THE CONCEPT OF "IMÂMAH" IN THE WORKS OF
ʿALÎ SHARÎAʿTÎ (1933-77 A.D.)

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Abstract

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Title of Thesis: The concept of "Imâmah" in the works of
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This thesis examines the Iranian scholar ʿAli
Sharîʿatî's (1933-1977) attempts to extend the meaning of
the Imâm - a central Shîʿî doctrine - to propound a radical
reformation in Islam in the light of Marxism, existentialism
and phenomenology, with the hope of establishing a universal
Islamic order and of helping to make Islam a more viable
socio-political force.

Sharîʿatî's reinterpretation of the doctrine of the
Imâmah and its related aspect of intiẓâr along Marxist and
Hegelian lines of thought provides the basis for an activist
and revolutionary Islam. His means are a unique modern Shîʿî
response to the need for change in the Iranian
religio-social order.

Résumé

Auteur: Majida Gabrani

Titre de la thèse: le concept d'Imâmah dans les oeuvres de
ʿAlî Sharîʿatî (1933-77 A.D.).

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Dans cette thèse, nous allons analyser les différentes tentatives faites par le penseur iranien ʿAlî Sharîʿatî (1933-1977) pour élargir le sens d'Imam - thème centrale dans la doctrine Shîʿî et pour proposer une réforme radicale en Islam à la lumière du marxisme, de l'existentialisme et de la phénomenologie, dans l'espoir d'établir un ordre islamique universel et d'aider à faire de l'Islam une force socio-politique plus viable.

Sa réinterpretation de la doctrine de l'Imâmah, selon Sharîʿatî et l'aspect d'Intizâr qui en découle, fidèle aux lignées de pensée marxiste et hégelienne fournit les bases d'un Islam révolutionnaire et activiste. Ses opinions représentent d'une façon moderne et exclusivement Shîʿî une résponse au besoin de changement dans l'ordre social-réligieux de l'Iran.

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Note on Technicalities.

The transliteration scheme employed is the one adopted by the Institute of Islamic Studies-McGill University (Montreal, Canada).

Due to the limitations of the word-processing facility at McGill University, long vowels are denoted by a circumflex (^) sign rather than a bar.

Dots under the letters d, t, h, z have been indicated by the cedilla (,).

The *hamza* is denoted by a single quotation (').

The *'ayn* is represented by a superscript open bracket ('').

The names of the works and non-English terms have been italicized.

In the present thesis, words such as Islam and Allah, are used as part of English vocabulary. The plural of words like Imâm and Madrasah have also been anglicized.

Direct quotes of various authors used in the text have been retained as they appear in the original form.

Note numbers have been indicated in brackets.

Abbreviations:

BSOAS:	Bulletin of School of Oriental and African Studies.
EI(1):	Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1st Edition.
EI(2):	Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd Edition.
IJMES:	International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies.
JAOS:	Journal of American Oriental Society.
MERIP:	Middle East Research & Information Project.

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Preface

This thesis studies the thought of Dr. ʿAlî Sharîʿatî (1933-1977). He occupies an important position in the history of the Iranian revolution and is generally considered as one of its ideologues. His traditional Shîʿî upbringing and subsequent exposure to the European ideas of Marxism and Socialism lent Sharîʿatî a theoretical framework to reinterpret Shîʿî Islam in the light of the changing needs of Iranian society.

The structure of thesis is as follows:

Chapter I: This chapter introduces ʿAlî Sharîʿatî's life and thought, his role in popularizing Shîʿî activism as a means to mobilise the masses to change the existing social order, his use of various European scholars in his approach and the ideosyncratic fashion in which he presented his ideas.

Chapter II: This chapter examines how ʿAlî Sharîʿatî utilizes the idea of succession in Islam for the purpose of lending sovereignty to 'the people' as opposed to the theory of divine appointment of the Imâm. He restricts the divine prerogative to the first twelve Imâms, the last Imâm being hidden. This chapter also deals with the contradictions that emerge from Sharîʿatî's attempt at emphasizing Shîʿî Islam on the one hand and Marxist democracy on the other.

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<u>Chapter III</u>: This chapter studies how 'Alí Sharí'atí modifies the two major Shí'í doctrines of *Imâmah* and *Inṭizâr* incorporating European ideas of Marxism and socialism. It also shows how such a re-interpretation of Shí'í Islam aims at awakening the masses to the social realities of his times.

<u>Sources</u>: Most of Sharí'atí's works were originally presented in the form of lectures which he delivered in Persian in Iran. These lectures have been transcribed and published. However, two of his works *Islâmshenâsí* (Islamology) and *Kavír* (Desert) were written by him solely for the purpose of publication. English translations of Sharí'atí's works are used in the text for analysis. However, a part of Sharí'atí's work entitled *Ummat va Imâmat* (Community and Leadership) is used in Persian. A copy was obtained from the School of Oriental and African Studies Library (University of London), However, a part f Amin Soheyl's translation of *Ummat va Imamat* pp. 197-214 was also used.

Chapter I - Alī Sharī'atī's Life and Thought

Sharī'atī's Early Life: 'Alī Sharī'atī was born in Mazinan village in the eastern part of Iran in the year 1933 A.D. He received his early education in a high school, where he, like every other student who goes to school, took his examinations and advanced from one year to another successfully. While he was pursuing his secular education, he also kept himself busy learning Arabic and the religious sciences.[1] As a schoolboy 'Alī Sharī'atī attended the discussion groups in the 'Centre for the Propogation of Islamic Truth' in Mashhad which was organised and established by his father, Taqī Sharī'atī, who was a religious leader and a teacher. During the 1960's he would lecture on the radio in Mashhad on religious topics.[2]

Taqī Sharī'atī earned his income by running his own religious lecture hall and by teaching. He is also considered to be one of the founders of the Islamic movement in Iran, rendering his services to it for about forty years. Taqī Sharī'atī's approach in the propagation of religion was logical, scientific and progressive. He was particularly inclined towards the youth who had received a modern education but who had to be brought back to the faith and to

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Islam because they were bent on following the increasing trend of materialism. In response to these developments he made a serious effort to reduce their worship of the West and their hostility towards religion. He also produced a number of religious and philosophical works such as *Khalifah and Wilayah in the Qur'ân and Sunna; Revelation and Prophethood, 'Alî Witness to the Message, The Promise of Religions, The Utility and Necessity of Religion, The Economics of Islam* and *Modern Tafsir (Tafsir-e-Navin)*.<3> Taqî Sharî'atî also attempted to establish a school of Qur'ânic exegesis based on critical examination of the circumstances of revelation and re-interpretation of its historical setting.<4>

While 'Alî Sharî'atî was studying in high school, he joined a small group known as *Nazhat-i Khoda Pastani Sosiyalist* (The Movement of the God Worshipping Socialist). This group proved to be more significant intellectually than politically since it made the first attempt in Iran to synthesize Shi'ism with European socialism.<5>

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Sharī'atī's First Formative period: As soon as Sharī'atī finished high school, he joined the Teachers' Training College in Mashhad, which was a reputable and an important institution that offered teacher training to students who were ~~unable to~~ enter the university. Sharī'atī joined the Teachers' Training College out of his love, for the profession of teaching.<6>

While pursuing his studies at the Teachers' Training College, Sharī'atī gave lectures, to students and intellectuals at the 'Centre for the Propagation of Islamic Truth' in Mashhad. Sharī'atī continued the task of lecturing to promote religious awareness among the youth. He was asked to lecture frequently and became a popular speaker at the 'Center for Propogation of Islamic Truth'. This activity brought him into close contact with many students, most of whom belonged to the lower economic strata of Iranian society.<7>

However, the lectures he delivered also shaped his own mind and did much to gear him towards the direction that his thought later took. Algar has clearly stated that the task of teaching shaped his thinking much more than did the formal program of study at the university;

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What fashioned him and determined the direction of his thought was not so much his conventional program of study, nor even the course of higher study that he followed abroad, as his love of learning and thought, and the creativity and commitment that he derived from his firm faith in the perspicuous religion of Islam, as well as from his earliest environment, which always remained a source of guidance for him. The Center for the Propogation of Islamic Truth in Mashhad, which for thirty years was the active and vital center of committed, intellectual Muslims in the city, contributed much to his formation; and in return he played a great role in promoting its activities by delivering lectures, answering questions, and presiding over its sessions.<8>

While pursuing his studies at the Teachers' Training College, Sharî'atî began to write. His first work was entitled *Maktab-e-Vâsitah* (The Median school) where he demonstrated that Islam is a 'median school' among the different schools of philosophy as well as an intermediate system between socialism and capitalism which had adopted the advantages and positive aspects of other schools of thought but avoided the negative aspects.<9>

Soon after finishing his studies at the Teachers' Training College, Sharî'atî embarked on his career as a teacher. He taught in his home province for four years and, while teaching, he began to pursue scholarly work. He translated into Persian an Arabic work entitled *Abû Dharr: Khodâ Parastî Sôsfyalist* (Abû Dharr: The God worshipping Socialist). This work was originally written by a radical

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Egyptian novelist named ʿAbdul Ḥamid Judat al-Sahar, who wrote on Abū Ḍharr as an early follower of the Prophet. According to the original writer, Abū Ḍharr denounced the khulafāʾ as corrupt rulers after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad. Abū Ḍharr withdrew from public life and went to the desert to lead a simple life. He spoke on behalf of the hungry and the poor against the greediness of the rich. Sharīʿatī considered Abū Ḍharr in the final analysis to be the first Muslim Socialist among many other radicals in the course of Middle Eastern history.<10> In his work *Islāmshenāsī* (Islamology), he described Abū Ḍharr as a

> ----multidimensional man, one spirit two dimensions, a man of sword and prayers, a lonely man and a man of society, of worship and politics, struggle for the sake of independence, justice and hungry people, and study for the sake of understanding the Quran properly to know the truth, to learn and collect knowledge.<11>

The interest in Abū Ḍharr al-Ghaffārī on the part of Dr. ʿAlī Sharīʿatī persisted throughout his life, and Abū Ḍharr became one of the archetypes of the ideal Islamic man who was frequently mentioned by Dr.Sharīʿatī in his works dealing with social concerns. After completing the translation of the book on Abū Ḍharr, Sharīʿatī translated a book on prayer from French.<12> Both of these translations were undertaken by Sharīʿatī in his pre-university period. This activity demonstrates the scope of his work and the interests he pursued at an early age on his own initiative.

They also exemplify his first interpretations of the life of the Prophet and other leading figures in the light of social concerns.<13>

In 1956 the Faculty of Letters was founded in Mashhad University. Sharî'atî was the first among all the students to be enrolled in the Faculty to study for a Masters degree in foreign languages. This move enabled him to continue his formal studies while still working as a teacher. At Mashhad University he specialised in Arabic and French and also developed a keen interest in the history of religions, the history of Islam in particular, and the philosophy of history.<14> He also wrote a series of articles entitled "Toynbee and History" for a Khorasanî newspaper as well as an article "Which one am I" for the *Farhang* magazine in Mashhad. He also translated *Supplications* by Alexis Carrel.<15> He participated actively both in the classes and lectures offered and did not feel content to remain passive as did the majority of the students. His active participation in discussions helped him to reflect upon and investigate the relevant issues objectively.<16>

By virtue of his activism and impulsive nature he never remained silent or passive particularly when socio-political disequilibrium prevailed in Iran during the early years

after the overthrow of Muṣaddiq in August, 1953. Sharī'atī reacted upon realizing that the social, political and religious turbulence affected the destiny of the people. The religious education sector was seriously affected, especially the *madrasahs,* which had remained the nucleus of religious guidance for a long time in Iranian history. They were undergoing a period of re-evaluation under the new educational system instituted by the government. In these turbulent conditions Sharī'atī delivered speeches with a radical content and wrote articles against the extreme traditionalists who separated Islam from society and retreated into a corner of the mosque and the *madrasah.* He condemned the traditionalists who reacted negatively to any kind of intellectual movement within the society. In his view the traditionalists put a dark veil on the truths of Islam. He also opposed the rootless and imitative intellectuals who made "new scholasticism" their stronghold. Sharī'atī condemned both of these groups who had severed their relations with society and the people. He criticised them also for their submission to the corruption and decadence of the modern age.<17>

Sharī'atī's activism caused the government authorities to investigate him. However, he never gave up his struggle for voicing what he believed to be true. He never ignored

the social injustice and oppression inflicted upon the ignorant masses. He always showed his concern for youth like his father, Taqî Sharîʿatî. The target audience of the latter was mainly the educated young in whom he infused religious awareness in the light of social concern so that they might react against the social injustice that prevailed in Iranian society. This kind of influence registered upon ʿAlî Sharîʿatî's mind right from his childhood. He spent most of his early life in Iran in the company of his father who nurtured him intellectually during his first formative years. In his autobiography *Kavîr* (Desert) ʿAlî Sharîʿatî acknowledged his father's relentless efforts:

> My father fashioned the first dimension of my spirit. It was he who first taught me the art of thinking and the art of being human. As soon as my mother had weaned me, he gave me a taste for freedom, nobility, purity, steadfastness, faith, chastity of soul, and independence of heart. It was he who introduced me to his friends-his books; they were my constant and familiar companions from the earliest years of my schooling. I grew up and matured in his library, which was for him the whole of his life and his family. Many things that otherwise I would have had to learn much later, in adult life, in the course of long experience and at the cost of long lasting effort and struggle, he gave to me as a gift in my childhood and early youth, simply and spontaneously.....[18]

Having grown up with his father's image before him, he devoted his life to his fellow men by addressing the youth in order to bring them back to Islamic ideals and by delivering lectures at the 'Center for the Propagation of

Islamic Truth', in Mashhad. Like his father, 'Alî Sharî'atî also considered the study of the Qur'ân as the central means for teaching. Sharî'atî remained indebted to his father for having conducted him to a point of departure from which he was able to make a creative leap forward. The first formative years that he spent with his father in Mashhad were supplemented by the formal education he pursued at high school, religious school, and at Mashhad University. These various aspects of training enabled him to actualise his potential.

Sharî'atî's Second Formative period in Paris: Sharî'atî won a state scholarship after successful completion of the M.A. at the Faculty of Letters in Mashhad University. He then proceeded to do his Ph.D. in Sociology in Paris at the Sorbonne. At the Sorbonne he took courses with the famous orientalist, Louis Massignon, for whom he had a deep admiration. Under the latter's guidance he studied the life of Fâṭimah, the daughter of Muḥammad and wife of 'Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib. He attended lectures by Marxist professors and was also exposed to different schools of social and philosophical thought, as well as to the works of Bergson, Albert Camus, Sartre, Schwartz and French sociologists such as Gurwitsch and Berque. Apart from his father who was the

first and greatest influence on him, Sharî'atî also acknowledged the influence on him of Louis Massignon (the French orientalist), Muḥammad 'Alî Furûghî (Iranian scholar and politician), Jacques Berques (French Arabist and sociologist), and Gurwitsch (French sociologist) in his autobiography *Kavîr* <19>.

While studying at the Sorbonne, he read the works of contemporary radicals such as Jean Paul Sartre, Franz Fanon, Che Guevera, Grab and Roger Garaudy (a prominent Christian Marxist intellectual who later became a Muslim), <20> and translated Guevara's *Guerilla Warfare*, Sartre's *What is Poetry*, Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* and *The African Revolution*. The translation of *The Wretched of the Earth* was completed and published by one of his followers, Abûl-Ḥasan Banî Ṣadr, later to become President of the Islamic Republic.<21>

Sharî'atî spent about five years in Paris and completed his graduate work with a doctoral dissertation entitled: *Faḍâ'il al-Balkh (Les merits de Balkh)*; it consisted of an introduction to and an edition and translation of a Medieval Persian text. The dissertation was philological in nature and was done under the direction of Professor G.Lazard.<22>

While doing his Ph.D., he was also engaged in a systematic study of Marxism. According to Algar he was engaged in this study for two reasons: One was to gain knowledge of this discipline so that he could produce a systematic and compelling critique of Marxism to be written by a Muslim. Second, although the refutation of Marxism was the first priority, he studied in order to confront certain problems at the forefront of the Marxist dialectical order.<23> This emphasis comes from Algar and is not warranted by Sharî'atî's own preoccupations. Perhaps Algar wrote as he did to save Sharî'atî from the accusation of being a Marxist.

