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THE NECESSITY OF IMĀMAH ACCORDING TO TWELVER-SHĪ'ISM

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TWELVER-SHĪ'ISM

With Special Reference to Tajrīd al-I'tiqād
of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī

by

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis is a study of one aspect of the Twelver-Shī'ī doctrine of imāmah. It is Shī'ī dogma that imāmah is necessary because it is an expression of God's Grace (lutf) to His creation. On the basis of the principle of God's Justice ('adl), Twelver-Shī'ī theologians developed theological arguments to support this dogma. One aspect of God's Justice is that He will not do injustice or punish His servants without valid reason. Consequently this principle makes it necessary for God to lay Religious Obligations (taklīf) upon His servants to be observed. However, these Religious Obligations could not be performed by human beings unless God also gave them His Grace (lutf), which brings them near into obedience (ṭā'ah) and keeps them away from disobedience (ma'siyah). Hence, God's lutf, which He has expressed through the Divine Mission (bi'thah), by sending prophets and messengers and appointing imāms, is necessary. It is for this reason that the Twelver-Shī'īs consider imāmah absolutely necessary.

RESUMÉ

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Titre de la thèse : LA NÉCESSITÉ DE L'IMAMAH SELON LE
SHĪ'ISME DUODÉCIMAIN; avec une
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Cette thèse se propose d'étudier un aspect de la doctrine de l'imāmah de Shī'isme duodécimain. Selon le dogme shī'ite, l'imāmah a une fonction importante car il est une expression de la Grâce (lutf) de Dieu envers sa création. Selon le principe de la Justice ('adl) de Dieu, les théologiens du Shī'isme duodécimain ont développé des arguments religieux afin de soutenir ce dogme. Un aspect de la justice divine est que Dieu ne commet pas d'injustice et ne punit son serviteur sans raison valable. Par conséquent, ce principe rend nécessaire pour Lui d'imposer des obligations religieuses (taklīfs) afin que son serviteur les observent. Cependant, ces obligations religieuses ne peuvent être accomplies par des êtres humains à moins que Dieu leur donne aussi sa Grâce (lutf). Cette dernière les amènerait à obéir (tā'ah) et les maintiendrait loin de la désobéissance (ma'siyah). Donc, le lutf, que Dieu a exprimé grâce à la Mission Divine (bi'thah), en envoyant des prophètes et messagers et en nommant des imāms, devient primordiale. C'est donc pour cette raison que le Shī'isme duodécimain considère l'imāmah comme un principe fondamental et nécessaire.

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M. R. Y.

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PREFACE

The Twelver-Shī'ī and the Sunnī theologians are in agreement that imāmah is a necessity for the welfare of mankind. However, their agreement is limited only to this point; they hold different opinions concerning the details of this necessity, as well as different conceptions of the authority and function of the imām.

The Twelver-Shī'īs insist that imāmah is a pillar of religion, without which īmān (belief) would not be completed, and as such, imāmah is as important as nubū'ah. They consider imāmah also to be a divine position given to the imām who is divinely specified. In the Sunnī view, imāmah is not as important as nubū'ah, and is in no way a divine institution. However, as we stated above, both the Twelver-Shī'īs and the Sunnīs consider imāmah as a necessity, though their reasons of its necessity are totally different. The Twelver-Shī'īs evolved the dogma that imāmah is necessary because it is an expression of God's Grace (luṭf). It is through the imām that God communicate with His servants and give His guidance to them. On the other hand, the Sunnīs maintain that it is necessary only because of the community's need for a leader to administer its religious and worldly life.

Thus, the function of the imām in the view of the Sunnis is merely as the leader of Muslim community without any divine function such as a mediator through whom God communicates or gives His guidance to the human beings.

This thesis is an attempt to study the Twelver-Shī'ī conception of the above mentioned dogma, considering and referring to the arguments given by their theologians. The study is based on several parts of Tajrīd al-I'tiqād of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (597-672 H.) The Sunnis' positions on the problems arising from these theological notions are also presented in order to give a better understanding of the positions of both sides.

The thesis is composed of three chapters. The first deals with imām and imāmah, in which we will explain the meaning of the words imām and imāmah and their usage as technical terms among the Twelver-Shī'īs and the Sunnis. The position and authority of the imām will also be discussed in this chapter. The second one, which is the main part of this thesis, deals with the problem of the necessity of imāmah according to Twelver-Shī'īs. It is a dogma among them that imāmah is necessary because it is an expression of God's Grace (lutf). This dogma is supported by a chain of theological arguments based on the Twelver-Shī'ī concept of God's Justice ('adl). We will see how the concept of 'adl makes it

necessary for God to lay Religious Obligations (taklīfs) upon His servants to be observed. However, human beings cannot fulfill these taklīfs without God's Grace (luṭf) to them, which brings them near into obedience (tā'ah) and keeps them away from disobedience (ma'siyah). God has expressed His Grace through the Divine Mission (al-bi'thah), viz., by sending prophets and messengers and designating imāms. Thus, the Twelver-Shī'īs came to the conclusion that imāmah is necessary. The third chapter, a complement to the second, deals with the issue of the qualifications and designation of the imām.

The reason for the writer to chose Tajrīd al-I'tiqād by Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī as a special reference to this study is because this book is one of two works of al-Ṭūsī in Arabic on theology which are highly esteemed by the Twelver-Shī'ī community. The other book is his Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id. These two works contain sections on imāmah which are preceded by sections on theological matters. Tajrīd al-I'tiqād has been commented upon by at least five scholars. The names of these commentators and their works are: (1) Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Hillī, Kashf al-Murād, (2) Maḥmūd al-Iṣfahānī, al-Sharḥ al-Qadīm, (3) 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Qushjī, al-Sharḥ al-Jadīd, (4) 'Abd al-Razzāq ibn 'Abd Allāh al-Lāhijī, Shawāriq al-Ilhām,¹ and (5) a contemporary Shī'ī scholar, Muḥammad

Mahdī al-Ḥusaynī al-Shīrāzī, al-Qawl al-Sadīd fī Sharḥ al-Tajrīd.² Four of these commentaries are available in the Library of the Institute of Islamic Studies, namely those of Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, al-Qushjī, al-Lāhijī and al-Shīrāzī, which, in fact, enabled the writer to study al-Ṭūsī's text.

There are two other treatises on imāmah written by al-Ṭūsī, yet these are less well-known than Tajrīd al-I'tiqād. These are Fuṣūl-i Khvājah-i Ṭūsī³ and Risālah-i Imāmat.⁴ Besides these treatises, al-Ṭūsī's thought on imāmah can also be studied in his commentary on Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's work, Kitāb Muḥaṣṣal Afkār al-Mutaqaddimīn wa al-Muta'akhkhirīn.⁵

Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī was born at Ṭūs on the 11th of Jumāda al-Awwal, 597 H., and died in Baghdād on the 18th of Dhū al-Ḥijjah, 672 H.⁶ He was famous for his speciality in several branches of science. According to D. M. Donaldson, beside being an astronomer and philosopher, al-Ṭūsī was also a theologian,⁷ and in fact he is a respected Shī'ī theologian and a standard authority for their view. Nevertheless, al-Ṭūsī is especially famous for his work on ethical philosophy, the Akhlāq-i Nāsirī, and on astronomy, the Zīj-i Ilkhānī. The former was translated into English in 1839 by W. T. Thompson, and recently by G. M. Wickens in 1964.⁸

Although the main source for this study is the Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, yet we shall also refer to the commentaries on it, especially the Kashf al-Murād of Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, in order to throw light upon al-Ṭūsī's meaning. As well, we shall present the accounts of other Twelver-Shī'ī scholars concerning certain problems to determine how far al-Ṭūsī's arguments were supported by his co-religionists.

Finally, I would like to mention here that the translation of the Arabic texts quoted in this thesis is entirely mine. In which case, I have tried to give as literal meaning as possible of these texts. As for the transliteration, I have followed the method adopted by the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University.

NOTES TO PREFACE

¹See Carl Brockelmann, Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur, Supplementband I. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1937), pp. 925-927.

²(Karbilā', al-A'lamī, 1381 H./1961 M.)

³Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, Fuṣūl-i Khvājah-'i Ṭūsī, va tarjumah-'i tāzī-i ān az Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn-i 'Alī Gurgānī Astrābadī, bi-khūshish-i Muḥammad Taqī Dānish-pazhūh (Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tihṙān, 298; Tihṙān: Dānishgāh-i Tihṙān, 1335 H.)

⁴Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, Risālah-'i Imāmat, bi-khūshish-i Muḥammad Taqī Dānish-pazhūh (Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tihṙān, 302; Tihṙān: Dānishgāh-i Tihṙān, 1335 H.)

⁵al-Ṭūsī's commentary entitled Talkhīs al-Muḥaṣṣal is to be found in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Kitāb Muḥaṣṣal Afkār al-Mutaqaddimīn wa al-Muta'akhkhirīn (Miṣr: Maṭba'ah al-Ḥusaynīyah, n.d.)

⁶R. Strothmann, "al-Ṭūsī," Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol. IV (Leyden: E. J. Brill, and London: Luzac & Co., 1934), p. 980.

⁷See Dwight M. Donaldson, The Shī'ite Religion (London: Luzac & Co., 1933), p. 294.

⁸See Michel M. Mazzaoui, The Origin of the Safawids: Si'ism, Sufism, and the Gulāt (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GmbH, 1972), p. 23, n. 3. For further information on al-Ṭūsī's works, see Carl Brockelmann, Geschichte der

arabischen Litteratur, Vol. I (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1934), pp. 670-676, and his Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur, Supplementband I, pp. 925-933. See also 'Umar Riḍā Kaḥḥālāh, Mu'jam al-Mu'allifīn, Vol. XI (Dimashq: Maktabah al-'Arabīyah, 1380 H./1960 M.), pp. 207-208. Brockelmann lists al-Ṭūsī's works on Fiqh, Dogmatic (Theology), Philosophy and Mysticism, Mathematics, Physics, Astronomy, Medicine, Superstitions and Mineralogy.

CHAPTER I

IMĀM AND IMĀMAH

In its general meaning the word imām as it is used among the Muslim community, Sunnīs or Twelver-Shī'īs, refers to the prayer leader, or to a respectable scholar. Anyone who leads the prayer is called imām, and distinguished scholars are also called imām. In the title pages of several pieces of Shī'ī literature, the honorific title imām is used in front of the author's name, sometimes put together with another title, for example: al-imām al-faqīh al-muhaqqiq Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Nu'mān (known also as al-Shaykh al-Mufīd), and al-imām al-kabīr Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan al-Ḥurr al-'Āmilī. In Sunnī literature, names such as al-imām al-Bukhārī, al-imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, al-imām Shāh Walī Allāh, etc., are more than familiar to us.

However, the usage of the word imām as a technical term according to the Sunnī notion differs from that of the Twelver-Shī'īs. In this chapter, we will try to explain the literal meaning of imām and imāmah as well as their meaning as technical terms.

The word imām comes from amma which means "to aim at," "to follow after," "to proceed," "to lead." E. W. Lane explains that imām denotes a "person or learned man, whose example is followed, or who is imitated; ... any exemplar, or object of imitation, to a people, or company of men, such as head, chief, or leader."¹ Ibn Manẓūr states that an imām is "any exemplar or object of imitation to a people, whether they be following the right way or be erring therefrom."² Besides this, he also gives another meaning of the word imām as "'custodian (qayyim)' and 'someone who takes care of something (al-muṣliḥ)' and 'way (ṭarīq).'"³ Furthermore, he adds: "If we say: 'So-and-so is the imām of the people,' it means that he is the one who precedes them."⁴

In the Qur'ān, the word imām and its plural, a'immaḥ, is used in the sense of "leader," "model," "guide," and "chief" in II.124, XXV.71, IX.72, XXVIII.5 and 41, and XXXII.24. In XV.79, the word imām is used in the sense of "highway" or "indication" or "sign" which leads to a destination. It is also used in the sense of "guidance," as in XI.17, and in XLVI.12. Only in XXXVI.12 is it used in the sense of "record," or "Book of Evidence." From these verses, we understand that the word imām signifies a person or a thing which has to be imitated or to be followed. If it is a person, it refers not only to any person who is the leader, but

also to the prophet or prophets. In II.124, for example, it refers to a prophet, namely Ibrāhīm, while in XXI.72, it refers to the prophets mentioned before this verse. As a leader, the prophet is called, as Lane puts it, "imām ummatih [the exemplar, object of imitation, leader, or head, of his nation, or people]; ... or imām al-ummah [the exemplar & c., of the nation, or people]; ... it being incumbent on all to imitate his rule of life or conduct."⁵ In XI.17 and XLVI.12, imām is used in reference to the revealed Book which is the guide for the Jewish people, i.e. Tawrāt. Thus in its literal meaning the word imām, as it is used in the Qur'ān, had a wide signification. In general, it means one who takes precedence over others, who is to be imitated or to be followed.

In ordinary life, the word imām is used to denote several things, among others are: the commander of an army; the builder's wooden instrument whereby he makes the building even; the caravan leader, and the guide of the travellers.⁶ Beside these, imām also means the largest head in a subḥah (or tasbīḥ, rosary), from which the counting begins.⁷

As a technical term, the word imām is used in ordinary life in three different senses:

(1) As "leader of congregational prayer (ṣalāt ...)."⁸ In this sense, any Muslim, "sufficiently versed in the technique of the ṣalāt, can act as an imām." Therefore, "the

imām is an imām only so long as he is actually engaged in leading the prayer."⁹

(2) The term imām is applied by the Sunnīs to the caliph, "as leader of the Community."¹⁰ Therefore, we find that in Sunnī literature, the terms imām and khalīfah are used interchangeably.¹¹ However, the term imām is also used to signify the "eminent doctors of Islām, such as the founders of the orthodox schools, etc., e.g. Imām Abū Ḥanīfa, al-Shāfi'ī, al-Ghazzālī, etc."¹²

(3) Among the Shī'īs, the term imām signifies those who were recognized, according to Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, as "the possessor of the universal leadership in religious and worldly [matters] by fundamental right (bi-al-aṣālah) in [this] world."¹³ The same definition is also given by Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī (d. 726 H.), and according to him, this definition includes the prophet under its scope, since God says in the Qur'ān II.124: "I make thee Imam for mankind"¹⁴ However, the inclusion of the prophet under the term imām

does not erase the distinction in terminology and in reality between prophecy (nubū'ah) and imāmah, and their conjunction in a person does not eliminate this difference, because he [the prophet] combines both offices; and thereupon the imāmah belongs to the prophet, yet nubū'ah does not belong to the imām.¹⁵

From this brief explanation we understand that the Sunnīs and the Twelver-Shī'īs differ in their application

of the term imām. The Sunnīs apply it in a general sense of leadership, and therefore, imāmah for them simply means "leadership." On the other hand, the Shī'īs apply it in a special sense, in which the prophet is also included. Therefore, imāmah for them denotes the supreme leadership of the community, by a fundamental right (bi-al-aṣālah), both in religious and worldly matters.

The meaning of the term imām, the person to whom it refers, and the extent of his authority will become clearer for us if we examine the meaning and definition of the term imāmah.

We mentioned that among the Sunnīs, the words imām and khalīfah are used interchangeably, because Sunnīs define imāmah as khilāfah. Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī (d. 450 H.) defines imāmah as follows: "Imāmah is put down as the succession (khilāfah) to prophecy in guarding religion and administering the world."¹⁶ Aḥud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 756 H.) defines it as "succession (khilāfah) to the messenger in the application of religion."¹⁷ A third definition is given by Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī (d. 791 H.) who defines imāmah as "general leadership in religious and worldly matters as succession (khilāfah) of the Prophet."¹⁸ These three definitions bear witness that the Sunnīs use the term imāmah to denote khilāfah or niyābah (deputyship) to the Prophet Muḥammad,

peace be upon him, in guarding religion and administering the worldly problems of the community. Thus, when the term imāmah is used, one of its references is to the khilāfah of the Prophet to act as his deputy (nā'ib).

In the works of the Twelver-Shī'ī scholars we find several definitions which are different in essence from those of the Sunnīs'. Though the three definitions presented below appear to be different from one another, yet in fact they supplement each other. The first definition applies the term imāmah to religious leadership in religious and worldly matter without specifying it to be the succession (khilāfah) to the Prophet. Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī defines:

Imāmah is a religious leadership comprising the incitement of the whole of mankind to the preservation of their religious and worldly advantages and to restrain them from whatever may cause harm to them.¹⁹

The second of these definitions applies the term imāmah to the khilāfah of the Prophet, but specifies that it belongs only to a certain person. Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Hillī writes that

Imāmah means deputization of a certain person (shakhsin min al-ashkhāṣ) on behalf of the Prophet, peace be upon him, to the application of the religious laws and the protection of religion, in a way that the entire community should follow him.²⁰

A third definition designates imāmah as a divine institution, as Kāshif al-Ghiṭā' al-Najafī (d. 1344 H.) says: "Imāmah is a divine position (mansab ilāhīyah) like prophecy."²¹

From the above definitions given by these Twelver-Shī'ī scholars, we can trace three definite specifications which distinguish the notion of imāmah among Twelver-Shī'īs from the view of Sunnīs. These specifications implicitly explain also the nature and authority of the imām.

(1) Imāmah is a universal religious and temporal leadership, and in one sense it is not necessarily succession to the Prophet. This implies that the meaning of imāmah is more comprehensive than that of khilāfah. The Qur'ānic verses in which the word imām or a'imma is used, also imply this. However, it is not impossible that imāmah and khilāfah are to be found in the person of the successor of the Prophet.²²

(2) Imāmah must belong to a specific person (li-shakhsin min al-ashkhās.) According to Miqdād Fāqīl al-Ḥillī, this implies that "he who is worthy of the Imāmate is a person appointed and specified by Allāh and His Prophet, not any chance person."²³ This specification indicates that due to his position as the universal religious leader, the imām is not elected by the people; instead he must be appointed and specified by a divine designation.

(3) Imāmah is a divine office (mansab ilāhīyah). This specification is closely related to the first one, namely that imāmah is a universal religious and secular leadership. Being a divine office, imāmah is not only a universal religious and secular leadership; it is also

an authority from God to preserve and to explain the sharī'ah, and to regulate social affairs in accordance with the sharī'ah, and as an extension of the position of risālah and nubū'ah and the divine authority.²⁴

These explanations throw some light upon the Twelver-Shī'ī notion of the nature and authority of imāmah. According to these indications, imāmah is a divine office held by those who are divinely appointed. The authority of the imāms is divine in its nature which means that they possess universal leadership pertaining to the religious as well as the worldly matters of the community's life. Imāmah then is

a universal divine leadership in the matter of religion and of the world in a way that the whole community should obey those who undertake it; and it is a divine office which is distinct from khilāfah and risālah and nubū'ah; yet it can unite with one of these things without penetrating their nature.²⁵

These specifications make the Twelver-Shī'ī concept of imāmah very different from that of the Sunnis'.

Although both of their concepts of imāmah originate out of the fundamental politico-religious problem of the succession (khilāfah) to the Prophet, an issue which has had important consequences throughout Islamic history, their perception of the imām's qualities, and the source of his authority, differs radically. The problem of imāmah thus must be viewed as the primary issue, but the response of Sunnīs and Twelver-Shī'īs to this problem displays the characteristic differences between them. The imām or the khilāfah in the Sunnī concept is

deputy of the law giver [the Prophet] to preserve the religion; hence he induces the people to perform what God commanded, and he is the head of the sovereignty in judicial, administrative and military matters. However, he does not have any legislative power.²⁶

The emphasis in the Sunnī concept of imāmah/khilāfah is no more than deputyship to the Prophet in administering the religious and worldly life of the community.

The Twelver-Shī'ī concept of imāmah is that it is more than deputization to the Prophet. "The imāmah is a universal divine authority over creation in regard to its religious and worldly affairs."²⁷ Muḥammad ibn Ya'qūb ibn Ishāq al-Kulaynī (d. 328 H.), the famous Shī'ī traditionist, narrates a Shī'ī tradition related by the eighth Imām, 'Alī al-Riḍā, in which he explains the nature, function and authority of the imām and imāmah: al-Riḍā is reported as saying

in a very long tradition, among other things:

Verily, imāmah is the status of the prophets and the heritage of legatees; verily imāmah is the vicegerency of God and of the Prophet, peace be upon him
 Verily, imāmah is the rein of religion and the order of the Muslims, the welfare of this world and the might of the faithful. Verily, imāmah is the ever-growing root of Islam and its ever-rising branch. Through the imām is achieved the perfection of prayer, alms, fasting, pilgrimage, holy war, the collection of booty ('fay') and charities, the execution of the ordinances (hudūd) and rules (ahkām), and the protection of frontiers and boundaries. The imām allows that which God has permitted and forbids that which God has forbidden; he establishes the ordinances of God and protects the religion of God, and calls unto the way of his Lord with wisdom and fair exhortation and with decisive proof, . . .

.
 The imām is the trustee of God in His creation, His proof upon His servants, and His vicegerent on His earth

The imām is purified from sins and free from faults, endowed with knowledge The imām is unique in his time, no one can come close to him [in knowledge] and no scholar can compete with him He is favoured with complete grace, without he seeking it and without he acquiring it, but it is a special favour from the Most Generous, the Bestower . . .

.
 And when God chooses His servant for the affairs of His subjects, He opens his heart for that purpose, and entrusts his heart with the fountains of wisdom, and inspires him with knowledge through inspiration . . .

hence he is infallible . . . indeed he is protected from mistakes and errors God favours him with that so that he will be His proof upon His servants and His Witness to His creation, and this is the grace of God; He bestoweth it upon whomsoever He willeth, and God is the Lord of Mighty Grace. Are they [the people] capable of choosing [an imām] like this? or is it possible that their chosen imām would be like this?²⁸

This tradition explains several important points pertaining to imām and imāmah.

(1) It refers to imāmah as the status of the prophets, which implies that the prophets are included also under the scope of imāmah. The legatees (al-awṣiyā') share this position with the prophets, because the legatees inherit it from their predecessors. As we will see in the second chapter, every prophet, according to the Twelver-Shī'īs, has a legatee (waṣī), and each of these legatees inherit the position and knowledge of the prophets.

(2) Imāmah is referred to as the khilāfah (vicegerency) of God and of the Prophet. This implies that imāmah not only represents the Prophet and carries on his missions, but it is also a representative of God on earth in a certain sense. And as we shall see below it is a proof (hujjah) of God to creation.

(3) In general, the imām is given the authority to control religion and to organize all aspects of the life of

Muslims. He is responsible for teaching the people all things pertaining to religious obligations, and for urging them to perform these obligations; as such he is responsible for the growth, the preaching and the perfection of religion.

(4) Above all these responsibilities, the imām has also a very important position with regard to the sharī'ah. In the tradition mentioned above, the imām is referred to as he who "allows that which God has permitted and forbids that which God has forbidden (yuhillu ḥalāl Allāh wa yuharrimu ḥarām Allāh).". This passage implies that the interpretation of the sharī'ah and its implementation in the right manner could only be done through the imām.²⁹ The imām acquired this role not by his own effort; rather it was bestowed on him by God. He was given every kind of knowledge needed to fulfill his mission and was inspired with every wisdom required to perform his duty. This position is unlike the Sunnī concept of a khalīfah. To the Sunnīs, the khalīfah is subject to the sharī'ah, and his role with regard to it is not a decisive one.³⁰

One must note that the established doctrine of imāmah among the Twelver-Shī'īs has passed through various stages of development in the elaboration of their theology. It is not our intention in this study to trace this development of the concept of imāmah and related notions. What is important to us here is that from the Twelver-Shī'ī point of

view, it is clear that the imām cannot be compared with the khalīfah in the understanding of the Sunnīs, and that imāmah is a much more comprehensive concept than khilāfah.

