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EARLY DOCTRINE OF THE SHI'AH, ACCORDING TO THE SHI'I SOURCES

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July 1994

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
of the degree of Ph.D.

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## ABSTRACT

Well before the Occultation of the Twelfth imām in 330/942 and before the time of the great Shī'ī theologians such as al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022), the Shī'ah had constructed their own integral and elaborate system of thought. This thought is expressed in the sayings of the Shī'ī imāms, recorded in ḥadīth collections gathered in the traditionist centres of Kufah and Qum. It is apparent when these narratives are pieced together that the Shī'ī system as presented by the Shī'ah themselves bears little resemblance to the descriptions of the heresiographers. At the centre of the Shī'ī worldview is the relation between the imāms and the community. The imāms' constitution is altogether supernatural, and they succeed to the whole of the prophetic knowledge, while the Shī'ah, who were created of the same substance as the imāms, are the bearers and beneficiaries of that knowledge. The imāms continue to receive intelligence from God so that they know every thing and are able to address themselves to every circumstance, while the Shī'ah must resort to no one else to guide them. God is known only through the imāms and they conduct their followers to Paradise while others are left for the Fire. There is, however, evidence of revision of belief already in the time of the first traditionists. The definition of faith is emended so as to allow the non-Shī'ah a place in Paradise and enable the Shī'ah to integrate into the larger community. The confinement of the imāms by the Abbasids and the lesser Occultation lead to reconsideration of the question of authority: human reason is given a greater role as the Shī'ah set about thinking how to evaluate the words of the imāms already recorded. Kalām, a field of enquiry formerly forbidden to the faithful Shī'ah due to the necessity of absolute submission to the statements of the imāms, is sanctioned so that dicta concerning theology are issued under their names. Tradition now moves away from predestinarianism, and other features of post-Occultation Shiism are prefigured. Early Shī'ī tradition presents the record of a community moving from exclusivism and rigid traditionalism toward greater social and intellectual integration.



## RÉSUMÉ

Bien avant l'Occultation du Douzième imām en 330/942 et avant la période des grands théologiens shī'īs tels que al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022), les Shī'ahs avaient développé leur propre système intégral et élaboré de pensée. Cette pensée s'exprime dans la parole des imāms shī'īs, rapportée dans les collections ḥadīth qui sont regroupées dans les centres traditionnistes de Kufah et Qum. Lorsqu'on assemble ces narrations, il apparaît que le système shī'ī, comme présenté par les Shī'ahs eux-mêmes, offre peu de ressemblance avec les descriptions des hérésiographes. C'est la relation entre les imāms et la communauté qui forme le centre de la vision du monde shī'ī. La constitution des imāms est surnaturelle et ceux-ci accèdent à la connaissance prophétique totale alors que les Shī'ahs, qui ont été créés à partir de la même substance que les imāms, sont les porteurs et les bénéficiaires de cette connaissance. Les imāms reçoivent continuellement l'intelligence de Dieu, ainsi ils savent tout et peuvent s'exprimer à propos de n'importe quelle situation qui leur est soumise. Les Shī'ahs, quant à eux, ne peuvent consulter que les imāms. On ne connaît Dieu que par le biais des imāms et ce sont eux qui conduisent leurs disciples au Paradis alors que tous les autres sont condamnés au Feu. On trouve cependant une révision de croyance dès la période des premiers traditionnistes. La définition de la foi est modifiée de manière à ce que les non-Shī'ahs puissent obtenir une place au Paradis et de façon à permettre aux Shī'ahs de s'intégrer dans une plus large communauté. L'isolement des imāms par les Abbasides et la moindre Occultation conduisent à reconsidérer la question d'autorité: on donne un plus grand rôle à la raison humaine alors que les Shī'ahs se mettent à penser à la manière d'évaluer les paroles des imāms déjà rapportées. Kalām, un domaine de recherche autrefois interdit aux fidèles Shī'ahs en raison de la nécessité d'une soumission absolue aux affirmations des imāms, est ratifié pour que les affirmations relatives à la théologie soient émises sous leurs noms. La tradition s'éloigne désormais du prédestinarianisme et on préfigure d'autres traits du Shiisme de post-Occultation. La tradition shī'ī primitive témoigne d'une communauté qui va de l'exclusivisme et du traditionalisme rigide à une plus grande intégration sociale et intellectuelle.

FOR: MAHMOUD, FIRAS, & SUMAYYA

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The present work describes a part of the system of Imāmi Shī'ī thought contained in collections of Shī'ī ḥadīth in circulation before the 'Greater Occultation' (al-ghaybah al-kubrā), that is before the final disappearance of the Twelfth imām from the eyes of humankind in 330/942. The narratives express the emerging orthodoxy of Twelver Shiism, framed in the words of the imāms and the Prophet. This 'orthodoxy' provided a foundation for later developments in Shī'ī belief and still has some hold on the imagination on Shī'īs today.

Nevertheless, scholars of Islam referring to points of Shī'ī doctrine have tended to rely on reports of the heresiographers or rivals of the Shī'ī school, which place undue emphasis on the multiple 'sects' and do not do justice to the coherence and detail of mainstream Shī'ī views.<sup>1</sup> The thesis argues that the

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<sup>1</sup> The non-Shī'ī heresiographer who gives us the most information about the Shī'ah is Ash'arī. Ash'arī died in 324/935; the Shī'ī traditionist Kulaynī (Kulīnī) who compiled the first of the four canonical books of Shī'ī ḥadīth died at about the same time, in 328 or 329/939 or 940. Yet the system outlined in the present work cannot be recognized in Ash'arī's account. His several lines' preface to the discourse on the 'Rawāfiḍ' is approximately correct - but this is cut short as he launches into an enumeration of sects, understood as the groups who followed various pretenders to the imāmate. Some of the most important discussions of the ḥadīth are not touched on by Ash'arī at all. Occasionally beliefs attributed by Ash'arī to other sects find an echo in the ḥadīth; these are discussed in the notes.

Shī'ī community had already by the tenth century - perhaps as early as the eighth century - constructed for itself an elaborate and integral world view, which becomes apparent when the ḥadīth narratives are assembled. I also demonstrate that there are, at the same time, different layers or streams of thought in the early tradition; these differences produce tensions which are accommodated in varying degrees.

The ghaybah occurred in the lifetime of Ibn Bābawayh al-Qummī, known as 'The Truthful Master:' al-Shaykh al-Ṣadūq (d. 381/991-92 in the eighth decade of his life). Ibn Bābawayh is the great systematizer of the legacy of the imāms and their circle. With him begins a new direction in Shī'ī thought. He is no longer content to collect and arrange the traditions, but chooses his positions on various issues and selects ḥadīths to support these (although his opinions are generally those already favoured by the ḥadīth). After Ibn Bābawayh another stream of Shī'ī thought begins to predominate: one which concentrates on reasoned argument rather than citation of texts to establish theological premises. This development is described by Fr. M. McDermott in his Theology of Al-Shaykh Al-Mufīd;<sup>2</sup> the author relates how the traditionism of Ibn Bābawayh was eclipsed in the work of his student al-Mufīd (d. 413/1022) by Mu'tazilī-influenced rationalism - which allowed Mufīd to take his own

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<sup>2</sup>(Beirut: Dar El-Machreq, 1986.)



theological positions - and further how that trend was continued by al-Sharīf al-Murtadā, (d. 436/1044), the next intellectual leader of the Shī'ah. The ghaybah is thus an appropriate terminus for the data used in this work, since the disappearance of the imām marks a new stage of intellectual growth in Shiism (albeit one which is, as I shall also demonstrate, presaged in the ḥadīth itself). I propose for now that the ḥadīth record I have begun to assemble here be considered as roughly the first period of Shī'ī thought (until we are able to divide it further), Ibn Bābawayh as the second, and Shaykh Mufīd and his successors as the third, and that studies of Shī'ī themes take account of each of these stages in turn.

i. The nature of the system and of the texts.

The ḥadīth collections surveyed for this work are not all alike. Their emphases, the opinions they relate, and even the literary forms in which they are presented differ. Nevertheless, I have found that all the collections agree on - or at least are concerned with - a certain set of basic tenets, and that they connect these tenets in similar ways. There is, moreover, a group of belief-statements that is repeated many times in all the collections. These seem to make up the logical 'core' of the system. Other less frequently repeated and less central statements tend to fit around the core in different ways, either by elaborating on some of the common assertions or in presenting a variant belief of some kind. (Here I remark that, while I

speak of an 'integral' system, the pronouncements of the hadiths are not entirely consistent; in some cases they are totally contradictory. A few seem to be quite beyond the pale of orthodoxy. Obviously the texts were orchestrated by several hands, whether we prefer to think of these as the imāms, their followers, or later compilers - or some combination of these. It is fortunate that the muhaddithūn, following in their honourable tradition as faithful transmitters, have not entirely 'smoothed out' all these difficulties, so that we are able to trace certain developments and controversies in the texts.)

I have not noted all the elaborations and variations of the system. That is too large a task, and I expect, in any case, that others will now be moved to focus on whichever aspect they find interesting and 'work it through' in greater detail, and then perhaps also into later texts.<sup>3</sup> By the same token, I have not considered it necessary (apart from the fact that it is impossible!) to search out all narratives belonging to the targeted time-period regardless of the time of redaction, or to try to determine, either by applying the science of the rijāl or other, internal criteria, which hadiths are likely to be 'authentic,' that is attributable to the imām quoted. The double

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<sup>3</sup>Another task for the future will be to define the uniqueness of each of the collections relied on here - or, to put it another way, the personalities and beliefs of individual compilers. Some of these features are mentioned in the survey of literature below, but my approach here, as suits the purpose, has been to merge the different works.

knot of sources and authenticity is cut by limiting the survey, as I have stated above, to collections already circulating before the Occultation. On the question of sources, the pattern of endless variant reports and somewhat variant views clustered around a 'core' structure of belief easily justifies exclusion of material appearing in later collections - as well as reasonable limitation of sources within the designated time-period. On the question of authenticity, I do not claim anything more for the hadīths on which this work is based other than that they represent the views of some central group existing some time before the Occultation. If this group is the imāms themselves, then the largest part of the narratives belongs approximately to the beginning of the second to mid-second century A.H./mid-eighth to late eighth century C.E. (the time of the imāmates of the fifth and sixth imāms). If the narratives, or a part of them, is contrived by the Companions of the imāms or by others outside their circle, some or all of the material may be of a later date - but I will still have surveyed the opinions of the Twelver Shī'ī community or its scholars in a formative period of their history, which is my more modest intention.

The Shī'ī 'system' I describe is neither spare nor neat; it is rather like a web with countless interconnections. By relying on the words of the imāms (which have the quality, at times, of pointing in several different directions at once) I have tried to communicate that aspect. I have also tried to convey some of the

colour, variety, and even drama of the texts; for this reason also I quote often and sometimes at length. Finally, I ask the reader to keep in mind that what follows is put together from only hundreds of pieces out of thousands. Although I have managed in some places to fit these together so that the seams hardly show, each text originally stood alone.

It will be useful at this point to remark how the Shī'ī ḥadīth literature came to enclose a doctrinal system, and how the system is expressed.

Sunnī ḥadīth traditions are referred to the Prophet, and thus to a time before doctrinal entanglements and before the rational discussion of religious questions. Tendentious reports had to be injected into the corpus somewhat discreetly; the opportunity for open and extended theological and sectarian argument in the Sunnī ḥadīth is limited. Sunnī ḥadīths are therefore mostly concerned with devotions and the practice of daily life: in short, with orthopraxy. The living authority of the Shī'ī imāms, on the other hand, extended through the great political and theological controversies stirring from the first through the fourth centuries of Islam. The Shī'ah (or their imāms) were therefore able to use the ḥadīth openly to shore up their own positions and attack the various political and theological parties ranged about them. It might also be fair to say that the Shī'ah, whose existence as a separate school was

predicated on such beliefs, would have been especially compelled to use their traditions to expose their beliefs in any case.

All this resulted in a considerable proportion of ḥadīths addressed, openly and at length, to doctrinal issues. The tendency is evident beginning with the earliest, 'notebook' [asl; pl. uṣūl] collections, dating for the most part from the lifetimes of the fifth and sixth imāms. Several volumes of Kulaynī's (d. 329/841) al-Kāfī, the most comprehensive ḥadīth collection of this period, are devoted exclusively to doctrinal matters. The other surviving works of the second and third centuries also contain these kinds of reports, in varying degrees.

In general, the number of doctrinal or 'theological' traditions (in contrast to ḥadīths having to do with, for instance, issues of purity, or simply legal matters) increases in later compilations, along with complexity of argument. This is prima facie evidence that the ḥadīth corpus is composed of different layers and that not as much of it is attributable to the fifth and sixth imāms as claimed.

The form of the Shī'ī ḥadīths is consequently also quite different from that of the ḥadīths found in the standard Sunnī collections. Many reports are very long; a few run in the printed editions to fifty lines or more. The majority of these

are extended responsa: the answers of the imām to a question or series of questions on a doctrinal issue posed by one of his followers. Others present the debates of the imāms with their opponents or, in a few cases, even a debate between a Companion of the imām and a non-Shī'ī, related in the presence of the imām and therefore presumed to have his approval.<sup>4</sup> Much detailed exposition of Shī'ī doctrine is to be found in these reports—even though the pronouncements of the imām tend to be imprecise or somewhat mysterious, befitting his position, no doubt, as a communicator of esoteric knowledge.

In other cases narratives take the form of long historical relations or hagiographical anecdotes justifying Imāmī positions and vilifying the enemies of the Alid line. Most of these types of hadīths concern either the third imām Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī or the later imāms from the eighth imām 'Alī al-Riḍā onward. In the case of Ḥusayn such reports apparently compensate for a lack of oral tradition linked to that most important figure. Beginning with the confinement of al-Riḍā at the court of the Abbasid al-Ma'mūn (leading ultimately to his death in 203/818) the imāms could no longer freely communicate with their followers. The embellished tales connected with the later imāms are obviously

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<sup>4</sup>Eg. in Abū Ja'far Muḥammad ibn Ya'qūb ibn Ishāq al-Kulaynī al-Rāzī, al-Uṣūl al-kāfī, ed. Jawād Muṣṭafawī, 4 vols. (Tehran: Daftar-i Nashr-i Farhang-i Ahl-i-Bayt, n.d.), vol. 1, pp. 238-240 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb idtirār ilā al-ḥujjah, hadīth # 3}. (As there are several editions of this important work, the book, chapter, and hadīth number are also given for each citation.)

designed to fill the gap in tradition that resulted.

Many Shī'ī traditions are phantastic, in which, with the exception of the Sunnī eschatological (fitan) traditions, they are also rather different from Sunnī ḥadīth. This is the result of the hagiographical bent of the literature; Shī'ī tradition in fact breathes and exudes that spirit. Examples of all these types of traditions are found in the text below.

The majority of ḥadīths in the Shī'ī corpus are attached to either the fifth imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 114/733) or the sixth imām Ja'far al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765). These figures appear as the foremost expositors of Shī'ī doctrine, and their epithets confirm this role: 'al-bāqir' is a shortened form of 'bāqir al-°ilm,' meaning 'one who penetrates or delves into knowledge' and 'al-ṣādiq' means 'one who speaks or confirms the truth.' Tradition reports that before his death the Prophet was given a book fastened with a number of seals; each imām was to expect his instructions from God under the seal bearing his name. The instructions to the fifth imām were: "Relate (ḥaddith) to the people and make them understand; and fear none but God, for no one can do you harm." The sixth imām found the same words, but was further commanded to "publish the wisdom of the Family of Muḥammad and reiterate the words of your forbears."<sup>5</sup> Apart from

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 29-30 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb 'anna al-a'immah lam yaf°alū shay'an... illā bi-°ahd min Allāh, ḥadīth #2}; see also ḥadīth #1 in the same chapter.

the fifth and sixth imāms, some ḥadīths are attributed to °Ali, although not nearly so many as one would have expected from such a venerated figure. Very few traditions are related from Ḥasan son of °Ali, and not many more from the fourth imām °Ali son of Ḥusayn. After Ja°far al-Ṣādiq, his son the seventh imām speaks on several important issues in the ḥadīth; less, however, is heard from the eighth and the ninth imāms, and almost nothing directly from the tenth and eleventh imāms.

The ideological personalities of the imāms are, for the most part, indistinguishable. An opinion attributed to, for example, the fifth imām, is likely to appear also under the name of the sixth or seventh imāms, or the first imām °Alī, or any other. I have found that it is not possible, on the basis of our texts, to speak of a distinctive thought of Ja°far al-Ṣādiq, or Muḥammad al-Bāqir, or any other imām. What is asserted by one is asserted by all; we are presented with the thought of a period, a group, or a literary genre, not the progressive thought of a series of individual minds. (Two exceptions to this rule are discussed in the text: a group of traditions which suggests a new opinion from the sixth imām on the question of the destiny of the unbeliever [non-Shī°ī], and the distinctive opinion of the eighth imām al-Riḍā on the question of free will and predestination.)



## ii. The collections.

Following is a description, in chronological order, of the collections of Imāmī ḥadīths on which this work is based.

The earliest book of the Shī'ah, according to the Fihrist of Ibn Nadīm and other authors,<sup>6</sup> is the Kitāb al-Aṣl of Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilālī al-Kūfī, also called Kitāb Sulaym. Ibn Qays al-Hilālī died during the rule of the Umayyad governor of Iraq al-Ḥajjāj ibn Yūsuf between 75/694 and 95/714: thus in the lifetime of the fourth imām 'Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn. Kitāb Sulaym is, supposedly, one of the few books of ḥadīth collected before the imāmate of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq. Some Shī'ī authors praise it highly; it is even said to have been verified after its compilation by being read back to the fourth imām.<sup>7</sup>

There are, however, several problems with the 'Kitāb Sulaym' in our hands. The manuscripts preserve different recensions, and there is variance and weakness of isnāds and some anachronous

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<sup>6</sup>Ibn Nadīm, Kitāb al-fihrist, ed. C. Fluegel (Leipzig, 1872; reprint ed., Beirut: Khayyāt, n.d.), p. 219/ The Fihrist of Ibn Nadīm, ed. & tr. Bayard Dodge, 2 vols. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), vol. 1, p. 535. For some of the other authors see Āghā Buzurg Ṭihirānī, al-Dharī'ah ilā taṣānīf al-Shī'ah, 26 vols. (Tehran: Kitābkhānah-yi Islāmīyah, 1387-1405/1968-1985), vol. 2, pp. 153-154. (Publisher and edition varies.)

<sup>7</sup>This is related in many places; for a summary see Abū al-Qāsim al-Mūsawī al-Khū'ī, Mu'jam rijāl al-ḥadīth wa-tafsīl ṭabaqāt al-ruwāt, 23 vols. (Qum: Manshūrāt Madīnat al-'ilm, 1978/1398), s.v. "Sulaym bin Qays."

ḥadīths. This has caused other Shī'īs to reject its authenticity and forbid their co-religionists to rely on it.<sup>8</sup>

On internal evidence, Kitāb Sulaym appears to be an elaboration of a smaller amount of material from an original aṣl. The ḥadīths are very different in form from those of the other uṣūl, that is the earliest 'notebooks' (on these see below). The edition listed in the bibliography consists principally of a series of lengthy, detailed narratives (including dialogues) recounting how °Alī was prevented, chiefly through the machinations of the caliph °Umar, from taking his rightful position as successor to the Prophet.<sup>9</sup> This theme is not at all prominent in the other collections. In addition, there are a few more sophisticated ḥadīths dealing with theology that are not paralleled in the other uṣūl and earlier collections and which seem to belong rather to the stratum of the Kāfī. The K. Sulaym as it has come down to us appears to have been fathered on Sulaym as the Companion of the first four imāms with the intention of verifying a highly partisan version of events in early Islamic history. This impression is strengthened by the nearly miraculous story of its preservation: Sulaym, it is said, gave it to Abān ibn Abī °Ayyāsh while he was in hiding from the

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<sup>8</sup>For a summary of these arguments against the Kitāb Sulaym, see *ibid.*, vol. 8, pp. 216-228.

<sup>9</sup>Thus the book is sometimes known as 'Kitāb al-Saqīfah,' Saqīfah referring to the day on which Abū Bakr was elected to the caliphate instead of °Alī, the Prophet's designated heir.

Umayyad governor al-Ḥajjāj, while Abān in turn, prompted by a vision of Sulaym in his dream, transferred it just before his death in written form to another muḥaddith, °Umar ibn Adhīnah (himself a companion of the sixth and seventh imāms).<sup>10</sup>

Āyat Allāh Khū'ī in a detailed exposition attempts to dispel the doubts surrounding Kitāb Sulaym. Khū'ī argues that, while a small amount of anachronous material may have been introduced into the material attributed to Sulaym, the book is in general sound; he points out that the early texts in general have been doctored to some small extent, not excluding al-Kāfī.<sup>11</sup> In any case, a manuscript of the work we presently know as Kitāb Sulaym dates from the early 4th/10th century<sup>12</sup> and is thus within the range assigned for our sources.<sup>13</sup>

Shī'ī scholars speak of a group of ḥadīth notebooks called uṣūl (s. asl): 'sources.' The number of these is fixed at four

<sup>10</sup>Sulaym ibn Qays al-Kūfī al-Hilālī, Kitāb Sulaym ibn Qays (Najaf: al-Maṭba'ah al-Ḥaydariyah, n.d.), p. 57 (told in the relation of the chain).

<sup>11</sup>Khū'ī, Mu°jam, vol. 8, p. 225 (s.v. "Sulaym ibn Qays").

<sup>12</sup>Āghā Buzurg, Dharī°ah, vol. 2, p. 157. Madelung also assigns the work to the "early fourth/tenth century", perhaps on the basis of this manuscript; see "Die Sia - Die Imāmiya," in Grundriss der Arabischen Philologie. Band II. Literaturwissenschaft, ed. Helmut Gaetje (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1987), p. 263.

<sup>13</sup>See also GAL I, p. 199; GAS II, pp. 525-526; and for an account of the other uṣūl see Āghā Buzurg, Dharī°ah, s.v. "Asl."

hundred; thus they refer to al-uṣūl al-arba°mi'ah, 'the four hundred sources.' A few of these sources have reached us in the form of a collection of sixteen uṣūl, an early manuscript of which is extant from the early fifth/eleventh century, based on a copy from 374/984.<sup>14</sup> It is suggested that the difference between an aṣl and an ordinary kitāb or 'book' is that the traditions in the former are related on the ultimate authority of a single person and committed to writing for the first time, while the latter is a compilation from several earlier sources.<sup>15</sup> An aṣl, having been redacted close to the original utterance, should be more reliable than a 'book.' According to another opinion, an aṣl may be more exactly defined as a collection of hadīths "heard from [the sixth imām] Ja°far al-Ṣādiq, for the most part from persons relating directly from him."<sup>16</sup> Some of the characteristics of the uṣūl can be determined from the sixteen surviving collections. Approximately seventy-five percent of the traditions do indeed originate with Ja°far al-Ṣādiq.

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<sup>14</sup>Details in Muḥammad Husayn al-Husaynī Jalālī, Dirāṣah ḥawl al-uṣūl al-arba°mi'ah. Tehrān: Markaz Intishārāt al-A°lamī, 1394/1974, p. 29. Sezgin lists thirteen uṣūl: GAS II, pp. 531-533.

<sup>15</sup>Etan Kohlberg, "Shī°ī Hadīth," in The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature. Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period. Edited by A.F.L. Beeston et al. Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 300.

<sup>16</sup>Jalālī, Dirāṣah, p. 11 (and see pp. 7-12). This writer informs us also that 'four hundred' is only a formula to indicate the vastness of the sources; the references to different uṣūl total only about one hundred. Āghā Buzurg, Dharī°ah, collects references to 116 (s.v. "Aṣl").

Twenty percent are from Muḥammad al-Bāqir, while the remaining fifteen percent go back to °Alī and the seventh imām 'Abū al-Ḥasan' Mūsā, with a few attributed to the fourth imām °Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn. In approximately one-fifth of the traditions the author of the asḥ provides a first-hand report of the words or actions of the imām; most of the remaining ḥadīths show the reporter at one remove from the imām. The authors of the uṣūl were thus men in the circles of the imāms, for the most part of Muḥammad al-Bāqir and Ja°far al-Ṣādiq, who undertook to note down the reports of other close companions along with their own. The ḥadīths are for the most part short dicta, rather of the kind found in the Sunnī ḥadīths of the Prophet. All the authors of the sixteen uṣūl are Kūfans, Kūfa being the first centre of Shī'i traditionist activity.

The Kitāb Maḥāsin is the sole survivor of many works of Abū Ja°far Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad ibn Khālīd al-Barqī (d. 274/887). Barqī was a companion of the eighth imām al-Riḍā; although his grandfather hailed from Kūfa he was himself a Qummī. The Maḥāsin is primarily a book of adab - of instructions on the minute etiquette of Islamic life - although it also includes some legal material.<sup>17</sup>

Abū Ṣaffār al-A°raj al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī, the author of the

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<sup>17</sup>See: GAS II, p. 538; Muhammad Muhsin Āghā Buzurg al-Tihrānī, al-Dharī°ah ilā taṣānīf al-Shī°ah, 28 vols. (Najaf: Maṭba°at al-Qādī, 1936 -), vol. 20, p. 124.

Baṣā'ir al-darajāt fī 'ulūm Āl Muḥammad, was a companion of the eleventh imām al-°Askarī. He died in 290/903. Al-Ṣaffār was known as a jurispudent; this book however concerns the imāmate, as the title suggests ('Levels of insight into knowledge of the Family of Muhammad...'). In the Baṣā'ir the whole doctrine of the imāmate is expressed through a fairly systematic arrangement of the traditions; in this it is quite different from the earlier writings described above which lack such purposive organization. The creation and the knowledge of the imāms are the special subjects of Ṣaffār's Baṣā'ir, with many ḥadīths cited on both subjects. The influence of this work is shown by the fact that Kulaynī reproduces whole sections of it in his Kāfī, sometimes with ḥadīths given in the same order. The book is sometimes called al-Baṣā'ir al-kubrā, as recensions found in various manuscripts suggest that the author reworked and expanded on an earlier, smaller work.<sup>18</sup>

Contemporary with al-Ṣaffār al-Qummī is the Kūfan Abū al-°Abbās °Abd Allāh ibn Ja°far al-Ḥimyarī (d. 290/903). The term 'qurb al-isnād' ('proximity of the chain of authorities') denotes a collection of traditions at only one or at the most two removes

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<sup>18</sup>Abū Ja°far Muḥammad ibn al-Hasan al-Ṣaffār, . Kitāb baṣā'ir al-darajāt 'al-kubrā' fī fadā'il Āl Muḥammad, ed. Mīrzā Ḥasan Kūchah-bāghī (Tabriz: Matba'at Shirkat-i Chāp-i Kitāb, 1380/1960), pp. 4-5 (introduction). See also: *ibid.*, pp. 1-18; GAL I, p. 199 & SI, p. 319; GAS II, p. 538; Āghā Buzurg, Dharī°ah, vol. 3, pp. 124-125.

from the imām; Ḥimyarī's Qurb was only one of many such works.<sup>19</sup> Ḥimyarī is said to have devoted a part of the original Qurb al-isnād to each imām, but only the relations from the sixth, seventh, and eighth imāms have come down to us.<sup>20</sup> Qurb al-isnād consists for the most part of short statements pertaining to practical and legal matters; in form it is very much like the uṣūl.

Exegetical (tafsīr) works may be considered together. The method of Shī'ī tafsīr is esoteric. The Shī'ī exegetes seek to discover the hidden meanings of the Qur'ān relating to the imāmate and other articles of their creed. The early tafsīr works rely almost exclusively on presentation of ḥadīths to explain the verses.

Furāt ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Furāt al-Kūfī (d. 300/912) is the author of an early Shī'ī exegesis of the Qur'ān; the works of al-Naḍr (or Abū al-Naḍr) Muḥammad ibn Mas'ūd ibn °Ayyāsh al-Sulamī (al-Kūfī al-Samarqandī), known as 'al-°Ayyāshī' (d. last part of the third/ninth century) and Abū al-Ḥasan °Alī ibn

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<sup>19</sup>Abū al-°Abbās °Abd Allāh ibn Ja°far al-Ḥimyarī, Qurb al-isnad, ed. °Abd al-Mawlā al-Turayhī (Najaf: al-Maṭba°ah al-Ḥaydariyah, 1369/1950), pp. 'dāl'-'hā'; and for an account of the other books of 'near relation' see Āghā Buzurg, Dharī°ah, vol. 17, pp. 67ff.

<sup>20</sup>See Ḥimyarī, Qurb, pp. 'alīf' to 'hā'; GAL SI, p. 272; GAS II, p. 165; Āghā Buzurg, Dharī°ah, vol. 17, p. 67.

Ibrāhīm al-Qummī (d. early fourth/tenth century) are also surveyed here. Tafsīr Furāt al-Kūfī is a short volume that discusses only the verses relevant to the Shī'ī thesis; the Kitāb al-tafsīr of °Ayyāshī and Tafsīr al-Qummī are much longer works which present distinctively Shī'ī arguments but also include other material explaining verses of a more general significance.<sup>21</sup> Only the first half of the tafsīr of °Ayyāshī is extant. Furāt's Tafsīr is accepted as a Twelver source; many traditionists relate from Furāt, including Ibn Bābawayh and Majlisī, author of the Biḥār. At the same time, this work seems to be unusually sympathetic to Zaydism or Ḥasanid convictions; it may point to a milieu in which the Zaydī and Twelver traditions were not yet entirely distinct. Evidence for this is cited at several points in the text below.<sup>22</sup> Both Qummī and °Ayyāshī

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<sup>21</sup> For further information on Tafsīr al-Furāt see: Furāt ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Furāt al-Kūfī, Tafsīr Furāt al-Kūfī (Najaf: al-Maṭba'ah al-Ḥaydariyah, n.d.), pp. 2-6; GAL 1, p. 539; Āghā Buzurg, Dharī'ah, vol. 4, pp. 298-300. For Tafsīr al-°Ayyāshī see: al-Nadr Muhammad ibn Mas'ūd ibn °Ayyāsh al-Sulamī al-°Ayyāshī, Kitāb al-tafsīr, ed. Ḥāshim al-Rasūlī al-Mahallātī, 2 vols. (Tehran: al-Maktabah al-°Ilmiyah al-Islāmiyah, n.d.), vol. 1, pp. 'alif - 'dāl; GAS 1, p. 42; Āghā Buzurg, Dharī'ah, vol. 4, p. 295. For Tafsīr al-Qummī, see: Abū al-Ḥasan °Alī ibn Ibrāhīm al-Qummī, Tafsīr al-Qummī, ed. Tayyib al-Mūsawī al-Jazā'irī, 2 vols (Najaf: Maṭba'at al-Najaf, 1387/1967-8), vol. 1, pp. 7-26; GAS 1, pp. 45-46; Āghā Buzurg, Dharī'ah, vol. 4, pp. 302 ff.

<sup>22</sup> Too late to be included in this work, there came to my attention an unpublished Ph.D. thesis (likely in Hebrew) that uncovers traces of Zaydism also in the tafsīr of Qummī: Meir M. Bar-Asher, Etudes sur l'exegese imamite ancienne du Coran (III-IV/ IX-Xeme s.H.) (Hebrew University, no date given): cited in: Bar-Asher, "Deux traditions heterodoxes dans les anciens commentaires immites du Coran," Arabica 37 (1990): 291-314. The evidence presented by the article (which is a translated excerpt



occasionally cite their own opinions, apart from the ḥadīths.

The Baṣā'ir al-darajāt of Abū al-Qāsim Sa'd ibn 'Abd Allah al-Khalaf al-Ash'arī al-Qummī (d. 301/914) survives in the abridgement of al-Ḥasan ibn Sulaymān al-Ḥillī (d. early 10th/15th century); this book, called Mukhtaṣar baṣā'ir al-darajāt, also relates a small number of ḥadīths gathered by al-Ḥillī from other early sources. Like the Baṣā'ir of al-Saffār al-Qummī (to which however it bears no apparent relation), the Mukhtaṣar is a selection of traditions bearing directly on the imāmate.<sup>23</sup>

Kulaynī's (d. 329/941) Kāfī is the most comprehensive collection of Shī'ī ḥadīths of this period. Approximately one-quarter of Kulaynī's collection concerns Shī'ī ideology; this is the uṣūl min al-kāfī: the 'complete religious principles or beliefs.' The rest is devoted to legal questions; this is the furū' min al-kāfī: the 'complete subsidiary or legal material.' In the introduction to the Kāfī Kulaynī explains his reason for gathering all the traditions of the imāms in one book:

The people of our time no longer struggle against ignorance (jahl); indeed they cooperate in tracing out the paths of ignorance.... So perfectly content are they to rely on jahl that they are on the verge of losing all contact with [true] knowledge ('ilm).

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from the thesis) is rather subtle; certainly the Zaydism/Ḥasanism of Furāt's Tafsīr is much more striking.

<sup>23</sup> See: GAS II, p. 538; al-Dharī'ah II, p. 124, & XX, p. 182.

By 'ilm' Kulaynī means the knowledge communicated through the ḥadīth; by jahl he means (as he explains) not only 'applying one's own discretion' (istiḥsān) in religious matters and 'uncritical adoption' (taglīd) of the ways of one's ancestors but also "relying on intellect (ʿaql) in matters both subtle and great."<sup>24</sup> Kulaynī thus intended by composing the Kāfī to secure the place of ḥadīth against kalām (theological) speculation. To this end he arranges his material, in systematic fashion, into a number of books and many constituent chapters.<sup>25</sup> Kulaynī introduces many traditions addressed to theology proper which are not seen in the other collections mentioned here.

Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Jaʿfar al-Nuʿmānī was born in the beginning of the lesser occultation, when the twelfth imām was no longer seen by his followers but communicated through his appointed agents. His Kitāb al-ghaybah selects ḥadīths relevant to the subject of occultation and establishes Imāmī views on this subject. Al-Nuʿmānī was a student of al-Kulaynī (d. 328/939) and is said to have helped him in writing out the Kāfī. Al-Nuʿmānī migrated from his native Nuʿmānīyah to Baghdad; his residence there reflects the shift of Shīʿī intellectual activity in the last part of the fourth century to Baghdad after it had been

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<sup>24</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 4.

<sup>25</sup>More will be said about this in Chapter VI.

nurtured by the traditionists first in Kūfah and then in Qumm.<sup>26</sup>

In the pages following I have arranged the ḥadīths in the way I judge best presents an outline of traditional Shī'ī thought. The presentation does not follow any formal arrangement suggested by the collections. My linking of the traditions is rather determined by a reading of the internal logic of this apparently fragmented material; I do not deny that it could have been shaped in a different, perhaps equally descriptive, form. In order to cut the project down to size I have not devoted separate chapters to 'political' matters: the relations of the imāms and community with the temporal authority and problems of succession in the line of the imāms. I have concentrated instead on the relations of the imāms and community with each other and the destiny of the Shī'ah as determined by their loyalty to the imāms. This, I believe, is the heart of the tradition.

Within these bounds, the order of the chapters follows the reasonable order of the premisses: the creation of the imāms (Chapter II) establishes the background to the central issue of the imāms' special knowledge (Chapters III & IV); the benefits of that knowledge are then conferred on the community (Chapter V), culminating in a soteriology (Chapter VI) which is linked again

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<sup>26</sup>See: Muḥammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Ja'far al-Nu'mānī, Kitāb al-ghaybah (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-A'lamī, 1403/1983), pp. 5-8; GAL SI, p. 321; GAS II, p. 543; Āghā Buzurg, Dharī'ah, vol. 16, p. 79.

to the primordial creation. Theology proper, as being knowledge of God Himself, is rather a side-issue for the Shi'î traditionists, and so that brief chapter is placed at the last (VII). A summary of the system distinguishing earlier and later trends concludes the study.

## II. THE CREATION OF THE IMĀMS AND OF THE COMMUNITY

It is the belief of the Shī'ah that the ranks of good and evil, of righteousness and unrighteousness and faith and unfaith were drawn up long before the existence of this world. Believer and unbeliever, those destined for Heaven and those destined for the Fire, the prophets in their various stations and the supernatural beings of the imāms were all created, tested, and set on their course in a series of events orchestrated by God in a primordial time. Human life on earth temporarily obscures the true order and the true qualities of those who enter into it-but with the return of the disappeared twelfth imām and the great Judgement at the end of time all shall again become as clear as it was in the beginning.

The Shī'ī doctrine of creation as founded on this basis serves several purposes. One is to designate the Shī'ah as an exclusive community, set apart from the rest of the Muslims not merely by religious conviction but by actual constitution. Another is to mark the imāms as superhuman beings, possessed of semi-divine qualities. A third use is to link the origin of the imāms with that of the Prophet Muḥammad and the line of prophets and awṣiyā' (vicegerents) throughout history. The story of creation, or pre-creation, also fixes an extremely important

element of the Shī'ī world view: the idea that the imāms and the community are inextricably joined one to the other (in this case by the very substance from which they are made).

The ḥadīth supports these principles in the course of several different narratives, which are laid out in the chapter following: the story of the burden of faith offered to mankind as-yet-uncreated; the story of the mixing of materials by the Hand of God to fashion the bodies of mankind and the test of these new beings by Fire; the parable of the 'heavenly tree,' symbolizing the essential unity of the imāms and their followers; the doctrine of the hierarchy of 'spirits' (s. rūḥ) and the notion of the infusion of divine light into the favoured beings of the imāms and the Shī'ah; and the history of the transfer of the prophetic essence from womb to immaculate womb, culminating in miraculous birth.

#### i. The burden of faith and those who accepted it.

The story of the acceptance of faith by the Shī'ah in the time before creation is based on the incident described in Qur'ān 7:172. "Your Lord," says the revelation, "brought forth from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their progeny, and made them testify of themselves [saying]: 'Am I not your Lord?' And they said: 'Yes, we testify (7:172).'" The Sunnis have understood this verse to refer to a primordial event in which mankind assented to a covenant (mīthāq) offered by God, agreeing

to His Lordship and their duty to worship Him. The Sūfis have taken this verse and enlarged upon it from a mystical point of view; the Shī'ah, similarly, have their own elaboration which centres around the articles of their creed, chiefly the imāmate.<sup>1</sup>

The first element of the mīthāq, according to the Shī'ah, was belief in God. "God," reports the sixth imām, "took out from the loins of Adam his progeny until the Day of Creation [that is He took out all of mankind that shall ever exist] - and if it were not for this, no one would know his Lord."<sup>2</sup> Those who pledged to the covenant largely forgot its terms as they entered this world (although they shall be reminded again on the Day of Judgement);<sup>3</sup> this explains why humankind is not endowed with certainty but is left to find its way toward religious truths only vaguely perceived. Humans thus have a certain religious

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<sup>1</sup>The Sūfi version is close to that of the Shī'ah in that it also uses the covenant to explain election, in this case of the mystics. For an early Sūfi formulation of the mīthāq see: Gerhard Boewering, The Mystical Vision of Existence in Classical Islam. The Qur'anic Hermeneutics of the Sufi Sahl al-Tustari (d. 283/896) (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980).

<sup>2</sup>Hasan ibn Sulaymān al-Hillī (from Sa'd ibn 'Abd Allāh ibn Abī Khālaf al-Ash'arī al-Qummī, Abū al-Qāsim), Mukhtaṣar Baṣā'ir al-darajāt (Najaf: al-Maṭba'ah al-Haydariyah, 1370/1950), p. 163; Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 71, ḥadīth #6 & p. 72, ḥadīth #8; Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 49. According to a tradition of the fifth imām, God at this point 'introduced Himself to them' and actually made them to see Him, so that they would afterwards know their Lord ('Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 40, ḥadīth #110). On the Vision of God see Chapter VII.

<sup>3</sup>See Abū Ja'far Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Khālid al-Barqī, Kitāb al-maḥāsin, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Husyanī (Qum: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, 1371/1951), p. 241, *passim*; *ibid.*, p. 281, ḥadīth #410; Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 168.

instinct, derived from this initial knowledge (ma°rifah). In particular, they are created with an inborn disposition to monotheism (tawhīd). Commenting on the Qur'ānic phrase "the disposition (fiṭrah) with which God endowed mankind (30:30)" Ja°far al-Šādiq declared: "They were endowed (f-t-r) with tawhīd."<sup>4</sup> The precedence of Muḥammad over all the other prophets was established with this very first test, as he assented (n. igrār) to God before all the others.<sup>5</sup>

God also secured from mankind in the time before creation their faith in His prophets, particularly in Muḥammad. "God,"

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<sup>4</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 241, ḥadīth # 222; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, pp. 19-21 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb fiṭrat al-khalq °alā al-tawhīd}. This idea of fiṭrah seems to include all Muslims; note the ḥadīth in Himyarī, Qurb, p. 214 in which the eighth imām admits the testimony of two non-Šī°is on the grounds that 'testimony is allowed from anyone born in the fiṭrah.' According to at least one report, however, the wilāyah of °Alī is also a necessary element of the fiṭrah (Saffār, Basā'ir, p. 78, ḥadīth # 7), and thus natural religion is attributed to the Šī°ah only. Cf. another declaration of Husayn: "We, by God, and our Šī°ah, are endowed with the religious instinct [in confirmation of which] God sent Muḥammad, while the rest of mankind is completely devoid of it (al-Uṣūl al-sitt °ashar, ed. Ḥasan Muṣṭafwī [n.p., Chāpkhānah-yi Ḥaydarī, 1371], p. 41)."

<sup>5</sup>Saffār, Basā'ir, p. 83, ḥadīth #2 & p. 86, ḥadīth #12; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 39, ḥadīth #7; Ash°arī, Basā'ir, pp. 165 & 170; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, pp. 16-17 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb anna Rasūl Allāh awwal man ajāba wa-aqarra lillāhi bi-al-rubūbiyah, ḥadīth #1}; see also ibid., pp. 23-25 {Bāb anna al-šibghah hiya al-islām & Bāb fi anna al-sakinah hiya al-islām}. This explains why Muḥammad is the most excellent of the prophets, even though he is the last in sequence. The sixth imām adds that Muḥammad was the first to assent because he was at that time the closest creation to God, standing as he pronounced the word 'yes' in the same place he reached during his later heavenly ascent (mi°rāj) (Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, pp. 246-247; Ash°arī, Basā'ir, p. 167; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 327 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb mawlid al-nabī..., ḥadīth #6}).



says the fifth imām, "took the progeny of Adam from his loins in order to take the covenant from them concerning His Lordship and prophethood of every prophet, the first of those for whose prophethood he secured the covenant being Muḥammad."<sup>6</sup> The first of all the community of Muḥammad to believe in him was °Alī. °Alī's precedence in faith was thus already established before time; that he was also the first (according to the Shī'ah) to believe in this world is but a reflexion of the pre-eternal order established in the mīthāq.<sup>7</sup>

It is, however, confirmation of the wilāyah of °Alī and his descendants the imāms that constitutes for the Shī'ah the central element of the covenant. Acceptance of the wilāyah of the imāms appears in the ḥadīth as the crux of the proffered faith and the criterion by which the believers are separated

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<sup>6</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 13 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb ākhir min-hu [ṭīnat al-mu'min wa-al-kāfir], ḥadīth # 2}. See also al-Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 169.

<sup>7</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 41; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 165 (and see also p. 64). "My community was shown to me," says the Prophet, "at the time of the Covenant, and the first to believe in me and testify to the truth [of my mission] (Ṣaddaqa-nī) was °Alī, and he was [also] the first to believe in me and confirm me when I was sent [as a prophet to the earth]; [therefore] he is 'the most veracious [al-siddīq al-akbar]' (Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 84, ḥadīth # 3, from the fifth imām)." 'Al-Ṣiddīq' is the epithet of Abū Bakr, and one of the points of the tradition is to appropriate it instead for °Alī. Alī is also called 'al-Fārūq' ('he who distinguishes'), normally the epithet of °Umar. He is al-Fārūq because he is the one to distinguish between good and evil and truth from untruth (Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 12) and also because he divides those who shall go to Paradise from those who shall go to the Fire (ibid., p. 61; see also K. Sulaym, pp. 138 & 178-179 and Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 30).

from the unbelievers. This is the main subject of the mīthāq traditions.

The wilāyah was, according to the ḥadīth, offered to the angels, some of whom accepted and some of whom rejected it. God recalled to Muḥammad when he was lifted to heaven on the mi°rāj: "I offered their wilāyah [the wilāyah of Fāṭimah, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, and the imāms] to the angels; and those who accepted it were among the muqarrabīn (the favoured angels or angels closer to God, = cherubim), and those who opposed it were among the unbelievers (kāfirīn)."<sup>8</sup> The cherubim are thus, according to Ja°far al-Ṣādiq, "a group of our Shī°ah from the first creation whom God has placed behind the Throne, and if He were to allot only one of their lights to the people of the earth, it would be enough for them."<sup>9</sup> The heavens and earth were also invited to confirm the wilāyah of °Alī - but they, according to some reports, refused it, unlike humankind who chose to bear this heavy responsibility.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, p. 59; see also Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 5 and Ṣaffār, Baṣā°ir, pp. 67-69. In the chain of this ḥadīth the name of the fifth imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir is separated from the words of the Prophet by several other authorities.

<sup>9</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā°ir, p. 69, ḥadīth #2. See also *ibid.*, pp. 67-68.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 76, ḥadīth #2, and see also the traditions cited in the previous note. This tradition is apropos of the words of the Qur°ān: "We offered the trust (amānah) to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, and they refused to bear it and were afraid of it. But man accepted it; how iniquitous he was, and how evil (33:72)!"

The first among the prophets to believe in the wilāyah of °Alī and the imāms (and also among the first to believe in Muḥammad) were the 'ulū al-°azm,' or 'those possessed of [firm] resolve.' By the ulū al-°azm is meant the chief prophets who carried with them a sharī°ah or divine law, these being: Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and then Muḥammad.<sup>11</sup> Thus the Shī°ah explain the verse of the Qur'ān "We made a covenant of old with Adam, but he forgot, and we found no resolution (°azm) in him (20:115)" in the following way:

God made a covenant with him concerning Muḥammad and the imāms after him, but he abandoned it and could not firmly resolve that they were as he had been told; while the ulū al-°azm received this name because when he made covenant with them concerning Muḥammad and the vicegerents (that is the imāms) after him, and the Mahdī and his history, they gathered their resolve to affirm that it was thus, and that assent was required to it.<sup>12</sup>

Here the reluctance of humankind in historical time to testify to the wilāyah of °Alī is prefigured in the initial reluctance of

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<sup>11</sup>See: Barqī, Mahāsin, pp. 269-270, ḥadīth #358 and Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 247 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb ṭabaqāt al-anbiyā' wa-al-rusul wa-al-a'immah, ḥadīth #3}. The ulū al-°azm are mentioned in the Qur'ān (46:35), but the members are not identified.

<sup>12</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 70, ḥadīth #1, from the fifth imām (and see this chapter in general). See also Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, pp. 246-246 & vol. 2, p. 300 and Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 163. One tradition asserts that Qur'ān 21:115 was actually sent with an added phrase: "We made a covenant of old with Adam, with words concerning Muḥammad, °Alī, Hasan, Husayn, and the imāms among their descendants, but he forgot..." (Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 71, ḥadīth #4). Refer to the discussion of Shī°ī views of the Qur'ān in the next chapter.

Adam, the father of man.<sup>13</sup> All the other prophets of the ages then also testified, and this was (similar to their recognition of the prophethood of Muḥammad) only the confirmation of an essential part of their prophetic mission, for, as the sixth imām states, "No prophet was ever made a prophet or any messenger sent except with [tidings of] our wilāyah and our pre-eminence over all others."<sup>14</sup> Therefore, as the Prophet says, "God sent no prophet without inviting him to your [°Alī's] wilāyah, whether he was willing or not;"<sup>15</sup> "no prophet was completely a prophet... until my wilāyah and the wilāyah of the Holy Family was offered to him... and he accepted."<sup>16</sup> In fact, Adam was only created for the sake of acknowledging the prophethood of Muḥammad the wilāyah of the imāms!<sup>17</sup>

First among those to believe in the wilāyah, and therefore

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<sup>13</sup>According to a tradition cited on the authority of Ja°far al-Sādiq, Adam was reluctant to testify because of his jealousy of the Holy Family as their forms were 'represented' to him, before their actual creation, in heaven. It is for this reason that he fell from God's grace, and his 'repentance' as mentioned in the Qur'ān was in fact his final acceptance of the wilāyah (°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 41, ḥadīth #27).

<sup>14</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 75, ḥadīth #5; Kulaynī, al-Kāfi, vol. 2, p. 320 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb fī-hi nutaf wa-ḥawāmi° min al-riwāyah fī al-wilāyah, ḥadīth #4}; See also *ibid.*, ḥadīth #3.

<sup>15</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 72, ḥadīth #2 (and see this chapter in general). On the authority of the fifth imām. According to one tradition from °Alī, Jonah refused the wilāyah, causing God to imprison him in the belly of the whale until he relented (*ibid.*, pp. 75-76, ḥadīth #1)!

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 73, ḥadīth #7.

<sup>17</sup>K. Sulaym, p. 219, related from the Prophet.

on a par with the very prophets and angels, were the Shī'ah of °Alī. Their exalted status (though concealed in this world by a veil of oppression) was, like that of the imāms, already established before creation. The tale of the elevation of the Shī'ah and the degradation of their enemies began with their being 'brought out from the loins of Adam.' At this time, so the hadīths report, they were not yet contained in bodies, or indeed created at all. They were still in the form of 'atoms' or 'tiny particles' (dharr).<sup>18</sup> The atoms were called by God and they came 'creeping;' as related in one report, they came out from Adam "as ants from their nest."<sup>19</sup> Or, according to other Hadīths, humankind was in the form of 'shadows' (ẓilāl, azillah, s. ẓill); "God," says the fifth imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir, "took our covenant

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<sup>18</sup>The idea of dharr or atoms is suggested by the words of the Qur'ān: "And [remember] when your Lord brought forth from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their seed (dhurriyah) (Q. 7:172)."

<sup>19</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, pp. 218-220, hadīth #73. In this lengthy hadīth related from the fifth imām the event of the dharr takes place in an earthly setting, specifically in a valley between Ṭā'if and Makkah. This seems to contradict the view that it took place before creation. The narration, in the form of a dialogue between God and Adam, also mentions an earlier mīthāq taken from mankind or from the atoms 'in heaven' (fī al-samā'); thus the subject may in fact be a second covenant, which is not spoken of in other traditions. The sequence of events of the creation is presented differently in different hadīths; this is one outstanding example.

and the covenant of our Shī'ah while we and they were shadows."<sup>20</sup> The fifth imām, when asked about the shadows, replied: "Do you not see your shadow in the sun, how it is something, and [at the same time] nothing [apparently, but not actually, existing]?"<sup>21</sup> As each being in this insubstantial condition assented or refused to assent to the imāms, its response was determined forever after: "God knew their faith (īmān) in our wilāyah or their rejection (kufr, = also 'unbelief') of it on the day He took from them the covenant in the loins of Adam, while they were in the form of atoms."<sup>22</sup> All of the various degrees of faith were already established with this event, so that humans are sowed in the wombs of their mothers with the belief they obtained through the covenant.<sup>23</sup> And so it shall remain even to the coming of the Qā'im, at which time "none shall stand by him except those whose covenant God had taken in the first dharr."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 136, ḥadīth #17. Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 168: "...at the origin (fī al-aṣl), at the time of the shadows (°ind al-aẓillah) (also from the fifth imām)."

<sup>21</sup>Kulayni, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 16 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb ākhīr min-hu [annex to Bāb anna Rasūl Allāh awwal man ajāba wa-aḡarra...], ḥadīth #3}; Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 81, ḥadīth #1; *ibid.*, p. 135, ḥadīth #16. In this version (also from the fifth imām) God's creatures are sent as 'shadows' after they are created from various clays; see also Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 164.

<sup>22</sup>Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 169. From the sixth imām. See also °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 126, ḥadīth #35; Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 88; Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 271.

<sup>23</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 161. From the fifth imām.

<sup>24</sup>Nu'mānī, Ghaybah, p. 125. From the sixth imām. See also *ibid.*, p. 99.

The fixity of belief established through the event of the mīthāq is emphasized by the doctrine that the number of believers established in primordial times can never increase or decrease. "God," says Zayd ibn ʿAlī (the brother of the fifth imām and chief of the Zaydī sect<sup>25</sup>), "created that which He created, then made them 'shadows'... and then He secured our covenant and the covenant of our Shīʿah, and they shall not be reduced by a single person, and we shall not be increased by a single one."<sup>26</sup> This means that love for the Holy Family and the imāms is the privilege of only a limited number of souls. Others may wish to love them, try to love them, or pretend to love them, but if they are among those who refused the covenant, that is who refused the wilāyah before they were created, they cannot. Similarly, as much as those who are numbered among the believers may try to disbelieve, they cannot. One cannot 'become' a Shīʿī, and the true Shīʿī cannot become anything else; "if a Shīʿī tries to abandon the right opinion, God shall return him to it by force!"<sup>27</sup> The fifth imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir, upon hearing that al-Ḥajjāj, the harsh Umayyad governor of Iraq, was engaged in

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<sup>25</sup>Hadiths related from Zayd are sometimes found in the books of the Twelvers.

<sup>26</sup>ʿAyyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 207, ḥadīth # 24. According to one ḥadīth, the number of believers and of unbelievers is established by God in the permanent heavenly record, the umm al-kitāb ('mother of the book'), thus ensuring that it shall never be altered "until the Day of Judgement (Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 32; from the Prophet)."

<sup>27</sup>Usūl, p. 103; Barqī, Mahāsin, p. 200, ḥadīth #32. From the sixth imām. See also *ibid.*, p. 280, ḥadīths #407 & 408.

damning °Alī ibn Abī Tālib from the pulpit, remarked:

The enemies of God curse us - while if they could become Shī'is, they would! But they cannot, for God secured our covenant and that of our Shī'ah while we and they were as yet shadows. Even if they were to direct all their effort into increasing them [the Shī'ah] by one person, or reducing them by one, they would not be able.<sup>28</sup>

As for the imāms, they always know who are the believers and who are the unbelievers, whatever their appearance may be. From a general point of view, this is so because the imām knows all and has perfect knowledge of every thing.<sup>29</sup> More particularly, it is so because the imāms viewed all of humanity before they were created and are thus able to immediately recognize them in this world. Some ḥadīths place this viewing at the time of the covenant, while according to others humankind was displayed to the imāms after they had been made from clay, or when they were still disembodied spirits. God secured the covenant of the Shī'ah to Himself, Muḥammad, and °Alī, and then "...He made your [°Alī's] face to know their faces, and your spirit to know their spirits, so that you shall recognize those who claim to love you, and recognize those who say they hate you."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 203, ḥadīth # 48. See also Abū °Abbās °Abd Allāh ibn Ja°far al-Himyarī, Qurb al-isnād (Najaf: al-Maṭba°ah al-Ḥaydariyah, 1369/1950), pp. 203 & 209.

<sup>29</sup>This principle is explained in Chapter III, section i.

<sup>30</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 40. These are the words of Satan, persuading °Alī to release him as he wrestles him down with the promise to give him these glad tidings! See also Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 84, ḥadīth #3.



It is also said that God at this time taught °Alī all the names of his partisans and enemies<sup>31</sup> and that each individual had either the word 'mu'min' (believer) or 'kāfir' (unbeliever) inscribed between the eyes, which sign can be seen only by the imāms.<sup>32</sup> These are additional sources of the imāms' knowledge of humanity.

So intimate is the acquaintance of the imāms with all the members of the human race that they know just by looking at a man his 'essential qualities,'<sup>33</sup> they can recognize their faithful Shī'ah only by their 'tone of voice.'<sup>34</sup> The imāms also know without a doubt those who wish to follow them or pretend to follow them but are of a substance and persuasion that prevents them from ever being one of the elect.<sup>35</sup> Many ḥadīths picture

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<sup>31</sup>Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 164; Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 83, ḥadīth #1 & pp. 83-86, passim; Furāt, Tafsīr, pp. 86 & 205.

<sup>32</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 354 ff; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 335, ḥadīth #53; Furāt, Tafsīr, pp. 81-82.

<sup>33</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 361, ḥadīth #1.

<sup>34</sup>Uṣūl, p. 28. Ja°far al-Sādiq adds: "even if we hear him speaking from the other side of a wall..." (Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 361, ḥadīth #1; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 322-323 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb fī ma°rifati-him awliyā'a-hum..., ḥadīth #3}. See also Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 89, ḥadīth #1 & p. 387, ḥadīth #13; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, pp. 180-182, ḥadīth #74; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 166.

<sup>35</sup>Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 166: "We know the love of one who loves [us], even though he may say otherwise, and we know the hatred of those who hate [us], even though they may pretend to love us...." From the fifth imām. See also Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 288-290.

the imāms confronted by persons who profess their love for them and their adherence to the wilāyah, whom they flatly reject on the grounds that they did not 'recognize' them.<sup>36</sup>

## ii. The trial by fire.

The episode of the mīthāq is paralleled in God's test of His uncreated beings by Fire. This legend also serves to confirm the election of the Shī'ah. Ja'far al-Ṣādiq gives the following account of the 'trial by fire':

God raised [for humanity] a fire, and said to them: 'Enter it, by my command!' The first to enter was Muhammad, followed by the ulū al-°azm [the other four chief prophets] and their vicegerents. Then He said to the 'Companions of the Left' [the first group being the Companions of the Right]: 'Enter it, by my command! 'O Lord,' they said, 'have you created us in order to burn us?' Thus they disobeyed God. Then God told the Companions of the Right: 'Come out, by my command, from the Fire!' And the fire did not wound them or leave any trace on them. When the Companions of the Left saw them, they said: 'We see, O Lord, that our companions are unharmed; forgive us our offence and allow us to enter!' 'I forgive you.' said God. 'Enter the Fire!' As they approached and were confronted by the intense heat, however, they drew back. 'O Lord,' they said, 'we cannot endure being burned.' And they disobeyed [once again]. Thus God ordered them three times [to enter the Fire], and [each time] they disobeyed; and He ordered those [the 'Companions of the Right'] three times, and [each time] they obeyed, and emerged [unharmed]. Then He said to them: 'Be clay, by my command!' and He created Adam from it. And those who belong to the first group shall never belong to the second, and those who belong to the second group shall

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<sup>36</sup>Eg: Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 86-89 and *ibid.*, pp. 361-362 (in which Ja'far al-Ṣādiq pulls a man by the beard for his audacity in introducing himself, while the imām had already 'recognized' who he was!) See also *ibid.*, pp. 390-392.

never belong to the first....<sup>37</sup>

In the course of this ordeal, as in the mīthāq, precedence of faith was also established. According to a report from Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, the first to enter the Fire was Muḥammad, followed by °Alī, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, and the other imāms, and finally by their followers the Shī'ah.<sup>38</sup> The tradition seems to have been inspired by the story in the Qur'ān of Abraham who was thrown into a great fire by the idolaters, which God however made for him "coolness and peace (Q. 21:69)."<sup>39</sup> Here it serves as a parable for the trials and persecution the Shī'ah must accept in this world as the price of their faith. The tradition also highlights the sorrows of the imāms, who are cast by the Shī'ah in the role of ideal sufferers and martyrs.

### iii. Creation from the two clays.

In a lengthy tradition traced from the fifth imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir through the line of imāms to °Alī, 'the Commander of the

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<sup>37</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, pp. 17-18 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb anna Rasūl Allāh awwal man ajāba..., ḥadīth #2}. For other versions see: *ibid.*, pp. 9-11 {Bāb ākhir min-hu [annex to Tīnat al-mu'min wa-al-kāfir]}; Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 242, ḥadīth #412; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, pp. 39-40, ḥadīth #109.

<sup>38</sup>Nu'mānī, Ghaybah, p. 57 (in this version of the tradition the beings who entered the Fire had already been formed from clay). See also Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 11 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb ākhir min-hu [annex to Bāb Tīnat al-mu'min wa-al-kāfir], ḥadīth #3}.

<sup>39</sup>The tradition does not connect the trial of the faithful to the trial of Abraham; but in a tradition from the sixth imām the Qur'ānic phrase 'coolness and peace' is used (*ibid.*).

Believers,' °Alī recounts the story of the creation of humankind. His story is a Shī'ī-flavoured elaboration of the well-known Qur'ānic account in Sūrat al-baqarah of God's election of man, over the objections of the angels, to rule the earth (verses 30 ff.).

The world, °Alī states, was first filled with the race of jinn, as well as another group of creatures called 'nasnās.'<sup>40</sup> These, however, disobeyed their Creator, shed blood and practised iniquity, so that God decided to begin anew with another kind of being. "I shall," He said to the angels, "place upon the earth a representative (khalīfah) (Q. 2:30)."<sup>41</sup> "I wish," He declared, "to create a creature by my own Hand and make of his progeny prophets and messengers, and righteous servants: the rightly-guided imāms. I wish to appoint them as [my] representatives over my creation on my earth, in order that they might forbid them from disobedience and guide them to obedience and warn them

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<sup>40</sup>Mention of the jinn, etc., is meant to explain why the angels drew the conclusion that humankind would "do harm and shed blood" (Q. 2:30); they concluded this from the prior deeds of other creatures. On the existence of the jinn before man, see °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 317, ḥadīth #167. Shī'ī tradition contains reports of yet other creations existing before man. It is said that there were eight creations altogether on the earth before Adam, including mankind (°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 238, ḥadīth #57). See also *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 31-32, ḥadīth #8 and Uṣūl, p. 105.

<sup>41</sup>The tradition adds to the Qur'ānic quotation, either as exegesis or emendation: "...such that he shall be my proof (ḥujjah) upon the earth over my creation." The 'khalīfah' is thus made to refer to the prophets and ultimately the imāms, rather than mankind in general.

of my punishment...." And this He proceeded to do, over the objections of the angels who feared that mankind-to-be would repeat the experience of the jinn and nasnās and who preferred that the honour of being chosen 'khalīfah' should fall to one of them. God said to the angels: "I shall create a mortal out of potter's clay of black mud altered,/ So, when I have made him and have breathed into him of my Spirit, fall down, prostrating yourselves unto him (Q. 15: 28-29)."

According to °Alī, God began by scooping up with His right hand (both His hands being, the ḥadīth reminds us, right hands) "a handful of fresh, sweet [furāt; also = Euphrates] water." This He worked in His palm[s] until it congealed, and He said to it: "From you shall I create the prophets and messengers, my righteous servants, the rightly-guided imāms, and those who shall invite [the people] to Paradise and their followers, until the Day of Judgement, nor do I care...." Then He took another handful, this time from salty, brackish water, also kneaded it, and said to it: "From you I create the tyrants, the 'Pharaohs'<sup>42</sup>, and the arrogant, the brothers of the Satans, and those who shall invite to the Fire to the Day of Judgement, and their adherents...."<sup>43</sup> The beings created from superior clay are

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<sup>42</sup>That is those temporal rulers who refuse to submit to God, just as the Pharaoh (the story is told in the Qur'ān, 10:75 ff.) who rejected Moses' call to acknowledge God.

<sup>43</sup>The Mughīriyah, an extremist Shī'ī sect, also held that God created the world from two seas, one dark and salty and the other bright and sweet. The unbelievers were created from the

called 'the companions of the Right [Hand],' whereas the creatures made from inferior material are 'the companions of the Left.'<sup>44</sup> Finally God mixed and kneaded the two waters together, and placed them in front of His Throne.<sup>45</sup>

Mankind is therefore created, or mixed, of two substances, and the question of belief and unbelief (equal in the Shī'ī view to loyalty or lack of loyalty to the imāms) was decided in these events.

In fact, the whole of creation was divided by this dual creation into two opposing forces. For it is said that God divided creation at the beginning into sweet and brackish water. Paradise and its people were of one sweet substance, and the Fire and its destined inhabitants were both created of another, foul

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former, and the believers from the latter. (This is, however, only part of the account of creation of the Mughīriyah; other, more phantastic details do not appear in the tradition.) See Abū Hasan °Alī ibn Ismā'il al-Ash°arī, Maqālāt al-islāmiyīn, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyi al-Dīn °Abd al-Ḥamīd (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍah al-Miṣrīyah, 1389/1969), p. 73.

<sup>44</sup>Or as Muḥammad al-Bāqir describes it, God kneaded the clay vigorously so that "they came out in the form of atoms from His Right [Hand] and Left [Hand]" - and these were the two groups (Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb ākhīr min-hu [annex to ṭīnat al-mu'mīn wa-al-kāfir], ḥadīth #2}. The companions of the right and of the left are mentioned in several places in the Qur'ān; see for instance Q. 56:8-9.

<sup>45</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, pp. 36 ff; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, pp. 26-29, ḥadīth #2; an abbreviated version in *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 240-241, ḥadīth #7. The story of the mixing of sweet and salt waters recalls the Mesopotamian creation-myth, which speaks of the mixing of the sweet waters of the Euphrates with the salt of the Gulf at the beginning of time.

substance:<sup>46</sup> "He created whom He loved from that which He loved... and created that which He hated from that which He hated."<sup>47</sup> Thus the journey of the pious to Heaven and the sinners to Hell is nothing but an inevitable return to the source. Those who have been formed of superior matter cannot help but to be attracted to the righteousness the essence of which they share: "If God wishes good for His servant, he makes his body and his spirit (rūḥ) excellent, so that whatever good he hears he knows [to be good], and whatever bad (munkar) he hears, he rejects."<sup>48</sup> Similarly, those who were created of the substance of the Fire are forever drawn toward it.

The Prophet, imāms, and their Shī'ah are particularly closely associated through their formation from one earth. God, reports Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, created Muḥammad from the clay of a precious essence beneath the Throne, formed 'Alī from a bit of the clay left over, created the imāms from the excess of 'Alī's clay, and then finally the Shī'ah from the clay of the imāms.<sup>49</sup> Thus 'Alī declares: "The Prophet, we [the imāms], and our Shī'ah

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<sup>46</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 282, ḥadīth #412. In this ḥadīth also the incident of the 'atoms' occurs after the creation Adam's clay 'from the crust of the earth.'

<sup>47</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 80-81, ḥadīth #1.

<sup>48</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 3 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb ṭīnat al-mu'min wa-al-kāfir, ḥadīth #2}. From the sixth imām.

<sup>49</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 14, ḥadīth #1; and see this chapter in general.

are of one clay."<sup>50</sup>

Since the imāms are of the same stuff as the prophets it is clear that, far from one being inferior to them, they are a continuation of the same principle and being. In addition, the creation of all the imāms from one clay means that they are each one equal to the other, with no one 'more excellent' (afḍal) than the other.<sup>51</sup> That the imāms and their followers are also made from one clay confirms that the Shī'ah share in the superior, divinely-granted qualities of their masters. It is even said in one report that the believers, that is the Shī'ah, are "formed from the clay of the prophets;" thus (adds the sixth imām Ja'far) "they shall never be made impure."<sup>52</sup> By sharing in the substance of the imāms the Shī'ah are set apart from the rest of humanity. They are 'like people' (fully human), while others are only 'the great mass,'<sup>53</sup> the 'rabble.'<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 41.

<sup>51</sup>So asserts Ja'far al-Ṣādiq in answer to a question about the relative 'excellence' of Ḥasan and Ḥusayn (Nu'mānī, Ghaybah, p. 54).

<sup>52</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 133, ḥadīth #7. See also *ibid.*, ḥadīths #8 & 9; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 4, {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb tīnat al-mu'min wa-al-kāfir, ḥadīth # 3} ("thus God does not differentiate between the prophets and their followers [the Shī'ah]"); *ibid.*, ḥadīth #2. The sixth imām also says: "No one shared in the [clay] from which the Shī'ah were created save the prophets and messengers... (Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 20, ḥadīth # 3)."

<sup>53</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 8. From °Alī, upon being asked to differentiate between 'nās,' (people), 'ashbāh al-nās' (those similar to people) and 'nasnās.' 'People,' according to °Alī, refers to the Prophet, those similar to him are the Shī'ah, and



Human beings are forever associated and inevitably drawn to those whose 'clay' they share. This tendency is implanted within their very hearts. "God," says the fifth imām, "created us from the highest part of °Illīyyīn<sup>55</sup>, and He created the hearts of the Shī'ah from the same substance - but he created their bodies from something inferior to that. Thus do their hearts yearn toward us, for they were created from that from which we were created."<sup>56</sup> The enemies of the imāms, in a reverse pattern, were created from Sijjīn, that is from Hell, and the hearts of their followers are of the same substance (while their bodies were made, again, from a clay inferior even to that).<sup>57</sup> Each group is attracted to its leader: "The hearts of the believers yearn toward that from which they were created," says the fourth imām, "and the hearts of the rest of humankind is the nasnās.

<sup>54</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 20, ḥadīth #3: reading hamajan in place of hajaman, on analogy with the ḥadīth cited in the previous note. From the sixth imām. See also Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 340 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb fī qillat °adad al-mu'minīn, ḥadīth #4} & ibid., p. 387 {Bāb al-kabā'ir, ḥadīth #16}.

<sup>55</sup>°Illīyyīn is a part of Heaven. Its opposite is Sijjīn (mentioned below), a part of Hell. Both names are Qur'ānic: see sūrah 83.

<sup>56</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 24-25, ḥadīth #18 & pp. 59-60, ḥadīth #1; Qummī Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 411; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 4 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb tīnat al-mu'min wa-al-kāfir, ḥadīth #4}. Barqī (Maḥāsin, p. 132, ḥadīth #5) reports the same ḥadīth from Ja'far al-Šādiq; Furāt, (Tafsīr, p. 81), attributes it to the Prophet.

<sup>57</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 14, ḥadīth #2 (and see this chapter in general). From the fifth imām.

unbelievers yearn toward that from which they were created."<sup>58</sup> Thus the Shi'ah are led to follow the imāms, and their enemies gravitate toward those who shall lead them to error and into Hell - and there is no choice for either.

In addition, the believers themselves, being of the same clay, are like brothers. Muḥammad al-Bāqir said:

God created the believers from the clay of the gardens of Paradise and breathed into them of the breath of His Spirit. It is for this reason that the believer is the brother of the believer, both on the side of the father and the mother, and it is for this reason that when a soul among them in any country of the world suffers any thing the souls [of the others] are saddened - because they are one with it.<sup>59</sup>

This is the meaning of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq's advising his followers that they were 'brothers' not in the sense that they had adopted Shiism in this world, but that they had actually 'recognized' each other from a prior association.<sup>60</sup>

The paradigm of the brotherhood of faith is completed by the idea that the Prophet Muḥammad and 'Alī are the 'two fathers' of

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<sup>58</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 1 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb ṭīnat al-mu'min wa-al-kāfir, ḥadīth #1}. For other traditions on the 'yearning' see: Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 14-19, passim; Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 81; Nu'mānī, Ghaybah, p. 26.

<sup>59</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, pp. 133-134, ḥadīth #10. See also Uṣūl, p. 63 and Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, pp. 241-244 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb ikhwat al-mu'minin ba'du-hum li-ba'd}.

<sup>60</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 245 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb fī anna al-tawākhī lam yaqa° 'alā al-dīn wa-inna-mā huwa al-ta°aruf} . See also Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 84, ḥadīth #4.

all the believers.<sup>61</sup> Some of the Arab tribes, it is related, recognized °Alī as the vicegerent of the Prophet even before this was revealed to them because, in their words, "when we saw him... we felt as if he was our father and we his children."<sup>62</sup> Muḥammad also, as is well known, pronounced °Alī his 'brother.' This was part of the formal institution of 'fraternization' which the Prophet had established in the early part of his mission;<sup>63</sup> but the Shī°ah take it as another indication of the shared essence of the two men.

Once again, as at the time of the dharr, the imāms were introduced to their followers, so that they instantly remember them in this world. °Alī dismissed a man who claimed loyalty and love to him with the observation: "I do not recognize your name [among the names of the Shī°ah], nor your face, and your substance is of a substance other than that clay."<sup>64</sup> It seems that the imāms recognize their Shī°ah in this world quite literally from their physical aspect, for it is said that they were 'represented' (maththala; ṣawwara) in the clay for them to

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<sup>61</sup>Eg. Furāt, Tafsīr, pp. 86 & 120; Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 176.

<sup>62</sup>Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, p. 26. Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 14, ḥadīth # 1: "The hearts of our Shī°ah feel an affinity with us, and our hearts feel an affinity with them, like the affection between father and son... (related from the fifth and sixth imāms)."

<sup>63</sup>On this practice see Ilse Lichtenstaedter, "Fraternization (Mu'ākhāt) in Early Islamic Society," Islamic Culture 16 (1942): 47-52.

<sup>64</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 390, ḥadīth #1.

see.<sup>65</sup>

Nothing shall be added and nothing can be subtracted from the mass of clay from which the Shī'ah are made. No one shall ever become a Shī'ī who was not created a Shī'ī, and no Shī'ī shall ever escape his origin, as 'Alī says: "No part of it [the clay] shall ever become separated, and nothing shall ever be added, until the Day of Judgement."<sup>66</sup>

It appears however that this neat scheme of things, with the entire world divided into two forces precisely drawn and eternally opposed, was not sufficient to the minds of the Shī'ah. It may be that they were forced to consider certain practical situations which could not be fitted into their rigid scheme. How to explain, for instance, the undeniable existence of those who professed the wilāyah of the imāms, but did not otherwise present a model of piety? And what about the child who, born to unbelieving parents, chose to attach himself to the imāms and become a Shī'ī? The second instance also presented a controversy current in the Muslim community in general; the ulamā' generally agreed that believers could be born from unbelievers, the proof-verse being "You bring forth the dead from the living, and the

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<sup>65</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 84-86, passim; *ibid.*, p. 83. See also Furāt, Tafsīr, pp. 25 & 205; Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 390-392; Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 165.