Although Sharî'atî was extremely impressed by the French school of sociology, he believed that neither western sociology nor purely Marxist thought could comprehend and analyse the social realities of the non-industrialised world or the Third world.<24>

He was impressed by Franz Fanon's approach to the anti-imperialist struggles against France in Algeria. Fanon's strategy towards imperialism appealed to Sharî'atî since he considered himself and Iranian society as part of the Third world and had a deep concern for this segment of society and its problems. Subsequently, he devoted a great

deal of his attention during his stay in France to the anti-imperialist struggles of Algeria and considered himself a part of the Muslim struggle. He also built close ties with the leaders of the Algerian FLN, the National Liberation Front of Algeria who were in exile, and especially with Franz Fanon who was originally from Martinique and an active participant in the Algerian revolution. Fanon had joined the Algerian revolution from its very inception. Sharī'atī learned about the ideas of cultural alienation and the psychological damage caused by imperialism from Fanon. Sharī'atī was influenced to the extent that he translated Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* and *The African Revolution* so that Fanon's ideas would be exposed to Iranians who were also engaged in the struggle against imperialism. He considered Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* a profound sociological and psychological analysis of the Algerian revolution and recommended the work to those who were struggling against imperialism. Fanon was introduced to Europeans through Jean-Paul Sartre; to Iranians he was introduced through Sharī'atī.[25] Sharī'atī expounded certain theories of Fanon which were entirely unknown to the Iranian population. Many of Fanon's phrases began to appear in his pronouncements:

> Come, friends, let us abandon Europe; let us cease this nauseating, apish imitation of Europe. Let us leave behind this Europe that always speaks of

humanity, but destroys human beings wherever it finds them.<26>

Although Sharī'atī went far in advocating Fanon's ideas, he refuted Fanon's thesis about the relationship between religion and revolution. Fanon professes that the peoples of the Third world must give up their own traditional religions in order to wage a successful struggle against the imperialism of the west. Sharī'atī, however, challenged Fanon on this view in the letters he wrote to him.<27> In Sharī'atī's view, the peoples of the Third world had to rediscover their religious roots before they could challenge the West in order to be independent. He made this issue explicit in a lecture *"Bazgasht bi Khishtan"* (Return to Self) where he suggested that "Return to Self" has been studied by many progressive non-religious intellectuals *(rôshanfikrân)* who are the leaders of the Third world anti-imperialist movement, such as Aime Cezasrie, Franz Fanon, Sanghor, Kâtib Yâsîn, Âl-i Ahmad of Iran etc. In Sharī'atī's opinion, 'Return to Self' no doubt implies going back to our respective cultural roots. However for Iranians he argues that Self' implies "Islamic culture" and "Islamic ideology". Returning to "Islamic culture" and "Islamic ideology" can alone confront the cultural imperialism of the West because the force of religion will awaken the society and mobilize the masses.<28>

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When he returned to Iran, Sharī'atī continued to express his concern for the Third world. He held that the Third world must undergo the process of self-recognition, self-integration and self-reliance at the national as well as local level in order to come out of the inertia of decadence. Only then will these countries be able to liberate themselves from the yoke of imperialism.<29>

Besides his involvement in the Algerian revolution, Sharī'atī established contacts with other Arab and African anti-colonialist struggles and theoreticians. He expounded the ideas of other African revolutionaries such as 'Umar Uzgân, author of 'Afḍal al-Jihâd' (The Best of All Struggles) to the Iranian people. He exposed these thinkers to the Iranians with the hope that the ideas that were taking shape in various Islamic movements would inspire a new intellectual dynamism in the social and political struggles of Iranian Muslims.<30>

Apart from Sharī'atī's contacts with Arab and African leaders in France and the world of intellectual life, he was also involved in Iranian politics while he was in France. He was involved in a group known as the Movement of God-Fearing Socialists, a major organization of opposition to the Shah's régime after the American coup d'état of August 1953.<31>

Sharî'atî, too, belonged to the movement which was headed by Ayatullah Khomeini and wrote about the nationalist struggle in Iran because he felt that the movement was not depicted in the way it should have been in the Persian language publications of Paris. Although the movement was essentially Islamic in character, the underlying tone depicted in the literature was non-religious or even anti-religious. The Iranian intellectuals seemed to overlook the social reality of Iran and the nature of the movement.<32> In the midst of the conspiracy of misunderstanding and distortions of the Iranian struggle, Sharî'atî published articles in the most widely read Persian-language journals in Europe. He also edited two journals: *Irân Âzâd* (*Free Iran*) which became the organ of Muşaddiq's National Front in Europe, and also *Nâmeh-yi Pârs* (*Pars Letter*), a monthly journal of the Iranian student confederation in France.<33>

Upon successful completion of his doctoral dissertation, Sharî'atî returned to Iran. His period of study in France was significant in terms of his active involvement in anti-imperialistic struggles for Algeria and his contributions towards political activities in Iran. However, his activities seem to be in sharp contrast with the interest reflected in his doctoral dissertation which consisted of editing and translating a Medieval Persian

text. 'Perhaps he chose to pursue this type of scholarly activity because of the interest dating from his pre-university period in translating texts useful for giving the masses access to the earlier sources of Islamic history. It is also evident that while studying at the Sorbonne he undertook translation of Fanon's works and other European authors whom he thought significant enough to help create an awakening among the Iranians engaged in the anti-imperialist struggle then. He participated actively in many political movements. This fact proves what Algar claims, that Sharî‘atî's study and understanding of society were not based on formal and official sociology but on the actual observable movements of society. Furthermore, he did not engage in studying, memorizing and preparing for examinations to the extent that other university students did. Rather, he invested his efforts to become a *mujâhid* (warrior in the cause of religion), an aware and discriminating personality. In this respect he emulated his father's strategy of reacting in response to what the Iranian masses were going through. It was also pointed out earlier that the lectures he delivered at the 'Center for the Propagation of Islamic Truth' contributed much more to the development of his thought than did the conventional program of study at home and abroad. For him the task of translating and editing was a means to an end rather than an

end in itself. His strategies were a response to the observable movements of the society in Iran and other countries of the Third world.

It is however ironic that when he returned to Iran and lectured at the Ḥusayyniyah-i Irshâd, he always quoted Western writers, particularly European historians, European philosophers, and European orientalists whom he had studied at the Sorbonne in order to identify the social realities in Islam.

Sharî'atî's Return to Iran: Sharî'atî returned to Iran after receiving his doctorate at the Sorbonne. As soon as he arrived, he was arrested at Bazargan, the main point of entry to Iran from Turkey. He was imprisoned on the ground that he had participated in political activities against the Iranian government while he was studying in France.<34> Although it was not uncommon among Iranian students who went abroad to Europe and America to engage in political activities, in the case of Sharî'atî he was taken seriously to task for the role of leadership he had played in political activities; that role transcended the normal agitation and concentration on demonstrations, the shouting of slogans, etc., among the Iranian opposition abroad.<35>

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After spending six months in prison, Sharī'atī was released. Thereafter he was inclined to pursue a job as a teacher, but he was denied permission to teach in Tehran. He returned to Khorasan and was obliged to work for many years as a teacher at various high schools and in the College of Agriculture. He taught in these schools at the same level at which he had taught before going to France for further studies. He continued to teach there until a teaching position became available at the University of Mashhad. He became very popular at the university and was appreciated by his audiences as a good speaker because of his style that was innovative in method and in substance. However, the latter element caused him trouble and distress, and he was taken to task by the religious leaders for his flaws in expounding Islamic doctrines and particularly the Shī'ī interpretation of them.<36> But Sharī'atī's father and some other sympathetic members of the religious class helped him to revise the content of the lectures.<37>

Since Sharī'atī's approach and methods of teachings were different from the conventional methods, they also brought him into conflict with the university administration. This happened because the University of Mashhad was headed by conservative 'ulamā' and promonarchist personnel. Although Sharī'atī was proved to them to be a

committed native intellectual with an acute sense of moral and social responsibility, he was considered far more radical than was proper in the Iranian academic context. Consequently, he was soon asked to resign by the authorities.<38>

Despite his forced resignation, Sharî'atî did not cease his activity as a lecturer. He moved to Tehran where he became a lecturer at 'a religious centre called Ḥusayniyyah-i Irshâd. This was a religious meeting hall built and financed by a group of wealthy merchants and veteran leaders of the Liberation Movement.<39> Such centres existed alongside mosques in all large and small cities of Iran for the purpose of congregational meetings and the comemoration of the martyrdom of Imâm Ḥusayn, the grandson of the Prophet Muḥammad and the third Imâm of the Twelver Shî'ah, killed at Karbalâ' (680 A.D.). At the various centres of Ḥusayniyyah-i Irshâd popular preachers were called upon to inform the masses about the tragedy of Karbalâ', where Imâm Ḥusayn was betrayed by his own supporters and finally received the death of a martyr. These religious edifices served a crucial purpose among the Twelver Shî'ah of Iran as a means to arouse emotional sympathy for the Ahl al-bayt <40> These centres were named Ḥusayniyyah to symbolise the Imâm Ḥusayn's struggle against the oppressive rule of the

Umayyads (660-750 A.D.); the Imâm served as a model to the Iranian youth of the twentieth century for their struggle to transform oppressive circumstances into a just social order. The inherent character of this institution identified it with the socio-political aspirations of the Islamic community and underlined its confrontation with the Shah's régime. <41>

Sharî'atî's lectures were attended by large audiences, especially by large numbers of youth belonging to the student community at the Ḥusayniyyah-i Irshâd in Tehran. His lectures had a great impact because of his innovative style in method and content. His ideas however were in sharp contrast with the traditional religious interpretations of the 'ulamâ' and even with those of the westernised professors. He used Jamâl al-Dîn Afghânî's and Muḥammad Iqbâl's strategy of emphasizing the dynamic, progressive and scientific nature of Islam. He also addressed the Iranians with respect to their problems and expressed his revolutionary ideas in the context of traditional society.<42>

Despite the fact that Iran had adopted certain secular elements from the modern West, it essentially remained a traditional country. Yet the imitation of the West had

occurred on such a grand scale that it inevitably led to a deep cultural confusion. The socio-political turbulence in Iran helped Sharī'atī to identify the struggle in Iran as having two fundamental aspects; one was for national independence and the other was for socio-economic justice. This dual program was addressed to a politically subjugated and economically exploited Iran which was caught in the grips of multinational corporations and Western cultural imperialism, racism, class exploitation, class oppression, class inequality and *gharbzadegi* (westoxication).<43>

Sharī'atī advocated a revolutionary version of Islam which was in contrast to the traditional Islam. He opposed traditional Islam from a number of different perspectives: first, he opposed its intellectual, spiritual and theological aspects; second, he opposed mere submission to the divine will as a religious doctrine. Consequently he sought to revitalize Islam in the way best suited to a revolutionary temperament.<44>

He presented Islam, not as a religion in the sense of being concerned only with spiritual and moral matters or with the relations of the individual with his Creator, but rather as an Ideology. Islam, in Sharī'atī's scheme, had a system of ideas, a comprehensiveness, and a totality that do

not restrict themselves merely to a moral purification of the individual and the establishment of a spiritual link between the individual and God.<45> The foundation of Sharī'atī's scheme of ideas is *tauḥīd* (the oneness of God). He interprets *tauḥīd* not in the sense of a religious-philosophical theory that "God is one, not more than one", but rather in the sense of a world view that regards the universe as a discordant assemblage full of disunity, contradiction, heterogeneity, possessing a variety of independent and clashing poles, conflicting tendencies, variegated and unconnected desires, reckonings, customs, purposes and wills. In his view *tauḥīd* (oneness) is to be contrasted with *shirk* (dualism, trinitarianism or polytheism). Moreover, the meaning of *tauḥīd* (oneness) is not as Ṣūfīs view it, that is, as *waḥdat al-wujūd* (oneness of being); rather it is *tauḥīd-i wujūd* (Universal unity of Existence).<46> He presents Islam as an ideology of *tauḥīd* (oneness), and Shī'ism as a revolutionary ideology, by maintaining that:

> ----finally, after considering all the schools, ideologies, revolutions, movements, sociology, Islamology, historical investigation, research into the causes of cultural decline and intellectual and social deviation, and a more profound recognition of (the Prophet's) family, *Imamate* (Leadership of 'Ali and his descendants), *wilayat* (the doctrine of the legitimacey of 'Ali and his descendants), *intizar* (waiting for the appearance of the Twelfth Imam), 'adl (God's justice), and man's legacy in the duration of human history, and after

experiences, conflicts, reactions, and the clarification of dark spots and concealments, I have reached this inner principl- that: 'essentially, Shi'a is a complete party'.<47>

For this purpose he concentrated on the household of 'Alî, Fâṭimah (the Prophet's daughter) and Ḥusayn who are important figures in Shî'ah history and particularly in Sharî'atî's scheme of Islamology. He asserted their importance in a lecture:

> But when someone (such as I), with all of his being and life and belief deeply loves this household (of 'Alî's), both faithfully and humanistically, and believes that the only way for the freedom of this people (i.e., Muslims in general, Iranians in particular) is in geuine return to 'Alî's school and Fatima's house(hold), then, how can he ....remain 'indifferent'?<48>

Sharî'atî's Islam is a political Islam; a religious order turned into a political ideology which serves as a strategic apparatus necessary for turning Islam into a revolutionary ideology Sharî'atî conceived Shi'ism as a complete party and documented his statements from the Qur'ân, verse (29:69) : "As for those who strive in Us, We surely guide them to Our path, and lo! Allah is with the good.."<49>

This kind of innovative and syncretic interpretation of Shî'ism offered by Sharî'atî helped in the understanding of Islam and the understanding of Shî'ism in particular. However, this approach to Islam led to a confrontation with the Shah who called Sharî'atî an 'Islamic Marxist' as well

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as with the religious authorities who criticized him for an unwarranted departure from the traditions. Sharî'atî was well versed in Marxist thought since he had studied it systematically while he was in France. On occasion he addressed his audience on the subject of Marxism in the role of a knowledgeable guide, yet on other occassions he refuted Marxist thought. For instance in the lecture entitled *Agar Pâp va Marks nabudand* (If there weren't the Pope and Marx) at Ḥusayniyyah-i Irshâd, he stated that:

> If Marx's enlightened thinking *(roushanfekri)* has any value, it is solely that you attempt to understand the movement it was bound up with and longings it believed in. One should analyse it scientifically; comment upon it; codify its history benefiting this movement; arm oneself with the help of its philosophy, logic, science, economics, sociology and anthropology; and give class awareness *(âgâhi)* and ideological arms to the working class, which became unified in confrontation with it; and accordingly, imitate it intellectually in propaganda and scientifically.<50>

At the same time he warns his audience against blind imitation of Marxism by presenting it with an analogy;

> That does not mean, however, striving blindly and enacting its prescriptions blindly; for this imitation is (that of) a common patient of an expert physician. The imitation of a healthy person is to strive like him (the physician) to become an expert physician. This imitation isn't unique.<51>

In Sharî'atî's opinion Marxist thought arms a thinker with facts and ideas; however, one should not adopt Marxist

thought blindly. In one of his works entitled, *Marxism and Other Western Fallacies*, Sharî'atî attacks many aspects of Marxism and other western trends of thought. He points out ...that Marxism itself is utterly a product of the history, social organization and cultural outlook of this same west.' In the same work he criticizes Marx's thesis on God and man. Sharî'atî quotes Marx's preface to a treatise:

> Philosophy is allied with the faith of Prometheus; in sum, I feel a loathing toward the gods....All the proofs of God's existence prove rather His nonexistence.... The real proofs should have the opposite character: Because nature lacks a right order, God exists; 'because an unintellegible world exists, God exists'.... in other words, irrationality is the basis for God's existence.<52>

His analysis reveals that Marx's knowledge of religion was confined to what his father had comprehended of it; the father was of Jewish descent and had become a Protestant by conversion. It seemed to Sharî'atî that Marx had never heard of the most common doctrines of Judaism, Protestant Christianity and Islam.<53>

He also comments on Marx's choice of the word "loathing" in the preface to the philosophical treatise quoted above, saying that it was an unnatural one. The statement expresses an emotion, not a philosophical or scientific point. Sharî'atî vehemently attacks the latter part of the passage quoted "that real proofs.... existence",

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by pointing out that this sentiment is a matter of confused logic because it has taken popular religion as the criterion of religious reasoning, whereas the popular religious approach always seeks God beyond natural, rational laws and in unintelligible courses of events; it sees proofs of His existence in extraordinary occurrences and in unscientific and unnatural sources. Moreover, in Sharî'atî's perspective the scriptures, particularly the Qur'ân, have made a rational case for *tauḥîd* on the basis of nature, custom, the constant laws of life, and the ordered and intelligible quality of events in the universe. The scriptures look upon these things as objective attestations to the existence of an Intelligence who rules over nature.<54>

In Sharî'atî's view the Qur'ân harshly criticizes the materialists who ask "Do you imagine the order of this world to be futile?". The Qur'ân's answer is proclaimed in the following verse (38:27): "We did not create heaven, earth and all between in vain". Furthermore, God does not set the affairs of the world in motion without their proper causes. Everything in nature, man, and history has a known quantity and a fixed term. The most important evidences for God's existence offered in the Qur'ân point to the existence of a rational order and intellegence in nature.<55>

Sharí'atí has also commented on Marx's view that: "religion is, however a supra-rational realization of man's destiny, for human destiny has no real existence...." He denounces this sentiment by comparing Islam and Marxism. He believes that Islam and Marxism contradict each other completely in their ontologies and cosmologies although these two ideas embrace every dimension of human life and thought. Each possesses a particular cosmology, a particular code of morals, a particular form of organisation, a particular philosophy of history and a outlook on the future. Each is interested in the private and social lives of people in this world. However, Marxism is based on materialism and derives its sociology, anthropology, ethics and philosophy of life from materialism. The Marxist cosmos posits a heartless and dispirited world where man lacks a 'real' destiny. Islam, by contrast rests upon faith in the unseen *(ghaybah)* which is an unknown actuality beyond material and natural phenomena that are accessible to the senses and empirical perception. The hidden *(ghayb)* constitutes a higher order of reality and the central focus of all the movements, laws and phenomena of the world. The Qur'ân in the beginning of the second Sûrah, *al-Baqarah*, proclaims faith in the unseen and also cites this as a pre-requisite for guidance and a source of piety:

> A.L.M. This is the Book in which is no doubt, a
> guide to the pious, who believe in the Unseen
> *(bi'l-ghayb)*, are steadfast in prayer, and spend
> out of what we have provided for them. (2: 1-2)

The "unseen" is in truth the absolute spirit and will of existence. This notion is, however, the contrary of the idealism that looks upon the phenomena of the material world as arising from the 'idea' of materialism which imagines the 'idea' as springing from the material world. Islam regards matter and idea as differing manifestations of an unseen absolute Being, and it negates both materialism and idealism <56>

Sharî'atî seems to have studied Marxist thought sufficiently well to be able to identify its pitfalls. He carefully dismissed those ideas which would negate the principles of religion and the principles of Islam in particular. On the other hand he conveniently borrows ideas, terms and trends of thought from the Marxist school whenever he can accommodate them with the principles of Islam and traditional Shî'ism. This makes it harder to establish whether Sharî'atî was anti or pro-Marxist.

