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Multiculturalism and Global Peace as Reflected in Mahdawiyyah: Complementary or Contradictory?

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Abstract

The attainment of global peace, as viewed by diverse schools of thoughts and social theories, is a showcase of cultural homogenization, hegemonization, or heterogeneity in varying degrees. The narrative of "the war of civilization against evil" after the 9/11 is an attempt at homogenization. The discourse of "the international duties of liberal states" and the narrative of "Great Power responsibilities for promoting global reform" are cases of hegemonization. The language of multiculturalism and religious tolerance is an instance of cultural heterogeneity and diversity.

This paper is an attempt to examine whether multiculturalism in its descriptive and normative sense is complementary or contradictory to the attainment of global peace in the light of the Islamic eschatological concept of *mahdawiyyah* (the Islamic belief in the coming

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of a global savior or redeemer, called the Mahdi, in the future).

I argue that the acceptance and promotion of multiple cultures is not contrary to the attainment of global peace as portrayed in Islamic eschatological sources. In fact, it can be said that multiculturalism is a requisite to the formation of global society and the realization of universal peace.

Keywords: culture, multiculturalism, global peace, eschatology, Islam.

Introduction

This paper is an attempt to examine whether multiculturalism in its normative sense is complementary or contradictory to the attainment of global peace in the light of the Islamic eschatological concept of *mahdawiyyah* (the Islamic belief in the coming of a global savior or redeemer, called the Mahdi, in the future). I argue that Islam depicts a scenario of universal peace with a mosaic of cultures in both dimensions of time and space.

In this paper, instead of the Latinized 'Mahdism' or 'Mahdiism', the transliteration *mahdawiyyah* of the Arabic word is used because the latter is historically and linguistically more accurate than the former. The former can be considered an anachronism that has little significance in an age in which cross-cultural understanding is a pressing concern. Moreover, the suffix '-ism' in 'Mahdism/Mahdiism' is used to form an abstract noun. The word *mahdawiyyah*, however, is a term which signifies not a set of concepts or propositions per se, but rather an activity or movement.

Conceptual Framework

The attainment of global peace, as viewed by diverse schools of thoughts and social theories, is a showcase of

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cultural homogenization, hegemonization, or heterogeneity in varying degrees. The realist narrative of "the war of civilization against evil" after the 9/11 is an attempt at homogenization.[1] The liberal discourse of "the international duties of liberal states" and the narrative of "Great Power responsibilities for promoting global reform" are cases of hegemonization.[2] The language of multiculturalism and religious tolerance is an instance of cultural heterogeneity and diversity.[3]

Wikipedia defines multiculturalism as the acceptance or promotion of multiple ethnic cultures, applied to the demographic make-up of a specific place, usually at the organizational level, e.g. schools, businesses, neighborhoods, cities or nations.[4] It is understood either in its descriptive or normative sense:

As a descriptive term, it has been taken to refer to cultural diversity… As a normative term, multiculturalism implies a positive endorsement, even celebration, of communal diversity, typically based on either the right of different groups to respect and recognition, or to the alleged benefits to the larger society of moral and cultural diversity.[5]

Mahdawiyyah and Global Peace

In a Prophetic tradition (*hadith*) upon whose authenticity Muslim schools of thought agree, Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said:

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1. Andrew Linklater, "Unnecessary Suffering," in Worlds in Collision: Terror and the Future of Global Order, ed. Ken Booth and Tim Dunne (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 304-305.
2. Ibid., 305-306.
3. Ibid., 306-307.
4. "Multiculturalism," Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multiculturalism, accessed April 14, 2010.
5. Andrew Heywood, Political Ideologies, 4th ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2007), 313.

If there were to remain in the life of the world but one day, God would prolong that day until He sends in it a man from my community and my household. His name will be the same as my name. He will fill the earth with equity and justice as it was filled with oppression and tyranny.[1]

It is said that the establishment of this global rule will usher in a golden age for mankind characterized by spiritual and moral excellence, diffusion of knowledge, technological advancement, agricultural abundance, economic prosperity, and political stability. According to Prophetic traditions, people of the world will be so contented that 'The younger ones wish they were grown-ups, while the adults wish they were younger….The good become even more good, and even the wicked ones are treated well'[2] and 'The inhabitants of the heavens and the inhabitants of the earth will be pleased with him [i.e. the Mahdi] and such plants will be produced by the earth that the living will wish the dead could come back to life.'[3]

Multiculturalism in Imam al-Mahdi's ('atfs) Personality

As reflected in its eschatology, Islam depicts a scenario of universal peace with a mosaic of cultures in both dimensions of time and space. A central part of Islamic eschatology is *mahdawiyyah* or the belief in the coming of a savior (munjih) called Mahdi (the Guided One) in the future who will establish a global government.

As indicated in Islamic sources, the promised redeemer is of Arab, Persian, African, and Byzantium descent. Imam 'Ali ibn al-Husayn al-Sajjad, the eighth degree ancestor of

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1. Quoted in Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, et al. 'Messianism and the Mahdi', in Expectation of the Millennium: Shi'ism in History, ed. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, et al. (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), 8; Najmuddin Tabasi, An Overview of the Mahdi's Government, trans. Mansoor Limba (Tehran: Ahl al-Bayt ('a) World Assembly, 2009), 117-118.
2. Quoted in Harun Yahya, The End Times and the Mahdi (Maryland: Khatoons, 2003), 53.
3. Ibid., 54.

the Mahdi, was half-blooded Persian through his mother, Shahzanan (otherwise known as Shahrbanawayh or Shahbanu) daughter of Yazdigard son of Shahriyar son of Choesroe, the Persian King (see Figure 1: Imam 'Ali ibn al-Husayn's Parentage).[1]
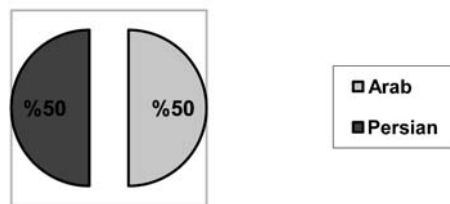
Figure 1 Imam 'Ali ibn al-Husayn al-Sajjad's Parentage

Imam Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Baqir, the seventh degree ancestor of the Mahdi, was the son of Imam 'Ali ibn al-Husayn and Fatimah bint al-Hasan ibn 'Ali ibn Abi Talib who were cousins. So, genetically, Imam al-Baqir was a three-fourth blooded Arab and a one-fourth blooded Persian (see Figure 2: Imam Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Baqir's Parentage).

Figure *2* Imam Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Baqir's Parentage

Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq, the sixth degree ancestor of the Mahdi, was the son of Imam al-Baqir and his wife named Umm Farwah, daughter of Qasim ibn

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1. Shaykh al-Mufid, Kitab al-Irshad: The Book of Guidance, trans. I.K.A. Howard (London: The Muhammadi Trust, 1981), 380.

Muhammad ibn Abi Bakr.[1] Regarding Qasim ibn Muhammad, Shaykh al-Mufid narrates thus in *Kitab al-Irshad*,

The Commander of the faithful, peace be on him, had appointed Hurayth b. Jabir al-Hanafi over part of eastern provinces. The latter had sent to him two daughters of Yazdigard b. Shahriyar b. Choesroe. Of these he had given his son al-Husayn, peace be on him, Shahzanan and she bore him Zayn al-'Abidin ('Ali b. al-Husayn), peace be on him. He had given the other to Muhammad b. Abi Bakr and she bore him al-Qasim b. Muhammad b. Abi Bakr, so that these two (Zayn al-'Abidin and al-Qasim) were maternal cousins.[2]

So, Umm Farwah, like her husband, Imam Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Baqir, was three-fourth Arab blooded and one-third Persian blooded. As such, their son Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq ('a) was also such (see Figure 3: Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq's Parentage).
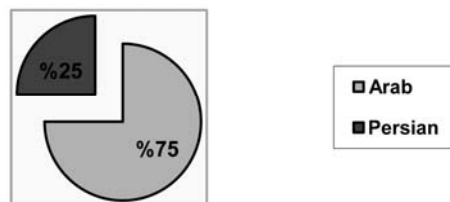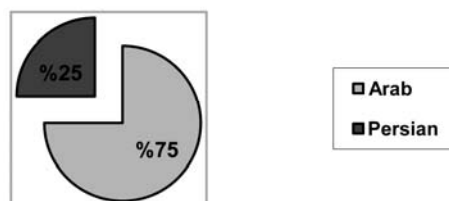

Figure 3 Imam Ja'far ibn Muhammad al-Sadiq's Parentage

Imam Musa ibn Ja'far al-Kazim, the fifth degree ancestor of the Mahdi, was the son of Imam al-Sadiq through his slave-wife *(umm al-walad)* named Hamidah al-Barbariyyah (or Hamidah the Berber).[3] To be exact, Imam al-Kazim was genetically 37.5% Arab, 12.5% Persian, and 50% African

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1. Ibid., 409.
2. Ibid., 380.
3. Ibid., 436; A Brief History of the Fourteen Infallibles, 2nd ed. (Tehran: World Organization for Islamic Services, 1992), 125.

(Berber) (see Figure 4: Imam Musa ibn Ja'far al-Kazim's Parentage).[1]
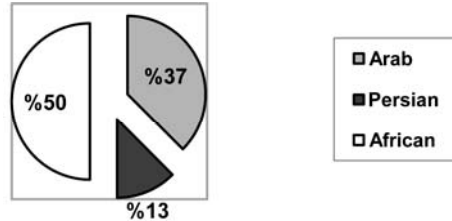
Figure 4 Imam Musa ibn Ja'far al-Kazim's Parentage

Imam 'Ali ibn Musa al-Rida, the fourth degree ancestor of the Mahdi, was the son of Imam al-Kazim through his slave-wife called Umm al-Banin al-Najmah from Maghreb.[2] That is, genetically, Imam al-Rida was around 19% Arab, six percent Persian and three-fourth African (Maghribi) (see Figure 5: Imam 'Ali ibn Musa al-Rida's Parentage).[3]
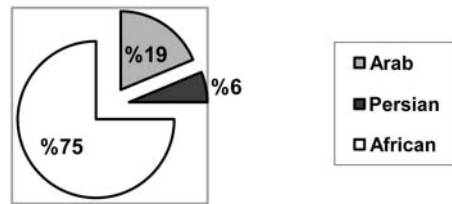
Figure 5 Imam 'Ali ibn Musa al-Rida's Parentage

Meanwhile, Imam Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Jawad, the great grandfather of the Mahdi, was the son of Imam al-Rida and his Nubian[4] slave-wife called Sabikah (or

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1. Discontinuously distributed from the Atlantic to the Siwa oasis, in Egypt, and from the Mediterranean to the Niger River, Berbers are the indigenous peoples of North Africa west of the Nile Valley. Linguistically, their various languages together form a branch of the Afro-Asiatic language family.
2. The Maghreb (or Maghrib) refers to the five countries constituting North Africa, viz. Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Mauritania, and the disputed Western Sahara.
3. Kitab al-Irshad, 461; Baqir Sharif al-Qurashi, The Life of Imam 'Ali bin Musa al-Rida, trans. Jasim al-Rasheed (Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 2001), 60.
4. Being an independent kingdom in ancient times, Nubia is the region in the south of Egypt (about a quarter), along the Nile and in northern Sudan (about three quarters).

Khayzuran).[1] So, genetically, Imam al-Jawad was about 9% Arab, three percent Persian and 88% African (Maghribi and Nubian) (see Figure 6: Imam Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Jawad's Parentage).
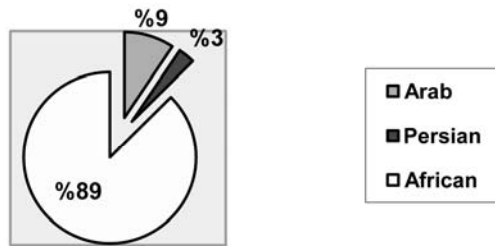
Figure *6* Imam Muhammad ibn 'Ali al-Jawad's Parentage

Imam 'Ali ibn Muhammad al-Hadi, the paternal grandfather of the Mahdi, was the son of Imam al-Jawad and his slave-wife called Sumanah from Maghrib.[2] Thus, Imam al-Hadi had genetically about five percent Arab blood, two percent Persian blood, and was 93% African (Maghribi and Nubian) (see Figure 7: Imam 'Ali ibn Muhammad al-Hadi's Parentage).
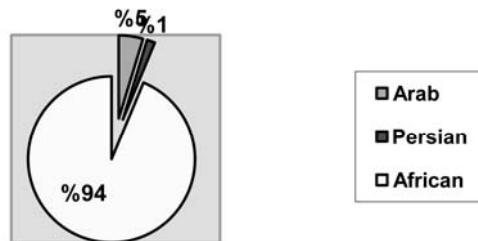
Figure *7* Imam 'Ali ibn Muhammad al-Hadi's Parentage

Imam Hasan ibn 'Ali al-'Askari, the father of the Mahdi, was the son of Imam al-Hadi and his Nubian slave-wife

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1. Kitab al-Irshad, 480.
2. Ibid., 496; Baqir Sharif al-Qurashi, The Life of Imam 'Ali bin Muhammad al-Hadi, trans. Abdullah al-Shahin (Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 2005), 21.

called Hadith (or Salil) from Nubia.[1] Given this, Imam al-'Askari was genetically only about two percent Arab, less than one percent Persian and 97% African (Maghribi and Nubian) (see Figure 8: Imam Hasan ibn 'Ali al-'Askari's Parentage).
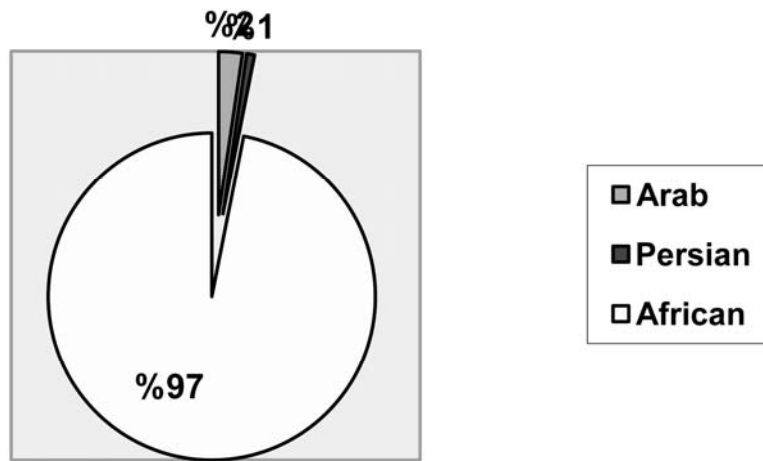
Figure *8* Imam Hasan ibn 'Ali al-'Askari's Parentage

Finally, Imam Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Mahdi was the son of Imam al-'Askari and a Byzantium lady named Narjis, among others, who was daughter of a certain Joshua whose genealogy goes back to the Cesar of Rome while her mother's lineage could be traced to Simon the Peter, the disciple of Jesus Christ.[2] Thus, the promised Mahdi has over one percent Arab and less than a percent Persian blood. He is a half-blooded European (Byzantium) and around 49% African (Maghribi and Nubian).

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1. Kitab al-Irshad, 507; Baqir Sharif al-Qurashi, The Life of Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari: Study

    and Analysis, trans. Abdullah al-Shahin (Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 2005), 16.

2. Kitab al-Irshad, 507; Baqir Sharif al-Qurashi, The Life of Imam al-Mahdi, trans. Sayyid Athar Husain S.H. Rizvi (Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 2005), 31; Jassim M. Hussain, The Occultation of the Twelfth Imam: A Historical Background (London: The Muhammadi Trust, 1982), 67.
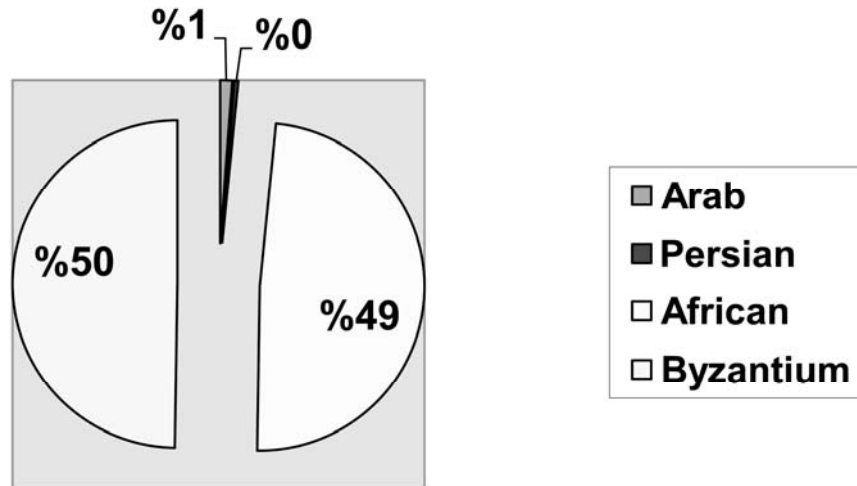
Figure *9* Imam Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Mahdi

As can be seen from this brief survey of the Mahdi's lineage, the mothers of seven of the Imams from the progeny of Prophet Muhammad were slave-wives or were taken as captives, viz. Hamidah al-Barbariyyah (mother of Imam al-Kazim), Umm al-Banin al-Najmah (mother of Imam al-Rida), Sabikah (or Khayzuran) (mother of Imam al-Jawad), Sumanah (mother of Imam al-Hadi), Hadith (or Salil) (mother of Imam al-'Askari), and Narjis (mother of Imam al-Mahdi).

Although Imam al-Mahdi is racially an Arab, genetically, he is more of a European and an African descent. With this, his very person is an embodiment of multiculturalism at least in its descriptive dimension.

Multiculturalism in Imam al-Mahdi's Followers

It is also notably mentioned in the corpus of *hadith* (tradition) that the Mahdi's immediate followers and trusted lieutenants are of diverse cultural backgrounds and nationalities; for example, Jesus the Messiah and Joshua

(Jews), the Companions of the Cave (*ashab al-kahf*) (from Asia Minor), the believer from the family of Pharaoh (Egyptian) and the people of Rey, Khurasan and Qum (Persians) from among the non-Arabs.

Regarding the Christ, the Commander of the Faithful 'Ali ibn Abi Talib said in a sermon (khutbah):

…Then the Mahdi ('atfs) will appoint Hadrat 'Isa ('a) as his representative in the offensive operations against al-Dajjal (the Anti-Christ). 'Isa ('a) will set out to capture and suppress al-Dajjal. Al-Dajjal who will then be controlling the entire world, destroying agriculture and human generation, will call the people toward him and anyone who accepts him will be treated with favor and anyone who refuses to accept him would be killed. He will travel throughout the world, with the exception of Mecca, Medina and Bayt al-Muqaddas (Jerusalem), and all the illegitimate children from both the east and the west of the globe will rally around him. Al-Dajjal will set out toward the Hijaz and 'Isa ('a) will intercept him at the passage of Harsha. 'Isa ('a) will direct a horrible shout at him and strike him a decisive blow. Al-Dajjal will melt in a blazing fire like lead melting in fire.[1]

It is stated in the book, *Khasa'is Fatimiyyah*, thus:

In the government of al-Mahdi ('atfs) thirteen women will be revived and return to the world to treat the wounded. One of them is Siyanah who had been the wife of Hizqayl (Ezekiel) and hairdresser of the daughter of Pharaoh. Her husband, Hizqayl (Ezekiel), was the cousin and treasurer of Pharaoh. It has been said that Hizqayl is a believer from the family of Pharaoh and believed in Musa (Moses), the prophet of his time.[2]

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1. Al-Shi'ah wa'r-Raj'ah, vol. 1, p. 167. Quoted in An Overview of the Mahdi's Government, 89-90.

2. Quoted in An Overview of the Mahdi's Government, 66.

Another woman who is said to be revived and returned to the world to render service in the global military campaign of the Mahdi was the mother of 'Ammar ibn Yasir, Sumayyah from Africa. She was the seventh person to embrace Islam and on account of this, she was subjected to the most horrible tortures, thus becoming the first lady martyr in Islam.[1]

Mufaddal ibn 'Umar reported that Imam as-Sadiq said:

During the advent of the Qa'im of Muhammad's Progeny ('a), some people will come from behind the *Ka'bah* such as the twenty seven persons from the community (qawm) of Musa (Moses)—those who rightfully give judgment; the seven persons from the Companions of the Cave; Yusha' (Joshua) the executor of Musa's will *(wasi)*; the believer from the family of Pharaoh; Salman al-Farsi…[2]

Moreover, contrary to the common notion that the Mahdi will deal with all the followers of other religions at the point of the sword, it can be understood from other *hadith*s that the confrontations and encounters of the Imam with the People of the Book would not always be the same. In fact, in some cases, he will allow them to remain in their religions by paying the jizyah. He will engage another group in discussion and debate, and in doing so, he will invite them to Islam.