<sup>66</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 390, ḥadīth #1; see also *ibid.*, p. 17, ḥadīth #11.

living from the dead... (Q. 3:27)."67

The first question is answered by postulating a mixing at the time of creation of the two different substances from which human beings were made. God (according to another variation on the tale of myth of the 'two clays') first created 'an earth' and 'a clay.' He then extracted from them two waters. He made the water to flow upon the earth seven days and nights and then drained the water. From the purest part (ṣafwah)<sup>68</sup> of this mixed material he took the clay of the imāms. The lowest or least pure part of the superior clay was used to create the descendants of the imāms and their Shī'ah. If the clay of the Shī'ah had been left alone at this point as was the clay of the imāms, "we would have been one" - say the fifth and/or sixth imāms, from whom the ḥadīth is related. But He chose instead to take an inferior clay, made with brackish water. From the most unmixed part of this clay He made the 'imāms (lit. 'leaders') of unbelief (kufr), and

...and if the clay of our enemies had been left as God took it, they would not have recited the witness:

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<sup>67</sup>See for instance: Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, Jāmi' al-bayān 'an ta'wīl āy al-Qur'ān, ed. Mahmūd Muḥammad Shākīr & Ahmad Muḥammad Shākīr, 10 vols - (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif bi-Miṣr, 1971 -); vol. 6, pp. 306-309 (while Ṭabarī sets out the controversy, he does not himself favour the interpretation of the verse as referring to the birth of a believer from an unbeliever). Qummi uses the proof verse in his tafsīr: see vol. 1, p. 211 (& cf. *ibid.*, p. 35).

<sup>68</sup>The imāms are often described in the ḥadīths as 'the ṣafwah' of God's creation, which may be a reference to this tradition.

'There is no god but God, and Muhammad is His Messenger,' nor would they have performed the lesser or greater pilgrimage, nor would they have given the obligatory or voluntary alms, or performed any pious deed.

God then took the two clays, that of the Shī'ah and that of their enemies, rubbed them together, and mixed them with the water. It is because of the mixture of clays that the believer seems at times to have a bad character and that he does evil, and it is because of this same mixture that the non-Shī'ī unbeliever (lit. nāṣib, one who 'sets up' false leaders in opposition to the true imām) exhibits some good qualities and performs duties such as prayers and the fast.<sup>69</sup>

The birth of a believing Shī'ī to an unbeliever is explained by the intervention of God. Tradition tells us that when God wishes to create a believer he squeezes a drop out of a heavenly tree called 'al-Muzn,' and the liquid falls on some fruit or green. Then when an unbeliever (or believer) eats the food and ingests the drop, God extracts from his loins a believer.<sup>70</sup> The

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<sup>69</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, pp. 282-283, ḥadīth #413. See also *ibid.*, pp. 136-138; Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 17, ḥadīth #10; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 18 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb anna Rasūl Allāh awwal man ajāba..., ḥadīth #2}. Ja'far al-Ṣādiq demonstrated the admixture of clays at the time of creation by displaying the yolk of an egg (the imāms) and then the yolk mixed together with the white (the Shī'ah) (Furāt, Tafsīr, pp. 82-83).

<sup>70</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 22 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb idhā arāda Allāh an yakhlūqa al-mu'min, ḥadīth #1}. 'Muzn' is a word for a rain-cloud.

fact that the 'drop' or sperm destined to become a believer has been contained in the loins of the 'polytheist' (mushrik)<sup>71</sup> does not contaminate it; it is not, in the words of Ja°far al-Şādiq, "in any way afflicted by evil."<sup>72</sup> Rather such a being is like "a little pebble embedded in mud brick: the rain comes and washes the brick away, but the stone remains, unaffected."<sup>73</sup> Thus the sixth imām speaks of 'three classes' of people created by God: one which worships God, another which tends toward polytheism, and yet a third which worships other than God, but from whose loins comes those who worship God alone.<sup>74</sup>

The concern of the Shī°ah with the possibility of a believer of unbelieving parentage, and the reverse, is better understood in light of the preoccupation of the ḥadīths with lineage, that is with purity and impurity of descent. Putting aside the two moderating theories outlined above, the tendency of the reports is to assume that belief and unbelief are, as it were, genetically determined. In the opinion of the traditions, the original cleanliness or uncleanness of each human being will out through his parentage. Only the Shī°ah are ever born pure,

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<sup>71</sup>The term mushrik in Shī°ī context may refer to one who considers others to be on a level with the imāms, rather than a polytheist as such.

<sup>72</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, pp. 21-22 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb kawn al-mu'min fī ṣulb al-kāfir, ḥadīth #1}.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 22, ḥadīth #2. Also from the sixth imām.

<sup>74</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 206.

that is in respectable circumstances from a properly married woman. "Only those of pure birth love us," says Ja°far al-Şādiq, "and only... [the children of adultery] hate us...; those who love us are the purest of the pure, to whichever generation they may belong."<sup>75</sup> And since heaven is reserved for the pure ("Heaven," says the sixth imām, "was made pure and purified, so that none shall enter it except those of clean birth."<sup>76</sup>) only the Shī°ah, who are of pure parentage, may attain it.

#### iv. "Its branches are in heaven."

The organic, indissoluble relation between the imāms and the Prophet and between the believing Shī°ah and their masters the imāms is elegantly drawn in the tradition by invoking the image of a heavenly tree. The image of the tree is inspired by a verse of the Qur°ān: "do you not see how God makes a parable: an excellent tree, its root firm, its branches reaching to heaven/ Giving by permission of its Lord fruit at every season (Q. 14:24-25)?" This tree is also associated with the heavenly tree of Tūbā, which the Prophet saw on his journey into the heavens. The tree plays a role in many belief-systems as a symbol of, among

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<sup>75</sup>Or an ecumenical note may be sounded here; jīl ('generation') also = 'people, nation.' Barqī, Mahāsin, pp. 138-139, hadīth #25 (and see this chapter in general). See also Himyarī, Qurb, pp. 19-20, in which °Alī rejects the claim of a man to love him on the grounds that he is one of those whose birth is unclean (which include 'cuckolds' and 'those whose mothers conceived during menstruation').

<sup>76</sup>Barqī, Mahāsin, p. 139, hadīth #29.



other things, the life-force and the cosmos itself.<sup>77</sup> The celestial tree of Shī'ī tradition is another expression of this universal theme.

The parts of the tree are likened to the Prophet, the imāms, and their followers. "I," said the Prophet Muḥammad, "am its root, and °Alī is the trunk, and the imāms are the branches... and our Shī'ah are the leaves."<sup>78</sup> Or the tree is the Prophet himself, 'rooted in the Banī Hāshim,' that is the clan of the Prophet;<sup>79</sup> the fifth imām names it "the tree of prophethood."<sup>80</sup> According to other reports, Fāṭimah is also part of the tree.<sup>81</sup> This supports the Fatimid argument that only persons descended from Fāṭimah's children by °Alī are candidates for the leadership of the community.

Other tradition holds that Fāṭimah was created directly from the tree. According to this legend the Prophet went to heaven

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<sup>77</sup>See: Mircea Eliade, Traité d'histoire des religions (Paris: Payot, 1949), pp. 232 ff.

<sup>78</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 85, ḥadīth #1; and see also the rest of the chapter.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 59, ḥadīth #2. See also ibid., ḥadīth #3 and K. Sulaym, p. 67.

<sup>80</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 147. This becomes one of the epithets of Muḥammad (see ibid., p. 135) and also of the imāms (Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 56-58; Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 228).

<sup>81</sup>Eg: Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 59, ḥadīths #2 & 3: "Fāṭimah is the essence (°unṣur) of the tree." Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 147: "Fāṭimah... is its branches, and its fruits are Ḥasan and Ḥusayn."

and ate the fruit of the tree. The fruit became seed in his loins which, when transferred to the womb of Khadījah, caused Fāṭimah to be conceived.<sup>82</sup> The Prophet, it is reported, used to find pleasure in kissing Fāṭimah because he could sense the essence of the Ṭubā-tree in her.<sup>83</sup> The imāms are also sometimes said to have been created in this way, that is through the ingestion by their fathers of a drop of a heavenly substance deposited on some food.<sup>84</sup> Once again the tradition insists on the supernatural origin of the imāms (along with their mother, Fāṭimah).

If the leaves which are the product of the tree are identified with the faithful Shī'ah, the deaths and births of the Shī'ah on this earth are seen in the sprouting and withering of the leaves. When a Shī'ī is born, a leaf buds; and when he dies, a leaf dies and falls from the tree.<sup>85</sup> That is to say, the birth of every member of the community is vital to the whole, and the death of every member is a loss to the very root and branch which

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<sup>82</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, pp. 10, 72-73, & 77; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 212, ḥadīth #46. According to a tradition from the Prophet related through the fourth, fifth, and sixth imāms, Fāṭimah was made of the juice of the apple of the tree and the sweat of Gabriel mixed together (Furāt, Tafsīr, pp. 119-120)!

<sup>83</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 365; Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 10.

<sup>84</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 431-434; see also *ibid.*, p. 223, ḥadīth #13; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 374, ḥadīth #83; Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 215 (the imām is given a drink stored under the Throne, taken from 'al-Muzn'); Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 225-229 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb mawālīd al-a'imma, ḥadīths #1-3}.

<sup>85</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 58-59, *passim*.

are the Holy Family and the imāms.<sup>86</sup> Those who are not part of the tree (who are not the partisans of the imāms), on the other hand, cannot be considered true believers.<sup>87</sup>

The integrality of the imāms and their community is also symbolized by the intrusion of the tree into their residences in heaven. "Its root," said °Alī, "is in the house of the Prophet, and there is no believer but that one of its branches is in his house."<sup>88</sup> Or it is said that the tree is rooted in °Alī's house (but, we are reminded, the house of the Prophet and that of °Alī are the same).<sup>89</sup>

The tree itself is a being animated by God, and therefore of God; God "sowed it with His own hand and breathed into it of His Spirit."<sup>90</sup> Planted in heaven, it is over-arching, all-enclosing; as described by °Alī, "if a horseman were to ride at full speed for a hundred years, he would find himself still in its shade, and if a crow were to fly from its lowest part upward, it would not reach its highest branches before it fell dead from old

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<sup>86</sup>On the roots, branches, and leaves of the tree see also Qummi, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 369; Furāt, Tafsīr, pp. 79-80; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 244, ḥadīth #11.

<sup>87</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 60, ḥadīth #2. From the sixth imām.

<sup>88</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 213, ḥadīth #50. See also Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, pp. 337-338 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-mu'min wa-°alāmāti-hi..., ḥadīth #30}.

<sup>89</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 76.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., p. 77. From the Prophet. See also *ibid.*, p. 76.

age."<sup>91</sup> Shade in Arab culture suggests protection and comfort, and so we are told that the Shī'ah of °Alī shall in Paradise gather in the shadow of the tree and have their dwellings there,<sup>92</sup> under the cool and spreading branches, as it were, of their religion and their allegiance to their imāms. The tree of Ṭūbā is an endless source of riches for the believer. There hang from it, according to the fifth imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir, "baskets of silk and brocade, with a thousand thousand baskets for the believer, and in each one a hundred thousand garments, each and every one a different colour - but all green." Each branch as it hangs over the residence of a believer has a hundred varieties of fruit and every time a fruit is cut, another grows in its place.<sup>93</sup> In fact every need and desire of the believer is fulfilled by the Ṭūbā-tree.<sup>94</sup> The rewards of the tree, however,

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<sup>91</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 337 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-mu'min wa-°alāmāti-hi..., ḥadīth #30}. See also Furāt, Tafsīr, pp. 74 & 78; Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 365.

<sup>92</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 74.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., pp. 77-78. The imām continues with description of the river that flows from the tree and the spacious, jewel-like castle, identified with the Paradise of °Adan, which serves as the residence of the believers there. According to another ḥadīth, there is a tree located at the entrance of Paradise of Firdaws on every leaf of which is written in light the legend: 'There is no god but God, and Muhammad is the Messenger, and °Alī is God's firm handle. It is through this tree that the angelic inhabitants of the seventh and highest heaven are aware of the full dignity of Muḥammad and °Alī (ibid., p. 135, from the Prophet).

<sup>94</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 337 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-mu'min wa-°alāmāti-hi..., ḥadīth #30}; Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 78; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 213, ḥadīth #50. Further description of the fruits and treasures of the tree in Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 74.

are only given to the Shī'ah of °Alī; the enemies of °Alī shall never have anything from it.<sup>95</sup>

#### v. The hierarchy of spirits.

All humans, in the view of Shī'ī tradition, are animated by spirits (s. rūḥ, pl. arwāḥ) of different kinds, and these spirits account for different faculties. Belief in multiple and varied spirits is common to the larger Islamic community, and in fact the 'spiritology' of the Shī'ah is quite similar to that of other Islamic schools.<sup>96</sup> The Shī'ī flavour is detected in the conviction that the true believers, that is the Shī'ah, own a Spirit which lesser mortals do not, and that both the prophets and imāms are possessed of yet another, divine Spirit which allows them to receive inspiration from God. The implications of this theory are familiar: first, that the Shī'ah are an elite community of superior constitution; and second, that the imāms are similar to the prophets, especially Muḥammad.

Spirit, according to tradition, is a thing which God 'breathes' into the believers among humanity - and into other beings, as in the case of the Ṭūbā-tree mentioned above. "God," said Muḥammad al-Bāqir, "made to flow in the believer of the

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<sup>95</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 77.

<sup>96</sup>See: Duncan Black Macdonald, "The Development of the Idea of Spirit in Islam," Acta Orientalia (1931): 307-351.

breath of His rūḥ...."<sup>97</sup> This spirit suffuses the body, but is not part of it, as indicated in the following description given by the sixth imām Ja°far al-Sādiq:

The spirit of the believer is to his body as a jewel is to a casket. If the jewel is removed, the casket is discarded as insignificant. The spirits do not mix with the body, nor do they have charge of it; rather they are like thin veils draped all around it.<sup>98</sup>

Although one speaks of God's 'Spirit,' the spirit is not in fact of God, since this would damage His Unicity. Rather it is, according to the Shī°ah, a thing created. God in the Qur'ān is made to possess 'rūḥ,'<sup>99</sup> only to indicate that "he chose it over the other spirits;" and He is said in the Qur'ān to 'breathe/infuse' (n-f-s) only because the rūḥ itself moves as a breeze moves.<sup>100</sup>

There are five spirits. 'The rūḥ from God' refers to the two

<sup>97</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 131, ḥadīth #2.

<sup>98</sup>Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 3. See also Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 14 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb ākhīr [second annex to anna al-Rasūl awwal man ajāba, ḥadīth #2}. Thus subtle spirit is not contaminated by the material of the body, and while Satan may gain control over the bodies of the believers, he cannot influence their spirits. At death, the discarded body remains, but the rūḥ returns to its original home in heaven (°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, pp. 269-270, ḥadīth #66).

<sup>99</sup>Eg. 15:29 & 4:171.

<sup>100</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 181 {K. al-tawḥīd, Bāb al-rūḥ, ḥadīth #3}. From the sixth imām. See also °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 241, ḥadīths #9-11. The association of 'spirit' and 'breeze' is helped by the fact that the two words in Arabic are related (breeze = riḥ).

superior spirits that engender faith and facilitate revelation. The spirit of revelation, which is the highest spirit, is called rūḥ al-qudus: 'the spirit of the holy.' The term is taken from the Qur'ān,<sup>101</sup> where it is most often mentioned in connexion with Jesus. The rūḥ al-qudus is the wakeful spirit. "Its attention is not diverted, or does it trifle or play;"<sup>102</sup>

it is not like the other spirits which are "subject to the vicissitudes of time."<sup>103</sup> Thus it functions as the clear and alert receptor of divine revelation, and it is in all the prophets, whether they are 'sent' with scriptures or not.<sup>104</sup> But it also dwells in the imāms, to whom it was transferred when the Prophet died: "God sent down the Spirit upon His Prophet," said the fifth imām, "and it has never since ascended to heaven; verily it is in us."<sup>105</sup> Through the agency of the Holy Spirit the imāms are inspired to a special kind of knowledge - but this is the subject of the fourth chapter on the ʿilm of the imāms,

<sup>101</sup>Q. 2:87; 2:253; 5:11; 16:103.

<sup>102</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 454, ḥadīths #12 & 13; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 17 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb fī dhikr al-arwāḥ..., ḥadīth #3}.

<sup>103</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 447, ḥadīth #4; *ibid.*, p. 454, ḥadīth #12; Ashʿarī, Baṣā'ir, p. 2; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 16-17 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb fī-hi dhikr al-arwāḥ..., ḥadīth #2}.

<sup>104</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 448, ḥadīth #5 & p. 449, ḥadīth #6; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 385 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-kabā'ir, ḥadīth #16}.

<sup>105</sup>Ashʿarī, Baṣā'ir, p. 3; Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 456, ḥadīth #8 & *ibid.*, p. 457, ḥadīths #11-13; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 18 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb al-rūḥ allatī yusaddidu Allāh bi-hā al-a'immaḥ, ḥadīth #2}.

and further discussion of the rūḥ al-quḍus is found there.

Next to the Holy Spirit is the rūḥ al-īmān: "the spirit of faith." It is through this spirit that people "worship god and do not associate anything with Him"<sup>106</sup> and that they "believe and achieve right conduct."<sup>107</sup> The spirit of faith constantly struggles with Satan over dominion of the heart.<sup>108</sup> No one shall survive the long and trying Occultation of the twelfth imām except those "upon whose hearts has been written 'faith' (īmān), and who have been fortified with a spirit of Him [God]."<sup>109</sup>

The other spirits are the rūḥ al-quwwah ('spirit of power'), rūḥ al-shahwah ('spirit of appetite'), and a spirit called either rūḥ al-ḥayāt ('spirit of life'), rūḥ al-badan ('spirit of the body'), or rūḥ al-madraj (lit: 'the motive spirit'). These are the only spirits possessed by the unbelievers.<sup>110</sup> Most traditions relate them to the practical functions of human beings; according to °Alī, with the rūḥ al-quwwah one struggles against one's enemies and gains a living, by the rūḥ al-shahwah

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<sup>106</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 448, ḥadīth #5; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 385 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-kabā'ir, ḥadīth #16}.

<sup>107</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 17 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb dhikr al-arwāḥ..., ḥadīth #3}.

<sup>108</sup>Ḥimyarī, Qurb, p. 24.

<sup>109</sup>Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, p. 99. From the sixth imām.

<sup>110</sup>See Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 447, ḥadīth #3.



one is motivated to eat and engage in sex, and through the spirit of life or of the body one 'moves and creeps.'<sup>111</sup> If one should incline toward a sin, these spirits will aid the evil impulse.<sup>112</sup> Other ḥadīths equate the lesser spirits with religious motivations. According to the sixth imām, for instance, the spirit of power serves to strengthen one to obey God, and the appetitive spirit to stir the desire to obey Him and excite hatred of disobedience. It may be, however, that this particular scheme is limited to the prophets, imāms, and believers.<sup>113</sup>

The spirits - not the spirits as faculties but rather the soul-spirits - also enter into the drama of primordial time.

The arwāḥ, the tradition tells us, were created before the bodies by a space of two thousand years. In this state they were exhibited to the imāms so that they knew them each and every one. In addition, the believers and the unbelievers were each marked, which reveals their faith to the imāms. °Alī the Commander of the Believers said: "When God created the spirits before the bodies by one [sic] thousand years and seated them in bodies, He

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<sup>111</sup>Ibid., p. 449, ḥadīth #6 (and see also ḥadīth #5); Kulayni, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 384 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-kabā'ir, ḥadīth #16}. According to the tradition in al-Kāfī, a deficiency in any of these spirits is the cause of a deficiency in the related function.

<sup>112</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 447-450, ḥadīths #5 & 6.

<sup>113</sup>See ibid., p. 446, ḥadīth #1; Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 178: from the fifth imām.

wrote between their eyes 'mu'min' or 'kāfir' (unbeliever)."<sup>114</sup> For this reason the imāms are able to instantly recognize their Shī'ah and reject those who merely claim to be their followers.<sup>115</sup> The spirits are also able to recognize each other and seek out the company of their own kind. As 'Alī tells it, "the spirits of the believers meet in the air and sense [lit: 'sniff']"<sup>116</sup> each other out, and those who recognize each other, are reconciled, while those who deny each other remain disparate."<sup>117</sup>

#### vi. The divine light.

Many of the statements of the imāms employ symbols of light. Religious thought has often been fascinated by light and the opposition of light to darkness and has seized upon these as a metaphor for its truths. There is also a Qur'ānic background to the light imagery in Shī'ī tradition, as the Qur'an takes light as a metaphor for guidance, for truth, for the divine presence, and for God Himself. The influence of neo-Platonic/emanationist thought is evident in some of the light

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<sup>114</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, pp. 81-82; see also Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 354-356, *passim*.

<sup>115</sup>Eg. Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 86-89, *passim*; 'Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, pp. 180-181, ḥadīth #74; Furāt, Tafsīr, pp. 81-82.

<sup>116</sup>The word rūh: 'spirit' is related to riḥ: 'smell.' It is perhaps because of this association that the spirits are said to recognize each other by scent. See Uṣūl, p. 111.

<sup>117</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 391, ḥadīth #2. See also *ibid.*, pp. 87-88, ḥadīth #2 & #5; Uṣūl, p. 68.

hadīths, and the similarity of some Ṣūfī ideas to the Shī'ī views outlined below may be attributed to this common heritage.

God created the Holy Family and the imāms from His own light, and He created them before anything else. Ja'far al-Ṣādiq says: "There was God, and there was not anything else. Then God created five [Muḥammad, °Alī, Fāṭimah, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn] from the Light of His Glory, and gave each one of them one of His revealed Names...."<sup>118</sup> The Holy Family and the imāms became "lights ranged about the Throne," praising God.<sup>119</sup> The tradition states that they were created as 'phantoms of light' (ashbāh nūr) from the light of God.<sup>120</sup> The light that was the imāms was made to dwell in their special clay, and thus they are created 'luminous' like no other part of creation.<sup>121</sup> The light of God referred to in the Qur'ān which He 'sent down'<sup>122</sup> is, explains Muḥammad al-Bāqir, °Alī and the imāms, and they are "the light of

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<sup>118</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 11; see also Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 219 for a different version of the same event. The hadīth continues: "...thus since He is called 'al-Hamīd' (The Praiseworthy), He called him Muḥammad, and since He is 'al-A°lā' (The Highest), He called the Commander of the Believers °Alī..." (and so on for the other members of the Holy Family). The derivation of the names of the five venerated personalities from those of God are taken as further evidence of their share in the divine. For other examples of traditions on this subject see Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 5; Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, p. 59.

<sup>119</sup>Qummi, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 228. From the sixth imām.

<sup>120</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 5; see also *ibid.*, pp. 134 & 207.

<sup>121</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 20, hadīth #3. From the sixth imām.

<sup>122</sup>Q. 64:8: "Believe in God and His Messenger, and the light which we have sent down."

God in the heavens and the earth." Their light illuminates the hearts of the believers, who recognize their aura as easily as the bright sun at noon, while it is unseen by everyone else.<sup>123</sup>

Tradition emphasizes that the Prophet and the imāms are created from one light of the light of God; therefore they are in essence one being. The Prophet reported that God told him: "I created °Alī, Fāṭimah, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, and the imāms from one light,"<sup>124</sup> while Ja°far al-Ṣādiq says: "God created the believer from the light of His Greatness and the Glory of His Grandeur...."<sup>125</sup> The sixth imām also said: "God appointed for us [the imams] a Shī°ah, and appointed for them a light."<sup>126</sup> The eighth imām al-Riḍā wrote in reply to a question on the exegesis of the 'light verse' of the Qur'ān (24:35): "We have taken hold of the waistband (ḥuizah) of our Prophet, and he has taken hold of the waistband of our Lord - the 'waistband' being the light-

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<sup>123</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 371; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 276 & 277-278 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb anna al-a°immah nūr Allāh, ḥadīth #1 & 4}. From the fifth imām. The wilāyah or imāmate of the imāms is also compared to light: eg. Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, pp. 215-216; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 279 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb anna al-a°immah nūr Allāh, ḥadīth #6}; *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 311-317, {Bāb fī-hā nukat wa-nutaf min al-tanzīl fī al-wilāyah, ḥadīth #91}.

<sup>124</sup>Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, p. 59; see also Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 325-326 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb mawlid al-nabī}.

<sup>125</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, pp. 131-132, ḥadīth #3 (and see this section in general). The ḥadīth continues: "and thus who speaks ill of the believer or answers him disrespectfully speaks to God on His Throne...."

<sup>126</sup>Ash°arī, Baṣā°ir, p. 164.

and the Shī'ah have taken hold of our waistband."<sup>127</sup> The Prophet says: "We [the Prophet and the Holy Family] were the first things God created, and when He created us, he rent every matter with our light, and made through us every excellent clay [as opposed to the baser clay] to live."<sup>128</sup>

Thus the Prophet, the imāms, and the Shī'ah are all animated by the divine light. More than this, each receives the light of the being prior to it, suggesting an emanationist scheme, albeit a rudimentary one (and one which, not incidentally, leaves the non-Shī'ah entirely in the dark).

Here also in the realm of light is another opportunity to emphasize the unity of the believers, their recognition of each other and their mutual sympathy. This is the subject of a ḥadīth from the seventh or eighth imāms:<sup>129</sup>

'O Sulaymān,' the imām said to me, 'fear the insight (firāsah) of the believer, for he sees with the light of God! I remained silent until I found an opportunity

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<sup>127</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 104; see also Furāt, Tafsīr, pp. 104-105. For further traditions linking the Light Verse to the imāms see: *ibid.*, pp. 102-105; Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 294, ḥadīth #8; Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, pp. 102-105; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 278-279 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb anna al-a'imma nūr Allāh, ḥadīth #5}.

<sup>128</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 35.

<sup>129</sup>The ḥadīth is attributed to 'Abū al-Hasan,' which may mean either the seventh or eighth imāms. Since the last guarantor of the chain, Sulaymān al-Ja'farī (= Sulaymān ibn al-Ja'farī) related from both these imāms, it is not clear which is meant.

opportunity to speak to him privately, and then I said: 'I hear you say (may I be your ransom!) "Fear the insight of the believer, for he sees with the light of God."' 'Yes,' he said, 'for God created the believers from His light and immersed them in His Mercy, and He then secured their covenant to us with the wilāyah. Thus is the believer the brother of the believer, both on the side of the mother and the side of the father—the father being the light and the mother being the mercy [rahmah, feminine in gender]. The believer perceives with the light from which he was created.'<sup>130</sup>

Thus the Shī'ah are themselves luminous, just as the imāms are. It is for this reason, and not only by way of metaphor, that the sixth imām proclaims them "the light of God in the darkness of the world,"<sup>131</sup> declaring that "the light of the believer shines for the people of heaven as do the stars for the people of the earth."<sup>132</sup> And just as the believers recognize the light of the imāms, so they recognize each others' light. This is the meaning of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq's advice to his followers: "You possess a light by which you may be identified in this world, so that when one of you meets his brother, he should kiss him where the light is, on the forehead."<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>130</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 79-80, ḥadīth #1 (and see also the rest of this chapter); Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 131, ḥadīth #1; Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, pp. 162-164. Sulaymān thinks it better to wait until he can talk to the imām alone because the attribution of light to the mortal believer suggests to him a dangerous belief which should not be discussed within the hearing of non-initiates. The tradition is also reported from the sixth imām.

<sup>131</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, pp. 162-163, ḥadīth #112.

<sup>132</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 248 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb haqq al-mu'min 'alā akhī-hi..., ḥadīth #5}. See also Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 378.

<sup>133</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 266 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-taqbīl, ḥadīth #1}.

The radiance of the light which is the light of God, of the prophets, of the imāms, and of faith itself, has also been deposited in the hearts of the believers by God. For it is said that "if God wishes good (khayr) for a servant, He inserts a drop of light into his heart by which his heart and hearing are illuminated, so that he shall be more eager for that which you have [loyalty to the imāms; Shiism] than you yourselves...."<sup>134</sup> "The heart of the believer," says Muḥammad al-Bāqir, "contains lamps shining, and its light shall never be extinguished to the Day of Judgement."<sup>135</sup> The hearts of the unbelievers are, on the other hand, dark, which means that, lacking the spark of faith which might be kindled into a fire, they are unlikely to be guided.<sup>136</sup>

vii. Light becomes prophethood; purity and protection from sin.

The birth of the imāms into this world and their succession one to the other is a continuation of the history of divine light. The Prophet said:

I and the people of my House were light moving before God, two thousand years before Adam was created, and whenever that light praised [God] the angels would

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<sup>134</sup>Ibid., pp. 303-304 {Bāb fī tark duʿā al-nās, ḥadīth #6}. From the sixth imām. See also this chapter in general.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid., vol. 4, pp. 152-153 {Bāb fī zulmat qalb al-munāfiq...wa-nūr qalb al-mu'min..., ḥadīth #3}.

<sup>136</sup>Ibid. See also Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 105; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, pp. 376-377, ḥadīth #94; Ashʿarī, Baṣā'ir, p. 96.

imitate it in its praise. When God created Adam he placed that light in his loins and sent it down to the earth contained in him. Then He caused it to be carried in the Ark in the loins of Noah, and after He cast it into the Fire in the loins of Abraham - never ceasing to transfer us through the most noble loins until He brought us out again into sources of most excellent descent [male] and fields of most noble fertility [female], the best of these among all mothers and fathers, none of whom had ever been touched by fornication of any kind....<sup>137</sup>

The "sources of most excellent descent" refer to the course of the divine seed in Muḥammad's Arab tribe; this statement is supposed to have been made by him in defence of the purity of his genealogy. Thus the Light is the essence of the prophets, of the Prophet of Islam, and of the imāms after him, and it is passed from one to the next along with the mission of prophethood or vicegerency.

According to tradition, the pre-created light that was with God travelled in two lines. In one account it is said to have been put into Adam in two parts, one of which eventually became Muḥammad and the other °Alī.<sup>138</sup> In another version, the light passes from the loins of Adam through those of the prophets until it is finally divided between Abū Ṭālib, the father of °Alī, and

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<sup>137</sup>K. Sulaym, p. 217. A similar statement in: Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 207. The traditions also say that the light was created twelve or fourteen thousand years before Adam. Apropos of the virgin birth the fifth imām comments that, while Jesus was transferred directly to the womb of his mother, he had previously been created in the loins of the prophets (Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 224).

<sup>138</sup>Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 116.



°Abd Allāh, the father of Muḥammad.<sup>139</sup> The purpose of these reports is to explain how °Alī, who was not a descendant of Muḥammad but only his collateral, came to inherit the light of prophethood. They may also be intended to reinforce the stature of °Alī during the time before the death of the Prophet when he could not yet have passed the light on to him, or to emphasize that the Prophet Muḥammad and the imām °Alī have equal shares in the light. This tripartite light (God - Muḥammad - °Alī) resembles the three Plotinian hypostases (Nous - Divine Intelligence - Soul) - a very great coincidence, at the least.

The vessels of the loins of the ascendants of the prophets and the wombs of their wives are always pure, so that they never contaminate the radiance they hold. 'Purity' in this case means both that they are pure in their sexual relations and that they were never in the wombs of the unbelievers and thus remained untouched by unbelief.<sup>140</sup> This is the practical purity, so to

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<sup>139</sup>K. Sulaym, p. 216; Furāt, Tafsīr, pp. 107 & 190; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 328 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb mawlid al-nabī..., ḥadīth #9}.

<sup>140</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, pp. 380-381; K. Sulaym, p. 126: "I and the people of my House were clay from beneath the Throne, [transferred] to Adam through sexual relations free of fornication, and the marriage of the Jāhiliyah [the 'time of ignorance' before Islam] was not associated with us." This raises the problem of the status of the Prophet's mother and father and other relatives who followed the old Arab religion and were not Muslims. In some traditions the problem is solved by asserting that they did in some way and at some time testify to God and His Prophet; see for instance Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 336-342 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb mawlid al-nabī..., ḥadīths #21-33}. At least one ḥadīth (ibid., p. 339 {ḥadīth #28}) states that °Abū Tālib had faith, but concealed it - for which he shall receive double

speak; but the Prophet and imāms are also pure in a greater sense, in that they were purified by God directly and thus cleansed of all pollution of any kind. "God," said °Alī, the 'Commander of the Believers,' "purified (ṭ-h-r) us and protected us [from sin...]."<sup>141</sup> The purity of the Prophet and imāms guarantees their fitness to carry the divine message, which is purity itself. The Holy Family in particular is purified, which serves to demonstrate not only the purity of the line of the imāms, but specifically that of the Fatimid succession, since Fāṭimah is included in the Family along with °Alī and their two sons, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn.<sup>142</sup>

Related to the idea of purification is that of 'protection' from sin or error (adj. ma°ṣūm). Part of the meaning of this term may be understood from the following statement: "God," said the Prophet Muḥammad,

...protected us from ever being tempters or tempted by others, from practising sedition, from being liars,

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reward. See the discussion on taqiyah (concealing one's beliefs) in Chapter Five.

<sup>141</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 83, ḥadīth #6. "Protected us" = °aṣamnā; see the next paragraph.

<sup>142</sup>See for instance Uṣūl, p. 121, and also Furāt, Tafsīr, pp. 122-126 and Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 193. The purity of the Holy Family is revealed, according to the Shī'ah, in the verse: "God wishes to remove from you the Holy Family [all] impurity, and to purify (ṭ-h-r) you most thoroughly (Q. 33:33)." Furāt, Tafsīr, pp. 123-124 (several traditions on these pages) includes the angels Gabriel and Michael among those meant by the verse.

soothsayers, or sorcerers,<sup>143</sup> from failing [in the pursuit of truth], from being defrauders or among those who reproach unjustly, from introducing hateful innovations (bid'ah) [into religion], being uncertain [as to religion], or obstructing [others from] the truth through hypocrisy...."<sup>144</sup>

'Protection' is attributed by tradition to two groups: the Ahl al-Bayt or 'People of the House': Muḥammad, °Alī, Fāṭimah, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn, and the imāms in general. Most reports are in the first category. °Alī declares: "We are the People of the House (Ahl al-Bayt)... and he who possesses any of these [negative] characteristics is not of us, and we are not of him."<sup>145</sup> According to °Alī also, "purification (tathīr) from mortal sins which lead to the Fire" is one of the necessary qualifications for the imāmate.<sup>146</sup> (The Shī'ah are said also to be guarded from

<sup>143</sup>In some ḥadīths the enemies of Prophet and of the imāms charge them with sorcery; eg., Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, pp. 118-119.

<sup>144</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 111; see also Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 290 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb nādir jāmi° fī faḍl al-imām wa-ṣifāti-hi, ḥadīth #1}. The ḥadīth continues with mention of the 'purification' of the Holy Family from all contamination and lists other outstanding qualities unique to them (knowledge, mildness and restraint, wisdom, intelligence, the right to give legal opinions, bravery, veracity, integrity, virtue, and the wilāyah).

<sup>145</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 62. The ḥadīth continues: "... for God has purified us the People of the House from all impurity, and He has given us [certain characteristics] He has given no one else...." Cf. another report (*ibid.*, p. 144) in which the sixth imām denies that any of the Quraysh could be the 'near relatives' for whom love is enjoined in the Qur'an (42:23; this verse is taken by the Shī'ah to refer to the Ahl al-Bayt), because they are not ma°ṣūm. °Alī's statement is intended to deny the candidacy of others than the imāms for the leadership of the community; either the Umayyads or Abbasids may be meant.

<sup>146</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 322, ḥadīth #119. The term ma°ṣūm is not used in this report.

sin in some sense<sup>147</sup> and the term ma°ṣūm has been applied to them;<sup>148</sup> the angels are certainly ma°ṣūm, because they do not have the defect of 'natural disposition' [ṭibā°]).<sup>149</sup>

°Iṣmah, in any case, is not a very prominent theme of the early ḥadīth traditions. This is rather unexpected, since it is a central tenet - perhaps the central tenet - of later Shī°ī imāmology. The reason for the shift of emphasis onto °iṣmah in later Shī°ī thought is its newfound importance as the linchpin of the rational argument in favour of the leadership of the Shī°ī imāms: The Shī°ah argue that the absolute 'protection' of the imāms from sin demonstrates that they alone shall never lead the community into error, for to allow that leadership of any others 'less excellent' (mafdūl) is sanctioned by God is to admit that God, contrary to the Justice which is His necessary attribute, would deliberately lead His servants into error. This reasoning

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<sup>147</sup>Ibid., vol. 2, p. 218. According to this ḥadīth, Satan comes to every person when he is born; but if the infant is a Shī°ī, God 'veils him from Satan.'

<sup>148</sup>See Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 158, ḥadīth #95. This is the only example I have found of the term applied to the community; in another tradition from the sixth imām the Shī°ah are to be purified and 'encompassed by the °iṣmah of God,' but this seems to refer only to removal of sins already committed. Another tradition states that after the Prophet died, most people apostatized (that is did not follow °Alī), except for a few whom God 'protected' through the Ahl al-Bayt (K. Sulaym, p. 60). It appears that the word when applied to the community has a rather different sense than when it is applied to the Ahl al-Bayt or imāms.

<sup>149</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, pp. 272-273; see also Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 65.

is not yet put forward in the ḥadīths. Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam, the Companion of Ja°far al-Ṣādiq and Shī°ī theologian, already promoted a systematic theological, as opposed to merely pietistic, view of °iṣmah; perhaps he is to be credited with beginning of this development.<sup>150</sup>

In fact, a tradition from the Tafsīr of Furāt suggests that °iṣmah of the imāms may have originally been regarded as an extreme claim outside the pale of Shī°ī orthodoxy. Zayd ibn °Alī is reported as saying:

May God [judge] between us and those who exaggerate (ghālā) concerning us, who say that we are more than we are and claim for us what we do not claim for ourselves! There are only five of us who are ma°ṣūm: the Messenger of God, °Alī, Fāṭimah, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, and Fāṭimah. As for the rest of us, we sin as people do.<sup>151</sup>

These words were directed by Zayd at the heresiarch Abū al-Khaṭṭāb.<sup>152</sup> Zayd cautions Abū al-Khaṭṭāb on this matter just as the fifth and sixth imāms warn him against various forms of 'extremism' in other ḥadīths.<sup>153</sup> Of course, the refusal to consider the imām divinely protected from sin and error is the

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<sup>150</sup>See: Josef Van Ess, Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra. Eine Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam, 6 vols. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1991 -), vol. 1, pp. 377-378.

<sup>151</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 152.

<sup>152</sup>A similar report, without mention of Abū al-Khaṭṭāb, is found in *ibid.*, pp. 122-123.

<sup>153</sup>Cited at various point in the text below.

classic Zaydī position. From this point of view, these statements of Zayd ibn ʿAlī are not surprising - but their inclusion in a source which represents the tradition of the Twelvers (along with the fact that the majority of traditions in our survey concerning ishmah attribute it to the Ahl al-Bayt, rather than the imāms) raises the possibility that limitation of 'protection' to the five was the original position of the nascent Twelver community.

#### viii. The births and miracles of the imāms.

The conception of the imāms, their formation in the womb and their births are marked by many miracles, as befits beings who are all but divine. It has already been related how the imāms were conceived, according to some traditions, directly from a heavenly substance ingested by their fathers. The ḥadīths also tell how their mothers were chosen as the best and most pure of women, and then mysteriously put in the way of their fathers to marry.<sup>154</sup> The imāms hear while still in the bellies of their mothers;<sup>155</sup> thus their extraordinary perspicacity begins even

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<sup>154</sup>Eg: Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 385-386, ḥadīth #1 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb mawlid Abī al-Ḥasan Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar, ḥadīth #1}; ibid., p. 403 {Bāb mawlid Abī al-Ḥasan al-Riḍā, ḥadīth #1}. Such stories are told of the imāms whose mothers were purchased as slave-girls, apparently to compensate for their lack of noble descent. This legend is attached even to the mother of Zayd ibn ʿAlī: his father the fourth imām dreamed that the Prophet had brought him to heaven and had him lie with one of the houris, and this dream was followed by the gift to him of the girl from whom Zayd was to be born (Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 71).

<sup>155</sup>ʿAyyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 374, ḥadīths #82-83. This happens after forty days.

before birth. In the womb an angel is sent to them to inscribe on the right arm the legend: "Perfected is the Word of thy Lord in truth and justice; and there is nothing that can change His words (Q. 6:115)."<sup>156</sup> As soon as the imām is born - as soon as he 'falls upon the ground' - a column of light is raised for him by which he is able to view 'East and West' and 'the deeds of all God's servants.'<sup>157</sup> He is born in the attitude of prayer, with his face turned to heaven to hear the announcement of his mission which is made at that moment; and when he replies with the witness of faith, he is given the special knowledge which is the greatest privilege of the imāms.<sup>158</sup>

The imāms continue through their lives with the power to work miracles. The miracle stories in the ḥadīths are in fact so numerous that it is possible to recount only a few here.<sup>159</sup> Some classes of miracles of the Prophets and imāms are: control over

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<sup>156</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, pp. 314-315 (after four months, this being the time at which the Spirit is implanted in the imām); Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 438-439; Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 215; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 374, ḥadīth #83.

<sup>157</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 339-443, passim; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 374, ḥadīths #82 & 83.

<sup>158</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 315, ḥadīth #32; Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 223, ḥadīth #13. All these legends and further elaborations in: Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 225-232 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb mawālīd al-a'imma}.

<sup>159</sup>A collection of traditions relating the miracles of the Prophet and imāms has recently been published: al-Sayyid Ḥāshim al-Bahrānī, Ma°ājiz Ahl al-Bayt, 4 vols. (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Nu°mān, 1411/1991).

the forces of nature;<sup>160</sup> transporting oneself and others to far places;<sup>161</sup> seeing and cause others to see wondrous things not apparent to the ordinary viewer;<sup>162</sup> causing inanimate objects to speak;<sup>163</sup> rendering oneself invisible;<sup>164</sup> and conjuring riches from the ground or out of thin air.<sup>165</sup> The purpose of these traditions is not only to excite wonder and reverence in the hearer, but also to confirm the mission of the imāms. The miracles of the imāms have the function of demonstrating their succession to and equality with the prior miracle-working prophets of Islamic tradition. Thus they are also able, as was Jesus, to raise the dead, cure the blind and leper, and to walk

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<sup>160</sup>Eg. Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 148: °Alī stems the flood of the Euphrates; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 13: °Alī impresses the people of Yaman by causing the trees to move and salute him; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, pp. 222-223 {K. al-du°ā, Bāb al-iqbāl °alā al-du°ā, ḥadīth #4}: the Prophet causes rain to fall and then the clouds to part again; *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 361-362 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb mawlid al-Ḥasan, ḥadīth #4}: Ḥasan causes a palm tree to fruit.

<sup>161</sup>Uṣūl, pp. 129-130 & Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 115: the Prophet transports °Alī and others on a flying carpet to Byzantium, where they speak to the Seven Sleepers in the Cave (but only °Alī receives a reply).

<sup>162</sup>Eg. Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 110: Husayn upon his accession to the imāmate causes those who doubt him to see °Alī in his house, even though he is long dead; *ibid.*, p. 112: the followers of the imām are allowed to see those making the hajj as they really are: pigs and donkeys; *ibid.*, pp. 118-119: °Alī causes a group of his Shī°ah to see Paradise and the Fire, as well as the door of the mosque of Kūfah studded with rubies and pearls.

<sup>163</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 13-15 (various incidents).

<sup>164</sup>Eg. Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 494-495; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, pp. 8-9 (various incidents).

<sup>165</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 374-376; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 412 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb Mawlid Abī al-Ḥasan al-Ridā, ḥadīth #10}: the eighth imām changes water to gold.



on water for, as the fourth imām says:

God did not give anything to any prophet but that He gave it also to Muḥammad... [and then to °Alī] and then . Hasan and Ḥusayn, and then every imām until the Day of Judgement, with increase....<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>166</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 269-270, ḥadīth #2. See also Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 374-375 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb Mawlid Abī Ja°far Muḥammad ibn °Alī, ḥadīth #3}.

### III. THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE IMĀMS: INHERITED KNOWLEDGE

I asked [the fifth imām] Abū Ja°far about God's words: 'an excellent tree, its roots firm, its branches reaching to heaven, giving by permission of its Lord fruit at every season,' and he replied by quoting the Prophet: 'I am the root, °Alī is the trunk, and the imāms are the branches; and the fruit of the tree is the knowledge we possess.'<sup>1</sup>

The most important quality of the imām confirming him in the office of imāmate is his superior knowledge (°ilm). It is the exclusive knowledge or power of knowing with which the imām is endowed by God which makes him the sole guide to religion and ascendant over all humanity.

The °ilm of the imām is of two kinds: the learning of the scriptures and other wisdom inherited from the Prophet and passed from one descendant to the next, and knowledge of emerging circumstances and events communicated directly and continually by God. The imām is by virtue of the second category much more than a passive legatee of the Prophet. He effectively becomes an active continuator of the prophetic mission, continually receiving fresh knowledge from the divine source. It is this continual, progressive knowledge which is the most

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<sup>1</sup>Q. 14: 24-25. Furāt, Tafsīr, pp. 79-80; Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 58, hadīth #1; Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 369; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 224, hadīth #11.

distinctive and at the same time the most radical feature of Shī'ī belief concerning the °ilm of their imāms.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the general characteristics of °ilm, both inherited and communicated. The rest of the chapter is devoted to the inherited knowledge referred to in the traditions: the Qur'ān, the books of the ancient prophets, and the other books possessed by the imāms. Description of the various kinds of °ilm that maintain a perpetual line of communication between God and His earthly representatives, the imāms, is reserved for the next chapter: "The Knowledge that Comes by Night and by Day."

#### i. The nature of the °ilm.

The knowledge of the imāms is comprehensive. This dogma is worked out in every part of the doctrine of °ilm, and has the effect of extending the authority of the imāms over all the affairs of the community and rendering it absolute.

The imāms hold, to begin with, knowledge of the ḥalāl and ḥarām, by virtue of which they are 'witness over humankind';<sup>2</sup> they have the "radiant knowledge of all that the community needs."<sup>3</sup> No dispute arises among the Shī'ah over religious law

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<sup>2</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 82, ḥadīth #1; Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 65.

<sup>3</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 322, ḥadīth #119.

but that the answer is to be found with the imām.<sup>4</sup> The full extent of this knowledge is realized when one understands that, according to the Shī'ah, there is a religious norm for absolutely every human action. Every endeavour has a divine norm (sunnah) or 'boundary' (ḥadd) attached to it: "For everything needed by the human race" says the sixth imām, "there is a sunnah from God."<sup>5</sup> The fifth imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir said:

God has not left anything the community may have need of [from its beginning] to the Day of Resurrection but that He has sent it down in His Book and explained it to His Messenger; He has set for everything a limit (ḥadd), with a proof (dalīl) pointing to it.<sup>6</sup>

But the °ilm of the imām extends beyond religious affairs. The imām knows absolutely everything; nothing is obscure to him. This is because "God is much too Glorious, too Mighty and too Noble to oblige His servant to obey one from whom He has

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<sup>4</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 26.

<sup>5</sup>Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 66; see also Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 517, ḥadīth #50.

<sup>6</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 6, ḥadīth #3; see also Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 77 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb al-radd ilā al-Kitāb wa-al-sunnah, ḥadīth #2}, and other ḥadīths in this bāb (pp. 76-80). On the other hand, it is also suggested that although there is a law to cover every detail of earthly life and although the imāms are undoubtedly in possession of that knowledge, it shall only be realized when the imām rules, that is with the advent of the Mahdī: "If our affair (amr) were to appear," said the imām, "there would not be any thing except that it would have a sunnah, which we would institute" (Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 164, ḥadīth #10; imām not named, but the 'Muḥammad ibn Muslim' who appears as the last guarantor of the chain is likely Muḥammad ibn Muslim Riyāh, a Companion of the fifth and sixth imāms known for his extensive knowledge of fiqh).

concealed any knowledge of earth or heaven."<sup>7</sup> Ja°far al-Şādiq was asked about the extent of his inherited °ilm: "Is it comprehensive (jawāmi°), or is it intended to explain [only] things with which people are familiar, such as divorce and religious precepts?" The imām replied: "°Alī recorded [both] the farā'id, (the ordinances) and all of the °ilm...."<sup>8</sup> Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam was surprised when Ja°far al-Şādiq was able to advise him on theological questions he supposed to be beyond his expertise: "Does this (begging your forgiveness!) have anything to do with ḥalāl and ḥarām? I know that you are master of the Qur'ān and more learned in the Qur'ān than any person - but this is theology!" Ja°far reproached him severely: "Do you harbour doubt, Hishām? To imagine that God would set as proof (Hujjah) over His creation one who does not have everything needed by mankind is to slander Him!"<sup>9</sup>

The imāms' °ilm is thus without a trace of jahl, the 'ignorance' or 'discontinuity' that mars the science of ordinary persons; "never shall the °ālim (the 'learned man,' that is the

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<sup>7</sup>Şaffār, Başā'ir, p. 124, ḥadīth #2; see also pp. 124-126, ḥadīths #1-6, p. 122, ḥadīth #4, & Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, p. 226. Uṣūl, p. 90, from Ja°far al-Şādiq: "God has not failed to teach His Prophet any thing."

<sup>8</sup>Şaffār, Başā'ir, p. 513, ḥadīth #30; see also Ash°arī, Başā'ir, p. 10.

<sup>9</sup>Şaffār, p. 123, ḥadīth #3.

imām) be also ignorant (jāhil)."<sup>10</sup> This exuberant view leads the tradition to picture the imāms as the masters of every conceivable knowledge and art.

The knowledge of the imāms is, secondly, exclusive. They are the only source of true knowledge, and knowledge from any other source is necessarily false. A Kūfan asked the sixth imām about °Alī's oft-repeated words, "Ask me what you will, and I shall inform you," and he said: "Any [true] knowledge any person has of any thing has come from °Alī, the Amīr al-Mu'minīn (Commander of the Believers). Let people wander as they will; authority (al-amr) is nowhere but there [pointing to his own house]."<sup>11</sup> The fifth imām said: "Whatever does not come from this house, is false (bāṭil)."<sup>12</sup> °ilm is limited to the imāms because they take it from the divine source from which all knowledge is derived: "People have trekked to a muddy spring, with one stream emptying into another; but the one who comes to the Family of Muḥammad comes to a pure spring, flowing with the

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<sup>10</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 391 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb anna al-a'immaḥ ya°lamūn °ilm ma kāna wa-mā yakūn..., ḥadīth #6}. From the fifth imām. This means also that the Prophet cannot have been illiterate (see for example Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 225-227).

<sup>11</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 251 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb laysa shay' min al-ḥaqq fī yad al-nās..., ḥadīth #2}, and see also the rest of this bāb, pp. 250-253. Similar statements in Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 9-10 & p. 12, ḥadīth #1. The sixth imām's dictum, which is repeated in many ḥadīths, is usually reported: "let them wander as they will, East or West...."

<sup>12</sup>Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 62.

°ilm of God which can neither be stemmed nor exhausted."<sup>13</sup> Because the source of his knowledge is divine the verdict of the imām can never be contested, for "we relate from the Prophet and from God; therefore if you accuse us of lying, you also accuse God and His Prophet!"<sup>14</sup>

°Ilm is, thirdly, cumulative. It has gradually increased throughout prophetic history. Each heir has received all the knowledge of the prophet or vicegerent (waṣī) preceding him, added what he himself was given by God, and then passed everything on to his successor. This means that Muḥammad, the last prophet, had a greater store of knowledge than anyone before him.<sup>15</sup> God, the tradition says, "gathered for him all the revelations;"<sup>16</sup> "all the prophets were given only a part of °ilm, except Muḥammad; he was given it in its entirety."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 54; Kulaynī, al-Kāfi, vol. 1, p. 260 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb ma°rifat al-imām wa-al-radd ilay-hi, ḥadīth #9}. From the fifth imām; by 'one stream emptying into another' he means water which does not derive from the one pure and original source.

<sup>14</sup>Uṣūl, p. 61. From the fifth imām.

<sup>15</sup>Hibat Allāh (Seth), for instance, was given fifty scrolls (s. ṣaḥīfah) additional to the revelation of his father Adam and Idrīs was given twenty more than his predecessor, while David was increased in the Psalms over the Torah (Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, pp. 18 & 20). The °ilm of Moses compared to that of Muhammad is like the quantity a bird takes with its beak from the sea (ibid., pp. 58-59).

<sup>16</sup>Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 285, ḥadīth #305. From the sixth imām.

<sup>17</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 47. From the fourth imām. See also Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 114-115, ḥadīth #3 & ibid., pp. 47-48, ḥadīth #1.

That Muḥammad possessed the fullest revelation of all the prophets is also, of course, the belief of the Sunnīs. The idea of the accumulation of °ilm, however, is of special significance for the Shī°ah. For if Muḥammad was the most learned of the prophets, and the imāms inherit from him, then are not the imāms also more learned than the prophets? Indeed this is so, as the fifth imām explains: "God gathered for Muḥammad the °ilm of the prophets in its entirety, and then the Apostle delivered it all to °Alī, the Amīr al-Mu'minīn." A man interrupted, asking: "O son of the Messenger of God, is then °Alī more learned, or a prophet?" The imām answered: "Listen to what I say, and God shall open the ears of whom He wills: I told you that God gathered for Muḥammad the °ilm of the prophets and that He delivered it all to °Alī. And he asks me who is more learned, °Alī or a prophet!"<sup>18</sup>

It is asserted in turn that each of the imāms after °Alī inherited all the knowledge of the imām before, without decrease

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<sup>18</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 117, ḥadīth #12; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 322-323 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb anna al-a'immaḥ warathat al-°ilm, ḥadīth #6}. In particular the imāms are, by virtue of their inheritance, greater than the ulū al-°azm; see Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 227-229 & p. 117, ḥadīth #12. It was related above how the ulū al-°azm pledged loyalty to the imāms at the time of the primordial covenant; according to another report (Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 44), Jesus shall pray behind the imāms at the end of time./ One of the controversies mentioned by Ash°arī (Maqālāt, p. 120) is the relative merits of the prophets and imāms. The tradition clearly emphasizes the superiority of the imāms: "the doctrine of several groups among them."



of any kind. For this reason Ja°far al-Şādiq was able to assure his followers that he was more learned than either Moses or Khidr, for these two prophets were given "the °ilm of what has been - but not the °ilm of what shall be until the Day of Resurrection. This we have inherited from the Messenger of God as part of our inheritance."<sup>19</sup> Thus, even though the age of prophethood ended with the death of Muḥammad, the prophetic knowledge of the ages survives in the person of the imām.

The knowledge of the imāms is, finally, unbroken. Never for an instant does it perish from the earth. God declared to Muḥammad: "I shall not leave the earth without an °ālim through whom [the necessity of] obedience to me and my wilāyah [that is loyalty to the imāms] shall be known: one who shall act as the Proof (ḥujjah) for those born while one prophet awaits another."<sup>20</sup> The continuity of °ilm is necessary so that the community shall not be left without access to religious knowledge. Ja°far al-Şādiq was asked: "Is the earth ever devoid of an °ālim from among you, one who is living and manifest

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<sup>19</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfi, vol. 1, p. 388 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb anna al-a°immah ya°lamūn °ilm mā kāna wa-mā yakūn..., ḥadīth #1}. Moses and Khidr are named because their relative knowledge is a matter of controversy, since Khidr seems in a Qur'ānic narrative to puzzle Moses with some of his actions (Q. 18: 60-82).

<sup>20</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 150. These words were given to Muḥammad as he prepared to appoint °Alī; the wording of the ḥadīth is rather odd in that it seems to imply that he is to carry the °ilm until it can be passed on to another prophet after Muḥammad. For other statements on the necessity of an °ālim see Uṣūl, p. 150; Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 117-118, ḥadīth #1 and p. 510, ḥadīth #16; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 59.

(ẓāhir) and to whom the people can resort [for answers to questions concerning] ḥalāl and ḥarām?" The imām denied that this could be so.<sup>21</sup>

In fact, the imāms' imperishable knowledge is simply a continuation of prophetic history. Mankind has never been without prophetic ʿilm, which has passed as inheritance in unbroken succession: "The ʿilm that came down with Adam was not taken away, for ʿilm is inherited, and the ʿālim does not die unless the possessor is succeeded by another who knows as he knew - or as God wills."<sup>22</sup>

## ii. The inherited knowledge as charisma.

The imperishable ʿilm granted by God to His elect throughout the ages and inherited by the imāms is represented in material form by various scriptures and esoteric writings. These writings: the Qur'ān, the books of the prophets, and the books of the imāms, are discussed in separate sections below. The written sources described in great detail in the Shī'ī traditions do not, however, represent all the ʿilm bequeathed to the imāms. It is true that tradition tells us that the Qur'ān, and in fact almost every one of the other books and documents,

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<sup>21</sup>Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 8; see also Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 252 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb anna al-ʿard lā takhlū min ḥujjah, ḥadīth #5}.

<sup>22</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, vol. 1, p. 235, ḥadīth #196; see also ibid., ḥadīth #197 and Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 321-324 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb anna al-a'imma warathat al-ʿilm...}.

contains the sum of all knowledge (although that can be extracted only by the imāms). From this point of view, all possible knowledge is ultimately derived from the scriptures. But this perspective is supplemented by the belief that °Alī was the recipient of a fund of mysterious, unwritten knowledge - or perhaps it would be more just to say, of a gnostic charisma.

The idea of a 'gnostic charisma' is most clearly expressed in the narrative of the 'thousand gates,' the subject of many ḥadīths. It is reported that as the Prophet lay dying he called out for his 'friend.' Abū Bakr and °Umar were summoned but he turned his face from them; finally °Alī came and, as he leaned over him, Muḥammad communicated something. No one else heard what passed between them. Asked afterward what the Prophet had said Alī replied: "He related to me a thousand gates, each one of which opens another thousand."<sup>23</sup> In other words, the knowledge he obtained was limitless, as counted in multiples of thousands.

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<sup>23</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 61 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb al-ishārah wa-al-nass °alā Amīr al-Mu'minīn, ḥadīth #4}. There are many variants of this ḥadīth: see for example K. Sulaym, p. 189; Uṣūl, p. 88; Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 302-307 & 313-315. We also find substituted for gate (bāb): 'ḥadīth,' 'word' (kalimah), and 'letter' or 'mode' (ḥarf). The °ilm of the thousand gates consisted, according to one ḥadīth, of "ḥalāl and ḥarām, and that which has been and shall be until the Day of Resurrection... (Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 305, ḥadīth #11)." However, the few examples of insight derived specifically from this source illustrate only the second, sibylline type of knowledge. Sulaym reports that, at the Battle of Dhū Qār, °Alī knew through the 'thousand gates' the number of men Hasan would bring as reinforcement before they arrived (K. Sulaym, p. 189); in another narrative eight persons who (jokingly) swear allegiance to a lizard while on a desert journey are shamed by °Ali, who had been informed through the 'thousand gates' (ibid., p. 306, ḥadīth #15).

This extraordinary occurrence (the effort was so tremendous that, according to one report, °Alī and the Prophet perspired until their sweat flowed together<sup>24</sup>) suggests that the Messenger of God inspired °Alī with a peculiar science or capacity by which he could untangle or 'open' the many problems which would arise after his death. This capacity is indicated by reports that insist that the one or thousand gates were only keys to myriad others.<sup>25</sup>

Thus the scriptures are only an aspect, or perhaps it is better to say a confirmation, of the idea of inheritance. What 'inheritance' (w-r-th) of °ilm means in the most fundamental sense is that the imām inherits the Prophet's aura. The imāms are not merely the interpreters or even the 'knowers' of what the Prophet has left them in written form; they are themselves wise as the Prophet is wise, and thus they succeed to his every dignity (excepting, of course, the privilege of prophethood). Several traditions point to this process of charismatic transference. One example is the ḥadīth of the 'two

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<sup>24</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 313-314, ḥadīths #1 & 2.

<sup>25</sup>Eg. ibid., p. 304, ḥadīth #7; see also ibid., p. 303, ḥadīth #2 & ḥadīth #5 ("a bāb of °ilm") and ibid., p. 305, ḥadīth #12 ("the °ilm is the key to every gate, and each gate opens a thousand others"). It is also related that only a small part, perhaps one or two, of the 'thousand gates' has ever been revealed - implying that the rest shall be delivered with the Mahdī (ibid., p. 307, ḥadīth #17; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 61-62 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb al-ishārah wa-al-naṣṣ °alā Amīr al-mu'minīn, ḥadīth #6}).

pomegranates,' according to which:

Gabriel came to the Messenger of God with two pomegranates. The Prophet ate the first one himself and divided the other into two parts, eating half and giving the other half to °Ali. 'Do you know, brother,' he said, 'what these two pomegranates signify? The first is prophethood, in which you have no share; but the second is °ilm, in which you are my [full] partner (sharīk).'<sup>26</sup>

The sharing of food illustrates vividly the complete incorporation - the digestion - of charismata into the two persons of the Prophet and his successor. The pomegranates that Muḥammad held in his hand were certainly of heavenly origin; the pomegranate is mentioned in the Qur'ān as a luxurious or heavenly fruit (6:99; 6:141; 55:68). The symbol of light is also used to signify the transference of Muḥammad's essence to °Alī, as it is asserted that he laid his hand upon °Alī's breast and made it luminous by infusing it with °ilm.<sup>27</sup>

### iii. The Qur'ān.

°Alī, according to the Shī'ah, was the sole amanuensis of the Prophet. He was the only person (with the exception, according to some reports, of Fāṭimah, Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn, the other members, along with Muḥammad, of the 'Holy Family') whom the Prophet allowed beside him when the revelation was sent down.

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<sup>26</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 292, ḥadīth #1; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 392-393 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb anna Allāh... lam yu°allim nabiya-hu °ilman illā amara-hu an yu°allima-hu amīr al-mu'minīn}. From the fifth imām (according to al-Kāfī, from the sixth imām).

<sup>27</sup>Uṣūl, p. 40; Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 182.

°Alī reports:

I used to come to him once every day and once every night. He would make certain that we were alone, and I would follow him closely wherever he went; the other Companions knew that he did this only with me. If I came to him at one of his houses he would make sure we were alone and would have his wives leave so that no one remained but him and me; but if he came to my house, Fāṭimah and my two sons would stay. If I asked him a question, he would answer it, and if I fell silent or had finished my questions, he would speak to me without being asked. Every verse of the Qur'ān that came down he recited and dictated to me, and I wrote it down in my own hand. He would pray God to make me understand and memorize it, and I have not since forgotten one verse of the Book of God. He also taught me the interpretation (ta'wīl) [of each verse], and that too I memorized: he dictated it to me and I wrote it down.<sup>28</sup>

In this way °Alī came into possession of two aspects of the Qur'ān: the true redaction, and the authoritative interpretation. The traditional Shī'ī belief that only °Alī received the true and authentic Qur'ān has led to allegations that copies recorded and transmitted by others (meaning the °Uthmānic recension) are incomplete or corrupted,<sup>29</sup> while his claim, reported in the ḥadīth, to an exclusive interpretation has resulted in an extensive and elaborate system of esoteric exegesis (ta'wīl). We

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<sup>28</sup>K. Sulaym, pp. 93-94. This ḥadīth is also reported from Sulaym in: °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, pp. 14-15, ḥadīth # 2 & pp. 253-254, ḥadīth # 177 (the second in an extended form), Kulaynī's al-Kāfī: vol. 1, pp. 80 - 83 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb ikhtilāf al-ḥadīth, ḥadīth #1} and Nu'mānī's Ghaybah (p. 51), each time embedded in a different narrative.

<sup>29</sup>'Tahrīf' (distortion or alteration) is the term used by traditional and Western scholars. This word is generally not, however, used in the traditions. The process the Qur'ān went through is not called by the early tradition tahrīf.

shall deal with the problem of corruption of the text first,<sup>30</sup> and then advance to the related question of ta'wīl.

Some Shī'ī traditions assert that the true text of the Qur'ān as revealed by God to Muḥammad through the angel Gabriel has not come down to us. "Whoever says that he has gathered all of the Qur'ān as God sent it down," declared the fifth imām, "lies. No one has gathered it or preserved it as God sent it down except °Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib and the imāms after him."<sup>31</sup> The question that emerges upon gathering and reading the traditions is: is the accepted Qur'ān deficient merely because it is missing portions recorded by °Alī, or is it deficient because the text has actually been corrupted and changed?

The true or full text of the Qur'ān was not transmitted, according to tradition, because of the intervention of persons hostile to °Alī and his political rights. In K. Sulaym the story is repeated many times, embedded in various narratives, of how °Alī was preoccupied with the writing out of the Qur'ān during

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<sup>30</sup>Some of my remarks concerning Shī'ī views on the integrity of the Qur'ānic text are anticipated by Goldziher in his Richtungen der Islamischen Koranauslegung (Leiden: Brill, 1952) in the chapter on sectarian exegesis (pp. 263-309) and this should be read along with what I have written. Goldziher's conclusions are correct, but his distaste for the 'fanatic' Shī'ī approach to the Qur'ān prevents him from placing the question in the wider context of Shī'ī esoterism.

<sup>31</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 193, ḥadīth #2; see also Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 232 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb anna-hu lā yaḥma° al-Qur'ān kulla-hu illā al-a'immah..., ḥadīth #1}.

the hasty gathering that led to the designation of Abū Bakr as Muḥammad's successor. Thus overtaken by events, his support fell away to the extent that he was forced to refrain from immediately claiming his rights or publishing his Qur'ān. Sulaym reports that °Alī told Ṭalḥah (addressing him sometime after the Shūrā or 'Council' in which °Uthmān was elected to the caliphate) that °Uthmān was "not fit to transmit so much as a scroll (ṣaḥīfah) the length of three fingers."<sup>32</sup> This prompted Ṭalḥah to recall:

I saw you [on the day of the Prophet's death] come out [of Muḥammad's house] wearing a figured (?makhtūm) garment, and you said: 'I have been busy washing, shrouding, and burying the Prophet, and then gathering the Book of God so that there shall not be a word (ḥarf) missing.' I myself did not see any of what you wrote down and put together, but I did notice that °Umar sent a message to you when he succeeded to the caliphate asking you to give him your copy. You refused. Subsequently he called the people together, and if two men verified a verse of the Qur'ān, he had it written down - but if only one man could verify it, he discarded it. Then he said - and I heard him say this myself - that there were men killed on the Day of Yamāmah who read the Qur'ān differently [lit: 'used to read a different Qur'ān'] than others, and that the reading had been lost. In addition, a ewe approached the ṣaḥīfah while °Umar's scribes were working, and ate [part of] it, and that part also disappeared! °Uthmān was the scribe when this happened - but you [pl., apparently speaking to others of the electors of °Uthmān present] do not admit this. And I heard °Umar and those of his friends involved in writing and compiling the Qur'ān in the time of both °Umar and °Uthmān say that sūrat al-aḥzāb was equal in length to sūrat al-baqarah, and that sūrat al-nūr was one hundred and sixty verses, and sūrat al-hujurāt sixty [or ninety, according to a ms. variation noted by the

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<sup>32</sup>K. Sulaym, pp. 106-107.



editor].<sup>33</sup>

Sulaym's report implies only that parts of the Qur'ān have been dropped; it does not attack what remains. The ḥadīth is brought to an end as °Alī asks Ṭalḥah: "Tell me about what °Umar and °Uthmān wrote: is it all of it Qur'ān [that is are there any interpolations]?" Ṭalḥah affirms that all of the version is Qur'ān. But then °Alī asks: "If you believed in what you find in it, would you be saved from the Fire and would you enter Paradise; does it contain our proof, the exposition of our rights, and the injunction to obey us?" Ṭalḥah, defeated, can only answer: "If it is Qur'ān, that is enough for me; that is enough for me."<sup>34</sup> According to this tradition, the °Uthmānic recension contains no interpolations, but it is missing some important passages: specifically those pertaining to the rights of the imāms.<sup>35</sup>

Ṣaffār's Baṣā'ir relates a tradition concerning the eighth imām Riḍā which also points to the belief that the Qur'ān is incomplete. The imām's follower reports that he had given him a

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 108. Goldziher (Richtungen, pp. 276-277) discusses a variant on this tradition from the K. al-iḥtijāj of Tabarsī (d. early 6th/ 12th c.). Here most of the blame for distortion of the Qur'ān is put on °Umar rather than °Uthmān, °Umar being a particular object of Shī'ī hatred.

<sup>34</sup>K. Sulaym, p. 210.

<sup>35</sup>See also Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, p. 218: °Alī confirms that the Qur'ān is not 'as it had come down,' for the Quraysh removed their names and the names of their ancestors (that is, in the original Qur'ān these opponents of °Alī were spoken of unfavourably).

pouch containing some money and a scroll (muṣḥaf), and asked him to rent rooms for him.

One day I was by myself and I opened the scroll, intending to read it. As I unrolled it, I saw something I thought quite impossible: I found double/several (ad°āf) times the text of the Qur'ān which is in our possession. I set to reading it, and did not recognize anything of what I read. Quickly I took out pen, ink, and paper, intending to copy it so that I could ask questions later....

The man's intention was defeated by the arrival of a messenger bearing cloth, string, and a seal, along with the imām's orders to wrap the scroll and send it back to him.<sup>36</sup>

°Ayyāshī, on the other hand, cites three ḥadīths which confirm the opinion that the text of the Qur'ān is distorted, rather than merely incomplete. In the following tradition reported in °Ayyāshī's tafsīr from the sixth imām, the critical juncture is the compilation of °Uthmān's version:

°Abd Allāh ibn °Amr ibn al-°Ās had just left °Uthmān when he happened to meet the Amīr al-Mu'minīn. He said to him: 'We have spent the night dealing with a matter through which, we hope, God shall strengthen this community.' °Alī retorted: 'You cannot hide from me what you have done. You have corrupted (ḥarraf-tum), altered, and substituted (or perhaps 'disarranged': baddal-tum) nine hundred words. You have corrupted three hundred, altered three hundred, and substituted three hundred: "Woe to those who write the book with their own hands, then say, 'This is from God (Qur'ān 2:79)!'" '37

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<sup>36</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 246-247, ḥadīth #8.

<sup>37</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, pp. 47-48, ḥadīth #62.

°Ayyāshī also reports the following statement from the fifth imām: "If the Book of God had not been added to and subtracted from, our rights would be obvious to any intelligent person...."<sup>38</sup> A final tradition from the fifth imām, also quoted in the tafsīr of °Ayyāshī, states: "Many verses have been removed from the Qur'ān, but only a few words have been added; they have been written down incorrectly, and people have taken them for something else...."<sup>39</sup> In other words, there is addition, but the addition is not extensive and may amount to a misreading.

The most serious claims are made in the first two hadīths cited by °Ayyāshī: that words of the Qur'ān were actually changed, and that in some cases false text was substituted for passages that had been struck. There is no way around it; °Ayyāshī's reports cast serious doubt on the °Uthmānic Qur'ān, the Qur'ān accepted by all Muslims. Most traditions, however, limit themselves to denying only the completeness of the Qur'ān. Thus it may be said that the majority of the Shī'ah had at an early date accepted the °Uthmānic Qur'ān, although they still maintained a radically different thesis as to the meaning of the

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 13, hadīth #6. Emphasis added; the hadīth continues: "...and if the One who Rises (al-Qā'im, that is the Mahdī) were to come and speak, the Qur'ān would verify his words."

<sup>39</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 180, hadīth #73. The combination of this hadīth quoted in °Ayyāshī with the two from °Ayyāshī above (for which I can find no equivalent in my other sources) proves the danger in thinking that the hadīth-collectors' choice of traditions is necessarily dictated by personal conviction!

text, as we shall see below.<sup>40</sup>

That the traditionists were concerned with omission from the Qur'ān rather than actual corruption of the text is also borne out by the evidence of the exegetical ḥadīths. The great majority of alterations to the Qur'ān proposed by the traditions involve the addition of short phrases which have the effect of tying the verse to some point of doctrine concerning the imāms. The addition is often marked by a phrase such as "it came down thus" (hakadhā nazalat), "Gabriel came down with this verse to Muḥammad thus," and other similar. Two examples, out of scores in the Shī'ī tradition, follow:

'Those who believe and do good works and believe in what has been revealed to Muḥammad concerning °Alī - it being the truth from their Lord - He shall rid them of their evil deeds and improve their state;' it came down thus.<sup>41</sup>

'Then Adam received from his Lord words concerning Muḥammad, °Alī, Ḥasan, Ḥusayn, and the imāms and their progeny, but he forgot;' it is thus, by God, that it

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<sup>40</sup>Ash°arī (Maqālāt, pp. 119-120) distinguishes three opinions of the 'Rawāfiḍ' (the Shī'ah) with regard to the Qur'ān. Only two have come down to us; the other has been blotted out on the manuscript pages. The first opinion cited by Ash°arī is that the Qur'ān is missing a great deal, but that it is not possible that there should have been additions or that any of the received text should have been changed. This accurately describes the majority position of the early ḥadīth. The alternate position, attributed to 'those holding for the imāmate but with Mu°tazilī tendencies,' is that nothing has been omitted, added, or altered. On the evidence of the tradition, the third opinion lost or struck from Ash°arī is that the Qur'ān had been not only subtracted from, but also changed and added to.

<sup>41</sup>Qummi, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 301; Qur'ān 47:2.

was brought down to Muḥammad.<sup>42</sup>

Here it is instructive to compare Shī'ī and Sunnī views. In fact, Sunnī tradition has also allowed that the Qur'ān is incomplete.<sup>43</sup> For the Sunnīs, however, the tradition co-exists with the assurance that the text is mutawātir. Thus the Sunnīs have de-emphasized the possibility that the Qur'ān is incomplete - and naturally so, since they have an interest in affirming that the Book of God is whole. The Shī'ah, on the other hand, while beginning from somewhat the same premisses, have emphasized incompleteness, since that is useful in confirming the occult knowledge of the imāms.

Apart from the question of omission, the Shī'ī critique of the received text of the Qur'ān is directed at the order of the verses, the alteration or misreading of single words, and loss of the reading (qirā'ah) of 'Alī.