Though the Sunnīs and the Twelver-Shī'īs agree on the necessity of imāmah, they differ in the details pertaining to its necessity, among other things over why it is necessary. The Sunnīs give an answer to this question, as we saw in the definitions given by their scholars, that the imām or khalīfah is necessary to guard religion, to administer all aspects of the Muslims' life, to prevent disorder, etc. Though the Sunnī scholars, like al-Māwardī to mention only one, developed a refined theory of khilāfah, yet they did not have any complex theological theory on the necessity of khilāfah or imāmah. As for the Twelver-Shī'īs, their scholars reacted to this question by developing a dogma, based on theological doctrine, that imāmah is an expression of God's Grace, and therefore it is necessary. We will treat this concept in the next chapter, which is the main part of this study.

Before we proceed to the discussion of the necessity of imāmah, we must take note of one point, namely: What is the position of the imām in relation to the prophet? From the Sunnī point of view, it is obvious that the imām (or khalīfah) is only a successor of the prophet, and deputed to carry on his duties. However, the role of imām or khalīfah

is much less than that of the prophet, because, unlike the prophet, the khalīfah is not an agent of revelation and hence not a law-giver. As for the Twelver-Shī'īs, the matter is more complicated. As we saw above, the Twelver-Shī'īs include under the scope of the imāmah not only those who deputize for the prophet, but also the prophet himself. This implies that in one sense, the position of the imām sometimes approaches that of the prophet, and sometimes is inferior to it. This implication is made possible by their concept that imāmah is universal divine leadership.³¹ However, they draw a distinction between the imām and the prophet by stating that imāmah can be attributed to the prophet, while prophecy (nubū'ah) cannot be attributed to the imām.³² The Twelver-Shī'īs refer to the fact that Ibrāhīm was appointed imām by God³³ to support this concept.

Although the imām and imāmah in the Twelver-Shī'ī notion are given a universal and divine position, yet from their theological arguments, which we shall treat below, we see that the term imām refers in fact to those who are regarded by them as the true vicegerents of the Prophet Muḥammad, peace be upon him, namely 'Alī and his descendants. It seems that the suitable definition of imām for the purpose of our study is the combination of Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī's and Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Hillī's definitions, which can be formulated

as follows: "The imām is the man who possesses the universal leadership in religious and worldly [matters] by fundamental right in [this] world,³⁴ acting in place of (niyābatan 'an) the Prophet [Muḥammad], peace be upon him."³⁵

In light of the preceding discussion, we may now proceed to the central issue of this study, namely the problem of the necessity of imāmah according to the Twelver-Shī'īs.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

¹Edward William Lane, An Arabic-English Lexicon, Part 1 (London: William and Norgate, 1863), p. 91.

²Ibn Manẓūr, Lisān al-‘Arab, Vol. XII (Bayrūt: Dār Ṣādir, 1375 H./1956 M.), p. 24.

³See ibid., pp. 25 and 26.

⁴Ibid., p. 26.

⁵Lane, An Arabic-English Lexicon, Part 1, p. 91.

⁶See Ibn Manẓūr, Lisān al-‘Arab, Vol. XII, pp. 25-26.

⁷The writer is very much indebted to Prof. Adams for this information.

⁸"Imām," Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam (Leiden: E. J. Brill, and London: Luzac & Co., 1961), p. 165.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹See for example Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, al-Aḥkām al-Sultānīyah, ‘uniya bi-taṣḥīḥih Muḥammad Badr al-Dīn al-Na‘sanī al-Ḥalabī (Miṣr: Maṭba‘ah al-Sa‘ādah, 1327 H./1909 M.), p. 3, in which he defines the imāmah as the khilāfah al-nubūwah (succession of the prophecy). Explaining the meaning of khilāfah, Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā says: "The khilāfah and imāmat al-‘uzmā and imārat al-muslimīn are three words bearing the same meaning." (Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, al-Khilāfah aw al-Imāmat al-‘Uzmā [Miṣr: Maṭba‘ah al-Manār,

(1341 H.)], p. 10). See also Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddimah, mahhada lahā ... 'Alī 'Abd al-Wāḥid Wāfī, Vol. II ([Miṣr: Lajnah al-Bayān al-'Arabī, 1378 H./1958 M.]), p. 519.

¹²"Imām", p. 165.

¹³Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, Risālah-'i Imāmat, bi-khūshish-i Muḥammad Taqī Dānish-pazhūh (Intishārat-i Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, 302; Tihrān: Dānishgāh-i Tihrān, 1335 H.), p. 15.

¹⁴See Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, al-Alfayn, qaddama lah Muḥammad Mahdī al-Sayyid Ḥasan al-Mūsawī al-Khurasānī (Najaf: Maktabah al-Ḥaydariyah, 1388 H./1969 M.), p. 2. The translation of Qur'ānic verse is from S. V. Mir Ahmed Ali, The Holy Qur'ān, With English Translation of the Arabic Text and Commentary according to the Version of the Holy Ahlul-Bait (Karachi: Sterling Printing & Publishing Company, Limited, 1964), p. 87.

¹⁵al-Ḥillī, al-Alfayn, p. 2, n. 1.

¹⁶al-Māwardī, al-Aḥkām al-Sultāniyah, p. 3.

¹⁷'Aḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī, Kitāb al-Mawāqif, bi-sharḥih li ... 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Jurjānī ..., Vol. VIII (Miṣr: Maṭab'ah al-Sa'ādah, 1325 H.), p. 345.

¹⁸Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī, Sharḥ al-Maqāṣid (Maqāṣid fī 'Ilm al-Kalām) ... sharaḥaḥā ... Mawlānā al-Qārī, Vol. II ([Istanbūl]: Būsnawī al-Ḥajj Muḥarram Afandī Bīk, [1305 H.]), p. 272.

¹⁹Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, Qawā'id al-'Aqā'id ([Tihrān], 1303 H.), p. 34.

²⁰al-Ḥillī, al-Alfayn, p. 2. His own definition is as follows: "The imamate is a universal authority (riyāsa) is the things of religion and of the world belonging to some person and derived from (niyāba) the Prophet." (Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, al-Bābu 'l-Hādī 'Ashar, ... with Commentary by Miqdād-i-Fāḍil al-Ḥillī, translated from the Arabic by William McElwee Miller [London: The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1958], p. 62.)

²¹Kāshif al-Ghiṭā al-Najafī, Aṣl al-Shī'ah wa-Uṣūluhā (Najaf: Maṭba'ah al-Ḥaydariyah, 1369 H./1950 M.), p. 97. The same specification is also given by Shihāb al-Dīn al-Najafī (see Nūr Allāh al-Ḥusaynī al-Mar'ashī al-Tustarī, Iḥqāq al-Haqq wa Izhāq al-Bāṭil, ma' tā'līqāt ... bi-qalam Shihāb al-Dīn al-Najafī, Vol. II [Tih-rān: Maṭba'ah al-Islāmīyah, (1377 H.)], p. 300, n. 1).

²²Cf. Muḥammad Maḥdī al-Āṣifī, al-Imāmah fī al-Tashrī' al-Islāmī (Najaf: Maktabah al-Najāf, 1383 H./1963 M.), p. 25.

²³al-Ḥillī, al-Bābu 'l-Hādī 'Ashar, p. 62.

²⁴al-Āṣifī, al-Imāmah ..., p. 28.

²⁵Ibid., pp. 27-28.

²⁶Aḥmad Amīn, Fajr al-Islām (Qāhirah: Maktabah al-Nahḍat al-Miṣrīyah, 1374 H./1955 M.), p. 271.

²⁷al-Āṣifī, al-Imāmah ..., p. 28.

²⁸Muḥammad ibn Ya'qūb ibn Ishāq al-Kulaynī, al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī, Vol. I (Tih-rān: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, n.d.), pp. 199-202.

²⁹We will deal more with this issue later on in the discussion of the function of imām as guardian of the law sharī'ah.

³⁰The differences between the position of khilāfah and imāmah are dealt with by Andrea M. Farsakh in his article, "A Comparison of the Sunnī Caliphate and the Shī'ī Imamate," Muslim World, Vol. LIX, No. 2 (1969), p. 129.

³¹A group of Shī'īs called the Ghulāt, even make the imām more important than the prophet, because some of them consider the imām as the incarnation of the Deity. See al-Shahrastānī, al-Milal wa al-Nihāl, taḥqīq 'Abd al-'Azīz Muḥammad al-Wakīl, Vol. I (Qāhirah: Mu'assasah al-Ḥalabī wa sharikah, 1387 H./1968 M.), p. 173. See also Israel Friendländer, "The Heterodoxies of the Shiite in the Presentation of Ibn Hazm," Journal of the American Oriental Society, Vol. XXIX (1908), p. 12.

³²See al-Ḥillī, al-Alfayn, p. 2, n. 1.

³³See Qur'ān, II.124.

³⁴al-Ṭūsī, Risālah-'i Imāmat, p. 15.

³⁵See Miqdād Fāḍil al-Ḥillī, al-Nāfi' Yawm al-Ḥashr Sharḥ al-Bāb al-Ḥādī 'Ashar ([Tihrah: Markaz Nashr Kitāb], 1370 H.), p. 43.

CHAPTER II

THE NECESSITY OF THE IMĀMAH

The problem of the necessity of the imāmah is one of the controversial issues among Muslim theologians. However, the Twelver-Shī'īs and the Sunnīs are in agreement that imāmah is necessary to carry on the duties of the prophet in maintaining all aspects of the life of the Muslim community. Nevertheless, their agreement is limited only to this point; they hold different opinions concerning the details of this necessity.

As we have already explained in the previous chapter, the Twelver-Shī'īs developed a distinctive doctrine of the necessity of the imāmah. The reason given by their theologians for this necessity is that the imām is an expression of God's Grace (luṭf) toward His creation. Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī succinctly formulates the Twelver-Shī'ī doctrine of imāmah in his Tajrīd al-I'tiqād as follows:

The imām is [an expression of God's] Grace. Therefore, his [the imām's] designation is incumbent upon God, the Most High, in order to attain the purpose [of the creation of human beings].¹

This statement is seemingly contradictory at first glance. The first part of it speaks of God's Grace, which, in the Sunnī's understanding, is His absolute right. He proffers it whenever He wills and nobody can oblige Him to do so. Meanwhile, the second part insists that it is incumbent (wājib) upon Him to designate the imām, in order that He may confer His Grace upon His creation. The seeming contradiction lies between Grace (luṭf) and incumbency (wujūb). Speaking of God's Grace, one can understand that this act is done by Him simply out of His will. At the same time, the insistence that it is incumbent upon Him to perform His Grace is as if the Almighty were "ordered" to proffer it. How could He be obliged to perform this act when the act itself a matter of His own Grace and Mercy upon the human race? One becomes more puzzled if he considers a verse from the Qur'ān (XII.100) which states: "... Verily my Lord is Benignant unto whomsoever He willeth; Verily He is All-Knowing, All-Wise."² This verse, in its plain meaning, reveals that God is certainly the possessor of Grace, but there is nothing obligatory upon Him, as He does what He wills. We will see later, that the Twelver-Shī'īs give a rational explanation to this problem. The issue is one example of the differences between Twelver-Shī'ī and Sunnī thought. To some extent, the Twelver-Shī'īs give more emphasis to rationality and rational

considerations, while the Sunnīs have depended more on authority.

Why, then, did the Twelver-Shī'īs make it incumbent upon God to perform the designation of the imām, the expression of His own Grace? In fact, al-Ṭūsī's statement is not contradictory. The Grace and the incumbency he refers to have a special meaning, and the two are closely related. To understand their relationship, and thus to understand al-Ṭūsī's statement, we have to investigate the whole background of thought behind the statement which composes an integral part of al-Ṭūsī's Tajrīd al-I'tiqād. We believe that this statement is a conclusion drawn by him from a very careful study of a series of theological problems, namely:

- A. The concept of Divine Mission (al-bi'thah)
- B. The concept of God's Grace (al-luṭf)
- C. The concept of Religious Obligation (al-taklīf)
- D. The concept of God's Justice (al-'adl).³

These problems are not independent in themselves, rather they are a chain of ideas which constitute the Twelver-Shī'īs' doctrine of imāmah. Studying al-Ṭūsī's arrangement in his Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, one can easily conclude that according to him, imāmah is the continuation of the Divine Mission.⁴ This mission is the manifestation of His act of Grace. God's act of Grace has a very important impact upon His servant in relation to the Religious Obligation laid on them. The Religious

itself is a logical sequence of God's Justice. In other words, one can say that since God is the God of Justice, He never acts unjustly to His servants and never punishes them without valid reasons. One of the characteristics of His Justice is that He demands obedience (ṭā'ah) and hates disobedience (ma'siyah). Therefore, He laid Religious Obligation on His servants to be observed. In order that His purpose in the matter of Justice be realized, it is incumbent upon Him to perform a certain act with regard to His creation. This act is His Grace (luṭf), which brings the human race closer to obedience and keeps it away from disobedience. The expression of this Grace is the sending of prophets to the human race with the mission to lead them to the right path, and to teach what God wants them to do. According to the Twelver-Shī'īs, the Divine Mission is necessary at all times because "the void of a time from a prophetic ordinance (shar' nabī) is inconceivable ...",⁵ and therefore, each prophet has a vicegerent (waṣī) who continues his mission as the proof (ḥujjah) of God on earth.⁶ The idea that the earth will never be void of a ḥujjah, as we shall mention later on, is very important in its relation to the fact that Muḥammad, peace be upon him, is the last prophet sent to mankind. This idea is the very link securely connecting the prophecy (nubū'ah) with imāmah.

In al-Ṭūsī's statement mentioned above, we encounter

two things, Grace (lutf) and incumbency (wujūb), which we said carry a special meaning. We shall deal with the idea of God's Grace later on. As for incumbency, in Twelver-Shī'ī literature we find that the statement: "It is incumbent upon God to do something," is frequently used. As we mentioned above, this statement seems to imply that God was compelled or forced to perform a certain act. However, by such a statement, the Twelver-Shī'īs did not mean that God was compelled or forced. Since the phrase "incumbent upon God" will appear frequently in our discussion, it needs to be explained before we proceed to our main point. Though al-Ṭūsī himself uses this phrase several times in his Tajrīd,⁷ still he does not explain its meaning. Nevertheless, in another work, Talkhīṣ al-Muḥaṣṣal, he mentions that this matter is included in the discussion of Good and Evil.⁸ Criticizing Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī's opinion, al-Ṭūsī says that "... this 'incumbency' does not denote the ['obligation'] in Islamic canonical law as it is used by Muslim jurists"⁹

Up to this point, our understanding of the meaning of incumbency (wujūb) is still vague. Fortunately, a very helpful explanation is found in a contemporary Shī'ī work by Muḥammad Aṣaf al-Muḥsinī.¹⁰ First of all, he explains that the incumbent (al-wājib) has three different meanings:

1. Something which rationally deserves blame if it is neglected.

2. Something whose appearance is inevitable, since wisdom is violated if it does not appear.
3. Something which definitely has to be performed by God, even though it is possible that He does not do it.¹¹

Analyzing these meanings carefully, it is clear that the first one does not suit the issue under discussion, because God cannot be blamed even if He should neglect something. Moreover, God never performs a deed which deserves blame.¹² The second and the third ones seem to be more suitable for the issue. Violating wisdom, as we shall see later, is evil; and according to the Twelver-Shī'īs, God never perform Evil. The third one shows that in fact, God is capable of doing anything, including Evil. However, the perception of our intellect tells us that He never performs what is evil, due to His perfect essence (dhāt). al-Muḥsinī concludes that "if we say that it is 'incumbent' upon God to perform such and such, we mean that He, the Almighty, performs this act based on His far-reaching wisdom"¹³ which implies that it is contradictory to God's wisdom if that act is not done. al-Muḥsinī's conclusion throws light to what al-Ṭūsī and other Shī'ī theologians imply by 'incumbency'. This explanation shows that their notion of 'incumbency' attributed to God is totally different from 'obligation'.

(al-wujūb) attributed to mankind in Islamic canonical law (sharī'ah). In the sharī'ah, al-wujūb is that category of an act or duty in which the neglecter is blamed if he neglects it. In Twelver-Shī'ī theology, the meaning of al-wujūb attributed to God has nothing to do with the sharī'ah; rather it means that it is inconceivable and contradictory to God's wisdom that He should neglect what is incumbent upon Him.¹⁴

The Sunnī notion of wujūb is somewhat different from that of the Twelver-Shī'ī. From al-Ṭūsī's statement mentioned above, it is evident that wujūb arises out of the idea of Good and Evil. The Sunnīs do not seem to have laid much stress on these ideas, and therefore they did not develop a specific idea of wujūb with regard to God. The Sunnī idea on this matter is very simple, and it is summarized by Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (544-606 H.) in a short statement that "There is nothing incumbent upon God, the Most High."¹⁵ The reason given by al-Rāzī to support his statement is that "a regulation (hukm) cannot be established except by the shar', and [it is evident that] nobody controls the shar' [except God himself]."¹⁶ In other words, al-Rāzī insists that 'incumbency' is part of the canonical law revealed by God. Therefore, nobody can apply this regulation to God, or impose upon Him to do something. We can say that the different backgrounds of Twelver-Shī'īs and Sunnīs in

viewing the problem of incumbency has lead them to very different notions.

We mentioned in the beginning of this chapter that the Twelver-Shī'ī and the Sunnī theologians are in agreement that the imāmah is a necessity. Though they agree in this main point, yet they hold different opinions concerning the details of its necessity.

The first detailed issue is the way by which the necessity of imāmah can be known. From the commentary made by Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī to the Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, we learn that Twelver-Shī'ī theologians say that imāmah is necessary according to the intellect ('aql), while the Sunnīs are of the opinion that it can be known only by tradition (sam', i.e. a text from Qur'ān or Hadīth).¹⁷ In his own Anwār al-Malakūt fī sharḥ al-Yāqūt, al-Ḥillī tells us that the Twelver-Shī'īs believe that it is necessary according to the intellect as well as by tradition.¹⁸

The argument for the claim that imāmah is necessary according to the intellect is that possessors of intellect naturally submit to a leader who forbids them to do injustice among themselves, and who can arbitrate in their disputes. Thus, this leader can bring people closer to obedience and keep them away from disobedience. Had the imām not existed,

the community would be in chaos and anarchy. Therefore, it is inevitably known to everyone that imāmah is necessary.¹⁹

For the Twelver-Shī'ī claim that imāmah is also necessary by tradition, al-Ḥillī quotes a verse from the Qur'ān (V.41 [38]) in his Anwār al-Malakūt which supports this claim. This verse reads: "As for the man who stealeth and the woman who stealeth, cut 'ye off their (right) hands."²⁰ From this verse al-Ḥillī concludes that God, the Most High, commanded the punishment of the guilty persons, in this case to cut off the thieves' hands. Only the imām, and not the whole community, is authorized to execute this punishment. Since this kind of task cannot be accomplished without an imām, it is, by implication, a command of God to establish the imām.²¹ Another evidence is a Prophetic tradition that "The leaders are from the Quraysh."²² al-Ḥillī argues that although this tradition is in report (khābar) form, yet it implies the imperative (amr) meaning, namely, that the imām should be established from the Quraysh tribe. It is in this implication that the imperative effect can be felt, and hence, the establishment of the imāmah is a necessity.²³

The argument for those who claim that the necessity of imāmah can be known only by tradition is carefully explained by al-Māwardī in his famous al-Ahkām al-Sultānīyah. He says:

The imām is [supposed] to advocate the problems related to the sharī'ah, and it was already a possibility for intellect not to reach the devotional matter by imāmah, [and therefore] the intellect is not the way to know its necessity. The intellect only obliged each of the possessors of intellect not to be unjust ... [then] the canonical law came [and] ordered that religious matters be entrusted to its authority.²⁴

To support this argument, al-Māwardī quotes a verse from the Qur'ān (IV.59) which reads: "O ye who believe! obey God and obey the Apostle and those vested with authority from among you."²⁵

al-Qāḍī Abū Ya'ālā (d. 458 H.) is in accord with al-Māwardī. However, he explain his argument more easily. He says that the indication of the necessity of imāmah by tradition (sam') is that

by intellect we could not know what is obligatory (fard) and what is permissible (mubāh), nor the lawful or the unlawful things, nor the good or evil ones. These things could be known only by tradition. ... Therefore, the necessity of imāmah [also] could be known only by tradition.²⁶

The second issue is: Who is the authority to designate the imām? This question was brought forward in relation to the first issue. The Twelver-Shī'īs argued that

the designation (al-nass) of the imām is incumbent upon God. This argument, as is evident from al-Ṭūsī's statement mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, bases itself on the view that imām is an expression of Grace from God. Since it is incumbent upon Him to proffer this Grace, it is also incumbent upon Him to designate the imām.²⁷ On the other hand, the Sunnīs hold that designation of the imām is incumbent upon the intellectuals (al-ʿuqalāʾ) among the Muslims, and in this case, the influential people (ahl al-hall wa al-ʿaqd).²⁸ As far as imāmah is concerned, this issue, from the Twelver-Shīʿī point of view, is closely connected with the problems of Grace (luṭf) and Divine Mission (biʿthah). We shall discuss this when we come to analyze these problems.

The third issue also arises from the first, and has a very close relation to the second. This is the question: What is the suitable method of appointment of an imām? Since this issue is one of the two important implications of the doctrine pertaining to the necessity of imāmah, we will treat it in our third chapter. Nevertheless, here we note that the Twelver-Shīʿīs insist that the designation should be made by divine appointment (al-nass),²⁹ while the Sunnīs insist on election (al-ikhtiyār).³⁰

As mentioned above, to understand the thought involved in al-Ṭūsī's statement pertaining to the necessity

of imāmah, we must investigate the chain of ideas which constitutes the Twelver-Shī'ī's doctrine of imāmah. It seems to be better and easier to discuss our topic if we follow the arrangement employed by al-Ṭūsī in his Tajrīd al-I'tiqād. Thus, we shall begin our discussion by investigating the concept of God's Justice (al-'adl). After that, we shall discuss the concept of Religious Obligation (al-taklīf), followed by the concept of God's Grace (al-luṭf). Finally, we shall examine the concept of Divine Mission (al-bi'thah), in which we shall discuss the relationship between bi'thah and imāmah with regard to the problem of the necessity of imāmah.