According to Tabasi, we can probably say that at the beginning of the uprising, he will engage in discussion with them and wage war with those who hide the truth:

Abu Basir said: "I asked Imam al-Sadiq ('a): 'Will Hadrat al-Qa'im ('atfs) remain in the Sahlah (Kufah) Mosque till the end of his life?' The Imam ('a) said: 'Yes.' I asked: 'How will be the Ahl al-Dhimmah in his opinion?' He replied: 'He will deal with them conciliatorily just as the

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1. Ibid., 68.
2. Ibid., 96-97.

Prophet (s) used to behave with them. As subjects (of the Islamic state) they will pay the *jzyah*'."[1] Ibn Athir said: "At that time no Ahl al-Dhimmah will be left to pay the *jizyah*."[2] Ibn Shawdhab said: "It is because of this that they refer to Hadrat al-Qa'im ('atfs) as al-Mahdi (the Guided One) because he will be guided toward one of the mountains of Sham and from there he will take out the books of *Tawrat* (Torah). Through them he will discuss and debate with the Jews, and a group of them will embrace Islam through him."[3]

Multiculturalism in Time and Space

Furthermore, these personalities who live for an extremely long period or in different times as explained by the eschatological beliefs in *ghaybah* (occultation), *tawaffa* (ascension) and *raj'ah* (partial resurrection) in the case of the Mahdi, the Messiah and some of the Mahdi's followers, respectively, equally embody the time dimension of cultural diversity.

Ghaybah means a state of occultation or hiddenness. Technically, it refers to the state in which the Twelfth Imam subsists until his reappearance in the outer plain of existence in which we live in order "to fill the world with justice and equity". His absence is divided into two terms or periods, viz. the Minor and Major Occultation. The Minor Occultation *(ghaybat al-sughra)* which began in 260 AH/872 CE and ended in 329AH /939 CE lasted about 70 years during which the Imam was indirectly in touch with the people by means of 4 deputies or mediums.[4] Next is the Major Occultation *(ghaybat al-kubra)* which commenced in

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1. Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. 52, p. 376. Quoted in ibid., 139.
2. Nahāyah, vol. 5, p. 197. Quoted in ibid., 139.
3. 'Iqd ad-Durar, p. 40. Quoted in ibid., 139.
4. The Last Luminary (Tehran: World Organization for Islamic Services, 1980), 44-53.

329 AH/939 CE and continues up to the present until the time comes for the triumph of good over evil.[1]

In elucidating the rationale of the Minor Occultation, Sadr says,

This minor occultation marks the first phase in the Imamate of the Expected Leader (peace be upon him). From the time that had been predestined, [and] from the time he assumed the role, he remained hidden from the outside world, distant from all the events that were taking place although being at the same time proximate to them in his mind and heart. We should bear in mind that had this occultation occurred suddenly, the result would have been a great shock among the popular masses, who believed in the Imamate since they were used to contacting their Imam in every period, to consulting him for solutions to their various problems… So the plan was this minor occultation, during which al-Imam al-Mahdi vanished from the universal scene, while keeping in touch with his popular bases and supporters through his delegates or representatives and the most reliable among his companions, who acted as a link between the Imam and those who believed in his line.[2]

More relevant to our present concern about multiculturalism in time and space is Sadr's explanation and justification of the Major Occultation, thus:

Since the message of the appointed day is to change, in a comprehensive way, a world filled with injustice and tyranny, it is therefore natural that it is looking for an individual whose psychological attitude is superior to that whole world; a person whose age exceeds those who were born in that world and who were brought up in the shade of its civilization which he is to destroy and replace with one

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1. Ibid., 54-60.
2. Sayyid Muhammad Baqir Sadr, An Inquiry concerning al-Mahdi (Tehran: World Organization for Islamic Services, 1980), 77-78.

based on justice and truth. For whoever is brought up in a deeply-rooted civilization, that dominates the world with its values and modes of thinking, would be overwhelmed by it, since he would have been born while it had been in existence, and opened his eyes just to see its different aspects, and would have been brought up under its power and influence. Unlike that is a person who has deeply penetrated history, who has come to life long before that civilization which completes the cycle of the story of humanity before the appointed day saw the light. He sees it as little seeds, hardly visible, then gradually growing and taking roots within human societies, waiting for the right moment to blossom and appear. Then he witnesses it, as it starts to grow and advance, sometimes relapsing, sometimes meeting with success, then when it begins to prosper and become gigantic, gradually dominating the destinies of the world, such a man who has lived through all these stages with sagacity and caution, watching this giant-against which he has to struggle-under that long historical perspective which he has lived in reality, and not just read about in books of history, such an individual would consider it as a definite destiny.[1]

In short, the Mahdi is also a witness to every culture in the world and its evolution in the course of many centuries, nay even millennia.

Regarding the ascension of Jesus Christ and his return at the end of time, it is thus stated in *Surat Al-i 'Imran*, verse 55:

When Allah said, 'O Jesus, I shall take you[r soul], and I shall raise you up toward Myself, and I shall clear you of [the calumnies of] the faithless, and I shall set those who follow you above the faithless until the Day of Resurrection.

Under this Qur'anic verse, Qara'i has this short commentary:

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1. Ibid., 53-54.

Tawaffai means 'to exact fully' something, 'to receive in full,' 'to take one's full share,' and in the present Qur'anic context it is used in the sense of taking away of the soul, either temporarily, as during sleep… or permanently, as at the time of death… In a tradition, Imam 'Ali ibn Musa al-Rida ('a) explains that Jesus Christ ('a) "was raised alive from the earth to the heaven. Then his soul was taken away between the earth and the heaven. After he was raised to the heavens his soul was restored to his body, and hence the word of God, the Almighty and the Glorious, *'When Allah said, 'O Jesus, I shall take you[r soul], and I shall raise you up to Myself…'"*…[1]

This belief explains the Messiah's living in a Jewish cultural context under a Roman rule prior to his ascension and his living in a global cultural context during his return in the future.

Literally means 'return,' *raj'ah*, in Islamic theology, denotes the return of a group of Muslims to this world after the appearance of the Mahdi and before the Resurrection, as alluded to in these Qur'anic passages:

The day We shall resurrect from every nation a group of those who denied Our signs, and they shall be held in check… The day when the trumpet will be blown, whoever is in the heavens will be terrified and whoever is on the earth, except whomever Allah may wish, and all will come to Him in utter humility.[2]

As analyzed by Subhani,

…the verses above speak of two days, the first of which turns one's attention to the second. As regards the first day, there is mention made of the revival only of a particular group, while as regards the second day, the death of the

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1. 'Ali Quli Qara'i, The Qur'an with a Phrase-by-Phrase English Translation (London: Islamic College for Advance Studies Press, 2004), 79, fn. 2.
2. Surat al-Naml 27:83, 87.

whole of mankind is mentioned; we observe, then, that the first day is other than the Day of Resurrection.[1]

As mentioned in traditions, famous figures in the past, some of whom are mentioned in this paper, will be revived to assist the Mahdi in his revolution or assume pivotal role in his universal government. These figures as well as Jesus Christ who is the embodiment of *tawaffa* are witnesses to cultures and their evolution from their earlier lives to the new ones in the future.

Conclusion

The attainment of global peace, as viewed by diverse schools of thoughts and social theories, is a showcase of cultural homogenization, hegemonization, or heterogeneity in varying degrees. The narrative of "the war of civilization against evil" after the 9/11 is an attempt at homogenization. The discourse of "the international duties of liberal states" and the narrative of "Great Power responsibilities for promoting global reform" are cases of hegemonization. The language of multiculturalism and religious tolerance is an instance of cultural heterogeneity and diversity.

As reflected in its eschatology, Islam depicts a scenario of universal peace with a mosaic of cultures in both dimensions of time and space. A central part of Islamic eschatology is *mahdawiyyah* or the belief in the coming of a savior *(munjih)* called Mahdi (the Guided One) in the future who will establish a global government. As indicated in Islamic sources, the promised redeemer is of Arab, Persian, African, and Byzantium descent. It is also notably mentioned in the corpus of *hadith* (tradition) that the Mahdi's immediate followers and trusted lieutenants are of diverse cultural backgrounds; for example, Jesus the Messiah and

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1. Ja'far Subhani, Doctrines of Shi'i Islam: A Compendium of Imami Beliefs and Practices, trans. Reza Shah-Kazemi (London: Institute of Ismaili Studies, 2003), 163.

Joshua (Jews), the Companions of the Cave *(ashab al-kahf)* (from Asia Minor), the believer from the family of Pharaoh (Egyptian) and the people of Rey, Khurasan and Qum (Persians) from among the non-Arabs.

Moreover, these personalities who live for an extremely long period or in different times as explained by the eschatological beliefs in *ghaybah* (occultation), *tawaffa* (ascension) and *raj'ah* (partial resurrection) in the case of the Mahdi, the Messiah and some of the Mahdi's followers, respectively, equally embody the time dimension of cultural diversity.

In sum, the acceptance and promotion of multiple cultures is not contrary to the attainment of global peace as portrayed in Islamic eschatological sources. In fact, it can be said that multiculturalism is a requisite to the formation of global society and the realization of universal peace.

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1. *A Brief History of the Fourteen Infallibles, 2nd Ed. Tehran:* World Organization for Islamic Services, 1992.

2. Al-Qurashi, Baqir Sharif. *The Life of Imam 'Ali bin Muhammad al-Hadi*, trans. Abdullah al-Shahin. Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 2005.

3. *The Life of Imam 'Ali bin Musa al-Rida*, trans. Jasim al-Rasheed. Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 2001.

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American Shi'ism and the Media

Dr. Liyakat Takim[1]

The twentieth century witnessed a dramatic increase in the migration of Muslims to the American shores. The increased presence and visibility of Muslims in America means that Islam can no longer be characterized as a Middle Eastern or South Asian phenomenon. Given the fact that it is the fastest growing religion in America, Islam is now a very American phenomenon. Scholars and journalists who have studied or written about Islam in America have limited their research to the majority, Sunni Muslims. Even in academic discourses and classes, most discussions equate Islam in America with the Sunni experience or with that of the indigenous African American Muslims. Very little has been written about the origins and experiences of minority groups within the American Muslim community.[2] This monolithic view has also obscured the proper recognition and understanding of the religious experience of a significant religious minority in America. This paper will initially examine the origins and contemporary experience

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1. McMaster University.
2. An exception to this is Yvonne Haddad and Jane Smith, Mission to America: Five Islamic Sectarian Communities in North America (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993).

of the Shi'i community in America. It will also discuss how Shi'is can better represent themselves in the media.

Like other immigrants to America, Muslims have been defined as alien. This categorization has become more entrenched since the events of September 11, 2001 and is directed at Muslims who, more than any other immigrant group, are more vulnerable to stereotypes and attacks.

The Early Shi'is in America

The first significant wave of Muslims arrived in America between 1875 and 1912. They came from rural areas of what was then called Greater Syria, living under the rule of the Ottoman Empire.[1] Many of these immigrants who came from the Middle East were Christians; however, a small percentage was comprised of Sunnis, 'Alawis, and Druzes.[2] Among the early immigrants who arrived at the American shores in the 1870s were Shi'is who accompanied other immigrants from the Middle East. These early immigrants settled in different parts of America. Some went to Ross, North Dakota in 1899.[3] In all probability, there were some Shi'is present among the early Lebanese who settled in Ross.[4] Other Shi'is settled in Michigan City, Indiana.

Among the migrants to Michigan City in the early 1900s was a passenger on board the Titanic. The famous ship, which sank in April 1912, carried at least three Shi'is, Fatima Masselmany and her two cousins, Mustafa Nasr and Yousif Wazli. Fatima was born in Tibnin in Lebanon

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1. In the late nineteenth century, Lebanese migrants migrated to Latin and South America too. See Darcy Zabel ed., Arabs in the Americas, chapter two.
2. Yvonne Haddad and Adair Lummis, Islamic Values in the United States: A Comparative Study (New York: Oxford, 1987), 13-14.
3. On the different reasons why Arab immigrants came to America during the first wave see Darcy Zabel, "The Arab Diaspora in the Americas: Latin America, the United States and Canada," in Zabel ed., Arabs in the Americas, 6.
4. This was confirmed by a friend who saw grave inscriptions that indicate the presence of Shi'i figures among the early migrants.

whereas her cousins, who drowned when the ship sank, came from Bint Jbeil. All of them had planned to settle in Michigan City.

My research indicates that the Shi'is in Michigan City, Indiana, were among the first to construct a mosque in America in 1924. According to a booklet published by The Islamic Center of Michigan City, the center was first incorporated on April 26, 1914 under the name of "The Bader Elmoneer Society of Michigan City, Indiana."[1] Thus, it is correct to state that Shi'is have been on the American shores since 1880s.

The Events of 9/11 and Its Impact on the American Shi'i Community

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 revived prejudices of Islam as a religion that promotes the killing of innocent people and of Muslims as an inherently militant and irrational people. The media has represented the "absent Muslim other" and has sought to create a stereotypical representation of Islam and Muslims that have been impossible to ignore. In addition, the American global war on terror and the invasion of Iraq have invigorated stereotypes and suspicions against Muslims, especially those of Middle Eastern origins.

Since 9/11, Islamophobia and hatred towards Muslims have become legitimized and acceptable by-products of national media and American culture. This has left many migrants and second generation Muslims with a sense of alienation and marginalization. Furthermore, the vitriolic attacks on Islam and the Qur'an.

by some Christian fundamentalist groups have exacerbated the current conflict in America. Franklin

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Graham labeled Islam as a "very evil and wicked religion" whereas Jerry Vines, a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, said the Prophet Muhammad was a "demon-obsessed pedophile."[1] On public television, Jerry Falwell called the Prophet a pedophile and a terrorist.[2] Such comments further amplified the prejudices against Islam and Muslims.

The prejudices, stereotyping of and attacks against Muslims and Islam ignore the multiplicity of voices and nuances prevalent within Islam. They also ignore that fact that Muslims are multivocal and hold different views. Since 9/11, in the media and the eyes of many Americans, all distinctions between Muslims have been obliterated. Distinctions between Shi'is and Sunnis, moderate or conservative, Christian or Muslim Arabs have been effaced. Instead, all Muslims and Arabs have been grouped together as the enemy other.

Like other Muslims, American Shi'is have been held equally responsible for the terrorist attacks even though none of the terrorists were Shi'is. They have had to apologize for acts they did not commit, and to condemn acts that they never condoned. Shi'is feel that they have been found guilty by religious association, drawn into a discourse on terrorism and associated with a group (al-Qa'ida) which would, ironically, exterminate them if it could. Indeed, there is no record of any Shi'i group committing an act of terror in America. Neither have Shi'i mosques or institutions been funded by foreign movements.

For the Shi'i community, the ramifications of 9/11 have been varied. Many Shi'is who I spoke to stated that the events of 9/11 have exposed the true terrorists. Before the

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1. Amir Hussain, "Muslims, Pluralism, and Interfaith Dialogue," in Omid Safi ed., Progressive Muslims, 261.
2. Abdo, Mecca and Main Street, 85.

attacks of 9/11, many Americans associated Shi'ism with acts of terror and militancy, especially after the Iranian hostage crisis and the taking of American hostages in Beirut in the 1980s. However, 9/11 showed that the true perpetrators of terror were extremist groups like al-Qa'ida, who base their ideology on Wahhabism.

Stereotyping in the Media

The American media has vastly enhanced and promoted Islamophobia which means an increased anxiety about Islam. Islamophobia is premised around concepts of threat and fear. One way of promoting Islamophobia is to make Muslims as "the other." They are seen as outsiders, a threat to American values and norms.

It is also important to realize that the media is not monolithic. It uses different tools to promote a certain image. A cartoon, for example, is a very powerful and important tool in the media arsenal. It communicates briefly yet powerfully. It is easier to see than to read. Hence, cartoons utilize symbols, i.e., objects or images that represent something else. The cross, for example, represents the suffering or crucifixtion of Christ. Symbols are brief yet they create an association with well known objects or concepts. This leads to stereotyping a group that is connected with the symbol.

The effect of stereotypes is to assign a group in a specified role. As such, stereotypes tend to promote characteristics of a group that are different from normal society. So for example, in the American media, African Americans are often depicted as impoverished and criminals whereas Mexicans are seen as bandits and illegal. FBI agents, lawyers, doctors, and reporters, on the other hand, are white males. Stereotyping a group also means that "the other" that lies within "the other" is hidden since the whole group is

clustered in a particular compartment. Thus Shi'is who are a minority within the Muslim community, are not generally mentioned since they are subsumed and voices silenced by the Muslim other.

A good example of how Muslims are portrayed in the American media is the film "The Siege". Two Muslims appear in the movie, one of them who works for the FBI, the other is a terrorist. Interestingly, in the movie, the good Muslim is the one who does not do anything associated with Islam whereas the terrorist invokes Islam all the time and prays before he kills. The obvious message from this is that Muslims who do not observe Islam or are invisible are the good Muslims. On the other hand, *wudhu* and salat are symbolic acts of terrorists. As such, they are contrary to American norms.

In many ways, the media defines what Muslims are not and also what they should be. The subtle message coming from the media is that Muslims need to reform so they can become like "us Americans". They should endorse and reflect our values and social choices.

To get messages across powerfully cartoons use caricatures. Here artists focus on features of an individual and exaggerate that feature so as to attain publicity. They often use a recognized symbol such as a prolonged nose or a bomb. The caricatures are then exaggerated and utilized to depict an entire group. Gradually, the caricature becomes a stereotype. For example, the Danish cartoon depicts not only the Prophet (SAW) but uses the symbol of a bomb as a turban, indicating that those who wear turbans are associated with violence.

Similarly, cartoonists and other forms of the media subjugate Muslim women by denying them any representation in Islam except under oppression. It is as if women play no role in Islam apart from being oppressed.

The media image is gendered since a fanatical Muslim man is often countered by a submissive and oppressed Muslim woman. The American media also lumps Muslims together. It never projects Muslims as ordinary smart Americans who hold important positions in the American corporate industry. Muslims are never seen as CEOs, astronauts or nuclear scientists. Rather, the media shows them as strangers, either from Arabia, Iran or Pakistan who drive taxis and plot against the government.

It is time that Muslims draw their own cartoons and caricatures to show the diversity inherent within Muslims. They need to counter western stereotypes and show that rather than the sameness based on stereotypes, Muslims are to be depicted with same nuances that Christians and other groups are.

Shi'ism and the American Media

The media has looked at Islam primarily through Sunni lens. Since Shi'is are in a minority within the Muslim minority in America, they have less access to power, and privilege in the public sphere.[1] Since they have been recently established, Shi'is had fewer resources, institutions, and, most importantly, access to power and influence in the public sphere. Thus, it is the Sunnis who define and represent Islam in America.

Sunni domination and representation of American Islam is visible in many domains. When the State Department or the media want to talk to Muslims, in most cases, it is to the Sunni institutions and mosques that they turn. Likewise, Sunni centers tend to have more access to the media than Shi'is do. When the press reports that American Muslims offer special night prayers in Ramadhan (called *tarawih*), the

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1. Bruce Lawrence, New Faiths, 13.

average non-Muslim reader or viewer naturally assumes that Shi'is offer these prayers too. Infact, Shi'is do not offer the *tarawih* since they maintain it was a *bid'a* introduced by 'Umar, the second caliph. When a newscast reports that a Muslim can divorce his wife by reciting the triple divorce, it is referring to a distinctly Sunni practice, one which Shi'is reject.

This has been the Shi'i dilemma of minorityness in America. Not only have the Sunnis represented Muslims, Sunni practices have been assumed to be normative, embracing all Muslims, whether Shi'is accept them or not. It is the Sunnis who speak on behalf of the Muslim community. Not only have the Shi'is been subsumed, they have been presumed to speak the language of the majority Sunnis. Shi'i voices have been drowned by Sunni ones. During the course of the twentieth century, Shi'is have learned that being a minority means, in the American context, being the invisible other within the other.