The Shī'ah believe that the 'Uthmānic recension is not in the correct order. Thus Qummī remarks in his tafsīr, apropos of Qur'ān 15:91: "Those who break the Qur'ān into parts": "They have

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<sup>42</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 71, ḥadīth #4. Additional examples of Qur'ānic emendation, including the types mentioned below, are gathered in the chapter of Kāfī entitled Bāb fi-hi nukat wa-nutaf min al-tanzīl fī al-wilāyah of the Kitāb al-ḥujjah (in the edition used here, vol.2, pp. 276-318).

<sup>43</sup>See: John Burton, The Collection of the Qur'ān (Cambridge U.P., 1977), pp. 105-113 & ff.

divided up the [true] Qur'ān, and not ordered it as God sent it down."<sup>44</sup> It is not clear from the tradition whether this refers to the order of the verses or the order of the sūrahs (although a different arrangement of sūrahs of 'Alī's Qur'ān is given in other sources.)<sup>45</sup> If it is the sūrahs, then this is not so different from Sunnism; there is also a trace of this view in Sunnī sources.<sup>46</sup> It is, again, only that the Shī'ah place emphasis on disarrangement because it supports their view that the Qur'ān has a hidden aspect which has been lost to all but the imāms.

I have found only a few instances of the emendation of single words of the Qur'ān in the Shī'ī traditions. One example has in place of 'ummah,' 'a'immaḥ' ('imāms' in place of 'nation'); thus Qur'ān 2:143 "We have made you a middle community (ummatan wāṣaṭan) becomes "We have made you middle imāms (a'immatan wāṣaṭan)." In this way the next phrase: "so that you may be witnesses against mankind" is made to refer to the imāms.<sup>47</sup>

It appears that the loss of 'Alī's reading was thought by

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<sup>44</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, Vol. 1, p. 377.

<sup>45</sup>See: Arthur Jeffery, Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'ān. The Old Codices (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1937), pp. 182-183.

<sup>46</sup>Burton, Collection, pp. 215-216.

<sup>47</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 63.

some of the Shī'ah to amount to distortion of the text. The aṣl of al-Ḥannāt relates that when °Uthmān suppressed the alternate readings and "tore up the copies (maṣāḥif) of the Qur'ān," °Alī declared to his companion Abū Dharr: "A terrible disaster has befallen Islam this day. He [°Uthmān] has torn up the Book of God and put it to the sword - and it is for God to make die by the sword him who shreds His book with the sword!"<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, the traditions very rarely offer variant readings. One variant often cited concerns Q. 38:39, where "hādha °aṭā'u-nā, fa-amnun aw amsik bi-ghayr ḥisāb" (this is our gift, so bestow, or withhold, without reckoning) is read as: "hādha °aṭā'u-nā, fa-amnun wa-a°ṭu bi-ghayr ḥisāb" (this is our gift, so bestow, or give, without reckoning). A report from the sixth imām follows this reading with the comment "thus it is in the reading (girā'ah) of °Alī."<sup>49</sup> There is a significant doctrinal point attached to this verse which depends on the variant.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Uṣūl, p. 36. Sulaym (p. 108) refers to °Uthmān's 'burning' of the 'muṣḥaf' of Ubayy ibn Ka°b and Ibn Mas°ūd, but not that of °Alī. Ubayy's reading in any case was traced back to °Alī and Ibn Mas°ūd's girā'ah had the reputation of being close to the original, 'as fresh as when it was revealed,' so the point is still made. Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 295, commenting on Qur'ān 45:29, gives a minor (non-tendentious) variant, apparently also stemming from the reading of °Alī, and adds the following comment of the fifth imām: "It is thus, by God, that Gabriel came down with it [the verse] to Muḥammad - but this is part of that of the Book of God which has been corrupted (ḥurrifa)." (The variant is mentioned by Goldziher in Richtungen, p. 282.)

<sup>49</sup>Saffār, Basā'ir, p. 361, ḥadīth #1; *ibid.*, p. 387, ḥadīth #13; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 322-323 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb fī ma°rifati-him awliyā'a-hum..., ḥadīth #3}.

<sup>50</sup>See Chapter V, section iv.

°Ayyāshī's tafsīr records another reading of °Alī of Q. 16:90. Here Ja°far al-Şādiq reads "inna Allāh ya'mur bi-... itā' dhī al-qurbā" (God orders to give to the near relation) as: "inna Allāh ya'mur bi-... itā' dhī al-qurbā haqqa-hu" (God orders to give to the near relation his right). The variant helps to make the point that God commands that °Alī, the near relation of the Prophet, be given the right of the imāmate.<sup>51</sup> Are such readings remnants of the °Alī's distinctive Qur'ān which was lost or destroyed? Although great ideological weight is placed on their existence, and the variants are sometimes made to support doctrinal points (as in the two examples above), they are so few and so contrived we are inclined to consider them forged in the Shī°ī interest.

A factor complicating the issue of the Shī°ī view of the Qur'ān was first brought to Orientalist notice a century and a half ago by Garcin de Tassy and Mirza Alexandre Kazem-Beg in the Journal asiatique.<sup>52</sup> This concerned the discovery by Garcin de Tassy in an eighteenth-century Indian work of a whole additional Shī°ī-inspired chapter of the Qur'ān consisting of forty-two verses, the question raised thus being: has the Shī°ī tradition

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<sup>51</sup>Vol. 2, p. 267, ḥadīth #60. The imām's Companion upon hearing the altered reading exclaims in surprise: "It is not read thus in Zayd's reading!", to which the imām replies: "But we read it this way in the reading of °Alī."

<sup>52</sup>M. Garcin de Tassy, "Chapitre inconnu du Coran," Journal asiatique ser. IV, 1 (May 1842): 431-439; Mirza Alexandre Kazem-Beg, "Observations," Journal asiatique ser. IV, 2 (Dec. 1843): 373-429.



transmitted entire verses, and even entire chapters of a 'suppressed' Qur'ān? Kazem-Beg concluded that the chapter was a late forgery, originating from no earlier than the Safavid period and likely spun out from a single word mentioned by earlier authorities as among those missing from the °Uthmānic Qur'ān. In the result, Garcin de Tassy refused to consider the chapter as definitely 'apocryphal' on the evidence presented by Kazem-Beg.<sup>53</sup> Then in 1913 W. St. Clair Tisdall took up the question of 'Shi°ah additions to the Koran' anew by presenting a manuscript of the Qur'ān discovered, once again, in the subcontinent, "said to be some 200 or 300 years old" and with additions "consisting of two whole sūrahs and a number of separate verses."<sup>54</sup> Tisdall however considered his sectarian Qur'ān to be, on the basis of internal evidence, a base forgery, and praised the Shi°ah for having almost universally refused to admit additions to the scriptures.

Our contribution to the question is to note a single report from the Qurb al-isnād of an entire verse added to the Qur'ān. Ibrāhīm ibn °Abd al-Ḥamīd, the well-known companion of the sixth imām and 'trusted depository' (thiqah) of hadīth, related how Ja°far al-Ṣādiq had shown him a muṣḥaf and how he then proceeded to 'leaf through it.' "Something on the page caught my eye, and there I saw written: 'This is the Hell you used both to deny./

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<sup>53</sup>In a reply appended to Kazem-Beg's article (pp. 427-429).

<sup>54</sup>"Shi°ah Additions to the Koran," The Moslem World 3 (1913): 228.

Burn! You shall not live in it, nor shall you die!"<sup>55</sup>. The Shī'ī interest of the verse (presented in the rhymed prose characteristic of the Qur'ān) is in the dual verb pointing to Abū Bakr and °Umar, the usurpers of °Alī's rights. Thus, even if the materials published by Garcin de Tassy and Tisdall add up to nothing more than schismatic phantasy, it is proved that the Shī'ah had proposed the addition in early times of a whole verse to the Qur'ān. The uniqueness of the report, on the other hand, suggests that this was not common among the mainstream.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Himyarī, Isnād, p. 12: "hādhihi jahannum allatī kuntum bi-hā tukadhdhibān fa-aṣliyā fī-hā lā tamūtān fī-hā wa-lā taḥīhiyān." The modern editor of the Qurb notes that this is an āḥād tradition (a 'single,' isolated tradition, attested only through one chain of transmitters), and that it "is to be rejected, in view of the agreement of scholars and sound traditions affirming the integrity of 'what is between the two covers' ('mā bayn al-daffatayn,' an oft-repeated phrase signalling acceptance of the received text)."

<sup>56</sup>Here is the place to mention Joseph Eliash's article on the subject of tahrīf: "The Shī'ite Qur'ān. A Reconsideration of Goldziher's Interpretation," Arabica 16 (1969): 15-24. While Goldziher attributes to the Shī'ah the claim that the revelation contained text additional to the °Uthmānic version, Eliash concludes that there is no difference between the Shī'ī Qur'ān and that of the Sunnīs apart from disagreement about the order of some sūrahs and verses, and variations arising from the gira'āt. The additional phrases cited in the traditions, Eliash states, are only regarded as °Alī's explanatory notes which are "revered by the Shī'a to the same extent as the revealed text (p. 24)." What Eliash has done is to state the generally-held modern Shī'ī view of the Qur'ān and attitude toward the exegetical hadīth. Goldziher presents, and presents accurately, a view based on earlier sources such as the tafsīr of Qummī and al-Kāfī (and thus his findings generally coincide with mine). The Shī'ī view of the Qur'ān has evolved over time, just as have many other points of Shī'ī doctrine - and there are in addition continuing disagreements on the matter among modern scholars (for a discussion of various views on tahrīf held by early and contemporary °ulamā', see the editor's preface to Tafsīr al-Qummī, vol. 1, pp. 22 ff.). This is why Eliash already finds a difference in attitude toward the Qur'ān between Kulaynī's Kāfī

It is obvious that the additional words and sentences supplied in the exegetical traditions are not the whole of the missing Qur'ān. Which leads to the question: where is the rest of it, and why is it not accessible to us? The answers given by the tradition throw over the text the veil of esoterism which envelopes the whole of Shī'ī thought. Certainly the true Qur'ān is not lost. According to the Shī'ī it has never been lost: "whoever says that anything has been lost from the Qur'ān, lies."<sup>57</sup> Instead it is with the imām, but the imāms choose not to reveal it; pressed as to why he would not publish his Qur'ān, °Alī only stated that it could not be delivered to °Umar because "the Qur'ān must only be touched by pure persons and by those of

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(which he somehow dismisses) and statements by Ibn Bābawayh. By the same token, it does not do to interpret material in the Kāfī in light of the tafsīr of Tabarsī (d. 548/1153-4) or material found in Majlisī's (d. 1110-1111/ 1699-1700) Bihār al-anwār as Eliash does (p. 21, & n. 3). What is required is a historical study of the various and evolving Shī'ī views of the Qur'ān. McDermott has already made a contribution in his study of al-Shaykh al-Mufīd (Theology, pp. 92-99). Mufīd's position is that while nothing has been added, some things have been left out of the Qur'ān - but that the missing parts are the authoritative interpretation and not part of the revelation itself. This brings the Mu'tazilī-influenced Mufīd into line with the Mu'tazilizing view mentioned by al-Ash'arī (cited supra). The opinion of al-Mufīd's teacher, the traditionist Ibn Bābawayh, is also that the Qur'ān is complete as received (*ibid.*, p. 355); Ibn Bābawayh had evidently already moved away from the traditional ḥadīth position.

<sup>57</sup>K. Sulaym, p. 210. This would in fact not be possible in the Shī'ī view of °ilm, for °ilm is, as explained above, imperishable.

God's servants chosen for it."<sup>58</sup> A companion of Ja°far al-Şādiq noticed as the Qur'ān was being recited to the imām that it contained certain words not in the known text. He mentioned this to the imām, who warned him: "Do not recite it this way. Recite it as people ordinarily do, until the Qā'im rises. When the Qā'im rises, he shall recite the Book of God as it should be recited and make public the muṣḥaf written by °Alī."<sup>59</sup> Thus the entire Qur'ān is passed, in a form to which only the imāms are privy and freighted with meaning which only the imāms are able to comprehend, to °Alī's descendants one after the other, to be revealed only when the Mahdī appears and the confusion of history and the age of caution are at an end.<sup>60</sup> Then shall people "know the Qur'ān as it was sent down;"<sup>61</sup> in the time of the Qā'im, states Muḥammad al-Bāqir, "people shall be given wisdom (ḥikmah) such that even a woman shall judge in her house by the Book of God and the sunnah of the Messenger of God."<sup>62</sup> It appears that the issue of the corruption of the text of the Qur'ān is more a part of the esoteric complex of Shiism than a scriptural

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 210, citing Qur'ān 56:79: "None shall touch it save the purified" and 35:32: "We gave the Book as inheritance to those of our servants whom We chose." In the lengthy narrative from Sulaym quoted above °Alī simply replies, in answer to Talhah's question as to why he held back his Qur'ān, that he prefers not to answer!

<sup>59</sup>Şaffār, Başā'ir, p. 193, ḥadīth #3.

<sup>60</sup>See K. Sulaym, p. 110 and Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, p. 164.

<sup>61</sup>Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, p. 218.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 158.

reality.

Ta'wīl, in Shī'ī usage, means the determination of the true and full meaning of the Qur'ān hidden from the mind of the ordinary observer. The whole of the Qur'ān is subject to ta'wīl: "There is not a verse of the Qur'ān but that it has an outer (zahr) and inner (batn) aspect; the outer aspect is the revelation (tanzīl), and the inner aspect is the ta'wīl."<sup>63</sup>

The hidden meaning includes much more than the prohibitions and injunctions applying to everyday life: "What is ḥalāl and ḥarām," said the sixth imām, "in comparison to °ilm [of the Qur'ān]? Ḥalāl and ḥarām are only a small part of the Qur'ān!"<sup>64</sup> For the Shī'ah the Qur'ān is the Great Code, containing all guidance, all history, all judgement - in short, all there is to be known; "it does not leave room for anyone to pronounce on any thing."<sup>65</sup> The seventh imām was asked: "Is everything contained in

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<sup>63</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 196, ḥadīth #7 & cf. Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 232 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb anna-hu lā yajma° al-Qur'ān kulla-hu illā al-a'immaḥ..., ḥadīth #2}: "No one can claim to have gathered all the Qur'ān, [including its] inner and outer aspects (zāhiri-hi wa-bāṭini-hi), except the imāms." Ta'wīl in the traditions is opposed to tanzīl. Tanzīl means simply the text of the revelation; ta'wīl means the true explanation of the text, knowledge of which was given to °Alī, is exclusively with the imāms, and can be known only through their sayings. The word 'tafsīr' is also in use, apparently in the same sense as ta'wīl; but it is not specifically contrasted to tanzīl.

<sup>64</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 194-195, ḥadīth #2.

<sup>65</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 9.

the Book of God and the sunnah of His Prophet, or do you also make your own pronouncements [on your own authority]?" The imām answered: "Rather everything is in the Book of God and the sunnah of His Prophet."<sup>66</sup> Ja°far al-Şādiq said: "I know the news of heaven and earth, of what has been, and what is to be, as if it were in the palm of my hand! It is from the Book of God that I know it, for God says: 'In it is the explanation of every thing.'<sup>67</sup>

Only the imāms know the ta'wīl, as indicated by the proof-text: "No one knows its ta'wīl except God and those firmly rooted in knowledge (3:7)." The fifth or sixth imām explains: "The Messenger of God is the best of those 'rooted in knowledge.' God taught him all the tanzīl and ta'wīl He sent down to him, and He did not reveal anything to him without teaching him the ta'wīl- and his heirs know all this...."<sup>68</sup> With knowledge of the ta'wīl all of the Qur'ān is plain to the imāms; the verse "It (the Qur'ān) is clear verses in the breasts of those who have been given knowledge" refers to none but them.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 80 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb al-radd ilā al-Kitāb wa-al-sunnah..., ḥadīth #10}.

<sup>67</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 266, ḥadīth #56. See also Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 127-128, passim & pp. 197-198, ḥadīth #2; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 79 {K. al-°ilm, Bāb al-radd ilā al-Kitāb wa-al-sunnah..., ḥadīth #8}.

<sup>68</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 309 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb al-rāsikhūn fī al-°ilm..., ḥadīth #2}; and see this chapter in general.

<sup>69</sup>Şaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 204-207. Qur'ān 29:49.

Exegesis can therefore only be accomplished by the imāms. It is expressly forbidden to anyone else: "There is nothing further from the hearts of men than the interpretation (tafsīr) of the Qur'ān; it simply confuses anyone who attempts it...."<sup>70</sup> Since everyone except the imāms is essentially ignorant of the Qur'ān, it is forbidden to them to 'argue' using it, that is to use proof-texts from the Qur'ān to support their arguments or position. Anyone who attempts to dispute on the basis of a verse of the Qur'ān is bound to end up further from the truth of it 'than heaven is from earth.'<sup>71</sup> Understanding the meaning of the Qur'ān is particularly difficult because of several complex features of the text. Part of the revelation is nāsikh (abrogating) and part mansūkh (abrogated by the nāsikh); some is muḥkam ('clear' or 'precise') and some mutashābih ('obscure' or 'ambiguous'); and a verse of the Qur'ān may also have a specific (khāṣṣ) as well as a general (ʿāmm) meaning. People have mistaken the meaning of the Qur'ān because of ignorance of these subtleties. But all of them are clear to the imāms; those who

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<sup>70</sup>Barqī, Mahāsīn, p. 268, ḥadīth #356. Even if one happens to coincidentally fall on the correct interpretation using one's own opinion rather than relying on the pronouncements of the imāms, this shall not bring divine reward: "Who interprets (yufassir) the Qur'ān using his own judgement (ra'y) shall not receive reward if he is correct (aṣāba), and if he is in error (akḥṭa'a) he is responsible for his own sin (°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 17, ḥadīth #2; and see this section in general, pp. 17-18).

<sup>71</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 18, ḥadīth #1 (see also the other ḥadīths in this section).

assert that there is any real obscurity in the Qur'ān "have perished, or caused others to perish."<sup>72</sup>

Ta'wīl does not, however, consist of the opinion of the imāms or their analysis. Ta'wīl, like the rest of the °ilm, consists of inherited (and therefore ultimately prophetic and divine) knowledge. "If we were to tell you things derived from our own opinions," says the fifth imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir, "we would surely perish! Rather we relate to you reports which we have stored up from the Messenger of God as others store gold and silver."<sup>73</sup> Ta'wīl was received along with the revelation by Muḥammad, who communicated it to °Alī, who then passed it whole to his descendants. "God taught His Messenger the ḥalāl, the ḥarām, and the ta'wīl, and the Messenger taught all his °ilm to °Alī."<sup>74</sup>

The imāms are by virtue of the knowledge they inherit the sole support of the Qur'ān for all time. The Qur'ān can never stand without them; without them it has no meaning. This belief is expressed in the well-known ḥadīth of the thaḡalayn, the 'ḥadīth of the two weights.' According to this tradition

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<sup>72</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 270, ḥadīth #360.

<sup>73</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 299, ḥadīth #1, and see this and the following chapters in general: pp. 299-302.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 290, ḥadīth #1 (and see this chapter in general: pp. 290-292).



Muhammad said: "I have left for you two weights: the Book of God, and my Household."<sup>75</sup> "The greater weight," he explained,

...is the Book of God, a rope one end of which is in the hands of God and the other in yours... and the lesser weight is my Family (ʿitrah), my Household. The Kind, the All-Knowing, has given me tidings that they shall not be separated until they meet again with me [on the Day of Judgement]....<sup>76</sup>

Alī said: "God put us with the Qur'ān, and the Qur'ān with us, and we shall not separate from it, nor it from us;"<sup>77</sup> the sixth imām compared the relationship of the imāms and the Qur'ān to that of two fingers alongside one another.<sup>78</sup>

The imām is also the gayyim ('guardian') of the Qur'ān. There must be in every generation a member of the Family of the Prophet to "ward off from religion the tahrif of the extremists,

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<sup>75</sup>Uṣūl, p. 88. K. Sulaym reports the Prophet as saying, "I have left for you two affairs (amrayn) (p. 103)," but the report is celebrated as the 'ḥadīth of the thagalayn.'

<sup>76</sup>Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 4. The ḥadīth has many variations. The usual phrase is 'until they return to me at the Hawd' (the celestial basin at which the imāms and their followers shall gather on the Day of the Judgement); see for instance K. Sulaym, p. 167.

<sup>77</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 281-282 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb fī anna al-a'imma shuhadā' Allāh... ʿalā khalqī-hi, ḥadīth #5}.

<sup>78</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 49, ḥadīth #6; Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 173. While the ḥadīth of the 'two weights' describes the Qur'ān as the greater and the Family as the lesser weight, in this ḥadīth reported by Qummī the imām emphasizes that the 'two fingers' are not the second and third (which are of unequal length), but rather the first finger of each hand laid together (therefore of equal length). According to this version the Family is equal to the Book, not subordinate to it.

the false ascriptions of liars, and the ta'wīl of the ignorant."<sup>79</sup> Were it not for the imām the indisputable wisdom of the Book would be obscured by the debates of ignorant persons. A rational argument for the necessity of the imām as interpreter and guardian of the Qur'ān is expressed in the following ḥadīth, as the jurisprudent and well-known traditionist Maṣṣūr ibn Ḥāzim recalls his intellectual journey in the presence of the sixth imām:

God cannot be known by His creation, for He is too Noble and too Glorious for that. ('What you say is true,' said the imām.) And whoever knows that he has a Lord, must realize that that Lord is possessed of both pleasure and wrath.<sup>80</sup> And His pleasure and wrath cannot be known except through a revelation, or an apostle. And it is incumbent on one whom the revelation has not reached to seek out the apostles; then when he meets them, he shall know that they are the proof (ḥujjah) of God over His creation, and that obedience to them is compulsory. (Ja'far assents to all this with his silence.) Thus I said to the people: 'Do you not acknowledge that it was the Messenger of God who was the Proof from God over His earth?' They agreed. Then I asked them: 'And after he died, who was the ḥujjah?' 'The Qur'ān,' they said. So I examined the Qur'ān, and found that the Murji'is, the Qadaris, and the Zindiqs - people who do not even believe in the Qur'ān - use it to defeat one another in their debates. Thus I realized that the Qur'ān cannot be a Proof without a guardian (ḡayyim), and that whatever such a person said concerning the Qur'ān would be the truth. So I asked the people: 'Who is the guardian of the Qur'ān?' They told me: 'Ibn Maṣ'ūd used to know [the

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<sup>79</sup>Ḥimyarī, Qurb, pp. 51-52.

<sup>80</sup>What Ibn Ḥāzim means to say is that man does sense that he has a Creator, and realizes that he risks His wrath in disobeying him. This he knows by intuition. But he has no way of knowing the command of God which might protect him from His wrath - for 'God is too Glorious to be known by His creation.' This motivates him to seek out one who does have this knowledge - leading him finally to the imām.

Qur'ān], and °Umar and Hudhayfah also know.' 'Do they know all of it?' I said: 'No,' they confessed. I did not find one single person of whom it could be said that he knew all of the Qur'ān except °Alī.... Thus do I testify that °Alī was the guardian of the Qur'ān, that obedience to him is compulsory, and that he was the Proof over the people after the death of the Messenger... and I testify also that °Alī did not die before he left another hujjah to take his place, just as the Prophet did...."<sup>81</sup>

The clearest outcome of ta'wīl is announcement of the rights of the imāms, as Ja°far al-Şādiq said: "It is enough for you to know that everything in the Book, from the Fātiḥah to the end, concerns the imāms."<sup>82</sup> Most exegetical ḥadīths link the Qur'ān to the subject of the imāmate so that virtually all the scriptures become an exposition of it. Ta'wīl also reveals and judges the enemies of the imāms. Thus the scriptures are, properly interpreted, a record of the historical struggle between these two forces: "The Qur'ān has come down in three parts: one concerns us, one our enemies, and one consists of rules and injunctions."<sup>83</sup> Among the enemies of the imāms and the Shī°ah

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<sup>81</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 267-269 (K. al-hujjah, Bāb farḍ ṭā°at al-a'immaḥ, ḥadīth #15).

<sup>82</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 13, ḥadīth #8.

<sup>83</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 44; similar statements in *ibid.*, p. 1; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, pp. 9-10, ḥadīths #3 & #7; and Şaffār, Başā'ir, p. 121, ḥadīth #1. The seventh imām says: "The Qur'ān has both an outer (ẓahr) and inner (batn) aspect. The things that God has forbidden are the outer aspect, and the inner aspect of those are the 'imāms of oppression' [a'immat al-jawr, those other than the Shī°ī imāms who claim authority]; and the things that God made licit are the outer aspect, and the inner aspect of those is the true imāms (Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 202 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb man adda°ā al-imāmah wa-laysa li-hā bi-ahl..., ḥadīth #10}; Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, p. 83)."

whose identity is revealed by ta'wīl are the first three caliphs (especially Abū Bakr and °Umar), the Umayyads, and the Abbasids. Said the fifth imām: "If you hear God mention someone in the community favourably, that is us, but if you hear Him mention past nations disapprovingly, those are our enemies."<sup>84</sup>

Ta'wīl speaks to events in the age of the imāms as well as in the age of the Prophet in which the Qur'ān was revealed. A tradition explains: "There is that of the Qur'ān which has passed, and that which has not yet come to pass. It proceeds as do the sun and the moon, so that when there is ta'wīl of something it applies to the living as well as to the dead."<sup>85</sup> In other words, just as the sun and moon return day after day to shed their light on a changed world, so does the Qur'ān illuminate events throughout time. An important aspect of the continuous application of the Qur'ān is that any statement about the Prophet (or even about any of the ancient prophets) must also apply to the imāms. If this were not the case, tradition argues, the revelation would be a dead letter, applicable only to a certain time and place. Ja°far al-Şādiq was asked about the interpretation of the verse: "You are a warner, and a guide to every people (13:7)." He said: "The 'warner' is the Messenger of God, and the guide is °Alī. And do you think that any 'guide'

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<sup>84</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 13, ḥadīth #3.

<sup>85</sup>Şaffār, Başā'ir, p. 196, ḥadīth #7; see also Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, p. 85.

exists today?" "Certainly." answered the imām's Companion. "There is always a guide from among you, one after the other, until it was given to you." "God bless you!" said the imām. "If a verse were to come down about a man and then he died, the verse would also die - and [eventually] the Book as well. But it [the Qur'ān] lives, applying to those who live as well as to those who have died."<sup>86</sup>

The ta'wīl - the true and full meaning of the Qur'ān - has always had to set itself throughout history against the false interpretation of the enemies of the imāms. Thus the Prophet exhorts °Alī, in a phrase often repeated in the ḥadīth, to "fight for the ta'wīl of the Qur'ān as I have fought for its tanzīl."<sup>87</sup> False exegesis, according to the Shī'ah, began when the first caliphs and the early Umayyads used their political power to promote their own interpretation.<sup>88</sup> These were perfectly aware of the true meaning of the Qur'ān, just as they knew that it was °Alī who had been designated caliph by the Prophet. But they made the revelation an instrument for their own ends, as the Prophet predicted: "When fifteen men of the Banī Abu °Āṣ shall have

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<sup>86</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 272 - 273 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb anna al-a'immah hum al-hudāt, ḥadīth #3}; see also °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 203, ḥadīth #6.

<sup>87</sup>K. Sulaym, pp. 82-83 & 172; Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 309, ḥadīth #5; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, pp. 15-16, ḥadīth #6; Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 71.

<sup>88</sup>For which reason a number of traditions exclaim: "Woe to the Quraysh for their ta'wīl!" (eg: Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 145).

ruled, they shall make the Qur'ān their own property."<sup>89</sup> (Abū °Ās is the eponymous ancestor of the tribe of Marwān ibn al-Hakam). The rest of the community was gradually convinced by their false interpretation. Finally the true meaning remained only with the Shī'ah, guided by the imāms. It shall prevail in the great struggle at the end of time, when the righteous shall finally gain victory by the sword: "The world shall not end," °Alī told his followers, "before you strike them for the sake of the ta'wīl."<sup>90</sup>

#### iv. The books of the prophets.

Ja°far al-Şādiq says: "God said [to Muḥammad], 'I have given you revelation as I gave revelation to Noah and the prophets who followed' - thus He gathered for him all the revelations."<sup>91</sup> Just as Muḥammad was given all the scriptures, so the imāms inherited them in turn: "...every book that was sent down is with the possessors of °ilm - and we are they."<sup>92</sup> The imāms have complete and perfect knowledge of the past books. A learned

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<sup>89</sup>K. Sulaym, p. 205, & p. 174 (here the members of the Banī Abū al-°Ās become thirty).

<sup>90</sup>Ḥimyarī, Qurb, p. 70.

<sup>91</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 285, ḥadīth #305. Qur'ān 4:163.

<sup>92</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 327 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb anna al-a'immah warathū °ilm al-nabī wa-jamī° al-anbiyā' wa-al-awsiyā', ḥadīth #6}. From the sixth imām. The sixth imām also said: "In °Alī was the sunnah of a thousand prophets... and knowledge [does not perish but rather] is inherited (ibid., p. 322 {Bāb anna al-a'immah ma°dan al-°ilm..., ḥadīth # 4})."

Christian was amazed at the seventh imām's faultless recitation of the Gospel (Injil) and asked him: "Do you possess the Torah, the Gospel, and the books of the prophets?" The imām answered:

That we do; they were given to us by them as inheritance. We recite them exactly as they did, and we explain them just as they did - for God would not place a hujjah upon this earth who, if asked a question, would answer: 'I do not know.'<sup>93</sup>

Possession of the wisdom of the ancient prophets allows the imāms to enclose the Judaic and Christian traditions which Islam claims to supersede. This part of the knowledge of the imāms must have had particular significance for the Shī'ah while they lived in the religiously diverse atmosphere of seventh and eighth century Iraq. It would have served not only as convincing proof of their °ilm and therefore their mission but also as refutation of the claims of other faiths. The tradition is filled with stories of the imāms' complete mastery of the Jewish and Christian scriptures - and the consequent ready conversion of members of the 'People of the Book.' It is reported that a certain Christian named '°Abd al-Ṣalīb' (Servant of the Cross) came to the seventh imām Mūsā al-Kāẓim and told him how, in the course of a thirty years' quest for the true religion, he had first been directed to a bishop (maṭrān) resident in a town near Damascus. This man, although he was "the most learned of his faith among Arab and non-Arab," gave °Abd al-Ṣalīb news of

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid., p. 330 {Bāb anna al-a'immaḥ °inda-hum jamī° al-kutub allatī nazalat min °ind Allāh..., ḥadīth #1}.

another man more learned than himself. The object of his search, the Damascene informed him, possessed

...ilm of Islam and of the Torah, of the Gospel and the Psalms (Zābūr), of the Book of Hūd and everything sent to every prophet whether in this age or any other, [in short] every message (khavar) that has ever been sent from heaven, whether anyone was aware of it or not.<sup>94</sup>

The seventh imām was finally able to fulfill the hopes of the former 'Servant of the Cross' (now converted to Islam and renamed '°Abd Allāh,' 'servant of God') by citing the ancient scriptures and revealing details concerning Jesus and Mary of which not even the learned Christian, had been aware. He also informed him of the names of his ancestors in his native language, Syriac.<sup>95</sup>

The imāms, as appears from the previous narrative, are

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<sup>94</sup>Hūd was a prophet sent to an ancient Arabian tribe; thus along with the Gospel of Jesus and the Psalms of David the three prophetic traditions of the Qur'ān are referred to.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 388-392 {Bāb mawlid Abi Hasan Mūsā ibn Ja°far, ḥadīth #4}. The imām knows all languages; one of the reasons for this is that he must know the languages of prior scriptures. For other examples of the imāms' knowledge of prior scriptures see: Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 318 (°Alī's answer to the Jews who asked him about Jonah's whale and its role in cosmology); ibid., vol. 2, pp. 259 (the fourth imām quotes the Gospel) and pp. 269-270 (Hasan answers questions of the Byzantine king extracted from thirteen boxes in his possession 'filled with quotations from the prophets'); Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 475-477 {K. al-ḥuijah, Bāb mā jā'a fī al-ithnā °ashar..., ḥadīth #5} (a Jewish descendant of Aaron the vicegerent of Moses finds that °Alī is aware of the contents of the books of Aaron in his possession).



actually more learned in the ancient scriptures than their communities: "Ask me," said °Alī, "before you suffer my loss, for by Him who split the seed and caused breath to be drawn, I am more learned in the Torah than the people of the Torah, more learned in the Gospel than its people, and more learned in the Qur'ān than the people of the Qur'ān..."<sup>96</sup> This learning concerns not only the arcane details of the revealed books, but also knowledge of the laws of the 'People of the Book.' "If a cushion were to be folded for me [i.e. if a place were to be prepared and I were given the office]," said °Alī, "I would judge the people of the Torah by the Torah itself until that which is between heaven and earth becomes manifest..." (and so the people of the Gospel, and so the people of the Qur'ān [Furqān]).<sup>97</sup> This claim - the claim to know the sacred law of Judaism and Christianity - is particularly significant in view of the fact that Islam is a legalistic religion. To know the law, in the eyes of Islam, is to know the way to salvation.

What were the books of the prophets inherited by the imāms?

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<sup>96</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 9. See also K. Sulaym, p. 190, where °Alī displays more knowledge about the various sects of the Jewish community than the head rabbi (ra's al-yahūd) himself!

<sup>97</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 133, ḥadīth #2; see also °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 15, ḥadīth #3. The statement is conditional because °Alī and his descendants did not gain political power; the judgement of the imāms is suspended until the coming of the Mahdī, at which time he "shall bring out the Torah and the rest of the books of God from a cave and judge over the people of the Torah according to the Torah [and so forth for the Gospel, Psalm, and Qur'ān] (Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, p. 157)."

They were, as already stated, "...everything sent to every prophet whether in this age or any other; every message (khābar) that has ever been sent from heaven, whether anyone was aware of it or not."<sup>98</sup> The Shī'ī tradition is, however, exclusively concerned with the books of the prophets mentioned in the scriptures of the 'People of the Book.' These books include, in addition to the Torah and Gospel, the books of Noah, Ṣāliḥ (a prophet of the ancient Arabians mentioned in the Qur'ān), Shu'ayb (the successor of Ṣāliḥ [see Qur'ān 11:89], perhaps identical with Jethro of the Old Testament); and the scrolls (ṣuḥuf) of Abraham and Moses.<sup>99</sup>

Shī'ī tradition is particularly interested in the Tablets (alwāḥ) of Moses. According to tradition the Tablets were a vast depository of knowledge; they contained "the explanation of every thing and of what shall be until the Day of Resurrection," as well as "the ʿilm of the ancients (awwalīn) and moderns (ākhirīn)."<sup>100</sup> The physical aspects of the Tablets are emphasized: they are "shards containing the ʿilm and the Wisdom (ḥikmah); the ʿilm came from heaven, was inscribed on the

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<sup>98</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 288 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb mawlid Abī Ḥasan Mūsā ibn Jaʿfar, ḥadīth #4}.

<sup>99</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 469, ḥadīth #4; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 55 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb al-ishārah wa-al-naṣṣ ʿalā Amīr al-Mu'minīn, ḥadīth #3}.

<sup>100</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 139-140, ḥadīth #4; see also *ibid.*, p. 141, ḥadīth #6.

Tablets, and placed in the Ark (tābūt).<sup>101</sup> They are made of green precious stone, sent from heaven.<sup>102</sup> According to some reports the Alwāḥ of Moses were recovered by the Prophet in Yemen and given by him to °Alī. Moses caused a mountain there to be split, inserted the wrapped Tablets in the fissure and closed it up again. The mountain opened only with the coming of the Prophet of Islam, at which point it was 'conveyed'<sup>103</sup> to the people of the area that they should not look at the Alwāḥ; they consequently felt a dread of them until they were able to reach the Prophet. Muḥammad had in fact been informed by Gabriel of the circumstances of the Tablets and the people who carried them, and his knowledge caused the [Jewish] Yemenites to confess his prophethood. The Tablets were in Hebrew so that when the Prophet offered them to °Alī he feared that he could not read them. Muḥammad, however, had him place them under his head while sleeping, and he became able to read.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 133, ḥadīth #440. The 'Ark' becomes part of the regalia of the imāms the possession of which proves their mission. On the place of the alwāḥ in the Tābūt see also ibid., pp. 133-134, ḥadīth #442.

<sup>102</sup>Either emerald or chrysolite: Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 139-140, ḥadīth #4; see also p. 141, ḥadīth #6. This recalls the colour of the Tablet of Fāṭimah (see below).

<sup>103</sup>'Conveyed' = alqā, suggesting divine inspiration.

<sup>104</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 139-140, ḥadīth #4. According to this report °Alī copied the contents of the Tablets onto a sheepskin, which became the Jafr (for discussion of this book of the imāms see below). Another ḥadīth (ibid., p. 141, ḥadīth #6) does not mention the mountain, relating instead that the Tablets were passed on to Yūsha° ibn Nūn, the vicegerent of Moses, and then to four groups of Yemenites who kept it with them generation after generation until the coming of the Prophet. This version

The Tablets of Moses are important because Moses is the chief receptor of revelation of the Jewish community. Possession of his scriptures therefore verifies Muḥammad's claim to knowledge of the Jewish dispensation. The claim is strengthened by the fact that the Tablets were, according to scripture, lost to the Jewish community itself as Moses destroyed them in his anger; Muḥammad thus comes to complete the lost revelation.<sup>105</sup> The Tablets are located in the Yemen because this was the home of a large and sophisticated Jewish community which represented for the Arabs of the time the epitome of religious civilisation.

The scriptures of the ancient prophets are part of the 'Greatest Name' (al-ism al-akbar or al-ism al-a'zam). The Greatest Name is "the scriptures (kitāb) through which is

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has the effect the linking the imāms, the vicegerents of the Prophet, to the vicegerent of Moses.

<sup>105</sup>One report has it that what is in the Tābūt is not all that Moses had, for "some was shattered, some survived, and some was taken up [to Heaven] (ibid., p. 141, ḥadīth #6)." This should not be taken to mean that the imāms have only a part of what was revealed to Moses. Certainly they have the whole of it, inherited from Muhammad along with all the °ilm of all the prophets. There is a distinction to be made between the scriptures of the prophets as relics or as part of the regalia preserved in the Ark, and the perfect knowledge of the contents of the scriptures inherited from the Prophet as part of the °ilm. These are two different things. In some ḥadīths the 'remnants' (āthār) of the prophets are referred to in addition to the 'legacy of °ilm' and 'Greatest Name (on which see below);' the remnants are the written scriptures, while the 'Greatest Name' represents the perfect knowledge of all the past revelations. See Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 54 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb al-ishārah wa-al-naṣṣ °alā Amīr al-Mu'minīn, ḥadīth #2}; Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 468-470, *passim*.

obtained the °ilm of every thing that was with the prophets."<sup>106</sup> According to other reports the Greatest Name consists of seventy-three letters. A certain number of these letters were given to various prophets (the letters and the prophets varying according to different accounts) until finally Muḥammad came into possession of seventy-two. Knowledge of the last letter is with God; this letter is the ghayb ('the hidden'), the unknowable which He has reserved for Himself.<sup>107</sup> The letters of the

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<sup>106</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 469, ḥadīth #4; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 55 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb al-ishārah wa-al-naṣṣ °alā Amīr al-Mu'minīn, ḥadīth #3}.

<sup>107</sup>See Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 208-211, *passim*; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 334-335 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb mā u°ṭiya al-a'immah min ism Allāh al-a°zam}, *passim*. The number seventy-one may have several significances. Seventy-one is the number of the sects of Israel spoken of by Moses; the Muslims number their sects as seventy-two, although the Shī'ah favour seventy-three. The increase in each case seems to indicate an equation of 'previous dispensation plus one.' Or the variation may be due to a general significance of the low seventies, for "the numbers seventy to seventy-three are often interchanged in the Semitic tradition (Mircea Eliade, Encyclopedia of Religion, s.v. "Numbers: An Overview," by Annemarie Schimmel)." Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 210, ḥadīth #9 reports seventy-one letters possessed by the Prophet instead of seventy-two. Seventy-two is also the number of the martyrs of Karbalā, as well as of the disciples of Christ; see (Luke 10:1 [usually read 'seventy']); thus it may be that the aim is to relate the number of letters specifically to the number of sects, each sect being equivalent, by implication, to one incomplete part of the whole, true revelation which is the Word of Islam. According to an isolated report in Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir (p. 117), °ilm consists of twenty-seven letters, two of which represent all that was given to the prophets, including Muḥammad. The Mahdī shall bring the other twenty-five and join them with the two already known. I do not understand the significance of 'twenty-seven' here, unless we are meant to assume one letter remaining with God, making a total of twenty-eight - the number of letters of the Arabic alphabet. Or it may be that this represents a number of prophets, as there are twenty-seven prophets discussed in a later mystical work, Ibn °Arabī's (d. 638/1254) Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam ('Bezels of Wisdom').

Greatest Name have, according to the ḥadīth, special power. °ʿĀṣif ibn Barkhiyā', Solomon's vizier, possessed only one but he was able by uttering it to cause the earth between him and the throne of Bilqīs to sink so that he could bring the throne to his master;<sup>108</sup> with the letters he was given Jesus used to bring the dead to life, cure the leper and cause the blind to see.<sup>109</sup> °Alī was able with the aid of the Name of God to cause the sun to return so that he could make up the evening prayer.<sup>110</sup> It is reported that the famous traditionist °Umar ibn Ḥanẓalah asked Muḥammad al-Bāqir to teach him the Greatest Name, assuring him that he could bear the knowledge; but when the imām laid his hand on the ground and the room immediately darkened °Umar wisely changed his mind.<sup>111</sup>

#### v. The books of the imāms.

The imāms have in their possession, in addition to the true text of the Qur'ān and the revelations received from the ancient prophets, a number of their own special writings. These writings originated with members of the Holy Family and the Prophet, and are passed on as part of the inherited knowledge.

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<sup>108</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 208-211, passim; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, pp. 334-335 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb mā uṭṭiya al-a'immah min ism Allāh al-a'zam}, passim.

<sup>109</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 208-209, ḥadīth #3.

<sup>110</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 217-219.

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 210, ḥadīth #1.

The books of the imāms are an occult literature. They are not published; the contents are known only to the those who possess them (although in a few instances the ḥadīth gives a short legal sentence supposedly drawn from them). Being written documents, however, they appear as tangible indication of the °ilm, a role which the ḥadīth reinforces by describing, in great detail, their physical appearance. The books serve several other functions as well. They represent a kind of scriptures to which the imāms alone can lay claim, raising their status at least a little closer to the prophetic figures of the past. They further demonstrate the comprehensiveness of the °ilm of the imāms, providing a referent for their complete knowledge of the legal injunctions and of past and future events. And finally, the books are part of the regalia, like the various swords and relics of the past prophets, confirming their possessors as the true imāms to the exclusion of all other claimants.

In the last capacity the imāms' books are produced as evidence against the Ḥasanids and Zaydīs, rivals of the Ḥusaynids who favoured rising up against the Abbasids. Both rejected the pretense of the ḥusaynids to a divine and exclusive °ilm. °Abd Allāh ibn al-Ḥasan maintained that the imāms do not have any knowledge not possessed by others;<sup>112</sup> Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad even

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<sup>112</sup>Ibid., pp 157-158, ḥadīth #19. To which Ja°far al-Ṣādiq replied with a description of the books, followed by the challenge: "And what would °Abd Allāh do if people came to him from every direction to ask questions?"/ °Abd Allāh ibn al-Ḥasan, a grandson of Ḥasan the second imām, died in prison (145/762)

declared that "°Alī did not leave any book, or if he did, it was only a couple of skins."<sup>113</sup> The imāms of the emerging Twelver line relied on their °ilm to justify their quietism, replying to their militant cousins that the course of history and the appointed time of the uprising were known and not subject to 'hastening' (ta°jīl). "Are you not amazed," exclaimed Ja°far al-Şādiq,

...that °Abd Allāh [ibn al-Ḥasan] asserts that... we possess neither °ilm nor the truth? By God, it is he who does not possess knowledge, whereas, by God [and here he pointed to himself] we have the arms of the Messenger of God: his sword and armour, and we have, by God, the Scroll of Fātimah, which has not one verse of the Book of God and is not the dictation of the Prophet [and the Jafr].<sup>114</sup>

That the imāms also possess the arms of the Prophet proves again that it is they and they alone who shall rise up against injustice when the proper time comes. As the fourth imām approached death he had his son Muḥammad (the fifth imām) place the arms and books in a casket. When he died, his brothers came

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after plotting against the caliph al-Mansūr (see Abū al-Faraj al-Işfahānī, Maqātil al-Ṭālibiyyīn, ed. Sayyid Aḥmad Şaqr [Cairo: Mu'assasat Maṭbū°āt Ismā°iliyān, 1368/1949], pp. 179-184 & 205-229].

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., p. 151, ḥadīth #2. The reference to the two skins allows the imām to launch into description of the two Jafrs (discussed below). Ibrāhīm ibn Muḥammad = son of Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan ibn Ḥasan? The statement is, in any case, typically Ḥasanid, and Majlisī places this ḥadīth in his Bihār in a chapter on the "uprisings" of the Banī Ḥasan and descendants of Zayd (Muḥammad Bāqir al-Majlisī, Bihār al-anwār, 110 vols. (Tehran: Maktabah Islāmīyah, 1385/1965), vol. 47, pp. 270-271.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., p. 153, ḥadīth #5.



to collect their share, but Muḥammad told them: "None of this is for you; if it were so, he would not have given it to me." In the box were both the arms of the Prophet and the books belonging to the imām.<sup>115</sup> During the imāmate of Ja°far al-Ṣādiq two men came to him asking insolent questions; told that they were Zaydīs who believed that the sword of the Prophet was with °Abd Allāh ibn al-Ḥasan, he remarked:

They lie - may God curse them! °Abd Allāh ibn al-Ḥasan never saw them; he never even caught a glimpse out of the corner of his eye, and neither did his father - except that he might have happened to see them with °Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn (the fourth imām).... It is I who possess the sword of the Prophet, and his standard and armour....<sup>116</sup>

The Banū Ḥasan, said Ja°far, know that the books and arms are with the true imāms and that the box or hide containing them shall only be opened with the coming of the Mahdī; they know it "as they know night is night and day is day, but they are motivated [to claim otherwise] by envy and thirst for power."<sup>117</sup>

Furāt's Tafsīr does not mention the books of the imāms. Nor is it concerned with the continuing °ilm, the '°ilm that comes by night and by day' treated in the next chapter (although it emphasized the miraculous constitution of the imāms). This is

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<sup>115</sup>Ibid., p. 180, ḥadīth #18.

<sup>116</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 337-338 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb mā °ind al-a'immah min silāh Rasūl Allāh... wa-matā°i-hi, ḥadīth #1}.

<sup>117</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 151, ḥadīth #1.

consistent with the Hasanid/Zaydī view.

The first book of the imāms I shall discuss here, the Jāmi°ah, is described as a scroll 'seventy cubits' in length, the cubit (i.e. forearm) being that of the Prophet.<sup>118</sup> It contains all the legal prescriptions ('jāmi°' means 'comprehensive'), everything people shall need until the Day of Judgement. One of the indications of °Alī's high status was his ability to give unerring judgement in legal affairs, both during the life of the Prophet and after his death. The Jāmi°ah stands as yet another confirmation of °Alī's knowledge of the divine law.

The name 'Kitāb °Alī' is given to another book or scroll also said to be seventy cubits long and containing all the legal injunctions; this document approximates, or is identical with, the Jāmi°ah. Some reports speak of the 'books of °Alī' in the plural as a collection of legal books,<sup>119</sup> which suggests that 'Book of °Alī' may be simply a general term for all the imāms' books, including the Jāmi°ah. The Book of °Alī or Jāmi°ah is

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<sup>118</sup>Ibid., p. 150, hadīth #3. Traditions discussing the Jāmi°ah are found in *ibid.*, pp. 142-168, and Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 244-250 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb fī-hi dhikr al-ṣaḥīfah wa-al-Jafr wa-al-Jāmi°ah...}, both *passim*.

<sup>119</sup>Eg: Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 143, hadīth #7: "We have in our possession a ṣaḥīfah of the books of °Alī, seventy cubits in length;" *ibid.*, p. 144, hadīth #12: report of a 'ṣaḥīfah containing nineteen ṣaḥīfahs' bestowed by the Prophet; *ibid.*, p. 145, hadīth #14: a follower reports that he saw the sixth imām bring out 'an ancient scroll of the scrolls of °Alī.' See also *ibid.*, pp. 162-168, *passim*.

sometimes called a 'ṣaḥīfah,' or less commonly, 'mushāf.' This confusion or profusion of terms is typical of ḥadīth discussion of the books of the imāms.

There is a 'Kitāb °Alī' in which is recorded the reigns of kings until the end of time,<sup>120</sup> similar to an aspect of the Mushāf Fāṭimah discussed below.<sup>121</sup> Ja°far al-Ṣādiq was able by looking into this book to confirm that the Ḥasanīds would never rule.<sup>122</sup>

The Jāmi°ah or Book of °Alī is made of hide, "like the thigh of a paralytic."<sup>123</sup> As in the case of the other books of the imāms the primitive material on which it is recorded lends an air of authenticity, recalling the inscription of the Qur'ān on rough skins and bones. The Jāmi°ah was dictated by the Prophet and written down by °Alī in his own hand. It cannot crumble or fade.<sup>124</sup> Although some persons have caught glimpses of it, it is

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<sup>120</sup>Ibid., pp. 168-170, passim.

<sup>121</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī gives a ḥadīth that refers to 'two books' in which the record of the kings is contained: the Kitāb °Alī and Mushāf Fāṭimah (vol. 1, pp. 349-350 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb dhikr al-Ṣaḥīfah wa-al-Jafr, ḥadīth #7}).

<sup>122</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 168-169, ḥadīth #1; ibid., p. 169, passim; and Kulaynī, al-Kāfī: the ḥadīth cited in previous note. All apropos of the claim of Muḥammad ibn °Abd Allāh.

<sup>123</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 153, ḥadīth #6; ibid., p. 165, ḥadīth #14: "like a folded (wrinkled?) thigh." Thick, leathery, and wrinkled?

<sup>124</sup>Ibid., p. 144, ḥadīth #9.

reserved only for the eyes of the imāms.<sup>125</sup> It contains all the legal injunctions needed by mankind for all time, even down to (the phrase is repeated whenever the document is mentioned) 'the fine for inflicting a scratch' ('arsh al-khadsh,' 'arsh' being the term for the penalty attached to very small injuries). The sixth imām explains the function of the Book of °Alī as follows:

God did not create a ḥalāl or a ḥarām except that it has a 'limit' (ḥadd), [as exactly defined] as the boundary of one's house. And the ḥalāl of Muḥammad is ḥalāl until the Day of Resurrection, and the ḥarām of Muḥammad is ḥarām until the Day of Resurrection. We are in possession of a ṣaḥīfah seventy cubits in length, and God has not made anything ḥalāl or ḥarām except that it is contained therein... including even the penalty for a scratch, or one lash of the whip, or one half.<sup>126</sup>

Jā°far states that there is a legal injunction for every thing, down to the most minute or obscure matter, and (in case of infringement of the law) a penalty to match. Through the Jāmi°ah the imāms possess knowledge of all these things, valid until the Day of Resurrection. This comprehensive knowledge precludes the need for any other kind of legal ruling from any other person, as the seventh imām explains:

Those who were before you have perished through use of analogy (qiyās) [in deriving legal rules]. God did not take away His prophet before he made His religion

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<sup>125</sup>Ibid., pp. 144-145, ḥadīth #13 & p. 145, ḥadīth #14. Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, p. 226: The sixth imām declares his son the rightful possessor of "the Book of °Alī, 'the hidden book' concerning which God has said: 'none shall touch it save the purified (Q. 56:79).'"

<sup>126</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 148, ḥadīth #7.

complete for him - until he made complete His halāl and His harām. What you need [in the way of the law] was provided during the lifetime of the Prophet, and you should seek it from him, and after his death from his Household. It is a muṣḥaf in the possession of his Household containing everything, even down to the penalty for a scratch on the hand. [Then he added] Abū Hanīfah (may God curse him!) is among those who say: '°Alī said,' and 'I say.'<sup>127</sup>

Another book inherited by the imāms is the Jafr. The Jafr was obtained by the Prophet for the special use of °Alī and his descendants; it is not, like the Kitāb °Alī, a kind of personal notebook. It is reported that when Muḥammad was informed by God that his death was imminent he asked Him to 'fulfill His promise.' God replied by commanding him to climb the Mountain of Uhūd along with °Alī and, facing away from the direction of prayer, make the mountain aware of his presence. He was then instructed to select a certain young calf or lamb (jafrāh, implying the derivation of 'jafr'<sup>128</sup>), with prominent horns and

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<sup>127</sup>Ibid., p. 147, hadīth #3. Abu Hanīfah and his school were noted for use of the qiyās, a kind of analogy. Here Abū Hanīfah is accused of quoting °Alī ("°Alī says") and then drawing his own conclusion in the parallel case ("I say"). See Chapter V, section i.

<sup>128</sup>This is the only tradition to offer this etymology. The hadīths give many details concerning the material of the Jafr, in this way emphasizing the existence of the actual document. There is general agreement that the skin of the Jafr was taken from a sheep; it is "the skin of a sheep or the skin of a [young] camel (ba°ir)" (ibid., p. 152, hadīth #3 & p. 153, hadīth #5; jafr, according to Ibn Manẓūr [Lisān al-°Arab, s.v. "j-f-r"] may also refer to a young camel). According to other reports, the jafr was taken from a goat or sheep (Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 154, hadīth #9) or "neither the skin of camels (jimāl) nor of a bull, nor of a cow, but rather the untanned skin (ihāb) of a sheep (ibid., p. 156, hadīth # 14)."

blood spouting from its veins, and have °Alī slaughter it and turn its skin inside out; the skin would be found to be already tanned. At this point, so the Prophet was told, the Spirit (Rūḥ) and Gabriel would come with heavenly pen and ink (its colour a luminous green), and as the Prophet dictated °Alī was to record the revelation. Both the skin and the ink are indestructible. But even though the scroll becomes more fresh and new every time it is unrolled, no one is allowed to view it except the imāms.<sup>129</sup> "My son," says the seventh imām, "looks along with me into the Jafr, and no one may look at it except a prophet or a vicegerent."<sup>130</sup>

That the Jafr was actually a skin gotten from some specially slaughtered animal suggests divinatory practice. This is in keeping with the oracular nature of the Jafr as described in the next paragraph.

The information inscribed by °Alī on the Jafr included description of "every age and what shall occur therein," "all that has been and shall be until the Day of Resurrection," "things the interpretation (ta'wīl) of which is known only to God and 'those firmly rooted in knowledge'" (i.e. the imām, as

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<sup>129</sup>Ibid., pp. 506-507, ḥadīth #6; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 57 (from the seventh imām 'Abū Ibrāhīm' [Mūsā al-Kāzīm]). I find no trace of this tradition concerning the origin of the Jafr in any of my other sources; Kulaynī has rejected it.

<sup>130</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 88 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb al-ishārah wa-al-naṣṣ °alā Abī Ḥasan al-Riḍā, ḥadīth #2}

per Qur'ān 3:7), and the identity of "those among his progeny who shall become the Friends (awliyā') of God continuously until the Day." The Jafr contains in addition news of "every enemy they (the imāms) shall have in every age," and "every event that shall overtake both °Alī and his descendants, the imāms." The Prophet also informed °Alī at this time of circumstances surrounding the coming of the Mahdī; the seventh imām comments that "all of the ḥadīths having to do with the battles at the end of time (malāḥim) have been extracted from this book."<sup>131</sup>

Thus the Jafr is distinguished by its reference to events, rather than legal norms. Through the Jafr the imāms gain knowledge of the future, in particular of their own destiny and how it is to be worked out in the coming of the Mahdī. The possession of this knowledge by the imāms is important because it justifies their political position - in short, their passivity. Since the imāms know the course of history and its summation, their position can only be correct, and that of the others (the Zaydīs, Ḥasanīds, and all those who are mistakenly 'in haste' to rise up) must be wrong.

In time there developed a separate, divinatory science of jafr, involving the combination and recombination of the letters of the alphabet. Several manuscripts devoted to this science have

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<sup>131</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 507, ḥadīth #6.

survived.<sup>132</sup> Some of these writings trace themselves to °Alī, while others name as their master the sixth imām, Ja°far al-Şādiq, no doubt because of his reputed expertise in the occult sciences. The ḥadīths, however, contain no indication that the Jafr was concerned with penetrating the meanings of words or letters, with alphabet-mysticism or with numerology; these things have been projected onto the legend of the Jafr at some later date and are not a result of the original Shī°ī understanding. Note that, according to clear Shī°ī doctrine, such a document could not have originated with the sixth imām. All the °ilm of the imāms is inherited in a line from °Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, who in turn took his wisdom from the Prophet; it cannot be admitted that the sixth imām owned wisdom or books of wisdom independently of his forbears.<sup>133</sup>

The °ilm of the Jafr dictated by the Prophet to °Alī is

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<sup>132</sup>Described in Toufic Fahd, La Divination arabe (Leiden: E.J. Brill), pp. 219-224.

<sup>133</sup>T. Fahd (E.I.<sup>2</sup>, s.v. "Djafr") quotes a 'Bātinī tradition' from the K. al-haft wa-al-azillah (ed. °Arif Tāmir & Abduh Khalīfah [Beirut: Dār Mashriq, 1960], p. 175) in which °Alī is told by the Prophet to set up his body after his death and continue to ask it questions and record the answers. He points to this as the "clearly defined... terminus a quo of the djafr." The tradition does not support this contention. It also survives in 'Twelver' Shī°ī tradition (Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 282-282) and there it is not linked in any way with the Jafr. The purpose of this tradition is not to explain the origin of one of the books of the imāms but rather to reinforce the dogma that °Alī received all the °ilm of the Prophet, without exception. Fahd appears to single out this tradition because, like the Jafr, it concerns knowledge of the future and events at the end of time. But other books of the imāms are also said to contain that knowledge.



described even more elaborately . According to one ḥadīth it contains (apparently serving as a container or wrapping instead of writing material<sup>134</sup>) the Psalms of David, Torah of Moses, Gospel of Jesus and Scroll (Muṣḥaf) of Abraham, as well as the ḥalāl and ḥarām and the Muṣḥaf of Fāṭimah. There is in this Jafr "that which causes people to have need of us" (i.e. the necessary knowledge of the law for which people must apply to the imāms) while "we have need of no one" (i.e. nothing is omitted from it, so that the imāms are never at a loss and never obliged to refer to any other person).<sup>135</sup> In several other ḥadīths also legal knowledge, or 'books,' or knowledge is general, are referred to as the Jafr - possibly because the Jafr is imagined as a container for all these things.

Tradition speaks of two Jafrs: the White and the Red.<sup>136</sup> They are, says the sixth imām, "two untanned skins with the wool

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<sup>134</sup>'Jafīr' is the name for a box of skin in which arrows are placed (Ibn Manzūr, Lisān, s.v. "j-f-r"). The word 'jafr' could thus be taken to mean 'container,' which might have caused the traditionists to think of it as a receptacle for books or weapons.

<sup>135</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 150-151, ḥadīth #1. This is the White Jafr: see infra. In the same vein the Jafr is also described as a "pouch (wi'ā') of animal skin containing the °ilm of the prophets and vicegerents, and the °ilm of the learned men of the past of the Tribe of Israel" (ibid., p. 152, ḥadīth #6; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 345 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb fī-hi dhikr al-Ṣaḥīfah..., ḥadīth #1}).

<sup>136</sup>Many traditions, however, make no such distinction, indicating that the division into 'White' and 'Red' is a later elaboration.

and the hair still attached, skinned (preserved?: madhūsayn<sup>137</sup>); our books are in one [the White Jafr] and the arms (silāḥ) in the other."<sup>138</sup> In another report Ja'far states: "°Alī behaved according to the contents of the White Jafr, that being restraint, while the Mahdī shall act according to the contents of the Red Jafr, and that is 'slaughter' [and here he gestured with his finger across his throat.]"<sup>139</sup> What is meant is that the White Jafr contains knowledge of the events through which the imāms and the community must suffer (and therefore justification for restraint) while the Red Jafr, which shall supersede the White, reverses this order by commanding slaughter by the Mahdī of the enemies of the imāms and Shī'ah. The Red Jafr shall be opened only by the Mahdī; it is red because it is 'opened for blood.'<sup>140</sup> The White Jafr may be white because of absence of blood - or perhaps because white, the colour of the shroud, is symbolic of martyrdom.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>137</sup>Editor of Majlisī, Biḥār (vol. 47, p. 271), glosses the word as 'filled.'

<sup>138</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 151, ḥadīth #2.

<sup>139</sup>Ibid., p. 154, ḥadīth #13. Cf. Nu'mānī, Ghaybah, p. 153: "The Qā'im shall come with killing; thus was he commanded in the book that was with him (from the fifth imām - but the Jafr is not mentioned by name)."

<sup>140</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 151, ḥadīth #1.

<sup>141</sup>The other colour important for the books of the imāms is green: the ink with which the Jafr is written is 'luminous green,' and the Tablet of Fāṭimah is green. Green, red, and white, along with black, have been the traditional colours of Shiism. Curiously, they are also the colours of the Arab nation.

It is related that Jābir ibn ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī, a prominent companion of the Prophet, had come to visit Fāṭimah in order to congratulate her on the birth of Ḥusayn. He saw in her hands "a green tablet, so green that I thought it to be made of emerald, with an inscription as brilliant and white as the sun." Jābir asked her about the tablet and she said:

It was presented by God to His Messenger. In it are written the names of my father, of ʿAlī, of my two sons, and all the vicegerents among my descendants. My father gave it to me in order to announce to me these glad tidings.

This was the "Lawḥ Fāṭimah" (Tablet of Fāṭimah), also called "Muṣḥaf Fāṭimah" (Scroll of Fāṭimah). Jābir was able to copy the Lawḥ, and his text has been transmitted by tradition. In twenty-five to thirty printed lines it presents a doxology and names the twelve imāms and characterizes their missions, concluding with a description of the signs of the return of the Mahdī. The frame-story has Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq take Jābir secretly aside and recite for him, word for word, the contents of his copy of the Lawḥ, proving that the imāms carry this inherited knowledge perfectly in memory.<sup>142</sup>

There is, however, a tension in the tradition concerning Fāṭimah's Tablet. It appears that ḥadīths denying that Fāṭimah

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<sup>142</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfi, vol. 2, pp. 470-474 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb mā jā'a fī al-ithnā ʿashar wa-al-naṣṣ ʿalay-him, ḥadīth #3}; Nuʿmānī, Ghaybah, pp. 42-44.

received revelation have been applied as a corrective against others that strongly imply just that. The tradition above which states that the Tablet was an inheritance from the Prophet does not appear in the earlier Baṣā'ir which is so much concerned with ilm and the documents supporting it. Ṣaffār instead offers another tradition which makes Fāṭimah herself rather than the Prophet the receptor of the text (Kulaynī also collects this tradition). When the Prophet died, says the sixth imām,

... Fāṭimah was overwhelmed by such grief as only God could know. He sent an angel to relieve her sorrow and to speak with her.<sup>143</sup> She told the Commander of the Believers about this and he said to her: 'When you feel the thing about to happen and you hear the voice, tell me.' This she did, and 'Alī set about writing down whatever he heard from her, until finally he recorded enough to fill a book ('muṣḥaf,' actually scroll).<sup>144</sup>

Fāṭimah's Tablet or as it is called here, 'muṣḥaf,' was "dictated to her by God, and revealed (awḥā) to her."<sup>145</sup> God 'sent it down' (anzala) to her.<sup>146</sup> Both terms are used to refer to the revelation of the Qur'ān and other books of the prophets.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>143</sup>The word used is 'yuhaddithu,' a verbal form related to 'muḥaddath' ('one spoken to'). The imāms because they are spoken to by the angels are called 'muḥaddath'; see the next chapter for the significance of this term.

<sup>144</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 157, ḥadīth #18; see also pp. 153-154, ḥadīth #6. Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 355-356 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb mawlid al-Zahrā', ḥadīth #1}.

<sup>145</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 152, ḥadīth #3.

<sup>146</sup>Ibid., p. 156, ḥadīth #14.

<sup>147</sup>Another ḥadīth, also from Ṣaffār, uses instead the term 'conveyed:' "huwā shay'un ulqiya 'alay-hā" - "it is a thing that was conveyed to her (Baṣā'ir, p. 159, ḥadīth #27)." This is one

Caution about attributing revelation to Fāṭimah, however, begins already with Ṣaffār. Ṣaffār's traditions repeat many times that 'the Muṣḥaf of Fāṭimah is not a qur'ān.'<sup>148</sup> It is rather "speech from the speech of God" (kalām min kalām Allāh).<sup>149</sup> It is "a muṣḥaf containing three times the like of this your Qur'ān, but not a word of the Qur'ān...."<sup>150</sup>

The contents of the Tablet of Fāṭimah were, according to Ṣaffār's sources, "news of her father and his station [in Paradise], and of what was to occur in the lives of her descendants after his death,"<sup>151</sup> this information being meant to comfort her, the chief mourner for her father, in her extreme sorrow over his death. In another report this insight is

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of the processes through which the imāms are continually informed by God; see the next chapter.

<sup>148</sup>Ibid., pp. 150-161 and 168-170, both *passim*. Ibid., p. 157, ḥadīth #17 reports that the sixth imām was asked: "Is that which Gabriel dictated to 'Alī a qur'ān?" - to which he replied in the negative. It is not clear whether this ḥadīth refers to the Lawḥ, or to a similar controversy surrounding the Book of 'Alī.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid., p. 156, ḥadīth # 14.

<sup>150</sup>Ibid., p. 152, ḥadīth #3; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 346 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb fī-hi dhikr al-Ṣaḥīfah..., ḥadīth #1}. This paradox may be interpreted in different ways - which is why, of course, the statement is presented as a paradox. "It contains three times the like of this your Qur'ān" implies either that the knowledge it contains is three times the knowledge of the Qur'ān or, more likely, that it is three times the length of the Qur'ān. "But not a word of your Qur'ān" may mean either that it does not contain revelation as the Qur'ān does, or that what it contains is additional to the Qur'ān.

<sup>151</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 154, ḥadīth #6.

broadened to a general knowledge of the events of the future; thus the Tablet is said to contain "[nothing of the ḥalāl and ḥarām but rather] the °ilm of what is to be."<sup>152</sup> In particular the Lawḥ Fāṭimah foretells the reigns of kings, which prevision allows the imāms to see the end of their political enemies and rule out the claims of their rivals. "I used to look into the Book (kitāb) of Fāṭimah," says Ja°far al-Şādiq, "and there is not a king that shall reign but that his name and the name of his father is recorded in it. But I found nothing there regarding the sons of Ḥasan."<sup>153</sup>

The possession by Fāṭimah of a document naming her issue as the imāms has the effect of guaranteeing the Fāṭimid line of descent against other °Alid claimants to the authority of the House of the Prophet. The Lawḥ is even referred to in one ḥadīth as Fāṭimah's 'waṣīyah'- her will to or appointment of her successors.<sup>154</sup> The Lawḥ also demonstrates, once again, the great esteem in which Fāṭimah is held by the Shī°ah. Reverence carries her almost beyond the bounds of her sex as she receives, or is made custodian of, a manifestation of the Word of God. In

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<sup>152</sup>Ibid., p. 157, ḥadīth #18. The ruling out of ḥalāl and ḥarām may also be meant to distinguish the Tablet from revelation.

<sup>153</sup>Ibid., p. 169, ḥadīth #3. Ja°far also reports that he found in the Muṣḥaf Fāṭimah "nothing about such-and-such a tribe ('Banī fulān,' a thinly-veiled reference to the the Umayyads) except 'something like the dust of a sandal' (?an insignificant and low mention) (ibid., p. 170, ḥadīth #7; see also p. 161, ḥadīth # 32).

<sup>154</sup>Ibid., p. 157, ḥadīth #16.

fact, the tradition even allows that she shared in some way in the °ilm with which the imāms were nourished before creation: "By God," said the fifth imām, "God weaned her from (faṭama-hā °an) menstruation and nourished her with (faṭama-hā bi) °ilm at [the time of] the primordial covenant (mīthāq)!"<sup>155</sup>

Similar to the Lawḥ or Muṣḥaf of Fāṭimah is a sealed book received by Muḥammad from God and delivered to °Alī. This book also reveals the succession and destiny of the imāms. It is identified with the waṣīyah, the written testament which appoints the successor of each imām. Ja°far al-Ṣādiq reported that: "The waṣīyah came down from the sky upon Muḥammad in the form of a book; no sealed book (kitāb makhtūm) was sent down except the waṣīyah." The book, according to tradition, was closed with many seals; as each imām opened each seal in turn he found his mission outlined for him there and passed the document on to the next imām.<sup>156</sup> It is through this book, according to some reports, that the imāms know the times of their deaths: this

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<sup>155</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 358 {Bāb Mawlid al-Zahrā', ḥadīth #6}. Menstruation is an impurity which would normally bar a female from continual contact with the Word of God. Some reports even appear to allow that Fāṭimah inherited °Alī's knowledge: "°Alī inherited the °ilm of the Messenger of God - and Fāṭimah inherited his legacy" (Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 294, ḥadīth #6; ibid., ḥadīth #7: "guarded his legacy." From the fifth and sixth imāms respectively).

<sup>156</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 28-29 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb anna al-a'immaḥ lam yaf°alū shay'an wa-lā yaf°alūna illā bi-°ahd min Allāh..., ḥadīth # 1} and see this chapter in general.

shall occur as soon as they complete their earthly tasks.<sup>157</sup>

Finally, the close relation between the imāms and the Shī'ī community - the paternity which is at the core of Shī'ī doctrine - manifests itself in the material form of yet another 'book.' In chapter two it was explained how the imāms acquired, in the world of shadows existing before this world, intimate knowledge of each member of their community. One report has it that, as the Prophet passed on his heavenly journey past the paradisial lote tree beyond which no mortal had gone, God presented him with two books: "the book of the companions of the right, which He

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<sup>157</sup>Ibid., pp. 34-35, ḥadīth #5. The sealed book is mentioned only in the Kāfī. Saffār, Baṣā'ir, (pp. 162-163, passim) tells of a book deposited by Muhammad with his wife Umm Salamah to be given to 'Alī only as he succeeded to the caliphate, and of another entrusted by Husayn as he prepared for his martyrdom to his daughter Fātimah to be transferred to his successor the fourth imām. This book is also referred to in some ḥadīths in Baṣā'ir as a 'waṣīyah' (e.g. p. 163, ḥadīth #3: 'waṣīyah zāhirah:' 'manifest testament'). It resembles the sealed testament described in al-Kāfī, except that it is also said to contain the legal injunctions: "what mankind shall need from the beginning of the world to its end" (p. 164, ḥadīth #6); in this respect the book is closer to the Kitāb 'Alī. The holding of the book by Fātimah is intended to explain its preservation in face of the slaughter of the adult male relatives of the imām Husayn. The case of Umm Salamah is more difficult, since it conflicts with the dogma of 'Alī's absolute knowledge and immediate succession. The logic of the ḥadīth suggests that 'Alī did not actually ascend to the imāmate until he succeeded to the caliphate! A somewhat similar situation obtained in the case of the eighth imām: his father was taken by the authorities to Baghdad and died, so that he could not give the money the next imām was to have charge of as part of the office to his son. Knowing his fate, he gave the money to his dear wife 'Umm Ahmad,' who was then able to hand it to the eighth imām as he perceived, with the insight of his kind, the exact moment of his father's death (Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 218-219 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb fī anna al-imām ya'lam anna al-amr qad ṣāra ilay-hi, ḥadīth #6}).



gave to him with His right hand, and the book of the companions of the left, which He gave to him with His left...." He opened the book he was given in his right hand and there he found "the names of the people of Paradise, and the names of their tribes and ancestors;" in the left-hand book was the register of the people of the Fire with the same particulars. Upon returning to earth, the Prophet gave the books to °Alī.<sup>158</sup> Here in Shī'ī Islam is the continuation of an idea which has played a role in many religions of the Near East, including Judaism and Christianity: that of a 'book of deeds' in which the destinies of individuals are recorded on a heavenly plane.

In earthly guise, the books are a scroll (ṣaḥīfah) in the possession of the Prophet and imāms. The ṣaḥīfah (sometimes called 'Nāmūs' - the 'Law' or 'Divine Decree',<sup>159</sup>) is 'large',<sup>160</sup> and may in fact consist of several scrolls;<sup>161</sup> it is even said that Ḥasan, on his way to Madīnah after having given up his rights to Mu°āwiyah, carried this 'dīwān' on a camel which he

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<sup>158</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 158; see also Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 190-191, ḥadīth #1 & p. 191, ḥadīth #6. According to one report (*ibid.*, p. 191, ḥadīth #3) this was the book given to Umm Salamah which she kept from the first three caliphs.

<sup>159</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 170, ḥadīth #1 & p. 173, ḥadūth #7.

<sup>160</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 170, ḥadīth #1.

<sup>161</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 171, ḥadīth #2; p. 173, ḥadīth #6.

never let out of his sight.<sup>162</sup> According to one report it is like 'the upper leg of a camel' and arranged alphabetically;<sup>163</sup> according to others it is contained in a kind of case (safaṭ).<sup>164</sup> Some of the faithful have actually seen the register and have been allowed to look into it to find their names;<sup>165</sup> such stories must have put fear of God and imām into the hearts of the Shī'ah who heard them! As in the case of the other books, descriptive details and sightings by the Shī'ah serve to verify the existence of the wondrous °ilm of the imāms.

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<sup>162</sup>Ibid., p. 172, ḥadīth #6. The implication is that, although Ḥasan may have appeared to give up his political rights, he still carried with him the °ilm which confirmed him as the true imām and which sorted out the good (the beleaguered Shī'ah) from the evil (Mu'āwiyah and his like).

