. Author's Note: It is essential to differentiate between the concept of ijm□' from the Catholic concept of council. Viewing ijm□' as the Isl□mic version of the Christian Council is a gross oversimplification. From its very beginning, ijm□' was a fundamentally political concept even when it had legal repercutions. In early Isl□m, ijm□' was more intuitive than technical. The immediate goal of ijm□' was to address various socio–political questions which had surfaced as a result of the passing of the Prophet Mu□ammad.
According to the traditional view of Muslim scholars, Isl□mic jurisprudence (fiqh) traces back the Companions (□ah□bah) of the Prophet Mu□ammad although it was only during the generation of the Followers of the Followers (t□bi'□ at–t□bi'□n) that the major schools of law (t□bi'□ at–t□bi'□n) were finally formalized.
According to Sunn□ authors, the Companions (□ah□bah) derived answers to immediate problems from the Qur'□n and the Sunnah. When faced with unexpected issues, the Companions made an effort (ijtih□d) to apply the spirit of the Prophet's teachings new problems. The ijtih□d of the □ah□bah consisted of deriving judgments or legal norms from the teachings of the Prophet. The □ah□bah had their own disciples and followers, the □□bi'□n, who consisted of Muslims who knew the □ah□bah and learned from them but never had the opportunity to meet the Prophet. The □□bi'□n were thus the second generation of Isl□m. The □□bi'□n, in turn, had their own followers, who consisted of disciples who had never met the □ah□bah, and they are known as the t□bi'□ al–□□bi'□n and represent the third generation of Isl□m.
The second and third centuries of Isl□m, (known as the Century of the Companions, the Companions of the Companions, and the Great Sunn□ Imams), were marked by the rapid expansion of Isl□m. During this time, many non–Arabs became

Muslims, integrating into society, and greatly expanding the territory of the Islamic community. Along with the influx of new Muslims came new questions. The new questions required new solutions and broad generalizations appeared which allowed for universal applications. In short, fiqh moved from a practical realm to a theoretical realm.

Prior to the formation of the major schools of jurisprudence, legal norms had not been organized in an orderly fashion. The early jurists did not engage in theoretical issues, dealing only with practical solutions to practical problems. Since no systematic study of law had been completed during the first and second generations of Islam, it would be inappropriate to refer to early Islamic law as an actual legal science. Since the science of fiqh developed during the second century of the hijrah, the Companions cannot truly be called fuqaha'. In light of what we have explained, it can be said that Islamic jurisprudence was born towards the end of the first century of the hijrah, namely, the beginning of the eight century.

During most of the first century A.H., Islamic jurisprudence, in a strict sense, did not possess a legal corpus. The great center of Islamic jurisprudence during the end of the first century A.H. and part of the second century A.H. was Iraq. Doctrinal influences from one school to another moved almost invariably from Iraq towards Arabia and the doctrinal development of the Medinan school was often surpassed by the school in Kufah.

By the end of the first century A.H., we find the names of jurists whose existence can be confirmed as historical. These include Ibrahim al-Nakha'i in Kufah and Sa'id ibn al-Musayyab and his contemporaries in Madinah. Not only did these ancient schools share a common doctrinal base, they shared the same legal framework and viewed law as a "living tradition," a concept that dominated the development of Islamic jurisprudence throughout the second century A.H.. Known as 'amal or "living tradition," the aim of Islamic jurisprudence was to follow the spirit of the Muhammad's teachings. At the same time, this 'amal was validated through consensus (ijma'), which consisted of the common opinion of the learned representatives of each legal school.

Ijma', as we have explained, was a powerful political tool. It was employed to ensure the election of Abi Bakr as the Caliph after the death of the Prophet Muhammad. Later, it would be used to ensure the spread and implementation of the four schools of Islamic law as sole representatives of orthodoxy. In both cases, ijma' was employed to marginalize the authority of the Household of the Prophet. Imam 'Ali was passed over as Caliph despite being selected as the Prophet's successor and the Ja'fari school was cast aside and considered orthodox despite the fact that is was the most ancient school and formed the basis of the hanafi and the Malik schools. Since the time of the Rightly-Guided Caliphs, Muslim jurists had based themselves on the Qur'an and the Sunnah in order to derive laws. In order to consolidate their political agenda, however, the ruling authorities were required to use ijma' as a secondary source of legal authority which they did not hesitate to use against the Holy Imams.

In the early days of Islam, ijma' had not yet been consolidated as a secondary source of Islamic law. It was only in the third century A.H. that ijma' became codified as standard procedure. During the time of the two first khulafa al-rashidun, Abi Bakr al-Siddiq, and 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, the analogical method was employed to deduce legal implications and to find solutions to new or unforeseen situations, turning to the Qur'an and the Sunnah. When they found the solution they were looking for, they would apply it, and when they did not find it, they would gather a group of Companions and ask their opinions. Whichever opinion was the most prevalent was the opinion which prevailed. This selective practice represents the origin of "consensus" as a legal practice. In other words, until the time of the khulafa al-rashidun, the concept of ijma' or consensus was an eminently political decision which had the force of law.

The Caliphs in Madinah, as legal administrators, acted as legislators for the community, and the same example was followed by the 'Ummayad Caliphs and their governors. During the entire first century of Islam, the administrative and legislative activities of the Islamic government were one and the same. The 'Ummayad governors appointed the first judges who would shape Sunni law. These judges or legal arbitrators judged new cases on the basis of personal opinion (ra'y), basing themselves on traditional practices and customs but supposedly considering the letter and spirit of the Qur'an.

The need to establish an ijma' al-ummah or community consensus surged from the unwillingness of some tribal chiefs to accept the designation of 'Ali as the Caliph or successor to the Prophet Muhammad. In the early days of Islam, consensus was not so much a legal necessity, as a political requirement.

When differences of opinion affected political matters, particularly relating to the succession of the Prophet, the Shi'ite had no other option but to speak out. As a result of the differences between early Muslims, and the prevalence of partisan politics, the Ummah of Muhammad split into 'Ibadis, Sunnis, and Shi'is. The intensity of the political debate accentuated

other doctrinal differences leading to the division of the Ummah into three major groups of Muslims, Sunnis, Sh□‘□s, and ‘Ibad□s, each employing their own form of ijm□’ as a secondary source of Isl□mic jurisprudence.
Although these groups were distinct, they were never separate from the broader Isl□mic community. Even though the separation into factions was painful and accompanied with violence and diatribe, the universal spirit of Isl□m always prevented schism. Each new generation moved from the extreme positions of the generation which preceded it, embracing middle positions, and recognizing the right of each party to its particular position. If one examines the history of Isl□m, one will find that the first to call for Isl□mic unity and the reconciliation of all Muslims were the Im□ms of ahl al-bayt.
During the life of the Prophet, discords and disputes were resolved through revelation. The issue of the succession of the Prophet, however, was left unresolved in the hearts of Muslims, and simmered below the surface. Despite the fact that the successor of the Prophet had been established and confirmed by the Qur’□n, Muslims were divided: some felt the successor should be elected by tribal leaders and others accepted that the successor had been chosen by divine decree.
Sunn□ jurists have justified the use of ijm□’ or consensus based on a □ad□th from the Prophet Mu□ammad which states that: “My community will never agree on an error” (Tirmidh□). This □ad□th served as the basis for turning ijm□’ into a tool for deriving Isl□mic laws. This tradition grants apparent infallibility to the consensus of Sunn□ jurists, an infallibility no Sh□‘ite fuqah□’ would ever claim for themselves as they rely on the legal and spiritual authority of the Holy Im□ms who, as far as Sh□‘ite Muslims are concerned, are the only individuals worthy of being considered infallible (ma‘□□m□n).
As far as Sh□‘ite Muslims are concerned, the Prophet and his ahl al-bayt were, by divine design, perfect human beings from the moment of their birth. They were purified, and infallible due to the innate perfection they had been granted by divine grace. Although the need to recur to political consensus might be invoked in the absence of divinely appointed leadership, the fact remains that the Prophet Mu□ammad appointed ‘Al□ as his successor in accordance with a divine decree. Despite the fact that no ijm□’ was required, it was employed by the opponent of ‘Al□ in order to destitute him from his legitimate right to the Caliphate.
Had the Prophet Mu□ammad received a divine order to place the leadership of the Isl□mic community into the hands of tribal leaders, he would have said so. We would have ample traditions in which the Prophet states: “When I die, hold elections and elect a Caliph.” The truth of the matter is no such traditions exist. What does exist is a large body of traditions in which the Prophet explicitly appoints Twelve Im□ms as his successors, all of whom were individually named, the first of which was ‘Al□ and the last of which was the Mahd□. Rather than leaving his community in the lurch, the Prophet Mu□ammad had always emphasized the need for an Im□m or divinely-inspired guide to lead the Muslim community.
It is important to remember that the Prophet Mu□ammad never considered the Isl□mic Ummah as being infallible or free of error. When the tribe of Quraysh reached the peak of its aggression towards him, the Prophet prayed: “O All□h, pardon my people for their ignorance.” Had the Isl□mic community been capable of governing itself and acting in the best interest of Isl□m, there would never been a need for All□h to send Spiritual Guides.
The fact that All□h had opened the wil□yah (Guardianship of the Im□ms) upon the closing of the nubuwwah (Prophethood) is sufficient indication that the Isl□mic community was in no position to guide itself and that it needed divinely appointed Im□ms to guide it on the straight path. In this light, it could even be argued that consensus or ijm□’ is an innovation (musta□dath) in Isl□m. Based on the pre-Isl□mic tribal custom of sh□r□, ijm□’, as an Isl□mic institution, was developed after the death of the Prophet in response to the political need to consolidate the power of the emerging Caliphate.
In the Twelver Sh□‘ite context, the use of ijm□’ or consensus came at a much later date and coincides with the Greater Occulation of the Twelfth Im□m. As far as Ja‘far□ jurists were concerned, the use of ijm□’ could scarcely be conceived in the presence of Infallible Im□ms. It is for this reason that Sh□‘ite jurists only started to employ ijm□’ after the Greater Occultation of the Im□m Mu□ammad al-Mahd□. It should be noted, however, that the concept of ijm□’ for Sh□‘ite jurists differs completely from the concept of ijm□’ held by Sunn□ jurists. For Sh□‘ite scholars, ijm□’ is used for religious matters and not as part of political ploys.
3. Editor’s Note: As we explain in “El idioma árabe en proceso de convertirse en un arma contra el Isl□m,” “No cabe duda alguna que los orientalistas norteamericanos de hoy no son comparables a los orientalistas franceses e ingleses de la época colonial” [There is no doubt that the American Orientalists of today cannot be compared to the French and English Orientalists from colonial times].
4. Editor’s Note: A□mad Ghur□b’s Book, Subverting Isl□m, is a valuable read as it exposes Saudi supported schools and

scholars. The leading pseudo-specialists on Islām include the neoconservative Daniel Pipes who is viewed by many as Islāmophobic.

5. Editor's Note: The Council of Nicea was the first ecumenical council convened (325) by Constantine I to condemn Arianism. Lyon was the place of two councils (1245-1274) while Letran was the place of five. The Council of Trent took place in Trent, from 1545 to 1547, in Bologna from 1547 to 1549 and once again in Trent from 1551 to 1552 and 1563 to 1563. It was convoked by Pope Paul III and concluded by Pious IV. It was the keystone of the Counterreformation by which the Roman Church opposed the Protestants, revised their disciplines, and reaffirmed their dogmas. For the Vatican Council, see note 87.

6. Editor's Note: It cannot be denied that there have been cases of persecution in Islām. To cite a single example, Sultān Selīm I, the Cruel, exterminated 40,000 of his Shī'ite subjects for political reasons. As for the main madhāhib in Islām, they were imposed by various authorities on their subjects. For more on the spread of the Sunnī schools, see the chapter "[The] Secret Behind the Spread of [the] Sunnī Schools" in Tājānī's The Shī'ah: The Real Followers of the Sunnah: 82-87. Although Tājānī conveniently fails to mention it, this applies equally to the Ja'farī school of thought in Persia which was imposed as a state-religion by the Safavids. Without the Occultation of the Twelfth Imām, Twelver Shī'ites did not have a physical candidate for the leadership of the Muslim Community. Hence, they posed no immediate threat to the authorities at a time where multiple movements were vying for power and leadership. It is important to note that, although the Sunnī schools of law were imposed by the ruling authorities to ensure uniformity and unity, many of the founders of the Sunnī madhāhib had been persecuted by the powers that be. For more on the suffrage of ahl al-sunnah by the ruling class, see Khaled Abou El Fadl's The Search for Beauty in Islām: A Conference of the Books.

7. Editor's Note: Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥusayn ibn Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj was a theologian, mystic and Muslim martyr whose work marked the beginning of a strong ṣūfī current. Accused of claiming divinity for having stated anā al-ḥaqq (I am the Truth), he was executed by the Abbasids. The rigorist literalists who judged him could not see beyond the surface of his words. Al-Ḥallāj was not claiming to be Allāh. He was stating that he had submitted to Allāh and had become at one with Him. As Annemarie Schimmel explains, "in rare moments of ecstasy the uncreated spirit may be united with the created human spirit, and the mystic then becomes the living personal witness of Allāh and may declare anā al-ḥaqq" (72). The legitimate theological basis for such an understanding is demonstrated in the following ḥadīth qudsī where the Messenger of Allāh says that Allāh said,

Whosoever shows enmity to someone devoted to Me, I shall be at war with him. My servant draws not near to Me with anything more loved by Me than the religious duties I have enjoined upon him, and My servant continues to draw near to Me with supererogatory works so that I shall love him. When I love him I am his hearing with which he hears, his seeing with which he sees, his hand with which he strikes and his foot with which he walks. Were he to ask [something] of Me, I would surely give it to him, and were he to ask Me for refuge, I would surely grant him it. I do not hesitate about anything as much as I hesitate about [seizing] the soul of My faithful servant: he hates death and I hate hurting him.' (Bukhārī)

Rather than claiming that he was God, al-Ḥallāj was expressing that he had lost his "I"--his selfhood--and had been submerged in the Beloved. Rūmī believed that the words "I am God" and I am creative truth" meant "I am pure" and "I hold nothing within me except Him" (Arasteh 89). Rūmī contrasted this interpretation with "orthodox" believers who claim, "I am a servant of God," which asserts the dualism of existence (89).

The Messenger of Allāh and the Holy Imāms are also the Supreme Names of Allāh for it has been said by Imām al-Ṣādiq: "We are the Most Beautiful Names" (Khumaynī Islāmic Revolution 411). The ahl al-bayt are manifestations of Allāh. As such, the divine names are applicable to them, despite the fact that they themselves are not divine. As Khumaynī observes, "The whole world is a name of Allāh, for a name is a sign, and all the creatures that exist in the world are signs of the Sacred Essence of Allāh Almighty" (367); "Everything is a name of Allāh; conversely, the names of Allāh are everything, and they are effaced within His being" (370).

Suhrawardī (c. 1155-Alepo 1191) was a philosopher and mystic. He integrated the Gnostic tradition, hermeticism and neo-Platonism into Islām and exerted a great influence. Uways al-Qaranī was a follower of 'Alī who died fighting for him. Qanbar was a retainer of 'Alī. Maytham al-Tammār was a freedman of 'Alī and a loyal Shī'ite. He was executed by Ibn Ziyyād in Kufah. For a detailed description of the Imāms, consult Mufīd's Kitāb al-irshād.

As for the Shī'ite Imāms, the majority opinion, with the notable exception of Shaykh al-Mufīd, is that all of them were

martyred through poisoning with the exception of Imām ‘Alī who was killed by the blow of a sword while conducting prayers and Imām Ḥusayn in a heroic battle at Karbala.

8. Editor’s Note: The author wishes to make it explicitly clear that he is not justifying or defending the actions of any individuals. Al-Ḥallāj’s words may seem excessive to some, but so was the punishment inflicted upon him by the authorities. When the author describes al-Ḥallāj as a “martyr” he does so in the sense found in the dictionary: “someone who suffers death rather than renounce his faith // someone who suffers greatly for some cause or principle” and not in the strict Islāmic sense of the word shahīd, which means a Muslim who has died defending his dīn [religion], who struggled in the path of Allāh, and who is assured of immediate and eternal reward in Paradise. In the case of Ḥallāj, Allāh is the Judge and Allāh is Just.

9. Editor’s Note: This is in contrast to Naṣr’s view that heterodoxy can be judged by the consensus or ijmā‘ of the mainstream community on the basis of the Qur’ān and the Sunnah (Heart of Islām 87).

10. Editor’s Note: In Islāmic jurisprudence, one can find a variety of opinions on different issues, each suited to the variety of individuals and levels found in society. While there may be a myriad of multicolored leaves on the tree of Islām, they all contrast and complement one another to create the Muslim mosaic. Truly, there is a great blessing in differences and diversity.

11. Editor’s Note: Among the Sunnis, the doors of ijtihād, the independent interpretation and application of Islāmic law to changing times and circumstances, was closed in the 10th century. As a result, many Sunnī Muslims are obliged to follow Islāmic law as understood by medieval scholars which comes into conflict with their ability to manage with modernity. See Morrow, John Andrew “Like Sheep without a Shepherd: The Lack of Leadership in Sunnī Islām.” The reopening of the doors of ijtihād was done by Muḥammad ‘Abduh, leader of the Salafī movement which can be defined as “Wahhābism with ijtihād.” Their ijtihād, however, is not the interpretation of the sharī‘ah to apply it to modern times but rather subjecting modernity to misinterpreted medieval mandates.

12. Editor’s Note: A fact which must be remembered when following the fatwā of any scholar. In some cases, what they are presenting are educated points of view which is why they often finish their fatwā with the words wa Allāhu a‘lam or “And Allāh knows best.” They are not necessarily absolute facts. On many issues, there is not just one ruling: there are many, each of which is based on a thorough understanding of the Islāmic sciences. It is a must for Muslims to adopt this tolerant attitude of mutual respect and comprehension. Imām Khumaynī, who was perhaps the greatest Islāmic scholar of the 20th century, firmly adopted this humble attitude. In both his commentary of the Qur’ān, and other contingent domains, he reiterated that “what I have to say is based on possibility, not certainty” (Islām and Revolution 366). And this is precisely what differentiates Muslims from the ahl al-bayt. While we may have knowledge, the ahl al-‘ismah have knowledge of certainty.

13. Editor’s Note: As Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir explains:

He who has given verdicts [in matters of religion] on the basis of his own opinion, has actually followed a religion which he himself does not know. And he who accepts his religion in such a matter, has actually contradicted Allāh, since he has declared something lawful and something unlawful without knowing it. (Kulaynī 152: Ḥadīth 175)

And as the Prophet Muḥammad has said, “He who interprets the Qur’ān from his own personal opinion will have a seat in hell” (Tirmidhī, Ghazālī).

14. Editor’s Note: Shī‘ite Islām places a great deal of importance on ‘aql or reasoning. While Shī’ite Muslims must follow experts in matters of law, they are prohibited from following anyone in matters of faith without proof and conviction. As Imām Khumaynī explains, “A Muslim must accept the fundamental principles of Islām with reason and faith and must not follow anyone in this respect without proof and conviction” (The Practical Laws of Islām 17).

15. Editor’s Note: The author is alluding to the following verse “to Allāh belongs all power” (2:165), among others.

Chapter 4: The Infallible Divine Authority, Source of Law and Doctrine in Islamic ijma‘

In the preceding pages, we have addressed the issue of *ijm‘*. We have seen that, on the one hand, the Islamic concept of consensus is interpreted as an intellectual acceptance of divine truth and, on the other hand, as an expression of trust in God and the Prophet. We have also noted that, to a certain degree, the Islamic concept of consensus requires the acceptance of educated opinions acquired through a thorough study of Islamic law and through the intellectual effort known as *ijtihd*. It is thus the obligation of every observant Muslim to place his trust in the wisdom of others.[1] **The entire structure of Islamic society is based on this trust in the rulings of scholars since, for all intents and purposes, the acceptance of these religious rulings constitutes an acceptance without reservation of revealed law.**

The concept of *ijm‘* as a source of law and doctrine implies, in an objective sense, the acceptance of a body of divinely revealed laws which must be accepted in their entirety as a manifestation of the acceptance of the sovereign authority of God. In a subjective sense, embracing divine authority represents the sanctifying flux [*barakah*] instilled by God in the human soul through the bounty bestowed upon the Prophet. Such submission is never blind and unconditional. Blind following is unacceptable when the motives that are expounded are not sufficiently convincing or do not coincide with the inner meanings of the revelation.[2] If, as we have said, some Islamic tenets, mandates or principles must be accepted completely, totally and wholeheartedly, it is because they are directly ordained by the revelation, which is free of errors,[3] and because they are based on the authority of the Prophet and the Imms. **In Islm, in order for a norm or dictate to be accepted, it must be firmly based on God's revelation and the *sunnah* of his Prophet.**[4] In such cases, transcendental and ineffable reality becomes evident as soon as reason elevates itself beyond the sphere of sensible truth and attains the level of intelligent truth. It is for this reason that it is the obligation of every Muslim to refrain from submission to a dictate until he is convinced with certainty that what he is accepting is legitimate and in complete accord with revealed truth.[5] This is the teaching of Sh‘ism as taught during the time of the Prophet and further developed on the authority of the Imms as part of their prophetic supplement.

Regardless of their efforts and actions, ordinary human beings do not deserve the rank of absolute authority over others. Even the greatest of human efforts cannot be compared to the divine gift of prophecy and the grace of *wilyah*. The authority of the Prophet was the result of revelation. The Prophet passed his supreme status and the mandate of his mission, the spread of revealed truth, to his cousin and son-in-law Imm ‘Al ibn Ab lib. This divine authority was passed on to his descendants and successors who are the definitive authorities of Islm whose obligation was to amplify it and actualize it. The human efforts of the Imms would be of little or no benefit were it not for the fact that

their external words and actions were accompanied by the rays of light which flow within them, the Mu□ammadan truth [al-□aq□qah al-mu□ammadiyyah], the gnostic or esoteric reality, the divine presence in their hearts which are the true depositories of eternal wisdom. It is for this reason that they receive the titles of "legatees" and "executors" of the revelation. As can be appreciated in light of the above, ijm□' is an intellectual assent of divinely revealed truth, assent which does not exclude trust.

