POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF AL-GHAZZĀLĪ: AN ANALYSIS

By

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in
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ABSTRACT

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Title : Political Philosophy of al-Ghazzālī: An Analysis

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This thesis deals with the political philosophy of al-Ghazzālī from an analytical point of view. It focuses its examination on his theory regarding the imamate and sultanate. This examination is based on four of his works, namely, *Faḍā'iḥ al-Bāṭinīyah wa-faḍā'il al-Mustaẓhirīyah*, *al-Iqtiṣād fī'l-i'tiqād*, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* and *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*. It begins with an account of past scholarship on al-Ghazzālī's political thought. Until recently scholars have focused on al-Ghazzālī's theories without giving due consideration to the circumstances that led him to develop them. This thesis shows how they were shaped by his encounter with the 'Abbāsid court and the Seljuq sultanate, and how his own theological and juridical concerns coloured his interpretations. The practical necessity of justifying his concept of the imamate was forced upon him by the challenge posed by the Fāṭimid caliph in Egypt, and by the reality of power politics in Baghdad, where the caliph exercised only nominal control. Throughout his writings he demonstrates an overriding concern for a stable society in which Islam can be practiced in full, even at the cost of living under an oppressive system.

RÉSUMÉ

Auteur: Russli Kamarudin

Titre: La philosophie politique d'al-Ghazzālī: une analyse

Département: Institut d'études islamiques

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Ce thèse aborde le sujet de la philosophie politique d'al-Ghazzālī d'un point de vue analytique. Il examine surtout sa théorie de l'imamat et du sultanat. Cette investigation est fondée sur quatre de ses oeuvres, c'est à dire, *Faḍā'iḥ al-Bāṭinīyah wa-faḍā'il al-Mustaẓhirīyah, Al-Iqtiṣād fī al-i'tiqād, Iḥyā 'ulūm al-dīn* et *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*. Il commence par un examen de la recherche sur la pensée politique d'al-Ghazzālī. Jusqu'à date, la plupart des chercheurs a concentré sur ses théories sans prendre compte des circonstances qui l'ont amenés à les développer. Ce thèse montre comment ces théories ont étés formées par son rencontre avec la cour abbaside et le sultanat seldjukide, et comment ses propres idées théologiques et juridiques ont colorés ses interprétations. La necessité pratique de justifier sa conception de l'imamat lui a été imposeé par le défi lancé par le calife fatimide en Egypte, et par la réalité de la politique de pouvoir à Baghdad, où le calife n'exerçait q'une controle nominale. Dans chacun de ses oeuvres sur la politique, al-Ghazzālī démontre un souci principal d'avoir pour une société stable dans laquelle l'Islam peut se pratiquer en plein, mêmc au cout d'être obligé à vivre sous un régime oppressif.

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INTRODUCTION

Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Ṭā'ūs al-Ṭūsi al-Shāfi'ī, better known as al-Ghazzālī, was born in 450/1058 at Tabaran, one of the townships of Ṭūs, now in ruins, in the neighbourhood of modern Meshhed in Khurāsān.[1] He was one of the greatest scholars that Islam has ever produced and was given the honorific title Ḥujjat al-Islām (the proof of Islam). His work has been extensively studied, not only by Muslims but also by non-Muslims, many of whom have made it their life's work. He wrote on a vast number of subjects ranging from jurisprudence, theology and philosophy to Bāṭinite thought and Sufism. He is usually perceived as a writer on doctrine, and is therefore less well-known as a political scientist. There are however many passages in his works which discuss politics, and certain treatises that are exclusively devoted to the topic.[2]

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[1]W. Montgomery Watt, "Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid al," in Mircea Eliade, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 5 (New York: Macmillan, 1987), p. 541. Cf. Hassan Muhammad, *The Influence of al-Ghāzalī upon Islamic Jurisprudence and Philosophy* (Beirut: Dar-el-Jil, 1993), p. 9. Cf. M. M. Sharif, ed., *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, vol. 1 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963), p. 582.

[2]There has so far only been one book written on his politics, that is *La Politique de Ġazali* by Henri Laoust, published in 1971 by Geuthner of Paris. Other studies have appeared in the form of articles, among them: Haroon Khan Sherwani, "El-Ghazzālī on the Theory and Practice of Politics," *Islamic Culture*, vol. 9 (1935), pp. 450-475; Ann K. S. Lambton, "The Theory of Kingship in the *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* of Ghazzālī," *The Islamic Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 1 (1954), pp. 46-55; Leonard Binder, "Al-Ghazzālī's Theory of Islamic Government," *The Muslim World*, vol. 47 (1955), pp. 229-241; W. Montgomery Watt, "Reflections on al-Ghazālī's Political Theory," *Glasgow University Oriental Society Transactions*, 21 (1965/66), pp. 12-24; Carole Hillenbrand, "Islamic Orthodoxy or Realpolitik? Al-Ghazālī's Views on Government," *Iran*, 26 (1988), pp. 81-94. Of the above, Sherwani gives a brief sketch of the author's thought, where he left *al-Mustaẓhirī* (written in 487/1094) in his discussion, which contains the author's thought in politics,

Four books in particular are recognized as containing substantial material on political theory. These are: *Faḍā'iḥ al-Bāṭinīyah wa-faḍā'il al-Mustaẓhirīyah* (henceforth called *al-Mustaẓhiri*), *al-Iqtiṣād fi'l-i'tiqād* (henceforth *al-Iqtiṣād*), *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* (henceforth *Iḥyā'*) and *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*. Out of these four, only two are exclusively devoted to politics, namely *al-Mustaẓhirī* and *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*, while the others are works on theology (*al-Iqtiṣād*) and Sufism (*Iḥyā'*). All four books contain, to a greater or lesser degree, al-Ghazzālī's views on the imamate and the sultanate. The aim of this thesis is to study the author's political philosophy from an analytical point of view based on the above four books, with special attention given to his ideas concerning the imamate and the sultanate.

To achieve this aim the thesis is divided into three chapters. Chapter one discusses al-Ghazzālī's life, and is itself divided into two subsections, in the first of which we survey his intellectual career. For the purpose of our analysis, we have divided this into three stages: first his life as a student, where we focus on his travels in search of knowledge, the subjects that he studied, and the professors under whom he worked; next, his career as professor at the Niẓāmīyah college in Baghdad, where we discuss the subjects that he taught, the problem that he faced, and his involvement with Sufism after his resignation from the professorship; and finally, the third stage, the longest of his intellectual life, which ended

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while Lambton focuses on *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk* (written between 1106-1109), and Binder on the three of al-Ghazzālī's works, i.e., *al-Mustaẓhirī, al-Iqtiṣād* (written in 488/1095) and *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* (written in 489-90/1096-97) leaving aside the *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*. Hillenbrand on the other hand studies his thought on government from the question of orthodoxy or realpolitik, whereas Watt looks at the reflection of the author's thought based on the *al-Iqtiṣād*.

with his death in 505/1111. The second subsection discusses his political background which covers the period of his professorship and his resignation, because it was during this time that he began to write on political topics, particularly in *al-Mustaẓhirī*. These two subtopics are important in assessing his political views.

Chapter two studies the ideas presented in the four books mentioned above. This is done in chronological order, based on their original dates of composition. The study not only focuses on the political contents of the books but also the circumstances of their composition as well as their audience. It also discusses the periods when and the places where they were completed. It begins with *al-Mustaẓhirī*, followed by *al-Iqtiṣād*, then *Iḥyā'* and finally *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*.

Chapter three studies the nature of al-Ghazzālī's political philosophy. This study is based on the materials presented in chapter two. In so doing it concentrates on two things, namely the practicality of his thought and its characteristics. In terms of its practicality it evaluates in what ways his views helped resolve certain political problems of his time. Lastly, various strands of thought are brought together in the conclusion.

Chapter One

Al-Ghazzālī's Life

1. His Intellectual Life

During his lifetime, al-Ghazzālī showed an interest in a number of intellectual disciplines, particularly jurisprudence, theology, Greek philosophy, Ismā'īlī thought and mysticism or Sufism. In his journey in search of the truth, he devoted much of his time to studying the last four disciplines, which finally culminated in his desire to live the life of a Ṣūfī.[1] This intellectual journey began during his professorship at the Niẓāmīyah college.[2] However, long before this stage in his life, we find him laying the foundations for his career as a student in Ṭūs.

a. Al-Ghazzālī's early life.

Al-Ghazzālī, who was orphaned at an early age, was first exposed to a Ṣūfī environment, wherein he and his brother Aḥmad received their primary education. This was the wish of his father, who regretted his lack of education and wanted his sons to be nurtured and taken care of by a Ṣūfī friend. The father left a small amount of money to be spent on this purpose. However, when this small legacy was exhausted, and the Ṣūfī teacher was himself

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[1]W. Montgomery Watt, "Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid al," in Mircea Eliade, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 5 (New York: Macmillan, 1987), p. 542. Cf. Hassan Muhammad, *The Influence of al-Ghāzalī upon Islamic Jurisprudence and Philosophy* (Beirut: Dar-el-Jil, 1993), p. 9.

[2]Watt, "Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid al," p. 541. Cf. Muhammad, *Influence*, p. 18.

unable to support them financially, the orphans were advised to go to a college or *madrasah.* For in a college, as students or "seekers of science," they would have rations alloted to them.[3]

Al-Ghazzālī thus began his life as a *madrasah* student in Ṭūs. It is noteworthy that at this time, as he himself admits, he was studying for wealth and reputation.[4] Here he studied jurisprudence under Aḥmad b. Muḥammad ar-Radhkānī, and then travelled to Jurjān where he studied further under Abū Naṣr al-Ismā'īlī.[5] During this period he collected what he learned in copious notes rather than trying to master them by heart through memorization. However, he was forced to change this approach when one day, on his way back from Jurjān, he was robbed of his notebooks. Although the notes were returned to him after much pleading, he was teased by the robbers for his claim that all he knew was in fact only in his notebooks. This incident led him to spend three years memorizing the material.[6]

Before al-Ghazzālī left for Nīshāpur he is said to have studied Sufism under Yūsuf al-

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[3]M. M. Sharif, ed., *A History of Muslim Philosophy*, vol. 1 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963), p. 582. Cf. Muhammad, *Influence*, p. 18; W. Montgomery Watt, *Muslim Intellectual: A Study of al-Ghazali* (Edinburgh: The Edinburgh University Press, 1963), p. 20; Duncan B. Macdonald, "The Life of al-Ghazzālī, with Especial Reference to his Religious Experiences and Opinions," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 20 (1899), p. 75.

[4]Al-Ghazzālī says: "We became students for the sake of something else than God, but He was unwilling that it should be for the sake of aught but Himself." See Macdonald, "Life of al-Ghazzālī," p. 75. Cf. Muhammad, *Influence*, p. 10; M. M. Sharif, *History*, p. 583.

[5]M. M. Sharif, *History*, p. 583. Cf. Macdonald, "Life of al-Ghazzālī, p. 76; Muhammad, *Influence*, p. 11, where he says that his teacher at Jurjān was ash-Shaykh Ismā'īl ibn Sa'dā al-Ismā'īlī (d. 487/1094).

[6]See Muhammad, *Influence*, p. 11; Watt, "Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid al," p. 541; Macdonald, "Life of al-Ghazzālī," p. 76.

Nassāj. It is also believed that under this teacher he was instructed in certain Ṣūfī exercises.[7] However, this period in his life was of short duration, for at the age of about twenty he proceeded to the Niẓāmīyahcollege in Baghdad to study under Abū al-Ma'ālī al-Juwaynī (d. 1085), also known as Imām al-Ḥaramayn, the most distinguished theologian of the age.[8] Under him, al-Ghazzālī's studies embraced jurisprudence, Ash'arī theology, philosophy, logic, dialectics, the natural sciences and Sufism.

Al-Juwaynī gave his students complete freedom of thought and expression, and encouraged them to engage in debate and discussion of all kinds.[9] It was during this studentship that al-Ghazzālī gave early proof of great learning and a tendency towards philosophizing. Realizing his brilliance, al-Juwaynī asked him to be his assistant, and it was from this point onward that he was recognized and honoured as a rising scholar. It was evident from his writings that he had made himself the master of every subject to which he had applied himself. Furthermore, with his book *al-Mankhūl*, he proved himself the superior of his teacher, as al-Juwaynī himself admitted.[10]

One distinct character trait of al-Ghazzālī was that he was a born critic, and possessed great independence of thought. This he proved when he became impatient of dogmatic

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[7]M. M. Sharif, *History*, p. 583.

[8]M. M. Sharif, *History*, p. 583. Cf. Macdonald, "Life of al-Ghazzālī," p. 77; Muhammad, *Influence*, p. 11; Watt, "Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid al," p. 541.

[9]M. M. Sharif, *History*, p. 583.

[10]Muhammad, *Influence*, p. 12.

teaching and freed himself from the bondage of authority (*taqlīd* or blind following) by adopting scepticism.[11] Interestingly, he never missed any chance to deepen his knowledge of Sufism. During his stay at Nīshāpur he became a disciple to the Sufi Abū 'Alī al-Faḍl ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Alī al-Fārmadhī al-Ṭūsi a pupil of al-Ghazzālī's own uncle and of the reputed al-Qushayrī (d. 1074). From al-Fārmadhī he learnt more about the theory and practice of Sufism. He even practised rigorous ascetic and Ṣūfī exercises under his guidance, but not to the desired effect. His failure to attain the stage at which mystics begin to receive pure inspiration from God caused him to feel unsettled in his mind.[12]

b. Al-Ghazzālī as a Professor at the Nīẓāmīyah College

Upon the death of al-Fārmadhī in 1084, which was followed by that of al-Juwaynī in 1085, al-Ghazzālī chose to join the court of Niẓām al-Mulk (d. 1092), the great vizier of the Seljūq sultans, who at that time served sultan Malikshāh (r. 1072-1092). Niẓām al-Mulk was very much impressed by al-Ghazzālī's profound knowledge of jurisprudence, theology, and philosophy, which he demonstrated at the assemblies for debate and discussion held at the court. Consequently, in 1091, he appointed him to the chair of jurisprudence in the Niẓāmiyah college, which he himself had established, in 1065-67, one of the leading teaching posts in the Sunnī world. He was only thirty-four when he was appointed to this

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[11]M. M. Sharif, *History*, p. 583. This distinct point of view eventually had an effect on his intellectual journey later on, which will be discussed below.

[12]Ibid., p. 583.

position, an honor which had not previously been conferred on anyone at so early an age.[13]

As a professor at this college, he became renowned and was sought out by many people, including the chief savants of the time, for his religious and political advice. It is said that his audiences often reached more than three hundred people. Moreover, he came to be looked upon as the greatest jurist ever to practice in Baghdad.[14] It is no exaggeration to say that with this position al-Ghazzālī had achieved what he had been after, i.e. wealth and reputation. However, after four years of holding this post, he gradually experienced an intellectual and spiritual crisis.[15]

During this crisis he became more sceptical about the possibility of attaining truth. He claimed that neither the senses nor the mind are reliable for attaining certainty. His scepticism was so great that he became highly critical of the very subjects he taught. This lasted for almost two months. Once he had abandoned his scepticism, he began his intellectual journey in search of truth among the four "classes of seekers of truth," namely, the Ash'arī theologians, the Neoplatonic philosophers, the Ismā'īlīyah and finally the Ṣūfis, or mystics.[16] According to al-Ghazzālī, the truth cannot lie outside these four classes, for these

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[13]Muhammad, *Influence*, p. 14. Cf. Watt, "Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid al," p. 541. According to M. M. Sharif, however, al-Ghazzālī was appointed to the chair of theology, rather than jurisprudence as mentioned by Hassan Muhammad. See M. M. Sharif, *History*, p. 584.

[14]Muhammad, *Influence*, p. 15.

[15]See M. M. Sharif, *History*, p. 585. Cf. Muhammad, *Influence*, p. 16; Macdonald, "Life of al-Ghazzālī," p. 79.

[16]Muhammad, *Influence*, p. 16ff. Cf. Watt, "Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid al," p. 541.

are the people who tread the path of the quest for truth. If the truth is not with them, no point remains in trying to apprehend it.[17]

His first encounter in his search for the truth was theology. Unfortunately he found no intellectual certainty there, for the theologians depended entirely on the acceptance of their dogmatic assumptions of authority. He said that they never tried to justify their assumptions, which he could not accept without some reliable foundation. In addition, the disputes of the scholastics among themselves he considered as mere dialectical exercises which had no real relation to religious life.[18]

Soon dissatisfied with theology, he then turned to philosophy. He studied it as diligently and as comprehensively as he could. He devoted three years of his life to this effort, while at the same time teaching jurisprudence and issuing *fatāwā* (legal opinions, sing. *fatwā*). He devoted two years to the study of the writings of the different schools of philosophy. He believed in fact that he was the first Muslim scholar ever to do this with the requisite thoroughness.[19] Nevertheless, he found that it was impossible to build theology on reason alone. Reason was fine so far as it went, but it did not go far enough. The Ultimate, the Supreme Truth, could not be reached through it.[20]

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[17]W. Montgomery Watt, *The Faith and Practice of Al-Ghazālī* (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1953), p. 27.

[18]Sharif, *History*, p. 585. Cf. Hassan Muhammad, *Influence*, p. 18. For details, see Watt, *The Faith and Practice of Al-Ghazālī*, pp. 27-29.

[19]Muhammad, *Influence*, p. 19.

[20]Sharif, *History*, p. 585.

Although he devoted three years of his life to studying philosophy, and managed to produce two books[21] on the subject, he still could not find the goal he sought from this discipline. He had in fact discovered twenty points on which the philosophers contradicted Islam or were inconsistent in their own claims. Seventeen of them he regarded as heretical and three others as infidelity.[22] The three points which he regarded as infidelity were: first, rejection of the resurrection of the body and physical punishment in the hereafter; second, the assertion that God knows universals only and not particulars; and third, the teaching that the world exists from all eternity to all eternity.[23] For all these reasons, he turned away from philosophy.

Having been frustrated by philosophy, he next turned his attention to the Ismāʿīlīyah.

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[21]These are *Maqāṣid al-falāsifah* (The Intentions of the Philosophers), which is believed to have been written in 1091/92; and *Tahāfut al-falāsifah* (The Inconsistencies of the Philosophers), which was most probably written in 1094. For details, see George F. Hourani, "A Revised Chronology of Ghazālī's Writings," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 104, nos. 1-2 (1984), pp. 292-293.