<sup>163</sup>Ibid., p. 173, ḥadīth #10.

<sup>164</sup>Ibid., p. 172, ḥadīth #5 & p. 173, ḥadīth #7.

<sup>165</sup>Ibid., pp. 170-173, *passim*. These traditions also present a moral. The name of the one who was so anxious to find himself registered as one of the Shī'ah is found only after the name of a younger or less prominent person, who apparently did not expect the honour, is spied. Being a Shī'ī is a matter of predestination, and only the imāms know who the real Shī'ah are.

#### IV. THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE IMĀMS: THE ʿILM THAT COMES BY NIGHT AND BY DAY

The ʿilm inherited by the imāms includes all religious injunctions, all the events of the past and the future to the end of time, and the identity of the believers and unbelievers. It seems, however, that the Shīʿah or their imāms still felt that the powers of the imāms had been insufficiently explained. Certain questions occurred to them : How does the imām produce answers to problems of a religious nature arising from conjunctions of events and circumstances that have never before occurred? How does he become aware of emerging events and changing circumstances - of things as they happen or directly before they happen? Were all these details of daily life in the future also known by the Prophet? The imām, it was asserted, must in such cases obtain his knowledge and his answer directly from God, as the occasion demands. The idea of a ceaseless ʿilm communicated directly by God to the imāms finally became an important theme of Shīʿī thought.

##### i. 'The knowledge that comes by night and by day.'

It is reported that the sixth imām was approached by his Companion Abū Baṣīr, who wished to question him on the subject of the ʿilm of the imāms. He asked about the 'thousand gates' and, upon hearing that each of the thousand ʿAlī had received would

open another thousand, exclaimed: "This, by God, is °ilm!" Ja°far fell silent, fixing his eyes on the ground as he scratched with a stick.<sup>1</sup> Finally he replied: "It is °ilm, and yet it is not." Abū Bašīr's questions about the Jāmi°ah, Jafr, the Muṣḥaf of Fāṭimah, and the 'the °ilm of what has been and what is to be' brought the same hesitation and response from the imām, until he finally asked him: "What thing then (begging your forgiveness!) is °ilm? The imām replied: "It is that which comes by night and by day, one matter after another and one thing after another, until the Day of Judgement."<sup>2</sup> The °ilm that appears by night and by day is greater than the scriptures inherited from the ancient prophets, according to Ja°far al-Ṣādiq;<sup>3</sup> Muḥammad al-Bāqir asserted that even knowledge of the Qur'ān and the ḥalāl and ḥarām was little compared to it.<sup>4</sup> It is, according to the seventh imām Mūsā al-Kāzīm (and his father Ja°far al-Ṣādiq before him) the culminating third of three 'modes' (wujūh) of °ilm:

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<sup>1</sup>The imāms frequently make this gesture. It signifies displeasure or reluctance to answer; sometimes the answer which cannot be spoken is written on the ground. The Prophet is also pictured by the ḥadīth as scratching or writing on the ground in lieu of answer to a question.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 151-152, ḥadīth #6; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 344-346 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb fī-hi dhikr al-Ṣaḥīfah..., ḥadīth #1}. Another phrase used is: "the °ilm that appears by night and by day, day after day and hour after hour" (see Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 324-326, passim; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 327 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb anna al-a'imma warithū °ilm al-nabī, ḥadīth #4}).

<sup>3</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 138-139, ḥadīth #15; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 326-327 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb anna al-a'imma warithū °ilm al-nabī..., ḥadīth #4}.

<sup>4</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, pp. 96-97.

"knowledge of the past (al-mādī), which is 'explained' (mufassar, i.e. inherited from and elucidated by the Prophet); knowledge of what is to be (al-ghābir), which has been written down (mazbūr, i.e. recorded in the inherited texts); and 'that which is in the process of occurring' (al-ḥādith), which penetrates our hearts and hearing." "That," said the imām, "is the best of our °ilm."<sup>5</sup>

This knowledge consists, says the fourth imām °Ali ibn al-Ḥusayn, of "an excess (ziyādah) [additional to that which is passed as inheritance from imām to imām] appearing in every year and every month - by God, in every hour!"<sup>6</sup> A follower of the eighth imām al-Riḍā asked permission to put a question he had previously submitted to his father. Riḍā allowed the question and the man said: "Do you have the °ilm of the Prophet, and His books, and the °ilm of the vicegerents and their books?" The imām answered (divining, though the man had not yet pronounced it, the crucial part of the question for which he had sought

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<sup>5</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 393 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb jihāt °ulūm al-a'immah, ḥadīth #1}. See also the rest of the chapter, pp. 393-394 (the meaning of ghābir as 'future' is explained in ḥadīth #3) & Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 318-319. The perennial wisdom is represented in one tradition as an elaboration on the Qur'ān rather than fresh knowledge; this brings it into line with the dogma that the Qur'ān contains knowledge of every thing: "The Qur'ān has a ta'wīl, part of which has come [happened], and part of which has not come; if the ta'wīl falls in the time of one of the imāms, the imām knows it at that time (Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 195, ḥadīth #5; see also p. 195, ḥadīth #6 & p. 196, ḥadīth #8)."

<sup>6</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 315, ḥadīth #3.

permission): "Yes, and more even than this - ask whatever you will!"<sup>7</sup> The excess is not of halāl and ḥarām, for "God sent them down to His Prophet in their entirety" and they are not subject to increase. What is increased is rather "things other than the halāl and the ḥarām."<sup>8</sup> Other sources of knowledge to which the imām has access would have been enough only "if there was not to be other than what has been," but since there is "what God causes to happen by night and by day," progressive knowledge is needed.<sup>9</sup> In order to guarantee this ʿilm every angel God sends to the earth with some matter is sent first to the imām so that he may know it;<sup>10</sup> "every night and day," says Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, "the news (akhbār) of the earth and what is happening in it is with us."<sup>11</sup>

The 'ʿilm that comes by night and by day' is necessary because, as Jaʿfar says: "If knowledge were not increased for us,

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 511, ḥadīth #19; Ashʿarī, Baṣā'ir, p. 62.

<sup>8</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 393, ḥadīth #5. From the sixth imām. This statement sometimes added to traditions having to do with the perpetual ʿilm is designed to protect the finality of the Qur'ānic revelation. It is, however, far from a mastering idea as the imāms do often answer questions of the law with the aid of divine inspiration.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 140, ḥadīth #5.

<sup>10</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 242 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb anna al-a'immaḥ tadkhul al-malā'ikah buyūta-hum..., ḥadīth #4}.

<sup>11</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 94, ḥadīth #19. The example of the 'news of the earth' given here is the death of kings, which has particular relevance to the Shī'ah in their oppression. Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq was even able to tell when the eye of the Umayyad Hishām ibn Malik popped in the grave! (ibid., p. 397, ḥadīth #5).

it would be depleted."<sup>12</sup> That is if the imāms were not apprised of every new circumstance and every wisdom relating to it, they would be at a loss when their followers came to question them.<sup>13</sup> And this, as we have seen, is not possible, for God has made obedience to the imām obligatory and He is too Noble to have obliged mankind to follow one who might display ignorance in some matter. Tradition has it that one of the Shī'ah came to Ja'far al-Ṣādiq and asked him a question. "I know nothing about it," the imām told him. The man, exasperated, cried out: "God preserve us! This is the imām whom we are obligated to obey, and I ask him a question and he claims that he has nothing to tell me!" Ja'far put his ear to the wall and listened intently as if something was being said to him. Finally he asked: "Where is the man who asked me such-and-such a question?" The petitioner who, having left in disgust, was just then stepping through the door, identified himself and the imām gave him the answer he sought. "He then turned to me," recounts the guarantor of the ḥadīth, "and said: 'Were we not increased [in knowledge], what we have would be depleted.'"<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>This phrase is repeated often. See for instance Uṣūl, p. 92; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 374-375 {Bāb law anna al-a'immaḥ yazdādūn la-nafida mā 'inda-hum}, passim.

<sup>13</sup>See Uṣūl, pp. 74-75.

<sup>14</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 396, ḥadīth #8. Note however a very different report (also from the sixth imām) from Himyarī's Qurb al-isnād: One of the Shī'ah came to Ja'far al-Ṣādiq and asked a question about the blood price. The imām answered him by citing the practice of the Prophet. The man remarked: "What do you think the answer would have been if the Prophet had not set a precedent [lit. 'had not done this']?" Ja'far replied: "I have

The gift of perennial wisdom to the imāms does not mean that they become more learned than the Prophet who is not on earth to receive it or more learned than the deceased imāms. "Nothing," said the sixth imām, "comes from God until after it begins with the Prophet, and is then passed on to °Ali, and then to one [imām] after the other, so that the last of us shall not be more learned than the first."<sup>15</sup> It is true that the imāms have knowledge additional to that of the Prophet, just as David inherited from the previous prophets and God gave him increase, and Solomon inherited from David and was given increase, and the Prophet himself inherited the °ilm of all these and was given further increase. The imāms were increased in knowledge in the same way as these, excepting that (says the sixth imām) "we are not increased in any thing except that which Muḥammad [already] knows."<sup>16</sup> This is so because knowledge comes first to the Prophet and previous imāms, as Ja°far al-Ṣādiq explains:

Whenever a command (amr) comes from God, the angel brings it to the Prophet and says: 'Your Lord gives you a command relating to such-and-such,' and the angel says: 'Go with this to °Alī.' Then the Prophet goes to

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told you what the Prophet did; as for what he did not do, I have no knowledge of that (p. 63)."

<sup>15</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 392, ḥadīth #2; Kulaynī, al-Kāfi, vol. 1, p. 375 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb law lā anna al-a'immaḥ yazdādūn, la-naḥida mā °inda-hum, ḥadīth #4}. Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, p. 54: "Our creation is one, and our °ilm is one, and our excellence is one, and we are all one with God." From the sixth imām.

<sup>16</sup>Uṣūl, p. 75.



°Alī and says, 'Take this to Ḥasan,'... and so on one after another until it comes to us.... It is impossible that the imām should know something the Messenger of God and the imām before him do not!<sup>17</sup>

There is, on the other hand, a minority position in the tradition which holds that the imāms do enjoy some kind of advantage over the Prophet and the imāms before them - although it is not clear what that advantage or increase might be. This is perhaps the remnant of an earlier tradition.<sup>18</sup>

The imāms receive the knowledge that comes by night and by day because they are 'muḥaddath,' that is 'addressed [by the angels].' In connexion with this the ḥadīth reads Qur'ān 21:51: "We have not sent before you any messenger [rasūl] or prophet [nabī] except that..." as "We have not sent before you any

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<sup>17</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 393, ḥadīth #5; see also *ibid.*, p. 428 and Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 374-375 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb law lā anna al-a'imma yazdādūn...}, *passim*. The transfer of 'additional' knowledge down the line of the Prophet and imāms may explain a curious type of narrative which has the imāms visited by their deceased fathers; see Himyarī, Qurb, pp. 202-203; Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 274-275, ḥadīth #3 & p. 280, ḥadīth #18; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 111.

<sup>18</sup>The sixth imām replied to the question: "Are some of the imāms more learned than others?": "Yes, and/but their °ilm with regard to ḥalāl and ḥarām and the tafsīr of the Qur'ān is one (°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 15, ḥadīth #4; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, pp. 5-6)." Saffār's Baṣā'ir (but not Kulaynī's Kāfī) also contains the following tradition from Ja°far al-Ṣādiq: "There is no imām that dies except that the one who comes after him is given the same as the first, and an increase (ziyādah) of five things (p. 423, ḥadīths # 1-3; we are not told what the 'five things' are)." Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir: The fifth imām is asked, "Do you have the °ilm of the Messenger, his books, and the °ilm of the vicegerents (awṣiyā') and their books?" The imām replies: Yes, and we have more than this, so ask whatever comes to mind (p. 62)."

messenger, prophet, or muḥaddath..." - an addition to the text resulting in three, instead of two, categories of persons favoured by God.<sup>19</sup> The fifth imām was heard to amend the recitation of one of his companions thus, adding that it was so in 'the Book of °Alī;'<sup>20</sup> the fourth imām declared that "the °ilm of °Alī is all of it in one verse of the Qur'ān, but we have concealed it [concealed the additional word 'muḥaddath' / kept secret the ta'wīl of this word?]." <sup>21</sup>

The tradition is careful to differentiate the imām as muḥaddath ('addressed') from the prophet as the actual receptor of revelation. 'Muḥaddath' is in fact explained in this context; the enthusiasm of some of the devoted Shī'ah, it seems, had caused them to confound the two. The imāms are represented in the reports as denying the error of their followers who assert that the imām, because he is muḥaddath, is also a prophet;<sup>22</sup> the fourth imām points particularly to the heresiarch Abū al-Khaṭṭāb, declaring: "Abū al-Khaṭṭāb perished because he did not understand the true meaning (ta'wīl) of 'muḥaddath' and 'nabī' (prophet)." <sup>23</sup>

<sup>19</sup>Eg. *ibid.*, p. 311, ḥadīth #8. This is said to be the reading of Qitādah.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 324, ḥadīth #14.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 323, ḥadīth #11.

<sup>22</sup>Eg: Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 9-12 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb fī anna al-a'immah bi-man yushbihūn mimman maḍā...}.

<sup>23</sup>Ṣaffār, Basā'ir, p. 320, ḥadīth #2; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 14-15 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb anna al-a'immah muḥaddathūn mufahhamūn, ḥadīth #2}. The Zaydis, according to Shī'ī tradition,

We observe the imāms lowering their voices or drawing their interlocutors aside before speaking on this hazardous subject; one of the Shī'ah when told by al-Bāqir that the imām was addressed by the angels found it so 'amazing' that he rushed to tell his friends who had not yet heard the news!<sup>24</sup>

The 'addressed' imām is distinguished from the messenger and the prophet by the way in which he receives intelligence.<sup>25</sup> The messenger ('rasūl,' that is a prophet who has the mission of bringing a revelation to humankind) is one to whom the angels come and speak 'as one of you would speak to a companion,' who is brought news or command and prohibition (amr wa-nahī) from God by the angels<sup>26</sup> and actually sees them with his own eyes. The prophet ('nabī,' according to Islamic tradition one who is brought news from God but does not have scriptures) receives revelation (waḥī) and sees the angels in his sleep, 'as if he were actually seeing them.' The nabī's sight of the angels is

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denied that the imāms were muḥaddath, and they are reproached for this. See: Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 320, ḥadīths #4 & 5; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 13 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb anna al-a'immaḥ muḥaddathūn..., ḥadīth #1}, & ibid., p. 478 {Bāb mā jā'a fī al-ithnā 'ashar wa-al-naṣṣ 'alay-him, ḥadīth #7}; Nu'mānī, Ghaybah, p. 44.

<sup>24</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 321, ḥadīth #3; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 15 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb anna al-a'immaḥ muḥaddathūn..., ḥadīth #5}.

<sup>25</sup>On the three modes of revelation see Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 316-318, 319-324, and 368-374: passim, along with other references given below.

<sup>26</sup>Ash'arī, Bāṣā'ir, p. 114.

compared to 'the vision (ru'yā) of Abraham' or to the light somnolence which would overtake Muḥammad when Gabriel came to him in his sleep;<sup>27</sup> "the tidings (naba') descends upon his heart and he is like one who has lost consciousness...."<sup>28</sup> Muḥammad was first a nabī; but after the angel Gabriel came to him from God with the first revelation he became a rasūl (messenger) and his revelatory experience changed accordingly;<sup>29</sup> in fact he was a rasūl and a nabī together, as these two things may sometimes be combined in one person.<sup>30</sup> According to one report the nabī may either hear the speech of the angel, or see him; but the two channels may not be opened at the same time.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 371, ḥadīth #10 & p. 373, ḥadīth #19.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 371, ḥadīth #12.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 370, ḥadīth #9.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 372, ḥadīth #13 & p. 371, ḥadīth #11.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 369, ḥadīth #4. A different kind of prophethood is proposed by a few reports preserved in Ṣaffār's Baṣā'ir. According to the fifth imām, there are five kinds of 'nabī' (only four are given in the report): one who hears a sound like that of a chain; one who, like Joseph and Abraham, is given tidings in his sleep; one who 'witnesses' (sees the angel while he is awake); and one whose heart is penetrated and ear is pierced (pp. 369-370, ḥadīth #6). In another scheme reported from the fifth and sixth imāms, there are four ranks of nabī and rasūl: the nabī who is given tidings only for himself; the nabī who sees (the angel) in his dreams and hears the voice, but is not sent to any one (and who also has an imām - that is a leader - set over him as was Abraham set over Lūt [Lot]); a nabī who sees in his dreams and hears the voice and (also?) witnesses the angel (unclear) and who is sent to a people; and a nabī who fulfills all the requirements of the third class but is also an imām or leader, as were the ulū al-ʿazm (pp. 373-374, ḥadīth #20). These classifications are not found in the other books of tradition, and I have been able to discover the reasons for the categories.

The muḥaddath, on the other hand, is one who hears the speech of the angels as they bring news from God, but does not see them, either actually or figuratively. Instead "his ear is pierced and his heart is bored into"; this is the common phrase.<sup>32</sup> This is how the imām learns "things about which he is asked, but knows nothing."<sup>33</sup> One of the Shī'ah asked Ja'far al-Ṣādiq: "Sometimes we ask you a question and you answer quickly, while other times you answer us only after hesitation." "Yes," the imām said, "our ears and hearts are pierced and penetrated; if this takes place we speak, but while it does not, we refrain from speaking!"<sup>34</sup> There is a great interest in the experience of

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<sup>32</sup>The piercing of the ear and boring of the heart are represented in some reports as separate processes, which may, however, be combined; see for instance Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 316, ḥadīth #4. That the imām as muḥaddath is not given sight of the angel creates a problem: how does he know that the voice or sound he hears is actually from Gabriel, and not from some other kind of (evil) spirit? The answer is that he knows because "knowledge of that [the identity of the one speaking with him] descends on him until he is certain of it (ibid., p. 381, ḥadīth #11);" or more precisely, because "he is given the sakīnah and 'calm dignity' (waqār) until he knows [with certainty] that it is the angel (ibid., p. 323, ḥadīth #9; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 14 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb anna al-a'immaḥ muḥaddathūn..., ḥadīth #4})." Thus God causes the imām to enter a psychological state in which he can accept what he hears with untroubled mind. The sakīnah is described in the tradition as a 'spirit' (rūḥ) with human face or form. It descended upon Abraham as he set to building the Ka'bah and was with the other prophets; it was also in the Ark of the Children of Israel (see Himyarī, Qurb, p. 219 & 'Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, pp. 84-85, ḥadīth #39). The Islamic sakīnah is the counterpart of the Judaic Shekhinah, which also comes to rest, as an aspect of divine wisdom and power, on the prophets and other persons favoured by God.

<sup>33</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 316, ḥadīth #2.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 316, ḥadīth #3.

the muḥaddath as the angels communicate with him; it is said that he hears a ringing in his ears like that of a basin (a metal bowl when it is struck?), or that his heart is penetrated and he hears something falling like the sound of a chain in a basin.<sup>35</sup> This is meant to recall the auditory experience of the Prophet as he received the early revelations.<sup>36</sup>

The category of muḥaddath is not limited to the imāms. Other persons who were, according to Shī'ī tradition, 'addressed' include Dhū al-Qarnayn, Khidr, and 'the companion (ṣāhib) of Solomon.'<sup>37</sup> There are also women who are muḥaddathah (f. muḥaddath): the mother of Moses who was told by God to place her infant in the stream (the perpetual oilm of the imāms is described as 'revelation (waḥī) like that of the mother of Moses'<sup>38</sup>), and Sarah who was told she would be with child and was

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 324, ḥadīth #13 & pp. 368-374, passim.

<sup>36</sup>Bukhārī {First Book, Bāb kayf kana bad' al-waḥī, ḥadīth #2} reports that the Prophet said: "Sometimes it [the revelation] comes to me like the clanging of a bell; this is the thing that is most difficult for me. Then it loses its grip on me and I find that I remember [what was communicated to me]. And sometimes the angel appears before me in the form of a man, and he speaks to me and I understand what he says." Shī'ī tradition has the imāms share in the auditory sensation of prophethood, but is careful to distinguish imām from prophet by denying the imām the vision of the angel.

<sup>37</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 321-324; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 9-12 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb fī anna al-a'immaḥ bi-man yushbihūn mimman maḍā...}, both passim.

<sup>38</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 317, ḥadīth #10. The use of the word 'waḥī' is Qur'ānic (28:7): "And we inspired the mother of Moses...."

given glad tidings of Isaac and Jacob.<sup>39</sup> In the Prophet's time Fāṭimah<sup>40</sup> and Abū Dharr, the close Companion of the Prophet venerated by the Shī'ah,<sup>41</sup> were muḥaddath according to Shī'ī tradition. It seems, however, that after the days of the Prophet or °Alī the charisma of the imāms ceased to spill over to those who associated with them; no longer do we hear anyone other than the imāms described as 'addressed.'<sup>42</sup>

As one who was muḥaddath °Alī used to learn from the angels "the identity of his [future] murderer, and great affairs (al-umūr al-°iẓām) of which he used to speak to the people."<sup>43</sup> On the Day of Qurayẓah and the Day of Naḍīr (when the Medinese Jewish tribes of these names were placed under siege and banished) the angels Gabriel and Michael stood on his right and

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<sup>39</sup>K. Sulaym, p. 201.

<sup>40</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 372, ḥadīth #16.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 322, ḥadīth #4. Abū Dharr once saw the angel in disguise, but did not recognize him. Still Gabriel told the Prophet: "If he had greeted me, I would have returned his greeting. (Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, K. al-du°ā, Bāb da°awāt mujāzāt li-jāmi° al-ḥawā'ij..., ḥadīth #25)).

<sup>42</sup>In Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 317-318, ḥadīths #12 & 13 Ja°far al-Ṣādiq seems to suggest that he is the only one of the imāms (or of the imāms after °Alī?) who has been muḥaddath. If this is the correct reading of the ḥadīth it is the trace of a view which is not promoted by the rest of the tradition. On the other hand, the existence of a number of reports insisting that one or another individual imām is muḥaddath also implies that the imāms may not have been all automatically regarded as addressed by the angels.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., pp. 319-320, ḥadīth #3; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 13 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb anna a'immaḥ muḥaddathūn, ḥadīth #2}.

left and 'addressed' him (apparently to give him future or hidden news which would help him in battle).<sup>44</sup> Most extraordinarily, it is reported that Zurārah was told by the fifth imām that on one occasion the Prophet nodded off while he was dictating the revelation to °Alī. He came to and, seeing what °Alī had written, pointed and asked: "Who dictated this to you?" "You did," said °Alī. "No," said the Prophet, "rather it was Gabriel himself!"<sup>45</sup>

Finally, although tradition establishes that the muhaddath imāms cannot see the angels who address them with news from God, this cannot restrain the piety of the ḥadīth which pictures the imāms as the intimates of the angels in every way. They have recognized Gabriel and the Angel of Death disguised as men.<sup>46</sup> Ḥasan and Ḥusayn when they were children played with Gabriel and actually sat on his lap; the two saw him "in the same form as the Prophet used to."<sup>47</sup> Gabriel brought °Alī a bucket of water and

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 321, ḥadīth #2 & pp. 322-323, ḥadīth #7; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 113. The sixth imām revealed this information only after persistent questioning on the part of Abū Baṣīr. Most reports do not have the angels 'address' °Alī during his various battles but state instead that God at these times 'whispered' (nājā) to him. Those present were surprised to hear from the Prophet that it was not he but God Himself who had spoken to °Alī (with, according to one report, a 'screeching' sound); Abū Bakr and °Umar were dismayed when they learned that this privilege had been extended to °Alī but not to them (Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 291, ḥadīth #6 & pp. 410-412, *passim*).

<sup>45</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 322, ḥadīth #5.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 233, ḥadīth #1.

<sup>47</sup>Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, pp. 68-69.



cloth to clean himself after sexual intercourse with Fāṭimah, causing the bucket to fly up to heaven after he was finished.<sup>48</sup> The imāms are the 'object of frequent visits' (mukhtalaf, thus parallel to muḥaddath) by the angels; in fact the angels enter their residences, seating themselves and crowding the household members; they pray with them, are 'kinder to the children than ourselves,' follow them in their travels, attend their mealtimes, bring them herbs in each season, and prevent every kind of creeping thing from approaching them. The feathers of the angels' wings are scattered in their houses, and they sometimes pick them up and hang them around the necks of their children.<sup>49</sup>

ii. 'A spirit greater than Michael and Gabriel.'

Shī'ī tradition also proposes aid to the imāms by the 'Holy Spirit' (al-rūḥ al-quḍus). The Spirit performs essentially the same function as the angels, apprising the imāms of developing circumstances and supplying them with answers to questions not found in the inherited knowledge. Some of the terminology is also the same: for instance, the imāms when addressed by the Spirit

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., pp. 114-115 (here °Alī does not actually see Gabriel, but only hears his voice telling him to take the bucket and wash).

<sup>49</sup>Saffār, Basā'ir, pp. 90-95; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 320-321 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb anna al-a'immaḥ ma'dan al-°ilm wa-shajarat al-nubūwah wa-mukhtalaf al-malā'ikah}; *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 240-242 {Bāb anna al-a'immaḥ tadkhul al-malā'ikah buyūta-hum...}, all *passim*.

are called 'muḥaddath,'<sup>50</sup> and ilhām and talqīn are mentioned as modes of communication, just as they are in the case of the angels. Despite this, there is no attempt in the ḥadīth to reconcile or coordinate the two theories. They simply coexist side by side in the tradition and appear to have evolved separately.

The principle of the rūḥ al-qudus is an elaboration of the doctrine of the 'five spirits' discussed in Chapter III, according to which the faculty of prophetic ʿilm is located in the highest spirit, the Holy Spirit. The idea of the approach of the Spirit is also certainly suggested by mention in the Qur'ān of 'rūḥ' and 'rūḥ al-qudus;' these references are connected by the Shī'ī exegetes to the wisdom of the imāms. Christian and Jewish influences should not be overlooked, as both these religions conceive of a 'Holy Spirit' as an aspect of the Divinity which may descend upon certain favoured persons.

God, according to Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, "created the rūḥ al-qudus, and did not create anything closer to Himself than that, and there is nothing in His creation more noble (akram) than it; if He wills a thing He conveys (alqā) it to it...."<sup>51</sup> In

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<sup>50</sup>Eg: Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 453, ḥadīth #9; Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 1.

<sup>51</sup>ʿAyyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 270.

another report the sixth imām describes the rūḥ more exactly, being careful (perhaps mindful of Trinitarian controversy) to separate it from God Himself:

God, Exalted and Blessed be He, is One and Solid (samad), sāmad indicating a thing which has no cavity (ḥawf), whereas the rūḥ is [merely] a part of His creation, possessing sight, power, and 'strength to lend to others' (ta'yīd). God places it in the hearts of the Messengers and the Believers.<sup>52</sup>

Shī'ī tradition is particularly anxious to establish that the Holy Spirit is something different from Gabriel. "Gabriel," explained 'Alī to a questioner who had confused the two, "is one of the angels, and the Spirit is other than Gabriel." "What you say," said the man, "is astounding, for no one has ever claimed that the rūḥ is anything but Gabriel!" "You are mistaken." replied the imām. "You repeat the words of those who are lost in error." He then cited as proof the Qur'ānic verse (97:4): "The angels and the Spirit descend...."<sup>53</sup> (The verse demonstrates that Gabriel and the Spirit cannot be the same thing because they are linked with the conjunction 'and'). According to one view the Spirit is an angel, although still one "greater than either

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<sup>52</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 462-463, ḥadīth #11. In one report the rūḥ is assigned to the 'malakūt,' the heavenly realm or realm of angels (ibid., p. 462, ḥadīth #9; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 18 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb al-rūḥ allatī yusaddidu Allāh bi-hā al-a'imma, ḥadīth #3}).

<sup>53</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 464, ḥadīth #3; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 19-20 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb al-rūḥ allatī yusaddidu Allāh bi-hā al-a'imma, ḥadīth # 6}. See also Barqī, Mahāsin, pp. 314-315, ḥadīth #32.

Michael or Gabriel."<sup>54</sup> Most of the reports, however, do not consider that it is an angel, only declaring that it is 'a creation of God greater than Gabriel and Michael' (this being the common phrase).

The purpose in distinguishing Gabriel from the spirit is to provide the imāms with a bringer of news that is with them always, but at the same time separate from the angel which brings revelation to the prophets: "Gabriel is the one who came down [with revelation] to the prophets, while the rūh is with them and with the vicegerents, never departing from them, strengthening them and guiding them on behalf of God...."<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup>Qummi, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 279 (apropos of Qur'ān 17:85 "they shall ask you concerning the Spirit"), p. 358 (apropos of Qur'ān 58:23 "He has fortified them with a spirit from Him") & p. 402 (apropos of Qur'ān 78:38 "on the Day when the angels and the Spirit stand arrayed").

<sup>55</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 463, ḥadīth #1. 'Strengthening' = sadd (V); this is the word most commonly used to refer to the action or effect of the rūh. The Qur'ān also speaks of the 'strengthening' (a-y-d) of the spirit (Q. 5:110, 2:87, 58:23)

Some reports insist that the Spirit "has not been with anyone in the past except Muhammad," thus identifying it exclusively with the complete and final prophetic mission of Muḥammad (and likely also by implication the imāms after him) (°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 317; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 3; Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 460-461, ḥadīth #1 & p. 462, passim; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 19 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb al-rūh allatī yusaddidu Allāh bi-hā al-a'immah, ḥadīth #4}). Against this, however, is the doctrine of the five spirits which places the power of prophethood in the rūh al-gudus, as well as other ḥadīths which mention it as dwelling in 'prophets' and 'vicegerents' in general (eg: Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 178; Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 445-450, passim; Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, p. 9: "He sent to them... messengers... fortified with the Holy Spirit;" ibid., p. 24: "God fortified Noah with the Spirit from him). In the Qur'ān Jesus is 'fortified with the Holy Spirit:' Q. 2:87 & 253. The idea that the Spirit was only with Muḥammad and not with the

Still, other traditions glorifying the Spirit tend to blur this useful and politic distinction. It is said that Muḥammad 'bore' his mission of prophethood with the rūḥ al-gudus.<sup>56</sup> The rūḥ al-gudus was originally with him, and when he died it was transferred to the imāms, as God told Muḥammad: "Your spirit runs in them, and their spirit runs in you."<sup>57</sup> The similarity of the awareness conferred on the imām by the Spirit to the revelation conferred on the Prophet presented a weak point to the opponents of the Shī'ah which they were obliged to defend, as we shall see below.

The knowledge imparted by the Holy Spirit is the true °ilm (as is also asserted in the case of the 'knowledge that comes by night and day'). Other learning cannot be called °ilm in comparison to this. Abū Ḥamzah al-Thumālī, a prominent ancient prophets is difficult to reconcile with Shī'ī doctrine.

<sup>56</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 454, ḥadīth #13; Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 2. See also Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 17 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb fi-hi dhikr arwāḥ allatī fī al-a'immah, ḥadīth #3}.

<sup>57</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 54, ḥadīth #3. See also *ibid.*, p. 456, ḥadīth #8 & p. 457, ḥadīths #11-13; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 18 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb al-rūḥ allatī yusaddidu Allāh bi-hā al-a'immah, ḥadīth #2}. Ash'arī (Maqālāt, p. 119) describes a sect of the extremists (he counts them as the eleventh) who assert that the Holy Spirit is God, that it was in Muḥammad, and that it was passed to °Alī and the imāms: it is a god that passes from one to the other by the process of metempsychosis. If we strike the belief that the Spirit is God, this is not far from the suggestions of the ḥadīth. Cf. also *ibid.*, p. 67, concerning the similar belief of another groups of extremists, the Bayāniyah.

Companion of Ja°far al-Şādiq, asked him:

What is '°ilm? Is it the °ilm which the °ālim [the 'learned one,' here referring to the imāms] acquires from the mouths of men [that is the ḥadīth, the oral tradition], or is it in a book [the written tradition] you have with you, which you consult and learn from?

Ja°far replied:

The matter is greater and more crucial (awjab) than that.... Until God sent the Spirit mentioned in the Qur'ān (42:52 'And thus have We inspired in you a Spirit by Our command') the Prophet was in a state in which he knew neither the Book, nor Faith (īmān) (42:52, cont.: 'You did not know what the Book was, or Faith.') Then when God pressed it upon him he knew through it the °ilm and the understanding (fahm). This is the Spirit that God gives to whom He wills, and by giving it He teaches the °ilm and understanding.<sup>58</sup>

The matter is indeed, as Ja°far says, 'great,' for what he asserts is that the actual faculty or spirit through which prophethood was conferred on Muḥammad is also with the imāms, providing them with continuous intelligence from God. Here is a difference between 'the knowledge that comes by night and by day' granted the muḥaddath imām and the communication of the Holy Spirit: the former has to do only with a gate between the angels and the imāms which may also be opened to other favoured persons, while the rūḥ resembles a faculty owned by both prophet and imām, raising the status of the imāms closer to that of the prophets.

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<sup>58</sup>Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 3; Şaffār, Baṣā'ir pp. 458-460, passim; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 19 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb al-rūḥ allatī yusaddidu Allāh bi-hā al-a'immah, ḥadīth #5}.

The rūḥ al-qudus confers on the Prophet and the imāms awareness of everything: "Through the Holy Spirit we know everything, from what is beneath the Throne to what is under the earth."<sup>59</sup> Some reports take this as the occasion for a miracle story. "Through the aid of the rūḥ al-qudus," says the sixth imām, "the Prophet used to know what was in the East and the West, on land and sea." A follower asked him: "Is the imām able to grasp with his hand that which is in Baghdād [Ja°far residing in Madīnah, and the centre of °Abbasid power being in Iraq]?" "Yes," said the imām, "and all that is beneath the Throne."<sup>60</sup> Even though we are told that the Spirit is a thing that is transferred to the imām only after the death of the Prophet or the previous imām,<sup>61</sup> °Alī was according to some accounts imbued with the Holy Spirit even before he succeeded Muḥammad. "People assert," said a man to Ja°far al-Ṣādiq,

...that the Prophet sent °Alī to the Yaman to judge between the people there and that he declared afterward: 'No problem arose but that I settled it according to the judgement of God and His Messenger.' How could this have been possible when all of the Qur'ān had not yet been sent down and the Prophet was not with him?

The imām replied: "The rūḥ al-qudus used to convey it to him."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 447, ḥadīth #4; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 2.

<sup>60</sup>Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 2; Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 454, ḥadīth #13.

<sup>61</sup>See for instance Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 454, ḥadīth #13, and *ibid.*, pp. 455-457, *passim* (for the oft-repeated phrase 'it is with the Prophet... and with the imāms and vicegerents after him').

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 1; Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 452-453, ḥadīths #8 & 10.

Once again we see °Alī during the lifetime of the Prophet as the receptor of separate communication from God. This is yet another indication of the special esteem in which he is held by his Shī°ah.

The °ilm of the Holy Spirit is invoked, as in the case of the knowledge obtained from the angels, by questions submitted to the imām by his faithful Shī°ah. It was asked of Ja°far al-Şādiq: "Does it ever happen that you are asked something of which you have no knowledge?" "Sometimes," replied Ja°far, "it does happen... but the Holy Spirit conveys (l-g-y) it to us."<sup>63</sup> The process of dispatch by the Holy Spirit is described by °Alī: he would submit to the rūḥ whatever he was asked and, when he sensed that he had hit upon the right answer, he pronounced the verdict.<sup>64</sup> The function of the Holy Spirit, like that of the °ilm that comes by night and day, is to ensure that the imām shall never be at a loss and that the community shall always have guidance in every thing.

Danger looms for Shī°ī orthodoxy as the revealments of the rūḥ al-quḍus appear to suggest the revelation of prophethood. In the following report we observe Ja°far al-Şādiq speaking of the

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<sup>63</sup>Saffār, *Baṣā'ir*, p. 451, ḥadīth #1 & pp. 451-454, passim. Ḥadīth #6, p. 452 adds: "...if it is not in the Book of °Alī."

<sup>64</sup>Ash°arī, *Baṣā'ir*, pp. 1-2; Saffār, *Baṣā'ir*, p. 453, ḥadīth #9. The Prophet felt that the rūḥ al-quḍus, in conveying to him that it was not his time to die, had 'transfused' (n-f-th) his mind or soul (rū°) (*ibid*, p. 453, ḥadīth #11).



matter only with greatest reluctance. "According to what thing," Ja°far was asked, "does the imām issue a legal opinion?" "According to the Book," he answered. "And if it is not in the Book?" "According to the sunnah." "And if it is neither in the Book nor the sunnah?" "There is nothing," said the imām, "that is both not in the Book and not in the sunnah." The guarantor of the ḥadīth reports that he had to repeat and insist on his question until the imām finally relented, saying: "He [the imām] is guided and led to success, but as for what you imagine [i.e. that he receives revelation as a prophet does] - no, that is not it."<sup>65</sup> One of the Shī°ah was greatly troubled by reports of the rūḥ he heard from 'Jābir,' (a companion of the fifth and sixth imāms) which he felt he could not accept, as they seemed to him too extreme.<sup>66</sup> He determined to settle the matter and his mind by travelling to Madīnah to meet with Ja°far al-Ṣādiq himself. As he entered Ja°far's presence the imām fixed his gaze upon him and said (immediately discerning what was in the petitioner's mind): "May God have mercy upon Jābir, for he spoke the truth about us. And may God curse al-Mughīrah, for he used to lie!" Then he added: "The Spirit of the Messenger of God is in us."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, pp. 387-388, ḥadīth #1; see also pp. 387-388, *passim*.

<sup>66</sup>The man was Jābir ibn Yazīd al-Ju°fī. Several versions of this ḥadīth are found under his name in Khū'ī's Mu°jam (s.v. "Jābir ibn Yazīd").

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 459-460, ḥadīth #4. The 'Mughīrah' in question is al-Mughīrah ibn Sa°d. He appears in the heresiographies as the founder of an eponymous Shī°ī sect. Several different things are asserted concerning the Mughīriyah, the common thread

The efficacy of the spirit is limited in some traditions by allowing that the imām is not autonomous in the knowledge afforded by the Spirit. For although he may wish to know, "he does not find whenever he seeks."<sup>68</sup> "God gives the Spirit to whom He wills, and if [emphasis added] He grants it He teaches the °ilm and understanding."<sup>69</sup> The condition ensures that the knowledge of the imāms shall not be seen to equal the Omniscience of God. Shī'ī tradition thus advises that, although the imām may know everything by virtue of the Spirit that is in him, this knowledge is not necessary knowledge.

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being that the group did not hold for the imāmate of either the sixth, or both the sixth and fifth imāms. Some reports (Abū Muhammad al-Hasan ibn Mūsā al-Nawbakhtī, Firaq al-Shī'ah, ed. Hellmut Ritter [Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus, 1931], p. 52) place them close to the Zaydīs and state that they eventually failed to proclaim any imām after diverging from the Twelver line. Others (see Sa'ad ibn 'Abd Allāh Abū Khalāf 'al-Ash'arī al-Qummī, 'K. al-maqālāt wa-al-firaq, ed. Muhammad Jawād Mashkūr [Tehran: Mu'assasat Matbū'āt 'Atā'i, 1341 H.Sh./1962-3], p. 42) think that the Mughīriyah held for the imāmate - or even the prophethood - of Mughīrah himself. It is therefore unclear whether the error for which Mughīrah is condemned in the ḥadīth was 'moderation' which caused him to deny the special knowledge of the imāms (as in the case of the Zaydīs and Hasanīs) or 'extremism' which aimed to transfer the charisma of the imām to his own person. On the Mughīriyah see also Ash'arī, Maqālāt, p. 97, and the additional references in Ritter's index to Nawbakhtī; add to these Abū al-Husayn Muhammad ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Malatī al-Shāfi'ī, al-Tanbīh wa-al-radd 'alā ahl al-ahwā' wa-al-bida', ed. Muhammad Zāhid ibn al-Hasan al-Kawtharī (Baghdad, Maktabat al-Muthannā/ Beirut: Maktabat al-Ma'ārif, 1388/1968), p. 161.

<sup>68</sup>Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 3; Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 460-461, ḥadīth #1 & p. 462, *passim*; Kulaynī, al-Kāfi, vol. 2, p. 19 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb al-rūḥ allatī yusaddidu Allāh bi-hā al-a'immah, ḥadīth #4}.

<sup>69</sup>Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 3. From the sixth imām.

### iii. 'On Friday's Eve.'

The imāms' supply of °ilm is renewed not only moment by moment, but by intervals - week by week and year by year. "Each Friday eve," declared the fifth imām, "an extraordinary thing happens to us." He then explained:

It is permitted to the spirits of the prophets and the vicegerents already dead and to the spirit of the vicegerent who is among you [living] to ascend to heaven and circumambulate the Throne seven times and to pray two units of prayer behind each leg of the Throne. Then the spirits of the prophets and vicegerents are returned to their bodies and they awake filled with joy, and the vicegerent who is among you awakes having been increased in his °ilm in extraordinary quantity!<sup>70</sup>

The spirits of the deceased prophets and imāms share the experience of the living imām at the Throne so that their knowledge shall be equal to his and it cannot be said that he is more knowledgeable or excellent than them. All the prophets and all the imāms receive the °ilm together and are fortified in the same measure. The most extraordinary feature of the tradition is the journey of the spirit outside the bodies of the imāms until they are "returned [on the following morning] to their bodies in which they were contained."<sup>71</sup> This recalls the Night

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<sup>70</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfi, vol. 1, pp. 372-373 {Bāb fī anna al-a'immaḥ yazdādūn fī laylat al-jum'ah, ḥadīth #1}. See also Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 130-131, ḥadīth #2. Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 143 gives a tradition which speaks of the ascension of the spirits, but does not explicitly link this with replenishment of the store of knowledge.

<sup>71</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 131, ḥadīth #4.

Journey of the Prophet as he was carried up to heaven and met the ancient prophets. The event is assigned to the night before Friday because of the auspiciousness of that day.

A weekly occasion is also fixed for the display of the works, good and bad, of the Muslims, or according to some reports of the Shī'ah alone, to the Prophet and imāms. The deeds are reviewed, according to most reports, on Thursday (that is, the eve of Friday);<sup>72</sup> according to others, this happens whenever the crescent phase of the moon is complete in mid-Sha'bān, every morning, every morning and night, or when one is put to rest in one's grave.<sup>73</sup> The effect of the review in any case is to replenish the imām's exact knowledge of the condition of each individual in the community, thus renewing the close bonds between the two.

#### iv. The 'Night of Power.'

The Shī'ah reason that 'laylat al-qadr,' the 'Night of Power' on which God used to review the Qur'ān with His Messenger, must also be a source of knowledge for their imāms. Since laylat al-qadr still occurs each year and since 'every decree' comes down on that night (Qur'ān 97:4: "The angels and the Spirit descend therein, by permission of their Lord, with every decree")

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<sup>72</sup>Uṣūl, p. 75 (according to the sixth imām).

<sup>73</sup>See: Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 424-431; Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 95; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 318-319 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb 'ard al-a'māl 'alā al-nabī wa-al-a'immah}.

there must be men after the Prophet to receive this knowledge. These are the imāms.<sup>74</sup> Ja°far al-Şādiq declared: "On the Night of Power God writes what shall be, then He casts it down."<sup>75</sup> "To whom does He cast it?" he was asked. "To the one you see before you, idiot!"<sup>76</sup>

Kulaynī gathers ḥadīths that present a different and rather more complex argument for the continuation of laylat al-qadr. It is asserted that, while the revelation of the Qur'ān was complete, it was only complete in a general way; on Laylat al-Qadr the further details necessary for guidance come down. This argument is particularly interesting in that it serves as proof for the continuation of the °ilm of the imāms in general; this is really what the reports are wrestling with, rather than the question of the Night of Power alone.<sup>77</sup>

The reasoning of one of the ḥadīths of this kind, related

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<sup>74</sup>See Şaffār, Başā'ir, p. 224, ḥadīth #16; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 363-364 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb fī sha'n innā anzalnā-hu fī laylat al-qadr wa-tafsīri-hā, ḥadīth #5}.

<sup>75</sup>Reading 'yarmī bi-hi.'

<sup>76</sup>Şaffār, Başā'ir, pp. 221-222, ḥadīth #8.

<sup>77</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 350-372 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb fī sha'n innā anzalnā-hu fī laylat al-qadr...}. Al-Kāfī tends on the subject of °ilm to follow Şaffār's Başā'ir, recording the same or similar narratives. On the subject of laylat al-qadr, however, Kulaynī has an independent set of narratives which follow a different line of thought. These are all guaranteed by a certain 'Hasan ibn °Abbās ibn al-Ḥuraysh,' an associate of the ninth imām who had composed a separate work on the topic (see Khū'ī, Mu°jam, s.v. "Hasan ibn °Abbās al-Ḥurayshī").

from the eighth imām from Ja°far al-Ṣādiq, may be summarized as follows. It cannot be denied that people find themselves faced with questions the answer to which is found neither in the Qur'ān (for the Qur'ān is proof [dalīl] only in the sense that it contains the general provisions of the divine law [jumal al-hudūd]), nor in the sunnah, nor among the body of accepted rulings. But the Knowledge of God does not allow that His creatures should be faced with questions - whether religious or non-religious - for which there is no solution. The 'explanation and elaboration' (tafsīr) of these things must therefore be sought from the legal authority, that is the imām of the age. Or to put it another way, the Qur'ān is not possessed of speech so that it can command and forbid. If therefore there is to be a 'proof' (hujjah) on the earth over God's creatures, it must reside in those articulate (nāṭiq) beings who are the proper interpreters and custodians of the Qur'ān, that is the imāms. Moreover the tafsīr dispensed by the imāms will be, unlike the explanation of those who exercise their mental powers upon the text, without contradiction (ikhtilāf) - for their knowledge is a part of the absolute Knowledge of God, granted them as being necessary for the guidance of humankind. (The traditions in al-Kāfī dealing with the Night of Power place great emphasis on the avoidance of ikhtilāf.) How is this vital knowledge communicated to the imāms? It is certainly given to them as they are 'addressed' (muḥaddath) by Gabriel and others of the angels, day by day, for God reveals knowledge to the imāms whenever He deems

it necessary. But it is also given each year on the Night of Power, when God's commands for the following twelve months are sent down from Heaven.<sup>78</sup>

In another hadith, the delicate matter of the relation of Laylat al-Qadr to the Qur'ān was put to 'Abū Ja°far' (meaning here 'Abū Ja°far the second,' the ninth imām) only after he had promised to spare the questioner his anger: "Do you consider," the man ventured,

...concerning laylat al-qadr and the descent of the angels and Spirit upon the awṣiyā' that night that they bring to the imāms things that the Prophet did not know? For I know that when the Prophet died there was nothing he knew of which °Alī was not also aware [and therefore any °ilm acquired by °Alī after this must have been additional to the °ilm of the Prophet].

The imām could not suppress his irritation at the insolence of the question but, having obliged himself, he gave the following answer:

The Messenger of God when he was carried aloft on his Night Journey was not again brought to earth until God had given him knowledge of the past and of the future. A good portion of this knowledge, however, was of a general (jumal) nature, and this was elaborated and explained for him on the Night of Power. °Alī's knowledge, like that of the Prophet, was also 'general,' and it shall also be explained on the Nights of Power (meaning, during the lives of all the imāms).

"Did not the general knowledge," continued the man, "include the

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<sup>78</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 350-372 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb fī sha'n innā anzalnā-hu fī laylat al-qadr...}, passim.

explanation?" "Certainly." answered the imām. Then he added:

...but on the Night of Power the Prophet and His vicegerents are given the command by God to do one thing or the other. They are told what action to take concerning things of which they were already aware.... [That which descends on the Night of Power is therefore] the command concerning that which they already know, and its 'facilitation' (yusr).

More questions were put, but as much as he was pressed the imām would only confirm that the Prophet and imāms are endowed with equal °ilm, the Night of Power being the occasion on which descends "the command (ḥukm) by which the waṣī shall judge the servants of God."<sup>79</sup> This was the reply of Abū Ja°far, successful in preserving both the perfect knowledge of the Prophet and imāms, and the necessity of progressive °ilm.

An additional proof advanced by Shī°i tradition of the continuation of laylat al-qadr in the imāms is its unbroken history before Islam: once again we see the tradition reach back to the time of the ancient prophets to approve its claims. The ninth imām said:

It is absolutely necessary that there should be, from the first day that the Night of Power was created until the end of the world, a hujjah (proof) over all who dwell on earth so that this [the °ilm given on this occasion] shall descend on the Night to those of God's servants whom He loves. God sent down the Spirit and angels with the command (amr) on the Night of Power to Adam, and Adam did not die without leaving a vicegerent; and God gave 'the command' on the Night of Power to all the prophets who came after Adam, and

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid., pp. 368-370, ḥadīth #8.



placed it in each succeeding waṣī.<sup>80</sup>

The imāms' share in the institution of laylat al-qadr was, however, apparently difficult for even some of the Shī'ah to accept, as coming dangerously close to an assertion of prophethood. This is suggested by forceful condemnation of those who were inclined to reject it. Anyone who denies that laylat al-qadr continues in the imāms and in them alone, is 'a disbeliever' (munkir), according to the declaration of the fifth imām.<sup>81</sup> It is reported that (°Abd Allāh) Ibn °Abbās, the cousin and companion of °Alī, was struck with the wing of an angel and blinded as he insisted that it had ended with Muḥammad!<sup>82</sup>

On the occasion of laylat al-qadr, from the setting of the sun until the break of dawn, the imām learns about such things as deaths or births that are to occur, what the sustenance (rizq) of each of God's creatures shall be, who shall be obedient and disobedient, who shall make the ḥajj pilgrimage, and whether the

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 366, ḥadīth #7.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 372, ḥadīth #9; see also Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 224, ḥadīth #15 ('kāfir'). The ḥadīth also aims to prove that the Night of Power belongs to the imāms alone, and not to anyone else. The limitation of laylat al-qadr to the imāms is also emphasized in other reports, eg: "...we alone are distinguished by laylat al-qadr, and it belongs to no other person (Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 70)." It is not clear who else claimed this distinction.

<sup>82</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 357-359 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb fī sha'n innā anzalnā-hu fī laylat al-qadr..., ḥadīth #2}. Ibn °Abbās was also known for his claim to some of the special °ilm of the imāms; see Khū'ī, Mu°jam, s.v. "°Abd Allāh ibn °Abbās."

earth shall be fertile or barren.<sup>83</sup> On this night God 'determines' (yugaddir) such things, and the angels deliver to the imām of the time what has been written concerning them.<sup>84</sup> Or, according to one ḥadīth, matters such as sustenance and term of life are determined on the nineteenth of Ramaḍān, the month in which the laylat al-qadr occurs, but events are only finally determined on the Night itself; "if it were not for this, the imām would know nothing [of what is to come in the year]."<sup>85</sup>

Here is the essential difference between the revealments of laylat al-qadr and other instances of continual °ilm: the 'knowledge that comes by night and day' is knowledge of events as they appear; but on the Night of Power the imām is instilled with knowledge of future circumstances and events. This raises a

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<sup>83</sup>See Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 220-225, *passim*; Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 431.

<sup>84</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 431.

<sup>85</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 220, ḥadīth #3; see also p. 222, ḥadīth #11. A report from Ja'far al-Ṣādiq assigns a special epistemology to the laylat al-qadr: according to this account, God removes the heart of the imām and inscribes upon it, with a pen made of light, all of the °ilm. In this way his heart becomes "a book (muṣḥaf) to the sight" and the ear "an interpreter (mutarjim) to the tongue," so that if he wishes to obtain knowledge of a thing he looks with the eye and the heart and finds what he wants, "as if he were looking at a book." The °ilm of laylat al-qadr, Ja'far indicates, is the only knowledge communicated in this way; in other instances the heart is only penetrated by knowledge, which is then insinuated to the ear (Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 223-224, ḥadīth #14. This somewhat phantastic ḥadīth is related on the authority of the 'Ibn al-Huraysh' who is the guarantor of the ḥadīths on laylat al-qadr in al-Kāfi. It does not, however, appear in Kulaynī's collection).

problem (implied in the general assertion of the imāms' ability of precognition, but brought into sharper focus by the matter of laylat al-qadr): if the imām knows the future with certainty, how is his knowledge different from the Omniscience of God Himself? And how can we escape the conclusion that God's Power and His Will have been limited by the imāms' foreknowledge of His actions? At this point we come up against questions belonging to theology proper, which are better left for that discussion (see Chapter VII); it only remains here to mention the upper limit set by Shī'ī doctrine on the apparently boundless °ilm of the imāms.

v. 'We do not know that which is hidden.'

God's Knowledge, according to the Shī'ah, is of two kinds: one which is 'cast' to the angels and prophets and then handed down to the imāms, and another which "is with Him [alone], and of which He has made none of His creatures aware."<sup>86</sup> The knowledge restricted to God is the 'ghayb,' - 'that which is hidden.' The tradition insists that the imāms, as well as the Prophet before them, do not (automatically) have knowledge of the ghayb.<sup>87</sup> The

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<sup>86</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 376 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb anna al-a'immah ya°lamūn jamī° al-°ulūm..., hadīth #2}.

<sup>87</sup>Eg: °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 16, the words of the sixth imām: "I do not say to you that we are possessors (aṣḥāb) of the ghayb." Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 340 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb Mawlid Abī Ḥasan °Alī ibn Muḥammad..., hadīth #9}: The tenth imām sends a medicine to his follower before news of the prescription could have reached him, causing the narrator to remark that this would likely confirm the ghulāt in their belief that the imām knows the ghayb (while he does not know it; he is only informed by God).

fifth and sixth imāms report that °Alī said: "Be advised that God has spared 'those who are rooted in knowledge' [the imāms] from attempting to part the veils drawn over 'hidden things' (al-ghuyūb), thus confirming their ignorance (jahl) as to decipherment (tafsīr) of 'the veiled, hidden [world] (al-ghayb al-mahjūb).'"<sup>88</sup> The eighth imām al-Riḍā, hearing of the claim of one of the Shī°ah that, according to the prediction of Ja°far al-Ṣādiq, the Qā'im had already come, retorted: "What could Ja°far possibly know of what was to happen by the command of God? For God said [even] to the Prophet: 'I do not know what shall be done with me or with you; I only follow that which has been revealed to me (46:9).'"<sup>89</sup>

The inability of the imāms to apprehend the ghayb even as God's °ilm is executed and events are in progress is dramatized in the story of the sixth imām and his errant slave-girl. Ja°far, it is reported, had intended to punish her for some offence, but was left with his anger unsatisfied as she had fled to a part of the house where he could not find her. "How amazing it is," he remarked, "that people claim that we know that which is hidden, while in fact no one knows that which is hidden except God!"<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 163, ḥadīth #5.

<sup>89</sup>Ḥimyarī, Qurb, pp. 219-220.

<sup>90</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp 230-232, ḥadīth #5 & p. 213, ḥadīth #3; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 378-379 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb nādir fī-hi dhikr al-ghayb, ḥadīth #3}. The anecdote seems

Although the prophets and imāms do not know that which is hidden, they may, however, be granted some knowledge of it. "The one of us who is the °ālim," said the fifth imām, "does not know the ghayb; but he is 'addressed' (muḥaddath) concerning what is to happen in the night at that moment, and concerning what is to happen in the day at that moment, one matter after another and one thing after another until the Day of Resurrection."<sup>91</sup> The apparent contradiction between ignorance of the ghayb and knowledge of what is to happen at every moment is solved by maintaining that the ghayb reserved to God represents the part of His knowledge that may or may not be actualized. Muḥammad al-Bāqir explains:

God knows that which is hidden from His creatures in that He decrees (yugaddiru) a thing and effects (yaqḍī-hi) it in His Knowledge before He creates or informs the angels of it. This knowledge is reserved (mawqūf) with Him, and is subject to His Will (mashī'ah). If He desires it, He effects it; but if '[another thing] occurs to him' (yabdū la-hu fī-hi), He does not execute it. The °ilm that reached the Prophet and then came to us is the °ilm that God decrees, effects, and [also]

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inconsequential, as if the tradition was reluctant to seriously limit the °ilm of the imāms. Cf. Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 59: the fifth imām, although he was able to describe many things he had never seen, could not tell where his own son was. On the other hand, Himyarī relates a number of stories in which the imām is able to tell of phantastic "things that are hidden (al-ghuyūb)," even though "no one knows the ghayb except God" (Qurb, pp. 182-184).

<sup>91</sup>Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 113. Although it seems that knowledge of the ghayb corresponds to the 'knowledge that comes by night and by day,' the traditions do not explicitly make the connexion.

executes.<sup>92</sup>

The imāms, in other words, may gain knowledge of the ghayb as God 'executes' it, that is as it becomes inalterable reality. In this sense, and in this sense only, they know the ghayb. From some reports it appears that knowledge of the 'hidden' is granted only at the pleasure of God: "If knowledge of the ghayb is offered to us," said Muḥammad al-Bāqir, "we know; but if it is taken from us, then we do not know."<sup>93</sup> Another tendency in the tradition, however, indicates that the imāms know a thing simply by choosing to know it. They know the ghayb as they themselves wish, not at God's pleasure. "Does the imām," Ja°far al-Ṣādiq was asked, "know the ghayb?" "No," he answered, "but if he wants to know a thing, God teaches it to him."<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 113, ḥadīth #1; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 377-378 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb nādir fī-hi dhikr al-ghayb, ḥadīth #2}.

<sup>93</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 513, ḥadīth #32; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 63. For a statement from the Prophet confirming this point, see K. Sulaym, p. 215.

<sup>94</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 315, ḥadīth #4 (and also the rest of the chapter); Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 382-383 {Bāb anna al-a'immah idhā shā'ū an ya°lamū, °alimū}; *ibid.*, pp. 380-381 {Bāb nādir fī-hi dhikr al-ghayb, ḥadīth #4}.

## V. THE GUIDANCE OF THE COMMUNITY

Knowledge of God's commandments and prohibitions, and even knowledge of all that is in heaven and earth, is exclusively with the imāms (even though they may, for various reasons, not freely dispense it). All other 'knowledge,' however it is derived, is false. The question consequently to be considered is: how do the Shī'ah receive and digest the true and only knowledge? Or in short, how are they guided by the sayings of their imāms?

The first matter to be considered is the Shī'ī ideal of 'submission' (taslīm). Taslīm requires that all questions be referred to the imām and that whatever is said by the imāms on any subject be accepted, without question and without the slightest resistance. Taslīm precludes, above all, any method of interpretation, which can only be equivalent to convenient distortion of the truth. The doctrine of taslīm is the logical counterpart to the dogma of the imāms' universal and unerring knowledge.

The other major principle governing the community's reception and dissemination of the ilm is taqiyyah (dissimulation of belief). Taqiyyah is, on the one hand, a practical strategy necessary to preserve the body of the Shī'ah through adversity

until the 'relief' of the Mahdī. This aspect will be discussed briefly. But tagīyah has another face: it is the principle, familiar from the worlds of falsafah (Islamic philosophy) and Sufism, of the limitation of special knowledge to privileged persons. This tagīyah is at the heart of the esoteric spirit of Shiism.

The traditions also lay down requirements for those of the Shī'ah who would be °ālim, that is 'learned' in the °ilm (the ḥadīths) of the imāms. The term '°ālim,' as well as the related terms '°āqil' and 'faqīh,' describe the faithful who cultivate certain moral characteristics and intellectual attitudes of a moral character. One of the qualities of the °ālim is attachment to °aql. The widest sense of °aql is 'learning'; however, one trend in the Shī'ī tradition assigns to °aql a special meaning ('reason') that suggests the beginning of a radical change in Shī'ī epistemology. The subjects of °ilm/°ālim and °aql are treated in separate sections.

In the last part of this chapter two practical problems are considered. In the first case, a group of ḥadīths offers different explanations for instances in which the responsa of the imāms seem contradictory or uninformed. The aim of such ḥadīths is to preserve the dogma of their unimpeachable °ilm, and also to allow successive imāms some freedom in their rulings independent of their forbears. These traditions, I believe, are



the trace of real problems which arose as the community asked questions of their imāms while they still lived among men. The second problem concerns the actions of the Shī'ah when the statements of the imāms are not clear and there is no access to their personal authority (as in the time of the later imāms). For this the tradition offers several solutions, some of which suggest features of the Uṣūlī Shiism of the modern age.

i. Taslīm: 'Successful indeed are those who submit.'

'Taslīm' - complete submission to the authority and dictates of the imām - is counted a great virtue among the Shī'ah. According to Shī'ī piety it is the first of three chief excellences to be sent down from heaven,<sup>1</sup> and with it comes the reward of heaven.<sup>2</sup> It is the characteristic by which a true believer may be recognized<sup>3</sup> and through which his heart is purified.<sup>4</sup> Neglect of taslīm leads to 'slaughter' (perdition, or the revenge of the Mahdī).<sup>5</sup> Even if a servant were to worship God alone and faithfully perform all the devotions, still if he allowed himself to object to and question either a thing God had

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<sup>1</sup>Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 93. From the sixth imām. The other virtues are 'piety' (birr) and 'certainty' (yaqīn, on which see below).

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>5</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 522, hadīth #16; Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 73: "'It is taslīm, and if not, slaughter,' - and here Abū Ja'far [in this case meaning the fifth imām] gestured toward his throat."

wrought or something the Prophet had done, saying: "Why did they not do it differently?" he would be considered a mushrik.<sup>6</sup>

Taslīm is, according to the Shī'ah, recommended in the Qur'ān in several places. For example, the first verse of Sūrah 'al-Mu'minūn: "Successful indeed are the believers" is taken to refer to 'those who submit.'<sup>7</sup> A companion of the sixth imām told of a man he knew by the name of 'Kulayb' who used never to hear a ḥadīth of the imāms but that he would declare: "I submit!," so that they named him in fun, 'Kulayb Taslīm.' But the imām approved of him, remarking, "Successful indeed are those who submit...."<sup>8</sup>

A Shī'ī must receive all the sayings of the imām with

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<sup>6</sup>Barqī, Mahāsin, p. 271, ḥadīth #365; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 235 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb al-taslīm wa-faḍl al-musallimīn, ḥadīth #2}; ibid., vol. 4, p. 115 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-shirk, ḥadīth #6}; Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, pp. 71-72. From the sixth imām.

<sup>7</sup>The word 'muslim' means, in the generic sense, 'submitter' (i.e. to God). See Barqī, Mahāsin, pp. 270-272, passim; Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 520-526, passim; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 234-238 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb al-taslīm...}; Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, pp. 71-77, passim. The verse: "They will not believe until they... submit with full submission [taslīm] (Q. 4:65)" is also thought to refer to submission to the rule of the imāms; see refs. above. These are the two proof-verses most often cited. It is reported that the fifth imām Muhammad al-Bāqir asserted that the word 'muslimūn' in Qur'ān 15:2: "It may be that those who disbelieve wish ardently that they were Muslims" is to be read instead 'musallimūn,' "...that they were submitters," that is that they were those who submit to the imāms (Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 71).

<sup>8</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 236 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb al-taslīm..., ḥadīth #3}. See also Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, pp. 73-74 (told of the fifth imām).

taslīm, without exception. An attitude of submission is to be maintained even when a statement seems to be unreliable, patently false, or outrageous. In fact it is in these difficult cases that the aspirant is tested and the true extent of his taslīm revealed. When a Shī'ī submits to a ḥadīth which it would be difficult for anyone else to believe, he demonstrates awareness of his own limited knowledge and proper respect for the boundless ʿilm of the imām. "Do not," says the seventh imām, "say concerning that which comes to you from us, or that which is attributed to us, that it is 'invalid' (bāṭil), even if you [think you] know for certain that the truth is the opposite, for you do not know why we said it, or in what connexion."<sup>9</sup>

Scrupulous observance of taslīm avoids the sin of 'giving the lie' to a statement which may, despite the judgement of the hearer, be from the imāms. Someone asked Ja'far al-Ṣādiq: "A man comes to us from you who is known to be a liar, and he relates to us a ḥadīth, and we find it repugnant. [What should we do]?" The imām countered: "Does he tell you that I say that night is day, and day is night?" "No." "Even if he reports that I said this, do not call him a liar, for you might be calling me a liar."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 538, ḥadīth #4; Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 77.

<sup>10</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 537-538, ḥadīth #3 (and see also p. 538, ḥadīth #5); Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, pp. 76-77. But the sixth imām is also reported in one ḥadīth as saying: "If something comes to you from us that may be conceived as existing in creation, and you do not know it and you do not understand it, then do not oppose it, and refer it to us. But if something comes to you

One should never oppose (j-h-d) a ḥadīth attributed to the imāms, even though the heart may recoil from it - for one never knows but that it might be true.<sup>11</sup> 'Opposition' is equivalent to abandoning the wilāyah.<sup>12</sup> One should never lose sight of the fact that the word of the imām is the word of the Prophet, which is the Word of God; opposing a ḥadīth attributed to the imāms is therefore equivalent to "giving the lie to God on His Throne."<sup>13</sup> Muḥammad al-Bāqir said: "We relate from the Prophet and from God - thus if you say we lie, you also give the lie to God and to His Prophet."<sup>14</sup>

Thus it is apparent that adherence to taslīm is much more important than determination of the actual truth or falsehood of a statement. The key to salvation is not in the text or report, but in absolute and unquestioning obedience to the imāms.

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which may not be conceived as existing in creation, then do oppose it, and do not refer it to us (ibid., p. 92)." In another tradition also the fifth imām allows a little latitude in submission: "Who hears from someone something that he cannot fully comprehend and therefore denies it, but otherwise accepts our authority and practises taslīm, shall not be considered a kāfir (ibid., pp. 74-75)."

<sup>11</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 537, ḥadīths #1 & 2; Ash'ārī, Baṣā'ir, p. 98. Just as the one who resists the right of the imāms is called a 'jāhid,' one who opposes (refuses to believe) the ḥadīths also 'j-h-d.' The term is approximately equivalent to k-f-r; see Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, pp. 102-104 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb wujūh al-kufr, ḥadīth #1}.

<sup>12</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 537, ḥadīth #1.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 538, ḥadīth #5.

<sup>14</sup>Uṣūl, p. 61.

Even if the imām should seem to 'change his mind' - if one edict should come from him and then another that appears to contradict the first - it is only for the believer to say: "God and His Prophet have spoken the truth," and he shall receive a double reward. Similarly, if a Shī'ī should hear a ḥadīth he does not understand or cannot credit, he is asked to pronounce the formula: "The true opinion (al-qawl) is their opinion [that of the imāms]." By this he will be considered, even in the absence of certain knowledge, to have "believed in [all of our tenets], both that which is hidden and that which is published."<sup>15</sup> Recitation of the formula of taslīm thus guarantees a follower of the imām perfect faith even in those things of which he has never had any knowledge and concerning which no statement has ever reached him.<sup>16</sup>

Another aspect of the duty of taslīm is 'referral' (radd). Radd is the habit of referring any problem or dispute concerning the pronouncements of the imām - or anything at all about which there is disagreement or confusion - back to the imām himself. "Who refers the matter to us," said the sixth imām, "has

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<sup>15</sup>Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 76. From the sixth imām. See also *ibid.*, pp. 92 & 94; Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 212, ḥadīth #85; Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 525, ḥadīth #27.

<sup>16</sup>See Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 237 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb al-taslīm..., ḥadīth #6}.

submitted."<sup>17</sup> If a matter is clear to a believer, it should be accepted directly, but if it is unclear, it should be 'referred to God.'<sup>18</sup> If two of the Shī'ah find themselves disagreeing on some point of religion, the solution is radd, for "radd is part of the wilāyah."<sup>19</sup> One should always proceed directly to the imām; never should one reason or ponder - although if a determination cannot be had it is best to 'refrain from' or 'suspend' a dubious tradition rather than risk action based upon doubt.<sup>20</sup>

Referral, like taslīm, is most urgently required when a follower of the imāms who hears a ḥadīth is inclined to reject it. Opposition (i-ḥ-d) is dangerous to the soul because one cannot know the truth of what one is rejecting; therefore what 'the heart denies' must be referred to the imām.<sup>21</sup> The Prophet said (as reported by the fifth imām):

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<sup>17</sup>Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 76. See also *ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>18</sup>K. Sulaym, p. 60; see also Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 75. It is not always clear in the tradition whether radd means referral in the sense of actually referring a question to the imām or some person relating from the imām, or simply putting the question off - accepting that the truth cannot be determined and relying on God.

<sup>19</sup>Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 93; see also *ibid.*, p. 74; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb al-taslīm..., ḥadīth #1}.

<sup>20</sup>See Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 63 & 64 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb al-nawādir [annex to Bāb luzūm al-ḥujjah °alā al-°ālim], ḥadīths #9, #10, & #12}.

<sup>21</sup>Uṣūl, pp. 61 & 65. See also Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, p. 4 (preface of the author).

Refer that which your heart finds repugnant and which you are inclined to reject to God and to the Apostle, and to the learned man [°ālīm, that is the imām] of the Family of Muhammad. For the danger here lies [not in accepting a dubious tradition but rather] in relating a thing one is not suited to relate while constantly repeating: 'By God, it cannot be; by God, it cannot be so...!' In such cases it is denial that constitutes unbelief (kufr) [and not acceptance].<sup>22</sup>

Taslīm absolutely precludes any kind of speculation on the basis of the words of the imāms. One reason given for this is that, because God has a ruling for and guides humankind in everything, and because the imām has knowledge of all these things, there is neither room nor need for speculation. It is in this spirit that Muḥammad al-Bāqir tells his companion:

The imām is the one who guides, and he is guided, and God does not keep him in the dark or cause him to be ignorant of any sunnah. It is not for people to speculate [the term used is 'nazar'] on his authority or to introduce confusion into it, for they are commanded to submit!<sup>23</sup>

In cases where questions occur to which the Qur'ān and sunnah do not address themselves, the argument against nazar is that one cannot obtain reward for any determination one arrives at by oneself, even if it is correct (which would, of course, occur only fortuitously). For there is no reward for any belief

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<sup>22</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 20-21, ḥadīths #1 & #4 and p. 22, ḥadīths #6 & #9; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 253-254 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb fī mā jā'a anna ḥadītha-hum ṣa°b, mustaṣ°ab, ḥadīth #1}. See also Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 35; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 317 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-kitmān, ḥadīth #7}.

<sup>23</sup>Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 74.

held or action carried out without the guidance of the imām. Thus when the sixth imām was asked: "Should we, when matters arise which we do not know to exist in the Book or in the sunnah, employ speculation?" he replied: "Certainly not! For if you were to arrive at the right conclusion (in aṣab-ta), you would not receive any reward, while if you were to err (in akhta'ta), you would have given the lie to God!"<sup>24</sup>

It is specifically juridical speculation that is banned by the imāms. In the struggle which took place in the second century of the Hijrah between the Traditionists - those in the Islamic community who would rely on the words of the Prophet, forbidding interpretation - and the scholars who aimed at developing a science of jurisprudence which would extend the scope of the law, the Shī'ah stood firmly with the former. The reason for this is clear: legal reasoning was excluded by insistence on the imāms' universal and exclusive °ilm.

Muḥammad al-Bāqir and Ja°far al-Şādiq, the two imāms most prominent in the traditions, lived in the midst of this struggle, and if the very large number of traditions on legal interpretation attributed to them is authentic, this must have been one of the greatest battles they fought in their lifetimes.

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<sup>24</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 213, hadīth #90 & p. 215, hadīth #99; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 73 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb al-bida° wa-al-ra'y wa-al-maqā'is, hadīth #11}. See also Şaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 518-519; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 99.



The seventh imām Mūsā ibn Ja°far also figures prominently in the struggle against legal reasoning. His period of activity (128 or 129 to 183 A.H.; between 745 and 747 to 799 A.D.) partially coincides with that of the great jurist al-Shāfi°i (150-204/767-820) who laid down rules for the use of the legal analogy (qiyās).

The two chief concerns of the imāms are ra'y (reasoned opinion) and qiyās (reasoning by analogy). Qiyās in the several instances in the tradition in which an example is given clearly refers to an analogy, but there are no clear examples given of ra'y. Qiyās and ra'y are often condemned in one phrase, as if the two things are the same.<sup>25</sup>

The use of one's opinion or judgement, say the Shī°ah, is based on imagined, not real knowledge; the only true knowledge is the knowledge of the imāms. Who "makes his religion his own ra'y, in the absence of [any guidance from] one of the rightly-guided imāms" follows nothing more than his own fancy.<sup>26</sup> Thus

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<sup>25</sup>- which is not unnatural, since qiyās is a subset of ra'y. The term 'ijtihād' which has become so important in Uṣūlī Shiism is very rarely used by the imāms (that is it is very rarely used in the now usual sense of al-ijtihād fi al-ra'y: utmost exercise of the intellectual faculty in search of a judgement). Where this ijtihād is mentioned, it is also condemned: eg. K. Sulaym, p. 210; Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 209, ḥadīth #76 & p. 210, ḥadīth #77; Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, pp. 31-33 (comment of the author).

<sup>26</sup>Uṣūl, p. 63; Himyarī, Qurb, p. 204. From the fifth imām. See also Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 203 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb fi man dāna Allāh bi-ghayr imām min Allāh, ḥadīth #1}; Nu°mānī,

reliance on ra'y is equal to (in a common phrase) 'issuing a fatwā without °ilm' - issuing a legal opinion without knowledge, that is without basis in any text and without any indication from the imām. The seventh imām warns that the man who issues a fatwā without knowledge "shall be cursed by the angels of heaven and earth."<sup>27</sup> Ja°far al-Şādiq related through the line of his forefathers that the Prophet said: "He who issues a fatwā without knowing the nāsikh and the mansūkh and the muḥkam and the mutashābih has surely perished and caused others to perish!"<sup>28</sup> That is not only does such a person himself go astray, but he saddles others with his errors so that even after his death they are led by him still further astray - while he himself depends on

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Ghaybah, p. 82 (the same report related from the seventh imām). Saffār reports this ḥadīth from the fifth, sixth, and seventh imāms (Baṣā'ir, p. 13).