Sharî'atî devoted most of his time to teaching and lecturing at Ḥusayniyyah-i Irshâd. The activities of Ḥusayniyyah-i Irshâd, however, were closed down after

Sharî'atî's arrest in the summer of 1973. Sharî'atî was released towards the end of 1975, but he was not free to move about; he remained in exile in Mazinan. In early 1977 he was permitted to leave Iran to travel to Europe. He left for London, and only a month after his arrival, he died under mysterious conditions. His admirers and friends suspect foul play by the Shah's secret police.<57> It is, however, ironic that Sharî'atî was possibly the target of a plot similar to that of Moise Tshombe when he set Patrice Lumuba free. Sharî'atî narrated the incident in his *Majmû'a*, vol 5, saying that:

> We all remember that Tshombe released Lumumba from prison so that he would not be held responsible for killing him while he escaped from the Katanga prison. Did you see how he got rid of him? This proves the point that one should ask: "Who is setting free whom? and why?" We should not speak about "those who are released"; rather, we should consider "acquiring freedom." Or, still better, we should think about recognizing and choosing freedom and becoming free.<58>

'Alî Sharî'atî appears to have commented about Patrice Lumumba's release because he could foresee his own fate. So did 'Ayn al-Quḍât. 'Ayn al-Quḍât was a Persian sufi who was put to death in Baghdad in 526 A.H./1132 A.D. on the charge of heresy. 'Ayn al-Quḍât had a premature death in the earliest part of youth. Sharî'atî found the attributes of sensitivity, boldness of thought, loftiness of spirit, and fortitude of heart in 'Ayn al-Quḍât quite common to himself

as well. Inspired by ʿAyn al-Quḍât's life and thought, Sharîʿatî gained a great insight into his own society; but he knew from the life of ʿAyn al-Quḍât that in a society filled with oppression and humiliation awareness and sensitivity were crimes. It was for this reason that he could foresee his own fate clearly.<59>

Notes to Chapter 1

1. ʿAlî Sharîʿatî, *On the Sociology of Islam*, trans. H. Algar (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1979), p. 18.

2. B. Hanson, "The "Westoxication" of Iran: Depictions and Reactions of Behrangi, Al-e Ahmad and Shariʿati," *IJMES*, 15 (1983), p. 13.

3. ʿAlî Sharîʿatî, *On the Sociology of Islam*, pp. 16-17.

4. A. A. Sachedina, "ʿAlî Sharîʿatî: Ideologue of the Iranian Revolution", in *Voices of Resurgent Islam* ed. by J. L. Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 183.

5. E. Abrahamian, "ʿAlî Sharîʿatî: Ideologue of the Iranian Revolution", *MERIP Reports,* XII (1982), 25.

6. ʿAlî Sharîʿatî, *On the Sociology of Islam*, p. 18.

7. A. A. Sachedina, *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, p. 193.

8. ʿAlî Sharîʿatî, *On the Sociology of Islam*, p. 19.

9. Ibid.

10. E. Abrahamian, *MERIP Reports*, p. 25.

11. ʿAlî Sharîʿatî, *The Visage of Muḥammad*, trans. A. A. Sachedina (Houston: Free Islamic Literatures, Inc., 1979), pp. 22-23.

12. E. Abrahamian, *MERIP Reports*, p. 25.

13. ʿAlî Sharîʿatî, *On the Sociology of Islam*, p. 20.

14. Ibid.

15. Idem, *Martyrdom (Shahadat)* trans. by Laleh Bakhtiar and Husayn Salih (Tehran: The Abû Dharr Foundation, n.d.), p. 11.

16. Idem, *On the Sociology of Islam*, p. 20.

17. Ibid., pp. 20-21.

18. Ibid., p. 17.

19.   Ibid., p. 18.

20.   E. Abrahamian, *MERIP Reports*, p. 25.

21.   Ibid., pp. 15,28.

22.   N. Keddie, *Roots of Revolution: An Interpretive History of Modern Iran* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 294, n. 50.

23.   H. Algar, *Roots of Islamic Revolution* (London: The Open Press, 1983), p. 75.

24.   ʿAlî Sharîʿatî, *On the Sociology of Islam*, p. 21.

25.   Ibid., p. 23.

26.   Ibid.

27.   E. Abrahamian, *MERIP Reports*, p. 25.

28.   ʿAlî Sharîʿatî, *Return to Self (Bazgasht bi khishtan)* trans. by Mangol Bayat in *Islam in Transition* ed. by J. L. Donohue and J. L. Esposito (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 306-307.

29.   Idem, *Man and Islam* trans. by Ghulam Fayez (Mashhad: University of Mashhad Press, 1982), pp. 142-143.

30.   Idem, *On the Sociology of Islam*, pp. 23-24.

31.   H. Algar, *Roots of Islamic Revolution*, p. 75.

32.   ʿAli Sharîʿatî, *On the Sociology of Islam*, p. 25.

33.   E. Abrahamian, *MERIP Reports*, p. 25.

34.   J. L. Esposito, *Islam and Politics* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1983), p. 183.

35.   H. Algar, *Roots of Islamic Revolution*, p. 75.

36.   A. A. Sachedina, *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, p. 195.

37.   Ibid.

38.   Ibid.

39. E. Abrahamian, *MERIP Reports*, p. 25.

40. *Ahl al-bayt* is used by the Shî'î for the descendants of Muḥammad through 'Alî and Fâṭimah.

41. A. A. Sachedina, *Voices of Resurgent Islam*, p. 196.

42. J. Esposito, *Islam and Politics*, p. 185.

43. E. Abrahamian, *MERIP Reports*, p. 26.

44. H. Dabashi, "'Alî Sharî'atî's Islam: Revolutionary uses of Faith in Post-Traditional Society," *Islamic Quarterly*, 27 (1983), p. 209.

45. H. Algar, *Roots of Islamic Revolution*, p. 78.

46. 'Alî Sharî'atî, *On the Sociology of Islam*, pp. 82-85.

47. H. Dabashi, *Islamic Quarterly*, p. 216, quoting 'Alî Sharî'atî, *Shi'a*, (n.p.: n.d), pp.14-15.

48. Ibid., p. 210.

49. Ibid., p. 215.

50. B. Hanson, *IJMES*, 15 (1983), p. 15, quoting 'Alî Sharî'atî, *Agar Pâp va Mârks nebudand* (n.p: n.d.) pp. 9-10.

51. Ibid., p. 10.

52. 'Alî Sharî'atî, *Marxism and Other Western Fallacies*, trans. by R. Campbell (Berkeley: Mizan Press, 1980), p. 53.

53. Ibid., p. 58.

54. Ibid., p. 55.

55. Ibid.

56. Ibid., pp. 65-66.

57. A. A. Sachedina, *Voices of resurgent Islam*, p. 196.

58. Ibid.

59. 'Alî Sharî'atî, *On the Sociology of Islam*, p. 11.

Chapter II - The problem of succession in Shí'ah Islam

Origin of and Schisms within Shí'ism: The Prophet Muḥammad was the founder of Islam as well as a charismatic leader who possessed the virtues of a king and a Prophet. His charisma was marked in terms of his being a recipient of divine communications which were essential for establishing the Islamic community. Upon the death of the Prophet nobody appeared to claim the ability to succeed Muḥammad as the messenger of God or the transmitter of Divine Revelation. But two fundamental questions arose: Who would succeed to the temporal leadership of Islam? And how was he to be selected? This problem of succession in the *ummah* (= ummat, lit. community of Islam) split it into two antagonistic sects: the People of the Sunnah and the Shí'ah. A group of people decided to select a Khalífah to compensate for the loss of their leader. The Khalífah to be selected was to ensure the welfare of the community and to solve its problems after the Prophet. Abū Bakr was then chosen as the first Khalífah in order to resolve the problem of succession. The majority of people accepted his leadership and gave their allegiance to him; they are known as the Sunnís. A minority, however, protested against the leadership of Abū Bakr and maintained that Muḥammad's

charisma was inherited within the family and clan of Muḥammad. They regarded Muḥammad's cousin and son-in-law ʿAlî as having inherited this charisma and argued that Muḥammad had designated ʿAlî as his successor in a clear as well as a concealed sense during his lifetime.<1> The group who advocated the leadership of ʿAlî are known as the partisans of ʿAlî or political Shîʿah because they preferred ʿAlî's succession over that of Abû Bakr.<2>

The Shîʿah, however, argue that Shîʿism existed during the life time of the Prophet and that reference was made to Shîʿism during the period in the sense of partisans of ʿAlî.<3> ʿAlî was considered as the leader of the household of the Prophet. Salmân, Abû Dharr, Miqdâd and ʿAmmar were also known as Shîʿah. Therefore the original Shîʿah consisted of these men who were the élite among the companions of the Prophet.<4>

The group of Shîʿah formed after the death of the Prophet believed in ʿAlî as their first and rightful Imâm, because he seemed to have gained charisma through his descent in addition to his appointment through God.<5> Belief in ʿAlî grew stronger because he was the successor of the Prophet; it also grew in the descendants of the Prophet through ʿAlî and Fâṭimah. The belief in an Imâm became the

cardinal doctrine upon which the entire Shî'ah creed rests.<6>

Although belief in an Imâm grew to be a central doctrine, a difference grew up among the Shî'ah around the question of how and to whom the Imâmate was transferred among the descendants of 'Alî. The differences resulted in five major groups viz. Kaisâniyyah, Zaydiyyah, Imâmiyyah, *ghulât* (extremists) and Ismâ'îliyyah.<7>

. The Kaisâniyyah are the followers of Muḥammad, a son of 'Alî and his wife who was a Ḥanafite woman. They do not maintain that the Imâm should be appointed through *naṣṣ*. They consider the Imâm's claim to be based on his personal qualifications.<8> The Zaydiyyah sect believed in the Imâmate of Zayd b.'Alî b.al-Ḥusayn b.'Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib; they maintain that the Imâmate belongs to the offspring of Fâṭimah and 'Alî.In addition to this the Imâm should be brave, pious and generous. If a person of this calibre claims the Imâmate, then allegiance must be given to him, whether he is a descendant of Ḥasan or Ḥusayn.<9> The later sectarian developments within the Shî'ah (namely: Imâmiyyah and Ismâ'îliyyah, Nuṣayriyyah) grew up around the question of *naṣṣ*, and these groups are referred to as *naṣṣ Imâmates.* <10> The disregard for the *naṣṣ* of the Imâm was not only

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true for the Zaydis but was true also for the large population of the early Shî'ah before the Imâmate of Ja'far al-Ṣâdiq.<11> The notion of *naṣṣ* dates back to Muḥammad, Bâqir (d. 733 A.D.) and Abû Hâshim (d.716 A.D.) who was the heir of Ibn al-Ḥanafiyya. Abû Hâshim had conferred *naṣṣ* upon Muḥammad b. 'Alî (d.743 A.D.).<12> The idea of *naṣṣ* was complemented by the idea of *'ilm* (special knowledge), which was retained in the line of the 'Alîds. In that line there would always be one 'Alîd who was inherently the sole legitimate ruler, designated by his predecessor. This notion of Imâmate was possible regardless of the fate of particular political movements.<13>

The schism that occurred after the Imâmate of Ja'far al-Ṣâdiq (d.765 A.D.) was not based on the point that the Imâm should come from the 'Alîd family but upon the issue of who was the next Imâm designated by Ja'far al-Ṣâdiq. The problem of succession to Ja'far al-Ṣâdiq arose thereafter. One group maintained that Ja'far b. Ismâ'îl was designated by his father and believed in his Imâmate, whereas the other group believed in the Imâmate of Ja'far b. Mûsâ al-Kâẓim and his descendants up to the twelfth Imâm. They are known as the *ithnâ'ashariyyah* or the twelvers.<14> They maintain that their twelfth Imâm, Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-'Askarî al-Zakî, disappeared at Samarra. He is in a state of *ghaybah*

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(occultation) and will return *(raj'a)* as the Mahdî or Qâ'im
to restore peace and justice in the world. The *ghaybah* <15>
is divided into two periods: a shorter occultation
(al-ghaybah al-şughrâh) which lasted from 874 A.D.to 941
A.D. During this period the Imâm was represented by four
sufarà'(ambassadors) also known as *nuwwâb al-Khâşş* (specific
deputies) who were meant to institute guidance from the Imâm
to his believers. The duration of the longer occultation
(al-ghaybah al-kubrah) is known only to God.<16> The doctrine
of *ghaybah* changed the role of the living Imâm into that of
a messiah. The Imâm then became a messiah or a saviour who
would return at the end of time to restore peace and
justice. It is maintained that the doctrine of *ghaybah* was
the inevitable outcome of the experience of the Shî'ah Imâms
because they were under constant persecution by the Sunnî
Khulafâ'.<17>

**Sharî'atî's views on leadership and the successor of the
Prophet.** 'Alî Sharî'atî attempted to examine the
controversial and sensitive question concerning the
succession of 'Alî in order to identify the role of
leadership in contemporary Iranian society. Actually, the
religious class had carried out the function of guiding the
community in religious and social affairs from the early

days of Shí'ah history.<18>

As soon as the period of lesser occultation began, the
Imâm was represented by four deputies the *sufarâ' nâ'ib al-
khaṣṣ*. This period is also known as the period of the
'specific agency' of deputies as a means for the Imâm to
provide guidance for his believers. After the death of the
fourth deputy, the period of greater occultation began. This
period was the period of 'general agency' *nâ'ib al-'amm*
whereby the learned men or the *'ulamâ'* began to be the
agents for the hidden Imâm. However, this agency is
sustained by a tradition attributed to Imâm Jaf'ar al-Ṣâdiq.
He said that all those who might act as judges over the
Muslims and interpret the law 'had their appointment *ex ante*
from him. Moreover, since Ja'far al-Ṣâdiq was the founder
of Shí'ah jurisprudence, this tradition is the more
significant as a way of establishing the authority of the
'ulamâ' <19>

But, after the downfall of Muṣaddiq in the twentieth
century, there were anticlerical sentiments in Iran,
especially among the modern educated class. The educated
class were responding to the growing power of the *'ulamâ'*
and their indifference to the situation in modern times. The
contemporary *'ulamâ'* never showed any concern to understand

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the needs of the society and the individuals who compose it. They were virtually out of touch with modern Muslim society.<20> On the other hand, the 'ulamâ' in other Islamic countries had lost their social and intellectual standing. But the 'ulamâ' in Iran maintained the tradition of political leadership to a great extent. Their monopoly even militated against the emergence of Islamic thinkers in Iran.<21> Sharî'atî thought it vital to discuss the role of leadership in Iran by examining the early history of Islam in general and Shî'ism in particular. He examined the problem of leadership that crystallised after the death of the Prophet from a sociological perspective. His analysis was based on one of the fundamental questions that arose from the situation: why was 'Alî not chosen as the successor of the Prophet despite his appointment by the Prophet as his successor during his lifetime?.<22>

In Sharî'atî's view the arguments presented by the Sunnis were true and valid in terms of the reasons they presented. According to him, the Sunnîs regard the Prophet Muḥammad as divinely appointed by God. He was obliged to teach and to impart the verses of the Qur'ân clearly and carefully. The Prophet also had a duty to show the same care and clarity in announcing his successor, if there was to be one. This successor would be appointed by God in order to

prevent any plot, rejection, false explanation or mis-interpretation which might occur in the future. However, after the Prophet's death, the emigrants and the citizens of Medina gathered in *Saqîfah* (an area belonging to the Sa'ebah [sic.]tribe) to elect the khalîfah. The Muslims in Medina thought it vital to elect someone as a leader. Moreover, the Prophet did not write about the matter of succesion because of the protest that took place then (perhaps, Sharî'atî refers to the incident when the Prophet on his death bed expressed his desire to write but 'Umar dismissed the desire by saying that the Prophet was seriously ill). The Sunnîs argue that if the Prophet had had the mission to write an official decree from God governing the succession to leadership, he would not have overlooked it just because the people were protesting. Furthermore, 'Alî himself finally approved the election of the Khalîfah Abû Bakr at a later time. If the position of 'Alî had come from God like that of the Prophet Muḥammad, then 'Alî would not have given his approval to anyone else.<23>

In contrast, the arguments presented by the Shî'ah in Sharî'atî's view are just as firm if they are studied objectively. He maintains that the Shî'ah argued that succession to the Prophet differed from succession to political office. The Prophet did not hold a political

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position; in fact he was a thinker, master and a teacher divinely appointed by God. He was not appointed by the people, which would have allowed the people to select the successor to the Prophet. Moreover, since the Prophet was appointed by God, his position would not be strengthened even if all the people accepted him as the Prophet. Neither would he cease to be a Prophet if none accepted his prophecy.<24> Sharî'atî emphatically states that:

> The fact of the matter is that the station of Prophethood is not a popularly, elective office. It is not a power which people give to a person. Thus a Prophet is not an elected individual. It is for this reason that his mission and the continuity of his movement must be put into the hands of a successor who is qualified for the same type of leadership and mission as that of the Prophet himself.<25>

Although Sharî'atî considers the Sunnî view to be acceptable, he regards their view of the Prophet's successor as analogous to that of the Mayor of a city who is elected by the people. This Mayor gets his power from the people. When he dies or his term ends, the people choose another mayor to replace him.<26>

However, he refutes the Sunnî arguments which are in contrast to Shî'ah arguments. He argues that the Prophet is like a teacher who has brought a new school of thought into being. This teacher gives a special/ class which no one else

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can teach in the way and manner in which he does. He has
initiated a new approach for them. Eventually, the students
find faith in him, and in the course of time, the teacher
too recognizes his students. This recognition helps him to
know which of his students or friends is most worthy as the
trustee of the task and profession of teaching. The teacher
finally selects the most capable personnel who will continue
the task he has started. A teacher of this calibre is not
selected by the votes of people. He is selected by God, and
the people have to accept him because they do not have the
wisdom to select their own teacher.<27>

Therefore, in Sharî'atî's view, since the successor of
the Prophet is entrusted with a special task, he should be
appointed by the Prophet himself. The Prophet announced his
mission without the permission of the people. He continued
his mission so that his school would be carried on by the
individual who was most capable and most familiar with his
thoughts and teachings.<28> If the Prophet had been a figure
of political power only, then the people could have selected
his successor. But he was a moral power and was not selected
by the people. He came with a divine message, and so he had
the right to appoint a successor who was worthy to continue
his mission.<29>

This would imply that the Prophet did not permit the people of his time to vote and express their opinions. This, however, is not true in the light of how the Prophet interacted with the people in social matters. In fact the Prophet valued the vote of the majority in social affairs because the principle of 'counsel by council' (shôrâ) is a universal principle.<30> There are many instances during the war of Uḥud when the Prophet based his personal actions on counsel.<31> However, the evidence cited by Sharî'atî is not enough to prove that the modern concept of democracy existed in seventh century Arabia.