Whenever infallible divine authority is absent, human life loses its direction and ceases to be oriented towards God as a final destination. Although God calls all human beings to obedience and the straight path, not all are reached. And not all of those who are reached by His call respond to it, because not all are chosen, obey and submit to His authority.6 The Prophet and the Im□ms are the most obedient and submissive to God's authority. This is because they are the Chosen Ones, the purest souls on earth. They are epiphanies [*ma□har*, lit. "appearance" or "manifestation"], theophanies [*tajalliy□t*, lit. "illuminations" or "revelations"], and signs [□*y□t*] of the infallible divine authority. Such authority cannot be claimed by just anyone. Rather, it must be considered as a gift or grace from God. When 'Al□, the depository and inheritor of the infallible divine authority and the Vicar of God, was preparing himself to enter the scene of Islamic life, not even the opposition and collusion of the followers of Ab□ Bakr could impede this apparition which was announced by the Prophet prior to his death and awaited by his family and closest companions. 'Al□ struggled tirelessly against them and became their most dreaded enemy.7 He always upheld his right to the succession and debunked all of the arguments used against his legitimate aspirations. But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

From the opposition and collusion of the followers of Ab□ Bakr, to the resistance and reaction of 'Al□ and his followers, the historical development of the Caliphate revolved around the issue of the succession of the Prophet. They involved one another and illuminated one another. In light of authentic and trustworthy sources, the situation becomes clear and enables us to see that the historical emergence of Sh□'ism was based on metaphysical and cosmological principles, even though the chain of secular conflicts have externally emphasized the political side. This leads us to the fundamental issue which interests us most: the concept that **Sh□'ite Isl□m was a divinely ordained development destined to convert itself into an invisible axis and visible hinge of the entire prophetic *wil□yah*.** In order to understand this, it is necessary to examine its exoteric reality *on the inside*, starting with its esoteric and Gnostic interior.

1. Editor's Note: Sh□'ite scholars are unanimous regarding the obligation of taql□d. As Im□m Khumayn□ explains, "If one is not a mujtahid and does not have confidence in oneself, then he must follow a particular mujtahid and act according to his rulings" (The Practical Laws of Isl□m 17).

2. Editor's Note: As Im□m Al□ explains in al-K□f□, if one has to chose between intellect, chastity and faith, one should chose intellect as intellect leads to faith (qtd. In al-Haiat: La vida, vol 1., 23: □ad□th 22). He also explains that "The intellect is the messenger of truth" and "The foundation of all things is the intellect" (21, □ad□th 11, 12). And as Im□m al-□□diq has said in al-K□f□, "The intelligence is that through which man worships the All-Merciful and gains Paradise" and "He who possesses intelligence possesses religion, and he who possesses religion enters the Garden" (qtd. in □ab□tab□'□ A Sh□'ite Anthology 55).

3. Editor's Note: According to Almighty All□h, the Qur'□n is safeguarded: "We have, without doubt, sent down the Message; and We will assuredly guard it (15: 9). According to Ay□tull□h al-U□m□ Sayyid Mu□sin Hak□m □ab□tab□'□, "The opinion of

all the elders and the scholars of all the Muslims from the beginning of Islām till now, is that the arrangement of the verses and the chapters are the same, as it is in our hands. Our elders did not believe in tarāf [textual change]" (Amad 'Alī, The Holy Qur'ān 59a). Ayatullāh al-Uāmā Sayyid Abā al-Qāsim al-Khu'ī has ruled that "Any talk about tarāf [textual change] of any kind in the Holy Qur'ān is only superstitious. No disarrangement of any kind has taken place in the Holy Qur'ān (61a)." According to Ayatullāh al-'Uāmā Sayyid Hādā al-usayn al-Milān,

Neither any disagreement nor any shortage nor addition of any kind whatsoever has taken place in the Qur'ān. The discussion and arguments about tarāf [textual change], etc., are all false and unfounded. This is an Everlasting Miracle of the Holy Prophet. The Lord Himself has made incumbent on Himself its collection, recital and explanation and has said that He Himself will be its Guard. It has also been challenged that falsehood shall approach it neither from front or from behind. And Shaykh adāq has said 'Verily it is our belief that the Qur'ān which God sent down to His Prophet Muammad is what is between the two covers and that which is in the hands of the people, and nothing more than that... And he also said that anyone who attributes unto us that we [the Shā'ah] say that it is more than that, he is a liar" (63a). Ayatullāh Milan concludes concisely that "The Holy Qur'ān is divinely protected. There is no tarāf [textual change] of any kind in it.

4. Editor's Note: As Imām al-āādiq has said, "Nothing exists but it has been described in the Book [of Allāh, al-Qur'ān] and the Sunnah" (Kulayn 1:1:2, 157: ādāth 184,). Imām al-Kāim has said, "Certainly, the Book of Allāh and the Sunnah of the Prophet contain each and every thing" (161: ādāth 190).

5. Editor's Note: The author is alluding to the Qur'ānic verses: "Produce your proof if ye are truthful" (2:111); "Bring your convincing proof (21:24); and "Produce your proof" (28:75).

6. Editor's Note: The Shā'ite position regarding predestination and free choice is a middle one. As Martyr Murtaā Muahar explains:

[F]ree will and freedom in Shā'ism occupy an intermediate position between the Ash'arite [absolute] predestination [jabr] and the Mu'tazilite doctrine of freedom [tafwāā]. This is the meaning of the famous dictum of the Infallible Imāms: lā jabra wa lā tafwāa bal amrun bayna amrayn: Neither jabr nor tafwāā; but something intermediate between the two [extreme] alternatives. (Muahar 1985)

7. Editor's Note: This is in sharp contrast to Nar's claim that 'Al did not oppose the first two Caliphs (Heart of Islām 66), a view held by many notable Shā'ite scholars, including 'Allāmah al-ill, and supported by historical anecdotes. As we explain in "Strategic Compromise in Islām:"

When Imām'Al's Caliphate was usurped on three occasions, he did not respond with the sword, but with silence and patience. The Imām understood that a civil war in the early days of the Islāmic movement, when Muslims were surrounded by hostile enemies on all fronts, could very well lead to the annihilation of Islām. His weapons were taqiyyah [pious dissimulation] and withdrawal from public affairs. As a result of these actions, many Muslims became keenly aware that there was something seriously wrong with the system. The Imām's apparent inaction was in fact the wisest and most effective of action through which he called into question the legitimacy and undermined the authority of the opportunistic rulers.

While 'Al's did provide advice and guidance when called upon, his behavior was consistent with that of an opposition leader. Nar's attitude is similar to that of Sachedina's who claims that 'Al's appointment as Imām and Caliph was implicit and not explicit ("Islām" 1289; Rizv Chapter 4). As Rizv observes, "This dichotomy between 'the academician' and 'the believer' is indeed disturbing (Chapter 1).

Chapter 5: Mukhtar al-Thaqafi

Chapter 5: Mukhtār al-Thaqāf, The Enlightened Messianic Activist, The Shā'ite Insurrection as Political Reaction, Reparation and Revenge

In order to explain the transformation that Islām went through since the rise of Shā'ism, Muslim and

non-Muslim historians point to two factors derived from the same cause: the political struggle for the Caliphate. The first factor was the political influence of the oligarchy which transformed itself into a timocratic power, a state in which political power increases with the amount of property one owns, through the support of the triumphant majority. The second factor was the political will of a marginalized minority which became a medium of resistance. Depending on the personal inclinations of previous researchers, they argue in favor of one of these two factors. For us, both factors are two aspects of the same cause. For Western research scholars, it is not always easy to accept the idea that in Islām, the relationship between the religion and politics is much closer than it is in the West between the Church and State. It is even more difficult for them to accept that, **in Shī'ism, religion and politics are two aspects of the orthodox development of the same doctrine**, rather than parallel or separate tendencies that revolve around the same sphere but without any effective connection between them.

"Recent studies," says Bausani, "distinguish more between a political Shī'ism, which included the purely political partisans of 'Alī and his family..., a religious Shī'ism, which included activists impregnated with Gnostic ideas, who were based mostly in Kūfah, in Mesopotamia, and whose main representative ... was the politico-religious agitator al-Mukhtār who took over Kūfah in 685-686. He preached Messianic doctrines and started some very interesting customs like the cult of the vacant throne and so forth" (112-113). As a result of these events, some Orientalists attempted to establish a clear distinction between an "extremist" political Shī'ism, a "moderate" religious Shī'ism, and an "intermediate" Shī'ism. This latter, which shares both political and religious aspects, is at times "extremist" and at others "moderate" according to Bausani's definition of Twelver Shī'ism. It comes as no surprise that, centuries after the birth of Shī'ism, Orientalists seeking support for the "democratic" orientation of Abū Bakr would use this inappropriate division to supposedly distinguish between a political Shī'ism and a religious Shī'ism.1

The origin and early development of Shī'ite Islām is, to a great extent, a history of divisions, dissensions, and internal quarrels relating to the problem of succession. A considerable number of movements, some of which went from partial or relative dissidence [*inshi'ābb*] to outright rupture [*fitnah*], were drawn into the center of this great storm as a result of the violence perpetrated by the political and religious authorities. It must be mentioned, however, that while some of these groups may have reached the state of sects [*furaq*] in the Christian sense of the world, in our view, even this barrier between differences does not produce clear-cut division. On the contrary, under this umbrella, many branches flourished, some longer-lived than others, which developed alongside Shī'ism without breaking the tie, as weak as it may have been, with the Islamic trunk from which they were born.2

In truth, the development of sects--that is, groups which diverge on the basis of important beliefs or practices--is the result of the closer ties established between Shī'ism and the surrounding esoteric traditions. The divergence and conflict between the distinct groups is related to the reaction towards an ocean of doctrinal wealth. The Ismā'īliyyah,3 for example, have a doctrine which, in many respects, makes them the heirs of the Sabian tradition of Ḥarrān which, as is known, was the depository of

Hermetic and neo-Pythagorean doctrines combined with elements from Hindu occultism and Gnosis.[4] These Sabians must not be confused with the Sabaeans or Mandaeans from southern of Iraq and Persia.[5]

One of the common mistakes made in relation to Sh□'ah Isl□m is the attempt to compare it with the various schisms found in Christianity. Sh□'ism is often portrayed as a schismatic coextension of dissident groups organized in small cells or brotherhoods driven by an uncompromising parochial spirit. **The concept of *inshi'□b* [division] in the Islamic religion must not be confused with that of *fitnah*, definitive division and irreparable rupture.** In fact, Sh□'ism suffered no "division" [*inshi'□b*] or rupture [*fitnah*] during the Im□mate of the first three Im□ms: 'Al□, □asan, and □usayn.

After the death of □usayn, however, the majority of Sh□'ites placed their trust in 'Al□ ibn al-□usayn Zayn al-'□bid□n,[6] while a minority, known as al-Kaysaniyyah, believed that the right to succession belonged to Mu□ammad ibn al-□anafiyyah. He was the third son of 'Al□, but not through F□□imah. As a result, he cannot be considered a descendant of the Prophet.[7] Despite this fact, Mu□ammad ibn □anafiyyah was proclaimed by his partisans as the Fourth Im□m and the promised Mahd□. During the time he sought refuge in the mountains of Raw□ah, which form a cordillera in Mad□nah, Mukht□r al-Thaq□f□ served as his "representative."[8] It was believed that Mu□ammad ibn □anafiyyah would come down one day and appear as the rightly-guided and long-awaited Messiah.

In accordance with Sh□'ite thought, the Mahd□ is a man motivated by God who is also a military chief and a warrior. Even if the followers of Mukht□r al-Thaq□f□ gave an extremist character to the eschatological idea of the Hidden Im□m, the Islamic figure of the Messiah as restorer of revealed religion is not an invention of Mukht□r or a Christian influence. **The Mahd□ is a spiritual synthesis of all revealed forms and not a mere uniform syncretism. It is a concept that is expressed in all its dimensions and depth in many *a□□d□th* of the Prophet as well as many traditions of the Im□ms.**[9]

In synthesis, we can say that after the death of Im□m Zayn al-'□bid□n, the majority of Sh□'ites accepted Mu□ammad al-B□qir as the Fifth Im□m, despite the fact that a minority followed his brother Zayd al-Shah□d, who were known from that moment on as Zaydis.[10] Im□m Mu□ammad al-B□qir was succeeded by his son Ja'far al-□□diq the Sixth Im□m and, after his death, his son M□s□ al-K□□im was recognized as the Seventh Im□m. Nevertheless, an opposition group insisted that the successor of the Sixth Im□m was his elder son Ism□'□l who had died when his father was still alive.[11] This group split from the Sh□'ite majority and became known as the Ism□'□l□s. Others, instead, preferred 'Abdull□h al-Aftah and some even chose Mu□ammad, both sons of the Sixth Im□m. Still, there were even those who considered Ja'far al-□□diq as the Last Im□m and were convinced that none would succeed him. Likewise, after the martyrdom of Im□m M□s□ al-K□□im, the majority followed his son 'Al□ al-Ri□□ as the Eighth Im□m. But there were those who refused to recognize any Im□m after al-K□□im and came to constitute the brotherhood of the W□qifiyyah.[12] From the Eighth to the Twelfth Im□m, considered by the Sh□'ite majority as the Awaited Mahd□, no important division [*inshi'□b*] took place within Sh□'ism.

However it occurred, what is important to retain here is that, since its origins, Sh□‘ite Isl□m represents, more than a spiritual and political rebellion against illegitimate authority, a movement of “awakening,” like that of □□f□sm in the Sunn□ world. It was not a reformist movement in the Christian sense, like the one that took place in Europe during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Sh□‘ite Isl□m represents an integral restoration of Mu□ammadan theosophy and metaphysics through the application and practice of all the teachings of the Holy Im□ms, who linked the outer meanings of the text to the inner meanings of the divine word.

The root cause for the development of Sh□‘ism is utterly alien from worldly affairs. The source of Sh□‘ism is not a simple heresy or a political disagreement. **Sh□‘ite Isl□m springs from a metaphysical reality, a process of epiphany which establishes a new logophonic manifestation of Prophethood. Sh□‘ism, as the Isl□m of ‘Al□ and the *ahl al-bayt*, is the temporal and earthly pillar of the eternal and celestial reality of the *wil□yah*. The *wil□yah*, the spiritual guidance of the Im□ms, is a manifestation of Prophethood.** The *wil□yah* is an inner or occult reality which is found in potential and action within the same Prophethood. The *wil□yah* is a manifestation of Prophethood that is revealed in a new way. The *wil□yah* is not the renovation of the anterior Qur’□nic revelation but its closure. The *wil□yah* is an unveiling of the esoteric and metaphysical truths found in the Qur’□n. **While the Prophet sealed the age of formal revelation, by means of the divine concession of the *wil□yah* and the Im□mate to his descendants, a new age of profound “revelations” was opened.**[13] **Just as the pleroma of the Twelve Im□ms represents the fullness of the Mu□ammadan Reality, their teachings and doctrines are flashes from the sole Mu□ammadan Light, the logophonic effusions and manifestations of the Qur’□nic revelation: its perfect synthesis and exact formulation.**

Finally, in order for there to be a living branch from the Islamic trunk, a favorable doctrinal terrain was required, a spiritual identity with its own characteristics which were qualitatively different from the other ideological options of its age. With such an understanding, the historical appearance of Sh□‘ism seems to be completely inevitable. Without its presence, of course, the history of Isl□m and the world would have totally changed. In our judgement, any attempt to reduce the historical development of Sh□‘ism to a mere political problem related to the succession or to some insurgent elements is misguided at best. This applies to figures as fictitious as ‘Abd All□h ibn Saba’, the Yemenite of Jewish extraction, and as real and historical as Mukht□r al-Thaq□f□.

Abd All□h ibn Saba’ and Mukht□r al-Thaq□f□ are presented by Alessandro Bausani as “extremists” [*ghul□t*][14] and precursors of a political Sh□‘ism. Muslim and non-Muslim specialists have long disputed which one deserves the inappropriate title of “founder of Sh□‘ite Isl□m.” The Italian Orientalist briefly refers to ‘Abd All□h ibn Saba’ as an exalted personality, an ex-Jewish Yemenite who deified ‘Al□ during his lifetime. The feeble historical foundation surrounding someone considered to be no less than the “founder of Sh□‘ite Isl□m” should have led Bausani and other contemporary Orientalists to infer that they were dealing with a fictitious character or an insignificant individual whose existence had not even been faithfully documented by the annals of time.

It is shocking to learn, nonetheless, that the refusal to recognize Sh‘ism as a historical and meta-historical reality profoundly rooted since the dawn of Isl‘m has led certain Orientalists to discard the strongest evidence in favor of the weakest. In reality, **‘Abd All‘h ibn Saba’ is a literary character, a fabrication of Sayf ibn ‘Umar al-Zind‘q [the Atheist or Dualist], a famous falsifier of *a‘‘d‘th* or prophetic traditions.**[15] The absence of any convincing evidence to support the existence of ‘Abd All‘h ibn Saba’, partnered with the constantly contradictory and nebulous character of his life, convinced some Sh‘ite scholars long ago that they were facing the figure of an imposter. Despite this body of bona fide doubts, it took longer than expected for this fact to be confirmed. In fact, it took no less than one thousand years before a perspicacious research scholar, the erudite Sh‘ite ‘All‘mah Sayyid Murta‘‘ al-‘Askar‘, shed light on this somber subject. For many centuries, the detractors of Sh‘ism used the tale of ‘Abd All‘h ibn Saba’ as a pretext to deny its purely Islamic origin and to corrupt its genuine Mu‘ammadan connection. They have stubbornly presented Sh‘ism as the creation of an ex-Jew, thence as the political scheme of an upstart Muslim convert. As a result, the figure of the “convert” in the Muslim world continues to be the center around which all suspicions converge, whether reasonable or groundless.[16]

Along with ‘Abd All‘h ibn Saba’, Mukht‘r al-Thaq‘f‘ is often cited as one of the persons directly responsible for the creation of Sh‘ism. He appeared as the inspiration for an armed resistance that took place in the year 40 of the ‘ijrah, during the regime of Mu‘‘wiyyah. The revolutionary movement was directed against the Caliph and the powerful governors of the Ummayad clan who were all considered, without exception, as preachers of moral perdition and religious innovation. During the period of the first three *khulaf‘’ al-r‘shid‘n* [rightly-guided Caliphs]--Ab‘ Bakr, ‘Umar ibn al-Kha‘‘‘b and ‘Uthm‘n--between the years 632 and 656, ‘Al‘ ibn Ab‘ ‘‘lib and his followers were subjected to a considerable degree of political coercion which relaxed temporarily when ‘Al‘ acceded to the Caliphate. After the death of ‘Al‘, however, the persecution of the Sh‘ites became increasingly intense and intolerable under the Ummayad regime.[17]

With the proclamation of Mu‘‘wiyyah as the Caliph in Jerusalem in the year 660, the Caliphate was moved to Damascus and acquired an entirely different character than the one it possessed during the rule of the four rightly-guided Caliphs.[18] The defining characteristics of Mu‘‘wiyyah’s rule were nepotism and tyranny. The Caliph turned into a “king” [melik] who governed as an absolute sovereign in the manner of the Persian and Byzantine emperors.[19] With the death of Mu‘‘wiyyah, he was succeeded by his son Yaz‘d [680-683], described by historians as a degenerate drunkard.[20] Successive uprisings against him broke out through all of Arabia, inspired and encouraged by the Sh‘ites who despised the moral and spiritual decadence of the Umayyads. The Sh‘ite revolts multiplied throughout the Umayyad Caliphate. The political reaction and righteous revenge for the death of ‘usayn, the youngest son of ‘Al‘ and F‘‘imah, occurred in Karbala during the reign of Yaz‘d. The revolution was led on behalf of Mu‘ammad ibn al-‘anafiyyah, whom we have already mentioned, and its goal was accomplished by Mukht‘r al-Thaq‘f‘ of K‘fah in the year 685. It was in K‘fah, one of the holiest cities in Isl‘m, that the various esoteric and political branches of Sh‘ism appeared. Fond of the old Christianizing formula of

the Orientalists, Hitti affirms that “the blood of ḥusayn, and the blood of his father, was the seed of the Shīʿite Church.”[21]

The unequal efforts of the distinct Shīʿite groups against the Umayyad regime, each distinct in nature, meaning, purpose and reach, definitively did nothing but lead the insurgents to disaster, to merciless, heartless, and relentless repression and to brutal martyrdom. But, despite these vagaries, they are not movements undeserving of attention. They have their place, which is not at all negligible, in the course of the historical evolution of the Shīʿism we attempt to trace. In short, Mukhtār al-Thaqafī lived in a period of difficult transition in the history of Shīʿism. As we have mentioned, it was, to a great extent, a time of violent dissent and disputes. Bribery and political crimes were routinely used by the Umayyad regime to suppress its opponents. As a result, the division of Shīʿite Islām into distinct parties or factions, each one following ʿAlī and some of his descendants, became an instrument of political struggle and the sole means of liberation and hope for the oppressed.

It was then, during those dark days of despotism, that Mukhtār al-Thaqafī appeared on the scene, transforming himself into one of the most active combatants and one of the most outstanding and ingenious revolutionaries of his time. It goes without saying that Mukhtār al-Thaqafī was Shīʿite, and probably forcibly so. In the religious and social framework of his time, he was also a messianic revolutionary, illuminated by Gnostic ideas. In line with the goals and aspirations of his political program, he accomplished his mission to kill ʿUbayd Allāh ibn Ziyād and, in so doing, he avenged the death of the Third Imām, ḥusayn al-Sibṭ al-Aṣghar, the youngest grandson of the Prophet. The personality and character of Mukhtār al-Thaqafī aroused a great deal of controversy in the early history of Shīʿite Islām. Some sources present him as an ambitious adventurer and a faithful follower of the political authority of *ahl al-bayt*. For others, he was an enlightened being who was almost raised to the rank of a prophet by his contemporaries. Although he never made such a claim himself, he did indicate directly and indirectly, as we will see shortly, that his actions were inspired by the angel of revelation. After overcoming some initial hurdles, Mukhtār’s personal success was great and long-lasting. He finished his days with praise and acclaim, recognized as one of the bravest heroes and one of the most efficient military leaders of Shīʿism. He was the implacable avenger of ḥusayn, the standard of the *tawwābūn* [penitents] who consolidated the aspirations of this revolutionary Shīʿite movement whose appearance was motivated by the tragedy of Karbala.[22] The *tawwābūn* or penitents constituted the first avenging movement of Karbala. However, as soon as Mukhtār al-Thaqafī appeared on the scene, the *tawwābūn* were assimilated, and perhaps rightfully so, into his brand of revolutionary Messianism.