<sup>27</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 205, ḥadīths #58 & #59; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 52 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb al-naḥī °an al-qawl bi-ghayr °ilm, ḥadīth #3}. See also Barqī, Maḥāsin, ḥadīth #60 (from the sixth imām). For other statements on 'issuing opinions without knowledge' see: Uṣūl, pp. 38-39; Barqī, Maḥāsin, pp. 204-206 {Bāb al-naḥī °an al-qawl wa-al-futyā bi-ghayr °ilm}; Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 196, ḥadīth #9; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 36, ḥadīth #99; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 52-54 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb al-naḥī °an al-qawl...}; Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, p. 21. Kulaynī's chapter is essentially an abbreviated version of that found in Saffār. Ra'y may also, of course, be applied to exegesis of the Qur'ān. Tafsīr on the basis of ra'y, that is exegesis without reliance on the sayings of the imāms is also condemned, as already apparent from Chapter IV: see °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, pp. 17-18.

<sup>28</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 206, ḥadīth #61; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 53-54 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb al-naḥī °an al-qawl..., ḥadīth #9}.

the errors of those before him!<sup>29</sup> As we have seen above, even if one's opinion happens to coincide with the 'truth' (ḥaqq), the one who concerning the same matter only pronounces the formula 'the correct statement is that of the ʿulamāʾ [the imāms]' (who, in other words, submits and refers) shall be considered the better man.<sup>30</sup>

Ra'y leads in the end to complete corruption of the law and corruption of those who had intended to abide by it. The Prophet shocked his companions by predicting that after his death people would because they had relied on ra'y come to consider maʾrūf (accepted custom) munkar (unknown; denied), and munkar, maʾrūf.<sup>31</sup>

Who gives a fatwā (legal opinion) according to his ra'y," says the sixth imām, "attempts to approach that of which he has no knowledge - and who attempts to approach that of which he has no knowledge opposes God Himself, declaring ḥalāl and ḥarām that which he does not know!"<sup>32</sup>

Ra'y - reliance on one's own perception or opinion - is the thing most likely to remove the servant from his faith, for he

<sup>29</sup>See Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 70-72 {K. faḍl al-ʿilm, Bāb al-bidaʾ wa-al-ra'y wa-al-maḡāʾis, ḥadīth #6}. The ignorant publisher of a fatwā carries the weight of the sins of those he has misled (ibid., p. 52 {Bāb al-naḥī ʿan al-qawl..., ḥadīth #3}).

<sup>30</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 212, ḥadīth #85.

<sup>31</sup>Ḥimyarī, Qurb, p. 37.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 9-10; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 73 {K. faḍl al-ʿilm, Bāb al-bidaʾ wa-al-ra'y..., ḥadīth #10}. See also ibid., p. 75, ḥadīth #17.

will persist in following it even when he clearly perceives that its results are opposed to the truth (that is the truth of the law).<sup>33</sup>

As for analogy (qiyās) it is in itself, even apart from the question of the source of true knowledge, unsound. For any analogy may be overruled by another analogy, so that one can never get to the point of establishing a clear truth; "any qiyās that is produced is liable to be 'broken' by another."<sup>34</sup> So concludes Ja°far al-Şādiq, in the following statement extracted from his 'epistle to the practicans of ra'y and qiyās:'

Who invites another to his religion by citing opinions and posing analogies shall not establish his case and shall not attain what he desires. For the one he intends to convince will also not be without his own opinions and his own analogies. And as long as the missionary is not stronger in his appeal than the one he seeks to convert, there is no guarantee that he will not after a short time find himself beholden to him! Indeed, how often have we seen the student surpass his teacher (even if only after some time) and the teacher have to depend in his opinion on the opinion of the very one he once preached to! This is a source of confusion for those who are not learned (jāhilīn), of further doubt (shakk) for those already liable to doubt, and of uncertainty (ẓann) for those already uncertain. If this were allowed by God, surely He would not have sent messengers with that which contains decisive judgement [revelation]....<sup>35</sup>

The argument is addressed also to the issue of the authority

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<sup>33</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 211, ḥadīth #83.

<sup>34</sup>Himyarī, Qurb, p. 209. The statement of the eighth imām.

<sup>35</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 209, ḥadīth #76.

of the imāms. Use of opinion and analogy, Ja°far argues, undermines authority, and the breakdown in authority will finally touch even the imāms and prophets. The traditions find a certain arrogance in the 'jurisprudents and judges' who use ra'y and qiyās rather than limiting themselves to the true °ilm. For they hate to admit to those who come to them that they do not have the answer they seek. Thus when they find they have no text (athr) from the Prophet they attempt to conceal their ignorance by issuing an opinion based on similar texts and their own legal reasoning, rather than resorting to the imāms who also possess the knowledge that was not written down.<sup>36</sup>

In fact the following of the 'opinions' of others and of the laws they invent is absolute negation of taslīm to the imāms, since the servant now obeys and submits to other men instead of them. When the Qur'ān says: "They have taken as lords beside God their rabbis and their monks...(Q.9:31)" it means that the religious leaders made ḥalāl ḥarām, and ḥarām ḥalāl, so that the people in effect worshipped them.<sup>37</sup> This is taglīd of an ordinary human being - 'taglīd' meaning 'imitation,' that is

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<sup>36</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, pp. 330-332, ḥadīth #46; from the sixth imām. (Such was the case of Moses, who imagined that all knowledge was contained in his Torah and therefore did not properly appreciate the °ilm of Khidr.) See also Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 70-72 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb al-bida° wa-al-ra'y..., ḥadīth #6}.

<sup>37</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 246, ḥadīths #244-246; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 68-69 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb al-taglīd, ḥadīths #1 & 3}.

accepting the ruling of a person deemed to possess superior knowledge without oneself determining the truth of a matter. No ordinary man is worthy of taghlīd. The Shī'ah are rather advised to 'imitate' only 'Alī and his descendants the imāms in all the affairs of their religion, for they are the ones who have all the knowledge that was communicated to Muḥammad by God.<sup>38</sup> If they do not do this, then they are even worse than the non-Shī'ah who do taghlīd of common persons, for these at least are not aware of who is really to be imitated!<sup>39</sup>

If analogy is a blunt instrument which is likely to be turned on the user, it is also completely unable to dissect the sharī'ah. God's law can never be determined by analogy, simply because the processes of the law are beyond human ken. God "will not be asked how He makes ḥalāl and how He makes ḥarām."<sup>40</sup> The imāms give examples from the sharī'ah to prove the inapplicability of qiyās. For instance, if analogy was a valid method, then we could infer from the fact that a menstruous woman must make up fasting missed during her impurity that she should also make up missed prayers; but she is in fact not obliged by

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<sup>38</sup>K. Sulaym, p. 167.

<sup>39</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 69 {K. faḍl al-ʿilm, Bāb al-taghlīd, ḥadīth #2}. From the seventh imām.

<sup>40</sup>Barqī, Mahāsin, p. 114, ḥadīth #94; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 75 {K. faḍl al-ʿilm, Bāb al-bidaʿ wa-al-ra'y wa-al-maqā'is, ḥadīth #16}. The statement of the seventh imām opposing qiyās.

the law to make up her prayers.<sup>41</sup> If analogy were applied in this case, the result would be error. The reason for the difference cannot be determined by us; or perhaps it would be better to say that God is not bound in what He commands by what we see as reason or logic. Therefore qiyās not only does not lead toward the truth; it actually makes it more distant: "The practitioners of qiyās seek knowledge using their analogies; but that puts them only further away from the truth, for God's religion is not determined through analogies!"<sup>42</sup>

Final proof of the evil of qiyās is the fact that the first to employ it was Satan himself, as he concluded from the proposition that he was made from a substance superior to that of humankind (fire, instead of clay) that he should not be obliged to bow down to Adam as God had commanded.<sup>43</sup> Qiyās was therefore according to the Shī'ah "the first sin ever committed."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 214, ḥadīth #96. From the fifth imām. See also Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 15 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb al-bida° wa-al-ra'y..., ḥadīth #15} (from the sixth imām). For other examples of mistaken analogies, see: Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 114, #97; Ḥimyarī, Qurb, p. 211; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, pp. 144-145. Most of these are in refutation of Abū Ḥanīfah (concerning whom see below).

<sup>42</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 211, ḥadīth #79; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 72 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb al-bida° wa-al-ra'y..., ḥadīth #7}. From the sixth imām. See also ibid., p. 74, ḥadīth #14.

<sup>43</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 211, ḥadīth #80. See also ibid., ḥadīth #81; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 75 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb al-bida° wa-al-ra'y..., ḥadīth #18}; ibid., p. 76, ḥadīth #20.

<sup>44</sup>Qummi, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 42.

Despite these warnings, the reports picture the followers of the imāms applying to their masters for permission to use analogy - sometimes, apparently, after they had already done so. A companion of the seventh imām Mūsā ibn Ja°far came to him and said:

We meet together [to combine our resources], and find that we have something relevant to almost everything that is referred to us. This is God's blessing which He has bestowed on us through you. However, it also sometimes happens that things are referred to us and we find that we have nothing that is relevant - but we do have something that resembles it. Should we then, as best we can, draw an analogy?

The imām replied: "No! You should have nothing to do with qiyās." Then he said (perceiving whose hand was at work in the affair): "May God curse that person! It was ever his habit to say: '°Alī said,' and 'I said,' and 'the Companions [of the Prophet] said,' and 'I said' [citing their opinions and then deriving his own.]" Finally the imām gave his follower this advice: "If something comes to you that you know, pronounce on it, but if something comes that you do not know..." (and here he placed his hand over his mouth).<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 213, ḥadīth #91; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 73-74 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb al-bida° wa-al-ra'y..., ḥadīth #13} The ḥadīth continues: "...because the Prophet came to humankind with that which was sufficient for them in their age, and with whatever they shall need after his death until the Day of Judgement." See also Usūl, pp. 165-166 (a variant from the sixth imām); Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 72-73 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb al-bida°..., ḥadīth #9} (another variant from the seventh imām). A similar tradition from the eighth imām al-Ridā has him reply: "By God, this is not part of the religion of Ja°far (al-Sādiq)... (Ḥimyarī, Qurb, p. 209)!" For stories of other similar encounters see: Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 212, ḥadīths



The person meant by the seventh imām Mūsā is Abū Ḥanīfah (d. 150/767), the central figure of the Ḥanafī school of law. Qiyās is recognized as the method of Abū Ḥanīfah, and the tradition constantly condemns him for his practice of it.<sup>46</sup>

The use of judicial reasoning - of ra'y and qiyās - finally leads to bid'ah - to the innovation of legal rulings where none has come from the Prophet and imāms. The term 'bid'ah' is opposed to 'sunnah;' what is outside the sunnah, is bid'ah.<sup>47</sup> °Alī said: "No one has ever introduced an innovation (bid'ah) except that he has thereby abandoned a sunnah."<sup>48</sup> Such legal

#87, #88, & #89.

<sup>46</sup>In addition to examples already cited see Barqī, Mahāsin, p. 212, ḥadīth #89. Ra'y and qiyās are also attributed to the 'people of °Irāq' (Barqī, Mahāsin, p. 210, ḥadīth #77); Abū Ḥanīfah was in fact known as the founder of the Irāqī school of law. In ḥadīth #77 there also appears the figure of 'Ibn Shubramah,' a judge who is pictured as being troubled by the opposition of the imām to analogy. °Abd Allāh Ibn Shubramah (d. 144/761-762) was a Qādī in the service of the °Abbāsīd Mansūr; his charge was Kūfah, the Shī'ī 'capital' (see °Abbās al-Qummī, Safīnat al-Bihār, 2 vols. [Tehran: Intishārāt-i Kitābkhānah-yi Sa°dī, 1355/1936-7], vol. 1, p. 315). He combined his caliphal employ with a measure of sympathy for the Shī'ah; hence his attention to the words of the imām. Other mentions of Ibn Shubramah in: Barqī, Mahāsin, p. 206, #61; Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 146, ḥadīth #23 & p. 148, ḥadīth #8; al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 74 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb al-bida° wa-al-ra'y..., ḥadīth #14}.

<sup>47</sup>Eg. Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 90 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb al-akhḍh bi-al-sunnah wa-shawāhid al-Kitāb, ḥadīth #10}: "Who has an inclination toward sunnah is guided, and who has an inclination toward bid'ah, is gone astray."

<sup>48</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 75 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb al-bida° wa-al-ra'y..., ḥadīth #19}. See also *ibid.*, p. 90 {Bāb al-akhḍh bi-al-sunnah..., ḥadīth #10}: "Those whose natural

innovations are particularly dangerous because, being cobbled from truth and untruth, they are all the more attractive to the 'followers of Satan.'<sup>49</sup>

The originators of bid'ah are vigorously condemned. They are not to be respected (or perhaps what it meant by the tradition is that they do not receive the protection [ḥurmah] normally afforded Muslims)<sup>50</sup> and their repentance is not accepted;<sup>51</sup> for they intend to destroy Islam.<sup>52</sup> Their fault is that they 'follow their own desires (h-w-ā)' - that is they invent rulings to suit themselves and their ambitions, rather than conscientiously and humbly limiting themselves to the sayings of the Prophet and imāms.<sup>53</sup> In all this they are driven by love for the world; the reason they 'invent religion' is to gain wealth and position.<sup>54</sup>

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disposition is toward the sunnah are guided and those whose natural disposition is toward bid'ah are gone astray (from the fifth imām)."

<sup>49</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 208, ḥadīth #74 & p. 218, ḥadīth #114; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 69-70 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb al-bida° wa-al-ra'y..., ḥadīth #1}. Related from °Alī, through the fifth imām.

<sup>50</sup>Ḥimyarī, Qurb, p. 107 (according to the fifth imām).

<sup>51</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 207, ḥadīth #69 (according to the Prophet).

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 208, ḥadīth #72 (also according to the Prophet).

<sup>53</sup>Eg. ibid., p. 208, ḥadīth #74; Ḥimyarī, Qurb, p. 107.

<sup>54</sup>Eg. Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 207, ḥadīth #70.

Innovated legal rulings lead in turn to another evil. They introduce 'difference' (ikhtilāf) into the community.<sup>55</sup> Since (as was explained in the last chapter) the divine law is one and the Prophet has ruled on every matter, there can never be any contradiction in the commandments and prohibitions, and thus there is no reason for the Muslims to splinter into factions. But despite this the non-Shī'ah have fallen into confusion, for they have no living guide. They follow leaders whose judgement—even though they may believe that they have arrived at the right determination - is riddled with ikhtilāf.<sup>56</sup> The multiplicity of sects among them demonstrates their failure to travel together in the one true path.

If the Shī'ah, on the other hand, were to allow themselves to be guided only by the imāms, there would be no dispute among them. The fifth imām explains God's words "[Mankind] ceases not to differ, save those on whom your Lord has had mercy... (Q. 11:118-119)" as follows: "People differ in arriving at the true doctrine, and all of them are perished... excepting our Shī'ah, whom God created for His mercy."<sup>57</sup> All the Muslims are

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<sup>55</sup>Eg. ibid., p. 208, ḥadīth #74 & p. 218, ḥadīth #114; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 69-70 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb al-bida° wa-al-ra'y..., ḥadīth #1}; Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, p. 36.

<sup>56</sup>Eg. Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 360 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb fī sha'n 'innā anzalnā-hu fī laylat al-qadr wa-tafsīri-hā, ḥadīth #3}.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., vol. 2, p. 304 {Bāb fī nukat wa-nutaf min al-tanzīl fī al-wilāyah, ḥadīth #83}; Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 338. For other proof-verses relating to ikhtilāf see Nu°mānī, Ghaybah,

"overwhelmed, heedless, perplexed, and confused," but the ḥalāl and ḥarām of the imāms is one, without ikhtilāf, and the Shī'ah may rely in this on what was copied down by °Alī.<sup>58</sup> It is with the preservation of the accord of the community in mind that the Prophet states that the one who adheres to the sunnah in the face of ikhtilāf (that is who refuses judicial innovations) is given the reward of one hundred martyrs.<sup>59</sup>

The necessity of complete submission to the authority and the dicta of the imāms, of 'referring' to them all obscure matters and avoiding the temptation of relying on one's own intellect excludes any venture into the science of theology (kalām). To begin, theology, which requires the exercise of the intellect in constructing proofs and arguments, is completely contrary to the requirements of taslīm.

The most basic objection to theology is that it is based on limited and imperfect knowledge. Ja°far al-Şādiq said:

The theologians (aşḥāb al-kalām) are perished, and the

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pp. 32-33. But it is also said that "God has ordained ikhtilāf and disunity for this community [the Muslims] even though, had He wished, He could have guided all of them, and not two of them would have differed...." Here it is suggested that God introduced ikhtilāf into the world in order to heighten the difference between truth and error, and test His servants (K. Sulaym, p. 171).

<sup>58</sup>K. Sulaym, p. 207.

<sup>59</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 224, ḥadīth #144. As reported by the sixth imām.

'submitters' (al-musallimūn) are saved. They say: 'this should be admitted,' and 'that should not be admitted' [debating various propositions]. By God, had they knowledge of the cause of creation, not one of them would have differed with another!<sup>60</sup>

That is if the theologians had knowledge of the one and certain truth, they would not need to debate.<sup>61</sup> Why should they rely on useless conjecture when the true, complete, and certain knowledge is with the imāms, and salvation may be had by submitting to that knowledge? What use are their odious formulas, their 'qīl wa-qāl' ('if it is said....,' and 'he said')?<sup>62</sup>

Nor can the faithful follower of the imām if he is drawn into argument honestly offer ready answers to all the questions raised in the course of the debate. If something arises concerning which he has not yet heard anything from the imām he cannot, as a Shī'ī properly submissive to the imām, reason his reply. Muḥammad al-Bāqir enquired of his follower: "Do you debate (tukhāṣim) with people?" The man replied in the affirmative. "And do you have an answer for everything you are asked?" "Yes." Exasperated, the imām exclaimed: "What is it that you think you are supposed to refer (radd) to us?"<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 72.

<sup>61</sup>Uṣūl, pp. 64-65. The statement of the fifth imām.

<sup>62</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 269, ḥadīth #358; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 77-79 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb al-radd ilā al-Kitāb wa-al-sunnah, ḥadīth #5}.

<sup>63</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 213, ḥadīth #92.

Theology is worse than useless. As a form of argument, it is pernicious. This is because speculation on the nature of God (especially when aggravated by contention) is likely to violate His sanctity. Says Muḥammad al-Bāqir: "Avoid acrimonious debates (al-khuṣūmāt), which only lead to doubt, invalidate good works, and invite perdition - for it is possible that one might venture in the course of such debate things which would afterward not be forgiven by God!"<sup>64</sup> "Speak of God's creation," declares the fifth imām, "and not of God Himself; for speech concerning God ['al-kalām fī Allāh,' that is theological discourse] only increases the confusion of the speaker."<sup>65</sup> And there is always the danger that one might, in the heat of argument and through ignorance of the Book of God, make ḥalāl ḥarām, and ḥarām ḥalāl.<sup>66</sup> If a Shī'ī finds himself in a gathering where the talk turns to beliefs concerning God, it is best to pronounce the formula: "There is no god but the One God, whom nothing resembles,"<sup>67</sup> or simply to remain silent.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 125 (K. al-tawḥīd, Bāb al-nahī °an al-kalām fī al-kayfiyah, ḥadīth #4).

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., pp. 124-126, ḥadīths #1 & 7. See also ibid., vol. 3, p. 410 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-mirā' wa-al-khuṣūmah wa-mu°ādāt al-rijāl, ḥadīth #3}.

<sup>66</sup>Uṣūl, pp. 64-65. See also °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 18 {Chapter: Karāḥiyat al-jidāl fī al-Qur'ān}.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., vol. 1, p. 125 (K. al-tawḥīd, Bāb al-nahī °an al-kalām..., ḥadīth #3).

For the Shī'ah, in fact, venture into any area or discipline not pronounced upon by the imām is forbidden. Rather they are advised by the imāms to "speak if we speak, and be silent if we are silent."<sup>69</sup> Muḥammad al-Bāqir said: "Beware of liars and those who engage in acrimonious debate (khuṣūmāt). They have abandoned pursuit of the knowledge they were commanded to acquire, and set out to acquire knowledge they were never commanded to pursue - even going so far as to trouble themselves with astronomy!"<sup>70</sup>

ii. Taqīyah: 'Our ḥadīth is difficult...'

The true religion, the religion of the imāms and of their Shī'ah, cannot be promulgated for fear of the enemies of God, those whom God has allowed dominion over the earth until the coming of the Mahdī. It is for the Shī'ah only to endure this adversity. Their charge is not to give out the true doctrine, but only to keep it alive in their hearts and to preserve their

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid., ḥadīth #2. Added to this, argument is in itself an offence to adab, breeding enmity and hypocrisy. It is to be avoided even if one is in the right (ibid., vol. 3, pp. 409-411 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-mirā' wa-al-khuṣūmah...}).

<sup>69</sup>Uṣūl, p. 34; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 2 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb al-tāfwīḍ ilā Rasūl Allāh..., ḥadīth #1}. The statement of the sixth imām.

<sup>70</sup>Uṣūl, p. 27. The Prophet (as reported by the seventh imām) took the same attitude toward the Arab sciences of genealogy, battle-lore, and poetry, declaring: "They neither add to one's knowledge, nor reduce one's ignorance (Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 37-38 {K. faḍl al-ʿilm, Bāb ṣifat al-ʿilm..., ḥadīth #1})."

community which is its vessel. For this reason they are told to practise taqīyah (concealment of belief). A very large number of traditions are devoted to this subject.

It is often said in the ḥadīths that "Taqīyah is the shield of the believer."<sup>71</sup> The believers are called upon to prefer self-preservation to promulgation of their beliefs or even to merely open practice of their rituals; this is the meaning, according to the Shī'ah, of the verse of the Qur'ān that says: "Fear in the Way of God, and do not throw yourselves with your own hands into perdition (Q. 2:195)."<sup>72</sup> Taqīyah is finally elevated by tradition into a high principle of religion, thus the oft-repeated dictum: "He who has no taqīyah has no faith."<sup>73</sup> It is the principle the faithful Shī'ah are called upon to live by during the pre-ordained dawlah (rule or 'cycle') of their enemies, confident that they will have greater reward for their discretion and that it will be followed, with the coming of the

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<sup>71</sup>"Taqīyah junnat al-mu'min." Eg: Barqī, Mahāsin, p. 258, ḥadīth #301; Himyarī, Qurb, p. 25; Ash'arī, Basā'ir, p. 104; Kulaynī, al-Kāfi, vol. 3, p. 312 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-taqīyah, ḥadīth #14} Some Western scholars read: "Taqīyah jannat al-mu'min," thus: "Taqīyah is the Paradise of the believer." This reading does not seem to make good sense. In addition, the phrase sometimes appears as "Taqīyah turs al-mu'min;" turs means 'shield' (eg. *ibid.*, p. 312, ḥadīth #19 & p. 314, ḥadīth #23).

<sup>72</sup>Saffār, Basā'ir, p. 93, ḥadīth #19; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 87, ḥadīth #218.

<sup>73</sup>or "no religion." Eg: Ash'arī, Basā'ir, p. 101; Kulaynī, al-Kāfi, vol. 3, pp. 308-314 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-taqīyah}, *passim*.



Mahdī, by their own triumphant dawlah.<sup>74</sup>

Tagīyah begins, however, as a thoroughly practical principle, designed to ward off real dangers. This is proved by the numerous hadīths that cite specific instances of violation of tagīyah and offer practical advice for daily life lived according to it. One should not, for instance, greet the imām when one meets him, lest his identity be revealed;<sup>75</sup> the twelfth imām supposedly communicated in a letter the advice that certain Shī'ī officials should not visit the graves of the imāms in Iraq (i.e. that they should practice tagīyah in this regard), for the caliph had put a watch on these places.<sup>76</sup> Tagīyah "applies to every instance where it is necessary;"<sup>77</sup> but there are certain specific things to which it does not apply, such as drinking wine and 'wiping the feet' (the latter distinguishes the Shī'ah from the

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<sup>74</sup>For the two dawlahs see, eg: Uṣūl, p. 4; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 106, hadīth #108; *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 199, hadīth #145 & p. 325, hadīth #132; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 130-131 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb nādir fī ḥāl al-ghaybah, hadīth #3}; *ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 360 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb faḍl fuqarā' al-muslimīn, hadīth #7}; Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, pp. 128, 167 & 204.

<sup>75</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 310 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-taqiyah, hadīth #9}.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 467-468 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb mawlid al-ṣāhib, hadīth #31}.

<sup>77</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 259, hadīths #307 & 308; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 313 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-taqiyah, hadīth #18}.

rest of the community when they perform their ablutions).<sup>78</sup> When a ruler behaves badly, one should, while opposing him inwardly, take the precaution of mixing with his cohorts outwardly,<sup>79</sup> but because tagīyah is designed to avoid the shedding of blood, it is to be practised only so far as it serves that purpose; if the situation is such that blood will be shed in any case, it is no longer valid.<sup>80</sup> In general, one can resort to tagīyah in any time of need, but the one practising it is bound to know best when his circumstances require it.<sup>81</sup>

There are, however, other, more fundamental reasons why tagīyah must be practised. One is the inability of all but a few of mankind to carry the tremendous weight of truth, as indicated by the oft-cited saying of the imāms: "Our ḥadīth is 'difficult' ('ṣa'ib), such that none can bear it save an angel near to God (muqarrab, = cherub), a prophet sent with a message (nabī murassal), or the servant whose heart God has tested for faith." The 'few' are the Shī'ah.<sup>82</sup> Another is the sanctity of the

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<sup>78</sup>Barqī, Mahāsin, ḥadīth #309. See also Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 244 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb fī-mā yūjib al-ḥaqq li-man intaḥala al-īmān wa-yanquḍu-hu}.

<sup>79</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 313 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-taqīyah, ḥadīth #20}. From the fifth imām.

<sup>80</sup>Barqī, Mahāsin, p. 259, ḥadīth #310. From the fifth imām.

<sup>81</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 311 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-taqīyah, ḥadīth #13}. From the fifth imām.

<sup>82</sup>This formula is repeated many times in the sources, on the authority of different imāms. See for example Saffār, Basā'ir, pp. 20-28 and Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 253-257 {K. al-

divine mystery, so pure and inaccessible - "a secret veiled in a secret"<sup>83</sup> - that to allow it to be heard by any but the elect is violation. "God," said the sixth imām, "likes to be worshipped in secret."<sup>84</sup> And °Alī himself exhorted his followers: "Preserve the ḥadīth with kitmān ('keeping secret'), and put the secret of faith in your heart."<sup>85</sup> Both themes - the sanctity of the truth and the unbearableness of the truth - are evident in the discussion below.

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ḥujjah, Bāb fī-mā jā'a anna ḥadītha-hum ṣa'ab, mustas'ab). The restrictions 'near angels,' etc., exclude those of the angels, prophets, and servants not so qualified (Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 25, ḥadīth #19, p. 26, ḥadīth #1, & p. 28, ḥadīth #9; Furāt, Tafsīr, pp. 161-162; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, pp. 123-124 & 126). For the angels were unable to 'bear' knowledge in that they refused to bow down to Adam; and the Prophet Moses was unable to bear it because he could not imagine that he did not have all the knowledge in his Torah and that there was another on the earth more learned than him (Khidr); and the greater part of mankind unable in that they refused the wilāyah of °Alī proclaimed to them at Ghadīr Khumm (Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 7; from °Alī)./ The word 'ḥadīth' is sometimes replaced by 'amr,' in which case it is understanding and acceptance of the rule or appointment of the imāms that is difficult to accept.

<sup>83</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 28-29, passim; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, pp. 126 & 127. Ja°far al-Ṣādiq warned: "Our 'affair' is wrapped and veiled in the covenant (mīthāq), and who tears the curtain, God shall bring him low (Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 320 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-kitmān, ḥadīth #15}; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, pp. 126-127)."

<sup>84</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 309 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-taqiyah, ḥadīth #7}; ibid., p. 317 {Bāb al-kitmān, ḥadīth #8}; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, pp. 101, 105, & 106. The statement may also be directed against ostentation in worship: cf. Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, pp. 261-262 {K. al-du'ā', Bāb dhikr Allāh fī al-sirr} & Himyarī, Qurb, p. 84: "The devotion (°ibādah) with the greatest reward is the one kept most secret" (the Prophet, reported by Ja°far al-Ṣādiq).

<sup>85</sup>Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 100. Related from °Alī. Kitmān is equivalent in meaning to taqiyah.

Taqīyah, according to Shī'ī tradition, is part of the custom of the ancient prophets and past communities. When, for instance, Joseph had his brothers accused of theft (while he knew that they had not stolen anything), and when Moses said: "I am sick," (which he was not), they were practising taqīyah.<sup>86</sup> The 'people of the cave' also concealed their true religion, even going so far as to worship other gods, evincing polytheism and keeping their faith secret in their hearts, and for this God gave them a great reward.<sup>87</sup> In fact, their reward for pretending kufr was greater than the reward for keeping the secrets of their true faith!<sup>88</sup> Thus the secret of God has always been concealed throughout history; according to the eighth imām al-Riḍā, the keeping of it is in fact the sunnah of God which

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<sup>86</sup>Barqī, Mahāsin, p. 258, ḥadīth #303; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 308 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-taqīyah, ḥadīth #3}. The Qur'ān relates how Joseph had a drinking-cup inserted into his brother's saddlebag while he was in Egypt, so that he would be able to detain him (Q. 12:70 ff.). Moses claimed he was sick, and so his people 'turned their backs' and went away from him so that he was left alone to destroy their idols (Q. 23:89 ff.).

<sup>87</sup>Usūl, p. 114; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, pp. 321-323, ḥadīths #4-11; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, pp. 309-310 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-taqīyah, ḥadīth #8}; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 100. The story of the people of the Cave is told in Q. 18:9-26; they were youths who fled to a cave in order not to compromise their beliefs and were miraculously made to sleep for more than three hundred years. The story recalls the Christian legend of the seven sleepers of Ephesus.

<sup>88</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 323, ḥadīth #9.

humankind was obliged to take upon itself.<sup>89</sup> Muḥammad al-Bāqir was told that Ḥasan al-Baṣrī had claimed that those who kept °ilm secret would be tormented by the people of the Fire with wind in their bellies (that is it would be uncomfortably kept inside them, just as they had once kept inside them knowledge that should have been allowed to escape and circulate). The imām commented: "[If this were true], then the 'believer of the Family of Pharaoh' would have perished! Rather °ilm has remained ever hidden (maktūm) since God sent Noah...."<sup>90</sup>

Thus it is with the Prophet of Islam and his successors the imāms. Because "God refused to be worshipped except in secret until the proper time should come for His religion to be manifested" Muḥammad and his wife Khadījah concealed their faith until God ordered it to be announced. °Alī also did not make his islām public until the appointed time. And so it shall be throughout history. The full truth of the amr of the imāms shall

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<sup>89</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 339 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-mu'min wa-°alāmāti-hi wa-ṣifāti-hi, ḥadīth #39}. The word used is 'kitmān.'

<sup>90</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 9, ḥadīth #1; ibid., p. 10, ḥadīth #6; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 64 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb al-nawādir [annex to Bāb luzūm al-ḥujjah], ḥadīth #15}. Or according to the sixth imām, vicegerency and 'kitmān' have been paired ever since Adam bequeathed his office to Abel (Hābīl) and to Seth (Hibat Allāh) (Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 10, ḥadīth #5; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 103). The 'believer of the family of Pharaoh' refers to the wife of Pharaoh who believed in God and wished to save the infant Moses because she belonged to the faith of his people, yet concealed her faith under taqiyah (see Q. 28:9).

not be made apparent until the time indicated in the Book,<sup>91</sup> and the Shī'ah should not ask them for that knowledge before it appears of itself.<sup>92</sup>

Nevertheless, the proper initiates of the rare knowledge of Muḥammad and his descendants the imāms - in whatever measure it is to be revealed - are the Shī'ah, for as the imāms were ordered by God to propagate the 'secret' (sirr) and the °ilm they were given by Him, they found no one to deposit it with other than this community. The Shī'ah alone were worthy because they were created to receive the knowledge: they were created of the same clay and of the same light as Muḥammad and his family.<sup>93</sup>

But it is also stated that the number of persons able to endure even among the Shī'ah is few. Ja'far al-Ṣādiq reports that he brought up the subject of tagīyah one day in the presence of his grandfather °Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn (the fourth imām), who was moved to declare:

By God, if Abū Dharr knew what was in the heart of Salmān [al-Fārisī] he would have killed him - and the Prophet had made them 'brothers!' What then do you think would happen to the rest of the people [if the complete truth were revealed to them]? The knowledge

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<sup>91</sup>Kulaynī, vol. 1, pp. 364-365 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb fī sha'n innā anzalnā-hu fī laylat al-qadr, ḥadīth #6}. From the fifth imām.

<sup>92</sup>See K. Sulaym, p. 141. Related from °Alī.

<sup>93</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 255-257 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb fī-mā jā'a anna ḥadītha-hum ṣa'ab, mustaṣ'ab, ḥadīth #5}. From the sixth imām.

possessed by learned men seems difficult, and is indeed so; none can bear it except a prophet sent with a message....<sup>94</sup>

The veil of tagīyah is to be lifted only gradually and most carefully, for the °ilm is such that it invites resistance and denial.<sup>95</sup> One can only tell if a person is a good prospect by allowing him to hear a little of the truth and then, if he appears to hold up under the strain, a little more. "Give a little at a time," °Alī advised his followers, "and then give more to those who approve (°-r-f) of what you say, and withhold from those who deny (n-k-r) it."<sup>96</sup> One should only guide an aspirant if he specifically asks for guidance, and then cautiously reveal more only if he asks for more. If instead he begins to 'resist' or 'oppose' (i-h-d) that which has been revealed to him, an equal and opposite reaction is called for: "If he asks you for guidance, guide him, and if he asks for more, give him more; but if he opposes you, oppose him."<sup>97</sup>

This procedure avoids shocking people with words alien to their limited and comfortable belief. That would only make them

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<sup>94</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 25, ḥadīth #21; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 254 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb fī-mā jā'a anna ḥadītha-hum ṣa°b, mustaṣ°ab, ḥadīth #2}; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, pp. 124-125.

<sup>95</sup>See Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, p. 93.

<sup>96</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 21; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 124. See also Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 23, ḥadīths #12 & #14; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 100; Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, pp. 21-22 & 136.

<sup>97</sup>Barqī, Mahāsin, p. 232, ḥadīth #184. The statement of the fifth imām.

draw away, whereas the goal should be to gradually cultivate their interest and affections, as the sixth imām says: "God bless him who attracts the love of people toward himself."<sup>98</sup> Lack of caution both exposes the hearer to the personal danger of denial, and the inviolate truth to insult.<sup>99</sup> Thus promulgation (idhā'ah, the opposite of taqīyah and kitmān) is equal to 'opposing' the imāms not only because it places them in physical danger, but because it is likely to incite others, including their followers, to reject them and cause the truth to be denied. This is why the duty of the Shī'ah in 'bearing' the ḥadīth is not only to know and accept it, but also to preserve it from those who are not worthy of it.<sup>100</sup>

Taqīyah applies in different ways to different types of ḥadīth. Some knowledge the imāms keep entirely to themselves, either because it was never meant to be revealed to mankind in the time before the coming of the Mahdī, or simply because they fear the consequences for themselves and their followers if their

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<sup>98</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 315 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-kitmān, ḥadīth #5}; Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 101; and see the references in the following note.

<sup>99</sup>See: Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 100; Nu'mānī, Ghaybah, pp. 21-22. It was apparently this fear that prompted Sulaym ibn Qays al-Hilālī to caution Abān when he turned his collection over to him: "There are in this book certain ḥadīths that I would not like to be made public, for people will either deny them or make too much of them [reject them or base upon them extreme and exaggerated doctrines]... (K. Sulaym, p. 57)."

<sup>100</sup>Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 101; Nu'mānī, Ghaybah, pp. 21-22, *passim* & p. 23.



unconventional doctrine should come to the notice of those who cannot understand it. The imāms can never speak the whole of God's truth because even the best of their followers will be overwhelmed by it or will commit kufr by rejecting what they have to say.<sup>101</sup> The eighth imām al-Riḍā upon being asked about the vision of God (ru'yā) simply refused to answer, saying only: "If we were to give to you everything you wanted, it would be harmful for you, and the 'Master of the this Affair' [that is the imām, meaning himself] would be seized by his neck!"<sup>102</sup> Another portion of the °ilm is only for the select few, and a certain part may be revealed to the multitude:

Some of our ḥadīths we relate freely from the pulpits, and they are adornment for us and put our enemies to shame. Others we speak of only to our Shī'ah, and they in turn speak of them only when they gather by themselves or visit one another. Then there are those of our ḥadīths we relate only to one person or two persons - certainly not as many as three. And finally there are the ḥadīths we entrust only to high fortresses, to secure hearts, firm minds, and unshakable intellects....<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup>Thus Ja'far al-Sādiq declared that he would only relate a portion of the 'rights of a believer over another believer' because he 'feared that it could not be borne' by his questioner! (Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, pp. 252-253 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb ḥaqq al-mu'min °alā akhī-hi..., ḥadīth #14}. See also ibid., pp. 274-275 {Bāb idkhāl al-surūr °alā al-mu'minīn, ḥadīth #10}).

<sup>102</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 318 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-kitmān, ḥadīth #10}; Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 104. This ḥadīth is discussed in Chapter VII, in the section on the divine vision.

<sup>103</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 132. From °Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad, the militant Hasanid! For this reason Ja'far al-Sādiq told his companion to gather at different times with people of different degrees of understanding, rather than to keep his rarest knowledge completely to himself (Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, pp. 102-103).

If a Shī'ī relates a saying of the imām to one who cannot bear it and is not fit to hear it, he is worthy to be cursed and the imām does barā'ah of him, that is he disassociates himself from him entirely;<sup>104</sup> that he had transmitted the ḥadīth accurately does not help him.<sup>105</sup>

Taqīyah among the circle of the believers is necessary and severe because of the carelessness of most of them. Ja'far al-Ṣādiq witnessed the behaviour of his Shī'ah as they promulgated his ḥadīth and remarked in disgust: "These people claim that I am their imām. By God, I am not any such thing! May God curse them; whenever I keep a secret, they violate it...."<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup>Barā'ah is the opposite of wilāyah; it is a kind of formal disavowal. The faithful Shī'ah are called upon to do barā'ah of the enemies of the imāms at the same time that they confirm their wilāyah - their loyalty to them. A discussion of this important concept in Shiism in: E. Kohlberg, "Barā'a in Shii Doctrine," Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam 7 (1986): 139-175. For barā'ah in the ḥadīth and its pairing with wilāyah see, eg: K. Sulaym, pp. 85, 102 & 106; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 155, ḥadīth #155; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 300-301 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb mā farāda Allāh... wa-rasūlu-hu min al-kawn ma'a al-a'immaḥ, ḥadīth #7}; ibid., vol. 2, p. 11 {Bāb anna al-a'immaḥ bi-man yushbihūn mimman maḍā wa-karāhiyat al-qawl fī-him bi-al-nubūwah, ḥadīth #6} (Ja'far al-Ṣādiq pronounces a formula of barā'ah from those who consider the imāms gods); ibid., vol. 3, pp. 310-311 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-taqīyah, ḥadīth #10} (permission given by °Alī to his followers to do barā'ah of him as a measure of taqīyah).

<sup>105</sup>Nu'mānī, Ghaybah, p. 23. From the sixth imām, with the comment of the author. See also Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, p. 78 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-idhā'ah, ḥadīth #10}.

<sup>106</sup>Nu'mānī, Ghaybah, p. 23. See also Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 102.

Muḥammad al-Bāqir, in a similar mood, declared: "God confided his secret to Gabriel, who confided it to Muḥammad, who confided it to °Alī, who then passed it on to those whom he wished, one after the other [the imāms] - and now you talk about it in the streets!"<sup>107</sup>

If the imāms could have relied on the secret being kept they would have revealed much more of the knowledge they possess. The fifth imām says: "By God, if your mouths were tied with thongs [if you were so reluctant to speak that one might think your mouths were bound: a phrase common in the tradition] I would have told every man among you what was in store for him..."<sup>108</sup> Alī too declared in his time that he was willing to divulge a portion of the 'abundant °ilm' with which the Prophet had filled his breast, if only he were able to find someone to preserve it and relate it exactly as he heard it.<sup>109</sup> Muḥammad al-Bāqir sought only three men together to whom he could divulge his °ilm, and if he had found these he would, he claimed, have told them

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<sup>107</sup>Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, p. 32; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, pp. 104-105; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 318 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-kitmān, ḥadīth #10}. In Ash°arī and Kulaynī's version the fifth imām remarks: "Who among you has ever heard a word and refrained from repeating it?"

<sup>108</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 258, ḥadīth #304; Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 422-423, passim; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 104; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 394 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb anna al-a'immaḥ law sutira °alay-him la-akhbarū kulla imri'in bi-mā la-hu wa-°alay-hi, ḥadīth #1}; Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, p. 23 (in this case from the sixth imām).

<sup>109</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 305, ḥadīth #12. See also Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 105.

everything about the ḥalāl and the ḥarām until the rising of the Qā'im.<sup>110</sup>

Furthermore, if the imāms could have trusted their companions (aṣḥāb) to say exactly as they said and no more, they would have acknowledged them as such (implying that they are reluctant to designate members of their inner circle because of the authority this would lend misrepresentations of their doctrine). Do not Abū Ḥanīfah and Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (who, it is suggested, are ignorant men) have aṣḥāb? Should not then the imāms, who have knowledge of all that is in the universe, have their own aṣḥāb? (yet they cannot, since there are no reliable persons to be found).<sup>111</sup>

It appears that at one time the imāms were able to place confidence in their followers and to tell them everything they wanted to know. This occurred during the imāmates of °Alī 'the Commander of the Believers' and his son, the martyr Ḥusayn: thus at the points at which there were political uprisings and, in the view of the later Shi'ah, a foretaste of messianic fulfillment. Abū Baṣir was told by Ja°far al-Ṣādiq that the 'door' (to the knowledge of the imāms) had been opened to the companions of

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<sup>110</sup>Uṣūl, p. 91; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, pp. 99 & 106; *ibid.*, p. 98 (in this case related from the sixth imām). See also Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 340 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb fī qillat °adad al-mu'minīn, ḥadīth #3}.

<sup>111</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 316 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-kitmān, ḥadīth #5}; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 101.

Husayn for a time during his reign; for in that period "there were on their mouths thongs [they behaved as if their mouths were bound and could be trusted to keep the secret]." <sup>112</sup> But the age of knowledge came to an end because the followers of the imāms after could no longer be relied on to keep their taqīyah. Abū Baṣīr asked Ja'far: "Is there no one to tell us about what is in the future, as 'Alī used to do for his companions [i.e. do you not have the same knowledge]?" "By God, yes!" the imām replied. "But can you give me an example of one ḥadīth I have related to you which you have kept secret?" Abū Baṣīr recalls: "By God, I could not think of one!" <sup>113</sup>

The imposition of taqīyah from this point of view is a kind of a punishment, a postponement of the truth necessitated by the fewness of those worthy of it. It is also one of the causes for God's denial of the political hopes of the Shī'ah; according to

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<sup>112</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 260-261, ḥadīths #1 & #4. See also Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 395 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb anna al-a'immah law sutira 'alay-him..., ḥadīth #2}. In Kulaynī's version the imām says: "This door has been closed - except that Husayn ibn 'Alī opened it just a little...."

<sup>113</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 258, ḥadīth #305; *ibid.*, p. 261, ḥadīth #5. See also *ibid.*, p. 262, ḥadīth #5; in this report it is made clear that the knowledge given out by 'Alī was the times of the deaths of his followers. In another tradition the sixth imām suggests that the taqīyah was first broken with the advent of the Abbasids: "Our secret was well-kept (maktūm) until it got into the hands of the Kaysānīs and they talked about it on the streets and in the villages of Iraq (al-sawād) (Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 316 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-kitmān, ḥadīth #6})." 'Kaysānīs' here refers to a movement in favour of the imāmate and rule of Muḥammad al-Hanafīyah, another of the sons of 'Alī. The group rose up and seized Kufah in 66-7/685-7, but was soon defeated.

Ja°far al-Şādiq, the realization of the amr of the imāms was put forward by God because people noised it about (this after it had already been put off because of the martyrdom of Ḥusayn).<sup>114</sup> Or tagīyah is a 'trial,' one of many which the Shī°ah undergo in this world to prove their faith, as in the words of Ja°far al-Şādiq: "Our Shī°ah are tested... by their keeping of our secrets."<sup>115</sup> The tagīyah of fear and physical restraint was lifted in the time of °Alī and Ḥusayn when the force of the believers was sufficient. But when this was no longer so the age of ṣabr (patience; forbearance) returned, and that shall end only with the coming of the Mahdī. The 'esoteric' tagīyah also shall end only when the Mahdī returns, "at which point the Qur'ān shall confirm all that he says" (that is all that was hidden will become apparent and be shown to tally with the Qur'ān).<sup>116</sup>

In the meantime the tagīyah of the imāms is so deep that they may in order to conceal the doctrine and preserve the community deliberately give out other than the truth. Zurārah ibn A°yan, the associate of the fifth imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir, reports that he received an answer to a question he had submitted to the imām, and then heard him give different answers to two other petitioners. He asked him: "How is it that two men, both

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<sup>114</sup>Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 102.

<sup>115</sup>Himyarī, Qurb, p. 52.

<sup>116</sup>Şaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 28, ḥadīth #8 & p. 21, ḥadīth #3.

from Iraq and both members of your Shi'ah, come to you and you give each one a different answer?" The imām replied: "This is better and safer; for if you were to all behave in the same way people would know for certain that you were our followers, and both our lives and yours would be in danger."<sup>117</sup> Still the course of the believer is to follow the false opinion necessitated by taqīyah - that is to adhere unfailingly to the principle of taslīm. In fact if he does not follow it, he has sinned!<sup>118</sup> It is, as always, obedience to the imām that rules, rather than determination of the true law; the salvation of a believer following a 'false' opinion issued by the imām under

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<sup>117</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 84-85 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb ikhtilāf al-ḥadīth, ḥadīth #5}. Zurārah recalls that he also asked this question of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq and received the same answer. The reference to Iraq is significant. The movement of the Shi'ah was centered in the territory of Iraq, and within Iraq in the town of Kūfah. The ḥadīths recall many excellences of Kūfah; the sixth imām says: "God offered our wilāyah to the people of all the regions, and no one consented except the people of Kūfah (Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 76, ḥadīth #1)!" 'Syria' (al-Shā'm), on the other hand, is the centre of anti-Shiism; the people of Syria, says Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, "are worse than even the people of al-Rūm (Byzantium), for the Byzantines reject belief but are not enemies to us, while the Syrians both reject belief and are our enemies (Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, p. 134 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb fī ṣunūf ahl al-khilāf, ḥadīth #5})." The fifth imām mentions the 'Sha'mī' in the same breath as the 'nāṣib,' Murji'ī, Qadari, and Khawārij (Uṣūl, p. 154)!

<sup>118</sup>According to the fifth imām. Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 84 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb ikhtilāf al-ḥadīth, ḥadīth #4}. But see *ibid.*, p. 85, ḥadīth #6: "They who know that we speak only the truth [i.e. our Shi'ah] may confine themselves to what they already know from us; if they should hear something attributed to us that contradicts what they already know, they may assume that we issued it in order to protect them." Related from the sixth imām.

taqīyah is assured simply by his act of compliance.<sup>119</sup>

But perhaps the strangest use of taqīyah - although one which is not inconsistent with Shī'ī predestinarianism - is to lead those who are astray further along the path of error. The sixth imām caught sight of a man who had come to ask a question and immediately declared (no doubt recognizing, as the imāms are able to do, that he was not one of those created a Shī'ī): "By God, I shall lead him astray; I shall delude him!" They sat down together so that the man could submit his question, and Ja'far gave his answer. When the man had gone the imām said: "I have given him an opinion that will lead him astray (aftay-tu-hu bi-al-ḍalālah), one in which there is no guidance (hidāyah)!" The same man came during the imāmate of the seventh imām Mūsā ibn Ja'far and asked the same question again. This time Mūsā gave him the correct answer - but only in order to confuse him further!<sup>120</sup> It is reported that the eighth imām al-Riḍā used in the presence of non-Shī'īs to deliberately greet the Prophet at his grave in a manner different than usual. When asked about

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<sup>119</sup>Ibid., p. 84, hadīth #4. Or, according to one hadīth, God shall ensure that the servant hears of the right opinion and is given a chance to perform the righteous act before he dies. Ja'far al-Ṣādiq was asked by his companion Abū Baṣīr: "Suppose there is a man who receives an invalid ruling (amr bāṭil) from you, and then dies [still believing in it and following it - what is his position]?" The imām replied: "God will find a way out for him." Abū Baṣīr, not satisfied, persisted: "But if he dies in that state.....?" The imām replied: "He shall not die until God finds a way out for him (Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 96)."

<sup>120</sup>Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, pp. 94-95.



this he only recommended to the Shī'ah that they do the same, citing his grandfather Ja'far al-Ṣādiq's remark concerning one of the Murji'ites: "By God, I shall lead him astray!"<sup>121</sup>

iii. °ilm: 'The pursuit of knowledge is a religious duty.'

The word '°ilm' has been introduced as a term designating the knowledge of the imāms, and especially 'the knowledge that appears by night and by day' through which the imāms are made aware of emerging events and developing circumstances. °ilm, however, has other meanings. °ilm is the sayings of the imāms as they are communicated to their followers (the ḥadīths). It is, in other words, the traditional knowledge possessed by the faithful. It is also, in a wider sense, the wisdom and piety that results in the hearts of the Shī'ah as they assimilate the words of the imāms. It is not too much to say that with the transfer of the knowledge of the imāms to the Shī'ah they also absorb a part of their charisma. Just as the °ilm of the imāms is at the core of their mystery and their authority, so the °ilm of the Shī'ah which they derive from their imāms is at the centre of their religious life and one of the sources of their privileged position.

Similarly, the word '°ālim,' which sometimes refers specifically to the imām, is also the title for a person learned

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<sup>121</sup>Ḥimyarī, Qurb, p. 230.

in the ḥadīth.<sup>122</sup> Here it should be understood that an ʿālim (savant) in the usage of the Shīʿī tradition is not necessarily a member of a particular class of learned men - although the one who has truly become ʿālim carries the obligation to preserve and transmit the traditions to other members of the community. All the Shīʿah are called upon to be ʿālim, in the special sense urged by the imāms. Moreover, by 'ʿālim,' as well as the related terms 'ʿāqil' and 'faqīh' (from 'fiqh:' speculative meditation) is meant not only those who preserve the ḥadīth but also persons who through assimilation of the wisdom of the imāms have refined their moral sense. An ʿālim is not only a learned man, but a pious man.

The opposite of 'ʿālim' is 'jāhil' (ignorant person). 'Jāhil' is used in two senses. The jāhil may be one who is willfully ignorant. Although he has intelligence and has acquired some kinds of knowledge, he will not be restrained from his jahl. This type of ignorant person is one who only claims ʿilm and is deluded by the ʿilm he thinks he possesses; he does not have the real and the only ʿilm, which is the ʿilm that comes

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<sup>122</sup>It is not in every case clear when the word 'ʿālim' is used whether it is the imāms that are meant or those learned in their ḥadīths. Sometimes phrases which clearly have to do with the imāms' ʿilm (and appear in other traditions in that context) are inserted into ḥadīths having to do with the derived 'knowledge' of their followers. Or it may happen that a tradition that appears to have more to do with the ʿilm of the imāms is placed in a chapter the subject of which is the ʿilm (in the alternate sense) of the savant. This is a creative confusion, as it allows the savant to share further in the aura of the imāms.

from the imāms.<sup>123</sup> Or the term 'jāhil' may be used of one who merely does not have the full measure of the °ilm or does not know a certain thing; °Alī said (as reported by the fifth imām): "The jāhil if he does not know should not be ashamed to learn."<sup>124</sup>

. The °ālim is superior to the ordinary servant of God in every way. The Prophet said (as reported by the sixth imām): "The excellence of the °ālim over others who worship God (°ābid) is like that of the moon over the stars on a night when the moon is full."<sup>125</sup> If a 'faqīh' is lost the damage to Islam is incalculable, and the angels weep.<sup>126</sup> One widely-reported tradition divides humanity into three classes: the °ālim (apparently either the imāms alone, or the imāms and some of the elite); the 'aspirants to °ilm (muta°allim);' and the rest of humanity, who are described as 'dross' or 'scum.'<sup>127</sup> The knowledge of the savant also results in a commensurately greater

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<sup>123</sup>See for instance Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 41 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb aṣnāf al-nās, ḥadīth #1}.

<sup>124</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 229, ḥadīth #164.

<sup>125</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 3, ḥadīth #2; ibid., pp. 6-8; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 42 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb thawāb al-°ālim wa-al-muta°allim, ḥadīth #1}. See also ibid., p. 40 {Bāb ṣifat al-°ilm wa-faḍli-hi wa-faḍl al-°ulamā', ḥadīths #8 & #9}.

<sup>126</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 46-48 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb faḍl al-°ulamā', ḥadīth #6}.

<sup>127</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 8-9; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 41-42 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb aṣnāf al-nās, ḥadīth #4}. From the sixth imām. 'Scum' = ghuthā', a Qur'ānic word (23:41, 87:5).

responsibility than the jāhil, and thus he is more severely punished for his sins.<sup>128</sup>

The faithful Shī'ah are ever obliged to seek the knowledge of the imāms from those who carry it. In this they must never rest. "The pursuit of knowledge," said Ja'far al-Šādiq, "is a religious duty (farīdah)."<sup>129</sup> Said Muḥammad al-Bāqir: "Seek knowledge of the ḥalāl and ḥarām, for if you do not, you are no better than an 'Arab' [an ignorant bedouin]."<sup>130</sup> Journeys in search of knowledge are particularly recommended.<sup>131</sup> Even if one is already aware of the 'affair' of the imāms, it is not permitted to him to rest and isolate himself from his brothers in religion. He cannot stay in his house; he must continue to go out to search for knowledge.<sup>132</sup> Moreover, if a Shī'ī has a 'legal problem' (mas'alah), he absolutely must seek the answer to

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<sup>128</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfi, vol. 1, pp. 59-60 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb luzūm al-ḥujjah °alā al-°ālim wa-tashdīd al-amr °alay-hi}. See the next section on °aql.

<sup>129</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 225, ḥadīth #146; Šaffār, Bašā'ir, pp. 2-3 (here also related from °Alī and the Prophet); Kulaynī, al-Kāfi, vol. 1, pp. 35-36 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb farḍ al-°ilm wa-wujūb ṭalabi-hi wa-al-ḥathth °alay-hi}, passim.

<sup>130</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 227, ḥadīth #158; *ibid*, p. 228, ḥadīth #162 & p. 229, ḥadīth #163; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 118, ḥadīth #162.

<sup>131</sup>Šaffār, Bašā'ir, p. 3, ḥadīth #2 & p. 4, ḥadīth #6.

<sup>132</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfi, vol. 1, p. 36 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb farḍ al-°ilm wa-wujūb ṭalabi-hi..., ḥadīth #9}. The statement of the sixth imām.

it. It is not allowed to him to simply 'leave' it<sup>133</sup> - for God has made guidance available in every thing, and there is a 'light' to lead to every correct determination (ṣawāb).<sup>134</sup> Even if there is not an immediate problem to be addressed, one should seek knowledge (t-f-gg-h) in order to store it up for the future.<sup>135</sup> Ja°far al-Ṣādiq says: "There is upon this °ilm a lock, and the key is asking the question."<sup>136</sup>

Added to this, the recitation, circulation, and discussion of the imāms' tradition of itself refines the mind, as the Prophet reveals in this striking metaphor: "Consult together, meet together, and speak together - for the ḥadīth polishes the heart; the heart is able to be polished just as a sword is

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<sup>133</sup>Barqī, Mahāsin, p. 225, ḥadīth #148; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 35 {K. fadl al-°ilm, Bāb fard al-°ilm wa-wujūb talabihī..., ḥadīth #3}. The statement of the seventh imām. Ja°far al-Ṣādiq says: "No one is free of obligation until he asks, or seeks to acquire knowledge (t-f-gg-h) [of what he needs] (Barqī, Mahāsin, p. 225, ḥadīth #147)."

<sup>134</sup>Barqī, Mahāsin, p. 226, ḥadīth #150. The statement of the sixth imām.

<sup>135</sup>Ibid., p. 229, ḥadīth #167. From the sixth imām.

<sup>136</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 49 {K. fadl al-°ilm, Bāb su'āl al-°ālim..., ḥadīth #3}. Kulaynī says in the preface to his Kāfī: "The true believers are not permitted to remain in a state of jahl - for God has commanded them to ask and to reflect (t-f-gg-h) on religion.... [If they were so permitted] God would not have commanded them to ask [as He has, in the Qur'ānic verses quoted earlier by Kulaynī] and there would be no need to send prophets and books and lay down rules for the proper conduct of life - and people would be no better than animals (vol. 1, pp. 5-6)." Here Kulaynī gives a rational explanation for this essentially pietistic principle.

polished, and it is polished by the ḥadīth."137 Whatever °ilm is retrieved must be the object of continued reflexion. °Alī said: "There is no good in an °ilm in which there is not tafahhum (attempt at understanding), and no good in a recitation in which there is not tadabbur (meditation), and no good in worship in which there is not tafakkur (contemplation)."138

There is another, from the Shī'ī point of view extremely compelling reason for the acquisition of °ilm. If the Shī'ah do not find themselves independent in their knowledge (fiqh) - that is if they do not find the answer to everything they seek within their own circle - they will be forced to ask those who are not Shī'īs, and will certainly be led astray by them.139 The faithful must at every turn avoid resorting to the rule and judgement of non-Shī'īs, who do not share in the true knowledge and whose authority is false. This measure is designed to preserve the integrity of the minority community of the Shī'ah; the result is a kind of self-segregation, as is evident also from a number of traditions recommending psychological, if not social,

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137Ibid., p. 50 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb su'āl al-°ālim wa-tadhākuri-hi, ḥadīth #8}.

138Ibid., p. 44 {Bāb ṣifat al-°ulamā', ḥadīth #3}. The most commonly used terms are tafakkur and tafaqquh (study). These values are recommended frequently in the traditions; for examples see: Usūl, p. 109; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 118, ḥadīth #162; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, pp. 91-92 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-tafakkur}; ibid., vol. 1, p. 33 {K. al-°aql wa-al-jahl, ḥadīth #34}.

140Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 40 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb ṣifat al-°ilm wa-faḍli-hi wa-faḍl al-°ulamā', ḥadīth #6}.

separation.<sup>140</sup>

Once a Shī'ī becomes °ālim, he incurs the responsibility of propagating the °ilm he has acquired. The one who keeps his °ilm to himself is cursed by all God's creatures;<sup>141</sup> "the zakāt (purifactory offering) of °ilm," says the fifth imām, "is that you teach it to the servants to God."<sup>142</sup> A Shī'ī who has any amount of knowledge must preserve it by transmitting it: "Gather °ilm from those who carry it and then teach it to your brothers, just as the °ulamā' [apparently here meaning the imāms] taught it to you."<sup>143</sup> The passing on of even a bit of knowledge secures eternal reward;<sup>144</sup> for one who teaches the words of the imāms all the world asks forgiveness - the angels and all God's creatures great and small, even to the beasts on land and fish in the

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<sup>140</sup>Eg: ibid., vol. 4, pp. 82-89 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb mujālasat ahl al-ma'āsi}; ibid., vol. 1, p. 48 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb mujālasat al-°ulamā', ḥadīth #1}; ibid., vol. 3, p. 335 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-mu'min wa-°alāmāti-hi wa-ṣifāti-hi, ḥadīth #27}: "Our Shī'ah... do not sit with our enemies (the sixth imām)."

<sup>141</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 231, ḥadīth #177. The statement of °Alī.

<sup>142</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 51 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb badhl al-°ilm, ḥadīth #3}.

<sup>143</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 4, ḥadīth #9; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 42 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb thawāb al-°ālim wa-al-muta°allim, ḥadīth #2}. From the fifth imām.

<sup>144</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 27, ḥadīth #9; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 42-43 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb thawāb al-°ālim...}, passim. The sixth imām says: "On the Day of Resurrection God shall bring forth as an °ālim and faqīh whomever has preserved forty ḥadīths (ibid., p. 62 {Bāb al-nawādir [annex to Bāb luzūm al-ḥujjah...], ḥadīth #7})."

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It is especially important that those learned in the sayings of the imāms keep the °ilm always in evidence in order to counter false knowledge. The Prophet said: "When innovations (bida°) appear in my community the savant must proclaim his knowledge; if he does not, he is cursed by God."<sup>146</sup> This recalls the function of the °ālim par excellence - the imām - who stands on the earth against those who would lead astray and against excesses and deficiencies of belief.

iv. °Aql: 'You are the best of My creation.'

The problem of °aql in Shī'ī tradition lies in the interpretation of the term. °Aql often seems to be equivalent to °ilm, rather like 'fahm' and 'fiqh.' On the other hand, it may also be taken to mean reason or intellect.

°Aql, according to the Shī'ah, is a special creation of God, loved and favoured by Him:

God created °aql and said to it: 'Come forward [that I may see you], and it came forward.' Then He commanded, 'Step back,' and it retired. Finally God declared: 'By my might and my glory I swear that I have not created anything more beloved to me than you and that I shall not give full measure of you to any

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<sup>145</sup>Şaffār, Başā'ir, pp. 3-5, passim.

<sup>146</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 231, ḥadīth #176; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 70 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb al-bida° wa-al-ra'y..., ḥadīth #2}. See also *ibid.*, p. 44, ḥadīth #3.



except those whom I love. It is you whom I command, and you whom I interdict. And it is on the basis of you that I shall punish, and on the basis of you that I shall give reward!'<sup>147</sup>

The sixth imām describes °aql as "the first of God's creation, which He created from the 'spiritual presences' (rūḥāniyīn) to the right of His Throne from His own light." According to this tradition, after God viewed °aql and praised it He turned to his next task: the creation of jahl. Jahl was created from the 'dark salty sea.' Thus the creation of °aql and jahl parallels the creation of the imāms and their enemies and the Shī'ah and non-Shī'ah, and °aql is associated with light just as the luminous °ilm that was passed through the prophets. Finally God assembled for °aql and jahl 'troops' (junūd) each in the number of seventy-five. The troops of °aql are the desirable characteristics of the believer, and the troops of jahl are the opposites of these characteristics.<sup>148</sup> For instance, the soldier of °aql is īmān (faith), and the soldier of jahl, kufr (unbelief). On the side of °aql is taṣḍīq (affirmation; belief), while the helper of jahl against it is juḥūd (opposition). °ilm is opposed by jahl, taqīyah is opposed by idhā'ah (revealing the secret), taslīm by istikbār (arrogance), and certainty (yaqīn) by

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<sup>147</sup>Barqī, Mahāsin, p. 192, ḥadīth #6 (from the sixth imām); Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 10 {K. al-°aql wa-al-jahl, ḥadīth #1} (from the fifth imām). This ḥadīth is repeated in several different versions in the chapters in the Mahāsin and al-Kāfī.

<sup>148</sup>This is what Ja'far al-Sādiq means when he says that °aql is the 'commander of the troops' of the believer (Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 78 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb khiṣāl al-mu'min, ḥadīth #1}).

shakk (doubt). These are some of the values of the junūd that resonate to the Shī'ī ethic. Otherwise the junūd of °aql are a catalogue of personal and social virtues: frugality, industry, hope, sincerity, truthfulness, kindness, knowledge (ma°rifah), understanding (fahm), and so forth.<sup>149</sup> °Aql in these traditions becomes a font of piety and right conduct and the companion or culmination of all virtues, similar to °ilm in a multitude of other traditions.

°Aql resembles °ilm in several other ways also. It is, to begin, possessed in full measure only by the elect. The virtues springing from °aql (according to the sixth imām as he speaks in the same ḥadīth) are not found all together in perfect form in any being except a prophet, the vicegerent of a prophet, or 'a believer whose heart God has tested for faith' - although others of the Shī'ah may acquire and perfect them so that they also attain a similar high status.<sup>150</sup> The Prophet of Islam said: "God never sent any prophet except that he was °āqil (possessed of [perfect] reason)."<sup>151</sup> Neither can °aql, like °ilm, be fully

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<sup>149</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, pp. 196-198, ḥadīth #22; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 23-26 {K. al-°aql wa-al-jahl, ḥadīth #14}.

<sup>150</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, pp. 196-198, ḥadīth #22; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 23-26 {K. al-°aql wa-al-jahl, ḥadīth #14}. The seventh imām also says: "Those who shall have the highest status in this world and the next are the ones who have the most perfect °aql (Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 19 {K. al-°aql wa-al-jahl, ḥadīth #12})".

<sup>151</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 14 {K. al-°aql wa-al-jahl, ḥadīth #11}; see also Barqī, Maḥāsin, pp. 192-193, ḥadīths #8 & 9.

revealed to the uninitiated. Thus the prophets were commanded by God to address people only according to the extent of their limited intellects, and the Prophet of Islam was never able to speak from the full depth of his °aql.<sup>152</sup> Finally, °aql is held in abeyance until the complete revealment that shall come with the appearance of the twelfth imām: "When the Qā'im rises God shall put His hand on the heads of His servants and compose their °aql, thereby perfecting their intelligence (aḥlām)."<sup>153</sup>

In all these traditions, °aql is the wisdom and discernment that results from knowledge of and reflexion on the traditions. It is closely related to - perhaps interchangeable with - °ilm. In the traditions below, on the other hand, °aql more nearly resembles the faculty of human reason.

Having endowed His servants with varying degrees of °aql, God, according to the fifth imām, tries each man only according to that which He had granted Him. Every soul shall be judged on the Day of Judgement according to the measure of °aql it possessed in this world; humankind is not responsible for more than that.<sup>154</sup> It is said that the prophet Moses was vexed when a

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<sup>152</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 27 {K. al-°aql wa-al-jahl, ḥadīth #15}. From the sixth imām.

<sup>153</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 29 {K. al-°aql wa-al-jahl, ḥadīth #21}. From the fifth imām. Or it may be in this case that what is meant is 'intellect.'

<sup>154</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 195, ḥadīth #16; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 12 {K. al-°aql wa-al-jahl, ḥadīth #7}.

simple-minded man of the Children of Israel wished that his Lord might have a donkey so that he could take care of it for Him. God reproached Moses, saying: "Why do you disdain the words of my servant? I judge my servants only according to the amount of °aql I have granted them."<sup>155</sup>

Still, however limited the °aql of humankind, it is through this that they come to know Him; "°aql is that through which God, the Merciful, is worshipped."<sup>156</sup> It is °aql that points the way to awareness of the truths of religion. Ja°far al-Şādiq explains:

It is through °aql that humanity knows their Creator and realizes that they are created, that He is the one who arranges their affairs and that they are directed by Him, that He is Eternal, and they ephemeral. With the aid of °aql they are able to discern by observing His creation - His heaven, earth, sun, moon, night, and day - that both these and they themselves have a Creator and an authority set over them: a Creator without beginning and without end. Through °aql they are able to recognize good (ḥasan) and evil (qabīḥ) and to associate jahl with darkness and °aql with light.

At the conclusion of this speech a question was submitted to the imām by one of his listeners: Is °aql sufficient for humankind to the exclusion of all else? The problem raised here is that of the relation between reason and revelation; the disciple might

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<sup>155</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 193, ḥadīth #10. From the fifth imām. See also Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 12-13, ḥadīth #8 (another version, from the sixth imām). On the obligations and judgement of the ignorant, refer to Chapter VI, section iv..

<sup>156</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 195, ḥadīth #15; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 11 {K. al-°aql wa-al-jahl, ḥadīth #3}. According to the sixth imām. See also *ibid.*, p. 13, ḥadīth #9.

have been prevented only by respect or caution from asking directly: 'Does this mean that we may rely on our intellects and dispense with the revelation and the °ilm of the imāms?' Ja°far recognized the tendency of the question and answered:

He who is possessed of reason (al-°āqil) knows by the aid of reason... that God is the Truth and that He is his Lord. And he also knows that His creator loves and hates, and that one may either obey Him or disobey Him. At the same time, however, he perceives that his reason is not able to inform him of that [of exactly what God likes and what He hates, and what constitutes obedience and disobedience] and realizes that he will only be able to obtain this information by seeking °ilm [the traditional knowledge communicated by the imāms]. He recognizes that his °aql is of no use to him whatsoever unless it is directed by °ilm. Thus he who is °āqil is compelled to seek °ilm.<sup>157</sup>

Thus did the sixth imām reconcile reason and revelation: reason does not equal or replace religion, but it prompts investigation of revelation (°ilm).

°Aql is also said to verify revelation because it is a 'proof' of it. The imām Abū al-Ḥasan (here meaning the tenth imām) described how each of the prophets was sent with a proof (ḥujjah) appropriate to his time: Moses with his miracles, Jesus

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<sup>157</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 33-34 {K. al-°aql wa-al-jahl, ḥadīth #34}. See also *ibid.*, p. 29, ḥadīth #22. Kulaynī in his preface to the Kāfī appears to assign to °aql a negative value, as he declares that one may not depend instead of °ilm on the intellect (the pl. form, '°uqūl,' is used) (vol. 1, pp. 4-5). Similar is the comment of Nu°mānī in his Ghaybah (p. 33), as he condemns the use of 'our intellects' (°uqūlu-nā). This is in connexion with his disapproval of ijtihād and ra'y. These statements have in fact to do with the limitations of °aql, and they are consistent with the tradition to which this note is appended.

with the power of healing, and Muḥammad with marvelous eloquence. He was asked: "What is the proof over mankind today?" The imām replied: "It is °aql, for it is through °aql that it is known who speaks God's truth and who lies."<sup>158</sup> That is, °aql is the arbiter and interpreter of °ilm - of traditional knowledge. Ja°far al-Şādiq said: "The proof of God over His servants is the Prophet, and the proof in affairs between humanity and God is °aql."<sup>159</sup> Thus °aql in effect replaces the imām as proof.

°Aql in the sense of 'reason' plays a crucial role in Shī°ī theology and jurisprudence, and so we will now allow ourselves to move for a moment to a different level of analysis and speculate on its development in (or perhaps better: intrusion into) Shī°ī tradition.

°ilm is the conservative value around which the traditional Shī°ī system revolves. Reason, on the other hand, is not in accord with it; the system is in fact very much concerned with denying the efficacy of reason. Thus °ilm must be assumed to be a value prior to °aql (= reason), and °aql an interpolation. It is also proposed that °aql where it is introduced in narrations in which °ilm would have served equally well has been insinuated - whether by the imāms, the transmitters, or the collectors-

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<sup>158</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 28 {K. al-°aql wa-al-jahl, ḥadīth #20}.

<sup>159</sup>Ibid., p. 29, ḥadīth #22.

ostensibly as a twin of °ilm but actually for the purpose of suggesting its second sense. Both these propositions are strengthened by the fact that °aql is the concern of only two collections: Barqī's Maḥāsin and - to a much greater degree - Kulaynī's al-Kāfī. It does not play a role in any other of the works surveyed, including Ṣaffār's Baṣā'ir which is otherwise entirely devoted to the subject of knowledge.

Shī'ī ḥadīths on the subject of °aql thus furnish evidence of an attraction to rationalism against the grain of an earlier, 'orthodox' Shiism. This rationalism, on the little evidence available, is of the type thought of as 'Mu'tazilī.' The few ḥadīths available demonstrate this clearly, even if only in a very general way.

For the Mu'tazilah the first of the duties incumbent upon man (al-wājibāt) is 'exercise of the intellectual faculties' (al-nazar) leading to knowledge (ma'rifah) of God - for the knowledge of God is not necessary knowledge.<sup>160</sup> In the Shī'ī scheme, the position of °aql as the first of God's creation, in combination with its high status, also suggests the primacy of the intellect. Moreover, the opposition made by the Mu'tazilah between °ilm/°aql and jahl is paralleled by the polarity of these two values in the Shī'ī system.

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<sup>160</sup>See: °Abd al-Jabbār ibn Ahmad al-Asadābādī, 'al-Qādī,' Sharḥ al-Uṣūl al-khamsah, ed. °Abd al-Karīm °Uthmān (Cairo: Maktabat Wahbah, 1384/1965), p. 39.

The Mu'tazilah set °aql as one of the 'evidences' (s. dalālah) by which mankind obtains knowledge (the others being: the Book, the sunnah, and the ijmā°). Thus °aql is hujjah (proof).<sup>161</sup> Just so, the sixth, eighth, and tenth imāms speak of °aql as hujjah (in this case the participation of the later eighth and tenth imāms seems significant). The Mu'tazilah state further that knowledge of God is not to be obtained except with °aql.<sup>162</sup> In this they are followed by the Shī'ah, who assert that God is known and worshipped through this faculty. Following on this proposition, the Mu'tazilah rely for proof of the existence of God on the argument from design. This is also the proof offered by Ja°far al-Šādiq: the human intellect begins by reflecting on the signs of creation and finally advances toward knowledge of the Creator as Eternal and One; thus "...it is through °aql that humanity knows their Creator and realizes that they are created... [and] that He is Eternal, and they ephemeral."

Ja°far also declares in the same tradition that humankind is able through °aql to recognize good (ḥasan) and evil (qabīḥ). Here the imām upholds the rationalist, as opposed to revelationist, world-view: good and evil are constant values liable to perception by the human intellect, independently of

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<sup>161</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>162</sup>Ibid.



the revelation. They are not values 'arbitrarily' assigned by the All-Powerful God, subject to change by Him and known only through revelation. This affirmation is also the basis of Mu°tazilī rationalism, marking at this point in time the great divide between them and the other schools of theology.