[22]Heretical *bid'ah* is "innovation," heresy in the context of Islamic law and doctrine, unwelcome religious innovation and the opposite of *sunnah* (custom). The introduction of *bid'ah* is seen as a great danger for the stability of the community; however, good *bid'ahs* are seen by some as acceptable. See Annemarie, Schimmel, *Islam An Introduction* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992), p. 54. For details see Iftikhar, Zaman, "Bid'ah," in John L. Esposito, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, vol. 1 (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 215-6. Infidelity (*kufr*) or unbelief includes the meaning of ingratitude or concealing the truth, namely to cover over the truth that God has revealed through the Prophets and to conceal the blessings that God has given to His creatures. See W. C. Chittick, *Faith and Practice of Islam* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 6-7. For details see Charles J. Adams, "Kufr," in John L. Esposito, ed., *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, vol. 2, pp. 439-443.

[23]Watt, "Ghazālī," p. 542. Cf. Muhammad, *Influence*, pp. 19-20. See also Watt, *The Faith and Practice*, pp. 29-43.

This group, which was also called the Bāṭinīyah, considered itself the party of "authoritative instruction," deriving truth from an infallible imam.[24] Al-Ghazzālī studied their views carefully. In addition to accomplishing his intellectual journey, however, he was also fulfilling the command of the then 'Abbāsid caliph al-Mustaẓhir (r. 1094-1118) to refute their views. For the latter purpose he wrote the treatise *al-Mustaẓhirī* in 1095.[25] He found that the Bāṭinites and their teachings were eminently unsatisfactory; they absorbed dogma in parrot-like fashion, but besides this they were woefully ignorant.[26]

The last destination in his intellectual journey was Sufism. However, he did not start this journey from scratch, because he was already familiar with mysticism. He had made a theoretical study of Sufism and had ventured into its exercises, although he had not advanced far enough to find truth in any of its doctrines.[27] He admits in his writings that the complete mystic "way" includes both intellectual and practical activity, the latter consisting of exercises which rid the self of obstacles to spiritual progress by stripping off its base characteristics and vicious morals. The heart is thereby cleansed of all that is not God and

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[24]Watt, *The Faith and Practice*, p. 26.

[25]Hourani, "Revised Chronology," p. 293. Actually there are four other books of al-Ghazzālī which were written against the Ismā'īlīyah; for details see Watt, *The Faith and Practice*, p. 52.

[26]Macdonald, "Life of al-Ghazzālī," p. 87. Cf. Muhammad, *Influence*, p. 21. For more details about his arguments agains the Bāṭinites, see Watt, *The Faith and Practice*, pp. 43-54. Cf. Richard Joseph McCarthy, S. J. *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of Al-Ghazālī's al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of al-Ghazālī* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1980), pp. 175-286.

[27]Sharif, *History*, p. 585. Cf. Macdonald, "Life of al-Ghazzālī," p. 89.

of whatever prevents constant recollection of Him. He confesses that the intellectual activity was easier for him than the practical.[28]

He found that the sure and certain knowledge which he had earlier sought was not a knowledge which could be contained in books or in words, but one that demanded to be put into living practice day by day. He maintained that the saving truth was to be found not in recourse to authority (although this did lead to specific truth) but to that confluence of perception and action denoted by the notion of "taste" (*dhawq*). Taste means to experience directly. Therefore, as he saw it, the highest truth, attained only by the most accomplished Ṣūfis, can only be acquired by taste, not by learning.[29]

Realizing that only through renouncing his prestigious position and becoming a fully committed Ṣūfī could he reach the truth and certainty, he found himself "continuously tossed about between the attractions of worldly desires and the impulses toward eternal life."[30] He remained in the throes of a severe moral conflict and spiritual travail for about six months, beginning in Rajab 488/July 1095. He collapsed physically and mentally; his appetite and digestion failed him and he lost his power of speech.[31]

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[28]Watt, *The Faith and Practice*, p. 54.

[29]Eric L. Ormsby, "The Taste of Truth: The Structure of Experience in al-Ghazālī's *al-Munqidh min al-Ḍalāl*," in Wael B. Hallaq and Donald P. Little, eds., *Islamic Studies Presented to Charles J. Adams* (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1991), p. 141.

[30]Watt, *The Faith and Practice*, p. 57. Cf. M. M. Sharif, *History*, p. 585; Muhammad, *Influence*, p. 22.

[31]Watt, *The Faith and Practice*, p. 57.

In Dhu al-Qa'dah 488/ November 1095, he left Baghdad under the pretext of making a pilgrimage to Mecca but in fact intending to abandon his career as a professor in order to secure certainty for his mind and peace for his soul. He gave away all his fortune, except for some "trust funds" to maintain his family, and proceeded to Syria.[32] From his intellectual journey to find certainty and truth, he at last chose the Ṣūfī life as the one means to achieve nearness to God, where eventually he found tranquillity of soul.

c. Al-Ghazzālī as a Ṣūfī

This period was the most significant of his life and it lasted until his death. During this time he produced many works, including his *magnum opus*, i. e. *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn*, a work that has brought him fame until today. It is therefore of great interest to see how his life and intellectual activities evolved during this time.

Al-Ghazzālī embarked on his Ṣūfī life in Syria. There he is said to have undergone a strict ascetic existence for two years. He used to shut himself in one of the Umayyad Mosque's minarets as part of this mission. However, he did not spend the whole two years in Syria alone, for he is also said to have visited Jerusalem and meditated in the Dome of the Rock. While there he visited Prophet Abraham's tomb at Hebron. In 489/ 1096 he went to Mecca to perform the pilgrimage and visited Medina, then returned to Syria. This seems to suggest that he was motivated to visit the holy places of Islam.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that during his stay in Syria he studied under Abū'l

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[32]Watt, *The Faith and Practice*, p. 59. Cf. M. M. Sharif, *History*, p. 586; Muhammad, *Influence*, p. 22.

Fatḥ Naṣr b. Ibrāhīm al-Maqdisī an-Nābulusī (d. 490 A. H.).[33] However, it was not for long due to the latter's death later that year. Murtaḍa names him as al-Ghazzālī's teacher in *ḥadīth*.[34] Tibawi, however, states that there was another factor that attracted al-Ghazzālī to become his student, that is, mystical experience[35] Even though al-Ghazzālī never mentions this shaykh in his books, there are many stories that connect the two of them.[36]

From Syria, al-Ghazzālī proceeded to Iraq where he is said to have spent some time teaching at Baghdad. However, he never resumed his official position as a professor at the Niẓāmīyah college there. Not long after that al-Ghazzālī continued his journey and reached Ṭūs in 493/ 1099-1100. In Ṭūs he gave private lessons and, in spite of being distracted by cares about his family and his livelihood, he was occasionally able to experience mystical ecstasy. During this time he wrote several of his works, among them: *Kīmiyā -yī sa'ādat*,[37]

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[33]He was not only a mystic but also a recognized leading scholar of the Shāfi'ī school in Syria. He spent the last ten years of his life in the city of Damascus. He led a life of extreme austerity and asceticism. He was described as *az-Zāhid,* who kept alive on one loaf of bread a day baked in the corner of his brazier. He was also known as a *faqīh* and *muḥaddith*. See A. L. Tibawi, "Al-Ghazāli's Sojourn in Damascus and Jerusalem," *Islamic Quarterly*, vol. 9, nos. 3-4 (1965), pp. 70-71.

[34]Murtaḍa al-Zabīdī, *Itḥāf al-sādat al-muttaqīn*, vol. 1, (Cairo: n. p., 1311), p. 19.

[35]Tibawi, "Al-Ghazāli's Sojourn," p. 71.

[36]Tibawi mentions several authors whose books connect al-Ghazzālī to this shaykh; they are: Ibn Shuhbah, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īyah* (Hyderabad: Maṭba'at Majlis al-Du'ārat, 1978-1980), p. 5; Ibn al-'Imād al-Ḥanbali, *Shadharāt al-dhahab* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Qudsī, 1931-32), vol. 3, p. 395; Mujīr ud-Dīn, *Kitāb al-uns al-jalil bi-tārikh al-Quds wa al-Khalīl* (Cairo: n.p., 1283 A.H.), vol. i, p. 264; and Murtaḍa al-Zabīdī, *Itḥāf al-sādat al-muttaqīn*, vol. 1 (Cairo: n.p., 1311/1894), p. 19. See Tibawi, "Al-Ghazāli's Sojourn," pp. 71-73.

[37]According to George F. Hourani, this book is a Persian version of *Iḥyā'* which was composed after al-Ghazzālī's return from Baghdad to Ṭūs and before his return to teaching in

Bidāyat al-hidāyah (*Beginning of Guidance*), *Ayyuhā'l-walad,* and a mystic work, *Mishkāt al-anwār* (*Niche of Lights*).[38]

His retirement from public teaching lasted until he was summoned to resume this role by Fakhr al-Mulk, son of Niẓām al-Mulk and vizier of Sanjar who was then viceroy of Khurasan. This took place in Dhū'l-Qa'dah 499/ July-August 1106, when he finally taught again, this time at the Niẓāmīyah college at Nīshāpūr His acceptance of this summons is said to have been motivated by his realisation that his retirement in the hope of preserving himself from worldly contamination had been selfish in nature. However, this did not deter him from retiring once again in 503/ 1109-10 after having taught for three years at that college. Although it was during this second teaching period that he wrote his *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* (*Deliverence from Error*), this second retirement nevertheless seems to suggest that his preference for private life was stronger than his enthusiasm for public teaching.

Having retired for the second time, al-Ghazzālī lived in Ṭūs during the final years of

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Nīshāpūr in Dhū al-Qa'da, 499/ July, 1106. See George F. Hourani, "A Revised Chronology of Ghazālī's Writings," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 104, no. 2 (1984), p. 300.

[38]Of these four books, the attribution of a portion of *Mishkāt al-anwār* to al-Ghazzālī is questioned, namely its "veils section" or its third section. There are several scholars who discuss this issue, amongst them Hermann Landolt, Montgomery Watt and W. Gairdner. Landolt mentions that this section is distinctly Iranian in all its intents and purposes and therefore very unlike al-Ghazzālī's doctrine of "light." Moreover, the philosophy of religion of this section is heretical. See Hermann Landolt, "Ghazālī and *Religionswissenschaft*," *Asiatische Studien/ Études Asiatiques*, vol. 45, no. 1 (1991), pp. 19-72. Montgomery Watt, on the other hand, reveals the non-Ghazalian character of this section. For details see Montgomery Watt, "A Forgery in al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt*?" *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1949, pp. 5-22. Gairdner also discusses the *Mishkāt al-anwār* and this issue; for this see W. H. T. Gairdner, "Al-Ghazālī's *Mishkāt al-anwār* and the Ghazālī-Problem," *Der Islam*, vol. 5 (1914), pp. 121-153.

his life. While there he wrote other works: *Iljām al-'awāmm 'an 'ilm al-kalām* and *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*. Al-Ghazzālī died in Ṭūs at the age of fifty-three on 14 Jumāda II 505/ 18 December 1111.

It is no exaggeration, therefore, to call al-Ghazzālī a man of knowledge, for he never missed an oppturnity to expand his learning. This is apparent when one sees how he involved himself in the realm of *'ilm* or knowledge from his childhood until his last breath. After his laborious struggle to find the truth, he finally settled for Sufism, a discipline in which, he claimed, one can acquire tranquillity and certainty. His literary productivity was at its most prolific during his retirement; however, he also composed excellent works during his professorship, managing to complete several of these especially during his professorship at the Niẓāmīyah college at Baghdad. He was not only a good teacher, but also a fine author whose life was devoted to knowledge.

2. His Political Background

Al-Ghazzālī lived at a time when the 'Abbāsid caliphate was in decline and when Arab rule in Baghdad had nearly passed away.[39] The caliphs had lost most of their remaining power, though they retained their position as figureheads with certain official functions and dignities. Real power passed into the hands of a series of warlords, who eventually came to bear the title of "sultan."[40] The caliphs had become mere puppets of the Seljūq sultans,

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[39]McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. ix.

[40]Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*, p. 12.

and had been forced to put all worldly power and authority in their hands. The caliphs during whose reigns al-Ghazzālī lived were al-Qā'im (r. 1030-1075), al-Muqtadir (r. 1075-1094) and al-Mustaẓhir (r. 1094-1118).[41]

Of the Seljūq sultans who reigned during al-Ghazzālī's lifetime there were Ṭughral Beg (r. 1037-1063), Alp Arslān (r. 1063-1072), Malik Shāh (r. 1072-1092), Maḥmūd (r. 1092-1094), Barkiyārūq (r. 1094-1104), and finally Abū Shujā' Muḥammad (1104-1117),[42] during whose reign he died. The Seljūqs, who were initially a family of warlords, were able to take control with the support of Turkish tribesmen in Baghdad in 1055. Their empire included Syria in the west and Transoxania and the whole of Persia in the east.[43]

In one way this period marked the end of the rule of the caliphs; in another, it was a restoration of the central government of the territories directly under them. In this new central government the place of military power was explicit, and the political power strongly depended on it. In short, those who were successful in the struggle for power, like the Seljūqs, were groups of men, not isolated individuals, who had effective military support.[44]

Furthermore, apart from having military support, political power was also dependent on the acquiescence of the people, and this was gained by recognition of the Islamic bases

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[41]H. K. Sherwani, *Studies in Muslim Political Thought and Administration* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1970), p. 137.

[42]Ibid., p. 137.

[43]Watt, *Muslim Intellectual*, p. 13.

[44]Ibid., p. 13.

of society, i.e., acknowledgement of the caliph, participation in worship on certain occasions, and continuation of the courts applying the *Sharī'ah*.[45] The earlier phase of the Seljūq domination, especially the reigns of Alp Arslān (1063-1072) and Malik Shah (1072-1092), was a time of peace and prosperity and of great cultural achievement. This was due to the wise and efficient vizier of these two sultans, Niẓām al-Mulk (1017-1092). Though nominally subordinate to the sultan, he was practically all-powerful for a period of about thirty years (1063-92).[46]

However, the latter part of the Seljūq period was colored by civil wars among the claimants to the sultanate. This occurred after the death of Malik Shāh, and is said to have been instigated by the sons of Niẓām al-Mulk, Fakhru'-l-Mulk and Muwayyidu'l-Mulk.[47] The civil wars took place during al-Ghazzālī's professorship at the Niẓāmīyah college in Baghdad (1091-1095). They continued for years and ended in a kind of political paralysis in the Seljūq dominion, its division into a number of small states and its final disruption soon after al-Ghazzālī's death.[48]

At this time, furthermore, the Bāṭinite threat was on the upswing. It reached a high point with their assassination of Niẓām al-Mulk in 485 A. H. and his son Fakhru'-l-Mulk

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[45]Ibid., p. 13.

[46]Ibid., p. 14. See also McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. x.

[47]Sherwani, *Studies*, p. 137.

[48]Ibid.

in 500 A. H.[49] The Bāṭinites imposed terror tactics in the eastern zones of the Islamic world. Behind this movement were the Fāṭimids, who exploited the political anarchy and lack of outstanding leaders among the Abbāsids to cause general havoc.[50]

In general, the political background of al-Ghazzālī was quite confused and complicated. On the one hand there was a caliph, whose dominion seems to have been limited to the mention of his name in the Friday public sermon and to its inscription on coinage, while on the other there were the Seljūq sultans, who dominated the army and politics. Moreover, the civil wars among the claimants to the sultanate also added to the deteriorating political situation. Amid his highest professional achievements al-Ghazzālī was faced with two big problems, one being his personal crisis which led to his physical and mental collapse, and the other the political agitation and turmoil which challenged his perception of the established order of things.

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[49]McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. x.

[50]McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. xi. Cf. Carole, Hillenbrand, "The Power Struggle between the Seljuqs and the Ismā'ilis of Alamūt, 847-518/1094-1124: The Seljuq perspective," in Farhad Daftary, ed., *Medieval Ismā'īlī History and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 205-220. Cf. Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā'ilis: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 324-434; Farhad Daftary, *The Assassins Legends* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1994), pp. 88ff, 136ff; Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), pp. 50-58, 64-5.

Chapter Two

Al-Ghazzālī on Politics.

1. His Works on Politics.

Of the many works that al-Ghazzālī produced, there are certain ones that speak of his views on politics. These include *Faḍā'iḥ al-Bāṭinīyah wa faḍā'il al-Mustaẓhirīyah, al-Iqtiṣad fī'-i'tiqād, Iḥyā' 'ulūm ad-dīn* and *Naṣīhat al-mulūk.*[1] The political views expressed in these works on the imamate and the sulṭanate[2] are the focus of this study.

2. *Faḍā'ih al-Bāṭinīyah wa-faḍā'il al-Mustaẓhirīyah.*

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[1]This book contains two parts. The second part raises doubts as to the genuineness of the work as al-Ghazzālī's due to its approach, which is at variance with the rest of al-Ghazzālī's writings, both in Arabic and in Persian, not to mention the fact that it even clashes with part one of the same work. For details, please see Patricia Crone, "Did al-Ghazālī Write a Mirror for Princes? On the Authorship of *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk,*" *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, v ol. 10 (1987), pp. 167-191. See also Carole Hillenbrand, "Islamic Orthodoxy or Realpolitik? Al-Ghazālī's Views on Government", *Iran*, vol. 26 (1988), p. 92. Cf. George F. Hourani, "A Revised Chronology of al-Ghazālī's Writings", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 104, nos. 1-2 (1984), p. 301. Due to its dubious authenticity, our study will only focus on part one of this book.

[2]Al-Ghazzālī also gives his view on the development of the idea of the state in his *magnum opus, Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn;* see in the latter work, vol. 3, bk. 6, chap. 5, ed. Zayn ad-Dīn Abi Faḍl 'Abd al-Raḥim ibn Ḥusayn (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Tijārīyah al-Kubrā, n.d.), pp. 224-230. Haroon Khan Sherwani, in commenting on this view of al-Ghazzālī, says;

> "One is amazed to find the modernity of the argument propounded in this synthesis of the state-idea, and it is refreshing to note that after accepting the Aristotelian doctrine of the social nature of Man, Ghazzālī, instead of falling on the dry heap of patriarchal theory faces blunt facts of human association and develops the idea little by little till he reaches the doctrine of the formation of the State with all its implications."

For more information please see Haroon Khan Sherwani, *Studies in Muslim Political Thought and Administration* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1968), pp. 146-150.