A. God's Justice (al-'adl)

1. Its meaning

The meaning of the word 'adl is the same as al-inṣāf (justice), which is the opposite of al-zulm (injustice, or tyranny). It also means al-istiḳāmah (uprightness, integrity). The definition given by Ibn Manẓūr is as follows: "Justice is what has been established in the souls that it is upright. It is the opposite of injustice [or tyranny]." ³¹

In relation to the attribute of God, al-'adl can be explained as follows: "Regarding the names of God, the

Most High, Justice is that which could not be diverted through emotion (hawā) to the effect that [the Just one] does injustice in [His] judgment."³² Parallel to this, E. W. Lane explains: "al-ʿadl as one of the names of God means He whose desire does not cause to incline or decline, so that he should deviate from the right course in judgment."³³

As a technical term used among the theologians, al-ʿadl is one of the many attributes ascribed to God, the Most High. In the section dealing with God's Justice, neither al-Ṭūsī in his Tajrīd al-Iʿtiqād nor his commentators define what is meant by al-ʿadl. However, Miqdād Fāḍil al-Ḥillī's commentary to the famous al-Bāb al-Hādī ʿAshar, defines al-ʿadl as follows: "Justice is that, the Most High is far removed from every evil act and from being remiss in what is incumbent."³⁴ Another definition gives us a clearer idea of what al-ʿadl means is: "al-ʿadl means ... that God the Almighty is just and not tyrannical, and He did not perform what is considered evil by the sound intellect and righteous feeling."³⁵

The basic foundation of the discussion on ʿadl is the notion that God is All-Wise (ḥakīm) in the sense that He does not perform evil and is not remiss in what is incumbent. It is from this notion that the Twelver-Shīʿīs develop their idea about ʿadl and its consequences. To understand this

basic foundation, we have to analyze their concept of Beauty (al-husn) and Ugliness (al-qubh), on which, in fact, their idea about God's 'adl is based.

In the beginning of his exposition of God's deeds, al-Ṭūsī tries to explain the concept of Good and Evil from the Twelver-Shī'ī point of view. His very short statement on this matter reads: "The deed characterized by the excessive [aspect] is either Good or Evil."³⁶ Analyzing this statement, we see that al-Ṭūsī is trying to categorize the deed (al-fi'l) into two groups:

- a. If the excess character is involved in the aspect of goodness, the deed is called Good.
- b. If the excess is involved in the aspect of evilness, the deed is called Evil.

Based on these categories, the Twelver-Shī'īs developed their idea about the five principle (al-aḥkām al-khamsah) in Islam. From the Good they derive the necessity of the obligatory (al-wājib), the permissible (al-mubāh), the recommended (al-mandūb), and the reprehensible (al-makrūh). From Evil, they establish the unlawful or the forbidden (al-ḥaram).³⁷

Meanwhile, Miqdād Fāḍil al-Ḥillī in his commentary to al-Bāb al-Ḥadī 'Ashar points out that Good and Evil are used in three senses:

First: The Good is something related to perfection; whereas Evil is related to imperfection. Knowledge, therefore, is Good, because it is a perfection to the possessor; whereas ignorance is Evil because it is an imperfection.

Second: The Good is something which is in conformity with nature. Evil is the opposite.

Third: The Good is something which deserves God's commendation and reward; Evil is something which deserves His blame and punishment.³⁸

Miqdād, Fāḍil al-Ḥillī goes on to explain that there is no disagreement among theologians concerning the first two meanings: they all agree that reason is the judge of Good and Evil in these points. Nevertheless, they differ as to the third. According to him, the Ash'arīs insist that reason does not have any authority or capability to determine what is Good or Evil in this connection. Only the shar' has such authority.³⁹ Contrary to this, the Twelver-Shī'īs argue that both Good and Evil are rational; as al-Ṭūsī puts it: "And both [Good and Evil] are rational, since even without any revelation, the excellence of beneficence and the evil of oppression are known."⁴⁰ By this statement, the Twelver-Shī'īs emphasize their trust in rationality, which is another example of the importance given by them to it.

To support this opinion, al-Ṭūsī puts forward three considerations. We mentioned the first one in the statement above, that in general the goodness of several things and the evil of other things are necessarily known to everyone without any assistance from revelation.⁴¹ By reasoning, every intelligent person will come to the conclusion of the excellence of beneficence and praise it, and of the evil of offense and blame it. According to al-Ḥillī, this is a necessary principle (ḥukm ḍarūrī) without any doubt about it, and it was not derived from revelation. To prove this, al-Ḥillī says that the Brahmins and heretical people acknowledge such a principle without any recognition of the revelation.⁴²

The second consideration proposed by al-Ṭūsī is that "both [Good and Evil] would be absolutely absent if they were established by revelation."⁴³ al-Ḥillī's commentary on this explains that if we did not know the excellence and the evil of things by reason, then we could not determine the evil of lie, and consequently its occurrence through the agency of God would be possible. If He revealed to us that a thing is Evil, we could not acknowledge its evil; and if He revealed to us that a thing is Good, neither could we acknowledge its excellence because of the possibility of His lying. Besides, it would also be possible that He has ordered us to do evil and forbidden us from good things.⁴⁴ About

this, al-Qushjī in his commentary to the Tajrīd al-I'tiqād adds the explanation that if Good and Evil could not be established except by revelation, then they were not established originally. The reason is that knowledge of the excellence of an act commanded by revelation, and knowledge of the evil of what it forbade or of what revealed its evil, all depend on the assumption that a lie is Evil and is impossible to come from God, and the commanding Evil and forbidding Good are an offense and mockery. If this assumption is based on reason, then our knowledge is affirmed. On the contrary, if it is based on revelation, then it will come to a vicious circle: Good and Evil are dependent upon revelation, while revelation itself is conditioned by Good and Evil.⁴⁵

Thirdly, al-Ṭūsī proposed that if Good and Evil could not be known by reason, then "there is a possibility of inversion."⁴⁶ This means, al-Ḥillī comments, that what we consider as Evil is Good,⁴⁷ or, as al-Shīrāzī puts it, the revelation could determine Evil as Good and Good as Evil. This, al-Shīrāzī continues, is repudiated automatically because it is self-evident that under no circumstances does revelation ever regard killing as Good, or Good as Evil, without any valid reason.⁴⁸

Basing himself on these propositions, al-Ḥillī, in his commentary to the Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, concludes that

"all these regulations are depended on rational decisions, and, therefore, Good and Evil are not determined by lawful commands or prohibitions, nor by customs."⁴⁹

In addition to these considerations, al-Ṭūsī also furnishes several rebuttals to the position taken by the Ash'arīs, for example, the following two:

a). al-Ṭūsī says: "... and [it is permissible] to penetrate the lesser evil of two evils"⁵⁰ According to al-Hillī in his commentary, this is intended to be a response to two specious arguments forwarded by the Ash'arīs. First, they say, if a lie is Evil, then the lie which is intended to rescue the prophets from unjust people is also Evil. The latter is absurd because it is good to rescue the prophet, and as such, the former is also absurd. Second, the Ash'arīs say, if someone promises to lie tomorrow, then if it is good for him to be truthful by fulfilling his promise, the excellence of the lie is inevitable; but if it is evil for him to be truthful (by fulfilling his promise to lie), then truthfulness is Evil, and so the lie is Good.⁵¹ The response of the Twelver-Shī'īs to these specious arguments, as explained by al-Hillī in his commentary to the Tajrīd al-I'tiqād is as follows:

In their response to the first argument, the emphasis is that the rescue of the prophet outweighs truthfulness;

thus, its omission is more evil than the lie. As for this point, it is obligatory to choose the lesser of the two evils, in this case, the lie. The reason for the choice is that it contains a meaningful advantage which is preponderant over truthfulness. In their response to the second argument, they say that it is obligatory to neglect the lie promised for tomorrow; because, if one lies, one performs a deed with two evil aspects--namely the decision to lie and its performance--and with only one good aspect, namely truthfulness (by fulfilling his promise). On the other hand, if one does not fulfill one's promise to lie, one performs a deed with two good aspects, namely the omission of the lie itself and the decision to omit it; and thus, one performs only one evil aspect, namely the lie itself (since one does not fulfill one's promise).⁵²

b) The Ash'arīs argue that if Good and Evil are rational, there is nothing rationally Good and Evil about the creature's deeds. According to them, this statement is untenable.⁵³ The Ash'arīs argue that the subject (al-'abd) is compelled in all his deeds, and nothing rationally Good and Evil comes from the deeds of one who is compelled. The matter, they continue, is different if we say that both Good and Evil are revealed; and, therefore, the deeds of the compelled person are lawfully Good or Evil.⁵⁴ al-Ṭūsī responds to this argument by stating that "The compulsion is false (bāṭil)."⁵⁵

He supports this statement by another one saying that "Necessity requires that our acts are dependent upon us."⁵⁶

It seems from these statements that the Twelver-Shī'ī theologians are of the opinion that human beings are free agents

(fā'ilūn bi-al-ikhtiyār) in all of their acts, Good or Evil,

because all of them happen in accordance with their intention.⁵⁷ Regarding a creature's act, and in many other things

as well, the Twelver-Shī'īs hold the same position as the Mu'tazilīs, who assert that the creature is the creator of his own actions. This is unlike the Sunnīs, who argue that God is the creator of all the actions of His creatures.⁵⁸

This problem, important as it may be for theological studies, is not our primary concern here. However, it is important to note that the Twelver-Shī'ī notion that human beings are free agents, is the argument on which their notion of Religious Obligation (al-taklīf) is based. As free agents, they argue, human beings have the power to do what they are responsible for.⁵⁹

2. God does not perform Evil and is not remiss in what is incumbent

The explanation given in the previous section provides some indication of the Twelver-Shī'ī concept of Good and Evil. As we understand from their argument, they argue that Good and Evil are rational. On the basis of this

principle they formulate their concept of God's Justice. Their notion of 'adl is that God is far removed from every Evil and from being remiss in what is incumbent. They hold that "the whole of God's acts are wise and just; there is no injustice, outrage, lie, imperfection or atrocity in them."⁶⁰ al-Ṭūsī provides reason for this position by stating that "His [God] being self-sufficient and His knowledge [of Evil and of His self-sufficiency] indicate the absence of Evil from the Almighty's deeds."⁶¹

The Twelver-Shī'īs' position is the same as that of the Mu'tazilīs on the issue that God does not perform Evil. The indications given to support this position are that God is All-Knowing about everything and that He is in no need of things at all. Thus He knows the evil of Evil, and He also knows that He is in no need of it. It is known by necessity that whoever is in this situation will never perform Evil. Evil is committed only by the person who is ignorant of it or who is ignorant of his being in no need of it.⁶²

In accordance with this indication, al-Hillī exposes the argument forwarded by the Mu'tazilīs. He says that they argue that God has a motive to perform Good, and He has no deterrent from doing it; while He has a deterrent from doing Evil, but He does not have any motive to do it.⁶³ The factor which would deter Him from doing Evil is His knowledge

of Evil as we mentioned above. As for the lack of motive, al-Hillī says that there are two things which could become a motive to do Evil. The first is the need of it, and the second is the wisdom of it. Since it is of necessity known to everyone that it is impossible for God to be in need of Evil, as well as that there is no wisdom in it, therefore, it is obvious that the motives do not exist. Hence, God does not perform Evil.⁶⁴

According to the Twelver-Shī'īs, if it be possible that God could perform Evil or be remiss in what is incumbent, several consequences would occur as a result. One is that the trust in His promise (wa'd) and His threat (wa'id) would be eliminated, because of the possibility that He could be a liar. The second is that it is possible for Him to authorize a liar to perform miracles, and this would lead to doubt about the truthfulness of the prophets; and as a result, He could no more use miracles as a proof for the prophets.⁶⁵

The Sunnī position on this issue is in contradiction to that of the Shī'īs and the Mu'tazillīs. According to al-Ash'arī's creed which is popularly recognized among the Sunnī theologians, there is nothing Good or Evil on earth except what God wishes.⁶⁶ On the basis of this creed, they insist that the term Good and Evil do not apply with regard to God's acts. Therefore, in his al-Luma', al-Ash'arī says

that God is free to inflict pain on infants in the next life, or to punish the believers, or to put the unbelievers in paradise, and these are not Evil with regard to His acts.⁶⁷

This insistence leads to the conclusion that no evil adjectives can be applied to God's acts, even if they are judged Evil by reason, and that nothing is incumbent upon Him.

Therefore, the Ash'arīs insist that God is the creator of all actions, whether Good or Evil. This opinion results from their conception that Good and Evil are judged by revelation or shar'.

The Twelver-Shī'ī argument on this problem triggered two questions:

- a) Is God able to do Evil or not, and
- b) Does He act with or without a purpose or goal?

Their answer to the first question is yes, like the rest of the Muslim theologians. al-Ṭūsī says that God does not perform Evil "in spite of His ability (qudrah) to [perform] it, based on the universality [of the prevalence] of the relation...."⁶⁸ In his commentary on this issue, al-Hillī states that Evil is included among the possibilities (al-mumkināt), and that these possibilities are included under potentiality (al-maḥdūr). God is powerful (qādir, capable) over these potentialities. Thus, Evil is included under His capability, and therefore He is able to perform it.⁶⁹

The Twelver-Shī'īs say that if Evil occurs, its occurrence connotes His ignorance of its evil and of His being in no need of it. Since these are impossible for Him, so the occurrence of Evil through Him is also impossible.

To the second question, the Twelver-Shī'īs answer that God certainly acts with a purpose. al-Ṭūsī argues that "the lack of purpose [in His act] necessitates the baselessness [of His act]." ⁷⁰ This argument is based on the Twelver-Shī'ī conception that God does not perform Evil. Explaining what al-Ṭūsī means by this argument, al-Ḥillī refers to the Mu'tazilīs' position that any act without purpose is baseless. The baseless act, according to Mu'tazilīs, is Evil. Since God does not perform Evil, therefore His act certainly has purpose. ⁷¹

Those who disagree with this position hold that if God's act has purpose, then He is seeking perfection by doing it, which indicates that He is imperfect in His essence (dhāt), and this is impossible. ⁷² al-Shahrastānī (d. 548 H.) adds to this, saying that

... no final cause prompted God to create the universe, because He cannot profit or suffer harm from anything, nor can anything incite Him to create for the sake of the creature. His activity (gan') is the cause of everything, and His activity has no cause." ⁷³

The Twelver-Shī'īs contradict the above-mentioned assertion by basing their opinion on what appears to be a logical argument, that

The imperfection has an effect only if the purpose and advantage of His act is accruing to Himself. If the advantage is accruing to other than Him, then the imperfection has no effect.⁷⁴

In connection with this assertion, the Twelver-Shī'īs hold that "the purpose in the bringing of mankind into existence is the advantage (maṣlaḥa) which accrues to them (that is, ~~Allāh creates~~ man not for His own glory, but for man's good)." ⁷⁵

3. God wills obedience and hates disobedience

This issue is the consequence of the above-mentioned issues, namely the problem of Good and Evil, and the position that God does not perform Evil and is not remiss in what is incumbent. The Twelver-Shī'īs hold that God is far removed from doing anything which is considered Evil by reason. Since He does not perform Evil, it is only logical that He does not demand such a thing either, because the All-Wise demands only Good. By using one's reason, one arrives at the conclusion that those who know the hideousness of Evil will neither perform nor demand it. God is the All-Knowing: He knows what

is Good and what is Evil. Not only does He know that to demand Evil is evil in itself, but He knows also that to repudiate Good is evil. On the basis of this notion, al-Ṭūsī states that "to demand an Evil thing is evil and likewise to neglect the demand for Good, of commanding and of prohibiting."⁷⁶ Therefore, the Twelver-Shī'īs insist that God wills only Good, including obedience (tā'ah) and hates Evil, including disobedience (ma'siyah).

If we look carefully at al-Ṭūsī's statement, we find that it explains the position taken by the Twelver-Shī'īs regarding one of the most controversial questions among Muslim theologians, namely: Does God will obedience and hate disobedience? This question will lead to another question: Does He will unbelievers to be obedient and to be believers?

To answer the question from the Twelver-Shī'ī point of view, we have to consider two points:

- a. that God is far removed from Evil, and
- b. that man is a free agent for his own deeds.

Concerning the first point, we have explained that one cannot attribute any Evil to God, because He is All-Wise. His wisdom prevents Him from performing Evil. To demand disobedience or infidelity is certainly Evil in its nature, and opposes His wisdom; and therefore God is far from it. His

wisdom also requires that He command only what He wills, and forbid what He hates.⁷⁷ As for the second point, we have also mentioned that to be an unbeliever or believer depends on the person himself. He can determine for himself which state he is going to choose. The fact of the existence of infidelity and the abundance of unbelief has nothing to do with the question based on the argument that man is a free agent of his own. Commenting on al-Tūsī's statement, al-Hillī says that

God the Most High wills obedience from the believer as well as from the unbeliever whether it is materialized or not, and [He] hates disobedience whether it is materialized or not.⁷⁸

Concerning the question under discussion, the Sunnīs hold a position different from that of the Twelver-Shī'īs. While the Twelver-Shī'īs insist that man is the free agent of his own deeds, the Sunnīs hold that man's deeds are created by God. This means that all the actions of man, whether Good or Evil, are in accordance with the will of God, and man cannot perform anything without being given the power to do so. Belief (īmān) and unbelief (kufr) are also created by God and therefore, according to the Sunnīs, God wills that the believer become a believer and the unbeliever become an infidel, as al-Nāsafī (d. 537 H.) implies:

Allāh is the Creator of all the actions of His creatures whether of Unbelief or of Belief, of obedience or of disobedience. And they are all of them by His will and desire, by His judgment, by His ruling, and by His decree."⁷⁹

This statement is in accordance with content of several verses of the Qur'ān which emphasize this point. Two verses are of special value in this connection; the first is XIII:16 which states: "God (alone) is the Creator of all things"⁸⁰ and the second is XXXVII:96: "God hath created you and what ye make."⁸¹

On the other hand, one may refer to one verse of the Qur'ān (XVIII:29) which seems to give support to position taken by the Twelver-Shī'īs. This verse reads: "The truth is from your Lord; so let him who pleaseth believe; and let him who pleaseth disbelieve."⁸² Analyzing the interpretation of this verse, one can easily understand that it is up to everyone to be a believer or to be an infidel. This implies that our deeds are the product of our own will, which is in accordance with the Twelver-Shī'ī concept. However, in response to this interpretation, one can also pick another Qur'ānic verse to support the Sunnī point of view, for example X:44 which reads: "Say thou ... 'I own not for myself, any harm nor any benefit save what willeth God'"⁸³ We do not need, however, to go through all the arguments on this

question, since our study is not intended to give details on this issue. Our purpose in expounding this problem is to give a background to the justification--from the Twelver-Shī'ī point of view--of the following discussion, namely Religious Obligation (al-taklīf).

In summing up what we have explained in the previous pages, the following points may be considered to be the important parts of the Twelver-Shī'ī conception about God's Justice.

- a. The emphasis on the elimination of any kind of Evil from God's acts.
- b. Evil, with respect to God's acts, is what is opposed to His wisdom. Therefore He is deterred from doing Evil by His wisdom.
- c. Injustice is Evil, as is the neglect of what is incumbent, the repudiation of Good, demanding Evil, and acting without purpose.
- d.. The concept that man is the creator of his own deeds, in the sense that he is free to do what he wants or to refrain from doing anything, is the basis on which the justification of reward and punishment are based.

B. Religious Obligation (al-taklīf)

In the discussion of God's Justice (al-'adl) two points are of considerable importance in connection with the discussion of Religious Obligation (al-taklīf). These two points are:

1. That man is a free agent of his voluntary deeds, and therefore he is responsible for them all.
2. The fact that God acts with purpose (gharad), based on the argument that without purpose, His acts are vain, and this is Evil.

These points are the main arguments that justify the necessity of Religious Obligation for human beings.

Before we proceed to explain the Twelver-Shī'ī argument on this problem, it is of importance to disclose the meaning of the word "taklīf".

"Taklīf" means: burdening, commissioning, charging. It also means commandment (of God), burden, inconvenience, and discomfort. In this case, the word taklīf is related to the word "kulfah" which means: discomfort, trouble and inconvenience. On the bases of these meanings, we can interpret the meaning of taklīf to be: commanding or burdening anyone to act in a way that involves inconveniences and discomforts. As D. B. Macdonald explains: "Taklīf is imposing

a requisition or constraint upon any one; it requires an action in which there is difficulty and trouble"84

If we project these meanings on the religious life, we find that the word taklīf is used as a technical term among Muslim theologians as well as the jurists (fuqahā'). On the basis of the meanings mentioned above, we can construct a definition for this term with regard to the religious life. We can say for example, that taklīf is God's commandment given to human beings to be practiced or observed in accordance with certain rules. Macdonald writes: "Technically it means the necessity which lies on the creatures of Allāh to believe and act as He has revealed to them"85 This parallels the definition given by Thānawī as follows: "Taklīf is the compulsion of a deed where there is hardship and inconvenience."86

Macdonald's and Thānawī's definitions clarify what taklīf is. Taklīf is an obligation or a guideline given by God to His subjects which serves to regulate their actions. Since this obligation should be followed, therefore His servants are under the liability of God's laws. By giving such an obligation, God puts a responsibility upon the shoulders of his creatures. Therefore, taklīf can simply be explained as "Religious Obligation," and by the term "Religious" we mean the whole sharī'ah which regulates mankind's life.

Concerning the Twelver-Shī'ī opinion on taklīf, al-Ṭūsī does not mention any explanation as to its meaning or definition in his Tajrīd al-I'tiq'ad. Rather, he proceeds to discuss the issues related to it. However, in his short treatise entitled Fuṣūl-i Khvājah-'i Ṭūsī, he explains the meaning of taklīf as follows:

The taklīf of the Creator, the Most High, means His order to His servants concerning their interest, and His ordering not to do what may result in their disaster.⁸⁷

This explanation makes it clear that taklīf, as interpreted by al-Ṭūsī, is none other than God's "dos' and dont's" which He commanded His servants in order to regulate their actions to their own advantage.

It is noteworthy that we find another explanation given by al-Ḥillī, which throws more light upon the Twelver-Shī'ī understanding of taklīf. al-Ḥillī defines taklīf as:

The will of those to whom obedience is obligatory in a way that involves hardship, in the primary aspect, on condition that it is notified beforehand.⁸⁸

Four things can be extracted from this definition which show the element of taklīf from the Twelver-Shī'ī point of view. (1) The first element is "those to whom obedience is obligatory." This element is a restriction on the

authority to establish taklīf, namely those to whom obedience is obligatory. God definitely is the authority to lay taklīf. However, according to al-Hillī, it also includes "the prophet, the imām, the master, the parent, and the benefactor."⁸⁹

(2) The second element is that taklīf should be laid "in the primary aspect," which means that the commandment given by anyone of them would be in effect if no one else had given the same commandment before. Therefore, al-Hillī argues that "the command of the parent to his child to perform ṣalāt is not a taklīf, because God had commanded it."⁹⁰ (3) The

third is that this taklīf involves "whatever has hardship."

This element shows the nature of taklīf which is derived from the word kulfah, which means inconvenience. If there is no difficulty whatsoever in meeting the taklīf, then it loses its nature. One cannot find any religious obligation without accompanying difficulties in performing it, either physical or spiritual. For example, to exercise ṣalāt five times a day as is obligatory upon every Muslim, is certainly difficult, even for pious Muslims. The degree of difficulty might differ from one person to another, yet its inconveniences is still there. To perform zuhr prayer while one is busy in his office, is difficult, unless he really undertakes this command wholeheartedly. So also is the command to pay zakāt, etc.