For various reasons, Shi'ism has recently attained much attention in the press. For the Shi'is, the need to depict a positive image of Islam in general and Shi'ism in particular became more acute after the Iranian revolution in 1979 and the ensuing hostage crisis. This was because Americans had associated Shi'ism with militancy and terrorism. The emergence of Hizbollah after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the subsequent capture of American hostages in Beirut further exacerbated the situation for American Shi'is who had to counteract the negative publicity that Shi'ism received in the media. In addition, the gulf war created an awareness of the presence of the Shi'is in various Arab countries.

Increasingly, the American media has become aware that Islam is not a monolithic entity and that there are many dividing lines within the Muslim community. They know

that Muslims hold a variety of opinions on multitudinous issues, and they want to hear a wide range of Muslim voices. Consequently, many journalists want to hear both Sunni and Shi'i voices.

The Shi'is need to self-represent rather than being represented by the Sunni majority. Especially after the American invasion and occupation of Iraq and the concomitant awareness of Shi'ism, Shi'is need to counter the negative images the media has about Islam. Shi'i institutes across America have engaged in dialogue with their non-Muslim counterparts. The Islamic Education Council of Maryland organizes annual inter-faith events that discuss topics affecting other faith groups in America. It issues press releases and is constant contact with the American media on Islamic issues.

Especially after the American invasion of Iraq, Americans have gone beyond asking questions such as "why do they hate us, and why are Muslim women oppressed?" The themes covered in the media now are as diverse as they are fascinating. Topics that are typically covered include issues like authority and scripture, challenges in the American milieu, holy days, and Islamic fundamentalism. American media also want to know more about the relationship between Black and immigrant Muslims, Muslim perspectives on issues like abortion, gay marriages, aging, and euthanasia. In fact, it is possible to detect an evolution in the media from basic issues (terrorism, women's rights) to more sensitive and controversial topics.

The challenge for Shi'is is to introduce distinctly Shi'i themes and figures in their conversation. They need to introduce their sheroes and heroes. Figures like Imam 'Ali, Fatima, and their daughter Zaynab have to feature more in conversations. They have also to make the media aware of what it means to be a Shi'i Muslim in America, and that the

demonization of Islam, increasing surveillance of Muslims, and restriction of civil liberties have been extremely painful for all Muslims. They also make it clear that Shi'is have been drawn into a battle (the war against terror) that they are not a part of.

For the Shi'is, it is very important that Shi'is have their own outlet where they can represent themselves. An important form of outreach is satellite Television. Currently, several Shi'i satellite channels reach the American audience. Most of these are either in Persian or Arabic. The exceptions are: Salaam TV, Ahlul-bayt TV and Press TV. Salaam TV broadcasts from Los Angeles in both Persian and English. So far, its programming has consisted of a series of English lectures, supplications, and programs in Persian that appeal to devout Shi'is. The programs are neither captivating nor intellectually engaging and have not touched upon the substantive issues that impact the American Shi'i community, especially the needs of the younger generation. More importantly, since most of its English programs are in the form of interviews and lectures delivered in Islamic centers by Shi'i imams, Salaam TV has not been able to reach out to a Western audience. Salaam also suffers from a dearth of financial resources that are required to sustain a wide range of programming. Due to these factors, Salaam TV has not been able to exploit the tremendous potential at its disposal and has, so far, been not been able to reach out to the non-Muslim community.

Ahlul-Bayt TV is broadcast from England and is free on satellite TV. It is an important platform to reach a non-Muslim audience. However, although its contents are entirely in English, its programming is geared toward a Shi'i audience. It consists of a series of interviews, lectures and discussion on various religious and social issues. It features a section on women, converts (or reverts) and various

lectures by various scholars and public speakers. Significantly, the program is speaking to the converted and may actually be turning people off Shi'ism. Especially in the months of Muharram and Safar, the channel features Shi'is beating their chests and weeping. While enacting such rituals are important for the Shi'i community to perform in the mosques, presenting these to a non-Muslim audience can have the effect of turning them *away* from Shi'ism. The message should be positive and simple. Shi'ism is rooted in the concept of standing up to injustice and oppression. It is also based on a special kind of charismatic leaders who have inherited authority from the Prophet (SAW) himself. However, such concepts have to be presented in a way that would attract non-Muslims to the Shi'i ethos. In addition, journalists and editors watching scenes such as people wailing and cutting themselves can use such images to promote a negative and violent image of Shi'i Islam. Let us be clear, Shi'is have more opportunity to speak in the West than in most Muslim countries. More Universities want Shi'i studies to be taught unfortunately there are very few Shi'i professors available. It is upto the community to seize this opportunity.

Conclusion

Religious communities often show the preponderance of their faith rather than seek accommodation when confronted with an alien faith. However, existence in an American pluralistic milieu has forced Shi'is to seek an appropriate response to religious and interfaith diversity. Shi'is have realized that they cannot afford to isolate themselves. Especially since the events of 9/11, along with peoples of other faiths, American Shi'is have searched for a global ethic that can provide a basis for interreligious relations among people of diverse spiritual commitment.

We need to understand the role of Shi'i Muslims in weaving the religious as well as social tapestry of America and to see several gaps – between religion and culture, the gap between religion and politics, religious loyalty and ethnic identity and the lacuna between normative religious texts and the reality of American life. With time, these gaps will be filled. It is here that the challenge for the next generation of Shi'is lies.

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Within Mahdiology's Just Society: Mass Media's Role between Creation and Manipulation

Ali H. Al-Hakim,

Abstract

In this article, one is enabled to face crucial questions that are currently baffling many Western thinkers and critical minds concerning the role of religion in the public sphere and read an enlightened attempt to answer them. The root of Muslim presence in Europe has been highlighted, while emphasis has been placed on how a dwindling Christianity exerts less influence, while religion and Divinity is waiting in the wings, creating a transitional phase within European societies. The role of religion has been discussed and the characteristics of an ideal monotheistic society has been emphasized, the relationship between faith and cultural customs was underscored, paving the way for establishing the role of the media in creating a just society or, conversely, manipulating to establish an unjust society.

Introduction

Mahdiology is the science where all the Shi'ah eschatological technical terms should be defined and re-produced. In the light of the frameworks of this knowledge, one should grasp the role of each organisation and redefine the responsibility of every single entity. In this article, my work is dedicated to highlight the characteristics of a 'Just Society', and to rediscover the role of mass media in creating a 'Just Society ', or even its ability through manipulation to produce an unjust atheistic social order. It is the author's sincere attempt to manifest the role of religion in the public sphere together with its constructive contribution.

This work is neither based on, nor inspired by, attending various church services; and secular events and the publication thereof provide no source for brainwaves. No informative meetings were helpfully inspirational unlike the motivational sparks generated by Qur'anic verses and its exegesis. The Qur'an has been revealed for more than a millennium, but has consistently innovated and stimulated Muslim scholars throughout history, up until today and for the foreseeable future.

The Article's main questions

The broad-spectrum topic that this article may necessarily seek to address is the appropriate role of religion in the public sphere in quest of answers to the following:

- Whether, in a pluralist society, public expression and/or displaying of any religious signs belonging to a belief system can be divisive? Can the Media play a constructive role or, through manipulation, exhibit only a destructive influence?

- Can a community find cohesion amongst various faiths and backgrounds?

- What are the potential clashes of values as globalization and population mobility increasingly lead to the intersection of strikingly different backgrounds and cultures?

The Role of Religion in the Public Sphere

Throughout many articles written by Jurgen Habermas[1], amongst others, e.g., Rosalind I.J. Hackett [2], and the multitude of books which have emerged particularly after the Hijab ban in French schools, the question of the role of religion in the public sphere has become increasingly urgent, and now is the time to begin the search for deeper knowledge and understanding of the sociological, historical, and theological issues that confront the relation between Muslims and between Great Britain and Europe. England provides an adequate start towards gaining insight into religion's potential role in European public society and perhaps in the world through pursuing a deeper understanding of the thoughts of Islamic sacred texts.

Islam, its crucial role in the public sphere and the way it is presented by the media is one of our subjects, partly due to the fact that it has become a major religion in Great Britain. Despite our emphasis being placed on Christianity's diminished role and Islamic thought while elaborating generally the role of religion in the public sphere, we have not mentioned Sikhs, Buddhists and other religious minorities satisfying ourselves with Islamic features and rare Christian references, as these were taken as examples of the growing European religious diversity and the increasing role the Islamic faith is starting to play.

1. See his article: 'Religion in the Public sphere' published in the European Journal of Philosophy 14:1, ISSN: 0966-8373, pp. 1-25.
2. See her article: 'Rethinking the Role of Religion in the Public Sphere: Local and Global Perspectives'.

Muslims Roots in the West

There are many causal factors leading to the growth of extensive Muslim communities in Europe but, in many cases, Muslims were encouraged to immigrate to various European destinations which sought cheap labour from the Muslim workforce, and from working wanderers from different Muslim lands. The result instigated a great migratory Muslim movement into the European heartland, including its Scandinavian periphery.

Muslims ought to play a positive role, precisely taking into consideration their magnificent religion and ancient civilizations and heritage. They have to come to Europe with their contribution to the European societies, and this is not because they are impelled to say something, but rather because they, in fact, have something to say and contribute.

Muslims who are living in the West are either being collectively or individually promoted or motivated to preach with their Divine teachings in an effort to convince others that their faith ought to be followed. They are ordered by the Holy Qur'an not to remain silent in the face of corruption or if they witness any form of transgression. We read a statement of the Qur'an as follows:

"Thus did we try them because they transgressed. And when a party of them said: Why do you admonish a people whom Allah would destroy or whom he would chastise with a severe chastisement? They said:- to be free from blame before the Lord, and that haply they may guard (against Evil). So when they neglected what they had been reminded of, we delivered those who forbade evil and we overtook those who were unjust with an evil chastisement because they transgressed".[1]

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1. Qur'an, C. 7: V. 163-165.

In a narration we read that Sharif b. Sabiq al-Tafalisi narrated on the author of Hammad al-Samdari: 'I said to Abu 'Abidillah, Ja'afar b. Muhammad [al-Sadiq] (as): 'I often go to the land of idolaters, and people say that if I die there, I will be resurrected with them'. He said to me: 'O Hammad! When you are there do you mention our cause and call people to it?' I said, 'yes.' 'And when you are in these cities –the cities of Islam- do you mention our cause and call people to it?' I said, 'Yes'. He said: 'if you die over there, you will be resurrected as a whole community in yourself, and your light will run before you.'[1]

This narration clearly made it investable for all Muslims to call to their faith, in order to attain the peak of salvation and to be resurrected as a whole 'Ummah. Indeed, calling to the Right Path is the antithesis of causing division amongst others, as it is not meant as an insidious act or a discordant performance. Islam is a call for harmony and a reminder for peace as every believer ought to be in entire peace with himself, nature and his environmental surroundings. The Shi'ah Imams have promoted positive thoughts and goodness; we read from Imam Ali (as): 'Thinking instigates goodness and action upon it.'[2]

From this narration, from the abovementioned points and the ensuing discussion related to the Islamic role of mass media, one should be able to discern answers to the first and second questions posed in the beginning of the second subtitle.

Religion's Fluctuating Status Throughout the Last Centuries

The traditional secularization thesis predicted that modernization would inevitably and irreversibly lead to secularization, while the latter should lead to the limitation

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1. Amali al-tusi, p.46, no.54.
2. Al- kafi, v. 2, p.55 no. 5.

of religiosity to the worship sites. Many social scholars and materialist philosophers, like Karl Marx, postulated that key aspects of modernity, such as industrialization, urbanization, and scientific rationalism, would result in the ultimate erosion of religion in society. Church domination of virtually every aspect of life gave way to structural differentiation in which functions previously performed by the church, such as healthcare and education, became increasingly specialized and carried out by independent bodies or organizations.[1] As the church lost its pervasive social influence, religion became a matter of private personal choice rather than social obligation. This has reinforced the stereotypic theories claiming that religion should appropriately remain solely a private matter between an individual and his creator.

It is hardly accurate to claim that religiosity has been blanched or limited, as it is difficult to give a precise numerical value on church attendance, mosque prayers in particular, or the actual presence of religious belief in general. Nonetheless, certain facts are verifiable; at the end of the nineteenth century, a period when some currents of thought- most notably Darwinism- seemed to many to pose a real threat to the Christian tradition. It posed a serious threat to the classical way of understanding the story of creation.

Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) was moved to declare in 1882: 'Whereas the basis of things amidst all chance and change has in Europe generally been for ever so long supernatural Christianity, and far more so in England than in Europe generally, this basis is certainly going.' The years 1914-1945 seem a period of marked decline for organised religion and perhaps the trauma of the Great War was one

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1. John Habgood, Church and Nation in a Secular Age (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 1983) 18.

factor behind this loss of faith. While wars' catastrophes should have rendered people back on track to being humble servants of their Lord, the statistics tell their own distorted story. In 1920, perhaps about 23% of the adult population were active members of the protestant churches of Great Britain; a figure which had dropped to roughly 18% by 1945.[1] In the major provincial town of York, regular church attendance fell from 35.5% in 1901 to 17.7% in 1935 and to 13% in 1948.[2] The number of civil marriages in England and Wales rose from 16% in 1901 to 31% in 1952.[3]

Sunday school enrolment in the same home countries fell from 51% of population aged 15 in 1911, to 46% in 1931, and to 20% in 1961.[4]

J. Martain states:

'Sometime during the 1920s' we are told of organised religion in industrial Yorkshire, 'the local religious classes lost heart.' They ceased to believe in their mission to evangelise the nation... It no longer seemed possible. And it had become a burden.'[5]

At a variety of official levels, Christianity still seemed well established but, as an official Church of England report acknowledged at the end of the war, realities belied appearances:

The coronation ceremony, the regular prayerful openings of the sittings of Parliament, the Mayor's Chaplain, the provision for religion in the services and in all state institutions, the religious articles in popular periodicals, the Religious Department of the British Broadcasting Corporation, and many similar phenomena, go to show that

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1. P. Brierly, the Making of post-Christian Britain p. 1.
2. W. Barret, Death of the soul. From Descartes of the computer (oxford university press, oxford, 1987, esp. 163-6.
3. C.B Macpherson, Natural Rights in Hobbes and Locke 'in D.D. Ralphael (ed), political theory and the rights of man (macmaillan,London,1967,p.14s.
4. E. Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France Penguin, Harmondworth,1987,pp.152-3.
5. J. Martain, The rights of Man and Natural Law, p.45.

the ethos of the state remains Christian... the Established Church is still entwined by countless subtle threads around the life of the realm and the nation'... But behind the facade the situation presents a more ominous appearance.[1] The decline seems to have accelerated after 1960. The statistics are unequivocal. By 1974 only 53.5% of marriages in England and Wales were performed in a place of worship, a figure that had declaimed to 45.1% by 1995,[2] and by 1989 'only 14% of the under –15s attended churches or Sunday schools'.[3]

As regards religious observance, it is estimated that in England in 1967 only about 15% of population attended religious service on Sunday and only 25% went to church at least once a month.[4]

By 1975 only 11.3% of the adult English population were committed churchgoers and by 1989 only 9.5%.[5] Recent decades have seen an especial collapse. Trinitarian Churches fell in active membership from 9.1 million adults in 1970 to 6.4 million in 1995.[6] In England, in 1979, 5.4 million people attended Sunday Church; by 2005 that figure was down to 3.2 million and the largest percentage decrease was amongst the young.[7]

A Church of England account of the 1989 census on church attendance concluded its analysis in the following melancholy fashion:

1. For a survey of modern natural rights theory and its implementation see: A, H. Birch, the concepts and theories of modern Democracy, Routledge, London,1993, pp.113-134
2. M.A. Glendon, Rights Talk. The Impoverishment of Political Discourse (free press, New York,1991, p.7
3. J. Bentham, Anarchical fallacies', in J. Bowring (ed), the works of Jeremy Bentham, William Tait, Edinburgh,184,vol.2, 22 501,523
4. W.L. Miller, A.M. Tipson and M. Lesson, Political culture in contemporary Britain. People and politicians, Principles, Clarendon press, Oxford, 1996, p.4
5. S. piker, the blank slate. The Modern Denial of Human Nature, Penguin London, 2002 p.3
6. Office for National Statistics, Social Trends, n. 27 [1997], p. 224
7. Office for National Statistics, Social Trends, n. 37 [2007], p. 182.

Can we consider England as 'Christian'? With only two thirds of the population claiming some allegiance to the church, however faint, 14% active members, and 10% regularly attending the claim to call England Christian looks thin. The UK community figure is much lower than the figures of other Western European countries.[1] However one interprets such figures it seems reasonable to suppose that they indicate a fading of Christian religiosity. They correlate with that they indicate a fading of Christian religiosity. They correlate with the fact that there is now a broad area of non-belief within British society.

All of the abovementioned reflect clearly and without doubt that there is a tendency towards rejecting Christianity. A phenomenon that has been called by some contemporary authors as 'DeChrisitianisation' is ongoing, whether one likes it, or is not willing to accept it.

Can we conclude that all the members of British society are currently against any form of religiosity? One can hardly reach this conclusion based solely on the above statistics, as those mentioned aspects of the Christian practice may only prove that it is no longer in favour of the Christian faith and its dogmas. It is beyond doubt that all the indicators available suggest that British society has become heavily discouraged about Christianity over the last hundred years when we survey that such factors as levels of church attendance, people's connections with organised Christianity, the importance of Christianity in politics, and a whole range of contemporary comment, has been diminished.

But can one come to a wider and more all-inclusive conclusion that all forms of faiths and religiosity are rejected? It is the author's firm belief that religiosity in

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1. P. Brierley, Christian England. What The 1989 English Church Census Reveals [Marc Europe, London, 1991, p. 30.

individuals, as in societies, is hard to monitor. It is difficult to probe the presence of religious beliefs, the intensity with which they are held, the way in which they are put into practice, or the impact that they have on the lives of individuals or cultures.

Recalling the saying of an Iranian ethical scholar, Ayatollah Mazaheri, who always taught his students that: 'You should refrain from being negative, as sometimes people are too negatively oriented *'manfeebaaf'*.' One should become inspired, e.g. as to how to establish rightly-guided mass media! Being negatively-oriented, *'Manfeebaafi'*, means that one is always approaching the world wearing gloomy glasses. One is negatively built, that's when one is always critical, approaches things from an evil angle and is never satisfied. This negative approach is disastrous as it causes others to avoid associating with such a person, or drives them away. Mass media – if it were to adopt such a negative policy - is capable of corrupting the whole world, and all individuals around them leading them to overwhelming destruction.

A narration has been reported by some Islamic references quoting the story that:

In Tanbih al-khawatir the prophet Jesus (as) was passing the corpse of a dog, with his disciples, when the disciples exclaimed: What an awful stench this dog has!' to which the prophet Jesus (as) retorted: How white are his teeth!'[1]

Based on the abovementioned narration and the ethical lesson, one can only accept that there might be many individuals who have become apathetic to the Christian faith, and/or are unsatisfied with its dogmas, but this may also mean that mankind is now more inclined towards a religion that is more practical and commonsensical, more easily acceptable and more viable in being followed.

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1. Tanbih al-khawatir,v.1, p.117.

Imam Ali (as) taught us: 'A real scholar is one who does not make people lose hope in the mercy of Allah, or cause them to have despair from the mercy of Allah, or make them feel safe from the Allah's resourcefulness.[1]

Based on these guidelines one is inclined to arrive at the abovementioned conclusion, albeit to be equally precautious to warn the majority of population that miserable life conditions are to be expected, if one remains rebellious towards his Lord. However the author is convinced that there are felt evidence that we are through a transitional phase, which is to be elaborated in the next paragraphs.

A Transitional Phase:

Though the secularization thesis predicted the ultimate demise of religion in the modern world, religion is clearly thriving globally today even in secular Europe. It is the author's claimed postulate that we are encountering the invisible reflections of perhaps the greatest social transformation of our times. Christianity is about to fade out of British culture. In recent decades, under the influence of secularism, the nations of Europe have moved away from unitary forms of religious expression toward greater pluralism or rather: We witness the phenomenon of the transitional phase from vague atheism towards invisible uniting Divine-humanism. It is an inevitable process that shall never be diverted into recourse nor distorted towards a reversion of atheism.