In addition, the Mu°tazilah say that humankind is motivated to seek knowledge of God and His commandments by 'fear,' that is intuitive fear of perdition.<sup>163</sup> The sixth imām makes a similar argument: man is aware that God loves certain things and hates certain things, and of the reward and punishment that must follow on these; from this comes motivation to seek the commandments and prohibitions, which are contained in the form of the transmitted knowledge, the °ilm.

It is Kulaynī in particular who impels °aql toward the meaning of 'reason:' most of the hadīths on reason given above are taken from his collection. For this the Kāfī deserves to be seen as an advance in Shī°ī thought rather than a mere compilation. The contribution of al-Kāfī is also evident in the arrangement of the work, which will now receive the consideration promised in Chapter I.

The Kāfī is divided into six Books, the first of which is the 'Book of Reason and Ignorance' (K. al-°aql wa-al-jahl). The

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<sup>163</sup>Ibid., p. 68.

Book of Reason and Ignorance is extremely brief, consisting of only thirty-four ḥadīths with no constituent 'chapters' (s: bāb). (The other books are rather substantial and are divided into many chapters.) It seems that there were not many traditions available to the author on this topic. Yet it is with this odd fragment that Kulaynī chooses to open his collection.<sup>164</sup> The next Book of the Kāfī is Kitāb faḍl al-ʿilm, the 'Book of the Excellence of Knowledge (i.e. traditional knowledge),' this being an ordinary subject of Shīʿī (as well as Sunnī) collections. The Excellence of Knowledge is followed by Kitāb al-tawḥīd, the 'Book of the Oneness of God.' This a collection of statements on the subject of theology. Kulaynī is the first of the collectors of ḥadīth to devote a whole and separate section to theology (although it is still relatively brief compared to the other sections of the Kāfī). Only after these prefatory chapters does he turn to the more usual topics of Shīʿī tradition in the 'Book of the Proof [of the imāms' Mission]' (K. al-ḥujjah), 'Book of Belief and Unbelief' (K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr) and 'Book of Supplicatory Prayer' (K. al-duʿā).

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<sup>164</sup>In one another collection, Barqī's Maḥāsin (which predates Kulaynī), the tome: 'Lights through the Darkness' (Maṣābiḥ al-ẓulam) is also begun with a chapter on ʿaql. This is followed by various other chapters devoted to questions Kulaynī treats in his 'Book of the Excellence of Knowledge' (K. faḍl al-ʿilm). Kulaynī must have been influenced by Barqī's model or by another common to the two. Barqī's Chapter on Reason is even briefer than Kulaynī's Book of Reason. Moreover, although Kulaynī does reproduce some of the same traditions (see notes above), none of the more clearly 'rational' ones are included.

The plan of the opening chapters of al-Kāfī in fact recapitulates rationalist ('Mu°tazilī') epistemology, according to which utilization of God-given intellect for the purpose of speculation is the first necessary duty, which then leads to realization of the existence and essential nature of the Creator, as well as apprehension of the necessity of gathering the revealed and transmitted knowledge (°ilm).

Kulaynī's preface to al-Kāfī is final proof of his rationalist bias. In this important document he explains why he collected the traditions and offered them to his co-religionists. Man possessed of reason, says Kulaynī, will readily perceive from the clear and apparent proofs in God's creation that God exists and that He is one; and subsequently he finds that he must have access to the °ilm - which the author therefore aims to supply through his work. Kulaynī also argues that it is not permitted to be jāhil (ignorant, lacking knowledge and therefore not °ālim), since this would also permit the lifting of the taklīf (the necessary obligations imposed upon mankind by God as condition for reward), which would in turn invalidate the Books and the Prophets, and finally all of religion. Therefore the Justice (°adl) of God and His wisdom (hikmah) necessitates (w-j-b) the availability of knowledge and of someone to perpetuate it.<sup>165</sup> Thus God the Omnipotent is

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<sup>165</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, pp. 5. Here Kulaynī appears to be speaking of the Prophet and imāms, but he may also mean the °ulamā'/traditionists, or even these in particular.

circumscribed by the necessity of 'justice' (God's justice being the guarantee of rationability) and justice is a prerequisite for the imposition of taklīf. The terminology here as well as the theodical view place Kulaynī in the same camp as those who called themselves 'Mu'tazilah.'

v. Interpretation of the traditions in the presence and absence of the imāms.

We have seen that Shī'ī tradition maintains that the °ilm of the imāms is without contradiction (ikhṭilāf). It appears that the Shī'ah took this quite literally: it is reported that the eighth imām al-Riḍā provided proof of his imāmate by answering a number of questions in exactly the same words as his father had, not changing even a single letter of the response!<sup>166</sup> At the same time, there are a number of ḥadīths that relate the dismay of the followers of the imāms as they found that their rulings were inconsistent. The incident is followed in each case by the imām's patient explanation of the reason for the difference; these traditions must have been intended to answer to a real perplexity in the community. Such reports may also have been intended to promote the freedom of the imāms to rule independently of the dicta of their forebears. The several "explanations" are set out below.

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<sup>166</sup>Ibid., vol. 2, p. 165 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb mā yufsal bayn da'wā al-muḥiqq wa-al-mubṭil fī amr al-imāmah, ḥadīth #10}.

The question posed to the imām may itself contain a crucial difference; Ja°far al-Şādiq explained to his Companion that he had answered him differently than another man (replying to the same question) because "one word [or letter] was different."<sup>167</sup> The texts, in addition, present different levels of interpretation. Thus Muḥammad al-Bāqir replied differently on two occasions to a question concerning the exegesis of the Qur'ān because 'the Qur'ān has an inner (baṭn) and outer (ẓuhr) portion, each with an interpretation belonging to it;' this is the explanation he gave to his follower who had exclaimed in dismay: "Your answer before was different!"<sup>168</sup> In general, each word of the Qur'ān may be interpreted according to several different 'modes'<sup>169</sup> (wujūh), as the Qur'ān itself was sent down in seven modes.<sup>170</sup> One of the Shī'ah heard Ja°far al-Şādiq give three pieces of contradictory advice to different persons on the subject of divorce, and was overwhelmed with sadness. When he brought this to Ja°far's attention the imām was angered at his

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<sup>167</sup>Uṣūl, p. 105.

<sup>168</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 300, ḥadīth #5; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 12, ḥadīth #8. It may also be that, if a ḥadīth is related from the Prophet from reliable persons and the imāms come with something that contradicts it, this is because the ḥadīth, like the Qur'ān, "abrogates and is abrogated" (Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 83 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb ikhtilāf al-ḥadīth, ḥadīth #2}, concerning a ruling of the sixth imām).

<sup>169</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 300, ḥadīth #5; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 12, ḥadīth #8.

<sup>170</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 12, ḥadīth #11.

doubt and explained how the details of the cases - which he as the imām was able to perceive even though he had not been told - necessitated different answers.<sup>171</sup> Thus the rulings of the imāms may appear to be different from those of the Prophet, but they are in fact based on the same principles; it is only that different circumstances may necessitate a ruling different in exterior details.

Another explanation for differences in rulings is that there has been tafwīd (delegation) of authority to the Prophet and imāms, giving them the right to judge as they please.<sup>172</sup>

According to tradition, God 'delegated' (f-w-d) certain matters to the Prophet and then to the imāms.<sup>173</sup> Ja°far al-Şādiq says:

God, praised and exalted be He, trained (a-d-b) the Prophet to love Him... then delegated to him... and the Prophet of God delegated to °Alī and the imāms, and you submitted (salam-tum) while [other] people opposed

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<sup>171</sup>Uşūl, p. 167.

<sup>172</sup>Ash°arī, author of the Maḡālāt, speaks of 'extremists' (Ghāliyah) who 'delegate' to the Prophet; according to him they "assert that God gave charge of affairs and delegated them to Muhammad, and gave him power to create the world, and he created and arranged it while God created nothing in it - and many of them also say this of °Alī. And they assert also that the imāms abrogate laws, and that the angels come down to them... and that they receive revelation (p. 88)." If we strike the phrases having to do with the creation of the world, this is not an inaccurate picture of the Shī°ī doctrine of tafwīd.

<sup>173</sup>But see Himyarī, Qurb, p. 206: a ḥadīth in which the eighth imām seems to deny delegation

(jahada)....<sup>174</sup>

The matters delegated were the details of edicts already in the revelation. For instance, God forbade khamr (a kind of alcoholic drink) in the Qur'ān, and thus the Prophet made ḥarām everything that inebriates.<sup>175</sup> Another instance: the Prophet, fortified as he was with the Holy Spirit, unerring in guiding mankind, and having been trained in the ways of God, legislated and added to the details of the prayer.<sup>176</sup> This accounts for differences in opinions from one imām to the next: God has left an area for them in which they can legislate. Their apparently contrary rulings are (so the reports may be understood) merely elaborations given out as appropriate to the circumstances. It is related that a man heard Ja'far al-Ṣādiq give different interpretations of the same part of the Qur'ān to different persons, so that his heart was "almost torn apart" thinking of Abū Qitādah<sup>177</sup> whom he had left in Syria, a man who would not mistake as much as one letter, while he had journeyed to sit by the supposed imām who made errors at every turn. But the imām came to him and explained:

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<sup>174</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 2 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb al-tafwīḍ ilā Rasūl Allāh... wa-ilā al-a'immah... fī amr al-dīn, ḥadīth #1} (and see this chapter in general).

<sup>175</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 379, ḥadīth #5. From the sixth imām. See also *ibid.*, pp. 378-387, *passim*.

<sup>176</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 5-7 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb al-tafwīḍ..., ḥadīth #4}. From the sixth imām.

<sup>177</sup>Abū Qitādah (d. 164/780) was a follower of Awzā'ī, the founding figure of the Syrian school of law of that name (see Abū al-Faḍl Ahmad ibn 'Alī ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī, Lisān al-mīzān, 7 vols. (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-'A'lamī, 1390/1971), vol. 7, p. 97.

"God 'delegated' to Solomon son of David... and He delegated to His Prophet... and what He delegated to His Prophet, He delegated to us."<sup>178</sup> For this reason the sixth imām was able to declare that, while °Alī did not use to permit °uzl ('drawing oneself apart' - social segregation and political quietism?), he himself did, even though that was 'contrary' (khilāf) to the actions of °Alī, for "it did not harm David that Solomon differed from him" and God said: "We made Solomon to understand it [a certain legal case] (Q.21:79)."<sup>179</sup>

The reference to Solomon points to a third, slightly different view of the freedom of the imāms to issue their own opinions. Some ḥadīths speak of ḥukm Dāwūd (the authority or ruling of David), or 'ḥukm Āl Dāwūd' - the authority of the family of David (thus including Solomon). The phrase derives from the fact that David and his son and successor Solomon both judged the same case, as per Q. 21:78-79:

And David and Solomon, when they gave judgement concerning the field, when people's sheep had strayed and browsed therein by night; and We were witnesses to

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<sup>178</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 386, ḥadīth #11. According to one ḥadīth, however, God "has not delegated to any of the prophets except Muḥammad (ibid., p. 379, ḥadīth #3). The name of the imām is omitted, but the first link in the chain is 'Qāsim ibn Muḥammad,' perhaps identical with al-Qāsim ibn Muḥammad ibn Abī Bakr, a Companion of the fifth and sixth or perhaps the fourth imām.

<sup>179</sup>Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 95.



their judgement,/ And We made Solomon to understand [the case]; and unto each of them We gave judgement and knowledge.

Qummî in his Tafsîr offers a tradition apropos of this passage that states that David referred those who had come to him for judgement to Solomon, and that their verdicts were identical, proving that Solomon was indeed his successor.<sup>180</sup> Most other traditions, however, either draw the conclusion that David had equal right to his son Solomon to 'judge,' or seize on the suggestion that David's judgement differed from that of Solomon. The extra favours given Solomon by God (his rule over the wind and the Satans, etc.) also enter into the matter, and so the hadîths on the subject of hukm Dāwūd cite God's words as He granted Solomon these things (Q. 38:39): "This is our gift, so bestow, or withhold, [Shî'î reading: 'give',<sup>181</sup>] without reckoning." Thus the sixth imām remarked concerning his own succession: "What was given to David does not prevent it being given to Solomon" (that is, the son will inherit the full authority of his father and will not be limited, or perhaps:

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<sup>180</sup>Vol. 2, pp. 73-74. See also *ibid.*, pp. 238-239 (concerning Q. 38:39, "This is our gift, bestow or withhold, without reckoning," on which see below): here the exegetical tradition offered by Qummî also affirms that Solomon succeeded David because he was able to demonstrate knowledge equal (but not contrary) to that of his father.

<sup>181</sup>See Chapter III, section ii. It appears that 'give' is read rather than 'withhold' since the point is that the successor is given everything, or give and then given an excess.

Solomon was given additional powers).<sup>182</sup> On another occasion a Companion asked him: "Did God delegate (fawwadā) to the imām as He did to Solomon?" Ja°far answered:

Yes - for one man would ask him concerning a [legal] problem and he would reply in one way, and then another would ask him and he would reply differently, and then another and he would give a different answer still. [Then he recited]: 'This is our gift; so bestow, or give, without reckoning (Q. 38:39).'<sup>183</sup>

Another, related aspect of the ḥukm Dāwūd is authority to judge 'without demanding evidence (bayyinah)' (this is the typical phrase), as it is supposed David or 'the Family of David' did.<sup>184</sup> The traditions in our sample do not tell us exactly what 'without demanding evidence' is. The historian Mas°ūdī (d. 346) writes in his Ithbāt al-waṣīyah (Establishing Vicegerency, a pious history of the prophets and their vicegerents) that David used to ask God to inspire (l-h-m) him with the solution to cases. In this way he judged without ascertaining evidence. But the result was that he would give judgement which, however true, was not in accordance with the apparent facts of the case. The Israelites were troubled, and thus God advised David to judge according to

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<sup>182</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 259, ḥadīth #5; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 247 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb fī al-a'immaḥ... anna-hum idhā zahara amru-hum ḥakamū bi-ḥukm Dāwūd wa-Āl Dāwūd wa-lā yas'alūn al-bayyinah, ḥadīth #1}.

<sup>183</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 361, ḥadīth #1; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 322-323 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb fī ma°rifati-him awliyā'a-hum..., ḥadīth #3}.

<sup>184</sup>Eg: Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 248 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb fī al-a'immaḥ... anna-hum idhā zahara amru-hum ḥakamū bi-ḥukm Dāwūd wa-lā yas'alūn al-bayyinah}, *passim*.

the outer aspect (ẓāhir) rather than the inner reality (bāṭin), since the latter could not be borne by his people.<sup>185</sup> Thus the imāms judge differently because they draw on a hidden fund of knowledge.<sup>186</sup>

Each of these explanations for ikhtilāf is equivalent to saying that legal rules are to be adjusted to respond to changing circumstances, which is in fact the dynamic principle of Uṣūlī jurisprudence. Thus it may be said that this important and distinctive feature of Shiism is already evident in the

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<sup>185</sup>Abū al-Hasan °Alī ibn al-Husayn ibn °Alī al-Mas°ūdī, Ithbāt al-waṣīyah lil-imām Abī Ṭālib (Qum: Maktabah Basīratī, n.d.), pp. 66-67. Majlisī gives several possible interpretations of this power of the imāms: Mirāt al-°uqūl fī sharḥ akhbār al-Rasūl, 24 vols. (Tehran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmīyah, 1404-09/1984-89), vol. 4, pp. 300-303.

<sup>186</sup>The idea of a hidden, unrealized knowledge carries the 'judgement of David' into the realm of eschatology. "The world shall not end, " declared Ja°far al-Sādiq, "until a man from among my descendants shall emerge who shall judge with the authority of the Family of David, without demanding evidence- and he shall give every soul its due (ḥaqq) (Ṣaffār, Basā'ir, p. 258, ḥadīth #1 & p. 259, ḥadīths #3 & 4; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 248 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb fī al-a'immah anna-hum idhā zahara amru-hum ḥakamū bi-hukm Dāwūd..., ḥadīth #2} & ibid., p. 441 {Bāb mawlid Abī Muḥammad al-Hasan ibn °Alī, ḥadīth #13})." The fifth imām (reported by the ninth imām Muḥammad al-Jawād through Ja°far al-Sādiq) spoke of 'the sword of the Family of David' which the angels shall wield against the spirits of the unbelievers at the coming of the Mahdī. He then exhibited one of those very swords he had in his possession. This was in response to a questioner who wondered why the Prophet and imāms were reluctant to unveil all their knowledge and reveal the full dispensation; the imām commented as he took out the sword that he feared conflict in the community (ibid., vol. 1, pp. 351-353 {Bāb fī sha'n innā anzalnā-hu fī laylat al-qadr..., ḥadīth #1}).

traditions.<sup>187</sup>

As the imāms became ever more closely confined by the Abbasid caliphs and finally disappeared from view during the time of the Lesser Occultation, 'referral' (radd) must have been quite impossible - if, indeed, it was ever more than a construct supplied to complete the principle of taslīm.<sup>188</sup> The ḥadīths give evidence of some of the strategies that evolved, even before the decisive break of the Greater Occultation, to address this situation.

There had already appeared, as seen in the discussion of °ilm above, the notion of an '°ālim,' an authority qualified to transmit the wisdom of the imāms - and thus surely, in some measure, to interpret it. A few traditions even suggest an institutionalization of this authority, as in these lively and amusing instructions (related from °Alī on the authority of the sixth imām) concerning etiquette in the presence of an °ālim:

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<sup>187</sup>Ash°arī speaks of a faction of the Rawāfid who allow that the imāms are distinguished by 'signs' (miracles), that the angels come down to them with revelation/inspiration (waḥī), and that they are able to abrogate and change laws (Maqālāt, p. 123). This picture is similar to that presented in the ḥadīth. Other, more moderate views are mentioned along with these, demonstrating that it is not only 'extremist' views that are excluded by the tradition.

<sup>188</sup>Nevertheless, it is reported that the tenth imām wrote out this strict instruction for his followers even as he was imprisoned: "[In case of a difference in opinion between the imāms] adhere to that which you know as our words, and that which you do not know, refer" (Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 524-525, ḥadīth #26)."

The °ālim has the right not to have too many questions asked of him. Do not pull at his robe, and if there are other people with him when you enter, greet them all at once, and then him alone. Sit in front of him, not behind. Do not signal to him with your eyes or gesture with your hands! Above all, do not offer too many statements contradicting what he says, interjecting: '[But] so-and-so said....' And do not become annoyed if he is too long in answering, for the °ālim is indeed like the date-palm, the fruits of which one must wait for patiently to drop....<sup>189</sup>

The appearance of °aql as an epistemological principle independent of the °ilm of the imāms also hints at an attempt to compensate for the absence of their immediate personal authority. Before the ghaybah when there was an imām to pronounce there was an answer to every new question that arose and a guarantee for every new circumstance; where could the unfailing answer and guarantee be found after the imām had been lost except in the God-given intellect, informed and refined, of the learned divines?

Finally we see, as a result of the absence of personal the beginnings of a science of ḥadīth criticism. This criticism relies on evaluation of the text, rather than only examination of

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<sup>189</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 233, ḥadīth #185; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 45-46 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb ḥaqq al-°ālim, ḥadīth #1}. °Alī adds: "...and the °ālim shall receive a greater reward than one fasting who stands [all the night in prayer] or the warrior (ghāzī) in the way of God." Note that the imāms also are 'not to be asked too many questions,' although in this case the aim seems to be avoid controversial questions; see: Uṣūl, p. 74; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 77-78 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb al-radd ilā al-Kitāb wa-al-sunnah..., ḥadīth #5}.

the isnād, as is also true of Shī'ī treatment of ḥadīth today.

According to the Shī'ī traditions, the arbiter of any statement of the imāms concerning which there is some doubt or dispute is the Qur'ān and the sunnah (the sunnah of the Prophet and the imāms). Reference to the Qur'ān and sunnah is for the Shī'ah the most important control of the ḥadīth. The sixth imām reported that the fifth imām stated that he had read in the Book of 'Alī that the Messenger of God said:

They shall attribute to me things that are not true, just as they did in the case of those who came before me [the ancient prophets]. The ḥadīths related from me that are in agreement with the Book of God are mine, and those contrary to the Book of God are not.<sup>190</sup>

The sixth imām said: "Everything returns to the Book of God and the sunnah, and that which does not agree with the Book of God is nonsense!"<sup>191</sup> 'Al-'Abd al-Ṣāliḥ' (meaning the seventh imām) said: "If there should come to you two different ḥadīths, compare them to the Book of God and to our ḥadīths. If it [one of them] resembles (sh-b-h) it [the Qur'ān] then it is truth (ḥaqq), and if it does not, it is invalid (bāṭil)."<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>190</sup>Ḥimyarī, Qurb, p. 60.

<sup>191</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, pp. 220-221, ḥadīth #128; 'Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 9, ḥadīth #4; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 89 {K. faḍl al-'ilm, Bāb al-akhḍh bi-al-sunnah wa-al-Kitāb, ḥadīths #3 & #4}.

<sup>192</sup>'Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 9, ḥadīth #7. See also: Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 221, ḥadīths #129, #130, & #131; 'Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, pp. 8-9 (Bāb tark riwāyah allatī bi-khilāf al-Qur'ān); Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 89 {K. faḍl al-'ilm, Bāb

It is important to 'discard' (t-r-k) the tradition that does not agree, for this avoids doubt. Ja°far al-Şādiq said:

Stopping at the point where there is doubt is better than rushing toward perdition; and thus also to leave off reciting a ḥadīth that you do not properly remember is better than relating one you do not understand.... Take that which agrees with the Book of God, and discard that which does not. There are many people in this world who do not discard it!"<sup>193</sup>

The final justification for making the Qur'ān arbiter over the ḥadīths is the comprehensive nature of the revelation. Ja°far also said: "For every truth (ḥaqq) [that is sought] there is a verity (ḥaqīqah) and there is a light [showing the way to] every 'correct answer' (ṣawāb). Take that which agrees with the Book of God, and leave that which does not!"<sup>194</sup> Here the imām explains, in accordance with Shī°i doctrine, that there is guidance available for every thing of which humankind finds itself in need. God has put the explanation of every thing in the Book and in the sunnah and there is nothing concerning which we can say that we are left at a loss. Therefore any confusion that arises from differences between ḥadīths will without a doubt

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al-akhdh bi-al-sunnah wa-al-Kitāb, ḥadīth #5).

<sup>193</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 115, ḥadīth #150.

<sup>194</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 226, ḥadīth #150 (in this case attributed by the imām to °Alī); °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 8, ḥadīth #2; *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 115, ḥadīth #150; Kulaynī, al-Kāfi, vol. 1, p. 88 {K. fadl al-°ilm, Bāb al-akhdh bi-al-sunnah wa-shawāhid al-Kitāb, ḥadīth #1} (in this case attributed by the imām to the Prophet). See also *ibid.*, p. 63 {Bāb al-nawādir [annex to Bāb luzūm al-ḥujjah °alā al-°ālim...], ḥadīth #9}.

be resolved by these divine sources.

The principle of referring a ḥadīth to the Book and the Sunnah overrules the isnād. That is if a tradition is in accord with the Qur'ān and the custom of the Prophet and the imāms, the presence of an untrustworthy person among the relaters does not damage it.<sup>195</sup> A follower of the sixth imām asked about a case in which a ḥadīth was related in two different versions, one coming from a 'trustworthy' person and the other from one who was not trustworthy. The imām replied with the simple dictum: "If a ḥadīth should come to you and you find textual evidence (shāhid) for it in the Book of God or the words of the Prophet [accept it]; if not, it is for the one who related it [i.e. refuse it and leave him to do with it as he wills]."<sup>196</sup> On another occasion the imām advised his follower:

If there should come to you a report from one who is free from blame, but also at the same time from one who lives immorally, and the report agrees with the Qur'ān, then accept it; and if it should come from one who is free from blame and also from one who lives immorally and it does not agree with the Qur'ān, then do no

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<sup>195</sup>This principle is already admitted, although in a different and perhaps contrary way, through taslīm, as the properly 'submissive' Shī'ah are obliged to accept any relation of the imāms no matter who relates it. Cf. the chapter in Barqī's Mahāsin: 'Khudh al-ḥaqq mimman °inda-hu wa-lā tanzur ilā °amali-hi (pp. 200-202).'

<sup>196</sup>Barqī, Mahāsin, p. 225, ḥadīth #145; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 88 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb al-akhdh bi-al-sunnah wa-al-Kitāb, ḥadīth #2}. A variant from the fifth imām reads: "...and if not, refrain from it [i.e. suspend application], then refer it to us [when you again have access to the imām] (ibid., vol. 3, p. 315 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-kitmān, ḥadīth #4}).



accept it!"<sup>197</sup>

The Shī'ah may also if they hear two different opinions from an imām find their way out of the difficulty by preferring the tradition issued later.<sup>198</sup> The rule of the later tradition seems to be predicated on an idea of a dynamic or progressive revelation. Even more significant is another statement of the sixth imām prescribing the course of action in the case of two different opinions from two different imāms: "Adhere to [the prior opinion] until another comes from the living; when it comes to you from the living imām, accept his words." This provision was made, the imām continues, in order to ease the situation of the Shī'ah while they attempted to determine the opinion of the later or living imām (that is the opinion of the dead imām would still be valid for them until they could get news of the opinion of the next imām).<sup>199</sup> The result is that every imām is free of the opinions of the imām before him; he is entirely equal in authority to his predecessors and may decide as he sees fit. That is in fact the position of the modern (Uṣūlī) Shī'ī muṭtahid, who can never be limited by the rulings of those who

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<sup>197</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 8, ḥadīth #3.

<sup>198</sup>See Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 85-86 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb ikhtilāf al-ḥadīth, ḥadīth #8} (from the sixth imām). See also ibid., vol. 3, p. 309 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-taqīyah, ḥadīth #7} - although in this case Ja°far al-Sādiq seems to be speaking of differing opinions issued under cover of taqīyah, with the acceptance of the later ḥadīth a strategy for avoiding the deliberately false opinion.

<sup>199</sup>Ibid., vol. 1, p. 86 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb ikhtilāf al-ḥadīth, ḥadīth #9}; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 94.

have died, and also the position of the community, who are absolutely required to follow the rulings of the living authority and discard the opinions of the dead - although they may follow the dead until a new ruling is required.

Other rules for decision in case of conflicting traditions are given in a lengthy ḥadīth from Ja°far al-Şādiq. This narrative provides a complete set of instructions for determining rulings in the absence of the imām. It is recorded only in al-Kāfī. The imām's stated motivation for this speech is to ensure that his Shī°ah are able to make their own determinations and thus avoid having to try their cases before the false authority of non-Shī°ī rulers and judges. He begins by recommending the judgement of the Shī°ī traditionists:

Look to those among you who have transmitted our ḥadīth, who have studied (n-z-r) our ḥalāl and ḥarām and who know our legal decisions (aḥkām). They should content themselves with the decisions of such a person, for I have made him judge over them. If he rules according to our judgement and one of the disputants does not accept it, he shall be considered to have scorned the judgement of God and to have rejected us - and who rejects us, rejects God and is very close to shirk.

Thus the °ālim is given the power to judge and his judgement has approximately the same status as that of the imāms. But here Ja°far's petitioner persisted, and asked: "What if each of the two [plaintiffs] chose a different man to judge, both agreeing to abide by the decision of the two judges [expecting them to come to the same conclusion], and then they disagreed in their

decision and disagreed concerning your ḥadīth?" The imām answered: "The right decision is the decision of the most just of the two, the most learned (afqah), the one most reliable in the ḥadīth and the most pious; the judgement of the other should not be taken into consideration."

Thus in the case of conflicting judgement from two Shī'ī authorities the opinion of the most pious and the most competent rules. This resembles the modern rule which dictates that the most learned mujtahid is to be chosen as a model for taghlīd. But still the imām's follower would not rest and asked: "What if they are both [equally] just and both accepted by the people, with nothing to distinguish one from the other?" Ja'far replied:

[In that case] they should focus on the narrative relevant to the case which is universally accepted (al-mujma' °alay-hi) by your companions [that is the learned men among the Shī'ah] and proceed according to that. The isolated narrative (al-shādhdh) not well known (mashhūr) among your companions is to be discarded - for there can be no doubt concerning that which is universally accepted.

As is well known, the Shī'ah reject reports which are khabar al-wāḥid (syn. shādhdh), that is which are supported at each link by only one or at the most a few authorities. Here the principle is referred back to the sixth imām.

This, however, was not satisfactory to the imām's interlocutor, who then proposed a situation in which both of the conflicting traditions were both reliable and mashhūr. In this

case the imām recommended not only that they be referred to the Qur'ān and sunnah, but also that the hadīth contrary to the Sunnī opinion be admitted and the one in agreement with the Sunnīs dropped. The second criterion would, according to the imām, rule even in the event that both traditions were accepted by the Sunnīs, for in that case the Shī'ah could distinguish by choosing the one least favoured by the Sunnī judges and their authorities! Finally the imām was asked: "And if their judges and authorities favour both equally...?" At this point he could no longer resist the conclusion his follower was leading him toward and replied: "Then wait until you meet your imām, for 'stopping at the point where there is doubt is better than rushing toward perdition.'"<sup>200</sup> Kulaynī himself recommends the same procedure in his Preface, also concluding:

We are only able to determine a small amount from this [comparing the tradition to the Qur'ān, rejecting the tradition in agreement with the Sunnīs, and relying on the tradition most agreed on]; thus the most cautious and manageable course of action is to refer (n. radd) knowledge of all that to the imām.<sup>201</sup>

Thus, although suggestions are given for viewing the tradition critically and determining the truth of it, the fiction of taslīm is still maintained. In fact, this tension or fiction is still

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<sup>200</sup>The phrase in single quotes is a common one in the tradition. Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 86-88 {K. fadl al-°ilm, Bāb ikhtilāf al-hadīth, hadīth #10}. But note *ibid.*, p. 85, hadīth #7 (related from the sixth imām) which allows either of the two opinions to be followed.

<sup>201</sup>*ibid.*, Preface, p. 9.

present in Shiism today as even purely categorical judgements are said to coincide with the opinion of the imāms, on the grounds that the imāms were most possessed of reason among humankind.

## VI: FAITH AND SALVATION

Concerning the identity of the true believer and the effect of God's final Judgement the Shī'ah are of two minds. On the one hand the traditions envision only a single path to salvation, trodden by the predestined few. This belief is in accord with the doctrine of the community's creation described in Chapter II, and the majority of the statements of the imāms on faith, reward, and punishment are in favour of it. But the Shī'ah had also entered at some point into the controversies in which the larger community was embroiled concerning the definition of a 'Muslim,' the exact nature of faith, and the fate of those of less than perfect belief. Out of participation in this debate came different views and a more moderate and systematic thought, with arguments now framed in terms similar to those of the other schools. The two views, though largely opposed, coexist together in the tradition.

### i. On the necessity of knowing the imām: 'the death of the Jāhilīyah.'

The simpler Shī'ī thought on faith and judgement can be summed up in one sentence: the sole criterion of faith and the only basis for reward and punishment is loyalty to the imāms. Those who profess the wilāyah are believers, and those who do not, are unbelievers. This is the radical claim of innumerable traditions.

Ignorance or rejection of the imām can never be overlooked, as Ja°far al-Şādiq said to his Shī°ah: "You follow one ignorance of whom is not excused."<sup>1</sup> In many ḥadīths this truth is expressed in the phrase: 'the death of the Jāhiliyah.' It was the Prophet himself who declared (as reported on the authority of various of the imāms): "Who dies without knowing his imām [or: the imām over him'] dies the death of the Jāhiliyah."<sup>2</sup> That is if the servant does not follow one of the Shī°i imāms and profess the wilāyah, he is in the same category as one who never adhered to Islam. Even the smallest lapse in knowledge of the imām leads to perdition, so that Ja°far al-Şādiq claimed that a man who spent as much as one night not knowing the imām of his time would die that ignorant death.<sup>3</sup> It seems that the Shī°ah themselves were aware of the immoderacy of this claim, for it is said that as the sixth imām happened one day to pronounce the famous phrase his listeners asked him in disbelief: "Do you mean to say that absolutely everyone who dies without an imām dies the death of the Jāhiliyah?" The imām answered in the affirmative.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., vol. 1, p. 263 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb fard ṭā°at al-a'immaḥ, ḥadīth #3}.

<sup>2</sup>Eg: Usūl, p. 78; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, pp. 32-33 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb da°ā'im al-islām, ḥadīth #6}; Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, p. 82; and see references below.

<sup>3</sup>Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, p. 80.

<sup>4</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 208 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb man māta wa-laysa la-hu imām min a'immat al-hudā..., ḥadīth #1}. On another occasion as his hearers' 'eyes widened and necks craned forward' the imām moderated his statement, retreating into

Knowledge of the imām is necessary in the final analysis because God Himself is known only through the imāms: "God is not known except through knowledge of them."<sup>5</sup> For mankind cannot set out on the journey toward God without a guide on the road; without someone to lead them they are utterly lost. The fifth imām warned one of his Shī'ah: "When one of you plans a journey of many miles you seek out a guide. Surely you are more ignorant of the paths of heaven than the paths of the earth; therefore seek your guide [that is your imām]!"<sup>6</sup> In this way knowledge of the imām actually becomes part of the knowledge of God. As the fifth imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir puts it: worship without proper knowledge of God is 'going astray' (ḍalāl), and knowledge (ma'rifah) of God is belief (taṣḍīq) in His Prophet and love and obedience to 'Alī and the imāms after him.<sup>7</sup> Thus none can be a believer (mu'min) except if he knows God, knows His messenger, and knows His imāms; it is not possible to be ignorant of or to deny any of these and claim to be a believer.<sup>8</sup>

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taqīyah (°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 303, ḥadīth #119).

<sup>5</sup>Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 54. According to the fifth imām.

<sup>6</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 261 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb ma'rifat al-imām wa-al-radd ilay-hi, ḥadīth #10}.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 254, ḥadīth #1.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 255, ḥadīth #2 (and see also the other ḥadīths in this chapter, esp. ḥadīth #5). Related from either the fifth or sixth imāms. And since knowledge of God and His prophets is obtained only through the imāms, to follow the imām is to gain faith in all the previous messengers: "Who enters the wilāyah



This is the meaning of Ja°far al-Şādiq's statement: "God is worshipped through worship of us, and if it were not for us God would not be worshipped."<sup>9</sup> It is not, at heart, that the faithful are called upon to worship the imāms, but rather that faith in God can be gotten only through the instruction of the imāms, and thus knowledge of the imāms is part of the knowledge of God.

From this it follows that the only approach to God is by way of the imāms, His designated representatives on the earth. There is no other way to know and believe in God.<sup>10</sup> This idea is expressed through the symbol of a 'gate' (bāb). There is only one gate or access to true faith. The gates are the Prophet and imāms; "the Family of Muḥammad," says the fifth imām, "are the gates to God and the way to Him."<sup>11</sup> They are the gates of God

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enters the house of the prophets (ibid., vol. 2, p. 293 {Kitāb al-ḥujjah, Bāb fī-hi nukat wa-nutaf min al-tanzīl fī al-wilāyah, ḥadīth #54}).

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., vol. 1, p. 275 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb anna al-a'immah wulāt amr Allāh wa-khazanat °ilmi-hi, ḥadīth #6}.

<sup>10</sup>Cf. John 14:6 (Jesus speaking to Thomas): "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh until the Father, but by me."

<sup>11</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 86, ḥadīth #210. A propos of Q. 2:189, "It is not righteousness that you go into the houses by their back; rather the righteous one is he who fears God and approaches the houses from their gates...."

between Him and His creation.<sup>12</sup> The 'gate' refers particularly to the Amīr al-Mu'minīn °Alī, as Salmān al-Fārisī remarked: "°Alī is the gate which God has opened; who enters it is a believer and who exits is an unbeliever."<sup>13</sup> The image of the gate appears to derive from a well-known statement of the Prophet concerning °Alī, in which he is reported to have said: "O °Alī, I am the city of knowledge, and you are its gate. Is the city ever approached from other than its gate?"<sup>14</sup>

The tradition employs several other images to emphasize that the only way to God is through the imāms. If God had wished, says °Alī, He could have made Himself known directly to His servants, but He made the imāms "His gates, His straight path (ṣirāṭ), His way, and the face from which He is to be approached."<sup>15</sup> °Alī, says the fifth imām, is the 'sign' (°alam) between God and His creation; who knows him is a believer, and who denies him, is a kāfir.<sup>16</sup> Ja°far al-Ṣādiq said: "God loved

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<sup>12</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 379. From the eighth imām.

<sup>13</sup>K. Sulaym, p. 220; Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 20 (from Ḥasan); Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, p. 100 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-kufr, ḥadīth #16} (from the fifth imām).

<sup>14</sup>Eg: Furāt, Tafsīr, pp. 9 & 95.

<sup>15</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 261 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb ma°rifat al-īmām..., ḥadīth #9}; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, pp. 52 & 55. See also Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 64-66 {Bāb fī al-a'immah anna-hum wajh Allāh...}; Furāt, Tafsīr, pp. 44, 46, & 61; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 283 {Kitāb al-ḥujjah, Bāb fī-hi nukat wa-nutaf min al-tanzīl fī al-wilāyah, ḥadīth #24}.

<sup>16</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, p. 101 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-kufr, ḥadīth #20}.

to be known through men [the Prophet and imāms] and to be obeyed through obedience to them, and He has made them His way and His Face (wajh) from which He may be approached."<sup>17</sup> Or the imāms are described as God's 'rope' (sabab) between Him and His creation, none of that which is with God being obtained except by grasping the rope.<sup>18</sup>

It is not only that faith and salvation are obtained exclusively through the imāms and through no one else. More than this, the mere attempt to approach God through another is equal to opposition to the imāms and negation of faith. If any person claims to have learned of God from other than the gate which God has opened, he is a 'mushrik,' pretending to make others share with the imāms a distinction that belongs to none but them.<sup>19</sup> Muḥammad al-Bāqir said (as reported by his son the sixth imām): "God has made °Alī a sign (°alam) between Him and His creation, and there is no other. Who follows him is a believer (mu'min), and who opposes (jaḥada) him is an unbeliever, and who doubts him

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<sup>17</sup>Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 83; See also Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 526 ff.

<sup>18</sup>Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 90. From the sixth imām.

<sup>19</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 209 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb man māṭ wa-laysa la-hu imām..., ḥadīth #4}; Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, p. 85. See also: Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 257 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb ma°rifat al-imām..., ḥadīth #6}. By the same token, one who does not believe in that which God has sent to His messengers of the ta'wīl of the Book is also a mushrik and a kāfir (Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 260; from the fifth imām). Once it is agreed that the imām is the only way to God, all this, though apparently extreme, follows logically.

is a mushrik."<sup>20</sup> The servant who aspires to belief but fails to believe in the imāms and adhere to their wilāyah, placing his loyalty elsewhere instead, is like one who attempts to enter the house from its back, whereas the believing servant can only enter by the imāms, who are the gates of God.<sup>21</sup> The fifth imām offers another parable: Those who attempt to approach God through their worship but have no [true] imām are like sheep who have lost their shepherd and gone astray and, finding themselves attracted first to one keeper and flock and then to the next, are finally devoured by wolves:

Whoever of this community has no manifest (zāhir), just imām is gone astray (dāll); and if he dies in such a state he shall die the death of unbelief (kufr) and hypocrisy (nifāq). The 'imāms of oppression' and their followers are far indeed from the religion of God; they have gone astray and led others astray.<sup>22</sup>

Thus loyalty to the imāms is equal to belief in God, while following others (even with the intention of obeying God) is equal to unbelief.

The necessary and eternal opposition between the true imāms and false leaders is also expressed in the tradition in terms of

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<sup>20</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 89, ḥadīth #34 (and see this chapter in general).

<sup>21</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, pp. 45-46.

<sup>22</sup>'Imāms of oppression' = a'immat al-jawr, i.e. false leaders. Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 259-260 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb ma'rifat..., ḥadīth #8}; *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 205-206 {Bāb fī man dāna Allāh bi-ghayr imām, ḥadīth #2}; Nu'mānī, Ghaybah, pp. 80-81. See also Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 426, ḥadīth #15.

love (ḥubb) and hate or disassociation (bughḍ). 'Love,' like 'knowledge,' is the basis of faith: "Everything has a foundation, and the foundation of Islam is love of us the ahl al-bayt."<sup>23</sup> And 'hatred,' like 'ignorance,' is rejection of faith, as the fifth imām says: "Love of us is faith (īmān), and hatred of us is unbelief (kufr)."<sup>24</sup> Love of the imāms is the same as love of the Prophet, which is the same as love of God, and hatred of the imāms is the same as hatred of the Prophet, which is equal to hatred of God.<sup>25</sup> There is, once again, nothing between the two extremes. There is no possibility of a neutral position, for a man cannot have 'two hearts;' if he loves the imāms he has to hate others who demand his loyalty, and if his heart has imbibed love of another, he has to hate the imāms.<sup>26</sup> One either knows

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<sup>23</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 286, ḥadīth #427; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 77 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb nisbat al-Islām, ḥadīth #2}. The words of the Prophet. Ḥubb of the ahl al-bayt, according to one ḥadīth, may afford even the People of the Book - Christians, Jews, and Magians - a place in Heaven! (Uṣūl, p. 96; the Prophet's comforting of 'Alī as he mourned a Jewish friend).

<sup>24</sup>Kulaynī, Al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 266 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb farḍ t̄ā°at al-a'immah, ḥadīth #12}. See also Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 162. Note however the words of Ja°far al-Šādiq: "God shall cause the love of him who loves us to benefit him... but he who loves us for the sake of other than God, God shall do with him as He wills (Ḥimyarī, Qurb, p. 28)." 'Love for the sake of other than God' may refer to extremist (ghuluw) beliefs, eg. deification of the imāms.

<sup>25</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 205; see also *ibid.*, pp. 53 & 133.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 20. According to 'Alī. The predestinarian tendency of Shiism is reinforced by this doctrine, for love, according to the Shī°ī account of the creation, is granted only to those created as Shī°ah, while it is absolutely denied to the lower orders (see *ibid.*, p. 177).

and loves the imām and thus becomes a believer, or is ignorant and hates the imām and so is dedicated to unbelief.

ii. Faith and works: "Good works shall not avail."

For the Shī'ah, works accomplished without knowledge of the imāms are invalid, as the eighth imām al-Riḍā said: "Nothing shall be accepted save with knowledge (ma'rifah) of us."<sup>27</sup> °Alī himself declared from the pulpit: "The faith of those who love us the ahl al-bayt shall be useful for them and their deeds shall be accepted, but as for those who do not love us, their faith shall not help them and their deeds shall not be accepted."<sup>28</sup> The deeds of the ones who refuse to follow the imāms are "like dust in the midst of the storm: nothing they have acquired (k-s-b) shall they retain."<sup>29</sup> It is even asserted that those who after the death of the Prophet 'apostatized' (meaning that they denied °Alī the right to the caliphate) shall find that all their

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<sup>27</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 42, ḥadīth #119. See also Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, p. 150. This was also the case for the past prophets and vicegerents. Thus the fifth or sixth imām relates how the fervent prayers of an Israelite were refused until he cleansed his heart of doubt (shakk) in the Prophet Jesus (Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, pp. 119-120 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-shakk, ḥadīth #9}).

<sup>28</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 199, ḥadīth #31.

<sup>29</sup>From the fifth imām: that is the deeds they had acquired storing them up in expectation of future reward. Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 259-260 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb ma'rifat al-īmān wa-al-radd ilay-hi, ḥadīth #8}; *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 204-205 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb fī man dāna Allāh bi-ghayr imām, ḥadīth #2}; Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, pp. 80-81. See also Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 426, ḥadīth #15.

efforts in the struggle for Islam before that date are void.<sup>30</sup>

The books of ḥadīth contain a very large number of hyperbolic traditions intended to demonstrate that good works, however excellent and however numerous, are cancelled by absence of loyalty to the imām.<sup>31</sup> For example, it is reported that Muḥammad al-Bāqir was told of a man who fasted the day, stood the night in prayer, and gave the poor-tax; "nothing has ever been known from him but good, except that he does not recognize the wilāyah." This led him to comment: "Even if a servant should never cease to prostrate himself in prayer between the rukṇ and the maqām [that is between the 'corner' and the 'station' of Abraham, in the Ka'bah] until he left this world, still if he does not recognize our wilāyah, all that is of no use to him!<sup>32</sup> It is also related that a man exclaimed, addressing Ja'far al-Ṣādiq: "O son of the Prophet of God, how many people there are making the pilgrimage this year!" But the imām said: "Let them come as they will, many or few, for by God, He shall not accept

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<sup>30</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 300.

<sup>31</sup>Or even by the intrusion of 'doubt' (shakk) and therefore lack of the complete 'certainty' (yaqīn) that is demanded of the perfectly committed Shī'ah; eg: Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, pp. 119-120 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-shakk, ḥadīth #9} and ibid., p. 98 {Bāb al-kufr, ḥadīths #9 & #10}. On the subject of shakk and yaqīn, see below.

<sup>32</sup>Uṣūl, p. 118. See also Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 90, ḥadīth #40 and p. 91, ḥadīths #43 & #44; Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 74.

the pilgrimage from any but you [the Shī'ah]...!"<sup>33</sup> And on another occasion Ja'far said: "By God, if a man should fast the day and stand the night in prayer, and then meet His Lord without wilāyah of us, he shall find [contrary to his expectations] that He is displeased and angry with him!"<sup>34</sup>

Loyalty to the imāms also cancels evil works, whatever and however many they may be. Wilāyah strips away sins "as a strong wind causes leaves to fall from a tree."<sup>35</sup> The fifth imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir reported that God said: "I shall surely grant forgiveness to any community of Islam that follows a rightly-guided imām appointed by God, even though its works may be evil and they may do wrong!"<sup>36</sup>

Thus neither good nor evil works are taken into account, but only the faith evidenced in wilāyah, as expressed in the oft-cited dictum of the sixth imām: "[Evil] works do not harm if one possesses faith, and [good] works shall not avail in the presence

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<sup>33</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 167, ḥadīth #167; and see also the rest of the chapter: 'The Acceptance of Deeds (Qubūl al-°amal).'

<sup>34</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 89, ḥadīth #61. On the performance of the 'pillars' see also: Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 90, ḥadīth #39; Furāt, Tafsīr, pp. 202-203, and Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, pp. 190-191 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-hubb fī Allāh wa-al-buḥd fī Allāh, ḥadīth #6}.

<sup>35</sup>Ḥimyarī, Qurb, p. 28. From the sixth imām.

<sup>36</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 94, ḥadīth #51 (and see this chapter in general: '°Iqāb man lam ya°rifu imāma-hu'); Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, p. 83. On the cancellation of sins see below, section viii.



of kufr."<sup>37</sup>

One result of the irrelevance of works to salvation is that an 'evil' Shī'ī is better than another 'good' Muslim; Ja'far al-Ṣādiq reports that °Alī used often to say: "Evil in your religion [the religion of adherence to the imāms; Shiism] is better than good in another, for in the first case evil shall be forgiven, whereas in the second the good shall not be accepted."<sup>38</sup> Thus °Umar ibn Ḥaṇṣalah, a companion of the sixth imām, was reassured that even though a certain non-Shī'ī had succeeded better than himself in withdrawing from the world, still God would not accept that from him. °Umar was still by virtue of his Shiism in the better position.<sup>39</sup>

Moreover, God does not 'hesitate' (lit., 'He is not shy') to commit apparent injustice in nullifying the good deeds of those who have rejected the imāms, while at the same time subtracting the sins of His chosen community, the Shī'ah:

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<sup>37</sup>(Faith being equal to wilāyah, and kufr to rejection of the imāms): Barqī, Mahāsin, p. 166, ḥadīth #123; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 89, ḥadīth #61; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, pp. 206-207 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb anna al-imān lā yaḍurru ma°-hu sayya'ah wa-al-kufr lā yanfa°u ma°-hu ḥasanah, ḥadīth #4}. See also °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 139, ḥadīth #462.

<sup>38</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, p. 207 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb anna al-imān lā yaḍurru..., ḥadīth #6}.

<sup>39</sup>Barqī, Mahāsin, p. 168, ḥadīth #129. The 'non-Shī'ī' called in the ḥadīth 'al-Dahhāq ibn Qays' is likely al-Ahnaf ibn Qays, a companion of both °Alī and Ḥasan who fought on °Alī's side in Ṣiffīn but later had dealings with Mu°āwiyah; see article under that name in Khū'i's Rijāl.

God does not hesitate to punish the community that attaches itself to an imām that is not from God, even though their deeds may be righteous; but He is reluctant to punish the community which has attached itself to an imām from God, even though its works are evil and it does wrong.<sup>40</sup>

This state of affairs is justified by the original creation: Human beings, it is said, are created either 'happy' (sa'id, that is destined for eternal bliss) or 'miserable' (shaqī, destined also for that condition in the next world). Misery and happiness were fixed before mankind appeared on the earth, and they cannot be altered: the Pen has 'dried' in relation to the happiness of the believers and the misery of the unbelievers.<sup>41</sup> Therefore those whom God knew in His infinite knowledge to be 'happy' He shall never hate. If they do evil, He shall hate their deeds, but He shall not hate them. And so also the 'miserable:' these God shall never love, and if they do good He shall love their deeds but not them, for "when God loves a thing He shall never hate it, and that which He hates He shall never love."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Nu'mānī, Ghaybah, p. 84. From the sixth imām.

<sup>41</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 210. According to the fifth imām. See also Himyarī, Qurb, p. 208.

<sup>42</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 279, ḥadīth #1; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 211 {K. al-tawḥīd, Bāb al-sa'ādah wa-al-shaqā', ḥadīth #1} (from the sixth imām), and see also both chapters. It is also said (apropos of the verse: "God intervenes between a man and his heart [Q. 8:24]") that God intervenes between the believer and his sin before it takes him to the Fire, and between the unbeliever and his obedience (tā'ah) lest his faith should be completed (Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 271)!

Of so little account are the deeds of men that a 'happy' one may travel all his life in the way of the miserable, doing evil along with them so that people are led to remark: "How much he is like them; surely he is one of them!" But then happiness shall finally overtake him, and God shall confirm him in his happy state, "even if there remains to him nothing of this world but his last dying breath."<sup>43</sup>

The servant is therefore judged as a part of the community to which he belonged - Shī'ī or non-Shī'ī - rather than according to his own apparent merits. His fate is determined according to the status of the one whom he had followed rather than on the basis of his own efforts and actions. The words of the Prophet confirm this:

Even if a servant should worship God one thousand years standing between the rukū and the maqām, and then go to the slaughter as a lamb, 'without sin or protest' (mazlūm, lit. oppressed), still God shall resurrect him on the Day with those whom he followed and whose guidance he accepted, and as they go so shall he: if to Paradise, to Paradise, and if to the Fire, to the Fire.<sup>44</sup>

### iii. Imān and Islām; Faith and works: "Faith is all of it works."

So far we have understood that, according to the Shī'ah, the only basis for faith is knowledge and love of the imāms (while

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<sup>43</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 213 {K. al-tawhīd, Bāb al-sa'ādah wa-al-shaqā', ḥadīth #3}; Barqī, Maḥāsīn, p. 280, ḥadīth #409. From the sixth imām.

<sup>44</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsīn, p. 61, ḥadīth #102.

ignorance of the imāms excludes one from Islam), and that such faith leads to salvation regardless of works (while lack of it leads to perdition, no matter how many good works are performed). There is, in other words, only one standard of faith, and works are immaterial to that.

The Shī'ah also, however, came to distinguish two categories of belief: īmān ('faith'), meaning a higher degree of belief, and islām ('submission'), indicating the formal religion in its superficial aspect. The two standards allowed the followers of the imāms to include all Muslims in the community of faith, while still reserving a more strict definition of true belief to be applied to the favoured sect. A part of the tradition also gives a definition of īmān that, contrary to the trend described above, makes works a condition of faith or even an integral part of it.

Shī'ī tradition separates īmān and islām according to two criteria. First, it is asserted that īmān is superior to islām - to formal, outward religion - because of an inner conviction or quality of belief. Second, the condition is imposed that īmān be accompanied or evidenced by works (a'māl). In both cases īmān is seen as a superior subset of islām, just as (the parallel is drawn in many ḥadīths) the Ka'bah is contained within the Masjid al-Ḥarām and is part of it, but at the same time superior to

it.<sup>45</sup>

As for the distinction between īmān and islām on the basis of 'inner conviction,' the imām °Alī states that Gabriel informed the Prophet that islām consists of the profession of faith and outward observances (the pilgrimage, ablutions, and so on), while īmān is belief in God and His angels, His books, His prophets, and life after death.<sup>46</sup> That is, islām is the outward performance of all the acts of obedience, without the participation of the heart, whereas īmān belongs to one who is obedient both outwardly and in his inner state.<sup>47</sup> Imān, in addition, involves a psychological state or a certain response to the proffered belief. This is termed variously taṣḍīq ('verification' or 'sincere belief'),<sup>48</sup> iqrār ('affirmation' or 'confirmation'),<sup>49</sup> niyah ('right intention'), sakīnah (a state

<sup>45</sup>Eg: Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, pp. 41-44 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb anna al-īmān yashraku al-islām wa-al-islām lā yashraku al-īmān, ḥadīth #4 & #5}. Or it is said that islām is 'prior' to īmān (that is the state of islām is achieved first, and that of īmān only subsequently); see *ibid.*, p. 45 {Bāb ākhīr wa-fī-hi anna al-islām gabl al-īmān, ḥadīth #2}. See also *ibid.*, p. 87 {Bāb faḍl al-īmān °alā al-islām wa-al-yaqīn °alā al-īmān, ḥadīth #3}.

<sup>46</sup>K. Sulaym, pp. 87-88.

<sup>47</sup>See Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, pp. 40-41 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb anna al-islām yashraku al-islām..., ḥadīth #1}.

<sup>48</sup>Eg: *ibid.*, pp. 63-64 {Bāb fī anna al-īmān mabthūth li-jawāriḥ al-badan kulli-hā, ḥadīth #5}; Barqī, Maḥāsīn, p. 222, ḥadīth #135; Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 31.

<sup>49</sup>Eg: K. Sulaym, p. 87. This and the last term recall the acceptance of the original faith offered at the creation.

of 'tranquillity' that descends upon the believer),<sup>50</sup> and taslīm (the complete mental 'surrender' described in the previous chapter).<sup>51</sup>

While īmān is required to secure the status of a soul as mu'min ([true] believer), islām, that is the outward assent, still has the effect of making one an accepted member of the community for legal purposes. The fifth imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir says:

īmān is that which is established in the heart and by which the servant attains to God, and which is verified by active obedience to God and submission to His command. Islām, on the other hand, is the declarations or deeds that may be observed outwardly, and this is possessed by all the people to whatever sect they may belong. It is on the basis of islām that blood is not to be spilled, that inheritances are settled, and that marriage is allowed..., and it is through it that one leaves the state of kufr....<sup>52</sup>

Thus, as Ja'far al-Ṣādiq confirms, marriages and contracts may be concluded with those possessing merely islām, and there is peaceful social intercourse with them (citing the maxim: al-islām yuḥqanu bi-hi al-damm: 'blood is spared by Islam').<sup>53</sup>

<sup>50</sup>See: Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, pp. 24-25 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb anna al-sakīnah hiya al-īmān (all the chapter)}.

<sup>51</sup>Eg: ibid., p. 42 {Bāb anna al-īmān yashraku al-islām..., ḥadīth #5}.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 38 {Bāb anna al-islām yuḥqan bi-hi al-damm wa-anna al-thawāb °alā al-īmān, ḥadīth #1} (see also the rest of this chapter).

In these provisions we see the true design of the doctrine of imān and islām: it is the Shī'ah who are the real believers, but the others possess such belief as would allow the Shī'ah to coexist with them in one community.<sup>54</sup>

As for the position that faith must be paired with works (°amal), the ḥadīths that support it are almost as numerous as those that discount works and declare faith - that is faith in the imāms - to be the sole standard of belief. Both views are well established in Shī'ī tradition.

Islām, according to Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, is the name of the eternal religion which existed before man and shall exist after him. Who assents to this religion may be called 'muslim.' If, however, one performs in addition the works that God has commanded, he is also fit to be called 'mu'min.'<sup>55</sup>

Works are in fact the evidence of faith, as Ja'far al-Ṣādiq says: "Who does works [we may assume that] knowledge has led him

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<sup>54</sup>Despite this, a few ḥadīths still manage to incorporate 'islām' and 'imān' into the exclusivist interpretation; eg. the saying of the fifth imām: "Islām [belongs to] those who pronounce our shahādah, perform the same acts of piety, are loyal to our walī [the imām], and are enemies to our enemies; such a person is a muslim [whereas a mu'min is one who adds to this inner faith and conviction] (ibid., pp. 63-64 {Bāb fī anna al-imān mabthūth..., ḥadīth #5})."

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 63 {Bāb fī anna al-imān mabthūth li-awāriḥ..., ḥadīth #4}.

to it, and who does not [obviously] has no knowledge."<sup>56</sup> According to the imām °Alī, the faith of a believer is known in his °amal, and the denial (kufr) of an unbeliever is also known through his °amal.<sup>57</sup> Thus (says the Prophet) the pronouncement [gawl] of a servant shall not be 'lifted' [accepted by God and taken up to him] unless confirmed by his deeds or practice.<sup>58</sup>

It is not far from taking works as the necessary evidence of faith to considering °amal as actually constituting faith. The Shī°ah in fact regard faith itself as a work, as 'the best of works, in the absence of which no other is accepted.' Imān, they say, is 'spread throughout the limbs,' that is it is not only deposited in the heart but evidenced in the actions the body performs. This point is emphasized by declaring the oral witness of the shahādah: 'There is no god but God, and Muḥammad is the Messenger of God' to be also a work: the work of the tongue. Imān, says Ja°far al-Ṣādiq, is not merely the 'pronouncement' (gawl, meaning the shahādah) unaccompanied by °amal; rather it is all of it °amal - "faith is all of it works" - and the gawl is

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<sup>56</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 198, ḥadīth #25.

<sup>57</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, pp. 99-100. See also Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 222, ḥadīth #135; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 76 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb nisbat al-Islām, ḥadīth #1}. Emphasis on the evidence of works is also reflected in pietistic thought, as in the statement of the sixth imām that 'the one whose deeds do not confirm his °ilm is not in truth an °ālim' (Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 44 {K. faḍl al-°ilm, Bāb ṣifāt al-°ulamā', ḥadīth #2}).

<sup>58</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 208 ("...and if his deeds are contrary to it, he shall go to the Fire").



part of that °amal.<sup>59</sup> Asked for a definition of īmān, he said: "It is the shahādah that there is no god but God, affirmation (iqrār) of what has come from God, and the sincere belief (taṣdīq) in these things that establishes itself in the heart." "Is not the shahādah," asked his companion, "also a work?" "Certainly," the imām said. "And are works part of faith?" "Yes," replied the imām, "īmān does not exist without °amal, and °amal is part of it, and īmān is not established except through °amal."<sup>60</sup>

By the works that must be carried out to verify or produce faith is meant the obligatory duties, the 'pillars' (arkān).<sup>61</sup> In some ḥadīths, however, the suggestion survives that the central work constituting īmān is obedience to the imāms; Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, for instance, defines works as "knowledge [ma'rifah] of the imāms."<sup>62</sup> In other reports the wilāyah is actually counted

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<sup>59</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 56 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb anna al-īmān mabthūth..., ḥadīth #1}; ibid., p. 64, ḥadīth #7 (here reported from the seventh imām).

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 63, ḥadīth #3.

<sup>61</sup>See for example ibid., pp. 44-45 {Bāb... anna al-islām qabl al-islām, ḥadīth #1}; ibid., p. 55 {Annex to Bāb anna al-islām qabl al-īmān, ḥadīth #2}. See also ibid., p. 95 {Bāb al-kufr, ḥadīth #5}. This leads to the question: how can works such as the prayer and the fast performed by one person guarantee īmān while the same works performed by another result only in islām? Muhammad al-Bāqir answers that the works of a mu'min lead to faith because God gives many times greater credit to the mu'min for each work, in accordance with the soundness of his īmān (ibid., pp. 42-44 {Bāb anna al-īmān yashraku al-islām..., ḥadīth #5}).

<sup>62</sup>Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 135, ḥadīth #96.

as one of the pillars; thus the well-known saying of the Prophet: "Islam is built on five... [the shahādah, the prayer, the alms, the pilgrimage, and the fast] is reported from the fifth and sixth imāms as: "Islam is built on five: the prayer, the alms, the pilgrimage, the fast, and the wilāyah." <sup>63</sup> Traditions such as these represent a continued attempt within the context of the revised doctrine to restrict faith to the Shī'ah.

The position that ʿamal is paired with imān is opposed to the belief of the Murji'is, who did not think that works were a prerequisite of faith; thus the sixth imām condemns the Murji'is by name, declaring:

Faith is only a claim, which cannot be allowed except if proven, and the proof is in works and the intention (niyah) behind those works [that is the proper intention must be formed in order for the action to be valid]. If these things are present, the servant is in the eyes of God a mu'min. <sup>64</sup>

There was a compelling reason arising from within the Shī'ī environment for insisting on works as part of faith. For some of

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<sup>63</sup>Eg. Barqī, Maḥāsin, pp. 286-290 {Bāb al-sharā'i}; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, pp. 29-38 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb da'āim al-Islām}, passim. The wilāyah is also said to be the best of the duties; see the ḥadīths in these two chapters and also Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 79, ḥadīth #10. (Other ḥadīths concerning the pillars do not include the wilāyah, count a lesser or greater number than five, or different 'pillars' altogether; consult the same two chapters.)

<sup>64</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 66 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb anna al-imān mabthūth..., ḥadīth #8}. See also *ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 133 {Bāb fī sunūf ahl al-khilāf..., ḥadīth #1}; Nu'mānī, Ghaybah, p. 190 (other condemnations of the Murji'is by the sixth and fifth imāms).

the Shī'ah had apparently concluded (as adherents of esoteric systems are apt to do) that because others had erred by depending on the outward performance (al-zāhir) without believing in the inner truth (al-bāṭin), they would be right in ignoring the zāhir and depending only on the bāṭin.<sup>65</sup> Concerning these the sixth imām warned: "That shall not be of any use to them! There is no faith [implied in] the outer practice except if accompanied by the inner truth, and there is also no inner truth without the outer practice."<sup>66</sup> A faction even thought that 'prayer,' 'fasting,' and so forth were 'men' (meaning the imāms) and that therefore they were not compulsory and any license was permitted, provided one knew the Prophet and imāms.<sup>67</sup> The imāms also condemn this error.<sup>68</sup> Other reports issue a more general caution, as in this message sent by Ja'far al-Ṣādiq to his mawālī: "Greet them and tell them that we shall not be sufficient for them before God even to the smallest extent without deeds, and that they shall not attain wilāyah of us except through deeds

<sup>65</sup>Ash'arī (Maqālāt, pp. 121-122) mentions a group of the Rawāfiḍ who held that the sharī'ah is not necessary for those who know the imām.

<sup>66</sup>Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 78. See also Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 526 ff. and Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, p. 207 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb anna al-īmān lā yaḍurru ma°-hu sayyi'ah wa-al-kufr mā yanfa° ma°-hu ḥasanah, ḥadīth #5}.

<sup>67</sup>This position is attributed by the heresiographer [pseudo-] Nawbakhtī to a group of the 'Khattābiyah,' partisans of Abū al-Khaṭṭāb ibn Abī Zaynab: K. firaq al-Shī'ah, pp. 38-40.

<sup>68</sup>Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 78 (from Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, in a letter to Abū al-Khaṭṭāb).

and piety."<sup>69</sup> Affirmation of the value of works therefore served to counter an extremism that denied the exoteric aspects of Islamic worship.

iv. The station between belief and unbelief; the kāfir.

A part of Shī'ī tradition situates those who profess Islam but do not adhere to the wilāyah in a separate station between belief and unbelief. This is, once again, directly contrary to the trend that denies salvation to all but the followers of the imāms. The establishment of a 'middle position' also involves a reconsideration of what is meant by 'kāfir.'

Those in the station between īmān and kufr are said by the Shī'ah to have 'gone astray' (dāll). Islām, it is said, consists of the outward (zāhir) devotions, whereas īmān is all of these things along with knowledge (ma'rifah) of 'this affair' (al-amr, that is wilāyah of the imāms). The one who affirms (aqarra) the outward aspects but does not have the ma'rifah (inner conviction; knowledge granted by God) necessary for īmān is certainly a muslim, but he is also considered 'to have gone astray' (dāll).<sup>70</sup> To be dāll, therefore, is not to know the imām,<sup>71</sup> while the

<sup>69</sup>Himyarī, Qurb, p. 24; Furāt, Tafsīr, pp. 57 & 84; Nu'mānī, Ghaybah, p. 84.

<sup>70</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 39 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb anna al-islām yuḥqanu bi-hi al-damm wa-anna al-thawāb °alā al-īmān, ḥadīth #4}. From the sixth imām.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., vol. 4, pp. 142-143 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb adnā mā yakūn bi-hi al-°abd mu'min aw kāfir aw dāll, ḥadīth #1}.

quality that distinguishes true faith (īmān) is ma°rifah of the imāms.

It must be understood that in this scheme 'straying' is a state of ignorance, not disobedience.<sup>72</sup> Being dāll involves only "not knowing God's proof on His earth [the imāms]...;"<sup>73</sup> it does not mean actively rejecting them. It is precisely this ignorance that protects the servants who have gone astray from the Fire-for how can God punish His servant for ignorance, when knowledge and lack of knowledge are not in his hands? As the Amīr al-Mu'minīn explains: ma°rifah is created in the heart by God (and not by man). It is God who invites man to the knowledge and offers him the proof (ḥujjah); even the act of confirmation is from God, through His Protection (°iṣmah) and Mercy (rahmah). However, if God does not grant knowledge, the one who is consequently ignorant - jāhil - is not considered to have been offered the proof. It is only for that person to refrain from that which he does not know (adhering to that concerning which the community does not disagree and refraining from pretending to make ḥalāl and ḥarām that concerning which there is disagreement); through this he shall not be liable to God's punishment. For the servant is capable of obedience or disobedience, but he is not in himself capable, by choice, of

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<sup>72</sup> (Whereas, according to the doctrine of the 'death of the Jāhiliyah,' ignorance is equal to disobedience).

<sup>73</sup> Ḳ. Sulaym, p. 89. From °Alī.

knowing or not knowing.<sup>74</sup>

The only one who can properly be called a kāfir is he who has actually rejected the imām.<sup>75</sup> (Kufr is thus linked to juḥūd, to 'opposition;' according to Muḥammad al-Bāqir, everything that leads to icrār and taslīm, is īmān; whereas all that leads to denial [inkār] and juḥūd is kufr.)<sup>76</sup> Kufr, moreover, is informed opposition: "it is opposition (juḥūd) accompanied by knowledge; it is that one opposes what he knows to be the truth."<sup>77</sup> Kufr,

<sup>74</sup>K. Sulaym, pp. 86-87. This tradition is certainly out of place in this supposedly early source. On the hujjah see also Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, p. 120 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-dalāl, ḥadīth #1}. Those who know the wilāyah are invited in instances in which they are unable to ascertain the truth to guarantee their salvation by reposing in a state of ignorance (which thus constitutes not disobedience, but a kind of acquiescence). The sixth imām says: "If God's servants when they did not know (j-h-l) would 'halt' [w-g-f, that is refrain from taking action], they would neither have 'opposed' [j-h-d, that is opposed the authority of the imāms] or 'denied' [k-f-r, that is denied the imāms, and so committed kufr] (Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, p. 101 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-kufr, ḥadīth #19})."

<sup>75</sup>See Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, pp. 117-118 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-shakk, ḥadīth #3}. According to one ḥadīth, this kufr is actually 'more serious' than shirk, that is to oppose God and his earthly representatives is more serious than to worship another alongside Him! (ibid., pp. 93-94 {Bāb al-kufr, ḥadīth #2}, from the fifth imām). This hyperbole is perhaps inspired by the doctrine that kufr is 'prior' to shirk (since Satan first committed kufr when he rejected Adam, and only after did he preach the worship of one other than God) (ibid., p. 97, ḥadīth #8 & p. 95, ḥadīth #6).

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 100 {Bāb al-kufr, ḥadīth #15}.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 102 {Bāb wujūh al-kufr, ḥadīth #1}; according to the sixth imām. Thus among the 'branches' of kufr are 'doubt' (shakk; shubḥah), 'exaggeration' (ghulūw), and 'immersion in speculation' (al-ta'ammug fī al-ra'y) (ibid., pp. 104-107 {Bāb da'ā'im al-kufr wa-shu'abi-hi, ḥadīth #1}; reported from °Alī).

which means literally, 'rejection,' is therefore taken to signify rejection of the imāms. Thus the fifth imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir distinguishes three categories: those who know °Alī are mu'min, believers; those who deny him are kāfir, unbelievers; and finally those who are (merely) ignorant (j-h-l) of °Alī are dāll.<sup>78</sup>

The middle group is itself divided into several categories.<sup>79</sup> Asked whether there was a 'station (manzilah) between imān and kufr' the sixth imām replied:

Yes, and there are [within that] several others.... There are between the two "others [the determination of the fate of whom is] postponed (al-marjawn) for God's decree (Q. 9:106)," and there are between them 'the weak' (al-mustad'afūn), and "others who mixed righteous action with another that was bad (Q. 9:102)," and there are also between them, as God says: "on the heights are [certain] men (Q. 7:47 & 48)."<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 101 {Bāb al-kufr, ḥadīth #20}. A similar statement from the sixth imām in ibid., p. 91 {Bāb aṣnāf al-nās, ḥadīth #2}). Note that a kāfir is not a mushrik; those who fought °Alī rejected him and were therefore kāfirs, but they were not 'mushrik,' polytheists (ibid., p. 94 {Bāb al-kufr, ḥadīth #3}, from the fifth imām)./ Ash°arī (Maqālāt, p. 122) speaks of a sect called the 'Ya°fūriyah' who asserted that ignorance of the imām is allowed, the one ignorant being as a result neither a kāfir nor a mu'min. The idea of a middle group may have penetrated the tradition from this direction.

<sup>79</sup>According to some reports, there are six groups altogether: those who shall certainly go to Heaven, those who shall certainly go to Hell, and the four other groups mentioned below (see ibid., pp. 90-92 {Bāb aṣnāf al-nās, all the chapter}). Note here that I have merely inferred that the four classes are subsets of 'dāll,' since dāll is the name given in many ḥadīths to the middle station and the four are said to be degrees of that station. I have not actually found any report that draws that scheme, and this may be an oversystemization.

<sup>80</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 111, ḥadīth #133; see also K. Sulaym, p. 86 (related from °Alī).

The mariawn (those whose fate is postponed) are identified as those who fought against the Muslims in the battles of early Islamic history but then later accepted Islam, for example ones who killed believers such as Ḥamzah the uncle of the Prophet (this was Waḥshī, a slave of the Quraysh who did the deed in exchange for his freedom) and Ja°far (ibn Abī Ṭālib, 'al-Ṭayyār,' brother of °Alī), but then later came over to the new religion. While Waḥshī and the murderer of Ja°far abandoned polytheism, (true) faith cannot be said to have entered their hearts; and while they deserve Paradise for their eventual belief, they also deserve Hell for their original opposition (juḥūd) to the Prophet. They are therefore in the position of awaiting the judgement of God, who shall either punish or forgive them as He wills.<sup>81</sup>

The mustaḍ°afūn: 'those considered weak' are, according to some reports, persons who are weak in intellect; they are, in the words of the fifth imām, "those who neither believe nor disbelieve, that is children, and men and women whose intellect is similar to that of children; 'the pen is lifted from them.'"<sup>82</sup> However, by mustaḍ°aūn the Shī°ah mean primarily

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<sup>81</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 110, ḥadīth #130; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, p. 131 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-murjawn li-amr Allāh, ḥadīths #1 & #2}. All from the fifth imām.

<sup>82</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, p. 126 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-mustaḍ°af, ḥadīth #1} (and see also the other ḥadīths in this chapter).



those who do not profess the wilāyah of the imāms, but also do not oppose it.<sup>83</sup> (This class therefore seems to be the same as that of the dāll as a whole, although the tradition neither states that, nor makes a distinction between the two.) The mustaḍ°afūn are those who "are neither able to manage the deception of kufr and shirk, nor to 'set up' [n-ṣ-b, follow false imāms]; nor have they any possibility to be guided toward being conscious, informed believers...."<sup>84</sup> Ignorance is, again, of the essence; those who are aware of the causes of the differences between the sects cannot be considered 'mustaḍ°af.'<sup>85</sup>

Another 'middle' group is 'those who have mixed good and evil' or whose good and evil deeds are equal. They are the ones who, while they possess imān, have damaged their faith through sins disapproved and detested by the believers.<sup>86</sup> The faithful

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<sup>83</sup>See *ibid.*, pp. 128-129, ḥadīths #5, #6, & #7. See also *ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 192 {Bāb al-ḥubb fī Allāh wa-al-buḥd fī Allāh, ḥadīth #10}. The mustaḍ°afūn, says Ja°far al-Sādiq, are made of a third kind of clay which is neither purely that of the believer nor that of the 'nāṣib.' Those made of this clay may become as they are created either one of these things or the other, and they are not capable of change, except if God wills to change them (that is His Will is effective over their final fate) (Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 16, ḥadīth #7).

<sup>84</sup>K. Sulaym, p. 86. From °Alī.

<sup>85</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfi, vol. 4, pp. 129 & 130 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-mustaḍ°af, ḥadīths #7, #10, & #11}. According to the sixth imām. In one report, however, the sixth imām claims that there can no longer be mustaḍ°afūn, since the truth has been published for all men and women to hear (*ibid.*, p. 130, ḥadīth #12).