(4) The fourth element is that the receiver of taklīf, namely the mukallaf, should be notified beforehand about the

taklif, to prepare him for the fulfillment of what is commanded of him. This element is an indication of the Justice of God. As we will explain below, the purpose of taklif is the indication (al-ta'rid, offering) of reward, and therefore, giving notice beforehand is one of the condition of taklif. Besides, if man did not know the taklif beforehand, he would not be in a position to obey it, as is confirmed by al-Hilli: "If the mukallaf did not know the will of the mukallif [the giver of taklif], he would not be a mukallaf."⁹¹

Keeping in mind al-Tusi's explanation of taklif as discussed above, we may now proceed to analyze some issue related to it. The first one is its excellence. From the explanation of al-Tusi, we understand that these Religious Obligations are for the advantage of man himself. On the basis of the idea of Good and Evil, together with the concept that man is a free agent of his own deeds, the Twelver-Shi'is developed their doctrine of taklif. If man is a free agent, then he is fully responsible for whatever action he performs. However, man's action cannot be characterized as rewardable or punishable unless God has revealed to man His command which specifies the "dos" and "dons". Upon becoming subject to taklif, man's actions are then rewardable or punishable in accordance with this taklif. As a result, in this case, the taklif is excellent because it brings advantage

to man, as al-Tūsī points out: "And the taklīf is excellent because it contains an advantage which could not be realized without it."⁹² The advantage it brings is the indication of reward and punishment in relation to Religious Obligation. If taklīf is not imposed, this indication will not take place. By commanding the performance of obligation, God indicates (or offers) the reward to those who obey His command. Likewise, by giving the command not to do a forbidden thing, He indicates the punishment to the transgressor. What we have just explained is the literal meaning of ta'rīd, (indication, offer). Yet according to the Twelver-Shī'īs, ta'rīd means more than that; it means that God has placed His servants in a position which enables them to gain reward. As al-Hillī says:

The meaning of our saying that taklīf is an indication of reward, is that the mukallif [God] made the mukallaf [man] with such characteristics that lead him to the achievement of reward, and instigate him to the means by which he is able to achieve it [the reward].⁹³

In other words, we may say that the excellence of taklīf lies in the fact that man is a free agent to do whatever he wishes. The Justice of God, meanwhile, necessitate that He should indicate, in the form of taklīf, the reward He promised to those who obey His commands. This

indication makes it possible for man to fulfill his duty, and as such, to gain the promised reward.

In indicating this reward, according to the Twelver-Shī'ī theologians, God does not discriminate between the believers and the unbelievers. He offers it to both of them, and this is another argument for the excellence of taklīf,⁹⁴ and an evidence of the Justice of God. This account makes it clear that taklīf is also imposed on the unbeliever, in the sense that God has placed him in a position which enables him to gain the reward. Unfortunately, he chooses the other way, because he is free to determine his own act. Therefore, the unbeliever deserves punishment due to his transgression.

The position of the Sunnīs concerning the imposition of taklīf on the unbeliever, in one way parallels the position of the Twelver-Shī'īs. The former also hold the opinion that God certainly imposed taklīf on the infidel, as is implied by al-Ash'arī in his al-ibānah.⁹⁵ Nevertheless, the argument given by al-Ash'arī is based on the opinion of God's effective determination of events, including man's deeds. God is the creator of these deeds, and He does not allow to man's power alone any effect upon his deeds. Man's power will have an effect only if God supports it with His own power. If God wills an action to happen, then man has

the power to do it, and this is called iktisāb (acquisition).⁹⁶ However, the infidel cannot fulfill the command of God, because it is not incumbent upon God to give power to him to exercise what He commands, as is indicated by the Qur'ān LXVIII.42: "On the Day that the skin shall be laid bare, (i.e. befallen an affliction), and they shall be called upon to prostrate in obeisance, but they shall not be able (to do it)."⁹⁷ This verse, according to al-Ash'arī, is "a proof of what we believe ... that it is not necessary for God, if He commands them, to enable them to fulfill His commandment."⁹⁸

Another issue which deserves explanation is the necessity of taklīf. Mention has been made that taklīf plainly connotes the "dos' and dont's" which are given to man by God as a guidance for his actions. Besides their concept that man is a free agent, the Twelver-Shī'ī theologians hold that man is given the inclination towards evil desires; and as a result, man tends to pursue and give way to his evil desires. God, according to the Twelver-Shī'īs, is the God of Justice. He neither performs evil nor wills it. If He did not reveal His taklīf, in which he indicates, among other things, His punishment to those who perform Evil, then He Himself would be instigating the performance of Evil. There is no doubt that instigating Evil is Evil. Therefore,

it is incumbent upon God to lay His taklīf upon His servants, because it is a restraint upon Evil things.⁹⁹ This is confirmed by al-Ṭūsī's statement: "And it [the taklīf] is incumbent [upon God to impose] because it restraint [the servants] from Evil."¹⁰⁰

As for the Sunnīs, since they emphasize the omnipotence of God, they insist that there is nothing incumbent upon God, as al-Rāzī states in his Muḥaṣṣal.¹⁰¹

Returning to the necessity of taklīf, we find at least two verses in the Qur'ān which imply that it is incumbent upon God to impose the taklīf. The first is to be found in XVI.9 in which God proclaims: "And upon God rests the guidance unto the right way, and of them ... are the deviating ones."¹⁰² The second is God's saying in XCII.12: "Verily on Us (dependeth) the guidance."¹⁰³ These verses could well be used by the Twelver-Shī'īs to establish their claim of the incumbency of taklīf upon God. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that Sunnī theologians failed to take these verses into their consideration. What appear to be the solution of the Sunnīs with regard to these verses is again the doctrine of the omnipotence of God: He is the originator of everything, who can create when and what He wills.

C. God's Grace (al-luṭf)

In Twelver-Shī'ī theology, the role of God's Grace with respect to the doctrine of imāmah is as important as the notion of taklīf itself. The Grace (luṭf) is closely related to taklīf because the former is considered to be the consequence of the latter. To understand the relationship between luṭf and taklīf, first of all we must expose the meaning of luṭf.

The word "luṭf" is a verbal noun which means: kindness, benevolence and friendliness, but it also means "the help and protection of God." With regard to the relationship between God and His servants, the word "luṭf" is closely connected with one of the names of God, namely latīf, which, according to Ibn Manẓūr, means: "He who is the Most Loving and Caring towards His servants."¹⁰⁴ Ibn Manẓūr further explains the meaning of God's luṭf as "His guidance and His preservation."¹⁰⁵ Ibn Manẓūr furthermore amplifies his explanation by citing Ibn al-Athīr as follows:

The Most Gentle (al-latīf) is He who combines loving and caring towards His servants in deeds, with the knowledge of the subtleties of interests and causes it to reach those whom He had destined among His creation.¹⁰⁶

In this meaning, two aspects are involved in lutf, namely God's guidance and His preservation. That is to say that lutf consists of a kind of guidance which inclines man to fulfill the commands of God, and a kind of preservation which keeps him away from committing the forbidden things. In this sense, its meaning is in accordance with the definition of lutf as a theological term, given by al-Hillī as follows:

Lutf is that which brings the creature near to obedience and keeps him away from disobedience. And it is no part (hazz) of ability (tamkīn), and it does not go as far as compulsion (al-iljā').¹⁰⁷

Beside the two aspects of lutf mentioned above, there are another two which appear in al-Hillī's definition. The first one is that lutf is not included under the ability (qudrah, the power) to perform a certain deed, because "power in actions is not lutf, but rather a condition of their possibility."¹⁰⁸ The second aspect is that lutf is not a compulsion of any sort. If it is compulsory, "it contradicts the taklīf,"¹⁰⁹ which in itself is not compulsory; rather it is an indication of reward. Since--as we have seen--lutf is considered as the consequence of taklīf, therefore it is impossible that it should contradict taklīf.

From these explanations, we may attempt to draw a

clear picture of lutf. We can say that lutf is the kindness of God that bestowed upon man, which brings man near to the obedience that God obliges him to perform, and keeps him away from the disobedience God commands him to avoid.

The relationship between lutf and taklif, from the Twelver-Shī'ī point of view, revolves around the purpose of taklif, namely the indication of reward toward man by commanding him to obey God's laws. Central to Twelver-Shī'ī theology is the concept that man, besides being a free agent of his deeds, is also given the inclination to give way to his own Evil desires.¹¹⁰ Since God created this inclination, He knows that man always tend not to obey Him, whereas He Himself wills obedience and hates disobedience. In order that His purpose, namely the indication of reward towards man which leads him to obedience, could be achieved, it is incumbent upon God to give something to His servants, and this "something" is lutf. al-Tūsī beautifully describes this notion in his Fusūl by saying:

If the Creator the Most High knows that the servants do not adhere to the taklif unless there is an action taken by Him for their sake, then that action must of necessity issue from Him, so that His purpose would not be contradicted. That action is called lutf (Grace). And therefore, Grace is incumbent [upon Him.]¹¹¹

By this description, al-Ṭūsī presents the notion of the incumbency of luṭf. The goal of taklīf is for man to obey, and God knows that without giving luṭf, man would not obey. Therefore, luṭf is incumbent upon Him, as can be seen from al-Ṭūsī's description in his Tajrīd al-I'tiqād: "Luṭf is incumbent [upon God] in order that [His] purpose could be achieved by it."¹¹²

There are, however, some objection to the insistence upon the incumbency of luṭf. In his refutation of this insistence, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī attacks the very element of luṭf. We have seen that luṭf is preference (tarjīh) of the cause of an action without any compulsion, which means giving something to the servant which will bring him near to the obedience and keep him away from the disobedience. To this, al-Rāzī argues:

The cause leading to that point [compulsion] is possible of existence in itself (mumkin al-wujūd fī nafsih). Since God the Almighty has power over possibilities (al-mumkināt), then God the Almighty has to be able --without that mediator [i.e. luṭf]--to make the cause leading to that point [compulsion], exist.¹¹³

It seems that the only way for the Twelver-Shī'īs to counter-attack this argument is to emphasize their concept that God never performs Evil. To impose the cause which would drive

man as far as compulsion means compulsion, and compulsion itself is Evil. Therefore, God would never do it.

Another objection is attributed to the Ash'arīs.

They argue that:

- a. If, as the Twelver-Shī'īs insist, the infidel is included under taklīf, and as a consequence is given lutf, then it is necessary that he become a believer; while the fact is that he is still an infidel. Therefore, lutf is not incumbent.
- b. If the infidel is given taklīf without lutf, it implies that lutf is not incumbent, which contradicts the Twelver-Shī'ī concept.¹¹⁴

To these arguments, al-Ṭūsī replies by asserting his opinion that "the infidel is not [in any way] excluded from lutf."¹¹⁵ By this assertion, al-Ṭūsī implies that the fact that the infidel remains in his infidelity is not a suitable argument to refute the concept of the incumbency of lutf. Besides, this also implies that it does not necessarily follow that by giving lutf to the infidel he should become a believer at once. These arguments are derived from the Twelver-Shī'ī concept that the meaning of lutf is not something which necessitates obedience; rather, it means something which, as al-Ḥillī explains, "brings [man] closer to the recipient of lutf (al-maltūf fih) [i.e. obedience] and emphasize its existence."¹¹⁶

The general example of lutf is the Divine Mission (al-bi'thah), namely the sending of guides (prophets, messengers, imāms) to mankind. We will deal with the role of this Divine Mission as lutf below. Another form of lutf is the precepts or stipulations (al-ahkām) given in respect of certain activities which lead to obedience, for example the obligations of ṣalāt and zakāt, the prohibition of killing, of adultery, etc. All these precepts are lutf because they can bring man closer to obedience (the fulfillment of ṣalāt and zakāt for example), and keep them away from disobedience (e.g. committing murder and adultery).

Another aspect of lutf which deserves explanation is its principles. By principles we mean the norms by which an action can be measured to determine whether or not it is a lutf. There are five principles mentioned by al-Ṭūsī in his Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, which will be examined briefly as follows:

1) The lutf and the maṭṭūf fīh (the recipient of lutf) should be in an intimate correlation. Thus, the obligation of ṣalāt for example, encourages man to perform ṣalāt itself (which is the maṭṭūf fīh).¹¹⁷

2) This lutf should not be compulsory for the maṭṭūf fīh. So the obligation of zakāt should not be interpreted as a compulsion to give zakāt, because compulsion is not a lutf.¹¹⁸

3) The mukallaf (the person who is given a Religious Obligation) should know this lutf, either in a general or in a particular way. If he does not know the prohibition of killing, it is not a lutf for him.¹¹⁹

4) Lutf should be in addition to the good part of the activity involved. The good part of an action lies in its being voluntarily done; yet its voluntariness does not necessitate that it bring man nearer to obedience. What brings man nearer to obedience is its being of an obligatory nature. Therefore, lutf should consist of obligation and recommendation.¹²⁰

5) Lutf has something optional internally. That is to say, the possibility of the enforcement of one of the two (or more) acts alternatively in a way conducive to obedience. An example of this is the three legal atonements.¹²¹

D. Divine Mission (al-bi'thah)

1. Its meaning

In the previous section, we have discussed several concepts on which our analysis concerning al-bi'thah should be based. The concept of God's Justice has as its consequence that God never performs Evil nor wills it: He is not

unjust, neither does He will disobedience. The concept of man as the free agent of his own deeds, is a justification of reward or punishment in relation to the Justice of God. He would not punish a single person unless He made known to him His commandments. Therefore taklif is necessary. Since God gave man the inclination to give way to his own desires, especially the Evil ones, He knows that to some extent, man will not observe His taklif as He wills it to be, unless He gives him His Grace (lutf) which brings man near to obedience. Such lutf is thus incumbent upon God. One of the expression of God's lutf is the Divine Mission (al-bi'thah).

In its literal meaning, "bi'thah" denotes the state of sending or delegating. Among the theologians and jurists, it is used as a technical term to mean "the sending of a man by God the Almighty to the human race as well as to the jinn in order to call them to the right path."¹²² In this definition, the term "bi'thah" seems to have the same meaning as "risālah". The latter, as a theological term, means "dispatching a man by God the Almighty to creation with a canonical law (sharī'ah), either he is commanded to communicate it or not."¹²³ According to Thānawī, the term "risālah" is equal to the term "nubū'ah"¹²⁴ which originated from naba'a and means to inform or to announce.

In the section of the Tajrīd al-I'tiqād dealing

with nubū'ah, al-Ṭūsī uses the word bi'thah immediately after the word nubū'ah. He writes: "al-Maqṣad al-rābi' fī al-nubū'ah. al-Bi'thah hasanah ..."¹²⁵ His commentator, al-Ḥillī, also uses the word bi'thah in this section. This fact raises a question: Is there anything to justify the use of bi'thah instead of nubū'ah? The answer may be given after examining the whole idea discussed in this section. One important point is the necessity of bi'thah at all times. According to the Twelver-Shī'īs, as we will discuss later, there should be a prophetic law (shar' nabī) in all ages,¹²⁶ which implies that this law must be preserved for the benefit of human beings. Since God had declared in the Qur'ān (XXXIII.40) that Muḥammad is the seal of the prophets, therefore the Prophetic Mission (nubū'ah) is sealed and concluded by the end of Muḥammad's mission. However, due to their nature, human beings are in constant need "for the proper guidance ... toward the correct interpretation of the Final Word of God and the correct translation of it in the practical life."¹²⁷ Hence, the Divine Mission (al-bi'thah) is necessary at all times. In this sense, al-bi'thah has a special meaning to the Twelver-Shī'īs, namely the Divine Guidance, because God's guidance is always existent among the human beings in all ages, on the basis of the principle of God's Grace (lutf) toward His servants. It is also in this sense that al-bi'thah seems to include--from the Twelver-Shī'ī

point of view--the nubū'ah and imamah together. This might be the reason for al-Ṭūsī and al-Ḥillī to use the word bi'tīyah instead of nubū'ah.

2. Its beauty

There is no disagreement among the Muslim theologians about the beauty of the Divine Mission. Its beauty derives from the fact that, in al-Ṭūsī's words, "it brings virtues"¹²⁸ and advantages for the human race which would not be achieved without it. Although his reason or evidence might differ, it appears that al-Ṭūsī agrees with the statement made by al-Nasafī, that "in the sending of Messengers there is wisdom."¹²⁹

A number of these virtues and advantages are mentioned by al-Ṭūsī in his Tajrīd al-I'tiqād to support his statement. Among them are the following:

a. "To give support to the intellect [in proving] what is indicated by it."¹³⁰ That is to say that the Divine Mission conveys evidences, either from revelation or from tradition, to support the intellect in establishing rational problems, for instance in determining the existence of God, His uniqueness and His Justice, and in establishing the excellence of Good and the hideousness of Evil.

b. "And to obtain the principle (law) [in the matter]

which is not reached by it [the intellect].¹³¹ This means that from the Divine Mission, we obtain principles about certain matters which are not rational, for example in the matter of canonical laws pertaining to fundamental principles of religion, including rules governing relations between man and God ('ibādāt) and relations between man and man (mu'āmalāt).

c. By the Divine Mission, the intellect "obtains [the perception] of Good and Evil."¹³² As we mentioned in n. 41 of this chapter, the power of the intellect to detect Good and Evil is not unlimited. Though most Good and Evil in the social life of the human race can be detected rationally, still there are many things which cannot be detected by it. These kinds of things are perceivable only by the guidance of the Divine Mission.

d. "And to [obtain the perception of the] useful and harmful things"¹³³ immediately. Actually, we can distinguish useful things from the harmful ones only after a long process of trial and error. The Divine Mission, on the other hand, makes them known to us immediately.

e. "And to preserve the human race"¹³⁴ because the Divine Mission brings laws which regulate the social life of the human race. Commenting on this, al-Hillī says that "by nature, man is a social creature who needs many things in his life, but [unfortunately], he cannot obtain them

without the cooperation of others."¹³⁵ In this mutual co-operation, an authoritative law is absolutely necessary to maintain justice, because, as al-Hillī puts it, "predominance [over others] exists in the very character of man, which is contradictory to the wisdom of society."¹³⁶

f. And last but not least, the Divine Mission provides us with "information pertaining to punishment and reward."¹³⁷ This is the most important of the Divine Mission's aspects, because by having such information, man is urged to do good deeds and to abandon evil ones, which means that man is brought closer into obedience and kept away from disobedience, and as such, "the lutf for the mukallaf is achieved."¹³⁸

3. Its necessity

It is from the above mentioned virtues that the concept of the necessity of the Divine Mission emerges, since all of them can be explained as the expression of God's Justice. After a thorough analysis, we are led to believe that these virtues stand for what the Twelver-Shī'ī call "traditional taklifs" (takālīf sam'ī).¹³⁹ It is their concept that some of these auditory taklifs are lutf with regard to the "rational taklifs" (takālīf 'aqlī), as al-Hillī puts it.¹⁴⁰ That is to say, that these auditory taklifs bring men closer to obedience and keep them away from disobedience.¹⁴¹

According to the Twelver-Shī'īs, lutf is incumbent upon God; and consequently these auditory taklīfs are also necessary. Since this kind of taklīfs cannot be perceived by the intellect, they must be conveyed from God by the messengers or the prophets, who act as mediators between God and man.¹⁴² As a result, the Divine Mission is incumbent. In confirmation of this, al-Ṭūsī states: "And it [the Divine Mission] is incumbent [upon God to be fulfilled], because it comprises the lutf with regard to the rational taklīfs."¹⁴³

Similar in essence to the explanation just alluded to above is an argument based on philosophical grounds. When we discussed the Twelver-Shī'ī doctrine of Good and Evil, we mentioned an issue related to it, namely the purpose of God's deeds. We saw that Twelver-Shī'īs insist that the purpose of God's bringing men into existence is that advantages accrue to men themselves, not to God. God's wisdom necessitates that His act accord with His purpose, because it would be Evil if He contradicted His own purpose. Therefore it is incumbent upon God to bring men into proximity with these advantages. According to al-Hillī, these advantages are of two kinds: one is related to man's present state, and the other is related to man's future state,¹⁴⁴ and both can be considered as the indication of the virtues brought by the Divine Mission mentioned above. We note them briefly as follows:

First: Man was created as a social being, which means that social life is a must for the survival of the race and for the perfection of man's life. In his attempt to perfect his own life, man realizes that he has his own interests which are different from those of others'. He also realizes that he has endless demands which cannot be materialized without the help of others. Therefore, man is aware that he has to sustain a mutual cooperation with his fellow men to gain the goals of their lives. This awareness leads him to recognize the urgency for a law "to be put into effect among men in such a way that every individual may obey its commands and heed its prohibitions,"¹⁴⁵ because this law regulates the rights and obligations of each member and lays prohibitions on transgressors. Man's need of such law is constant, because from the very beginning of the existence of the human race until the very end, man always faces the same essential problems which can be solved only by authoritative regulation, namely the Divine Laws.

Second: To obtain happiness in the hereafter, men should make their souls perfect by exercising good deeds related both to spiritual as well as material aspects. Men's dependence upon worldly matters restrains them from achieving this perfection. To assist men in achieving this goal, a person who is independent from worldly matters is required to inform his fellow men of the way to deal with their

problems, "and remind them of their Creator and their Object of Worship, and appoint them acts of devotion ('ibādāt) and right actions in order to secure them nearness to Allah."¹⁴⁶ The required persons who are supposed to inform and guide men toward the perfection of their souls, and to convey the needed regulations from God, are the prophets or the messengers. Therefore, the sending of prophets (al-bi'thah) is incumbent.

The above arguments posit the existence of a mediator between God and man, which in itself could serve as an argument for the necessity of the Divine Mission. That the intellect can convince itself of the existence of God, the Creator, and that this Creator is totally different from His creatures, must be denied. This fact, together with the concept of God's Grace, His commandments (i.e. taklifs) and His Justice, form an argument for the necessity of the Divine Mission (al-bi'thah). The intellect perceives that God is a distinct essence (dhāt) which cannot be reached by human beings. Although He is Most Exalted in His Highness, yet He is not a tyrannical God. His Justice overwhelms all His creatures. Because of His Justice, He laid taklifs on the creatures to be exercised properly. God's nature necessitates that no human being should see, or associate with, or convers with Him. However, at the same time, His Justice also necessitates a kind of link between Him and His creatures,

so that they may become informed about His taklīfs. Therefore, to convey this information to human beings, it is incumbent upon God to designate the appropriate person as His messenger.