This book, better known as *Kitāb al-Mustaẓhirī*, was named after the reigning 'Abbāsid caliph, al-Mustaẓhir Billāh (r. 478/1094 to 512/1118),[3] who had commissioned al-Ghazzālī to compose it. The motive behind its composition lay in the caliph's bid to show up the errors of the Ismā'īlīs, who constituted a threat to the 'Abbāsid caliphate, and to legitimize his reign.[4]

Kitāb al-Mustaẓhirī is believed to have been composed in 487/1094,[5] shortly before al-Ghazzālī's departure from Baghdad in 488/ 1095 as a result of his spiritual crisis. In terms of its authenticity, no scholar doubts its ascription to al-Ghazzālī.[6] There were two target audiences for whom this book was written: the first constituted the masses, including scholars and lay persons;[7] and the second was the caliph al-Mustaẓhir himself, whom al-

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[3]Please see Richard Joseph McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment* (Boston: Twayne Publisher, 1980), p. 175. Subsequent reference to the English translation of *al-Mustaẓhirī* are from this work, printed in the appendix 2, pp. 175-286.

[4]For more details please see McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, pp. 175-286. See also Hillenbrand, "Islamic Orthodoxy," pp. 81-87.

[5]Duncan B. Macdonald, "The Life of al-Ghazzālī, with especial Reference to His Religious Experiences and Opinions", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 20 (1899), p. 87. See also George F. Hourani, "The Chronology of Ghazālī's Writings", *Journal of American Oriental Society*, 79 (1959), p. 227. Cf. Carole Hillenbrand, "Islamic Orthodoxy," p. 82; W. Montgomery Watt, *Islamic Philosophy and Theology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1962), p. 119.

[6]William Montgomery Watt, for instance, in his "The Authenticity of the Works Attributed to al-Ghazālī", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1952, pp. 25-45, raises no doubts as to its authorship. Cf. Hourani, "A Revised Chronology," p. 293; Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies in Al-Ghazzali*, (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1975), p. 46. Lazarus-Yafeh groups this work with those written by al-Ghazzālī during his stay in Baghdad, i.e., from 1091 to 1095.

[7]This is confirmed by Hillenbrand who says:

"It is not surprising, therefore, that one of the first actions of al-Mustaẓhir after becoming

Ghazzālī counsels in chapter ten of the book.[8]

Political Contents of *Kitāb al-Mustaẓhiri.*

Al-Ghazzālī presents his political views in chapters nine and ten of this book. In chapter nine he supports his arguments with legal proofs to claim that the true caliph of the age was al-Mustaẓhir Billāh. Meanwhile, in chapter ten, he gives counsel to the caliph, listing the religious duties which the latter must observe to remain worthy of merit.

a. Chapter Nine.

In chapter nine, al-Ghazzālī, states his intention to accomplish three things: validate the imamate of al-Mustaẓhir; acknowledge the validity of his appointment of governors and *qāḍīs* (judges); and to proclaim him as God's vicegerent over men, thereby establishing obedience to him as a duty incumbent on all Muslims.[9] To that end, he decries the corrupted doctrine of most other writers on the imamate. This doctrine denies the existence of a caliph, since no candidate possesses all the requisite qualities for holding the office of imam. As such, those who assumed the latter title would only violate the conditions of the imamate,

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caliph was to commission from al-Ghazālī, as one of the leading theologians of the age, a work of polemic against these Ismā'īlīs whose sophisticated propaganda was exerting growing appeal amongst the intelligentsia and the common people alike."

See Hillenbrand, "Islamic Orthodoxy," p. 82.

[8]Al-Ghazzālī, Abū Ḥāmid, *Faḍā'iḥ al-Bāṭinīyah,* ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān Badawī (Cairo: Dār al-Qaumīyah lil-Ṭibā'ah wa-al-Nashr, 1964), pp. 195-225. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, pp. 280-286.

[9]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 169. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 274.

due to their lack of worth or qualifications.[10] This condemnation shows that al-Ghazzālī accepted the overall theory of the imamate.

Al-Ghazzālī argues that this corrupted doctrine constitutes an attack on law-based judgement (*aḥkām,* prescriptions) and an explicit confirmation of their inoperativeness (*ta'ṭīl*) and neglect (*'ihmāl*). It also negates the validity of all administrative posts, the soundness of *qāḍīs'* judgments and the weight of God's rights and prescriptions in Muslim life,[11] all on the grounds of the absence of the imam. Consequently, the affairs of the people are left unadministered and God's laws unexecuted. It becomes a religious duty, therefore, to right this state of corruption.[12]

Having exposed the corruption of the foregoing group, he proceeds with an argument justifying al-Mustaẓhir's claims to the imamate. Syllogistically, he argues;

> There must be an imam in every age.
> But only he [al-Mustaẓhir] is qualified for the office.
> Therefore, he is the rightful imam.[13]

Al-Ghazzālī argues that there must be an imam in every age and that all Muslims agree upon the necessity of the imamate. He affirms the principle of the necessity of this institution in every age as indisputable and based on the unanimmous consensus (*ijmā'*) of all Muslims.

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[10]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 169. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 275.

[11]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 170. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment* p. 275.

[12]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 170. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 275.

[13]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 170. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 275.

The only points open to dispute, he says, are the qualifications of the individual.

However there was one man who, according to al-Ghazzālī, questioned this principle, even though all knowledgeable men agreed upon his falseness. This man was 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Kaysān,[14] who is also identified as 'Abu Bakr al-'Aṣam, and one of the persons who held that the imamate is void in the event of civil war (*fī ayyām al-fitnah*) or disagreement among the people (*ikhtilāf al-nās*). Without the general consensus (*ijmā'*) of the *ummah*, 'Abd al-Raḥmān contended, the imamate is void.[15]

Al-Ghazzālī put forward two points to justify the necessity of the imamate. First, the example of the early companions who acted hastily to set about appointing an imam immediately after the death of the Prophet Muḥammad (PBUH).[16] Although their action could have had a negative impact,[17] their urgent attention to appointing an imam served as

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[14]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 170. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 275. Cf. also al-Ghazzālī, *al-Iqtiṣād fī'l-i'tiqād* ed. by I. A. Çubukçü and H. Atay (Ankara: Nur Matbaasi, 1962), p. 234, n. 1.

[15]Shahrastānī's commentary on the margins of Ibn Hazm's *al-Faṣl fī al-milal wa al-'ahwā' wa al-niḥal* vol. 1-2 (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1986), p. 93. Abu Bakr al-'Aṣam also holds that the Qur'ān is a created thing (*jism makhlūk*) and denies the accidents (*'arāḍ aṣlan*) and the attributes of God originally. See al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 170, no. 4. Cf. Shahrastānī on the margins of Ibn Hazm, *al-Faṣl fī al-milal*, p. 96.

[16]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 171. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 275.

[17]Due to this hasty action, the Muslims came eventually to be divided into two large sects, the Sunnites and Shi'ites. For an account of this development see, among others, Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1985); Āl-Kāshif al-Ghiṭā, 'Allamah Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥusayn, *The Origins of Shī'ite Islam and its Principles* (Qumm: Ansariyan Publications, 1982); Dwight, Donaldson, *The Shi'ite Religion* (London: Luzac & Co., 1933); Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 3 vols. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974); al-Muẓaffar, Muḥammad Riḍā, *The Faith of Shi'a Islam*

a valuable lesson in the the importance and necessity of the office. Second, he argues that the duty of defending and championing the faith is necessary and incumbent upon Muslims. In order to preserve order, he continues, there must be a responsible individual to guide men and to thwart danger, including anarchy.[18] For this reason, al-Ghazzālī feels that the imamate is an indispensable office for Muslim society.

In proclaiming al-Mustaẓhir as the qualified imam, al-Ghazzālī points to two facts which discredit the Bāṭinites, thereby disqualifying them from eligibility for the imamate.[19] First, their doctrines and their imam are guilty of innovation and deviation (*bid'a*) at the very least, and unbelief (*kufr*) at the most. This includes the affirmation of two pre-eternal Gods, a concept to which, according to al-Ghazzālī, all the Bāṭinite sects agreed. This falsehood disqualifies them from the imamate by virtue of their not meeting the key conditions of the office: correctness of belief and soundness of religion.[20] Second, the Bāṭinites are at fault for rejecting, by false interpretation, many of the eschatological details

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(Qumm: Ansariyan Publications, 1982); and 'Allāmah S. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī, *Shi'ite Islam*, tr., and ed. S. Hossein Nasr (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1975).

[18]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 171. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 275.

[19]The Bāṭinites claimed that only their master (who occupied the post of caliph in Egypt) was qualified for the imamate and that all mankind had to render obedience and submission to him. He was the infallible imam and the only person qualified to interpret the *sharī'ah,* and all men had to learn from him. See al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, pp. 46, 73. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, pp. 202, 218. See also Hillenbrand, "Islamic Orthodoxy," p. 85.

[20]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 172. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 276.

revealed in the Qur'ān.[21] How then can a person, whose falsehood in religion is clear, argues al-Ghazzālī, be fit for the imamate? Given these falsifications, the only eligible candidate is al-Mustaẓhir, because his views on dogma were sound.

Moreover, al-Ghazzālī employs the idea of "might makes right" (*Imāmat taqūm bi-al-shawkah*)[22] in strengthening his argument against the Bāṭinites. He states that if, for the sake of argument, the leader of the Bāṭinites were fit for the imamate, his claims would still lack support from the people. By contrast, obedience and submission to al-Mustaẓhir were demonstrated by all the leaders and *ulamā'* of the age and the masses of men in the furthest East and West, excluding only the Bāṭinites. Thus, he argues that if might is another of the yardsticks for the right to the imamate, then the Bāṭinites' claims must be rejected.[23] It was al-Mustaẓhir who enjoyed the support and allegiance of the majority.

It is also noteworthy that al-Ghazzālī repudiates the very source of the Bāṭinites' claims to the imamate. In chapter seven of this book[24] he argues that the source of the

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[21]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 173. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 276.

[22]This idea was used by the enemies of the Prophet Shu'aib, who was told by the former that they had all power and influence, whereas he was only a poor teacher. They could stone, imprison or do whatever they liked with him. However, they spared him, for the sake of his family. According to A. Yusuf 'Ali what the former understood by power and influence was brute strength. See verse 11:91, *The Holy Qur'ān: Text, Translation and Commentary* tr. and comm. A. Yusuf 'Ali (Maryland: Amana Corp., 1983), p. 539. In Arthur J. Arberry's translation, the verse is 11:93. Please see Arthur J. Arberry, tr., *The Koran* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 222.

[23]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 173. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 276.

[24]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, pp. 132-145. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, pp. 261-264.

imamate is not a textual designation (*naṣṣ*)[25] as contended by the Bāṭinites. The only valid source, he contends, is the choice (*ikhtiyār*) of the people of Islam and their consensus in submission.[26] This is precisely the criterion he employs to justify the imamate of al-Mustaẓhir. If the credentials of the Bāṭinites are proven false, he maintains, the only criterion left is "election."

Realizing that it is impossible to obtain the consensus of all men, al-Ghazzālī reasons that the support of one person can suffice if he is on the side of the multitude, as his consent would represent theirs.[27] He defends this view by referring to the manner in which the first caliph, Abū Bakr, was appointed. He says that when 'Umar swore fealty to Abū Bakr, the latter's imamate was established by the succession of those who followed 'Umar's lead. This process, he argues, was disputed by no split or faction, for the aim of an imam is the uniting

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[25]According to Shī'ite thought, an imam is appointed through the explicit designation (*naṣṣ*) of a preceding imam. The first *naṣṣ* initiated by the Prophet under the divine command or inspiration, had remained in the Ḥusaynid line of imams, having been transmitted successively from 'Alī to al-Ḥasan, and then to al-Ḥusayn, Zayn al-'Ābidīn, al-Bāqir, Ja'far al-Ṣādiq and so on in the 'Alid family. It is said that it was during al-Bāqir's time (son of Zayn al-'Ābidīn) that the idea of *naṣṣ* imamate became widespread amongst the Shī'ites. The process of designation is sometimes referred to as a covenant (*'ahd*) from one to the next. Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, the sixth imam said that each imam knows who is to come after him and so he appoints him as his successor. See Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs: Their History and Doctrines* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 61, 69, and 84; Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), pp. xxi, 37, 39 and 154; M. G. S, Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 1 (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 260.

[26]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 175. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 276.

[27]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 176. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 277.

of views (*jam' shitāt ārā'*).[28] However, the one whose allegiance is followed by the rest must also exercise authority and influence which are recognized and revered by the populace. This he terms *al-shawkah,* which signifies personal power, military power and influence. By asserting this point, he determines that there can be no doubt about al-Mustaẓhir's imamate.[29] Apparently al-Ghazzālī, through his influence, saw himself as performing the role of 'Umar in acknowledging the imamate of al-Mustaẓhir. Because of his influence, the *'ulamā'* and the masses would follow suit.

Al-Ghazzālī admits that the specification of the imamate is reduced to the choice of a single person, and to God's choice and appoinment. If God were not satisfied with it, he continues, He would not make it workable. Although the imam of the Fātimids (the Bāṭinites) had also been successful, it had been proven that they hold false beliefs which automatically, according to al-Ghazzālī, disqualify them from office. The real justification for the choice is in the allegiance and obedience that the imam inspires--a grace and gift of God, unattainable by any human contrivance.[30] This does not happen to the Bāṭinites because they do not appoint their imam by election but by textual designation, which has nothing to do with the consent of the masses.

Al-Ghazzālī lists ten qualities and conditions that an imam must meet, six of them

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[28]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ,* p. 177. Cf. McCarhty, *Freedom and Fulfillment,* p. 277.

[29]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ,* p. 178. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment,* p. 277.

[30]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ,* p. 178. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment,* p. 277.

innate and the remainder acquired (*kasb*). The six innate qualities are: (1) *al-bulūgh,* maturity; (2) *al-'aql,* intelligence; (3) *al-ḥurriyah,* freedom; (4) male sex; (5) *nasab Quraysh,* descent from Quraysh; and (6) *salāmah ḥāssat al-sam' wa l-baṣar,* soundness of hearing and sight. The four acquired qualities are: (1) *al-najdah,* intrepidity (bravery, courage; fitness for combat, war or fighting); (2) *al-kifāyah,* competence; (3) *al-'ilm,* knowledge; and (4) *al-wara'*, piety.[31] Al-Ghazzālī claims that the first six qualities were present in al-Mustaẓhir.[32]

For the four acquired qualities, al-Ghazzālī simply shows that al-Mustaẓhir fulfilled all the requisites.[33] However, the third quality, i.e. knowledge (*al-'ilm*) is dismissed by al-Ghazzālī as a rank of "private personal effort in legal reasoning" (*al-ijtihād*), which, while indispensable to the imam,[34] can be met by consultation with the learned. The imam

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[31]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 181. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 278.

[32]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 180. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 278.

[33]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, pp. 182-194. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 278.

[34]Pertaining to the third requisite i.e. knowledge (*al-'ilm*) of the imam, al-Ghazzālī says that the *'ulamā'* are agreed that the imamate is only for one who has attained the rank of personal effort (*mujtahid*) and can therefore give a legal decision (*fatwā*) in the science of the Law. He says that nobody could claim that this requisite is present nor can he deny that it is a requisite. However, if one denies it, he only departs from the past *ulamā'* and not from the Prophet. He says that Muḥammad never mentioned that knowledge is a requisite for the imamate; in fact the only requisite the latter mentioned is descent from Quraysh. He maintains that the requisites of the imamate must be proved, and it is either by the text of Muḥammad (*ḥadīth*) or by reasoning based on the community's welfare (*maṣlaḥah*) that this may be achieved. Without such a text referring to knowledge, therefore, al-Ghazzālī felt entitled to compromises on this requisite for the imamate of al-Mustaẓhir. Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 193. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 279.

can "know" by his own reasoning or by that of others.[35] In principle, he concedes, one ought to prefer a person of independent personal judgement over one who follows others. But if the latter is chosen, and has the support and the submission of all, and there is no Qurayshite *mujtahid* (one who can exercise independent personal effort in legal reasoning) who possesses all the requisites, the choice is valid.[36] However, if there were a qualified Qurayshite, and the deposition of the other would lead to various exigencies, insurrections and disturbances, it would not be prudent to depose the incumbent and replace him with the qualified Qurayshite.[37] He admits that knowledge adds lustre to the imamate, but argues that the result sought from the office is to extinguish dissension. This function, he warns, is not to be sacrificed for more precision in differentiating between arguments or in conforming to the views of others.[38] Two conclusions can be derived from this argument of al-Ghazzālī's: first, personal knowledge (private personal effort in legal reasoning or *al-ijtihād*) is not something indispensable to the imam; and second, the need for the imamate is paramount in view of the need for an ordered society.

Thus al-Ghazzālī's proviso that an unqualified imam could be removed was only theoretical in nature. In practical terms, he simply could not be deposed. Al-Ghazzālī was

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[35]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 193. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 279.

[36]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 193. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 279.

[37]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 193. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 279.

[38]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 193. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 279.

the first to state this conclusion in such clear terms.[39] Dissension against al-Mustaẓhir was therefore unlawful, and the *'ulamā'* were bound to acknowledge the formal validity and legality of his imamate. All that remained for al-Mustaẓhir was to settle problems through consultation with the *'ulamā'*. In fact, al-Ghazzālī allowed for the possibility that the imam who is young might time to attain a rank of independence in the science of the law later on.[40]

b. Chapter Ten.

This chapter is comprised of al-Ghazzālī's advice to al-Mustaẓhir. In it, al-Ghazzālī counsels the imam on his twofold duties. The first group of duties is connected with knowledge (*'ilm*) and is theoretical in nature, while the second group is connected with action (*'amal*) and is practical.[41] Al-Ghazzālī says that the commander of the faithful (imam, caliph) is religiously bound to read and reflect on this chapter continually. If God aids him in striving towards mastery of at least one of these sets of duties, even though it should take a year, it would signify success and ultimate bliss (*sa'āda quṣwā*).[42]

The duties that are connected with knowledge (*'ilm*) are four in number: (a) the imam must know why man was created and for what purpose; (b) he must recognize that

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[39]Deposing an imam is impossible during this time because it would cause various vexations, insurrections and disturbances, resulting in chaos and disharmony in the society. See McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 279.

[40]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 194. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 279.

[41]The duties which are connected with knowledge are four, and the duties connected with action eleven. For details see al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, pp. 195-225. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 280-286.

[42]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 195. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 280.

it is imperative for his happiness in the next life that he has piety (godliness), and that the place of this piety is located in the heart; (c) the imam should know that being God's vicegerent (caliph) over men carries responsibilities for the betterment of those men; and that only he has the capability to better the people of the world, his town, his household, and himself; and finally, (d) he must recognize that man is comprised of angelic and bestial qualities.[43]

The duties which are connected with *action* demonstrate al-Ghazzālī's conception of a truly Islamic ideal for politics and government.[44] First, the imam is advised to be just in dealing with his subjects. If he deviates from the path of justice (*'adl*), his subjects may regard him as a ruler who has usurped power.[45] His aim should be to gain the approval and love of men in a way which conforms to the law. Obedience to him is incumbent only when he has brought men into conformity with the law.[46] Moreover, he should solicit, and be grateful for, the counsel of the *'ulamā'* (the learned), as well as profit from the admonitions of the rightly guided caliphs and those of religious elders (*mawā'iẓ mashāyikh al-dīn*) to

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[43]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 201. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, pp. 284ff.