<sup>86</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 106, ḥadīth #109.

in this world should 'postpone' (ر-ي-ل) their estimation of such persons, for their fate is with God who shall either take them to Paradise by His Mercy or to the Fire for the sake of their sins.<sup>87</sup> In one report Ja°far al-Şādiq gives as an example of those who have mixed good and evil Wahshī (because while he first killed Ḥamzaḥ, after his conversion he also did good by killing the false prophet Musaylimah);<sup>88</sup> in another he identifies as such a man who professed the wilāyah of the imāms, did barā'ah of their enemies, and held for the doctrine of qadr (the absolute power of God), but who was also in the employ of the Umayyads.<sup>89</sup>

The group indicated by the Qur'ānic phrase: "on the heights are certain men" seems to mean those who sinned but then confessed and repented; 'heights' (= a°rāf) is related by the exegetes to the verb a-°-t-r-f, 'to confess,' as in Q. 9:102: "There are others who have confessed (a°tarafū) to their sins."<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, p. 132 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb aṣḥāb al-a°rāf, ḥadīth #1}. According to the fifth imām. The fifth imām also states, however, that the forgiveness of such persons by God is 'unlikely' (ibid., p. 133, ḥadīth #2, in accordance with the continuation of the Qur'ānic verse: "it is unlikely that God shall turn toward them)."

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 90 {Bāb asnāf al-nās, ḥadīth #1}. °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, pp. 105-106 {ḥadīth #106}, also mentions Wahshī, as well as the killer of Ja°far al-Tayyār. These two are also given as examples of the 'marjawn.' In fact the four classes are mixed together in some reports (examine, for instance, the Arabic text of the ḥadīth cited in the previous note), and the distinctions between them are, it must be said, not very clear to begin.

<sup>89</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 106, ḥadīth #108.

<sup>90</sup>See Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, pp. 53-54.

The tradition does not have much to say concerning this last group of the 'middle station.'

Two of the most oft-cited ḥadīths supporting the exclusivist trend of Shī'ī thought appear in an altered form to suit the revised doctrine of the middle position. Ja'far al-Ṣādiq was asked if the 'death of the Jāhiliyah' referred to so often by the imāms was 'a death of unbelief (kufr),' and he answered: "No, rather a death of going astray (ḍalāl)."<sup>91</sup> And the seventh imām described 'Alī as "one of the doors of guidance; who enters his door is a believer (mu'min), who exits it is an unbeliever (kāfir), and who neither enters nor exits is in a class over which God exercises His Will."<sup>92</sup>

By suggesting an intermediate rank the Shī'ah were able to avoid condemnation of all outside their school to the Fire; in fact in some traditions they identify this extreme position with the Khārijīs, who were known for their narrow definition of belief.<sup>93</sup> Another, practical consequence of the classification of non-Shī'īs as merely 'dāll' was that it allowed the Shī'ī

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<sup>91</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 154, ḥadīth #80; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 208 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb man māṭ wa laysa la-hu imām, ḥadīth #2}.

<sup>92</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, p. 101 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-kufr, ḥadīths #18 & #21}.

<sup>93</sup>Muḥammad al-Bāqir says: "Religion is spacious, but the Khārijīs have through their ignorance made things narrow for themselves (Himyarī, Qurb, p. 227; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, pp. 128-129 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-mustad'af, ḥadīth #6})."

minority greater freedom in social intercourse. Both motives are evident in the question posed by Ja°far al-Şādiq to his followers:

What do you say of your servants, your women, and your families? Do they not testify that there is no god but God, that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God; do they not pray, fast, and go on the pilgrimage? And yet do they acknowledge what you believe? What should you then consider them?

The imām's companion answered: "The one who does not know [the imām] is an unbeliever (kāfir)."<sup>94</sup> This prompted the imām to ask the same question concerning the pilgrims camped around Makkah (the reported conversation took place during the hajj) and those seen circumambulating the Ka°bah and grasping its curtains. Upon receiving the answer that these, too, were unbelievers, he reproached the man for 'saying what we [the imāms] do not say' and exclaimed: "God preserve us, this is what the Khārijīs say!"<sup>94</sup> Ja°far's intention to reverse the prior doctrine of the Shī°ah that would send all but themselves to Hell could hardly be clearer.<sup>95</sup> Other reports relate how the fifth and sixth imāms corrected the view of their companion Zurārah ibn A°yan who clung to the idea that there was no 'middle position' and that all who

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<sup>94</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, pp. 120-122 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-dalāl, ḥadīth #1}. See also Uṣūl, p. 68 (the fifth imām condemns the Khārijīs on similar grounds).

<sup>95</sup>See also Şaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 158, ḥadīth #94.

did not know the imāms would perish.<sup>96</sup> Zurārah was apparently well known for his refusal to accept the 'middle position.'

The Shī'ī 'middle position' reserved for those who have gone astray is similar to the Mu'tazilī 'station between the two stations' (manzilah bayn al-manzilatayn): the tenet that one who commits a major sin is neither an unbeliever (as the Khārijīs said on the one hand) nor a believer (as the Murji'is claimed on the other), but rather in an intermediate state pending God's judgement. The great difference is that the issue in the case of the Mu'tazilah is the committing of a major sin, while in the case of the Shī'ah it is failure to accept the wilāyah of the imām.<sup>97</sup> Both doctrines, in any case, have in common that they embrace a wider definition of the community.

#### v. Increase and decrease of faith; the degrees of faith.

The Shī'ah say that faith may increase and decrease, and

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<sup>96</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, pp. 122-123 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-dalāl, ḥadīth #2}: Muḥammad al-Bāqir tells Zurārah, who had refused to marry, that he may marry any believing woman, even one who does not know the imām. Ibid., pp. 117-118 {Bāb al-shakk, ḥadīth #3}: Ja'far emphasizes for the sake of Zurārah that only those who doubt in God and the Prophet and who 'oppose' (j-h-d) are unbelievers. Ibid., pp. 91-92 {Bāb asnāf al-nās, ḥadīth #3}; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 106, ḥadīth #110: Zurārah states that he allies himself with any person who agrees with the Shī'ah and does barā'ah of any who do not; the fifth imām sets him right, telling him of the other groups. See also Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4., p. 96 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-kufr, ḥadīth #7}.

<sup>97</sup>Although the other four classes 'subject to God's Will' do also involve commission of sins, which might make the difference less.

that there exist various degrees of faith, higher and lower. "Imān," explained the sixth imām to a follower, "[consists of] states, degrees, levels, and stations. There is a faith that is complete in all its aspects, and there is faith that is obviously deficient, and there is also [between these] faith that is mostly in place." "Does faith," the man asked, "therefore both increase and decrease?" The imām answered in the affirmative.<sup>98</sup>

The tradition explains the variability of faith by stating that imān is 'distributed between the limbs,' that is to say, each part of the human body participates in the act of belief. "There is no limb of the human body," says the sixth imām, "but that it is charged with a different part of faith than another." The heart has the special duty of acknowledging God and His unicity, His Prophet, and what God has commanded and what is written in His Book. This is the 'work' of the heart, and the heart is therefore the 'head' (ra's) of faith. It is also, as it exercises its intelligence and understanding, the 'commander' (amīr) of the other parts of the body, and each part carries out what the heart has determined. Prompted by the heart, the tongue attests (n. igrār) to its belief and pronounces the declaration ('gawl,' that is the shahādah) - as well as the other seemly words it has been commanded by God to utter. Similarly, the ears perform an act of faith in hearing the law, the eyes in averting

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid., vol. 3, pp. 56-57 {Bāb fī anna al-imān mabthūth..., ḥadīth #1}.

themselves from forbidden sights, the legs in not propelling their owner toward the commission of evil acts, the face in bowing in prayer; and so forth. He who dies with each of his limbs and members having kept faith shall meet his Lord with his faith 'perfected' (mustakmil). The ones who have not accomplished this also have faith (are still mu'min), but their faith is 'deficient' (nāqis).<sup>99</sup>

Belief in increase and decrease of faith therefore results from the tenet that faith consists of works: for as works may be accomplished or not accomplished (or accomplished in greater or lesser measure), so also does faith increase and decrease. This is clearer when considered in light of the positions of the other schools.

Among the Ash'arīs, the Ḥanafīs maintain that faith is only the formal confession (qawl) and belief (i'tiqād, that is the inner belief). These things are constant, and faith does not include works; thus īmān neither increases nor decreases: "As for works, they increase in and of themselves, while īmān neither

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<sup>99</sup>Ibid., pp. 56-62. From the sixth imām. The possibility of increase (ziyādah) in faith is proved by several verses in the Qur'ān, as well as by the fact that without this there would be no superiority and inferiority of faith, which is illogical since we clearly see that some persons possess more faith than others (see: Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, pp. 307-308 & ibid., vol. 2, p. 303; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3 pp. 67-70 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-sabq ilā al-īmān, ḥadīth #1}).

increases nor decreases, and Islam is one."<sup>100</sup> The Shāfi'is among the Ash'arīs, on the other hand, believe that faith is not only gawḥ and i'tiqād, but also works; therefore, as "works... are part of the totality of īmān," faith increases and decreases (with the accomplishment of works).<sup>101</sup> The Khārijīs, Murji'is, and Mu'tazilīs agree that faith includes works, but in the first case there is no question of decrease in faith as the sinner immediately becomes kāfir, in the second the status of the sinner is deferred, and in the third the sinner is declared neither a believer nor an unbeliever and relegated to the 'middle station.' The statement of the Shī'ah on the question of faith is therefore closest to that of the Ash'arī-Shāfi'is. According to both works are a part of faith, faith may as a result increase and decrease, and, finally, the one whose faith has decreased is still considered a mu'min (on which point see the next section).

Recognition of different degrees of faith had the function of allowing the Shī'ah a measure of tolerance, at least within their own group, as the following anecdote shows. Ja'far al-Ṣādiq mentioned a certain group of people to one of his followers (knowing that the man would disapprove of them), and when the man declared that he had 'disassociated' himself from

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<sup>100</sup>Najm al-Dīn al-Nasafī/ Sa'd al-Dīn al-Taftazānī, A Commentary on the Creed of Islam (New York: Columbia U.P., 1950), p. 120.

<sup>101</sup>Bayhaqī, Ahmad ibn al-Husayn (d. 1066). I'tiqād wa-al-hidāyah ilā sabīl al-rashād, ed. Kamāl Yūsuf al-Hūt (Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kitāb, 1405/1985), p. 115 {'Bāb al-qawḥ fī al-īmān'}.



them, the imām found his opportunity. How, he asked, was it possible for a Shī'ī to disassociate himself from those who do wilāyah of the imāms? Did he not understand that, although the faith of these might seem imperfect, there were others with faith more perfect than himself (and the imāms with the most perfect faith of all)? Should he not then also expect them to disassociate themselves from him? Thus was the man forced to agree with Ja'far, acknowledging that "some Muslims have one share of imān, some two... [and so forth up to seven shares]." 102

The degrees of faith are in fact often fixed at seven. In one report they are named as birr (piety), ṣidq (sincerity), yaqīn (certainty), ridā (contentment), wafā' (faithfulness), ʿilm, and hilm (mildness and restraint).<sup>103</sup> The Shī'ah are mostly concerned with the supreme station of imān, the highest attainment in faith: 'yaqīn' or certainty. According to numerous ḥadīths, while imān is better than islām, yaqīn is better still than imān; thus in ascending order: islām, imān, yaqīn.<sup>104</sup> Yaqīn is often presented as subsuming the other elements of faith: the fifth imām describes yaqīn as "absolute

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<sup>102</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, pp. 71-72 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb darajāt al-imān, ḥadīth #2}.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., vol. 3, pp. 70-73 (all the chapter).

<sup>104</sup>Eg. Himyarī, Qurb, p. 208; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, pp. 86-88 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb fadl al-imān ʿalā al-islām wa-al-yaqīn ʿalā al-imān}.

trust in God (tawakkul), submission (taslīm), contentment (ridā) with the decree of God, and consignment of all one's affairs to Him (tafwīd).<sup>105</sup> Yaqīn is said to be very rare; it is 'one of the things least possessed by man.'<sup>106</sup> The ascending psychological states culminating in yaqīn recalls the spiritual discipline of the Sufis.

The opposite of 'certainty' is 'doubt' (shakk, sometimes zann).<sup>107</sup> "Shakk," says the seventh imām, "exists up to the point where there is not yaqīn, and where there is yaqīn, shakk

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<sup>105</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, pp. 87-88 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb faḍl al-īmān °alā al-islām..., ḥadīth #5}. Yaqīn is an important value of Shī'ī piety, linked to many other laudable sentiments; eg: Barqī, Maḥāsin, pp. 246 ff. {Bāb al-yaqīn wa-al-sabr fī al-dīn}, passim; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, pp. 95-99 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb faḍl al-yaqīn}. A concept closely related (or perhaps synonymous with) yaqīn is baṣīrah, 'insightful understanding.' See Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 78; *ibid.*, p. 82; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 8 (preface of the author).

<sup>106</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, pp. 87-88 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb faḍl al-īmān °alā al-islām..., ḥadīths #2 & #6}. The imāms, on the other hand, are filled with certain knowledge; see Uṣūl, pp. 63-64.

<sup>107</sup>For mentions of zann see Himyarī, Qurb, p. 22 ("zann is the greatest lie"); Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, pp. 104-105 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb da°ā'im al-kufr wa-shu°abi-hi, ḥadīth #1}; *ibid.*, p. 119 {Bāb al-shakk, ḥadīth #8}; Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, p. 110 (in relation to doubts about the ghaybah). Zann in the traditions is only a little-used synonym of shakk; it is never used in the jurisprudential sense of the uṣūl al-fiqh (where it means 'a reasonable supposition' on the basis of which the servant is entitled to act and the mujtahid entitled to issue an opinion).

is not permitted to exist."<sup>108</sup> The imām °Alī describes a process in which God induces belief by illuminating the heart until it is filled with perfect yagīn such that it becomes tranquil and absolutely unmixed with shakk.<sup>109</sup> It is even said that good works and strenuous devotions (ijtihād) are not accepted where they have been tarnished by shakk.<sup>110</sup> It is therefore the mission of the Shī°ah to erase all shakk from their hearts. Yagīn is in fact very like 'submission' (taslīm), for both are states of absolute confidence in the truth, of mental purity attained by the banishment of every doubt and question.

#### vi. The status of the sinner.

According to the Shī°ah, sins do not necessarily destroy faith and make one an unbeliever. The faith of the servant may oscillate or vary, but it does not cease to exist for all that. The object of this doctrine is, once again, tolerance. Thus in a well-known ḥadīth the Amīr al-Mu'minīn is addressed by a man troubled by the thought that those with whom he prayed and married and from whom he could inherit would be consigned to the Fire for the sake of 'a little sin:' "They assert that the servant is a believer [only] when he does not commit adultery,

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<sup>108</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, p. 116 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-shakk, ḥadīth #1}. On the opposition of doubt and certainty see also Kulaynī's Preface: vol. 1, p. 7.

<sup>109</sup>K. Sulaym, p. 85.

<sup>110</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, pp. 118 & 119-120 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-shakk, ḥadīths #7 & #9}.

that he is a believer [only] when he does not steal, drink, take interest, or shed blood unlawfully; [does this mean that all those who commit such sins are perished]?" To this the Commander of the Believers replied by exposing the doctrine of the 'spirit of faith,' outlined below.<sup>111</sup>

According to Shī'ī tradition, the rūḥ al-īmān or 'spirit of faith' departs while the believer sins, but returns to settle again upon him when sins are no longer being committed. The seventh (or eighth) imām said: "God has fortified the believer with a Spirit from Him that stays with the believer whenever he does good and practises piety, and leaves him whenever he sins...."<sup>112</sup> It is also said that the spirit during commission of a sin does not depart entirely, but only decreases. If a man commits adultery, only part of the spirit of faith departs, while a part stays with him.<sup>113</sup> The rūḥ al-īmān may like the other spirits be at different times strong or weak, but as long as it still exists faith remains intact.<sup>114</sup> (This is consistent with the idea expressed in some traditions that the lower, appetitive

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<sup>111</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 449-450, ḥadīth #1; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3 pp. 384-387 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-kabā'ir, ḥadīth #16}.

<sup>112</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 369 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-rūḥ alladhī uyvida bi-hi al-mu'min, ḥadīth #1}.

<sup>113</sup>Uṣūl, p. 160 (the sixth imām explaining the saying of the Prophet).

<sup>114</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 449-450, ḥadīth #1; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3 pp. 384-387 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-kabā'ir, ḥadīth #16}.

'spirits' scheme against the rūḥ al-īmān to weaken and overcome it, thus causing the servant to sin.)<sup>115</sup>

Therefore the adulterer, the thief, and the drunkard, while they cannot be considered mu'min during the actual performance of these acts, become believers again when the act ceases - for then the 'spirit' returns. This is the true meaning, as revealed by the imāms, of the Prophet's saying: "As long as the adulterer does not commit adultery, he is a believer, and as long as the thief does not steal, he is a believer; if they should do any of that, the spirit of faith leaves them...."<sup>116</sup> As long as the

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<sup>115</sup>Eg: Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 448, ḥadīth #5. It is also said that the Spirit is an angel which wars with the impulse to sin promoted by Satan, and that every heart has two 'ears,' with the angel attempting to influence the believer through one and Satan through the other (Uṣūl, p. 160; Kulaynī, al-Kāfi, vol. 3, pp. 366-369 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb anna lil-qalb udhunayn yanfuthu fī-himā al-malak wa-al-shayṭān}).

<sup>116</sup>Eg: Uṣūl, pp. 166-167; Himyarī, Qurb, p. 165 (from the seventh imām); Kulaynī, al-Kāfi, vol. 3, pp. 388-389 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-kabā'ir, ḥadīths #21 & #22}. The Prophet's words are rather obscure: lā yaznī al-zānī wa-huwa mu'min wa-lā yasriq al-sāriq wa-huwa mu'min (lit: "the adulterer does not commit adultery and he is a believer, and the thief does not steal, and he is a believer"). The significance of the ḥadīth is that only the imām, who alone knows the full meaning of all the revelation and sayings of the Prophet, is able to clarify and explain that what is meant by this difficult sentence is not that only a servant who has never committed adultery, etc., is a believer, but rather that such a one loses his belief only temporarily. This is why some versions of the ḥadīth have the imām add the phrase "Go you and your companions where you will;" he means: "Wherever you go, you shall not find the true knowledge (of this and other difficult and misleading texts) except with us, the imāms." The words: "if they should do any of that, the spirit of faith leaves them" do not appear in all versions, and may be meant as either the explanation of the imām, or the further words of the Prophet which are known only by the imāms. In the Sunnī collections the ḥadīth is reported without the

adulterer, for instance, lies on the belly of a woman, he is not a believer; but if he afterward performs the ablutions and repents, he is a believer again.<sup>117</sup> Nor does the thought or intention of sinning remove the 'spirit,' however close the intention may bring one to the actual act.<sup>118</sup>

Through this doctrine the Shī'ah not only arrive at tolerance (since the sinner may still be considered a believer), but avoid at the same time the odious belief of the Murji'is that sin does not negate faith, since it is allowed that sin does indeed displace it, albeit only temporarily. Thus it is reported that a man declared to the fifth imām (in the presence of Abū

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additional phrase (eg. Ibn Mājah, K. al-fitan, Bāb al-nahī 'an al-nuhbah; Abū Dāwūd, K. al-sunnah, Bāb ziyādat al-īmān wa-nuqsāni-hi) - although in Tirmidhī (K. al-īmān, Bāb lā yaznī al-zānī wa-huwa mu'min) the report does continue: "...if the servant commits adultery, īmān leaves him and hovers above his head like a canopy, and when he ceases that action, īmān comes back to him." (Tirmidhī in the same chapter also reports the relation of the fifth imām of the words of the Prophet: "[if the servant does these things] he leaves īmān for islām;" on this, see below.) Tirmidhī seems to have relied on Shī'ī tradition for clarification of this ḥadīth.

<sup>117</sup>Himyarī, Qurb, p. 25; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 380 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-kabā'ir, ḥadīth #6}. According to the sixth imām.

<sup>118</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, pp. 380 & 383 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-kabā'ir, ḥadīths #6, #12 & #13}. All from the sixth imām. According to the doctrine of 'intention' (nīyah) as explained by Shī'ī tradition, the servant who forms an intention to do evil is not punished for it, while there is infinite reward for one who forms an intention to do good, even if he is unable to carry it out. See for instance: Uṣūl, p. 67; Himyarī, Qurb, pp. 7 & 33-34; Barqī, Mahāsin, pp. 260-261 {Bāb al-nīyah}, passim; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, pp. 132-136 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-nīyah}; *ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 160-163 {Bāb man yahummu bi-al-ḥasanah aw al-sayyi'ah}.

Hanīfah, who was also a prominent Murji'ī): "We do not exclude those who adhere to our religion and are part of our community from faith because of disobedience and sins," to which the imām replied: "The Prophet said: 'As long as the adulterer does not commit adultery, he is a believer, and as long as the thief does not steal, he is a believer....'"<sup>119</sup>

The only thing, according to the tradition, that can remove the Spirit is 'opposition' to the imām.<sup>120</sup> A man may lie, break his word, and otherwise behave treacherously, but if he adheres to 'the affair (amr) [of the imāms],' he shall not be considered a kāfir, though he has through these things come close to kufr.<sup>121</sup> In this ḥadīth we see the doctrine of tolerance of sin constructed so as to guarantee the salvation of all the Shī'ah. It can easily be imagined, given the importance of the community to the Shī'ī world view, that this was a principal reason for the

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<sup>119</sup>"...so go you and your co-sectaries where you will [but you shall not find true knowledge except with us, the imāms] (Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 389 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-kabā'ir, ḥadīth #22})." One imagines an emphasis placed on the phrases after "as long as...."

<sup>120</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 449-450, ḥadīth #1; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, pp. 44-45 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb... anna al-islām qabl al-īmān, ḥadīth #1}; *ibid.*, pp. 384-387 {Bāb al-kabā'ir, ḥadīth #16}. And according to some reports, also 'istiḥlāl,' that is declaring ḥalāl, ḥarām, and vice versa (*ibid.*, pp. 44-45 {Bāb... anna al-islām qabl al-īmān, ḥadīth #1}; *ibid.*, pp. 382 & 389 {Bāb al-kabā'ir, ḥadīths #10 & #23}). Istiḥlāl, of course, is also a usurpation of the authority of the imām, and therefore a form of 'opposition.'

<sup>121</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 397 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb uṣūl al-kufr wa-arkānu-hu, ḥadīth #5}. According to the sixth imām.

adoption of tolerance.

Tolerance is also secured through the principle that while (unintentional) sin causes īmān to be lost, it leaves islām intact.<sup>122</sup> This is illustrated by a parable: if a man were to accidentally spill his urine in the Ka°bah he would be thrown out from it, but not out of the ḥaram which surrounds the Ka°bah, and after purifying himself he would be allowed back in. If, however, he were to urinate in the Ka°bah purposely, he would be thrown out of both and never allowed to return (in fact, killed). In the same way an 'unintentional' sin causes one to be excluded from īmān (the Ka°bah), but not from islām (the wider ḥaram), and one may in this case re-enter īmān after purification; whereas an 'intentional' sin causes one to be banished from both īmān and islām (from both the Ka°bah and the ḥaram), without hope of return.<sup>123</sup>

The crucial factor here is intent, and it is on this basis that the imāms distinguish sins that may be forgiven from those that must lead to the Fire. For instance, it is said that the sin of adultery does not make the servant a kāfir because one is attracted toward it by expectation of pleasure, rather than actual intent to sin. Failing to perform the prayer, however,

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<sup>122</sup>Ibid., pp. 44-45 {Bāb...anna al-islām qabl al-īmān, ḥadīth #1}.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid., p. 45, ḥadīth #2 (and see also ḥadīth #1). From the sixth or seventh imāms.



does have that effect, since the motive is not pleasure but simply 'taking it lightly' (istikhfāf), that is conscious neglect.<sup>124</sup> It is heedlessness and persistence that make one an unbeliever, rather than the sin itself. Thus, for instance, the sixth imām reports that °Alī stated that each believer is provided with forty 'shields' to protect him from the consequences of that number of kabā'ir - and even after this God may command the angels to shield the sinner with their wings, until his insistence on sinning makes further protection impossible.<sup>125</sup>

By the same token, awareness of sins deflects punishment. If one acknowledges that a major sin is such and that it is forbidden then only imān is lost, and not islām, and the penalty is lighter.<sup>126</sup> Repentance actually erases sin, and God's

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<sup>124</sup>Ibid., vol. 4, pp. 97-98 {Bāb al-kufr, hadīth #9}. From the sixth imām. See also ibid., p. 99, hadīth #12. Note also that neither the commission of minor sins nor the omission of secondary duties renders one an unbeliever, but only the deliberate abandonment of the major devotions commanded by God (that is deliberately "abandoning one of the major duties without which the servant would not be entitled to imān, provided there has been explanation and proof"). If one fails to carry out the command of the Prophet or follow his sunnah, that will result only in a deficiency of good or loss of blessing (khayr) - but if one abandons one of the duties prescribed by God, failing to perform it and intentionally opposing it, one is a kāfir (see ibid., p. 93, hadīth #1, from the sixth imām.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid., vol. 3, pp. 381-382 {Bāb al-kabā'ir, hadīth #9}. See also ibid., p. 395 {Bāb al-iṣrār °alā al-dhanb, all the chapter}.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid., pp. 382-383 & 389 {Bāb al-kabā'ir, hadīths #10 & #23}. According to the sixth imām.

acceptance of the repentance of a sinning believer is all but guaranteed; it is even said that the sins are never recorded, that the recording angels forget such sins, or that there is a space of time allowed between the committing of a sin and the recording of it so that the servant has an opportunity to repent.<sup>127</sup> Shī'ī tradition places great emphasis on repentance and forgiveness.

The Shī'ī view of the sinner is more tolerant than that of the Mu'tazilah, since while the latter, denying that there is any difference between a mu'min and muslim,<sup>128</sup> immediately consider such a person fāsiq ('an unrighteous person'), the former allow that he is still a mu'min. The Shī'ī opinion in this case is closer to that expressed in Sunnī tradition, which records the ḥadīth: "Whoever of my community dies not associating any other thing with God shall enter the Garden... even though he may have committed adultery or stolen."<sup>129</sup> The Shī'ah accept this formula for the same reason the Sunnīs do: in order to throw protection over all members of their own community.

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<sup>127</sup>See: ibid., vol. 4, pp. 157-159 {Bāb al-i'tirāf bi-al-dhunūb wa-al-naḍam °alay-hā}; ibid., pp. 163-169 {Bāb al-tawbah}; ibid., pp. 170-173 {Bāb al-istighfār min al-dhanb}; ibid., pp. 173-175 {Bāb fī-mā a°tā' Allāh Adam waqt al-tawbah}.

<sup>128</sup>The difference is merely linguistic; one is a metaphor for the other. See Qāḍī °Abd al-Jabbār, Sharḥ, p. 707.

<sup>129</sup>Cited in several places in most of the six collections; eg: Bukhārī, K. al-jaṇā'iz, Bāb mā jā'a fī al-jaṇā'iz wa man kāna ākhir kalāmu-hu 'lā ilāha illā Allāh.

Despite, however, the tolerance offered to the sinner by most of the ḥadīths, there are a number of traditions that hold that major sins necessarily lead to Hell. The kabā'ir, states the sixth imām, are "those things for which God has prescribed the Fire."<sup>130</sup> The evil deeds of the Shī'ah, declares the fifth or the sixth imām, shall be forgiven and they shall be in Heaven - but only if they avoid the major sins, for which they must go to the Fire.<sup>131</sup> Another report, also from the sixth imām, appears to regard major sins as being of the same gravity as lack of knowledge of the imāms.<sup>132</sup> There is apparently a tension in the tradition between these two views; in one ḥadīth the followers of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq appear to be surprised by his insistence that 'God may forgive any sin lesser than shirk as He wills, including kabā'ir.'<sup>133</sup> Ash'arī reports that there were two opinions among the 'Rawāfiḍ' with regard to the wa'id, that is the threat of being punished for sins in Hell. One group held that this threat applied only to the enemies of the Shī'ah and

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<sup>130</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfi, vol. 3, p. 378 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-kabā'ir, ḥadīth #1}. The catalogue of the major sins (usually reckoned as seven) vary, as they do in Islamic tradition in general; see *ibid.*, pp. 378-393, *passim* & Ralph Stehly, "Un probleme de theologie islamique: la definition des fautes graves," Revue des etudes islamiques 45 (1977): 165-181. In *ibid.*, ḥadīth #8, the seven sins are related from the 'Book of 'Alī'.

<sup>131</sup>Uṣūl, p. 111; Kulaynī, al-Kāfi, vol. 3, p. 378, 380, & 388 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-kabā'ir, ḥadīths #1, #7, & #20}.

<sup>132</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfi, vol. 3, p. 388 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-kabā'ir, ḥadīth #20}.

<sup>133</sup>*Ibid.*, ḥadīths #18 & #19.

that the Shī'ah themselves would go all to Paradise (or if they were punished in the Fire, it would only be for a time). Another group held that all those who committed major sins would be punished, both the Shī'ah and the non-Shī'ah.<sup>134</sup> It appears that the tradition had not yet chosen between these two alternatives.

vii. Loss of faith: 'the borrowers.'

Shī'ī tradition states that, although it is God who grants faith and who guides and leads astray, He shall never take away faith from the servant who possesses it: "once the servant has gained īmān, God shall never transfer him to kufr."<sup>135</sup> Despite this the Shī'ah say that, while faith is in some persons 'settled' (mustaqarr), to others it is only 'lent' (mustawda°) for a certain time.<sup>136</sup> The faith of the first is 'firm in the heart, unto death,'<sup>137</sup> but God may stabilize or remove the faith of the second group as He wills.<sup>138</sup> The fifth or sixth imām

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<sup>134</sup>Ash'arī, Maqālāt, p. 126.

<sup>135</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, p. 144 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb thubūt al-īmān wa-hal yajūz an yanqula-hu Allāh, ḥadīth #1}. From the sixth imām.

<sup>136</sup>The proof verse is Q. 6:98: "And it is He who has produced you from a single being, and has given you a [settled] dwelling (mustaqarr) and a repository (mustawda°);" see °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 371, ḥadīth #69.

<sup>137</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 212.

<sup>138</sup>Or, as it is said in one ḥadīth, the servant with borrowed faith may keep it until his death by constant prayer (Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, pp. 147-148 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-mu°ārīn, ḥadīth #5}. According to a tradition from the

states:

God (Glorified and Exalted be He) created a people for faith unceasing, and a people for unbelief (kufr) unceasing, and also a people between the two, to some of whom he [only] 'lent' faith. If He wishes to complete their faith for them, He does, and if He wishes to remove it, He does....<sup>139</sup>

Those who have lost their borrowed faith are called in the traditions al-mu°ārūn: 'the borrowers.' The ḥadīth is careful to emphasize that the prophets and awṣiyā', that is the imāms, cannot be of this group,<sup>140</sup> as this would cast doubt on their missions.

The question of 'borrowed' faith arises in the ḥadīth in the context of the problem of certain personalities who first appeared to conform to orthodox thought, but then went astray. By far the most prominent mu°ār is 'Abū al-Khaṭṭāb.' A close Companion of the sixth imām Ja°far, he ended by espousing extreme doctrines. When a follower demanded of the seventh imām Mūsā ibn Ja°far why his father had first ordered the Shī°ah to obey Abū al-Khaṭṭāb, then subsequently commanded that they curse him and do barā'ah of him, he replied that he was one of those

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sixth imām cited by Kulaynī in his preface to the Kāfī, God removes borrowed faith by leading the servant toward istiḥsān, taqlīd, and false ta'wīl (vol. 1, pp. 7-8).

<sup>139</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 373, ḥadīth #76; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, p. 145 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-mu°ārīn, ḥadīth #1}.

<sup>140</sup>°Ḥimyarī, Qurb, p. 193; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, p. 145 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-mu°ārīn, ḥadīths #4 & #5}.

whose imān had been 'borrowed';<sup>141</sup> "when he lied concerning us, his faith was removed."<sup>142</sup> (The 'exaggeration' of Abū al-Khaṭṭāb, from the evidence of Shī'ī tradition, lay in his belief that the imāms are prophets,<sup>143</sup> or even that he himself was a prophet and the imām Ja'far God.<sup>144</sup>) Another one who had his faith 'removed' was °Alī ibn Abī Ḥamzah, who had related from

<sup>141</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, pp. 146-147 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-mu°ārīn, ḥadīth #3}. See also Uṣūl, p. 163 and Ḥimyarī, Qurb, p. 193.

<sup>142</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, p. 147 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-mu°ārīn, ḥadīth #4}. See also Uṣūl, p. 163.

<sup>143</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 320, ḥadīth #4; ibid., pp. 258, ḥadīth #2 & p. 452, ḥadīth #5: Abū al-Khaṭṭāb believes that the imāms are prophets because they appear to receive revelatory answers; but this, explains Ja'far al-Sādiq, is only the ḥukm Dāwūd, or results from the fact that the imāms are muḥaddath (& see also ibid., p. 415, ḥadīth #5). Strangely enough, Abū al-Khaṭṭāb is censured in other ḥadīths for underestimating the ilm of the imāms; see ibid., pp. 194-195, ḥadīth #2 & pp. 394-395, ḥadīth #11: Ja'far indicates that by teaching that the imāms know all the ḥalāl and ḥarām, Abū al-Khaṭṭāb has failed to mention the greater matter of 'the knowledge that appears by night and by day' & ibid., p. 424, ḥadīth #3: Abū al-Khaṭṭāb says that the deeds of God's servants are exhibited to the Prophet each Thursday; but in fact they are shown to him every day.

<sup>144</sup>According to one ḥadīth (Uṣūl, pp. 46-47), he and his followers claimed that he had gone on a 'night-journey' (similar to that of the Prophet), arriving at the house of the imām Ja'far where he pronounced the ṭalbiyah, that is the formula of devoted service which is associated (apart from its use in the ḥajj pilgrimage) with prophetic personalities answering to God. See also Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 536, ḥadīth #4, in which Ja'far 'disassociates' himself from Abū al-Khaṭṭāb for thinking °Alī divine. (Pseudo-) Nawbakhtī's Firaq al-Shī'ah confirms the opinion of the ḥadīths. According to Nawbakhtī, he was Abū al-Khaṭṭāb Muhammad ibn Abī Zaynab al-Ajda° al-Asadī; he began by claiming that Ja'far al-Sādiq had made him his waṣī (implying that he also considered Ja'far a prophet), and ended by claiming prophethood for himself. The 'Khaṭṭābiyah' split into several sects; see Nawbakhtī, Firaq, pp. 37-38. For more information on Abū al-Khaṭṭāb and his sect see: Ash°arī, Maqālāt, pp. 76-77 (the note of the editor).

the sixth and seventh imāms but then became one of the leaders of the Wāqifis after the death of the latter. The eighth imām al-Riḍā identified him as a mu°ār, comparing him with those who had "tried to extinguish the light of God" when the Prophet died (that is who had refused to recognize the imāmate of °Alī).<sup>145</sup> Zubayr was also one of the 'mu°ārīn,' for after the death of Prophet he fought for the imāmate of °Alī, but then he opposed him; first he walked in the light of faith, but then the light was taken away from him.<sup>146</sup> Two others mentioned in the ḥadīth whose faith was borrowed were Yaḥyā ibn al-Qāsim al-Ḥadhā', who was one of the companions of the fifth imām before he became a Wāqifite, and Zur°ah (ibn Muḥammad), who related from the sixth and seventh imāms before he too joined the same camp.<sup>147</sup>

The notion of faith lent and lost is meant to explain why the imāms, who are supposed to be divinely-guided and nearly omniscient, took as their companions persons who later went far astray. It may also be intended to preserve the authority of the ḥadīths related by such men. The ḥadīths do not suggest that the mu°ārūn are a large class (that would seriously undermine the stability of imān which other parts of the doctrine seek to

<sup>145</sup>Himyarī, Qurb, p. 202; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, pp. 372-373, ḥadīth #75. In the report in °Ayyāshī yaqīn is attributed to those of 'stable' faith, and shakk to the 'borrowers.'

<sup>146</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 371, ḥadīths #69 - 71.

<sup>147</sup>Ibid., p. 372, ḥadīth #73 (the seventh or eighth imām comments on their deaths).

establish); they are only a few exceptional men.

#### viii. The final judgement; the intercession.

For the Shī'ah the Judgement of God on the final Day verifies the privileged position of the community, as they are all without exception admitted to Heaven. The special relation between the community and imāms is also confirmed, for it is the imāms who conduct them there through their extraordinary power of intercession (shafā'ah).<sup>148</sup>

Even before the Judgement, the terrors of death are lessened for the followers of the imāms. They do not fear death, and the torment of the grave is lightened for them.<sup>149</sup> Their success in answering the angels assigned to question the dead as they lie in their tombs is guaranteed, for if they reply that their walī (master) is one of the imāms, they are certain to be released from the Punishment (while ignorance of the walī sends the others

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<sup>148</sup>Concerning the phrase in the Qur'ān that appears to exclude intercession (Q. 44:41, "A Day when no friend can avail another, nor can they be helped"), the Shī'ah quote the verse following: "save him on whom God has mercy...", and refer it to the imāms; thus the imāms can intercede (Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 294 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb fī-hi nukat wa-nutaf min al-tanzīl fī al-wilāyah, ḥadīth #56}). Q. 19:87 ("None shall have the power of intercession...") is interpreted in a similar way. See: ibid., p. 309, ḥadīth #90.

<sup>149</sup>Eg: Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 209 & 128; Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 84, ḥadīth #5 (these favours granted by God to the Shī'ah at the request of Prophet in primordial time); Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 273 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb idkhāl al-surūr 'alā al-mu'minīn, ḥadīth #8}; Nu'mānī, Ghaybah, p. 137.



to the Fire).<sup>150</sup>

Then while humankind endures the trials of the Resurrection the Shī'ah shall find an even greater ease: they shall come out of their graves with shining faces, with their privates covered (a coveted privilege granted only to the choicest of humanity), experiencing neither stress nor fright; "the others shall fear, but they shall not fear, and the others shall sorrow, but they shall not sorrow." They shall arrive with shining faces, clothed in garments of light and upon pulpits of light, carrying in their hands rods (sceptres?) of light; though neither martyrs nor prophets, they shall be in the station of these.<sup>151</sup> Then the Shī'ah shall sit in the shade of the Throne of the Merciful, with a table spread in front of them, thus reposing until the other people are finished with the Reckoning (ḥisāb).<sup>152</sup>

For the Shī'ah, it is said, shall enter Paradise having

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<sup>150</sup>See Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 498, ḥadīth #9; Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 53, & ibid., p. 21: in the second tradition in Ash'arī the fifth imām states that only those of pure faith or pure kufr shall be questioned in the grave concerning their imām; the rest of the dead shall be ignored. The implication is that the rest are in the 'middle station' and shall be left for the judgement of God.

<sup>151</sup>Himyarī, Qurb, p. 65. From Muḥammad, as reported by Ja'far through the line of the imāms.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid., pp. 64-65; Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 165. For other tales of the happy circumstances of the Shī'ah on the Day see: Furāt, Tafsīr, pp. 9, 83, 128-129 & 209.

been exempted from the Reckoning - "bi-ghayr ḥisāb"<sup>153</sup> - or according to other accounts with a 'light reckoning';<sup>154</sup> the enemies of the imāms shall, in reverse fashion, go to Hell 'without the Reckoning.'<sup>155</sup> The Shī'ah are guaranteed Heaven through their loyalty to the imāms regardless of all else, as the Prophet said: "Adhere without fail to love of the ahl al-bayt; for he who meets his Lord while he loves us enters into Paradise through our intercession...."<sup>156</sup> Just so, those who lack wilāyah of the imāms are condemned without question, as Ja'far al-Ṣādiq says: "They are all slaves to the Fire except you and your companions...."<sup>157</sup>

Between these two are the rest of humanity who have neither opposed, nor declared loyalty, and who have kept away from all

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<sup>153</sup>Uṣūl, p. 80; Furāt, Tafsīr, pp. 128-129.

<sup>154</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 372; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 273 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb idkhāl al-surūry..., ḥadīth #8. From the sixth imām.

<sup>155</sup>K. Sulaym, pp. 85-86.

<sup>156</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 61, ḥadīth #105. The ḥadīth continues: "...and the works of a servant shall not avail him anything except with knowledge (ma'rifah) of our right." In addition, the one with greater love of the imāms shall have a higher station in heaven - while those with the greatest hatred of him shall be in the lowest rank of Hell (Maḥāsin, p. 153, ḥadīth #76, and see also ibid., ḥadīth #77; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, pp. 56-62 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb anna al-īmān mabthūth li-jawāriḥ al-badan kulli-hā, ḥadīth #1}; ibid., pp. 64-65, ḥadīth #7.

<sup>157</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 307 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb fī-hi nukat wa-nutaf min al-tanzīl fī al-wilāyah, ḥadīth #88}.

the controversies between the sects, only accepting that which has been agreed on by all Muslims. These are neither in one category nor the other and so are subject to the Reckoning; they are the 'people of the reckoning and the scales,' and they are most of humankind.<sup>158</sup> The fate of these souls is decided by the Will (mashī'ah) of God such that "if one of them should enter the Fire, it shall be for the sake of his sins, while if he escapes it, it is through God's Mercy." Thus it is said that while no believer shall enter the Fire, those who do not know their imām (but at the same time do not oppose him) shall not enter Paradise except if God wills - that is while the way to Hell is open for them, God may will that they go to Heaven.<sup>159</sup>

The Prophet shall be the first out of his grave and to the gates of Paradise, and °Alī with him.<sup>160</sup> This is in accordance with their superiority over the rest of humankind, but they also precede so that they may be in place to begin the work of

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<sup>158</sup>K. Sulaym, pp. 85-86. According to °Alī. It is also said that these are 'mawqūfūn' - (their judgement is) 'postponed.' Such persons, provided they have to their credit good deeds and did not evince enmity to the imāms, are to be placed in a Paradise which God has created in the West; there their spirits rest until the Judgement Day at which time He shall judge them according to their good deeds and bad and send them to Paradise or the Fire (Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, pp. 260-261; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, p. 96 {K. al-imān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-kufr, ḥadīth #7}, from the fifth imām).

<sup>159</sup>K. Sulaym, p. 86. From °Alī.

<sup>160</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 205. Or according to another report, °Alī shall enter Paradise even ahead of the Prophet (ibid., pp. 175-176).

intercession. The intercession is conceived of in terms of the Prophet and imāms literally recognizing and guiding their followers; it is therefore also necessary that the Prophet and imāms be stationed so that they can actually view the resurrected as they pass and conduct them to their reward. Thus it is said that on the Day the imāms (or °Alī, or the Holy Family: therefore including Fāṭimah<sup>161</sup>) shall stand on a 'wall' or 'promontory' between Heaven and the Fire, from which vantage they shall recognize their Shī'ah and shepherd them directly to Paradise, while the rest go to Hell.<sup>162</sup> From the wall the Holy Family shall recognize their Shī'ah by their names and the names of their fathers (for the imāms instantly know those who are of their own substance and their names and genealogies); then they shall take them by their hands and conduct them over the sirāt-the narrow bridge over which the believers must pass to enter

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<sup>161</sup>One report has it that Fāṭimah asked for and was granted intercession for her own Shī'ah (called al-Fāṭimiyīn), as well as the Shī'ah of her husband °Alī and his descendants (Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 172, related from the fifth imām; see also *ibid.*, p. 154 & Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 250). This ḥadīth may be meant merely to heighten the prestige of Fāṭimah - or it may point to intercession for the Ḥasanīs and Zaydīs, who as relatives of the imāms are occasionally viewed in the traditions with some sympathy. That the tradition appears in Furāt supports the second interpretation.

<sup>162</sup>Eg. Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 496-497, ḥadīth #6; Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. i, pp. 231-232; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 53. This is in connexion with the verse (Q. 7:46): "And on the Heights (a°rāf) are men who know them by all their marks," the 'men' being the imāms.

Paradise.<sup>163</sup> Or as a tradition from the Prophet has it, °Alī shall on the Day of Resurrection stand on the dreaded and difficult sirāt, and there he shall make those loyal to him to enter the Garden, and his enemies to enter the Fire.<sup>164</sup> It is also said that Muḥammad and °Alī shall stand at the lip of Hell, and there as the condemned pass they shall recognize their Shī°ah and claim them before they enter the Fire.<sup>165</sup>

In fact, forgiveness for the Shī°ah is guaranteed even before the imāms intercede for them at the Resurrection. They were forgiven before they were created, since while they were as yet spirits they were 'represented' for the Prophet in clay at which time he asked for and received forgiveness for each one,<sup>166</sup> for all their sins both minor and major.<sup>167</sup> Because of this the

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<sup>163</sup>Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 53. From the sixth imām. (In this ḥadīth Khadijah is included along with Muhammad, °Alī, Ḥasan, Husayn, and Fāṭimah among the intercessors of the Family).

<sup>164</sup>K. Sulaym, p. 159; Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 174.

<sup>165</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 169. This tradition is related not from a 'Twelver' imām but from al-Ḥasan ibn Ṣāliḥ ibn al-Hayy, a Zaydite (and one, moreover, whose authority is generally not accepted by the Shī°ah)./ According to some traditions, Muhammad shall weep for the Shī°ah of °Alī who are being diverted from Heaven to Hell, and it is because of his tears that God shall forgive them their sins and allow them to proceed instead to the Garden (Ibid., p. 92; Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 65; related from the fifth imām).

<sup>166</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 85-86, ḥadīths #7 & #11; Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 205; Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 165.

<sup>167</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfi, vol. 2, p. 331 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb mawlid al-nabī, ḥadīth #15}.

Prophet (and so, it is implied, also the imāms) on the Day shall not require God's permission to intercede, the permission already having been granted long before.<sup>168</sup> The imāms therefore intercede on their own authority; they dispense, in effect, their own grace.

More than this, the Prophet and imāms appear from the tradition to actually have charge of the Judgement. The sixth imām states that the Reckoning of the Shī'ah on the Day of Judgement is turned over to the imāms; whatever account there is between them and God is gifted to Muḥammad, and whatever they owe for wrongs they have done to their fellow human beings is also taken care of by him (and therefore they shall enter Paradise without Reckoning).<sup>169</sup> Similarly, °Alī is often called the 'gasīm' (arbiter); it is actually he who decides who shall be for the Garden and who shall be for the Fire.<sup>170</sup> It is even reported that the keys to Heaven and Hell were given to Muḥammad by the two angels who guard them, and that he gave them in turn to 'his brother,' °Alī.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>168</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 201. From the sixth imām.

<sup>169</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 208.

<sup>170</sup>Eg. K. Sulaym, p. 138; Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 191, ḥadīth #3; p. 414-418 (Chapter: "Bāb fī Amīr al-Mu'minīn anna-hu gasīm al-jannah wa-al-nār"); Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 61. °Alī is also called in some of these traditions the 'distinguisher' (fārūq) between Heaven and Hell, and the 'keeper' of the Fire.

<sup>171</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 416-418, ḥadīth #11.

It is, as always, °Alī who embodies the dignity of the imāms, and so the tradition reports that on the Day he shall be set on a pulpit visible to all gathered there, with an angel on his right who shall declare: "This is °Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, who makes to enter the Garden whom he wills," and an angel on his left who shall declare: "This is °Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, who makes to enter the Fire whom he wills!"<sup>172</sup> The Prophet also proclaimed to °Alī, confirming his privilege as the judge of the resurrected:

Who stands in your shadow is victorious, for the Reckoning (ḥisāb) of all creatures is yours, and their return is yours, and the Balance (mīzān - the scales in which good deeds are weighed against the bad) is yours, and the Bridge (ṣirāt - the perilous bridge over which all must pass in order to reach heaven) is yours....<sup>173</sup>

Not only the Prophet and imāms have the power to intercede. Their power of intercession is also passed down the line to the Shī'ah: thus the Prophet intercedes for his community, the imāms intercede for their Shī'ah, and the Shī'ah intercede for others.<sup>174</sup> The Shī'ah finally intercede for the non-Shī'ah, and their intercession is effective for many: they may for instance

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<sup>172</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 414-415, ḥadīths #1 & #6. From the sixth imām.

<sup>173</sup>K. Sulaym, p. 217.

<sup>174</sup>And among the Shī'ah the intercession of the martyrs-shuhadā' - is particularly potent: Himyarī, Qurb, p. 44, from the Prophet, reported by Ja'far through the line of the imāms.

intervene on behalf of their (non-Shī'ī) family members,<sup>175</sup> their neighbours or friends,<sup>176</sup> or the servants in their households who afforded them comfort in this world.<sup>177</sup> Their influence is such in fact that they may intercede for any unbeliever who does them good in this world.<sup>178</sup>

The pattern of intercession also holds for all the prophets and all the vicegerents throughout history, each of whom intercedes for their own 'shī'ah' (partisans) - although only after the Prophet and his descendants the imāms have completed their intercession.<sup>179</sup> Just as on the Day of Judgement the Prophet 'grasps the hem' of God, the imāms 'grasp the hem' of the

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<sup>175</sup>Barqī, Mahāsin, p. 184, ḥadīth #189. See also *ibid.*, p. 184, ḥadīth #191. According to one tradition from the Prophet, all the descendants of his grandfather 'Abd al-Muttalib "who shall meet God believing Him to be One" shall enter the Garden, "even though their sins may be as many as the pebbles or the foam of the sea (K. Sulaym, p. 125)." The Prophet's blood thus protects a wide circle of his kinsmen.

<sup>176</sup>Barqī, Mahāsin, p. 184, ḥadīth #190; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 283 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb al-sa'ī fī ḥājat al-mu'min, ḥadīth #6}. Both from the sixth imām. See also Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, pp. 276-277 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb qaḍā' ḥājat al-mu'min, ḥadīth #1}.

<sup>177</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 202.

<sup>178</sup>Barqī, Mahāsin, pp. 184-185, ḥadīths #192 & #193. In the second report, the fifth imām warns one of his Shī'ah not to allow the enemies of the imāms to do him kindness, lest he feel obliged on the Day to answer their calls for intercession! Even a mushrik who had helped and comforted a believer may, though he is placed in the Fire, receive the favour of not having it touch or harm him (Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb idkhāl al-surūr 'alā al-mu'min, ḥadīth #3}, according to the fifth imām).

<sup>179</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 210; from the sixth imām.



Prophet, and the Shī'ah 'grasp the hem' of the imāms,<sup>180</sup> each of the vicegerents of the prophets intercedes for his community, the vicegerent is saved by the prophet of whom he is representative, and each of the prophets is in turn saved by God.<sup>181</sup>

All humankind, even the believers (that is the Shī'ah) have committed some kind of sin or error, and thus all are in need of intercession.<sup>182</sup> And all of them may receive intercession-except for those who had opposed the imāms: the nussāb (pl. nāsib). Even if all the angels and prophets were to attempt to intercede on behalf of these, their intercession would have no effect.<sup>183</sup> Shafā'ah is denied the enemies of the imāms regardless of their works; God said to Muḥammad while he was on his 'night journey:' "If a servant should worship me until he no longer had any attachment to anything else, until he became a worn-out and dried-up leather bottle, then came to me opposing (jāhid) your wilāyah, he would not be forgiven until he attested

<sup>180</sup>Eg: Ḥimyarī, Qurb, p. 27; Barqī, Maḥāsin, pp. 182-184.

<sup>181</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, pp. 136-137. From the sixth imām.

<sup>182</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 314, ḥadīth #150; Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 202. According to the sixth and fifth imāms, respectively. Or it is said that there are two types of believers: one that is not affected by the temptations of this world, and shall therefore intercede for others, and one which is affected, and therefore cannot intercede for others but shall receive intercession (Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, pp. 346-347 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb fī anna al-mu'min ṣinfān}).

<sup>183</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 395 (origin of report not given; perhaps from the sixth imām, as in the previous ḥadīth).

to it."<sup>184</sup> Certainly those who were 'worshipped' in this world (that is the false imāms) shall not have the power to intercede on behalf of those who 'worshipped' (followed) them;<sup>185</sup> in fact, as they realize their predicament, they shall attempt to throw the blame on each other rather than interceding for one another.<sup>186</sup> As the enemies of the Shī'ah see them saved, they shall wish that they could return to the earth again in order to become believers,<sup>187</sup> but only those who had taken the covenant (°ahd) of the wilāyah shall receive intercession or be able to intercede for others.<sup>188</sup>

This is the view of the judgement and intercession presented in most of the traditions. There are, however, traces of a thought that the sinning Shī'ah shall be punished for a certain time. For instance, it is asserted that the fussāq (the unrighteous) of the Shī'ah shall not go to Heaven, but instead be placed, along with the believers of the jinn, in a kind of special enclosure between Heaven and Hell.<sup>189</sup> It is also said that on the Day the gates of Hell shall be opened, and if the

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<sup>184</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 5.

<sup>185</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 290.

<sup>186</sup>Ibid., p. 287. From °Alī. See also °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 304, ḥadīth #123.

<sup>187</sup>Uṣūl, pp. 24-25. According to the fifth imām.

<sup>188</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 57. According to the sixth imām.

<sup>189</sup>Ibid., p. 300. According to the seventh imām.

imāms find there a spirit (rūh) with the 'fragrance' (rā'ḥah) of Paradise, they shall have the angel Mālik, the keeper of Hell, release them.<sup>190</sup> Shī'ī tradition refuses that any of the followers of the imāms should be in Hell eternally - as the Mu'tazilah asserted that some sinners would be - for this would, by denying the absolute good of the wilāyah and primacy of the community, demolish the whole Shī'ī worldview. Thus the fifth imām replied to one who argued that the people of Heaven and Hell would each stay in their places eternally (as proved by Q. 18:3: "They shall dwell in it forever") with the assertion that those who had entered upon the wilāyah of the people of Muḥammad would leave Hell and enter Heaven, while those who had adhered to the wilāyah of the enemies of the Family would be compelled to leave Heaven and enter Hell.<sup>191</sup> In this question as in all others in Shī'ī tradition, imamology is the determining factor.

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<sup>190</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 156. From the sixth imām.

<sup>191</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, pp. 159-160, ḥadīth #66 (and see also on this subject ḥadīths #67-#69 & p. 161, ḥadīth #72). In later Shī'ī treatises the temporary punishment is a key dogma, argued in opposition to the position of the Mu'tazilah, but in the ḥadīths it is still of little importance. See: Ibn Bābawayh, tr. Āsaf A.A. Fyzee, A Shi'ite Creed (London: Oxford U.P., 1942), pp. 79-80 & Ibn al-Mutahhar al-Hillī/ Miqdād-i Fādil al-Hillī, tr. William McElwee Miller, Al-Bābu 'L-Hādī °Ashar (London: Luzac, 1958), pp. 84-85.

## VII. THEOLOGY

The first subject of theology to appear in the Shī'ī tradition is badā', that is the alteration by God of events already decreed. Badā' is an early concern because it is linked to the central question of the ḥadīths, the imāmate. The Divine vision (ru'yah) is connected in Shī'ī tradition with the Shī'ī community; for this reason it is also discussed in the older collections. The next concern to arise, prompted by the need of the Shī'ah to define themselves within the larger community, is the definition of faith (īmān and islām). Thereafter the traditions address themselves to topics in two areas: moral philosophy, and the nature and attributes of God.

In order to more clearly see the 'shape' of the tradition, several points should be kept in mind. First, many of the sentences of the imāms concerning theological issues are presented as corrections of errant belief, especially of the beliefs of certain of the imāms' followers: the mistaken opinion is mentioned, and the approved opinion set out. The impression is of the imāms, or whoever stands behind these statements, attempting to impose order against a flood of speculation rising from sources somewhere outside their authority. Second, much theology is set out for the first time in Kulaynī's Kāfī, with a few anticipatory ḥadīths in earlier works. Therefore the

tradition 'broadens out' only in the last text. Third, there is little evidence altogether in the tradition for theology. For most topics one has to rely on a very few ḥadīths, and much remains unclear. The theology of the traditions is, finally, truncated: treatment of metaphysical problems and other subsidiary questions found in contemporary discussions is missing.

Now the stage is set, and we proceed to the substance of the chapter. I shall first discuss the attitude of the imāms toward kalām. The imāms claim perfect ʿilm and deny even legal reasoning. Thus the question arises: how do they admit theological speculation? The second subject, badā' (the 'appearance' of a determination of God that He did not previously make) is important because it is distinctively Shī'ī, mentioned in the earliest texts.<sup>1</sup> The third topic is predestination and free will; here tradition moves from the first position to the second. The related question of man's Sustenance (rizq) and Term of Life (ajal) follows. The divine vision (ru'yah) - the possibility of actually seeing God - is of special concern to the Shī'ah, and is therefore treated before other problems relating to His nature. These are: the affirmation of His existence without anthropomorphism, and His attributes.

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<sup>1</sup>Ash'arī (Maqālāt, p. 111) states that all but a small faction of the Rawāfid assert that "God wills a thing, then there appears to Him something [concerning it]."

i. The issue of kalām.

Theology, like all speculative knowledge, is forbidden to the followers of the imāms. Yet the Shī'ah apparently felt the need to respond to the theological issues stirring around them and to take part in defending Islam against foreign creeds. They were likely also pushed toward kalām by their dogma of the universal and perfect knowledge of the imāms. How could such a thing be believed if the imām could not easily defeat the enemies of Islam on their own ground? Thus one of the necessary qualifications of the imām mentioned by Ja'far al-Ṣādiq is that he "defend justice in the face of the confusion of the people of ignorance and those who debate (ahl al-jadal)."<sup>2</sup> The ḥadīths picture the imām engaged in kalām debates with both Muslims and non-Muslims; in each case he wins handily - sometimes by producing a miracle). Even the atheist is in awe of the imām's skill in theological argument as he declares: "My tongue is stilled by reverence, for though I have seen many learned men and debated with many theologians, never have I felt such bewilderment as I now feel in your presence!"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 293 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb... fī fadl al-imām wa-ṣifāti-hi, ḥadīth #2}.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 98 {K. al-tawhīd, Bāb ḥuduth al-°ālam wa-ithbāt al-muḥdith, ḥadīth #2} (speaking to Ja'far al-Ṣādiq). In another report it is Ibn al-Muqaffa°, the Persian secretary suspected of Manichaeism, who bows to Ja'far al-Ṣādiq's expertise in the kalām: ibid., pp. 95-96, ḥadīth #1.

It is apparent, however, from the traditions that some of the followers of the imāms (specifically, the companions of Ja'far al-Ṣādiq) did engage in theological speculation. The most important of these, the Shī'ī mutakallim par excellence, was Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam.<sup>4</sup> In one lengthy ḥadīth Hishām, still in his youth, defeats an opponent after other kalām experts retained by the sixth imām are overwhelmed.<sup>5</sup> In others he defeats the Mu'tazilī 'Amr ibn 'Ubayd with his proofs for the necessity of the imamate and argues against a Zindīq (a 'heretic' holding non-Islamic views), for which he is declared by the sixth imām 'teacher of the faith to the people of Syria and Egypt.'<sup>6</sup>

The position of these Shī'ī theologians is, however, ambiguous. Hishām himself is strongly condemned for his claim that God has body and form.<sup>7</sup> Hishām ibn Sālim, a Companion of the sixth and seventh imāms, is introduced as another

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<sup>4</sup>We will only be concerned with Hishām as he appears in the record of the ḥadīth. For a full account see EI 2, s.v. "Hishām ibn al-Hakam," by W. Madelung; further details in Michele A. M. De Angelis, "The Collected Fragments of Hishām ibn al-Hakam... and an Introduction to His Teachings" (Ph.D. dissertation, New York University, 1974).

<sup>5</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 240-244 {K. al-Hujjah, Bāb al-idṭirār ilā al-hujjah, ḥadīth #4}.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 238-240, ḥadīth #3.

<sup>7</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 140-143 {K. al-tawhīd, Bāb al-naḥī 'an al-jism wa al-ṣūrah}, passim. On this question, see below.

'excellent' theologian retained by Ja°far al-Şādiq,<sup>8</sup> but he is also linked with the suspect beliefs of Hishām ibn al-ḥakam; they are referred to together as 'the two Hishāms.'<sup>9</sup> That Muḥammad ibn Nu°mān 'Mu'min al-Ṭāq,<sup>10</sup> a third mutakallim approved by the sixth imām, held views foreign to the orthodoxy of the traditions is evident from other sources.<sup>11</sup> The tradition thus condemns the ideas of the early theologians, but at the same time produces them to demonstrate Shī°i knowledge of the kalām. This reflects the tension of a system founded on tradition but tempted to theology.<sup>12</sup>

The two positions, theological and anti-theological, are reconciled in the following long tradition from Ja°far al-Şādiq.

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., vol. 1, p. 241 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb al-idṭirār ilā al-ḥujjah, ḥadīth #4}.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 141 {K. al-tawḥīd, Bāb al-naḥī °an al-jism wa-al-sūrah, ḥadīth #5}.

<sup>10</sup>Mu'min al-Ṭāq = 'the believer of the arch,' as being the site of kalām disputation in the mosque.

<sup>11</sup>A summary of the ideas of the two Hishāms and Mu'min al-Ṭāq as revealed in non-Shī°i sources in W. Madelung, "The Shiite and Khārijite Contribution to Pre-Ash°arite Kalām," in Islamic Philosophical Theology, ed. Parviz Morewedge (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1979), 120-139.

<sup>12</sup>The mutakallimūn mentioned here were themselves also traditionists. Mu'min al-Ṭāq transmitted ḥadīth on many different topics; both the Hishāms are said to have been authors of a kitāb. Another theologian placed by the ḥadīth in the circle of the sixth imām is Humrān ibn A°yan (Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 241 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb al-idṭirār ilā al-ḥujjah, ḥadīth #3}). Ibn A°yan was a companion of the fifth and sixth imāms, a guarantor of much ḥadīth, and reputed to be of firm Shī°i orthodoxy. On all these see arts. in Khū'ī, Mu°jam.



One day, it is reported, a Syrian man came to the imām and declared: "I am a man of theology (kalām)... and I have come for a debate (munāẓarah) with your companions!" The imām asked him: "Is the kalām you mean the kalām ['statement'] of the Apostle of God, or your own?" "Both the Apostle's and my own," replied the Syrian. "Are you then a partner [sharīk] with the Apostle of God?"<sup>13</sup> "No," replied the Syrian. "And do you consider that the Muslims are obliged to follow and obey you just as they are obliged to follow and obey the Prophet?"<sup>14</sup> "No," replied the Syrian. "See," said the imām, "how this man argues against himself before he even begins the debate!" One of those present asked: "I have heard you (begging your forgiveness!) prohibit kalām; I have heard you say: 'Woe to those who engage in kalām...'" "Rather," Ja'far replied, "I say: 'Woe to them if they pay no attention to what I say and instead believe what they want to believe!'"<sup>15</sup> In other words, it is allowed to discuss kalām, but strictly on the basis of the Qur'ān and the words of the Prophet and imāms. To venture beyond this is to claim

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<sup>13</sup>It is properly the imām who is the 'sharīk' or sharer of the Prophet in his knowledge. This is what the imām alludes to (see Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 392-393 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb anna Allāh lam yu'allim nabiya-hu 'ilm illā amara-hu an yu'allima-hu Amīr al-Mu'minīn, ḥadīths #1, 2, & 3}).

<sup>14</sup>The reference is, of course, to the imāms, who do demand such obedience.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., pp. 240-241 {Bāb al-idṭirār ilā al-ḥujjah, ḥadīth #4}.

authority equal to theirs.<sup>16</sup>

ii. Badā': that which 'appears' to God.

Badā' is, in simplest terms, the alteration by God of events already decreed. Shī'ī tradition glorifies badā', most likely in reaction to criticism from the opponents of the Shī'ah. Badā' is presented as the true Islam and thus the mark of the Shī'ī sect. It is claimed, for instance, that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the grandfather of the Prophet, was the first to believe in badā', for which he will receive great honour on the Day of Judgement.<sup>17</sup> "God," says Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, "was not ever worshipped through anything as He was through badā'."<sup>18</sup> Ja'far also said: "...if people knew what reward there was in speaking of badā', they would never cease."<sup>19</sup> Belief in badā', according to the sixth and eighth imāms, is one of the things God verifies in those He sends as prophets.<sup>20</sup> The ḥadīths also cite instances in which

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<sup>16</sup>Ibn Bābawayh states the same principle. In his Risālat al-i'tiqādāt we read that "while vain disputation [munāzarah] is prohibited in all matters of faith... controversy against opponents by means of the Word of God, the Prophet, and the imāms, or by means of the purport of their words is allowed without restriction to those well-versed in theology [kalām]; but it is not permitted (indeed it is forbidden) to those not well-versed (Fyzee, A Shiite Creed, pp. 42-43; translation emended & emphasis added).

<sup>17</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 336-337 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb mawlid al-nabī wa-wafāti-hi, ḥadīths #23 & 24}.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 200-201 {K. al-tawḥīd, Bāb al-badā', ḥadīth #1}.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., ḥadīth #12. From the sixth imām.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., ḥadīths #13 & 15.

badā' occurred in past history. For example, the Qur'ān says: "Withdraw from them, [O Muḥammad], and you shall not be blamed; and warn, for warning shall avail the believers (51: 54-55)." This is an example of badā', since at first God wanted to punish those who did not heed the Prophet, but then 'badā lillāh' and He decided instead on mercy.<sup>21</sup> Jonah's (Yūnus's) people also benefitted from badā', since at first they were to be destroyed, but then it occurred to God to have mercy on them.<sup>22</sup> God gave the Holy Land to the Israelites, but then he effaced that (before he gave it again to their descendants, who took it).<sup>23</sup> Joseph's father Jacob, being a prophet, knew that his son would be safely delivered to him; he sorrowed only because he was afraid that there might be badā' and this might not happen.<sup>24</sup>

It is clear from the hadīths that badā', even though it involves discussion of God's Knowledge, has developed from the doctrine of the imām's ʿilm. It is for this reason that it appears in the texts earlier than other 'theological' problems. The original purpose of badā' is to explain why the imāms are not

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<sup>21</sup>Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 110, hadīth #4; Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, pp. 330-331. A similar instance of badā' in the Qur'ān, in which Muḥammad is first told to retreat, then to warn, mentioned in Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 208 (apropos of Q. 51: 54-55).

<sup>22</sup>ʿAyyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 55, hadīth #77. From the fifth imām.

<sup>23</sup>ʿAyyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 304, hadīth #72. From the sixth imām.

<sup>24</sup>Masʿūdī, Ithbāt, pp. 43-44.

aware of all events before they happen - why they appear to make incorrect predictions or are sometimes apparently 'surprised' by political events. The reason is that God, within a certain limit, may change His decree; he may confirm an event or not confirm it. Said the fourth imām °Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn: "If it were not for a certain verse in the Book of God, I could have told you everything that would happen, until the Day of Judgement. [The verse is]: "God effaces and establishes as He wills, and with Him is the Mother of the Book (13:39)."25

This is possible because God is possessed of two types of knowledge. The sixth imām Ja°far al-Ṣādiq says:

God has two 'knowledges:' one which is hidden and stored with Him, and which no one knows but Him - and it is to this that badā' pertains. Then there is the knowledge which He has taught the angels, messengers, and prophets - and we [the imāms] know it."26

That is to say, God has revealed one kind of knowledge to the angels, etc., and this may be known with certainty. But He also retains another portion of knowledge for Himself and does not reveal it. It is this second, private knowledge which may be affected by badā'.

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25°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 215, ḥadīth #59.

26Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 202-203 {K. al-tawḥīd, Bāb al-badā', ḥadīth #8}. This is the ḥadīth quoted most often in connexion with badā' and the Qur'ānic proof verse usually cited. See, however, Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 111 ḥadīth #9, in which badā' is explained by °Alī citing 31:34 ("God! With Him is knowledge of the Hour").

Badā' functions in the following way: Events are decreed (q-d-r) and determined (q-d-ā) in God's Knowledge before they are created (that is before they occur) and before knowledge of them is given to the angels, prophets, and imāms.<sup>27</sup> This knowledge of God is 'reserved' (mawqūf), and He exercises His Will (mashī'ah) over it. It may be that, after it has been decreed and determined, He 'executes' (m-d-ā) it, in which case it eventuates and the angels, etc. know it; or it may be that 'there occurs to Him' (badā la-hu) something concerning it and He does not execute it, in which case it does not eventuate.<sup>28</sup> What He wills of this knowledge becomes, and what He does not will does not become.<sup>29</sup> Or to put it another way: The second knowledge is not known, unless badā' takes effect, by any but God. This knowledge is 'restricted' (makfūf, the other knowledge being 'freely given,' mabdhūl); it is in the 'Mother of the Book' - the Umm al-Kitāb - and when it is brought out of that (when badā' happens), it becomes effective.<sup>30</sup> At that point there is nothing to

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<sup>27</sup>The Shī'ah/imāms here seize on a distinction also current in other schools of kalām, that between God's universal or eternal Decree, and His decree which concerns the bringing of things into being in time.

<sup>28</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 113, ḥadīth #1; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 377-378 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb nādir fī-hi dhikr al-ghayb, ḥadīth #2}. According to the fifth imām. See also Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 243, ḥadīth #234.

<sup>29</sup>Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 216, ḥadīth #64.

<sup>30</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 109, ḥadīth #3, and see also p. 111, ḥadīth #11; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 375 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb anna al-a'immaḥ ya'lamūn jamī' al-°ulūm allatī kharajat ilā al-

repulse it.<sup>31</sup> Therefore there are two classes of events, and God's Will operates differently in each. There is the 'maḥtūm:' the inevitable or inalterable, which God has determined (q-ḍ-ā) and definitively determined (ḥ-t-m), and there is the class in which badā' may operate, so that God "puts forward as He wills and sets back as He wills" (while in the maḥtūm there is neither putting forward nor setting back).<sup>32</sup> God's Will is powerful over everything so that He may put forward and back as He wills until the day that He makes inevitable (ḥ-t-m) the qaḍā'.<sup>33</sup>

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malā'ikah wa-al-anbiyā'..., ḥadīths #2 & #3}. From the sixth and fifth imāms. The two knowledges are also described as 'particular' (khāṣṣ) and 'general' ('āmm): see Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 109, ḥadīth #1 & p. 111, ḥadīth #12; or the restricted knowledge is 'hidden' (maknūn) and 'stored-up' (makhzūn) (eg. ibid., ḥadīth #2 & p. 112, ḥadīth #18; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 216, ḥadīth #63). In a few ḥadīths in Nu°mānī's ghaybah the terms are apparently reversed; the 'maḥtūm' ('decreed' or 'inevitable') is that 'over which God exercises His Will' (p. 203) and over which badā' may be effective (p. 205); the mawqūf seems to be that which has eventuated (or perhaps maḥtūm is a sub-category of mawqūf)? There are a number of ḥadīths here (pp. 203-205, the section concerning the 'Sufyānī,' the one who shall rise to battle the Mahdī at the end of time) which do not fit with the usual ideas concerning badā' and are confused in other ways. There is perhaps a mix-up in the text or the edition; cf. Himyarī, Qurb, in which the fourth imām °Alī ibn Husayn declares that both the Mahdī and Sufyānī are part of the maḥtūm.

<sup>31</sup>Uṣūl, p. 163. From the sixth imām.

<sup>32</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 194. From Ja°far al-Sādiq. See also Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 202 & 203 {K. al-tawḥīd, Bāb al-badā', ḥadīths #4 & #5}, from the fifth imām. Here the suspended event is called 'mawqūf.'

<sup>33</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 153. In this tradition, specifically until He makes His qaḍā' clear by sending down victory for the believers. The issue here seems to be the delay in the realization of the Shī°ī hegemony.

To put it another way, God's second Knowledge is like a storage box hidden away, the contents of which may be taken out and put into use, or left and not used - but which in either case do exist; the contents are 'known' both before they are taken out and if they are not taken out at all. The tradition expresses it thus: God holds in front of Him a Book in which is written everything that has been or shall be and as He gazes upon that Book He puts forward and back, effaces, or causes to be whichever part of it He wills - and what He does not will does not become.<sup>34</sup>

Therefore the imāms are not ignorant in any way. God did indeed inform Muḥammad (and thus the imāms) of all that was to occur until the end of the world - but only the maḥtūm; He withheld the other things.<sup>35</sup> The fifth and sixth imāms said:

If we tell you that something shall come from one direction, but it comes from another, it is only that God does as He wills; and if we should tell you something today and then something different tomorrow, it is because God "effaces as He wills and establishes as He wills."<sup>36</sup>

When badā' does affect some part of that hidden knowledge - when something is decreed and determined but not executed - God then

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<sup>34</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, pp. 215-216, ḥadīth #61.

<sup>35</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 204 {K. al-tawḥīd, Bāb al-badā', ḥadīth #14}. From the sixth imām.

<sup>36</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 217, ḥadīth #66.

does show it to the imāms (so that they are the ones who become aware and inform the people of God's 'change of mind').<sup>37</sup>

The doctrine of badā' is also constructed so as to avoid damaging the perfection of God's Knowledge: an important, if subsidiary, problem and an obvious weak point probed by the opponents of the Shī'ah. We are assured that, although the Divine Science is divided into two parts, both are eternal. It is not that there 'occurs to God' (badā lillāh) that which was not previously part of His knowledge,' i.e. that He knows at some point that which He previously did not know.<sup>38</sup> "Everything that God wishes is in His °ilm before he creates it, and there is nothing that 'occurs' to Him that was not [previously] in His knowledge, for things do not occur to Him from ignorance."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 394, ḥadīths #6 & #9; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 375 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb anna al-a'immah ya°lamūn jamī° al-°ulūm allatī kharaḡat ilā al-malā'ikah wa-al-anbiyā'..., ḥadīth #1}. From the sixth imām. The ḥadīth continues: "and it is shown to the imāms who were before us;" this according to the principle that the °ilm of all the imāms must be equal (see above, Chapter III, section i.). Tradition assures that °Alī, Hasan, and Husayn did not rise up and suffer defeat because knowledge of that was put beyond them by badā'. That knowledge, since it was not only in the qadr and qaḍā' but was also 'executed' (m-d-ā) and 'sealed' (ḥ-t-m), was part of that which was communicated to them by the Prophet (Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 30-31 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb anna al-a'immah lam yaf°alū shay'an wa-lā yaf°alūn illā bi-°ahd min Allāh..., ḥadīth #3}).