Though this argument takes the form of a rationalization of the fact of God's Uniqueness, yet it supplements the Twelver-Shī'ī arguments in their insistence upon the incumbency of the Divine Mission. Furthermore, the essence of this argument is confirmed by a tradition narrated by al-Kulayni in his famous al-Kāfī on the authority of Abū 'Abd Allāh:¹⁴⁷ This tradition reads:

When we proved that there exists a Creator who is, most Exalted and unmatched by His creation, and that that Creator is Wise and Most Exalted, it becomes impossible that His creation see him or touch Him so that (the Creator and the creation) would mutually deal with each other (on ground of direct contact, and argue with each other). It is therefore, proved that He has messengers [sent] to His creation who deputize for Him in expressing [His will] to His creation and servants, and who show them their interests and benefits and what sustains their life and that without which they would be annihilated. Thus, it became proved that those [messengers] who enjoin the right and forbid the evil, became firmly established in their deputization of the Wise and the Most Knowing to His creation.¹⁴⁸

From the Sunnī point of view, the nature of the Divine Mission, as al-Shahrastānī puts it, is "an intellectual possibility and an actual phenomenon."¹⁴⁹ Their argument to support this opinion is the evidence of the mission of the Prophet Muḥammad, peace be upon him. According to al-Ījī (d. 756 H.), "the thing which proves the occurrences, also proves the possibility."¹⁵⁰ Though the Sunnīs oppose the Twelver-Shī'ī concept of rationally determined Good and Evil with all its consequences, including the incumbency of taklīf and luṭf which are the main reason for the incumbency of the Divine Mission, it seems that the Sunnīs do not totally deny it. One of the prominent Ash'arī scholars, al-Ījī, states in his al-Mawāqif as follows:

In case of its [the opinion of incumbency of the Divine Mission's] soundness, it does not harm our insistence, since we only insist on the general possibility [of the existence] which includes also its incumbency rather than the more special possibility which negates it [i.e. the Divine Mission].¹⁵¹

Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī in his Muḥaṣṣal goes even further in stating the necessity of the Divine Mission when he explains in detail the virtues brought by it.¹⁵²

Analyzing this issue from the Twelver-Shī'ī as well as the Sunnī points of view, we note that there may not be any meeting point between the two, since both use different

starting points in determining the nature of the Divine Mission. However, by considering the content of several Qur'anic verse, one can at least justify the importance of the role of the Divine Mission for human beings. Three verses are of special worth in relation to this discussion. These three are:

- (1) LI.56: "And created not I, the Jinn and the humans, but that they may worship (Me)."¹⁵³
- (2) XLII.19: "God is benign unto His servants."¹⁵⁴
- (3) XLII.51: "And it is not for any man that God should speak unto him save by revelation or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger and to reveal by His permission what He willeth."¹⁵⁵

The first verse gives an evidence of God's taklif, by stating that the purpose of the creation of jinn and human beings is to worship Him, which will bring them near to Him. In the second verse, God describes Himself as the All-Gentle (latif), which implies His will to assist His creatures in fulfilling what He wants them to perform. Nevertheless, due to the difference of nature between Him and His creatures, a direct communication between God and men to announce His commandments is impossible, except by employing special means, as is described in the third verse. One of these means is delegating a messengers who acts as the mediator to convey God's laws to human beings. By relating this important role

to the meaning of the first two verses, the necessity (and even the incumbency) of the Divine Mission can be justified.

Another Qur'ānic verse concerning the Divine Mission is a special verses found in XXI.107 dealing with the Prophet Muḥammad's mission. This verse reads: "And we sent thee not (O' our Apostle Muhammad!) but as a Mercy unto (all) the worlds."¹⁵⁶ This is an evidence that Muḥammad's mission is a mercy from God; it has the same nature as the missions before him, as we can see from the following verse found in Qur'ān (XI.7), in which God states: "... and preceded by the Book of Moses, a guide and a mercy."¹⁵⁷ If the book of Moses certainly is a part of his mission, then his mission itself is a mercy from God. In another place in the Qur'ān (XIX.21) God says: "... and that We will make him ['Isā] a sign (miracle) ... unto the people and a Mercy from Us,"¹⁵⁸ which signifies the mission of 'Isā, peace be upon him.

All these verses speak about God's mercy expressed by the Divine Mission. If we can assume that this mercy is a general term for a special attribute of God in which lutf is also included, then it follows from the Qur'ān itself that the Twelver-Shī'ī argument is not totally unfounded. Moreover, if we examine other verses which speak about God's mercy, we find a verse which states that Mercy or Grace

(lutf) is incumbent upon God, for God says in the Qur'ān (VI.12): "He [God] hath prescribed mercy upon Himself,"¹⁵⁹ Along with other verses which confirm His forgiveness, mercy (XVIII.58) and lutf (XXXI.16, XXXIII.34, and LXVII.14); the last mentioned verse appears to be another support for the Twelver-Shī'ī concept of the incumbency of lutf. However, a presentation of these verses does not necessarily justify the Twelver-Shī'ī assumption. These verses have yet to be thoroughly analyzed in their context to determine if there is any hint to relate the Twelver-Shī'ī conception of lutf to the verses which contain a discussion of God's mercy and grace.

In discussing the necessity of bi'thah, there is one more aspect which should be mentioned, because it plays a significant role in Twelver-Shī'ī theology. This aspect is the function of bi'thah as a hujjah for human beings. Hujjah literally means argument, excuse or plea. It can be said that all Muslim theologians recognize this function, because it is stated in the Qur'ān (IV.165):

(We sent) apostles as givers of glad tidings and warners, that there may not remain any argument [hujjah] for people against God, after (the coming of) these apostles; And God is Mighty, Wise.¹⁶⁰

This verse explains that prophets are sent to people to convey

the commandments of God, so that those who disobey God will not have any argument against Him on the Day of Judgment by saying, for example, as intimated in Qur'ān (V.19): "There came not unto us any bearer of glad tidings nor a warner."¹⁶¹ In this respect, the prophets themselves are the argument of God against the people, arguments which cannot be used by those who disobey. It is in this sense that the hujjah also means "proof" of God, which has a very special connotation among the Twelver-Shī'īs. We will deal more fully with this concept below.

4. The impeccability of the prophets (al-'ismah)

Impeccability is one of the many qualifications attributed to the prophet.¹⁶² In our study, only this one will be dealt with, because of its unique position with regard to the prophet as the bearer of the Divine Mission, in addition to its controversial nature among Muslim theologians. However, it is important to note that the Twelver-Shī'īs give importance to this qualification along with the doctrine of the precedence (afdaliyah) of the prophets.

The word 'ismah signifies man' which means: prevention, hindrance, defence or protection. It also connotes "a faculty of avoiding, or shunning, acts of disobedience

[or of self-preservation therefrom], with possession of the power to commit them."¹⁶³

As a technical term used among the Muslim theologians, 'ismah means: "Inability to disobey: or a disposition [to act]."¹⁶⁴ Another meaning is: "A mental faculty which prevents its possessors from inequity, namely disobedience [or sin],"¹⁶⁵ and this signifies "immunity from error and sin."¹⁶⁶

Both the Sunnis as well as the Twelver-Shi'is ascribe impeccability to the prophets. However, they differ as to the extent of this impeccability.¹⁶⁷ The Twelver-Shi'i concept of the duty of the prophets implies that the prophets and messengers have to fulfill a very important mission. They are the agents of God who convey His taklifs to their fellow men. The prophets and messengers are the receivers of the Divine Revelation which regulates all aspects of human life. They are the bearers of the Divine Mission which consists of God's guidance to assist human being's efforts to perfect their lives in this world and in the day hereafter. The whole duty of this mission, i.e. receiving the Divine Revelation, preserving and propagating it, was placed upon the shoulders of the prophets. Therefore, a very special quality must be possessed by a prophet, namely the quality of impeccability. A prophet should not err in receiving and

preserving the revelation and in performing his duties; otherwise he is either incapable of bearing his duties, or he is a traitor to the trust bestowed on him. In propagating his mission, a prophet should not make any error, especially something which opposes his own mission, because these errors would destroy the confidence of his people toward him and his mission. If his people do not have confidence in him, they would not follow or observe his teachings, and this would make his mission a failure, which is clearly not his purpose.

In accordance with this explanation, al-Ṭūsī in his Tajrīd al-I'tiqād proposes three arguments as to why impeccability is necessary for the prophet. He says:

Impeccability is necessary for the prophet so that [people] may have confidence in him, and as such the purpose [of commissioning him] is attained, and [because] it is obligatory to follow him ... and [because] the rejection of him [is forbidden].¹⁶⁸

The first of al-Ṭūsī's argument is the maintenance of peoples' confidence in the prophet. As we have just explained, this confidence constitutes one of the most important conditions enabling him to propagate his mission, because his people would then respectfully accept his mission. Thus the purpose of his commission would be achieved.

The second is that it is obligatory to follow and

to obey the prophet.¹⁶⁹ This principle implies that even if the prophet commits disobedience or sin, it is obligatory to follow and obey him; whereas the principle of the obligation to forbid the munkar (evil) states that it is forbidden to follow the sinner. Hence it is necessary that a prophet should be impeccable.

The third, which is closely related to the second, is that if a prophet commits disobedience, it is obligatory to reject him, according to the obligatory to forbid the munkar (evil). Rejecting the prophet means offending him, which is also forbidden by God.¹⁷⁰ Therefore it is obvious that the prophet should be impeccable.

As for the extent of the prophet's impeccability, the Twelver-Shī'īs insist that prophets are impeccable from all kinds of sin, great ones or small ones, intentional or unintentional, from the very beginning of their lives to their death,¹⁷¹ which means that they are completely ma'sūm in any case all the time. The prophet's impeccability from sin or disobedience does not mean that they do not have the ability (qudrah) to commit sin. Their impeccability is a very gift from God as regards their divine mission to their people. In his al-Bāb al-Hādī 'Ashar, al-Hillī explains:

Immunity to sin is a hidden kindness (luṭf) which Aīlāh the Most High shows to (the Prophet) on whom

He has laid this task (mukallaf), that he may have no incentive to forsake obedience and to commit sin (ma'siya), although he has the power (qudra) to do so.¹⁷²

Though the Sunnīs also insist upon the impeccability of the prophets, yet they only insist on their immunity from intentional great and small sins at the time of their prophecy. The Sunnīs do not absolutely deny the possibility of unintentional sins, or the occurrence of sins before designation to the prophetic office. al-Rāzī confirms this when he says:

Our opinion is that the prophets ... are impeccable from intentional great and small sins at the time of [their] prophecy; yet the [occurrence of the] unintentional sins are [still] possible (jā'iz) [from them].¹⁷³

5. The preservation of the Divine Laws:

The urgency of bi'thah at all times

We pointed out that bi'thah is seen to be lutf in the sense that it brings man nigh unto obedience and removes him from disobedience, which serves as the very reason for its incumbency. Its nature as lutf necessitates its existence not only at a certain, but at all times, because the encouragement of obedience and discouragement of disobedience

would not be actualized without bi'thah. al-Ṭūsī says that the argument of its necessity applies also to its urgency at all times, as he states: "The evidence of its necessity implies the generality; yet [sometimes] the [new] sharī'ah is not necessary."¹⁷⁴ The word "generality". (al-'umūmiyah) here means, according to al-Ḥillī's commentary, "the generality of its necessity at all times."¹⁷⁵

Though the Twelver-Shī'īs insist on this view, yet they do not insist that a new sharī'ah should be introduced by each of those who were appointed by God to carry out the Divine Mission. This notion proves to be important in relation to the justification of the existence of persons who were divinely designated to guide their people. Their tasks are to continue the mission of the prophets or messengers. This notion, of course, is the fundamental basis which justifies the existence of the imāms and their authority. We mentioned elsewhere that it is the nature of human beings to be in constant need of proper guidance for the exact interpretation of God's revelation and the correct translation of it in the practical life. This nature makes the Divine Mission (al-bi'thah) necessarily existent at all times, on the basis of the principle of God's Justice ('adl) and His Grace (luṭf). The guidance of God, therefore, in the view of the Twelver-Shī'īs, is continuously given to the human

beings until the last day. By the death of the Prophet Muḥammad, peace be upon him, this guidance did not cease; instead, it continues through the imāms. This is the most important ethos of Shī'ī conception on imāmah, namely the uninterrupted communication between God and His creature through the imāms. This is one of the fundamental point of differences between Twelver-Shī'īs and Sunnīs.

If we connect the above mentioned notion of the urgency of bi'thah at all times to the fact of man's constant need of Divine Laws, it is only natural that these laws should be preserved, so that they are presented and explained to the people whenever need arises. God's lutf necessitates the sending of men of great personality, chosen from among the people, to convey God's laws to the human race. These great personalities are the prophets and the messengers. It is this same lutf that necessitates the installation of those who have the responsibility to preserve these Divine Laws. While the prophets still alive, this task is given to them. After their death, the duty to guard and to preserve these laws is transferred to the divinely chosen persons. These persons, according to the Twelver-Shī'īs, are the imāms.

E. The Necessity of the Imāmah

1. The necessity of the hujjah at all times

The Twelver-Shī'ī notion of the urgency of the preservation of Divine Laws, as we have seen, justifies the existence of those person who are divinely designated to continue the mission of the prophets. In the Shī'ī traditions, these persons are called hujjah, imām or waṣī. Hujjah means proof, argument, plea or evidence. We have already mentioned that hujjah is one of the functions of bi'thah for human beings. It is in this connection that the Twelver-Shī'īs insist upon the necessity of the hujjah at all times.¹⁷⁶ Concerning the word imām, we have seen in the first chapter that it simply means leader. As for waṣī, it plainly means legatee, authorized agent, executor, caretaker, or vicegerent. According to Asaf A. A. Fyzee, this word is untranslatable into English.¹⁷⁷ It is necessary for us to quote some Shī'ī traditions to gain a better idea about the hujjah, the imām, and the waṣī. The famous Shī'ī traditionist, al-Kulaynī, narrates several traditions concerning this issue. The traditions worth-quoting are as follows:

- (1). ... God did not leave a land, since Ādam was dead, without a leader (imām), who was taken [by his people] as a guide towards God, and he [the leader] is God's proof

(hujjah) upon His servants. And the earth would not remain without an imām as the proof of God upon His servants.¹⁷⁸

- (2) ... it became warranted that [mission] which the messengers and apostles brought, were at every age and time. Such warranty was in order that God's earth would not deviate from a proof (hujjah).¹⁷⁹
- (3) As long as the earth is existent, God should have an hujjah on it, which defines the halāl and the haram [to the people] and enjoins the human race to the path of God.¹⁸⁰
- (4) The first legatee (waṣī) on earth was Hibat Allāh, son of Ādam. And none of the prophets would pass away without his having a waṣī.¹⁸¹

In discussing the necessity of the bi'thah, we have pointed out that those who are appointed by God to lead the people toward the right path also function as the proof (hujjah) of God against human beings. This means that on the Day of Judgment, men will not be able to plead that God did not send a leader to them. The first of the above-mentioned traditions explains who this hujjah is. This hujjah is the imām, the leader. However, a question arises here, namely: Who is meant by the imām? In the first chapter of this thesis, we mentioned that according to the usage of the word imām among the Twelver-Shī'īs, it denotes primarily those who succeed the prophet as the leader of the community, the

guardian and the preserver of the Divine Laws. Nevertheless, the prophet is sometimes also referred to as imām, most probably because of the nature of his mission as leader and guide for his people.¹⁸² Thus, the word imām is not strictly applied to the above-mentioned notion. The Qur'ān itself informs us in II.124 about Ibrāhīm being introduced as "the imām": "He [God] said, 'Verily I make thee (O' Ibrāhīm) Imām for mankind.'"¹⁸³

This first tradition also appears to support the notion of the preservation of the Divine Laws, and thus justifies the urgency of bi'thah at all times. It clarifies the view that there should be an imām at all times, whether he be a prophet or only the legatee or the vicegerent of the prophet, i.e. the imām.

The second tradition speaks about the existence of the "mission" at all times and ages, because the earth should not be devoid of a hujjah. The third refers to the main duty of the hujjah, viz., to make the Divine Law known to the people. By doing so he becomes the guide as well as the guardian and the preserver of those laws. In another tradition which has the same essence as the third, we find that the word imām is used instead of hujjah.¹⁸⁴ This suggests that both words are used interchangeably.

The fourth tradition clearly indicates the existence of legatees (al-awsiyā', pl. of al-waṣī) of the prophet, and even mentions the name of the first waṣī on earth.¹⁸⁵

These traditions give us a clearer idea about the existence of the hujjah and what he is supposed to fulfill. The term hujjah employed in the above traditions denotes generally those who were divinely appointed with the responsibility to guard and preserve the Divine Laws. The term imām can be considered as a special application of this general meaning, in the sense that he is the leader of his people towards the right path. Meanwhile, the term waṣī is yet another application of hujjah, who functions as the vicegerent of the prophet on earth. The waṣī in Shī'ī literature is described as one who is divinely designated and "... specially instructed and authorized by the nabī to perform certain acts."¹⁸⁶ While the prophet is still living, the waṣī is his vicegerent and "... for particular religious and political functions, he acts as his plenipotentiary."¹⁸⁷ When the prophet has passed away, "the waṣī is his khalīfah (successor), his executor and the leader of the community."¹⁸⁸

For the Twelver-Shī'īs, the existence of the hujjah at all times is established by the above-mentioned traditions. The tasks of the hujjah are also confirmed, namely to maintain the Divine Laws regulating all aspects of human life in the

attempt to achieve its perfection, materially as well as spiritually. Without the existence of the hujjah, there would be a lack of divine guidance, and as a result, chaos would occur. We are told in a tradition narrated by al-Kulaynī as follows:

It is related from al-Wāshshā' that he said: "I asked Abū al-Ḥasan al-Riḍā, may peace be upon him, if the earth could carry on (stay) without an imām? He said: 'No.' I said: 'It has been related that the earth could not carry on [without an imām] unless the wrath of God, be Him glorified, would [fall] on creation.' He said: 'If [the earth] does not stay so, then it would be self-destruct.' "189"

All these explanations are evidences for the Twelver-Shī'īs, which not only justify their notion of the existence of the legatee of the prophet, but also provide a foundation for the whole structure of the Twelver-Shī'ī doctrine of the necessity of the imāmah. Analyzing these evidences, and relating them to the fact that Muḥammad, peace be upon him, is the last and the seal of the prophets, one comes to the conclusion that the Twelver-Shī'īs use them to establish their doctrine on imāmah and to confirm the imām's authority. As we already discussed in section dealing with the urgency of bi'thah at all times, it is clear that the death of the Prophet Muḥammad does not mean the termination of the communication between God and human beings. God's

Justice makes it necessary that He continues to give His guidance to His creatures in order that they can perform the taklīfs given to them in relation to their happiness here and hereafter. This is done through the divinely appointed imāms who are the vicegerents of the Prophet and at the same time the vicegerent of God.¹⁹⁰

A question arises here, namely: Is there any evidence from the Qur'ān to support the traditions of the Twelver-Shī'īs mentioned above? Looking into the Qur'ān, we find several verses which speak about the "designation" of a "guide" or "warner" to every group of people.¹⁹¹ Although these verses explicitly indicate only the existence of a guide and warner to every group of people, yet they do not negate the possibility of the existence of such individuals at all times, on the basis of the fact that the "group of people" exist not only at the same time, but also one after another. It seems that the Twelver-Shī'īs interpret these verses in the same way as the interpretation mentioned above, thus confirming the imām's position and authority. This is clearly exhibited in a tradition narrated by al-Kulaynī:

From Burayd al-'Ajlī, he said: "I asked Abū Ja'far¹⁹² may peace be upon him, on [the interpretation of] God's, the Most High and Exalted, saying: 'Verily

thou art a Warner and [we sent] a guide unto every people." He [Abū Ja'far] said: "The messenger of God, peace be upon him, is the warner, and for every age [there are] guides from among us to lead them [the people] to the [observance of the sharī'ah] laid down by the Prophet of God, peace be upon him. And the guide after him is 'Alī and then the awsiyā' one after the other."¹⁹³

2. The necessity of the imāmah

In the beginning of this chapter we stated that the Twelver-Shī'ī and the Sunnī theologians are in agreement on the necessity of the imāmah. Several reasons are given by the Sunnīs to corroborate this point. In his al-Tamhīd, Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 403 H.) has a very brief section which deals with the reasons for the necessity of imāmah. The relevant passage is as follows:

If they [the inquirer] said: "Why [is it necessary] to establish the imām?" [We] say to them: "Because of what we stated above that is to organize the armies and to protect the frontiers, and to restrain the oppressor and to redress the grievance of the oppressed, and to maintain the ordinances, and to divide the booty (fay') among the Muslims, and to protect them while they perform pilgrimage and while they are in war."¹⁹⁴

Analyzing these reasons, we can understand that the function of the imām or khalīfah according to the Sunnīs is

that of a secular leader of the Muslim community. This seems to imply that the necessity for imāmah or khilāfah comes from man, that is his need for a leader to protect him from his enemy, to settle his differences with the other and to regulate all aspects of his life. There is no single indication in the reasons given by al-Bāqillānī to the divine nature of the khalīfah's mission. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that beside his concern for the temporal problems, the khalīfah is also concerned with the religious matters of the community. This is clear from the statement "to maintain the ordinances," which according to the present writer, means the enforcement of Islamic canonical laws (sharī'ah). However, according to the Sunnis, khilāfah is established by the community, and it is by no means a divine institution. The community has the power to depose the khalīfah if he erred or did not perform his function the way it should be. This is affirmed by al-Bāqillānī when he says: "If he [the khalīfah] erred in any one of these things or he put it aside from its place, [then] the community [should] stand behind him [to correct him] and to force him to perform his duties."¹⁹⁵

In the previous section of this chapter we have already analyzed the arguments proposed by the Twelver-Shī'ī on the issue of the necessity of the imāmah. There are, however, two more arguments of the Twelver-Shī'ī theologians

which are worth mentioning as to why the imāmah is incumbent upon God, namely:

- a. The imām is God's lutf, and
- b. The imām is the guardian of the law (sharī'ah).

- a. The imām is God's lutf.

The first thing mentioned by al-Ṭūsī in his chapter on imāmah is the following statement:

The imām is [an expression of God's] lutf, and therefore his [the imām's] designation is incumbent upon God, the Most High, in order to attain the purpose [of the creation of human beings].¹⁹⁶

This statement undoubtedly represents the Twelver-Shī'ī conception of imāmah and its incumbency. In the following lines, we will try to explain this statement by analyzing the background of this concept.

In our analysis of Good and Evil, we saw that the Twelver-Shī'īs suggest that God's deeds have a purpose, which is not for His own benefit, but for the advantage of human beings. In the Qur'ān LI.56, God tells us what is the object of creation. He says: "And created not I, the Jinn and the humans, but that they may worship (Me)."¹⁹⁷ Upon analysis of its content, this verse seemingly opposes the Twelver-Shī'ī suggestion, since in this verse, God explains that the

purpose of creating the jinn and human beings is that they may worship Him. At first glance, this verse reveals that the object of creation is in God's interest. However, if we analyze the content of other Qur'ānic verses which speak about God's self-sufficiency, for example in VI.133 [134], XIV. 8, and XXXI.26, we will be convinced that God does not need anything; it will not affect His Authority, His Glory or His Power if nobody worship Him. Therefore, it is clear that though the above mentioned verse uses the phrase "may worship Me", yet it does not imply that this worship is for the interest of God Himself. The interpretation of this phrase as S. V. Mir Ahmed Ali puts it in his commentary on the Holy Qur'ān, is that God created the jinn and human beings in order that they may "act according to the will and command [of God]."¹⁹⁸ Acting in accordance with the will and command of God is for the advantage of human beings themselves. Created as social beings, men are in need of authoritative law to regulate all aspects of their lives in order to achieve their goal: happiness in this worldly life as well as in the hereafter.