[44]According to McCarthy, this portion on duty (action: *'amal*) is similar to that found in another work of al-Ghazzālī's, i.e., *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*, which has been translated by F. R. C. Bagley into English. See al-Ghazzālī, *al-Tibr al-masbūk fī naṣīḥat al-mulūk*, ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad Damaj (Beirut: al-Mu'asassah al-Jāmi'īyah lil-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr wa al-Tauzī', 1987), pp. 109-140. Cf. al-Ghazzālī, *Ghazālī's Book of Counsel for Kings (Naṣīhat al-Mulūk)*, tr. F. R. C. Bagley (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 12-31.

[45]Hillenbrand, "Islamic Orthodoxy," p. 91.

[46]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 206. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 286; Hillenbrand, "Islamic Orthodoxy," p. 91.

bygone princes.[47]

Furthermore, the imam is also counselled to live in piety. He is advised to forfeit comfort, luxury and indulgence in food and clothing. He should ensure that his office facilitates worship and seize every opportunity to serve God through humility, justice, empathy and sincere counsel to Muslims.[48] The imam is reminded that the imamate is a formidable post: it can lead to good or to unsurpassed misery. Kindness in all matters should be more predominant in the imam than harshness. While he is in power he must temper his actions with mercy, clemency, good conduct and restraint.[49]

Al-Ghazzālī's approach, in this chapter, is similar to that of his other works in that he quotes from the Qur'ān and *ḥadīth* and the sayings of the rightly guided caliphs to buttress his arguments.

3. *Al-Iqtiṣād fī'l-i'tiqād*

This book was written in 488/1095 while al-Ghazzālī was still teaching in Baghdad.[50] It was compiled just after *al-Mustaẓhiri* and before *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn.* This book is said to have been called al-Ghazzālī's "chief theological work" and has received considerable scholarly attention, forming the basis of many of the generalizations made about his political

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[47]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 212. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 286.

[48]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 203. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 286.

[49]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 220. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 286.

[50]Hourani, "A Revised Chronology," p. 294. Cf. Hillenbrand, "Islamic Orthodoxy," p. 87.

theory.[51]

Political Contents of *Kitāb al-Iqtiṣād fi'l-i'tiqād.*

The political content of this book is concentrated in chapter three, entitled "On the imamate."[52] Only the first two sections of this chapter are relevant to this discussion, while the third section explains the belief of the *ahl al-Sunna* [the People of the (established) Custom] in the companions of the Prophet Muḥammad and the Rightly Guided Caliphs. In section one, al-Ghazzālī emphasizes the need for an imam. He argues that this need is not dictated by reason but by revelation,[53] the same argument put forward by al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058).[54] Al-Ghazzālī employs a syllogism to support his argument. In his words:

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[51]Hillenbrand, "Islamic Orthodoxy," p. 87.

[52]Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Iqtiṣād fi'l-i'tiqād,* ed. by I. A. Çubukçü and H. Atay (Ankara: Nur Matbaasi, 1962), p. 234.

[53]Ibid., p. 234.

[54]Abu'l-Ḥasan 'Ali b. Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb al-Baṣrī al-Baghdādī al-Māwardī was regarded as one of the greatest and most learned jurists of his time. Because of his work *al-Aḥkām al-sulṭānīyah wa al-wilāyāh al-dīnīyah,* he is looked on as the first Muslim to have developed Islamic political science in the modern sense of the term. He was a Shafi'ite, like al-Ghazzālī. For his views on the the imamate, see Māwardī, *al-Aḥkām al-sulṭānīyah wa al-wilāyāh al-dīnīyah,* ed. Khālid 'Abd al-Laṭīf (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1990). Among other works on his views, see Sherwani, *Studies*, pp. 87-112; Hamilton A. R. Gibb, "Al-Māwardī's Theory of the Khilāfah", *Islamic Culture*, vol. 11, no. 3 (1937), pp. 291-302; Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, *Political Thought in Medieval Islam: An Introductory Outline* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp. 27-38; Hamilton A. R. Gibb, *Studies on the Civilization of Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 151-162; M. M. Sharif, ed., *A History of Muslim Philosophy* vol. 1 (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1963), pp. 717-732; A. al-Baghdādī, "Al-Māwardī's Contribution to Islamic Political Thought," *Islamic Culture,* vol. 58, no. 4 (October 1984), pp. 327-331; Qamar-ud-Din Khan, "Al-Māwardī's Theory of the State," *Iqbal*, vol. 3, no. 3 (Jan. 1955), pp. 39-86; and Muhammad Nafis, "The Concept of the Imamate in the Works of al-Māwardī" (M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1993).

Good ordering of religion was an aim of the Prophet (*ṣāḥib al-shar'*);
good ordering of religion is brought about only by an imam who is obeyed;
therefore, the setting up of an imam, who is obeyed, is necessary (obligatory).[55]

Realizing that the middle term, i.e. that a good ordering of religion is incumbent upon the presence of an imam who is obeyed, might be disputed as un-Islamic, al-Ghazzālī defends it with another syllogism. He says;

Good ordering of religion (*al-dīn*) is brought about only by good ordering of this world (*al-dunyā*);
good ordering of this world is brought about only by an imam who is obeyed;
therefore, good ordering of religion is brought about only by an imam who is obeyed.[56]

In upholding this syllogism, al-Ghazzālī provides a clear indication of what he means by the word *"al-dunyā."* He admits that his definition of the word is not equivalent to that in common use.[57] His definition implies basic needs, such as food, clothing, shelter and health. These, he maintains, are the preconditions of life.[58]

Furthermore, Al-Ghazzālī admits that worldly security is essential. If one is busy defending oneself and one's family against tyranny or in search of a livelihood, he reasons, no time can be devoted to the quest for knowledge or worship; which are the only means of

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[55]Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Iqtiṣād*, pp. 234-235.

[56]Ibid., p. 235.

[57]Al-Ghazzālī says that to most people the world (*al-dunyā*) denotes the opposite of religion (*dīn*), and that the preoccupation with promoting it will lead to the destruction of religion. This meaning includes excessive enjoyment of this world's pleasures. Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Iqtiṣād*, p. 235.

[58]Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Iqtiṣād*, p. 235.

attaining true felicity in the hereafter.[59] In other words, if there is no security in this world -- which can, in turn, guarantee a commitment to knowledge and worship -- one cannot gain bliss in the next. This argument, i.e., the need for an ordered society, is the same as in the *al-Mustaẓhirī*.[60]

As an exemple of "disorder," al-Ghazzālī points to the climate of strife which erupts on the death of sultans (*salāṭīn*) and imams. If no immediate appointment is made to replace him with another sultan who is obeyed (*sulṭān muṭa'*), then, he argues, discord will prevail and the sword will take precedence.[61] In short, the masses will face a great ordeal. A situation such as this would preclude anyone from devoting himself exclusively to the acquisition of knowledge and worship. To al-Ghazzālī, "Religion (*al-dīn*) and authority (*sulṭāna*) are twins" and "Religion is a foundation and the *sulṭān* its guardian (*ḥāris*); a thing which has no foundation will fall and that which has no guardian will be lost."[62]

Al-Ghazzālī concludes his arguments by maintaining that a reasonable man cannot dispute the fact that human beings -- because of their different natures, the inherent diversity of their passions and the divergence of their opinions -- would engage in quarrels and wars,

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[59]Ibid., p. 236.

[60]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 193. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 279.

[61]Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Iqtiṣād*, p. 236.

[62]Ibid., p. 236.

and that the victor would destroy the loser if left to his own devices. From this stems the necessity of appointing an imam.

The second part of chapter two deals with the way in which a person may be appointed to the imamate. Al-Ghazzālī stresses certain properties (*khāṣṣ*) which a person must possess and which differentiate him from the rest, prior to his appointment as imam. These properties are of two kinds, namely, properties that one possesses in connection with the self (*fī nafsihi*), and properties which are connected with other people (*min jihat ghayrihi*). The properties he mentions first are *al-kifāyah* (competence), *al-'ilm* (knowledge), *al-wara'* (piety), and descent from the Quraysh.[63] These properties are the same as the qualities cited in the *al-Mustaẓhirī*.[64]

Al-Ghazzālī maintains that if there is more than one Qurayshite descendant who possesses the first set of properties, then the need arises to evaluate them against the second set, namely: being appointed to govern (*tawliya*) or; being entrusted with authority (*tafwīḍ*) by other people. The ways in which a person is given this authority are, he continues, threefold: through designation (*naṣṣ*) by the Prophet Muḥammad; through appointment by the ruling imam of a suitable successor from among his sons or from among the Quraysh; or through entrusting authority (*tafwīḍ*) in a suitable individual by a person vested with military power (*dhū shawkah*) whose lead is followed by others such that they

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[63]Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Iqtiṣād*, p. 237.

[64]The first three properties are found among the acquired qualities, while the last property, i.e., descent from Quraysh, is found among the innate qualities. See above page 28 of this chapter.

participate in giving fealty to the appointed imam.[65]

Of the three methods of conferring appointment, only the last method interested al-Ghazzālī. The first two methods are not given the same weight, and are only alluded to in brief.[66] The last method, an act of allegiance by one man with military power (*dhū shawkah*), is sufficient to appoint a person to the imamate.[67] This is due to the support and respect which the former enjoys among the people. Moreover, his actions meet the demands of the imamate itself, that is, to unite the divergent views and interests of men. The imam is obeyed because allegiance is, in turn, given by the man who is obeyed (*shakhṣ muṭā'*).[68] Furthermore, if more than one man is vested with such military power, they must agree with one another and pay allegiance to the appointed imam, for only then can obedience be secured.[69]

In case only one Qurayshite, who is obeyed and followed (*muṭā' muttabi'*), appoints

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[65]Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Iqtiṣād*, p. 238.

[66]As regards the first method, al-Ghazzālī mentions that the Prophet had never designated (*lam yanuṣṣ huwa*) his successor nor had the four rightly guided caliphs, thereby refuting the theory of designation, see al-Ghazzālī, *al-Iqtiṣād*, p. 241. W. Montgomery Watt comments that the first two methods are simply mentioned for the sake of completeness, and then dismissed. See W. M. Watt, "Reflections," p. 19.

[67]This view is similar to the views of al-Juwayni (d. 1085 A. D.); see Watt, "Reflections," p. 15; for comparable views by al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058), see Ann K. S. Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam: An Introduction to the Study of Islamic Political Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 90.

[68]Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Iqtiṣād*, p. 238.

[69]Ibid., p. 238.

himself as imam and has *shawkah* (military power), *kifāyah* (competence) and the necessary attributes of an imam, his candidacy is valid and it is incumbent upon people to swear obedience to him. He will be able to win the allegiance of the important men (*akābir*) of the age, and of those who loose and bind (*ahl al-ḥa ll wa'l - 'aqd*).[70] The latter are those who are qualified to act on behalf of the *jamā'a* (community of believers), as they form an *ijmā'* (consensus) in electing a caliph or imam. In medieval political theory, their main function was contractual, namely, to offer the office of caliphate to the most qualified person and, upon his acceptance, to administer to him an oath of allegiance (*bay'ah*). They were also entrusted with deposing him should he fall short in fulfilling his duties. The members of the *ahl al-ḥall wa'l-'aqd* must be Muslim, of age, just, free, and capable of exercising *ijtihād* (private personal effort in legal reasoning), and be jurists of the highest caliber.[71] On the number of members making up this body, scholars disagree; this is because there is no text (Qur'ānic verse or *ḥadīth*) about it. Al-Māwardī, for instance, is of the view that one person is enough because this reflects the historical reality in which a caliph or an imam normally designated his successor.[72]

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[70]Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Iqtiṣād*, p. 238.

[71]See Wael Hallaq, "*Ahl al-Ḥall wa-al-'Aqd*," in John L. Esposito, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World*, vol., 1, pp. 53-54. Cf. E. I. J. Rosenthal, "The Role of the State in Islam: Theory and the Medieval Practice," *Der Islam*, vol., 50, no. 1 (April 1973), p. 7.

[72]Al-Māwardī maintains that since the caliph is appointed by the *ahl al-ḥall wa-al-'aqd*, he must enjoy the same qualifications required of the members of the appointing body; therefore he himself must be deemed its most qualified member, who alone might designate a successor. Due to this fact he maintains that the allegiance of the *ahl al-ḥall wa-al-'aqd* was a subsidiary process,

Al-Ghazzālī asks whether a man who becomes an imam and possesses all the conditions (*shurūṭ*) of the imamate, except knowledge, but also regularly consults with the *'ulamā'* and follows their advice, should be deposed or obeyed. He holds that the man must be deposed and replaced by someone who fulfills all the necessary conditions, provided that his deposition and replacement do not engender battle (*qitāl*). Otherwise, he must be obeyed and his imamate validated. He reasons that the disadvantages of having an imam who cannot give legal decisions are less than those of having an imam who can render legal decisions but whose entry to the office would spark civil war.[73]

In defending the above argument al-Ghazzālī says that it is not a matter of compromise which makes him hold to the view that the office is an imperative for Muslim society. He provides an analogy in support of his view: the consumption of carrion is prohibited, but death (from starvation) is a worse proposition (*tanāwal al-mayta maḥẓūr, walākin al-maut ashad minh*).[74] He likens this analogy to a situation where one is faced with two possibilities. If one says that there is no imam for lack of a qualified person, then all efforts at administration are invalid and ordinary people are doing what is wrong because the legal underpinnings of their actions are void. Conversely, if one says that there is an imam who is validated by the necessity of the situation (though he might lack one of the

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and resorted to only in cases where the caliph failed to appoint an heir. See Hallaq, "*Ahl al-Ḥall,*" pp. 53-54.

[73]Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Iqtiṣād*, p. 239.

[74]Ibid., p. 240.

requisites), then there is administration and validity in action, and the public interest (*maṣlaḥah*) of the *ummah* (community of believers) is preserved. Therefore, he says, the people should opt for the latter choice. Again, he puts forth a view that defends an imperfect imam.

4. *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn.*

This book is believed to have been written and completed in 489-90/1096-97.[75] It is acclaimed as al-Ghazzālī's most valuable and comprehensive work. Some people even go so far as to say that it rivals the Qur'ān[76] in outlining, for the devout Muslim, every aspect of worship (*'ibādah*), conduct in daily life, purification of heart, and progress along the mystic path.[77] In part, its popularity may be attributed to its accessible style for average readers who have an ordinary knowledge of Arabic literature. It is also free of linguistic ambiguity, idiomatic and technical terminology[78] and its authenticity is beyond doubt.[79]

Political Content of *Kitāb Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn.*

Al-Ghazzālī's political ideas are found in chapter five of book fourteen, namely the

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[75]This was during the early period of al-Ghazzālī's retirement from teaching in Baghdad. The book was written in the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus and at the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. See Hourani, "A Revised Chronology," p. 297.

[76]Hassan Muhammad, *The Influence of al-Ghāzalī upon Islamic Jurisprudence and Philosophy* (Beirut: Dar-el-Jil, 1993), p. 42.

[77]Ibid., p. 40.

[78]A. H. Muhiyuddin, "Al-Ghazali: Recollection of his Works", *Islamic Literature*, vol. 6, no. 1 (1954), p. 58.

[79]Hillenbrand, "Islamic Orthodoxy," ibid., p. 90.

Book of what is licit and what is illicit (*Kitāb al-ḥalāl wa al-ḥarām*). In brief, he discusses the imamate and its relationship to the military warlords.[80] At the same time, he also develops his views on the sultanate. An unjust, ignorant sultan (*al-ṣulṭān al-ẓālim al-jāhil*), who is sustained by military power (*shawkah*) and whose deposition would engender civil war (*fitna thā'ira*), should, he reasons, be left in power, for obedience is due to him, as it is due to an *amīr*.[81]

Al-Ghazzālī maintains that the caliphate (*khilāfah*) is given contractually to the member of the 'Abbāsid family who is charged with its functions, and that authority (*wilāya*) in the various lands is legally exercised (*nāfidha*) by sultans who pay allegiance

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[80]Al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn,* ed. Zayn al-Dīn Abū al-Faḍl 'Abd al-Rahīm ibn Ḥusayn, vol. 2 (Cairo: al-Maktabah al-Tijārīyah al-Kubrā, n.d.), pp. 140-141. There are numerous English translations of this work. However, only two of them claim to cover the entire forty books of the *Iḥyā'*, one by al-Haj Maulana Fazul-ul-Karim, and the other by Bankey Behari. Of these two translations, the first constitutes four volumes, while the second is in one volume only and seems to be more a summary of the *Iḥyā'* because it discusses every subject in very brief terms. See al-Ghazzālī, *Imam Gazzali's Ihya Ulum-id-Din*, tr. Fazul-ul-Karim, 4 vols. (Lahore: Sind Sagar Academy, 1971), and al-Ghazzālī, *The Revival of Religious Sciences by al-Ghazāli*, tr. Bankey, Behari (Surrey: Sufi Publishing Co. Ltd., 1972). The rest of the translations are of individual books, and they include: *Al-Ghazālī: The Remembrance of Death and the Afterlife, Book XL of Iḥyā'*, tr. T. J. Winter (Cambridge: The Islamic Text Society, 1989); Martin Stanley, Stern, "Al-Ghazzālī on Repentance: Book Thirty-One of the Revival of the Religious Science," Ph. D. Diss., University of California, 1977; *Marriage and Sexuality in Islam: A Translation of al-Ghazālī's Book on the Etiquette of Marriage from the Iḥyā'*, tr. Madelain Farah (Utah: University of Utah Press, 1984); *Al-Ghazzālī, The Mysteries of Almsgiving: A Translation from the Arabic with Notes of the Kitāb Asrār al-Zakāh of al-Ghazzālī's Iḥyā'*, tr. Nabih Amin Faris (Beirut: The Heidelberg Press, 1966); *The Mysteries of Worship in Islam: Translation with Commentary and Introduction of al-Ghazzālī's Book of the Iḥyā' on the Worship*, tr. Edwin Elliot Calverly (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1977); and *Al-Ghazālī: Invocations and Supplications (Kitāb al-Adhkār wa'l-Da'awāt) Book IX of the Iḥyā'*, tr. K. Nakamura (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1990).