<sup>38</sup>See Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 110, ḥadīth #4.

<sup>39</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 218, ḥadīth #71; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 203 {K. al-tawḥīd, Bāb al-badā', ḥadīths #9 & #10}. From the sixth imām. See also Saffār, Baṣā'ir, p. 113, ḥadīth #2 and Kulaynī, vol. 1, pp. 203-204 {K. al-tawḥīd, Bāb al-badā', ḥadīth #11}./ This statement of the tradition may be in



Badā' explains the succession of the seventh imām Mūsā (al-Kāzīm) to the imāmate after his father the sixth imām Ja°far al-Ṣādiq had originally designated Mūsā's older brother Ismā°īl. Ismā°īl's failure to succeed was the cause of a major crisis among the Shī°ah, so that al-Ṣādiq was prompted to say: "God made no greater badā' than He did concerning my son Ismā°īl!"<sup>40</sup> Badā' is also behind another change in the succession of the imāms after the case of Ismā°īl. Although it appeared that Abū Ja°far, the eldest son of the ninth imām, would succeed to the imāmate after his father, God exercised badā' (in fact, Abū Ja°far died), and the younger son, Abū Muḥammad, became the tenth imām instead, "though the liars may detest it."<sup>41</sup> Finally, in the time after the Occultation badā' explains the postponement of eschatological events desired by the Shī°ah, at the same time assuring them that they had not been deceived - since the original determination was, in the context of badā', true and valid. Thus °Alī, asked how long the Mahdī would be absent, answered at first: "Six days,

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answer to Mu'min al-Tāq and his group, who thought that God did not know a thing before He decreed (q-d-r) it since the thing did not become a thing before that point (Ash°arī, Maqālāt, pp. 111-112),

<sup>40</sup>Uṣūl, p. 49. Perhaps, however, this event is not as important in the history of badā' as has been claimed, since there are not many references in the early ḥadīths to badā' in this connexion.

<sup>41</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 116 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb al-ishārah wa-al-naṣṣ °alā Abī Muḥammad, ḥadīth #10.} Normally, the eldest son should succeed; this was the problem with the succession of both Mūsā and Abū Ja°far.

six months, or six years," further assuring his skeptical or worried follower that "[it shall happen], as surely as it had already eventuated (ka-mā huwa makhlūg). "And what," °Alī was asked, "shall happen after that?" He replied: "Then God shall do as He wills, for He may effect badā' in different ways, He may will different things, and He has certain terms and times for things [which we cannot discern]."<sup>42</sup> The occultation of Moses is the prophetic pattern for the occultation of the Mahdī, as Moses was to be gone on the mountain thirty nights, and this was in the Knowledge and Decree (tagdīr) of God, but the nights were subsequently changed to forty.<sup>43</sup> The 'Time' (wagt) of the triumph of the Shī'ah has been fixed several times, but for one reason or another (God's wrath at the murder of Ḥusayn, the failure of the Shī'ah to keep God's secrets) it was postponed each time, so that they are warned at present against 'fixing a time,' for "God effaces and establishes as He wills, and with Him is the Mother of the Book."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 136 {Bāb fī al-ghaybah, ḥadīth #7}; Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, pp. 41-42. The last phrase is: "la-hu badā'āt wa-irādāt wa-ghāyāt wa-nihāyāt;" cf. the sixth imām's words concerning the destruction of the Abbasids (mulūk Āl Fulān): "God does not hurry things because His servants are in a hurry; this affair has a ghāyah yantahī ilay-hā" (Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 184 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb karāhiyat al-tawqīt, ḥadīth #7}).

<sup>43</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 44, ḥadīth #46. From the fifth imām. On Moses's absence see further: °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 26, ḥadīths #70 & 71; Qummi, Tafsīr, vol. 2, pp. 134 & 137; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 191-192 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb karāhiyat al-tawqīt, ḥadīth #5}; Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, pp. 196 & 197.

<sup>44</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, p. 190 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb karāhiyat al-tawqīt, ḥadīth #1}; Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, p. 197. Badā' is in fact not explicitly linked in the ḥadīths to the 'putting

Shi'ī tradition is, however, careful to amend the doctrine of badā' so that God's promise will not appear to be unreliable and injustice will not be attributed to Him. The Shi'ah are particularly concerned to establish that the basic guarantees concerning the imāmate will not be changed or cancelled. Thus Muḥammad al-Bāqir assured his followers that the °ilm already with the imāms, angels, and prophets would most definitely eventuate, for "God does not make Himself lie," nor does He make lie His prophets and angels.<sup>45</sup> On another occasion the fifth imām was again asked about that which the prophets had published to their people: would God effect badā' in such things (i.e. can we at least rely on the revelation as inalterable)? The imām replied: "I do not say to you that He shall do such a thing; rather I say that He shall do it if He wills."<sup>46</sup> Here the imām assures his questioner that the revelation is true and

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off' of the time. There are, moreover, other ideas at work here: that the imāms have not stated the time - or have fixed it at times when they actually knew that it would not occur - in order to test people, or in order that they would not despair. 'Those who attempt to fix a time' (al-muwagqitūn) or 'who hurry' (al-musta°jilūn, i.e. who attempt to rise up and overthrow the established order before God's good time) are cursed. See: K. Sulaym, p. 141; Uṣūl, p. 92; Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, pp. 310-311 (concerning the putting off of the collapse of the °Abbāsīd empire); Ash°arī, Baṣā'ir, pp. 100 & 105; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 190-194 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb karāhiyat al-tawqīt, ḥadīth #1}; Nu°mānī, Ghaybah, pp. 129-134 & 194-199.

<sup>45</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsin, p. 243, ḥadīth #131; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 217, ḥadīths #65 & #67; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 202-203 {K. al-tawhīd, Bāb al-badā', ḥadīth #6}.

<sup>46</sup>Uṣūl, p. 110.

inalterable, but avoids limiting God's power to effect badā' and damaging His Omnipotence by adding 'if He wills.' Nor should the Shī'ah fear that God will exercise badā' with regard to the actual coming of the Mahdī, even if the time of his coming is changed, for "this is part of the Fixed Hour [mī'ād, i.e. necessary eschatological events], which God does not go back on."<sup>47</sup>

Badā' also guarantees the efficacy of prayer. The tradition often cites the formula: 'prayer turns back destiny' (al-du'ā' yaruddu al-qaḍā'). Prayer is effective, it is said, because part of God's power to 'establish and efface' is His allowing certain prayers to change what is in the Umm al-Kitāb.<sup>48</sup> Prayer may have effect on what is already decreed (q-ḍ-r) and determined (q-ḍ-ā) as long as it has not been executed (m-ḍ-ā) and has not yet eventuated;<sup>49</sup> though destiny be 'like a tightly-twisted thread'

<sup>47</sup>Nu'mānī, Ghaybah, p. 205. The assurance is given by the ninth imām. Nu'mānī himself declares that the ghaybah had to happen, for if it had not despite all the reports concerning it, the whole of the Imāmī school would have been rendered invalid (ibid., p. 13)!

<sup>48</sup>Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 220, ḥadīth #74. From the sixth imām. See also Ḥimyarī, Qurb, p. 24, also from the sixth imām.

<sup>49</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, pp. 215 & 216 {K. al-du'ā', Bāb anna al-du'ā' yaruddu al-balā' wa-al-qaḍā', ḥadīths #2 & #8}. Both from the seventh imām. This is the meaning of a tradition from the Prophet in which he is asked concerning a parchment (apparently a prescription or part of a spell) through which one seeks a cure: "Does such a thing turn back the qadr of God?" His answer: "It is part of the qadr of God (Ḥimyarī, Qurb, p. 62)." Reported by the fifth and sixth imāms. That is: though it may alter destiny, it was still ever part of God's decree, present in the Umm al-Kitāb.

still prayer can unravel it.<sup>50</sup> One should therefore not despair and abandon prayer, simply saying: "The matter is already decided." One's faith in God's qadar and qadā' should not prevent one from constant supplication.<sup>51</sup>

It is interesting that the Ash'arī solution to the problem of prayer resembles the Shī'ī traditional solution. For the Ash'arīs also divide the predetermined Divine Decree into two parts: fixed, and suspended, maintaining that prayer will have efficacy over the second (subject to certain elaborations to guarantee God's Omniscience).<sup>52</sup> This is rather close to ideas of badā'; some borrowing or common influence is likely. In any case, although the badā' of supplication is relevant to questions of prayer, hope, and human aspiration in general, it might have had a particularly powerful appeal for members of the Shī'ī community, who perhaps felt themselves beset even more than others by fate and the tide of events.

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<sup>50</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 4, pp. 215-217 {K. al-du°ā, Bāb anna al-du°ā' yaruddu al-balā' wa-al-qadā'}, passim.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., pp. 212-213 {Bāb fadl al-du°ā' wa-al-ḥathth °alayhi, ḥadīth #7}. From the sixth imām, followed by Zurārah' explanation of the imām's words.

<sup>52</sup>See: G.C. Anawati & Louis Gardet, Dieu et la destinee de l'homme (Paris: Librairie philosophique J. Vrin, 1968), pp. 137-138.

### iii. Predestination and free will.

Most of the Shī'ī ḥadīth traditions favour predestination. Of the lesser number of traditions that lean toward either free will or a compromise between free will and predestination, most are first recorded in Kulaynī's al-Kāfī. Kulaynī's collection once again proves to be a turning point in Shī'ī thought.

Shī'ī predestinarianism is founded in beliefs concerning the primordial creation and covenant, according to which the Shī'ah were fashioned of superior material to be believers for all time and the non-Shī'ah created to be rejecters of faith. This predestinarianism was perhaps the reaction of the community to its minority position and political failure: if such things are commanded by destiny and destiny also decrees an end inevitably good for the Shī'ah and an end inevitably bad for those who are not and can never be part of 'the chosen,' then all is right and good.

There is also evidence in the tradition of a more general predestinarianism: of the insistence that human action cannot influence any event, including the course of one's own life. The famous jabrī ḥadīth: "One has not tasted faith until one has realized that what has reached him could not possibly have escaped him and what escaped him could not possibly have reached

him" is cited in a few places.<sup>53</sup> Similarly, the idea that God makes certain persons blind to guidance but opens the eyes and ears of others is present.<sup>54</sup> The imāms say that if God wishes evil for a people, there is nothing they can do about it; 'the amr is to Him;'<sup>55</sup> one's deeds are written out in the Book before one is created<sup>56</sup> and we have no power over whether we enter Heaven or Hell.<sup>57</sup> There is enough condemnation of the 'Qadariyah' who, according to the fifth imām, say "that there is no divine power (qadr) but assert instead that they have power over [their own] guidance or misguidance, that if they will, they are guided and if they will, they are misguided." They are "the enemies of God [who] lie concerning His Will and Power!"<sup>58</sup> The doctrine (kalām) of the qadr, says Ja°far al-Şādiq, "is not any part of my religion or that of my fathers, nor can anyone be found of my House who supports it."<sup>59</sup> When the qadr (man's power to act) and the doctrine of istiṭā°ah (man's 'capacity' over his

<sup>53</sup>Eg. in Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 3, p. 96 {K. al-īmān wa-al-kufr, Bāb faḍl al-yaqīn, ḥadīth #4}. From the Amīr al-Mu'minīn.

<sup>54</sup>Eg. Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, pp. 212 & 303.

<sup>55</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 206, ḥadīth #20. From the eighth imām.

<sup>56</sup>Eg. Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 92. From the fifth imām.

<sup>57</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 242, ḥadīth #16. From the fifth imām.

<sup>58</sup>Eg. Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, pp. 226-227. See also °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 23: °Abd al-Malik summons the young Ja°far al-Şādiq to debate with a 'Qadarī,' whom he handily defeats.

<sup>59</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 261, ḥadīth #210.

own acts; sometimes taken in the tradition as the opposite of jabr) were mentioned in the presence of the sixth imām he exclaimed: "This is a wicked belief! I follow the religion of my ancestors and I shall never repeal it: the Qadr, the sweet and the bitter of it, is from God...."<sup>60</sup> The tradition declares the proponents of free will to be (in a well-known formula of the Jabariyah) 'the Magians of this community.'<sup>61</sup> Ja°far al-Şādiq attributes to the Qadariyah the belief that "it is not that which God wills that becomes, but rather that which Satan wills." He accuses them, in other words, of allowing, by denying that misguidance comes also from God, that Satan has some power which He does not: a characteristic accusation of the Predestinarians.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup>Here Qadr means the power of God. Barqī; Mahāsin, p. 283, #417 (& see the ḥadīth following, also from the sixth imām). This is another common phrase of the predestinarians. The ḥadīth continues: "...and all good and all evil is from God." Similarly, °Alī states that one part of imān (as opposed to mere islām) is belief in: "all of Qadr, the good and bad, the sweet and bitter... (K. Sulaym, p. 88)."

<sup>61</sup>Eg. Qummi, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 227. In one ḥadīth (Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 216 {K. al-tawḥīd, Bāb al-jabr wa-al-qadr wa-al-amr bayn al-amrayn, ḥadīth #1}) in which the Qadariyah are equated with 'Majūs,' 'Qadariyah' seems to refer to the Predestinarians.

<sup>62</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, pp. 260-261 {K. al-ḥujjah, Bāb mā amara al-nabī bi-al-naṣīḥah li-a'immat al-muslimīn, ḥadīth #2}. Other references to the Qadariyah: Himyarī, Qurb, p. 210; Qummi, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 199; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 218-219 {K. al-tawḥīd, Bāb al-jabr wa-al-qadr wa-al-amr bayn al-amrayn, ḥadīth #4}. Note, however, that in many places condemnation of the Qadariyah is coupled with equal denunciation of the Jabariyah, the predestinarian party; see below.



We have already seen a modification or break-down of this predestinarian world view in a few places. For example, although the 'miserable' and 'happy' - the Shī'ah and non-Shī'ah - are formed from different substances, it is also said that there is a third group created of mixed material whose apparent destiny may be altered (though not through their own striving but by the Will or Grace of God).<sup>63</sup> Faith may increase and decrease in accordance with works. And badā' allows not only for changes in the destined course of events but also for man's power over his own destiny through prayer.

Shī'ī tradition finally moves from a conservative, predestinarian stance toward a middle way between predestination and free will. The ḥadīths deny the two extremes, citing the error of the Jabariyah in failing to attribute to humankind responsibility for its actions and the error of the Qadariyah in damaging God's Omnipotence. The solution of the traditions is expressed in the formula: 'neither jabr (compulsion) nor tafwīd (entrustment/delegation of acts to man).' Ja'far al-Ṣādiq says: "Neither jabr nor qadr, but rather 'a station between the two'

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<sup>63</sup>One ḥadīth reports that God after He had made the 'imāms of kufr,' etc., from rancid clay made their wretched condition subject to badā' (Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, pp. 38-39; from the fifth and sixth imāms). Here the concept of badā' has been worked into the creation-story at a point where the general idea of 'change in destiny' is already present. (The good clay, according to this report, shall not be subject to badā'; again badā' is limited so as not to interfere with God's Justice).

(manzilah bayna-humā).<sup>64</sup>

Such statements are made in many reports. The imāms, however, do not go very far toward explaining what the middle position might be. It seems that we are to understand by such ḥadīths that the imām has deliberately refrained from definition, there being, in some way, a question of privileged knowledge, as witness the words of Ja°far al-Ṣādiq: "only the imāms or those whom they have taught know the truth of it [of the intermediate position]."<sup>65</sup> This is, I believe, a tactic made necessary by the difficulty of moving toward free will from a position of a predestinarian sort without being seen to 'go too far.' The matter was apparently made more acute by tensions within the community. We see that some questions are put to the imāms by their followers from a Qadarī point of view, and others from a Jabarī point of view; the eighth imām was given the news that "some of our companions hold for jabr, and some for istiṭā°ah [man's 'capacity' to act, thus 'free will']" - which caused him

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<sup>64</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfi, vol. 1, p. 222 {K. al-tawḥīd, Bāb al-jabr wa-al-qadr wa-al-amr bayn al-amrayn, ḥadīth #10}. Ash°arī (Maqālāt, pp. 114-115) speaks of a group of Rawāfiḍ holding exactly this belief. He adds, however, that the (unnamed) sect "did not occupy themselves with deciding if the servant's acts are created or not." The tradition does treat this question (see below) - although the reports find a way to define the origin of acts that avoids exactly attributing creation. Perhaps this is what Ash°arī means.

<sup>65</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfi, vol. 1, p. 222 {K. al-tawḥīd, Bāb al-jabr wa-al-qadr wa-al-amr bayn al-amrayn, ḥadīth #10}. See also ibid., p. 228 {Bāb al-istiṭā°ah, ḥadīth #4}: Ja°far al-Ṣādiq at first refuses to speak to his follower on this question.

to issue a statement that appears (in a somewhat vague way) to mediate between the two.<sup>66</sup>

The uncertain suspension of the tradition between jabr and qadr is underscored by close reading of another report from the eighth imām. We are again reminded by this ḥadīth that we are dealing with a peculiar literary form in which dramatic suggestion is important. It is useful to treat such texts accordingly.

The 'qadr' (the concept of man's 'power') was mentioned in the presence of °Alī al-Riḍā, and he remarked: "It leads to zandaqah [i.e. heresy, particularly dualistic heresy]" - the imām means that God's unicity is damaged by the suggestion that there is a power outside Him. Then he was asked about the Jabariyah (ahl al-jabr) and he replied by prompting the questioner: "What do they say?" The man answered:

They assert that God has charged His servants with that which they cannot bear... while we [the Shī'ah, or the group of the Shī'ah to which this man belonged] say that God does not charge His servants with that which they cannot bear, but [at the same time] we also oppose the Qadariyah and say that it is not as they say.

This prompted al-Riḍā to declare: "The Pen with which the Truth (ḥaqīqah) of faith (īmān) was inscribed for those who have

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<sup>66</sup>This is the ḥadīth discussed on the next page. Ḥimyarī, Qurb, pp. 207-208; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 222-223 {K. al-tawhīd, Bāb al-jabr wa-al-qadar wa-al-amr bayn al-amrayn, ḥadīth #12}.

affirmed and believed has dried, and the Pen with which the Truth of rejection (kufr) was inscribed for those who gave the lie and sinned has also dried."<sup>67</sup> The imām thus quickly and easily characterizes and condemns the position of Qadar - of human power - but seems to hesitate to strike at the Jabriyah (the Shī'ah being originally closer to these). He lets his follower answer instead and we are given the impression of silent approbation, which seems to depend in turn on the vague emendation of the Qadarī-like statement ("but still we oppose the Qadarīs...") as well as the 'escape clause' of an added, strongly predestinarian declaration ("the Pen... has dried").

The beginnings of a compromise between predestination and free will - along with a kind of creeping toward the second position - are observed in several versions of another, well-known ḥadīth from the eighth imām. 'Alī 'al-Ridā' reports that God said:

O son of man! You are what you are - what you will and what you say - through my Will, and you are led to [obey] my divine law through my Power (quwwatī), and you are given the power to disobey me through my Grace (ni'matī). 'Any good that overtakes you is from God, and any evil that overtakes you is from yourself (4:79);' this is because I have more title to your good deeds than you, and you have more title to your evil deeds than me. And that is because I shall not be asked about what I do, while they [humankind] are asked.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>Ḥimyarī, Qurb, p. 230.

<sup>68</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, pp. 258-259.

Thus: good acts are directly attributable to God and His Power, while God places in humankind a power which is capable of evil acts.<sup>69</sup> This tradition is initially aimed at a problem inherent in the Jabarī position: if all acts are from God, then does He also create the evil acts of man?<sup>70</sup> The imām escapes the difficulty, but avoids falling into Qadarism, by citing a verse which appears to give humankind greater credit for evil while essentially affirming God's power over acts.<sup>71</sup> The imām does not in this report directly address the problem of man's power over his acts and the moral qualification of those acts. Nevertheless, another version of the same ḥadīth emphasizes man's power by adding (after "you have more title to your evil deeds than me"): "[for] I have made you hearing, seeing, and powerful (qawīy)."<sup>72</sup> Still another version reads: "...you are made able (quddīrat) to

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<sup>69</sup>The idea that God gives the power to disobey through his 'Grace' (luṭf) seems to be a Mu'tazilī one. That is, it is blessing that we are given the power to do evil, for if we did not have this power there would be no cause for reward for refraining from evil and doing good instead (and thus we would be deprived of the reward for good).

<sup>70</sup>For other ḥadīths addressing this question see: Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 220-221 & 224 {K. al-tawhīd, Bāb al-jabr wa-al-qadar wa-al-amr bayn al-amrayn, ḥadīths #6, 7, & 13} (all from the sixth imām).

<sup>71</sup>A similar position is maintained by Ja'far al-Sādiq in the report in which he says: "He who asserts that God commands vile deeds, lies against God, and he who asserts that good and evil come from himself, also lies against God." Ibid., ḥadīth #2.

<sup>72</sup>Himyarī, Qurb, pp. 207-208; Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 209-210 {K. al-hujjah, Bāb al-mashī'ah wa-al-irādah, ḥadīth #6}; ibid., pp. 222-223 {Bāb al-jabr wa-al-qadr..., ḥadīth #12} (the second without the word 'qawīy').

obey my divine law through my Power (gudrah);" g-d-r/gudrah here signifies man's independent power, which could not have escaped any who framed this tradition.<sup>73</sup> °Ayyāshī in his Tafsīr gives an expanded version of the imām's dictum.<sup>74</sup> Among the additional phrases are: "I [God] shall not have ceased to warn you, and I shall not take you unawares" (you shall be held responsible for your actions on the Day of Judgement, as you were fairly warned and then given the choice to do good or evil). And also: "I shall not have charged you with more than you can bear, and I shall not attribute to you any faith except that which you have taken upon yourself by testifying to it" (the proponents of 'free will' argue that God is too Just to compel man to evil and then punish him for it - thus charging him with 'more than he can bear' - and also too Just to give man reward for faith which He had granted him without him earning it). Kulaynī's al-Kāfī proposes an interpretation of the same ḥadīth of the eighth imām that emphasizes God's Justice, the ultimate principle on which free will is founded. The eighth imām was asked: "Has God entrusted affairs to humankind?" The imām replied: "God is more mighty than that." Then he was asked: "Has He forced (j-b-r) mankind to sin?" The imām replied: "He is too Just and Wise for that." Then the imām recited: "O son of man! I am closer to

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<sup>73</sup>Ḥimyarī, Qurb, p. 202.

<sup>74</sup>Vol. 2, pp. 210-211. The added sentences may actually be °Ayyāshī's own explanation.

your good deeds than yourselves...."<sup>75</sup>

One branch of the tradition refines the theory of acts further by taking up two related issues: the creation of acts, and the nature of the capacity (istiṭā'ah) placed in man.

As for the creation of acts, the traditions reject both the notion that God is directly the Creator (khāliq) of all elements of human action, and the assertion (usually identified with the Mu'tazilah, although they are not named in any ḥadīth) that we create our own acts. The Shī'ah say that, while there is creation (khalq) in a sense, it is the creation of taqdīr (issuing a decree), not takwīn (actualization, bringing into being).<sup>76</sup> In other words, God creates all acts, which then exist in potentia, but the acts are only 'actuated' if the actor, humankind, carries them out. This is the meaning of 'Alī's words to the old man at Ṣiffīn (see below): "Do you imagine that I mean a definite (ḥatm) decree and necessary (lāzim) determination?" The man's acts were created - or the first stages of their creation were completed - by God, but they were only made definite as he fulfilled his part in them, and this was the basis of his reward.

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<sup>75</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 218 {K. al-tawhīd, Bāb al-jabr wa-al-qadr..., ḥadīth #3}.

<sup>76</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, pp. 89-90 (on his own authority); see also ibid., pp. 416 & 273.

The idea of stages in the actualization of events introduced in this ḥadīth recalls the doctrine of badā'.<sup>77</sup> Use of the terms qadā' (decree), qadar (determination), and ḥatm ('definite,' etymologically rel. to maḥtūm) by 'Alī underline the similarity. Nevertheless, badā' is not mentioned anywhere in connexion with the problem of man's power, nor in connexion with 'free will' in general. The flexibility in events allowed by 'the appearance of something to God' is not exploited in the way one might have expected.

As for the capability (istiṭā'ah) placed in man, we have already seen it equated in one ḥadīth with free will, and as such it is also condemned by the sixth imām.<sup>78</sup> In most ḥadīths, however, it is defined so as to more clearly demarcate the 'middle way' finally chosen by the tradition. The two extremes rejected by the imāms as they discuss istiṭā'ah are: that of the Mu'tazilīs, who claimed that capacity was created before the act, owned and freely disposed of by man; and that of the Predestinarians, who thought that we must be compelled to the acts we perform. The ḥadīth quoted below provides a fair summary

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<sup>77</sup>Note also Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 218-219 {K. al-tawhīd, Bāb al-jabr wa-al-qadar..., ḥadīth #4}: a ḥadīth from the eighth imām in which he further explains the stages by way of clarifying the alternative to Qadarism and Jabarism & ibid., p. 207 {Bāb al-mashī'ah wa-al-irādah, ḥadīth #1}: from the fifth imām.

<sup>78</sup>See in addition Barqī, Maḥāsīn, pp. 283 - 284, ḥadīths #417 & 418.



of the Shī'ī view of istiṭā'ah.

'A Baṣran' questioned Ja'far al-Ṣādiq concerning istiṭā'ah, and the imām began by asking him: "Are you capable (tastati') of performing an act that has not been [previously] created [by God]?" The man admitted that this was not so. Ja'far then asked: "Are you capable of refraining from an act that has [already] been created [by God]?" This the man also denied, and admitted that he could not account for how one could actually be 'capable.' The imām finally relented and explained:

God created mankind and put in them the instrument (ālah) of istiṭā'ah - but he did not consequently 'delegate' (f-w-ḍ) [power over their own acts] to him. Thus they are capable of the act at the time of the act, along with the act - if they do in fact perform it. If they do not perform it... they were not 'capable' of performing an act they did not perform- for God is too Mighty and too Glorious to have anyone in His Dominion oppose Him.

The Baṣran now asked: "Is mankind then compelled (majbūr) [to good and evil]?" The imām denied this was so, saying: "If they were compelled, they would be excused (ma'dhūr) [that is there would be no justification for their punishment by God]." "Then has He delegated [their acts] to them?" "No," the imām replied. Finally, to end the confusion, he explained: "God knew that they would commit a certain act, so He placed in them the 'instrument' for that act. Thus if they perform the act, they are 'capable'

along with the act."<sup>79</sup>

In this ḥadīth the sixth imām admits the notion of 'capacity,' but only in a very restricted sense. His chief aim is to limit the free will attached by the Mu'tazilah to this concept. (That the tradition is aimed at the Mu'tazilah is highlighted by the fact that Ja'far is questioned by an unnamed 'Baṣran,' Baṣrah being a centre of Mu'tazilī speculation. The ḥadīth ends with the Baṣran's testimony to the imām's mission, indicating that he has 'converted' to his view.) The sixth imām begins by demonstrating that the notion of an independent 'capacity' in man is absurd (since one can neither bring into existence something not created by God [act performed], nor can one prevent the existence of something created by God [act not performed]). Consequently, capacity exists only in the case of acts actually performed. (What the imām means to say here is that istiṭā'ah does not indicate capacity to either perform an act or not perform it.) More precisely, the capacity is not owned and disposed of by man according to his choice but rather created by God at the moment of the act for the purpose of that act only - thus having no existence outside the act, neither before nor after it. We must also conclude from Ja'far's words that istiṭā'ah compels the act, since one is only 'capable' if the act is performed, and it is impossible to refrain from or

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<sup>79</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 226 {K. al-tawḥīd, Bāb al-istiṭā'ah, ḥadīth #2}.

'prevent' a capacity created by God. Yet he goes on to deny that his definition of capacity leads to compulsion - though it seems to strip the concept of any reality and reduce it to a mere relation between man's act and God's will. This, it is implied, would be inconsistent with a moral definition of acts and thus with God's Justice. Man is not compelled, because the instrument of capacity was placed in him by God for particular acts which He knew he would perform. Thus the thesis of some of the Mu'tazilah that man has the capacity for acts which God knew he would not perform is also denied. The theological problem raised by an istiṭā'ah of choice (and in fact by any suggestion of human liberty) is that it damages God's Prescience. But Prescience may also be used to affirm autonomy, if we are able to conceive that it encompasses all possibilities and thus also that Knowledge precedes 'choice.' This is the solution offered by Ja'far al-Sādiq, in this and other ḥadīths.<sup>80</sup>

There are, however (in the manner typical of the ḥadīths) some variations in the view of istiṭā'ah. In another report the sixth imām, while also characterizing capacity as an 'instrument' placed in man through which he is capable of acts performed and

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<sup>80</sup>Eg. Kulaynī, al-Kāfi, vol. 1, p. 220 {K. al-tawḥīd, Bāb al-sa'ādah wa-al-shaqā', ḥadīth #5}. In ibid., p. 212, ḥadīth #2, the sixth imām states that 'God gave those destined to sin the power to sin, and those destined to obey Him the power to obey, rendering them as He always knew they would be.' Kulaynī makes this ḥadīth follow the tradition: "He whom God created happy He shall never hate, and he whom He created miserable He shall never love...." His aim is apparently to soften or explain away the predestinarianism of the first tradition.

denying that capacity has any existence outside the act, goes on to admit that one who refrains from an act (in his example, fornication) was 'capable' of that refraining. This is a little closer to 'free will.' The same ḥadīth, moving in a similar direction, also proposes a refinement in God's Will, this in answer to the crucial question: "According to what [principle] does God punish [His servants]?" While the imām affirms again that istiṭā'ah is placed in man for particular acts which God knew he would perform, His Willing (irādah) of unbelief (in accordance with His Knowledge that His servant would not believe) is not a Will of 'final decision' (ḥatm). Rather it is a Will of 'choice' (ikhtiyār). Ikhtiyār in kalām usage means human choice.<sup>81</sup> Thus the ḥadīth may be interpreted to mean that God wills according to man's choice.

We have already seen ḥ-t-m introduced in connexion with badā', in the context of which it means God's 'definite,' rather than changeable decree. While badā' is still not linked to the question of free will, it is surely implied here that something may 'occur' to God concerning man's fate, possibly in accord with his actions.

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., pp. 227-228 {Bāb al-istiṭā'ah, ḥadīth #3}. Cf. °Alī's words to the old man at Ṣiffīn, in the ḥadīth cited below. Here ḥatm and ikhtiyār seem to have a similar meaning (but cf. also ibid., pp. 208-209 {Bāb al-mashī'ah wa-al-irādah, ḥadīth #4}, in which ḥatm is used to signify God's actual Will as opposed to His wish, or Will of 'intention' (°azm) (as in ibid., ḥadīths #3 & 5, but with different terminology).

Thus far we have seen Shī'ī tradition move from predestination toward a middle way between jabr and tafwīd, admitting, in accordance with that shift, a concept of istiṭā'ah more or less restricted. There is another outgrowth of this revision: a cluster of traditions which concentrates on establishing God's Justice, that He shall neither compel to sin and then punish, nor fail to credit man's acts and reward him with his wage. While still endeavouring to hold to a 'middle position,' such reports tend yet further toward affirmation of free will.

It is reported that, after the Battle of Ṣiffīn, an elderly man came to °Alī and asked him: "Was our journey to [fight] the Syrians due to God's decree and His command?" °Alī affirmed that this was so: "There was no hill that you climbed or valley into which you descended except by God's decree and command." The old man was disappointed: "Then all my efforts should be credited to God?" "Certainly not!" °Alī reassured him. "God has given you great reward for the going, for time you spent there, and for your return, and you were not at any moment in time acting under compulsion." The man was now confused as to how to reconcile the two statements of the Amīr al-Mu'minīn. °Alī explained:

Perhaps you imagine that I mean a definite (ḥatm) decree and necessary (lāzim) determination? Were this so, God's reward, punishment, command, prohibition, and rebuke would have no meaning, the promise [of Heaven] and threat [of Hell] would become invalid, and there

would be no reason for blame the sinner or to praise the one who does good.... Rather God has laid duties upon humankind with the purpose of giving them the choice [of performing them or not] (kallafa takhyīran) and He has issued prohibitions in order to warn [i.e. He does not issue them in vain].... He does not compel humankind to obey Him or to disobey Him, but neither does He give them complete power over their own acts (f-w-d).<sup>82</sup>

Here humankind is explicitly given the choice (ikhtiyār) of performing duties (taklīf), by which they earn blame and praise.<sup>83</sup> God's reward and punishment are Just because of this.

The choice brings in train another question related to God's Justice: can He 'charge man with more than he can bear?' The part of Shī'ī tradition that is anti-predestinarian holds that this is not possible. God is "too Noble to charge people with that which they cannot accomplish."<sup>84</sup> Shī'ī tradition addresses this problem primarily from the point of view of knowledge: since God creates man's knowledge (ma'rifah) and humankind has no part

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid., pp. 216-217 {Bāb al-jabr wa-al-gadr..., ḥadīth #1}.

<sup>83</sup>Taklīf and ikhtiyār are promoted by Qummī on his own authority. According to Qummī, God created man in order to fulfill His commands and prohibitions - in order to fulfill the duties laid upon him (taklīf). He did not create them compelled to worship Him, but rather He created them possessed of choice (ikhtiyār), so that He informs them of His commands and prohibitions, and then who obeys, obeys, and who disobeys, disobeys (Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 331).

<sup>84</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 224 {K. al-tawhīd, Bāb al-jabr wa-al-qadar..., ḥadīth #4}. From the sixth imām. The ḥadīth continues: "...and He is too Mighty for there to be anything in His dominion He does not wish." See also ibid., p. 228 {Bāb al-istiṭā'ah, ḥadīth #4}.

in that,<sup>85</sup> God holds proof over each person only according to the extent of the knowledge He has granted them.<sup>86</sup> Says °Alī:

There is no ḥujjah over those whom God has not made knowledgeable (°ārif). They have only to refrain from that which they do not know, and God shall not punish them for their ignorance; rather He shall praise them for their obedient deeds and punish them for disobedience. For such a person can (yastatī°) either obey or disobey, while he cannot be knowledgeable but can be ignorant. This is impossible; such a thing shall not be except through God's Decree (qadā') and His Power (qadar) and Knowledge (°ilm) and Book, without compulsion (bi-ghayr jabr). For if they were 'compelled,' they would be 'excused,' and not worthy of praise....<sup>87</sup>

In sum: Shī°ī tradition, originally predestinarian, also includes a number of ḥadīths that propose a via media between predestination and free will - in effect, a compromise between traditionalism and rationalism. The Shī°ah thus move to a theological position close to that of the Ash°arīs, the majority 'orthodox party.' The Ash°arīs established a compromise by asserting that acts are created by God, but 'acquired' by man: the doctrine of kasb or iktisāb ('acquisition' of acts); kasb signifies the middle way between the Mujbirah and Qadariyah. The Shī°ī solution is somewhat different in that it depends not on

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., pp. 229-230 {Bāb al-bayān wa-al-ta°rif wa-luzūm al-ḥujjah, ḥadīth #1}. From the sixth imām.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 229, ḥadīth #1. From the sixth imām. See also Kulaynī's Preface, p. 7.

<sup>87</sup>K. Sulaym, p. 87. The tradition is out of place in this early source.

kasb,<sup>88</sup> but on istiṭā'ah. It is difficult to explain why the Shī'ah seized on one term and excluded the other, especially since 'kasb' had been employed by Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam. Kasb, acquisition, and istiṭā'ah, the capacity to act, are intrinsically linked to each other in the analysis of human acts; there is no clear theological implication in the preferment. It may be simply that the imāms or the muḥaddithūn (or Kulaynī in particular) were anxious to establish their own analyses independent of the dominant Ash'arīs. In any case, some ḥadīths from later compilations, as well as some commentators (Qummī,<sup>89</sup> °Ayyāshī) seem to want to move further toward the side of choice and free will, so that we may think of Shī'ī doctrine as continuing to slide in that direction. The compilers of the traditions seem to be 'ahead' of the ḥadīths they collect.

The unusual prominence of the eighth imām in the question of free will also deserves comment. °Alī al-Riḍā flourished at the time of the Mu'tazilī controversy and was, as is well known, favoured by the Caliph al-Ma'mūn who intended to impose Mu'tazilī doctrine. It is thus not at all unlikely that questions

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<sup>88</sup>The term is not used in the tradition in the technical sense, although Qummī introduces it on his own authority (Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 212 & vol. 2, p. 150).

<sup>89</sup>In addition to references above: God, says Qummī, created man in order to fulfill 'the duties laid upon him' (taklīf). He did not create them compelled to worship Him, but rather possessed of choice (ikhtiyār), so that He informs them of His commands and prohibitions, and then who obeys, obeys, and who disobeys, disobeys (vol. 2, p. 331).



concerning jabr and qadar were put to him by his followers and that they were themselves confused about this problem. The caution exhibited in the imām's responses seems, given the political situation, true to life. The attribution, beginning with Kulaynī, to Ja'far al-Ṣādiq of an elaborate theory of 'capacity' is less convincing, especially when we consider that he is presented in earlier sources as a staunch opponent of the Qadariyah.

iv. The Sustenance (rizq) and Term of Life (ajal).

The main question raised in kalām with regard to Sustenance (the fixed portion allotted each human being) is: does humankind store and 'own' its sustenance, having acquired it by its own efforts and through free choice, or is rizq - including that which is illicit - possessed and conferred by God, only becoming 'Sustenance' as it is actually utilized? With regard to the related matter of the fixed Term of life, the theologians asked the following question: when a man is murdered, does the moment of his death coincide with his Term, as the (evil) action was willed and always known by God, or has the Term been, in effect, cut short by the independent action of another human being? Underlying these questions are the two perennial, and related, problems associated with predestination and free will: (1) man's share in his acts vs. God's absolute ownership of acts in accord with His Omniscience and Omnipotence and (2) the attribution of evil.

Early Shī'ī ḥadīth does not deal with these traditional questions, even though they are intimately related to the problem of free will and were as such the subject of intense debate between the Mu'tazliyah and Ash'arīs. This again demonstrates the sparseness of theological discussion in the ḥadīth. The Shī'ah are rather concerned with the question: can Sustenance and the Term of Life be either lengthened or shortened by God, in accordance with the deeds of human beings? We must by now consider the efficacy of human action and the flexibility of 'predetermined' events a typical concern of Shī'ī tradition.

Shī'ī tradition maintains that both rizq and ajal may be changed by God in response to human action.<sup>90</sup> Sustenance comes to each soul according to its destiny, but God by His Grace may increase this if He is asked,<sup>91</sup> or it may be decreased because of sin<sup>92</sup> - a matter, says Ibn 'Abbās, "more clear in the Book

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<sup>90</sup>See, however, Himyarī, Qurb, p. 29, which might be taken in the opposite sense (from the sixth imām).

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 74: "Sustenance comes down from heaven to the earth... to every soul as was ordained for it, but God has excess, and you should ask for some of that." From the Prophet, as reported by the fifth and sixth imāms.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 24, from the sixth imām: "Prayer turns back destiny, and if a believer sins he is deprived of rizq because of it."

than the noontime sun."<sup>93</sup> Alteration of Sustenance and Term is explained by the same idea of stages in the actualization of the Decree as invoked in the case of badā'. This allows for harmonization of a flexible destiny with the spirit of the Qur'ān, which declares the Term to be 'fixed.' Thus Qummī explains the verse, "To no soul shall God grant respite when its Term has come... (63:11)" as referring only to cases in which God has also sent down and inscribed the Terms on Laylat al-Qadr. Before this there is the Book, the Umm al-Kitāb, any of which God may 'put forward and back as He wills,' either lengthening or shortening the ajal according to one's good or bad deeds.<sup>94</sup>

The problem of Sustenance and Term is connected with the matter of the imām's ʿilm through the tradition that life, death, and rizq are fixed at each Laylat al-Qadr, at which point the imām becomes aware of them.<sup>95</sup> Awareness of the Terms is in fact

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<sup>93</sup>This upon being informed that "a party of this community assert that if God's servant should sin, he shall be deprived of his rizq." Ibn ʿAbbās goes on to cite and embellish the tale in Sūrat al-Qalam of the owners of the garden who expected to gather fruit but were deprived because they had omitted to say 'if God wills' (Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, pp. 381-382).

<sup>94</sup>Qummī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, pp. 370-371, from the fifth imām, & see also ʿAyyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 220, ḥadīth #75: according to the Prophet, as reported from the fifth and sixth imāms. One ḥadīth also has it that God may shorten or lengthen the life of a people, 'hastening or slowing their days' (ʿAyyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 218, ḥadīth #70, from the fifth imām). Though this appears as exegesis of 13:39, "God effaces and establishes as He wills," it is likely in answer to 7:34: "Every nation has its term (ajal), and if their term arrives they shall not put it forward or back a single hour."

<sup>95</sup>See Ṣaffār, Baṣā'ir, pp. 220 ff.

presented as one of the most outstanding features of the esoteric knowledge possessed by the imāms. This extraordinary knowledge, however, remains in the sphere of piety; it is not linked in the tradition to the theological questions set out above.

#### v. The Vision of God (ru'yah).

There are many reports on the vision of God. Why was ru'yah so important to the Shi'ah? The hadīths suggest that seeing God was originally considered one of the privileges of the Shi'i community. As the election of the community is central to the Shi'i world view, so is their privilege of seeing God. This view, however, was at some point defeated by anti-anthropomorphism and the ru'yah was denied.

The Shi'ah, according to tradition, had already been given the privilege of seeing God during the primordial episode in which they were granted other special distinctions and favours. The sixth imām states that the Covenant during which God 'took Adam's progeny from his loins' included an actual 'seeing with the eye' of God (ru'yah mu'āyanah/ mu'āyanah lillāh). The vision was part of their testimony. God made them forget the vision, but the 'knowledge' (ma'rifah) or 'affirmation' (iqrār) remained in their hearts and it is because of this that they instinctively know that they have a Creator.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>96</sup>Barqī, Maḥāsīn, p. 281, ḥadīth #411; °Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 2, p. 39.

The vision on the Day of Judgement is thus part of the closing of the cycle as God's elect return to Him and their high rank is confirmed. The imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir describes the final ru'yah clearly:

He who would be glad not to have any veil between him and God [on the Day of Judgement] so that he may gaze upon (yanzura ilā) God and God may gaze upon him should be loyal (w-l-ā) to the Family of Muḥammad and disassociate (b-r-') himself from their enemies, and should follow one of their imāms. If he does this, God shall gaze upon Him and he shall gaze upon God.<sup>97</sup>

The sixth imām also states that one of the rewards of those who have to suffer in this world during the dawlah (the necessary but temporary dominion or 'cycle') of their enemies is the nazar ilā Allāh.<sup>98</sup>

Once again, as in the question of free will, the eighth imām al-Riḍā seems to mark the transition from the discarded to the re-formulated view. We hear that when the imām was asked about the problem of the ru'yah he did not reply, but said instead: "If I were to give you what you want it would be evil for you, and 'the master of this affair' [himself] would be seized by his neck!"<sup>99</sup> Al-Riḍā means that taqīyah is advisable for him and his follower. The view which he conceals is

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<sup>97</sup>Ḥimyarī, Qurb, p. 205; Uṣūl, p. 60.

<sup>98</sup>Uṣūl, p. 4.

<sup>99</sup>Ḥimyarī, Qurb, p. 223; Ash'arī, Baṣā'ir, p. 104.

obviously approval of the ru'yah, which was vigorously denied by the Mu'tazilis and the Caliph Ma'mūn who supported them; it is for fear of the caliph that the imām is silent. In another ḥadīth it is suggested to the eighth imām that, just as it was given to Moses to speak to God, so it was given to Muḥammad to see Him [since Muḥammad must necessarily be superior to Moses]. The imām denies that this is so, citing Q. 6:103: "Sight does not compass Him...", adding that if sight may compass Him, then so may Knowledge - which is not the case. The imām's interlocutor appears to be much surprised at this, and asks: "Then you say that these things which have been related are untrue [i.e. there are reports from your predecessors that affirm the ru'yah; are we to disregard these]? "Yes," the imām replies,

...if they are contrary to the Qur'ān, then I must say that they are untrue! And it is besides agreed by the Muslims that neither ʿilm nor sight may compass Him, and that there is nothing like Him [appealing to ijmā', the consensus of the community - including Sunnis?].<sup>100</sup>

Two types of argument are presented in the traditions against the divine vision. One depends on allegorization: it is

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<sup>100</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 128-129 {K. al-tawḥīd, Bāb fī ibtāl al-ru'yah, ḥadīth #2}. Strangely, the vision of God by the prophet and imāms is not emphasized in the tradition; perhaps it is too easily assumed to need emphasis. I do find a ḥadīth on this subject in Mas'ūdī, Ithbāt (p. 148): Some of the companions of the Prophet came to him and asked him what he had to equal the gifts and miracles of prior prophets. Concerning Moses' speaking to God, he said: "He spoke to him from behind a veil, but I saw the Glory of my Lord [directly], and He spoke to me directly/in words [mushāfahatan]." The topos (a common one) is the Prophet's connexion with and superiority to another prophet, rather than the ru'yah.

said that there is a kind of vision, but that it is a vision of the 'heart' rather than ocular vision. Many ḥadīths present this view. The eighth imām says: "The verse: 'Sight does not compass him, but he compasses it...(Q. 6:103)' refers not to the sight of the eyes, but the sight that is 'in the heart; thus the meaning is that [man's] imagination can neither grasp Him nor comprehend how He is."<sup>101</sup> The Prophet himself states that while he was on the Night Journey, he saw God (absartu-hu) with the sight of his heart, not the sight of his eye.<sup>102</sup> The eleventh imām was asked (by letter) how one can worship a being one cannot see. He replied that God was too Glorious to be seen. Then he was asked if the Prophet saw Him. His reply: "God showed His Messenger to his heart - that of the Light of His Majesty which He wished."<sup>103</sup> It is reported that a Khārijī<sup>104</sup> came to the fifth imām to ask him about the divine vision. The imām told him: "The eyes do not see Him directly; rather the heart sees Him through the truths of faith."<sup>105</sup> A rabbi came to °Alī asking the same

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<sup>101</sup>°Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 373, ḥadīth #79. See also Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 132-133 {K. al-tawḥīd, Bāb fī ibtāl al-ru'yah, ḥadīth #9, 10 & 11} (similar statements from the sixth, eighth, and tenth imāms).

<sup>102</sup>Furāt, Tafsīr, p. 31.

<sup>103</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 128 {K. al-tawḥīd, Bāb fī ibtāl al-ru'yah, ḥadīth #1}. Ibid., p. 132 {ḥadīth #8}: a ḥadīth from the eighth imām reports the words of the Prophet to the same effect, but omits 'to his heart.'

<sup>104</sup>The Khārijīs were strict anti-anthropomorphists.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., p. 131, ḥadīth #5.

question, and °Alī replied that he would not worship that which he had not seen. But when the rabbi asked him how he had seen Him, he replied with the same phrase as in the previous ḥadīth.<sup>106</sup>

Allegorization here has an important and rather delicate function. It allows the imāms or the framers of these ḥadīths to avoid contradicting earlier tradition. There is still a vision, and it is even possible to retain the statement, characteristic of supporters of the ru'yah, that 'one cannot worship what one cannot see.' It is only that it is a different kind of vision.

The second type of argument against the ru'yah is mechanical. Ja°far al-Şādiq points out that one cannot tolerate looking directly at the sun; how then can one even look at the Throne or the Veils [let alone God]?<sup>107</sup> Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam states that God can be perceived only by the heart because the heart does not, as the eye does, need air between it and thing perceived in order to perceive it.<sup>108</sup> The eleventh imām, in a letter written to settle disputes on the question among his followers, makes the same point, adding that ru'yah also involves the likening of God to other things, for in order that the object

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<sup>106</sup>Ibid., ḥadīth #6; a similar story in ibid., p. 188 {Bāb jawāmi° al-tawḥīd, ḥadīth #4}.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., pp. 131-132 {Bāb fī ibtāl al-ru'yah, ḥadīth #7}.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., ḥadīth #12.



of vision be seen, it must be in relation to the seer.<sup>109</sup>

The eighth imām, also in a written reply, uses a different kind of argument. He reasons that, since knowledge is necessitated by sight, if it is permitted to see God it is also necessary that one can know Him. And if this knowledge is faith, then the knowledge that is acquired by the servants in this world is not faith, and there would be no believer in the world, since they do not see God!<sup>110</sup> It is interesting in this case that, asked about the opinions of the both the Shī'ah and non-Shī'ah, the imām cites 'the agreement of all, concerning which none differ.' He is in fact matching Shī'ī with Mu'tazilī opinion.

#### vi. The nature of God.

Hadīths on the subject of the nature of God appear almost exclusively in Kulaynī's al-Kāfī. These traditions, many quite long, take the form of kalām arguments. Kulaynī's collection exhibits three main concerns. The first is to demonstrate the existence of God. This is accomplished through the ontological argument,<sup>111</sup> but in reality the point of such hadīths is to

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., p. 130, hadīth #4. This report indicates that views concerning the ru'yah were in flux in the community.

<sup>110</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 129 {K. al-tawhīd, Bāb fī ibtāl al-ru'yah, hadīth #3}.

<sup>111</sup>Eg: Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 91-108 {K. al-tawhīd, Bāb hudūth al-°ālam wa-ithbāt al-muḥdith, hadīths #1-6}. Qummi (Tafsīr, vol. 2, pp. 93 & 218) argues on his own authority for the existence of God and against the Dualists.

demonstrate the efficacy of the imāms and their followers in defeating 'Zindīqs' of the Dualist and Atheist kind. There is no need to go further into these arguments. The second concern is to establish a middle way between the 'two extremes' of tashbīh-anthropomorphism - and ta'ṭīl - divesting God of all attributes, a kind of atheism. The third concern of al-Kāfī, related to the second, is to define the relation of the attributes (ṣifāt) to the essence of God, an important subject of kalām.

The anthropomorphic opinion mentioned repeatedly in the ḥadīths is the attribution to God of Body (jism) and Form (ṣūrah). A man wrote to the eleventh imām, informing him that some of the Shī'ah asserted that God is Body, while others asserted that He is a Form. The imām replied by declaring that God "can be neither limited nor described."<sup>112</sup> Hishām ibn al-Hakam appears as the most prominent of those who held that God is a Body and Form: "a body, solid and luminous;" his associate Hishām ibn Sālim is also mentioned.<sup>113</sup> A ḥadīth from 'Alī al-Riḍā reveals a few more details of the anthropomorphism of the Shī'ah: It is reported that some people came to him and recalled an occasion when the Prophet had seen his Lord in the form of a thirty-year old man, and also how Hishām ibn Sālim, Mu'min al-

<sup>112</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 137-138 {K. al-tawḥīd, Bāb al-nahī 'an al-ṣifah bi ghayr mā waṣafā bi-hi nafsa-hu, ḥadīths #5, 8, 9 & 10}. The imām is identified only in the last ḥadīth, possibly because of taqiya.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid., p. 140 {Bāb al-nahī 'an al-jism wa-al-sūrah}, passim.

Tāq, and Maythamī had said that God is hollow to the point of His navel, the rest of Him being solid. The imām, shocked, cried out: "If they had [truly] known You, they would have described You [only] as You have described yourself!" He then advised his followers to conceive of God as other than whatever could be conceived of any thing.<sup>114</sup>

We know of the existence of Shī'ī anthropomorphism from the heresiographers. In Ash'arī's report of the 'Rawāfiḍ' the belief in God as Body and Form is prominent, just as it is in the ḥadīths.<sup>115</sup> Ash'arī finally distinguishes a group of Rawāfiḍ who hold that

...their Lord is neither Body, nor Form, and that He does not resemble any thing; that He neither moves, nor is at rest, nor is in contact [with any thing.] They define God's Unicity in the same way as the Mu'tazilah and Khārijīs.

These, he adds, are "the later group; the earlier ones held the anthropomorphic (n: tashbīh) beliefs we have outlined."<sup>116</sup> On this point Ash'arī is accurate: Kulaynī, a contemporary of Ash'arī, belongs to the later group, and he refutes the ideas of his earlier co-sectaries. However, collections of traditions

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<sup>114</sup>Ibid., p. 136, ḥadīth #3. The Prophet's vision he explained allegorically, stating that the 'youth' was the Glory of God, with the greenness in the same vision representing the light of God.

<sup>115</sup>Maqālāt, p. 109; see the section: 'Qawl al-Rawāfiḍ fī al-tajsīm,' p. 106 ff.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., p. 109.

prior to al-Kāfī do not contain ḥadīths promoting anthropomorphism. Perhaps these ideas were disseminated outside the circles of the traditionists; according to Ash°arī's account, the most influential of those who held anthropomorphic ideas was the theologian Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam.

Against the apparent anthropomorphism of some of their followers the imāms affirm that, "God cannot be described by anything that limits Him."<sup>117</sup> One should not enquire about the 'kayf' - the 'how' of God;<sup>118</sup> indeed God does not have 'kayfiyah' and one should not attribute that to Him, since it involves limiting Him.<sup>119</sup> This is both a caution against too close theological enquiry, and a dodge of the problem of anthropomorphic expressions in the Qur'ān - thus approximating the bi-lā kayf of the Ḥanbalīs.

The weight of the tradition, however, falls not on refutation of anthropomorphism and establishing God's Transcendence, but on tracing a path between the extremes of tashbīh and ta°ṭīl. The imāms seek to maintain this position

<sup>117</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 135 {K. al-tawḥīd, Bāb al-nahī °an al-ṣifah..., ḥadīth #2}. From the fourth imām.

<sup>118</sup>Nor, according to this ḥadīth, His °ayn - God's Essence or Substance. Ibid. {K. al-tawḥīd, Bāb ḥudūth al-°ālam wa-ithbāt al-muḥdith, ḥadīth #3}. From the eighth imām.

<sup>119</sup>Ibid., pp. 110-113 {K. al-tawḥīd, Bāb itlāq al-qawl bi-anna-hu shay', ḥadīth #6}. See also ibid., p. 187 {Bāb jawāmi° al-tawḥīd, ḥadīth #3}.

through the doctrine that God is a Thing (shay'). This is not the phantom of the former anthropomorphism of the Shī'ah, but rather an attempt to avoid ta'ṭīl. Thus it is said that, while God does not have kayfiyah, He does have inniyah ('essentiality') and ma'iyah, ('quiddity') for no thing is established except through these.<sup>120</sup> We must be able somehow to conceive<sup>121</sup> of God, for if we were not able to conceive of Him, there would be no obligation to know Him. For this reason He must be a Thing-although not a thing that is compassed by the senses and of which a representation may be formed, and thus created.<sup>122</sup> Rather He is "a thing different from all other things." He is "a thing in the true sense" (shay' bi-ḥaqīqat al-shay'īyah), except that He has neither body, nor form, is not perceived by the senses, worn down or changed through time - and so on.<sup>123</sup> Although a Thing, He is not perceived by the intellect (ghayr ma'qūl) nor limited (maḥdūd). Whatever you imagine of Him, He is different from

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<sup>120</sup>Ibid., p. 112 {Bāb itlāq al-qawl bi-anna-hu shay', ḥadīth #6}. From the sixth imām. For explanation of inniyah and mā'iyah see Majlisī, Mir'āt, vol. 2, p. 101.

<sup>121</sup>'Conceived' = mawhūm. Tawahhum here means the human conception of God (which is given to man by God, not created by man himself). Tawahhum may also take on a pejorative sense of 'false imagining;' see Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, p. 109 {K. al-tawhīd, Bāb itlāq al-qawl bi-anna-hu shay', ḥadīth #1; ibid., p. 116 {Bāb al-ma'būd, ḥadīth #1}.

<sup>122</sup>Ibid., pp. 110-113 {Bāb itlāq al-qawl bi-anna-hu shay', ḥadīth #6}. According to the sixth imām.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid., pp. 105-108 {Bāb ḥudūth al-°ālam wa-ithbāt al-muḥdith, ḥadīth #5}. From the sixth imām.

that; He does not resemble any other thing.<sup>124</sup> Thus, according to the imāms, it is indeed permissible to call God a 'thing,' for that saves one from the two extremes (ḥaddayn), the extreme of ta'ṭīl, and the extreme of tashbīh.<sup>125</sup> God has, in the words of the eighth imām, "established Himself (athbata) as a Thing"- although this does not mean that He is a thing like other things or a body. There are three schools of thought with regard to the Unity (tawḥīd) of God: the school of 'denial' (naḥī, meaning the way of ta'ṭīl), that of anthropomorphism (tashbīh), and that of 'establishing without anthropomorphizing' (ithbāt bi-ghayr tashbīh).<sup>126</sup> The last, of course, is the correct position, and ithbāt - 'positive determination' - is in fact the term for the approved orthodox approach to the problem of the larger community.

Shī'ī tradition, or more exactly, al-Kulaynī, also maintains the orthodox doctrine with regard to God's attributes (ṣifāt) and their relation to His Essence (dhāt). The ḥadīth does not, however, go as far as to distinguish primary and secondary attributes.

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<sup>124</sup>Ibid., p. 109 {Bāb itlāq al-qawl bi-anna-hu shay', ḥadīth #1}. From the fifth imām.

<sup>125</sup>Ibid., ḥadīth #2. From the ninth imām; on p. 113 (ḥadīth #7), from the fifth imām.

<sup>126</sup>Ayyāshī, Tafsīr, vol. 1, p. 356, ḥadīth #11.

The attributes are not allowed to interrupt the divine Unity; anthropomorphism is rejected and the unity of God's personality maintained. Thus the sixth imām argues that God is certainly All-seeing and All-hearing, but that He sees and hears through Himself, not through a member that hears or an instrument that sees. It is not that He is one thing and His 'self' (nafs, = dhāt?) another; rather He hears with all of Him. He is All-hearing, All-seeing, and All-knowing without difference in the Essence.<sup>127</sup>

In particular, the attributes are to be distinguished from the Names, that is the epithets by which God is described in the Qur'ān. Thus Ja'far al-Ṣādiq explains to Hishām ibn al-Ḥakam, replying to his question about the Names of God and their derivation, that "[however they are derived], the name is other than the thing named." There are, he points out, ninety-nine names, so that if the thing named was the same as the name, there would be ninety-nine gods!<sup>128</sup> Rather, the names are merely attributes by which God has described Himself.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup>Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, pp. 110-113 {K. al-tawḥīd, Bāb itlāq al-qawl bi-anna-hu shay', ḥadīth #6}.

<sup>128</sup>Ibid., p. 155 {Bāb ma'ānī al-asmā' wa-ishtiḳāqi-hā, ḥadīth #2}.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid., p. 118 {Bāb al-ma'būd, ḥadīth #3}.

## VIII. SUMMARY

The burden of faith is difficult indeed, but the Prophet Muhammad and his successors the imāms accepted it before time began and they were for that placed in the first rank of creation. The Shī'ah, extracted as atoms from the loins of Adam, in turn pledged their absolute loyalty (wilāyah) to the imāms, even to the point of trial by fire, while all the rest of creation, even the angels, could not. Because of this they share in the election of the imāms, are forever closely bound to them, are instantly recognized by them and recognize each other. By the same token, those who refused the burden and the fire and failed to pledge loyalty are doomed, fastened forever to leaders of their kind.

This destiny is worked into the very clay of humankind as the imāms are made of a sweet and luminous substance, some of which is shared by their Shī'ah, while the essence of their enemies, both leaders and followers, is salt, brackishness, and darkness. Each group will return to its origin, the sweet to Heaven and the salt to Hell. There is no choice for either, no escape for the good from a good end or from a bad end for the bad. If the characters of the Shī'ah or the non-Shī'ah appear not to conform to their constitution, it is only because of a slight admixture of the clays (although God may choose by other



means to make the child of an impure unbeliever pure and a believer).

The imāms are altogether supernatural, and this quality is reflected in their followers. They are also possessed of both a 'Holy Spirit' and a divine light that others are not. The Spirit opens them to a kind of revelation, while the light streams through the line of their pure ascendants and is matched by their immunity from sin.

The imāms inherit the full store of knowledge possessed by Muḥammad in the form of the scriptures, and they receive other knowledge also. This knowledge (ʿilm) is perfect and harmonious; it extends to all things in heaven and earth and there is on earth no other source of knowledge of anything. The Prophet and therefore the imāms have gathered all the knowledge of all the past prophets - which has as its logical consequence that the imāms have more knowledge than the prophets, excepting Muḥammad. The knowledge never wavers and never decreases, because God will never leave humankind without access to understanding of His commands and prohibitions. If the rulings of the imāms seem at times to be inconsistent or if they contradict the dicta of the imāms before them, this is because complex and changing circumstances interact with their profound, unlimited store of knowledge in ways hidden from our minds. It is also because they are delegated the power by God to legislate in

details as they see fit, as was the Prophet before them. The imāms are not limited by the letter of the opinions and rulings of their forbears.

This perfect inheritance was given by Muḥammad to °Alī and then passed on to his descendants. It is manifested in sensible form in the Qur'ān. The text of the Qur'ān is, however, in some sense incomplete. Only the imāms know its full meaning and esoteric dimension, which was also communicated to °Alī. A part of the inner meaning of the Qur'ān unfolds over time, but it will only be fully revealed with the return of the Twelfth imām, when the political order is due to be reversed and all hidden things shall become apparent. At that time it will also become clear that the Qur'ān affirms the rights of the imāms which had been denied in history and that it condemns their enemies. In the meantime, interpretation (ta'wīl) of the Qur'ān can be accomplished only by them. Only they can understand it and the text cannot stand without them; its difficulties are bound to mislead anyone else. The imāms, however, do not subject the text to their reasoning; they only communicate what they have already been given.

The imāms have also taken possession of the scriptures of the past prophets. They know all past dispensations perfectly; this proves that they are the legitimate heirs of the ancient prophets, inheritors of the knowledge that has never disappeared

from the earth. In addition, they (and Fāṭimah) have their own personal 'books' containing all the knowledge of ḥalāl and ḥarām and events to come. These heighten their prestige and confirm that the right to political action, even if not political power, is in their hands. The books of the imāms are real; although others are not permitted to see them, they are documents they have in their possession and look into when needed.

None of this ʿilm, however, is equal to the knowledge the imāms are given, night and day, to answer to fresh problems arising in the community due to novel circumstances. This knowledge is additional to the inherited ʿilm, and it is necessary so that the Shīʿah will always have guidance in every thing. The 'knowledge that comes by night and by day' is given to the imāms by the angels who are their intimates; thus they are 'muḥaddath' (spoken to). This communication, however, is not to be confused with the revelation of the prophets; others have been muḥaddath beside the imāms. The mysterious 'knowledge that comes by night and by day' may also be received by the imāms through the 'Holy Spirit.' The Spirit is not identical with the angel Gabriel who came to Muḥammad and is sometimes known by that name, but is rather a faculty which was transferred from the Prophet to ʿAlī and then from ʿAlī to his descendants. In addition, the spirit of the living imām ascends to the Throne once a week to replenish his ʿilm; at this time he also reviews the good and bad deeds of his Shīʿah. The 'Night of Power' (Laylat al-Qadr) in

Ramaḍān is another occasion upon which the imāms gain knowledge of events that will occur in the coming year.

Does the existence of these channels of communication open to the imāms mean that they know more than the prophets, or that the later, living imām knows more than the dead? This would seem to be the logical consequence of the continual °ilm, but the majority opinion of the tradition deflects the anomaly by asserting that the Prophet and each of the deceased imāms are apprised of news before, or along with, the living imām. If the knowledge inherited by the imāms from the prophets in the Qur'ān and in other ways is comprehensive, what more is to be known after that? Tradition suggests that what the imāms are made to understand is the details of the revelation, which is itself a kind of general guide, or that the imāms are given instructions to execute or make known that which they already knew. If the knowledge of the imāms is universal and unfailing, what is the difference between their knowledge and the Knowledge of God? In fact, God does reserve knowledge to Himself; this is the ghayb, the 'hidden.' The ghayb consists of things that have not been actualized: events that may, depending on the Will of God, either be or not be. God will only cause the angels to tell the imāms of these things if they are in the process of becoming reality (although it is also suggested that the imāms may actually choose themselves to know the ghayb). However, it may happen that events will not occur in the ways the imāms believed and said

they would. This is because something may 'occur' to God concerning those events, that is, He will choose to make a different event reality ('add' an event that alters the first?). In any case, all events, whether they eventuate or not, did exist and were always known by Him. It is because of this 'occurrence' (badā') of things to God that certain political events - for instance, the succession of some of the imāms - have turned out differently than the imāms announced they would.

Badā' also guarantees the efficacy of the prayers of the oppressed Shī'ah. Moreover, one's term of life (ajal) may be altered according to one's deeds. The flexibility of events is a typical concern of the Shī'ah even in their earliest texts, before theological enquiry.

In order to benefit from the knowledge the imāms have to offer, their followers must realize that the °ilm is perfect and exclusive and live accordingly in the proper attitude of 'submission' (taslīm) to their sayings. Taslīm is the mark of the true Shī'ah. The Shī'ah accept the words of the imāms uncritically, even passing over the integrity of those who relate them. This is because they fear the sin of denying a statement which was truly from the imāms and therefore from the Prophet and from God. Taslīm is, in fact, more important than the truth of a statement; the faithful may be led by 'submission' into accepting a statement that was falsely attributed but their

obedience still gains them reward. They know that every question or obscurity in the tradition must be referred to the imām and never to anyone else. They realize that the right path and the ḥalāl and ḥarām can never be determined by the juridical speculation of ra'y and qiyās. The ḥalāl and ḥarām do not proceed according to human rationality, and ra'y and qiyās are in any case faulty instruments which have led to differences in rulings, resulting in the disunity of Muslims. The ʿilm of the imāms, on the other hand, is without difference or contradiction and so is capable of preserving the unity of the Shī'ah.

The Shī'ah, realizing the limit of their own intellects as well as the primacy of the ʿilm offered by the imāms, must refrain from theological argument. Kalām speculation is inconsistent with both the principles of taslīm and radd (referral of all questions to the imām). Theology, like every discipline or field other than the transmitted words of the imāms, will only lead astray, perhaps causing one to make sinful statements about God.

Nevertheless, the full measure of the imāms' ʿilm cannot be revealed at the present time, before the coming of the Mahdī. This is not only because of adverse political circumstances (which do necessitate certain practical measures for the sake of self-preservation), but also because the truth is too great and precious to be known. God likes to be worshipped in secret, and

only a few of the Shī'ah are able to 'bear' the truth without revealing it. When the truth is incautiously revealed to others they are led into the danger of denying it; for this reason 'cautiously concealing' (taqīyah) beliefs is a virtue and 'disseminating' (idhā'ah) the truth is a sin. It is because the Shī'ah have committed this sin repeatedly that more of the truth has not been revealed and that the millenarian age, when all things shall be known, has been postponed. In the meantime, the imāms may protect the truth by deliberately issuing false opinions or even deliberately misleading the unworthy (whom they alone can recognize as being created from the same clay and light as themselves).

Still, the imāms do have some followers who are learned (°ālim) - a high station to which all the Shī'ah must aspire. These are ever in search of the true knowledge, addressing every problem to the imām and even storing up additional knowledge in order to circulate it. Their hearts are refined by the acquisition of °ilm and they are able to avoid the ever-present danger of having to ask questions of the enemies of the imāms. Their mission is to ensure that false knowledge shall not prevail in the absence of the true.

The criterion which divides the believer from the unbeliever is loyalty (wilāyah) to the imāms. Even mere ignorance of the imām marks one as an unbeliever: "Who dies without knowing his

imām, dies the death of the Jāhiliyah." Since guidance is obtained only through the imāms and God is known only through the imāms, to reject them is to disbelieve in God. One may only truly believe in God by accepting them; in fact, attempting to find one's way to God by another path or door is itself pure unbelief, doomed to failure. Just as at the time of the creation, each human can only belong to one camp. One is either loyal to the imāms and a believer or an enemy of the imams and an unbeliever; these qualities cannot be mixed. Nor do good and bad works alter this equation. Good works are not credited to the non-Shi'ī, and evil works are cancelled for the sake of loyalty to the imāms. A Shi'ī, though his deeds are evil, is better than a non-Shi'ī, no matter how many good works he has his to account, for God created the Shi'ī happy and the non-Shi'ī miserable, and so shall they ever be.

The goodness of the Shi'ah is reinforced and their admission to Paradise guaranteed from another direction by tolerance of sin. The sinner, in the view of Shi'ī tradition, is an unbeliever only as he sins; when he ceases to drink or lifts himself from the belly of his partner in adultery, the 'Spirit of faith' returns or regains its strength. While he sins the condition of imān is removed, but he is left still a muslim. It is intentional sins that lead to the Fire; these leave the sinner outside the realm of both imān and islām, without hope of return. (Or, according to another group of traditions, only opposition to



the imām leads to removal of the Spirit).

The Shī'ah are ultimately saved on the Day of Judgement by the intercession of the Prophet and imāms. As long as they are able to answer in their graves that their walī was one of the imāms they are safely conducted to Paradise by the Holy Family, who recognize them as their followers. (Or according to another opinion, they will be in the Fire for a time if they have committed major sins.) In Paradise the Shī'ah are given the special favour of actually seeing God - although some reports give to understand that this is a vision of the heart, not ocular vision. They are also themselves able to intercede for others - with the exception of those who had attempted to set up false imāms, who can never receive intercession from any person. The ones who had actively opposed the imāms are also taken, without judgement, to Hell. Most of humanity, however, is subject to the judgement, since they are in the position of neither having opposed the imāms nor declared their loyalty. On the one hand they have sinned, while on the other they are liable to God's mercy, and thus they thus shall go either to the Fire or Paradise as God wills. Their fate is decided by God's Grace.

The summary so far concerns an earlier stratum of Shī'ī tradition (as determined by time of appearance in the sources as well as internal evidence). Comparison with Ash'arī's account of the Shī'ah also reveals extrusions into this layer from various

Shī'ī 'heresies'; these have in each case been reshaped to fit the environment of the mainstream. A second stratum is built up over some areas of the first, resting there sometimes rather uncomfortably; the areas added to are the definition of faith, the role of the intellect, and theology. Faith and unbelief are re-examined in order to allow a definition of 'Muslim' that may also accommodate the non-Shī'ah, and the critical faculties are allowed to operate in a wider field to compensate for the ever-diminishing presence of the imām. Statements are issued in the field of theology with the aim of supplying the Shī'ah with expertise in this area to match that of the other sects.

Imān is a kind of higher belief, while islām ('submission'), indicates the formal religion in its superficial aspect. Imān is superior to islām, according to the ḥadīth, either because of a greater inner conviction, or greater works-for works are the necessary evidence of faith. There is no faith without works; works, in fact, are faith. (This belief already appears at an earlier time, prompted by a desire to check Shī'ī antinomianism.) A congruent scheme marks those who do not accept the wilāyah but also do not actively reject it as 'gone astray' (dāll). According to this view, ignorance of the imām does not result in kufr (unbelief); only the one who knows the truth and actively opposes it is a kāfir. The distinction between imān and islām and dāll and kāfir allows the Shī'ah to view other Muslims formerly regarded as of the essence of the

Fire as believers and, in practical terms, to integrate into and maintain social relations with the wider community.

Shī'ī tradition also allows that faith is liable to increase and decrease. The highest degree of faith is certainty (yaqīn)-complete, confident, and tranquil belief, unmixed with shakk.<sup>1</sup> Those with lesser faith, however, are still believers, and social intercourse with them is recommended. Belief in the increase and decrease of faith is the complement or result of the pairing of faith with works. It also serves to confirm tolerance of the Shī'ah with lesser degrees of faith.

Lack of access to the authority of the imāms results in greater scope being given to reason (ʿaql). Tradition states that the Shī'ah, or perhaps humankind in general, own their own intellect (ʿaql), which God also created and glorified. Human intellect is a luminous principle of heavenly origin around which human virtues are ranged; it is opposed by dark, hellish jahl (ignorance), which has its own evil helpers. Though limited, it is the faculty through which truths are first perceived; thus it may direct the reasonable owner toward revelation. ʿAql may serve when there is no longer access to the personal authority of the imām; it is even said that it becomes hujjah (proof) in place of the imām. As the principles of taslīm and radd, in the

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<sup>1</sup>This particular element is present in the first 'layer,' but there it is a pious construction rather than a doctrinal argument.

practical sense, recede ever further from view, the theory of ḥadīth criticism begins to be elaborated.

Theology, although apparently at odds with the authority of the imāms, finally receives their stamp in the tradition. This development is most evident in Kulaynī's al-Kāfī: thus late in the period under review. Using the instrument of theology, Shī'ī predestinarianism is further modified - as it already was to an extent, although cautiously, in earlier texts - by ḥadīths that favour a middle position between God's power over the acts of humankind and man's power over his own acts: the 'station between the two.' In this way the reports seek to avoid attributing injustice to God or emptying acts of moral content on the one hand, and damaging the Divine Omnipotence on the other. Shī'ī tradition proposes a theory of the creation of acts in two stages, so that both God and His servant have a share in their actuation. The capacity (istiṭā'ah) of man is admitted, but in a limited sense. Capacity is created by God, accompanies the act for which it is created, and has no existence outside it. According to some traditions, the capacity compels the act; but according to others it does not, and a possible element of human choice remains.

Shī'ī tradition also brings kalām into the service of denying anthropomorphism. Additional, mechanical arguments are adduced against the ocular vision of God. God, the imāms

declare, has neither body nor form - as some of the Shi'ah apparently imagined! He cannot be described by anything that limits Him. Neither, however, is He to be divested of all attributes. He is a thing that can be conceived of and therefore properly worshipped, but He is a thing unlike any thing. He is possessed of attributes, but not through a plurality in Himself.

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