Basing themselves on the principle of God's Justice, the Twelver-Shī'īs insist that it is incumbent upon God to give taklīf to human beings to be observed. We have seen that taklīf is also for the benefit of men themselves, namely

the indication of reward and punishment by commanding them to obey God's laws. Twelver-Shī'ī theology also suggests that men have the inclination to give way to their evil desires which means that they tend not to obey God. If this tendency is actualized, human beings would not achieve the goal of their lives, and therefore the object of creation could not also be attained. Knowing this tendency--because God Himself has created it He being a God of Mercy--the Twelver-Shī'ī argue that it is incumbent upon God to designate His hujjah on earth to establish His laws and to lead human beings in the observance of these laws. This mission is given to the prophets and messengers. At the same time, the principle of God's lutf necessitates the preservation of these laws, in order that in time of need, they can be presented and explained to the people. This responsibility is given to the wasī or the imām. Both institutions, prophecy and imāmah, are expressions of God's Grace on the ground that they bring human beings closer to obedience and keep them away from disobedience. Thus, the Twelver-Shī'īs conclude that the imāmah, which is responsible for carrying on the mission of the prophet, is also incumbent upon God.

This argument of lutf is the prime evidence brought forth by the theologians among the Twelver-Shī'īs to emphasize the incumbency of imāmah. However, there is another

reason which is developed by the Twelver-Shī'ī traditionalists. This reason is that the imām is the guardian of the law.

a. The imām is the guardian of the law (sharī'ah).

In our analysis of the necessity of the Divine Mission, we saw how the theologians established its necessity at all times, because of the constant need of divine law by human beings. The prophets and messengers are the bringer of these laws, and after their death, there should be other individuals who are divinely designated to succeed the prophet in guarding and preserving the Divine Laws. According to Twelver-Shī'ī theology, these individuals are the imāms, holders of the office of imāmah. Thus, imāmah is the continuation of nubū'ah.

Muhammad, peace be upon him, is the seal and the last prophet sent to human beings. His mission is to guide people toward the observance of God's wishes and commands. He was given revelation communicated to him from time to time in pieces, which later on was collected and became known as the Qur'ān. Being the last of the prophets, after his death there was no longer anyone through whom God could promulgate His wishes and commands for the guidance of human beings. However, the Qur'ān and the Sunnah of the Prophet

were still left for reference and instruction. If a text of the Qur'ān has covered a point, there can be no difficulty. But fresh facts and new circumstances often arise for which no provision had been made. This situation, along with the fact that a great number of the Qur'ānic verses are "... mujmal [containing only general concepts], and that most of the jurisdiction could not be explained from the literal meaning of the [verses of the] Qur'ān ..."¹⁹⁹ might cause confusion among people, and induce conflict between them. Every group might have their own interpretation to the mujmal verses, and make a regulations out of them in accordance with their own preferences. Therefore, the existence of an authoritative successor of the Prophet, who is divinely given the responsibility to prevent this confusion and conflict, is a matter of urgency.²⁰⁰ This successor, according to the Twelver-Shī'īs, is the custodian of the Qur'ān, who, through divine gift, receives the knowledge of the inner meaning of what is revealed, as well as the apparent meaning. He is the only authority to give the precise interpretation of the Qur'ān.²⁰¹ These successors are the imāms who deputize the Prophet in carrying out ordinances, abiding by the sharī'ah, observing the law and educating people. To perform these responsibilities, the imāms must possess complete knowledge of the content of the Qur'ān as the primary source for the sharī'ah.

Concerning these responsibilities and capabilities, we find a considerable number of Shī'ī traditions. We will glance briefly at some of these traditions. The first to be mentioned is that which explains the position of the imām as the administrators of God's command (wulāt amr Allāh). On the authority of 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Kathīr, al-Kulaynī narrates that Abū 'Abd Allāh said: "We are the administrators of God's command and the depository of His knowledge and the keepers of His revelations' secret."²⁰² In another tradition, al-Kulaynī reports that Sudayr asked Abū Ja'far: "'What is your function?' He said: 'We are the depository of God's knowledge, and we are the interpreters of His revelation (wahy)'"²⁰³ From the Shī'ī point of view, these are convincing evidences of the authority of the imāms. The imāms are the preservers of God's knowledge in the sense that they know what they ought to know to fulfill their mission as successors of the Prophet; they are the interpreters of God's wahy, which means that they know the meaning of each verse in its esoteric as well as exoteric sense.²⁰⁴ In this position they are the most intelligent among creatures after the Prophet himself, and they are the people whom we are supposed to consult,²⁰⁵ because they are responsible for providing explanations about everything concerning guidance to human beings.²⁰⁶

Being favoured with every kind of divine knowledge, the imāms therefore are the possessors of the knowledge of the past, the present, and the future. al-Kulaynī narrates⁽⁹⁾ a tradition in which Abū 'Abd Allāh explains that the imāms had the esoteric knowledge contained in three secret books called al-Jāmi'ah, al-Jafr and Mushaf Fāṭimah. The first one, al-Jāmi'ah, is a leaf (ṣahīfah) seventy arms (dhirā') in length dictated by the Prophet Muḥammad to 'Alī who wrote it down. This ṣahīfah contains everything about ḥalāl and ḥarām and all regulations needed by human beings to administer their religious and worldly life. The second, al-Jafr, is a receptacle originating from Ādam which comprises of the knowledge of the prophets and the plenipotentiaries (or the legatees, al-awṣiyā') and the knowledge of the scholars of Banū Isrā'īl. The last one, Mushaf Fāṭimah, is a volume threetimes thicker than the Qur'ān.²⁰⁷ We are informed in another tradition that Mushaf Fāṭimah came into existence at the time of the death of the Prophet Muḥammad, peace be upon him. Fāṭimah, the daughter of the Prophet, was in great sorrow for the loss of her father. God therefore sent an angel to console her. Fāṭimah informed her husband, 'Alī, about the visit of the angel. 'Alī asked her to let him know if the angel come again, which she did. Then 'Alī wrote down every thing that he heard from the angel. This record includes knowledge of the present and the future.²⁰⁸

In several other Shī'ī traditions we find that the knowledge revealed to the angels, the prophets and the messengers is also "revealed" to the imāms. Moreover, according to these traditions, even the knowledge which is exclusively appropriated by God to Himself, can be, if God so desires, revealed to the imāms.²⁰⁹ From this we can understand the distinctive character of the imāms and their importance position. These traditions imply that imāms are successors of the Prophet Muḥammad, peace be upon him, not only to his mission as head of the community but also to his function as agent of revelation, though the nature of this revelation is different from that of the Prophet's. Unlike in prophetic revelation where the prophet directly hears the voice and sees the angel, in "imāmic" revelation, the imām merely hears the voice of the angel and thus understands the truth.²¹⁰ Thus, it is clear that according to the Twelver-Shī'īs, the communication between the Divine and the human never ceases and God's guidance to mankind is continuously given through the imāms.

On the basis of these traditions, the Twelver-Shī'īs insist that the sayings of the imāms have the force of law binding on all Muslims, alongside the Qur'ān and the Sunnah (tradition) of the Prophet. This is due to their function as the custodians of the Qur'ān, which means they are its true interpreters, and, therefore, that they are firmly rooted

in knowledge (al-rāsikhūn fī al-‘ilm), as one of the Qur’ānic verses (III.7) tells us.²¹¹ Concerning the interpretation of this verse, al-Kulaynī narrates a tradition that al-Bāqir (or) al-Ṣādiq said:

The Messenger of God [Muḥammad], peace be upon him, is the best of those who are firmly rooted in knowledge; he was taught by God all that which He had revealed to him, either tanzīl or ta’wīl, and God did not reveal anything to him except He taught him its interpretation; and his legatess who came after him know it all.²¹²

All these traditions serve as proof, from the Twelver-Shī‘ī point of view, to establish the authority of the imāmah as the successor of prophecy and the continuation of Divine Mission (al-bi‘thah). Once established, this position, along with the previously analyzed arguments, provides a solid argument for the incumbency of the imāmah. Imāmah is shown to be necessary in order to continue the link between God and His creation, thus continuing His guidance to human beings. The imāmah is necessary, in other words, to accomplish the purpose of the creation of human beings which is to worship God for the benefit of human beings themselves so that they may obtain happiness in their lives in this world as well as in the hereafter.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

¹Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, in Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād fī Sharḥ Tajrīd al-I'tiqād (Qumm: Maktabat al-Muṣṭafawī, n.d.), p. 284. All subsequent quotations from al-Ṭūsī's Tajrīd al-I'tiqād come from al-Ḥillī's edition.

²S. V. Mir Ahmed Ali, The Holy Qur'ān, With English Translation of the Arabic Text and Commentary according to the Version of the Holy Ahlul-Bait (Karachi: Sterling Printing & Publishing Company, Limited, 1964), p. 789.

³These problems are parts of al-Ṭūsī's treatise on Islamic principle of faith (i'tiqād) in his Tajrīd al-I'tiqād. The order followed here is the reverse of that given by al-Ṭūsī, to show the immediate relation of imāmah to the bi'thah (Divine Mission). However, we shall follow al-Ṭūsī's arrangement when we come to discuss them.

⁴The doctrine that imāmah is the continuation of the Divine Mission is the essential difference from the Sunnī teachings. This doctrine will be discussed later on. According to the Sunnī, the Divine Mission ends with the Prophet Muḥammad, peace be upon him.

⁵Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād fī Sharḥ Tajrīd al-I'tiqād (Qumm: Maktabat al-Muṣṭafawī, n.d.), p. 278.

⁶This idea is clearly indicated in Shī'ī traditions. See for example the traditions narrated by Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Ya'qūb ibn Ishāq al-Kulaynī in his al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī,

Vol. I, (Tihrah: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, n.d.), pp. 178-179 and 224.

⁷See al-Ṭūsī, Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, pp. 225, 263, 267, 270, and 284.

⁸See Naṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, Talkhīs al-Muḥaṣṣal, in Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, Kitāb Muḥaṣṣal Afkār al-Mutaqaddimīn wa al-Muta'akhkhirīn (Miṣr: Maṭba'ah al-Ḥusaynīyah, n.d.), p. 148.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Even though al-Muḥsinī is not a well-known authority on Twelver-Shī'ī theology, his explanations about the problem of al-wujūb at least help us to understand one aspect of the Twelver-Shī'ī idea on the incumbency of imāmah.

¹¹Muḥammad Āṣaf al-Muḥsinī, Sirāt al-Ḥaqq fī al-Ma'ārif al-Islāmīyah wa al-Uṣūl al-I'tiqādīyah, Vol. II (Najaf: Maṭba'at al-Nu'mān, 1385 H.), p. 167.

¹²See ibid., p. 168.

¹³Ibid., p. 167.

¹⁴Cf. the explanation of al-Muḥsinī in which he cites two Qur'ānic verses (VI.12 and XCII.12) which state the incumbency of Grace (rahmah) and guidance (al-hudā) upon God. (See ibid., p. 167, n. 1.

¹⁵al-Rāzī, Kitāb Muḥaṣṣal, p. 147.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 148.

¹⁷See al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, p. 284.

¹⁸Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, Anwār al-Malakūt fī Sharḥ al-Yāqūt, bi-taṣḥīḥ ... Muḥammad Najmī-Zanjānī (Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tihṙān, 543; Tihṙān: Dānishgāh-i Tihṙān, 1338 H.), 202.

¹⁹Cf. ibid., p. 203.

²⁰Ali, The Holy Qur'ān, p. 463.

²¹al-Ḥillī, Anwār al-Malakūt, p. 203.

²²Quoted in ibid.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Abū al-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, al-Aḥkām al-Sultānīyah, 'uniya bi-taṣḥīḥ Muḥammad Badr al-Dīn al-Na'sānī al-Ḥalabī (Miṣr: Maṭba'at al-Sa'ādah, 1327 H./1909 M.), p. 3.

²⁵Ali, The Holy Qur'ān, p. 395.

²⁶al-Qāḍī Abū Ya'lā, al-Mu'tamad fī Uṣūl al-Dīn, in Yūsuf Ībish, Nuṣūṣ al-Fikr al-Siyāsī al-Islāmī: al-Imāmah 'ind al-Sunnah (Bayrūt: Dār al-Ṭalī'ah, 1966), p. 196.

²⁷al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, p. 284.

²⁸See al-Māwardī, al-Aḥkām al-Sultānīyah, p. 4.

²⁹al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, p. 288.

³⁰al-Māwardī, al-Aḥkām al-Sultānīyah, p. 4.

³¹Ibn Manẓūr, Lisān al-'Arab, Vol. XI (Bayrūt: Dār Ṣādir, 1375 H./1956 M.), p. 430.

³²Ibid.

³³Edward William Lane, An Arabic-English Lexicon, Part 5 (London: Williams and Norgate, 1874), p. 1974.

³⁴Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, al-Bābu 'l-Hādī 'Ashar, with Commentary by Miqdād-i-Fāḍil al-Ḥillī, translated from the Arabic by William McElwee Miller (London: The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1958), p. 40.

³⁵Ḥusayn Āl al-Wā'iz al-Khurasānī, al-Islām 'alā Daw' al-Tashayyu', Vol. I ([Najaf]: al-Mu'allif, [1367 H./1947 M.]), p. 258.

³⁶al-Ṭūsī, Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, p. 234.

³⁷See al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, p. 235.

³⁸al-Ḥillī, al-Bābu 'l-Hādī 'Ashar, p. 41. 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Qushjī in his Sharḥ Tajrīd al-Kalām ([Tih-rān, 1285 H./1868-1869 M.]), pp. 346-347 also gives these senses with a slight variation in the second. Instead of "conformity and unconformity to the natural disposition," he puts "conformity and unconformity to the objective (al-gharaḍ)." These senses of Good and Evil were criticized by al-Muḥsini in his Ṣirāt al-Ḥaqq, Vol. II, pp. 152-154, saying that these meanings were invented and employed by those who opposes the principle of "rational Good and Evil." Thus it implies that they were not genuinely Shī'ī.

³⁹al-Ḥillī, al-Bābu 'l-Hādī 'Ashar, p. 41. See also Muḥammad Abū Zahrah, Tārīkh al-Madhāhib al-Islāmīyah, Vol. I ([Miṣr]: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, n.d.), p. 195.

⁴⁰al-Ṭūsī, Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, p. 235.

⁴¹This does not necessarily mean that the intellect has unlimited power to detect everything Good and Evil or

determine its characteristics. It seems that al-Ṭūsī's argument here can only be applied to the social life and inter-relation between man and his fellow men. As for his relation with God, the intellect proves to be very limited in power. This may be the weak point in al-Ṭūsī's argument.

⁴²al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, p. 235. Cf. al-Qushjī, Sharḥ Tajrīd al-Kalām, p. 347.

⁴³al-Ṭūsī, Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, p. 235.

⁴⁴al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, pp. 235-236.

⁴⁵al-Qushjī, Sharḥ Tajrīd al-Kalām, p. 348. Cf. also Muḥammad al-Mahdī al-Ḥusaynī al-Shīrāzī, al-Qawl al-Sadīd fī Sharḥ al-Tajrīd (Karbīlā': al-A'lāmī, 1381 H./1961 M.), p. 291.

⁴⁶al-Ṭūsī, Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, p. 236.

⁴⁷al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, p. 236.

⁴⁸al-Shīrāzī, al-Qawl al-Sadīd, p. 291.

⁴⁹al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, p. 236. Cf. al-Qushjī, Sharḥ Tajrīd al-Kalām, p. 348.

⁵⁰al-Ṭūsī, Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, p. 236.

⁵¹al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, p. 236.

⁵²Ibid., pp. 236-237. Cf. al-Qushjī, Sharḥ Tajrīd al-Kalām, p. 348, and al-Shīrāzī, al-Qawl al-Sadīd, p. 292.

⁵³See al-Shīrāzī, al-Qawl al-Sadīd, p. 292.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵al-Ṭūsī, Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, p. 237. Cf. Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī, A Shī'ite Creed, A Translation of Risālat al-I'tiqāda of Muḥammad b. 'Alī Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī known as Shaykh Ṣādūq, by Asaf A. A. Fyzee (London: Oxford University Press, 1942), p. 32.

⁵⁶al-Ṭūsī, Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, p. 239.

⁵⁷See al-Ḥillī, Anwār al-Malakūt, p. 109.

⁵⁸See al-Nasafī, A Commentary on the Creed of Islam, Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftāzānī on the Creed of Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafī, translated with introduction and notes by Earl Edgar Elder (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), p. 80.

⁵⁹al-Ḥillī, al-Bābu 'l-Hādī 'Ashar, pp. 42-43.

⁶⁰Nūr Allāh al-Ḥusaynī al-Mar'ashī al-Tustarī, Iḥqāq al-Haqq wa Izhāq al-Bāṭil, Vol. I (Tih-rān: Maṭba'ah al-Islāmīyah, 1376 H.), p. 276.

⁶¹al-Ṭūsī, Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, p. 237.

⁶²al-Ḥillī, Anwār al-Malakūt, p. 108.

⁶³al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, p. 237. The explanation of this argument is given in detail by Abū al-Ḥasan 'Abd al-Jabbār, al-Majmū' fī al-Muhīt bi-al-Taklīf, ed. J. J. Houben, Vol. I (Bayrūt: Maṭba'ah al-Kāthūlīkīyah, [1962]), pp. 257-258.

⁶⁴See al-Ḥillī, al-Bābu 'l-Hādī 'Ashar, pp. 44-45.

⁶⁵al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, p. 237.

⁶⁶See Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī, al-Idārah 'an Uṣūl

al-Diyānah, a Translation with Introduction and Notes, by Walter C. Klein (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1940), p. 31.

⁶⁷ Abū al-Ḥasan al-Ashʿarī, Kitāb al-Lumaʿ fī al-Radd ʿalā Ahl al-Zaygh wa al-Bidaʿ, translated by Richard J. McCarthy (Bayrūt: Maṭbaʿah al-Kāthūlikīyah, 1952), p. 99.

⁶⁸ al-Ṭūsī, Tajrīd al-Iʿtiqād, p. 238.

⁶⁹ al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, pp. 237-238.

⁷⁰ al-Ṭūsī, Tajrīd al-Iʿtiqād, p. 238.

⁷¹ al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, p. 238.

⁷² al-Rāzī, Kitāb Muḥaṣṣal, p. 149.

⁷³ ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, Kitāb Nihāyat al-Iqdām fī ʿIlm al-Kalām, edited with a Translation by Alfred Guillaume (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), pp. 126-127.

⁷⁴ al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, p. 238.

⁷⁵ See al-Ḥillī, al-Bābu ʿl-Ḥādī ʿAshar, p. 54.

⁷⁶ al-Ṭūsī, Tajrīd al-Iʿtiqād, p. 238.

⁷⁷ Cf. al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, pp. 238-239.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 238.

⁷⁹ al-Nasafī, Creed of Islam, p. 80.

⁸⁰ Ali, The Holy Qurʾān, p. 802.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 1346.

⁸²Ibid., p. 918.

⁸³Ibid., p. 714.

⁸⁴D. B. Macdonald, "Taklīf", Encyclopaedia of Islam, Vol. IV (Leyden: E. J. Brill, and London: Luzac & Co., 1934), p. 631.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Thānawī, Kashshāf Istīlāḥāt al-Funūn, Vol. II (Kalkattah: Shyātik Sūsaytī āf Bangāl, 1862), p. 1255.

⁸⁷Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, Fuṣūl-i Khvājah-'i Ṭūsī, va tarjumah-'i tāzī-i ān az Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn-i 'Alī Gurgānī Astrābadī, bi-khūshish-i Muḥammad Taqī Dānish-pazhūh (Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tih-rān, 298; Tih-rān: Dānishgāh-i Tih-rān, 1335 H.), p. 35.

⁸⁸al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, p. 249.

⁸⁹Ibid. The inclusion of the prophet, the imām, the master, the parent, and the benefactor under those to whom obedience is obligatory is unquestionable. But if al-Ḥillī means that these figures can also impose taklīf, then it is questionable. Notwithstanding what al-Ḥillī's intention might be in including them under the authority of taklīf, it is obvious that, from the Twelver-Shī'ī opinion, his view lays down a very secure foundation for the authority of the imām in the life of the Muslim community.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Ibid. Cf. al-Ḥillī, Anwār al-Malakūt, pp. 150-152.

- ⁹³ al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, p. 250.
- ⁹⁴ See al-Ḥillī, Anwār al-Malakūt, pp. 151-152.
- ⁹⁵ al-Ash'arī, al-Ibānah, p. 111.
- ⁹⁶ Cf. ibid., p. 103.
- ⁹⁷ Ali, The Holy Qur'ān, p. 1728. See also Qur'ān, XI.22, and XVIII.101.
- ⁹⁸ al-Ash'arī, al-Ibānah, p. 111.
- ⁹⁹ Cf. al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, pp. 251-252.
- ¹⁰⁰ al-Ṭūsī, Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, p. 251.
- ¹⁰¹ See al-Rāzī, Kitāb Muḥaṣṣal, p. 147.
- ¹⁰² Ali, The Holy Qur'ān, p. 847.
- ¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 1866.
- ¹⁰⁴ Ibn Manẓūr, Lisān al-'Arab, Vol. IX. (Bayrūt: Dār Ṣādir, 1375 H./1956 M.), p. 316.
- ¹⁰⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁷ al-Ḥillī, al-Bābu 'l-Hādī 'Ashar, p. 50.
- ¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 51.
- ¹⁰⁹ al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, p. 254.
- ¹¹⁰ This concept is implicitly described by al-Ḥillī in ibid., p. 252.

- ¹¹¹See al-Ṭūsī, Fuṣūl, p. 35.
- ¹¹²al-Ṭūsī, Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, p. 254.
- ¹¹³al-Rāzī, Kitāb Muḥaṣṣal, p. 148.
- ¹¹⁴al-Ḥillī, Kahf al-Murād, p. 255.
- ¹¹⁵al-Ṭūsī, Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, p. 255.
- ¹¹⁶al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, p. 255.
- ¹¹⁷Cf. ibid., p. 256.
- ¹¹⁸Cf. ibid., p. 257.
- ¹¹⁹Ibid.
- ¹²⁰Cf. ibid.
- ¹²¹Cf. ibid. The "three legal atonements" referred to are the three alternative expiations for the non-discharge of certain obligations. These alternatives are: (1) Releasing a Muslim slave, or, for those who are not sufficiently well off, (2) Fasting (three days in some cases, up to two months in others), or, for those who are not able to fast, (3) Bestowing food or clothing on a definite number of poor people (from 10 to 60). See Qur'ān, V.92, and LVIII.3 and 4.
- ¹²²Thānawī, Kashshāf, Vol. I, p. 111.
- ¹²³Ibid., p. 584.
- ¹²⁴Ibid.
- ¹²⁵al-Ṭūsī, Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, p. 271.
- ¹²⁶al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, p. 278.

¹²⁷Ali, The Holy Qur'ān, p. 1271.

¹²⁸See al-Ṭūsī's explanation in the Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, p. 271.

¹²⁹al-Nasafī, Creed of Islam, p. 127.

¹³⁰al-Ṭūsī, Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, p. 271.

¹³¹Ibid.

¹³²Ibid.

¹³³Ibid.

¹³⁴Ibid.

¹³⁵al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, p. 272.

¹³⁶Ibid.

¹³⁷al-Ṭūsī, Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, p. 271.

¹³⁸Ibid.