However the problem that was precipitated after the death of the Prophet resulted in two principles, both of which emerged from religion:(i) the election of the Prophet's successor through the consensus of the people, and (ii) the selection of the Prophet's successor by appointment. Though they seem to conflict, Sharîa'tî considers both principles to be Islamic because they are found in the Qur'ân and in the traditions of the Prophet and are compatible with the spirit of Islam. (He does not cite the verses of the Qur'ân, nor the traditions to prove the compatibility of these principles). However, both of these principles emerged as phenomena of religion in a social context.<32>

As far as the Shí'í principle of election is concerned, Sharí'atí testifies that the Shí'ah believe in succession to the Prophet through appointment. They however believe that the Prophet had appointed only twelve people as his successors.<33> Sharí'atí asks how this could be possible, when the Prophet of Islam knew that Islam was the last religion which humanity could follow for all time to come. How is it that the Prophet first said that 'Islam is an eternal religion' and then appointed only twelve people to guide the society? Obviously, twelve people are not enough to guide the society forever.<34>

Sharí'atí attempted to resolve the polemics about succession to the guidance of the community in the absence of the twelfth Imâm. He proposed that when the twelfth Imâm went into occultation, a thirteenth successor of the Prophet should have been elected. This election should have been carried out through the principle of 'councilor election and allegiance'. He considers this to be appropriate because religion and the need for leadership are eternal. Moreover, when the thirteenth successor would be elected, the time would then have been right, because by this time the Islamic community would have been better established than it was soon after the death of the Prophet. He argues that society needs time in order to allow political, social and religious

growth. A society which has not had enough time for this
kind of growth remains underdeveloped. An underdeveloped
society of this kind usually consists of emigrants and
companions. If an election is held in this type of society,
the votes always would be determined by tribal, clan or
familial ties. It would be dangerous to rely on a social
group of this nature. Therefore, the election which was held
immediately after the death of the Prophet should have been
postponed until the Islamic society became a progressive
society. In a progressive society every individual could
vote without influence or pressure from his peer group. The
vote would be independent, and the individual in the society
would have the ability to make political distinctions. Such
a society has reached a stage of allegiance and council by
election. When the members of this society come into
contact with each other, they can recognize the best and
most capable person and then give an independent vote.<35>

He also suggests that Islamic society should have been
governed by Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, Bâqir and al-Ṣâdiq instead of
Muʿâwiyah, Yâzîd, Soffah[sic.] and Marwân respectively. If
Islamic society had been governed by the former group of
people, there would have been enough time and sufficient
direction to achieve religious, political and social growth.
This would have alleviated the problem of succession which

arose fourteen centuries ago. Instead the people would have
been able to choose the most suitable leader through their
vote when they had to elect the thirteenth successor.<36>

Thus Sharî'atî does not seem to reject the principle of
election altogether. In fact he considers it to be a
progressive principle in terms of sociology and humanity.
It is even compatible with Islam. However, he proposes that
the elections which took place immediately after the death
of the Prophet, should have taken place only after Islamic
society had attained a considerable social growth.
Preferably, they should have taken place two hundred and
fifty years after the Prophet's death.<37>

In this vein of argument, Sharî'atî tries to reconcile
the Sunnî concept of *bay'at* (allegiance), *ijmâ'* (consensus)
and *shôrâ* (counsel by election) with the Shî'ah principle of
vaṣâyat (designation). He claims that both Sunnî and Shî'ah
principles are Islamic principles and are compatible with
the Qur'ân. However, they represent two different phases in
the historical evolution of the *ummat*. In his view, the
former is the democratic principle of Islam while the latter
is the Will of the Prophet. The latter corresponds to the
first stage of social development, i.e. the Imâmate, whereby
the Imâm fosters social growth and development for the

community by instituting his divine guidance. The latter is the logical implication of the former; when the society stands firmly on its own feet, democracy can take over. Sharî'atî condemns the Sunnîs for eliminating the stage of social growth and development. They directly implemented the principle of democracy without taking advantage of the Imâm's guidance which would have better prepared the society for electing the Prophet's successor at a later time. On this basis he dismisses the election held at Saqîfah immediately after the demise of the Prophet. The election which had taken place then should have been postponed until the time of the thirteenth successor.

Sharî'atî professed that the thirteenth successor of the Prophet should have been elected by the people. According to him the Prophet had designated the twelve Shî'ah Imâms in order to foster the growth of an Islamic society. However, since the Prophet remained silent regarding the leadership after the twelfth successor, it was the sole responsibility of the people to choose their leader.<38>

He holds that there are four fundamental factors responsible for social development and change in Islam. They are personality, tradition, accident and the people whom he

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refers to as *al-nâs* (a Qur'ânic term). Of the four factors he contends that "the people" play the key role in social change, and bases his contention on two sources: (i) by citing references from the Qur'ân and interpreting them. (ii) by philosophising about the story of Cain and Abel in the Qur'ân and relating it to the dialectic of sociology.<39>

As far as the factors of social development and change in Islam are concerned, they seem to play roles of different magnitudes. The Prophet, for example, is considered as the greatest of all personalities. But according to the Qur'ân he is not recognized as the active cause of fundamental change and development in human history. In the Qur'ân he is depicted as a messenger whose duty it is to show men a school of thought and the path of truth. If the people do not accept the Prophet's message, the Prophet appeals to God in response to the people's behaviour. Then God explains to him that his mission consists of conveying the message only. The Prophet is not responsible in any way for the people's disobedience or their advancement. It is the people who are responsible for themselves. Personalities other than the Prophet are not considered to be effective factors of change in the Qur'ân.<40>

"Accident" as a factor of social change does not play a key role because all things are in the hands of God. Therefore, an accident which is a future event in nature or human society is inconceivable.[41]

"Tradition" as a factor is interpreted in a different sense. The Qur'ânic sense of 'tradition' means a road, path and a particular character. Now, Sharî'atî says that each society has its fixed norms; it may be considered like a living being which has scientifically demonstrable and immutable laws. Therefore, all kinds of development and change that are to take place in a society are based on a fixed tradition and immutable laws. These constitute the very foundation of social life.[42]

According to Sharî'atî, 'the people' referred to by the term al-nâs, are one of the profound variables in determining social change. He maintains that this principle is in accordance with Islam's theory of determinism in history and society. According to him, al-nâs are collectively responsible for the fate of the society, and the individual members who form the society are held responsible for their own fate and destiny. He demonstrates that the idea is depicted in the following Qur'ânic verse (2:134):

> For them shall be what they have earned and for you
> shall be what you have earned.

and also in verse (13:11):

> Verily God does not change the state of a people
> until they change the state of their ownselves.

Finally, verse (74:38) of the Qur'ân clearly seems to explain that an individual is responsible for himself.

> Every soul is accountable for what it has earned.

Sharî'atî believes that in Islam, the society and individuals are responsible for their own destiny because it is so stated in the Qur'ân.<43>

According to him, the four factors (personality, tradition, accident and al-nâs) which are in some way responsible for social change consequently form two main principles: (i) responsibility and the freedom of man to change the society, and (ii) the notion of fixed and scientifically established laws which provide an immutable basis for change in society. These two principles may appear to be contradictory because one of them says that man can control his fate and destiny, while the other states that man has to abide by the laws of nature. However, Sharî'atî rejects the view that they are contradictory principles because they they are complementary according to the Qur'ân.<44>

Therefore, Sharî'atî considers 'the people' i.e *al-nâs* to play a vital role in their society. Their role is to be actualised particularly in the third period of the four periods of history. The four periods of Islamic history are as follows: (i) the era of prophecy, (ii) the era of the Imâmate (the rule of 'Alî and the eleven Imâms who succeeded him, (iii) the period of occultation (i.e. the beginning of the *ghaybah* of the twelfth Imâm in 874 A.D.) and (iv) the era of resurrection and true justice.<45>

Sharî'atî argues that the first and the fourth periods of history are those of the mission of the Prophet and his legatee who was designated by God. The Prophet and the Mahdî (who will reappear at the end of the era to restore peace and justice) signify the end of corruption and the commencement of the golden age.<46>

However, in the third period of Islamic history, ever since the twelfth Imâm went into occultation, neither the Prophet nor the Imâm is accesible to the community. So in this period the mission of the Prophets and Imâms is entrusted to 'the people'. It is *al-nâs* who should implement the Islamic laws and establish an Islamic society in place of the false one maintained by tyrants.<47> Moreover, since the Imâm is not accessible to the community, and it is not

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possible for the community to live without a guide, the task of electing the leader is entrusted to 'the people' i.e. al-nâs. In Islam, the word al-nâs has profound meaning and a distinct significance. Although it is a singular noun, it is used in the plural sense. However, it does not merely denote a collection of individuals in a plural sense. Rather, it refers to a "society" as opposed to individuals. Perhaps, the word al-nâs can convey the concept of "society" better than any other word. It conveys an identity as a whole which is independent of its individual members.<48>

According to Sharî'atî the Qur'ân lends a distinct significance to the word al-nâs. He points out that the Qur'ân begins in the name of God and ends in the name of the people. It is the people who represent God and His "family" (al-nâs 'iyâl-u Allâh). The Ka'ba is the house of God, but the Qur'ân refers to it as the "house of people" and the "free house" (al-bayt al-'âtiq) in verse (22:29,33). This idea is, however, opposed to other houses which are in the bond of private ownership. <49>

Sharî'atî argues that of the two classes of Prophets, Semitic and non-Semitic.<50>, the Semitic prophets arose from the group of people deprived in their social and economic life. These Prophets were shepherds who grazed

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sheep. <51> Sharî'atî refers to the Qur'ânic passage: "It is He who was sent amongst the unlettered (ummiyyin), an Apostle from among themselves....." (62:2).

Ummiyyin refers to the unlettered masses of society. Moreover it is not to be taken for granted that they were mere human beings. Rather, the emphasis is that they were from the people (al-nâs), from the fabric of the masses and not from the special noble, élite and selected classes of the society. These Prophets spoke the language of the people as mentioned in the Qur'ân (14:4): "in the language of his people...." Sharî'atî contends that where it is said that the Prophets spoke the language of the people the phrase does mean that the Prophet of Islam spoke Arabic or that Moses arose among Jews and spoke Hebrew. It would be inappropriate if a Prophet sent by God should speak Chinese or Greek among Arabs. However, "Speaking in the language of his people" means speaking that language of the people which is based upon the special needs and understanding of the masses. This language is unlike the language of the élite, philosophers, poets, intellectuals, who speak a language that the masses do not understand <52> The masses were the centre of concern for the Semitic prophets, and rebelled against the existing powers of their time for the sake of the people. These prophets began their mission by fighting against the prevailing conditions. Abraham destroyed the

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idols, Moses took his staff and rebelled against the palace of Pharoah, and the Prophet Muḥammad, too, began his mission through *jihâd* (holy war). In about ten years time he fought more than sixty five wars.<53>

In contrast the non-Semitic prophets (those of Iran, China and India) belonged to the aristocratic class of society. Confucius was the son of a noble, Zoroaster was the son of a chief fire worshipper, Buddha was the prince of Banaras, and Mahavira was the son of a king and belonged to the *Kshatriya* (the caste of Indian warriors).<54>

Sharî‘atî's classification of the prophets into Semitic and non-Semitic categories echoes Weber's classification of prophets as "Ethical" and "Exemplary" prophets. In Weber's schema, the "Exemplary" type is characteristic of prophecy in India and China; while the Ethical type is confined to the Near East. However, in Weber's view the "Ethical" prophet of the Near East legitimises his teachings by delineating a transcendental conception of divinity which is beyond the human world. The "Ethical" prophet thinks of himself as an instrument of divine will. He has a mission to promulgate the divine will. Whereas the "Exemplary" prophet professes an immanent pantheistic principle of divinity and tends to define himself as a figure standing in some personal

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relationship with the divine, he also provides a model for a
way of life which others can follow.<55>

Sharî'atî's concept of prophecy complements Weber's
concept of a prophet in that the prophet is an agent of the
process of breakthrough to a higher, in the sense of more
rationalized and systematized, cultural order; an order at
the religious level which in turn has implications for the
nature of the society in which it becomes
institutionalized.<56>

Expounding his ideas on *al-nâs*, Sharî'atî maintains
that the term is depicted in the Qur'ân in a profound and
significant sense. However, in the existing structure of the
society "The people" i.e. *al-nâs* represent the pole of
Abel, i.e. those who are ruled, in contrast to the pole of
Cain, i.e. the rulers. Sharî'atî argues further that, no
matter how a society may have defined itself (in national,
political or economic terms), basically, all societies have
been formed in a system of contradiction. This
contradiction is depicted in the form of two hostile and
opposing poles that have existed throughout history. The
pole of Cain i.e. the ruler in the form of a king, owner or
aristocracy; and the pole of Abel in the form of the masses.
But the pole of Abel, i.e. the ruled, represents God also.

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However, the class of the ruled have always had to confront the threefold class of king-owner-aristocracy. Perhaps this situation was slightly different in primitive societies which were in backward stages of development. In such cases, the pole of Cain was represented by a single individual. This unique individual exercised power, ownership and aristocracy regardless of how the pole of Cain was represented, whether it is represented by one individual or by means of the threefold dimensions. Sharî'atî contends that Cain was, and is, always engaged in dominating, exploiting, and deceiving the people. The rulers depicted in the Qur'ân are symbols: the Pharaoh is the symbol of the ruling political power, Croesus (Qârûn) is the symbol of economic power, and Balaam is the symbol of the official ruling clergy.<57>

Sharî'atî maintains that since the pole of Abel represents "the people" it is also equivalent to God. It follows then that, when social matters are discussed in the Qur'ân, Allah and *al-nâs* are often interchangeable and yield the same meaning. For e.g. he cites the Qur'ânic verse; (64:17) to demonstrate the idea: "If ye lend Allah a goodly loan ....." According to Sharî'atî, Allah obviously refers to "the people" because Allah is not in need of any "goodly loan".<58>

Therefore, according to him the words *al-nâs* and Allah have synonymous meanings in verses concerning the social system. But they cannot be interchanged when creedal matters such as the order of the cosmos are at stake.<59> Thus when it is said that "Rule belongs to God" these words mean that rule belongs to the people. In addition Sharî'atî states that, when it is said, "Property belongs to God" the verse means its use belongs to the people as a whole <60> If it is said that religion belongs to God, the saying means that the entire structure and content of religion belongs to the people. For religion is not a monopoly held by a certain institution or certain people known as "clergy" or "Church".<61> He adds emphasis to this meaning of the people by citing a verse from the Qur'ân (94:1-3) and interpreting it: "Allah is the Lord of the People, King of the People, and God of the People." Therefore God does not belong to the aristocrats and the élite who form the prominent minority in society. He belongs to the people.<62>

However, Sharî'atî contends that despite the existing bi-polar structures in every society (ruler versus the ruled), eventually, there will be a dialectical war between them. This war will end with the triumph of the ruled, and will lead to the formation of a classless society. The end of time will come when Cain dies and the "system of Abel" is

established. This is perhaps the inevitable direction of history. A universal revolution will take place in all areas of human life, and the oppressed class will take its revenge. In this context, he cites the Qur'ânic verse (28:5):

> We have willed that We should place under
> obligation those who have been weakened and
> oppressed on the earth, by making them the leaders
> of men and heirs of the earth.<63>

Sharî'atî has reinterpreted the story of Cain and Abel in the Qur'ân to demonstrate Marx's scheme of social development, whereby primitive socialism was transformed into serfdom, serfdom into feudalism, feudalism into bourgeois society, bourgeois society into capitalism, capitalism into industrial capitalism, and finally industrial capitalism into a classless society. Sharî'atî contends that social structure is based upon class, and it remains always the same; only the forms of labour, tools and forms of production change. In his words:

> Once I and my fellow tribesman lived together in
> equality and brotherhood, hunting and fishing, a
> single structure existed in our society. Then he
> became an owner, and I, one of the deprived; he the
> ruler, and I, the ruled. The form of things
> changed, the tools and the mode of production, but
> he remained an owner and did not work, and I
> remained one of the deprived and worked. One day, I
> was slave and he was the master. Then I became serf
> and he became a lord. Then I became a peasant and
> he became the landlord. Later still, I laid down
> my spade, and he abandoned his horse, and we both
> came to the city. He bought a few taxis with the
> proceeds of his land, and I became a taxi-driver.