Regardless of the reason behind Mukhtār’s popularity, the question of his religious commitment coincides with the establishment of an initiatory hierarchy which is distinct from the Shīʿite structure. Since Shīʿite thought was already sufficiently delineated, we must say without hesitation that his divergent approach did not arouse much sympathy among the Shīʿites. The cause for such aversion is to be found in an accidental slip related to Imām ḥasan. During his conflict with Muʿāwiyyah, the Imām sought asylum in Madāʾin, in the house of the governor Saʿd ibn Masʿūd who was Mukhtār’s uncle.

Unexpectedly and inexplicably, Mukht□r suggested to his uncle that he should turn in Im□m □asan to the Umayyad Caliph, who was searching for him. He told his uncle that he could subjugate the deposed Caliph and declare that “The treaty made with □asan is null and void. It is under my feet.” Obviously, the governor emphatically rejected the treacherous suggestion made by his nephew. From this incident, we can only lament Mukht□r’s political blunder which did not go unnoticed by the Sh□‘ites. They unanimously and severely reproached him for being so inconsiderate and disloyal towards the first son of ‘Al□ and the oldest grandson of the Prophet.23 Further on, in an isolated and equally accidental incident, he regained the confidence and the appreciation of the Sh□‘ites. This occurred when he refused to appear before Ziyy□d ibn Abih, the Governor of K□fah, to testify against □ujr ibn ‘Ad□, the leader of the one of the Sh□‘ite rebellions to overthrow the tyrant. It seems that, from that moment onwards, Mukht□r adopted a position that was increasingly favorable towards the Sh□‘ite cause. At the same time, his revolutionary rhetoric acquired an undeniable messianic character which occasionally resembled revelation. Mukht□r was a man who possessed psychological qualities in line with his strong and unusually esoteric religious mentality. He quickly converted himself into a spontaneous orator. His rhetoric was smooth and eloquent. It overflowed with obscure reflections and periphrastic expressions, which gave it a poetic flow which superficially resembled the revealed word. His speeches gave the impression that they came from an inspired source. It was for this reason that Mukht□r often alleged that his spirit was illuminated by Gabriel, the Angel of Revelation, who, in an ineffable and mysterious way, warned him of the unexpected.

Mukht□r’s ingenious rhetorical slips had a tremendous influence on his followers and convinced them of the appearance of the Awaited Mahd□, identified with Mu□ammad ibn □anafiyyah, who was coming to restore order and justice. Due to this deep-rooted Sh□‘ite conviction, he was considered by his followers as the “Representative of the Mahd□,” namely, a delegate of the third son of Im□m ‘Al□. This is the manner in which he was recognized and allowed himself to be addressed. In the years 685 and 686, he established a Sh□‘ite-oriented government in K□fah.24 This was the first time this was done since the time of Im□m ‘Al□ when he finally received his much delayed turn to occupy the Caliphate and to fully assume the supreme role he had inherited from the Prophet.

It must be remembered, however, that similar excesses on the part of Mukht□r caused, if not serious religious worries, at least considerable annoyance to the ruling religious authorities. His influence was great in the genesis of one sect, the Mukht□riyyah, but did not shake the foundation of Im□m□ Gnosis. Although Mukht□r’s ideas were not free from doctrinal errors, they did not radically alter the esoteric concept of the Hidden Im□m which is the real touchstone of all Sh□‘ite thought: past, present, and future.25 The repercussion of his ideas was sufficient to inspire the partial development of an erroneous path which, in its true sense, was nothing more than a stubbornness to maintain ideas which were contrary to those espoused by the majority of Sh□‘ites.

In fairness, the interesting and eventful life of this unique man brought him the opportunity to regain the sympathy of the Sh□‘ites. As we have said, avenging the death of □usayn, the martyr of Karbala, was

the mission that was thrust upon Mukht□r al–Thaq□f□, as well as Sulaym□n ibn □urad, leader of the *taww□b□n*. The target of this vengeance was ‘Ubayd All□h ibn Ziyy□d, considered unanimously among Sh□‘ites to be the direct instigator and the main executor in the death of Im□m □usayn and his family. And here is one of those interesting facts that mark the lives of the chosen ones; the martyr Maytham al–Tamm□r, one of the closest companions of Im□m ‘Al□ and one of the saints of Isl□m who is highly venerated by □□f□s, was imprisoned as a political prisoner by ‘Ubayd All□h ibn Ziyy□d on charges of conspiring against the Umayyad regime. Destiny would have it that Mukht□r was also in the same prison. It is there that Maytham predicted that, once he was released, he would fulfill his mission of avenging □usayn which is, after all, exactly what happened.26

We have focused our attention on Mukht□r for the purpose of clearing up some common confusion related to the creation of the Party of ‘Al□. We wish to take advantage of this opportunity to clarify another error. Bausani says that Mukht□r took over K□fah and preached messianic doctrines and starting very interesting customs like the cult of the vacant throne. While this is true, it is not the complete truth. As “interesting” as this custom may be to Bausani––perhaps due to its symbolism––we must point out that Mukht□r never introduced “a cult of the vacant throne.” As Dozy explains, the idea of the throne was simply an ingenious ruse that this clever and brilliant strategist contrived to incite his army to battle. He had the idea of purchasing an old armchair that he had re–upholstered with a fine and expensive silk, converting it into the famous “vacant throne” of ‘Al□. This unusual inducement brought forth its desired fruit. Ibr□h□m, the commander of Mukht□r’s troops, fought in an unusually brave and heroic fashion and killed ‘Ubayd All□h ibn Ziyy□d with his own sword. In the minds of the Sh□‘ite soldiers the supposed throne of ‘Al□ truly acquired a highly symbolic value. Mukht□r had told them at the beginning of the battle that the throne would represent for them what the Ark of the Covenant represented to the Children of Israel.

As serious as the political events that coincide with the start of Sh□‘ism were, they cannot be considered a sufficient reason for its historical appearance. It is certain that Ab□ Bakr’s assumption of the Caliphate of the Islamic Community instead of ‘Al□, the coerced resignation of □asan and the martyrdom of □usayn, the division of the Islamic world into various groups as a result of the bloody raids and forays of Mu‘□wiyyah and Yaz□d––the founders of the Umayyad dynasty––forced Muslims, Gnostics included, to take sides. However, the reason for which they were fighting goes well beyond what today is qualified as “political.”

Not all of the political insurrections which took place in the name of Sh□‘ism reflected the complex reality of the Im□mate and what it represents metaphysically. Likewise, the development of the esoteric doctrine and thought of Sh□‘ism in Isl□m should not be linked to the appearance of the word “Sh□‘ite” or “Sh□‘ism.” These terms simply designate a particular “party” or a “group” of Muslims.27 As Mu□ammad B□qir al–□adr observes, one thing is the meaning of the term, and the other is the distinct doctrine it designates. To say that the Sh□‘ites are a “party” of legitimistic minority Muslims merely expresses one aspect of the term.

In the time of the Prophet, as can be seen in many *a□□d□th*, there are references to the “Sh□‘ah of ‘Al□” and the “Sh□‘ah of *ahl al-bayt* ”28 In Arabic, sh□‘ah means “partisans,” “adepts,” or “followers” of someone.29 As a result, it is said that Sh□‘ites are those who are partisans of Im□m ‘Al□ and his descendants. They are those who consider that the fulfillment of the sunnah of the Prophet demands the complete and obligatory observance of all of its dispositions and rulings. This evidently, and most importantly, includes the designation [*na□□*] made by the Prophet of Im□m ‘Al□ as his successor [*khal□fah*].

1. Editor’s Note: This current which seeks to split Sh□‘ism into fractions has even spread among Muslim scholars. Sachedina holds that Sh□‘ism was a political movement which acquired religious undertones (Isl□mic Messianism 5). Jafr□ recognizes the division between political Sh□‘ism and religious Sh□‘ism (97) as does Ras□l Ja‘fariyan who speaks of three forms of Sh□‘ism: political, creedal and Iraq□. The truth of the matter, however, is that “Sh□‘ism was a religious movement that also encompassed social and political aspects of society” (Rizv□ Chapter 1).
2. Editor’s Note: The author’s attitude is all-encompassing, eager to embrace, and stresses the common ground of taw□□d on which all Muslims stand. This can be contrasted with T□j□n□’s attitude which seeks more to splinter than to soothe, even rejecting the close legal, theological, philosophical and political ties which bind Twelvers, Seveners and Zaydis: “Our discussion does not invoke the other sects as Ism□‘□liyyah and Zaydiyyah, as we believe in their being like other sects in not adhering to □ad□th al-thaqalayn, and their belief in ‘Al□’s im□mah after the Messenger of All□h is of no use” (The Sh□‘ah 331 Note 1). This attitude also ignores the similarities between Sunnism, □□fism, and Sh□‘ism.
As M.G.S. Hodgson explains, “in its whole piety Sunn□ Isl□m can be called half-Sh□‘ite” (4). Similarly, Na□r observes that “In certain areas of the Isl□mic world...one meets among □□fis certain groups as devoted to the Sh□‘ite Im□ms, especially ‘Al□ and □usayn, as any Sh□‘ite could be, yet completely Sunn□ in their practice of the law [madhhab]” (□□f□ Essays 107). In reality, these so-called “half-Sh□‘ites” are neither one thing nor the other, but rather “seekers of the straight path.”
3. Editor’s Note: The Ism□‘□liyyah are known as Seveners as they follow Seven Im□ms, the first six Sh□‘ite Im□ms and Ism□‘□l as the seventh.
4. Editor’s Note: Some Ism□‘□liyyah adapted the Qarmathian syncretistic catechism to other forms of monotheism, to □arr□nian paganism, and even to Mazdeism (Massignon 60). As ‘All□mah □ab□□ab□‘□ notes, “The Ism□‘□lis have a philosophy in many ways similar to that of the Sabaeans [star worshippers] combined with elements of Hindu gnosis” (Sh□‘ite Isl□m 78).
5. Editor’s Note: As Netton explains, “The Sabians were a pagan sect who, according to some, had cleverly identified themselves with the □□bi’□n of the Qur’□n to avoid persecution” (15). □arr□n, in what is now southeastern Turkey, was the home of the star worshipping Sabians with their transcendent philosophy. The Sabians of □arr□n must not be confused with the Sabaeans who lived in what is today Yemen and who founded colonies in Ethiopia and Eritrea. As for the Mandaeans, they are members of an ancient Gnostic sect surviving in southern Iraq and which used the Aramaic language in their writings.
6. Editor’s Note: Zayn al-‘□bid□n is responsible for one of the great masterpieces of Sh□‘ite supplications, al-□a□□fah al-□ajadiyyah, rendered beautifully into English by William Chittick as The Psalms of Isl□m.
7. Author’s Note: He was the fruit of the marriage between the Im□m and a woman from the □anaf□ tribe, rather than from the Prophet’s daughter.
8. Editor’s Note: We must remember that, despite his accomplishments, Mukht□r al-Thaqaf□ did not recognize the Im□m of his Age. If prophets and Im□ms are infallible, ordinary human beings like Mukht□r are far from perfect. Although Mukht□r did a great deal of good and will always be remembered for avenging the death of al-□usayn he was misguided in many matters, including following Mu□ammad ibn al-□anifiyyah as the Mahd□. As as followers of the Twelve Im□ms, Sh□‘ite Muslims have always opposed and denounced all fabricators of false traditions, even when those traditions are favorable to their cause. Sh□‘ite mu□adith□n reject Mukht□r as an authority on the basis that he became an extremist. For the sake of historical accuracy, it is important to show human beings with their vices and virtues. The author does not present a romantic, idealized version of Mukht□r: he shows him warts and all.

9. Editor's Note: For more English-language books on the Mahd□, consult Shaykh al-Muf□d's Kit□b al-irsh□d, Sachedina's Isl□mic Messianism; An Inquiry Concerning al-Mahd□ by Ay□tull□h Mu□ammad B□qir al-□adr and Discussions Concerning al-Mahd□ by Ay□tull□h Lu□full□h □□f□ al-Gulpayg□n□.

10. Editor's Note: The Zaydis are followers of Zayd ibn 'Al□ ibn al-□usayn, the son of the Fourth Im□m, who led a revolt against the Ummayads and was killed in 738. Initially, the Zaydis held that the true Im□m was the □usaynid Im□m who rose up in revolt. Many of the Zaydis accepted the Caliphate of Ab□ Bakr and 'Umar, and some even accepted the early part of 'Uthm□n's. This attitude forms part of the theological doctrine of the Im□mate of the maf□□l [the less excellent]. It was agreed that 'Al□ was al-af□al [the most excellent] but conceded that the Im□mate of the less excellent could occur when the most excellent did not publicly assert his right to the Im□mate by armed revolt. For more on the beliefs of the Zaydis, see Howard's "Introduction" to Shaykh al-Muf□d Kit□b al-Irsh□d (xxiii-xxv) and 'All□mah □ab□tab□'□'s Sh□'ite Isl□m (76-77).

11. Editor's Note: Although the sources differ on the subject, Ism□'□l may not have been qualified for the Im□mate for several reasons: firstly, because his father Im□m al-□□diq had appointed M□s□ as his successor, and secondly, because Ism□'□l passed away before his father. The Im□mate is not a system of royalty or inheritance. It is a matter of divine pre-ordinance, a covenant from All□h. In any event, the Sixth Im□m did not designate his eldest son to be his successor, nor did it cause a great doctrinal or theological problem among the Sh□'ah.

12. Editor's Note: The W□qifites were those who held that M□s□ was the Im□m who would return as the Madh□.

13. Editor's Note: The belief in post-prophetic guidance is not exclusively Sh□'ite. It is related in Sunn□ traditions that the Messenger of All□h said, "Surely Messengership and Prophethood are terminated, so there will be no messenger or prophet after me except mubashshir□t" (Tirmidh□). He also stated that: "There is nothing to come of Prophethood except mubashshir□t." People asked, "What are they?" The Holy Prophet replied, "True visions" and these were declared by the Holy Prophet to be one forty-sixth of Prophethood (Bukh□r□).

14. Editor's Note: Ghul□t, plural of gh□li, is an Arabic term deriving from the verb gh□l□ which means "to exaggerate or exceed the proper bounds." The verbal noun is ghuluw and means "exaggeration." The ghul□t or extremists are sects which deify 'Al□. In Iran, they are known as the Ahl al-□aqq [people of the truth], 'Al□ Il□his ['Al□ worshippers]: in Iraq they are called Shabak, Bajwan, Sarliyya, Kkaiyya, and Ibr□h□miyyah. In Syria, they are known as Nu□ayris or 'Alawis. In Turkey, they are called Bektashis, Kizilbash (Alevis), Takhtajis and Çepnis. The Shaykh□s are also a modern ghul□t group. They are followers of Shaykh A□mad al-A□s□'□ (d. 1830) who taught that the infallible fourteen are the cause of the universe, in whose hands are the life and death and the livelihood of humanity. According to Moosa, al-A□s□'□ seems to justify this belief by explaining that God is too transcendent to operate the universe by Himself and therefore deputized the infallible fourteen to operate the universe on his behalf (109). If this is correct, the Shaykh□s resemble the mufawwi□ah [the delegators]. As Fyzze explains,

The mufawwi□ah are those who believe that God created the Prophet and 'Al□ and then ceased to function. Thereafter, it was these two who arranged everything in the world. They create and sustain and destroy; All□h has nothing to do with these things. (141).

When examining the Shaykh□s, it is important to differentiate between the Bah□'□-controlled group from the original teachings of Shaykh A□mad al-A□s□'□. As far as Sh□'ism is concerned, there is no doubt that the Im□ms are the Lords of Existence. What happens with A□mad al-A□s□'□ is that he developed entirely esoteric doctrines and many have understood him literally without understanding that the ideas he was expressing were metaphysical rather than philosophical or theological.

For Gnostics, the role of the Im□ms is viewed cosmically. There is no doubt that the B□bis and Bah□'is have misinterpreted this role in an extreme fashion, the first in an esoteric way, and the latter in a literal way, distorting the doctrines of Shaykh A□mad al-A□s□'□. The Universal Legislator is the one who initiates a cycle and brings it to its end. He does not destroy the world in a physical sense but in a historical one. He closes one cycle and commences a second. The Im□ms closed the cycle of prophecy only to initiate the cycle of the wil□yah. Im□m Mahd□ will come to close the cycle of wil□yah of the Prophet Mu□ammad.

If Shaykh A□mad al-A□s□'□ said that the Im□ms controlled the universe, he said so in the sense of prophetic □ad□th which states that without an Im□m, the world would be destroyed and would not last a single second. There are also other Sunn□

and Sh□‘ite traditions regarding Im□m ‘Al□ making it clear that the Im□m is center or heart of the world without whom the world would stop to exist. There is also the □ad□th which states that when Im□m Mahd□ returns, reason would leave the world and humanity would degenerate into destruction. The work of Shaykh A□mad al-A□s□’□ need to be re-examined from a Twelver Sh□‘ite perspective. This is the only way his scholarship can be saved from B□bi-Bah□’□ interpretations which have distorted his original doctrines.

As for the ghul□t, they are of different ethnic origins, speak different languages and are divided into different denominations. They share the common belief in the apotheosis of ‘Al□ and in a trinity of God, Mu□ammad and ‘Al□ or, as among the Nu□ayris, of ‘Al□, Mu□ammad and Salm□n al-F□ris□. They practice holy communion and public or private confession. According to Moosa Matti, “their religion is a syncretism of extreme Sh□‘ite, pagan, and Christian beliefs, and they fall outside the pale of orthodox Isl□m” (418). In fact, “some of the beliefs of the ghul□t have a greater affinity with ancient astral cults and Christianity than with Isl□m” (ix).

The Prophet Mu□ammad prophesized their appearance when he told ‘Al□: “In one respect, you are like Jesus. The Jews went so far in hating him that they turned hostile towards him and calumniated his mother and the Christians loved him too much that they elevated him to an undeserved status.” On another occasion, he told him that “I fear some sects of my community will say of you what the Christians said of Jesus” (N□s□b□r□ 1: 112-13) and “‘Al□, if it was not for the fact that I am concerned that some factions will say of you what the Christians say of Jesus, son of Mary, I would say of you today words such as (after them) you would never pass a gathering of men without them taking the soil from your feet” (Muf□d 79).

Im□m ‘Al□ warned against the extremists, saying that “Two groups will fall into perdition: The extremist who adore me unduly; and the enemies whose animosity leads them to calumniate me.” The na□□b□s are those who hate ‘Al□ bitterly; the ghul□t are those who literally adore him. The Im□ms who followed ‘Al□ condemned the extremists in the harshest terms (Rayshani).

Despite its deficiencies, Matti’s Extremist Sh□‘ites is one of the only scholarly books on extremist Sh□‘ites available in English. Regrettably, the author makes some ludicrous claims; namely, 1) asserting that when the muezzins in Iran call the people to prayer they cry out ‘All□hu Akbar! All□hu Akbar! Khomeini is Rahbar, Khomeini is Rahbar’ (All□h is Most Great; All□h is Most Great! Khomeini is the religious guide) thus placing Khomeini before the testimony of faith that ‘There is no god but All□h and Mu□ammad is the Messenger of All□h’ (99); 2) claiming that the Sh□‘ites of Iran believe that ‘Al□ is close to being a God (xxiii); 3) asserting that Sunnism represents Isl□mic orthodoxy (421); 4) and, finally, 5) categorizing the ghul□t as heterodox as opposed to heretical (418). It should also be noted that the term ghul□t has different connotations depending on who uses it. In Sunn□ sources, even moderate figures are seen as ghul□t.

15. Editor’s Note: As Na□r explains, “The zan□diqah [sing. zind□q] are identified specifically in Isl□mic history with Manichaeans, but the word is also used more generally … to mean unbeliever and heretic” (A Sh□‘ite Anthology 65, note 125). Saif ibn ‘Umar al-Tam□m□ is categorically discredited by ‘All□mah Murta□□ ‘Askar□ in his ‘Abdullah ibn Saba’ and Other Myths, 3rd. ed. trans. M.J. Muqaddas, Tehran: Isl□mic Thought Foundation, 1995. Sukaynah bint □usayn, who died shortly after the tragedy of Karbala, was also transformed into a literary character by story-tellers and is now exploited by feminist writers like F□□imah Merness□ (192-94).

16. Editor’s Note: Héctor Ab□ Dharr Manzolillo’s article “Los ‘conversos’ en países con minorías musulmanas” [“Muslim ‘Converts’ in Countries where Muslims are a Minority”] addresses this issue with eloquence.

17. Editor’s Note: As Jafr□ explains, “Mu‘□wiyyah seems to have been trying to destroy, at the slightest pretext, those of ‘Al□’s followers who could not be bought or intimidated into submission” (167). In short, the history of Sh□‘ism is written with the blood of martyrs.

18. Editor’s Note: Rather than ‘Umar, the “abomination of desolation” (Daniel 9:27; Matthew, 24:15; Mark 13: 14) might more appropriately refer to Mu‘□wiyyah’s coronation as Caliph.