The Secularists' Bid

Since the end of the Second World War, the secular declared approach to religion in the public realm has aimed to accommodate tolerance and peaceful coexistence within an existing or desired pluralist society through creating a

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1. Nahaj al-Balagha, saying 90.

public sphere devoid of any visible religious presence or even removing religion from public discourse. However, many insist that secularism was continuously leaning towards fundamentalism, i.e. that secularists, despite claiming neutrality and tolerance, were imposing their own values on others and threatening the very pluralism and diversity they claimed to encourage. This has been manifested in the many recent claims of German and British politicians that pluralism has failed. Thus, pluralist societies are confronted with the question of whether secularism was protecting it or whether it was constantly hindering religious freedom and dismissing what religion's proper role could or should be in the public dialogue.

Amongst the various secular regimes of many European countries, Great Britain is the home to secular and religious forces competing for influence and authority both within and abroad. Both secularist and religious camps claim to champion toleration and liberty accusing the other side of endangering pluralism and freedom. Therefore, we feel the need for a profound understanding of religion in general and Islam in particular. In the following, we shall elaborate on the characteristics of society based on monotheism, more precisely Islam, its relationship and potential interaction with each society's cultures and the role of media in creating an ideal just society or manipulating to produce an evil one.

How Does the Qur'an Describe Religious Scholastic Role?

The main or crucial description of religion is that it has become a matter of expert study, just like other human knowledge and science. The Qur'an has emphasised the need for dedicated individuals who would seek knowledge and devote many years of their lives both to study it and

equip their minds with saturated Divine teachings that their souls would be able to diligently absorb.

Qur'an states: 'Nor should the Believers, All go forth together: If a contingent. From every expedition. Remained behind, They could devote themselves, to studies in religion,

And admonish the people, When they return to them, That thus they (may learn), to guard themselves (against evil).' Qur'an, C. 9: V. 122.

Additionally, seeking knowledge or what was prescribed in the Qur'an as: 'Tafaquh Fid Din' is not meant to be a matter of aristocratic pleasure to argue and discuss with ignorant individuals, but rather to be used as a tool through which one should seek and aspire to guide the servant of Almighty (swt) to the Right Path, as it is perceived from the last phrase of the above mentioned Qur'anic verse.

In other narrations we read the following: 'Imam al-baqir (AS), with regards to the Quranic verse: "Except the ones who are deemed weak...", said, This refers to one who is not capable of disbelieving that he may be considered a disbeliever, though neither has he been guided on the path of faith that he has faith. [It also refers to] children, and those people from among men and women who have intellects of children and who are therefore not accountable for their deeds.[1]

The characteristics of an ideal monotheistic society

It is the author's firm belief that the characteristics of an idealistic monotheist society are to be summarised as follows:

1. Negation of the Man of Absolute Materialism: from the viewpoint of Islam, man is a mixture of soul and body, and

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1. Ma'ani al akhbar,Shaikh Sadduq, p.201,no.4

in this mixture the soul is genuine. In other words, the humanity of man and his reality depends on his soul, and this soul, with all its complexities, is a tool for comprehending and carrying out its own actions. Man, from the view of the Holy Qur'an and the narrations, is neither absolutely good-natured nor totally bad-natured; rather the two kinds of inclinations exist within his nature, one towards evil and the other towards good.

2. Negation of Individualism: individualism, as was formed under the auspices of humanism and which, subsequently, led to utilitarianism and profit-making, has no place in Islam and Islamic society. Individualism of this type is ungracious in the realm of values and morality; for the human being is not the pivot of morality and values but is the one who must be bound by values and in fact excels thereby. The bases of morality and the propositions of value are objective affairs independent of men's will, demand, and mentality. Consequently, the basic propositions of morality are absolute and free from relativity. The secret of objectivity of the main moral propositions is that these express the existence of a moral act and man's ultimate spiritual perfection.

3. Negation of Secularism (Separation of Religion from Politics)

If we consider even a little of the content of Islamic teachings, it can be understood that jurisprudence and religious law are important elements within it; for religious law is not limited only to personal and private realms, and Islamic social jurisprudence has clear teachings in various social categories.

Therefore, we have witnessed that secular media have introduced Islam in a totally negative way from a gloomy angle. Islam is continuously introduced by the media creating an Islamophobic environment. They, i.e. the

secularists, have constantly sought to remove Islam from the social and political fields limiting it to the arena of personal life, without realizing that Muslims recognize it as a pale distortion of the reality of this perfect and exalted religion. If personal behaviour plays a role in man's perfection and exaltation and is the cause for his consequent happiness in the hereafter, social behaviour and collective mutual relationships influence his happiness far more effectively. In the second media approach, Islam has been reproduced to be contradicting any human European culture, due to its exclusiveness and rigid Shari'a Law's rulings. Therefore, we feel the need to profoundly grasp the relationship between Islam and various European cultures.

Islam and the Various European Cultures Between Contradiction and Complimentarity

Islam and European Cultures, we have espoused the idea that it is here that one should promote complimentarity instead of conflict or contradiction. In order to analyse the discussion in a profound manner, one ought to grasp the relationship between religion and culture in general. It is necessary to technically define each term and arrive at a point of satisfaction regarding how these concepts stand and interact with each other in the reality of social life.

The interaction and the way these two social phenomena affect each other is accepted according to the Islamic legislator in the following examples, where no one shall be able to deny the effectiveness that pushing towards one direction may lead to a favourable level of the other. It means that religion and social norms should interact and complete each other instead of conflicting and contradicting each other.

There are different forms of interaction between culture and religion which shall manifest itself in many examples. Here follows some of the ensuing social and cultural effects:

- While practice of a religion is intended to unify a whole Muslim society in general practice, it may, however, differ in the manifestation as to how that practice is practiced. The perfect example of this case is in the Muslim woman's dress, whereas the Hijab (Muslim women's dress code) represents a religious duty, different manifestations appear of the same practice. In Iraq, ladies wear the 'Abayah while the Iranian lady wears the Tschadour and the Pakistani wears her Shalwar Khamis. The commemoration of Imam Hussain varies too, depending on the different cultures, while manifesting their devotion in various practices, either in form of theatre (Ta'aziah), lamentation (Ma'atam), and sad songs combining sorrow and deep emotional feeling (Na'i). All these different cultural acts are various manifestations related to different cultural and social practices of the Shi'ah Muslims.

- Cultural practice may create or eliminate extensions that are considered cases for the practical ruling of the Shari'ah Law.

- Cultural practice may change or alter the rulings of Shari'ah Law in favour of a dynamic implementation of Divine guidance.

Within the last century's different definitions of religion, we ought to discuss religion following the relevant theories introduced by astute sociologists ranging from Emile Durkheim, Clifford Geertz up until the current contemporary thinkers. Within the Islamic Worldview we have espoused the idea of a contemporary Muslim thinker, i.e. late Ayatollah S. M. B. As-Sad, who established the Shi'ah Muslims' practical approach towards a dynamic interpretation of Shari'ah Law that is flexible, lax and non

rigid to accommodate an applicable combinational model for the role of religion in the European public sphere. By this, we find it incumbent upon us to discuss the role of mass media in creating or manipulating social norms.

The Crucial Role of the Media in the Constructive Creation or Manipulating Against a Just Society

Media is a generic term used to indicate systems or vehicles for the transmission of information or entertainment such as radio, television, videotape, newspaper and magazines, hoardings, films, books, records, and tapes. Of these, the ubiquitous television, radio, and newspapers are generally qualified as the *mass media*. Unlike the others, they form parts of man's total environment in *Mass society* and cannot be ignored without conscious and sustained effort; far more commonly their use engenders degrees of passivity which make them efficient for moulding tastes and preferences. Many contemporary thinkers, such as Marshall McLuhan[1], have argued that the form of the media has a more significant effect on society and knowledge than the content carried. Of course, the content is also of great importance in leading laymen towards the desired direction.

Mixed media is a recent term for the long-established concept of combining more than one form or area of communication, usually for dramatic effect. Another usage of the term 'media' refers to the professionals employed in this sector who, on the ground of their assumed culture and political attitudes, are seen either to distort or dictate public taste.[2] For many thinkers, the media has assumed a

1. Fontona Dictionary of Modern Thought, edit: Allan Bullock and Oliver Stallybrass, p. 514, 5th edition, Glasgow/ G.B. 1990.
2. Fontona Dictionary of Modern Thought, edit: Allan Bullock and Oliver Stallybrass,p. 514, 5th edition, Glasgow/ G.B. 1990.

politically and culturally independent existence. Therefore, many strategic thinkers have considered the use of the media and propaganda as one of the modern state's tools through which it achieves its goals.[1]

It is obvious that the mass media has a great responsibility towards what it offers their audience. It should at least try to introduce a positive attitude and create a constructive atmosphere for its clients.

In a narration we read: 'The prophet (sawas) said: 'It is bad enough for a man – except for one whom Allah protects from evil - that people should point the finger at him with regard to either his faith or his worldly affairs.'[2] He meant that it is a matter of great concern that one is so evil to be accused of and have fingers pointed at him as having violated a matter that had negative impact on its faith. Media can be similarly accused with the same defect.

However, the great lesson here to all journalists and activists, who are in touch with the public or address the laity, is that one should struggle to achieve one's ultimate Divine duty, instead of presenting what they like to read or hear. The solution is that, as one can never achieve the satisfaction of all people, one should just think about Allah (swt)- what He would accept and be pleased with.

We know that disobedience is not desired, but committing disobedience in public is more disgusting than the act itself, as it calls for the Divine wrath to be instigated. Imam Ali (as) has said: 'Openly and candidly disobeying Allah-glory be to him-hastens his wrath'.[3] Therefore, even if one had committed an error or a mistake, it is recommended not to reveal their shortcomings, as it is a disgusting revelation.

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1. Al-'ilaqat Al-Siyassiyah Al-Duwaliyyah (The International political relationship), by Majid Ahmed Shedoud, pp. 155-185, published by the University of Damascus, Damascus, 1990.
2. Sharah nahj al-Balaghli ibn abi al- Hadid, v.2 , p.181.
3. Ghurar al-Hikam, no.9811.

Again, referring back to the Qur'an as a source of guidance for the media, we read the verse: 'Whenever you speak, speak good,' Whenever you judge between people, to judge following justice'[1], an example of those not speaking in justice are those who come with revelation, or who manifest justice with slanderous coverage so as to create a perception of total social disaster. That is when a media group manifests something in such a negative way that causes everyone to perceive it as a great felony and the person who did it to have committed a huge defect. This is a media ethical problem that every society of journalists are potentially endangered to suffer from. An ordinary layman would more commonly know this as 'gossip'. Manipulation *(Talbis Al-Haq bil Batil)* and/or backbiting *(Ghibah)* – in its ethical Qur'anic conceptualization- or revelation – as they may call it within the media milieu- is essentially revealing news about others with wrong intention anticipating that they committed such a thing, while they do not want it to be covered nor publicised in that negatively reproduced manner.

Analysing it from an ethical angle, there are in fact three misleading errors. Firstly, is the actual revelation which is, itself, undesirable and prohibited. Secondly, is the assumption, the way and/or the tone of voice that conveyed the negative impression. An insinuation that what 'X' has committed is a grave sin, while this was not the case at all. Thirdly, by informing others so that the revelation may result in the original act being amplified out of proportion and making it into a bigger issue than is necessary, especially as the original person did not want his action to become exposed to the public. Therefore, the situation can become very complicated, much more so than may have initially been imagined.

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1. Qur'an, C. 2, V. 83, and C. 4: V. 58.

One of the main problems with spreading misinformation, 'gossip', or revelation is that most people do it willingly or unwittingly, and thus unintentionally cause social problems. The Qur'an describes the ethical spiritual outcome affecting those who are involved in such revelation with a pitiful degradation, namely in verse 12 of surah al Hujurat; 'Avoid much suspicion; indeed some suspicions are sins. And spy not, neither backbite one another. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother?'.[1] While other traditions describe backbiters as 'the dogs of hell' that feed on the flesh of their dead brother. Therefore, one must take the outcome of these social sicknesses of the mass media seriously, as it gravely and fatally creates a society of dogs, which metaphorically it means it transforms harmonious individuals into hellish aggressive, turning them against each other.

We read further in the narrations from Ahlul Bayt (as) similar guidelines. The Prophet (sawas) said: 'Do not probe for flaws in believers, for a man that probes the flaws of his brother will have Allah probe his own flaws: and when Allah probes the flaws of a man, He will expose him even if he were inside his own home.'[2]

Also, Imam Ali (as) said: 'Nothing prevents anyone from among you from disclosing to a fellow brother a fault that he fears in him, except for the very fear that he too will disclose the same fault to him. You are all accomplices in your rejection of the next world and loving this world.'[3]

In another Qura'nic verse those who desire to spread exposure about wrong - doers are being condemned with the verse:' Those who love (to see), scandal published broadcast, among the Believers, will have a grievous

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1. Qur'an, C. 49, V. 12.
2. Al-kafi, v.2 p.355, no.5.
3. Nahj al-balagh, sermon113.

Penalty in this life, and in the Hereafter: God knows, and ye know not.'[1]

They have been displayed as if they would desire lewd things to be spread amongst the believers. Here one has to seek the genuine meaning of this technical term from other Qur'anic verses. For example verse 151 of surah an'am also refers to another duty, when it then states: "come not near to lewd things *(al-Fawahish)* whether committed openly or secretly".[2]

What is meant by 'al-Fawahish' is the reference to anything shameful, or indecent acts, whether being related to –amongst others- sexual desire or not. These acts are considered in Qur'anic terms as 'al-fawahish'. The Qur'an has described and used the same words (derived from the same word root) in verse 268 of surah baqarah- 'shaitan threatens you with poverty and orders you to commit fahsha'[3] (n.b. fahsha is the singular of the (plural) fawahish). According to Qur'anic terminology, all things which are lewd are considered to be 'al-fawahish'. The Qur'an has described adultery as 'fahisha', and repeated in numerous Qur'anic verses that it is prohibited, and is considered in many narrations to be one of those heinous and great sins (kaba'ir).

The Qur'an says prohibited are: 'all these forms of lewd things whether open or concealed.'[4] There are many narrations describing what is meant by 'open' and 'concealed'. What is 'open', according to the narrations, is whatever has been declared in the Qur'an as prohibited. What is meant by 'concealed' is whatever has been declared by the Prophet (sawas) or Imams (as) as prohibited. Imam Sadiq (as) was once asked 'what is meant when the Qur'an

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1. Qur'an, V. 24, C. 19.
2. Qur'an, V. 6, C. 161.
3. Qur'an, V. 2, C. 268.
4. Qur'an, V. 7, C. 33.

says lewd things which are open or concealed?' He replied that 'the things which are declared according to Qur'an as prohibited are open lewd things, and whatever has been declared by us (i.e. the Imams (as) or the Prophet (sawas) are concealed lewd things').

Misguiding the laity, and/or misleading them towards disobedience or manipulating the masses towards violating what has been declared as prohibited is an insidious act and lewd. Also when there are calls to lead people to the right path, standing against those calls may well cause sedition, but it is the responsibility of the media to resist sedition, which is strictly forbidden in Qur'anic terminology. Reading between the lines and whatever has been mentioned before gives the answer to the few questions that have been posed in the second subtitle of the article.

Media's Misleading strategies

Unfortunately, the pure teachings of Divine messengers including Prophet Jesus (as) are ignored. He used to say: 'Take truth even if it be from wrongdoers, but do not take falsehood even if it be from the righteous critics of speech. What has happened is exactly the other way round.[1] That is instead of following the truth and being thankful towards what Almighty has blessed mankind with an innovative mind, he surrenders to the satanic insinuation, and follows an Eurocentric attitude to neglect anything Divine.

We read in Maritain's book, 'Religion and Culture', the following: 'The spiritual dominant of modern culture is an anthropocentric culture.'[2]

The humanist outlook, with its associated faith in man and his capacities, has been powerfully promoted by the astonishing scientific, technological and economic

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1. al-mahasin, v.1359, no.769.
2. J. Maritain, Religion and Culture, p.19.

achievements of the last three centuries. It is a creed which has gained massive credibility and legitimacy from modern human advance. So much exaggeration has been produced in favour of placing emphasise on the Powerful Mankind which has been levelled with God. Amazing wealth, incredible machines, landing on the moon, conquest of diseases, the micro-chip, jet-planes, the mapping of the human genome, vast cities – all these successes, and many others have given man immense belief in himself and his abilities. Moreover, such advance has been very much a phenomenon of Western man, whose supremacy in such areas has marked him out from the other peoples of the earth and lain behind his planetary ascendancy, a process which has added further lustre and prestige to such achievements.

It seems that many predictions of the apocalyptic hadith and eschatological traditions were metaphorically referring to these cases. We read in a narration from hadith, which was narrated by Muslim, the following:

'Once they have been victorious over all those who are on Earth, they say, 'let's fight those who are in Heaven and the sky, so they would shoot at them with their arrows, but God will order those arrows to descend with blood. They would become incredibly happy claiming that they have killed those who are in the sky.'

Nowadays there is wide belief that there is nothing that he cannot do. He thinks that he is indeed, the master of his own destiny. This self-admiration has been especially encouraged by apparent success in the enterprise of dominating nature – an ancient ambition. For millennia man was heavily subordinated to the natural world and thus constantly reminded of his limits. His scientific successes during the modern age have revolutionised this relationship,

as Hans Jonas has well emphasised in his work: 'The Imperative of Responsibility'.[1]

Media has been transformed from what it ought to be - a source of inspiration and guidance towards the right path, into a tool of temptation and misguidance. Imam Ali (as) has said once describing this kind of tool: 'Condemning those who follow Satan, they have taken the controller for their affairs, And he has in turn adopted them as his partners [use them as his traps]. He has laid eggs and hatched them in their tongues. Thus does he lead them to commit errors and glamorizes their own foolish deeds to them, like the act of one whom satan has made partner in his domain, speaking lies through his tongue.[2]

Towards the End

Contemporary mass media's struggle has been to consistently belittle, even trivialize, the importance of religion in addition to causing confusion in the mind of the majority. Nevertheless, today's headlines have not awarded them the opportunity to escape what, for them, is the bitter fact that they cannot fail but be overwhelmed with astonishing evidence that refutes all relevant secularist predictions. The mobility of the population during the Islamic revolution of Iran, led and guided by the late Ayatollah Khomainy (may his soul rest in peace) has brought home to the whole world the varieties of religious phenomena that had seldom been reproduced as exotic features of the British empire. Now, the whole European continent has to deal with the entire gamut of them, and this paper has attempted to effectively spell out the paradox that faces French secular minds; on the one hand, dreaming of

1. H. Jonas, The Imperative of Responsibility. In search of Ethics for a Technological Age [University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1984].
2. Nahj- al-Balagh ,sermon 7.

the absence of religion from the public realm as a (mistaken) guarantee of liberal tolerance and, on the other, facing the unintended consequences of their futile policies.

Conclusion:

- Islam belongs at home to the majority of European countries, while these societies are heading towards a transitional phase about adopting a human-Divine Worldview that is closer to the teachings of Islam and Divine messengers.
- The decrease of the role of Christianity is not to be generalized to apply to the reduction of all Divine faiths, such as Islam, which is a thorough and all-inclusive worldview that possesses the practical approach to all European cultures with positive inclusion, rather than negative rejection.
- The role of religion, especially Islam, in the Public sphere, is undeniably powerful and impossible to be devoid, while the role of media could turn either way: Positively creating a just monotheistic society, or negatively manipulating to provide unjust, atheistic and apathetic social norms.

The Mahdi as a Source of Doctrinal Differentiation in Islam

Dr. Oliver Leaman[1]

It is often claimed that one of the major distinctions between the different approaches to Islam lies in the concept of the Mahdi. Both Shi'i and Sunni Islam have such a concept, but they play a different role in their accounts of the religion. For the former, the Mahdi plays a far more central role, and this is to be observed in the frequency of references to the Mahdi in the relevant literature, in the popular discussions of the end of times and in the iconography of Shi'iculture, or it would be better to say, cultures.