Now he has a factory, and I am the proliterian working in it! When and in what respect did the structure ever change? It was only the forms, the names, the tools, the forms of labor that changed; all these things relate to the superstructure. In all periods, with the exception of the period of primordial equality and fraternity, he retained his position of ruler. and I, my position of ruled, running back and forth in his service. The structure will change only when we again both go out to work on the same piece of land as before, with the same cow, plow and spade as before! <64>

Sharî'atî also maintains that although Cain represents the ruler, he is not inherently evil. What makes him evil is an antihuman social system, a class society, a *régime* of private ownership that promotes slavery and mastery.<65> Nonetheless, he believes that despite the inherent structure of the society, every individual in every age must determine his stance in the constant struggle between the two poles and not remain a spectator <66>

While admitting the two major types of societies i.e. the Abel and the Cain type, Sharî'atî refuses Marxist explanation wherein the superstructure is determined by the relationship of production and forces of production. These two societies are an alternative to Marx's evolutionary explanation of society based on the modes of production. One can also interpret that Sharî'atî's ownership of the means of production is a criterion that constitute the societal type.

Sharî'atî's main message for the people is that they must defend the power and the unity of the Muslims in the face of their enemies so that they may become powerful in order to undertake *jihâd* (lit. holy war) and implement *ijtihâd,* (lit. legal or theological decision) so that they can confront despotic rulers and defend Islam from the yoke of imperialism. In this sense Sharî'atî thinks that it is perfectly legitimate to entrust the task of designating the leader to the people <67> In one of his lectures he stated that:

> The responsibility of leadership lies with those who hail from the people and are elected {. *(montakhab;* cf. *moshakhkhas)* & by the masses of the people....In Alavi Shi'ism there is a period of occultation that is a period of democracy. Contrary to the system of Prophecy and Imamate, which are designated by God, the leadership of society during the period of occultation is based upon the principles of study, designation, *election* and consensus *(ijma)* of the people. *The power of sovereignty (hakemiyat) originates from* ......*the community.*<68>

1. see W. M. Watt, "The Conception of Charismatic Community in
   Islam," *Numen*, vol.7 (1960), p. 78, and A. M. Farsakh, "A
   comparison of the Sunni Caliphate and the Shî'ah Imâmate,"
   Muslim World, LIX (1969), 50.

   An example of the clear declarations is found in the
   words of the Prophet, "He to whom I am Master, 'Alî is also
   his Master." The Shî'ahs take this saying to mean that the
   right of Master or Lord in Islam belongs to 'Alî . Another
   saying of the Prophet: "The best judge between you is 'Alî".
   According to them, this means that the Imâmate has no other
   significance than this, namely the right of judging
   according to the commands of God.

   An example of the concealed sense for Shî'ah is found
   in the Prophet's remarks regarding the designation of 'Alî
   in an event. When the Prophet had received the sûrah of
   Immunity (Qur'ân ix) during the pilgrimage at Mecca, he
   first commanded Abû Bakr to explain it. However, the Prophet
   received a further revelation to assign the duty of
   delivering this message to someone of his family, he
   commissioned 'Alî to take this sûrah and to recite it to
   them. According to the Shî'ah, 'Alî had obtained the
   preferred right. In addition the Shî'ah claim that the
   Prophet did not place anyone over 'Alî in command, whereas
   he did place Usâmah ibn Zayd over Abû Bakr and 'Umar on an
   expedition, and 'Umrû ibn al-'Âs over them at another time.
   However, the Shi'ah consider all these facts to prove that
   'Alî and no one else was intended for the succession. See D.
   M. Donaldson, "The Shî'ah doctrine of the Imâmate", *Muslim
   World*, XXI (1923), 14-15.

   The event of Ghadîr Khumm is significant for the Shî'ah
   and they cite the event to prove that 'Alîs was deisgnated
   by the Prophet as his successor. Ghadîr Khumm is a site
   situated between Mecca and Medina where there is a pond of
   water. They maintain that when the Prophet returned from
   Mecca in the year of Farewell (10.A.H.), he halted at
   Ghadîr-i Khumm and proclaimed 'Alî ibn Abî Tâlib as his
   brother. He said to the group of people with him that: "
   'Alî is to me what Aaron was to Moses. Almighty God be a
   friend to his friends and a foe to his foes; help those who
   help him and frustrate the hopes of those who betray him.
   The Prophet Muḥammad also repeated the statement : "He whose

master I am has also ʿAlî for his master." See D. M. Donaldson, *The Shiʿite Religion* (London: Luzac and Company, 1933), p. 4.

2. R. Strothmann, "Shiʿa," *EI(1)*, IV:1 (1934), p. 350.

3. Allamah Ṭabâṭabâ'i, *Shiʿite Islam*, trans. S. H. Nasr (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975), p. 68.

4. Ibid., p. 51.

5.. D. M. Donaldson, "The Shi'ite doctrine of the Imâmate," *Muslim World,* XXI (1923), 14-15.

6. A. A. Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism: The idea of Mahdi in Twelver Shiʿism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), p. 4.

7. See Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Karim Shahratânî, *Kitâb al-Milal wa'l-Niḥal (Muslim Sects and Divisions),* trans. A. K. Kazi and J. G. Flynn (London: Kegan Paul Intenational, 1984).
    However, there are sub-sects in each of the major Shîʿah groups. Shahrastânî gives the following major divisions: Kaysâniyah (4), Zaydiyyah (3), Imâmiyyah (1), Ghulât (10), Ismâʿîliyyah (1). This consitutes to a total of 19 whereas Ibn-Ḥazm gives only two sub-divisions, the Zaydiyyah and the Imâmiyyah(or Râfiḍîyyah). Al Baghdadî gives an account of four main groups with a total of 20 sects excluding the ghulât from the *ummat al-Islâm:* Zaydiyyah (4), Kaisâniyyah (1), Imâmiyyah (15). See K.Seelye's introduction to ʿAbd al-Qâhir al-Baghdadî, *al-Farq bayn al-Firâq (Moslems schisms and sects),* trans. by K. Seelye (New York: Columbia University, 1920), p. 5.

8. M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shîʿî Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 47.

9. Shahrastânî, *Muslim Sects and Divisions,* p. 132.

10. M. G. S. Hodgson, "How Did the Early Shiʿa Become Sectarian?" *JAOS,* LXXV (1955), 9.

11. Ibid., p. 10.

12. M. G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974) I, 261.

13. Ibid., p. 260.

14. Shahrastânî, *Muslim Sects and Divisions,* p. 141.

15. The doctrine of *ghaybah* evolved as a major addition to the doctrine of Imâm. The Shî'ah doctrine of Imâm evolved gradually during the first Islamic century and gained a definite and concrete form by the middle of the second/ eighth century. For about the next hundred years, until the death of the eleventh Imâm al-Hasan al-'Askarî, no significant changes seem to have been introduced. However in the mid-fourth/tenth century the doctrine of *ghayba* appeared as an addition to the Shî'ah theory of Imâmate. see E. Kohlberg, "From Imâmiyya to Ithnâ-'ashariyya," *BSOAS,* XXXIX (1976), 521.

16. Ibid.

17. A. A. Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism,* p. 17-23.

18   Idem, *Voices of Resurgent Islam,* pp. 171-172.

19. L. Binder "The Proofs of Islam" in *Arabic and Islamic Studies in honor of Hamilton A. R. Gibb,* ed. George Makdisi (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 122.

20. A. A. Sachedina, *Voices of Resurgent Islam,* pp. 208-209.

21. H. Algar, *The Roots of Islamic Revolution in Iran* (London: The Open Press, 1983), pp. 171-172.

22. 'Alî Sharî'atî, *Selection and/or Election,* trans. A. A. Ghassemy (Houston: Free Islamic Literatures, Inc, 1980), p. 2.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., p. 3.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid., p. 4.

31. During the battle of Uḥud, the Prophet intended to remain in Medina, whereas the younger members wanted to leave Medina and fight. After a vote, the young people seem to have won. Although the Prophet was in the minority , he joined the younger members. In the battle of Muteh, the Prophet appointed three commanders, Ja'far, Zayd ibn Ḥâritha and 'Abdullah ibn Ravaheh so that if one of them were killed the others could take over in succession[sic.]. However, all of them happened to be killed and the Prophet had not chosen a fourth leader. The people chose Khâlid as their commander, at that the Prophet accepted their elected leader. Ibid., pp. 4-5.

32.. Ibid.

33. When Sharî'atî refers to the Shî'ah, he means the Twelver Shî'ah and not any other sect of Shî'ah Islam.

34. 'Alî Sharî'atî, *Selection and/or Election*, p. 9.

35. Ibid., p. 11.

36. Ibid., p. 12.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid., p. 9.

39. Idem, *On the Sociology Of Islam*, p. 50.

40. Ibid., p. 48.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid., p. 50.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid., pp. 50-51.

45. S. Akhavi: "Sharî'atî's social thought" in *Religion and Politics in Iran*, ed. Nikki Keddie (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 138.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

48.   'Alî Sharî'atî, *On the Sociology of Islam*, p. 117.

49.   Ibid.

50.   Idem, *The Visage of Muḥammad,* trans. by A. A. Sachedina (Houston: Free Islamic Literatures, Inc, 1979), p. 5.

51.   'Alî Sharî'atî, *Martyrdom (Shahadat)*, p. 18.

52.   Ibid., p. 19.

53.   Ibid., p. 20.

54.   Idem, *The Visage of Muḥammad,* p. 7.

55.   M. Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. by E. Fischoff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), pp. xxxv-xxxvi, 55.

56.   Ibid., p. xxxii.

57.   'Alî Sharî'atî, *On the Sociology of Islam*, p. 115.

58.   Ibid., p. 116.

59.   Ibid.

60.   Sharî'atî states below that Mu'âwiya said, "Property belongs to God" but Abû Dharr retorted, "You say this in order to draw the conclusion that since I am representative of God, property belongs to me. Say instead, 'Property belongs to the people'." He states that the dictum "people are enpowered over their own property" has led to the evolution of the principle of *taslît* (enpowering) in Islamic jurisprudence. However people used religious justification for individual ownership and sanctity of private ownership. see Ibid., p. 117, n. 2.

61.   Ibid., pp. 116-117.

62.   Ibid., p. 118, n. 3.
        Upon verification of the Sûrah number cited above with the Concordance of the Qur'ân, it seems that Sûrah: 94 is wrongly quoted in place of 114.

63.   Ibid., p. 109.

64.   Ibid., pp. 114-115.

65.   Ibid., p. 107.

66.   Ibid., p. 109.

67.   S. Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Iran*, p. 138.

68.   'Alî Sharî'atî, *Tasha'yyu-i 'Alavî va Tasha'yyu-i Şafavî*
        (Tehran: Husayniyyah-i-Irshâd, n.d.), p. 274, cited in S.
        Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Iran*, p. 138.

Chapter III - The Imâm as the leader of the Community

The Ummat and the Imâm. According to ʿAlî Sharîʿatî, the human agglomeration (or society) is represented in all cultures by means of different terms in their respective languages. It is generally represented by words such as 'society', 'nation', 'race', 'people', 'tribe', 'clan' etc. In Islam the society is referred to by the word *ummat*, which is derived from the root *a-m-m,* which means path and intention.<1>

This concept consists of three major elements, and they are; movement, goal, and conscious decision.<2> Therefore an *ummat* can be defined as a society in which a number of individuals possess a common faith, a goal, and come together in harmony with the intention of advancing and moving towards their common goal.<3> The other expressions such as: *nâsiyûn* (a French word Persianized which means nation); *qabîlah* (lit. tribe); *qaum* (lit. community); *shaʿb* (lit. people); *ṭabqah* (lit. a class); *tâʿifah* (lit. a sect, people) etc., denote unity of blood or soil.<4> They also incorporate sharing material benefits which is the chief criterion of their representation of the society.

Islam has chosen the word *ummat* to represent the society in contrast to other expressions such as 'society', 'nation', 'race', 'people', 'tribe', 'clan' etc. etc. Moreover, this particular word leads to the formation of a kind of intellectual responsibility among individuals to move the towards the common goal.<5>

The question for Sharī'atī is, how is it possible to materialise the common goal of the *ummat?* He maintains that this goal can be attained by having a common leadership for the *ummat*. The leadership would be responsible for the movement and the growth of society. It would also help realize the divine destiny of man in the plan of creation. It would be revolutionary and committed to its goals and not be the kind of *régime* which would be irresponsible and directionless for the *ummat*. He strongly opposes democracy (perhaps the western form) aristocracy, antipopular dictatorship and self-imposed oligarchy. In fact, the ideal kind of leadership which Sharī'atī advocates is the *régime* of the Imâm.<6>

He establishes his view of an Imâm as being the leader of the *ummat* by demonstrating that the word Imâm is derived from the same root as the word *ummat*. So Imâmate means the institution whose representative is responsible for

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directing the *ummat* towards a goal. He also states that the expression *ummat* encompasses the necessity of the Imâm whereas the other expressions such as *qaum, qabîlah, sha'b, class* no doubt represent human agglomerations but do not encompass the necessity of the Imâm. In his view the *ummat* cannot exist without an Imâm.<7> It follows, therefore that none of these other terms is adequate to express the nature of the community he has in mind.

He also points out the fact that just as the *ummat* is the best form of expression of society in Islam in contrast to other expressions of human agglomerations, similarly Imâm is a specific and precise expression for leadership *(rahbarî)* in contrast to words like *'pîshvâ'* (lit. exemplar), *'sayyid'* (lit. chief) feudal lord, the exalted one, Caeser and president...According to him the expression "Imâm" has all the possible rich and varied meanings that are found in the word *ummat* <8>

In Shî'ism the term 'Imâm' has two meanings:
(a) It means an 'ideal type', a 'shahîd (model)',.... a superior human. The Imâm is also visible and palpable Islam; he is the faith that has been transformed into man. In this sense he is immortal and is always an Imâm before or after his death, whether he rules or is ruled over, or whether he

is victorious or defeated.

(b) It also means a leader whose responsibility is to guide the *ummat* in accordance with the principles of Islamic doctrine and on the path of perfection.<9>

This meaning of the Imâmate is in accordance with the Qur'ânic meaning, which means that it is superior to *nubuvvat* (prophecy). In Sharî'atî's view the purpose of *nubuvvat* (prophecy) was to discharge the Prophetic message whereas the Imâmate's function is the responsibility of implementing the Prophet's message. The Prophet only communicates (Islamic) doctrines, and if he is also an Imâm (like the Prophet Abrâham who became an Imâm after he had been chosen as Prophet), his responsibility is to build a society, accept social responsibility and participate in politics along with prophecy. Moreover, prophecy can be accomplished in the lifetime of the Prophet whereas the function of the Imâm is not accomplished in a single generation but requires several generations so that it may form a revolutionary ideology.<10>

Therefore, he believes that Imâmology is most necessary and an urgent problem pertinent to Muslims in an Islamic socety. Imâmology has come into being from the earliest times of Islamic history; the grandeur and the intricate role of the Imâm was brought forth by the companions *(ashâb)*

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thinkers, leaders and scientists in the earliest periods of
Islam.<11> Sharî'atî refers to Imâm Ṣâdiq's views on the
Imâmate, its importance, and the value of leadership in
Islam which he addressed to one of his companions.