19. Editor’s Note: At the beginning of the reign of ‘Uthm□n when the Ummayads occupied prominent positions, Ab□ Sufy□n said, “O Children of Ummayyah! Now that this kingdom has come to you, play with it as the children play with a ball, and pass it from one to another in your clan. We are not sure whether there is a paradise or hell, but this kingdom is a reality.” (al-Isti‘ab by Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr 4: 1679) In Sharh ibn Ab□ □ad□d, the last sentence is quoted as follows: “By him in whose name Ab□ Sufy□n swears, there is neither punishment nor reckoning, neither Garden nor Fire, neither Resurrection nor

Day of Judgment!" (9: 53) Then Ab□ Sufy□n went to U□ud and kicked at the grave of □amzah [the uncle of the Prophet who was martyred in the Battle of U□ud in fighting against Ab□ Sufy□n] and said, "O Ab□ Ya'l□! See that the kingdom which you fought against has finally come back to us." (Shar□ ibn Ab□ □ad□d, 16: 136).
When Mu'□wiyyah took over the Caliphate, he said, "I did not fight you to pray, fast, and pay charity, but rather to be your leader and control you" (Tadhkirat al-khaw□□, Sib□ Ibn al-Jawz□ al-□anaf□, 191-194; Ibn 'Abd al-B□rr, in his S□rah; Ab□ Nu'aym; al-Sudd□ and al-Sha'b□). There are numerous instances where Mu'□wiyyah is recorded as saying, in reference to himself, "I am the first king in Isl□m" (Jafr□ 154). When Yaz□d became Caliph, he said, "Hashimite played with the throne, but no revelation was revealed, nor was there a true message" (History of al-□abar□, Arabic, 13: 2174; Tadhkirat al-khaw□□; Sib□ Ibn al-Jawz□ al-□anaf□ 261). The Caliph Man□□r defiantly declared: "Only I am the authority of God upon His earth" (Jafr□ 280; □abar□, T□r□kh III 426). The Turkish Sult□ns described themselves as the "Shadows of God on Earth."
20. Editor's Note: Yaz□d, son of Mu'□wiyyah, son of Ab□ Sufy□n ruled from 60 A.H. to 64 A.H. His army sacked Mad□nah in 63 A.H., killing 17,000 Muslims, and leaving 1,000 Muslim women pregnant as the result of rape. Thereafter, his army marched on Makkah, destroying one of the walls of the Holy Ka'bah and setting it on fire (D□r al-Taw□□d 139). He enacted the wholesale massacre of the Prophet's Family at Karbala in which □usayn, the second son of 'Al□ and F□□imah, was martyred along with his faithful band of 72 followers. Only 'Al□, the son of □usayn, was providentially spared, due to illness.
21. Editor's Note: See P. K. Hitt□, History of the Arabs from the Earliest Times to the Present 10th ed. (London 1970): 191.
22. Editor's Note: The very name, "the Place of Suffering" or "Land of Anguish," is indicative of the tragedy that befell there.
23. Editor's Note: For a more complete understanding of the circumstances that led Im□m □asan to make a treaty with Mu□'wiyyah, see 'Abb□s A□mad al-Bost□n□'s Pour une lecture correcte de l'imam al-□assan et de son traité de réconciliation avec Mu'âwieh. For an overview of the quietist as opposed to activist approach to politics in Sh□'ite Isl□m, see my "Strategic Compromise in Isl□m."
24. Editor's Note: It is important to remember that Im□m Zayn al-'Abid□n did not respond positively to the call of Mukht□r al-Thaqaf□ to rise up against the Umayyads. The Im□m was fully aware that opposition forces could not succeed in tearing down Umayyad rule and deemed that any participation in such activities would lead to the extermination of the real bearers of the divine message on earth: he himself and the ahl al-bayt. As a result, the Im□m distanced himself from any and all movements which might draw the attention of the authorities. For more on the subject, see: Im□m Zayn al-'Abid□n. Qum: al-Balagh Foundation, 1994: 49-50. Surprisingly, another book by al-Balagh claims that the Im□m supported the revolutionaries. While he did sympathize with the resistance and pray for All□h's mercy on Mukht□r, this should not be interpreted as support. The book also claims that the Im□m's supplications "are a clear expression of his political and ideological opposition to the rulers of the time." See: Ahlul Bayt: Their Status, Manner and Course. Qum: al-Balagh Foundation, 1992: 148. This view, which is an echo of Padwick's comments on the □ah□fat al-kh□misa, give a false impression of the work. As Chittick clarifies: "Though the Im□m makes a number of allusions to the injustice suffered by his family and the fact that their rightful heritage has been usurped, no one can call this a major theme of the □ah□fah" (xx).
25. Editor's Note: The belief in the Invisible Im□m is at the heart of Sh□'ite Isl□m.
26. While in prison, Maytham told Mukht□r: "You will escape and you will rebel to avenge the blood of □usayn, peace be upon him. Then you will kill this man who is going to kill us" (Muf□d).
27. Editor's Note: The term ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah appeared for the first time during the time of Mu'□wiyyah. During the rule of 'Al□, the Islamic Empire was divided into two parts: the part controlled by Im□m 'Al□, and the part controlled by Mu'□wiyyah. After the martyrdom of Im□m 'Al□, Mu'□wiyyah assumed control over the entire community. That year was proclaimed "the year of the jama'ah" or "the year of the majority of the community." The term ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah appears in its complete form during the peace treaty between Mu'□wiyyah and Im□m □asan ibn 'Al□. The term was chosen to differentiate the followers of Mu'□wiyyah, the ahl al-sunnah, from the followers of the Prophet's family, the ahl al-bayt. The term sunn□ is an abbreviated form of ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah. The early Muslims were also known as Sh□'ites (followers): the sh□'ah of 'Al□, the sh□'ah of Mu□'wiyyah, and so forth. See Ja'fariyan's "Sh□'ism and its Types during the Early Centuries."
28. Editor's Note: The Messenger of All□h said, "Glad tiding O 'Al□! Verily you and your companions and your Sh□'ah will be in Paradise" (Sunn□ References: Fa□□'il al-□a□□bah, by A□mad ibn □anbal, v. 2, 655; □ilyatul awliyy□', by Ab□ Nu'aym,

v. 4, 329; T□r□kh, by al-Kha□□b al-Baghd□d□, v. 12, 289; al-Awsa□, by al-□abar□n□; Majma‘ al-zaw□’id, by al-Haytham□, v. 10, 21-22; al-Darqutn□, who said, “This tradition has been transmitted via numerous authorities;” al-□aw□‘iq al-mu□riqah, by Ibn □ajar al-Haytham□, ch. 11, section 1, 247; al-Durr al-manthur, Suy□□□, vol. VI, 379).

The Messenger of All□h said the following about ‘Al□: “I swear by Him who holds my life in His hands, this person and his partisans [sh□‘ah] will have salvation on the Day of Judgment” (Suy□□□).

The Messenger of All□h said, “‘Al□ and his Sh□‘ah are the successful ones” (Muf□d 25, Muwaffaq). The Prophet said to ‘Al□: “I, you, F□□imah, al-□asan, and al-□usayn were created of the same clay, and our partisans [the Sh□‘ites] were created from the remainder of that clay” (Nis□b□r□ 101-02; Mu□ammad ibn Ab□ al-Q□sim al-□abar□ 20, 24, 96).

In another tradition, the Most Noble Messenger says that: “I am a tree whose main branch is F□□imah, whose pollen is ‘Al□, whose fruit is al-□asan and al-□usayn, and whose leaves are the Sh□‘ites and lovers of my community” (Ibn Ibr□h□m 222; Mu□ammad ibn Ab□ al-Q□sim al-□abar□ 40, 63).

The Messenger of All□h said, “Seventy thousand of my community will enter Heaven without any reckoning and punishment against them.” Then he turned to ‘Al□ and said, “They are your Sh□‘ah and you are their Im□m” (Muf□d 26).

The Messenger of All□h said, “‘Al□, the first four (men) to enter heaven are myself, you, al-□asan and al-□usayn. Our progeny [will come] behind us and our loved ones will be behind our progeny. To our right and left will be our Sh□‘ah” (Muf□d 26; al-Man□qib by A□mad; al-□abar□n□, as quoted in al-□aw□‘iq al-mu□riqah, by Ibn □ajar Haytham□, ch. 11, section 1, 246).

The Messenger of All□h said, “O ‘Al□! [On the Day of Judgment] you and your Sh□‘ah will come toward All□h well-pleased and well-pleasing, and there will come to Him your enemies angry and stiff-necked” (al-□abar□n□, on the authority of Im□m ‘Al□, al-□aw□‘iq al-mu□riqah, by Ibn □ajar al-Haytham□, ch. 11, section 1, 236).

The Messenger of All□h said, “O ‘Al□! On the Day of Judgment, I shall resort to All□h and you will resort to me and your children will resort to you and the Sh□’ah will resort to them. Then you will see where they carry us [to Paradise]” (Rab al-abr□r by al-Zamakhshar□).

Ibn ‘Abb□s narrated: When the verse “Those who believe and do righteous deeds are the best of the creation” (Qur’□n 98:7) was revealed, the Messenger of All□h said to ‘Al□: “They are you and your Sh□’ah.” He continued: “O ‘Al□! [On the Day of Judgment] you and your Sh□‘ah will come toward All□h well-pleased and well-pleasing, and your enemies will come angry with their head forced up.” ‘Al□ said, “Who are my enemies?” The Prophet replied: “He who disassociates himself from you and curses you. And glad tiding to those who reach first under the shadow of al-‘arsh on the Day of Resurrection.” ‘Al□ asked: “Who are they, O the Messenger of All□h?” He replied: “Your Sh□‘ah, O ‘Al□, and those who love you” (al-□□fi□ Jam□l al-D□n al-Dharand□, on the authority of Ibn ‘Abb□s; al-□aw□‘iq al-mu□riqah by Ibn □ajar, Ch. 11, section 1, 246-247).

On the basis of this evidence, we can safely conclude that “Sh□‘ism existed in the lifetime of the Prophet as a nascent movement” (Moosa 95). However, while there are discernable Sh□‘ite elements during the lifetime of the Prophet, “the hard-and-fast divisions of later centuries are not discernible in the earlier period. There were Sunn□ elements with definite Sh□‘ite tendencies, and there were Sh□‘ite contacts with Sunn□ elements both intellectually and socially” (Na□r □□f□ Essays 106-107).

29. Editor’s Note: The word Sh□‘ite derives from the Arabic verb sh□ya‘a, meaning “to adhere to; to support a common cause; to be a partisan of it.”

Chapter 6: The Caliphate at a Crossroads, Abu

Bakr and the Collusion of the Powerful Classes

Chapter 6: The Caliphate at a Crossroads, Abū Bakr and the Collusion of the Powerful Classes

The afternoon of the 28th of Safar of the year 11 A.H., which corresponds to May 25th of the year 632 A.D., is marked with indelible precision in Islamic history. With the flow of time, this event, and those which followed it, led to a radical political change in the socio-religious orientation of the Muslim world. It is the ill-fated day of the demise of the Prophet Muḥammad, the date of the closing of the "Cycle of Prophethood" [*dā'irat al-nubuwwah*] and, simultaneously and successively, the opening of the "Cycle of Initiation" or the "Esoteric Cycle of the Imāms" [*dā'irat al-wilāyah*]. The passing away of the Prophet constitutes the most tragic moment in which two distinct conceptions of authority and power confront themselves. The first was motivated by "eternal interests" and wanted to follow the straight path, shown by the final mandate of God and His Messenger, to its end. The second was embroiled in an intricate web of "personal interests," seeking social benefits and political privilege in which Islām, evidently, occupied a subaltern role. This later group represented the mentality of a segment of early Muslims who were unable to replace the ties of blood with the ties of faith.[1]

Historians explain that the death of the Prophet and the issue of his succession led to plots, intrigues, alliances, underground opposition, and corrupt forms of collusions. According to these academics, they were all provoked by the powerful representatives of the dominant class whose differences with 'Alī were motivated by political ambition from the very beginning. This interpretation, however, is far too simplistic when we consider the rivalry between the two factions, the emigrants [*muhājirūn*] and the allies [*anṣār*].[2] The first, long accustomed to strong tribal authority, treaties, and blood-ties, wanted to maintain some of the political privileges and ancient social considerations abolished by Islām. They wanted to take advantage of the Prophet's death to reclaim power by appointing a Caliph who would be loyal to them: Abū Bakr.

The appointment of 'Alī as successor, however, came from a divine mandate. Unlike the opportunistic and orchestrated election of Abū Bakr, **'Alī's investiture was rooted in the historical event of Ghadīr.** In the 11th year of the hijrah, the Prophet made a solemn pilgrimage to Makkah, known as *ḥajjat al-wadā'* [the Farewell Pilgrimage].[3] During his return, he stopped on the 18th of *Dhul-ḥijjah* at the pond of Ghadīr Khumm in front of 120,000 Muslims. Shī'ite commentators point to the event of Ghadīr as the definitive proof, not only of the fulfillment of the Prophet's mission, but of God's permanent commitment to the preservation of Islām by the concession of a *wilāyah* to His Final Messenger.[4] **The perfection and completion of Islām was conditioned and dependent on the designation of the Prophet's successor, for, as we read in the Qur'ān [5:3], the Messenger and the guidance go hand and hand.** As a result, both the Prophethood and the Imāmate must follow the same path.

Zayd ibn Arqam relates that “the first to visit and congratulate ‘Al were Ab Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthm n, al ah, and Zubayr: the congratulations and the *bay‘ah* [oaths of loyalty] continued until sunset .5 What stands out from this and other trustworthy and authentic Sunn traditions is that when **the Prophet publicly appointed ‘Al as his successor and executor, placing his *wil yah* in his descendants**, neither Ab Bakr nor ‘Umar ibn al-Kha b, who ended up preceding ‘Al in the succession of the historical Caliphate, contested the matter nor did they have the audacity to claim any special rights. Ab Bakr never insisted upon his superiority over ‘Al. He never claimed to have more right to rule over the Muslims and for them to obey him. To be precise, the event that unleashed an endless series of internal division, known by Arab historians as the *fitnah* [insubordination / sedition], came quite unexpectedly. It coincides with Ab Bakr, the son of Ab Qu fah, being illegitimately appointed as the successor of the Prophet. His appointment took place through the collusion of powerful interests. It was they who granted him the leadership of the Islamic community by means of a pre-Islamic consultative assembly [*sh r*].6

When commenting on this practice, Modernist Sunn scholars commonly claim that Ab Bakr was recognized as Caliph through a “democratic” election, based on the decision and consensus of a majority.7 This gives the false impression that this ancient form of consultation is comparable to the modern democratic systems found in the Western world. It must be recalled, though, that the people did not participate in this elective act in the political sense that we understand it today. Quite the opposite was true. The people were completely excluded from the process, including ‘Al, his Family and the closest Companions of the Prophet.8 **The *sh r* [a fundamental organism of the pre-Islamic constitutional system] that was convoked in the *saq fah* was limited to the council of tribal chiefs exclusively composed of the dominant classes who were open and organized enemies of ‘Al**.9

As a result of these events, the Islamic Caliphate, the first *de facto* Islamic government, the highest and most important religious and political institution in the Sunn world, begins when Ab Bakr decides to take personal power. As Caliph, Ab Bakr assumes the role of leading and governing the rest of Muslims in accord with a sovereign authority and jurisdiction which, until the time of the Prophet’s death, was expressed in his culmination of the Prophethood. While the Prophet lived, the Caliphate was, in the person of Mu ammad, a holy and indivisible entity. After his death, though, ambitions became impatient. The result was the rupture of what, by divine design, was inseparable, the Prophethood and the *wil yah*, the Caliphate and the Im mate, which were meant to go hand in hand, since there can never be one without the other.10 It was for this reason that the Prophet said in the Tradition of Ghad r, “to whomsoever I was the lord and master [*mawl*] ‘Al is your lord and master [*mawl*].”11

The initiatory role and function of the Caliphate and the Im mate are the same. They are characteristic of the spiritual authority and the temporal power of the Im m. They are non-transferable and cannot be subjected to the ballot box. When we say that the functions of the Im m are “non-transferable” we specifically mean that these powers and functions are not at the reach of unqualified individuals. Spiritual and political leadership is not available to all. They cannot be seized by force or by consensus. The

powers in question are exclusive. They are superior by their very nature. They are divine by origin and not by artifice. The Imāmate requires an individual with exceptional perfection and cannot be shared with all individuals.

Abū Bakr's attitude and actions forever destroyed the esoteric foundation of the succession of the Prophet. Concerned more with justifying his own personal superiority, he constantly stressed that consensus was indispensable when it came to continuing the exoteric work of the Prophet. This is the reason why, according to some later Sunnī commentaries, it is often asserted that Abū Bakr was selected Caliph because the Prophet had not clearly designated a successor. The truth, however, is altogether different.

Although some Sunnī scholars admit that the most important traditional sources contain numerous testimonies that manifest, with great clarity, the legitimate rights of succession of 'Alī, they insist, nonetheless, that the Prophet may very well have changed his mind at the last minute and finally decided to place Abū Bakr in the place of 'Alī.[12] We must remember that, according to the clearest and most unanimous accounts, there is no indication whatsoever that the Prophet changed his mind regarding 'Alī or did anything to retract his previous decision, annulling, canceling, or removing his primary rank as a member of the Prophetic Household. If he had changed his mind, he would have made it known publicly in front of all Muslims with the same clarity and precision that he had used previously to proclaim 'Alī as the head of the community at Ghadīr Khumm. It was well-known by all Muslims of the time that the Prophet never acted out of haste. His decisions were well meditated upon. What certain Sunnī commentators seem to forget, or fail to take into consideration, is the consequence of the ultimate mandate of God to His Messenger in the moment that the following *āyāh* (*verse*) was revealed: "And today I have perfected your religion and have chosen Islām as your religion." [4:3].

While some Sunnī commentators defend the superiority of Abū Bakr due to the respect he received from some of the Prophet's Companions, there are numerous clear accounts concerning the superiority of 'Alī. Any educated individual, who objectively examines the circumstances surrounding the death of the Prophet, can only conclude that **'Alī was the victim of a political plot**. He was the victim of a conspiracy aimed at denying him the legitimate exercise of his political functions as Spiritual Magistrate as Caliph and Imām. In this light, is it not significant that Abū Bakr changed the name of his post, calling himself "Caliph"--in the sense of "substitute" and not "successor"--as opposed to Imām?[13]

On the basis of the aforementioned, we cannot come to a favorable conclusion to support the superiority of Abū Bakr. If we stick objectively to the reports found in traditional primary sources, we must address the metaphysical and esoteric reasons for 'Alī's appointment as the successor of the Prophet. It was at Ghadīr Khumm were Muḥammad transmitted his *wilāyah* [guardianship] as an exoteric personification of temporal power and a representation of the esoteric unity and universality of the spiritual authority. Certain Orientalists, who focus exclusively on superficial interpretations, may indeed admit the superiority of 'Alī. However, they view the whole question as a political dispute between two factions

struggling for the succession of the Prophet which resulted in the victory of Abū Bakr. Similarly, when studying the prophetic traditions, many Sunnī commentators deny or fail to recognize the status of ‘Alī and his Imāmate as a continuation of the personal primacy of the Prophet.

The same selective blindness regarding the status of ‘Alī, however, does not occur among ṣūfi sages. In ṣūfīsm, one aspect does not exclude the other. As a result, both exoterically and esoterically, Abū Bakr and ‘Alī ibn Abū ṭālib can be seen as the *arkān* or pillars of Islām. **For ṣūfīsm, ‘Alī, as founder of the *wilāyah* [guardianship], legatee and living preserver, present at all times, continues to be the spiritual foundation of Islamic gnosis due to his innate dignity and power as *qutb al-aqṭāb* [the Pole of the Spiritual Poles**]. Abū Bakr, on the other hand, is the visible foundation of the religion due to the powers that were conferred upon him through the consensus of the Companions. For ṣūfīsm, they both fulfill this function simultaneously: both Abū Bakr and ‘Alī ibn Abū ṭālib are the pillars of the religion in its external and formal manifestations. The interesting thing, however, is that for the ṣūfīs, the First Imām of the Shī‘ites is the Pillar of all Pillars, even of Abū Bakr, in the sense that upon the death of the Prophet he assumed all of his functions and prerogatives.

ṣūfīsm, as is well-known, contains formulations that are more esoteric than exoteric. It should not be overlooked that the very establishment of ṣūfīsm in the Sunnī world is the result of the unbalancing action caused by Abū Bakr when he split the exoteric from the esoteric by assuming the leadership of the Muslim community. **Even though ṣūfīsm and Shī‘ism are entirely orthodox expressions of Islām, Sunnīs have always viewed them with extreme suspicion due to their constant reference to ‘Alī as *al-bāb* or "the gate" to Muḥammadan gnosis and initiation**. According to the exoteric exegesis of some Sunnī scholars, the Prophet is also a Legislator, since in Islām the sacred law permeates all aspects of religious and social life. For Sunnī scholars, the Caliph or Imām is the Successor of the Prophet, but only as a partial executor of the Law as given and is in no way a spiritual successor of the Prophet.

Sunnī theologians justify the historical need for the Caliphate, as an institution, from the point of view that one of the objectives of the Prophet was the creation of a strong organized Islamic State. For Sunnīs, the Imām or Caliph must possess the following qualities: belong to the tribe of Quraysh [the tribe to which Muḥammad belonged], be competent and capable, possess knowledge and virtue; be worthy of ruling men and guide them along the straight moral and religious path through the rigorous application of the formal divine laws. He may be named directly by the Prophet or the preceding Caliph or by means of "election," namely, through designation by the elders of the community.

1. Editor's Note: This shows that things are not much different today among many Muslims, where ties of blood, clan, and tribe, takes precedence over Islām.
2. Editor's Note: Having been rivals with the Hashimites, the Prophet's clan, for two generations, the Umayyads could not accept the supremacy God had given to the Hashimites by sending his Messenger from within his tribe. As Ja‘fariyan explains:
There is indisputable evidence provided by older and recent research that there existed two distinct factions during the era of the Messenger of God. The first consisted of the Quraysh who were not on good terms with the Banū Hāshim even

before the advent of Islām. The second faction was that of the supporters of ‘Alī consisting of the Hāshimis and their supporters from among the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār, such as Abū Dharr, ‘Ammār, Miqdād and Salmān. Al-Fārsī concedes the existence of these two factions before the episode of [the] saqīfah.

The extent of their political differences, which had religious roots from the very beginning, increased with time. For instance, some of the Companions from the very early days did not recognize a role for the Prophet’s sunnah by the side of the Qur’ān. This belief was the important characteristic of the Quraysh faction. Denial of the religious authority of the Prophet's prescriptions and prohibition on the writing and narration of ādīth are clearly visible elements in the stance of the leaders of this faction right from the Prophet’s days.

Without doubt, one can say that the Companions of the Prophet formed two different groups from this angle: those who believed in the necessity of following the Prophet in all aspects and those who did not consider it obligatory to follow the Prophet in matters relating to government and political affairs. The pre-Islāmic influence of the Quraysh, along with other factors, led the latter group to acquire power.