[81]Al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā'*, p. 140.

to the caliph.[82] This simply means that any sultan who holds power, regardless of whether he meets all the requirements, is considered legitimate as long as he pays allegiance to the caliph.

In defining the relationship between sultans and caliph, al-Ghazzālī says that the attributes and conditions (*al-ṣifāt wa al-shurūṭ*) of sultans are meant to safeguard the public welfare (*mazāyā al-maṣāliḥ*). Consequently, if the rulers are decreed as null and void, the interests of public welfare would also be null and void. How then could the source of power be lost in the quest for profit (*ribḥun*)?[83] To al-Ghazzālī the only means of bringing the imamate into being is through the efforts of a sultan who has military power, a condition which was also met by the Fāṭimids. Admitting the sultans' legitimacy is, therefore, a necessity. In his day, authority was only possible through military power (*shawkah*). Anybody to whom the holder of military power might give his allegiance would become caliph, a view that is open to dispute for its oversimplification. In return, whosoever has military power and pays tribute to the caliph in respect of the *khuṭba* -- namely, mentioning the caliph's name during Friday prayers and on the coinage (*sikka*)-- might become sultan, whose orders (*ḥukm*) and judgements (*qaḍā'*) are valid (*nāfidha*) in many corners of the world.[84] Due to its simplicity, this view is even less persuasive.

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[82]Ibid., p. 141.

[83]Ibid., p. 141.

[84]Ibid., p. 141.

In this book al-Ghazzālī maintains that only sultans can appoint the caliph because they have the sole military means of amassing real power. From this premise, he expounds the belief that even if the sultan is unjust and ignorant and yet hard to depose except through civil war, obedience is his due. Such a view, Hillenbrand remarks, is more pessimistic than any expressed ever before,[85] and I agree with her.

5. *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*.[86]

This book is believed to have been written in Ṭūs, either immediately before 499/1106 or soon after 502/1109, and is in keeping with the views expressed during the intervening period in Nīshāpūr, when the author was working in a more urban, political environment.[87] There are two theories as to whom this book was intended for. In its Arabic manuscript form, the book is addressed to the sultan Muḥammad ibn Malik shāh as "King of the East and West", whereas in the Persian manuscript, as edited by Professor Humā'ī,

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[85]Hillenbrand, "Islamic," p. 90.

[86]This book was originally written in Persian; however, for the purpose of this thesis, its Arabic translation is used, published under the title *al-Tibr al-masbūk fī naṣīḥat al-mulūk* ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad Damaj (Beirut: al-Mu'assasah al-Jāmi'iyah lil-Dirāsāt wa al-Nashr wa al-Tauzī', 1987). It has also been translated into English by F. R. C. Bagley under the title *Book of Counsel for Kings* (*Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk*) (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).

[87]George F. Hourani, "A Revised Chronology," p. 301. However, there is no standard date given by authors for the composition of this book. Hillenbrand for example, says that it was probably written before the author's death, namely in the years 503-5/1109-11; see Hillenbrand, "Islamic," p. 91. Meanwhile, Lambton mentions that it was written some time between 498/1105 and 505/1111. See Lambton, *State and Government*, p. 117. Cf. al-Ghazzālī, *Book of Counsel*, tr. Bagley, p. xvii. Nevertheless, what can be inferred here is that it was composed during the last years of the author's life.

it is addressed to Sanjar, "King of the East", Muḥammad's full brother and ally.[88] Whoever the addressee may have been, it is explicitly intended as a counsel to a sultan. As a result of the doubt which has been cast on the authorship of the second part of this book,[89] this study limits itself to an analysis of part one.

Political content of *Kitāb Nasīḥat al-mulūk.*

The first section of this book is not a theory of politics, but rather, a set of instructions given to a sultan on how he should conduct his relations with God as his creator and his dealings with men as his subjects. The basic teachings contained herein are: that rulership is a gift bestowed by God; and that the ruler will be accountable for it to God on the Day of Judgement.[90]

As a ruler who is directly accountable to God, al-Ghazzālī holds that the sultan must possess a correct faith which is perceived as "God's gift" and as "eternal wealth" (*al-sa'ādah al-mu'abbadah wa al-ni'mah al-mukhalladah*).[91] He likens the gift to a seed of faith which may be nourished with the water of justice and piety until it grows into a tree whose roots reach the bowels of the earth and whose branches touch the clouds of the sky.[92] He sets forth

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[88]Al-Ghazzālī, *Book of Counsel,* tr. Bagley, p. xvii. Cf. Hourani, "A Revised Chronology," p. 301.

[89]See note 1 of this chapter.

[90]Al-Ghazzālī, *Book of Counsel*, tr. Bagley, p. xxxix.

[91]Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Tibr*, p. 94. Cf. al-Ghazzālī, *Book of Counsel*, tr. Bagley, p. 3.

[92]Al-Ghazzālī, *Book of Counsel*, tr. Bagley, p. 4. Cf. Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Tibr*, p. 94, where the text states that the seed may be nourished with the water of obedience (*mā' al-ṭā'a*).

ten principles of the creed which are the roots of the tree of faith.[93] The strength of these roots signifies the strength of the sultan's vertical relationship to God.

As regards his horizontal relations (i.e., his conduct with his subjects), al-Ghazzālī outlines ten principles which are likened to the branches of the tree of faith. These ten principles, admits R. J. McCarthy, provide insight into al-Ghazzālī's thought and spirituality; which may truly be called an Islamic ideal of politics and government.[94]

The first principle expounded by al-Ghazzālī is justice. In explaining this, he says that authority (*wilāyah*) is a great blessing (*ni'mah*), since he who exercises it righteously obtains unsurpassed happiness; but if any ruler fails to do so, he incurs torment surpassed only by the torment of unbelief. This is proven by the tradition of the Prophet of Islam (PBUH) who said: "One day of just rule by an equitable sultan is more meritorious than sixty years of continual worship."[95] He quotes another tradition which relates that on the day of resurrection no shade or shelter shall remain except the shade and shelter of God on High, in which seven persons shall be found. At the head of them would be the sultan who had

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[93]Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Tibr*, pp. 97-105. Cf. al-Ghazzālī, *Book of Counsel*, tr. Bagley, pp. 6-12. This correct belief has been taken from section I of the first 'Pillar' of his *Kīmiyā-yi sa'ādat,* and agrees in content with book II of his *Iḥyā*, on the Articles of Faith. See al-Ghazzālī, *Book of Counsel*, tr. Bagley, p. xxxix.

[94]McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 285. This principle is also found in al-Ghazzālī, *al-Faḍā'iḥ*, pp. 285-286 and in his *Kīmiyā-yi sa'ādat*, see al-Ghazzālī, *Book of Counsel*, tr. Bagley, p. xxxix.

[95]Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Tibr*, p. 109. Cf. al-Ghazzālī, *Book of Counsel*, tr. Bagley, p. 14.

treated his subjects with justice.[96] Apart from being just, the sultan is also reminded that he must discipline his slave-troops (*ghulamān*), companions, servants (*'ummāl*) and officers (*nā'ibān*) and never tolerate unjust conduct from them, for he is not only accountable for his own unjust deeds but also for those of his staff'.[97]

After justice, he mentions the second principle, that the ruler should always be compelled to seek out devout *'ulamā'* (*'ulamā' al-dīn*) and ask them for advice. However, the ruler is warned not to meet with *'ulamā'* of worldly ambitions (*'ulamā' al-sū'*) who might inveigle, flatter and seek to please him in order to gain control over his terrestrial body by stealth and deceit (*al-makr wa al-ḥīla*). Al-Ghazzālī maintains that the devout *'ālim* is not one who has covetous designs on the treasury, but who gives his knowledge in just measure.[98] This principle accords with al-Ghazzālī's compromise over the condition of knowledge for a ruler,[99] as the latter is advised to turn to devout *'ulamā'* for counsel.

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[96]Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Tibr*, p. 109. Cf. al-Ghazzālī, *Book of Counsel*, tr. Bagley, p. 14. The other six persons are: (i) the young man who grows up in the worship of God; (ii) the man who lives in the bazaar but whose heart is in the mosque; (iii) two men who make friends with each other for God's sake; (iv) the man from whose eyes tears rain down when he remembers God and is alone; (v) the man who is sought after by a beautiful and wealthy woman but tells (her) 'I fear God'; and (vi) the man who gives charity with his right hand in such a way that his left hand does not know of it.

[97]Al-Ghazzālī, *Al-Tibr*, p. 127. Cf. idem, *Book of Counsel*, tr. Bagley, p. 23.

[98]Al-Ghazzālī, *Al-Tibr*, p. 118. Cf. idem, *Book of Counsel*, tr. Bagley, p. 19.

[99]The compromise made by al-Ghazzālī on the requirement of knowledge as a quality of the ruler is evident in several of his works. In *al-Mustaẓhirī* for instance, when dealing with the requisites of the imamate, he maintains that these must be proved either by a *ḥadīth* from the Prophet Muḥammad or by reasoning on the basis of the good for which the imamate is sought. He says that the only text (*ḥadīth*) is about descent from Qurasyh- *al-A'immah min Quraysh*- [Imām

The rest of the principles are the qualities and actions which al-Ghazzālī demands of the sultan and are, generally, of an ethical nature:[100] the king is to overcome pride;[101] he should imagine himself in the position of the subjects; he should do nothing which he would not wish to be done to himself;[102] he should not treat with contempt those who come to him in need;[103] he is to avoid luxury;[104] as far as possible he should show compassion to all;[105] and, finally, he should act in conformity with the *sharī'ah* in striving to satisfy his subjects.[106]

Having mentioned the roots and the branches of the tree of faith for the sultan, al-

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Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad* (Dār al-Fikr: al-Ṭabā'at wa al-Nashr wa al-Tauzī', 1994), vol., 4, p. 259 and vol., 7, p. 182], meaning that there is no text about knowledge. See above note 34 of this chapter. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 279. Another occasion is in the *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn;* here again he compromises over the requirement of knowledge for a sultan when he says even an unjust and ignorant sultan must be left in power and that obedience is due to him should deposing him run the risk of starting civil war. See al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā'*, p. 140.

[100]Lambton, *State and Government*, p. 119.

[101]Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Tibr*, p. 131. Cf. idem, *Book of Counsel*, tr. Bagley, p. 25. Cf. also Lambton, *State and Government*, p. 119.

[102]Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Tibr*, p. 136. Cf. idem, *Book of Counsel*, tr. Bagley, p. 28. Cf. also Lambton, *State and Government*, p. 120.

[103]Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Tibr*, p. 137. Cf. idem, *Book of Counsel*, tr. Bagley, p. 29. Cf. also Lambton, *State and Government*, p. 120.

[104]Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Tibr*, p. 138. Cf. idem, *Book of Counsel*, tr. Bagley, p. 29. Cf. also Lambton, *State and Government*, p. 120.

[105]Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Tibr*, p. 138. Cf. idem, *Book of Counsel*, tr. Bagley, p. 30. Cf. also Lambton, *State and Government*, p. 120.

[106]Al-Ghazzālī, *Al-Tibr*, p. 139,140. Cf. idem, *Book of Counsel*, tr. Bagley, p. 30,31. Cf. also Lambon, *State and Government*, p. 120.

Ghazzālī then explains the two springs (*'aynayn*) which water (*mashrab*) it. The first spring is knowledge of this lower world which, he says, is not a fixed abode, for the ultimate home (*waṭan*) of man transcends it in the hereafter.[107] He then includes ten analogies to describe the ugliness of this world.[108] The second spring is knowledge of the last breath (*nafs al-'ākhir*) which is illustrated through five anecdotes[109].

This book contains many references to the Prophets, and anecdotes and sayings from the earliest caliphs, such as 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, 'Umar 'Abd al-'Azīz, 'Alī, Hārūn al-Rashīd and al-Manṣūr as well as sayings attributed to Jesus. As its title suggests, the thrust of this book has nothing to do with the caliphate or the imamate. However, one still finds echoes of his earlier concerns, such as in his insistence upon the importance of knowledge when he advises the sultan to frequent the *'ulamā'* for their counsel. The same insistence is a pervasive theme in his previous books. With such insistence, al-Ghazzālī consolidates a new institution, namely, the *'ulamā'*. Al-Ghazzālī places the latter above the imamate and the sultanate, who must in turn rely on the *'ulamā'* for counsel. This makes the *'ulamā'* very influential in society, and it was to the former that al-Ghazzālī and his colleagues belonged.

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[107]Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Tibr*, p. 142. Cf. idem, *Book of Counsel*, tr. Bagley, p. 32.

[108]Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Tibr*, p. 144-155. Cf. al-Ghazzālī, *Book of Counsel*, tr. Bagley, p. 33-38.

[109]Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Tibr*, p. 155-169. Cf. al-Ghazzālī, *Book of Counsel*, tr. Bagley, p. 39-44.

Having studied their political content (i.e., on the imamate and the sultanate), we may now look at the differences to be found in these books. The differences are manifested where audience and motive of composition are concerned. The *al-Mustaẓhirī*, for example, is aimed at the caliph and the *'ulamā'* who had the intellectual and linguistic ability to understand the author's argumentation and his elegant Arabic style. Therefore, its audience was small and select.[110] It was written at the command of the 'Abbāsid caliph al-Mustaẓhir, to highlight the errors of the Bāṭinites, and to justify the rule of its patron.[111] The *al-Iqtiṣād* however, was targeted for a larger audience than *al-Mustaẓhirī* and is not confined to a select group. This is because the author did not write this work with any particular patron in mind,[112] as he had *al-Mustaẓhirī,* and could therefore freely air his views. With such freedom al-Ghazzālī was not confined to discussing the Bāṭinites or to justifying al-Mustaẓhir's imamate. It was composed, as the author himself says, more as preparation for the gnosis (*ma'rifah*) of the Ṣūfī than the usual dogmatic works.[113]

Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn's audience, as Lazarus-Yafeh points out, constituted three possible groups. These were: i.e., the masses, those who could not understand the esoteric hints[114]

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[110]Hillenbrand, "Islamic Orthodoxy," p. 86.

[111]Ibid., p. 82.

[112]Ibid., p. 87.

[113]See William Montgomery Watt, "Al-Ghazālī," in H. A. R. Gibb et al., eds., *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, vol. 2, second ed. (Leiden; New York: E. J. Brill, 1994), p. 1040.

[114]According to Lazarus-Yafeh, the *Iḥyā'* contains esoteric portions that can only be understood by a few chosen readers, whereas the average person might easily be misled by them.

contained in the *Iḥyā'*; the Ṣūfis, i.e., those who did not need these hints; and the *'ulamā'*, i.e., those whom these hints might direct to the right path and for whom they were added to the *Iḥyā'*.[115] However, Lazarus-Yafeh maintains that this book is more suited to the last category, since, according to her, they have the ability to understand and are worthy of this knowledge.

Moreover, the *Iḥyā'* was written, according to Montgomery Watt, as a guide for the devout Muslim on every aspect of religious worship and devotional practice, conduct in daily life, purification of the heart, and advance along the mystic way.[116] Lazarus-Yafeh concurs with this view, noting that al-Ghazzālī wanted to point some of its readers towards the light of true knowledge. However, he did it in a gradual way, hoping to "heal" the spiritual maladies of many of his contemporaries.[117] Moreover, she considers the *Iḥyā'* to be the author's "map" for the gradual education of his worthier readers, designed to impart to them some of the divine secrets[118] so that they may know the truth and sharpen their

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See Hava Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies in Al-Ghazzali* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1975), p. 363. For details on the esoteric aspects of the *Iḥyā'*, see ibid., pp. 366-373.

[115]Ibid., p. 370.

[116]See Watt, "Al-Ghazālī," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, p. 1040.

[117]This condition describes the *'ulamā'* during al-Ghazzālī's professorship in Baghdad, whom he saw as corrupt and exploitative of their position for fame and money as a reward for their scholarly studies. He describes them as ambitious and mercenary, serving the rulers with their knowledge, but not contemplating truth. This realization compelled him to correct and help, or as he puts it, heal them. See Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies*, p. 373. It is said that this corrupt condition was also the cause of his spiritual crisis. Ibid., p. 365.

[118]Ibid., p. 373.

intellect, thereby allowing them to lead a pious life as taught by Islam.

The chronology of composition also contributed to the differences between these books. *Al-Mustaẓhirī* for instance was composed at a time (487/1094) when the threat of the Bāṭinites, who were led by Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ (d. 518/1124), was so palpable in Baghdad.[119] The composition of the book was directly linked to the political climate. Even though *al-Iqtiṣād* was composed slightly later than *al-Mustaẓhirī*, i.e., in 488/1095, one can still classify them both as belonging to the same period, i.e., at the end of the author's professorship in Baghdad. However, *al-Iqtiṣād* differs from the latter in target audience, content and cause of writing.

Furthermore, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* was written during the period of al-Ghazzālī's strict

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[119]Ḥasan al-Ṣabbāḥ was previously a representative of the Fāṭimid *da'wah* in Rayy, who then broke from it due to the dispute over the succession following the death of the Fāṭimid caliph al-Mustanṣir (d. 487/1094). Ḥasan led the Nizārī Ismā'īlī movement, known as the *da'wah al-jadīdah,* as against the *da'wah al-qadīmah* in Egypt. This movement took the name of Nizār (d. 488/1095), al-Mustanṣir's son whose right to the succession was challanged by his brother, al-Musta'lī (d. 495/1101). Ḥasan's activities in Khurasan posed a menace to Seljūq power, as he initiated a policy of open revolt against them. His movement was still seen by al-Ghazzālī as being an extension of the larger Fāṭimid rivalry with the Seljūqs. By the time al-Ghazzālī wrote *al-Mustaẓhirī*, Ḥasan's movement was politically uncontrollable. For details of this story see Carole Hillenbrand, "The Power Struggle between the Seljuqs and the Ismā'ili Movement of Alamūt, 487-518/1094-1124: The Seljuq Perspective," in Farhad Daftary, ed., *Medieval Ismā'ili History and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 205-220. Cf. Farhad Daftary, "Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ and the Origins of the Nizārī Movement," in Farhad Daftary, ed., *Medieval Ismā'ili History and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 181-204. Cf. Farhad Daftary, *The Assassin Legend* (London: I. B Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1994); Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), pp. 50-58, 64-65; Farhad, Daftary, *The Ismā'ilis: Their History and Doctrine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 324-434; Farouk Mitha, "Re-reading of al-Ghazālī: Orthodoxy, Reason and Authority in the *Kitāb al-Mustaẓhirī*" (M.A. Thesis, McGill University), 1993, pp. 31-43.

seclusion in Syria. There, the author led a Ṣūfi life, through which, according to him, one finds truth. In this book he tries to hint to his readers (especially contemporary scholars who were not devoted to the Ṣūfi life), that their lives would only lead them to eternal perdition (*muhlikāt*).[120] The *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk* on the other hand, was composed during the time of the author's second teaching post, at the Niẓāmiyya college of Nīshāpūr, after he was summoned there by Fakhr al-Mulk in 499/1106.[121] Even though its audience differs from that of *al-Mustaẓhirī*, its content is similar to chapter ten of the latter. This similarity across time demonstrates the author's consistency of counsel.[122] Nevertheless, all demonstrate different emphases on the part of al-Ghazzālī. *Al-Mustaẓhirī* is polemical, *al-Iqtiṣād* theological, and *Iḥyā'* concerned with Sufism, while *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk* is a mirror for princes. Regardless of their differences, the political views contained in these books constitute the author's thought on the imamate and the sultanate.