In Sunni Islam there are around 50 ahadith of mutawatir status referring to the Mahdi, and in the commentaries he is sometimes directly linked with the ahl al-bayt and sometimes not. Many suggest that the Mahdi will appear with Jesus and bring the world as we know it now to an end, but while most of the Sunni commentators imply or state that he will create extraordinary events, some disagree and see him merely as a remarkable leader. It is not clear

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1. University of Kentucky.

whether this is supposed to be a genuine view or rather the making of a polemical anti-Imami point. There have been a number of Sunnis who have been regarded, or regarded themselves, as the Mahdi, and this proved a significant rallying call when looking for support and resources. For Shi'ites there is generally a close link between the Mahdi and the imam who is in occultation *(ghaybah)*, sometimes the twelfth and sometimes the seventh imam, and a more elaborate description of the signs of the end of times which will prefigure the appearance of the Mahdi. It is often claimed that he will be from the family of the Prophet and share his name, and perhaps also appearance, and his role will be to rescue the world which had by this time fallen into complete subjugation to the forces of evil, sometimes represented by the power of the Dajjal, in a typical eschatological model. It is often claimed in the literature that this idea became much more pronounced in Shi'i Islam, perhaps because the Shi'i were often a minority and suffered persecution at the hands of the Sunni majority, and so required greater consolation in the face of their sufferings. It is certainly true that the two major collections of Sunni *hadith* by Bukhari and Muslim do not directly include material on the Mahdi, but there is plenty of *hadith* material to be found elsewhere, and it has often been utilized by Sunnis who want to discuss the end of times. The fact that the Mahdi does not appear in the Qur'an itself is surely irrelevant, since many issues of great importance for Islam do not appear there directly and need to be worked in through other sources, and through seeing what is consistent with the tone of the Qur'an. Like all religions that have survived for a long time, Islam is very adaptable and capable of developing issues that do not directly appear in the key religious text.

Let us first look at the issue of why the role of the Mahdi might be more strongly emphasized by the Shi'a as compared with the Sunnis. Most Shi'i take very seriously the idea of the Imam reappearing and radically changing the direction of human history. This imam is also importantly linked with the family of the Prophet and his role will be to redeem past crimes against the faithful and move the world onto a new and positive path. It might also be said that the theme of suffering which plays such a large role in Shi'i culture calls for someone to come and relieve that suffering, and the idea of a redeemer who will play a role in that as part of a long and well-structured cathartic process is attractive. The fact that before the Mahdi comes the world is going to be in all sorts of radical trouble also provides some sort of explanation and religious justification for the terrible things which often happen and might be seen as happening at particular times when believers could find those events challenging to their faith. The idea that these events are part of a divine plan is reassuring and provides some sort of divine logic to what is occurring. Shi'i history starts really with a disaster, and in its rituals commemorates that disaster and elaborates on it, and in many ways that would only make sense if it were possible to rectify it eventually. The Mahdi initiates this moral rebalancing, and it is not surprising that the sort of detail we get on Shi'i accounts of the Mahdi's reappearance is often more elaborate and better defined than is the case with the Sunnis. To have the Mahdi based on an actual individual, as the Shi'i do, right from the beginning, produces far more definition and clarity than when he is seen as being someone quite indefinite until the time of his coming is determined by God.

What is surely more significant than the precise individual who is the Mahdi is the actual role that the Mahdi is taken to play in human history, and here there is a remarkable

confluence of views. Plenty of Sunni leaders have declared themselves, or been named by others, as the Mahdi in order to confer on him the advantages of the role. If someone is appointed by God to lead the community, then clearly he has an elevated status and can rightfully expect to be followed and obeyed. Many Sunnis have accordingly linked themselves with the Mahdi in one form or another, and will no doubt continue to do so. Religions which have an apocalyptic side to them have the problem of identifying who is the rightful owner of the title of the person who is going to initiate the final state of affairs in which everything will be resolved satisfactorily. It is not unusual for very distinguished religious thinkers to pick the wrong candidate for the role, nor for there to be controversy about who is the right candidate among the public at large.

A *hadith* which is generally accepted as genuine by both parties reports that even if the world is just about to come to an end, God will expand the time remaining to allow someone from his family to come and replace the existing miserable state of the world with peace and justice. It is not clear from the Sunni *ahadith* that the Mahdi is descended from the Prophet's daughter Fatima, but it is agreed that he is distinct from Jesus, who will reappear at the same time but in a subsidiary role. The Shi'i who are Twelvers identify him with the son of the eleventh imam Hasan al-Askari, and say he disappeared until God appoints the time for his reappearance, and that his name is Muhammad ibnHasan. Here we have a significant discrepancy with the Sunnis, since they take it that he will share the name of the Prophet, which is what the relevant hadith seems to suggest. The Shi'i point out that this is only mentioned in one *hadith*, and also that it could easily have been fabricated by someone who wished to advance the claim of someone with the Prophet's name to political power. In the rather polemical

atmosphere that exists the Sunnis throw all sorts of charges at the Shi'ion this issue, including ridiculing the parentage of the putative Twelfth Imam, his lack of ability to be an imam at the tender age he is said to have accomplished this, and suggesting he has been living in a cave or cellar for over a thousand years! The Shi'ihave no difficulty in responding to these points, all of which bring out the similarity between the life story of the Mahdi and Jesus. Both are taken to be mortal yet capable of living a very long time when God wishes them to, and surely there is no problem in this happening given that God is the creator of everything.

The very specific role that the Mahdi has in Islam is common to both schools of thought , the only issue is the precise individual who will accomplish the role. Since the Shi'ites identify the Mahdi with a specific person, the Sunnis tend to downplay not only that identification but to some extent the whole role of the Mahdi. So in the past IbnKhaldun is quite critical of the whole range of *ahadith*about the Mahdi, while in more modern times Mawdudi, Gulen and Said Nursi often disperse the role among a variety of people. Instead of playing a decisive role in a cosmic battle between good and evil, their Mahdis, or perhaps better mahdis, contain within themselves a variety of virtues for strengthening the community, albeit not all embodied in one person. Here the Mahdi is very much identified with the *mujaddid*, the reviver of Islam, or even just as a person who carries out well a range of civic tasks and duties. We should not be surprised at this variety of view,it is common in religions with messianic features to have a continuum of interpretations of the messianic age and the nature of the person who will bring about that age. Some see him as a unique individual who will change everything when he comes, while others suggest by contrast that there is no one such person but a variety of people who

each in their own way gradually move the world in a positive direction.

When the claim is made that there is a variety of views here one is tempted to add that it is surely a variety of Sunni views. The Shi'i are agreed on the significance of the Mahdi, and in their arguments with their co-religionists they often seek to show that the concept of the Mahdi is not unique to Shi'ism, but is there just as strongly in Sunnism. This is to a degree beside the point, though, since the issue is not so much whether there is a Mahdi and what he will do when he comes, the issue is more how we interpret those passages, particularly the *ahadith*, which report on his nature and activities. Shi'i theologians also are liable to disagree about how close we are to the coming of the Mahdi at any particular time, and how far we should actively seek to promote that time, by contrast with getting on with our lives and patiently waiting for the time to come which God determines is right. I am old enough to remember being taught as a truism that the Shi'ites tend to be politically quietist because they were normally a minority and anyway based their faith on waiting for something to happen, and until that happened, the coming of the Mahdi and everything that followed from that, there was not much point in being politically active. Then after the Islamic Revolution in Iran the story was that the Shi'i are particularly politically aggressive since their version of Islam sees a radical future event transforming the whole of society, and the world around it. The sufferings of the major figures in Shi'ism could serve as a motive to action, for justice and even revenge, as opposed to just being an indication of general passivity and acceptance. Wherever the truth lies here, what is clear is that there is not one view that has to be accepted even within Shi'ism on the implications of the Mahdi. His future reappearance could be taken as a reason to be very

active politically, or the reverse. Other factors come into play here, and these have nothing essentially to do with the Mahdi himself but with the sort of approach to general political and social commitments that Shi'i thinkers make on other grounds.

This suggests that in the area of theological polemics, it is a mistake to emphasize the issue of the Mahdi at all. Those strenuously opposed to Shi'ism pour scorn on the *ahadith*, even the Sunni *ahadith*, that relate to the topic, as though something which is not directly mentioned in Bukhari, Malik or Muslim is thereby ruled out of discussion, even though there are well-attested references to the Mahdi by the other respected Sunni *muhadithun*. IbnKhaldun makes the point, surely not implausibly, that while many of the *ahadith* about the Mahdi do not appear to be very strong, they are nonetheless generally in agreement with the more soundly based *ahadith*, and so it hardly matters. He himself was critical of the tendency for the label of mahdi to be assumed quite casually by anyone with something of a following, and points out that the *ahadith*, even if they are accepted at face value, do not make it at all easy to decide precisely when the Mahdi will arise, nor even who the Mahdi actually is. This is always a problem in religions that have the role of a savior, many people are all too ready to take on that role and this to a degree diminishes the status of the Mahdi itself, since it looks very much like a persona that it is easy for people to take on in the hope of attracting more followers and political support. The obvious retort which has in fact become popular among Sunni thinkers is to downplay the role entirely, and spread it around quite generally to those who make some contribution to the progress of the community, which does display a commendable democratic spirit, but surely misrepresents the role of the Mahdi on any traditional theological account. Even the Shi'i tend to throw

around Mahdi language when it is in their political interests to do so, and in this way the whole language that surrounds the Mahdi becomes devalued. If the *jaysh*al-Mahdi is in fact not the army of Muslims that have been gathered together in support of the Mahdi when he comes, but a political party, with a military wing, then this is a problem for the integrity of the theological language.

But the problem is more significant in Sunni Islam. The attempt to naturalize or demythologize the concept of the Mahdi has far-reaching consequences. The idea that the Mahdi is just a *mujaddid*, or a reformer, or a great scientist, raises a variety of issues. This sort of language suggests that he will come at the time that it is appropriate for him to come given the nature of the world at a particular time, and that there is no one "he" anyway, but perhaps a group of people who each will carry out some of his functions. It is not a large step from this position to think that he will come not when God sends him, but when the conditions that exist make it feasible for him to come, because then the situation is appropriate for that sort of person, or people, to have a significant effect on turning the world away from evil and towards the right. This is the sort of language that IbnKhaldun uses, when he points out that it is not enough for the Mahdi to be a member of the Prophet's family, but he has also to come at the right time to garner the support of the community. The Turkish thinkers Said Nursi and FethullahGülen also use this sort of language but unlike IbnKhaldun they even suggest that there is no one Mahdi but different people who all play a part in carrying out his role. It is certainly true that in the past many people were called Mahdi and often this was because they came at the right time to support the *umma* and resist aggression against it. They were not the Mahdi, but perhaps, the implication goes, they exhibited in some cases some of the

characteristics of the Mahdi, and that as history progresses more and more plausible candidates will emerge until it is the right time for the most perfect savior to appear, and that will be the (final) Mahdi.

This strategy goes along with other features of Sunnism which downgrade the role of the family of the Prophet in crucial decision-making in Islam. The original dispute after all was about who should be *khalifah*, someone from the family of the Prophet or someone who was appointed or chosen in some other way, and who had a different background. The diminishment of the role of the Mahdi by Sunnis is part and parcel of the approach which suggests that it is illegitimate to place such reliance on the family of the Prophet. After all, as IbnKhaldun suggests, being part of the family is not sufficient to being the Mahdi even in the eyes of the *umma*, although he does not go so far as to claim that it is not at the same time a necessary condition. He is making a largely political point here, that in order to be recognized as the Mahdi being part of the Prophet's family is not the decisive issue, other things come into play like being recognized as such by a significant number of people and presumably the other criteria which accompany the eventual appearance of the Mahdi. This is an excellent point about political reality, and it is perfectly possible that there are positive aspects of the Mahdi which are not exclusively attributed to the Mahdi. Yet to move from this point to the suggestion that in fact we should see the Mahdi not so much as a person but as a variety of people is possibly the thin edge of the wedge in Islamic theology. If the family of the Prophet is not that significant, how about the Prophet himself? Might it not be said that Muslims could see the Prophet of Islam is possibly not so crucial himself to the message of Islam, but perhaps there were several prophets who shared in his status? Of course, there were many

prophets but only one Prophet. Yet if the family of the Prophet is not so significant, perhaps the Prophet himself should be seen as more of a combination of several prophets which gradually put together the final message, or maybe the final message itself is something that is still evolving and has not yet been determined by the Qur'an.

Such a possibility contravenes the familiar Sunni claim that the door of *ijtihad* has closed and that Muhammad was the last Prophet, the transmitter of the final message represented by the Qur'an. The attack on the idea of the Mahdi as a significant individual could become an attack on the idea of the final judgment, on the fixed nature of the Qur'an, and so on. We are familiar with the impact of such theories about religion which seek to diminish the significance of a literal understanding of important religious claims, and that is generally to throw doubt on the leading principles of the religion. This brings us to the crucial issue in the discussion of the Mahdi, and that is whether it is in fact a crucial issue in Islam. Many Sunni thinkers suggest it is not, although they do not deny the existence of *ahadith* discussing the topic. There are, it has to be said, not very many *ahadith* on this topic, at least within the Sunni collections, and it is not always clear how strong they are either. To defend the Shi'iemphasis on the Mahdi the usual steps that theologians take is to argue it out on the *hadith* front, since here at least we can observe the details of what is said about the Mahdi, and when we examine the *isnad* we can comment on how reliable we think they are, and how much affected by a desire to advance the careers of particular individuals, or denigrate others. There has certainly been plenty of that in the *hadith* literature relating to the Mahdi and to the Imams which are so closely linked, at least within Shi'i Islam. The trouble with this sort of argument is that it inevitably rests on relatively few *ahadith*,

the Sunni ones, and on what Bukhari and Muslim might have meant when they used terms that come close to the Mahdi, and this is a narrow basis for a defense of the concept. After all, the Shi'i*ahadith* cannot be used since they are not acceptable to the Sunnis, and obviously prejudge the issue in favor of Shi'ism itself.

When we look at popular views of the Mahdi, they exist everywhere, and often blend ideas and stories from both traditions.As we know from even recent history, both communities enthusiastically announced on occasion that the Mahdi had come and deserved support. So for many ordinary Muslims the concept of the Mahdi is important and is obviously intimately connected with their faith. We need a strong argument, though, to show that in fact it is important and cannot be relegated as so many Sunni thinkers suggest to a minor role in Islamic theology. One way of proceeding here would be to use an idea from the philosopher Kant who argues that some religious ideas have to be accepted not because we know they are true but because if we did not think they were true, our moral action would lack rationality. For example, he argues that when we try to be good and make the world a better place we have to have in our mind the idea that the world might be a realm of perfect justice, and that is the state of affairs at which we are aiming, although we would no doubt be very surprised if we attained it. Our actions are rational because they are directed to that end, an end which we cannot, he thinks,know to be true but which we nonetheless must think of as possible and ultimately existing. One of the arguments Kant has for believing in immortality is that moral action assumes it exists, since if it did not then we could not accept the existence of a balance between deserts and rewards, and that is what moral action is all about. We act morally in order to make things better, to increase justice, and our experience is

that often the world does not get better and more just, so if we are to continue to act in this way and be rational about it, we need to assume the existence of an eventual state of affairs in which human actions do make a real difference to what happens, and this is an immortal state.

A huge difference between Kant's approach and that of Islam is that he thinks we can have no actual knowledge that God, immortality and human freedom exists, or that perpetual peace will occur, which he takes to be the ultimate end of politics. This is not the important issue here, though, what is important is what he says is part of a rational decision making process. We need to have an idea of the end to which our actions aim if those actions are to be rational, a point that was also made on many occasions by Aristotle. Is it possible to argue that the belief in the Mahdi is very much involved in being a Muslim? If it is then the arguments of the Shi'i on the topic are much more plausible. The argument would start by saying that Islam believes that God is in charge of what happens in the world, and can bring the world to an end at any time he wants. The Qur'an suggests that there will be such a time, a point which proved to be difficult for the *mashsha'i* philosophers to reconcile with their belief that the world is eternal. How should we think of this time? A traditional way of thinking about the end of normal life is for those hostile to God to appear to be very strong and about to take everything over, and then a figure arises, sent by God, and overturns the forces of evil and brings about the final and irrevocable triumph of good over evil. The significance of the efforts of the Dajjal and those he gathers to support him are that even when it looks as though everything is under the control of those hostile to religion, a reversal is ultimately going to occur. This is a dramatic illustration of the principle which is important in Islam that God is in charge of everything, and even when

things look very grim, we should not be surprised if they turn around again. There is light at the end of the tunnel, in other words, and the darker the tunnel and longer it is, the more dramatic will be the light when it comes. This is all very much part of the Mahdi narratives, a long period of difficulties will eventually be resolved by the arrival of the Mahdi, and the greater the hardships, the more eagerly his arrival will be.

Could this role be carried out by a gradual process of amelioration, carried out by a variety of different people each doing something that improves the situation? This is the suggestion of some Sunni commentators, although interestingly not IbnKhaldun, and the idea is that the Mahdi is not a person but either a group of people or even just a concept. IbnKhaldun understands the political significance of one person transforming the military and political situation in the ways that the Mahdi is traditionally taken to do. Like many features of religion, it is a highly imaginative concept which succeeds in explaining to the widest possible audience something that is true, that however grim the situation may look, God can turn it around if he chooses to do so. The *mashsha'i* philosophers emphasized the use of imagination in both political and religious life, pointing out its capacity to make vivid to people a point which others can come to by using their reason alone. When it comes to action, we often need something dramatic to move us to actually do something, and the Mahdi concept clearly plays a large role here. Imagination is a combination of reason and our sense faculties, in that it presents to us an idea which is essentially rational and yet clothes it in the sort of figurative language that we understand since our bodies are important to us and we understand things better if they can be explained in material terms. The Qur'an itself, of course, also uses materialistic language in order to communicate to

the widest possible audience basic truths which otherwise would be too abstract to understand, or so at least the mashsha'I thinkers argue.

IbnKhaldun refers to a *hadith* which elevates the story of the Mahdi to something crucial in Islam, where Abu Bakr al-Iskaf produces an *isnad* to Malik ibnAnas from Muhammad ibn al-Munkadir from Jabir that he said, "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'Whoever denies the Mahdi has become a *kafir*, and whoever denies the Dajjal has become a liar'. This is a very questionable *hadith* indeed, apparently. But although it is weak, it does outline a position which we have supported here, that it is reasonable for Muslims to think about the end of the normal state of affairs in the world of generation and corruption, and about the role that God will have in the way the world is radically transformed from evil to good. It is important also that the Mahdi is distinguished from `Isa, although some *ahadith* confuse them, and the stories about the Mahdi, various as they are, do lay out a general idea of a savior and a struggle in which in the end right prevails. The fact that the public at large has taken up these ideas with gusto suggests that they are important ways for Muslims to think about the link between their faith, their action and where that action will lead. There can be no doubt but that the Shi'i literature on the topic is far better defined than its Sunni equivalents, although of course there are also some significant differences between different schools of Shi'ism on the topic also. It has been shown how the theological debate over the Mahdi has often been used more to make doctrinal points in favor of and against competing schools of thought than really to elucidate the nature of the Mahdi. Despite this it is quite clear that an important issue for Islam exists here, one which brings out the different perspectives of the two main theological schools.

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Waiting, Worship, and Inner Transformation: Individual Duties of Human Beings in the Time of the Ghayba

Dr. Kazuyo Murata

Introduction

The concept of waiting *(intizar)* is one of the most central doctrines of Imāmī Shi`ism. The act of waiting can also be considered an act of worship, if we take into account the following prophetic hadith: "To wait for relief is to worship" *(Intizar al-faraj `ibada)*.[1] What exactly does it mean for a human being to be in a state of *intizar* in this context? Does it mean "waiting" in any form, or does it call for a specific set of actions to accompany this act of "waiting"?

The purpose of the present paper, hence, is an investigation of the exact meaning of *intizar* as an individual human duty during the *ghayba*, on the textual basis of classical sources in Islam - from the Quran to the Hadiths to classical *tafsir* works. The paper also addresses the following questions: How does the notion of *intizar* define the relationship between the human being and the Imam (a.s.)

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1. Cf. al-Suyuti, Jami` al-Saghir (Beirut: Dar al-Firkr, 1401q), p. 2717; Ibn `Adi, al-Kamil (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1409q), 2:76, among others.

during the *ghayba* on the one hand, and the relationship between the human being and God on the other? How does and *should* the act of waiting affect the way humans live their lives on earth? Ultimately, what is the greatest impact or significance of *intizar* for individual human life?