> A man, who does not recognize his Imâm is like that
> sheep who has lost his shepherd. This person even
> if he is a worshipper of God and if he is a
> unitarian (muvaḥḥid) and a Muslim and if he
> understands in detail all the principles of Islam
> and believes in them and acts according to all laws
> but in life he does not recognize his Imâm is like
> a sheep that has lost his flock, this sheep is lost
> for a long time; nights and days he wanders and
> roams in the deserts and in the plains and in the
> pastures and in fields until he bumps into his
> flock and occupies himself for a while in this
> flock and comes under the supervision of a
> shepherd. This shepherd takes him to a foreign
> pasture and an alien region. After a while he
> becomes aware and sees that this shepherd is not
> his shepherd, that this hut is not his hut, and
> that this flock is not his flock, and then he
> departs from them and wanders after his flock and
> shepherd. Having lost himself and his way âgâin,
> he reaches another shepherd and flock and after
> some time having been deceived by another flock, he
> realizes that this flock is not his flock and this
> shepherd is not his shepherd and will not guide him
> to his homeland and home, and once more in
> hopelessness he turns his back on this flock and
> shepherd and wanders astray and distressed in
> dreadful plains and alien and hopeless deserts
> after his flock and shepherd till in the end he
> falls into the mouth of the wolf....<12>

In Sharî'atî's view this analogy is deep and meaningful
because the destiny of man has mirrored the fate of a lonely
and wandering sheep from the ancient past to the present
day. Man, like this sheep, wanders from one flock to the
other and experiences the deceptions of one sheep towards

the other. This has made man disoriented and has caused him to lose his destiny and eventually to become a victim of the wolf.<13>

Sharî'atî is quite emphatic on the recognition of the Imâm and holds that even if people possess belief in worshipping God and even if their beliefs are vested in the right religion, all is futile if they do not recognize their Imâm and do not acknowledge his leadership. In such a case they will be lost and will not have a hold on their life<14> In addition to the acknowledgement of the Imâm, the individual as a part of the society is held responsible for the society and its progressive movement.<15> It is incumbent upon the individual to recognize himself as a member of the *ummat* and subsequently to serve the Imâm of the *ummat* <16>

On the other hand Sharî'atî maintains that the function of the Imâm is not merely to guard and administer the society but also to establish rule (*ḥukûmat*) upon the foundation of progress, change and completeness. He further states that the more speedily the society progresses and drives towards completeness, better it is for the people's stability because these things contribute to stability. In addition, the individual should obey the Imâm because the

goal of the Imâmate is not dependent upon general approval or private interest but rather upon the message *(risâlat)*, and its purpose is based upon "that which must be", rather than upon the foundation of a 'policy' *(maṣlaḥat)* It is also based upon the foundation of 'truth' *(ḥaqîqat)*, that truth which signifies the ideology of the people.<17>

For Sharî'atî the question is to what does the 'truth' refer? The 'truth' according to him does not lie in 'being' *(budan)* but rather in 'becoming' *(shudan)* <18> This idea is expounded by Sharî'atî through demonstrating that the state of the *ummat* 'should be one of 'going' *(raftan)* without a limit towards absolute completeness and self-awareness. It is a kind of migration *(hijrat)* from 'here' where we are and 'from that which we were'. Thus 'becoming' is moving towards the Lord for the sake of "Innâ lillâhi wa Innâ ilayhi râji'ûn", so that we return for the sake of our Lord and back to him.<19>

This idea can be traced back to Muḥammad Iqbâl who expressed similar arguments on permanence and change in a living being based on the theories of Alfred North Whitehead. He maintains that human beings are functionally related to an independent world-process. In this process the only kind of life known is a continuous change from one

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situation to another, and this entails the idea of imperfection. Only God or the 'Ultimate Ego' exists in pure duration wherein change ceases to be a succession of varying attitudes, and reveals its time character as a continuous creation, 'untouched by weariness', and unseizable 'by slumber or sleep'.<20> According to Sharî'atî the Lord here refers to absolute completeness, absolute eternity, absolute awareness, beauty, strength etc. It also means grace, forgiveness, justice, magnificience without measure, boundary and limit. In this respect, 'becoming' and 'going' are directed towards 'Him' (the Lord). This way of expression is unlike that of the Şûfîs who talk of Unity and being 'in Him' etc.<21> Sharî'atî contends that, Man cannot reach God in this domain i.e. the domain to which the Şûfîs refer. For man does not settle in God like a river that reaches the sea, disappearing into it and annihilating itself. Moreover, God is not a stable place that begins from a specific boundary. In fact He has no limit to his essence (dhât).<22>

Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947), the British mathematician, scientist and philosopher, conceived of nature as a process of events possessing the character of a continuous creative flow. He stated this concept in one of his lectures as follows:

> Nature is a process. As in the case of everything
> directly exhibited in sense-awareness, there can be
> no explanation of this characteristic of nature.
> All that can be done is to use language which may
> speculatively demonstrate it, and also to express
> the relation of this factor in nature to other
> factors.....The process of nature can also be
> termed the passage of nature.....It is in virtue of
> its passage that nature is always moving on. It is
> involved in the meaning of this property of 'moving
> on' that not only is any of sense-awareness just
> that act and no other, but the terminus of each act
> is also unique and is the terminus of no other
> act.......<23>

It is not known whether Sharî'atî derived the influence of
'Process Philosophy' from Whitehead directly or from
Muḥammad Iqbâl who seems to have quoted Whitehead to a large
extent in his work *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought
In Islam.* The latter conclusion appears more likely since
there is no account of Sharî'atî's having studied Whitehead
nor does he seem to have quoted Whitehead in his lectures or
works as he did other European thinkers. Sharî'atî applies
this philosophy to the *ummat* (society) which is in the state
of 'going' eternally and 'becoming'.<24>

The *Ummat* is not a society where people live their
lives in a kind of stagnant ease, or enjoy happiness without
responsibility, both of which merely offer consumption and
happy living without goals. Neither is the Imâmat a *régime*
whose function is to guard people and give them freedom,
happiness and prosperity. In fact its function is to drive

people towards a movement.<25>

Politics **and** **Siyâsat.** Sharî'atî maintains that to give individuals freedom, happiness and prosperity is the function of politics, whereas driving individuals towards perfection is the job of siyâsat (the term used to denote politics in the East). Although siyâsat normally means politics, Sharî'atî uses the two terms separately with different connotations. He establishes that politics as used in Greek and other European languages is a word derived from politike where polis means a city. A government's job is politics, that is, to govern a city in the best way. Its function in a country is like the functions of the municipal government in a city, which undertakes the responsibility of reform or of improving the conditions of the people. In fact the municipal personnel are limited to retaining the independence of institutions and to making life sound and safe, and also to providing the people with the basic necessities of life so that the people of the city are satisfied. Politics in this sense is an institution of the city and adds to the responsibility of the municipality.<26>

However, according to Sharî'atî, in the East the word siyasat is used in a different sense than 'politics'.<27> He

establishes that *siyasat* in the dictionary sense means "training", which also means to bear affliction, to purify and to cheer the members of the society. Above all it means to prepare them for the aim of existence.<28> In the literal sense *siyasat* means to train a wild horse in which modification, training, and completion are implied.<29>

In Sharî'atî's opinion, although the terms "politics" and *"siyâsat"* appear to be synonymous, they are not so because they differ in their functions. He maintains that since politics is service *(khidmat)* it helps an individual in his 'being' which gears him towards prosperity and well-being. Whereas since *siyasat* means reform, this is an action that will help the individual to achieve what he should want; *siyâsat* is the desire which he must feel in order to achieve progress. In this respect reform which is the function of *siyâsat,* helps the individual in 'becomming' and leads him towards perfection The analogy is that of a doctor who renders service to mankind, whereas Jesus Christ (the Prophet) was a reformer. A scientist is a servant whereas an intellectual is a reformer. Therefore, reform is naturally a service, but every service is not necessarily a reform.<30> *Siyasat* is unlike politics, because it does not incorporate guardianship of the people *(mardum),* where people enjoy complete freedom and happiness. Its function is

not to provide all the rights to the individuals in the society. Its role is rather to perfect them and train them. *Siyasat* never ever mean that it is a mere institution or a society, rather its function is to provide service to the people.<31>

On this basis Sharî'atî maintains that *siyâsat* does not comprise the problem of institutions, security, and guardianship; rather it propounds perfection and progress. Although Sharî'atî agrees that the nature of politics is progressive, he maintains that one cannot derive maximum benefit from it because it is despotic. It is even interpreted as guidance *(rahbarî)* and training *(tarbîyat)* of the society, but it is used in order to justify the actions of the rulers. In reality they whip the people and say that they employ the "cane of the school master" *(chûb-i ustâd)*. This strategy was prevalent in Greece and Rome and is found in the West today.<32> Sharî'atî contends further that dictatorship is also contrary to prophecy, by demonstrating that prophecy is guidance and nurture *(parvarish)*. Dictatorship on the other hand is the "claim" of guidance and nurture.<33>

On the basis of prophecy, Sharî'atî demonstrates the role of the Imâm and maintains that it is similar to the

function of *siyâsat* in the society. This function is to go beyond providing the basic necessities of life. His (the Imâm's) role is to guide the society on the most righteous path *(mustaqîmtarîn râha)* and towards perfection, even if this is attained at the expense of individuals. It is only then that the Imâm can follow prophecy in terms of imparting strong guidance and driving the society and individuals from 'whatever it is' *(âncheh hast)* towards 'whatever it should be' *(âncheh bâyad bâshad)* with every possible means.<34> This idea is important because it holds that the individual may be denied rights, even harmed for the sake of the collectivity. One wonders if Sharî'atî was aware of the implications of this idea because such an idea has often been used by tyrants. However, in his view leadership of the *ummat* characterised in the Imâm should not be confused with other kinds of leadership exemplified in the personalities who are the leaders of the people.<35>

According to Sharî'atî, the leadership of the Imâm is unique, and the kind of leadership exemplified in the Imâm transforms individuals into accomplished human beings. He has illustrated this point by means of the story of Ḥurr (the name means "free individual") whose image in history is distinctive because of his role at Karbalâ'. Ḥurr was a man who travelled the distance between criminality and service;

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he also travelled the distance from being the instrument of Yazîd to becoming the companion of Ḥusayn.<36>

Ḥurr was the deputy in the army of Yazîd on the morning of ʿâshûrah. A few hours later he became one of the great martyrs and was in the ranks of Imâm Ḥusayn as one of his devoted companions. Sharîʿatî's concern is to know how one can travel such a great spiritual distance in the period of one or two hours. Did he do so because his philosophical beliefs were altered? Or were the rulings of religious jurisprudence (aḥkâm-i fiqhî) on which he acted altered? In the final analysis Sharîʿatî contends that change in the leadership helped Ḥurr to transform himself into a good person, and this fact has promoted this blasphemous murder to the highest and most superior position that any human can reach during the course of life.<37>

This is an idea that ties Sharîʿatî to Muslim revivalist movements, particularly to that of Abûl ʿAlâ Mawdûdî (d. 1979 A.D.) who was a Muslim revivalist in the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent and who maintained that everything in the life of a society depends upon its leadership. In his view society will go exactly where the ruler as the centre of power determines it to go. In the words of Prof. Charles J. Adams regarding Mawdûdi's concept

of leadership:

> Change bad leadership for a good one, un-Islamic
> leaders for true Muslim ones, and society will
> become what it should be. The perspective is
> moralistic through and through with the realization
> of the Islamic ideal for society contingent upon
> the existence of a body of true Muslims who should
> seize political power.<38>

The transmutation of Ḥurr took place because the leader who is condemned to the eternal damnation of history metamorphized into a person who was exalted in history. According to Sharî'atî the story of Ḥurr reminds one of the fact that change in leadership can affect human beings.<39>

There is also another aspect to the story of Ḥurr. In Sharî'atî's view one of the major conclusions that can be drawn from the story is that belief in "champions", in well-known personalities among human beings, is a phenomenon prevalent in history.<40> One of the major reasons for this phenomenon is that, basically, man is a being who creates and loves absoluteness. If he cannot find an absolute, he will make up one in his mind. He does so because his spirit seeks to praise and worship absolute virtues and the most superior position that any human can reach during the course of his life. Moreover, one of man's psychological needs is to praise and understand great men. Therefore man is always an admirer of the Imâm and has the intention of finding and keeping him throughout history. According to Sharî'atî,

there has never been a man who has not been a praiser of the Imâm, or of the Imâms he has had, or of the ones he has created in his mind. Therefore, the need for an Imâm has always existed in history, in cultures and in religions. This phenomenon appears in the form of hero (qahriman) worship, the praising of a new leader, and the worship of a personality positively or negatively, correctly or incorrectly. Human beings prefer to do this because their psychology consists of idolizing and personifying immaterial meanings instead of transforming themselves into 'being great', 'being self-sacrificing', etc.<41>

The worship of heroes bears a relationship to the idea of salvation. Sharî'atî has analysed this idea by studying the history of human cultures. He divides cultures into two main types: One is Indian or Aryan, and the other is Semitic. He determines that one of the characteristics of Semitic religion is that man is awaiting someone or something. The expected person is he who will come and give salvation (nijât) because salvation is one of the most essential needs of man. Semitic thought always keeps man waiting for salvation and liberation. It invites a strong personality, a superhuman, a saviour a superior man, or a super man to come and hold the hands of human beings and show them the way to salvation <42> These superior men will

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come and free man from his unpleasant and limiting situation and also from degradation, inferiority, materialistic inclinations, savagery, oppression, ignorance, slavery, his rough and useless earthly life, and will lead him towards freedom or salvation.<43>

However, in Indian religions the situation is the reverse. According to Sharî'atî the call of these religions is "don't wait for anything from outside, don't expect external saviours, nobody will come from outside to save you. The way to salvation is to go within and contemplate and through meditation and contemplation bring yourself to a state which will make you eligible for salvation".<44>

Sharî'atî contends that, in Islam, too, the idea of a messiah or a saviour is characteristic, particularly in the Shî'ah sect.<45> In his view, because of the belief in a 'promised saviour' a gap has been created which separates Shî'ism from "what was" and attaches it to "what is". Moreover, among all the doctrines of the Shî'ah, the belief in ghaybah together with intizâr (awaiting the hidden Imâm), has most reflected this gap. <46> Apparently, Sharî'atî is right to point out this phenomenon because belief in a living Imâm was a cardinal doctrine of the Shî'î creed. However, as circumstances forced the Shî'î Imâms to go into

hiding, the belief in the return of the hidden Imâm expressed in the epithet of "al-Mahdî" grew stronger. Consequently the belief in a living Imâm shifted to the return of the hidden Imâm.

Sharî'atî explains that *intizâr* (awaiting) can be interpreted in different ways, and consequently it has different implications among the Shî'ah sects. Basically, it is a belief in the end of time, in the Imâm of the age, and also a belief in the final revolution at the end of historical time. Non-religious thinkers might view *intizâr* as incompatible with science and reason. To them it might seem an antiquated idea causing social decline that prevents man from assuming full responsibility over his destiny. Non-religious thinkers would also regard *intizâr* as promoting the belief that social reform, human awakening, destruction of the unjust and corrupt order lie in the hands of the "hidden one" who will appear to rescue man's fate from corruption and decline.<47>

In Sharî'atî's view, the religious masses do not doubt their belief in *intizâr*. They firmly believe that the Imâm is living but hidden, and that he will arise with a sword in his hand to fight the enemies of religion and restore the *régime* of the Imâm, the rule of the Qur'ânic laws, and thus

set up a universal government and universal peace. They do not think that the Imâm's long life is unnatural or unscientific, as their opponents hold. The masses on the contrary have faith in their belief and think, that God has willed to keep an individual alive as long as He may wish for the delivery of revelation. The masses are ignorant in the sense that they do not think of the possibility that should *intizâr* be wrongly interpreted, it may contradict many Islamic beliefs and Qur'ânic rules. In particular it would go against those ideas which entertain individual responsibility towards society and history. The masses are not even aware of the fact that such an understanding of the idea renders "good" and "justice" impossible.<48>

In Sharî'atî's view, the ideas of the Imâm's long life and his absence from the community have been implanted in people's faith by the religious leaders. They have made people believe in these ideas without seeing the necessity of independent rational and scientific analysis. The religious leaders have depicted these doctrines, in a scientific way and have proved the scientific possibility of the Imâm's enjoying a life of thousand years.<49>

However, the implantation of *intizâr* has had negative implications for the 'society and the masses'. From the time

when the *ghaybah* began, the age of the appointment of the Imâms had come to an end, and the age of election then began.<50> Although the election to be held was supposed to be democratic, it is limited in the sense that not all people can vote, nor is he who gets the maximum number of votes elected to the post of the Imâm's deputy. This is true partly because of the fact that the masses are not aware; neither do they possess any knowledge, and, therefore, they are considered not to be worthy of exercising the power of election. In these circumstances the *'ulamâ'* choose the leader, because they know who is the most learned and who is the best specialist of the school of thought. The people virtually rely on these religious leaders and therefore accept the *'ulamâ's* choice of the Imâm's deputy. The chosen leader then becomes responsible to the absent Imâm, follows his laws and his school of thought.<51>

Since the *'ulamâ'* choose the leader, the people do not seem to have any power. As a result the people seem to submit themselves during the *ghaybah* to the rule of the oppressor and to fight against evil only through spiritual and moral means. This attitude among the people guarantees a lasting influence of three interest groups who represent three forces of evil namely: the political, economic and religious authorities. The religious group especially have

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gained authority in Iran ever since the Ṣafavid dynasty came
to power.<52>

In Sharî'atî's opinion the Ṣafavids misused the
doctrine of *ghàybah*. They put Shî'ism into the service of
the ruling monarchy by creating an established clergy called
the *rûḥâniyyûn*. The *rûḥâniyyûn* are different from the
'*ulamâ*' (Islamic scholars) in the true sense of the word. He
uses the former term to distinguish this established clergy
from the '*ulamâ*' as the learned men in Islam. Sharî'atî
considers these two groups as being opposed to each other;
the former are entirely ignorant of the true meaning of
Islam, and they play the role of rabbis, monks, priests,
magis and official clerggy of other religions. In his view,
the Ṣafavids knew that the learned men '*ulamâ*' could not be
used to serve their purpose and that they could not become
the accomplices of the *Qizilbash* (the soldiers in the
ṣafavid empire who wore red hats). Consequently, the
rûḥâniyyûn and *qizilbâsh* were moulded by Shâh Sulṭân Ḥusayn
to serve the Ṣafavid empire. In this system the Shî'ite
'*âlim* (one who is a supporter of justice and the Imâmate)
was eventually deposed and supplanted by the established
rûḥâniyyun It is for this reason that nothing scholarly was
written after the Ṣafavids came to power since the *rûḥânî*
considered it below his dignity to engage in research.<53>

Sharî'atî denounces the religious class (the rûḥâniyyûn and not the 'ulamâ' whom he refers to as the learned men in the true sense of the term); Islam has actually abolished all forms of official mediation between God and man. The official clergy is mentioned in the Qur'ân as the third manifestation of Cain (the pøle of oppressive rule). The Qur'ân also mentions them in harsh words and curses them. They are compared with donkeys and dogs. The Prophet of Islam said: "Any beard longer than a man's hand shall be in hellfire", and the Prophet also commanded men to keep their sleeves and the hems of their garments short. Sharî'atî interprets this fact as a sign of the struggle that Islam has waged against the concept of an official clergy that exists in other religions.<54>