Jafrī further confirms that although Muḥammad’s progressive Islāmic action had succeeded in suppressing Arab conservatism, embodied in heathen pre-Islāmic practices and ways of thinking... in less than thirty years’ time this Arab conservatism revitalized itself as a forceful reaction to challenge Muḥammad’s action once again. (202)

3. Editor’s Note: The tradition of Ghadīr Khumm is mutawātir [continuous]. In other words, it is a tradition that has been accepted by Muslims generation after generation down from the time of the Prophet and has been reported by such a large number of authentic chains of narration that it is impossible that they should have agreed on a falsehood. Its authority is thus unquestionable and can be accepted as a historical fact. There is a difference of opinion as to the number of narrators needed for a tradition to be considered mutawātir. Some consider four to be the minimum required; others five, seven or ten. And yet others raise it further to forty or even seventy. In the case of the tradition of Ghadīr Khumm, it meets the most stringent requirements, having been narrated by hundreds of reporters from all schools of thought.

4. Editor’s Note: For a detailed discussion of the event of Ghadīr, consult ‘Abd al-Ḥusayn Aḥmad al-Amīnī’s 11 volume encyclopedic work al-Ghadīr fī al-kitāb wa al-sunnah.

5. Editor’s Note: All of whom broke their oath to Allāh, the Prophet and ‘Alī. If the tradition “Everyone rejected Islām after the death of the Prophet except three: al-Miqdād ibn Aswad, Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī and Salmān al-Fārisī” (Kulaynī) refers to kufr millah, the state of a person who is not a true Muslim yet adheres to the external trappings of Islām, then it is partially correct; otherwise, if it refers to kufr riddah, unbelief as a result of apostasy, it is an overgeneralization and must be rejected. In any event, the Messenger of Allāh warned Imām ‘Alī that “The community will betray you after me” (Mufīd 210).

6. Author’s Note: Shūrā is a pre-Islāmic custom in which elections and votes alternate giving place to a succession of consultative councils. These consultative councils became increasingly narrow until they reached the tribal leader, the living executive chief. The only thing that limited his exercise of absolutist power was the enormous coercion to which he was subjected.

Although shūrā was the method in which pre-Islāmic Arabic tribes selected leaders and made major decisions, some of the Companions pointed to the following Qur’ānic verses as an endorsement for its use in selecting the Caliph: “So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult with them [the believers] upon the conduct of affairs” (3:159) and “those who conduct their affairs by counsel [are praised]” (43:38). According to Shī‘ite scholars these verses do not refer to the appointment of the Caliph or the Imām, something which was divinely decreed.

7. Editor’s Note: The Sunnī often say that in the Islāmic system of shūrā, heads are not simply counted, they are weighed. Hence, they endorse this oligarchic “democracy” of the elite. As Jafrī notes,

Abū Bakr’s succession was realized neither through a free election in any sense of the term nor through a free choice of the community. It was simply a decision by a particular group of muhājirūn which was hastily forced or thrust upon others. Its success was due only to the delicate existing group conflicts in Madīnah. This is obvious from ‘Umar’s own statement…that ‘Admittedly it was a hasty affair but God averted the evil of it.’ (49).

The same applies for ‘Umar’s appointment. As Jafrī explains,

‘Umar’s nomination…was neither based on the method of consultation with the elite of the people, nor was the opinion of the community in general sought before the choice was made. It was simply Abū Bakr’s own personal and arbitrary

decision, which he wanted to be endorsed by only those of the Companions whom he considered most important from a clannish point of view. (64).

8. Editor's Note: Those who were excluded from the saqīfah included 'Alī, al-'Abbās, most of Banū Hāshim, Usāmah ibn Zayd, al-Zubayr, Salmān al-Fārisī, Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī, al-Miqdād ibn al-Aswad, 'Ammār b. Yāsir, Ḥudhayfah b. al-Yamān, Khuzaymah b. Thābit, Abū Buraydah al-Aslamī, al-Barā' b. 'Azib, Abū Ka'b, Sahl ibn Ḥanīf, Sa'ad b. 'Ubādah, Qays b. Sa'd, Abū Ayyūb al-Anṣārī, Jābir ibn Sa'd, Khālid b. Sa'd, and many others. See, Muḥammad al-Tijānī, Then I was Guided, 2nd ed. (Bayrūt: N.P, 1990): 164, referring to Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh ibn al-Athīr, Tārīkh al-khulafā' by Ibn Qutaybah, and Tārīkh al-Khamīs. The term saqīfah refers to the roofed building used for meetings by the tribe of Sa'ida, of the faction of the Khazraj, of the city of Madīnah.

9. The testimonies that attest to the opposition and collusion of Abū Bakr's followers can be seen in Ibn Ḥanbal, IV, 281; Ibn Abū al-Ḥadīd, VI, 42; Ibn Qutaybah, I, 18; Bukhārī IV, 127; Ibn 'Asākir, al-Tārīkh al-kabīr (Damascus n.d.) II, 50; 'Alī al-Muttaqī, Kanz al'-ummāl (Hyderabad 1364/1944-45) VI 397. Mu'āwiyyah's response to Muḥammad ibn Abū Bakr (who was one of the faithful and unconditional followers of 'Alī) is interesting in that he explicitly recognized that his mandate as well as Abū Bakr's primacy were the result of a plot and conspiracy of the oligarchic sectors against the First Imām's rights of succession. See, 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Mas'ūdī Murūj al-dhahab wa ma'ādin al-jawāhir (Bayrūt 1966), II; the version of 'Alī ibn Abū Ṭālib regarding these episodes is found in the famous Khuṭbat al-shiqhshiqiyyah, found in Nahj al-balāghah, ibid, khuṭbah III, 59-61; Ibn Abi al-Ḥadīd, I, 34; concerning what was discussed between 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb and the members of the shūrā during the reunion in the saqīfah, see Abū Ja'far al-Ṭabarī, Tārīkh al-Rusul wa'l mulūk, ed. M.J. de Goeje et alter (Leiden 1879-1901), I, 1837-1845; 1683; 1827; 2779; al-Balādhurī, I, 588; V. 19-21; 33; 49.

It is impossible to summarize in a few titles the vast repertoire of sources referring to the saqīfah. We have found it useful to list some of the principle sources and, some of the easily accessible English sources. See, Ibn Abū al-Ḥadīd, Sharḥ Nahj al-balāghah, ed. M. Abū al-Fażl Ibrāhīm (Bayrūt 1965), II, 20-25; 44-60; III 275; Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūṭī, Tārīkh al-khulafā', ed. A. al-Ḥamīd (Cairo 1964); 61-72; al-Balādhurī, Ansāb al-ashrāf, ed., by M. Ḥamidullāh (Cairo 1955), I, 579-591; Ibn Qutaybah, Tārīkh al-khulafā' (Cairo 1964), I, 18: 61-72; Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāyah wa al-nihāyah (Cairo 1932) V, 212; A. Ibn Ḥanbal, al-Musnad (Cairo 1895) IV, 136, 164, 172, 281; cfr. Also S.H.M. Jafrī The Origins and Development of Shī'ah Islām (Qum 1989, II, 27-57); M.R. al-Mudharar, The 'Saqīfah' (Tehran 1993), passim; D.M. Donaldson, The Shī'ite Religion (London 1933); Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī, o.c., I, 39-50.

Editor's Note: As Jafrī explains, "The material preserved in the sources also strongly suggests that Abū Bakr and 'Umar had formed an alliance long before" (49).

10. Editor's Note: Regardless of the qualities he may have possessed, Abū Bakr's action cannot be taken lightly. He disobeyed Allāh and His Messenger, undermined a divine design and usurped temporal authority. The result was a rupture between the spiritual and worldly realms of catastrophic consequences.

11. Editor's Note: As Jafrī notes,

As far as the authenticity of the event itself is concerned, it has hardly ever been denied or questioned even by the most conservative Sunnī authorities, who have themselves recorded it. Most noteworthy among them are Imām Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal in his Musnad, Tirmidhī, Nasā'ī, Ibn Mājah, Abū Dāwūd and almost all other sunan writers, Ibn al-Athīr in his Usd al-ghābah, Ibn 'Abd al-Barr in his Istī'āb, followed by all other writers of biographical works and even Ibn 'Abd Rabbih in his 'Iqd al-farīd and Jāḥiẓ in his 'Uthmāniyyah. The traditions of Ghadīr are so abundantly reported and commonly attested by hundreds of transmitters belonging to all schools of thought that it would be futile to doubt their authenticity. Ibn Kathīr, a most staunch supporter of the Sunnī viewpoint, has devoted seven pages to this subject and has collected a great number of different isnāds from which the tradition is narrated. It is also Ibn Kathīr who informs us that the famous historian al-Ṭabarī, in a two-volume unfinished work entitled Kitāb al-faḍā'il...wrote in full details of the Prophet's discourse in favor of 'Alī at Ghadīr Khumm. A modern scholar, Ḥusayn 'Alī Maḥfūẓ, in his penetrating researches on the subject of Ghadīr Khumm, has recorded with documentation that this tradition has been narrated by at least 110 Companions, 84 tābi'īn, 355 'ulamā', 25 historians, 27 traditionists, 11 exegesists, 18 theologians, and 5 philologists. Most of them were later counted by the Sunnis as among their own number. (19-20)

The Event of Ghadīr Khumm in the Qur'ān, Ḥadīth and History compiled by the Ahlul Bayt Digital Islāmic Library Project cites 76 companions, 69 successors, and 626 scholars in the chains of transmission, recorded in 182 Sunnī books. In

addition, it provides Arabic text for 387 narrations, English translation for 78 narrations, scanned pages from 54 books and 280 quotations on the reliability of narrators in Arabic and 324 in English.

12. Editor's Note: Such a volte-face from the Prophet is not plausible. This is the man who taught that "Haste is from Satan" (Im□m Ma□har□ Tafs□r Ma□har□, Ibn □ayy□n al-Ba□r al-mu□□□).

13. Editor's Note: The concept and foundation of the Caliphate was erroneous and, after the Four Rightly Guided Caliphs, soon degenerated into debauchery. As for Yaz□d, he was the first among the Caliphs to drink wine in public...he sought the worst company, spending much of his time in the pleasures of music and singing and amusing himself with apes and dogs. He himself had no use for religion, nor had he any regard for the religious sentiments of others. Addicted to wine-bibbing, attracted to singing-girls, and exposed to all sorts of vices, Yaz□d has never been presented in good terms by any Muslim writer of any period or by any school of thought (Jafr□ 174). The Im□mate, however, remained pure and pristine, led by the most God-fearing leading scholars and spiritual authorities of the age, the Im□ms from the ahl al-bayt.

Chapter 7: Prophethood and Imamate, Two Inseparable Metaphysical Realities

For Sunn□ Muslims, the legitimacy of the Caliphate is an issue of secondary or relative importance. According to Sunn□ thought, even an illegitimate Caliph is acceptable as long as he has sufficient strength and ability to resolve the socio-economic problems of the society.1 It is easily understood how individuals with stubborn tribal mentalities and notions of superiority could perceive the Caliphate as being the pinnacle of Arabism. Even the trials and tribulations they suffered due to their loyalty to Isl□m and the Prophet could not make them forget their prior status as oligarchic tribal chiefs. It is therefore not surprising that the election of Ab□ Bakr as Caliph was based on pre-Islamic tribal customs. The Caliphate allowed the tribal chiefs to satisfy their nostalgia for the old order by giving the emerging system, despite its radical transformation, traits of political and economic centralism which has been abolished by Isl□m.2

Ab□ Bakr assumed the Caliphate, not through the legitimacy of his aspiration, but through the complicity of his peers from the tribe of Quraysh. He gained the unanimous support of the leaders of his tribe and maneuvered himself into power at a time when differences in opinion and division of loyalties prevailed.

History will never understand the cause of such a phenomenon without considering the rivalry between the Quraysh and the non-Quraysh and the *mu□□jir□n* [the emigrants] and the *an□□r* [the allies]. Without such an understanding, any explication of the development of Sh□'ism would be nothing but a deceitful distortion. Was not the rise of Sh□'ism the case of a revolt of the new over the old established order? Indeed it was. The political and economic centralism of the elders of Quraysh from the days of ignorance [*j□hiliyyah*] was not extinguished with the arrival of Isl□m. **The partisans of the old order mobilized against the new Islamic order established by Mu□ammad and embodied by 'Al□.** The Quraysh defended the old order with the same drive and determination they demonstrated during the lifetime of

the Prophet when the Makkan oligarchy had resisted with all their strength against Muḥammad's divine and revealed message. The ruling classes were particularly disturbed by the fact that, from the very beginning of his mission, the Messenger of Allāh had rejected concepts such as social superiority, pride in ancestry, and Arabism.3 Muḥammad viewed himself, first and foremost, as an "admonisher" [*nadhīr*] and a "guardian" of his people rather than its "king" [*melik*].4 As he put it himself, "Surely I am not a king [*melik*] … I am but the son of a woman who ate dried meat" (Tirmidhī). And to the scandal of the Makkan oligarchy, he abolished all distinction between race and class with the decisive declaration that: "All human beings are equal like the teeth of a comb. There is no superiority of an Arab over a non Arab, of a non-Arab over an Arab, of a white man over a black man or of a male over a female. The only merit in God's estimation is righteousness."5

In truth, the Prophet never manifested in any of his sayings or *aḥādīth* that belonging to the tribe of Quraysh or social status were necessary conditions for being elected Imām or Caliph. Abū Bakr, on the other hand, always maintained, in accord with his background, that the right to the Caliphate belonged to the members of the tribe of Quraysh by the simple fact that they were descendants of "the most honorable Arabs."6

Whoever examines the Islamic accounts of the period will notice with great surprise that the sector of Muslims who proclaimed Abū Bakr as the First Caliph in the *saqīfah* soon lost the esoteric and spiritual significance of the Imāmate or the Caliphate, if they ever possessed it at all. For them, as we have said, spiritual authority and temporal power were united in the person of Muḥammad by the fact that he was the Messenger of God and the Intercessor between God and man.7 When it came to Imām 'Alī, he was viewed by the old oligarchy, in the best of cases, as merely a half-Muḥammad, blessed with an inspired character and the spiritual wisdom of a prophet.8 They did not, however, consider him fit to assume the functions of legal administrator and political leader. For the followers of 'Alī, among whom were the closest and most famous companions of the Prophet,9 this separation between spiritual authority and temporal power was intolerable. It was not so much the political Imāmate that 'Alī inherited from Muḥammad which drew the Shī'ah. Rather, it was the esoteric sense of the Prophethood that continued to pulse within him: Imāmate was the amplification of Prophethood, a more interiorized complement.

According to Shī'ite thought, divine guidance takes two forms: *nubuwwah* (*prophethood*) and *wilāyah* (*guardianship*). 10 The first is co-substantial to the "Muḥammadan Truth" [*al-ḥaqīqah al-muḥammadiyyah*], in an absolute, integral, primordial, pre-eternal, and post-eternal sense. The second is constituted by the partial realities of the first: its emissions and luminous epiphanies [*maẓhar*]; in other words, the Imāms of the Prophetic Household who initiated and continued the "Cycle of Initiation" [*dā'irat al-nubuwwah*] that was sealed by the Prophet and which, like his luminaries, are identified with the pleroma of the "Light of Lights" [*nūr al-anwār*] of the "Muḥammadan Light" [*al-nūr al-muḥammadī*]. From this metaphysical point of view, **the Twelve Imāms belong, in their condition of luminous epiphanies of "Muḥammadan Light," to the same spiritual and temporal category as the Prophet without them been truly and properly prophets.** 11 This notion is repeated in many *aḥādīth*

[traditions] in relation to ‘Al□, like the one which says “You are to me as Aaron was to Moses except there will be no prophet after me” (Bukh□r□, Muslim, □□kim, □ad□q, Muf□d, Kulayn□).12

The bond that exists between Mu□ammad and ‘Al□ goes far beyond that of blood. What exists between them is a special spiritual tie [*nisbah ma‘nawiyyah*] which surpasses the relation of impossibility that “there will be no prophet after me.” **The bond between Mu□ammad and ‘Al□ is the result of their common pre-existence in eternity where they were two spiritual entities united in the same luminous identity.** As Prophet Mu□ammad has explained in various *a□□d□th*, “‘Al□ and I are from the same Light”13 (Kulayn□, Majlis□, Ma‘□□m ‘Al□) “People are from various trees, but I and ‘Al□ are from the same Tree” (Tirmidh□, Ibn al-Maghazal□).14 The eminence and spiritual supremacy of the First Im□m is also established in the significant tradition in which the Prophet states: “‘Al□ has been sent secretly with every Prophet; but with me he has been sent openly” (K□sh□n□ qtd. in A□med ‘Al□ 1157).15 It can also be seen in the tradition which states that: “Every prophet has an executor [*wa□□*] and a successor [*khal□fah*] and surely my executor and successor is ‘Al□ ibn Ab□ □□lib” (Muttaq□, al-Baghd□d□). There is also the tradition that “‘Al□ is part of me and I am part of ‘Al□ and nobody acts on my behalf except ‘Al□” (A□mad, Tirmidh□, Ibn M□jah, Nas□‘□, Ibn Kath□r, Suy□□□, □ad□q, Muf□d, Kulayn□). In a passage from the well-known tradition of Ghad□r, delivered shortly before the Prophet’s death, ‘Al□ successorship is once again confirmed: “Oh People!” said the Prophet, “All□h granted me the *wil□yah* [guardianship], placing me above all believers. **To whom I have been the master, ‘Al□ is also his master** [*fa man kuntu mawl□hu fa ‘Al□ mawl□hu*] (H□kim, Dhahab□, A□mad, Tirmidh□, □ad□q, Muf□d, Kulayn□).”16

In relation to this Sh□‘ite doctrine of the “Mu□ammadan Light” there is a □*ad□th* from the Prophet which affirms that he and ‘Al□ are two identical and pre-existing lights that God manifested separately and simultaneously during the “reign” of Adam and in the hidden worlds.17 After having passed from one “reign” to another they were finally placed in the persons of □asan and □usayn who were, simultaneously, two luminous epiphanies that emanated from the “Primordial Light” through which the “Lord of the Worlds” [*rabb al-‘□lam□n*] illuminated all of creation through the “light of the logos” [*n□r al-kal□m*] or initial *fiat lux*.18 This “primordial light” protects the Prophet and the Im□ms from sin, making them immaculate19 [*ma‘□□m□n*]. At the same time, it confers on them the status of supremacy of the poles [*aq□□b*] of the universe and vicars [*khal□fah*] of God as well as spiritual legatees [*wa□□*] of the *b□□in* [esoteric aspects] of the scripture. As the Im□ms have stated, **“We are the first and the last. We are the logos of God. We are the executors of the revelation.”**20 As can be seen, the parallel between Moses’ position and that which Mu□ammad would occupy in later times becomes evident in light of these words.

It was also at this time that the Im□mate was established as part and parcel of the Prophethood. The true Im□m and Prophet was Mu□ammad; and Mu□ammad had a successor, his Aaron, in the person of ‘Al□ ibn Ab□ □□lib.21 It is for this reason that Sh□‘ite Muslims consider descent from ‘Al□ ibn Ab□ □□lib to be an obligatory requirement for any candidate to the Caliphate along with the criteria considered

necessary by Sunn□ Muslims. The Sh□'ite, however, differ with the Sunn□ in that they categorically reject election through *sh□rah* [consultative assembly]. In their eyes, the pre-Islamic process of *sh□rah* does nothing but continue the timocratic orientation of Ab□ Bakr and the representatives of the old Quraysh oligarchy established in the *saq□fah*. Since spiritual authority and temporal power come from God above, it is impossible for a man to receive the sacred investiture of Im□m or *khal□fah* through a classicist covenant or a political plot between parties. The word *khal□fah* appears twice in the Qur'□n. In the first case, it refers to Adam [2: 28]. In the second case, it refers to David [38: 257] with the sense of "legislator:" "We have made you a *khal□fah* on earth," says God to Adam, "decide among men with justice!" For Muslims, David was both a Prophet and an Im□m, combining both spiritual and political authority.22 The word appears several times in the Qur'□n in the plural, *khulaf□'* and *khal□'if*.

The plural "Caliphs" appears in contexts which, in relation to the descendants of Mu□ammad, can be translated as "successors" and, at times, as "inheritors," "proprietors" and even as "vicars" and "substitutes." The Arabic word *khal□fah*, from which the English word "Caliph" is derived, comes from a root that is found in several Semitic languages. At times, it has the meaning of "to pass on" or "to transmit." This would make the word the equivalent of the Latin word *traditio* and the Greek word *paradosis.* In Arabic, however, the generally accepted meaning is that of "following" or "coming in place of." By far, the most common interpretation by the majority of Sunn□ *'ulam□'* [scholars], with the sole exception of the □□fi Masters, is that the Caliph is the vicar or successor of the Prophet. The Caliph is the custodian of his moral and legal inheritance as founder of the faith and legislator for the Islamic government and community. The Caliph is not, however, in the eyes of most Sunn□ scholars, the successor to the spiritual office of the Prophet, the executor of his *b□□in* or the esoteric interpreter of the word of God. This interpretation, however, is inconsistent with the meaning of the word *wil□yah* which appears to indicate that **the function of the Prophet was not destined to disappear after his death but rather, on the contrary, to continue by means of the spiritual authority and temporal power of the Im□ms until the end of times.**

1. Editor's Note: Among Sunn□ Muslims, there are many traditions justifying submission and obedience to Isl□mic rulers, whether legitimate or illegitimate, including: "Behold, he, who is ruled by a ruler who disobeys All□h, should dislike what he commits as a disobedience to All□h but should not rise in revolt against him" (Muslim); where the Prophet is asked about rulers who deprive their subjects of their due rights and he responds "Listen to them and obey them because they are responsible for what they are ordained to do and you are responsible for what you are ordained to do" (Muslim); "Listen to the ruler and obey him" (A□mad); "The Sultan is the shadow of All□h on earth; whosoever insults him will be humiliated by All□h, and whosoever honors him will be honored by Him" (Alb□n□ 475). These traditions may have been fabricated by the authorities to ensure the submission of their subjects.
2. Editor's Note: The author's point is elusive but absolutely correct. The opponents of ahl al-bayt then tried to rationalize what had already been done.
3. Editor's Note: Almighty All□h criticizes the Arab love for ancestry saying: "Celebrate the praises of All□h, as ye used to celebrate the praises of your fathers,--yea, with far more Heart and soul." (2:200).
4. Editor's Note: As the Almighty All□h says in the Holy Qur'□n: "Verily We have sent thee in truth as a bearer of glad tidings and a Warner" (2:119). See also 5:19; 7:118; 7:184; 13:7; 27:92; 32: 3; 33:45; 35:23; 46:9; 48:8; 51:51; 79:45 and others.
5. Editor's Note: This tradition, in part or in whole, is found in the following sources: Ibn Ab□ □□tim al-R□z□'s 'Ilal al-

ad th, al-Bayhaq's Sunan, Ibn Is q's S rat Ras l All h, Kulayn's al-K fi, as well as Daylam, as cited in 'Ajl n's Kashf al-Khaf', among many others.