Definitions of *Intizar* and *Muntazir*

To begin, it may be helpful to consider basic dictionary definitions of the term *intizar*. Usually, this term is taken to mean "waiting," "expecting," or even "asking for" something to take place, while its occurrence is likely.[1] In addition, *intizar* is sometimes associated with *amr* ("command") and *iqama* ("raising," "abiding," etc.).[2] Further, *intizar* may also suggest the sense of "following."[3]

Muntazir is an active participle of *intizar*, which can refer to a person in the state of *intizar*. In light of the above senses associated with the term *intizar*, one may understand the *muntazir* in the Shi`i context to be someone who *anticipates* and *asks for* the reappearance of the Imam (a.s.), while having *certitude* about its occurrence and while *following* the divine *command*.

Ghayba, Zuhur, and Huzur

Since the act of *intizar* goes hand in hand with the state of the *ghayba*, we must also examine this key concept here. A standard definition for the word *ghayb*, from which the word *ghayba* derives, is that which is hidden from sight.[4] Hence, this term may suggest the sense of being covered or veiled.[5] In the Quran, *ghayb* appears ten times in contradistinction to

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1. Cf. Abu Hilal al-Askari, al-Furuq al-Lughawiyya (Qum: Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islami, 1412q), p. 123. He explains that if it were for something whose occurrence is unlikely or impossible, this would rather be a wish (raja') than an expectation or anticipation (intizar).
2. Ibn Manzur, Lisan al-`arab (Qum: Nashr Adab al-Hawza, 1405q), vol. 2, p. 191 (s.v. m-k-th).
3. al-Taftazani, Mukhtasar al-ma`ani (Qum: Dar al-Fikr), p. 745.
4. al-Jawhari, al-Sahhah, vol. 1, p. 196. (s.v. gh-y-b).
5. Ibid.

the word *shahada*. In the expression *al-ghayb wa-l-shahāda*,[1] *shahada* signifies anything apparent or sensible. For this reason, the earthly realm (`alam mulk`) is called `alam al-shahāda/al-shuhūd`, while the heavenly realm (`alam al-malakut`) is called `alam al-ghayb`.

From the Quranic usage of the term *ghayb*, it is clear that the root *gh-y-b* indicates the lack of *perceptibility* than the lack of existence. This is to say: it is an epistemological notion rather than an ontological one. This fine distinction helps us understand the notion of the *ghayba* of the Imam (a.s.) even more clearly-that his *ghayba* does not indicate his nonexistence by any means.

In fact, one should realize that even in reference to things in general, it would be a grave mistake to equate a thing's invisibility with its nonexistence.[2] The fact is that the existence of the Imam (a.s.) during his *ghayba* is not apparent to all people. It may be apparent to some, but even those who lack this perception still continue to benefit from his existence, just as the earth will continue to be lit by the sun behind the clouds.[3] Hence, the perception of "the sun" depends on whether one turns one's face toward it or away from it. In other words, this is a question of attention (*tawajjuh*) and where it is directed to. Thus, we have now come to an important point regarding the nature of *ghayba*, i.e., *ghayba* is the lack of *zuhur*, not of *huzur*.

Zuhur in turn usually signifies "appearance" or anything that opposes hiddenness.[4] The Quran employs the verb *zahara* in contrast to *batana* in two verses (Q. 6:151, 7:33) in the senses of "to be apparent/outward" and "to be

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1. Cf. Q. 6:73, 9:94, 9:105, 13:9, 23:92, 32:6, 36:46, 59:22, 62:8, 64:18.
2. This is one major difference between modern physical sciences and "the science of the unseen" that we are dealing with here. By nature, the realm of the science is limited to the measurable, observable, and sensible domain, which lies within the realm of zuhur and shuhud alone.
3. Cf. al-Majlisi, Bihar al-anwar, vol. 52, p. 94.
4. See for example, al-Jawhari, al-Sahhah, vol. 2, p. 730 (s.v. z-h-r).

hidden/inward," respectively. Again, it is clear that *zuhur* speaks to the *perceptivity* or the mode of appearance of a thing rather than its ontological status. After all, a thing can continue to exist whether it appears or remains hidden to human perception. However, in contrast to both *ghayba* and *zuhur*, *huzur* is an *ontological* concept that indicates a thing's *presence* or *existence* in a certain locus rather than its perceptivity.

Waiting and Servanthood

We have already seen above some of the proper conditions for the *muntazir*, such as "waiting" and "anticipation" for the reappearance, certitude about the impending reappearance, and obedience to the divine command. Another of such conditions proper to the state of *intizar* is no doubt the quality of *patience* (*sabr*).

In one version of the aforementioned hadith, the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) is reported to have said: "To wait for relief in patience is to worship" *(Intizar al-faraj bi-l-sabr `ibada)*.[1] In this important hadith, the act of "waiting" is regarded as an act of *worship (`ibada)*, which can further be understood as a *proper act* or even a *duty (wazifa)* of the individual worshipper *(`abd)*. Hence, only when a human being embodies all the conditions required for the state of intizar, he can be fully regarded as a true servant-worshipper *(`abd)*. This is to say: *intizar* is a necessary condition for the fulfillment of one's servanthood *(`ubudiyya)* toward God. Hence, intizar turns out to be not only a duty toward the Imam (a.s.), for whom one waits, but also a duty toward God, whom one serves/worships. Yet at the same time, it seems that human servanthood can only be perfected through the help of the Imams (a.s.).

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1. al-Rawandi, al-Da`wat, p. 41; al-Dhahabi, Mizan al-i`tidal, vol. 3, p. 256.

It has been reported that Imam Baqir (a.s.) said: "Through us God is served/worshipped, and through us God is known" *(Bina `ubida Allah wa-bina `urifa Allah).*[1] In other words, it is only through the Imams (a.s.) that human individuals can fulfill their servanthood toward God and come to know God.

In the Quran, there are indications of special knowledge of God being given to special servants of God, which includes the Imams and the *awliya'* (a.s.). In the story of Moses and Khidr, a verse reads: *Then the two found one of Our servants to whom We had given mercy from Us, and We had taught him knowledge from Our presence (Q.18:65).*

While there are such special distinctions given to certain humans, we must not forget that every *wali* and *nabi* is first of all a servant/worshipper of God. Even the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) is a servant of God before he is a messenger-as evident in the phrase, *Ashhadu anna Muhammadan `abduhu wa-rasuluhu.* Thus, the perfection of servanthood is first found in the prophets, Imams, and *awliya',* and that is why ordinary human beings need them for the perfection of their servanthood as well.

Perpetuity of Walaya

Walaya is another central concept in Shi`ism, which, as we shall see, is intimately connected to the idea of *intizar.* The possessor of *walaya* is called a *wali.* In the Quran alone, various orders of beings from God to Imams to other human beings are referred to as the *awliya',* which is often translated as "saints" or "friends" of God. While all the Imams (a.s) are possessors of *walaya,* there are also possessors of *walaya* outside the twelve Imams (a.s.), as indicated in the Shi`i hadiths, as we shall see below.

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1. al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 145; Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Saffar, Basa'ir al-darajat, p. 84; al-Sadduq, al-Tawhid, p. 152.

Imam Baqir (a.s) interprets the light verse, Light upon light (Q. 24:35), as follows: "A certain Imam came after another Imam among the family of Muhammad (s.a.w.s.) through the light of knowledge and wisdom, and he knows that [this custom] continues from the time of Adam (a.s.) till the Day of Resurrection. They are the appointees *(awsiya')* whom God has designated as vicegerents on earth; they are His proof *(hujja)* for His people; and the earth is never empty of them in any time period."[1] Thus, we can see that the *awsiya'* are the possessors of *walaya*, most prominently represented by the Imams (a.s.). Moreover, as long as the world continues to exist, there will always be such a being appointed by God to watch over the world and its people.

The continual presence of the Imams is indicated by the following saying attributed Imam Mahdī (a.s): "We do not abandon you, nor shall we forget to remember you,"[2] meaning that the Imams are always watching over those who wait for the reappearance. Thus, all of this textual evidence seems to indicate the continual presence *(huzur)* of the Imams (a.s) and the perpetuity of *walaya* in the world over its entire history. This is to say: even during the *ghayba*, God continues to guide people on earth through the Imams and the *awliya'*. Therefore, a true *muntazir* knows that in every time period—*ghayba* or pre-*ghayba*—the world is never devoid of the *presence/existence* of an Imam or a *wali*.

Human Being between Light and Darkness, Intimacy and Forgetfulness

If we turn our attention to human conditions on earth for a moment, we may say that human life is in constant fluctuation between light and darkness, or between uns (intimacy with God) and *nisyan* (forgetfulness). This

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1. al-Sadduq, al-Tawhid, p. 158.
2. al-Tusi, Tahdhib al-ahkam, vol. 1, p. 38.

forgetfulness is a darkness that dominates over many human beings (cf. Q. 103:2). In order for them to overcome this forgetfulness, they must seek and try to start moving toward light. And, as the Quran says, God is the light of the heavens and the earth (Q.24:35), this light that they must seek is ultimately nothing but God Himself.

If darkness is forgetfulness, light signifies not only intimacy but also remembrance *(dhikr)*. In other words, to move toward light means to *remember* God, for intimacy with God is only possible through full remembrance of His being. And it is the very function of the Imams and the *awliya'* to help people come closer to light.

The Guiding Light of Imama and Walaya

In fact, there are many hadiths in which the appearance of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) is associated with light shining on earth. For example, in his commentary on the verse, And the earth shall shine with the light of its Lord (Q. 39:69), Imam Sadiq (a.s.) interprets its Lord (i.e., the Lord of the earth) as "the Imam of the earth."[1] Thus, we can see that while God is the ultimate source of light, the Imams (a.s) are, as it were, avenues for that divine light to reach individual human beings, and conversely, they are the means for human beings to find and reach the divine light.

This view is further corroborated by Imam Baqir's (a.s.) interpretation of the verse, We placed for him a light to walk by among the people (Q. 6:122): [God placed for him] "an Imam to follow" [among people].[2] In other words, the Imams (a.s) are lights that guide human beings to the source

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1. Cf. Muhammad b. Jurayr al-Tabari, Dala'il al-imama (Qum: Mu'assasat al-Ba`tha, 1413q), p. 486; al-Mufid, al-Irshad (Qum: Mu'assasat al-Ma`arif, 1411q), vol. 2, p. 381; al-Qumi, Tafsir (Najaf: Maktabat al-Huda, 1387q), vol. 2, p. 253; al-Fayd al-Kashani, al-Safi (Maktabat al-I`lam al-Islami, 1420q), vol. 2, p. 1092.
2. al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 185; vol. 2, p. 675; al-`Ayyashi, Tafsir, vol. 1, p. 375.

of light—i.e., God. Thus, the Imams (a.s) serve as guides for the people to find God.

Likewise, light is also associated with *wilaya*.[1] This sense is suggested in the address of Imam Ali (a.s) to Kumayl b. Ziyad (d. 690/71), "Put off the light; the morning has come."[2] While Ali (a.s) is both an Imam and a *wali*, we can see how the light of guidance may be attributed to other than the twelve Imams (a.s). For instance, Imam Hadi is reported to have said to `Abd al-`Azim al-Hasani: "Welcome, o Abu al-Qasim! Truly, you are our *wali*."[3] In addition, Imam Hasan al-Askari (a.s) compared the pilgrimage to `Abd al-Azim's tomb to the pilgrimage to that of Imam Husayn (a.s.).[4] Thus, on the basis of historical evidence, we can see that it has been understood that people in every age found divine guidance through the Imams and the *awliya'*, who provide guiding lights on the path to God. The world ever remains the locus of their presence *(huzur)*, hence the guiding light of *Imama* and *walaya* remain.

There is a Quranic verse that says, O believers, fear God and desire the means to reach Him (Q. 5:35). The word used here for "the means" is wasila. The same word appears in a saying of Fatima (a.s), who regards herself as "a means" for human beings to reach God.[5] Since anyone who guides people to God would in fact be serving as "a means" for them to attain divine presence, it is clear that the light of divine guidance seen through the Imams (a.s.) and the *awliya'* are *necessary means* for human beings to progress on the path toward God.

1. Cf. al-Qumi, Tafsir, vol. 1, p. 215.
2. al-Sabzawari, Sharh asma' al-husna (Maktabat Basirati), vol 1, p. 133; vol. 2, p. 99; al-Sayyid Nasir Husayn al-Hindi, Ifham al-a`da' wa-l-khusum, p. 166.
3. al-Sadduq, p. 419.
4. Cf. al-Sadduq, Thawab al-a`mal, p. 99.
5. Ibn Shahr Ashub, Manaqib Al Abi Talib (Najaf: al-Maktaba al-Haydariyya, 1376q), vol. 2, p. 273.

Finding and Following the Wali

We have seen that how God continues to provide guidance to people even during the *ghayba* by the continual presence of *walaya* in the world. Now the question becomes what actions one must take to find a guide or a possessor of *walaya*.

There is a philosophical dictum that says, "Affinity is the cause of togetherness" (*al-shinkhiyya/al-jinsiyya `illat al-indimam*).[1] This principle tells us how things with similar tendencies tend to come together, and how people with common qualities incline toward one another.[2] In short, it explains the process of finding something or the mechanism of attraction in terms of affinity.

Let us try to apply this principle to the situation of a *muntazir* who is searching for an intermediary guide while he waits for the reappearance of the Imam (a.s). According to the above principle of affinity, people find things that they resemble. Therefore, if someone is in search of a *wali*, who possesses divine guidance and high human perfection, he must first try to become similar to the *wali* by trying to become a better person so as to perfect himself. Since there is always an Imam or *wali* who is watching over the entire world and always ready to protect and guide those who wait, the slightest sense of affinity should be enough to bring the two together on the initial level. Once the human individual recognizes a high level of human perfection in another, i.e., the *wali*, the latter can then start the process of drawing the former toward himself and toward God through divine grace. As God says in the hadith of *nawafil*, "The servant does not cease to draw near Me through the

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1. al-Fayd al-Kashani, al-Safi, vol. 5, p. 6; vol. 6, p. 436; al-Baydawi, Anwar al-tanzil, vol. 5, p. 171.
2. Cf. al-Majlisi, Bihar al-anwar, vol. 29, p. 496.

supererogatory acts of worship."[1] Hence, for the movement toward God to commence, all one needs is first, a recognition of the slightest degree of perfection within oneself in one's process of attraction to a more perfect being and second, an effort to attain greater perfection within oneself.

Furthermore, if affinity or similarity is what causes the *muntazir* to find a *wali*, the very act of finding affinity between oneself and the *wali* entails the act of finding (the qualities of) the *wali* within oneself. In other words, to find an affinity to something is to find that thing's presence within oneself-be that a *wali*, an Imam, or God. This is to say: in the very act of seeking the object sought is found. This idea seems to be implied by the hadith, "To wait for relief is a kind of the greatest relief itself" (*Intizar al-faraj min a`zam al-faraj*).[2] Thus, relief is found in the act of waiting itself; and *zuhur* may take place in the process of seeking it.

Therefore ultimately, those who actively seek the reappearance of the Imam (a.s) must and *will* find his presence *(huzur)* within themselves. This is the process of an inner *zuhur* of God, the Imam(s), and the *awliya'* (a.s), which can happen to human beings even during the *ghayba*, i.e., the period that lacks the outer *zuhur* of the Imam (a.s).

Once the *muntazir* finds *zuhur* within oneself, which is to say, the *huzur* of God, the Imams, and the *awliya* (a.s), his task is not to stop there but to continue this process to become ever closer and more similar to the *wali* through constant inner transformation. This is the only way the *muntazir* can draw closer to God—as the aforementioned hadith says, "The servant does not cease to draw near Me through the supererogatory acts of worship."[3]

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1. Ibn Hanbal, Musnad, vol 6, p. 256; al-Bukhari, al-Sahih, vol. 7, p. 190.
2. al-Majlisi, Bihar al-anwar (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Wafa', 1404q), vol. 36, p. 386.
3. Ibn Hanbal, Musnad, vol 6, p. 256; al-Bukhari, al-Sahih, vol. 7, p. 190.

Since God, the Imams, and the *awliya'* have *always* been present in the world as a whole as well as within individual human beings (in different degrees), the quest for them turns out to be nothing but a matter of *tawajjuh*, or attention—i.e., whether they have directed their faces toward God and His Imams/*awliya'* or not. In fact, to turn toward the *wali* is to turn toward God, for the *wali* is also understood to be "the face of God" *(wajh Allah).*[1] Thus in fact, the process of human beings' turning toward God begins with their turning toward the *wali*.

Once the human individual fully faces the presence of the *wali*, Imam (a.s), and God, he has to take up the next task of helping people to reach this stage. This point is suggested by several hadiths, such as the one attributed to Imam Mahdi (a.s.)-"Increase the call for the hastening of the relief" *(Akthiru al-du`a' bi-ta`jil al-faraj)*[2]-and the one attributed to Imam Sadiq (a.s.)-"Be inviters to the people through tongues other than your own."[3] Thus, in the time of the *ghayba*, calling people to the guiding lights toward the source of light is another necessary duty of the true *muntazir*. In short, various hadiths seem to exhort the *muntazir* in the following manner: O waiter! Invite people toward light by finding and nurturing the *zuhur* of light within yourself and let them see it appear in you so that they may be drawn toward light. Thus, in this long process of self-transformation, the true *muntazir* seeks to become another attractive force for the remaining *muntazirun* to be drawn toward the divine light. This is a force of attraction to greater perfection, which is doubtlessly of benefit to all living human beings.

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1. Cf. Muhammad b. al-Mashhadi, al-Mazar (Qum: Mu'assasat al-Nashr al-Islami, 1419q), vol. 509.
2. al-Sadduq, Kamal al-din, p. 485; al-Tusi, al-Ghayba, p. 293.
3. al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 78.

Appointed Time for the Outer Zuhur

Finally, there is the remaining question of when the outer *zuhur* of the Imam will take place. On this, Imam Mahdi (a.s) is reported to have said: "Close the door of questions about that which does not concern you."[1] This has been understood to include the question of the exact timing of the impending *zuhur*. However, it appears that specifying the time of the reappearance has been denied in the Hadith literature in general.[2] But why is this so? Since there does not seem to be any definite answer to this question in the standard sources, it might be worthwhile here to reflect on possible reasons for this intriguing phenomenon before we close our analysis for this paper.

Let us suppose that we know exactly when it will take place, and it is going to be the day after tomorrow. What should the *muntazir* do in this case? He knows that he has only two days before the much awaited *zuhur*. Will he change the way he has always lived before? Perhaps he will, especially if he has been a lazy waiter who has made no effort to improve himself or follow the guidance of a *wali* or even seek for one. In the case of a hardworking *muntazir*, he is most likely to continue to live just the way he has already lived-making constant efforts to come closer to God. Therefore, through this thought experiment we can see the ways in which knowing the time of the reappearance may not do much benefit to those who wait. In fact, there is a greater possibility of harm in knowing its timing, for people who have lived in moderate opposition to divine guidance all their lives hear the reappearence is near, they might think two days' time is not enough for them to repent and change their ways, so they might entirely give up the idea of trying

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1. al-Sadduq, Kamal al-din, p. 485.
2. Cf. al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. 1, p. 368; al-Tusi, al-Ghayba, p. 291; al-Rawandi, al-Khara'ij wa-l-jara'ij, vol. 1, p. 179.

to become better persons. And such a situation is no benefit to any party. Thus, knowing the appointed time for the *zuhur* turns out to be detrimental to the very process of *intizar*, which should be an ever-ongoing process of self-betterment, growth, and perfection.

Conclusion

So, what exactly is the significance of the act of *intizar* for the human individual? We have seen that *intizar* is an unceasing process of human growth in preparation for the outer and inner *zuhur*. It is also a movement toward God, which is a journey without an end. Since this is an endless process toward ever-greater perfection, it seems that its significance lies in the very process of striving to become better beings. The living human beings have no way of knowing the end result of these efforts, for they do not know whey they will die, any more than when the outer *zuhur* will occur. In this light, *intizar* can be even seen as an end in itself, it is a necessary process for human beings, perpetually giving meaning to human life in every time period.