He also points out the fact that Islam has no clergy and that the word 'clergy' (rûḥâniyyûn) is recent and is borrowed from Christianity. However, he affirms the fact that there are scholars of religion, but they do not constitute official authorities who impose themselves by way of heredity or monopolistic powers. They are merely specialized scholars who have come into being in Islamic society as a result of necessity but not on an institutionalized basis. They derive their influence, presence and power in society from the people. In fact they

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are ordinary individuals, either students who piously study
religion, or scholars who teach and conduct research. Even
the garb that they wear is not that of an official, but that
of a man of knowledge, personal investigation and
research.<55>

Sharî'atî contends that because of the position held by
the religious class meaning the rûḥâniyyûn they acquire a
monopoly to impose their will upon the people in the name of
religion and as the vicegerents öf the Imâm. They also
exercise the spiritual and worldly rights of the Imâm in his
absence, because the Imâm is both the religious and the
temporal leader of the community. They have enslaved
people's minds and forced them to pay taxes.<56> Sharî'atî
comments that despite the authority they exercise,

> And yet they are not the Imâm's special vicegerents
> since they are not appointed directly by him. Nor
> is there any official election.<57>

The question still remains whether the Shî'î 'ulamâ'
have the right to wield and exercise power in the absence of
the Imâm. This issue has been widely debated among the
Western scholars who adopt a different stance. Algar (1969)
presupposes that the 'ulamâ' are the religious leaders of
the community, and in his view they are the legitimate
successors to the Imâm. He also maintains that in the
absence of the Imâm the religious institution is liable to

dispense guidance on political matters.<58> Binder (1965)
maintains that the Shî'î 'ulamâ' act as the general agency
(nâ'ib al-'âmm) until the hidden Imâm reveals himself. The
'ulamâ' who act in the name of the Imâm do not share all of
his charisma, but some of it does accrue to them.
Nevertheless, they are not considered infallible nor
impeccable.<59> Eliash (1979) on the other hand maintains
that twelver Shî'ism rejects the notion of delegating the
Imâm's authority to a deputy or an agent (nâ'ib) in his
absence. This fact was evident during the period of four
deputies referred as nâ'ib al-khaṣṣ during the lesser
occultation (al-ghaybah al-ṣughrâh). These four ambassadors,
claimed no personal authority to interpret the law or to
pronounce judgement in the name of the hidden Imâm. They
assumed their office as no more than mere message carriers.
They received queries from the believers and carried them to
the Imâm, and then returned with 'his response' which they
produced in his own handwriting.<60> Nâ'ib al-'âmm (general
deputy of the Imâm) a term presently used to refer to the
'ulamâ', was a later manifestation and did not appear as a
term until the thirteenth century A.D.<61> This issue arose
out of discussion by the 'ulamâ' of the Mongol period
particularly by Shahîd ath-Thânî (d.1558 A.D.). However,
Muḥaqqiq al-Karakî (d.1533 A.D.) was the first to suggest
that the 'ulamâ' were nuvvâb al-'âmm (general deputies)

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quite distinct from the *nuvvâb al-khaṣṣ* (special deputies)
of the Imâm. However, he restricted this application of his
argument to the assumption of the duty of leading Friday
prayers. It was Shahîd ath-Thânî who extended the role of
the *nuvvâb al-ʿâmm* (general deputies). to the religious
prerogatives of the hidden Imâm. In this way the juridicial
authority of the *ʿulamâ'* came to be a direct reflection of
the Imâm himself.<62>

In this light Sharîʿatî argues that the *faqîh* (lit.
theologian) and the *mujtahid* (lit. one who possesses the
highest degree of knowledge of law) have suppressed the true
knowledge of religion and hindered the true understanding of
Shîʿah beliefs. Yet the people submit themselves to the
ʿulamâ's oppressive rule because of their firm belief that
the living Imâm, though hidden, will rise one day to restore
peace and justice.
Sharîʿatî contends that because people submit themselves to
oppressive rule, they are not qualified to choose a leader
whom they think to be the worthiest and most learned. This
attitude is perhaps a negative interpretation of *intiẓâr*
(awaiting).<63>

Sharîʿatî asserts that whereas Islam began by a
negation of Polytheism, Shîʿism began with ʿAli's negation

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of the election of the Khalîfah. This negation continued
until pre-Ṣafavid times and is recognized as a part of the
Shî'î movement in the history of Islam. It is also an
indicator of the social and political role of the group who
were the followers of 'Alî. In the contemporary context
Sharî'atî proposes to view *intiẓâr* from a positive and a
constructive angle. He does this because Shî'ism is a party
based upon the traditions of the Qur'ân and the traditions
of the Prophet, and not upon the Qur'ân and the traditions
which were proclaimed by the dynasties of Umayyads,
'Abbasids, Ghaznavids, Seljuks, Mongols and Timurids. In his
view Shî'ism is also a negation of the path of ignorance
which is followed in the name of the Qur'ân, Kings and
Caesars.<64> Therefore:

> *intizar* means to say no to what is..... Whoever is
> content with the present, is not awaiting. On the
> contrary, he is conservative; he fears the
> future......

He supports his views by agreeing with Becketts's ideas on

intiẓâr as stated in *Waiting for Godot*

> *intizar* is not a futile idea....for a condemned
> nation to give up *intizar* means to defeat as its
> fate forever.... Oppression, crime, injustice all
> are unfinished stories and events in human history.
> The story shall end with Justice and Truth
> triumphing over oppression and corruption..... This
> is what I believe in"..<65>

According to Sharî'atî, truth will triumph because a

sudden revolution will take place; it will not occur through prayers, but with a banner and a sword. Moreover, it will not be a revolution but a holy war involving all believers, a war that will fight for the oppressed religious masses, to establish the true meaning of religion and overthrow the oppressive *régime.* In his view this will take place because he believes in historical determinism.<66> It seems that the laws of dialectic are a driving force to determine history for Sharî'atî. The exposition of his ideas on the laws of dialectic demonstrate his dependence on the ideas of Hegel and Marx.

Historical determinism in Sharî'atî's opinion means that history shall end up by promoting justice because the human species is destined to evince the triumph of communal society and the communal way of life. Moreover, in Islam communal society and the communal way of life are the greatest source of strength and faith for the oppressed and exploited masses. He also thinks that belief in *intizâr* should not discourage those who are crushed beneath the yoke of oppression and those who seek the 'truth'. *Intizâr* has become a plaything in the hands of the oppressors and their religion, while at the same time giving the oppressed confidence in the will of God. The will of God is this historical determinism which follows natural laws and moves

towards the implementation of His thought, and His way.<67>

Therefore, Sharî'atî understands *intizâr* as the synthesis composed of 'two antitheses': 'truth and reality'.<68> 'Truth' is encompassed in the fact that the Qur'ân was sent to save man from oppression, force, aristocracy, a cult of blood ties, racial ties, pain, wretchedness, exploitation, ignorance and backwardness. He also believed that 'Alî and his sons were the successors of the Prophet and that Shî'ism guarantees salvation to Man. However, human beings fail to accept this truth. After the demise of the Prophet the same old system resumed its rule over history as it had before the advent of the Prophet. Neither truth nor justice remained, and neither did mankind find salvation. Neither oppression, deviation, nor lies were eliminated. In those days the rulers ruled in the name of Khusraw or Caesar. In later days they ruled in the name of the Prophet's Khalîfah. According to Sharî'atî, there was no difference in the situation before and after the rule of the Prophet. In fact, the rule of Alexander was better than that of the Khalîfah because, when Alexander came to Iran, he announced that he had come to burn Persepolis and to plunder Iran, and he did exactly that. By contrast the Khulafâ' announced that they had come to wage holy war in order to spread justice in the world and to implement the practice of

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the Prophet and Qur'ânic laws. Yet they plundered.<69>

In view of what has occurred and still does occur in reality, Sharî'atî thinks that there must be a contradiction in the Islamic truth we believe in. Therefore, he asks: How did the Qur'ân rescue the masses from the heavy yoke of oppression? and how did 'Alî successfully lead his people against oppression and force? In fact 'Alî himself suffered defeat and was oppressed. How did the Imâmate, which is the system of infallible leadership legitimately succeeding that of the Prophet, enable man to enjoy its rule? He also questions whether religion was sent to save mankind and to establish world justice. In response to this Sharî'atî thinks that God sent His Prophet, entrusted him with the greatest and most superior of all books, and commissioned him to save mankind. He (the Prophet) himself appointed his successors as the people's leaders. Yet, Sharî'atî wonders whether God changed His mind about appointing the Prophet's successors as leaders of the community and whether the Prophet and Imâms "had done their duty....but to no avail?".<70>

Although Sharî'iatî believes that the reality overshadows the truth, to him, there is no other alternative for believers but to have faith that the 'truth' shall

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definitely triumph and that justice is destined to be established on the principle of historical determinism. This is believed because God promised victory to Islam and to the wretched masses that they would become leaders of mankind. And only *intiẓâr*, which is the synthesis of two antitheses can resolve this disparity between the reigning false reality and the presently condemned redeeming 'truth'.<71> The contrast he is driving at is between the ideal (what ought to be, what the Qur'ân and the Prophet teach) and what really has happened in history. However, the mode of argument employed by Sharî'atî is Hegelian: thesis (Qur'ânic teaching); antithesis (what actually happens); leading to a synthesis of what he calls *intiẓâr*.

In the light of these concepts, Sharî'atî suggests that the masses' view of *intiẓâr* should be positive, action-oriented and voluntary. It must not be passive, inert and fatalistic. Also, Shî'ism envisages the movement of history towards a harmonious society and a society free of conflicts.<72>

This happy state of affairs would materialise if the masses would revert to 'Alîd Shî'ism. 'Alîd Shî'ism represents original Islam and is a movement of progress and revolution with no division between intellectuals and the

people. This kind of Shî'ism is contrary to Şafavid Shî'ism. According to Sharî'atî, the Şafavids degraded Shî'ism into an institution while making it the state religion of Iran, and used it as a means of political enslavement which diverted Shî'ism from its original aim. The original aim was a search for justice and sacred duties. Şafavid Shî'ism opposed Iranians to the Ottomans and mixed ethnocentricism and supernaturalism with Shî'ism. Sharî'atî also holds that aberrant forms of worship were borrowed from Christianity in Şafavid times. He refers to the theatrical plays which are performed on the day of Ḥusayn's martyrdom (ta'ziyeh), which he thinks, are copied from the Mystery plays of Christianity. He even equates Pahlavi Shî'ism with Şafavid Shî'ism because today's 'ulamâ' play into the hands of the oppressors. These 'ulamâ' have abandoned their role of awakening the people by contenting themselves with futile debates. They make Shî'ism a religion of the vanquished (the Muḥarram mournings), and consequently drive the believers towards exterior forms of religion but not towards a progressive movement.<73>

He states that the strategy of Imâm Muḥammad Bâqir and Imâm Ja'far al-Şâdiq was a deep intellectual struggle. It was based on the principle of "creating a true individual" (fard sâzî), instructing people to be good and arranging a

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new *ummat* <74> Even Imâm Reḍâ had a two fold policy; one aspect dealt with the Khalîfah Ma'mûn, and the other sought to revolutionize people. This policy resulted in the collective act of the ʿAlavis in order to confront oppression.<75>

Sharîʿatî contends that the period of the absence of the Imâm is a period of continuation of the struggle. Leadership is transferred during this time to those among the Shiʿah who are aware *(mardum âgâh Shîʿah)* so that they may choose the most learned and just leader to continue the leadership of the *ummat* of Islam. The leader of this kind will also help them to struggle for *(amr bil maʿrûf)* i.e, to enjoin good things and prevent evil. The struggle should also be directed against the powerful ruling system of history. The purpose of the struggle is to make people aware, or to prepare the faithful and not to submit to oppressive rule until the *Qâ'im* reappears.<76> However, Sharîʿatî's proposition that a leader should be among those Shîʿah who are aware is very close to the idea of *vilâyat-i faqîh* in the contemporary Iranian politics.

Sharîʿatî developed ʿAlîd Shîʿism into a revolutionary ideology in order to mobilize the masses to challenge the ruling authorities as well as other world views. He also

maintains that freedom achieved through revolution is equal
to the idea of a collective salvation.<77> On this basis, he
holds that it is perfectly legitimate to fight for
religion, by referring to Qur'ânic verse (29:69);

> "As for those who strive in us, we surely guide
> them to Our path, and lo Allah is with the good."
> "Those who fight in our cause, we will put forward
> our ways for their salvation and freedom; and do
> things well."

'Alîd Shî'ism leads man along the correct path; as mentioned
in the Qur'ân because it is a 'complete party' having an
ideology to launch a revolution.<78>

Sharî'atî asserts that the ideology of 'Alîd Shî'ism alone
can prepare the people for the Mahdî. In this respect
'intizâr' is a religion of protest and an absolute denial of
the status quo in whatever form. Intizâr not only
emphasizes man's responsibility but makes him feel
responsible to follow his own course, the course of truth
and mankind. Therefore, in Sharî'atî's view man must not
passively await the appearance of the hidden Imâm, but
protest against the status quo, because in Shî'ism intizâr
is a religion of protest.

Notes to Chapter 3

1. ʿAlî Sharîʿatî, *On the Sociology of Islam*, p. 119.

2. Idem, *Ummat va Imâmat* (Tehran: Ḥusaynîyyah-i Irshâd, n.d.), p. 33.

3. Idem, *On the Sociology of Islam*, p. 119.

4. These expressions are enumerated and explained in Idem, *Ummat va Imâmat*, pp. 30-34.

5. Idem, *On the Sociology of Islam*, p. 119.

6. Ibid., pp. 119-120.

7. Idem, *Ummat va Imâmat*, p. 37.

8. Ibid., pp. 71-72.

9. Soheyl Amini, "A Critical Assessment of ʿAlî Sharîʿatî's Theory of Revolution" in *Iran Essays on a Revolution in the Making* ed. Ahmad Jabbari and Robert (Kentucky: Mazda Publishers, 1981), p. 101.

10. Ibid., pp. 101-102.

11. ʿAlî Sharîʿatî, *Ummat va Imâmat*, pp. 101-102.

12. Ibid., pp. 72-73.

13. Ibid., p. 73.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., p. 37.

16. Ibid., p. 43.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid., pp. 44-45.
The verse cited is however a part of the Qurʾânic verse 2:156, "Who say, when afflicted with a calamity: 'To God we

belong and to Him Is our return'." See *The Holy Qur'ân,*
Text, Translation and Commentary by A. Yusuf Ali (Leicester:
The Islamic Foundation, 1975).

20. M. Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam*
(Lahore: Javid Iqbal, 1951), pp. 58-60.

21. ʿAlî Sharîʿatî, *Ummat va Imâmat,* p. 45.

22. Ibid.

23. A. Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature* (London: Cambridge
University Press, 1930), pp. 53-54.

24. ʿAli Sharîʿatî, *Ummat va Imâmat,* p. 45.

25. Ibid., pp. 42-43.

26. Ibid., p. 40.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid., p. 64.

29. Ibid., p. 40.

30. Ibid., pp. 41-42.

31. Ibid., p. 64.

32. Ibid., p. 65.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid., pp. 62-63.

35. Ibid., p. 63.

36. Ibid., p. 74.

37. Ibid., p. 74-75.

38. C. J. Adams, "Mawdudi and the Islamic State," *Voices of
Resurgent Islam,* p. 130.

39. Ibid., pp. 74-75.

40. Ibid., p. 75.

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid., p. 77.

43. Ibid., p. 78.

44. Ibid.

45. To comment that the idea of a messiah or a saviour is characteristic in Islam is perhaps a generalised statement on the part of Dr. ʿAli Sharīʿatī. In doing so he assumes the Sunnī beliefs of a saviour. However, reference to a saviour is expressed in the epithet, al-Mahdî, particularly among the Ithnâʿashariyyah and the Kayşâniyyah sect of Shîʿism. Consequently, belief in al-Mahdî is a part of the Shîʿî creed. It should be noted that in Islam messianism is used to denote the eschatological figure, the Mahdî, who 'will arise' to launch a great social transformation in order to restore and adjust all things under divine guidance. The Islamic messiah, thus, embodies the aspirations of his followers in the restoration of the purity of the faith, and by creating a just social order and a world free from oppression. The Islamic concept of messiah does not conceive man as a sinner to be saved through spiritual regeneration. Rather, it holds that man is not dead in sin, so he needs no spiritual rebirth. (See. A. A. Sachedina, *Islamic Messianism* p. 2).

However, al-Mahdî is not a Qurânic term and it was used in a non-eschatological sense, reference was made to the first four Khulafâ' as *(Sunnatul'l-Khulafâ' al-rashidîn al-mahdiyyin)* meaning who followed the right way and were guided. See, D. B. Macdonald, "al-Mahdî," *EI(1)*, III (1936), 112.

The eschatological sense of Mahdî is not mentioned in either of the two Şahîh's of Muslim, or of Bukhari, and it is not touched upon by Sunni theologians. Al-Ghazzâlî does not mention the Mahdî while dealing with eschatology. However the eschatological role of the Mahdî became more pronounced in post-classical collections of hadîth like those of al-Tabaranî, al-Hakim al-Naysâbûrî, and al-Bayhaqî, Şûfîs too claim that the advent of al-Mahdî. See, Ibid. p. 113.

To summarise the idea of al-Mahdî in the words of W. Madelung:
> "Inspite of the support of the belief in the Mahdî
> by some prominent traditionists and Şûfîs, it never

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became an essential part of Sunni religious doctrine. Sunni creeds mention it but rarely. Many famous scholars like al-Ghazâlî avoided discussing the subject. This attitude was often probably less motivated by doubts concerning the truth of the belief than by fear of encouraging politically disruptive movements in the Muslim community. Open criticism of the belief like that of Ibn Khaldûn, who, in his *Muḳaddima'*, undertook to refute the authenticity of all *ḥadîths* concerning the Mahdî, was exceptional." See. W. Madelung, "al-Mahdî" in *EI(2)* V (1986), 1235.