¹³⁹The Twelver-Shī'ī theologians explain that the subject matter (muta'alliq) of the taklīf is either apprehension, or supposition, or action. The apprehension is divided into two: auditory and rational. Therefore, they speak about "auditory taklīf" (taklīf sam'ī) and "rational taklīf" (taklīf 'aqlī). See al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, pp. 252-253.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 273.

¹⁴¹They argue that men would be more inclined to fulfill their rational obligations (i.e. those which can be perceived by intellect) and to avoid what is rationally forbidden

if they obeyed these auditory taklīfs. See al-Ḥillī's account in ibid.

¹⁴²Cf. ibid. For the function of the prophet and imām as mediator, see Dwight M. Donaldson, The Shī'ite Religion (London: Luzac & Company, 1933), pp. 339-356.

¹⁴³al-Ṭūsī, Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, p. 273.

¹⁴⁴See al-Ḥillī, al-Bābu 'l-Hādī 'Ashar, p. 54.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., p. 55. In the Qur'ān, God informs us in XLIII.32 about the social nature of human beings by saying "... (It is) We Who distribute among them (even) their livelihood in the life of this world, and We did raise some of them above others in rank, so that some of them may take the others in subjection." (Ali, The Holy Qur'ān, p. 1461. In the margin of this page, Ali gives the explanation of the word "in subjection" as follows: "For the purpose of serving each other, to maintain discipline in the practical life.") As for the inclination of man to dominate and oppress his fellow men, and his selfishness and greediness to monopolize things, God informs us in the Qur'ān LXX.19-21, that "Verily man is created avaricious; When afflicteth him any evil, he is fretful, When reacheth him any good, he is niggardly." (Ali, The Holy Qur'ān, p. 1743.)

¹⁴⁶al-Ḥillī, al-Bābu 'l-Hādī 'Ashar, p. 55.

¹⁴⁷Abū 'Abd Allāh is the sixth Imām of the Twelver-Shī'īs, and is also known as Ja'far al-Ṣādiq.

¹⁴⁸Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Ya'qūb ibn Ishāq al-Kulaynī, al-Uṣūl min al-Kāfī, Vol. I (Tih-rān: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyah, n.d.), p. 168.

¹⁴⁹ al-Shahrastānī, Nihāyat al-Iqdām, p. 133.

¹⁵⁰ al-Ījī, Kitāb al-Mawāqif, bi-sharḥih li ... 'Alī ibn Muḥammad al-Jurjānī ..., Vol. VIII (Miṣr: Maṭba'at al-Sa'ādah, 1325 H./1907 M.), p. 230.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² See al-Rāzī, Kitāb Muḥaṣṣal, pp. 156-157. In p. 157, he declares: "... fa lā budda min bi'thati al-anbiyā'..." (it is necessary to send the prophets [to mankind]). In the same page he states: "... fa waḥab bi'thatu al-anbiyā'..." (and therefore, the sending of the prophets is necessary.)

¹⁵³ Ali, The Holy Qur'ān, p. 1567.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 1443.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 1453.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 1018.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 735.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 945.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 516; cf. also Qur'ān, VI. 54.

¹⁶⁰ Ali, The Holy Qur'ān, p. 428.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p. 456.

¹⁶² In his Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, al-Ṭūsī mentions six other qualifications for the prophet, namely (1) the perfection of intellect (kamāl al-'aql), (2) mental acuteness (al-dhakā'), (3) sagacity (al-fatānah), (4) sensibility

(quwwat al-ra'y), (5) being non-absent-minded ('adam al-sahw), and (6) being free from everything which could avert people from him.' See al-Ṭūsī, Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, p. 274. Meanwhile, al-Ḥillī mentions another qualification, i.e. "that the prophet be the best (afdāl) of the people of his age." (al-Ḥillī, al-Bābu 'l-Hādī 'Ashar, p. 60.) In this section, only impeccability will be dealt with, due to its importance from the Twelver-Shī'ī point of view. The Twelver-Shī'ī theology implies that the imām shares with the prophet, among other things, in these qualifications. In the third chapter, we will briefly deal with impeccability and precedence (al-afdaliyah) as the qualifications of the imām.

¹⁶³ Lane, An Arabic-English Lexicon, Part 5, p. 2067.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Thānawī, Kashshāf, Vol. II, p. 1047.

¹⁶⁶ "Iṣma," Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, and London: Luzac & Co., 1961), p. 178.

¹⁶⁷ The doctrine of the impeccability of the prophets was not found in the early stage of Sunnī theology, as is pointed out by Donaldson. He argues that the Qur'ān itself does not support this doctrine, and this is proved by several verses containing statements regarding the sins of Ādam, Mūsā and Dāwūd. Donaldson concludes that "... it is more probable that the teaching of the sinlessness of the prophets in Islam owes both its origin and its acquired importance to the development of the theology of the Shī'ītes" (Donaldson, The Shī'ite Religion, p. 334.) The chapter which deals with the origin of this doctrine is to be found on pp. 330-338.

- ¹⁶⁸ al-Ṭūsī, Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, p. 274.
- ¹⁶⁹ There are so many Qur'ānic verses which tell us to do so. See for example, Qur'ān, III.31-32.
- ¹⁷⁰ See Qur'ān, IX.61.
- ¹⁷¹ al-Ḥillī, al-Bābu 'l-Hādī 'Ashar, pp. 58-59.
- ¹⁷² Ibid., p. 58.
- ¹⁷³ Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, 'Iṣmat al-Anbiyā' (Ḥimṣ, Sūriyā: Maktabat al-Islāmīyah, [1388 H.]), p. 3.
- ¹⁷⁴ al-Ṭūsī, Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, p. 278.
- ¹⁷⁵ al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, p. 278.
- ¹⁷⁶ See p. 84 above, and p. 93 below.
- ¹⁷⁷ Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī, A Shī'ite Creed, p. 92, n. 3.
- ¹⁷⁸ al-Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, Vol. I, p. 179.
- ¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 168.
- ¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 178.
- ¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 224.
- ¹⁸² See Donaldson, The Shī'ite Religion, p. 306.
- ¹⁸³ Ali, The Holy Qur'ān, p. 87.
- ¹⁸⁴ al-Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, Vol. I, p. 178.
- ¹⁸⁵ In a long tradition narrated by Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī, we are informed of the names of the awṣiyā' from Ādam

down to the last prophet, Muḥammad, peace be upon them all.
(See Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī, Amāli al-Ṣadūq (Najaf: Maṭba'ah al-Ḥaydariyah, 1389 H./1970 M.), pp. 360-361.

¹⁸⁶Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī, A Shī'ite Creed, p. 92.

¹⁸⁷Ibid.

¹⁸⁸Ibid.

¹⁸⁹al-Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, Vol. I, p. 179.

¹⁹⁰See ibid., p. 200, in which imām is called
"khalīfatuhū fī arḍih" (His [God's] vicegerent on His earth).

¹⁹¹See Qur'ān, XIII.7, and XXXV.24.

¹⁹²Abū Ja'far is the fifth Imām of the Twelver-Shī'īs,
and is also known as Muḥammad al-Bāqir.

¹⁹³al-Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, Vol. I, p. 191.

¹⁹⁴Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī, al-Tamhīd fī al-Radd 'alā
al-Mulḥidat al-Mu'atṭilah wa al-Rāfiqah wa al-Khawārij wa
al-Mu'tazilah, qabaṭah ... Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Khuḍayrī wa
Muḥammad 'Abd al-Hādī Abū Raydah (Qāhirah: Dār al-Fikr al-
'Arabī, 1366 H./1947 M.), pp. 185-186.

¹⁹⁵Ibid., p. 186.

¹⁹⁶al-Ṭūsī, Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, p. 284.

¹⁹⁷Ali, The Holy Qur'ān, p. 1567.

¹⁹⁸Ibid., p. 1568.

¹⁹⁹Aḥmad Maḥmūd Ṣubḥī, Nazarīyat al-Imāmah ladā al-

Shī'ah al-Ithnā 'Ashariyah (Miṣr: Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.), p. 71.

²⁰⁰Cf. ibid.

²⁰¹See traditions concerning this peculiarities in al-Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, Vol. I, pp. 228-229.

²⁰²Ibid., p. 192.

²⁰³Ibid.

²⁰⁴al-Kulaynī narrates a tradition on the authority of Abū Ja'far, peace be upon him, he (Abū Ja'far) said: "No one can claim that he has the whole [knowledge of the] Qur'ān, esoteric as well as exoteric, except the awṣiyā' [the imāms]." (Ibid., p. 228.) Another tradition narrated by al-Kulaynī on this matter is on the authority of 'Abd al-A'lā he said: "I heard Abū 'Abd Allāh, peace be upon him, says: 'By God, verily I know the [content of the] Book of God from its beginning to its end as if it is in my palm. In it [the Book of God] the news of heaven and the news of earth, the news of what had-happen and the news of what will happen. God says: "In it the explanation of everything."'" (Ibid., p. 229.)

²⁰⁵See Qur'ān, XVI.43. According to S. V. Mir Ahmed Ali, the words "people of 'Zikr'" (ahl al-dhikr) refer to the Ahl al-Bayt with whom the Holy Prophet left the Qur'ān. (See Ali, The Holy Qur'an, p. 854.)

²⁰⁶See al-Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, Vol. I, p. 210.

²⁰⁷Ibid., pp. 239-240.

²⁰⁸Ibid., p. 240.

²⁰⁹Ibid., p. 255.

²¹⁰See ibid., p. 176.

²¹¹The verse explains: "... none knoweth its (hidden) interpretation except God and those firmly rooted in knowledge." (Ali, The Holy Qur'ān, p. 247.)

²¹²al-Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, Vol. I, p. 213. In another tradition, Abū 'Abd Allāh explains that "Those firmly rooted in knowledge are Amīr al-Mu'minīn ['Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib] and the imāms after him." (Ibid.)

CHAPTER III

THE QUALIFICATIONS AND DESIGNATION OF THE IMĀM

The qualifications and the method of designating the imām are among the cardinal issues of Twelver-Shī'ī theology, since both are integral parts of their doctrine of imāmah. Having discussed the doctrine of the necessity of imāmah, it is important to deal with these significant issues. In the previous chapter we saw the claim of the Twelver-Shī'īs that imāmah is the continuation of nubū'ah, on the ground that God will not leave the earth without a hujjah. In this respect, the imām, after the death of the prophet, acts as guide for the people and as guardian of the revealed law (sharī'ah), and as such he is the expression of God's Grace (luṭf) toward His servants. These facts are behind the Twelver-Shī'ī claim that the imām shares certain functions with the prophet. The prophet, as the bearer of the Divine Mission, according to them, must be impeccable (ma'sūm), free from any kind of sin and disobedience, and must be the best among the people.¹ There is no doubt, that the prophet, being the divine messenger, is divinely appointed. It is only logical, from the Twelver-Shī'ī point of view, that the imām should share such qualities with the prophet. Being

the vicegerent of the prophet, the imām must also be impeccable, and be the best among the people. As the divine hujjah on earth, the imām must then be divinely appointed.

The qualifications and the method of designating of the imām are both complicated subjects in relation to the office of imāmah after the Prophet Muḥammad, peace be upon him, since they involve political issue concerning the status of the first three caliphs, Abū Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthmān. The present study is not intended to go into detail in these matters, and therefore we will deal with them in a very brief manner.

A. The Qualifications of the imām

In al-Ṭūsī's Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, two things are stressed as necessary qualifications of the imām, namely:

1. Impeccability (al-'iṣmah), and
2. Precedence (al-afdaliyah).

1. Impeccability (al-'iṣmah).

The arguments propounded by Twelver-Shī'ī theologians to support their doctrine of the necessity of imāmah, as we have seen in the latter part of Chapter II, imply the

similarity of the nature of the missions of nubū'ah and those of imāmah. Therefore, everything related to the prophet --except the "prophetic" revelation--is also related to the imām. According to the Twelver-Shī'īs, the nature of the prophets' mission necessitates that he should possess a very special qualification, namely impeccability (al-'iṣmah). The above-mentioned implication suggests that the imām should also be impeccable, since he is to continue the mission of the prophet.

The doctrine of the impeccability of the imām is one of the cardinal dogmas of the Twelver-Shī'īs.² This impeccability is the same in nature as the impeccability which is attributed to the prophet. In our discussion of the impeccability of the prophet, the definition of 'iṣmah has been given. However, it is important to note that this 'iṣmah is a luṭf given by God to those whom He has designated to carry out His sharī'ah, namely the prophets and the imāms.³ Being a given luṭf, therefore, the prophets and imāms still potentially able, and have the power, to commit sin or disobedience. Nevertheless, being guided by this luṭf, they have willed not to disobey God or to perform what is evil in the eye of the shar'. Hence, the prophets and the imāms are entitled to reward in spite of their impeccability.⁴

In Chapter II, we already explained the reason given

by al-Ṭūsī to back up his argument for the impeccability of the prophet. As for the imāms--they being the successors of the prophet--al-Ṭūsī also asserts the necessity of their impeccability.⁵ To support his assertion, al-Ṭūsī gives five reasons as to why impeccability is necessary to the imāms. He says:

The impossibility of infinite regreesion (al-tasalsul) makes the impeccability of the imām necessary; and because he [the imām] is the guardian of the sharī'ah; and because in case he sins, he should necessarily be suspected, and as such the command to obey him will be invalid; and because the objective of his designation would be nullified [if he sins]; and because of his being less in rank than the lowest rung of the people [if he is not impeccable].⁷

The first of these reasons is the impossibility of infinite regress (al-tasalsul). One of the many duties of the imām is to maintain justice among the people, by preventing oppression. If he is sinful, he will not be able to do justice; and in this case he is in need of another imām who would restrain him from his error. Suppose the second imām also is not impeccable, there would be need of a third imām, and so on. This would lead to an infinite regression, demanding an unlimited number of imāms, which is impossible. So, it is obvious that the imām must be impeccable in regard to any kind of sin.⁸

The second reason is that the imām is the guardian of the revealed law (sharī'ah). According to the Twelver-Shī'īs, the imām is the only guardian of the law after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad, peace be upon him. The Twelver-Shī'īs recognize only the Qur'ān and the prophetic traditions as sources of law. According to them, the ordinances and principles contained in these sources are too general (mujmal),⁹ and need to be interpreted in detail in order to accomodate the relevant ordinances to every aspect of the community's life at all times. The Twelver-Shī'īs did not rely on the consensus of community (al-ijmā') to give this interpretation, on the grounds that laymen are not impeccable. They also rejected the reliability of analogy (al-qiyyās).¹⁰ The only authority to provide a true interpretation of the Qur'ān and prophetic traditions is the imām. If he also is not impeccable, then no one can inform us of what God meant in His revelation, which is contradictory to the purpose of taklīf.¹¹ To fulfill this responsibility, therefore, the imām must be impeccable.

The third reason is that if the imām commits sin or disobedience, people would disapprove of him, and he would lose his respect in their eyes, which is contradictory to the command of God in the Qur'ān (IV.59) to obey Him, His messenger and those vested with authority, i.e. the imām. If the

imām is sinful, how could it be that God ordered us to obey a person who is a sinner? Therefore, the imām must be ma'sūm in order that he will be approved and respected in accordance with the command of God.

It is worth noting here that concerning obedience to those vested with authority, we find several Sunnī traditions which imply total obedience to the amīr (khalīfah, imām) without any reservation: One of these is a tradition narrated by Muslim in which he relates that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said:

He who obeys me has verily obeyed God, and he who disobeys me has verily disobeyed God. And he who obeys the amīr has verily obeyed me, and he who disobeys the amīr has verily disobeyed me.¹²

Though in another place in Muslim's Ṣaḥīḥ we find a tradition which commands every believer to obey the amīr as long as he orders nothing unlawful, yet Muslim also narrates several traditions which emphasize that even an unjust amīr (and hence he who is not impeccable) must be obeyed. Muslim relates that the Prophet answered a question about the unjust amīrs by saying "Hear and obey [to those amīrs, even if they are unjust]. Verily for them is what they are responsible for, and for you what you are responsible for."¹³

The fourth reason given by al-Ṭūsī is that it would

be contradictory to the purpose of the imām's designation if he were not impeccable. We mentioned earlier that the purpose of the designation of the imām is to create a guide to be followed by people in observing God's commandments. If the imām is sinful, there is no obligation on the people to follow him, which contradicts the purpose of his designation.

The fifth reason is that if the imām commits sin, his status would be lower than that of ordinary people, whereas it is a prerequisite that the imām should be the best from among the people in every respect. Besides,

... the imām is more cognizant of the evilness of disobedience and of the goodness of obedience; therefore the [occurrence] of disobedience and the negligence of obedience by him is fouler than disobedience ... [done] by the laymen, because the one who is cognizant [and then] neglects, is worse than those who are ignorant.¹⁴

These five reasons are the rational arguments advocated by the Twelver-Shī'īs. As for the traditional argument (dalīl naqlī), we find that it is not totally without foundation. There is one verse in the Qur'ān (II.124) which is frequently cited by the Twelver-Shī'īs to support their notion of imāmah, including their insistence on the necessity of the impeccability of the imām. This verse is a dialogue

between God and Ibrāhīm concerning the designation of the latter as an imām. The verse reads:

And remember when his Lord tried Ibrāhīm with certain words then he fulfilled them; He [God] said, "Verily I make thee Imam for mankind;" (Abraham) said: "And of my offspring?" He said: "My covenant reacheth not the unjust."¹⁵

As is clear from this verse, Ibrāhīm requests that his offspring be designated also as imām. To this request, God replies: "My covenant reacheth not the unjust." Interpreting this reply, the Twelver-Shī'īs explain that God's covenant, i.e. the imāmah, would not be given to the unjust, the evil-doers (al-zālimūn), which includes those who are not immune to sin.¹⁶ To be an imām, therefore, one should be impeccable (ma'sūm).

Among the Sunnīs, the doctrine of impeccability of the imām is not accepted, and their scholars attack the Twelver-Shī'īs' arguments. Ibn Taymīyah (661-728 H.), for example, refutes the argument that if the imām is not immune to sin, he is surely in need of another imām who is impeccable, which would cause an infinite regression (tasalsul). To this argument, Ibn Taymīyah responds with a question:

Why is it not possible that if the imām errs, there is someone in the community who reminds him of the

error, so that the unanimity of the whole [community] to err does not happen; yet if some of the community err, the imām or his agent or another [person] reminds him, and likewise if the imām or his agent errs the other person reminds him; and thus impeccability is established by the totality [of the community], not by individuals.¹⁷

Furthermore, he stresses that

...[eventhough] every one of the narrators of a successive tradition (khabar mutawātir) is liable to err, and even if it is possible that he intended to err, yet, it is impossible among the totality (al-majmū') [of the narrators to do so].¹⁸

On the basis of this reason, Ibn Taymīyah criticizes the Twelver-Shī'īs who emphasize the impeccability of a certain individual rather than that of the totality of the Muslim community. He proposes that "... the establishment of impeccability upon the totality of the group who are in agreement is more appropriate than that of an individual."¹⁹

The second point which is criticized by Ibn Taymīyah is the Twelver-Shī'ī emphasis that the imām is the guardian of the sharī'ah. He says:

It is not necessary that the imām should be the guardian of the law; instead, the community should be the guardian of the law ... [since] it is better if the

sharī'ah is conveyed by the members of the successive chain (ahl al-tawātur) rather than by an individual [i.e. the imām].²⁰

According to him, the companions had understood the teachings of Islam, and in turn they propagated it; thus, the impeccability should be attributed to each group who made the attempt to preserve and propagate it.²¹

Long before Ibn Taymīyah, al-Bāqillānī (d. 403 H.) made a systematic criticism of this issue. He maintains that it is not necessary for the imām to be impeccable, because his office does not require such a qualification. He says:

The imām is installed to implement the ordinances and regulations and matters which the prophet, peace be upon him, had set, and which the ummah had known beforehand. In all matters he deals with, [the imām] is a deputy of the ummah; and the ummah, from behind him is to continuously straighten, remind, advise, and punish, dispose and replace him in case he is found guilty. With all this, neither he needs to be impeccable, nor his emir or his judge.²²

It is clear from this quotation that the duty of the imām, from the Sunnī point of view, is only to enforce the law (sharī'ah) which has been established before him by the prophet and to which the imām himself is subject. Moreover, the sharī'ah is already known to the ummah, and therefore, there is no need for an impeccable imām to guard it.

2. Precedence (al-afḍaliyyah)

al-Ṭūsī states that "The evil of giving precedence to the unpreferred [person] is known, and there is no preference among the equals."²³

From this statement we learn that the Twelver-Shī'īs are of the opinion that the imām should be the best among the people of his age, because "he takes precedence over (muqaddam) all."²⁴ Commenting on al-Ṭūsī's statement, al-Ḥillī explains that "if the imām were equal to his people, it would be impossible to give preference to him over others on the [matter of] imāmah."²⁵ If, for any reason, the imām, who should take precedence over (muqaddam) his people, is lower in rank than the lowest rung of them, he is then unpreferred (mafdūl). Giving precedence to the unpreferred is rationally evil (qabīḥ), and it not only contradicts the principle that God does not perform evil,²⁶ but also the Qur'ānic verse (X.35) which reads:

Is then He Who guideth unto truth more worthy to be followed or he who himself goeth not aright unless he is guided? What then hath befallen you? How (ill) ye judge?²⁷

Therefore, the imām should be the best "in the matter of knowledge, religion, generosity, bravery, and all kind of moral and physical excellences."²⁸

The Sunnī scholars do not totally reject the principle of precedence (al-afdaliyah), yet they disagree with the Twelver-Shī'īs on its absoluteness as a qualification for the imām. The Sunnīs argue that the principle of precedence is necessary on condition that "there is no obstacle which [could] prevent the designation of the preferred one (al-afdāl) [to be installed as imām] ..." ²⁷ which implies that the unpreferred one (al-mafdūl) can also be designated as imām if circumstances necessitate. One of these circumstances is to prevent dissention and agitation. In this respect, al-Bāqillānī explains:

The purpose of designating the imām is that [he could] dispel the enemy, protect the territory, remedy the shortcomings, enforce the divine ordinance and extract the laws. If it is feared that agitation, depravity, struggle, disobedience, battle, or hindrance of statutes and laws [could happen], and that the Muslims' enemy strive to terrorize and to disregard them if the preferred one (al-afdāl) among them were designated [as the imām], then this [fear] is an obvious excuse to relinquish the afdāl one to the mafdūl. ³⁰

In his refutation of the Twelver-Shī'ī principle of precedence (al-afdaliyah), Ibn Taymiyah criticizes the use of the above-mentioned Qur'ānic verse (X.35) by the Twelver-Shī'īs, holding that there is no evidence in this verse which supports the principle of precedence. The reason

is that God's saying "He Who guideth unto truth" is applied only to God, whereas His saying "he who himself goeth not aright unless he is guided" is a characteristic of creatures.³¹ The Twelver-Shī'īs, on the other hand, use the former phrase to indicate the preferred one (al-afdāl) and the latter for the unpreferred (al-mafqūl).