Waiting *(intizar)*, therefore, encompasses a fourfold responsibility of the individual human being: duty toward God; duty toward the Imams; duty toward the *awliya'*; and finally, duty toward *oneself*. The duty toward God is to fulfill one's role as a servant of God. The duty toward the Imams (a.s) is to have no doubt about the coming of the Imam (a.s) and constantly ask for it. The duty toward the *awliya'* is to respect their instructions of the living guides (i.e., *awliya'*) on earth and follow and imitate them as closely as possible. Finally, the duty toward oneself is to transform oneself into a better, more perfect person so as to find an inner *zuhur* in oneself. The last is also a process of self-rediscovery and a cultivation of the innate human capacities for perfection—

just as the hadith says, "People are mines, like the mines of gold and silver."[1] In other words, the goal of *intizar* is not only to see the outer *zuhur* of the Imam (a.s) coming; it is also about encouraging human individuals to bring their potentialities for perfection into full actualization. This is the meaning of the famous saying, "Those who wait for the bringer of sound order must be sound himself" (*Muntaziran-i muslih khud bayad salih bashad*).

To conclude, the most significant impact of the act of *intizar* on the human individual is that this very act makes *zuhur* possible for him-i.e., by letting him discover an inner *zuhur*, which in turn makes him ready for the outer *zuhur* of the Imam (a.s.). The call for *intizar* proclaimed by the Imams and the *awliya'* (a.s) thus turns out to be nothing but the call for human growth and inner perfection through the guiding lights of *Imama* and *walaya*.

Once the true *muntazir* becomes the very locus of inner *zuhur*, he will be another inviter to the divine light through the guiding lights of *Imama/walaya*, following the injunction of Imam Sadiq (a.s): "Be inviters to the people through tongues other than your own."[2] Furthermore, in accordance with the principle of attraction by affinity, the *muntazir* joins the family of Muhammad (s.a.w.s.) in the true sense by becoming ever more similar and closer to the Imams and the *awliya'*. For the Prophet (s.a.w.s.) said, "Whoever resembles a people belongs to them" (*Man tashabbaha bi-qawmin fa-huwa minhum*).

Thus, *intizar* is an active process of "waiting." Its first condition is to have certitude about the impending reappearance of the Imam (a.s) even during the time of his *ghayba*. However, this mere certitude does not make one a

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1. al-Sadduq, Man la yahduruhu al-faqih, vol. 4, p. 380; Ibn Hanbal, Musnad, vol. 2, p. 539; Muslim, al-Sahih, vol. 8, p. 41; al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. 8, p. 177.
2. al-Kulayni, al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 78.

true *muntazir*; rather, he must prepare himself for the reappearance by becoming the very locus for the *zuhur* to take place. Since God always provides the world with guiding lights that lead to Himself through the presence of the *awliya'* even during the time of the *ghayba*, the true duty of the *muntazir* becomes the constant assimilation to the divine light through the process of self-transformation by way of those lights that get transmitted through *Imama and walaya*. Thus, the true act of *intizar* is what allows for the perfection of servanthood therefore of the perfection of human existence.

Imam Khomeini's Movement: Harbinger of the Reappearance of Imam Mahdi

Zainab Javier

Introduction

Parallel to the stries made in advancing the scientific and technological gains of the 2nd millennium is a burgeoning of spiritual movements across the globe, in all their hues and shades from the wide spectrum of religion. This is borne out of man's search for the Universal Truth and quest for the attainment of the actualization of his human potential; and an unassailable proof of the existence of a sublime essence inherent in man that makes the society's proclivity to religion an expected phenomenon.

Man labors hard to find happiness in life. This is the manifestation of an inherent longing for the actualization of his "human-ness," a longing for the attainment of the ultimate perfection, independence and obtaining a good grasp of reality. Thus, it is not surprising that since time immemorial, man awaits an era thriving with peace, justice and equality.

Lamentably, the contemporary time is permeated with just their opposites. The current world political set-up which is

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suffering under the colonialist yoke of U.S. global hegemony is pervaded with aggression, injustice and oppression. All these are antithetical to justice, peace and harmony which are the necessary features for the materialization of the awaited golden era.

Logic dictates that a link from this era replete with injustice and human destruction to that era of peace and justice has to be found. For despite a critical mass visualizing and deeply anticipating this blissful state in concurrence with the principles of the Laws of Attraction and Vibration, without the strategic planning and restructuring of prevalent systems, this would never materialize and all visualizations done towards attaining this would amount to nothing but mere daydreaming.

The reinventions during the last millennium made on conventions like reason, the basis of man's putting meaning to things within and outside his reality, manifest the constancy of movement that brings change. As Charles Handy declared: "we humans have entered an Age of Unreason- an era of rapid and highly 'discontinuous change' that calls for new approaches in all spheres and even new ideas about being in this world,"[1].

Among the many changes that came with the numerous achievements, discoveries and inventions during the last millennium, one significant movement brought changes in concepts that signify a move toward the actualization of man's highest aspiration. This is Imam Khomeini's movement, otherwise known as the Islamic Revolution.

The success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran made available to the rest of the world an alternative to consider that could be applied so as to bring into fruition the cherished era of justice since this can counter the designs of the divisive, anti-peace, anti-justice neo-colonialists,. The

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1. Charles Handy, The Age of Unreason, Harvard Business School Press, 1989.

Islamic movement spearheaded by Imam Khomeini (r.a) reintroduced to the world a system with its own modality and conventions that was proven to thwart the strategies of imperialists and thereby destroy the daunting impregnability they project.

Otherwise buried deep in the dustbin of history, religion got a shot in the arm with the victory of the Islamic Revolution in Iran. The success of this movement brought to the fore two points: the rationality of Islam and its workability in this contemporary time, plus the re-introduction of the Link between the millennia, Imam Mahdi (a.s), as the Savior of Mankind who will rid the earth of injustice and oppression.

With this revolution came a new vision, a new worldview and a precise description of the nature of man, with special emphasis on the significant role of women as the transmitter of values and beliefs, directing the course of society.

Man

Man is a complex being. A multifaceted being that may vary according to different life situations, but somehow two factors remain constant in him.

First, no matter what religious garb he may don or no matter what his pronouncements may be about his stance in life, man when put in a life-threatening situation automatically, without second thoughts, calls on a Power to pull him out. At that very instance a strong and propelling conviction springs out from deep within his very core that a Force far greater than what he is confronted with is existent and potent enough to neutralize the imminent danger he now faces. This is proof of man's instinctive belief in the Divine Source, in His Maker, in a Benevolent, Merciful and Caring God.

Second, man is always longing for something. "This fact that when human spirit is developed highly through intellect

and conscience cannot pause in certain points of recognitions and acts of its life and, as Dostoevsky says, whenever it reaches its destination would face a new perplexity, is caused by this reality that the human spirit is endowed with a grandeur which constantly makes it ascend from low to high and from high to higher. Even for some people a goal surrounded with a ghost of ambiguity in such as way that some space is left for improvement is more joyful. I think this motion and ascent has a direct relation with mental development: the more developed a human mind is, the more active he would be in passing limited, transient affairs so nothing would satisfy him but to achieve an infinite perfection- which is nothing but God.[1]

Thus, the unadulterated nature of man instinctively draws him to God. He by nature loves justice, beauty, equality and peace and thereby abhors aggression, oppression and all forms of injustice.

Unfortunately, in the course of time, the first factor which is the innate feeling for a connection to his Maker got hazy when religion became alienated and was reduced to a set of rituals performed during specific occasions. As history attests, religion lost its spirit when it got estranged due to the separation of the secular and the divine, of religion and science, of religion and politics.

With the scientific movements in science, the predictions of Quantum Theory that no volume of space can be perfectly empty is further fortified. This may likewise be said on the issue of man's innate longing for the ideal. For in the absence of answers provided for by religion, man inevitably fills this in with answers acquired outside the ambit of religion, albeit unfortunately, to his detriment. Thus, the abounding of numerous "escapes routes" for man: alcohol, drugs, sex, and even those seeming "safe"

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1. Allameh M. T. Jafari, The Conscience, Allameh Jafari Institute, Tehran, Iran, p. 83.

addictions to shopping, chatting, texting, television, work, etc. Superficially, these may provide enjoyment for a time but eventually, leave him in a bind that the full range motion of his growth and development is hindered.

True to the second factor but devoid of the traces of religion, the love for knowledge which started from the Prophets (p.b.u.t.) became one-dimensional. Consequently, devoid of the parameters set by religion that taper man's instinctive hunger for power, history is decked with harrowing pictures conveying the travails of man due to man. Just in recent history, the U.S. war crimes masked with the cover of promoting democracy, is but about 'capturing hydrocarbon resources that are oil and gas[1]." That is pure and unadulterated greed.

Ever searching for that cherished just and peaceful setting, while immersed deep in a reality permeated with a bankruptcy in morals that foments mayhem at the backdrop, the man of the 2nd millennium went full speed ahead in the inquiry and study on the essence of man, thus the mushrooming of spiritual movements the world over.

Waylaid along the way

According to religious traditions and the history of religions, man has never lived without a prophet and, at all times, religions and cultures left by Prophets have provided a model or program for people's lives.[2] The Prophets taught man the process of thinking about his reality, the world, and the relation between man and the world and its amazing phenomena. The Prophets not only formed human thought,

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1. Professor Niloufer Bhagwat, Vice President of Indian Association of Lawyers and member of the International Criminal for Afghanistan. In Their Eyes, Al-Hadi Printing Press, Beirut, Lebanon. P. 100.
2. Prof. S. M. Khamenei, Mulla Sadra's Transcendent Philosophy, Sadra Islamic Philosophy Research Institute Publication, Islamic Republic of Iran. 2004. p. 3.

but also taught them the lessons of ethics and law in social relationships.[1]

Through the course of history and after so many tumultuous events, the immense scientific and political treasures resulting from this Prophets-inspired thinking process fell into the Europeans hands after the Christians conquered Spain. All these were translated into Latin. Accordingly, a widespread scientific movement started in law, philosophy, logic, mathematics, physics, chemistry, astronomy, medicine and even in literature, music, architecture and art, and provided the foundations for the Renaissance.[2]

With the adherence to the Christian code bent on asserting the separation of the Church and State, and its stance on the irreconcilability of science with religion, thus the Inquisition that put Galileo Galilei in house arrest for the rest of his life, the fruits of the thinking process introduced by the Prophets was not only divested of the dimension of the spirit, but more tragically, a picture of religion as against progression and which is antithetical to the development of man became deeply imbedded in the psyche of man. Islam, although its Holy Book remained preserved, was not spared of this fate.

Thus, from the center where it is rightfully situated, religion, including the complete and final religion which is Islam, was relegated into the sidelines.

With the imbalance wrought forth by this schism, the inventions, discoveries and introductions made during the 2nd millennium, from the printing press to the satellite and the Internet, from Calculus to the DNA and Quantum Physics and mechanics, from canned food to the food processor, from the bicycle to the space station and GPS navigation, were offset by the killings perpetrated by man

1. Ibid, p.5.
2. Ibid, p. 5.

using inventions created by the ingenuity of man, which were more massive than those caused by natural forces.

As according to Patrick Hannon, Irish writer, researcher and commentator, "If you look at the overall picture in the 20th century, 120 million people have died in wars and not from famines, not from cancer, not from AIDS but wars instigated mainly by the USA over a hundred years, that is about 3,400 people die every day from wars because of the quest for power."[1]

Advancements gained with the scientific movements in the other fields and even in literature, music, architecture and art, were likewise utilized by the Western powers who work against the establishment of the sovereignty of God in this plane to lure, hoodwink, manipulate and control the people. Media, as television networks, radio networks, the cinema, newspapers, magazines, and even the Internet, are likewise utilized to control the masses, therefore referred to by the founder and director of Alternative Radio in the U.S. as "Weapons of Mass Distraction.[2]"

All these keep maintain the world order established, with its distinctive view on the nature of man and a worldview emphasizing the invincibility of the superpowers and the perception that only with the reliance on the superpowers can nations become successful.

Verse 36 of Chapter 8 of the Holy Qur'an states that:

"Indeed the faithless spend their wealth to bar from the way of Allah. Soon they will have spent it, then it will be a cause of regret to them, then they will be overcome, and the faithless will be gathered toward Hell,…"

So far, the American system of domination is mostly unchallenged to the degree that the Islamic Revolution in

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1. Patrick Hannon, Zeinab al Saffar, In Their Eyes, Al-Hadi Printing Press, Beirut, Lebanon. 2006, p. 151.

2. David Barsamian, Radio producer, journalist, author and lecturer, and winner for ACLU'S Upton Sinclair Award for independent journalism among others. In Their Eyes, p. 126.

Iran has reached when it ousted the Americans from their land. In most cases elsewhere, superficial make over lead the hoi polloi to believe that change has been had, but beneath the surface repressive configurations are left very much in place, with the educational system, the government system, and all other systems still very much in the hands of the U.S.

Finding the Way Back

The subjects in the Holy Qur'an are arranged in such a way that any reader who randomly flips through it and chooses any page to read does not at all find himself lost and disconnected, nor does this leave him in a state of confusion. Rather, despite the random selection, he finds its phrases talking to him at a level he understands, giving answers to his questions and helping him find his ground, enabling him to find his rooting, and safe from being tossed by the gushing winds of confusion due to the prevailing ignorance. So, whatever one's circumstances may be, at whatever juncture he may be in his life, one finds in the Holy Qur'an a credible source of solace and a reliable rope to hold on to, to pull him out of the rubble, so to speak.

As the written Word of the Beneficent and Merciful Lord of the Worlds teaching man how to get connected to the Divine Source and, thus, get the best of this world and the world to come, nowhere in the entire archive of men's literary works can one find a book as credible and effective as the Holy Qurán is. This is exactly what Imam Ruhollah Al-Musavi Al-Khomeini re-introduced to the world.

Imam Khomeini, by piloting the Islamic Revolution in Iran, re-introduced to a world steeped in ignorance the Holy Book, its Author, its Messenger and its Implementers. Thus, despite the full-blast media blitz carried out to demonize Islam through the demonization of Imam Khomeini, the world was reminded about the pristine version of Islam and

was thereby made aware about the truth regarding the Holy Qur'an, Allah (S.W.T.), Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W.) and the Ahlul Bayt (a.s.), and showed the world, with the founding of the Islamic Republic of Iran, that this way of life, as introduced by Allah's Messenger (S.A.W.) and Imams (a.s), is feasible even in this so-called Space Age and is never a hindrance to the full actualization of the human being.

Through this re-introduction, the people were made aware about the Greatness of God at a time when the majority was stupefied and awed with the mighty and stupendous wares churned out by the developments in science and technology in the West. Imam Khomeini (r.a.) also reminded them that infused with an essence from a Divine realm, as is stated in verse 29 of Chapter 15 of the Holy Qur'an …*"So when I have made him and have breathed into him of My Spirit..."* man holds a power within which was far greater than what was apparent; and that this can only be maximized once connected to the right Source. Imam Khomeini (r.a.) then reminded the people that that power, once active and charged can propel one to transcend and leap through blockades, freeing man to soar to higher dimensions.

With these reminders the Imam therefore fortified the belief in the Power of Belief in Allah (S.W.T.). This is exactly what made him gain the ire of the strategists in Washington, London, Paris and Tel-Aviv. As best said by Michael Opperskalaski, the editor and publisher of the magazine Top Secret and adviser to former South African President Nelson Mandela, "The CIA and the Israeli Mossad fear us. They can't believe that people are struggling because of their beliefs."[1]

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1. Michael Opperskalaski, Zeinab Al Saffar, In Their Eyes, Al-Hadi Printing Press, Beirut, Lebanon. P. 128.

Armed with a deep belief in the Power and Greatness of the Lord of the Worlds, this man from the holy city of Qom, was then successful in leading the Muslims to find their way back to fidelity to the Qur'an, fidelity to the Last Messenger of God, Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) and fidelity to the Rightfully Guided Imams (a.s.), and thereby gain self-confidence.

Thus, the inevitable happened. After years of disgrace in the hands of the proxy regime of the enemies of humanity, the secularist monarchy of the Shah Pahlavi, the Muslim nation of Iran was able to rise up and attained its dignity. Now, thirty years after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, the Islamic Republic of Iran finds itself directing its course as it navigates through the political landscape of the contemporary world.

The success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, thereby, serves as the most significant change in the 2nd millennium as it infused back the spirit in religion, which has lost its luster and viability in the perception of the people. Thanks to Imam Khomeini (r.a.) and all the fortunate individuals who were blessed with the gift of martyrdom, Islam, as the completion of the Message from God, was thus reinvented and is viewed as how it should be, a way of life where God is at the center, enabling man to reach the apex of his perfection.

Linking the Gap

Eschatology is not exclusive to any religion. People with diverse religious outlook commonly share an inclination towards attaining perfection, both in the personal realm and the world at large.. Most take steps towards actualizing their potential at the same time await a Savior to save humanity from injustice and oppression, and simultaneously awaiting the golden era this just leader will rule.

Considering the present makeup of the contemporary world, for this to come into fruition would require a systematic change that necessitates constructs that are attainable and doable. A link from the era of injustice to the era of justice must be established.

Of all the liberation movements undertaken, only the Islamic Revolution has the theoretical and practical implements that encompass all facets of man's life and is equipped with safety nets to foil the attacks of the aggressors in all spheres.

As far as the actualization of the ultimate human potential is concerned, a focal point to which energy is directed is a must. This Ultimate Point must be free of any incongruity and inconsistency. As Islam introduces an unlimited, unbounded, all-powerful Perfect Being who is beyond the comprehension and imagination of man as the Deity towards whom man must strive for, it opens wide an unlimited range for progression to make him reach the sommum bonum. Since there are no limiting boundaries in his scope, man is thereby uninhibited in discovering and realizing his potential.

On the socio-political realm, practical guidelines are needed to neutralize the negativities pervading the world over, manifested in the injustices carried out against humankind and the abounding social maladies that proliferate. As the coordinator of SOS Iraq and member of the Executive Committee of the Brussels Tribunal Dirk Adriaensens aptly said, "peace can only be achieved if imperialism is defeated in this region[1]." Of course, if we want world peace then this would necessitate the defeat of imperialism worldwide.

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1. Dirk Adriaensens, Zeinab Al Saffar, In Their Eyes, Al-Hadi Printing Press, Beirut, Lebanon.

Through the years imperialism has taken its hold over most regions through the implementation of strategies that have evolved with time. In this Information Age, the process of thinking is the main target. All efforts are concentrated on manipulating the mind through the use of inventions made in the second millennium.

This is where the movement of Imam Khomeini comes into the picture, for the Imam introduced a "way of thinking" (backed by practical rules and regulations that reinforce this) that acknowledges only the Power and Sovereignty of the Divine Being. This belief system makes ineffective the projection of power and impregnability long touted by the superpowers that has kept most pseudo-states powerless and immobilized in the face of their subjugation.

The emphasis of Islam on reliance on God alone, solidarity and truthfulness, all pursued for attaining the pleasure of a Merciful, Beneficent, Unlimited, Perfect and All-Powerful God alone, offers a solid defense against all these machinations.

Imperialists gain a stronghold over people's lives and lands when the majority is distracted and divided among them. This leaves the people distracted making them vulnerable to the cunning of those who are after nothing but power and control over the resources of the world.

As imperialism divides, Islam unites. The Holy Qur'an in Chapter 49 verse 13 says…

"O Mankind! Indeed We created you from a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes that you may identify yourselves with one another, Indeed the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most Godwary among you…"

The emphasis laid by Islam on piety as the only criterion that elevates man in the eyes of God foments unity based on the commonality of being human and counters the thrust of imperialism to divide peoples through the highlighting of

differences as to religion, race, financial status, educational level, etc.

Another concept introduced by the Islamic Revolution that has a great impact on the success and progress of society is the role of women, especially their noble profession of being mothers or human builders can never be underestimated. As caregivers in charge of the molding of character of the children who will be the adults participating in the affairs of the state in the future, mothers play a crucial role in transmitting values and the culture to future generations.

Their role in the success of the Islamic Revolution in Iran can never be understated. If not for the women encouraging their husbands and their sons to go out and face the forces of the Shah, reminding them about the lofty station of martyrs in the Eyes of God, the Islamic Republic wouldn't have been established.

Importance of a Leader

Having the right leader is a crucial factor for the success of any movement. This is true especially for the Islamic Revolution which involves transformation and development in all the spheres of human life. The leader must not only be an astute strategist in the realms of the social sciences but must also be an embodiment of total service and submission to God alone, in other words an upright moral and just man. The leader of the Islamic Revolution must therefore be the embodiment of all that is good, as the bona fide Representative of Allah (S.W.T.) in this time and age.