6. Editor's Note: The Prophet, however, had stressed repeatedly that Isl m had come to destroy class privilege.

7. Editor's Note: We would argue that the Companions of the Prophet were divided into two groups: one group, led by 'Al, accepted the Messenger of All h as both a spiritual and temporal leader. The other group led by Ab Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthm n accepted him as a spiritual leader, but not as a temporal, political leader. In that area, they felt their opinions were equally valid. This would explain the numerous instances of insolence and insubordination from a certain sector of the sa bas.

8. Editor's Note: The Prophet said of 'Al: "He who wants to see Noah in his determination, Adam in his knowledge, Abraham in his clemency, Moses in his intelligence and Jesus in his religious devotion should look at 'Al ibn Ab lib" (A mad, Bayhaq, al- ad d, R z, Ibn Batah).

In ay t al-qul b, Majlis relates a similar tradition in which Mu ammad says, "Let him who pleases look to Adam for his glory, to Shays for his wisdom, to Idr s and his nobleness, to N h and his thanksgiving and devotion, to Ibr h m and his fidelity and friendship, to M s and his hostility to the enemies of God, to 'Is and His love and familiarity with every believer, and then let him look to 'Al ibn Ab lib" (170-71). Ab Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthm n all called upon 'Al's expertise in legal matters during their respective reigns as Caliph (see Muf d, Chapter V)

9. Editor's Note: The Sh 'ah of 'Al from among the Companions of the Prophet included all the Ban H shim, Hudhayfah b. al-Yam n, Khuzaymah b. Th bit, whom the Prophet called dhu al-shah datayn, the one with two testimonies, Ab Ayy b al-An r, Sahl b. unayf, Uthm n b. unayf, al-Bar' b. 'zib al-An ar, Ubayy b. Ka'b, Ab Dharr b. Jundab al-Ghif r, 'Amm r b. Y sir, al-Miqd d b. 'Amr, Salm n al-F ris, Kh lid b. Sa'd, J bir b. 'Abdull h al-An r, Ab Sa'd al-Khu r, Bil l b. Arwah, Miqd d ibn al-Aswad and Mu ammad b. Ab Bakr. Umm Salamah, a pious wife of the Prophet, was also among the followers of 'Al. These and people like them among the emigrants and the An r, all these maintained that he was the successor [khal fah] of the Messenger of All h, and the Im m. For the Sh 'ah of 'Al, see S.H.M. Jafr, The Origins and Early Development of Sh 'ah Isl m (Qum: Ansariyan, 1989): 51-53; and Mu ammad al-T j n, Then I was Guided 2nd ed. (Bayr t: N.P, 1989): 161; Shaykh al-Muf d, Kit b al-irsh d: The Book of Guidance into the Lives of the Twelve Im ms, Trans. I.K.A. Howard (London: Mu ammad Trust, 1981): 2.

10. Editor's Note: In the previous versions of this study, the author explained that: "In Sh 'ite thought there exists an absolute Prophethood [nubuwwah mu laqah] which is common and universal and a partial Prophethood [muqayyadah] which is determined and limited by time." However, as was kindly pointed out by Sayyid Mu ammad Rizv, the division of nubuwwah into mu laqah and muqayyadah is unknown in mainstream Twelver Sh 'ah writings. In fact, such a concept contradicts the concept of khit miyyah, the finality of nubuwwah and ris lah of the Prophet Mu ammad. The division of Prophethood into "absolute" and "partial" was drawn by the author from the works of Henry Corbin who may have taken it from Ism ' sources. As this concept is erroneous, the author has retracted them.

11. Editor's Note: Sh 'ite scholars hold that the Im ms are equal to Mu ammad in all regards with the exception of prophethood. Furthermore, the majority of Sh 'ite scholars believe that the Im ms are superior to all prophets, with the exception of Mu ammad.

12. Editor's Note: The Messenger of All h also said that: "The flesh of 'Al is from my flesh, and his blood is from my blood, and he holds the same position in relation to me as Aaron held in relation to Moses" (A mad).

13. Editor's Note: In another tradition, Im m 'Al says, "A mad [Mu ammad] and I are of one Light. The only difference between my light and his is that one preceded the other in time" (Shahrast n 2:226). Another version of this tradition relates that "Mu ammad and I are of one light, which by All h's command was split in two halves. To the one half All h said, 'Be Mu ammad,' and to the other, 'Be 'Al'" (al-Yaman 127).

14. Editor's Note: Likewise, Im m Ja'far al- diq relates that the Prophet said, "I am the root of the good tree; 'Al ibn Ab lib is its trunk; the divinely chosen ones of the descendants of 'Al are its branches; and the faithful ones attached to the ahl al-bayt are its leaves" (qtd. in A med 'Al 820).

15. Editor's Note: Similarly, al- ajj Ma' m 'Al reports in his ar 'iq al- aq 'iq that Im m 'Al said, "I am Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus, assuming different forms, however I will. He who has seen me has seen them all" (7:43). In another tradition related by J bir al-J f, Im m 'Al proclaims that: "I am the Messiah, who heals the blind and the leper,

who created the birds and dispersed the storm clouds. I am he, and he is I...Jesus the Son of Mary is part of me, and I am part of him. He is the supreme Word of All□h. He is the witness testifying to the mysteries and I am that to which he testifies" (Yaman 8–9). The Messenger of All□h is reported to have said, "I am all the prophets" (Majlis□) a tradition widely quoted by the Bah□'□. The statements quoted from Ma'□□m 'Al□ and J□f□, however, would not be accepted by mainstream Sh□'ah Ithn□–'Ashariyyah scholars as they sound, at face value, very similar to the ideas of the ghul□t.

16. Editor's Note: The tradition ends with the Messenger of All□h imploring: "O All□h, love those who love 'Al□ and hate those who hate him."

17. Editor's Note: The Messenger of All□h said, "I was a Prophet while Adam was still between the water and the clay" (Moosa 61); "I was the first man in the creation and the last one in the Resurrection" (54); "The first thing which All□h created was my soul (60);" "My soul was the Primal Element" (46); "Myself and 'Al□ were created from one light, and we ascribed glory to All□h on the right side of the empyrean two thousand years before All□h formed Adam" (Majlis□, □ay□t al-qul□b 4). For more on the pre-existence of the Mu□ammadan Logos, see Moosa 54–59.

18. Editor's Note: As Im□m al-□□diq has said "All□h does not accept to appoint to it [the Im□mate] two brothers after al-□asan and al-□usayn" (Kulayn□ 1:2, 341: □ad□th 753). As Im□m al-□□diq explains in another tradition, "The Im□mate will never be diverted between two brothers after al-□asan and al-□usayn; it proceeds from 'Al□ ibn al-□usayn... There was no one after 'Al□ ibn al-□usayn except that it went to the next descendant or the next descendant of the next descendant" (340: □ad□th 752).

19. Editor's Note: According to 'All□mah □ad□q,

Our belief concerning the prophets [anbiyy□'], messengers [rusul], Im□ms and angels is that they are infallible [ma'□□m]; purified from all defilement [danas], and that they do not commit any sin whether it be minor [sagh□rah] or major [kab□rah]. They do not disobey All□h in what He has commanded them; they act in accordance with His behests. He who denies infallibility to them in any matter appertaining to their status is ignorant of them, and such a one is a k□fir [unbeliever].

Our belief concerning them is that they are infallible and possess the attributes of perfection, completeness and knowledge, from the beginning to the ends of their careers. Defects [naq□] cannot be attributed to them, nor disobedience ['i□y□n], nor ignorance [jahl], in any of their actions [a□w□l]. (140–141)

As Im□m Khumayn□ explains, "The quality of 'i□mah that exists in the prophets is the result of belief. Once one truly believes, it is impossible for one to sin" (Isl□m and Revolution 374). The Sh□'ite belief in the sinlessness of the Prophets and Im□ms is uniquely Sh□'ite and without a trace of Jewish or Christian influence (Donaldson 330–38). The'i□mah of the prophets is accepted by Sunnis to a limited extent and was developed under Sh□'ite influence (Fyzee 99). The Zaydis do not accept the concept of 'i□mah (Moosa 98).

20. Editor's Note: This tradition seems to be an echo of Revelation 22:13: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." It resembles Khu□bat al-bay□n, the Manifestation Speech, in which to 'Al□ allegedly says, "I am the Face and the Side of All□h, I am the Beginning and the End, I am the Outward [□□hir] and the Inward [b□□in]" (al-Amul□ 1348, fols 5a). The speech, however, is spurious. In his Kashf al-□un□n, □ajj□ Khal□fah refers to the seventy phrases reportedly used by 'Al□ to describe his excellence as "seventy words of falsehood" (Moosa 180). The speech is not even recorded in Sh□'ite books of □ad□th (179). Ay□tull□h al-U□m□ Sayyid Ab□ al-Q□sim al-Khu'□ was asked: "What is your opinion about Khu□bat al-bay□n that is attributed to Im□m 'Al□?" He responded that: "It has no foundation"(http://www.shiachat.com/forum/index.php?s=cb55e2e5549c0973a0f [22] 18ad1288a88f0&showtopic= 25980). Despite the fact that, from the point of view of chains of narration, the Sermon of Manifestation is spurious, some Sh□'ite mystics accept it as authentic from a philosophical and spiritual sense. According to some scholars, it is not 'Al□ who is speaking the Manifestation Speech but al-ins□n al-k□mil, the Perfect Person. According to others, including Massignon, the Manifestation Speech is actually a □ad□th quds□ [sacred saying] and it is Almighty All□h who is speaking. For more on the Perfect Person, see chapter five of our Arabic, Isl□m, and the All□h Lexicon, a version of which appears in the journal □□f□.

The spiritual status and authority of the Im□ms is expressed in the following trustworthy traditions:

When the pledge of allegiance was made to 'Al□ ibn Ab□ □□lib, the Commander of the Faithful, for the Caliphate, he went out to the mosque wearing the turban and cloak of the Messenger of All□h, and giving admonition and warning, he sat down confidently, knitted his fingers together and placed them on his stomach. He then said,

Question me before you lose me. Question me, for I have the knowledge of those who came earlier and those who will come later. If the cushion [on which a judge sits] was folded for me [to sit on], I could give judgement to the people of the Torah by their Torah, to the people of the Gospel by their Gospel, to the people of the Psalms by their Psalms and to the people of the Furq□n [ie. Qur'□n] by their Furq□n, so that each one of these books will be fulfilled and will declare, 'O Lord, indeed 'Al□ has given judgement according to Your decree.' By All□h, I know the Qur'□n and its interpretation [better] than anyone who claims knowledge of it. If it were not for one verse in the Book of All□h, Most High, I would be able to inform you of what will be until the Day of Resurrection.

Then he said,

Question me before you lose me, for by Him Who split the seed and brought the soul into being, if you questioned me about [it] verse by verse, I would tell you of the time of its revelation and why it was revealed, I would inform of the abrogating [verse] and the abrogated, of the specific and general, the clearly defined and the ambiguous, of the Meccan and the Medinan. By All□h, there is not a party who can lead astray or guide until the Day of Resurrection, without me knowing its leader, the one who drives it forward and the one who urges it on. (Muf□d 21–22; Kulayn□)

Im□m Ja'far al–□□diq used to say,

Our knowledge is of what will be [gh□bir], of what is past [mazb□r], of what is marked in hearts [naksh f□ al–qul□b], and what is tapped into ears [naqr fí al–asm□']. We have the red case [jafr], the white case, and the scroll of F□□imah, peace be upon her, and we have [the document called] al–j□mi'ah in which is everything that people need.

He was asked to explain these words and he said,

Gh□bir is knowledge of what will be; mazb□r is knowledge of what was; what is marked in the hearts [naksh fí al–qul□b] is inspiration; and what is tapped into the ears [naqr fí al–asm□'] are words of angels; we hear their speech but we do not see their forms. The red case [jafr] is a vessel in which are the weapons of the Messenger of All□h, may All□h bless him and his Family. It will never leave us until the one [destined] among us Members of the House [ahl al–bayt] to arise [q□'im], arises. The white case [jafr] is a vessel in which are the Torah of Moses, the Gospel of Jesus, the Psalms of David and the [other] Books of All□h. The scroll of F□□imah, peace be upon her, has in it every event which will take place and the names of all the rulers until the [last] hour comes. [The document called] al–j□mi'ah is a scroll seventy yards long which the Messenger of All□h, may All□h bless him and his Family, dictated from his own mouth and 'Al□ ibn Ab□ □□lib, peace be upon him, wrote in his own handwriting. By All□h, in it is everything which people need until the end of time, including even the blood–wit for wounding, and whether a [full] flogging or half a flogging [is due]. (Muf□d 414; Kulayn□)

The Prophet said of 'Al□: "You can hear what I hear and see what I see, but you are not a prophet; you are a vizier and you are well off" (Nahj al–bal□ghah, ed. 'Abd al–□am□d 2: 182–83)

Im□m Ja'far al–□□diq used to say,

My traditions are my father's traditions; my father's traditions are my grandfather's traditions; my grandfather's traditions are the traditions of 'Al□ ibn Ab□ □□lib, the Commander of the Faithful; the traditions of 'Al□, the Commander of the Faithful, are the traditions of the Messenger of All□h, may All□h bless him and his Family; and the traditions of the Messenger of All□h, may All□h bless him and his Family, are the word of All□h, the Mighty and High. (Muf□d 414; Kulayn□)

Im□m Ja'far al–□□diq said, "We have the tablets of Moses, peace be upon him, and we have the rod of Moses, peace be upon him. We are the heirs of prophets" (Muf□d 414–15; Kulayn□).

Im□m Ja'far al–□□diq said,

I have the sword of the Messenger of All□h, may All□h bless him and his Family. I have the standard of the Messenger of All□h, may All□h bless him and his Family, and his breast–plate, his armor and his helmet... Indeed the victorious standard of the Messenger of All□h is with me, as are the tablets and rod of Moses. I have the ring of Solomon, the son of David, and the tray on which Moses used to offer sacrifice and I have [knowledge] of the [greatest] name [of All□h] which when the Messenger of All□h, may All□h bless him and his Family, used to put it between the Muslims and the polytheists no arrow of the polytheists could reach the Muslims. I have the same as what the angels brought. We have the weapons in the same way that the Ban□ Isr□'□l had the ark of the covenant. Prophethood was brought to any house in which the Ark of the Covenant was present; the Im□mate will be brought to which every one of us receives the weapons. My father dressed in the armor of the Messenger of All□h, may All□h bless him and grant him peace, and it made marks on the ground. I put it on and it was [like] it was [for my father]. The one [destined] to rise up [q□'im] from among us, will fill it [so that it fits him

exactly] when he puts it on, if All□h wishes. (Muf□d 415–416)

Im□m Ja‘far al–□□diq was asked about what the people were saying that Umm Salamah, the mercy of All□h be on her, had been handed a sealed scroll. He said, “When the Messenger of All□h, may All□h bless him and grant him peace, died, ‘Al□, peace be upon him, inherited his knowledge, his weapons and what there was. Then that went to al–□asan, peace be upon him, then to al–□usayn, peace be upon him.” “Did it go to ‘Al□ ibn al–□usayn, peace be upon them, after that, then to his son and now has it come to you?” he was asked. “Yes,” he replied (Muf□d 416).

21. Editor’s Note: The author alludes to the tradition where the Messenger of All□h said to ‘Al□: “You are to me as Aaron was to Moses, but there will be no prophet after me” (Bukh□r□, Muslim, H□kim, □ad□q, Muf□d, Kulayn□).

22. Editor’s Note: As we read in the Qur’□n, Ibr□h□m was also an Im□m: “And remember that Abraham was tried by his Lord with certain commands, which he fulfilled: He said, ‘I will make thee an Im□m to the Nations.’ He pleaded: ‘And also [Im□ms] from my offspring!’ He answered: ‘But My Promise is not within the reach of evil–doers’” (2:124).

Chapter 8: The Wilayah

Chapter 8: The *Wil□yah*, The Spiritual and Temporal Authority of the Im□ms

If we focus on the term *wil□yah* [primacy, guide, lordship] and words related to spiritual authority and temporal power, as Ay□tull□h Mu□ahhar□ did in a formidable and authoritative synthesis, we note that this terminological repertoire has a very precise meaning in Sh□‘ite thought which is related to the idea of a unified government.1 *Wil□’*, *wal□yah*, *wil□yah*, *wal□*, *mawl□*, are nominal forms of the verbal substantive of the trilateral root WALLA (*waw–lam–alif maks□rah*) which has the primary meaning of “being close,” from which is derived “to be at the front of,” from which is derived the meanings of “government” and “governor” in the temporal and political sense of the words and “leader” and “chosen” in the spiritual sense. The same root gives place to a series of words which denote power and authority, that is, being close to the center [*wasa□*] of sovereignty. And the Arabic word *wasa□* [center] gives a gamut of terms which indicate “mediation” or “intercession” [*tawassu□*].

Other unfamiliar terms derived from the same trilateral root *waw–lam–ya* are *wal□* and *mawl□*. *Wal□* means “friend,” “intimate,” “close,” and with the respect to the Im□ms “holiness” and by extension spiritual “closeness” to the divine center. The passive participle *mawl□* means, among other things, “one who deserves a clientele,” and more frequently “boss,” “lord,” “protector,” “tutor,” “master,” “owner” and so forth. In Sh□‘ism, *mawl□n□* [our lord / our master] is used to address the Prophet and the Im□ms and, in □□f□sm, it is used to refer to the great spiritual masters like R□m□2 or Ibn al–‘Arab□. We have listed the various forms and verbal nouns because with the auxiliary one can better understand everything which is implied by the idea of Im□mate or Caliphate and how it is conceived in Sh□‘ite thought in relation to spiritual authority and temporal power. In the time of the Prophet, the title *mawl□* [master] had the connotation of spiritual authority and universal temporal power. The basis of any Caliphate or true government is the transcendence of its foundation, the very basis of its sovereignty, authority, and legitimacy. However, with the downfall of effective power in the succession of the Caliphate, starting with

Abū Bakr, the title *khalīfah* also suffered from the same process of depreciation. After the four *khulafā' al-rāshidūn* [rightly-guided Caliphs], the Caliphate ceased to have the connotation of sovereignty and, in fact, to admit the sense of effective authority. This can be seen clearly with Mu'āwiyyah, the founder of the Umayyad dynasty, who considered himself the "first king [*melik*]" of Islām.3 He is responsible for losing the effective [spiritual] authority of the Caliphate and diminishing the meaning of many titles which, in the early days, were exclusive Caliphal prerogatives. This includes the very term *khalīf* which, upon entering the common language, became so diluted that any governor of Islām could claim to be the Caliph of his own dominion.

Among some Sunnī commentators and misinformed Orientalists, there are those who believe that when 'Alī became the Fourth Caliph, according to the temporal and political precedence more than the spiritual, he was implicitly accepting the authority and the method of election of the previous Caliphs in that they accomplished similar political and social functions as governors and elders of the Islamic community.4 From a Shī'ite perspective, it is clear that **'Alī never accepted the Caliphate in the sense that the three Caliphs who preceded him did**. On the contrary, as Imām--in the Shī'ite sense of spiritual and political regency as well as *ta'ā/ām*, the esoteric faculty of perfectly interpreting the intertexual mysteries of the Qur'ān and the *sharī'ah*--'Alī was the legitimate spiritual heir and political successor of the Prophet, something which he and his successors always insisted upon. As he explains explicitly in his letters and sermons, 'Alī accepted the function of Caliph--in the Sunnī sense of governor and legal administrator--to avoid schism while preserving the function of *wilāyah* for himself. As Nasr says, this is how 'Alī can simultaneously be seeing as Caliph and Imām, by both Sunnīs and Shī'ites, in accord with the different perspectives on the issue (see Nasr's preface to Tabātabā'ī's *Shī'ite Islām* 10-12).

The *wilāyah* inherently implies certain legal and political faculties. The Imām, as we have said, exercises the spiritual magistrate and the esoteric guidance of the *wilāyah*. He also performs the function of administrator of the *sharī'ah*, fully interpreting its legal code and legitimately dispensing justice through his role as perfect monarch, by the fact that he embodies spiritual authority and temporal power. The monarch [from the Greek *monos*, "the sole one" and *arjé*, "rule," "principle"] is the "supreme sovereign," unique and universal," and not merely a "king" [*melik*] since a king only administers the temporal functions of government while the monarch is the one who rules according to the monarchy of divine right, established from above, by the mandate of God and not by human choice.

As Lord Acton, a British historian of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, said, "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." As human history has shown us, human lust for power can become exacerbated by its very existence. It can make man dream of limitless power, causing him to rebel against his plight, his powerless limited being. Justice and peace are then viewed as unacceptable unless they can help increase and maintain power and wealth. They are soon placed on the backburner due to innate egocentrism and worldly ambitions. This is why the Gospel refers to heads of nations as tyrants who rule like absolute sovereigns while the powerful ones oppress them with their

power (Matthew 20:25; Mark 10: 42). In a divine monarchy, based on balance, harmony, justice and peace, quite the opposite is true.

On the basis of the above, it can now be understood why in Sh‘ism, the sovereign authority of Im m al-Mahd has an eminently regulating and restorative function which is proper and non-transferable. In other words, he is worthy, by divine design, of the "central" position he occupies. As an "intercessor" between heaven and earth, he is beyond the distinction between the spiritual and worldly realms of existence. The very nature of "intercessor" in the true sense of the word is quintessential to the Seal of the Cycle of Initiation. It is for this reason that he is referred to as the "center" [*wasa*].5

The "center" in question is the fixed point around which the world rotates. It is designated symbolically by all religious traditions as the "pole" [*qu b*] and is generally represented by a "wheel." The most obvious sense of this symbol is the absolute dominion over the worldly order. This is why Im m al-Mahd receives the majestic titles of *ib al-zam n* [Lord of the Age], *al-ark n* [The Pillars], *al-q 'im* [The Restorer], *al-munta ar* [The Awaited One], *al- ujjah* [The Proof] as well as *al-qu b* or the Spiritual Pole of the Age. The title of *ib al-zam n*, in its most sublime sense, applies exclusively to the Mahd. He is granted this title in virtue of his role as the primordial universal legislator who formulates the most appropriate laws in accordance with the conditions during our cycle of existence. He directs the movement of our cycle without participating in it in a visible fashion. He maintains himself simultaneously present and hidden in the world, the same as in Aristotle's notion of the "unmoving motor."