46. ʿAlî Sharîʿatî, *"Intiẓâr, the Religion of protest,"* trans. by Mangol Bayat in *Islam in Transition*, p. 297.

47. Ibid. p. 298.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid., p. 299.

50. *taqlîd:* This terms means the practice of following the guidance of a religious person. According to the translator the author (ʿAlî Sharîʿatî) uses the term *taqlîd* in the broadest meaning as "those who do not know" and must follow the guidance of "those who do know". It is a logical necessity universally practiced so that the 'specialist' in any field of human knowledge guides the less knowledgeable. see, Ibid., p. 299.

51. Ibid.

52. Ibid., p. 301.

53. Idem, *Man and Islam*, pp. 111-113.

54. Idem, *On the Sociology of Islam*, p. 115.

55. Ibid., pp. 115-116.

56. Idem, *"Intiẓâr,"* p. 301.

57. Ibid.

58. H. Algar, "The Oppositional Role of the Ulama in Twentieth-Century", in *Scholars, Saints, and Sufis,* ed. Nikki Keddie (Berkeley: University of California Press,

1972), p. 235.

59. L. Binder, in *Arabic and Islàmic Studies in Honor of Hamilton A. R. Gibb*, pp. 122-123.

60. J. Eliash, "Misconceptions Regarding The Juridicial Status Of The Iranian ʿUlamâ'", in *IJMES*, X (1979) 17, quoting Ṭûsî, *Kitâb al-Ghayba* (Tabriz, 1323/1905), 172 ff., lithographed.

61. A. Moūssavi, "The Development of the Doctrine of Vilâyat-i Faqîh: The Role of Mullâ Ahmad Narâqî (1185/1170-1245/1830)". (unpublished MuA. Thesis, McGill University, 1983), p.14.

62. M. Momen, *An Introduction to Shîʿi Islam*, p. 190, n. 8,9.

63. ʿAli Sharîʿatî, "*Intiẓâr*," p. 301.

64. Idem, *Red Shi'ism* trans. by Habib Shirazi (Houston: Free Islamic Literatures, Inc, 1980), pp. 8-9.

65. Idem, "*Intiẓâr*," p. 303.

66 Ibid.

67. Ibid.

68. Sharîʿatî refers to 'truth' as a fact mentioned in Qur'ân and what the Prophet taught and 'reality' is what really happened in history.

69. ʿÂlî Sharîʿatî, "*Intiẓâr*," p. 302.

70. Ibid.

71. Ibid. p. 303.

72. S. Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran* (Albany: State University of New York, 1980), p. 155.

73. N. Keddie, *Roots of Revolution in Iran*, pp. 217-218.

74. ʿAlî Sharîʿatî, *Shîʿî* (Tehran: Ḥusayniyyah-i Irshâd, n.d.) p. 160.; Muḥammad Iqbâl also expressed a similar sentiment known as *mard-i mu'min*.

75. Ibid., p. 66.

76. Ibid., p. 168.

77. H. Dabashi, *Islamic Quarterly*, 27(1983), p. 209.

78. ʿAlî Sharîʿatî, *Shîʿî*, quoting Ibid., p. 215.

Conclusion

There have been a number of observations made in the process of what has been so far analysed and commented upon relative to Dr. ʿAlî Sharîʿatî's thought. These observations ,lead us to conclude that, in Sharîʿatî's thought, related themes — played a predominant role: (i) Analysis of the problem of the prophet's successor, and views concerning the age of the hidden Imâm as expressed in the notion of *intiẓâr* and (ii) The influence of Marxism.

Sharîʿatî was educated in Iran as well as in the West (France) where he did his doctorate. Having received his education in different environments, he was in a position to draw his inspiration both from without as well as from within Iranian culture itself. He seems to have borrowed many ideas from the French school of Sociology, Marxist ideas equipped him to identify the social inequality and oppression among the Iranian population. Therefore, he was able to comment upon the way in which rulers had exploited the ruled in general and in Iranian society in particular, through the course of history and also to comment on how the laws of 'historical determinism' which lead towards the triumph of the masses have functioned. Sharîʿatî was also influenced by Third World thinkers, particularly Franz

Fanon, and by others such as Jean-Paul Sartre. He synthesized their modern anti-imperialist strategies with traditional Shî'ism to create a revolutionary ideology which would confront Western imperialism. He also expressed a profound disillusionment with the West and the Westernized Pahlavî ruling élite. He stood on behalf of the oppressed class and religion, but he interpreted religion not as it had been traditionally represented in Iran, but along Marxist lines of thought. This is evident in the way he reinterpreted the Qur'ânic story of Cain and Abel along Marxist lines and demonstrated the triumph of the masses according to the laws of 'historical determinism'. The Marxist scheme, provided him with a framework in which he could depict the social realities in Iranian society. Thus his message appealed to four groups of people; the masses whose impulse was primarily religious; those who wished to react against the irreligious and westernized tendencies and those who were politically minded and geared for a revolution; and the Iranian youth who were charmed by his innovative style and content in the presentation of Islam. By making such an appeal, he could achieve his twofold purpose: (i) to retain Iranian identity and independence and (ii) to provide a basis for social change in Iran. Religion seems to have served the first purpose because so much of Iranian history is identified with twelver Shî'ism.

Religion in a reinterpreted activist form served the second purpose by providing a basis for revolution.

As a thinker, Sharî'atî exhibits manifold personalities. First, there is Sharî'atî the sociologist who was well versed in European Sociology, and interested in the dialectical relationship between theory and practice, ideas and social forces, conciousness and human existence. Second, there is Sharî'atî the believer in what he called true Shî'ism (generally referred to by him as 'Alavî Shî'ism in contrast to Şafavî Shî'ism which, in his view, was passive in character). He maintained that 'Alavî Shî'ism would not succumb to the oppression of the masses but demanded continous struggle because Shî'ism from its very inception had been a rejection of the circumstances then existing, in much the same way that Islam had struggled against polytheism in order to propagate monotheism. In this spirit he provided a theoretical, ideological, and religious framework for revolution so that Iranian society could be pulled out from under the yoke of imperialism and the exploitation of the masses by the bourgeois. Herein lies the reason for his being generally referred to as the Ideologue of the Iranian revolution. Third, there is the Sharî'atî who was a very powerful speaker, who addressed his audience on a wide spectrum of issues related to the current

political and social conditions of the Iranian people. He attracted large audiences, particularly the youth of Iran, because of his innovative style in presenting the content of Islam. He made reference to European scholars, with whom he had studied at the Sorbonne, and did so in a very ideosyncratic fashion at that. He became a famous thinker and speaker concerned to identify the social conditions of Iran-although he followed a Marxist and Hegelian line of thought- and with pointing out to his audience what the Iranian masses were enduring under the Shah's *régime*. He generally addressed himself to dissatisfied people about ways to change their situation thus gaining a large and loyal following among the common people of Iran.

Apart from the works he produced in his early days (translations of works in Arabic and other foreign languages) while he was in Iran, upon his return from France only a few of his works were written exclusively for the purpose of publication namely: *Islâmshenâsî* (Islamology) and *Kavîr* (Desert). He did not seem to have continued the interest pursued in the doctoral dissertation. Most of Sharî'atî's ideas were offered in response to the social realities of Iran, expressed by him in the form of essays, but mainly in lectures which were recorded and eventually transcribed and published. Perhaps, this is the reason why

his thought appears to be inconsistent and sometimes suffers from logical lacunae.

There are also misconceptions in Sharî'atî's thought particularly when he tries to establish the relationship between *ummat* and the Imâm by demonstrating that the words are derived from the root *a-m-m*. Although the word *ummat* is no doubt a Qur'ânic word and is used to denote people and the community, it is, however, not derived from the Arabic root *a-m-m*, but is a borrowed term from Hebrew *(Ummâ)* or from Armaic *(Ummethâ)*. This word found its way into Arabic in the early days of Islam. Initially the term figures in the constitution of Medina where, in the first usage, it seems to include Jews and pagan Arabs along with the *anşâr* and the *muhâjirîn*. Later it seems to have been restricted only to Muslims.<1>

Although Sharî'atî often told his audience that the true Shî'î community should be classless, and should be founded on social justice, equity, harmony etc, he said very little in detail about the structure and organisation of the true Shi'i political community and its social order.

Sharî'atî's aim was to emphasize the potentially radical notions inherent in some basic Shî'ite concepts. He

began with the emphasis on dogma but carefully shifted the emphasis from religion to the moral, political and social aspects of society. Particularly in connection with the idea of *intiẓâr* which he expounded, he maintains that the masses firmly hold their belief in the return of the hidden Imâm, and consequently submit themselves to the rule of the oppressors. He condemns this attitude and advocates that *intiẓâr* should be viewed from a positive side because of the law of 'historical determinism'. He also suggests that justice and truth will triumph, for this is the only alternative available. Moreover, God also promised that He would bring victory to Islam and that He would make the wretched masses the leaders of mankind. The disparity between the reigning false reality and the presently condemned redeeming truth will be resolved by the *intiẓâr*. Using this principle, he tried to utilize Shî'ism to support revolutionary political thought in Iran. He also assumed that *intiẓâr* has a very high potential for inducing social change. It is evident that Sharî'atî was not interested in religion for its own sake but as a tool to effect social and political change. He used religion for the sake of revolution and not revolution for the sake of religion. It also seems that he never failed to explain that religious doctrines follow a development that is parallel to the pattern of social and scientific progress, by retaining the

religious precepts and infusing new ideas into them. In other words he is trying to say that religious doctrines are to be altered according to the changing socio-political environment. This view is particularly evident in his approach to the problem of succession in Shî'ah Islam, whereby he suggests that the thirteenth succcessor of the prophet should be elected by 'the people'. In making this suggestion he has tried to integrate the modern concept of democracy into religious and political thought as a solution to the problem of succession in Twelver Shî'ism. However, this emphasis on democracy is a shift from the traditional theological position maintained by the twelver Shî'ah that the Imâm is divinely appointed.

A strong anticlerical tone permeates Sharî'atî's thought. He does not regard the religious class as 'learned people' in the true comprehensive meaning of the term. He maintains that they are not the vicegerents of the Imâm because they are neither elected by the Imâm nor elected by the people. He totally dismisses the religious class (rûḥâniyyûn) as legitimate leaders of the community. In fact he argues that the word rûḥâniyyûn is the contrary of jismânî which means physical, and that it was introduced into Shî'ism from Christianity by the Ṣafavids to serve their own purposes. He holds the religious class responsible

for indoctrinating the masses and merely collecting taxes from them. He also pronounces that the religious class have neglected their duties and narrowed their scientific interests to the field of jurisprudence. They have not given enough attention to the Qur'ân from a scientific point of view. He condemns the Şafavid rulers who corrupted Shî'ism and granted authority to the religious class over the community. This attack on the religious class is common to all the Muslim resurgence thinkers who generally condemn the *'ulamâ' for not having properly upheld the religious principles that are the source of community's real strength. Mawdûdi from the Indo-Pakistani subcontinent also condemned the 'ulamâ for going astray in their policies and ideas. In his view they were not following the Islamic technique of revolution and were groping in the dark.<2>

Sharî'atî's allegations against the Şafavids are not historically justified. Arjomand (1981) argues that until the last decades of the seventeenth century, the religious and judicial institutions remained under the firm control of a distinct group called the 'clerical estate'. The 'clerical estate' entered the service of the Şafavid state as a group of clerical administrators who were engaged in a number of judicial and quasi-political, quasi-religious functions. This brought the Şafavid state to rest upon a solid

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foundation of local power and reduced its total dependence on Qizilbâsh military forces. In exchange, the 'clerical estate' enjoyed its local power which enabled it to expand learning not only in the religious area but even in the areas of philosophy and Ṣûfism. Moreover, to spread Shî'i'sm in Iran, the Ṣafavids (1501-1722) imported Shî'î theologians into the learning centres of their empire.<3> Sharî'atî thus, seem to have disregarded many important historical facts and does not do justice to the history of his native land.

Sharî'atî however, is an ideologist, not a historian. He is confronted with the decadence and passivity of the Shî'ism of his time and the non-participation of the religious class in socio-political affairs. He had, ergo, either to reject Shî'ism as a betrayal of the good of the Iranian people or to find some way of discrediting the traditional religion and its representatives. He chose the latter by saying that established Shî'ism was not true Shî'ism at all but a Ṣafavid distortion of true Shî'ism. Even an accurate and full presentation of Ṣafavid history would not have changed his mind, because he does not seem to have been interested in history but rather in finding a religious base for revolutionary social change.

In his discussion about the problem of the successor to the Prophet in Shî'ah Islam, Sharî'atî tries to resolve the fourteen hundred year old polemic on the matter. He does so by proposing that the thirteenth successor of the prophet should be elected by 'the people', This is an apologetic stand on his part because he tries to integrate democracy of a kind into an Islamic perspective. He maintains that it is the people's responsibility to select a legitimate deputy of the Imâm. However, he also points out that the age of *taqlîd* begins with the very inception of the *ghaybah* (occultaion), and that in reality 'the people' do not elect their leader. Rather the *'ulamâ'* choose the leader because they know who is the most learned. He condemns the *'ulamâ'* for usurping the prerogative which belongs to 'the people'. In this case, Sharî'atî's demonstrative stance for 'the people' is contrary to the reality he has pointed out. His proposition that 'the people' should elect their leader has never been put into practice. There is an incompatibility between his theory and the practice in reality.

Sharî'atî's proposition that the *ummat* cannot exist without an Imâm, though an Imâm who is believed to be physically absent cannot be dismissed, rests on the Twelver Shî'î doctrine of the necessity of the Imâm. He also argues that if the Imâms had been allowed to assume the leadership

of the *ummat*, the occultation of the Twelfth Imâm would not have taken place. He would have lived like the others, and upon the death of the twelfth Imâm, the Imâmî phase would have come to an end. The *ummat* then would have deserved to choose a leader whom they thought to be worthiest according to the principle of *shôra*. In proposing this idea Sharî'atî invites criticism from Sunnîs who consider the caliphate of 'Abû Bakr perfectly legitimate and from the other sects of Shî'î Islam who believe ·in a different line of Imâms and have different criteria for eligibility to the office of the Imâm.

Sharî'atî also advocates the idea that the twelve imams were the rightful successors to the Prophet ⁓ in order to implement the prophetic message and to foster the growth of Islamic society. However, after the twelve imams the thirteenth successor should be elected by the people and not be chosen by the religious leaders. He establishes the role of the people through Qur'ânic references where the people are addressed as *al-nâs*. The role of the people, *al-nâs*, is expressed in the story of Cain and Abel. In order to emphasise the role of 'the people', Sharî'atî reinterprets the Qur'ânic story of Cain and Abel along the line of Marx's schema of social development. He refers to Cain as the pole of the ruler while Abel represents the pole of the ruled. He

maintains that these two poles have always existed in history and that the masses were always suppressed by the Cain pole which manifested itself as kings, aristocrats or the clergy. Like Marx's dialectic of sociology, he also held that the masses will rise to power and will triumph. He deduces their victory using Marxist reasoning and by citing references from the Qur'ân. He argues that the masses will triumph because God has promised them that He will make them Kings on the earth.

This point however, suggests that Sharî'atî has conveniently borrowed many terms, schemes and lines of thought from Marx to identify the social evils of Iranian society and to confront the ruling élites with the hope of changing the existing social order in Iran. This is the reason why he was accused by the Shah and his *régime* of being an 'Islamic Marxist'.

Sharî'atî seems to have studied Marxist thought sufficiently well to identify its pitfalls. He carefully dismissed those ideas which would negate the principles of religion and of Islam in particular. On the other hand he conveniently borrows ideas, terms and trends of thought from the Marxist school whenever he can accommodate them with the principles of Islam and Shî'ism because of his religious

conciousness. This fact makes it harder to establish whether Sharî'atî was anti-Marxist or pro-Marxist. He was a versatile Marxist, one who used Marxist ideas whenever he needed them to expound the sociological fact of Islam and the social structure of Iranian society. At the same time he vehemently attacked Marxist ideas when they were contrary to Islam. He refutes and denounces Marxist ideas he dislikes by citing references from the Qur'ân, just as he supports those he does like from the same source.

Bayat(1980) has rightly pointed out that ideologically, Sharî'atî seems to reject traditionalism, Westernism and Marxism. And yet he makes use of all three of them. In Iranian tradition, he finds an ideal, namely Shî'ism, which he seeks to reinterpret in order to make it more relevant to the contemporary situation and to produce an indigenous ideology. Western thought provides him with a framework to update Shî'i concepts and values. Marxism equips him with necessary revolutionary terminology, and a dialectical explanation to forecast the history of Iran.<4>

Notes to Conclusion.

1.   R. Strothman, "Ummah" *EI(1)* IV:2 (1934), 1015.

2.   A. Hashemi, *"Mawdûdi's Political Thought from 1933 to 1947 and its critics"* (unpublished M.A. Thesis, McGill University, 1981), p. 158.

3.   S. A. Arjomand, "The Shîʿite Hierocracy and the State in Pre-modern Iran: 1785-1860," *European Journal of Sociology,* 22 (1981), p. 41.

4.   M. B. Philipp, "Shîʿism in Contemporary Iranian Politics: The Case of ʿAlî Sharîʿatî" in *Towards A Modern Iran.* ed. E.Kedourie and G.Haim (London: Frank Class & Co Ltd, 1980), p. 166.

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