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[120]Lazarus-Yafeh, *Studies*, p. 365. Examples of *muhlikāt* (eternal perdition) include jealousy, hatred, conceit, vanity, hypocrisy and ambition.

[121]Hourani, "A Revised Chronology," p. 301.

[122]Even though its content is similar to that *al-Mustaẓhirī*'s, the *Naṣīḥat's* views however, are not in keeping with those found in the former. For instance their arrangement is greatly at variance with that found in *al-Mustaẓhirī*. The first point of *al-Mustaẓhirī*, i.e., the advice to the ruler that what he would not approve himself he should not approve in his subjects, is numbered as the fifth point of *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*. This is only one example of the many of its kind in the latter. Furthermore, there are two points on the same issue discussed in *al-Mustaẓhirī*, that is number two and ten on counselling the *'ulamā'*, of which only one is found in the *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*, namely point number two. Moreover, there are many anecdotes and *ḥadīths* in the *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk* which are not found in the *al-Mustaẓhirī*. For examples of those digression see al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, pp. 202-225, and idem, *Book of Counsel*, tr. Bagley, pp. 14-31. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, pp. 285-6.

Chapter Three

The Nature of al-Ghazzālī's Political Philosophy

In studying the nature of al-Ghazzālī's political philosophy, this chapter focuses on two aspects. They are: 1) the practicality of his political thought; and 2), its characteristics.

1. Practicality of al-Ghazzālī's Political Thought.

Based on the books discussed above in chapter two, it can be said that al-Ghazzālī's thought on politics involves mainly three subjects, namely, the imamate, the sultanate, and the *'ulamā'*. Each will be studied in terms of their practicality in dealing with the political agenda of his day.

a) The Imamate

It was stated in the previous chapter that al-Ghazzālī contended that there must be an imam in every age, and that this conclusion is dictated not by reason but by religion.[1] The fundamental reason for such a need is that the imam is the source of legitimacy for *qāḍīs* (judges) for those holding administrative posts in the government. Without the imam such officials would be ineffectual. Furthermore, an imam is looked upon as a person who unites all people and one to whom they must give their obedience, so that thereby all divergent

[1]The belief that an imam is necessary for the state to function is not derived from the Qur'ān or the *ḥadīth* but from the unanimous consensus of the Muslims, or *ijmā'*, upon the importance of this office. In Sunnī Islam there are four sources of rulings (*aḥkām*), i.e., the Qur'ān, the *ḥadīth, ijmā'* and *qiyās* (analogy).

views and interests can be harmonized.[2]

The imam is also looked upon as the one who implements the *Sharī'ah* (Islamic law). His absence would result in the laws of God not being executed, leaving the community in a lawless and chaotic state. Al-Ghazzālī maintains that the imam must be a descendant of the Quraysh, as is held by both Sunnī and Shī'ī scholars. He maintains that the lineage requirement was stipulated in the *ḥadīth* known as *al-A'immatu min Quraysh*,[3] which must be taken as proof of this condition. This view is found in three of the four works discussed in the previous chapter.[4]

According to al-Ghazzālī, the candidate for the position of imam must meet several conditions in order to be appointed to the post. He gives these conditions in both his *al-Mustaẓhirī* and *al-Iqtiṣād;* however, they differ slightly between the two works. In the former he presents ten innate and acquired conditions, whereas in the latter he discusses the two kinds of properties required in an imam: those that are connected with the self (*fī nafsihi*) and those that are not connected with the self (*min jihat ghayrihi*). The properties in the second set deal with the ways that an imam may be appointed, including the concept

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[2]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, pp. 170 and 177. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, pp. 272 and 277.

[3]For details of this *ḥadīth*, see Imām Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal, *al-Musnad* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1994), vol. 4, p. 259; vol. 7, p. 182.

[4]In the first two works, i.e., *al-Mustaẓhirī* and *al-Iqtiṣād*, this is mentioned among the conditions which the imam must meet, while in the *Iḥyā'*, it is said that the 'Abbāsid family, i.e., the descendants of the Quraysh, was given the caliphate contractually. See chapter two above, pp. 28, 36 and 42.

that his allegiance to the one who wields military power (*shawkah*) is sufficient for his appointment to the role.[5]

Having learned his views on the imam, let us now look at the situation of the imam of al-Ghazzālī's time. Al-Ghazzālī lived in the time of the 'Abbāsid caliphate, as institution whose power had been considerably weakened during the rising power of the Seljūq sultans. The 'Abbāsid imam was only the titular, while the Seljūq sultan was the *de facto* ruler. The imam served only as a religious symbol whose name was read in the Friday public sermons and written on the *sikka* (coinage), and who was regarded as a symbol of unity. Even though he did not possess the real power, he was seen as the protector of the *sharī'ah* (Islamic law). This position of the imam was the exact opposite of what it used to be, especially during the period of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, when he wielded both *de jure* and *de facto* power.

Although al-Ghazzālī lived during the reigns of more than one imam,[6] it was al-Mustaẓhir (d. 1118) who most influenced his political views on the imamate. This is not only because this caliph commissioned the treatise known as *al-Mustaẓhirī,* but also due to fact that al-Ghazzālī's political views seemed to have developed during his reign. Al-Mustaẓhir acceded to the throne after the death of his father al-Muqtaḍi in 487/1094, when he was only sixteen. Because of his young age he could not meet the condition of *'ilm*

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[5]For the ten conditions in *al-Mustaẓhirī,* see chapter two above, pp. 28-29, and for the properties in *al-Iqtiṣād,* see ibid., pp. 36-37.

[6]See chapter one above, p. 17.

(knowledge of jurisprudence), which called into question his qualifications for the imamate. Therefore, he assigned al-Ghazzālī the task of justifying his right to the title.[7] This is how al-Ghazzālī's views on the imamate began and developed.

After looking at both his ideas and the situation of the imam of his time, we may now turn our attention to how al-Ghazzālī dealt with that situation in practical terms. Realizing that al-Mustaẓhir lacked knowledge, al-Ghazzālī denied that this condition was indispensable. Instead, he argued that there is no *ḥadīth* specifically requiring it,[8] thereby freeing al-Mustaẓhir from the obligation and enabling him instead to seek the counsel of the *'ulamā'* in matters of legal problems and jurisprudence. Although this view contradicted that of the *'ulamā'* of his time, it was practical. He found a way for al-Mustaẓhir to retain the imamate by discrediting the condition of *'ilm*. This was particularly important in a period which witnessed great rivalry between al-Mustaẓhir and the Fāṭimid imam, al-Mustanṣir (d. 487/ 1094), for the office of imamate. Even though the imam does not issue rulings (*aḥkām*) on the basis of his own *ijtihād* (private personal effort in legal reasoning), he can still enforce the laws issued by the *'ulamā'*. Had al-Ghazzālī not supported al-Mustaẓhir, the newly appointed imam would have lacked legal validity, and al-Ghazzālī's view that there must be an imam in every age called into doubt.

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[7]For the purpose behind the composition of *al-Mustaẓhirī*, see chapter two above, p. 22.

[8]Al-Ghazzālī holds that any condition that is set for an imam must be proven by the *ḥadīth*, and mentions that there is no *ḥadīth* that knowledge is one of these. See chapter two above, p. 29, n. 34.

Though al-Ghazzālī managed to solve the problem faced by the caliph al-Mustaẓhir, he was forced to defend an imperfect imam. This accommodative approach resulted in two developments affecting knowledge and its political role. First, he incorporated the *'ulamā'* into the governing system, making them part and parcel of it, if not in fact indispensible to it. Interestingly, their rank seemed to grow to exceed that of the imam himself, as the latter always sought their advice. The subject of the *'ulamā'* will be discussed in greater depth later in this chapter.

Second, by denying that knowledge is one of the conditions for the imam, he degraded the rank of the imam from that of a *mujtahid* (one who exercises independent legal reasoning) or an *'ālim* to that of an imam who is dependent on others. This transformed the imam's role from a leader who guides the people to that of a leader who is guided by others. It placed the imam in an inferior position and marked a departure from the type of leader envisioned by both Plato and al-Fārābī (d. 950 A.D.),[9] who maintained that a leader must be a philosopher-king.[10] Nevertheless, it would unfair to conclude that al-Ghazzālī was not

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[9]His name was Abū Naṣr Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Ozlugh b. Tarkhān al-Fārābī, born in Transoxania in 870 A. D. He was one of the greatest philosophers the Muslim world has produced. He was a Turk by birth and was the first Muslim philosopher to head a "school" and to become known as a "teacher". He was acknowledged by subsequent Muslim philosophers as the true founder of philosophy in Islam and called the "second Master" (after Aristotle). See Muhsin Mahdi and Ralph Lerner, eds., *Medieval Political Philosophy* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1963), p. 22.

[10]Al-Fārābī, who was greatly influenced by Plato, agrees with the latter on the conditions of the leader. He views his ruler as the Foremost Leader (*Ra'īsu'l-Awwal*) who by his very nature does not want to be instructed by others and yet has an inherent capacity for observation and conveying his knowledge to others. He says that there is no human being superior to the foremost leader and if there were, then he would be the foremost leader. This leader is similar to the

a good political scientist merely on the strength of this fact. His approach after all dealt with the *Realpolitik* of his time, whereas both Plato and al-Fārābī were theorizing about ideal situations. Al-Ghazzālī's imam was a source of legitimacy, a protector of the *sharī'ah* and a cause of unity. He was in fact successful in developing the concept of the imam through his pragmatic ideas.

b) The Sultanate

The sultan was another important aspect of his political thought, and is discussed in three of the four books studied in chapter two, namely *al-Iqtiṣād, Iḥyā'* and *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk.* Of these three books, *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk* devotes exclusive attention to the subject, as this book was written purposely for the sultan. Before we go any further, it is important to explore the condition of the sultan during al-Ghazzālī's time.

Of the six Seljūq sultans who reigned during al-Ghazzālī's lifetime, only four of them -- Malik Shāh, Maḥmūd, Barkiyārūq and Abū Shujā' Muḥammad -- were likely to have influenced his views on the sultanate. When he became the professor at the Niẓāmīyah college at Baghdad, the sultan in power was Malik Shāh, and it was around this time that he began to write many of his works. The sultan may have influenced his ideas on the

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philosopher-king of Plato. See Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī, *Kitāb ārā' ahl al-madīna al-fāḍila* (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 1986), pp. 127-130. Cf. Haroon Khan Sherwani, *Studies in Muslim Political Thought and Administration* (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1968), 74; Farouk A. Sankari, "Plato and Al-Fārābī: A Comparison of Some Aspects of their Political Philosophies," *Muslim World*, vol. 60 (1970), p. 224; Fauzi M. Najjar, "Fārābī's Political Philosophy and Shī'ism," *Studia Islamica*, vol., 14 (1961), p. 63; E. I. J. Rosenthal, "The Place of Politics in the Philosophy of al-Farabi," *Islamic Culture*, vols. 29-30 (1955/56), p. 165.

institution, although his *al-Mustaẓhirī* and *al-Iqtiṣād* were written in 487, during the rule of Barkiyārūq. Besides these four sultans, another influence that must also be considered is that of Sanjar, a viceroy of Khurasan and the ally and full brother of Abū Shujā' Muḥammad. Sanjar (d. 1157 A. D.) who is pointed to by some authors[11] as having been the sultan whom al-Ghazzālī counsels in his *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*.

During al-Ghazzālī's lifetime the Seljūq sultans were the *de facto* rulers, the ones who wielded military power (*shawkah*), whereas the imams were looked at as religious symbols who received support and patronage from the former. With the sultans' support, al-Ghazzālī justified al-Mustaẓhir as having met the condition of *najdah* (bravery, courage; fitness for combat, war and fighting).[12] Here we see the support of a sultan as being very important, even essential to al-Ghazzālī's imam. Therefore, the sultan at this particular point in time formed part of the "imamate system" championed by al-Ghazzālī.

In claiming that the allegiance of one sultan represents the allegiance of the whole people,[13] al-Ghazzālī fails to see that the obedience of the people to the former does not

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[11]Bagley says that the sultan counselled by al-Ghazzālī in his *Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk* was probably Sanjar, because at the time he is said to have composed the work he was teaching at the Niẓāmīyah college at Nīshāpūr, in Khurasan, which was in Sanjar's province. Bagley says that al-Ghazzālī was summoned by Fakhr al-Mulk who was the vizier of Sanjar and that at the time it was normal for a viceroy to be called a sultan. See al-Ghazzālī, *Book of Counsel*, tr. Bagley, p. xvii.

[12]Al-Ghazzālī mentions that the condition of *najdah* that al-Mustaẓhir has to meet is fulfilled by the *shawkah* of his supporter and patron, namely the Turks (the Seljūq sultans). See al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 182. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 278.

[13]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'iḥ*, p. 238.

necessarily signify that they also agree or are content with his occupying this role.[14] The people's obedience might be caused by their fear of the sultan. Al-Ghazzālī takes for granted the voice and right of the people who form the largest group in the society. The sultan issues commands and expects the people to follow it unconditionally. Were half of the people to withdraw their allegiance from the sultan, what would then happen to the imam's status? His imam would be in trouble because the sultan's allegiance to him would not in turn represent the allegiance of the whole people. This exposes one of the weaknesses in al-Ghazzālī's argument.

Al-Ghazzālī also developed the view that an unjust and ignorant sultan who has military power must be obeyed because his deposition may cause civil strife. However, this view does not consider the welfare of the people in calling upon society to be passive and submissive to tyranny. Al-Ghazzālī believed that by eschewing civil war people would have peace and would be able to pursue knowledge and worship God. However, he did not realize that the people will have no peace as long as tyranny prevails over them. Furthermore, his view seems to contradict the Islamic injunction, to eradicate injustice. This view reminds us of one of the main elements of Niccolo Machiavelli's idea of

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[14]Al-Ghazzālī appears to have believed that the allegiance of the sultan represents the allegiance of the whole people, but did he not realize that the people may oppose the choice of a particular sultan, which would mean that they did not grant him their full allegiance? Even though God commands Muslims to obey those charged with authority over them, He also says that if they differ, they must refer it to God and the Apostle and not to those charged with authority, meaning that if they disagree with their leaders they can disobey them. Disagreement can occur especially if the leaders are tyrannical and the like. See *The Holy Qur'ān*, tr., A. Yusuf Ali (Lahore: Amana, 1983), chapter 4, verse 59, p. 198.

Realpolitik, i.e., "the end justifies the means."[15] What is obvious here is that al-Ghazzālī justified a bad situation in order to lend authority to his ideas.

Moreover, al-Ghazzālī applies a reciprocal theory to the relation between the imam and the sultan. Thus, for the sultan to be legitimate he has to pay allegiance to the imam, and by doing so he is effectively appointing the latter. Thereby both imam and sultan are acknowledged in the society. At first sight this theory seems to be ridiculous, for, instead of giving allegiance to the imam who has no *shawkah*, why does the sultan not appoint himself as imam? This argument is refuted by al-Ghazzālī's stipulation that an imam must be descended from the Quraysh, whereas the sultan in his day was a Seljūq Turk. This reciprocal theory regarding the conditions for the imamate was apparently pragmatic. Although in this theory the sultan appoints the imam, al-Ghazzālī however insists the necessity of the *bay'ah* was to be performed by the important men (*akābir*) and *ahl ḥall wa al-'aqd* (the people who bind and loose).[16]

After advising the people to obey an ignorant and tyrannical sultan, al-Ghazzālī then counsels the sultan on how he must deal with his subjects, which he does in his *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*. In this work he advises the sultan to observe both his relations with God and with his subjects. Amongst the pieces of advice that he gives: the sultan must lead a pious life,

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[15]Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, tr., Paul Sonnino (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996), p. 88.

[16]Al-Ghazzālī, *Al-Iqtiṣād*, 238. Cf. Binder, "Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Islamic Government," *The Muslim World*, vol. 45 (1955), p. 237.

do justice to his subjects and not be harsh in dealing with them.[17]

c) The *'Ulamā'*

The role of *'ulamā'* is a subject al-Ghazzālī was always careful to include in his discussion of the posts of both the imam and the sultan. They are regarded by him as knowledgeable people whose guidance and advice should be sought by rulers. Let us see how al-Ghazzālī looks at the *'ulamā'* and their relation to the politics of the time.

As mentioned during our discussion of al-Ghazzālī's theory of the imamate, the *'ulamā'* are complementary to the imamate, as they form a substitute for one of the conditions (knowledge) that cannot be met by the imam. The chief example is that of al-Mustaẓhir. Therefore, they were very important to the 'Abbāsid imamate. However, their involvement was temporary and impermanent. Furthemore, al-Ghazzālī stipulated that if there is another Qurayshite who fulfills all the necessary conditions, then the imam who regularly consults the *'ulamā'* must be deposed provided that his deposition will not lead to war.[18] This implies that if the deposition does not lead to violence, the role of *'ulamā'* as a substitute for personal knowledge on the part of the imam is redundant. This temporary approach is pragmatic.

Al-Ghazzālī's insistence that rulers seek out the most devout *'ulamā'* suggests two

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[17]Al-Ghazzālī, *Al-Tibr*, pp. 131-140. Cf. al-Ghazzālī, *Book of Counsel*, tr. Bagley, pp. 25-31. Cf. also Lambton, *State and Government*, pp. 119-120.

[18]Al-Ghazzālī, *al-Iqtiṣād*, p. 68.

things about the rulers of the time. First, there were no *mujtahid*[19]-level rulers (be they imams or sultans); therefore, they needed to seek the knowledge of the *'ulamā'* to make up for their inadequacy in this area. Second, the rulers led a frivolous life, which led al-Ghazzālī to advise them to seek out the *'ulamā'* for moral guidance. This is seen in his counsels contained in the *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk*. There he advises the imam to be correct in his faith, observe justice, seek out the *'ulamā'*,[20] overcome pride and lead a pious life. This suggests that the sultans had up to then led a blameworthy life which needed to be corrected; al-Ghazzālī called on the *'ulamā'* to shoulder such a responsibility.