In light of these considerations, it is understood why Im m al-Mahd has the fundamental attributes of "Justice" and "Peace." He shares these attributes with *çakravarti,* [from the Sanskrit: "he who makes the wheel turn"], the "Universal Monarch" of the Hindu and Buddhist traditions; with *wang*, the "Pontiff King" of Taoism and with *melki-tsedeq*, the "King of Justice and Peace" of the Jewish tradition.6 The Invisible Im m's attributes of justice and peace are veiled forms of his spiritual functions which, by an effort of cosmic unity, are identified with earthly equilibrium and harmony. In light of these concepts, we can affirm that the Sh‘ite concept of *wil yah*, the spiritual and temporal authority of the Im m, is the Islamic equivalent of all of these traditional notions from both East and West, including the Hellenist and Hellenist-Christian concept of the *panbasileus* or "Absolute King," who was the lord of a unique and universal empire.

Im m al-Mahd is particularly revered for his role as Executor of Prophetic Knowledge or First Intellect. At the same time, he is the Archetype of Man, the Visible and the Invisible, the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega. As Henry Corbin perceived from the development of Sh‘ite Prophetology, this human form in its pre-eternal glory is called Original Adam [*dam al- aq q*], the Perfect Man [*ins n k mil*], the Supreme Spirit and Scribe, the Absolute Caliph, and the Pole of the Poles [*qu b al-aq b*].7 Im m al-Mahd is also the Eternal Mu ammadan Reality [*aq qah mu ammadiyyah*], the Light of His Glory, His Sanctifying Virtue, His Primordial Logos or Divine Word and his Perfect Epiphany.

In light of the above, we can say that in the beginning of Islm, Shʿism, like ṣṣfsm, was a latent and nameless reality profoundly rooted in the esoteric dimension of the Qur'nic revelation.8 **In the Islamic world, the function of Shʿism, like that of ṣṣfsm, is similar to the human heart in the sense that the heart is the vital center of the human body as well as being, in reality, the intellectual "center" of a reality that transcends any formal determination.**9 This "central" role of Shʿism at the heart of the Islamic world has always, and continues to be, hidden from outside observers, who insist upon its non-Islamic origin. They insist on this theory because Shʿite doctrine does not appear in the first centuries, particularly during the life of the Prophet, with all of the metaphysical development that would manifest itself later on.10

From a historical perspective, **Shʿism surfaced immediately after the death of the Prophet and can be defined as "Al's Islm" or the "Islm of *ahl al-bayt*."** The emergence of Shʿism was not merely the consequence of a political conflict related to the succession of the Prophet, although this certainly helped to precipitate the events. What is important, above all, is the "central" role that Shʿism played in the Islamic world after the demise of the founder of Islm.11 As a continuation and a doctrinal complement to the *nubuwwah*, it was imperative for the *wilyah* to manifest itself in the world upon the completion of the prophetic mission. Since *wilyah* implies the same possibility of prolonging the spiritual leadership and the esoteric guidance of the Prophet, it cannot be superimposed on the *nubuwwah* as long as the Prophet was alive.12

In other words, Shʿite Islm, which was supposed to serve as a support for the *wilyah*, the spiritual and esoteric dimension of the *nubuwwah* must manifest itself upon the death of the Prophet. This moment, both cosmologically and metaphysically, signals the start of the *wilyah*, the beginning of its temporal and exoteric manifestation. It is at that point when the *wilyah* [guardianship] ceases to be a latent, nameless reality, and transforms itself into a manifest and named reality. **Due to its cosmological and metaphysical nature, the historical apparition of Shʿism was meant to coincide with the Cycle of *wilyah*, the start of 'Al ibn Ab ṣṣlib's earthly mission. The esoteric function of the first Imm, hidden until the moment of the Prophet's death, was meant to manifest itself in a partial opening of the Muammadan *wilyah* and the seal of the universal *wilyah*.** We can thus fully appreciate the importance of the designation [*naṣṣ*] of 'Al as successor [*khalfah*] and executor [*waṣṣ*] of the Prophet.13 'Al, the first link in the spiritual chain of the Immate and the *rukn* or pillar of Islamic Gnosticism, represents the complementary dimension of the Prophethood; his path, Shʿism, is a dimension of the depth found at the core of the Qur'nic message.

1. Author's Note: Concerning the various implicit meanings of the technical term wilyah and other related terms derived from the trilateral Arabic root W-L-Y, see M. Muahhar Wala'ha wa Wilyat ha (Qum 1976). There is an English version by Yayha Cooper, Wilyah: The Station of the Master (Tehran 1982), 21-48. Concerning the levels of wilyah, see D. Martin "The Return to 'The One' in the Philosophy of Najm al-Din al-Kubra" in P. Morewedge (ed.) 216-222.
2. Editor's Note: Jal al-Dn al-Rm, author of the Masnavi was a famous ṣṣf poet and founder of the whirling dervishes. He is the most widely read poet in the United States.
3. Editor's Note: As a result of "the usurpation of rule by Muʿwiyyah from 'Al... caused the system of rule to lose its Islmic character entirely and to be replaced by a monarchical regime" (Khumayn Islm and Revolution 200).

4. Editor's Note: As Ja'fariyan explains, "When 'Abd al-Ra□m□n ibn 'Awf laid down the condition that he would deliver the office of the Caliphate to the candidate who would follow the practice [s□rah] of the Shaykhayn [i.e. Ab□ Bakr and 'Umar] ... Im□m 'Al□ insisted that he would base his policy only on the Qur'□n, the s□rah of the Prophet and his own judgments [ijtih□d]."

5. Editor's Note: The existence of divinely determined intercession for believers is unquestionably Qur'□nic:

Who is there can intercede in His presence except as He permitteth? (2:255)

Verily your Lord is All□h, who created the heavens and the earth in six days, and is firmly established on the throne [of authority], regulating and governing all things. No intercessor [can plead with Him] except after His leave [hath been obtained]. (10:3)

None shall have the power of intercession, but such a one as has received permission [or promise] from [All□h] Most Gracious. (19:87)

On that Day shall no intercession avail except for those for whom permission has been granted by [All□h] Most Gracious and whose word is acceptable to Him. (20:109)

He knows what is before them, and what is behind them, and they offer no intercession except for those who are acceptable, and they stand in awe and reverence of His [Glory].(21:28)

No intercession can avail in His Presence, except for those for whom He has granted permission. (34:23)

Say: To All□h belongs exclusively [the right to grant] intercession. (39:44)

How many-so-ever be the angels in the heavens, their intercession will avail nothing except after All□h has given leave for whom He pleases and that he is acceptable to Him. (53:26)

Intercession, however, is not available to unbelievers, as is clearly stated in the Qur'□n (6:51; 2:123; 2:254; 6:70; 6:94; 7:53; 10:18; 19:87; 26:100; 30:30; 32:4; 36:23; 39:43; 40:18; 43:86; 74:48). Intercession is not available to those who are guilty of kufr or shirk. Almighty All□h addresses the polytheists, warning them that their partners will be unable to intercede with them on the Day of Judgment. According to Shaykh □ad□q:

The right to intercession belongs to the prophets [anbiyy□'] and awliyy□'. And among the believers [mu'min□n] also there are some who can intercede on behalf of people equal in number to the tribes of Rab□'ah and Mu□ar. Even the least of the believers will be liable to intercede on behalf of 30,000. (122)

It is narrated in □ad□q's Ris□latu al-i'tiq□d□t, Fakhrudd□n b. A□mad al-Najaf□'s Majma' al- ba□rayn and □asan b. Y□suf b. 'Al□ Ibnu'l Mu□ahar al-□ill□'s al-B□bu al-□□d□ 'ashar, that the Prophet said, "May All□h not grant my intercession to him who does not believe in my (power of) intercession."

All of the various orthodox manifestations of Isl□m believe in the intercession of the Prophet and the awliy□'. See Kabb□n□'s Encyclopedia of Isl□mic Doctrines: http://www.sunnah [23]. org/ibadaat/ twsl.html. The belief in intercession does not mean that there is an intermediary between human beings and God. It is merely an extra means of attaining His mercy.

6. Editor's Note: The Hidden Im□m is also the Philosopher King of the Greeks.

7. Author's Note: In general, Corbin deals with this theme in his diverse works dedicated to some of the internal or esoteric currents of Sh□'ism, although with slight variations. See "La filosofia islámica desde sus orígenes hasta la muerte de Averroes" in collaboration with S.H. Na□r and O. Iahia, in B. Parain, Del mundo romano al Isl□m medieval: Historia de la filosofía (Mexico 1972), III, 253-259; 265-266; Terre céleste et corps de résurrection: De l'Iran Mazdéen à l'Iran sh□'ite (Correa 1960); 106-107; 112-115; Temples et contemplation: Essais sur l'Isl□m iranien (Paris 1980), 75-76; 192-193; 220; 244-249; and Shaykh al-Muf□d's Kit□b al-irsh□d.

8. Editor's Note: The mystical dimension of the Holy Qur'□n and teachings of the Prophet were present from the very beginning, even though they were not labeled ta□awwuf, □□fism or 'irf□n. To borrow Sausurrian terms, the signified exists before the signifier. Im□m 'Al□ was criticized by some Companions of the Prophet for speaking of things which had never been spoken before by the Prophet. The Im□m responded with a reference to the Qur'□n that "Prophets speak to the people in the language of the people." It was the obligation of the Prophet to teach the fundamentals of faith and the outer dimensions of the religion. It was the obligation of the Im□ms to expound upon in their inner dimensions. As the Messenger of All□h said, "There is among you a person who will fight for the interpretation of the Qur'□n just as I fought for its revelation." He then indicated that it was 'Al□ (A□mad, H□kim, Bayhaq□, Ab□ Nu'aym, Muttaq□).

It is unfortunate that Sayed ‘Al□ Reza, the English translator of Nahj al-bal□ghah, would engage in the wholesale takf□r of the □□f□, claiming that “According to Sh□‘ah ‘ulam□’ all these sects are on the wrong path and out of the fold of Isl□m” (422), an intolerant attitude which tarnishes his otherwise informative commentary. It is equally regrettable that a scholar of the caliber of Ay□tull□h al-U□m□ Shaykh Fazel Lankar□n□ would reject mysticism ruling that “□□fism, in the eyes of Sh□‘ism, in general, [as well as] Isl□mically, has no religious basis, and there is no sign of it in the teachings of the Prophet” (http://www.lankarani.net/ [24] English/faq/en.htm). Similar views have been expressed by Grand Ay□tull□h Makarem Shir□z□, Grand Ay□tull□h Tabr□z□, Grand Ay□tull□h S□f□ Gulpaygan□, and Grand Ay□tull□h N□r□-Hamad□n□.

In response to whether it was possible for Sh□‘ites to participate in activities organized by Nimatull□h□ Gonabadi □□fis, the five aformentionned Sources of Emulation emited the following rulings which were published on Monday, July 12th, 2004, in the newspaper of the Haw□ah in Qum:

1. Grand Ay□tull□h N□r□-Hamad□n□ declared on August 15, 2006 that the □□fism has been created by the enemies of the Prophet and his family; and when they saw people rushing towards Isl□m, they created the abbeys and the groups and all the 72 branches of the □□fism are wrong.

2. Grand Ay□tull□h al-□ajj Shaykh Javad Tabr□z□: “In the name of All□h. Participation in non-usual meetings of Sh□‘ites as those cited above are not allowed. ”

3. Grand Ay□tull□h Fazel Lankar□n□: “In the name of God. Participation in the meetings not in connection to Ahl al-Bayt is not allowed at all, and is full of problems, and participation in the meetings of the Sufis is absolutely not permitted. ”

4. Grand Ay□tull□h S□fi Gulpayg□n□: “In the Name of All□h, the Most Compassionate, the Most Merciful. Participation in the meetings of the named sect under any reason such as mourning, remembrance, hosseyniyeh and the other ceremonies are □ar□m (prohibited) and it is preaching of heresy and blasphemy and it is destruction.”

5. Grand Ay□tull□h Makarem Shir□z□: “In the name of God. The □□fis sects in general are deviation from truth, and participation in their meetings is not allowed and the misguided □□f□ must be informed and be driven back by fine words of erudite people. I wish you the success.”

Grand Ay□tull□h N□r□-Hamad□n□ remarked that following the Isl□mic Revolution there is no longer a need for □□f□ orders in Iran. During his teachings of Kharaj at one of the largest mosques in Qum, he warned that:

The world-vision of □□fism is very dangerous and harmful against the Muslim-world, and we should watch their conspiracy... Many points in their thoughts and ideas are closer to the polytheism, and it is rejected from our point of view.... They try to propagate their ideas in different gatherings and assemblies, and because of this danger, all Muslims entirely should be aware and vigilant when dealing with them...the □□fis are a most disastrous phenomenon for Isl□m... many important men from the religious sciences, like Ay□tull□h Mar’ashí Najaf□, have felt their dangers, and warned about their harmful blows against Isl□m...many □□fis are supported by the enemies of Isl□m in order to harm the religion. (http://www.insideofiran.com [25] /en/?p=694)

Grand Ay□tull□h Muntazer□ responded to these rulings saying that attacking the places of worship of the □□fis had no religious justification.

While we have the greatest respect and admiration for Grand Ay□tull□h Lankar□n□, Grand Ay□tull□h Makarem Shir□z□, Grand Ay□tull□h Tabr□z□, Grand Ay□tull□h S□f□ Gulpaygan□, and Grand Ay□tull□h N□r□-Hamad□n□ as leading legal authorities, their views on ‘irf□n are diametrically opposed to those of Grand Ay□tull□h Khumayn□, ‘All□mah □ab□taba’□, Ay□tull□h Mu□ahhar□, Ay□tull□h Behesht□, Ay□tull□h Bahonar, Ay□tull□h Dast-Ghayb, Grand Ay□tull□h Arak□, Grand Ay□tull□h Sist□n□, Grand Ay□tull□h Behjat, Grand Ay□tull□h Zanjan□, Ay□tull□h ‘Al□ □ab□taba’□, Ay□tull□h Misb□□ Yazd□, Ay□tull□h Jaw□d□ Amul□, Grand Ay□tull□h Shahabad□, Ay□tull□h Ba□r al-‘Ul□m, Grand Ay□tull□h Isbah□n□, Grand Ay□tull□h Burujerd□, Ay□tull□h ‘Abd al-Ghaffar, Grand Ay□tull□h Khu’□, Grand Ay□tull□h □□diq al-□adr, and Grand Ay□tull□h B□qir al-□adr, not to mention all of the classic Sh□‘ite authorities which include the likes of Mull□ Sadr□ and Kash□n□.

When a person asked whether ‘irf□n was permissible or was a form of pantheistic blasphemy, Grand Ay□tull□h Sist□n□ responded that: “‘Irf□n is a synonym for cognition. According to us, true ‘irf□n is achieved by following the Book of All□h and the Sunnah. Those who are acquainted with ‘irf□n certainly do not believe in what you wrote in your message.” When asked what he thought about ‘irf□n as taught by ‘All□mah □ab□taba’□, Shah□d Mu□ahhar□, and Im□m Khumayn□ in the book Light within Me, Grand Ay□tull□h Sist□n□ responded that: “‘Irf□n is good in itself, if one is found to be bearing it.”

Historically, Twelver Sh▯‘ite scholars have been divided on the issue of ‘irf▯n, with one camp opposing it, and another endorsing it. In Isl▯m and Revolution, Im▯m Khumayn▯ lamented that:

We find some scholars...denying the validity of mysticism and thus depriving themselves of a form of knowledge. It is regrettable... Those who wear cloaks and turbans and denounce the mystics as unbelievers do not understand what they are saying; if they did, they would not denounce them. (423–424)

The Im▯m used to quote Ibn al–‘Arab▯, Suhraward▯, and R▯m▯ as spiritual authorities, demonstrating the legitimacy of Isl▯mic mysticism. In his letter to Mikhail Gorbachov, Im▯m Khumayn▯ referred to Ibn al–‘Arab▯ as “Abar Mard” (the greatest man). ‘All▯mah ▯ab▯taba’▯ is also reported to have said that “everything written about Isl▯m does not amount to two sentences of Ibn al–Arab▯’s works.”

Merely because the words ▯▯f▯ and ‘▯rif are not found in the Isl▯mic texts of the first century of ▯ijrah, it does not signify that mysticism and Gnosis did not exist. They did in fact exist under the general umbrella of ‘ilm [knowledge]. As official institutionalized Isl▯m became increasingly legalistic and focused on the exoteric foundations of the faith, the adherents of its mystical and esoteric dimension needed to distinguish themselves by calling their science ‘irf▯n and by designating themselves as ▯▯fis (Aw▯n▯ 169).

All prophets were mystics as were their faithful followers. The first paragons of ▯▯fism were the a▯▯▯b al–s▯fah, the Companions of the Ledge, about whom S▯rah 18:28 was revealed (170). They included such distinguished companions as Salm▯n, Ab▯ Dharr and ‘Amm▯r ibn Y▯sir (170). The early ▯▯fis were called zuhhad or ascetics, many of whom were associated with Sh▯‘ite Im▯ms (170). Among the companions of ‘Al▯ were found spiritual figures and ascetics like Kumayl and Maytham al–Tamm▯r (170). In his Essay on the Origins of the Technical Language of Isl▯mic Mysticism, Massignon shows that Isl▯mic mystics or r▯▯▯niyyah have existed since the dawn of Isl▯m. Isl▯mic mysticism is clearly based on the practice of the Prophet, the Im▯ms and their Companions and is directly derived from the Qur’▯n and the Sunnah, both of which are oceans of mystical manifestations. As Aw▯n▯ observes:

The ▯ad▯th literature in Sh▯‘ism and the anthologies of the ▯ad▯ths handed down from the Im▯ms are the veritable mines of Isl▯mic gnosis. The U▯▯l al–k▯f▯ of Kulayn▯ and the other compendia of Sh▯‘▯ ▯ad▯th are real treasures of ‘irf▯n... Moreover, the Sh▯’▯ prayers and litanies found in al–▯a▯▯fah al–sajadiyyah of the fourth Im▯m...is the best exposition and representation of Isl▯mic gnosis. Some Sh▯’▯ prayers, like Du‘▯’ Sha‘b▯niyyah, Du‘▯’ ‘Arafah, and Du‘▯’ Kumayl highlight the highest themes of Isl▯mic gnosis. Sh▯‘▯ prayer books are replete with ritual formulae for acts of supererogation [naw▯fil] also much emphasized in ▯▯fism and sometimes with identical formulations. The ritual invocation of the Beautiful Divine Names is the focus of emphasis in both Sh▯‘ism and ▯▯fism. For example, Du‘▯’ Jawshan kab▯r, found in Sh▯‘▯ prayer books contains one thousand divine names and is recited by pious Sh▯‘▯ on many occasions and at least once a week. Some identical formulae based directly and indirectly on the verses of the Qur’▯n are reiterated in both. The Sh▯‘▯ canonical books of ▯ad▯th are filled with themes which can be made the object of meditation and contemplation and which can find their true explanation in real ‘irf▯n. (174)

As Ay▯tull▯h Mu▯ammad ▯aq▯ Mi▯b▯h Yazd▯ explains, “The points which can be found among the narrations attributed to the Noble Prophet and Pure Im▯ms, may All▯h bless all of them, and in their supplications and intimate devotions related to the above topics [‘irf▯n, ▯▯fism, ▯ikmah] are uncountable.” A religion without mysticism would not be a religion. As Ay▯tull▯h Mi▯b▯h Yazd▯ explains, gnosis is not only a part of Isl▯m, but the kernel and spirit of it which comes from the Qur’▯n and prophetic Sunnah, just as the other parts of Isl▯m. It would be a dry carcass and an empty shell.

As Awan▯ explains, “esoterism in each religion, which constitutes its core and kernel, is an integral part of that religion without which it cannot be a religion to start with;” “esoterism is the sine qua non of every religion, without which the religion would lose its vertical dimension and would be reduced to a horizontal and mundane level” (172). ▯▯fism is not an extraneous accretion super added to Isl▯m ... it is its esoteric or inward aspect [b▯▯in] as distinguished from the exoteric or external aspect [▯▯hir]” (171–72). It is safe to say that “▯▯fism is totally based upon the Holy Qur’▯n, the sunnah of the Prophet, and the Household [‘itrah]” (172).

The mystical dimensions of Isl▯m have been fully appreciated by Ay▯tull▯hs Khumayn▯, ▯ab▯taba’▯ and Mu▯ahhar▯ who left us their insights in Light Within Me which is also available in an excellent Spanish translation titled Luz interior. Besides the aforementioned, the following Ay▯tull▯hs recognize the mystical dimensions of Isl▯m: Mu▯ammad Taq▯ Behjat, ‘Izz al–D▯n ▯usayn▯ Zanjan▯, Sayyid M▯rz▯ ‘Al▯ ▯ab▯taba’▯, Jaw▯d▯ Amul▯, M▯rz▯ Mu▯ammad ‘Al▯ Shahabad▯, Mu▯ammad

usayn al-Burujerd, Ab al-Qsim al-Khu', Muammad ddiq al-adr, etc. 'Allmah abtaba' was a specialist in exegesis, mysticism and philosophy while Aytullh Muahhar was an expert in both Eastern and Western thought. Imm Khumayn has also left us his Forty adth: An Exposition of Ethical and Mystical Traditions, which has been partly translated into English, as well as a beautiful body of mystical poetry. The greatness of Imm Khumayn was that, like the Prophet, he established equilibrium between the exoteric and the esoteric, between the worldly and the spiritual, and between religion and politics. He was able to function on various levels. Scholars like Khumayn, who are jurists, exegetes, mystics, philosophers, sociologists and poets, are few and hard to find. As Murata observes, "One of the most unfortunate signs of the contemporary malaise of the Islmic world is that the intellectual authorities have all but disappeared from the scene, while the jurists have a free hand to say what they want" (3).

9. Editor's Note: For the Arabs, Aztecs and Incas, the heart is the center of human intellect and spirituality. For them, reasoning is related to feelings and emotions. In the Western world, the intellect resides in the mind.