Imam Mahdi (a.s.) is the 12th Imam of the Household of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.). According to the Prophet (s.a.w.) himself, "The world will not come to an end until a man from the descendants of Husayn takes charge of the

affairs of the world and fills it with justice and equity as it is filled with injustice and tyranny.[1]"

"Follow the leader," the saying goes. To anticipate and believe in Imam Mahdi a.s. as the leader of the movement inevitably motivates one to the utmost of his ability to emulate the Imam a.s. Since the Imam is the embodiment of all that is good and just, this act as a motivating force behind initiatives working against injustices, consequently generating moves to neutralize existing oppressive systems.

To believe in the leadership of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) does not only provide a link for the two millennia but also offers a concrete reminder that fortifies the link between man and the Supreme Creator. The person of Imam Mahdi (a.s.), as a Representative of Allah (S.W.T.) in this material plane, serves as a tangible proof for the Infinite Power of the Creator, providing a glimpse of His Infinite Power which is beyond the scope of man's imagination and beyond the scope of science.

Conclusion

The most significant effect of the movement of Imam Khomeini (r.a.) is the change in the perception of things. The Islamic Revolution presented man with a different worldview. It gave man a new vision of who and what he is, of what the world is, of what death is, and of what Reality really is. It gave man a new vision of what he can become.

The Islamic Revolution brought with it the system introduced by the Prophets (s.a.w.) that includes strategies and courses of action that push forward the development and progress of man; and is likewise incorporated with safety nets to reinforce the results, at the same time protecting them against factors that may jeopardize them.

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1. Bihar al-anwar, Vol. 52, p. 345.

The Islamic Revolution presents a clearer picture of reality and offers a clearer vision for the future by elucidating several points:

1. That all humans are of the same essence. This presents a unifying factor, focusing on the commonality in all human beings despite the geographical, economical and ideological divide, and thereby gives a setback to the divide and rule policy of imperialists that capitalize on man's differences.

2. That all the Prophets (peace be upon them), numbering to 124,000, were sent by One God. This brings under one umbrella all the Prophets and thereby reveals the unity of all the unadulterated messages presented by them. Again, this concept can neutralize the divisions created out of the manipulations of neo-colonialists that try to pit followers of different religions against each other.

3. That religion calls for action. That faith without action is useless. That to have faith in God is to work for His Cause which is to uphold justice. That belief in God makes it incumbent upon the believers to enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong. That to believe in God gives one the responsibility to help the oppressed and fight the oppressors. In effect, this calls on sincere followers of all religions to fight against oppression, where ever and to whomever it is committed against.

4. That with the reality of Imam Mahdi (a.s.), man is presented with a reliable and credible link to the Absolute Power, and that with him at the fore this present era permeated with falsehood and injustice will be transformed into the era of prosperity and bliss.

5. That the woman, not just a body but a dignified personality, bears the noble responsibility of transmitting this subservience to God alone to the generations to come, thus freeing man to steer society's course towards perfection.

For the first time, in the halls of the United Nations, the name of Imam Mahdi (a.s.) reverberated when the Iranian President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, announced and reminded everyone about his reality. This could not have happened if not for the success of the Islamic Revolution that established the Islamic Republic of Iran.

This proves beyond doubt that there is a power more potent than what science and technology can ever create, and this is the power that lies within the very core of man - the power of his belief. With a firm belief that "If God helps you, none can overcome you," man is able to release his dormant power and is able to face all the challenges, weathering any storm, enabling him to reach his goal.

Armed with a belief in a God who is Unlimited, Unbounded, Perfect and Absolute, what can stop man from actualizing his human potential, soaring higher than the angels and finally, attaining that longed for era of bliss?

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Governments at Occultation Age & Paving the Ground for Reappearance

Syeda Saminah Sughra

Preface:

Collective life in a society demands for its survival, the presence of a political governing body called government. Political efforts in a society are in the true instinct of man that Allah almighty has created first human being as His vicegerent and also assigned political role to His prophets along with the prophet hood. During his apostleship, Holy Prophet (PBUH) used to receive revelations and deliver the laws and commands of Islam to the people and besides this he was designated as the head of the state and was nominated to administer the affairs of state e.g. to establish an economic system, introduce an independent judicial system, provide the basis of international law and introduce the Holy Quran as constitution and equitable civil law in the state of Medina. So, we have clarified that need of government is undeniable in the society which should prevail with justice and equity simultaneously where ever these concepts are ignored people demand for a "savior"

who with a "revolutionary system" can make their lives more secure and prosperous. Thus, we have to admit that throughout the history of mankind these two concepts remained present such as, "importance of Political governing body in every society" and "concept of savior" (a concept which emerged when the dictatorial, atrocious and seditious powers started to rule the society).

Likewise, while discussing about the "Concept of Mahdism" in Shiite belief we consider significant the foremost ideals of "Occultation age", "presence of savior among us", "paving the ground for his reappearance" and "governmental role". The pivotal point of "reappearance" is focused in this concept and "Governments along with their role" are of utmost significance. The political role and formation of an equitable Government by savior makes us to focus on the role of Governments in the occultation age and paving the ground for reappearance. The political role of savior cannot be denied as we observe that throughout the history of mankind concepts of "society", "State", and "Government" always remained correlated and were never new-fangled but actually these were present in the true instinct of Man. Thus we have to realize that if the prime objective of the "Savior" is to establish a good governing system full of justice and equity then while paving the grounds for his appearance we have to support him with the "governmental reforms".

The significance of governmental role for "preparing the grounds" is evident. So far, we are looking forward for a "Worldly Government" based on justice, equity, love, peace, brotherhood and equality. It makes it comprehensible that instead of waiting for any miracle, we have to pave the way through a "governmental revolution" which would be a part of "Worldly Government of Savior" in the future. Occultation age of the savior (Imam Mehdi) is like a

blessing for the society and people having strong belief about savior does not wait passively but perform revolutionary acts to pave the ground for his appearance and try to make their elegant acts adjacent to the great worldly revolution. This paper can make it clarify that though during the occultation there is lack of worldly divine governments yet prevailing governments by enforcing the laws based on justice, equity, brotherhood and equality can give their support to the divine government of the savior. This is the only way through which ground for appearance of savior could be paved and aims and objects of the worldly revolution of him could be fulfilled. Through this paper, while turning the pages of history we can look over the Islamic dynasties in the distinct era of times e.g. Safavid and Al-Booyeh dynasties in the ancient Persia, their significance in a specific region and their role for providing a foundation stone to the present Islamic government of Iran. It is obvious and understood fact that an Islamic government running on the principals of Willayat can pave the ground for appearance of savior and could be a part of his worldly divine government.

"Savior" and Significance of Occultation Age:

"Mahdism" or concept of savior is not mere a part of Islamic doctrines but it is a symbol of that hope which all humanity in spite of their different believes keep securely in their hearts. This doctrine is actually an interpretation to the sweat dream in which all humanity according to their different affiliations are waiting for a day when all divine religions will reach to their perfect objectives and exhausted and fagged journey in the history will finish consolatory on the destination of peace and prosperity. Though this concept is present in all religions of the world yet people not having belief on supernatural phenomena also accept it from whole

heartedly. The specialty which Islam has given to this concept is "Description of basis, standards and logics". Hence, in Islam it has been described as a "Doctrine" where "Occultation age" has its significance (according to Shiite beliefs). Now it is not necessary to wait for a "strange savior" who will come in the near future and will work for the welfare of humanity but "savior is already among us" and not only we have to wait for the circumstances which will demand His appearance necessarily so He may start His greatest mission but we have to work for His manifestation, adopt his political strategies and to form a just and fair government.

Presence of savior in the Occultation age gives hope to the people who have been detained in the shackles of tyranny and injustice. This is a positive feeling which makes the people not to sit passively and to work actively for the coming worldly revolution of the savior. There is an important illustration quoting that presence of savior in the occultation age is like "sun behind the clouds", thus He provides the same benefits to the humanity as the sun gives to the objects of this universe. Presence of savior (Imam Mahdi ajf) in the occultation age and afterward appearance of Imam with assigned political role has been proved from the narrations of Holy Prophet (PBUH) and Infallible Imams; hence it has been mentioned in the sacred books:

"Divine inspiration to you people about Mahdi (ajf), who will become manifest in the time when humanity will suffering separation, anxiety, distress and inconvenience; and the earth will be filled with oppression and tyranny, He will fill it with equity and justice, He will inebriate the hearts of His followers with the eagerness of worship and His justice will be accessible for everyone"

"In the last epoch my adherents will face a lot of obstinacy from the king of the times that will be such

affliction that no one has seen such type of calamity, in the result of such disaster this vast land will get scanty for my brethren in faith, earth will be filled with oppression and cruelty. No asylum will be available to believers and in this environment of tyranny and oppression no one will reach to redress their grievances. Then God Almighty will send one of pious person from may sacred generation so He may fill the earth with justice and equity as it would be filled with injustice and tyranny……..''

"Re-appearance; Pivotal Point in the Doctrine of Mahdism":

It has also been discussed while emphasizing in the above mentioned lines that Islam has given a unique characteristic to the concept of savior or doctrine of Mahdism. Islam (according to Shiite beliefs) narrates that Savior is present among Mankind and they are advised to pave the ground for His appearance instead of waiting for those circumstances which could pave the way for his soon arrival. Actually, concept of re-appearance of Imam is considered a pivotal point in the sacred doctrine of Mahdism. Keeping in view the worldly divine role of the savior following significant points can be mentioned in regard of appearance of the savior:

Appearance of Imam (savior) depends on the circumstances and conditions of that time, thus if considered suitable for His appearance He will be allowed to appear as soon as possible. Terms and conditions will be provided by the followers or lovers of Imam that how much they work to pave the ground for His appearance. It was the reason that Holy Prophet (PBUH) also mentioned during his sacred life about the making of preparation for the appearance of promised Mehdi (ajf). He narrated for the followers of Imam Mehdi (ajf) to be prepared, even, at least with "an arrow" to be saved for the assistance of Imam Mehdi (ajf).

- Savior (Imam) has been assigned political role. He has to form a worldly government with the formation of which Allah Almighty will predominant His religion on all religions or the world and people will penetrate in that true religion in large number. Hence mentioned in the Holy Quran, "Allah hath promised such of You as believe and do good work that He will surely make them to succeed (the present rulers) in the earth even as He caused those who were before them to succeed (others); and that He will surely establish for them their religion which He hath approved for them, and will give them in exchange safety after their fear. They server Me. They ascribe nothing as partner unto ME. Those who disbelieve henceforth, they are the miscreants"

- Appearance of savior makes it sure that a worldly government will be established based on justice and equity, whose laws and political philosophy will be based on divine laws, where plenty of justice will be available to everyone without any discrimination, concept of equality before law will be enforced with true spirit. Holy Quran also narrates this ideal situation as "And we desired to show favor unto those who were oppressed in the earth, and to make them inheritors."

Shortly, Doctrine of Mahdism has pivotal point of appearance of Imam (savior) with an assigned political role especially for the formation of a worldly government. A government which could be able to abolish the political system based on tyranny, oppression, exploitation, injustice, self interest, cheating and artifice. Under this doctrine according to Shiite faith, we believe on the presence of "alive and vanished" Imam who is living among us, supervising our activities, helping or guiding us in crisis. Now we are waiting rather we are made responsible to work

actively and not to sit passively, hence we could pave ground for His appearance.

"Governments During Occultation Age":

This article has mentioned very clearly that presence of a political governing body is of utmost importance for the survival of a society. Political movements or Political role of human beings collectively or individually is in the true instinct of Man. Great scholar of 20ᵗʰ century Imam Khomeini has mentioned that "I could not found a single principal of Islam without the element of politics". It is an admitted fact that Allah almighty has assigned political role to his pious peoples i.e. Prophets and infallible Imams. Hence, He mentioned in the Holy Quran that "And verily We have written in the scripture, after the Reminder: My righteous slaves will inherit the Earth". Keeping in view the political philosophy provided by Allah almighty in the Holy Quran and from the Holy life of Prophet (PBUH) the renowned Muslim political philosophers have mentioned their political philosophies. These great philosophers such as Al-Farabi (870-950A.H) Ibn-e-Khaldun (1332- 1406 AD) and Allamah Muhammad Iqbal (1873- 1938) have mentioned the significance of politics and formation of governments in a society. Almost all Muslim political philosophers had consensus on the point that "Political or governmental role" has such pivotal place in a system as "heart" maintains in the body. These philosophers have given their political theories and provided pattern of Governments based on such political philosophies. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal was a great scholar and philosopher of earlier 20ᵗʰ century who has mentioned the co-relation and importance of religion with that of politics. Even in his poetry he has delivered the message of "co-existence of politics and religion" and said "if politics separates from

religion, it has no worth but it becomes the politics of changez khan". During the late 20th century, it was Imam Khomeini who has up hold the banner of Islam and stood up right in front of the seditious and tyrannical powers of the society. Imam Khomeini (1900-1989) popularized the concept that there is no difference between "Religion and politics". He made it clear, through historical facts, that because of following reasons establishment or formation of Government is necessary in a society;

1. It is proved through the Holy life of "Prophet (P.B.U.H)" that formation of Government is of utmost importance.

2. The enforcement of "Divine laws" is not only confined to the era of Holy Prophet (P.B.U.H) but their demand is eternal.

3. "Divine laws" in their nature are not only theoretical but practical. Thus, for their proper application law enforcing agency (Government) is necessary.

Contrary to Muslim philosophies, Western political thinkers also focused on the political role of man individually as well as collectively but they were never convinced of the fact that religion has a place even in the collective life of a man. It was only in the medieval ages (11th to 16th century) when the role of church was observed in the politics but it ended with the "state and church controversy". Medieval Philosophy was greatly concerned with the "nature of God" and the application of Aristotle's logic and thought to every area of life. It was the time when "State and Church" controversy emerged which was because of the dictator ship of church. St. Thomas Aquinas (1227-1274) a famous philosopher of this era described "state" as 'God established or natural institution'. He claimed that Man cannot live without society and society must have "Government". He mentioned the source of

Political authority is "God" Who is "supreme Governor" and people under Him are sovereign and may delegate their authority to any form of 'Government'. Era of modern western political philosophy is considered the time of 17th to 19th century, this era is characterized as "Modern" because it was age of "Reason", "Renaissance" and "Enlightenment". In few usages, modern philosophy ended in 1800B.C. with the rise of "Hegelianism" and "idealism". Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) given the concept of "ideal state of nature" where in every person had equal right to every resource. Karl Marx (1818-1883), the founder of scientific socialism and communism, holds that the "state" is the political organization of ruling class which uses its power for the purpose of suppressing the resistance of its class enemy. Keeping in view the all above philosophies it can be concluded that Muslim philosophies could not remain in vogue properly mostly they had given the "caliphate system" which could not be enforced but according to western philosophies following models remained applicable in the society in different times. These models could be enlisted such as:

1. Stateless Societies of the Primitive times.
2. The tribal Kingdoms.
3. The oriental Empires.
4. The Greek City-states.
5. The Roman Empire.
6. The Feudal States.
7. The National States of the Modern times.
   - Monarchical or Despotic states
   - Democratic states (Prevailing with the concepts of|;)
      1. Secularism
      2. Nationalism
      3. Legalism

While giving an analysis to the presence of Governments during occultation age, it is worthy to mention that along with the states based on western philosophies there remained reign of Muslim dynasties during different era of times. Hence, we can mention that during the age of occultation there were following Muslim dynasties in distinct reigns.

1. Ottoman Empire in Asia (14th-20th centuries).
2. Safavid Empire in Persia (16th-18th centuries).
3. Mughal Empire in India (16th-19th centuries).

While especially referring to the safavid dynasty of ancient Persia it is worthy to mention that the Safavid dynasty had its origin in the "Saffawiyah" which was established in the city of Ardabil in the Azerbaijan region of Iran. From their base in Ardabil, the Safavids established control over all of Persia and reasserted the Iranian identity of the region, thus becoming the first native dynasty since the Sassanid to establish a unified Iranian state. Despite their demise in 1736, the Safavids have left their mark down to the present era by establishing and spreading in major parts of the Caucasus and West Asia, especially in Iran.

Even though Safavids were not the first Shia rulers in Iran, they played a crucial role in making Shia Islam the official religion in the whole of Iran. There were large Shia communities in some cities like Qom and Sabzevar as early as the 8th century. In the 10th and 11th centuries the Buwayhids, who were of the Zaidiyyah branch of Shia, ruled in Fars, Isfahan and Baghdad as a result of the Mongol conquest and the relative religious tolerance of the Ilkhanids, Shia dynasties were re-established in Iran, Sarbedaran in Khorasan being the most important. The Ilkhanid ruler Öljaitu converted to Twelver Shiism in the 13th century. In Number of ways the Safavids affected the development of the modern Iranian state: first, they ensured

the continuance of various ancient and traditional Persian institutions, and transmitted these in a strengthened, or more 'national', form; second, by imposing Ithna 'Ashari Shi'a Islam on Iran as the official religion of the Safavid state, they enhanced the power of Mujtahids. The Safavids thus set in train a struggle for power between the urban and the crown that is to say, between the proponents of secular government and the proponents of a theoretic government; third, they laid the foundation of alliance between the religious classes ('Ulama') and the bazaar which played an important role both in the Persian Constitutional Revolution of 1905–1906, and again in the Islamic Revolution of 1979; fourth the policies introduced by Shah Abbas I conduced to a more centralized administrative system.

On the contrary, Mughal Empire in India and Ottoman Empire were Sunni states and even some of their rulers were much prejudice to the Shiite Islam. Thus it can be notified that Safavid dynasty played a pivotal role for the spread of Shiite Islam in Iran which could be mentioned as foundation stone of present Islamic government. This government based on the pure system of Willayat is providing the beam of hope and a strong prediction that in the nearby future worldly Islamic government could be established based on the ideals of "Willayat", justice, equity, brotherhood and equality. This Islamic government is considered a best illustration for establishment of a "worldly Islamic Government" by the savior of the world. No doubt, it can be mentioned clearly that during the Occultation age, government playing its role for paving the grounds of appearance is the same based on the elegant principal of Willayat.

"Governments During Occultation Age & Paving the Ground of Appearance"

Above mentioned discussion makes it clear that different established governments throughout the world are based on different Islamic and western political philosophies. Though, the government based on true Islamic rules and system of willayat is the best of form of government playing its role actively for paving the ground of appearance yet other governments based on the true principles of justice, equity, brotherhood and equality can also have their proportional part for paving the ground of appearance. Keeping in view these all fundamental divine principles following points can be considered important:

- As we know that "Mehdavi state" will be established by elegant revolution and in the result of which a worldly government will be founded. It is also worthy to mention that this government will be based on the fundamental divine principles of justice, equity, brotherhood and equality. Hence, It cannot be denied that the governments playing their role for upholding the banner of justice though not an Islamic government are actually playing their part for the appearance of savior.

- In the worldly government of savior, rules or basis for international law will be "equality before law" rather than "might is right". So we should keep in mind that governments having such character in the international community are actually an important figure for paving the ground of appearance and can be a part of this worldly revolution. These states always stood up right in front of the seditious and tyrannical elements of the world community and always played their role for righteousness. These all are the attributes of the "Mehdavi revolution".

- Projects of education from the governments of throughout the world can also play a vital role for leveling

the grounds of appearance. This is the most important thing for paving the ground of appearance as when the level of intellect and education of people will rise, they will be more cultured, conscientious and aware. Thus they will be able to play their role for paving the ground of appearance and to be a part of the worldly revolution of savoir.

- Last but not the least, Union of Muslim countries enhancing the scope of globalization of Muslim world can be a very positive step from the Islamic countries in regard of paving the ground of appearance. Just a few years ago, it was a difficult thing to think over about the "worldly government" but now the establishment of United Nations as well as European Union is the best examples to be considered for the worldly government of Savior in the nearby future.

Concluding Remarks:

Sacred revolution of (savior) Imam Mehdi (ajf) contains political elements in its movement. To establish a just and equitable worldly government is the manifesto of the infallible Imam. Governments in the present era thought not fully an Islamic government by upholding the banner of justice, equity, equality and all other fundamental divine laws can be a part of the worldly government of the Savior. May Allah hasten His appearance and we could be a part of His worldly government playing our role positively for His early appearance.

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