Even though he incessantly counsels rulers to seek out the *'ulamā'*, yet he discourages the *'ulamā'* from frequenting them in turn. He maintains that the scholar who courts rulers will be drawn into he evil ways of the latter. To him the rulers who frequent scholars are good but the scholars who frequent rulers are bad.[21] He views such scholars as spiritually contaminated. However, if they are sought out by the rulers, they must give sound advice

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[19]A *mujtahid* is one who exercises *ijtihād*, "private personal effort" or "independent legal reasoning." See Frederick M Denny, *An Introduction to Islam*, 2nd. ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1985), pp. 198 and 392.

[20]Here the *'ulamā'* meant by al-Ghazzālī are those mentioned in the *Iḥyā'*, namely the pious *'ulamā'*, who shun the company of rulers, hate fame and worldly gain and normally refuse to accept any gifts or money offered to them by the powerful. It is they who are sought out by the rulers and not vice versa. These are the *'ulamā'* who are deemed as *warathat al-Anbiyā'* (heirs of the Prophets). For details of *'ulamā'*, see al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā'*, pp. 142-152. Cf. Al-Ghazzālī, *Imam Gazzali's Ihya*, tr. Fazul-ul-Karim, vol. 2 (Lahore: Sind Sagar Academy, 1971), pp. 101-107.

[21]Al-Ghazzālī, *Iḥyā'*, vol. 2, pp. 142-152. Cf. al-Ghazzālī, *Imam Gazzali's Ihya*, tr. Fazul-ul-Karim, vols. 1 and 2, pp. 101ff. Cf. also al-Ghazzālī, *The Revival of Religious Sciences by al-Ghazāli*, tr. Bankey, Behari (Surrey: Sufi Publishing Company Ltd., 1972), p. 39.

to them, even while exercising caution. Al-Ghazzālī himself was a living example of a scholar being sought out by a sultan. After a long retirement, he was summoned by Fakhr al-Mulk to teach again at the Niẓāmīyah college at Nīshāpūr in 499/ 1106. Al-Ghazzālī's counsel to scholars on how they should conduct themselves when dealing with rulers was very practical. This, he thought, would enable them to preserve their role as heirs of the Prophets (*al-'ulamā' warathat al-anbiyā'*).

2. Characteristics of al-Ghazzālī's Political Thought.

Having looked at the practical aspects of his thought on politics, let us look at its essential characteristics. There are several to be found in his thought that make it distinctive. These are its polemical, religious and realistic characteristics.

a) Polemics

This factor can be seen in his *al-Mustaẓhirī,* where he launches an attack on the Bāṭinites, calling them heretics and to some extent *kāfirs* (unbelievers). The Bāṭinites, who were Ismā'īlī Shī'ites, became the object of his criticism when his patron, al-Mustaẓhir, asked him to refute their teachings. These posed a political as well as ideological challenge to the 'Abbāsid imam, who for his part was relying on al-Ghazzālī to confirm his own position by questioning the theories of the Fātimids, who represented Bāṭinite political power.[22]

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[22]Al-Ghazzālī is reported to have taken part in the ceremony of administering the oath to the newly enthroned al-Mustaẓhir, who then commanded the former to a write a book exposing the truth about the doctrines of the Ta'līmites (i.e., Bāṭinites), i.e., the work that was to become known as *al-Mustaẓhirī.* See Al-Ghazzālī, *Book of Counsel*, tr. Bagley, p. xxxiv.

In justifying al-Mustaẓhir as the legitimate imam, al-Ghazzālī disqualifies the rival Fāṭimid imam, based in Egypt. Al-Ghazzālī discredited the latter's faith as unbefitting an imam. Moreover, he also condemned the Bāṭinite concept of the imam itself, particularly their belief that he is *ma'ṣūm* (impeccable or sinless). Such an attribute, according al-Ghazzālī, belonged only to the Prophet Muḥammad and to nobody else after him. Because he held such beliefs and concepts, the Fāṭimid imam, he argued, was therefore disqualified. This, in al-Ghazzālī's view, left al-Mustaẓhir as the sole candidate for the imamate.

Naturally, al-Ghazzālī's attacks met with a response from his opponents. Corbin, for instance, reveals that the Bāṭinites claimed that al-Ghazzālī had compiled his polemics under duress and at the direct orders of the imam. Nor, according to them, did he have enough time to internalize and understand fully their doctrine; rather, he simply gathered all the accusations made by various heresiographers, without referring to authentic Ismā'īlī sources.[23] Had al-Ghazzālī taken the time to understand the true context of their doctrine, he would have discovered their sources, and would not have been so vigorous in his attack on the Bāṭinites. However, these critics did not realize that al-Ghazzālī was not really motivated by a desire to find out the truth about Bāṭinite doctrine; otherwise he would have done so by studying it thoroughly and penetratingly as he had done with Sufism and philosophy. Rather, he wanted to disqualify their imam in support of his aim to have one

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[23]Henry Corbin, "The Ismā'īlī Response to the Polemics of Ghazālī," in Sayyed Hossein Nasr, ed., *Ismā'īlī Contribution to Islamic Culture* (Tehran: Iranian Academy of Philosophy, 1977), p. 70.

imam for all Muslims. His polemics against the Bāṭinites were based on political need. They were in response to the latter's activities which were perceived as a threat to the interests of both the 'Abbāsid imamate and the Seljūq sultanate.[24] To the 'Abbāsid imam, the Bāṭinites were rivals who claimed that only their imam should be obeyed by all peoples.[25] The Bāṭinites also claimed that their imam knew the realities of things and that through him people might obtain happiness in this life and in the hereafter.[26] This claim implied that the 'Abbāsid imam al-Mustaẓhir was not the imam of the people. Consequently, attacking the Bāṭinites was a political necessity for al-Mustaẓhir, and it was this task that al-Ghazzālī was assigned to accomplish.

In attacking the Bāṭinites' claim, the first thing that al-Ghazzālī does is rejects the authority of their imam. He argues that the "designation" (*naṣṣ*) by the Prophet of 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib as his successor,[27] and then by the latter of his sons and then on downward

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[24]However in his *al-Mustaẓhirī* he focuses on al-Mustaẓhir's imamate vis-à-vis the Fāṭimid imam (the Bāṭinite imam) rather than on the Seljūq sultan, for this work was meant for the imam and not the sultan.

[25]McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 218.

[26]Ibid.

[27]Al-Ghazzālī argues that there are two proofs which make the "designation" by the Prophet of 'Ali an impossibility. First, if such texts were unimpeachable, men would not doubt them, for the Prophet's statements about designation would be of such importance as not to be passed over in silence. This, he says, is a decisive proof of the falseness of their claim. Second, if the partisans of 'Alī against Abū Bakr clung to the probable expressions transmitted by individuals, how could they have remained silent about an unimpeachable text? With these arguments he contends that such designation was impossible. See McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, pp. 262ff. For the details of the Bāṭinites' doctrine of designation see Sami Nasib Makarem, tr. *The Political Doctrines of the Ismā'īlīs (The Imamate)* (Delmar, New York: Caravan Books, 1977), pp. 27-44. This book

through 'Alī's lineage is impossible. This is because one would expect to find many reports, and particularly an unimpeachable report, about this designation from the Prophet, which, according to al-Ghazzālī, is not the case.[28] This fact invalidates them as imams, leaving al-Mustaẓhir as the only legitimate choice for the people. Having refuted the claims of their imam, al-Ghazzālī justifies al-Mustaẓhir, for according to him, the latter's authority was unquestionable.[29] This is because the source of his authority was based in the choice of the *ummah* (community of believers), based in turn on their *ijmā'* (consensus of the community).

His attacks do not stop there, for he also refutes the most important attribute assigned by the Bāṭinites to their imam as well, i.e., that he is infallible (*ma'ṣūm*).[30] He reveals that the error of the Bāṭinites lies in their supposition that they have to acquire knowledge from

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is a translation of *ar-Risāla fī l-Imāma* of Abū l-Fawāris Aḥmad ibn Ya'qūb, who was a *dā'ī* (a propagandist) of the Fāṭimid imam al-Ḥākim (r. 386/966). This work is said to have been written before 408 A. H. However, the author's date of death is not mentioned in Makarem's translation.

[28]The requirement of an unimpeachable report for each individual imam assumes four things, all of which would have to obtain in every case for it to be valid: a) that the imam actually died leaving a son; b) that he actually designated his son before he died; c) that there also be unimpeachable transmission that the Prophet put the designation of all his children on the same level as the imam's "own" designation regarding the necessity of obedience, so that error in specifying would be inconceivable in any one of them; and d) that there also be transmission of the perdurance of infallibility and fitness for the imamate from the time of the designation to the death of the designator. Al-Ghazzālī argues that if there had been *tawātur* (unimpeachable transmission) in reports on the designation this would be known by others, but as people do not know of such a *tawātur,* therefore it cannot be established. See McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 262.

[29]Al-Ghazzālī, *Faḍā'ih*, p. 173. Cf. McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, 276.

[30]McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 264.

the imam just as Muslims did from the Prophet. The Prophet, from whom the people learned the truth, was *ma'ṣūm* (infallible); therefore, whatever he said was reliable. The imam must also be infallible in order to be a reliable source. But this is denied by al-Ghazzālī, who contends that nobody was *ma'ṣūm* after the Prophet.[31] He continues by stating that there is both rational and traditional (*sam'iyah*) knowledge. While the former is decisive and provable, can be learned from anyone and involves no *taqlīd* (blind acceptance), traditional knowledge is based on the hearing of *tawātur* reports (reports of unimpeachable transmission) or the reports of individuals, cases where there is no need for an imam in any event.[32] He says that the necessity for an imam is related to general administrative reasons such as defending Islam and the like.[33] Such a concept of the imam is naturally very different from that which was held by the Bāṭinites.[34]

Al-Ghazzālī's severe refutation of the Bāṭinites and their imam was also a check

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[31]Ibid.

[32]Ibid.

[33]Ibid.

[34]The Bāṭinites as well as the whole *Shī'ah* believe that the imam receives divine illumination regardless of any election by the Community, and that it is passed to him through the Prophet. The imamate is thus passed to each succeeding imam by the previous one, so as to ensure continuity of inspiration for the esoteric interpretation (*ta'wīl*) of revelation, which they do in accordance with the needs of the time.The imam is the sole interpreter of the revelation who is deemed to be endowed with divine insight. See Sami Nasib Makarem, *The Political Doctrine*, pp, 9-10.

against the intellectual war launched by Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ, whose ideology, *ta'līm*[35] (authoritative teaching), was quickly taking hold in the 'Abbāsid empire.[36] This intellectual war was part of Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ's policy, besides political and military initiatives.[37] His agressive tactics, which included selective assassination,[38] put the Seljūq sultanate on high alert. Since the sultanate was essential to the 'Abbāsid imam as a source of power, its collapse would most likely have led to his fall. Therefore, besides the military option being exercised[39] by the Seljūqs against the Bāṭinites, al-Ghazzālī's polemics represented the

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[35] *Ta'līm* (authoritative teaching), founded by Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ was known as a new teaching (*al-da'wah al-jadīdah*) in contradiction with the old movement (*al-da'wah al-qadīmah*) which was based in Egypt. See Ismail Poonawala, "An Ismā'īlī Refutation of al-Ghazālī," in Graciela de la Lama, ed., *The 30th International Congress of Human Science in Asia & North Africa*, 4, 1 (Mexico: Colegio de Mexico, 1976), p. 131.

[36] The Ismā'īlīs encouraged resentment against Turkic rule, particularly the Seljūq sultanate. They found partisans, especially among Shī'īs, in some rural areas, in most towns, and even in the lower ranks of the armies. See Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, vol. 2 (Chicago & London: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 58.

[37] Ismail Poonawala, "An Ismā'īlī," p. 131.

[38] The assassinations were aimed at single prominent enemies who had caused them special damage, and were seemingly calculated to avoid bloodshed among ordinary people and bloody battles. See Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, vol. 2, p. 60. This was true of the assassinations of Malik Shāh and his vizier, Niẓām al-Mulk, who were both murdered in 485/1094. For details on the assassination activities, see Farhad Daftary, *The Assassin Legends* (London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 1994); Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967); Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā'ilis: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[39] Muḥammad Tapar led a general campaign against the Ismā'īlī strongholds and retook many of them. See Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, vol. 2, p. 60. Before this campaign, there was another army sent by Niẓām al-Mulk against the Bāṭinites; however it was recalled due to the death of the former in 485/1092. See al-Ghazzālī, *Book of Counsel*, tr. Bagley, p. xxxi. See also Carole Hillenbrand, "The Power Struggle between the Seljūqs and the Ismā'ilis," pp. 205-220.

intellectual front in the battle[40] to preserve 'Abbāsid rule and Sunnism itself in the face of a direct and hostile Shī'ite adversary.

Al-Ghazzālī's polemics against the Bāṭinites also consisted of *fatwas* (legal opinions) on the status of the latter. These are outlined in four sections of his *al-Mustaẓhirī*. The first includes *fatwas* charging them with *bid'ah* (heresy) and *kufr* (unbelief). He defines as heresy such beliefs as that 'Alī should have been chosen as imam and not Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān, that the blood and property of Sunnī Muslims are licit to them, that the imam must be regarded as *ma'ṣūm* (infallible and impeccable) and that Abū Bakr and some other companions were sinful.[41] They err on all these counts. They draw the charge of *kufr* (unbelief) for their assertion that Abū Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthmān were unbelievers,[42] and for their doctrine of *ta'wīl* (interpretation of the Qur'ān) which

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[40]The intellectual war by the *'ulamā'* (al-Ghazzālī among them) against the Ismā'īlīs proved to be successful, since it managed to unite the Muslims politically, while most of the population turned against the Ismā'īlīs. See Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, vol. 2, p. 60.

[41]See McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, pp. 265-266. Cf. Arthur Jeffery, "A Fatwā of al-Ghazzālī against the Esoteric Sects," in Athur Jeffery, ed. *A Reader on Islam* ('s-Gravenhage: Mouton & Co., 1962), pp. 255-259.

[42]Al-Ghazzālī says that declaring 'Umar and Abū Bakr to have been unbelievers is different from doing so with respect to other Muslims for two reasons: 1) it opposes and contravenes the consensus (*ijmā'*) of the community; and 2) it contradicts the report about the former, that they were promised the garden (paradise). Therefore, those who accused them of unbelief are themselves guilty of unbelief, because they lie (*takdhīb*) about the Prophet. See McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 266. Cf. Arthur Jeffery, ed., *A Reader*, p. 258.

according to al-Ghazzālī results in the telling of lies (*takdhīb*) about the Prophet.[43]

The second section of *fatwas* applies to the consequences of this unbelief. Al-Ghazzālī says that the Bāṭinites should be treated in the same manner as apostates (*murtadd*) with regard to their blood, property, marriage, and other cult practices. Furthermore, in spirit (*arwāḥ*) they are not to be treated in the same way as those who have been unbelievers since birth, but are to be strictly put to death.[44]

The third section deals with the acceptance or rejection of their repentance. Here al-Ghazzālī places three conditions on accepting the latter. First, they must hasten to manifest repentance by not fighting or exerting other pressure. Such repentance must be positively received. Second, the one who embraces Islam at sword's point, but belongs to the class of ordinary and ignorant men and not to the propagandists and those who err, his repentance is also to be accepted. This is because his harm is limited to himself, and because the ignorant common man is easily deluded in religious matters. Lastly, the propagandist who realizes that the doctrine is false but embraces it as a means to power and worldly vanity, such a man's evil is to be feared and al-Ghazzālī leaves it up to the imam to decide on his

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[43]For the details, see McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 267. Cf. Arthur Jeffery, *A Reader*, p. 262.

[44]Al-Ghazzālī says that al-Shāfi'i, the founder of the Shāfi'i school, gave a choice to the one who was an unbeliever from birth, but no options in the case of the apostate. The options for the former are; a) extending to him grace, b) allowing him the chance of ransom, c) enslaving him, and d) putting him to death. See McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, pp. 268-9. Cf. Arthur Jeffery, *A Reader*, p. 265.

fate.[45]

The last section concerns the legal devices for escaping from oaths or contracts made with such people, especially when they have been secured by the standard Sunnī response. For this purpose al-Ghazzālī suggests five solutions. First, if the words *in shā Allāh* (if God will) is included in the pact, the swearer can violate it. Second, the swearer can convey in his oath a thing that is contrary to his intention. Third, he should look at the wording of the oath, for it is only incumbent when it is asociated with the phrases of *wallāhi, ṭallāhi* and *billāhi.* Fourth, one can look at what is being sworn to, for instance, if it is to make him a friend of God, then it can be broken, because he is not a friend of God, but His enemy. Finally, if the swearer does not try all the above solutions then he is bound to the punishment prescribed by Islam.[46]

All the above are the legal weapons used by al-Ghazzālī to attack the Bāṭinites for their errors and wrong beliefs. These attacks and charges are juristic in approach for they preserve and explain the beliefs and actions prescribed by revelation, combat error and prevent heresy.[47] b) Religiosity

Religiosity is another characteristic that colours al-Ghazzālī's political thought. Let

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[45]See McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, pp. 270-271. Cf. Arthur Jeffery, *A Reader*, pp. 269-273.

[46]For details see McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, pp. 271-275. Cf. Arthur Jeffery, *A Reader*, pp. 273-279.

[47]Ann K. S. Lambton, "Justice in the Medieval Persian Theory of Kingship," *Studia Islamica*, vol. 17 (1962), p. 91.

us look at some of the reasons why this statement is a valid one.

The first reason is that he bases the foundation of the imamate on religion and not on reason, even though the latter can also serve in this regard,[48] for it is reasonable to state that a society requires a leader so that order can be maintained. However, al-Ghazzālī takes religion as the underpinning of the imamate. He views the imam as the person who implements the Islamic law (*sharī'ah*), who is the source of the legitimacy of religious officials and who administers the day to day affairs of Muslims. Having said this, it is significant that the source he relies on is not the Qur'ān or the Sunna, but rather the *ijmā'* (unanimous consensus) of all Muslims upon the importance of the imam (*maṣlaḥa*-public interest) in preserving the laws of God. Moreover, among the conditions that he sets for on imam are those of *wara'* (piety) and knowledge in jurisprudence (Islamic law). This may serve as an indication of how important it was in his eyes to have a leader who is not only a Muslim but also one thoroughly endowed with Islamic values.[49]

Furthermore, in his counsel to the sultan in his *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk* he stresses the importance of faith, morality, and the correct observance of religious practices on the part of the sultan. He says that rulership is something bestowed by God, and a gift for which its holder (in this case the sultan) will be accountable in the hereafter, whether he has fulfilled

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[48]See Erwin I. J. Rosenthal, "Some Aspects of Islamic Political Thought," *Islamic Culture*, vol. 22, no. 1 (Jan. 1948), p. 2.