10. Editor's Note: The Imms inherited and enriched Islm. As Fyzee observes, "it is not possible to dismiss contemptuously the possibility of the personal religious tradition of the Prophet, at least in some important matters, being carefully handed down to the Imms of the House of the Prophet, the people who undoubtedly had the best opportunity of knowing the true interpretation of many a principle of Islm" (4). As Nar explains, "The sayings of the Imms are in many ways not only a continuation but also a kind of commentary and elucidation of the prophetic adth, often with the aim of bringing out the esoteric teachings of Islm" (A Shite Anthology 7). As Algar observes, "the Imms inherited from the Prophet a certain body of teaching concerning the interpretation of the Qur'n, which they enriched as they transmitted it" (Khumayn Islmic Revolution 427 note 7).

11. Editor's Note: Islm teaches that God sent 124,000 prophets since the time of Adam. Every tribe and nation received a prophet. The fundamental teachings of these prophets were the same: belief in One God, belief in the prophets and messengers of God, belief in the Day of Judgment, belief in the Hereafter, promote the good and forbid the wrong. Islm accepts all past prophets, including Adam, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. In Islmic thought, Judaism was the one true religion, followed by Christianity and finally followed by Islm. In essence, Islm embraces all revealed religions, all of which taught islm or "submission" to God's will. When the author says that Muammad was the founder of the Islmic religion, he expresses a limited truth. In the universal order of things, all revealed religions were "Islm" and the Islmic religion is merely its final and complete manifestation.

12. Editor's Note: It is related in al-Kf that Imm al-ddiq was asked whether there could be two Imms [at one time] to which he responded: "No, except in the case of one [of them] being silent" (Kulayn 35: adth 447)

13. Editor's Note: The appointment of 'Al as Imm was co-dependent on the appointment of Muammad as Messenger and an intrinsic aspect of the divine message. After receiving the revelation, the Prophet gathered the Ban 'Abd al-Muslib in order to make the following solemn pledge: "Whoever helps me in this matter will be my brother, my testamentary trustee [wa], my helper [wazr], my heir and my successor after me." 'Al stood before the gathering and he said, "O Messenger of Alláh, I will help you." Then the Prophet said, "Sit down, you are my brother, my trustee, my helper, my inheritor, and successor after me" (adq, Mufd, Kulayn).

This event is recorded in Guillaume's rendition of Srat Rasl Allh by Ibn Isq, the oldest extant biography on the life of the Prophet, where we read that the Messenger of Allh laid his hand on the back of 'Al 's neck and said, "This is my brother, my executor, and my successor among you. Hearken to him and obey him" [Inna hadh akh wa waiyy wa khalfat fkum, fasma' lahu wa a'hu].

It is also recorded by Ibn Jarr, Ibn Ab tim, Ibn Marduwayh, Ab Nu'aym, Imm Bayhaq, Tha'lab and abar (Msaw 152). It appears in Ibn 'Askir, Sy, 'Al'uddn al-Shfi', al-Hasakn, al-Muttaq al-Hind; Ab al-Fida, and Haykal. It is related in somewhat different words by Ibn al-'Athr, Imm Ab Ja'far al-Iskf Mu'tazal, alab, aw, al-Maqdis, Sa'd ibn Mnr, Amad, Nas', Hkim, Dhahab and many others (Msaw 152-54).

It is also recorded by many Orientalists including T. Carlyle, E. Gibbon, J. Davenport and W. Irving. This event is conveniently suppressed from some Sunn biographies of the Prophet. While the second line of the Prophet appeared in the first Arabic edition of asanayn Haykal's Life of Muammad, it has been deleted in the second editions and those which have followed. Apparently, the author was pressured by al-Azhar to remove the reference. For more on Haykal's censorship, see Chapter 2 of Rizvi's Sh'ism: Immate and Wilyah. There are a multitude of other traditions in which the

Messenger of Allāh explicitly appoints ‘Alī as his heir and successor.

Chapter 9: The Imamate, The Esoteric Inheritance or the Batin of the Prophet

Chapter 9: The Imāmate, The Esoteric Inheritance or the *Bāāin* of the Prophet

To sum up the political aspects of Islamic history, it is clear that the Caliphate is transmitted by way of *naāā* through which the Prophet or the Imām designates who will succeed him in the Imāmate.[1] **The Imām is the sole expert of the inner sense of the Scripture and the Sunnah. This exclusive knowledge was passed directly from the Prophet to ‘Alī and through him to his descendants.**[2] The Imām is thus the definitive authority on religion obligations [*wājibāt/furāā*] and the esoteric interpretation [*tafsīr/ta’wīl*] of the *sharī‘ah* [Islamic law]. Furthermore, the Imām possesses the quality of *‘ismah*, infallibility and impeccability.[3] The controversial and contentious issue of the succession of the Prophet, disputed by Sunnīs and Shī‘ites for over a millennium, can never be understood if the essentially esoteric function of the Imāmate, as a prolongation and complement to the Prophethood, is overlooked. **The issue of the Imāmate is more than an abstract question. It is the legitimate expression of Muāammadan spiritual authority and temporal power.** It is a concrete existential reality which needed to manifest itself in the world to continue expounding the *bāāin* [esoteric aspect] of the Prophethood.

For Shī’ites, **the completion of the “Cycle of Prophethood” [*dā’irat al-nubuwwah*] marks the beginning of the “Cycle of Initiation”** [*dā’irat al-wilāyah*]. For metaphysical and cosmological reasons, the Cycle of *wilāyah* was to be opened through its own “door” [*al-bāb*], ‘Alī ibn Abī āālib, due to his role as “spiritual successor” [*khalīfah rāāānī*] and “executer” [*waāā*] of the Prophet’s *bāāin* [secrets] or initiator into the Muāammadan mysteries. This is why the Imāmate is not merely a question of blood ties to the Prophet.[4] The issue is not the degree of relation with him, be it wives, daughters, grandchildren, sons-in-law or parents-in-law. On the contrary, the worldly family union is the result of the pleromatic unity of the *nubuwwah* [Prophethood] and the *wilāyah* [guardianship].

As Corbin senses, **the concept of the Imāms can only be understood if one considers them as divine luminaries and pre-cosmic entities.**[5] **They** themselves affirmed so during the course of their worldly existence. Many traditions to this effect were gathered by al-Kulaynī in his voluminous compilation *al-Kāfī*.[6] They stress the fact that the Prophet and the Imām are from the same essence and the same light[7] and what is said of one is applicable to any one of the twelve.[8]

Shī‘ite gnosis enables us to understand the importance of the situation and exactly what was on the line

with the Caliphate.[9] **By the political substitution of Abū Bakr for ʿAlī, the organic link between the ẓāhir [exoteric] and the *bāṭin* [esoteric] was temporarily broken. In Sunnism, this led to the development of a legalistic religion, based on a purely juristic interpretation of Islām.[10] It was thus left to ṣūfī and Shīʿite Islām to preserve, in their exoteric practices and doctrines, the lost esoteric equilibrium.**

1. Editor's Note: The naṣṣ or appointment of ʿAlī and the succeeding Imāms is one of the issues stressed by Shaykh Mufīd in Kitāb al-irshād.
2. Editor's Note: As Imām al-ṣādiq explains, "'ʿAlī was a man of knowledge, and knowledge is inherited. And a man of knowledge never dies unless another one remains after him who knows his knowledge" (al-Kāfī, 156: ḥadīth 590). Imām al-Riḍā wrote in a letter that "Muḥammad was Allāh's custodian over His creatures. When he was taken, we, the Household, were his inheritors" (160, ḥadīth 598).
3. Editor's Note: ʿIṣmah may also be translated as "a state of sinlessness."
4. Editor's Note: There can be no monarchy in Islām as can be seen in Imām Khumaynī's "The Incompatibility of Monarchy with Islām," Islām and Revolution (Berkely: Mizan P, 1981): 200-208. The Imāmate was given to those appointed by Allāh, and was not necessarily from father to eldest son. As Imām al-ṣādiq explains "Do you think that he who appoints a successor from among us, appoints anyone he wishes? No, by Allāh, indeed it is a covenant from the Messenger of Allāh to one man after another, until it comes down to the one who is entrusted with it" (Kulaynī 1:2, IV, 320: ḥadīth 739). In another ḥadīth, he explains that "The Imāmate is a covenant from Allāh, to Whom belong Might and Majesty, which is entrusted to men who are named" (320: ḥadīth 738).
5. Editor's Note: As Naṣr explains, "Shīʿism believes that there is a 'Primordial Light' passed from one prophet to another and after the Prophet of Islām to the Imāms. This light protects the prophets and Imāms from sin, making them inerrant [maʿṣūm], and bestows upon them the knowledge of divine mysteries" (ṣūfī Essays 111). ʿAllāmah Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī lists numerous traditions concerning this "Primordial Light" and how it was passed down from the prophets, to Muḥammad and then to the Imāms (see chapters 1 and 2 of ḥayāt al-qulūb). According to Imām Khumaynī:
The Most Noble Messenger and the Imāms existed before the creation of the world in the form of lights situated beneath the divine throne; they were superior even in the sperm from which they grew and in their physical composition. Their exalted station is limited only by the divine will, as indicated by the saying of Jibraʿīl recorded in the traditions on the miʿrāj: "Were I to draw closer by as much as the breadth of a finger, surely I would burn." The Prophet himself said, "We have states with God that are beyond the reach of the cherubim and the prophets." It is part of our belief that the Imāms too enjoy similar states... (Islām and Revolution 64-65)
Concerning these attributes of the Imāms, see Henry Corbin, Histoire de la philosophie Islāmique (Paris, 1964): 77 ff.
It is recorded in al-Kāfī that Imām al-ṣādiq was asked about the verse: "Therefore, believe in Allāh and His Messenger and in the Light which we have sent down" to which he responded:
The Light, by Allāh, is the Light of the Imāms from the Household of Muḥammad till the Day of Resurrection. They, by Allāh, are the Light which Allāh has sent down, and they, by Allāh, are the Light of Allāh in the heavens and on the earth." (Kulaynī I80: ḥadīth 514)
In Lantern of the Path, Imām al-ṣādiq relates a fascinating tradition on the authority of Salmān al-Fārisī in where the Messenger of Allāh explains that:
Allāh created me from the quintessence of light, and called me, so I obeyed Him. Then he created ʿAlī from my light, and called him, and he obeyed. From my light and the light of ʿAlī He created Fāṭimah. He called her and she obeyed. From me, ʿAlī and Fāṭimah, He created al-ḥasan and al-ḥusayn. He called them and they obeyed Him. Allāh has named us with five of His names: Allāh is al-Maḥmūd [the Praised] and I am Muḥammad [praisworthy]; Allāh is al-ʿAlī [the High], and this is ʿAlī [the one of high rank]; Allāh is al-Fāṭir [Creator out of nothing], and this is Fāṭimah; Allāh is the One with Iḥsān [beneficence], and this is ḥasan; Allāh is Muḥassin [the Beautifying] and this is ḥusayn [the beautiful one]. He created nine Imāms from the light of al-ḥusayn and called them and they obeyed Him, before Allāh created either Heaven on high, the out-stretched earth, the air, the angels or man. We were lights who glorified Him, listened to Him and obeyed

Him.

6. In The Origins and Development of Sh▯‘ah Isl▯m, Jafr▯ questions the authenticity of the traditions describing the Im▯ms as supernatural human beings and the miracles attributed to them (300, 303). Miracles and mysticism are clearly incompatible with his training as a historian. He holds that “a great many traditions ascribing supernatural and superhuman characteristics to the Im▯ms, propounded by semi-ghul▯t circles in Kufah, crept into Sh▯‘▯ literature” (303). He therefore dismisses the traditions concerning the light of All▯h in ‘Al▯ and the description of the Im▯ms as the “shadows of light” and “luminous bodies” (302).

Sh▯‘ite scholars, however, have always shown the greatest aversion towards ghuluw [extremism] and would not have accepted traditions from ghul▯t or even semi-ghul▯t sources. Sh▯‘ite fuqah▯’ [jurists] are unanimous in their takf▯r [declaration of infidelity] of the ghul▯t (Khu‘▯ 28; Gulp▯yg▯n▯ 30 et al.). As Shaykh ▯ad▯q says,

Our belief concerning those who exceed the bounds of belief [gh▯l, pl. ghul▯t] and those who believe in delegation [al-mufawwi▯ah] is that they are deniers [kuff▯r] of All▯h, Glory be to His name. They are more wicked than the Jews, the Christians, the Fire-Worshippers, the Qadarites or the Kharijites, or any of the heretics [ahl al-bid‘ah] or those who holds views which lead astray [al-ahw▯’ al-mu▯illah]. (141-142)

While Jafr▯ may believe that excessively zealous Sh▯‘ites exaggerated the status of the Im▯ms, turning them into divine luminaries, what accounts for the presence of similar traditions in Sunn▯ and ▯▯f▯ sources? In ‘Abd al-Ra▯m▯n Sulam▯’s (d. 1021) famous compilation of the Qur’▯n titled Haq▯’iq al-tafs▯r, we find an exegesis of S▯rah 2:37 which is startling for a Sunn▯ source. In interpreting the verse “and All▯h taught Adam the names,” Sulam▯ quotes a tradition from Im▯m Ja‘far to the effect that:

All▯h existed before His creation existed. He created five creatures from the light of His Glory and gave each one a name from among His Names: Being the Praised One [ma▯m▯d], He called His Prophet, Mu▯ammad; being the Most High [‘al▯], He called the Leader of the Believers, ‘Al▯; being the Creator [f▯▯ir] of the heavens and the earth, he forged the name F▯▯imah; and since he has the most beautiful names [▯usn▯], He forged two names for ▯asan and ▯usayn. He then placed them to the right of His Throne...

The traditions in question are numerous and widely recorded. We are not dealing with isolated traditions with weak chains of narrations [sanad] which can easily be dismissed.

Author’s Note: See al-Kulayn▯, al-K▯f▯ (Karachi 1965). There is also a more recent edition (Tehran 1400/1980).

Editor’s Note: al-K▯f▯ f▯ ‘ilm al-d▯n [The Sufficient in the Knowledge of Religion] is one of the “Four (Fundamental) Books” of the Sh▯‘ites. The others include Man l▯ ya▯duruhu al-faq▯h [For Him not in the Presence of a Jurist] by Shaykh al-▯ad▯q Mu▯ammad ibn B▯bawayh al-Qumm▯ (d. 381/991), Tahdh▯b al-a▯k▯m (Rectification of the Statutes) by Shaykh Mu▯ammad al-▯▯s▯ (d. 460/1068) and al-Istib▯▯r f▯ m▯ ukhtulifa f▯hi min al-akhb▯r (Reflection upon the Disputed Traditions) also by al-▯▯s▯.

7. Editor’s Note: It is related that Im▯m Mu▯ammad al-B▯qir said that “The first beings that All▯h created were Mu▯ammad and his family, the rightly guided ones and the guides; they were the phantoms of light before All▯h” (Kulayn▯ 1: 279).

8. Editor’s Note: The Messenger of All▯h said of his Holy Household: “We are exactly the same as regards command, understanding, and what is lawful and what is unlawful” (Kulayn▯ 314: had▯th 728). As Na▯r explains,

The Im▯ms are like a chain of light issuing forth from the “Sun of Prophecy” which is their origin, and yet they are never separated from that Sun. Whatever is said by them emanates from the same inviolable treasure of inspired wisdom. Since they are an extension of the inner reality of the Blessed Prophet, their words really go back to him. That is why their sayings are seen in the Sh▯‘ite perspective as an extension of the prophetic ▯ad▯th, just as the light of their being is seen as a continuation of the prophetic light. In Sh▯‘ite eyes, the temporal separation of the Im▯ms from the Blessed Prophet does not at all affect their essential and inner bond with him or the continuity of the “prophetic light” which is the source of him as well as their inspired knowledge. (A Sh▯‘ite Anthology 6-7)

9. Editor’s Note: The office of the Im▯mate and Caliphate was meant, by divine design, to function as the Government of God on earth. The Prophet has said that: “He, who denies ‘Al▯ his Im▯mate after me, verily denies my Prophethood [nubuwwah]. And he who denies my Prophethood has denied All▯h His divinity” (Sad▯q 107). He also stated that

The Im▯ms after me are twelve, the first of them is the Prince of Believers ‘Al▯ ibn Ab▯ ▯▯lib, and the last of them is the Mahd▯ [rightly-guided], the Q▯’im [the upholder of the true religion]; obedience to them is obedience to me and

disobedience to them is disobedience to me; and who denies one of them has verily denied me. (108)
Im□m al-□□diq has said that: "He who denies the last among us is like him who denies the first among us" (108). The following tradition from Im□m al-□□diq illustrates what is at stake when the authority of ahl al-bayt is forsaken:
We are those obedience to whom All□h has made an obligation. Nothing is proper for the people except to know, nor are the people absolved from being ignorant about us. He who knows us is a believer, and he who denies us is an unbeliever. He who neither knows us nor denies us is misguided, till he returns to the path of guidance, which All□h has made an obligation for him as a binding obligation to us. If he dies in misguidance, All□h will do with him whatever he pleases. (Kulayn□ 60 □ad□th 489)
The Im□m has also issued the following firm warning: "Whoever dies without having known and acknowledged the Im□m of his Age dies as an infidel" (Kulayn□ I 318). Recognition of the Im□m is an absolute duty of every believer. Loving the Household of the Prophet is mandatory. As we read in the Holy Qur'□n: "No reward do I ask of you for this except the love of those near of kin" (42:23). This is not to imply that failure to recognize the Im□ms is an act of disbelief. As Ay□tull□h Mu□ahhar□ clarifies in Isl□m and Religious Pluralism:
The verses and traditions that indicate that the actions of those who deny Prophethood or Im□mate are not acceptable are with a view to denial out of obstinacy and bias; however, denial that is merely a lack of confession out of incapacity (qu□□r)--rather than out of culpability (taq□□r)--is not what the verses and traditions are about. In the view of the Qur'□n, such deniers are considered musta'af (powerless) and murjawn li'amr illah (those whose affair is referred to God's command).
10. Editor's Note: Sunnism is primarily ritualistic while □□fism is primarily spiritualistic. Sh□'ism presents a balance between the ritual and the spiritual. As Na□r explains, "□□fism does not possess a shar□'ah; it is only a spiritual way [□ar□qah] attached to a particular Shar□'ite rite such as the M□lik□ or Sh□fi'□. Sh□'ism possesses both a shar□'ah and a □ar□qah" (□□f□ Essays 107).

Conclusions

For the sake of concision, and to avoid repeating what has already been explained, we will limit ourselves to recalling that in Sh□'ism, the question of the Caliphate is eminently transcendental. As such, **'Al□'s right to succession cannot, in any way, be subjected to human scrutiny**. For Sh□'ites, the supreme spiritual status of 'Al□ is peerless and cannot be compared to the rank held by other Islamic leaders. He belongs to a unique and superior spiritual category which was conferred on him by the grace of God. By bestowing the *wil□yah* of the Prophet on Al□, God perfected Isl□m and brought the prophetic mission to a close.

The fundamental doctrine of *wil□yah* is based on the concept of the *ta'□/□m* of the Im□ms. What continues in Isl□m under the name of *wil□yah* is, *de facto et de iure* [by fact and by right], a form of esoteric guidance [*al-hid□yah al-b□□iniyyah*] from which humanity cannot stray without perishing.1 The *wil□yah* is the guaranteed living embodiment of the spiritual authority of the Prophet which, by the temporal succession of the Twelve Im□ms, continues throughout human history until the end of times.

Understandably, it is impossible to separate the historical development of Sh□'ite Isl□m from the meta-historical antecedents of *wil□yah*. 'Al□'s Isl□m cannot be separated from the metaphysical truths which

are its *telos*, its fundamental and final cause. In closing, it is inconceivable to claim that we have dealt with the issue of Im□mate and *wil□yah* in all of its depth.

We have limited ourselves to addressing the issue of its origins and leaving the topic open to further research. As a result, this study on the origins of Sh□'ism must remain incomplete for the time being. In order for it to be complete, it would have been necessary to compile some of the traditions that attest to the extraordinary importance of the secret spiritual life of Sh□'ism and the Sh□'ite ethos of the Hidden Im□m, the seal of the Mu□ammadan *wil□yah*, for, as the Prophet has stated, without the continuous living presence of the Im□m, neither human beings nor the world can subsist.2

1. In the previous versions of this work published in Spanish, the author stated "what continues in Isl□m under the name of wil□yah is, de facto et de iure [by fact and by right], a form of esoteric Prophethood [nubuwwah b□□iniyyah]." What the author was attempting to convey was that Sh□'ism is the only expression of Isl□m which, in the words of Corbin, "has preserved and perpetuated the link of divine guidance between man and God through its belief in the Im□mate" unlike Sunnism which "believes that the link between man and God has been severed with the end of the Prophethood" (qtd. Baqr al-□adr, The Awaited Saviour).
As Sayyid Rizv□ has pointed out, however, the term "Esoteric Prophethood" for im□mah and wil□yah is problematic as it may lead readers to believe that Sh□'ites beliveve in the continuation of nubuwwah. An Im□m, after cessation of the Prophethood, still has access to divine guidance through true visions and the voices of angels without actually seeing them [al-mu□addath], as explained in the section of al-K□f□ which describes the Im□ms as al-mu□addathun. As per the suggestion of Sayyid Rizv□, the author has opted for the term al-hid□yah al-b□□iniyyah which more aptly captures the sense he was attempting to convey.
2. Editor's Note: Im□m Ja'far al-□□diq said that:
Am□r al-mu'min□n is the gate of All□h, except through which one cannot reach Him, and the path to Him, such that if someone passes along another (path) he will perish, and this is applied to all the Im□ms, one after another. All□h has made them the pillars of the earth. (Kulayn□ 88 □ad□th 521)
It is related in al-K□f□ that Im□m al-S□diq was asked whether the world could exist without there being an Im□m in it, to which he responded: "No" (Kulayn□ 35: □ad□th 447). The Im□m is also reported to have said that "Verily, the world can never be without an Im□m" (36, □ad□th 448), "As long as the world lasts, there will be in it a Proof of All□h" (36: □ad□th 449); "The earth can never last without an Im□m who is All□h's proof for His creatures" (37: □ad□th 454). Mu□ammad al-B□qir also said that "If the Im□m is removed from the earth (even) for an hour (of the day), the earth will surge up with those in it like a sea surges up with those in it" (39: □ad□th 458).

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