The dispute between the Twelver-Shī'īs and the Sunnīs on the principle of precedence actually led to a more bitter discussion on another issue, namely the comparison (al-mufāḍalah) among the companions of the Prophet. Perhaps the Twelver-Shī'īs were the first to raise this issue by making 'Alī the best of all companions.³² In his Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, al-Ṭūsī carefully describes in detail the reasons for the precedence (afdaliyah) of 'Alī over the other companions.³³ By giving such a precedence to 'Alī, the Twelver-Shī'īs imply that the true imām (caliph!) after the Prophet Muḥammad, peace be upon him, is 'Alī.

It is not our intention to discuss this issue here, because it would lead us to a discussion of the legitimacy of the first three caliphs before 'Alī from the Twelver-Shī'īs' point of view. This problem is far-reaching, and it should be treated carefully with intensive preparation and research. Therefore, we confine ourselves to this brief reference.

B. The Designation of the imām

The second issue which is closely related to the doctrine of the necessity of imāmah is the question of the method whereby the imām is appointed. Like the issue of the qualifications of the imām, this one also led to controversy among Muslim theologians. In general, they proposed two different methods of appointment: (1) election (al-ikhtiyār), and (2) specification (al-nass). The first method is suggested by the majority of Muslim theologians, while the second is held essentially by the Twelver-Shī'īs. There are also several other methods proposed by different groups. Among the Zaydītes, the nass and self-appointment (al-da'wah ilā nafsih) are the prevailing method, whereas the supporters of the Abbasids recognized the method of nass and inheritance (mīrāth).³⁴

It is a dogma of the Twelver-Shī'īs that the imām should be specified (manṣūṣ) either by God or by His prophet. Thus, they did not recognize election as an appropriate method for this purpose. In his Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, al-Ṭūsī gives two reasons why the imām must be specified.³⁵ The first reason is the doctrine of impeccability of the imām. This impeccability is a personal matter whose possessor is unknown to human being. God is the only one with knowledge

of who possesses it, because He Himself gave it to the possessor as a luṭf. There is no way for us to know who is impeccable unless God makes it known to us. According to Miqdād Fāḍil al-Ḥillī, this is done in two ways: (1) by informing the prophet who, in turn, informs us about the impeccability of the imām, and appoints him to the office of imāmah; (2) by the occurrence of miracles (mu'jizāt) as a proof on the part of those who claim the imāmah.³⁶ Since impeccability is a hidden matter, the imām must be designated by the specification of Him who knows the invisible things, or by those to whom He made it known, i.e. the prophets.

The second reason given by al-Ṭūsī is the conduct of the Prophet Muḥammad, peace be upon him. It is known that he gives guidance and provides information on all aspects of human life, even trivial matters such as manners in the wash-room. If the conduct of the Prophet is like this, it is inconceivable that he should have ignored the most important thing for the future of his ummah, namely the specification of the imām who will succeed him. Besides, it is a fact that whenever the Prophet planned to be out of town for a while, he always specified someone who would deputize for him during his absence. On the basis of these facts, al-Ḥillī argues:

He whose character is [like] this, how could he be charged with the negligence of his community and its lack of guidance [by him] in the most important, exalted and fundamental things [namely the specification of an imām] from which his ummah is benefiting most and which they need most, since he [the imām] is assigned the running of their affairs after him [the prophet]?³⁷

So, al-Ḥillī concludes: "It is necessary from his [the Prophet's] conduct that he should designate an imām after him, and specify him and proclaim him."³⁸

These two are the common reasons given by the Twelver-Shī'īs to support their dogma; the first is rational, while the second is historical. However, a traditional reason (dalīl naqlī) is also given in some Shī'ī writings. Quoting some Shī'ī authorities, Aḥmad Maḥmūd Ṣubḥī elaborates some Qur'ānic verses to support the Twelver-Shī'ī concept. One of the most impressive of these verses is God's saying in the Qur'ān (XXVIII.68): "And thy Lord createth whatever He willeth and (also) chooseth too; it is not theirs to choose."³⁹ Ṣubḥī explains that the denial of human choice is in general terms, unless it is specified by a particular thing. Therefore, he says,

The meaning of this verse is that a human being does not have any right to choose in a matter which falls under

God's jurisdiction and authority. Therefore, He is the only one who chooses whomever He wishes for prophecy and imāmah [office].⁴⁰

Another verse elaborated by Ṣubḥī is God's proclamation in the Qur'ān (II.124): "'Verily I make thee Imam for mankind;' (Abraham) said: 'And of my offspring?' 'He said: 'My covenant reacheth not the unjust.'"⁴¹ From these verses the Twelver-Shī'īs extract that imāmah is a matter of God's covenant, indicated by His saying "My covenant", in which a human being does not have any right. The only right to choose the imām belongs to God alone, which is indicated by His saying that He made (designated and specified) Ibrāhīm as imām for mankind.⁴² Though the verse refers to Ibrāhīm, yet for the Twelver-Shī'īs the act of specification did not apply particularly to Ibrāhīm, but to the imāms in general, because the imāmah was not confined to Ibrāhīm alone.

Evaluating the attempts of the Twelver-Shī'īs to support their doctrine by forwarding several kind of arguments, one can observe that the main reason behind this attempt is to provide solid ground for their insistence on the specification of 'Alī to the office of imāmah by the Prophet Muḥammad himself. They base their insistence on at least three different traditions:

- (1) The tradition in which the Prophet declares that 'Alī is his brother, his waṣī, his khalīfah after him and

the qāḍī of his dīn (religion).⁴³

(2) The tradition in which the Prophet addresses the people and proclaims that whoever recognizes him as his mawlā will know that 'Alī is his mawlā.⁴⁴

(3) The tradition in which the Prophet explains the position of 'Alī with regard to his own position. It is related that he says that 'Alī is to him like Hārūn to Mūsā.⁴⁵

The Sunnīs oppose the Twelver-Shī'īs in the matter of the method of designating the imām. Although the Sunnīs are of the opinion that the community recognizes specification (al-naṣṣ) and election (al-ikhtiyār) as the methods for designating an imām, yet they argue that specification is groundless (bāṭil), and that election is the only valid method.⁴⁶ The groundlessness of al-naṣṣ is based on the fact that the Prophet Muḥammad, peace be upon him, never explicitly specified anyone--in the presence of his companions--to be his khalīfah (successor [imām!]).⁴⁷

The Sunnīs refutation of the Twelver-Shī'ī doctrine on specification is, in fact, a refutation of the Twelver-Shī'ī insistence upon the specification of 'Alī by the Prophet Muḥammad. In his al-Tamhīd, al-Bāqillānī gives his interpretation of the above-mentioned traditions used by the Twelver-Shī'īs, and in doing so, he rebuts their arguments. To the first tradition, al-Bāqillānī replies that by

mentioning 'Alī as his brother, the Prophet wanted only to eulogize him; and by mentioning that 'Alī is his khawāṭifah after him, he referred only to his deputizing him in the affairs of his family, i.e. Fāṭimah and her children when the Prophet was out of town.⁴⁸ Concerning the word qady dyn, the Twelver-Shī'īs read it qāḍī dīnī⁴⁹ which means the "magistrate of my religion," while al-Bāqillānī reads it qāḍī daynī which means "the discharge of my debt."⁵⁰ The two readings speak clearly about their differences. As a conclusion to his criticism of this tradition, al-Bāqillānī says:

This is neither an assignment [for 'Alī] in the matter of imāmah, nor a specification of his authority, even though this reference indicates 'Alī's prominence, his significant position in regard to the Prophet's, and his [the Prophet's] trust in him.⁵¹

As for the second tradition, al-Bāqillānī assumes, after elaborating the different meanings of word mawlā, that what the Prophet meant by his saying: "Whoever [recognizes] me as his mawlā, will know that 'Alī is his mawlā" might be one of two possibilities: (1) He might have meant that

Whoever [recognizes] me as protector of his religion and his supporter by my exoteric and my esoteric aspects and my soul and my body, then [he will recognize] 'Alī as his protector in the same way.⁵²

(2) He might have meant that "Whoever [recognizes] me as his

beloved one and his protector in every respect, then 'Alī is his protector."⁵³ In his conclusion, al-Bāqillānī argues that if this tradition were meant as the specification of 'Alī, the Prophet would not have used this confusing phrase. Instead, he would have said: "This is your imām after me, obedience to whom is obligatory; therefore listen to him and obey."⁵⁴

As for the third tradition, al-Bāqillānī argues that it is not a specification of 'Alī, since the Prophet uttered this saying on his way to the Tabūk raid. Before his departure he deputized 'Alī in Madīnah to look after his family. The hypocrites in Madīnah interpreted the Prophet's leaving 'Alī behind as a sign of the Prophet's hatred for him. 'Alī then caught up with the Prophet and asked if the Prophet intended to leave him with those akhlāf (those who were not willing to go with the Prophet). To this question, the Prophet answered: "Are not you satisfied that your position to me is like the position of Hārūn to Mūsā ...?"⁵⁵

The rebuttals of al-Bāqillānī are the position held by the Sunnīs to support their claim for the invalidity of al-nass and the validity of al-ikhtiyār. However, Ṣubḥī summarizes Twelver-Shī'ī criticism of the Sunnīs by saying that in defending the principle of ikhtiyār, the Sunnīs are not united, because they differ in the method of election,

whether or not it is by ijmā' or by ahl al-hall wa al-'aqd, as well as on many other issues pertaining to election.⁵⁶

As we noted in the beginning of this chapter, the discussion of the qualifications and the method of designating the imām are both complicated subjects. The exposition of the Twelver-Shī'ī arguments, as well as those of the Sunnīs, is an indication of this complexity. Since the objective of this study is only to expose some aspects of the doctrine of the necessity of imāmah, what we have discussed in these pages is sufficient for our purpose.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

¹Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, al-Bābu 'l-Hādī 'Ashar, With Commentary by Miqdād-i-Fāḍil al-Ḥillī, translated from the Arabic by William McElwee Miller (London: The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1958), p. 69.

²A detailed explanation of the origin and development of this doctrine is given in Dwight M. Donaldson, The Shī'ite Religion (London: Luzac & Company, 1933), pp. 330-338.

³See al-Ḥillī, al-Bābu 'l-Hādī 'Ashar, p. 58.

⁴Cf. Aḥmad Maḥmūd Ṣubḥī, Nazarīyat al-Imāmah ladā al-Shī'ah al-Ithnā 'Ashariyah (Qāhirah: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1969), p. 110. See also Donaldson, The Shī'ite Religion, pp. 324-325.

⁵According to al-Ḥillī, the only parties who insist on the necessity of the impeccability of the imām are the Twelver-Shī'īs and Ismā'īlīs. The rest of the Muslim theologians do not consider impeccability as a necessity for the imāms. See Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād fī Sharḥ Tajrīd al-I'tiqād (Qumm: Maktabat al-Muṣṭafawī, n.d.), p. 286.

⁶Donaldson quotes nine proofs of the sinlessness of the imām according to al-Majlisī. See Donaldson, The Shī'ite Religion, p. 321.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Cf. al-Ḥillī, al-Bābu 'l-Hādī 'Ashar, pp. 64-65. In his commentary to al-Ṭūsī, al-Ḥillī explains this reason

using a different argument. He says that "the prerequisite of the necessity of the designation of the imām is the eligibility of the subjects to fault. If this prerequisite is applicable also to the imām, then it is necessary that he needs another imām, and [this state will produce an] infinite regress." (See al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, p. 284.)

⁹See al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, p. 284.

¹⁰Ibid. In his commentary to al-Bāb al-Ḥādī 'Ashar, Miqdād Fāḍil al-Ḥillī explains the reasons why the Qur'ān, the prophetic traditions, the ijmā', the qiyās, the hadīth āḥād or the istiṣḥāb could not be relied upon to be the guardians of the sharī'ah. (See al-Ḥillī, al-Bābu 'l-Ḥādī 'Ashar, p. 66.

¹¹al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, p. 284.

¹²Abū al-Ḥusayn Muslim, Saḥīḥ Muslim, waqaf 'ala ... taḥqīq nuṣūṣih ... Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī, Vol. III ([Qāhirah]: Dār Iḥyā' al-Kutub al-'Arabīyah, 1375 H./ 1955 M.), p. 1466.

¹³See ibid., pp. 1474-1475.

¹⁴Muḥammad al-Mahdī al-Ḥusaynī al-Shīrāzī, al-Qawl al-Sadīd fī Sharḥ al-Taḥrīd (Karbīlā': al-A'lāmī, 1381 H./ 1961 M.), p. 348.

¹⁵S. V. Mir Ahmed Ali, The Holy Qur'ān, With English Translation of the Arabic Text and Commentary according to the Version of the Holy Ahlul-Bait (Karachi: Sterling Printing & Publishing Company, Limited, 1964), p. 87.

¹⁶al-Ḥillī, al-Bābu 'l-Ḥādī 'Ashar, p. 68. See also.

Ṣubḥī, Nazarīyat al-Imāmah, p. 129 ff. in which he quotes several Qur'ānic verses with the explanation of their contents in support of the issue under discussion. In his commentary to the Qur'ān, S. V. Mir Ahmed Ali elaborates the meaning and connotation of the word "zulm" found in the above-mentioned verse. He says that "the greatest 'zulm' or injustice in the words of the Holy Qur'ān is 'shirk' i.e. idolatry." His interpretation implies that the only person suitable for the office of imāmah after the Prophet Muḥammad is 'Alī, on the ground that "besides the Holy Prophet Muḥammad there was none in the Islamic world during the Prophet's time who at any time had not been an idolator, save Ali." (See Ali, The Holy Qur'ān, p. 150.)

¹⁷ Ibn Taymīyah, Minhāj al-Sunnah al-Nabawīyah fī Naqd Kalām al-Shī'ah wa al-Qadarīyah, Vol. III (Miṣr: Maṭba'ah al-Kubrā al-Amīrīyah, 1322 H.), p. 255.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 415-416.

²¹ Ibid., p. 316.

²² al-Bāqillānī, al-Tamhīd fī al-Radd 'alā al-Mulḥidat al-mu'attilah wa al-Rāfiḍah wa al-Khawārij wa al-Mu'tazilah, qabaṭah ... Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Khuḍayrī wa Muḥammad 'Abd al-Hādī Abū Raydah (Qāhirah: Dār al-Fikr al-Ārabī, 1366 H./1947 M.), p. 184.

²³ Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, in Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād fī Sharḥ Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, (Qumm: Maktabat al-Muṣṭafawī, n.d.), p. 288.

²⁴ al-Ḥillī, al-Bābu 'l-Hādī 'Ashar, p. 69.

²⁵ al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, p. 288.

²⁶ This principle advocates that God's Justice necessitates the absence of Evil from His deeds, which implies that He always chose what is the best (al-aṣḥaḥ) for His servant. (See ibid., pp. 271-272; and Ibn al-Muṭahhar al-Ḥillī, Anwār al-Malakūt fī Sharḥ al-Yāqūt, bi-taṣḥīḥ ... Muḥammad Najmī-Zanjānī [Intishārāt-i Dānishgāh-i Tih-rān, 543; Tih-rān: Dānishgāh-i Tih-rān, 1338 H.], pp. 156-158 on al-aṣḥaḥ.) Designating the unpreferred (al-mafdūl) to be the imām while the preferred one (al-afḍal) exists is contrary to this principle.

²⁷ Ali, The Holy Qur'ān, p. 711.

²⁸ al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, p. 288.

²⁹ al-Bāqillānī, al-Tamhīd, p. 183. On the same page he even quotes several prophetic traditions to support this opinion.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 184.

³¹ See Ibn Taymīyah, Minhāj al-Sunnah, Vol. III, p. 277.

³² See Ṣubḥī, Nazarīyat al-Imāmah, p. 160.

³³ al-Ṭūsī, Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, pp. 300-314.

³⁴ See al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, p. 288.

³⁵ al-Ṭūsī, Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, p. 288.

³⁶ See al-Ḥillī, al-Bābu 'l-Hādī 'Ashar, p. 69. The Twelver-Shī'īs believe that some of the imāms performed

miracles after their claim to the office of imāmah, as it occurred at the hands of Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn for example. See al-Ḥillī, Anwār al-Malakūt, p. 208.

³⁷al-Ḥillī, Kashf al-Murād, p. 288.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ali, The Holy Qurʾān, p. 1179.

⁴⁰Ṣubḥī, Nazarīyat al-Imāmah, p. 79.

⁴¹Ali, The Holy Qurʾān, p. 87.

⁴²See Ṣubḥī, Nazarīyat al-Imāmah, p. 81.

⁴³This tradition is quoted by al-Ḥillī in his Kashf al-Murād, p. 289, without giving the chain of its sanad.

⁴⁴This address was delivered by the Prophet Muḥammad in Ghadīr Khumm. To locate the text of the tradition in the Sunnī collections, see A. J. Wensinck, A Handbook of Early Muhammadan Tradition (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), p. 15. In the Shīʿī collections this tradition is to be found for example in Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī, Maʿānī al-Akḥbār (Tihrah: Maktabat al-Ṣadūq, and Qumm: Muʿassasah Dār al-ʿIlm, 1379 H.), p. 67.

⁴⁵See Wensinck, A Handbook, p. 15 for the location of this tradition in the Sunnī collections. In the Shīʿī collections, this is to be found, among other places, in Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī, Maʿānī al-Akḥbār, p. 74.

⁴⁶al-Bāqillānī, al-Tamhīd, p. 176.

⁴⁷See ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 175-176.

⁴⁹See al-Ṭūsī's text in his Tajrīd al-I'tiqād, p. 291.

⁵⁰al-Bāqillānī, al-Tamhīd, p. 176.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 175-176.

⁵²Ibid., p. 172.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 173.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 174.

⁵⁶Ṣubḥī, Nazarīyat al-Imāmah, p. 97.

EPILOGUE

Both Sunnīs and Twelver-Shī'īs see imāmah as involving the notion of "succession to the Prophet." However, there are important differences between the two parties about this notion. The Sunnīs consider the imāmah as a worldly institution established by the community, and the imām for them is functioning merely as a leader of Muslim community. For Sunnīs, the imām is elected or appointed as the first among equals. On the other hand, imāmah for the Twelver-Shī'īs is a divine institution, and imām is a divine agent in succeeding the Prophet. The imām, according to them is divinely appointed as head of the community.

In the eyes of the Sunnīs, the position of the imām in relation to the Prophet is merely that of a successor and a deputy to carry on the Prophet's functions, except those of law-giver and medium of revelation. The role of imām or khalīfah from the Sunnī point of view is much less than that of the Prophet, since the imām is not an agent of revelation. As for the Twelver-Shī'īs, they include not only those who deputize for the Prophet, but the Prophet himself, under the scope of imāmah. Therefore, the position of imām in the Twelver-Shī'ī scheme sometimes approaches that of the

Prophet, and sometimes is inferior to it. Beside this, the Twelver-Shī'īs even believe there to be a kind of revelation through the imāms, though its nature is different from that of the prophetic revelation.

There is no dispute between the Twelver-Shī'īs and the Sunnīs concerning the necessity of imāmah; both sides are of the opinion that imāmah is necessary. Their disagreement arises in regard to the reason for its necessity. The Sunnīs argue that the human need of a leader necessitates the election of an imām after the death of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him.¹ Therefore, the suitable way to designate the imām according to the Sunnīs is election by the community. The Twelver-Shī'īs give a totally different reason for the necessity of imāmah. They insist that it is necessary because it is an expression of God's Grace (lutf) which originates from God's Justice ('adl). Hence, the imām must be divinely appointed and not elected by the community. The Sunnī argument implies that the necessity of imāmah or khilāfah came from man's side, and nothing divine is involved in it. It is true that khilāfah is concerned with problems related to religious matters, yet according to the Sunnīs, khilāfah itself is not a divine institution.²

On the other hand, the Twelver-Shī'ī reason for the necessity of imāmah implies that this necessity came from

God's side, not from man's, and therefore, imāmah is a divine office. The whole superstructure of theological arguments proposed by the Twelver-Shī'ī scholars in support of this concept is based on their idea of God's Justice.

God's Justice, according to the Twelver-Shī'īs, requires God to be far removed from Evil. He neither performs Evil nor wants it. He is a God of Justice, who never opposes His own wisdom and never punishes without valid reason. Along with this concept, another element is involved, namely the idea of man's responsibility. God created human beings for their own sake, namely to achieve happiness in their worldly life as well as in the hereafter. So that he may pursue this goal, man is equipped with an ability to do whatever he wants, and hence he is a free agent of his own deeds. Unfortunately, human beings are inclined to abuse this ability and to follow their passion and give way to their evil desires, which in turn leads them to the opposite pole from the goal of their creation. From the Twelver-Shī'ī point of view, it is unjust for God to let His creation go astray, since this opposes His own wisdom. Basing themselves on this concept, they insist that it is necessary for God to lay Religious Obligations (taklīfs) upon His servants to be observed as guidance in their actions. In order that these taklīfs be properly performed by human beings, it is

necessary that God should give His Grace (luṭf) to His servants. This luṭf is a situation by which human beings are brought nigh unto obedience (tā'ah) and kept away from disobedience (ma'siyah). God has expressed His luṭf to His servants by the Divine Mission (al-bi'thah), which took form in the sending of messengers and prophets and the appointment of imāms. As such, imāmah, like nubū'ah, is an expression of God's Grace.

The Twelver-Shi'īs see the imām as a noble personality who is vested with divine authority and who acted as the true vicegerent of God and the Prophet on earth. His divine authority includes also his role as the witness (ḥujjah) of God to His creation, and as the guardian of the sharī'ah. Therefore, the Twelver-Shi'īs assign to the imām an exalted degree of authority because the imām is believed to be the true interpreter of revelation. We have seen that because of the divine nature of the imām's mission as the legatee (waṣī) of the Prophet, and as a ḥujjah of God and the guardian of the sharī'ah, the imām is understood to be equipped with divine knowledge, which enables him to give the true meaning of the Qur'ān, something that no one else after the Prophet, except the imām, can provide.

Examining the whole theological arguments proposed by al-Ṭūsī concerning the doctrine of the necessity of imāmah,

we can see that with regard to the Twelver-Shī'ī feeling and thought about the imāms, these arguments are justification of the meaning they experienced in the imāms. This justification resulted in a dogma that the imāmah is necessary because it is an expression of God's Grace (luṭf).

From the Twelver-Shī'ī theological arguments on the necessity of imāmah presented in this study, we can assume that the reason for the Twelver-Shī'īs to develop this doctrine of imāmah as expressive of God's luṭf is to emphasize the continuity of communication between God and His servants, and that His guidance is always given to the human beings through the imāms.

NOTES TO EPILOGUE

¹This is implied in the works on imāmah or khilāfah by the Sunnī scholars. See, for example, Shāh 'Abd al-'Azīz, Mukhtaṣar al-Tuhfat al-Ithmā 'Ashariyah, naqalah min al-Fārsīyah ... Ghulām Muḥammad ibn Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn 'Umar al-Aslamī; ikhtaṣarah ... Maḥmūd Shukrī al-Alūsī (Qāhirah: Maṭba'ah al-Salafiyyah, 1373 H.), p. 116.

²Nevertheless, the Sunnī caliphs later came to stress the divine sanction which they possessed as the heirs of the Prophet and used this as a means to enforce obedience to their rule. Later Sunnīs political theorists even came to justify this. See, for example, al-Ghazālī, Naṣīhat al-Mulūk, translated by F. R. C. Bagley (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 45-46.

³Cf. Thomas W. Arnold, The Caliphate (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1965), p. 14.

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