[49]In Muslim society there are people who are not committed to their faith, called nominal Muslims or Muslims by birth, as well as those who observe and practise their religion in their daily lives, called committed Muslims or sometimes Islamic Muslims.

his responsibility justly or not. Moreover, he also warns that the ruler who fails to do justice will receive severe punishment in the hereafter. He says that one day of just rule by an equitable sultan is better than sixty years of continual worship.[50] He also quotes in his *Naṣīḥat al-mulūk* many *ḥadīths*, Qur'ānic verses, and as well several precedents set by ealier rulers who preserved justice and Islamic teachings during their reigns. These counsels offered by al-Ghazzālī are clearly replete with Islamic teachings.

Besides the advice and admonition offered to rulers there is one view that al-Ghazzālī held on religion that seems almost backward in its presentation. This is found in his analogical argument explaining the causal relation between religion and society. In his analogy he says that the good ordering of religion is brought about only by the good ordering of this world, and that the good ordering of this world is in turn brought about by an obeyed imam. Therefore, setting up an obeyed imam is necessary.[51] However, although the analogy appears to be sound, if we look at the first premise, namely, that the good ordering of religion is brought about only by the good ordering of this world, it seems to me that role of religion in creating and shaping a good society is denied. This is seen to be the opposite of the purpose of Islam when it was first brought by the Prophet, which was to change pre-Islamic Arab society from barbarous ignorance society (*al-Jāhilīya*) into a religious and God-fearing society, from a society based on polytheism to one based on monotheism.

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[50]Al-Ghazzālī, *Book of Counsel*, tr. Bagley, p. 14.

[51]Al-Ghazzālī, *Al-Iqtiṣād*, p. 234-235.

Therefore Islam has been seen as a religion that brings development and freedom to people. In other words it is religion, particularly this religion, that causes the good ordering of a society and not vice-versa. However, in his analogy al-Ghazzālī assigns religion a inferior position, which is the opposite of what one would expect.

Nevertheless, if we compare the situation of the Prophet's time with that faced by al-Ghazzālī, we are confronted by two different stories which cannot be judged using the same approach. In the Prophet's case, he came to a society whose inhabitants were not yet Muslims in order to Islamize it and thereby change it from a wicked society into a good (Islamic) one. Therefore, in his case Islam served as an agent of change. However, in al-Ghazzālī's day Islam was already the religion of the people and their rulers. Al-Ghazzālī came not to change the people as the Prophet did, but to admonish them that without stability or the good ordering of society, which he identified with civil war and a disobeyed imam, people would not have time to practise their religion because they would be too busy defending themselves. Therefore, religious practices such as worship and the search for knowlege depend on a stable environment. Thus, the good order of society and religion can only be maintained by obeying the imam.

c) Realism

Another characteristic that is apparent in his thought is realism. This can easily be seen in some of his views regarding the conditions that he set for rulers.

To solve the political problems of his time al-Ghazzālī used a realistic approach.

There are several examples of this in his writings, the chief among them being his compromise over the conditions of the imam. Al-Ghazzālī realized that al-Mustaẓhir alone could not meet several of the conditions, which would consequently invalidate his imamate. In order to justify al-Mustaẓhir, he resorted to the sultan and the *'ulamā'* to complement him, thereby qualifying his role as imam. The sultan fulfills al-Mustaẓhir's condition of *najdah* with the support of his *shawkah* (fitness for combat and war), whereas the *'ulamā'* fulfill the imam's condition of knowledge with their advice and counsels. With this approach he manages to solve the problem of the imamate as it existed in his day. Binder is correct when he says that in al-Ghazzālī's concept of the imamate there are three main elements, namely, the imam, the sultan and the *'ulamā'*.[52]

Another realistic approach is found in his argument on the idea of deposing an imam who is not perfect. Intrinsically, he agrees that the imam who does not have knowledge but who regularly consults the *'ulamā'* may be deposed and replaced by one who meets all the conditions, but argues that if the disadvantages of keeping the former are less than those involved in having him deposed, such as civil war, then it is better to obey him. This approach is very pragmatic, for it places a premium on the maintenance of order in society. Based on this and other arguments, all of which emphasize how important it is to avoid strife within the community, al-Ghazzālī shows himself to be a thinker who loved stability and

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[52]See Leonard Binder, "Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Islamic Government," *The Muslim World*, vol. 45 (1955), p. 240.

hated war; in this respect he parts company from the *Realpolitik* of Niccolo Machiavelli.[53] Nevertheless, his realistic approach was not popular, because it did not call for improvement in the political life of the state; rather, it maintained the status quo.

Much of his realistic approach was based on the principle of the public interest (*maṣlaḥah*), even his justification of an imperfect imam and the view that an ignorant and tyrannical sultan must be obeyed. His chief reason for this view was that the sultan was the one who wielded military power, whose presence was vital in guaranteeing the position of a weak imam. This sultan, due to his military power and the consequent support of the people (some of it no doubt due to fear) can act as the *ahl al-ḥall wa al-'aqd* to the imam. Moreover, al-Ghazzālī again argues that deposing the sultan would cause wars that would detract from the peacefulness of the society and its people. For these two reasons it was imperative that the sultan be obeyed. In spite of its realistic approach, however, the theory does seem to be rather passive. He gives no consideration after all to the feeling of a people suffering under the tyranny of a sultan. He never suggests that the majority should eradicate the cruelty at any cost. To him what is important is to have an imam who is supported by the sultan. This is the type of society that he envisioned.

Moreover, his realistic approach engenders another characteristic, which is that his theory is time-bound. This can be seen in some of the same examples depicted above,

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[53]In Niccolo Machiavelli's approach, i.e., "the end justifies the means" he allows every means and approach to power regardless of its goodness or badness, because to him achieving the end is the primary goal. See Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 88.

namely, in the condition set on the knowledge possessed by an imam, on the deposition of an imperfect imam and the obedience due to a tyrannical or ignorant sultan. All of his positions on the above matters were based on the events and concerns of the age, which forced him to take an unpopular stance. Had the situation been different, al-Ghazzālī might have conceived a more popular theory, less prone to criticism.[54] One example of this process at work may be seen in his *al-Mustaẓhirī,* where he says that knowledge is not indispensible to the imam, whereas in his *al-Iqtiṣād* he states, while discussing the same issue, that the imam who regularly needs to consult the *'ulamā'* and implements their advice should be replaced with one who is knowledgeable enough to function without their help. This position is different from the one in the *al-Mustaẓhirī* and is more lenient on the subject of deposition. It also seems to suggest that his views had a contemporary application, not a constant one.

There can be no doubt that al-Ghazzālī's political thought was a response to the political needs of his age, which forced him to be realistic and pragmatic vis-à-vis existing political conditions. Since, to him, having an imam was essential to the full implementation of the *sharī'ah* and the correct functioning of an Islamic state, he adopted many unpopular views that are open to criticism. However, one must remember that he was not an idealist

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[54]This is proven by his view that if it could be ascertained that deposing an imperfect imam would not lead to civil war, then he must be deposed and replaced by the more perfect candidate. However, he contends that this was impossible during his time. See McCarthy, *Freedom and Fulfillment*, p. 279. The same case applies to the sultan; since his deposition would generate civil war, people are therefore asked to be loyal to him. See Hillenbrand, "Islamic Orthodoxy," p. 90.

who longed for something that was not present, but rather a thinker confronted with urgencies of an evolving political situation. For these reasons his thought fails to take into account the prospect for development and change in society, and is coloured with accommodation, passiveness and an exaggerated respect for the status quo. To him, stability must be preserved, in that it guarantees an opportunity for the people to practice their religion in preparation for the next world. To meet this need, he envisioned an arrangement which was in fact a political necessity: a cooperative arrangement between imam, sultan and *'ulamā'*.

CONCLUSION

Al-Ghazzālī's political philosophy centres on two themes which influence his entire political *Weltanschauung,* namely, *sharī'ah* (Islamic law) and stability or order (*niẓām*). These two themes constantly inform his political thought as demonstrated in his four books studied above. They are always associated with his ideas on the imamate or caliphate and the sultanate. The terms imamate and caliphate are used by him interchangeably, and denote the same meaning in his works. The imam and the sultan are the two persons who maintain the law and the established order. The former, however, who has authority (*wilāyah*), nevertheless does not have the power (*quwwah*) and must therefore depend on the latter, the *de facto* ruler. And yet even though the imam does not have the power, he is essential to al-Ghazzālī's political scheme. This is due partly to his function of appointing the *qāḍīs* (the judges) and administrative officials who run and administer the daily life of the *ummah* (community of the believers). Without the imam, society is seen as having no rules or regulations because nobody is ultimately responsible; thus the law of God is left unimplemented and stability cannot be preserved.

In developing his theory that there must be an imam in every age to implement the law and unite the people, he took a realistic approach. This approach was at the time both practical and self-serving. It was practical in the sense that it managed to achieve its aim. For instance, he justified an imperfect imam. To compensate the for imam's weakness, i.e.,

his incapability of practising *ijtihād* (private personal effort in legal reasoning), he resorts to the *'ulamā'* for help. The addition of the *'ulamā'* to the equation results in an imamate composed of three elements, i.e., the imam himself, the sultan and the *'ulamā'*. Of these three bodies, the *'ulamā'* seem to play an important role vis-à-vis both the imam and sultan. This is because they are sought out by both for their counsel and decision, making them very influential in society. Al-Ghazzālī himself fulfilled just such a role.

Al-Ghazzālī takes a pragmatic view as well of the sultan, the holder of military power (*shawkah*). Such power was essential to the imam so that he might keep order and stability in society, by quelling rebellions and riots and disturbances of the peace. Moreover, al-Ghazzālī states his opinion that a sultan who is obeyed has the sole right to appoint the imam, since the sultan represents the community and its people. The importance of the sultan led al-Ghazzālī to conclude that obeying a sultan is necessary, regardless of whether he is a tyrant or an ignorant ruler. This idea seems on the surface to be in direct contradiction of the Qur'ānic and characteristically Islamic ethical directive *al-amr bi'l-ma'ruf wa al-nahy 'an al-munkar*. He does not support the removal of a bad sultan, lest doing so should create disharmony in the society. In one sense he is avoiding a possible conflict (*fitnah*), namely war; in another, he is maintaining an evil in society, i.e., tyranny (*ẓulm*). This shows that al-Ghazzālī was less concerned with improving the lives of everyday people by freeing them from tyranny, than he was concerned to preserve the political status quo.

Interestingly, when dealing with the Bāṭinites (the Ismā'īlīs), his position with

regard to "evil" was uncompromising. Whereas he was of the opinion that a tyrannical sultan should be obeyed under normal circumstances, in the case of the Bāṭinites it was just the other way around. His legal position on the former is sufficient to explain this. His charge against them of *kufr* (unbelief) means that they may rightfully be killed at any time, whether in war or in peace. In the case of the tyrannical sultan, at least this sultan had sound "political faith" in the 'Abbāsids, a Sunnī institution. The Bāṭinites, on the other hand, held incorrect dogma and besides posed a constitutional threat to the 'Abbāsid imam. Thus, his approach to this group was strongly motivated by political considerations.

The presence of Bāṭinite *dā'īs* (summoners or missionaries) in the 'Abbāsid empire was so prevalent as to endanger the Sunnī institutions championed by the 'Abbāsid imam and the Seljūq sultan. The latter moved quickly to suppress this activity, especially after Ṭughril Beg (d. 455/1063) managed to defeat the Shī'ī Buwayhids,[1] the former patrons of the 'Abbāsid imam. Ṭughril's victory over the Buwayhids did not stop or silence the Bāṭinites' activities in this area however. Figures like al-Basāsīrī (d. 451/1059), al-Mu'ayyad al-Shīrāzī (d. 470/1078) and Ḥasan-i Ṣabbāḥ (d. 518/1124) continued to be active in leading the Bāṭinites' *da'wah* (religio-political propaganda) against the Sunnī empire. Their success contributed to the instability of Sunnī rule.

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[1]In 447/1055 Ṭughril entered Baghdad and soon after extinguished the rule of the Buwayhids of Iraq by deposing and imprisoning the last member of the dynasty, al-Malik al-Raḥīm Khusraw Fīrūz (440-447/1048-1055). The 'Abbāsid caliph al-Qā'im (d. 467/1075) then confirmed Ṭughril's title of sultan and the latter announced his intention of sending expeditions against the Shī'ī Fāṭimid in Syria and Egypt. For details see Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs: Their History and Doctrines* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 205.

The coming of the Seljūqs as patrons of the 'Abbāsid imam and as champions of Sunnī Islam was not warmly welcomed by the people, because of their hatred for the former's soldiery.[2] This sentiment was exploited by al-Mu'ayyad,[3] the Fāṭimid dā'ī, who directed al-Basāsīrī to create anti-Seljuqid disorder. Al-Basāsīrī , who was originally a Turkish slave, had emerged as a prominent military chief in Iraq during the final decade of Buwayhid rule. In 448/1056, two years before the birth of al-Ghazzālī, al-Basāsīrī had succeeded in fulfilling his mission, for in Mawṣil, Wāsiṭ and Kūfa the *khuṭbah* was read in the name of al-Mustanṣir's, the Fāṭimid imam.[4] With the support he got from Cairo, al-Basāsīrī inflicted a heavy defeat on Seljūq forces in the region of Sinjār in 448/1057. In 450/1058 al-Basāsīrī managed to enter Baghdad, while Ṭughril was in western Persia, which resulted in the introduction of the Shī'ī form of *adhhān* (Muslim call to prayer) in Baghdad.[5] Moreover, the *khuṭbah* was also pronounced in the name of al-Mustanṣir (d. 487/1094). Al-Basāsīrī received much popular support from both Sunnīs and Shī'īs who were united in their hatred of the Seljuqid soldiery.

During this period, al-Basāsīrī captured the 'Abbāsid palace but then left it protected

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[2]Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs*, p. 206.

[3]His full name was al-Mu'ayyad fi'l-Dīn Abū Naṣr Hibat Allāh b. Abī 'Imrān Mūsā b. Dā'ūd al-Shīrāzī. Apart from being a Fāṭimid *dā'ī* of al-Mustanṣir he was also a prolific writer and poet, as well as a political organizer and a military strategist. He was born around 390/1000 in Shīrāz, where his father, coming from a Daylamī Ismā'īlī family, was himself a *dā'ī* with some influence in the Buwayhid circles of Fārs. For details of his life and activities, see ibid., pp. 213ff.

[4]Ibid., p. 205.

[5]Ibid., p. 206.

under the Uqaylid Quraysh, a decision which in turn disappointed al-Mustanṣir, who had been expecting the 'Abbāsid caliph to be brought as a captive to Cairo. The fact that he managed to send the 'Abbāsid insignia to the Fāṭimid capital seems not to have won al-Basāsīrī any favor with the Fāṭimid imam, for afterwards he received no more support from Cairo. Al-Basāsīrī was finally killed by the Seljūqs near Kūfa after he rejected the offer made by Ṭughril, i.e., to renounce his Fāṭimid allegience and restore the 'Abbāsid imam, al-Qāim to the throne.[6]

During the reigns of Alp Arslān (455-465/1063-1073), Ṭughril's nephew, and the latter's son Malik Shāh (465-485/1073-1092), the Seljūq empire was consolidated. This was due to the dependence of both on their famous Persian vizier Niẓām al-Mulk (d. 485/1092). It was also during this time that the power of the Fāṭimids was weakening. Due to the consolidation of the Seljūq empire, a change of influence and position occurred in certain parts of the Middle East. For instance, in 462/1069-70, the *sharīf* (a descendant of Ḥasan, son of 'Alī by Fāṭimah) of Mecca informed Alp Arslān that henceforth the *khuṭbah* in Mecca would be read in the name of the 'Abbāsid imam and the Seljūq sultan, and no longer in that of the Fāṭimids.[7] This implied his allegiance to the former and his renunciation of the latter.

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[6]Ṭughril had previously proposed to leave al-Basāsīrī in Baghdad provided that the latter renounced his Fāṭimid allegiance and restored al-Qā'im. See Farhad Daftary, *The Ismā'īlīs*, p. 206.

[7]Ibid., p. 207.

Even though the Seljūqs managed to consolidate their power and influence, the threat posed by the Fāṭimid Ismā'īlīs (the Bāṭinites) continued to be felt. The success of their *da'wah* in the eastern Islamic lands, especially Iraq and Persia, jeopardized the Sunnī 'Abbāsids and the Seljūqis, as well as the local rulers there. Some effort was made, however, to combat this, and this include the circulation of an anti-Fāṭimid document sponsored by the 'Abbāsid imam al-Qā'im. This document, to which a number of jurists and 'Alids subscribed, aimed at discrediting the claim of the Fāṭimids to 'Alid descent.[8] This, however, did not stop the Fāṭimids from gaining numerous converts for al-Mustanṣir as the rightful imam of the time and as the caliph of the entire Muslim world.

The rapid spread of Fāṭimid influence was accompanied by a series of so-called religious assassinations of many Sunnī figures, including sultans, viziers and *qāḍīs*. Among them were sultan Malik Shāh and his famous vizier Niẓām al-Mulk, who were both murdered in 485/1092. Meanwhile, the 'Abbāsids continued to encourage Sunnī scholars to write polemical works against the Bāṭinites and the Fāṭimid imam, which were intended to discredit the latter. It was because of this need that al-Ghazzālī was drafted into the effort of writing polemics, some of which were presented in his writings on political thought. Thus his political approach towards this Bāṭinites shows a juristic concern to guarantee the maintenance of pure Islam, the application of the *sharī'ah* and the defence of orthodoxy against heresy.

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[8]Ibid., p. 220.

His realistic and pragmatic approach was a response to the political conditions of his time, which did not allow him the luxury of considering purely theoretical questions involving the origin or nature of the state. This makes him distinct from idealist political thinkers, especially the philosophers. To this we can say that his political philosophy was strongly influenced by his position as a jurist, one who bases his thought on law, rather than on philosophy which relies more on rational wisdom. His experiences in the corridors of power also helped him to mould his political *Weltanschauung*. To him what was important was that the law be preserved and the stability of the state maintained. In short, for him politics was not a goal in itself but a means of assuring a better life in this world and in the hereafter.

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